

SELECTED WRITINGS  
ON  
FREE RELIGION (自由宗教)  
&  
OTHER SUBJECTS

Shin'ichirō Imaoka

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In the spirit of Imaoka sensei's own understanding of,  
and hopes for, Free Religion, this pdf collection of his essays  
is made freely available to all.

Also, in the spirit of recovering something beautiful and enriching  
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Imaoka sensei in his study at 102 years old corresponding with international friends after his morning meditation (seiza).

## SHORT BIOGRAPHY OF SHIN'ICHIRO IMAOKA (1881-1988)

hin'ichirō Imaoka (1881-1988) was a living legend in Japan who influenced the development of progressive and liberal religion. He lived so long and was involved in so many different phases of Japan's emergence in modern life that it remains difficult to comprehend his contributions and impossible to compare him with others. His life spanned a period of turmoil and transition that put all cultural values to question. He became an exemplar of one who turned crisis into spiritual opportunity and growth.

His parents were farmers and Shin Buddhists of Matsue. Born on September 16, 1881, he was named Nobuichiro Imaoka (an folk rendering of the characters for his name). His signature as the last secretary for the Japan Unitarian Mission was "N. Imaoka." The pronunciation of his personal name was changed to Shin'ichirō (a more usual rendering) for the convenience of others.

Studying under the famous Professor Aneskai in the department of religious studies at Tokyo Imperial University, he was influenced by the ethics of the New Testament, Quaker mysticism, and the writings of Dean William Inge. He graduated in the second graduating class in 1906. He had been a member of Reverend Danjo Ebina's youth group where he met and married Utayo Fukuda. Her life was not less remarkable than her husband's. She was to walk a path of independence in business and science unique for her times. She received two imperial awards for accomplishments in the telecommunications industry. She died in 1978.

Imaoka sensei was called to a Congregational church and went to Kobe in 1906 as its pastor. A spiritual crisis occurred; he could not convert others from their faith to Christianity. His own theology was found heterodox by an ordination committee, and he resigned and went back to Tokyo in 1910. There he met Torajiro Okada, a seiza master who taught a form of quiet sitting, which became a lifelong practice. Every day Imaoka sat for at least 15 minutes (Buddhists sitting with him often found him a living Buddha, Shintoists a kami), so identifying his presence.

The most progressive wing of Japanese Congregational ministers began gathering in Tokyo and Imaoka joined them. They became the heart of the Japanese Unitarian Mission at the nation's most influential religious/cultural journal, *Cosmos*, and at Unity Hall, the headquarters of the Japanese Unitarian Association.

Imaoka sought further theological studies with the desire to teach. He began a doctoral program at Harvard College in its doctoral program in New Testament studies but a personal crisis brought him back to Japan. This meant he did not have the doctorate necessary to enable him to teach about Christianity at the Imperial University, instead, he became deeply involved with Prof. Anesaki's national educational innovations and the many reform programs at Unity Hall, the centre of the "yunitarian" [sic] movement and its attempt to create a new unified Japanese culture.

Imaoka lectured from 1919 to 1936 at Nihon University on the history of religions and the outline of Christianity. In 1925 when he accepted the principalship of Seisoku High School which already had a distinguished past. But within 15 years Imaoka had helped turn it into a symbol of academic excellence in private education for all of Japan. In 1940 his school and the academic community honoured him for his contribution to education. In 1949 Seisoku



followed his leadership and decided to base all the school's activities on the principles of Free Religion (Jiyū Shūkyō). On the 25th anniversary of his principalship in 1950 the emperor honoured him with a blue ribbon award for his service to education, and in 1965 he received the fourth order of merit with the sacred treasure. If any knew beyond his own family, none of his congregation knew in 1980, nor even the scholarly community. Only when his son, daughter, and daughter-in-law begged their father that his life story be shared did these details begin to come out. Imaoka remained at Seisoku High School until 1973, finally retiring just before he was 93 years old.

For 60 years Imaoka worked behind the scenes as an organizer of conferences for religious dialogue, understanding, and mutual cooperation including in 1928 the Great Conference of Japanese Religion, in 1931 the Japan Religious Peace Conference, and in 1963 the Parliament of Religions in Tokyo at the centenary of the birth of Vivekananda. He was one of the founders of the Japan Free Religious Association in 1948 along with Prof. Kishimoto and Reverend Akashi Sr., a Japanese Universalist.

For over 70 years Imaoka was a minister. After the dispersal of Japanese Unitarianism into society around 1923 the gathering for spiritual practise or study on Sundays had to be begun again in 1948. Kiitsu Kyōkai, the Tokyo Unitarian Church, or more properly the Unity Church, was something new; it was a fellowship for the practise and study of Free Religion. Its organization made it impossible for it to be anything more than a small gathering.

Imaoka came to teach that Free Religion was something more than any particular religion. Free Religion was not limited to organized religion and has drawn Japanese who were members of the Japanese Unitarian Association to go beyond Unitarianism.

Religion was in all of life, including culture, economics, politics, and art. Yet, Free Religion has its expression in the connectedness of church as community. As Emerson said, there was no fundamental distinction between church and world. All of life was interdependent.

This quiet work was recognized in several ways. In 1972 Meadville Theological Seminary granted him a Doctor of Divinity degree. In 1979 the World Conference on Religion and Peace recognized his leadership with a distinguished founders award, and in 1981 the International Association for Religious Freedom at its congress in Holland presented to his son and daughter-in-law an award for his outstanding contribution to interfaith understanding and cooperation.

In 1985 the Japanese nation was hearing his talks on radio and television. The Japan Free Religious Association published 109 of more than 150 surviving essays. A paperback version emphasizing Free Religion contained 37 essays. Several Japanese professors began interviewing Imaoka on a continuing basis and, in 2019, George M. Williams published his study of Imaoka: “Cosmic Sage: Imaoka Shin’ichirō, Prophet of Free Religion” (Uniquest Publishing, Hawaii, 2019).

Thus, this apostle for Free Religion will not be forgotten.

Imaoka sensei died of pneumonia on April 11, 1988, at the age of 106.

George M. Williams

## WHAT IS FREE RELIGION?

**T**he reason why representatives of various particular religions and organizations in different countries can come together for dialogue is because they recognize unity in variety. Although every particular religion respects its own characteristic, it recognizes something common among those particular religions, religion behind religions. No particular religion can monopolize religious truth or contain it all. Particular religions contain something more than that which is confined within particular religions. What is that something more? It is universal, super-logical and creative. Is not this what leaders of the IARF (International Association of Religious Freedom) mean by Free Religion? Rev. A. B. Downing, the chairman of Commission II of IARF, remarked to the point as follows: “A Unitarian is more than a Christian. A member of Rissho Kosei Kai is something more than a Buddhist. Our awareness of this something more is very important to us in the IARF.” Free Religion is neither a new religion ranking among existing religions nor a unification of them. Free Religion is immanent in them, being their essence and goal. All particular religionists become Free Religionists by recognizing the immanence of such super-particular religion within them. Unitarians, Protestants, Catholics, Hindus, Buddhists, Shintoists and Muslims can all become Free Religionists under the said condition.

This reminds me of the fact that the famous British historian Arnold Toynbee wrote on the visitors’ album of the Ise Grand Shrine on the occasion of his visit there. “I feel in this holy place the underlying unity of all religions.” Although the famous Buddhist poet Saigyô visited the same Shrine, he was not allowed

to enter the holy place because he was a Buddhist. But he wrote a poem to the effect, that tears flow down due to devotion to something divine and inexplicable. While Toynbee, a Christian in England, could grasp the unity of religions, i.e., religion behind religions in the Shinto Shrine; Saigyō could feel the essence of religion beyond Buddhism and Shintoism there even though he was prevented from entering the holy place. I understand, therefore, that both Toynbee and Saigyō were typical Free Religionists and Shintoism may be called Free Religion if experienced as Toynbee and Saigyō did.

Free Religion will be discovered not only within particular religions but also within all human activities that are nothing but the realization of human nature, universal, creative, holy and religious. As Professor Tillich put it, religion is man's ultimate concern. In other words, religion aims at none other than becoming a true human being. Zen Buddhism that teaches "Everyday mind is the way" is, therefore, Free Religion. Shosan Suzuki, a Zen master, guided his disciple not to practise Zazen (Zen contemplation) but to devote himself to the recitation of Noh songs of which the disciple was very fond. From the standpoint of Free Religion what is natural and is, is what matters. Jesus taught:

"Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hast ought against thee; leave then thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."

"For I was hungry, and ye gave me meat. I was thirsty and you gave me drink. I was a stranger, and ye took me in. Naked and ye clothed me. I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee hungry and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee

drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of those my brothers, ye have done it unto me.”

Jesus emphasized not religion in the sanctuary but that of daily life. He was a Jew but more than that, a Free Religionist. According to a popular view, the sphere of religion is holy while those of politics, economy, science and art are secular. Free Religionists do not, however, distinguish between holy and secular spheres. Politics, economy, science and art are not mere politics, economy, science and art but the realization and development of universal and creative human nature and are therefore sacred, i.e., religious in the broad and true sense of the word. Mr. Kojiro Serizawa wrote: “Literature gives utterance to the silent demand of God: novel writing is a service to God, i.e., a sacred profession.” These relevant words apply not only to literature but to all human activities.

Mr. Torajiro Okada, who once dominated all Japan by his Seiza (Quiet Sitting), a kind of Zen, said to the effect that all human existence is Seiza, i.e., religion in the broad and true sense of the word, and Seiza is free from even Quiet Sitting because he could guide people to attain the same goal by dance and music. And I think I understand Dr. Felix D. Lion rightly when I say that his views on religion as wholeness are the same as Okada’s. The Toshogu (Shinto Shrine) and Rinnoji (Buddhist Temple) for many years engaged in a quarrel which they themselves could not solve religiously but it was finally settled by a civil court. Mahatma Gandhi said: “What India needs at present is not missionaries but

bread.” The former found religion in the law while the latter found it in the economy.

In short, human activities are multifarious but the ultimate goal is to become a true human being. And this is what I mean by Free Religion.

People who are used to associating religion with God, miracles, atonement, Amitabha in the Western Paradise, etc., may not be satisfied with such a dry and commonplace definition. That is the reason why Free Religionists have always been labeled heretics. But times change. I wonder how long hereafter the so-called religions will survive. Although Free Religion is always common like wind and plain like water, Truth is always common and plain. Free Religionists are none other than people who follow such common and plain Truth. They find Free Religion within not only established religions but within politics, economy, science and art, i.e., whole human activities; and they aspire for the realization of an ideal world community, that is nothing else than the Kingdom of God on earth.

I am anxious that the IARF should be an organization of Free Religionists. It should be more than an Association for Religious Freedom. The full name of the IARF should be changed to the International Association for Free Religion as Rev. R. N. West, the former President of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA), moved at the 1975 IARF Montreal Congress.

# I BELIEVE IN A UNIVERSAL COOPERATIVE SOCIETY—MY ARTICLES OF FAITH AT 100

From “Rinri” — No. 384, Special Edition “Search for Faith” (Ethics), 1981

## Sources of Learning and Faith

**I** was born into a devout Jodo Shinshu (Buddhist) family in Shimane Prefecture and I was not fed until I prayed before the Buddhist altar. I memorized the “Shoshinge” and the “Gobunsho” (sacred texts) without knowing what they meant.

Then I became a Christian when I was in the fourth year of the old style middle school. The fact is, at first, I wanted to learn English conversation and so I attended the school of an English missionary. Later I was baptized when I was attracted by his character and spirituality and had been converted by him. It was in Meiji 30 (1897) that I became a believer in Christianity. This was a time when conversion to Christianity was considered treason and my parents, saying that they were throwing out a Christian from their Shinshu household, just about disinherited me in their fury. Nevertheless, pouring over Uchimura Kanzo’s prophetic book, I boiled over with righteous indignation. But as I progressed through the Kumamoto Fifth High School, my doubts about Christianity gradually increased. Did the Virgin Mary give birth to Christ? Was he resurrected after three days having died on the cross? I began to doubt some of the miracles in the Bible. When I was very troubled about this, I met Ebina Danjo and he said that it is all right if you do not believe the miracles in the Bible, Christ is an ordinary man. But you should believe that there is a God. Professor Ebina’s thinking was based on the teachings of Free Christian

churches as distinct from so-called orthodox Christianity. This teaching saved me.

At the University (Tokyo Imperial University), I chose the philosophy department. Professor Anezaki Masaharu, who was lecturing for the first time on “The Study of Religion,” made a great impression on me. The professor’s very first lecture was on “Mysticism.” He commented broadly on the mystical aspects of various religions in a profoundly interesting manner. Professor Anezaki was a Buddhist but he had also studied Christianity. I was surprised to hear him express his religious attitude so lucidly, “Because I am a Buddhist, I am a Christian, and because I am a Christian, I am a Buddhist.” And so my eyes were once again opened to Buddhism.

It was during my university days that I admired Professor Tsunashima Ryosen. The professor was an exceptional philosopher and a logician. On the occasion of his illness, he achieved a deep religious experience which he announced in the journal, “New Person,” under the title of “An Actual Experience of Seeing God.” His was a vivid religious experience of the union of God and himself in the heart of the universe. This can be seen as a broad religious insight transcending Christianity and Buddhism. This article affected me greatly and taught me much.

### Lessons from Disqualifying Myself as a Pastor

After graduating from the university, I became the pastor of the Hyogo Christian Church, thanks to Professor Ebina’s recommendation. However, my doubts grew about how Christianity should be practised and I gradually lost confidence in



carrying out my duties as pastor. About that time I met Nishida Tenko. It was before he established Ittō-en.

I should comment that the religious people I had met up to that time were all living in another world. They were Buddhist or Zen and some were Christian. They seemed to be practicing literally the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount. “Do not think about tomorrow. Don’t worry about life and the economy. Above all, first seek the morality of the Kingdom of God.”

Tenko-san taught, “Give up egotism.” As a minister I believed that it was my mission as a Christian to teach and lecture, to resent and deplore the corruption of society, to criticize the decline of my superiors and to save sinful society. But in Tenko-san’s view, this was no more than egotism. “I indeed am correct. Therefore, I will be saved.” Throw away the “I.” Then one must become ego-less. He thought that the universe will become one’s world if, by first cleaning the detestable toilets of other people, one does away with the self. This teaching of Tenko-san’s was shocking. At the same time the vacillation in my way of life was foolish, and I could not make up my mind to leave the ministry. But soon I could not go on.

There are some very exceptional points about Buddhism, so isn’t it wrong to convert Buddhists to Christianity? I came to think that the real missionary work to do among Buddhists and Shintoists is rather to convert them to be true Buddhists and true Shintoists. So then I left the ministry after three years, and once more endeavoured to redo my research. Since this was in 1910, I was 29 years old.

## Arriving at “Free Religion”

Returning to Tokyo, I did meditation with Professor Okada Torajiro. This was recommended by Tenko-san. There was a meditation group every morning from 6 to 7 at the Buddhist temple, Hongyoji, in Nippori. I went there every morning. Professor Okada taught us, “Breathe correctly with correct posture and meditation will make you one with the universe.” He also said, “My method of meditation is basically the same as Master Dogen’s Zen meditation method.” The fact that I was able to take private lessons from Professor Okada during the remaining seven years of his life was a vital force in my life. I continued to practise meditation thereafter, and even now do not neglect it, so that it is my only discipline.

Later, from 1914 through 1915, my esteemed master, Professor Anezaki Masaharu, lectured at Harvard University on the history of Japanese culture, and thanks to the professor’s good offices, I accompanied him as an assistant and I was fortunate to be able to study religion and philosophy there.

Upon my return to Japan, I was invited by Nihon University, and for sixteen years I lectured on Christian thought and religious history. Then in 1925, I became principal of Seisoku Academy. I continued to work in that capacity for fifty years, a half century, until I was 92.

During that period, I enjoyed a close relationship with Mr. Mason, an American newspaperman who prided himself on being a Shintoist. Starting in 1932, we conducted Shinto research, and for ten years we prayed at Shinto shrines throughout the nation and visited Shintoists as well. Up until that time, I had thought that Shinto was simply superstition, the residue of a mere primitive

religion. But thanks to the stimulation of the foreigner, Mason, my concept of Shinto was uprooted and I came to understand the exceptional ideas that lay behind Shinto and their modern significance.

In this way, in the course of continuing my research, I whose religious awareness started with my becoming a Christian, no longer believed in Christianity exclusively. Nor did I feel that I could profess to be a Buddhist or a Shintoist exclusively. In other words, it seems best to say that at the same time I am a Christian and a Buddhist and a Shintoist. Another way of putting it is that my faith is Free Religion without any restriction whatsoever.

### Human Beings Are Really Gods

The word “religion” infers that one must believe in God. In fact, the relationship between God and man is a definition of religion. However, there are many people in the world who say that they do not know whether there is or is not a God.

As for myself, it used to be that I thought there was a God, but now I cannot imagine that there exists a God in the traditional sense. Rather it is closer to “God has died” (Nietzsche). Nowadays I must oppose the idea of God completely, even in its representations. So in my house there is no Buddhist or Shinto altar.

But on the other hand, every human being has religious feeling. I think that so-called religious needs are fundamental and universal elements of humanity. These have taken different forms depending on various environmental factors such as history and climate. There is a certain significance in this, but I think there is only one basis that I want to emphasize.

Putting aside the question of the so-called God, and considering I am a human being, I attempted to gather together those things that have value which I believe in — in the form of “My Tenets of Faith in Life.” These are in five parts.

The first one is “I Believe in Myself.” This means that even if one says there is a God somewhere, rather than depend on this, one should first believe in the essence of one’s self, and then go on to realize this self. That is, it is the act of establishing one’s self. The “self” in this case is not the self that satisfies earthly desires. It is not the self that is a slave to material things and the flesh. It is the self that has the autonomy for becoming one’s own hero. Moreover, it is the vigorous self or “creativity” which is constantly trying to progress and improve. It is the self that strives for “unity” and is not isolated from society. The kind of “self” that I believe in makes me feel that life is worth living. To put it in other words, I believe in a sacred quality inside the self. One can think of it as “essential being” or “character” or “divinity” or “Buddhahood.” Since it is common in religion to express the idea that man is a child of sin and to reject the self, it may seem that what I am saying is contradictory. But in the present day, when the idea of “no god” is prevalent, the absence of God in my concept would be exalted. My basic idea is that we should value the human being and believe in the human being. Perhaps we can call this faith in humanism or a religion without God. With this kind of inquiry, I do not only save myself but I can also respond to the modern tendency of alienation from religion and the various arguments for no religion and against religion.

## Universal Cooperative Society

My second tenet of faith in life is “I Believe in Other People.” Other people after all represent the autonomy, the creativity and the unitive elements in other people. When I say “other people” I mean that I believe in the “self” that is in my neighbours, assuming that my neighbours possess that “self” also. Putting aside the self and other people, let us believe in true humanity.

Next is my third tenet, “I Believe in a Cooperative Society.” While the self and other people have a certain unique individual character, they are not at all isolated or have a separate existence. By reason of being unique they sprout true mutual reliance, true unity and true love of humanity; thus, they establish a “cooperative society.”

One human being does not make humankind. This is so even when we consider an individual’s food, clothing and shelter. So the three elements, the self, others and a cooperative society are separate and distinct. Each one has a relationship which actually includes the others. That is to say, these three can be thought of as basically being three-in-one.

Having established this, we come to the fourth tenet, “I Believe in a Universal Cooperative Society.” The self, the others, and the cooperative society which are three elements in one are “human society.” This alone is not enough. There is something missing. When we think about it, the self, others and a cooperative society all exist because of the universe or nature. Humankind cannot exist apart from nature. That is the basis of our life. I would also like to establish that not only human society but also the heavens, the earth, nature and all the universe are one community (a cooperative society). Animals and plants, the moon and the sun, the

air and the water, everything, are in one cooperative society. That is what “Universal Cooperative Society” expresses.

Thus, inevitably, we cannot stop with believing in and embracing all humanity, we must also embrace and make companions of birds and beasts, and plants and trees. There is the biblical proverb, “Behold the lilies of the field . . . behold the birds in the heavens. . .” The “Universal Cooperative Society” is composed of the unity of humanity and nature, and the merging of human society with all the universe. I think it is appropriate to think of this as the fourth tenet.

### Not the End of Search for Truth

Finally, I add the fifth tenet, “I Believe in the Church.” In this case “church” can mean a temple or a shrine or anything of that kind, or a specific denomination or organization or group. All are included in the term of “church.” Each possesses certain special characteristics but just as universality does not manifest itself unless some special characteristics are in evidence, some starting point is necessary. So the term “church” is used to refer to these various entities.

Thus, as we comprehend the mystery of a particular church, we can understand the ultimate truth of nature and the universe. A church can be called a microcosm of the universal cooperative society. So people can become universal beings by being members of a church. This is why I have added this tenet.

However, I do not wish to think that these tenets of faith in life are conclusive. I think that they are provisional in the sense that when we reflect further we will see possible revisions. I became 103 on September 16, 1984, but human life has no final point. I believe that there is no graduation from the University of Life. My “Tenets

of Faith in Life” are like working principles in the University of Life.

My attitude towards life is to grasp and realize the mystery and the ideals, not only of religion, but also of all human activity.





## THERE IS NO GRADUATION FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF LIFE

Delivered before the National Conference of Free Religionists in Japan held at the  
Lecture Hall of Seisoku High School, June 3rd, 1979

**I**f not all, at least a vast majority of you attending here are full-fledged members of society taking an active part in various fields of work. You are no longer students.

However, I believe, your education has not been completed.

Education should be continued throughout life, even though one has gone out into the world after graduating from school, since lifelong education follows school education. I should like to say that this lifelong education is given by the University of Life.

There are neither school buildings nor definite teachers in the University of Life. Its school building is all of society or the whole universe. While students of ordinary schools, in principle, are depending on their parents, even though they legally become adults, students of the University of Life are independent and self-supporting. Therefore, the University of Life is an adult university.

To become an adult and become free of one's parents means, first of all, to be able to support oneself or to become economically independent from one's protectors. This means that one doesn't study economics any more, but that one participates in the economy. For that purpose, it is essential to have an occupation.

It is not an easy task to follow the course of practical economy based on engaging in an occupation. It is like a life or death struggle with real swords and quite different from fencing with bamboo swords in a fencing school. In the worst case, one may have to escape in the night, commit burglary or suicide as the result of debts, joblessness or bankruptcy. However, in the

education of the University of Life, such a situation is the best training arena. If classroom education contributes to building up human character, such a deadly ordeal in the University of Life is sure to be 100 times as effective as the former. Veterans in the economic world have all been educated and trained in such a university. Consequently, I always cite first of all the practical economy as an important subject in the education of the University of Life.

There was the following episode in the life of Kihachiro Okura, one of the foremost leaders in the industrial field during the Meiji era. When Kamesaburo Yamashita, the founder of the Yamashita Steamship Company, visited Okura to ask him about financing possibilities to tide over financial difficulties his company was confronted with, Okura answered to his request, "All right, I will lend you the money as requested. But, I should like to ask you one question, 'Do you want to be another Kihachiro Okura and give up being Kamesaburo Yamashita?'" At this question, Yamashita was awakened to his own self with a sudden flash. Promptly he left, saying, "I understand what you mean. I withdraw my request for a loan. Thank you." Yamashita discovered himself after considering the words of Okura. He established the Yamashita Steamship Company without Okura's assistance. Thus Okura succeeded in making Yamashita aware of his true self, though Okura was a businessman, not a professional teacher. Some people say with contempt that matters concerning finances or money-making are low-grade earthly affairs, but I am of quite the opposite opinion.

At this juncture, permit me to state my own past experience. Unlike Yamashita's case, I was helped out of financial difficulties by a loan. Many of my acquaintances would think that I have little to

do with monetary affairs. However, as a matter of fact, once I thought of throwing myself into the crater of Mihara-yama. The reason why I selected Mihara-yama was that it might conceal my ugly remains from people. However, when I confided my plight to one of my friends, he at once lent me some tens of millions of Yen in cash unconditionally, that is without a bond of debt or interest. Through his friendship and assistance, I was renewed and I owe him my long life – over 90 years by now. I don't believe in the Creator or the Almighty Personal God, but I believe in the Divinity immanent in Humanity. Divinity is nothing but genuine Humanity.

We who have graduated from a school and become full-fledged members of society as adults form first of all a community or a society. To form a community is a political affair, and it is a main subject of the University of Life along with economic matters. Some people might oppose this and say: “While politics forms society, education and religion shape individuals. If individuals become better, society would automatically become better.” However, individuals are not independent from society. It is true that an individual may possess their individuality with dignity which cannot be replaced by any other person. But the existence of an individual can be maintained only when he or she is organically integrated into society. In other words, society and the individual are interrelated as one organism. Politics for society is, at the same time, for individuals. Politics aimed at establishing an ideal society is also aimed at bringing up ideal individuals. Therefore, politics should always be combined with education. In this respect, Taisuke Itagaki and Yukio Ozaki, great political leaders during the Meiji era, are good examples. Itagaki remodeled the Japanese people still living under feudal conditions into free men through the movement for

democratic rights. Ozaki taught the people that everybody is equal and should have equal rights to vote irrespective of age, property or gender through the universal suffrage movement. Both of them were excellent educators.

Aside from politics and economics, the home is an important classroom in the University of Life. No matter how commonplace or trifling it may be, daily life itself is a subject matter of study in the University of Life. There are many different views on life – mine is “Life is a university,” meaning every human experience is material for education. And I wish to go one step further and say, “Education is religion.”

Not being a scholar, I can't state a theory of education or religion. The only thing I can do is to state my personal experience. I believe that education consists of building up a human being. It is commonly said that school education is to teach various subjects. It may be true. But, I think it should be more than that. Namely, the school should be the place to make true human beings providing something essential and ultimate in addition to the curriculum. Of course students are already human beings. But even as human as they are, they are not yet true human beings. Human beings become true only when they develop and realize their boundless possibilities under guidance of true educators. In other words, education is to seek and realize the true, the good and the beautiful, which are the ultimate ideals of humankind and nothing but Divinity or Buddhahood. Accordingly, education is, after all, religion. I have reached such a conclusion after many years of religious pilgrimage and teaching experience. Some 50 years ago when I became the principal of Seisoku Academy, I intended to give religious lessons in addition to the then existing curriculum. But, soon I became aware that it was wrong. If realization of human

ideals is the ultimate concern of human life, and it is nothing but religion, religion should be found in the curricula. Accordingly, the vital point in practical religious education is not to teach Buddhism, Christianity or Shinto but to bring out the religion immanent in the curriculum itself.

Recently, I was deeply impressed by learning Mr. Ichitaro Kokubu's method of teaching. Mr. Kokubu taught his elementary school pupils the lesson that the three interior angles of a triangle add up to two right angles in the following way. First of all, he told them to draw a triangle at will on a sheet of paper, and then ordered them to cut out three angles from the paper with scissors and put them together. The pupils did as they were told and found that three angles of any triangle formed a straight line. Mr. Kokubu taught them that the straight line means two right angles. A pupil, who was a son of a poor tenant farmer and was deemed to be a slow pupil, was surprised and asked: "My angles also made a straight line. It is the same with everyone!" Mr. Kokubu answered, "You are right. It is the same with a tenant farmer, landowner, teacher or pupil. Even with His Majesty. It is an eternally invariable truth in the universe." It is said that all the pupils were deeply moved, and the arithmetic class seemed to have been converted into a shrine. When a teacher and his pupils are really in earnest, I think, such a scene will be produced in any classroom.

As mentioned before, school education is a little like learning to swim on dry land, while lifelong education in the University of Life is – whether politics, economics or home life – a fight with real swords. I stated previously that Kihachiro Okura was an educator and, at the same time, a businessman. But, from the point of view just mentioned he may be said to have assumed one aspect of the religious human being. In this respect, Eiichi

Shibusawa, one of the distinguished business leaders during the Meiji era, is a good example as well. He was a businessman through and through. Because he was a businessman, he could thus be an educator and religionist in my sense. Shibusawa advocated the necessity of harmony of the Analects of Confucius and the abacus, and set up the Association Concordia (Kiitsu Kyōkai) which existed for about 30 years. It is said generally that the Association Concordia was established by Masaharu Anesaki, professor of Tokyo University, and Jinzo Naruse, President of Nippon Women's College. But, this is not correct. Anesaki and Naruse took part in setting up the association as a result of earnest persuasion by Shibusawa. The Association Concordia founded by Shibusawa was, in a sense, the forerunner of our Tokyo Unitarian Church and the liberal religious movement of today.

If Okura and Shibusawa, both being businessmen, were religious men, Itagaki and Ozaki, as I mentioned previously, were also religious men in my sense. Viewed from this point of view, we can understand the reasons why Isoo Abe, Sakusaburo Uchigasaki, and Bunji Suzuki, all of whom were senior leaders in the liberal religious movement in Japan, entered the field of politics. Having a career as pastor of Okayama Church, Professor of Waseda University, Chairman of the Unitarian Association, Abe became a Diet member and founded the Socialist Party of Japan. Uchigasaki also became a Diet member and, later on, Vice Minister of Education, retiring from the posts of Professor of Waseda University and pastor of the Unitarian Church. Suzuki joined the Unitarian Church as the secretary to Dr. MacCauley, representative of the American Unitarian Association, and later, turning to the labor movement, became a Diet member and founded the Labor Federation of today. Because these three leaders left and the

Unitarian Church began to decline, somebody criticized their activities as earthly and an apostasy, but in fact they weren't. For them, politics was sacred and the society and the nation were churches. They opened up religion which was confined to the Unity Hall near Shibazono Bridge to the general public; they tried to realize the unity of religion and politics in a new and true sense. Though not called religious, their activities were religious in the sense I have just stated – only it was not especially organized as a religion. It had no need for an organization. I myself call it non-organized religion so as to distinguish it from conventional religions. Non-organized religion is not inferior to ordinary or organized religions as to genuine religiosity. Therefore, in discussing religions, we should never neglect non-organized religion.

The Japan Free Religious Association includes such a non-organized religion. Though the Japan Free Religious Association is the smallest in the world as an organized body, we are firmly convinced that we are having 100 million members – that is virtually the whole population of Japan. Religion in the true and broad sense should not be, as John Dewey thought, bound by a doctrine, religious observance or a religious body. It should be for everybody. In the sense of the Lotus Sutra, commerce and industry are not different from Buddhism.

In conclusion, I should like to say that, if one's whole life-experience is education and religion, there is no graduation from the University of Life. In other words, if the ultimate concern in human life to create true humans or a true society by seeking and realizing truth, good and beauty, which may be called divinity or the Buddha-nature, is religion, then it will never reach an end, i.e., graduation. It should follow its eternal path. If expressed in the sense of Zen Buddhism, we should not cling to a temporary

spiritual enlightenment but to continue the study permanently. However, there is a counter argument which asserts that graduation is religion. The assertion is that one is saved or has attained spiritual enlightenment is religion. The achievement of salvation or enlightenment means graduation, it says. In other words, it is asserted that religion should have spiritual attractiveness or something supernatural. However, Jesus Christ, who did not deny but worked many miracles, rejected the request for miracles by the scholars and Pharisees as a claim in that vicious and unjust age. To see religions in the affairs of daily life including politics, economics, etc., is to find sacredness in secular things. It would be religious mystery in the true sense of the word.

At present, politicians and businessmen who became conscious of their own responsibilities are making an endeavour in unanimous cooperation for further development of the United Nations and establishment of the World Federation. If we can realize a truly ideal world community, it would be Heaven or the Land of Buddha.

Politicians, businessman, etc., who strive for realization of the divine land on this earth are more earnest religious men than those who believe in religions that teach them to expect to go to Paradise in the world to come. The establishment of Heaven on this globe is the real attraction. Because the Land of Buddha is not perfectly realized yet, we should devote ourselves to it. It is not a mere endurance race. To be devoted to this, there is boundless hope and inspiration. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, German poet, playwright and critic, said as follows:



“Suppose that God appears here, with all the truths in the right hand and an eager mind to seek after truth in the left hand, and asks me which I choose. I would in a humble way cling to his left hand and answer that I wish I could have the mind to seek after truth.”



## MY SPIRITUAL PILGRIMAGE

Delivered before the Tokyo Unitarian Fellowship sometime in 1970

**I** was born as a farmer's son in the country-side of Shimane Prefecture, Japan in 1881, i.e., 89 years ago. Because my parents were enthusiastic followers of Shin Sect Buddhism, I grew up under Buddhist influence. But my conscious religious life began in my high school days when I happened to come in contact with Rev. B. F. Buxton, an Anglican Church missionary. One day, out of curiosity, I intruded into the premises of Rev. Buxton's mansion that was big and exotic. Even now I remember very well what happened then. Mr. Buxton opened a window and asked me in Japanese in a quiet and subdued tone: "Is it a Japanese custom to intrude into the premises of others?" I was so frightened that I ran away at full speed without saying any excuse. But this was the beginning of my contact with the white man, Western culture and Christianity. Rev. Paget Wilkes, a co-worker of Rev. Buxton, invited us to a class of English conversation and Bible study. I was very diligent in attending the class, being very much interested in English conversation. I had no interest in the Bible at first, but I was attracted to Christianity through the noble characters of the missionaries and was baptized at last at the Matsue Episcopal Church.

In those days (1898) in Japan, Christianity was taken for a religion of devils, and Christians were taken for traitors to the state. The fact that I was baptized, therefore, was a great shock to my parents. My father seriously considered exiling me from the parental roof. My mother was more lenient than my father, but it saddened her more. Recollecting this incident of seventy years ago, I find it became the motive power that made me work later for the solution

of inter-faith problems, as the general secretary of the Japan Council for Inter-faith Co-operation.

Soon after I entered college, I began to doubt the historicity of the New Testament story concerning Jesus' life, and the validity of orthodox Christian doctrines. I moved, therefore, to a Congregational Church that was quite liberal in contrast to the Episcopal Church.

After graduating from Tokyo University in 1906, I took a position as minister of a Congregational Church in the city of Kobe. But after three years service, I resigned. The main reason was that I became unable to try to proselytize Buddhists and Shintoists into Christianity. I began to think that the mission of a minister was not proselytizing, but making people more honest believers in their own religions.

While I was working at the Kobe Congressional Church, I happened to know Mr. Tenko Nishida, founder of Ittō-en. Ittō-en is a non-sectarian communal life of penitence and service. According to its principles, man is to live not to become a cause of strife in the society. As such, it is a way of life rather than a religious sect. The centre of its activities located in the suburb of Kyoto consists of 100 families (500 individuals) and has its own kindergarten, primary and high school and junior college.

Tenko is one of a few seniors who influenced me most in my whole life. He practised the Sermon on the Mount literally. In Tenko's daily life and way of thinking, I found something which I had not found among Christians. That was selflessness or detachment. It seems to be a quite negative way of life superficially, but it is quite positive in reality. It seems to be more Buddhist than Christian. What do you think, however, about the fact that Jesus

taught in the Sermon on the Mount and on another occasion as follows:

“When you do some act of charity, do not let your left hand know what your right is doing. Your good deeds must be secret.”

“If any one wishes to be a follower of mine, he must leave his self behind, he must take up his cross and come with me. Whoever cares for his own safety is lost, but if a man will let himself be lost for my sake, he will find his true self.”

Although Tenko had little regular schooling, he wrote a book, *Life of Penitence*, which has become a best seller. It is now on its 31st edition, sold over 6 million copies since its first edition in 1921. Quite recently its English edition has also been published. It is a well known fact that he kept putting on tight sleeved dress of a workman even during his term of membership in the Upper House. This reminds me of the fact that Tenko's visit to my house delighted the maid most because whenever Tenko came, he never failed to clean the toilet room and help with the maid's kitchen work. Tenko was a workman, a servant and a saint at the same time.

Due to Tenko's suggestion, I came in contact with Mr. Torajiro Okada, a master of Seiza, soon after my resignation of the ministry of the Kobe congregational church in 1909. A literal translation of Seiza is Quiet Sitting, a kind of Zen contemplation. There were several thousand people who practised Seiza under Mr. Okada's guidance. More than several hundred people, men and women, old and young, businessmen, politicians, teachers, and students gathered at a Buddhist temple just to sit at 6:00 a.m. every day all the year round. Mr. Okada gave no sermon and no lecture. He taught us just to sit aright, to respirate aright and to assume a right posture. Everybody, however, who joined the gathering was

very much influenced and enlightened by him both physically and spiritually. I was one of those people and kept sitting 7 years until Mr. Okada passed away. I recollect now that it was a true Zen and appreciate Mr. Okada's personality most highly.

From 1932 to 1941, I had a chance to study Shinto with an American friend, J. W. T. Mason, a journalist from New York. He was very much fascinated by Shinto and became a Shintoist himself. When he died in New York in 1942, his ashes were brought to Japan to be buried in the Tama Cemetery in Tokyo, although it was the time when the U.S.A. and Japan were at war with one another.

According to Mason, Shinto is primeval and intuitive truth discovered by the Japanese race and has always been the motive power of self-creative activities of Japan as is shown in her history. Bergson's *elan vital* is nothing but the French translation of Shinto Spirit.

I will give you an example of Mason's interpretation. When Mason and I visited the Kashiwara Shrine, the chief priest Mr. Uda explained that the door of the sanctuary has been and will be never opened. As soon as the chief priest ended his explanation, Mason cried: "Shinto gods are spiritual! Shinto should keep no image or idol of gods. If any, they should be kept in a museum, not in the sanctuary."

It was in 1948 that we started the Japan Free Religious Association consisting of not only liberal Christians, but of liberal Buddhists and liberal Shintoists too and joined the IARF (International Association for Religious Freedom) as a non-Christian member group. In order that I may not speak too long, let me point out only one aspect of the Association that is most important. Many people say that Japan Free Religious Association

is an inter-faith cooperation group. There is no doubt about it, but the Association is more than that. Inter-faith cooperation is often nothing but the maintenance of the status quo. The most important aspect in our activities is Freedom. Freedom means autonomy, progress and action.

I cannot omit to refer to Seisoku High School to which I have been related for the past 45 years as a principal and chairman of board of directors. I have always thought: if the school does not have a special character, it is not necessary for it to exist. In the year we started Japan Free Religious Association, the board of directors of Seisoku High School decided to declare to the public that all educational activities in the Seisoku High School should be based on Free Religion, pure and creative. The declaration meant the unity of secular (education) and sacred (religion). In other words, the secular should be as heightened or as deepened so it can be called sacred at the same time. Seisoku High School does not teach religion to students as a regular course, but teachers are urgently required to study and experience religion personally. This sort of religious education does not conflict with the Japanese Constitution and can be practised not only in private schools but in public schools, too. If you ask me, however, whether Seisoku High School has succeeded in making all its everyday secular activities themselves so excellent and so splendid that you can not fail to recognize something divine and holy, I am sorry to confess "Not yet."





## WHAT I HAVE LEARNED ABOUT BUDDHISM AND CHRISTIANITY

**B**ecause December is the month in which Gautama experienced Enlightenment and Jesus was born, I shall speak today of what I have learned about Buddhism and Christianity.

Gautama was said to have experienced Enlightenment, after six years of ascetic practices, under the bodhi tree looking up at the morning star on December eighth. The contents of the experience was summarized as the Four Noble Truths, the Eightfold Paths and so on.

Gautama, however, was not satisfied with his private and individual experience and visited five friends who had practised ascetic discipline with him and some other people. He did not propagate or teach but just reported his experience to ascertain whether his experience was right or not. The dialogue and discussion among them reached a conclusion that religion is not a private matter but a community affair. They found that human existence has two levels, individual and community, and religion is an affair of community. Accordingly, Gautama and friends created a sangha (a church). That was not a mere gathering of individuals but a corporate entity, and Buddhism started as the religion of the sangha. Gautama was not, therefore, the founder of Buddhism.

This fact can be understood by the story of a prodigal son in the St. Luke Gospel. The prodigal son was not saved by his father. The father was very much worried by his son's dissipation. By the repentance and coming back home of the son, not only the son, but the father was also saved. The saviour was not the father but the home.

Jesus is quite different from Gautama in many respects. He was a carpenter, while Gautama was a prince. “The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but Son of man (Jesus) has not where to lay his head” (Matthew 7:20).

Although he is blamed by the scribes and Pharisees for this, he had many intimate female friends. Even a woman taken in adultery was not an exception. When he went to Gethsemane, with Peter and two sons of Zebedee, he said “my soul is exceedingly sorrowful even unto death” and prayed “O my father, if this cup may not pass away from you, except I drink it, thy will be done, not as I will” (Matthew 26:36). Jesus was thus utterly human, and I am fascinated with his humanity, not divinity. If you wish to keep the word divinity, I will answer to you that divinity in its essence is humanity.

Jesus taught the Golden Rule and Kingdom of Heaven. It is noteworthy that he did not mean Paradise after death in the Kingdom of Heaven. He taught [us] to pray “thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10). The apostle Paul interpreted Jesus’ Kingdom of God to be a beloved universal community by saying “there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female for ye are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28). Isn’t this what Buddhists mean by the sangha? Both Buddhism and Christianity are not religions of individuals. Both are community activities like language and customs.

In closing, I would like to tell you a story about a conversation between an American missionary and a Japanese Buddhist which took place 70 years ago. The Buddhist asked the missionary, “If I do not believe in Christianity, am I doomed to go to hell?” “It is quite so” answered the missionary. Then the


Buddhist asked another question. “My parents were devout Buddhists and had no chance to learn about Christianity. If souls are immortal, where are they now?” The missionary answered: “They are in Hell, of course, because they did not believe in Christ.” Then the Buddhist became indignant and said “If what you say is true, I wish to go to hell to see my parents and renew our happy home life even in the hell.”

Now I close my talk and wish to listen to your frank criticism of my talk and your response to the American missionary’s Christianity.



## MEDITATION IS THE SOURCE OF VITALITY

Rinri Kenkyusho, April, 1985

 new year is here, and having aged one more year, I am now 105 years old. I feel that I would not mind dying any time. To speak of my health, I suffer from failing sight, hearing and, especially, the ability to walk. Several years ago I underwent a prostate operation and because of my age I am not completely cured. So I go to the hospital once a week. These days I do not exercise or walk very much and I can say that my only good health regimen is that every day without fail since my youth I practise the meditation that I learned from Prof. Okada Torajiro (The Okada Method of Meditation). This is Zen meditation simplified and modernized. One sits erect, concentrating one's strength in the stomach and breathing deeply. It is only sitting and not thinking about anything. However, I do not try to prohibit all ideas and thoughts.

I try to do this every day for at least one hour. I can do this anytime, anywhere. When I go to the hospital, I wait my turn for thirty minutes or even an hour, and I do this meditation for that length of time. At first when I do it for 10 or 20 minutes, my arms and legs which had become cold as ice in no time warm up. Blood circulation improves.

However, meditation for me is not just a health practice. You can call it the source of the autonomous creative vitality for both my body and my spirit. Occasionally I can't sleep, but I stay as I am and do the breathing in the correct manner, and I feel all right even if I don't sleep for some time. When I meditate I feel that the heavens and earth are one with the universe.

In my house there is no Buddhist or Shinto altar. Also I do not read the Bible and pray as a daily routine the way I did as a Christian. However, I cannot stop doing meditation. I can say that meditation is the only religious life that I have.

### Lively Isolation

After my wife predeceased me in 1978, I led a completely solitary life for some time. The maid who was with us for a long time prepared my meals and took care of me. Soon thereafter, my son and his wife came to live with me. This son also passed away in 1984. Everyone would look at me and say I must be suffering, but to this day I have never been lonely.

In my room I have displayed the photographs of my deceased wife and my three revered masters (Anezaki Seiji, Nishida Tenko and Okada Torajiro). Whenever I remember them, I can call them together; first my wife and then my teachers and friends and I can enjoy all kinds of conversation. Therefore, my room is also full and I am never lonely. In this room is hanging the Irogami of the venerable Matani Roikotsu, the founder of the Chugai Nippo newspaper. When I look at it I can hear his voice full of infectious laughter. In this way I go on leading a cheerful life.

Now I can't visit my friends any more but they come to talk with me. We exchange letters and keep in touch. Since I became 90 I have made new friends in many parts of Japan and also in foreign countries. I communicate with them by letter. I was surprised to hear in messages from my friends in America and Europe that "My Tenets of Life," which appeared in Issue No. 384 of this journal, has been translated into German and Norwegian.

I am proud not because I have attained the age of 100 but because I have friends who number many hundred times 100. As I accumulate years, I have the strong feeling that people are becoming my brothers and sisters and the world is becoming my home. As I get older, I am gradually becoming more interested in politics, economics and international problems. They are part of the life of my brothers and sisters. Since I am a member of universal cooperative society I have come to embrace a strong interest in and a passion for world movements. I have become concerned about U.S.-Soviet relations, Japan's economic friction with various countries, and the destitute peoples of Africa and India. I don't go to sleep until after I see the last television news at 11 p.m.

### History of Past and Present Is Our Own Written Tradition

I feel that when I read the book of someone who has passed away that I can achieve an intimate relationship and understand him or her as well or even better than when they were alive. My vision has greatly deteriorated but thanks to magnifying glasses I can read books somehow, and reading and writing are my favourite daily occupations.

Aside from books by my esteemed masters and friends, the kind I like most are histories and biographies. I read history with the feeling of returning to my youth. The famous English historian, Toynbee, says, "Antiquity, the Middle Ages and recent times are all the present." By which he means that no matter how ancient a thing is we should look at it as if it were happening right in front of us. If we peruse history with such historical insight we will be able to experience an eternity in the present. Within one day an eternity of the past can be comprehended. If this is so, and if I invite the

great heroes and the sages and the wise ones of old and of the present, and of the east and of the west, and the nameless common people, they will all come and gather in my study and will come to life before my eyes. I myself as their companion can converse much with them and can understand their feelings. So then my little study becomes a boundless universe, transcending time and space.

In this way, discourse with all the peoples of the east and the west is the greatest delight of my remaining years. When we think about it, the study of history gives us the opportunity to re-live 3,000 years of history. When we try to live in the past with historical figures, we perceive that our own ancestors were one with the ancestors of all humankind. So we then understand that we here today are passing on the history of all humanity. When we read Japanese history and world history as if it were our own written heritage that we are not yet aware of, then our interest is greatly stimulated. In a broad sense, 3,000 years of world history is just like our own biography.

Thereby we not only have a physical and spatial world and universal existence, we can become eternal universal beings unlimited in spirit or by time.

### Lengthening One's Life By Looking at the Past

So the study of history is in this sense really interesting. Going back thirty years ago or fifty years ago, or speeding one's thoughts back into the world to 100 years ago or 300 years ago is like making one's self young again in a period that is definitely before one was born. Or to put it another way, I think it is like extending one's life. I say it this way, "I live longer by looking at the past." It is really a kind of longer life. When we speak of getting old, we are usually



referring to the future, but isn't it interesting to think of ageing from climbing back into the past? That is, we live longer by returning to the past and looking at the past. If this is the case, we can age not just 90 or 100 years, but any number of years that we wish. We can enjoy an ageless long life. From this viewpoint, I think we should reconsider such matters as memorial services to ancestors and ancestor worship or reverence. In Shinto and Buddhism, these customs are prevalent but they now exist in form only. There are many people who worship their ancestors only because it is customary, and there are those who worship them because they fear a curse. However, memorial services to ancestors take on their real meaning when one turns the mind back into the past and returning to the place of one's ancestors, joins them.

### The Direct Significance of Memorial Services for Ancestors

To begin with, we call dying "eternal sleep." This is truly an apt expression. If we take a universal viewpoint, death is literally to sleep eternally. It is to return to the bosom, yielding completely. So, if one went to sleep, then sometime one can awake in some way. Perhaps one cannot awaken in one's original form. For example, according to the Buddhist memorial service, the dead return and are vividly present in the minds of the living. Or even without referring to anything like memorial services, whenever we call the dead person to mind he or she comes back. This act of recall is proof that after all they are not dead. Certainly it may be that the five-foot physical body has disappeared. But the spirit of the person has not died. That is what I think. Therefore, even though we say he or she is dead, it is possible at any time to communicate with their soul.

If I want to live with my departed parents and to see in front of me their souls before they existed as parents, I can do that at any time. Then I can pursue the thread, starting with my parents to their parents, and then to their parents, until I have joined their souls all together and they become one in spirit. I think it would be very meaningful to think of this concept as constituting a memorial service.

We have two parents and they have four parents and they have eight parents, and then these have sixteen parents. And when we go back twenty generations we have over a million parents. If we go back thirty generations, there are one billion. When we consider one billion ancestors as our own flesh and blood, this is the true meaning of memorial services to the dead and ancestor reverence.

Then again, I wonder if it is enough to limit the scope of our ancestors to blood relations. I have natural parents, of course, but I also have spiritual parents without limit. For example, my masters. I cannot forget them. We must add to my masters, their masters, and again their masters. Thinking along these lines, in our respect for ancestors, we cannot limit ourselves to our family's ancestors or to those of Japanese or to those of the east or of the west, but we should include the concept of showing respect to the ancestors of all the world's people.

### Theory of Showing Respect for Descendants

I have many grandchildren and great grandchildren. Among the latter there are some in universities, some in high schools and middle schools and some in elementary schools. One day I asked one of them, "How many years difference is there between your

grandfather and you!” After thinking awhile, this great grandchild answered, “90 years difference.” Hearing this, I was overcome with a feeling of being very old.

I am a 20th Century person who was born near the close of the 19th Century. From the viewpoint that my great grandchildren will be active from now on into the 21st Century, I have the feeling that even I am becoming a 21st Century man.


In this way, with the present as a starting point, we can be back to the distant past and be with our ancestors or we can probe into the future and be with our descendants. So just as we are, in the present, we can create the eternal history of the human race from the past to the present to the future. The Apostle Peter says in the Bible, “In Christ, one day is like 1,000 years, and 1,000 years is like one day.” Also the German philosopher, Schleiermacher, said something to the effect that one instant truly fulfilled is an eternity, and that kind of living indeed makes an eternal life. I who am presently in this world intend to live this kind of eternal life one instant at a time.

I think that the world’s humankind and the great nature of the universe constitute one great life which must progress and develop from the unlimited past to the unlimited future. Are not we ourselves great living cells of all humanity and of the total universe? While our five-foot bodies are as infinitesimal and transitory as cells, they are one with unlimited eternal life. Although I am actually myself, I am yet not myself. The heaven and the earth and the universe are me. So I think that even when I die, in some form I will go on living an unlimited life. That is to say, I am a universal being so that I think it will be interesting even after I die.



## RE-EXAMINATION OF MASON'S SHINTO

Written originally for "Creation", 1966

his year has been 25 years since that famous newspaperman and Shintoist, J. W. T. Mason, passed away. His Shinto outlook is modern and universal, and is more and more fitting for our country's Shinto culture and for our people in general.

I plan to celebrate the 25th anniversary with a gathering of old friends. It will be nostalgic when we re-read a manuscript published in the *Jinja Shimpo* ("Shrine Bulletin"), to the special delight of the readers of that publication.

His View of Shinto was a Unity Between Heaven and Earth and Man and God as One.

One of the many criticisms of Mason is that the Shinto he advocated was Mason's own brand of Shinto and not Japanese Shinto. It is true that Mason did not study the Japanese language, so that he studied Japan and Shinto through English translations of Japanese articles. But Mason excused this by saying, "Were not Nichiren and Shinran great Buddhists despite the fact that they never studied Sanskrit?" In this, we see evidence of his strength as well as of his weakness. Another criticism of Mason is that the Shinto he advocated is nothing more than a rehash of the philosophy of Bergson. In October, 1939, he did invite 110 Japanese and foreign scholars, educators, and friends to celebrate Bergson's 70th year in Tokyo. Mason considered Bergson a great philosopher.

Mason also asserted that if America accepted Shinto, there would be shrines to Washington and Lincoln, and in the future, shrines to Christ, Sakyamuni, and Confucius are possible. In this also we see Mason's strength and weakness.

I do not agree with Mason's statements without qualification but at the same time that Japan became a defeated nation, I did think that Mason's thoughts were most effective as reference material. I believe that if he were living today, he would play an extremely important role for Japan, for America, and especially for Shinto. I recognize his value now more than ever.

While the 2600th anniversary of the birth of Buddha was being celebrated all over the country, Mason particularly worshipped at Kashiwara Shrine. At that time, Abbot Uda explained to Mason, "The main hall of this shrine is never opened." Mason excitedly said, "This is only natural since the deity of this shrine is formless and is a spiritual being."

When you say that a shrine is never opened, somehow one has the feeling that a mystical statue of a deity is kept there, but Mason did not feel that way at all. I admired him as a man who had the perception to see immediately the connection between "the never opened shrine hall" and "the formless deity."

After his visit to Kashiwara Shrine, Mason prayed at Kamiyama Shrine in Wakayama City. Abbot Adachi guided him and explained that although the shrine and the cemetery existed in almost the same place, not only was the entrance different but the two were treated completely differently. This pleased Mason very much. Somehow he had discovered the same shrine principle in Kamiyama Shrine as in Kashiwara Shrine. He discovered at Kamiyama Shrine the truth that even though the origins of the shrine were temporarily in the cemetery, the shrine was a completely spiritual entity and therefore different from the cemetery by virtue of its being a shrine.

But Mason was not discovering this spirituality for the first time when he prayed at Kashiwara Shrine and Kamiyama Shrine.

He had always stated energetically that shrines are spiritual in character and therefore when he prayed at a certain shrine in Izumo and he heard that a statue of Inada-Hime was kept in that shrine, he at once vigorously asserted that this statue was not there as an object of prayer but was an image to be kept in a treasure house or museum.

I journeyed with Mason to shrines all over Japan but of these, I will never be able to forget my impression upon visiting Hinomisaki Shrine in Izumo. This shrine is located on Izumo peninsula which juts out into the Sea of Japan. This is the best place to view the sun setting into the Sea of Japan. After completing our prayer visit through the shrine, we discussed many things with the Abbot Baron Ono. The deities of Hinomisaki Shrine are Amaterasu-omikami and Susuno-wo-no-mikoto. While viewing the beautiful sunset which is the symbol of Amaterasu-omikami, Mason listened quietly to Abbot Ono's commentary:

“Every year from Omisoka (the last day of the year) until Gantan (the first day of the New Year) we conduct a special ceremony at this shrine. This service is conducted only by the abbot and no one else is permitted to participate. It is an extremely important and austere shrine ceremony. It is absolutely forbidden to explain how the ritual is conducted but the theme of the ceremony is to commemorate the presentation of the Murakumo Sword, which he had grasped in the upper reaches Hino River by Susano-wo-no-mikoto to Amaterasu-omikami at Takamagahara.”

Mason listened to the abbot's words with great interest. It was fitting that we left on this note about the presentation of the sword. Bathed in the glow of the symbolic sunset, I felt like the abbot's

explanation was just like having Susano-wo-no-mikoto explain it in his own words and shake hands with us.

Mason liked Susano-wo-no-mikoto, and so he kept saying that he liked Izumo. At first, I did not completely understand what he meant. But when I thought about Mason's words when we were at the shrine, I understood very well. Susano-wo-no-mikoto was not just a crude, violent deity. The object that he had grasped in his hand was the sacred sword, one of the three divine treasures. This was not the same Susano-wo-no-mikoto who escaped from Takamagahara (Heaven of gods) to Nenokuni (the underworld). It was as if he once again ascended to heaven with the divine sword in his grasp. Susano-wo-no-mikoto's ascent to heaven symbolized the unity of earth and heaven, and the oneness of human and divine. In this, we have the essence of Shinto.

### View that Shinto Respects Freedom and Creativity

How would the Shintoists of old feel about the recently promulgated democratic constitution? From the beginning, there have been many people who thought that the democracy itself is not Shinto-like. So many people criticized Mason's Shinto as being too democratic.

Mason pointed to the tale of the meeting of the myriad of deities convoked by Amaterasu-o-mikami and Takami-Musubi-no-Kami and asserted that Amaterasu-o-mikami existed along with deities who themselves made creative things. "Amaterasu-o-mikami was not a dictator but one who governed democratically, emphasizing the responsibility and efforts of each individual. Amaterasu-o-mikami did not neglect those aspects of individual creativity which had as their essence elements closest to his own



divine spirit.” So, according to Mason’s own Shinto, we can consider the new Constitution as being Shinto-like.

It is not generally known but Mason was severely upset by the sudden explosion of the February 26 Incident. He said, “In London’s Hyde Park, freedom of thought is permitted. Freedom is proclaimed even in anarchism and communism. There lies the true Shinto also. I feel right now that Shinto has expired somehow. I must leave Japan when one must go on a pilgrimage to a Hyde Park shrine.” Shortly after saying this, he actually left Japan. But then after a little while, he came to Japan for a third time. He rejoiced to read the news of Takao Saito’s speech questioning the military. Then he visited Mr. Saito to express his appreciation. His comment on Mr. Saito’s speech was, “Give me liberty or give me death,” paraphrasing Patrick Henry. He believed that this was real Shinto. From this time on, Mason and Saito were extremely close. Accordingly, just as the photo shows the group at the Gakushi Hall, with Mason and his wife in the centre, these friends held an evening dinner party, Mason doing the honours, putting Mr. Saito in the middle also and their wives on both sides with the General Araki and Dr. Inoue. When I recall these things and think of what Mason could do for Japan and America if he were still alive, I cannot help grieving that his death was premature. According to Mason, the Japanese quality to apprehend truth directly was revealed in ancient Shinto. It is the quality that consistently made possible their spontaneous creative masterpieces.

In September, 1936, Mason and I were invited by Chief Priest Daiko Furukawa of Kiyomidera at Okitsu to spend the night there. We had a long discussion that night. Furukawa Roshi excited Mason’s interest with the following anecdote:

“Sesshu went to China to study Buddhism and painting. He stayed for several years but could not find a suitable teacher. When he was about to return to Japan, he painted a landscape of Mt. Fuji, Miho no Matsubara (Miho Pine Grove), and the Kiyomi lagoon. This painting won the admiration of the Chinese, and a great painting authority there honoured it with his seal. Whereupon, Sesshu painted another one just like it and had the same expert stamp his seal on it. He left one in China and brought the other painting back to Japan.

“However, Sesshu had one problem. In these paintings, he had added a tower outside the main hall of the temple. But it was doubtful whether in fact there was a tower in Kiyomi temple. So when Sesshu returned to Japan, he made a pilgrimage to Kiyomi Temple, and he found that there was no tower to be seen. Sesshu was disappointed. However, he determined, ‘There will be a tower,’ and Sesshu underwent great suffering in order to accumulate sufficient funds mainly by his own painting and calligraphy. Finally, a tower existed just like in his paintings, and so he had succeeded. Unfortunately, that tower has not survived. It was destroyed and only the foundation stone remains.”

Mason listened in rapt attention to the Roshi’s tale. Sesshu had created something from nothing. He had created a tower. Sesshu was a Shintoist as well as a Buddhist.

## THOUGHTS ON EMERSON

Lecture to the Kiitsu Kyōkai, March, 1981

**I**n my student days, we heard about Emerson and Carlyle together and we read them a great deal. Emerson's writing was introduced to the Tokyo Unitarian Church at that time through a pamphlet entitled, "One Word, One Thousand Gold Pieces" and impressed me so much that I still remember it very well. But I did not read his complete works. Now I have refreshed my memory with a book that I borrowed from Professor Woodroffe to prepare for this talk. In other words, I have only a fragmentary knowledge of Emerson. But the special quality of Emerson is that a fragment is not just a fragment but that everything within the fragment shines forth.

The reason for speaking about Emerson today is that next year will be the centenary of his death in 1882. In America, a committee is planning various observances and Reverend Greeley has asked me to participate. Reverend Greeley is the man who was chairman of the American Unitarian Association and also president of IARF (International Association of Religious Freedom), and he is now a minister in Concord. Concord is famous as the place where Emerson passed away and will always be remembered in association with the "sage of Concord."

Coincidentally, I was born the year before Emerson died in 1882. Also I followed in his footsteps at Harvard, and since he was a Unitarian and my great teacher of Free Religion, I feel a great responsibility in accepting his spiritual legacy.

Emerson was born in 1803 and after graduating from Harvard University and the Divinity School, he became a Unitarian minister in Boston at the tender age of 30. These were the

early days when the Unitarian Association had not yet been formed. Although it was called “Unitarian,” it had a deeply conservative tradition and many features which he did not like, such as mass which was derived from “The Last Supper,” a ritual which was the same as baptism, and the taking of the wafer and the wine for Christ’s flesh and blood. Emerson had doubts about this ritualism and after three years either left or was asked to leave the ministry. Always a poet, a thinker, and a preacher, later he also worked as an author and lecturer. His Divinity School address and his lectures on religion became famous. These are contained in the pamphlet I brought here today. These are the lectures he was asked to deliver before the students who were about to graduate and become ministers. I have just reread these after a long time and find Emerson’s writing hard to read. I received a copy of Mr. Konno’s complete translation of the History of Unitarian Thought. Here also I found many passages I could not understand. In any case, Emerson criticized the mediocrity and the impotence of the church of his time which had become extremely formalized and fossilized. He especially attacked the idea that Christ was the only child of God.

He said that if Christ is the child of God, then we are all children of God, because this universe has a spiritual existence and this divine spirit pervades all sentient beings beginning with humanity. He gave this spirit the name of “oversoul” or great spirit. All humanity possesses this great spirit, that is to say, are children of God. So there are no supernatural, mysterious miracles. If there is such a thing as a miracle, then the universe as it is in its natural state is indeed a miracle.

He preached revolutionary ideas for that time and he was criticized for his radical opinions. Finally, his preaching was banned

not only by Harvard but much more widely. So he went to England and visited Carlyle. Later he went there two more times and they achieved an understanding with each other and became lifelong friends.

Gradually Emerson developed a profound philosophy. His thoughts evolved from the idea of the oversoul. The features that stand out are the dignity and freedom of man, his trust in humanity, and the equality of man. He reasoned that we understand and empathize with the sages of old like Plato and Christ and Shakespeare because we have the same universal oversoul as they did. He thought that each human being is like an encyclopaedia and possesses within himself everything in the universe past and present, east and west. That is why all human beings have dignity and are equal. When one realizes this, he must value himself and trust himself. "It is suicidal to imitate others. It is foolish to envy others." I learned these words while I was in high school and they made an indelible impression on me. In imitating others, we abandon ourselves and become like others. Since we kill ourselves, it is suicide. When we envy others, we are forgetting that we ourselves have valuable qualities. In other words, we are being foolish. He taught us to open our eyes to the fact that each of us possesses a part of the oversoul, is a child of God, and has an invaluable treasure inside him, and must do everything we can to trust ourselves to find the way to develop our own individuality and achieve self-realization.

We learn from Plato and Christ but we must not imitate Plato and Christ. We must seek inside and not outside. Reading books and listening to lectures are indirect methods and not the main path for attaining truth. He said that it is only by direct experience, by intuition, by direct observation, and by direct study

that we attain truth. In such disciplines as Zen, a master is needed but we must attain Nirvana ourselves, not just through the teachings of the master. Emerson is famous for expressing such thoughts and for the idea of self-reliance.

His sentences are not logically structured prose but take the form of intuitive, poetic essays. So he is a wise man and not a philosopher. Or would you call him a philosophical poet, perhaps? That is why even a fragment is important and also difficult to understand. I must have an attitude of direct observation based on experience in reading his work.

When you say "Unitarian," you think of a very radical, progressive group, but the truth is that in the old days as now there were surprisingly many conservative members. Emerson was treated as a radical by his own associates. So it was that at the age of 40, he opposed the conservative Unitarians and established the Free Religious Association, becoming Deputy Chairman, and thus striving for the liberalization of Christianity. Dr. Holmes, the last Chairman, dissolved the association, saying that it had achieved its objectives.

Then, it was ten years ago, the Unitarian group merged with the Universalist group to form the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA). We think of this as America's Free Religious Association. However, they should not stick forever to the Unitarian Universalist name. Shouldn't they instead return to the spirit of Emerson and, like Japan, make it the Free Religious Association? We are asking the IARF to do the same. It is actually named the International Association for Religious Freedom. Freedom of belief and Free Religion are two separate ideas and should not be confused with each other. Therefore, I think that they should change the name to the International Association for Free

Religion. I have been speaking at every opportunity to the headquarters of the association and to my friends in the very influential American group, but I don't seem to make much progress.

So we in Japan can take pride that we embody the spirit of Emerson more faithfully than the Americans. That is why I would have those who are attending the IARF meeting in the Netherlands understand this idea and seek to bring about its realization.





## QUIBBLES OF AN OLD MAN

A Sunday talk before the Tokyo Unitarian Church by, Feb. 13, 1983

**B**ecause I shall attain my 102nd year in the coming September, many friends of mine congratulate me on my longevity. But I have neither expected nor striven for longevity throughout my life. I have been a mediocrity, always playing the second fiddle and have fallen behind in dying.

Why are people so anxious to live long? Are they not a little selfish? They seem to have forgotten the teaching of Confucius, "If you hear the Way in the morning, you can die happily in the evening." The Marathon race champion can run because he is not conscious of his weight. When one is unconscious of the existence of internal organs, he or she is quite well. If one is troubled with not being able to sleep at night, I advise him or her to lose the desire to sleep. One secret of longevity is not to have a longing for it.

We must lead a busy life. It is a matter of course that a person in the prime of life should be absorbed in one's occupation. But one must not live leisurely even after retirement. They should continue to associate with as many friends as possible. They can write or telephone to friends although they can not make a trip and are obliged to stay at home. They must read books, newspapers and listen to a broadcast, look in on a television. If one finds his or her days tedious, they become a living corpse. I hold that human being is a minor until he or she touches their sixtieth year, and true human life starts thereafter and proceeds without an age limit. From this point of view, Mr. Seisensui's haiku is quite pertinent:

A camphor tree,  
although 1000 years old,  
comes into bud again this year.

I am not lonesome at all. I am conscious of my individuality and respect it. But self can not exist without others. Of necessity, self and others realize solidarity, fellowship, and community. Apart from community, I cannot exist. I am deeply moved by the fact that I have had so many respected teachers, seniors, and friends due to longevity. I am proud of the fact that I have had almost ten thousand alumni of the Seisoku High School as my dear friends. Moreover, I am finding new respected friends these years. Quite recently a new American friend, Professor George Williams of California University, came to Japan to meet me and delighted me exceedingly.

Because one third of a lifetime is spent by sleeping, I can not help being aware of the positive and important role played by sleeping in human life. While I am sleeping, I am not conscious of myself, but breathing and circulation of blood do not stop. Both are not done by me but without my will. Because breathing and circulation are natural phenomena, I become a part of the Great Nature during sleep. That is the reason why I can work hard the next day, because I was united and invigorated by the Great Nature the preceding night. And I would like to add that Zen contemplation is a kind of sleep. A Zen man sleeps while he is awake. As people become one with Nature by sleeping, so a Zen man becomes one not only with Nature but with Dharma (The ultimate Truth or The Pure, Formless, and Universal Life.) Such remarks, identification of Zen contemplation with sleeping, may be criticized as absurd. But I will be quite satisfied if you will be good enough to understand my lay efforts to find Zen and religion in everyday affairs.

## FROM RELIGIOUS FREEDOM TO FREE RELIGION

Address delivered at the Worship Service of the national meeting  
of the Japan Association for Free Religion, October 30, 1983

**N**ext year (1984) there will be a meeting in Japan of the IARF, which is rendered in English as The International Association for Religious Freedom. However, we are not translating this name into Japanese literally, as given above, but as The International Association for Free Religion. Our theme today is whether the English title should be changed to conform to the English translation of our Japanese title, that is, using 'for Free Religion' instead of 'for religious freedom.'

The original English title refers to Freedom of Religion, not to Free Religion but to the search for religious freedom and freedom of religious faith, and also to freedom of speech, freedom of association and freedom of abode. Freedom of religion means that you must not be bound to any particular religion — Christianity, Buddhism, Shintoism. So freedom of faith is freedom of religion. Of course, this is fine.

But for our religious groups, it is not enough to have an organization simply for religious freedom without reference to religion itself. Freedom of religion is only one aspect of Free Religion. I have always said this must be an organization for religion itself and not just for one aspect, freedom of faith. That is why from the outset we did not translate the English title literally into Japanese and we called the IARF the IAFR. At the meetings which will be held in Tokyo next summer (1984), we must insist that the name of the organization formally be changed to the IAFR. Because we have this fundamental problem, I have made this the subject of today's talk.

We believe in everyone's right to believe whatever he wishes, but this alone is not enough to be the theme for the conference. As you know, the IARF was established 80 years ago in the year 1900, in Boston, with the initial name of The International Association of Unitarian and Other Liberal Religious Thinkers and Workers. It was founded as a Unitarian group. But at the second meeting in 1907, the name was changed to The Congress of Religious Liberals. Then, in 1910, in Berlin, the name was changed to The International Congress of Free Christianity and Religious Progress. In 1932, in Switzerland, it was changed to The International Association for Liberal Christianity and Religious Freedom. Since that time, the abbreviation IARF has been used. The word 'Christianity' was specifically included to supplant the word 'Unitarian' in the original title, and to include all Christianity.

At Boston in 1969, the word 'Christianity' was deleted, largely because of our efforts. It was good to remove the word 'Christianity,' but then the title was reduced to only The International Association for Religious Freedom. It was because the word 'Christianity' was deleted that such Shinto and Buddhist groups as Rissho Koseikai, Konkokyo, Tsubaki Jinja and Teppozu Inari Shrine could join the IARF. That was fine, but we feel there is something missing in just having an Association for Religious Freedom. Religion itself should be the essential concern. Of course, the movement for world peace is also necessary. It is also important to avoid criticism and attacks on other religious groups. But these things alone are not enough to be the aims of our organization. The WCRP, World Conference for Religion and Peace is mainly dedicated to world peace. The Rissho Koseikai and other groups in Japan support this movement. That's fine, but the transformation of a religious movement into a peace movement poses problems.

International peace is very important and we must oppose world conflict. But as a religious association we cannot have peace as our sole objective. Peace is most important. We must work together for peace. But is it enough just to have peace? We do not want to confuse the IARF with the WCRP and have the IARF become a shadow of the WCRP.

That is why I have made the theme of my talk to you today the change 'From Freedom of Religion to Free Religion.'

So what is Free Religion? Free Religion is not religion that was newly created. Unlike Buddhism, Christianity and Shinto, it was not established as a new religion. It is a religion that exists only through self-awareness and self-realization. I do not intend to organize a new religion to oppose existing religions. Nor do I intend to combine all existing religions into one to make new religion. The nature of man is free, pure and universal. So Free Religion is manifest in the self-awareness and self-realization of the individual.

Existing religions originally had the same object as Free Religion does today. But they failed to accomplish their purpose. Religious conflict is understandable, and the objective of Free Religion is not just to have peaceful coexistence among religions.

In the past, there have been all kinds of special religions. I do not intend to unite these religions under the banner of Free Religion. All religion is nothing but the self-awareness and self-realization of the individual. Even those things that are considered secular, like politics, economic activity, the labor movement and education, are all expressions of human self-awareness and self-realization, and so are Free Religion. Human life in its entirety is religion.

Gandhi said to the American and English missionaries, ‘We need bread, not missionaries. Many people are dying from hunger. Bread, not missionaries!’ Recalling Gandhi’s words, I want to say there is something more important than bread, or missionaries, or Christianity. Religion. Religion is present in bread and in economic activity. In Japan we had the case of Rinnoji Temple and Toshogu Shrine fighting for many decades. Finally, the courts settled this dispute which the Shintoist and Buddhists could not settle themselves. I believe that the court decision went beyond Shinto and Buddhism. If law, economic activity and politics involve human self-awareness and self-realization, then they are religion. We must think of religion as having a broad and profound meaning.

Friedrich Nietzsche surprised the Christian world by announcing that God is dead. I think it may be better to say that the God who created heaven and earth and all things is dead. Human beings are indeed heaven and earth and God, if we have to use the word ‘God.’

Milton said in *Paradise Lost* — “Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven.” As long as a human being is independent, he should not be a slave to anybody, even to god. He should be free. Better king of the underworld than somebody’s slave.

I believe this must be the attitude of the believer in Free Religion. As you read in my Statement of Faith, there is no mention of God. It is a creed without a God. I have faith in self, in other people, in society. There is no God in my creed. However, if one believes that the universe is religion, then if it is necessary to use the word ‘God’, I see no objection. Then man is God, society is God and the universe is God.

The founder of Konkokyo, Kawate Bunjiro, pointed out that the kami is dependent on the adherents and the adherents are

dependent on the kami. It is understandable how the adherents are dependent on the kami, but it is not clear how the kami is dependent on the adherents unless one realizes that the founder meant that the kami and the adherents are inter-dependent. This can be interpreted as meaning that God depends on the believers and the believers should be worthy of this regard.

We Japanese say that to show respect one should bow. When you borrow something from somebody you should bow. When you admire something you should bow. Writing a letter to someone is a kind of bowing. No matter what you do you should bow while you are doing it. In this way we bow and we are bowed to. God did not create the universe where there was nothing. When you go to a religious school there is the difficult subject of the theory of the one and only God, and they try to prove the existence of God based on this theory. But we are not talking about such a difficult concept, just about bowing when you write a letter and when you look at something. People are very incomplete but they have the capacity to show mutual respect by bowing to each other. Creative humanity manifesting universal freedom is God. We are trying to build a cooperative society in which we bow to such a God and bow to each other.

We do not always act with subjectivity. With self-realization this universe is God — it is paradise. We become gods and paradise. I think religion must be like this.

Free Religion is not merely the freedom of religion or religious freedom, and not just getting along with each other. Of course it is fine to have a religious peace movement but that alone is not enough. There is something beyond peace. Even with peace we will have problems. After the peace there will be conflict. Each new day brings struggle.

Therefore, Free Religion is bowing to each other, joining each other in vigorously promoting the progress without limit of our universe.



## INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM (IARF): FACTS, PROSPECTS & A STATEMENT OF FAITH

Published by the Japan Free Religious Association, July, 1984

**I**n 1899, Dr. Samuel Eliot, president of the American Unitarian Association, spoke as follows at the annual assembly. “Our movement must extend beyond our country’s boundaries. We must link up with kindred spirits in foreign countries. The Unitarian Association in Japan is the fruit of our labours. The Unitarian Association in England began the same year as our own association in America and has enjoyed a splendid history. The Unitarian movement in Hungary is the pioneer, dating from the 16th century. Next year will be the 75th anniversary of the establishment of our association. We should commemorate the great work of our forebear and we should form an international organization by extending invitations to attend our meeting in Boston next May to the Unitarian Associations of England, Japan and Hungary (sic), and also to individual religious liberals in other countries.”

The kindred spirits who responded to this invitation by gathering on May 25, 1900, formally established the International Council of Unitarian and Other Liberal Religious Thinkers and Workers. The Rev. Dr. Estlin Carpenter, Principal of Manchester College, Oxford, was elected President, and Dr. C. W. Wendte of the American Unitarian Association was appointed Secretary. The objectives which were projected were communication and cooperation among those seeking complete freedom for pure religion. The central figure who became the driving force for making this International Association of Unitarians possibly was

Dr. Wendte. The development of the Association for at least the first 15 years was due to the efforts of Dr. Wendte. With his boundless energy, he rallied his colleagues around the world by his travels, visits and communications. The writer, during his student days at Harvard, first became aware of the international liberal religious movement through Dr. Wendte. Thanks to Dr. Wendte's efforts, starting with the London meeting in 1901, assemblies were held in various cities of Europe and America every two or three years. Of these, the meeting which was convened in Berlin in 1910 was one of the most successful. It was the period when liberal theology in Germany reached its zenith. The religionists of all the countries participated en masse.

At this 1910 conference the name of the Association was changed to the International Congress of Free Christianity and Religious Progress (the word 'Unitarian' was changed to 'Free Christianity').

Although Dr. Wendte proclaimed, at the conference held in Paris in 1913 that the Association was full of energy and hope in its "fervent search for truth, the awakening of conscience, the sweeping away of old dogma and the flowing forth of inspiration," the World War from 1914-1918 was a great blow to this movement. However, the flame of liberal religion was never extinguished. When the world's adherents to Free Religion met at Arnhem in Holland in 1930, they laid a new foundation for the international free religious movement. That is to say, a permanent organization was established with its headquarters in Holland. The Council that was elected from the various participating organizations conducted all the operations. The international congresses which had been held irregularly were now convened every three years. New regulations were decided at the next congress, and the name was changed to the

International Association for Liberal Christianity and Religious Freedom.

In Japan, the free religious movement which started in 1948 joined the IARF in 1952, and attended its 16th World Congress held at the University of Chicago in 1958. Eight hundred adherents of Free Religion represented 20 countries. In addition to English and American Unitarians, Universalists and other liberal Christians, there were also Buddhist and Indian religious representatives. Also attending was Dr. Dana Mclean Greeley, President of the American Unitarian Association; Rev. Carleton M. Fisher, President of the Universalist Church of America; Rev. J. Kielty, Director General of British Unitarian Association; the Hon. J. Chuter Ede, Home Minister of the Eisenhower Administration; the former Dean of the University of Illinois, Dr. Stoddard, who had been sent to Japan during the Occupation as the head of an education commission; and Dr. Heiler, who was professor at Marburg University and a religious authority of world stature. For me, personally, it was a great discovery to meet Sir Zafrulla Khan, a judge at the International Court who was a follower of Free Islam and had been the Pakistani Foreign Minister 1942-1954. His ideas of Free Islam impressed me so deeply that I dared visit the headquarters of Free Islam in Pakistan the next year and found many congenial spirits.

An important development at the Chicago meeting was the submission of a resolution for a change in name. A free religious group from the Chicago area (including Gyomei Kubose, a leader of American Buddhist organizations) proposed the elimination of the word 'Christianity' from the name. The earlier revision from 'Unitarian' to 'Free Christianity' had been a great advance, but the name of the religious sect, 'Christianity,' remained as before. In

order to encompass members of free religious groups outside of Christianity, it was naturally proposed to eliminate the word 'Christianity.' As a representative from Japan which is not a Christian country, I subscribed to this proposal and I defended it in the deliberations. There was unexpectedly strong opposition to the extent that some of the representatives said they would leave the Association if the word 'Christianity' were eliminated. Finally this problem was tabled until the next Congress.

The 17th Congress was held in the city of Davos at the foot of the Swiss Alps. In the program was the poetic drama of Lessing, "Nathan Der Weise," which dramatized the principle that there is no distinction or ranking among Judaism, Christianity and Islam, but that they all have a parental and fraternal relationship to each other. I welcomed this. During the continuing deliberations over the name change, I proposed that if the name were changed, Japan would host the congress after the next one scheduled in Holland, that is, in 1967. I stressed that Japan, with various religions and an understanding of Free Religion, would be a very suitable host country. But finally the name change was rejected.

At the 18th Congress which was held in the Hague in Holland, the attitude of the various countries, starting with the host, Holland, and including Switzerland, France and England, was unexpectedly conservative and neutral. However, Rev. Fisher, the venerable minister of the American Universalist delegation, and Dr. Harrington of New York defended the Japanese position with great ardor. The progressive American minister Rev. Boeke asked, "If the followers of Islam established an organization like the IARF and called it the International Association for Free Islam and Religious Freedom, would any of you join such an organization? The name of IARF sounds like Christian imperialism." It seemed

that a majority of the representatives might approve the name change, but because of the nature of the problem a majority vote was avoided, and once more further deliberation and study continued.

Finally, at the 20th Congress in Boston in 1969 the two words “Free Christianity” were eliminated. It had taken 11 years, starting in 1958. So while previously only the Japan Free Religious Association had represented our country in the IARF, afterwards, one by one, Rissho Chose Kai, Konkokyo Izuo Church, Tsubaki Grand Shrine, Ittoen and Iwato Shrine, all joined the IARF.

Three years ago at the Congress in Holland, Nikkyo Niwano was unanimously chosen President and this year the 25th International Congress will be held in Japan. Not only will this be the first congress to be held in the Orient, but Rissho Kosei Kai, which is represented by Chairman Niwano, will have the largest number of members among the participating organizations. Mr. Niwano is a Buddhist but not only has he had dialogues with the Pope, Dr. Michael Ramsey, the Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury, and Dr. Eugene Carson Blake, Director-General of the World Federation of Churches of Christ in Switzerland, but he also has spoken out at the United Nations and has contributed tens of millions of dollars as a peace fund to the UN.

In 1980 when the Iranian students occupied the American Embassy in Teheran and held 50 Americans hostage, Mr. Niwano flew into Iran with the idea of exchanging himself for the 50 hostages. One year earlier he had received the Templeton Award (the Nobel Prize of the religious world) because the donors must have realized that Mr. Niwano was the kind of man who would make such a sacrifice. Although Mr. Niwano had no education beyond elementary school, he received the degree of Honorary

Doctor of Law from Meadville Seminary and was the first recipient of the Uniquist-Schweitzer Award which was established to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the birth of Dr. Schweitzer. Because of the above facts, I believe that this year's IARF International Congress marks a great turning point. In the past, the IARF, despite its influence, was in form a minority faction of intellectuals. But now, under the leadership of Nikkyo Niwano of Risho Kosei Kai, might it not be able to become a popular movement?

But there is a counter argument that even if it becomes large in numbers and in form, it would be weak in spirit and substance. These subjects will be appropriate for discussion at the congress. I believe that both sides must complement each other, and it is my hope that they will unite.

At this Congress there is one big problem, the change in name proposed by the Japan Free Religious Association. The present name of the International Association for Religious Freedom (IARF) should be changed to the International Association for Free Religion (IAFR). Religious freedom is freedom of belief. It is simply a problem of people's rights, just like freedom of speech or freedom of abode. It is not religion itself. We already have the World Conference on Religion and Peace, which promotes the freedom of belief and the cooperation of various religions to bring about world peace.

At the Boston Congress in 1969 it was excellent to have eliminated the words 'Free Christianity,' but it was a great mistake not to have clarified 'Religion' in the title of our Association. It has become too easy to confuse it with the World Conference on Religion and Peace as just another international group for religious freedom.

Since it took 11 years to eliminate the words ‘Free Christianity’ we should not think that it will be simple to get this proposal approved. Therefore, at this time, I am asking all my colleagues in the IARF to reconsider what Free Religion is — or should be.

Free Religion is not a new religion which conflicts with Christianity, Buddhism, or any of the other established religions. Nor is it trying to unite all the established religions. It maintains that no established religion has a monopoly on truth, and that any established religion can become Free Religion if it is humble and anxious to learn truths which are proclaimed by others. The essence of Free Religion is the unification of pure religion and complete freedom, or to put it another way, Free Religion does not lie in doctrines or in rituals but in the manifestation of creative and universal human nature. Accordingly, Free Religion extends to such worldly affairs as politics, economy and science, etc., if they are manifestations of genuine human nature. In other words, they are unorganized religions.


Mahatma Gandhi told the English missionaries that India needed not missionaries but bread. He clarified that real religion in those days of India existed in bread more than in missionaries. In Japan, when we consider the fact that the court settled the struggle which had gone on so long between the Nikko shrine and the Rinno temple, we see a manifestation of Free Religion through law, transcending the Shintoism of the Nikko shrine and the Buddhism of the Rinno temple.

Even if the resolution for changing the name to the International Association for Free Religion does not pass at this year’s [25th] Congress [in Tokyo], I think that, at the latest, it will be adopted before the end of the present century. As soon as the name

change comes into force I am anxious to invite all unorganized religionists to be members of the International Association for Free Religion and to participate in its congresses. The IAFR (not IARF) will then become not only an international religious community but also the World Federation, that is Kingdom of Heaven on Earth.



## IMPRESSIONS OF THE 25TH CONGRESS OF THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM, TOKYO, JAPAN, 1984

 Although my name has been printed in the program of the Congress as the honorary President, I have by no means deserved it and have done nothing in that capacity. Please understand that I am now speaking as a mere individual participant in the Congress [the theme of which was “Religious Path to Peace: Eastern Initiative & Western Response”]. If you will allow me to tell my experience [in my own way] . . .

### I

It was Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, a German dramatist, who taught me about inter-faith co-operation through his drama “Nathan der Weise.” It was Henry Bergson, a French philosopher, who taught me the theory of Creative Evolution. And J. T. Mason, an American journalist, explained it to me to be nothing else but the creative spirit of Shinto in Japan. It was John H. Holmes who suggested me to interpret Shinto in terms of Community Church. It was William Ralph Inge, Dean of St. Paul’s Cathedral, in London who taught me Christian Mysticism, and I found there something very much like Zen Buddhism.

### II

Part of the Congress team is concerned with Peace which, I would like to emphasize, cannot be realized by religionists only. Co-operation of the so-called secular people, politicians, economists, etc. is absolutely necessary. There is no distinction between the Church

and the World, as Emerson said. In other words, politics, economy, education and all other human activities are sacred and religious if they are realization of genuine human nature. They are unorganized religions.

### III

The Congress has impressed me that the IARF is going to mark a turning point in its history. It has been held in Asia for the first time under the leadership of President Niwano who represents several million Buddhists. The IARF is not a minority faction consisting of Unitarians and other intelligentsias any longer. I am sure that the IARF will hold before long a Second World Parliament of Religions greater than the first one held in 1893 in Chicago that was so magnificent it is often called the first, and may be the last, event in the history of religions in the world. In order to make the Second Parliament succeed, however, the fundamental and essential spirit of Free Religion should be emphasized and realized as the first Parliament that realized the spirit of Free Religion of the Free Religion Association of America under the leadership of Emerson. My conclusion is, therefore, to make IARF not Association of Religious Freedom but Association for Free Religion.

## STATEMENT OF FAITH (TENTATIVE)

Written in 1970

### I

I believe in Self. Awakened to my own autonomy and the capacity within me to create, I find my day-to-day life worth living. Other names which have traditionally been given to what I here call “autonomy” and “creativity” are “personality,” “divinity,” “Buddhahood.”

### II

I believe in Others. Because of my belief in Self, I cannot help but believe in my neighbour, who is another autonomous, creative Self.

### III

I believe in Community. Both my Self and that of my neighbour are autonomous. But that does not make us totally independent of one another. It is the uniqueness of each Self that makes a true Community possible. Community is an interdependence of beings at one and the same time dependent and dependable. Such is the source of social solidarity and human love.

### IV

I believe in the Trinity of Self, Others and Community. Community has its own individuality, distinct from Self and Other Selves. Although the three are distinguishable from one another, they are one in the sense that each presupposes the other two. No priority can be given any one.

## V

I believe in Church. The Church is the motive power for Community. I can be my true Self only when I belong to a Church.

## VI

I believe in particular Religion. In my own case, I belong to the Tokyo Unitarian Church [Kiitsu Kyōkai, literally unity or oneness fellowship]. But no particular religion (my own included) can monopolize religious Truth or contain it all.

## VII

I believe in Free Religion. The nucleus of religious life must be an endless aspiration for a search after Universal and Ultimate Truth — through the medium of a particular religion. Such a process of religious aspiration, i.e., the dynamic aspect of religion, is what I mean by Free Religion.

## POSTSCRIPT TO A STATEMENT OF FAITH

Written on September 16th, 1981

**M**y faith is, in other words, Free Religion, and I, as a Free Religionist, belong to the Tokyo Unitarian Church [Kiitsu Kyokai, literally unity or oneness fellowship], the Japan Free Religion Association and the International Association for Religious Freedom. Free Religion is, however, neither a new religion competing with established religions, nor insists it combines with them. Free Religion is nothing but grasping and realizing the essence and ideal of not only established religions but of all human activities. Accordingly this statement manifests my attitude toward daily life that I determine to retain most resolutely.



# STATEMENT OF FAITH FOR MY DAILY LIFE

Written in 1983

## I

Free Religion is not a ready-made religion and has not a creed nor a dogma except a tentative statement.

## II

Particular Religion is Free Religion if it does not insist on a monopoly of truth and applies itself diligently to seek after truth in others, too.

## III

Free Religion is neither a new religion that unifies all particular religions nor a new religion that competes with particular religions but is within particular religions as their essence.

## IV

Because I and others are not quite independent of each other and form a community, Free Religion is both an individual and community religion.

## V

Because Free Religion is nothing but the realization of the pure and genuine human nature consisting of autonomy, creativity and sociality, all human activities, i.e., politics, economics, education, art, labor and even domestic affairs are also Free Religion as much as they are also realizations of the same fundamental nature. There is no fundamental distinction between the sacred and the secular.

## VI

Free Religion is more than the cooperation of religions and the world peace movement.



## EDUCATIONAL POLICY OF SEISOKU MIDDLE SCHOOL (1928)

**I**want to propose three principles: Domestication, Socialization and Internationalization of the educational policy of Seisoku Middle School.

### i. Domestication

School should be like a home or the extension of your home, I think. The very beginning of education for a child depends on its parents at home, and real education is based on the parents' LOVE. The school and the home of each student should keep in close relation. School should be a large family.

Seisoku Middle School is one large family of ours; the principal is the head of the family, teachers and senior students are brothers of freshmen. Not only the students now studying at school, but also all the graduates are important members of our family. Parents, brothers, and sisters of our students, too, as their protectors, are members of our family. Although it might seem irrational to say so I, at least, say they are all our relatives. There are also invisible family members as, unfortunately, some teachers passed away while they were working at school. But they are still living in our mind as important family members.

These thoughts bring many different results in school education.

Firstly, rules, tests and punishment are not important at our school. A student cannot be treated like an evil man, nor a criminal. A Supervisor to control over the students, who seems to be a jailor, is not needed. Instead of a supervisor there are counsellors at Seisoku

Middle School to talk with the students. Some of them, among the numbers of students, are rather rude or not so good at work. That is as same as in ordinary families. We should take care of them, however bad they are, more than well-behaved students, because they are our own family members.

Especially, it is wrong to rank students by the results of terminal or annual tests given by stereotyped or standardized curricula. The duty of a real educator should be to draw out the individual potency of each student, respecting his personality. It is the most important point to bring out the individual personality of each student in true education, not to make him a stereotype.

Usually a child can fully show himself at home. When he plays with neighbours, playing games in the playground, he shows enough of his own ability. But some children become different at school. Such vigorous and cheerful children become very quiet in classes. I do not think it is good enough for them just to be quiet. Under orders, they are well controlled, following instructions mechanically and passively just like robots. They sometimes have no questions to the teacher in class. They are often treated as well-mannered, model students, but I do not think this is idealistic education. That is the bad influence of uniformity and formalization in school education, I think. As Seisoku Middle School each student has to live and study whilst feeling at home. He does not need to feel here another place, nor to imitate grown-ups. Our school should be a real home for each student, be more than his home in order to live a fulfilled student-life.

One of the results of “Domestication” has been the organization of an Association of Mothers of Seisoku to keep close relationships “between school and home.” I think Idealistic education should be achieved through close relations between

teachers and mothers, and that mothers should get some social education. That was the reason why the Association of Mothers of Seisoku was organized. Fortunately, it has been very active and effective, ever since. Some examples of its activities are:

On May 5th, the Boys' Festival, mothers come to school together in the morning. They prepare a special lunch, such as red rice and pounding rice cake with oak-leaves, etc., for all the students to celebrate their healthy and happy growing. In the New Year holiday, the last day of Winter training of Kendo and Judo, mothers come to school to serve them warm O-shiruko, pounding rice cake with sweet beans soup.

On Graduation Day, each graduate is given something in memory of his coming graduation by the Association of Mothers of Seisoku.

On March 6th, the Empress' birthday has been celebrated at girls' schools in Japan in the past but, since 1926, we have celebrated it as Mothers' Day. I want to give each student a chance to think of admiring his mother.

Once a year a Memorial Service is held in the school auditorium for the teachers and students who have passed away, in just the same way as ordinary families worship ancestors and serve the dead. But we do not ask any priest for the service. We listen to hearty speeches made for them by their class-mates and teachers who shared works and pleasure with them, reciting poems and singing songs written and composed by our teachers and students. We are more deeply impressed by this than by a professional religionist's sutra recitation or sermon.

## 2. Socialization

Firstly, the school is a place to educate students, who are all expected to work as members of society in the future. Seisoku Middle School is, as I said, a large family including all family members of students and graduates relating closely with “school and home.”

Socialization is in our actual effort. We always listen to social demands. School has a duty to educate the young generation in the community. A private school has the same duty as a public school does. Any kind of private school should be a fair public institution, morally and ethically. The private school should not be run for the sake of the Head or Officials. The community should support and cooperate with the school, too.

Secondly, school itself should be a community, I think. It has been ignored previously, at least indifferently taken in Japan. Students are apt to become more and more individualistic or selfish, being forced to study to join the elite, to pass the entrance examinations of upper schools. They study very hard. Some gain surprisingly great knowledge and ability in subjects such as mathematics, science, foreign languages and so on. Their purpose is only to pass the examinations. Even their classmates seem to be their rivals to kick off, not to tell them right answers to tests in class. It seems that individualism and selfishness are the key to being part of the elite.

I never put any value on such an elite. However, I am afraid that the present social problems mean many able young persons are struggling with such examination hell. What is worse, many selfish, elite individualists are increasingly being sent out into our community.

I really hope as many of our students and graduates as possible can pass the entrance examinations of upper schools. At the same time. I also hope they can achieve a social mind and human love. It is simple to have a social mind in ordinary experience. Let them feel the true joy of cooperative prosperity in their students' life by their own experience: let them find true, life long friends, unforgettable and inseparable. For naive and pure-minded students it is spontaneous and natural to find a way out among themselves. Today the education system in Japan distorts true school education, bringing a selfish elite out of an examination hell, as I have said.

Socialization, which I propose, does not mean to imitate things in the community. If school itself is a real community, the school life of pure-minded students can be a typically idealistic social life. At school, there is no value of difference between the rich and the poor, the high and low positions in community, etc.. Beyond those difference, free and equal activities are available in school life.

I am thinking this school is to be a community centre. Shrines and temples in olden days were community centres in the place where they stood. Now, and in the future, schools should take the place of them. I think, my community-mind and spirit of cooperative prosperity which I achieved in my middle school age, will be the key to resolve the difficulties of all kinds in the future. Loyalty is good, filial piety is all right, too. Problems in the community can be solved by morally educated young members in the community. The socialization of school is important not only for Seisoku but for all schools.

The Seisoku Students' Association is managed mostly by the students. In order to experience social work by themselves, they are very active, belonging to clubs, such as the literary club, the speech club, the kendo, judo, sumo and tennis clubs, the travel club

and the pingpong club, after school is over. Each club has a committee elected by students. And I tell the visitors to look at classrooms as well as club activities to understand our real school education.

There are 50 students in each classroom. In each class they elect a chairman from among them. A class is divided into several groups. Each group has a monitor elected by members of the group. At first they experience self-government and cooperation in a group, and from groups to class, from classes to school, the spirit of democracy is realized through their spontaneous activities in school life.

### 3. Internationalization

Founders of our school: Dr. Shoichi Toyama, Baron Naibu Kanda and Dr. Jojiro Motora were excellent pioneers in the educational field during the Meiji era, having deep and wide insight of international situation. Seisoku was founded in 1889 and since then it has aimed to become the Middle School Seisoku “in the world.” I take it that they wanted to promote this school as being at the same level as those found in England and America where there are many well-known middle schools. In 1925, I became the principal of this school and since then I have been thinking that the internationalization of the school is one of my most important duties.

I organized the Seisoku International Association with the help of those teachers and students who agreed with me, in order to encourage an international spirit among students. Activities of Seisoku International Association:

Lecture meetings, inviting famous lecturers to list to the subject on international situations, etc..

Writing letters and exchanging paintings with middle school students in foreign countries.

Learning practical English language.

We held a welcome party at school, when Japanese-American middle school boys and girls in Hawaii came to Japan for a sight-seeing trip. They sang Hawaiian songs for us. Both visitors and our students felt the warmest friendship with each other, enjoying a wonderful meeting, beyond nationalities.

On Armistice Day, November 13, in 1927, we celebrated peace at the school. Dr. Juichi Tokugawa gave a stimulating lecture on the international situation of the Day. Dr. Gundert, Chief of Japan-German Culture Association, gave a pertinent lecture on International League in Japanese, too. Majoy Nishikubo's representative read his speech. Prince Ietatsu Tokugawa, President of the International League of Japan, gave an impressive, open-minded lecture on that day, even though he was very busy, both officially and privately. And, in memory of his visit, he promised to write "Seisoku In The World." We decorated our auditorium with his words.

On such meetings held by a middle school, many famous persons in Japan and the world came to give lectures to our students, agreeing with the internationalization of Seisoku.

Some people say that internationalization and patriotism will not be compatible. But I declare to them, "For the Love of our nation, I want to educate young people with internationalism. Japanese people should not stay only in Japan just like a miniature plant in a plant pot. Japanese people should grow in the world just like a tall tree rooted in the great earth." Others are against me, saying that we have to do in a hurry some things much closer to us before thinking of the world. But I emphasize, urgently, that they

should have insight on the international situation of the world today. Japan cannot exist alone even for a single day. Lindbergh has easily flown across the Atlantic Ocean, as you know. The Japanese Air Force is beginning to train fliers, thinking that the Pacific Ocean will be like the inland Sea of Seto. The Pacific Ocean era is coming soon. At noon, on Saturday September 1st, 1923, the Great Earthquake hit the Tokyo area. The news telegraph reached New York on Friday evening, August 31st. We live now in such speedy days.

Of course, it is important for the students to pass the examinations of upper schools and universities. But it should not be the only purpose for them. Studying hard and training seriously, they should make themselves powerful enough to act contributively on the stage of the world.

Here is a famous story: The Duke of Wellington, who defeated Napoleon at Waterloo, once visited Eton School, from where he graduated. He told the teachers and students that he had won the Waterloo battle thanks to the training he had received at Eton School. The internationalization of Seisoku Middle School aims at making our school a Japanese Eton School to educate many men like him, but to fight, instead, for a Waterloo of World Peace.

I would like to speak about religion.

In my view, religion and education should be unified. But Seisoku Middle School should not take the standpoint of a certain conventional sect of religion. For the middle school students whose minds are awakening to religion, we should not convert them or disturb this awakening. Teachers should lead them very carefully. A teacher should have their own faith and religious experience. However, he should never preach, nor propagate. We do not need a special school subject for religious education. Religion can be taught



in ordinary classes, such as mathematics, science, history, English, music, and so on, when they have their own faith. Teachers are not expected to be religious experts at all.

In everyday school life, and through occasional meetings such as the four National Celebration Days, the Memorial Service of Seisoku and other annual events at school, etc., religious education can be effective. Teachers' personalities and faith are the most important thing for religious education, not the equipment nor the theories.



## MY FREE RELIGIOUS VIEWPOINT

**I** was brought up in an ardent Shinshu (Buddhist) family. When I was very young I was a Buddhist. In my later middle school and high school years, I was baptised in the Episcopal Church based on the instruction of an English missionary and I became a Christian. This happened in just about 1898. It was a bitter pill for my Shinshu family to have me converted to a foreign religion and to both my parents it was worse than producing an enemy of the State. I have painful memories of this, but I did not give up my foreign religion. I continued following the life of a dedicated Christian through high school and college, and I became a minister in a certain Congregational Church in Kobe as soon as I graduated from the University. However, after three years of life as a minister, I felt more and more that it is unreasonable to promote the conversion of Buddhists and Shintoists to Christianity. I reached the conclusion that rather than making them give up Buddhism or Shinto, it is better to urge them to practise true Buddhism and Shinto. Feeling that I could no longer follow the traditional Christian way in the right spirit, I finally resigned as minister and became an assistant in religious research at Tokyo University. Later, I studied at Harvard Divinity School for two years.

Still later, after returning to Japan, I conducted seminars in religious studies and the study of the history of Christianity for ten years at Nihon University. At the same time, while carrying on the duties of school principal, I did research on the fundamentals and methods of religious education.

With the American Shinto researcher, Mr. Mason, between 1932 to 1940 I made a series of visits to many Shinto shrines and

Shinto leaders in Japan and together we dedicated ourselves to an investigation of Shinto. In this way, my religious viewpoint ceased to be Christian. Also, I did not decide to be a Buddhist or Shintoist. Or to put it another way, I became all three, a Buddhist, a Shintoist, and a Christian. The most apt way of expressing this is that for the past fifty years, the essence of my religious pilgrimage has been Free Religion.

But what is that free religious viewpoint? I would like to expose a few foolish thoughts on this subject for your criticism.

I believe there are two central themes in Free Religion. One is freedom or respect for the individual. That is to say, it is a religion that does not restrict in any way and it is truly an individual religion for one's own life. To put it passively, one is not restricted by articles of faith. Of course, articles of faith which express intellectually one's own religious experience are worthy of respect. But this can never be the religion itself. Articles of faith have an important historical significance for the period when they were established but they do not represent an eternal, changeless truth. Articles of faith must change with progress. A religion that changes its articles of faith in this way is a true religion. Accordingly, Free Religion first advocates emancipation from articles of faith. But of course this does not mean it advocates individual principles which restrict others or that it rejects general principles for a church or a religious group as a matter of convenience.

Next, Free Religion must not be a borrowed religion. It must be advocated as one's own religion and, therefore, Buddhist priests and ministers should only be secondary in one's religious life. In fact, I believe that our religion should be a movement of laymen. I also think that Free Religion should be free of founders. Buddhism and Christianity have Sakyamuni and Christ as founders. But Free

Religion has no founder. This is not to belittle the charisma of Sakyamuni and Christ. But we do not cling to any special founder. We learn from the teachings of all religious sages and respect them all. Some may criticize that this makes Buddhism and Christianity and Islam meaningless. This may be so. But Free Religion has special features which are not understood in Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam. I think that the idea that religion must somehow be either Buddhism or Christianity or Islam is a strange one. This way of thinking supposes that religion must be ready-made. When clothes are ready-made, they may be useless. This is even more true of religion. Religion must be made to order. It must fit all kinds of individuals. After all, it must be one's own religion.

However, if this is the case, it must be all things to all people. There will be some people who feel this would mean confusion and disorder. But in reality, the contrary is the case. Having their own religion makes people co-operate with one another. It gives impetus to a deeper faith, a broader faith, a more universal faith. It is the same as realizing a stronger society once you open up the eyes of everyone individually.

While on the one hand respecting freedom and individuality, Free Religion also has as its principle the same principle of democracy which respects co-operation and society, so that Free Religion does not regard the salvation of the individual differently than the salvation of society. It does not think that after individuals are first saved, then society will be saved by the joint efforts of these individuals. It believes that the salvation of the individual and the salvation of society will occur at the same time. In this regard, the Catholic teaching that "There is no salvation if you leave the Church" has profound significance. Shrine Shinto has great concern for the joint religion of the joint society located

around the shrine. But like Hosho Bosatsu in his eighteenth vow, he felt in his heart unbounded sympathy for the multitude of 100,000 and, if the whole population were not saved, he vowed that he would not be saved either. Beyond achieving nirvana himself, and becoming a Buddha, he called on the general public to come with him. It was Hosho Bosatsu's policy to plunge into the crowd of people, to suffer with them, and to rejoice with them as well.

When children are hungry because of a lack of food, parents feed them before giving themselves any. They would never feed only themselves.

A fine teacher would never lord it over his students. He would not have apprentices and followers. If he would have anyone, he should try to have someone superior to himself. He should crawl in among the students and devote himself to joint effort to refine and polish their characters. I think that Shinran in saying, "I will not have even one apprentice" showed his greatness.

I believe that Hosho Bosatsu did not achieve Nirvana and become a Buddha but that he is still suffering with all of mankind in their struggles and wars. Is not a Hosho Bosatsu who undergoes suffering to be respected more than a god who achieves nirvana? Is not salvation and nirvana achieved through love by suffering with the people?

As a natural consequence of believing that salvation for society and salvation for the individual are inseparable, Free Religion insists on the absolute need for a church. This is the second essential point of Free Religion, that is to say, Free Religion absolutely rejects the anti-social, individualistic, complacent, anti-church ideas of intellectuals. However, as I said before, since Free Religion is and will be a layman's religion, such a church is definitely a microcosm of society and not a temple isolated from

society or some place like a monastery. In the view of Free Religion, real religious life can only exist in the midst of the life of society. Therefore, temples and churches are holy but we are opposed to the idea that true society is profane. It is religion that makes society sacred. So Free Religion does not emphasize heaven after life but rather stresses our real society. Or, to put it in another way, apart from ideal co-operative communities which are realized in the real world, heaven has no place there.

Finally, I will say a word about the relationship and the differences between Free Religion and existing religions. Above all, Free Religionists try to keep their own religion. Happily, the great majority of people in existing religions are able to become adherents of the existing religions in response to their own needs. It is the same as if a suit of clothes that one already has fits one; it is unnecessary to search for another. In that case, people in existing religions who believe in Free Religion respect the freedom of people who have similar beliefs to their own. They would never insist on the absolute truth of their free religious position or reject other religious denominations. I am speaking of free Buddhists, free Christians or free Shintoists. They are people who stress tradition at all costs in planning the free development of their existing religions. But it is the tendency among the majority of Free Religionists not to be satisfied with existing religions. Then they want to build new traditions. While they respect existing religions, they are trying to develop a new viewpoint. So Free Religion often exists within existing religions. In general, there is a tendency for such people to overcome this problem. If they can transcend this, it becomes a new religion, rather than becoming one new faction in the existing religion. It indicates that a great universal religion is entering a new

active phase even though it is an existing faction inside an existing religion.



## A VIEWPOINT ON FREE RELIGION

25th Anniversary of the Japanese Free Religious Association (JFRA), November 3, 1973



Celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Japan Free Religions Association (JFRA) today, I remember three great leaders: Rev. Shigetaro Akashi, Dr. Masaharu Anesaki and Dr. Junzo Naruse. Rev. Akashi devoted himself to organizing the JFRA in Oct. 17, 1948. Before the JFRA was organized, however, there was Tokyo Kiitsu Kyōkai working as a pioneer of the Free Religions Movement. Tokyo Kiitsu Kyōkai (TKK) was founded by Dr. Anesaki, professor of Tokyo Imperial University (TIU) and Dr. Naruse, President of Japan Women College. Owing to the direct and indirect support and assistance of the three leaders, the JFRA has been working on, so that we have to thank them on this occasion of 25th Anniversary of the JFRA and try to be their good followers, I think.

I would like to tell them and you now about my viewpoints which I have fostered over the past 25 years. Would you criticize me open-mindedly, please.

I was brought up in a family of enthusiastic followers of Buddhism (Shin sect). I was baptized in the fourth year of middle school in the old education system in Japan. After graduating from TIU, I worked as a minister of Christian church for three years. Some old friends of mine still believe me now to be a Christian. When I was the minister, I met Tenko Nishida of Itto-en. Ever since, I have been deeply influenced by him and Buddhism. At the same time I learned the method of Quiet Sitting or Seiza-Ho by Mr. Torajiro Okada, founder of the way, for about ten years. In fact, it was like Zazen for me. Since Showa 7 [1932] (through Showa 15 [1940]), for about ten years, I eagerly studied Shintoism, Shrine

Shinto and Japanese culture with J. W. T. Mason, an American journalist and Shintoist. Even now, when I happen to be among Buddhists and Shinto priests, coming back I feel at home. But I never take off my Christianity. I do not feel it to be a contradiction to be a Christian, a Buddhist, and a Shintoist at the same time. The three are not the one, however, having quite different characteristics and individualities, but all of them exist in me, supplementary to each other.

No one religion can monopolize Truth, I think. No particular religion or a sect of religion can express itself as the final embodiment of religious Truth. A believer of a particular religion should always try to transcend it, yet believing in it. Thus I have concluded that Free Religion should not take the place of a particular religion. Free Religion is a natural and idealistic vitality and dynamism which can be expressed in a particular religion. Jesus taught his disciples, saying that “you who would believe in me should do the same thing, or more than I have done, because I would go to my Father.” He taught them they should transcend him.

Shakyamuni, too, taught his disciples that they should keep two lights: Self and Dharma, after his death, and that they should not enshrine him as God. The founders of Christianity and Buddhism were Free Religionists who wanted their disciples to transcend their teachers. I can say the same thing, in true education students will transcend their teachers.

What can I do, then, with my spiritual pilgrimage and faith? Firstly, I have to interchange opinions with other religious groups. As I have said, however excellent religion may be, no one can monopolize the TRUTH, nor express the ultimate END. That is the reason why religions should co-exist and interchange with one

another. Some people think self-righteousness and fanaticism are characteristics of religion. But I never agree with them. Other people try only to co-operate tolerantly and liberally with other religions, with the activities of world peace movement and social welfare campaign, etc., not for religion itself. They are inconsistent. It is most important to interchange religion itself with one another and to debate about it among ourselves. I will never avoid controversy or conflict in the process on researching TRUTH. I appreciate, of course, that the World Religions Peace Movement is more and more active recently, but the first thing to do is interchange religion itself. I thought it was quite pertinent that the "Debate on World Religion" department was set up in the International Free Religion Association in 1967.

It is wrong, and a misunderstanding, when some people criticize Free Religion by saying it tries, in the long run, to unite religions through interchanging. But I say, various religions and religious groups have naturally arisen under different conditions historically and geographically, etc.. Anyway, religion has not come first, but human-being. Religion was made by human beings for human beings.

Secondly, I have to consider very seriously the good news for the community. Religion is not only for individual salvation. A person can live in a community. As only an abstract idea, an individual person is alone. The whole community should be saved for true individual salvation. Religion should save an individual human being as well as community: there should never be the first and second: both the individual and community must be saved at the same time. The 18th desire of Hozo-Bosatsu says, "As long as all individuals are not saved, the Buddhist Saint will not get enlightened."

Thirdly, I respect laymen. Generally speaking, it is said that religion is sacred and that politics, economy, culture and so on are secular. But there is no essential difference between them, in my view. Human nature is sacred by origin. Every activity to achieve human nature is sacred, just the same as there is no rank high and low in profession. Everything is sacred.

Remember the nation-wide movement for the defence of the Constitution of Imperial Japan in the 1910's, when Taro Katsura, the Grand Chamberlain and the Minister of Home Affairs, organized the Cabinet, hiding himself behind the powerful Emperor's virtue and influence. In the midst of the movement the Imperial Diet was in session — when Gakudo Ozaki impeached T. Katsura thoroughly for the immorality of his political behaviour in Court and Government — the Katsura Cabinet was toppled. I clearly remember now his eloquent impeachment address. I do not think of it as a secular act, but a sacred act in order to save Japan. Ozaki was praised as the god of politics in those days. I agree with them.

In general, economy seems to be more secular than politics. But I do not think so either. Here is a good example to tell you, an episode of Kihachiro Okura, an economist who worked in the Meiji and later eras in Japan. One day, Taro Yamashita visited Okura to borrow money. At that moment Okura said, “Why do you, such an able young man, ask an old man like this, to lend you money? I will lend you money, as much as you want, but answer me a question: Are you going to stop being Taro Yamashita and become Kihachiro Okura?” Yamashita was suddenly awakened as if shocked by electricity, and he withdrew his proposal. Instead of receiving money he took back his own Self. Later he was a successful president of Yamashita Ship Company. Okura was not a religionist,

but he awakened Yamashita with his wisdom, deeply gained through his life-long serious experience. His great leadership to Yamashita was far beyond that of a minister's or a priest's sermon. Every human activity, such as economy, politics, education and art etc., is sacred, because human life itself is sacred. He who is aware of himself as a human being, is a Free Religionist, whether he wills to be or not. He, who persists in life-long education, who tries to be educated in every aspect and period of human life, is just like a Free Religionist who thinks every human activity is sacred — that is his process to find the Truth. School education is more effective than others, the same as religious education at the traditional ready-made institutions, such as churches, temples, shrines, etc. in general. But I do not stick to them, as I am a free thinker.

Fourthly, I do not agree with the Hell-and-Heaven theory. I never believed in God or gods in order to be saved in the future world nor do I do good acts for the fear of the Last Judgement. For me there are hell and paradise in this present world. I cannot imagine greater joy in paradise than in this world, nor would I desire one, because I live here seriously doing my best. Hell is tragedy in this world, I think. And, I suppose, those who have already entered the paradise in this world would be in Heavenly Paradise, too, if it were there.

In this connection, I would like to speak about “Eternal Life.” I do not know whether individual consciousness lives on after death, or not. I cannot affirm the eternity of soul, nor deny it. But, as Confucius said, I should say, “I would gladly die in the evening, when I could have learned the Way of Life in the morning.” Could I live, vividly fulfilled today, I could, I believe, live Eternal Life today. I will live Eternal Life in my day-to-day life, whether there will be next world after death, or not.

Lastly, I would like to speak about God. In short, I should be free from God as a free thinker. In “Paradise Lost” by Milton, Satan seemed to cry, “Enjoy freedom in Hell, rather than to be slave of God in Heaven.” From the view-point of a Free Religionist, such an Almighty God or Creator, who treated human beings as his slaves, has already died. In the awakened free Self of Milton, I can find true God for a free thinker.

I can see God in the light of Self Consciousness, which Kant praised as the most beautiful thing in the world, just like starlight in the universe. Researching deeply into human nature, I find God beyond human nature as it is. What is the more, God is my own Self. It is the true Self beyond myself. It is the resource, the original power of my autonomy and creativity. A Buddhist might call this “Seeing Nature, Attaining Buddhahood.” God and humanity are one, not two. I believe Self is not only my autonomy but also universal autonomy.

## WHO IS CHRIST?

**S**trange as it may sound, I have met three Christs. First, I have met Christ who was born as a carpenter's son about 2000 years ago in Bethlehem, Israel. He was baptised by John the baptist and became conscious of his mission as God's son. After retreating to the wilderness and being tempted by Satan 40 days, he began to preach "Repent; for the Kingdom of Heaven is upon you" (Matthew 4:17) in spite of the fact that "Foxes have their holes, the birds their roosts; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head" (Matthew 7:20). He gave the golden rule and many other immutable maxims. Although he declared "I have conquered the world" (John 16:33), he was crucified in the end.

The apostle Paul introduces another Christ. Paul was originally a violent persecutor of Christians and had not seen Christ in person. Therefore his views on Christ are quite unique as follows:

"I betrothed you to Christ, thinking to present you as a chaste virgin to her true and only husband" (2 Corinthians 11:2), "and that is how Christ treats the church, because it is his body, of which we are living parts." (Ephesians 5:29-30). Christ said the same: "I am the vine, and you are the branches" (John 15:5). In short, according to the apostle Paul, Christ is a church consisting of him and his disciples. Therefore, I think the story of a prodigal son in the 15th chapter of St. Luke's Gospel is an excellent explanation of it. The father did not save the prodigal son because he himself was quite worried, just the same as his son. When the son was saved by coming home, the father was saved. Both son and father were saved simultaneously by the son's homecoming.

Christ is more than individual or corporate. The author of St. John's Gospel teaches us one more Christ as follows:

“Your father Abraham was overjoyed to see my day; he saw it and was glad. The Jews protested, ‘You are not yet 50 years old. How can you have seen Abraham?’ Jesus said, ‘In very truth I tell you before Abraham was born, I am’” (John 8:56-58).

“So the Word became flesh; he came to dwell among us, and we saw his glory, such glory as befits the Father’s only Son, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).

According to the author of St. John’s Gospel, Christ is super-historic, eternal and spiritual. If so, Christ must have been not only before Abraham was, but in the days of Socrates, Gautama, and Confucius. Because Socrates, Gautama, and Confucius saved the people of their days, they must have been Christ.

This reminds me of a true story concerning a discussion between a missionary and a Buddhist in the Meiji era. The Buddhist asked the missionary “My parents were earnest and ardent Buddhists and died without the chance to learn Christianity. Where are they now, in paradise or in hell?” The missionary answered “They are in hell, of course.” The Buddhist said “I will never be converted to Christianity. As you say, if there is truly a hell and my parents are there, I am very anxious to go to hell to see my parents and renew our ideal home life there. Then this hell will become paradise.”

Isn’t this a thought-provoking story? While the missionary did not know the spiritual, eternal and universal Christ, the Buddhist did not know the historical Christ, but believed in Amitabha, i.e. Eternal Buddha. And I think the Eternal Buddha is no one else but the Eternal Christ. Christ exists everywhere and at any time. I am convinced that Christ is born here today. Let us, therefore, celebrate Christ’s birth here within each of us just at this moment.



## SPEECH TO IARF CONGRESS (1969)

Morning Devotion, July 16, 1969

**I** have been an ordained Minister for the past 60 years. I do not, however, believe that I have been a full-fledged Minister. I have been a Principal of a high school for more than 35 years. But, I do not believe I have been a full-fledged Educator. Although I taught History of Christianity and Comparative Religions in several universities for about 20 years, I do not believe I have been a full-fledged Scholar. I have been an amateur, a mediocre and naive man. This morning, therefore, I cannot tell you anything except by briefly telling you about my religious career and spiritual pilgrimage.

I was born in 1881, and was brought up in a Buddhist family. My conscious religious life began, however, when I was baptized in an Episcopal Church at the age of 17, while still a high school boy. In those days (1898) in Japan, Christianity was taken for a religion of devils, and Christians were taken for traitors to the State. The fact that I was baptized, therefore, was a great shock to my parents. My father seriously considered exiling me from the parental roof. My mother was more lenient than my father, but it saddened her more. Recollecting this incident of almost seventy years ago, I think it became the motive power that later on, as the general secretary of the Japan Council for Inter-faith Co-operation, made me work towards finding solutions to inter-faith problems.

Soon after I entered college I began to doubt the historicity of the New Testament story concerning Jesus' life and the validity of orthodox Christian Doctrine. I moved, therefore, to a Congregational Church that was quite liberal.

After graduating from Tokyo University, in 1906, I took a position as Minister of a Congregational Church in the city of Kobe. But after three years service, I resigned. The main reason was that I became unable to try to proselytize Buddhists and Shintoists into Christianity. I began to think that the mission of a Minister was not to proselytize, but to help make people more honest believers in their own religions.

It was 1915 and 1916 that I studied at Harvard, when Professor Fenn was Dean, and Professor Foote was secretary of the Divinity School. A former President of the Unitarian Association, Frederic May Eliot, was in the same class. If you will allow me to say this, it was due to these circumstances that I later became a fully-fledged Unitarian.

Soon after World War II, in 1948, nine religious liberals (among whom you will be interested to find an American Minister, John N. Booth) started the Japan Free Religious Association. We have not called it Unitarian because we intended to graduate even from Unitarianism. This does not, of course, mean that we make light of Christianity or Unitarianism. On the contrary, we appreciate Christianity and Unitarianism much more than before. I came to the conclusion that Christianity and Unitarianism have not monopolized and exhausted Religious Truth. We must aspire to something beyond Christianity and Unitarianism.

In this connection, I cannot help but recall two books which influenced me most in my whole life. One is Dean Inge's "Christian Mysticism" which, strange to say, introduced me to Buddhism, Zen in particular. The other is Dr. John Haynes Holmes' "New Churches for Old." Thanks to his idea of a Community Church, I was awakened to recognize that this has been the fundamental idea of Shinto, too. I am fully convinced that

Holmes' book suggests the only way in which Shinto becomes relevant to the present needs of Japan.

In connection with Shinto, I must not omit telling you that, about ten years before World War II, I studied Shinto with a New York journalist, J. W. T. Mason, who was very much fascinated by Shinto, and became a Shintoist himself. When he died in New York in 1942, his ashes were brought to Japan to be buried in the Tama Cemetery in Tokyo, although it was at a time when the U.S. and Japan were at war with one another. Strange to say, again, that it was an American journalist who introduced me to Shinto, the heart of Japan.

In closing, please allow me to call upon my friend and colleague, Reverend Nakagawa, a Shinto Priest in Tokyo, to sing a Shinto hymn, a poem to peace composed by the Emperor Meiji. It is quite interesting to note that this poem moved President Theodore Roosevelt so intensely that he decided to act as arbitrator between Russia and Japan at the Peace Conference in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, in 1905. In translation, the poem reads as follows:

It was our hope  
That all the world's oceans  
Were joined in peace  
So why do the winds and waves  
Now rise up in angry rage?

Let us pray:

May we all be persistent in a free, creative, and universal faith, and go forward for the purpose of realizing the Kingdom of God, or Pure Land of Buddha, that is nothing but the Ideal Community.  
Amen.



Dr. IMAOKA Shin'ichirō at 105, century-old sage and prophet