

YAMAGUCHI Aki 山口亜紀

Religious Universalism in Modern Japan

Unitarians as Mediators Between Intellectuals and the West

At the outset of the modern nation-state in the early part of the Meiji period (1880s to 1890s), Japanese intellectuals engaged in serious discussions concerning the spiritual restoration of the country. They envisioned a reorganization of Japanese religious traditions that had fallen apart into various sects of Buddhist and Shinto traditions along with folk practices. As they sought to reorganize Japanese religious traditions with a more universalist outlook, the opinion leaders of the day, such as Fukuzawa Yukichi, Yano Fumio, Nakamura Masanao, Katō Hiroyuki, and Sugiura Shigetake were in sympathy with the Unitarianism that was introduced into Japan at that time. While they began to understand “religion” as a pillar of the modern nation-state, they expected that Unitarians would make contributions to social development and national unity as mediators with universalistic perspectives. Yet, their understanding of the Unitarian type of universalism was, by and large, intricately connected with nationalism.

KEYWORDS: modernization – nationalism – national morality – “religion” – Unitarianism – universalism

Yamaguchi Aki is a Junior Research Fellow at the Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture.

THE JAPANESE were abruptly thrust into a tumultuous age in the latter half of the nineteenth century and awoke to the far more advanced civilization and the imperialism of the West, including its notion of “religion,” which seemed to the Japanese as an essential part of the modern nation-state. Intellectuals of the early half of the Meiji period (1880s to 1890s) wooed the American Unitarians as a model for mediating what the Japanese took to be modern, that is, the universal values of being rational and moral. Yet, the honeymoon was shortlived, and soon the Japanese opted for their own nationalist and imperialist path.

In this presentation, I will focus on the Japanese intellectuals’ view on morals and “religion,” which arose in sympathy with the Unitarian type of universalism, with social Darwinism, and with the then worldwide trend of religion-wide ecumenism, as typified by the World Parliament of Religions held in 1893.

The ensuing discussion has five sections. First, I will consider historical reasons why Unitarianism was regarded with favor among intellectuals in Japan at that point. There seem to have been political and cultural contexts in which they understood “religion” as a necessity for the sake of their national administration. Those contexts will be covered in the first section. The second section will deal with the Unitarian Mission in Japan since 1887. The third and fourth sections will explore Japanese intellectuals’ sympathy with the Unitarian type of universalism, and the drift of their principles for national unity toward “national morality.” The fifth section will deal with the reinterpretation of Christianity in the climate of nationalism.

The Meiji Restoration and “Religion”

During a large part of the decade between 1880 and 1890, the Japanese leaders, fired by a strong zeal of the “turn to the West,” seemed intent on a complete Westernization. There was at that time a rapidly increasing favor shown to Christianity. Among some intellectuals, of whom Fukuzawa Yukichi 福沢諭吉 (1835–1901) was an opinion leader, a movement was created in 1884 for the acceptance of the Christian religion by the nation of Japan. That year Fukuzawa published an essay in *Jiji shinpō* 時事新報 on 6–7 June entitled *Shūkyō mo mata seiyōfū ni shitagawazaru o ezu* 宗教もまた西洋風に従わざるを得ず (“The adoption of the Western religion is necessary”).¹ First, he spoke of the way in which

1. Fukuzawa’s essay is in FUKUZAWA (1960, vol. 9, pp. 529–36). *Jiji shinpō* was a newspaper founded in 1882 by Fukuzawa Yukichi. His editorial policy was politically nonpartisan.

some animals protect themselves from danger by taking on the color of their surroundings, and then added:

The civilized nations of Europe and America have always held that non-Christian countries could not be treated as enlightened nations. Such being the case, if we desire to maintain our intercourse with Western nations on the basis of international law, it is first of all absolutely necessary that we remove completely the stigma from our land of being an anti-Christian country, and obtain the recognition of fellowship by the adoption of their social color.... To yield to enlightenment and to adopt civilized manners would not by any means indicate the policy of a sycophant, but simply a policy of self-defense by adopting the protective color of civilization among civilized nations.... Looked at from this point, it would appear that we ought to adopt a religion which, prevailing in Europe and America, exerts so considerable an influence over human affairs and social intercourse, so that our country may become a part of Christendom, presenting the same social appearance as Western powers.

(translation in *The Japan Weekly Mail*,² 12 July 1884, pp. 375–76)

Fukuzawa's argument was not suggesting the adoption of Christianity from the standpoint of a private individual, but for promoting the national interest, social intercourse, and expectation of good effects brought to society and education through collective adoption.

Not only did Fukuzawa applaud the sentiments that were expressed, but other leaders in their own speeches said that Japan could not hope to rank with Western nations until it possessed their religion, and the most urgent thing is how the Japanese can be made to seem moral. Thus they understood "religion" as a necessity for the sake of their national administration.

Nevertheless, most of these intellectuals could not accept the supernatural ideas implicit in Christian thought. An example of this was reflected in remarks by Kaneko Kentarō 金子堅太郎 (1853–1942), Secretary of the Privy Council, in an interview with American Unitarian Association, which was reported in full in *The Christian Register*, a paper published in Boston by the Association. Kaneko had been sent to America and Europe to examine the parliamentary systems of different countries. He made the following remarks about missionaries:

Then the era of Imperial Restoration came, and with it came the European civilization—science, philosophy, law, politics. With it also came the missionaries; Roman Catholic as well as Protestant; but neither of them had a chance to penetrate into the upper classes at all.... The upper classes, both politically and socially, studied the development of civilization and science, read a great deal of Spencer, Huxley, Darwin, and other leaders of the modern intellect....

2. *The Japan Weekly Mail*, a political, commercial, and literary journal, was published in Yokohama from 1870 to 1917.

When they (the missionaries) say that we were in a perfect state before our parents committed sin, and we are in a bad state now, the educated Japanese replies that Darwin and Spencer say no such thing. We have grown from a rude nature to a more perfect organism. Science shows this in every branch, whether in botany, zoology, or entomology. It is true, also, of humanity. And so the missionary idea has never penetrated the upper classes.

(*The Christian Register*, 5 September 1889, p. 570)

The rate of adopting Christianity seems to have been much slower than it had been before the reaction against the acceptance of Western civilization had set in. Furthermore, in 1891, Inoue Tetsujirō 井上哲次郎 (1855–1944), a professor of philosophy at the Imperial University, launched a severe attack on Christianity. This attack was based on the idea that Christians denied love of country and Emperor, and were not willing to follow the moral teaching prescribed by the Rescript on Education.³

During the 1880s, the Christian churches in Japan denied the importance of differences between denominations and placed an emphasis on administrative and economic independence from foreign churches. In 1883 these Christians united with others to form the first Kumiai (Congregational) body that was organized in Tokyo. This was followed by a union of the United Church of Christ in Japan and the Congregational Churches in 1886. In 1887 each decided to hold its annual meeting in Tokyo. At these meetings a joint committee was appointed which drew up a general plan embodying a basis for union. In 1890, however, that attempt eventually resulted in failure.

The Unitarian Mission in Japan

In the midst of this confusion, the mission of the American Unitarian Association held an important place in the religious influences operative in Japan. This mission was established in answer to requests from some prominent Japanese, and was directed by methods which gave it a distinctive character. A short time later (in 1886), Yano Fumio 矢野文雄 (1850–1931), who had been closely associated with Fukuzawa Yukichi, upon returning from a stay in England, set forth, in some noteworthy newspaper articles, Christianity as the only means of moral salvation for his country. At this point Yano recommended Unitarianism as that form of Christianity in which essential Christianity is freed from supernaturalism (*Shūyūzakki ge*: “*Shūkyō dōtoku no bu*” 周遊雜記下「宗教道德の

3. See SUZUKI 1979, pp. 100–103. His criticism of “religion” (especially Christianity) was clarified in an article entitled *Teishitsu to shūkyō no kankei* 帝室と宗教の關係 (“The Relation between the Imperial Household and Religion”) and in an interview entitled *Kokka to shūkyō no shōtotsu* 国家と宗教の衝突 (“The Conflict between State and Christianity”), published in *Kyōiku jiron* 教育時論, January 1891 and November 1892 respectively. Several Christians responded to his argument, which led to a heated discussion. Another article by Inoue, *Kyōiku toshūkyō no shōtotsu* 教育と宗教の衝突 (“The Conflict Between Education and Religion”), published in January 1893, continued the debate.

部」) published in *Yūbinhōchi Shinbun* 郵便報知新聞 on 7–9 October 1886.⁴ Other public leaders, including Kaneko Kentarō, Nakamura Masanao 中村正直 (1832–1891), Mori Arinori 森有礼 (1847–1889), Katō Hiroyuki 加藤弘之 (1836–1916), and Sugiura Shigetake 杉浦重剛 (1855–1924), at about the same time had much to say in favor of Christianity in rationalized forms. From these circles suggestions were made to the American Unitarian Association to send representatives to Japan to draw on this growing liberalism. In compliance with these suggestions, Arthur May Knapp (1841–1921) was commissioned to Japan in 1887. Knapp was cordially welcomed by many religious liberals.

Although it is difficult to state any fixed creed and say that it represents the belief of all or most Unitarians, in general Unitarians emphasize the unity of God, and believe that the moral and religious teaching of Jesus is higher and more complete than otherwise known in the world, while never finding in him in any sense a revelation of God. They have largely taken up the position of the nondenominational movement. They strive to follow the guidance of science and philosophy and to discover their truth. Knapp said, however, that Unitarian emphasis had previously been laid on the Divine Unity, but now Unitarian interest was no longer a theological but a humanitarian interest. Their new emphasis was focused upon the idea of the Unity of Man (*The Japan Weekly Mail*, 15 March 1890, p. 272).

Unitarian missionaries first began spreading the message of the Unitarians to the people of Japan through lectures and correspondence, in interviews, and through the press. The mission was organized around publications and education, rather than through church extension. Knapp was definitely critical of the methods of other missionaries.

The First Unitarian Church of Tokyo came into existence in 1890, and numerous domestic agencies for promoting public lectures were arranged, along with the distribution of Unitarian literature. A magazine, *Yunitarian*, began publication in the spring of the same year, consisting of lectures on religious, ethical, and social science topics.⁵

The Unitarian Mission was not considered by the Japanese intellectuals as classed with the other missionary organizations of Christendom. Its dominant purpose was not the teaching of a fixed or authoritative body of doctrine, or the reproduction among the Japanese of a specific system of ecclesiastical organization and government. When the mission was established, its founders stated that its aim would be to “express the sympathy of the Unitarians of America for progressive religious movements in Japan and give all necessary information to

4. This essay can be found in ŌITA KENRITSU SENTETSU SHIRYŌKAN, vol. 3, pp. 405–408 *Yūbinhōchi shinbun* was a newspaper founded in 1872 by Maejima Hisoka 前島密 and others, and was published by Hōchisha. It was a prominent voice for the freedom and people's rights movement (*Jiyū minken undō* 自由民権運動) in the 1870s and early 1880s.

5. Unitarian monthly journal published by the Nihon Yunitarian Kyōkai 日本ゆにてりあん協会.

the leaders of religious thought and action in that country” (NIHON YUNITERIAN KŌDŌKAI 1900, p. 4). In consequence of this purpose, the workers in this mission sought to discover, to encourage, and to cooperate with, any church, association, group of persons, or with individuals, irrespective of form of religion, sect, or personal belief, that might wish to know the most mature and advanced thought of Christendom about any of the higher or spiritual problems and interest of man. Knapp declared:

The errand of Unitarianism in Japan is based upon the now familiar idea of the “sympathy of religions.” With the conviction that we are messengers of distinctive and valuable truths which have not here been emphasized, and that in return there is much in your faith and life which to our harm we have not emphasized, receive us not as theological propagandists but as messengers of the new gospel of human brotherhood in the religious life of mankind.

(NIHON YUNITERIAN KŌDŌKAI 1900, p. 5)

Clay MacCauley (1843–1925), a Unitarian missionary who accompanied Knapp, described the Unitarian aim in Japan:

Unitarianism has not come to Japan to destroy but to fulfill. Unitarianism is here to set men free, or rather to help the free minds of Japan to set all minds free in spirit, and to hasten the coming in the world, as far as may be, of the sublime empire of love and righteousness which will at last make of humanity a true brotherhood under the care of the infinite and eternal God, our Father.

(MACCAULEY 1914, p. 508)

Unitarians encouraged leaders of religious thought, including Buddhists, to gather for discussions and to promote the comparative study of religion, in order to cooperate to pursue the universal truth. They believed that such an attempt was to have an effect for the highest good for their whole career as a people and as a nation.

Japanese Intellectuals and Universalism

The Unitarian mission stood apart from the other Christian missions. Unitarians had attracted great attention from Japanese opinion leaders. Yet, this success did not consist in establishing its church, but in the fact that Japanese opinion leaders conceived of Unitarianism as a “moral power” and as a “social force” that would prompt Japanese civilization to progress as a nation state.

Ernest F. Fenollosa, who sympathized with the Unitarian mission and in various ways gave it his aid, wrote:

[U]ntil recently, the leaders of Japanese thought have been quite indifferent to the whole question of religion. To them Christianity, equally with Buddhism, was puerile superstition, and quite naturally, since, on the one hand, while

ignorant of the deeper philosophy of Buddhism, they knew only its priests; on the other, while ignorant of the higher possibilities of Christianity, they heard only its missionaries. But the attempt which, turning away in disgust, they made to found the life of a new nation in pure rationalism they are just now coming to recognize as futile. The necessity of some religion as the source of principles and sanctions they have learned by experience to acknowledge. But, on the one hand, they cannot at once go back to Buddhism, since that for the moment, whether rightly or wrongly, is associated with ultra-conservatism; while, on the other, they refuse with wry faces to swallow the missionary pill. In the dilemma Mr. Knapp came along with the offer of a new kind of a religion, sweet and easy to take, something real and practical because workable in our best communities, based on science and advanced philosophic thought instead of tradition, and liberal enough to accommodate itself to all classes of views and predisposition.⁶

What has already been said of the views expressed by Kaneko Kentarō and other opinion leaders shows that many Japanese intellectuals were prepared to regard with favor a form of Christianity that minimized supernatural elements. They thought it was impossible to build on Buddhism a new religion that would satisfy modern ideas and the modern needs of thoughtful Japanese. On the other hand, they did not find the philosophy or the religion they wanted when they turned to the missionaries. They had found nothing, except Unitarianism, that seemed to advance the Japanese in a religious way.⁷ The vision expressed by Unitarians enabled the Japanese intellectuals to appreciate the utility of “religion” for social development and national unity, and to understand “religion” as a pillar of a nation-state.

In 1890 a banquet was given in the Rokumeikan to celebrate the founding of *Yunitarian*, the Unitarian magazine. It is reported that among those present were the Vice-Minister of State for Education, the President of the Imperial University, the leaders of the moral movement among the Japanese students, such as Sugiura Shigetake, and the editors of nearly all the principal journals and periodicals (“Unitarian Banquet,” *The Japan Weekly Mail*, 15 March 1890, p. 272).

Watanabe Kōki 渡辺洪基 (1847–1901), President of the Imperial University, said that he did not doubt that when human intelligence had been sufficiently developed, and the science of morals fully studied, there would be found some great solvent, capable of fusing all creeds into a single faith and bringing the whole human race into one family. Within the narrow circle of his own native place there were to be seen innumerable diversities of features and ideas, yet he observed that certain occasions could unite these folks who are otherwise so unlike, and could give prominence to the common elements of their characters.

6. Fenollosa's letter to Batchelor (a member of AUA), 5 June 1889, is in KIYOOKA 1983, p. 40.

7. See Kaneko's interview in *The Christian Register*, 5 September 1889.

The President of the Imperial University insisted that Japan had successfully accomplished a complete reform of its condition after feudal days, and “the nation united into a compact whole” (*The Japan Weekly Mail*, 15 March 1890, p. 274). On the other hand, he said that there remained still something to be accomplished, and for that reason he welcomed Unitarianism. According to the article in *The Japan Weekly Mail* mentioned above, he did not speak concerning its merits as a religious creed, but he entirely sympathized with its broad liberalism and philanthropy, and he trusted that it would prove an additional force to weld the Japanese people together and unite their minds upon the common purpose of national development.

At about the same time there was a call for people to reflect on the “turn to the West,” in various realms such as journalism, literature, as well as the arts of the day. It is noteworthy that a tendency toward universalistic vision was seen even in that movement. A movement, what would later be called “nationalism” (*kokusuishugi* 国粹主義), had arisen with the slogan to advocate the preservation of the best in Japanese tradition. The leaders of the movement, including Shiga Shigetaka 志賀重昂 and Miyake Setsurei 三宅雪嶺, organized an association, *Seikyōsha* 政教社.⁸ They reconsidered the meaning of Japanese identity. What was of value in Japanese civilization could be comprehended and appreciated through reaching a concord of a diversity of cultures, while the Japanese who reembraced their native land insisted that they should preserve the best in Japan’s tradition, which was integral to allegiance to their ancestors. At about this time, Okakura Kakuzō 岡倉覚三 (1862–1913) attempted to build an art school to restore traditional Japanese art. Afterward, Okakura wrote *The Ideals of the East with Special Reference to the Art of Japan* (OKAKURA 1970). Against the tide of “classification” which surged from the West, he insisted that Asia is one, claiming that “it must be a renewal of self-consciousness that shall build up Asia again into her ancient steadfastness and strength.” Finally, he concluded that we knew instinctively that there was the “spring of renewal” hidden in our history (p. 241). Thus he tried to seek Japanese identity in that spirit.

The nationalistic appeals represented here seem to have aroused sympathy with most Japanese intellectuals. They, on one hand, regarded the diversity of different cultures that different nations have, and, on the other hand, found their identity in harmony and unification. It was about the same time that the Unitarian type of universalism aroused sympathy among Japanese opinion leaders. As the spirit of the age was almost smothered with a nationalistic sentiment, however, they began to diverge from a universalistic outlook. Instead, their attention turned from “religion” to “national morality,” in line with the government principles.

8. This association had appealed for national identity, making literature their principal channel of discussion, through publications such as *Nihonjin* 日本人 (a journal published twice a month from 1888 that advocated nationalistic ideas) and *Nihon* 日本 (a newspaper published from 1889).

The Emergence of Nationalism and “Religion”

Inoue Kowashi 井上 毅 (1843–1895), one of the Meiji leaders, submitted a political program to the government in which he outlined the educational policies that he thought the state should adopt. Then Inoue and his fellow scholar Motoda Nagazane 元田永孚 (1818–1891) drafted the Imperial Rescript on Education, which was promulgated in 1890. They did not uphold national unity by means of a “religion,” but a morality stressing virtues such as loyalty to the ruler, love of nation, and allegiance to superiors.

These virtues appealed deeply to feelings traditionally held by the people. Moreover, the Rescript asserts that the Japanese people have always been united, and from generation to generation have illustrated the beauty of those virtues. This implied that national unity and the source of national morality could be traced back to their own history, and did not have to be based on a “religion.”

The Rescript did not assert that Japanese traditions were universal principles. Rather, it declared that virtues regarded as universal in nature really conformed to the Japanese traditional morality inherited from generation to generation throughout their history. Eventually, that morality came to be conceived as a transhistorical and everlasting national spirit, which would never be eroded by any external pressure.

As mentioned above, Inoue Tetsujirō’s rejection of Christianity involved a criticism of the Christian doctrines of monotheism and universal love, which were thought to be incompatible with loyalty and patriotism. On the other hand, he regarded not only Christianity but also the rest of the established religions as insufficient to handle moral and educational issues. However, he began to appreciate the value of Buddhist philosophy while he was influenced by German philosophy, evolutionism, and Confucianism. His thinking eventually ranged over an argument of an ideal religion (*risōkyō* 理想教), which would be possible if Buddhism absorbed Western philosophy, and was harmonized with Christianity. To him this involved a harmonization of the civilizations of East and West. He found Japan’s singular vocation to be that Japan should arrange a marriage between them (SUEKI 2004, pp. 82–85). Thus Inoue’s argument consistently developed from the standpoint of national morality (*kokumin dōtoku* 国民道徳), nationalism, and the national polity.

In such a climate of strengthening the national morality, it seemed that Japanese opinion leaders lost interest in the Unitarian mission. Coincidentally, at about the same time (in the winter of 1890), Knapp, on account of failing health, resigned his position in the mission and returned to America. Soon afterwards, other associates of the mission withdrew, so that MacCauley was left alone. That was followed by a decrease in the mission’s operations.

Reinterpretation of Christianity and Self-Cultivation

At the same time, however, there was a notable movement for the reinterpretation of Christianity by leading intellectual figures of the day, such as Yokoi Tokio 横井時雄 (1857–1927) and Matsumura Kaiseki 松村介石 (1859–1939). Yokoi declared that the Christianity about to spring up in the East must stand on “the pedestal formed out of the religion of Buddha and the Confucian philosophy” (see *Nihon shōrai no Kirisutokyō* 日本将来の基督教 “The Future Christianity of Japan,” *Rikugō Zasshi* 六合雜誌 114, June 1890, pp. 1–6).⁹ He also contributed an interesting article on the future Christianity in Japan to *Rikugō zasshi*, under the heading *Nihon ni okeru Kirisutokyō hattatsu no hōshin* 日本に於ける基督教發達の方針 (“The Tendency of Japanese Christianity”). In the first place, he observed, the Christianity that was to be preached to the Japanese must be simple. It meant that men must follow Christ as his original disciples followed him. He wrote, “We beseech the preachers of Christianity not to worry us with formidable articles of faith, with difficult dogmas of theology, and with complicated ceremonies of worship.... Do not initiate us into the secrets of sectarian strife” (*Rikugō zasshi* 116, August 1890, pp. 10–16; translation in *The Japan Weekly Mail*, 27 September 1890). Yokoi thus considered that the first requirement of Japanese Christianity should be freedom from all the dogmatic theology that had gradually grown around the religion over nineteen centuries. In the second place, he emphasized, it was pernicious to introduce into Japan, and to fetter the Japanese mind with, theology, customs, and sects that owe their origins and developments to the particular histories and characters of different foreign nations. While protesting against the indiscriminate introduction of foreign theology, customs, and sects, he also admitted that the introduction of Christianity could not but lead to the development of a theology and customs of a Japanese kind, and expected that these would, when brought to maturity, be more or less different from those of the West. According to Yokoi, such theology and customs should be genuine products of the Japanese mind. Yokoi called attention to the fact that Japan was struggling to forge a new career for itself; that it was endeavoring to find its place among the nations of the world. Further, he argued that Christianity should be consistent with a development of the idea of the Japanese nation (YOKOI 1894, pp. 193–202).

Matsumura Kaiseki also called attention to a new philosophical perspective to integrate the spiritual wisdom of East and West through the encounter with leaders like Kanamori Michitomo 金森通倫, who advocated what would be called the new theology; a more rational and humanitarian interpretation of Christian tradition, introduced from Europe in the middle of the Meiji era

9. Yokoi was a friend of Inoue Tetsujirō, although he was a Christian. *Rikugō zasshi* was a Christian monthly journal founded in 1880 by Japanese Christian leaders, such as Uemura Masahisa 植村正久, Kozaki Hiromichi 小崎弘道, and Tamura Naomi 田村直臣.

(KANAMORI 1891, pp. 7–10). Then Matsumura began to conceive a Confucian version of Christianity from which to integrate the culture and ideas of East and West.¹⁰ He expressed the universal virtue including loyalty and patriotism, with the word *michi* 道 (the way).

Finally, they turned to find a new value in self-cultivation (*shūyō* 修養), rather than in the establishment of Japanese Christianity. After the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905), religious leaders were brought together in a common effort to support the government and strengthen the unity of the Japanese people. Some showed deep interest in a movement of self-cultivation consistent with the national morality, while taking a transreligious attitude.

A closer look at those articles reveals that there had been, simultaneously, two tides of nationalism among Meiji intellectuals: the attempt to make new universal values to harmonize and integrate the prevailing civilizations of East and West as Japan's singular contribution to the world, or to consolidate national individuality based on the national polity (*kokutai* 国体). These two tides oscillated, and then gradually converged into the latter.

Conclusion

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, the inherited religious traditions were unavoidably reorganized, as if they were put on trial. Shinto was treated as the national religion, to the extent that it contributed much to establishing emperor worship. Shinto and Buddhist priests were trained for the propagation of National Shinto (*kokka Shintō* 国家神道). At the same time, various forms of Christian thought (over two hundred Christian societies) from the West, including liberal theology, were introduced in Japan. Thus it was the age in which Japanese religiosity was given its greatest ever challenge. An interesting attempt along these lines was made by American Unitarian missionaries, whose interest was in building broader foundations than creed or sect, and demonstrating reason in religion, and science in theology (MACCAULEY 1914, p. 508).

Liberal theology and new ideas were introduced toward the end of the 1880s and soon made a decisive impact on Japanese churches, and also strongly influenced intellectuals of the day. American Unitarian missionaries introduced American liberal ideas to the intellectuals and showed them a form of Christianity that had attempted to be harmonized with liberal ideas, and sought to cooperate with any religious association or group of persons, irrespective of the form of religious sect or personal belief. They further expressed sympathy for progressive religious movements in Japan, while playing a vital role in developing the study of religion and religious cooperation in Japan.

10. Matsumura expressed his individual religious views in the magazine *Michi* 道 (The Way), 7 November 1908. *Michi* was the monthly journal of Nihon Kyōkai 日本教会 (the Church of Japan), which was organized by Matsumura to create a new Japanese Christianity.

It is notable that American Unitarian missionaries emphasized the idea of the Unity of Man, rather than the Unity of God, an idea about which Unitarians had previously disputed with care. It seemed that a modernist humanitarian interest surged up in the world of religion in Japan at that time.

As we have considered here, a honeymoon between the American Unitarian missionaries and Japanese intellectuals show how these intellectuals tried to adopt universal values from the modernistic vision (and also how difficult it was for them to understand), while struggling to find the Japan's place among the nations of the world. Their arguments, however, did not develop into the vision of universal humanism, but mostly converged with the idea of a national morality. It could be argued that their advocacy of universalist values was closely related to justifying a kind of ecumenism in which Japan would play a central role. Perhaps it was even related to the development, during World War II, of the idea of *hakkō ichiu* 八紘一宇 (“universal brotherhood”; “all eight corners of the world under one roof”).

In the meantime, the World's Parliament of Religions was held in connection with the World Fair in Chicago in 1893. The Parliament of Religions was an attempt to demonstrate what and how many important truths the various religions hold and teach in common, and to promote and deepen the spirit of human brotherhood among peoples of diverse faiths (BARROWS 1983, p. 18). The delegates from Japan apparently shared the mood of seeking to unite and cooperate in their confrontation with the problems and the need of a common front against materialism and irreligion.¹¹ In this process some individual Buddhists and Christians had contacts and even established various forms of cooperation. In 1896, this new climate of religious sympathy brought about an unprecedented conference convened by liberal Buddhists and Christians. The meeting was officially called the Conference of Religionists (Shūkyōka Kondankai 宗教家懇談会). The conference was organized as a social gathering for exchange of opinions concerning the future of religion in Japan. Not content to confine themselves to particular religions, some religious intellectuals even appealed for a synthesis beyond Buddhism and Christianity.

At the same time, the various forms of the universalistic inclination were found in even reactionary impulse against any pursuit of Western civilization that would be inconsistent with national individuality. Some of them attracted attention to the moral issues, rather than religion. This movement apparently sympathized with the Government principle that Shinto should not be regarded as a religion.

11. The official Buddhist delegates from Japan were Shaku Sōen 釈宗演 and Ashizu Jitsuzen 蘆津実全 of the Rinzai sect of Zen Buddhism, Toki Hōryū 土宜法龍 of Shingon Buddhism, and Yabuchi Banryū 八淵蟠龍 of the Honganji sect of Shin Buddhism. The Christian delegate was Kozaki Hiromichi 小崎弘道.

Finally, it is notable that Japanese intellectuals had felt some difficulty in understanding the concept of “religion.” As we have seen above, during the Meiji Restoration, “religion” was understood as a necessary element for national unity. “Religion,” however, was a completely novel concept to the Japanese. The conception was evolved in the rationalistic vision of the modern West, by which one religious outlook was seen as a pattern for ordering the data of observation, as a framework of ideas, or a worldview, or as an over-all ideological pattern. Japanese intellectuals attempted to accept the concept with that vision, but there was no proper Japanese equivalent for this word. The difficulty in understanding the conception was exacerbated in part because, traditionally, in Japan folk religiosity, Shinto, Buddhism, and Confucianism had coexisted in a syncretistic harmony. As they wrestled with the problem, just at that time Unitarianism gave them a chance to reorient their own religious understanding, while putting aside for the moment what would be called “religion.” Out of this new self-consciousness, and its consequent capacity to enlarge their framework, they might have attained a more effective awareness of what was involved in the new conception “religion.” In the end, however, the establishment of “national morality” as laid down in the Imperial Rescript on Education, proved to be a turning point when their universalistic view converged into unity on the basis of virtues such as loyalty to the emperor, love of nation, and allegiance to ancestors. The Rescript was ideologically to lead the nation from then to the end of the empire in 1945. That there was, at the beginning of modern Japan as a nation state, a possibility for the nation to envision and pursue a different course vis-à-vis its own place and role in the world as well as its own domestic policies, even though it was lasted only for a short time, is still suggestive for Japanese people today when they appear to be faced with a seeming conflict between the tide toward globalization and anxiety about their own “national” identity.

REFERENCES

JOURNALS AND NEWSPAPERS

The Christian Register

The Japan Weekly Mail

Jiji shinpō 時事新報

Michi 道

Nihonjin 日本人

Rikugō zasshi 六合雜誌

Yūbinhōchi shinbun 郵便報知新聞

Yunitarian ゆにてりあん

OTHER SOURCES

BARROWS, John Henry

1983 *The World's Parliament of Religions, vol.1*. Chicago: Parliament Publishing.

FUKUZAWA Yukichi 福沢諭吉

1958–1964 *Fukuzawa Yukichi zenshū* 福沢諭吉全集. 21 vols. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten.

KANAMORI Michitomo 金森通倫

1891 *Nihon genkon no Kirisutokyō narabini shōrai no Kirisutokyō* 日本現今ノ基督教並ニ将来ノ基督教 (The Present and Future of Christianity in Japan). Tokyo: Keiseisha

KIYOOKA Eiichi 清岡暎一

1983 *Keiōgijuku daigakubu no tanjō: Hābādodaigaku yori no shinshiryō* 慶応義塾大学の誕生—ハーバード大学よりの新資料. Tokyo: Keiō Gijuku.

KNAPP, Arthur M.

1895 *Yunitarian no kyōgi* ユニテリアン之教義. Trans. Kanda Saichiro 神田佐一郎. Tokyo: Nihon Yunitarian Kōdō-kai.

1896 *Feudal and Modern Japan*. 2 vols. Boston: Colonial Press.

MACCAULEY, Clay

1914 *Memories and Memorials: Gatherings from an Eventful Life*. Tokyo: Japan Unitarian Mission.

NIHON YUNITERIAN KŌDŌKAI 日本ゆにてりあん弘道会

1900 *The Unitarian Movement in Japan: Sketches of the Lives and Religious Work of Ten Representative Japanese Unitarians*. Tokyo: Nihon Yunitarian Kōdōkai.

ŌITA KENRITSU SENTETSU SHIRYŌKAN 大分県立先哲史料館

1996–1998 *Yano Ryūkei shiryōshū* 矢野龍溪資料集. Ōita ken sentetsu sōsho, 8 vols. Ōita Ken: Ōita Ken Kyōiku Iinkai.

OKAKURA Kakuzo

1970 *The Ideals of the East with Special Reference to the Art of Japan*. Rutland, Vermont: Charles E. Tuttle. (originally published in 1903)

SUEKI Fumihiko 末本文美士

2004 *Kindai Nihon no shisō, saikō 1: Meiji shisōkaron* 近代日本の思想・再考1—明治思想家論. Tokyo: Transview.

SUZUKI Norihisa 鈴木範久

1979 *Meiji shūkyō shichō no kenkyū* 明治宗教思潮の研究. Tokyo: Tokyō Daigaku Shuppankai.

YOKOI Tokio 横井時雄

1894 *Wagakuni no kirisutokyō mondai* 我邦の基督教問題. Tokyo: Keiseisha.