

**RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY**

and miracles raised their hopes of political independence and spiritual rejuvenation.

But, says Erikson, Jesus sought more. He used parables to instill in his listeners an "inner light" that would better enable them to understand their own longings and behavior. Jesus' first known reference to this "light" was in the Sermon on the Mount, when he declared, "Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house" (Matthew 5:15). According to Erikson, Jesus spoke of what psychologists today call a sense of *I*—an awareness of oneself as the center of one's universe that individuals must possess to comprehend their place among their fellows.

Crucial to developing a sense of *I* is a person's childhood relationships with parents. Jesus may have shown an understanding of this when he appealed to God at Gethsemane as "Abba" (an Aramaic term Erikson likens to "Daddy"). Indeed, he emphasized that "whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it" (Mark 10:15).

The "inner light" enables an individual to break down the barriers that separate human beings from God—and from one another. Thus, Erikson believes that the central message of the parable of the Prodigal Son concerns not the steadfast love of the father (God) but the errant son's need to understand himself before he can live with his family. And, Erikson argues, as people feel more comfortable with their inner natures, they are more able to risk behavior that is morally right but that violates social norms or upsets political authority. Thus, by advancing the development of human consciousness, Jesus accelerated the evolution of human conscience as well.

***Born-Again Shinto***

"Shinto in the History of Japanese Religion" by Kuroda Toshio, in *The Journal of Japanese Studies* (Winter 1981), Thomson Hall, DR-05, University of Washington, Seattle, Wash. 98195.

Shinto has endured as Japan's indigenous religion since prehistory, resisting submergence by such imported faiths as Buddhism and Taoism. At least, that is the view held by most Japanese. Yet Kuroda, professor of humanities at Osaka University, maintains that Shinto did not emerge as a fully independent religion until modern times.

An amalgam of folk beliefs, rituals, and nature worship without a clear doctrinal structure, Shinto is the font of both ancestor and emperor worship in Japan. The word *Shinto* appears in the eighth-century *Nihon Shoki*, the best-known ancient collection of Japanese legends, but it seems to have had several meanings then: "popular beliefs in general"; Taoism (which had been coming in from China for seven centuries); the power of local deities and ancestor spirits, known as *kami*.

Then, in the eighth century, the Empress Shōtoku took up Buddhism, making it the state religion. Modern scholars have argued that objections by the nobility led to heightened *kami* worship, to the organiza-

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tion of the unique, non-Buddhist shrine at Ise (near Osaka), and to the final transformation of Shinto into an independent, purely Japanese faith. But Kuroda contends that the *kami* came to be viewed by most as the secular form in which the Buddha taught and saved humans. Even priests at Ise were students of Buddhism. In Japan, as in Tibet and elsewhere in East Asia, Buddhism absorbed native beliefs and gave them a new authority, without obliterating them.

Only in the 15th century, as the imperial system started to deteriorate and heresy fragmented Japanese Buddhism, did Shinto begin to depart from orthodox Buddhism. The split widened during the 17th century, with the spread of a Confucian brand of Shinto. Its central concept of "dō" (a "political or moral norm") further secularized Shinto.

The idea of Shinto as Japan's indigenous religion developed in the 18th century, among scholars of the National Learning School, who urged the Japanese to cleanse their culture of foreign influences. Finally, in the late 19th century, the Meiji emperor formally separated Shinto and Buddhism and tried to suppress the latter. Ironically, says Kuroda, it was this isolation that gave Shinto its "primitive" quality—for the Meiji emperor had severed Shinto's long-standing bond with a deeper religious philosophy.

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**SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY**


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### *A Third Branch*

"Archaeobacteria" by Carl R. Woese, in *Scientific American* (June 1981) 415 Madison Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017.

Until recently, scientists divided all living matter into eukaryotes (cells of which all animals and plants are made) and prokaryotes (bacteria). But Woese and fellow biochemists at the University of Illinois have found bacteria that constitute a hitherto unsuspected branch of life. The discovery of these "archaeobacteria" may upset conventional theories about life's beginnings on Earth.

Eukaryotes are relatively large (0.0000393-inch-long) organisms with well-defined internal structures such as nuclei and mitochondria (the respiratory mechanisms of animal cells). Prokaryotes are only one-tenth as long and lack such structures. Sketchy fossil evidence has long led researchers to believe that the ancestor of both was a fermenting prokaryote, which appeared at least 3.5 billion years ago, when the Earth was less than one billion years old and its atmosphere consisted mainly of carbon dioxide and hydrogen.

Eventually, bacteria evolved that could manufacture energy from sunlight and release oxygen in the process. Earth's changing atmosphere, scientists thought, spurred the evolution of the more advanced eukaryotic cells. Different kinds of prokaryotes carry their own genetic material and correspond roughly with different parts of the eukaryotic