

## The Idea of God in Nakae Tōju

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### INTRODUCTION

Nakae Tōju (1608-48) is acknowledged to be the founder of the Wang Yang-ming (Ōyōmei) school of philosophy in Japan—a school which produced such great men as Kumazawa Banzan (1619-91), an immediate disciple and chief minister to Ikeda Mitsumasa, feudal lord of Okayama, and Yoshida Shōin (1830-59), a fiery young reformer who paid with his life for his determination to learn from Western science in order to "modernize" Japan. In contrast to these men, Tōju led a retiring life, distinguishing himself chiefly as a village teacher, and extending the doctrine and practice of filial piety beyond the family, to the belief in and worship of a supreme deity. In this study, I should like to focus on Tōju's idea of God, and compare it to the Christian idea. The various influences on the formation and evolution of this idea, whether Confucian, Taoist, Shinto, Buddhist, or even possibly Christian, will also be discussed, in order that we might better understand this idea of God and perceive its uniqueness.

### LIFE AND THOUGHT

Nakae Tōju was born in the village of Ogawa, in the province of Ōmi, on the west bank of Lake Biwa, in a quiet and beautiful place which would become known mainly because of his own later fame. From the age of six on, the child lived, not with his parents in Ogawa, but with his grandparents in Shikoku. His sensitivity was probably enhanced by the successive tragic losses, during Tōju's early youth, of his grandmother (1621), grandfather (1622), and father (1625), which effectively left his mother alone and his only close adult kin by the time Tōju was age seventeen. These deaths did not threaten his livelihood, as Tōju continued to receive the stipends formerly awarded to

his grandfather as a samurai. But under these circumstances, he was unable to make book learning his principal pursuit, even though he desired to do so. Apparently, he could find time only at night for Confucian texts, and even that made him an object of derision. Also, he could only visit his mother occasionally, and that contributed to his later decision to quit samurai life and return to his native village.

To prefer filial piety over loyalty to one's lord was unusual for a Japanese, even if it was sometimes expected of Chinese scholars. In any case, Tōju must have struggled for some time under a sense of moral conflict. He submitted his resignation, explaining that his mother needed his support and care more than his lord. But he must have made this plea with some trepidation, since it could have been met with arbitrary punishment, even summary execution. Viewed in this light, it was an act of courage born of conviction, rather than one of weakness.

In leaving the samurai's life and career, Tōju had to abandon his material possessions of grain, houses, and other belongings. He became a peddler of liquor and rice in the countryside, to support himself and his mother with his earnings. Thus he voluntarily embraced the life of a lowly "merchant" in a highly structured society where the samurai were at the top, placed over and above the farmers, artisans, and merchants—not to mention the outcasts, or *burakumin*. All the while, he continued to deepen his knowledge of the Confucian classics and other texts. And, when he had acquired the means, he hastened to open a village school. He married late, in his thirtieth year. His filial piety was not blind; it is reported that his mother urged him to divorce the woman as her alleged ugliness was attracting mockery. But Tōju resisted such pressure, and the marriage appeared to have been a happy one.

From 1623 until his death at age forty—he would be survived by his mother—Tōju spent most of his life in Ogawa, teaching the simple people of the village, as well as a few youths from samurai families who came to stay

with him occasionally. He wrote in Chinese and Japanese a number of commentaries on Confucian texts, especially *The Four Books* and *The Classic of Filial Piety*. Together with his recorded conversations, his medical treatises, his poetry, and correspondence, these make up his *Collected Writings*. His fame rests chiefly on his virtuous character and the moral influence he exerted as a teacher (See his chronological biography, in Nakae 1940, 5:7-48. This includes the Japanese version, which is followed by the Chinese version, of his chronology).

We may discern at least two periods in Tōju's intellectual development, before and after his "conversion"—around age thirty-two—from the school of Chu Hsi (shushigaku) to that of Wang Yang-ming (yōmeigaku). Tōju began his studies by reading the *Ssu-shu ta-ch'üan* (A Compendium of the Four Books), which contains also the commentaries of the great philosopher Chu Hsi (1130-1299) and his followers. *The Great Learning* was his favorite text. It contains the teaching of moral cultivation, and the governance of family, state, and world by moral persuasion. Its first sentence explains the entire message in terms of "making illustrious virtue manifest" (ming-te), "renovating the people" (hsin-min), and "abiding in the highest good" (chih yü chih-shan).

In those days, Tōju accepted Chu Hsi's explanations of *The Great Learning*, which were focused on doing everything it recommends with a disposition of reverence (ching). This could be described as a religious disposition, which the ancient classics, especially *The Book of History*, attributed to the sage-kings in their disposition toward Heaven. Chu Hsi himself did not believe in a personal deity, although he agreed with Chou Tun-yi (1017-73) in proposing the *T'ai-chi* (Great Ultimate) as the source and principle of all things, transcendent as well as immanent. His disciples were perhaps even more zealous than their master in rigorously defining the disposition of reverence as an unfailing attitude of self-control, which must accompany the exercise of righteousness (yi) in one's actions (Ching 1977, pp. 8-12).

But Chu Hsi's reverence was directed more toward an immanent principle within the self (ching-yi chih-nei), while Tōju's was focused on a clearly transcendent being whom he allegedly discovered in the Chinese classics. He regarded this being as creator and master of the universe, controlling human affairs, rewarding the good with happiness and the wicked with punishment, a God of righteousness, who knows the good and evil of all thoughts and intentions.

Although it was not until 1640 that Tōju acquired the "new" writings of the Wang Yang-ming school from China, he always had an affinity for these ideas. This is evident from his explicit belief in freedom of choice in the determination of one's own life and career, and his rejection of social inequality as it was imbedded in the class structure of his time. The reading of the books of Wang Yang-ming (1472-1529) and of the *Collected Writings* of Yang-ming's disciple, Wang Chi (1498-1583), as well as the *Li-yüan sheng-yü* of T'ang Shu (1497-1574), which is found in the late Ming scholar Chung Jen-chieh's *Hsing-li hui-t'ung* (A Collection of Writings on Nature and Principles)<sup>1</sup> strengthened these convictions while also broadening Tōju's horizons. He felt a clear kinship for the Yang-ming school's emphasis on personal integrity, or, "respecting virtuous nature" (tsun-te-hsing) over the Chu Hsi school's insistence upon "the path of inquiry and learning" (tao-wen-hsüeh). The intellectual influence of the Yang-ming school also became apparent in Tōju's rejection of Chu Hsi's "revised" version of *The Great Learning*. He returned to the old text and the words *ch'in-min* (loving the people) instead of Chu's *hsin-min* (renovating the people). Like the Yang-ming school, or perhaps even more so, Tōju's teaching tended in a more intuitive and affective, and less rigidly rational, direction. He soon modified his doctrine of "reverence,"

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1. Chung's work, published in 1634, added to the *Hsing-li ta-ch'üan* (A Compendium of Writings on Nature and Principles), the selected writings of the Ming thinkers, especially of Wang Yang-ming and many of his contemporaries and followers. T'ang's treatise is in Chapter 31.

which he learned from the Chu Hsi school, to "love" and "reverence" (ai-ching) as a filial disposition toward both parents and a transcendent deity (Kōkyō keimō [The Classic of Filial Piety Explained]; Nakae 1940, 1: 313-15).

#### AN INDEPENDENT THINKER: PERSONAL THEISM

Nakae Tōju diverges from both Chu Hsi and Wang Yang-ming in his religious beliefs, especially his faith in a personal deity. In Chu Hsi's case, Chu had acknowledged that the ancient Chinese tradition, as manifest in *The Book of History*, suggested a belief in a supreme and personal or anthropomorphic deity, called Lord (ti) or Heaven (t'ien) (Chu Hsi 1962, ch. 43). But Chu considered such a belief to have been rendered obsolete by advances in philosophical speculation. According to him, this Lord-on-high should no longer be imagined as a human being living in the heavens, commanding things to come to pass. It should be thought of as *Li* or *T'ai-chi*, the Great Ultimate, from which flowed all reason and all moral principles, the Archetype, indeed, of reason and principle, a cosmic and metaphysical rather than personal Absolute (Ching 1977, p.134). As for Wang Yang-ming, he had not much discussed the ancient belief in the Lord-on-high. For him, all was in the mind (hsin), and the Absolute was called "mind-in-itself" (hsin chih pen-t'i). It is a principle which moves from within to without, becoming absolute to encompass the world and all things. Thus, where Chu Hsi speaks of the Great Ultimate (T'ai-chi) as the source and principle of all goodness and being, and where Wang Yang-ming speaks of *hsin* or *liang-chih* in near absolute terms, Tōju prefers reverence for a supreme and personal being, a God to whom he gives many names, but whom he honors especially as Lord-on-high (Chinese: Shang-ti; Japanese: Jōtei). This is not to say that either Chu Hsi or Wang Yang-ming was religious in his thinking (Ching 1974, ch. 7). It is to say that Nakae Tōju's religiosity, despite whatever it has received from either Chu Hsi or Wang Yang-ming, remains distinctive and unique, claiming inspiration indeed from the Chinese

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religion of antiquity and its personal theism.

#### A GOD WITH MANY NAMES

If the word "God" refers to the supreme being, then Nakae Tōju could surely be represented as a believer in God, a position he reached, apparently, through his own reading and understanding of ancient Chinese classics, especially the Books of *History* and *Poetry*, as well as more recent philosophical and religious literature of the Ming times. Tōju attributed many names to God, names that reveal his religious eclecticism. Besides the "Lord-on-high," or the "Supreme Lord-on-high" (Chinese: Huang Shang-ti; Japanese: Kō jōtei), which remained his favorite name for God, he also addressed the deity as the "Great August One" (T'ai-yi tsun-shen; Taiitsu sonshin), and as the "Lord-on-high of the Great Void" (T'ai-hsü shang-ti; Taikyō jōtei). These names disclose the various formative influences upon his religious evolution, including not only Confucian influences, but also Taoist, Shinto, and even Buddhist influences.

#### (1) Lord-on-high: The Personal God of Confucian Religion

Tōju's belief in a personal supreme being is all the more interesting as it predated even his move from Shushigaku to Yōmeigaku. This is apparent, for example, in his explanatory diagram of "manifest virtue" (meitoku zusetsu), a doctrine of *The Great Learning*. Here he refers to both *The Book of History* and *The Book of Poetry* to insist that the three primary doctrines of *The Great Learning* all represent the "clear command of Heaven" which should be obeyed with respect, as the commandments of the Lord-on-high (Nakae 1940, 1, 675-705). Although this term "Lord-on-high" referred in China itself to a personal deity, it was little used in the country of its origin by Tōju's time. As already mentioned, the Confucian scholars of the Sung (960-1279) and Ming (1368-1644) dynasties were much more interested in other words, such as nature, principle, and the mind. These made up a philosophical vocabulary with a

rational rather than religious or devotional resonance. Thus Tōju identifies Heaven, a term of some ambiguity, which the Chu Hsi and Yang-ming schools in China have tended to use in a somewhat pantheistic sense, with the personal deity of ancient Chinese religion.<sup>2</sup> He has this to say of this ancient Chinese deity which he makes his own:

Speaking of the process of creation (tsao-hua), He is called Lord (ti). He makes Heaven and Earth, and gives life to the myriad things. He clearly rewards good and punishes evil, without any infinitesimal error. The Lord-on-high is present in every place and at any time, be that as far away as outer space (literally, outside Heaven and Earth), as intimate as within one's self, as long as history, as short as a breath, as small as a dust particle, as secret as the darkest solitude. For that reason Heaven knows the good and evil of every one of our intentions and rewards and punishes the good and evil of every one of our actions (*Meitoku zusetu*; Nakae 1940, 1. 680).

## (2) The Great August One: Taoist Influences?

In his thirty-third year (1640), Tōju started to offer incense and prayer to an image of the Lord-on-high on the first day of every lunar month, after fasting and abstinence.<sup>3</sup> By then he had formally moved away from Shushigaku. He began to address this Lord-on-high also as the Taiitsu sonshin (T'ai-yi tsun-shen), literally, the Great August One, an ancient Chinese term associating the supreme deity with the Polar Star, which was considered fixed and immutable, although surrounded with "satellites."<sup>4</sup>

2. See his *Kōkyō keimō*, *Chūyō kai*, and *Chūyō zoku kai* in Nakae 1940, 1:342-343; 2:56 and 201. On ancient Chinese religion, see Ikeda 1981, Chapters 1 and 3.

3. Before that, he had chanted *The Classic of Filial Piety* aloud every morning, and even after that, he apparently continued to practice some form of daily chant. But it is not clear how he performed his formal monthly worship.

4. See especially Ma Jung's (79-166) commentary on *The Book of History*, Canon of Shun, where the Lord-on-high is identified with the Great One (ta-yi), as the Most August One in Heaven.

This term had undergone considerable evolution even in Chinese religious history, becoming representative of the highest of the Five Gods in the Han times, and increasingly associated with religious Taoism. The anti-orthodox Yang-ming school in China encompassed Taoist as well as Buddhist beliefs and ideas, although few Yang-ming scholars themselves articulated a clear belief in a personal and supreme being. In Tōju's case, he claimed to have derived this term from T'ang Shu's *Li-yüan sheng-yü*. But while T'ang tends to identify the Great One (t'ai-yi) with the Great Void (t'ai-hsü), and speaks of it as the source of all life, and while T'ang also acknowledges directing his reverence toward a simple diagram including a circle and the words *T'ai-yi yüan-shen* (The Great Primal One) around it, he has not identified this Great One with the ancient Lord-on-high. His Great One lacks the clearly personal attributes which Tōju gives to the "Great August One."<sup>5</sup>

Tōju directed his worship to an image of the Taiitsu sonshin. The image refers probably to a tablet which showed a circle, symbolic of the "Great Void" as well as of the invisible God, and the words making up the name of the deity, as it did with T'ang Shu. It is described in Tōju's Preface to his unfinished work, the *Taiitsu shinkyō*.<sup>6</sup>

If Tōju's reference to "ghosts and spirits" puzzles some people, and even casts doubt upon his alleged monotheism,

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*Ku-wen Shang-shu Ma-Cheng-chu* (The Old Text Book of History, with Commentaries by Ma [Jung] and Cheng [Hsüan]; Tai-nan-ko series, 1:7a). See also Shih 1969, pp.129-30.

5. See *Li-yüan sheng-yü* in Chung Jen-chieh, comp., *Hsing-li hui-t'ung*, op. cit., ch. 31. Tōju admits that he debated in his mind for three years before deciding to address worship to an image, a practice which was customary among religious Taoists. See Nakae 1940, pp.140-47.
6. See Nakae 1940, 1:137. Tōju refers also to the representations of yin and yang, or of "ghosts" and "spirits," flanking the symbol of the deity, but it is unclear whether these were in human form as two young children, as his words themselves suggest, or whether they were given in the form of two hexagrams from *The Book of Changes*.



let us make a distinction between what may be called the "latent" and the "manifest." The One August God is the supreme and invisible Godhead, who is made "manifest"—represented, if one wishes—by the many "ghosts and spirits," including especially the spirits of the ancestors. This becomes more comprehensible when we keep in mind the belief that the One August God is regarded as source and principle of all life, including the life transmitted through the ancestors (Yamamoto 1978, p.494 and p.633).

To justify his use of an image to represent the invisible god, Tōju attributes such usage to the legendary sage Fu-hsi, as well as to King Wen of the Chou dynasty (1111-249 B.C.) and to Confucius, all alleged authors of *The Book of Changes*. He was aware of the fact that such worship was not usual among scholars in China, although it was more common among the simple believers of the Taoist religion. He explained that knowledge of this allegedly ancient religion had been lost to later generations because of the silence of *The Book of Rites* concerning it. According to him, the Han (206 B.C.-220 A.D.) Imperial House learned it from the "ghosts and spirits," but regarded the deity worshipped as the guardian spirit of its own particular lineage. Thus it was transmitted, and regarded erroneously by later Confucian scholars as an integral part of religious Taoism.

The Taiitsu sonshin is the Supreme Lord-on-high of *The Book of History* . . . [and] the Lord and Parent of Heaven and Earth and all things. . . . His supreme excellence is unique and peerless; his virtue and power are wonderful and infinite. Originally he had no name, but the sage addresses him arbitrarily as the Great, Supreme, Celestial Excellence, the Great August One, and makes Him known as the root of life, to be waited on with reverence. The God represented by this image created (tsao-hua) Heaven and Earth and all things, and is in charge of all life's vicissitudes, whether happiness or disaster. [He is] omniscient and omnipotent (Preface

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to the *Taiitsu shinkyō* in Nakae 1940, 1: 137-140. This is written in Chinese.)

(3) Lord-on-High of the Great Void: The Neo-Confucian Cosmos

Tōju's decision to offer formal worship to the supreme being is all the more unique for a Confucian scholar since he obviously knew that the Chinese ritual texts permitted and prescribed such a cult only to emperors. In China, the worship of Heaven was reserved to the Son of Heaven, whereas officials and common people were only allowed to worship other, lower spirits. This was the historical reason for the general ignorance in the Chinese tradition about the belief in the supreme deity, as well as for the degree of neglect for the cult itself. In Japan, however, there was no such tradition of the emperor offering formal worship to a supreme being (See Nakae 1940, 1: 149. See also Yamashita 1970, p.315). Perhaps it was to avoid appearing to usurp the position of the emperor that Tōju addressed the deity of his formal worship not as Lord-on-high, but as *Taiitsu sōnshin*. It is even more probable that it was to include a sense of the cosmos that he used as well another term for God: "the Lord-on-high of the Great Void." It was his way of uniting in one the personal nature of the deity as well as a Neo-Confucian notion of the universe with clear Taoist and Buddhist overtones, as found in writings like those of T'ang shu.

The term T'ai-hsü (Great Void) has also an ancient origin, associated much more with Taoist or "eclectic" texts, like the *Huai-nan-tzu*, than with the Confucian ones. It occurs, however, quite often in neo-Confucian philosophical discussions, especially with Chang Tsai, who speaks of the Great Void as the fullness of the primal *ch'i* (matter-energy), another ancient Chinese concept, or the "stuff" of the universe. To call God the "Lord-on-high of the Great void" might be a manner of envisaging the Lord-on-high as residing in the Great Void, or of representing him as the Lord of the Great Void, that is, of the universe. The

former usage would give it a more pantheistic direction. In Tōju's case, however, since he had always given priority to the personal nature of the supreme being, it is difficult to assert that his use of the term denotes a move away from personal theism. He himself says "Heaven is the Lord of the Great Void, and what is called the Supreme Lord-on-high" (Nakae 1940, 2: 56).

If the gods of Heaven and the spirits of Earth are regarded as father and mother of all things, then the Lord-on-high of the Great Void should be regarded as the supreme ancestor of human morality and relationships. According to this religious understanding, sages and worthies, the Buddha and Bodhidharma, Confucians and Buddhists, myself and others, all the peoples and visible things of this entire world are all descendants of the Great Lord-on-high and the spirits of heaven and Earth. . . .(*Okina mondō* Nakae 1940, 3: 219. See also Yamamoto 1978, p.554).

#### (4) Amaterasu as Shinto Ancestral Deity

The year after Tōju's decision to worship the supreme deity (1641) he made a pilgrimage to the Shinto shrines at Ise, where he paid reverence to Amaterasu, the great sun-goddess and alleged ancestress of the people of Japan (Nakae 1940, 5: 22-23). This was no denial of his personal monotheism, but rather a manifestation of his special belief in the ancestral kami of the Japanese people. Indeed, the presence of personal gods in Shinto religious beliefs could have strengthened Tōju's faith in the personal dimension of the godhead, even though the god he worshipped was the supreme God, and not one of a multitude. For while Tōju gives credit to Confucian classics and later commentaries for justifying his belief in a supreme deity, it is quite possible that the Shinto ambience in Japan cultivated early in him a certain acceptance of the deity as personal. Besides, going beyond all accepted conventions of his time, Tōju made a clear choice for one supreme being, as the

source and principle for all life, a parent or ancestor God, if we wish, but a universal parent or ancestor rather than only the particular ancestor for the Japanese people or their imperial house. Here, Tōju's monotheism marks a clear departure from Shinto polytheism. Given this explicit monotheism, Tōju's attitude toward Amaterasu could be understood either as universalizing, in some sense, a particular ancestral spirit, or as reverencing a particular manifestation of the supreme being who is ancestor of all peoples.

Tōju's God is very much an ancestral God, revered as the source and principle of life, even though he has not articulated any theological doctrine of creation. His insistence is that "the root of my body (or self) is my parents; the root of my parents is the primal ancestors; the root of the primal ancestors is Heaven and Earth; the root of Heaven and Earth is the Great Void (*Kōkyō keimō*, Nakae 1940, 1: 266).

(5) A Compassionate God: Buddhist Influences?

While Tōju regarded himself as a Confucian in the Yang-ming tradition, he was open to Taoist and Buddhist influences. It seems that his mother had been a Buddhist of Shingon tendencies, and he himself had studied Confucian texts with Buddhist monks as a youth. Although he displayed an earlier distaste for Buddhism, he appeared to have developed a much more syncretistic outlook in his later years, partly through his readings of Wang Yang-ming and of Wang Chi. His Buddhist influences are more visible in his Japanese writings, especially in what he wrote for women. In these writings, he coins such eclectic Confucian-Buddhist terms as *meitoku busshō* (manifest virtue/Buddha-nature), *ryōchi nyorai* (innate moral intuition/Tathāgata) and *chūyō bosatsu* (the mean/bodhisattva). In such ways, he identifies the task of making virtue manifest with the cultivation of Buddha-nature, and affirms the existence of heaven and hell after death (See the preface to his *Kansō*, in Nakae 1940, pp.317-20). He wrote approvingly of Bodhidharma's alleged response to the Chinese emperor, that

true merit lies less in the building of temples and the copying of sūtras than in spiritual cultivation. He even says:

The pure and compassionate mind is what Confucians call the virtue of humanity (jen) and the Buddhist teachings call Buddha-nature. . . . Such a pure, compassionate, and humanely virtuous Buddha-nature is the root of all happiness (Nakae 1940, 3: 357; see Kimura 1971, p.607).

His preference was Pure Land Buddhism, the religion of faith. He speaks of "the sincere mind, the compassionate mind" as the special teaching of the Pure Land sūtras. Increasingly in his later life, he shows preference for a God of compassion over one of fear, which indicates an abandonment of an earlier and somewhat simplistic belief in the supreme deity as someone who mainly rewards good and punishes evil in this life. According to Yamamoto, Tōju appeared to have had the experience of prolonged illness, which taught him how to find true happiness in the acceptance and transcendence of pain and suffering. The evolution of his idea of God could indicate his having achieved a certain enlightenment (satori) in a spiritual quest undertaken with a spirit of filial piety toward the supreme being (See Yamamoto 1978, pp.603-31).

(6) Any Christian Influence?

Tōju's God is usually described as the God of ancient Chinese religion, or the Confucian God (Jushin), even though a closer look reveals influences from many sources, including Taoist, Shinto, and even Buddhist. But how about the possibility of Christian influence? Was his religion entirely a result of his studies of Chinese classics and philosophy, or was it not also the product, at least in part, of contact with Christian teachings? Given the uniqueness of his religious beliefs among both Chinese and Japanese scholars of his time, and certain points of resemblance with Christian beliefs, this becomes a natural question.

It appears that when Tōju was growing up at the home of his grandparents, Iyo was a place of much Christian missionary activity. Indeed, according to Jesuit records of 1626, a certain man was converted to Christianity in Shikoku, who had till then followed a "religion of morality," and who considered that there was much in common between "the religion of the scholars of China and the teachings of Christianity." There has been speculation that this man was no other than Tōju. He would have been at that time nineteen years old—hardly an age for possessing already a scholarly reputation.<sup>7</sup> There is even mention of the possibility that Tōju's first wife was either the daughter or granddaughter of a well-known Christian daimyō and waka poet, Kinoshita Chōshōshi (1569–1649).<sup>8</sup> It is interesting to note that Tōju's monthly act of reverence to the supreme deity continued until his wife's death, and was no longer practised thereafter.<sup>9</sup> Certain engravings found on his grandfather's tabernacle—which probably contained the tablet honoring the grandfather's spirit—might also be interpreted as Christian symbols. His two explanatory diagrams, the *Meitoku zusetsu* and the *Jikei zusetsu* (On abiding in reverence) are said each to contain a symbol of the Cross, including the T shaped *Crux Commissa* and the + shaped *Crux Immissa* (Shimizu 1967, pp.188–193). The well-known historian of Christianity, Ebisawa Arimichi, however, claims that there is no direct Christian influence on Nakae Tōju. His opinion is that the orthodox Shushigaku scholars like Hayashi Razan (1583–1657) and others sought to smear the Yōmeigakusha with Christian associations. They did not succeed in the case of Banzan, as he was able

7. This suggestion was mentioned in Léon Pagès 1869, p.637, and the speculation was made by Anesaki 1930, pp.276–78. Consult also Shimizu 1967, pp.200–201.

8. See two early biographies of Tōju, in Nakae 1940, 5:60 and 75. Shimizu Yasuzō suggests that Tōju's mother's advice to her son to divorce this woman could have been due to the woman's religious affiliation (Shimizu 1967, pp.234–237).

9. Tōju was to die three years after the death of his first wife, and reasons of health have been cited for his discontinuing the monthly cult (Nakae 1940, 5:15).

to make a successful reply, repudiating any connection with Christianity.<sup>10</sup>

All this is merely circumstantial evidence. But given the severity of the persecution of Christianity during Tōju's lifetime, had he been Christian, we can understand why no explicit proof exists. But should he have been Christian, we might appreciate better certain other facts, including his abrupt abandonment of the career of a samurai, at a time when Christians were being actively persecuted (see Ebisawa 1970 for a history of Christianity in Japan at this time). And it could help to explain his unique theistic piety, at a time when Confucian scholars tended in a pantheistic direction. However, should Tōju not have been Christian, real resemblances still exist between his beliefs and those of Christian theism. His attitude of loving, filial reverence for the Lord-on-high, was also close to the Christian's child-like attitude toward God.

But Tōju's idea of God is not entirely similar to the Christian idea. The distinction between the two seems to be his acceptance of God as a kind of universal ancestral deity, albeit a just and merciful one, and the Christian doctrine of God as Creator, with an explicit doctrine of how the world came to be through a creation *ex nihilo*. Besides, we have no evidence in Tōju's writings of any belief in the Trinity or Incarnation, or in any other characteristically Christian doctrine. Certainly, when considered according the Christian norms of his time, Tōju's ideas were eclectic, harboring, as they did, Buddhist as well as Confucian influences. But looking back from today, perhaps the distance of time, and the new developments in Christian theological thinking today, permit us to perceive a greater closeness between Tōju's idea of God and the core idea of God in Christian belief.

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10. See Ebisawa 1966, pp.252-257. I thank Dr. Cyril Powles of Trinity College at the University of Toronto for this reference.

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### CONCLUSION

Looking back from today, how can Nakae Tōju be evaluated? Perhaps, according to both Confucian and Christian standards, what he **was** is more important than his theistic belief and piety. The Meiji Christian writer, Uchimura Kanzō, himself a teacher and educator, wrote in his English article of the respect still shown to Tōju's name in his native village of Ogawa, by the villagers of Kanzō's time, one of whom apparently directed Kanzō to Tōju's grave.

You ask him why [t]his [sic] respect to a man who lived three hundred years ago, and he will answer you. . . : "Here in this village and neighborhood, the father is kind to the son, the son filial to the father, and brothers are affectionate to one another. In our homes no angry voices are to be heard, and all wear the countenance of peace. All these we owe to the teachings and after-influences of the master Tōju . . ." (Uchimura 1980, 3: 267).

Indeed, given the exemplariness of his life and character, and the radiating effect his virtue had on so many others, Tōju could qualify to be considered a saint (seijin) in the Christian sense. His belief in God is all the more important, as it appears to have been the foundation for his virtuous life. It is perhaps in this way that we may appreciate these words of praise of Nakae Tōju as a sage (seijin):

He was the Sage of Ōmi Province; but is he not also the Sage of Japan, the Sage of the East, and indeed, the Sage of the entire world? For a sage is a sage in the same way in the present as in the past, in the East as in the West.—Sugiura Jūgō.<sup>11</sup>

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11. This is taken from a memorial essay written in Tōju's honor, and collected in Nakae 1940, 5:401-02. The English translation is from Tsunoda 1958, 1:369.



## Glossary

ai-ching 愛敬  
 burakumin 賤民  
 ch'i 氣  
 chih-yü chih-shan 止於至善  
 ch'in-min 親民  
 ching 敬  
 ching-yi chih-nei 敬以直內  
 Chou Tun-yi 周敦頤  
 Chu Hsi 朱熹  
 Chung Jen-chieh 鍾人傑  
 chūyō bosatsu 中庸菩薩  
 Fu-Hsi 伏羲  
 hsin 心  
 hsin-chih pen-t'i 心之本體  
 hsin-min 新民  
 Hsing-li hui-t'ung 性理會通  
 Huang Shang-ti (Kō jōtei) 皇上帝  
 Ikeda Mitsumasa 池田光政  
 jen 仁  
 Jikei zusetu 持敬圖說  
 Jushin 儒神  
 Kinoshita Chōshōshi 木下長嘯  
 Kōkyō keimō 孝經啓蒙  
 Kumazawa Banzan 熊沢蕃山  
 li 理  
 Li-yüan sheng-yü 禮元刺語  
 liang-chih 良知  
 Ma jung 馬融  
 meitoku busshō 明德佛性

meitoku zusetu 明德圖說  
 ming te 明德  
 Nakae Tōju 中江藤樹  
 Ōyōmei 王陽明  
 ryōchi nyorai 良知如來  
 satori 悟  
 seijin 聖人  
 Shang-ti (Jōtei) 上帝  
 shushigaku 朱子學  
 Ssu-shu ta-ch'üan 四書大全  
 T'ai-chi 太極  
 Taiitsu shinkyō 太一神經  
 T'ai-hsü shang-ti  
 (Taikyō jōtei) 太虛上帝  
 T'ai-yi tsun-shen  
 (Taiitsu sonshin) 太乙尊神  
 T'ai-yi yüan-shen 太一元神  
 T'ang Shu 唐樞  
 tao-wen-hsüeh 性理大全  
 ti 帝  
 t'ien 天  
 tsao-hua 造化  
 tsun-te-hsing 尊德性  
 yi 義  
 yōmeigaku 陽明學  
 Yoshida Shōin 吉田松蔭  
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