

# RISSHO KOSEI KAI\*

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## Origin

Rishshō Kōsei Kai<sup>a</sup> was founded in 1938 by the Reverend Nekkō Niwano<sup>b</sup> and the late Mrs. Myōkō Naganuma<sup>c</sup>. It is a religious organization based on Nichiren<sup>d</sup> Buddhism and can be regarded as an offshoot of the Reiyū Kai<sup>e</sup>. The reason for the secession from Reiyū Kai was doctrinal. Reiyū Kai preached that repetition of the Sacred Title, *Namu Myōhō-enge-kyō*,<sup>†</sup> would save the soul of an individual; but the two founders, Naganuma and Niwano, held that salvation is not possible unless one's life accords with the teachings and unless a person improves the quality of his personality.

## Name

The ideal of the new group can be found in its name, Rishshō Kōsei Kai. *Rītsu*<sup>f</sup> means "based on." *Shō*<sup>g</sup> means "the right road" or "right teaching," that is, the Buddhist Law (*dharma*). *Kō*<sup>h</sup> means "association" or "to associate." In the past religious groups have emphasized the life of the priest, but this group emphasizes the laity, the leadership of laymen. That is why the term *kō*, meaning a "laymen's group," is used.

a. 立正佼成会 b. 庭野日敬 c. 長沼妙佼 d. 日蓮 e. 靈友会 f. 立 g. 正 h. 佼

\* This talk was delivered to a group of Westerners at the Tokyo headquarters of Rishshō Kōsei Kai in connection with an Institute-sponsored tour.

† *Namu myōhō-enge-kyō*, 南無妙法蓮華經

It signifies that one must live a righteous life in association with people at home and at the office. *Sei*<sup>a</sup> signifies "perfection," the perfection of our personality. Perfection of personality in Buddhism is called *jōbutsu*<sup>b</sup>, that is "to become a Buddha." This does not refer only to a man on the verge of death, but the perfection or completion of personality. *Kai*<sup>c</sup> means "congregation" or an "association of people," who aim at achieving these noble purposes.

As you can see from the meaning of the name, this group is not one that draws strength from magical manipulations or superstitions. The Reverend Niwano, president of the Risshō Kōsei Kai, is of the opinion that the continued chanting of *Namu Myōhō-ryōge-kyō*, the title of the Lotus Sutra, such as is practiced in the Sōka Gakkai or in other organizations of Nichiren-ism, is not right. The emphasis in Risshō Kōsei Kai is placed on such things as the perfection of personality. Chanting the Sacred Title or Amida's name, prayer, etc., are secondary means to help achieve the goal. That is the reason why Mr. Niwano seceded from the Reiyū Kai and the existing Nichiren organizations. During the first decade, revelation was the essence of the group, —revelation from above, revelation given through Mrs. Naganuma.

### First Stage

The group started in 1938 with thirty members. In the following ten years the adherents grew to 18,000 households. During this period there was cooperation between it and some other sects of Nichiren Buddhism. Although we withdrew from

a. 成 b. 成佛 c. 会

Reiyū Kai, we wished to collaborate with the Nichiren Sect but the sect officials did not show much enthusiasm about cooperation. Moreover, the Nichiren Sect did not agree to uphold the essential points of this organization, and gave the impression that they were not sincere. Such an undependable relationship led to gradual separation.

The first decade can be called the first stage in the growth of Risshō Kōsei Kai.

### Second Stage

The second stage began in 1949 with our secession from the Nichiren Sect and affiliation with the Union of New Religious Organization of Japan. It lasted until 1957. In this period our adherents increased to 330,000 households.

The first stage was characterized by spiritual revelation from above. The second stage was characterized by "practice and action" (*gyō<sup>a</sup>* and *gō<sup>b</sup>*). The doctrine of this organization is based on the "three actions" (*san-gō<sup>c</sup>*).

1. Verbal actions—Acts of the mouth: one must chant *Namu Myōhō-enge-kyō*, and recite the sacred scriptures.
  2. Mental actions—One must repent of and purify the sins of the six senses (*rokkon shōjō<sup>d</sup>*).
  3. Bodily actions—The practice of special actions, that is, the practice of the Bodhisattva's way that affects others.
- These three kinds of pure achievement must be conducted before one can hope to perfect his personality.

During 1952—1956 Risshō Kōsei Kai was severely criticized by people in general. In 1952 the Japan Broadcast Corporation

*a.* 行 *b.* 業 *c.* 三業 *d.* 六根清淨

and in 1955 the Yomiuri<sup>a</sup> Newspaper were among our accusers. The influence of the Yomiuri has been so strong in the past that at one time such religious groups as Hito no Michi<sup>b</sup> and Ōmoto<sup>c</sup> were suppressed as a result of its charges. However, Risshō Kōsei Kai was not seriously affected by the Yomiuri attacks. There was a little confusion in the minds of some believers, but such people were just nominal followers who did not participate in the activities of the organization. In the long run the Yomiuri attack did not have a very serious effect.

The second stage can be said to have been a transitional stage, and the first and second stage together can be said to have been a period of accommodation (*hōben*<sup>d</sup>).

### Third Stage—The Object of Worship

The third stage, which began in 1958, is a period in which "actions and learning go hand in hand." In January, 1959, the Rev. Nikkyō Niwano, the President, formally announced that the real object of worship of Risshō Kōsei Kai is the Buddha Sakyamuni who has realized Buddhahood from eternity (*Kuon jitsujō no Shakamuni Eutsu*<sup>e</sup>): the Buddha who has eternal life; not the human Buddha, but the cosmic life, Law and Truth. The object of worship can be compared to the God of Christianity.

Chapter 16 of the Lotus Sutra describes this object of worship. In this chapter the Buddha says that it has been countless eons since he attained enlightenment. It means that Sakyamuni is the Buddha existing and preaching from all eternity. He says, he continues preaching the Law in this

a. 読売 b. ひとのみち c. 大本 d. 方便 e. 久遠実成の釈迦牟尼仏

place. His plan is to lead countless beings into Buddhahood. He is existing wherever beings live, but he has made himself invisible by his inconceivable power. In other words, they cannot see the Buddha because their minds are in error. People who wish to see the Buddha should observe piety towards Him and have a fervent desire to be saved by Him. Such people gradually deepen their faith. They become gentle and meek until the feeling rises and deepens in them to such a degree that they are willing to offer their lives. At that moment the Buddha Sakyamuni shows himself to them. Such is the object of worship as stated in the Lotus Sutra.

### **Comparison with Christianity**

In Matthew 6 it says that when you pray you should go into your room, shut the door, and pray to God who is in secret and the God whom people can't see will answer. The God whom you can't see corresponds to the Buddha of the Lotus Sutra.

When the Bible says that God will answer your prayer, this means that God will show his presence, to the one who prays. Reference to the eternal God is also found in John 4:24—27. The Buddha Sakyamuni and the Christian God are one and the same.

Moreover, Christ and Sakyamuni seem to be very much alike. The object of worship is the Eternal Buddha not the human Buddha. This is comparable to the God of Christianity as eternal life and not the human Christ. It is eternal life. Therefore, we call the Eternal Buddha the Eternal God. The human Sakyamuni and Christ were sent to this mundane world by the Eternal Buddha, or God, for the purpose of saving mankind.

Chapter 16 of the Lotus Sutra and chapters 12 and 14 of St. John's Gospel explain this. Therefore, both Christians and the members of this organization believe in the teachings of Sakyamuni or the teachings of Christ sent by the Eternal Buddha or God to this world, and at all times we must aim at the perfection of our personality. Risshō Kōsei Kai does not say that other religions are not genuine, so for the peace and welfare of mankind we wish to join hands with other religions which are just and good.

We think there are some differences between Christianity and Risshō Kōsei Kai in regard to the solution of the sufferings of the world. However that may be, it is how to solve sufferings found in our environment or among ourselves that is the great task of religions everywhere in the world. We insist that the solution must not be sought by magical methods. From this view-point, we want to find religious groups with which we can join hands for the sake of world peace. These are not to be found in Islam nor in the established Buddhist sects in Japan, but in Christianity alone.

### Some Doctrines

It is not right to be resigned to one's sufferings. Sometimes, for instance, one satisfies oneself with the thought that there are other people who are more unhappy than oneself; but this is not the right approach. The sects centered in the *nembutsu*<sup>a</sup> tend to take such a resigned attitude toward life, but this is not the proper approach. The Buddha Sakyamuni taught the four noble truths (*shītai*<sup>b</sup>) to overcome suffering in this life.

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a. 念仏      b. 四諦

Religion tries to solve suffering (*kutai<sup>a</sup>*) in the spiritual, economic, and other fields. When suffering has been overcome, we attain a state called the truth of extinction (*mettai<sup>b</sup>*) which means that our suffering has been destroyed.

Thus, the question of method (*dōtai<sup>c</sup>*), that is, how to achieve this peaceful state, arises. This is, of course, where perfect religion can develop. Without resorting to magical methods, we try to find the reason or cause of our suffering (*jūtai<sup>d</sup>*).

Consideration of the cause is the basis of our discussion groups (*hōza<sup>e</sup>*). Visitors coming here want to see the people chanting the Sacred Title, but this is just one expedient, one method. The important thing is where our people learn what they must practice at home or in their work. That is the most important point.

So we emphasize the Bodhisattva spirit, which tries not only to perfect one's own personality but tries to give guidance to others, that is, to help others, to save others.

So training does not take place only at the training hall at this headquarters, but must be continued at home and in daily work. This group tries to practice very faithfully what the Buddha Sakyamuni taught in regard to the Four Noble Truths, the Twelve Chains of Causality (*jūni innen<sup>f</sup>*), and the Six Perfections (*roku haramitsu<sup>g</sup>*). We think the only way to save the world from its confusion is to be found in the teachings of the Buddha Sakyamuni.

We wish to join hands with you Christians because we believe that you must be right-minded for the sake of the salvation of mankind. The fundamental elements of Christianity are

a. 苦諦 b. 滅諦 c. 道諦 d. 集諦 e. 法座 f. 十二因緣 g. 六波羅蜜

splendid as a religion. That is why we wish to join hands.

There are too many religious groups in which the methods followed are not proper. For example, some groups stress magic and are not worthy to be called religions.

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### Discussion

**Q** What is the relationship between the concept of the Eternal Buddha and the historic Buddha. To what extent is the historical manifestation regarded as important?

**A** Both scriptures teach directly that when we earnestly seek for Buddha or God, he appears before us, and leads us into eternal life. This is derived from the fact that Sakyamuni and Christ sacrificed their lives in order to save us. The main point is to sacrifice oneself for others. This is the meeting point of our faith and Christianity, though it appears in different countries and in different ways.

**Q** What did you have in mind when you compared the Buddha and Christ?

**A** The Christian believes that Jesus is as important as God; and in the same way we believe in the relationship between Sakyamuni, that is, the human Buddha and the Eternal Buddha. The former is the manifestation of the latter.

**Q** What unique character has Sakyamuni as the manifestation of the Eternal Buddha?

**A** We can find his character in the 16th chapter of the Lotus Sutra, and also in John 5:24: "I say to you, he who hears my word and believes him who sent me, has eternal life; he does not come into judgement, but has passed from death



to life.”

**Q** What is the concept of eternal life. Is it an individual existence or otherwise?

**A** Individuals are a part of eternal life. Therefore, human beings also enter into eternal life. Entering into eternal life takes place when one becomes a Buddha. So religious groups are worthy of their name when they strive to attain this eternal life and do not try to get material gains or bodily gains from selfish motives. From this viewpoint we pay our highest respect to Christianity. Most of the new religions of Japan are not like this.

**Q** I didn't see many young people today. Most of the people in the circles (*hōza*) were adult women.

**A** Young people come almost every day, but now they are engaged in a local activity in the morning and afternoon. In the evening young people come in great numbers.

**Q** What kind of social work do you have?

**A** We have a large hospital very near here, a graveyard, a wedding hall, an old people's home, and a day nursery; and we have schools from kindergarten through high school.