

# RELIGIOUS FREEDOM UNDER THE MEIJI CONSTITUTION

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## III

### **Religious Freedom and the Imperial Rescript on Education**

The Imperial Rescript on Education, promulgated on October 30, 1890, was disseminated throughout the entire nation by the nation's educational machinery, and exercised as much influence on civil life as the Meiji Constitution. It was closely related to the issue of religious freedom in spite of the fact that the document did not refer at all to religious matters. Once promulgated, it in practice deified itself as the holy object of the civil religion, and expelled non-conforming convictions with the authority it gave to itself exclusively. The rescript became the source of coercion toward a national identity.

The incompatibility of the rescript and the constitution regarding religious freedom is deemed natural if they are placed in the context of rivalry between traditionalism and modernism in Meiji history. If the constitution was the most drastic swing toward modernization, the rescript was its balancing swing

back toward traditionalism. Then, inasmuch as religious freedom was the novel adoption of the modern practice that characterized the constitution, the emphasis on integrity to the rejection of freedom was the classic confirmation of the traditional practice that characterized the rescript. Nonetheless it is also to be expected that the forces of both currents embodied themselves in both documents.

The present chapter will examine the forces toward and against religious freedom that vied with each other in the making of the Imperial Rescript on Education and in the acceptance of the document. The material for the former is the traces of the opinions of Motoda, Inoue, Yamagata, and Itō. The material for the latter is the disputes on the Uchimura *lèse majesté* incident.

The reaction of the traditionalists such as Yamagata Aritomo and Oki Taketo against the indiscriminate introduction of Western ideas increased power contemporaneously with the drafting of the Meiji Constitution. Some intellectual leaders who had advocated Western ideas such as Katō Hiroyuki and Nishimura Shigeki, shifted and championed the particularity of the national tradition since the early 1880's.<sup>1</sup> In 1881, the Imperial Household Ministry distributed an ethics textbook for elementary schools with a strong Confucian influence, and the Ministry of Education removed from all public schools the translations of the Western ethicists which had been used as ethics

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1. Katō's *Jinken shinsetsu*, 1882 (in Yoshino, ed., V, pp. 353-388), repudiated the idea of the natural right of man that he had advocated in *Shinsei taii*, 1870 (in Yoshino, ed., pp. 109-126), and *Kokutai shinron*, 1874 (in Yoshino, ed., V, pp. 85-108). For Nishimura's intellectual portrait, Shively, "Nishimura," pp. 193-241.

textbooks.<sup>2</sup> The traditionalists strongly demanded the revival of Confucianism for the instruction of public morality, especially when they felt the threat of Western ideas at the promulgation of the Western style constitution and at the opening of the Diet. The draftsmanship and issuance of the Imperial Rescript on Education were closely related to this traditionalist reaction.<sup>3</sup>

It was Motoda Eifu, the Confucian lecturer for the Emperor Meiji and the most rigid opponent of the Westernization, who led in the making of the Imperial Rescript on Education. Motoda, who was summoned in 1871 to serve as the Emperor's lecturer on Chinese books when he was fifty-three and the Emperor was eighteen, interpreted his function in the broadest sense and advised the Emperor on every subject while he remained with the Emperor for twenty years and saw him almost every day. The content of Motoda's lectures to the Emperor was such that, regardless of what book he used, he always discussed the essential virtues of the sovereign, the gravity of the national polity, the purity of the Confucian way, the harm of Christianity, the errors of Buddhism, and the differences between Eastern and Western customs.<sup>4</sup> Such was the philosophy with which Motoda indoctrinated the Emperor and attempted to endorse the national education. Motoda's target, in short, was to establish the Confucian morality and to eliminate the Westernized way of thinking in the national education system.

His *The Great Principles of Education* (Kyōgaku taishi) of 1879, ascribed the decline of public morality to the bad influence of

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2. Karasawa, pp. 367-371.

3. Ienaga, "Kyōiku chokugo," pp. 1-19.

4. Shively, "Motoda," pp. 304-310.

the Western ethics textbooks and prepared the way for the compilation and distribution of the Confucian ethics textbook, *The Essentials of Learning for the Young* (Yōgaku kōyō) of 1881.<sup>5</sup> In *Another Opinion on An Opinion on Education* (Kyōikugi fugi) of 1879 and *The Discussion of the National Religion* (Kokkyō ron) of 1884, Motoda advised the Emperor and Itō Hirobumi that the government should establish Confucianism as the state religion.<sup>6</sup> Motoda's proposal, however, was flatly rejected by Itō.<sup>7</sup>

Motoda, then, approached Yamagata Aritomo, the rival of Itō. Yamagata was more amenable than Itō to Motoda's proposal to issue an Imperial pronouncement for the realization of the ideal of the national morality because he himself strongly opposed the introduction of Western political ideas that would endanger the foundation of the national polity. He, in fact, had promoted the issuance of the Imperial Rescript for the Soldiers in January, 1882 which ordered the placing of group identity over individual personality in its emphasis on the duties of soldiers. Yamagata, therefore, actively supported Motoda's move. With the support of Yamagata, Motoda's advice to the Emperor to issue an Imperial Rescript on Education became more powerful, and succeeded in obtaining His Majesty's agreement by the end of 1889.<sup>8</sup>

In February, 1890, Emperor Meiji ordered the Minister of Education, Enomoto Takeaki, to compose a text on the fundamental principles of education. However, in 1889, Enomoto,

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 327-328

6. *Kyōiku ni kansuru chokugo*, pp. 92, 96-98

7. Watanabe, *Nihon Kempō*, p. 373

8. Watanabe, *Kyōiku chokugo*, p. 141

had stated to those prefectural governors who urged the control of moral education under the auspices of the Ministry of Education that the constitutional principle of religious freedom ought to be esteemed and he did not consider it desirable for the Ministry of Education to take the initiative in setting a standard of national ethics. Aware of the conflict between such a project and the Constitution's provision of religious freedom, he did not forward this assignment. Thereupon Prime Minister Yamagata replaced the Minister of Education with his protégé, Yoshikawa Akimasa, in May, 1890. The Emperor repeated the order to Yoshikawa upon his appointment as Minister of Education.<sup>9</sup>

Yoshikawa, upon assuming his office, and receiving the Imperial order to prepare a draft for the Imperial Rescript on Education, assigned Nakamura Keiu, professor of ethics at the Tokyo Imperial University, to compose a draft. Nakamura, who was the translator of Samuel Smiles's *Self Help* and one of the leaders of the enlightenment espousing Western learning, submitted a draft in June. The draft recommended hard work and praised individualistic achievement rather than devotion to the national goals. Yoshikawa discarded this draft on the ground that it did not represent the national tradition. At this point, Yamagata, Motoda, and Yoshikawa jointly requested Inoue Kowashi to draw up the draft of the rescript.<sup>10</sup>

Inoue originally was against the issuance of an Imperial pronouncement on the ethico-religious principles. Inoue, in a letter dated June 25, 1890, expounded his conviction that

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9. *Ibid.*, pp. 141-144.

10. *Ibid.*, pp. 144-158.

Japanese citizens should enjoy freedom of belief according to the guarantee of the Meiji Constitution and that the government—including the Emperor—should not initiate or impose on the people an instruction on ethico-religious matters. He cautioned in the same letter that the citizens would not accept a document containing an ethico-religious teaching as an Imperial order, tacitly referring to the failure of the Great Religion attempt, and that the resort to the Imperial authority for the solution of that contemporary moral confusion would induce harsh criticism by the historians of later years.<sup>11</sup> Inoue, however, finally acceded to the repeated request of Yamagata, because as a civil bureaucrat, he could not reject the Prime Minister's insistence except by resignation. He, however, reserved an agreement with Yamagata that he might retain the following conditions in drafting. These conditions were that the rescript should not be treated as an Imperial order with legal function, that the rescript should not represent any particular religious, ethical, or political philosophy, that the rescript should not use the Confucian or Western terminology, and that the rescript should not restrict the constitutional rights of the citizens.<sup>12</sup>

When Inoue accepted the task of drawing up the draft of the rescript, Motoda wrote for himself a document for Inoue's guidance, which, in part, read as follows:

The objective of national education shall be the indoctrination of the three virtues wisdom, benevolence, courage, and the five relations, ruler and subjects, father and son, elder and younger brothers, man and wife, friends, for the cultivation of the Japanese subjects who would devote themselves to the glory of the Empire.<sup>13</sup>

11. *Ibid.*, pp. 373-374.

12. Watanabe, *Nihon kempō*, pp. 373-374.

13. Watanabe, *Kyōiku chokugo*, p. 158.

Motoda thus tried to establish the subordination of the people to the Emperor and the Confucian doctrines as the ultimate objective of the nation's education.

Inoue, however, attempted to modify those straightforward Confucian precepts and maneuvered to include the phrases which would endorse the constitutional principle. Inoue's contentions being accepted, the rescript became as follows:

Know ye, Our subjects,

Our Imperial Ancestors have founded Our Empire on a basis broad and everlasting, and subjects ever united in loyalty and filial piety have from generation to generation illustrated the beauty thereof. This is the glory of the fundamental character of Our Empire, and therein also lies the source of Our education. Ye, Our subjects, be filial to your parents, affectionate to your brothers and sisters; as husbands and wives be harmonious, as friends true; bear yourselves in modesty and moderation; *extend your benevolence to all; pursue learning and cultivate arts, and thereby develop intellectual faculties* and perfect moral powers; furthermore, *advance public good and promote common interests*; always respect the Constitution and observe the laws; should emergency arise, offer yourselves courageously to the State; and thus guard and maintain the prosperity of Our Imperial Throne coeval with heaven and earth. So shall be not only ye Our good and faithful subjects, but *render illustrious the best traditions* of your forefathers.

*The Way here set forth is* indeed the teaching bequeathed by Our Imperial Ancestors, to be observed alike by Their Descendants and the subjects, infallible for all ages and *true in all places*. It is Our wish to lay it to heart in all reverence, in common with you, Our subjects, that we may all attain to the same virtue.<sup>14</sup>

The italicized phrases promoted the individualistic achievement oriented values and the phrase, "always respect the Constitution and observe the laws," which was included in spite of the strong opposition of Motoda, endorsed the principle of constitutionalism. Consequently, this phrase supported the guarantee of religious freedom and intercepted the program of Motoda and

14. Reischauer, E. O., p. 276.

Yamagata that the Imperial Rescript on Education should authorize the Confucian dogmas as the state's discipline. The inclusion of this phrase was very controversial and the negotiation between the proponents and the opponents proved impossible. It was the Emperor who finally decided in favor of Inoue and included the phrase.<sup>15</sup>

By the inclusion of the phrase, Inoue must have thought he had succeeded in setting the standard of civil life which in essence was in conformity with the religious freedom guarantee of the Meiji Constitution and devoid of the governmental indoctrination of Confucianism as planned by Motoda and supported by Yamagata. Inoue's mindfulness of the universality of the document was indicated by his having made an inquiry to Kaneko Kentarō, a Harvard graduate, if the provisions of the document were acceptable to Americans and Europeans as standards of their civil life and by his showing relief in learning that Kaneko answered the question in the affirmative.<sup>16</sup>

Inoue's argument that the rescript should not become an Imperial precept that would legally bind the people took a unique form in the published document. When promulgated, the Imperial Rescript on Education did not carry the countersignature of the competent ministers which was the constitutionally required form for the Imperial rescripts with legal sanctions.<sup>17</sup> Inoue thus secured the independence of the constitution-

15. Watanabe, *Kyōiku chokugo*, p. 160; Ienaga, "Kyōiku chokugo," p. 13.

16. Watanabe, *Nihon kempō*, pp. 395-396.

17. Article 55 Paragraph 2 of the Meiji Constitution stated a All Laws, Imperial Ordinances, and Imperial Rescripts of whatever kind, that relate to the affairs of the State, require the countersignature of a Minister of State." Beckmann, *Making*, p. 153; *Modernization*, p. 652.

nal system from the legal conflict with the Imperial Rescript on Education.

Inoue succeeded in making the document a general statement of ethical ideals and in separating it from the regular governmental statutes which legally bound the Japanese people. The document itself was of such a quality that Ienaga Saburō observed that the text of the Imperial Rescript on Education revealed a modern philosophy of universalism in spite of the original particularist intentions.<sup>18</sup> This document without a legally sufficient form could have remained a pedagogical and sociological opinion of the Emperor. It could have refrained from enforcing an ethico-religious devotion upon the Japanese people.

The promulgation of the Imperial Rescript on Education was much simpler than that of the Meiji Constitution. Originally it included plans for the Emperor to visit the Higher Normal School (Kōtō Shihan Gakkō) and present it in the form of His speech. But due to the untimely illness of the Emperor and an urge to promulgate it before the opening of the first session of the Diet on November 30, 1890, the form of promulgation was changed. There was no ceremony or public gathering with the attendance of the Emperor comparable to the promulgation

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18. Ienaga, "Kyōiku chokugo," pp. 13-14; Ienaga, however, gives a different evaluation to the Imperial Rescript on Education in a more recent study; he observes that the rescript was motivated by the Confucian conservatives and given approval by the autocratic and bureaucratic oligarchs because the ultimate aim of the oligarchs as a group opposed the growing power of political parties and people as much as the conservative absolutists. And yet he still preserves the basic scheme of the Motoda versus Itō-Inoue confrontation. Therefore his analysis is still helpful in supporting the hypothesis of this paper regarding the dichotomy of the development based on two different values. Ienaga, *Nihon kindai*, pp. 318.

of the Meiji Constitution. The Emperor simply summoned Prime Minister Yamagata Aritomo and Minister of Education Yoshikawa Akimasa to the Imperial Palace and handed them the Imperial Rescript on Education on October 30, 1890.<sup>19</sup>

Consequently, the Ministry of Education made copies and distributed them to all the public elementary and middle schools over the nation.<sup>20</sup> On December 5, 1890, the Minister of Education instructed the prefectural governors to treat the document respectfully and to have the elementary and middle schools hold a monthly ceremony for its reading with the teachers in ceremonial dress.<sup>21</sup> The Ministry of Education now directed by the traditionalist leader devised and enforced these methods in order to distinguish the Imperial Rescript on Education as particularly authoritative material and to attach to it a somewhat divine character.

To the Imperial Universities and the seven Higher Preparatory Schools (*Kōtō Chūgakkō*) operated directly by the central government, the Emperor gave special copies of the rescript with His Imperial Sign Manual.<sup>22</sup> Upon receipt of the special copy, the universities and the higher preparatory schools held

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19. Watanabe, *Kyōiku chokugo*, pp. 166-173; Watanabe refers to Yoshikawa's recollection that the Emperor summoned him along with Yamagata to His private chamber and handed him the document, with a comment that such was impossible, due to Yoshikawa's extremely low status, in the court. Even if the story should be a forgery by Yoshikawa it attests how lightly the people in the highest offices assessed the promulgation of the rescript in comparison with the precautions and preparations paid in the issuance of the Meiji Constitution.

20. Watanabe, *Kyōiku chokugo*, pp. 172, 177.

21. Japan. *Kampō*, December 5, 1890, p. 76.

22. Ozawa, *Uchimura*, p. 40.

ceremonies specially planned for the reading of the rescript.

Tokyo Imperial University held a ceremony on November 5, 1890, where the secretary for the president read the rescript and President Katō Hiroyuki gave a commentary.<sup>23</sup> After the address, Katō picked up the paper and showed it to the audience, inviting them to examine the document if they were interested. None, however, took the trouble to come forward, and the meeting adjourned without any ritual.<sup>24</sup> Those who were in or being prepared for the elite bureaucracy, thus, did not regard the rescript as a sacred object.

The Second Higher Preparatory School in Sendai and the Third Higher Preparatory School in Yamaguchi likewise held a ceremony on January 8, 1891. The ceremony at these schools included a salute of 101 guns, a parade of the students with rifles on their shoulders, and the reading of the rescript.<sup>25</sup> The First Higher Preparatory School in Tokyo held a ceremony on January 9, 1891, at which the Acting Principal Kuhara Mitsuru gave an address, read the rescript, and demanded that all the faculty and students to go up to the platform and bow to the Imperial Sign Manual affixed to the special copy of the rescript.<sup>26</sup> All these ceremonies included heavily ritualistic elements.

At the ceremony held at the First Higher Preparatory School, it happened that an instructor, Uchimura Kanzō, did not bow

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23. Japan. *Kampō*, November 5, 1890, pp. 44-45.

24. Ozawa, *Uchimura*, p. 44.

25. Japan. *Kampō*, January 15, 1891, pp. 126-127, January 22, 1891, p. 198.

26. *Ibid.*, January 14, 1891, p. 110.

deeply to the Imperial Sign Manual affixed to the rescript.<sup>27</sup> Uchimura, a graduate of Sapporo Agricultural School and Amherst College with a career including social work in the United States and a period as dean of an interdenominational missionary college, Hokuetsugakkan, at Niigata in north central Japan, was a man with dual convictions, nationalism and Christianity. He was a nationalist as is observed from his clash with the missionaries at the Hokuetsugakkan for his demand for Japanese autonomy in operating the college. Nationalist Uchimura supported the rescript's standard of civil life and ideal of nationalism and encouraged its practice in daily life. But he disagreed with the deification of the document which he thought would by no means serve the fulfillment of its objectives. Besides, he was a convert to Christianity from Shinto, who had once prayed hard to the indigenous gods for the expulsion of Christianity. With his conversion, he came to regard the worship of indigenous gods as primitive idolatry and forsook it.<sup>28</sup>

On the 9th of January there was in the High Middle School where I taught, a ceremony to acknowledge the Imperial Precept on Education. After the address of the President and reading of the said Precept, the professors and students were asked to go up to the platform one by one, and

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27. The most exhaustive chronological coverage of the process of the incident is Ozawa, *Uchimura*.
28. Uchimura Kanzō's (1861-1930) life and thought have been introduced in the English language in the following works; Uchimura Kanzō, *How I Became a Christian* (New York, 1895); John Howes, "Kanzō Uchimura, The Formative Years," *The Japan Christian Quarterly*, vol. XX, no. 3 (1954), pp. 194-208, "Kanzō Uchimura, Teacher and Writer," *The Japan Christian Quarterly*, vol. XXIII, no. 2 (1957), pp. 150-156, "Kanzō Uchimura, Social Reformer," *The Japan Christian Quarterly*, vol. XXIII, no. 3 (Tokyo, 1957), pp. 243-252; H. R. Burkle, "Uchimura Kanzō: Christian Transcendentalist," *The Japan Christian Quarterly*, vol. XXVIII, no. 2 (1962), pp. 115-124.

bow to the Imperial signature affixed to the Precept, *in the manner as we used to bow before our ancestral relics as prescribed in Buddhist and Shinto ceremonies*. I was not at all prepared to meet such a strange ceremony, for the thing was the new invention of the president of the school ... hesitating in doubt, I took a safer course for my Christian conscience, and in the august presence of sixty professors (all non-Christians, the two other Christian professors beside myself having absented themselves) and over one thousand students, I took my stand and did *not* bow! ... For a week after the ceremony, I received several students and prof's who came to me, and with all the meekness I can master... I told them also that the good Emperor must have given the precepts to his subjects *not* to be bowed unto, but to be obeyed in our daily walks in life.<sup>29</sup>

This man Uchimura Kanzō, upon the demand to worship the Imperial Sign Manual, judged that the bow to the Imperial Sign Manual was a newly invented religious worship in the manner of the indigenous idolatry he had forsaken. An acquiescence to this alien religious ritual conflicted with his Christian belief, and he took the non-conforming action for the protection of his religious scruple.

Uchimura's action infuriated the professors and students who supported the ceremony as an occasion to express their loyalty as subjects. Among the professors with nationalistic zeal, Okada Ryōhei, associated with Hōjō Tokiyuki and Kawata Masazumi, promoted the accusation of Uchimura and demanded that the President of the school and the Ministry of Education dismiss Uchimura on account of his failure to qualify as a respectable citizen.<sup>30</sup> The students' magazine, *The Journal of the Students and the Friends of the First Higher Preparatory School* (Kōyūkai zasshi), proclaimed that the action of Uchimura Kanzō con-

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29. *Uchimura*, XVIII, pp. 207-208.

30. Shimomura, *Okada*, pp. 79, 81; Ozawa, *Uchimura*, pp. 54-69.

taminated the sacredness of the ceremony. Some professors<sup>31</sup> and students visited Uchimura at his residence, and extremists even attempted to use violence against him.<sup>32</sup>

The principal of the school, Kinoshita Kōji, defended Uchimura, persuaded him that the bow was not intended to be a religious worship, and advised him to bow to the Imperial Sign Manual again. Uchimura's Christian colleagues, Kimura Shunkichi and Nakajima Rikizō, and minister friends, Kanamori Tsūrin and Yokoi Tokio, also were of the opinion that the bow might be regarded as an expression of respect to the political head of the nation and not as religious worship. They advised Uchimura to bow to the Imperial Sign Manual. Thereupon, Uchimura changed his attitude, and having caught serious influenza, had his colleague, Kimura Shunkichi, bow to the Imperial Sign Manual on his behalf.<sup>33</sup> After this event, Uchimura's illness was aggravated, and he remained unconscious in critical condition for three weeks. While Uchimura was unable to act for himself, an anonymous person forged and submitted Uchimura's resignation. The Minister of Education, Yoshikawa Akimasa, instructed the school authorities to accept it, which they did on February 23, 1891.<sup>34</sup> Uchimura was thus removed from his teaching position.

The Buddhists and nationalists took advantage of the incident as an occasion to attack Christianity. An article written by the former proponent of religious freedom, Shimaji Mokurai, lit

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31. "Shinsho no chokugo," p. 42.

32. Ozawa, *Uchimura*, p. 114.

33. *Uchimura*, XVIII, pp. 208-209.

34. Ozawa, *Uchimura*, pp. 78, 115.

the fire of controversy: "Uchimura Kanzō, an instructor of the First Higher Preparatory School, committed the most deplorable and indecent action against the venerable authority of His Majesty's Rescript and Image by rejecting to pay hearty respect at the occasion of the ceremony on January 9 of this year .... Students claimed that he should be dismissed .... The proper solution should have been a punishment with dismissal, but his resignation prior to dismissal gave a temporary solution to the incident ...."<sup>35</sup> Daily newspapers, weekly journals, and monthly magazines reported the incident sensationally and commented that this Christian educator should be charged with *lèse majesté*.<sup>36</sup>

Defenders of Christianity campaigned against this offensive. Uemura Masahisa<sup>37</sup> flatly denounced the ceremony maintaining that it was required neither by the Meiji Constitution nor by laws nor educational ordinances, and declared that the ceremony was an invention of the foolish and primitive mentality of the bureaucrats. He contended that the enforcement of this silly ceremony was contrary to the august will of the Emperor and was a return to primitive superstition and magic.<sup>38</sup> Minami Hajime and Maruyama Tsūichi, ministers

35. Shimaji, "Fukei jiken o ronzu," pp. 4-5, "Fukei jiken no temmatsu," pp. 38-39.

36. Articles of this kind include:

"Shihen o reihaisuru wa kirisuto kyōgi ni hansu," *Mitsugon kyōhō* (Jan. 25, 1891), p. 25; "Bureikan," *Tōyō shimpō* (Jan. 27, 1891), p. 2; "Kōtō chūgaku no fukei jiken," *Nippon* (Jan. 28, 1891), p. 3; "Daiichi kōtō chūgakkō kyōjū no fukei," *Chūgai dempō* (January 29, 1891), p. 1; "Daiichi kōtō chūgakkō no fukei jiken," *Kokkai* (Jan. 29, 1891), p. 3.

37. Uemura Masahisa (1858-1925) was born a son of a *Hatanoto*, became a Presbyterian minister, and served to unify the Protestant Christian denominations in Japan. For his life and environs, Saba.

38. Uemura, "Fukei zai," pp. 1-2.

of the All Evangelistic Protestant Mission Union (Der Allgemeine Evangelisch-protestantische Missionsverein) gave open lectures in defense of Uchimura. They claimed that patriotism stemmed only from the sincere spirit and action of the citizens and not from the participation in a mockery of a ritual, and that forced participation in a ritual in which sincere citizens could not conscientiously join would deny the sincere function of the human spirit and the development of true patriotism.<sup>39</sup> These were the few among the Christians who supported Uchimura's action.

The majority of the Christians, however, were more eclectic and tended to admit that the ceremony was an acceptable social custom, thus distinguishing it from religious worship. Kanamori Tsūrin and Yokoi Tokio, the most influential Congregational leaders who held the presidentship of Dōshisha University consecutively, wrote that all Japanese subjects including the Christians ought to pay respect to the Emperor as the head of the nation and the expression of respect to Him was a secular duty that was not related to the realm of religious worship.<sup>40</sup> A Russian Orthodox, Morita Ryō, praised the ceremony and criticized Uchimura for confusing the issues and neglecting to respect the political sovereign.<sup>41</sup>

At the summit of the accusatory and defensive arguments on the Uchimura incident, Inoue Tetsujirō, professor of philosophy at Tokyo Imperial University, made a statement that gave a

39. *Yomiuri shimbun*, Feb. 8, 1891, p. 3; Ozawa, *Uchimura*, pp. 163-166.

40. Kanamori, pp. 5-6; Yokoi, "Shasetsu," p. 3.

41. Morita, pp. 5-8.

philosophical support to the accusers of Uchimura. He analyzed the values underlying the Imperial Rescript on Education and Christian ethics and found them incompatible.<sup>42</sup>

Inoue maintained that the ethical teaching of the rescript was grounded on the traditional and particularistic values, and explained that the rescript's provision "extend your benevolence to all" meant that one should love the ones with closer relations the more dearly and the ones with less relations the less affectionately. As one should love one's parents particularly, one should love one's country with particular affection. This particular love was the foundation of patriotism and this particularistic patriotism was the essence of the Imperial Rescript on Education, whereas Christian love was indiscriminate and universal love. Universal love, or love based on the universal value, did not distinguish a close relation from a more distant relation nor an enemy from a friend, and thus undermined the foundation for loyalty and patriotism. Inoue concluded, upon acknowledging that Uchimura's action came from his sincere religious scruples, that the Uchimura incident was essentially an expression of the conflict between the value of the Imperial Rescript on Education and that of Christian ethics rather than a chance misdemeanor of a professor.<sup>43</sup>

Inoue intentionally emphasized the original Confucian ideas in the rescript and neglected the modern universalist ideas written in its text. He purposely attacked Christianity for its values that were fundamentally antagonistic to the particula-

42. "Kyōiku to shūkyō," pp. 24-26.

43. Inoue, Tetsujirō, *Kyōiku to shūkyō*, pp. 33-34, 84-85, 116-117, "Kyōiku to shūkyō," pp. 14-19.

rist values of the traditional society. Inoue favored the particular values in the belief that they served better for the support of an orderly society, which in his evaluation, was the supreme aim of the government. His participation in the discussion unfolded a new phase in the controversy.

Inoue's remarks were immediately returned by the supporters of Christianity. Uemura Masahisa and Kashiwagi Gien understood and confronted the Inoue thesis of the value conflict. Uemura claimed that Inoue's concept of patriotism was national egotism and lacked the perspective of righteousness. He asserted that the love of a nation should be a step toward the fulfillment of righteousness.<sup>44</sup> Kashiwagi reasoned that the rescript should be judged to violate the constitution if it were based on particularist love and exclusive nationalism as Inoue explained. Kashiwagi emphasized that the constitution guaranteed religious freedom and demanded its enforcement.<sup>45</sup> Both Uemura and Kashiwagi rejected acceptance of the Imperial Rescript on Education as a document which proclaimed the particular value that contradicted the universal right of man the Meiji Constitution guaranteed. They acknowledged the conflict of values and fought for the universal value. Their opinion, however, remained that of a small minority.

The majority did not recognize that the comment of Inoue pointed out the difference between the valuations in Christianity and in the rescript. They attempted to refute Inoue's denouncement of Christianity, but they did not go much further than providing examples from Christian teaching that conformed to

44. Uemura, "Konnichi no shūkyōron," p. 161.

45. Kashiwagi, LX, p. 7. ILX, p. 7.

the tenets of the rescript as delineated by Inoue. Honda Yōichi, president of the Methodist Aoyama College and leader of the Methodist church, tried to prove with citations from the Bible that the Christian concepts of love and nationalism were in accord with those Inoue advocated.<sup>46</sup> Yokoi affirmed that the Old Testament taught filial piety and ordered the death penalty for those who were not filial to their parents and that the New Testament abounded in instructions to revere the king and public authorities.<sup>47</sup> He considered “the statement in the Imperial Rescript on Education... corresponds exactly to what is taught by Christian ethics.”<sup>48</sup> Maeda Chōta, a Catholic, wrote that Christian teaching encouraged every citizen to perform his civic duties and that the Imperial Rescript on Education and the Christian teachings were not only similar but also reciprocal in their function of boosting the national morale.<sup>49</sup> The majority of Christians thus emphasized such elements that coincided with the traditional particularity. They did not advocate the Christian belief with the application of the universal human right of religious freedom that the constitution guaranteed. They did not detect that Inoue’s fundamental position was antagonistic to the constitutional guarantee of religious freedom nor did they ponder on his intentional negligence of the universalistic principles written in the rescript. The majority shared their particularist values with Inoue Tetsujirō.

Thus, a handful of intellectuals, a part of the higher segment of

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46. Honda, pp. 17-20.

47. Yokoi, “Shōtotsu,” pp. 255-264.

48. Yokoi, “Tokuiku, p. 35.

49. Maeda, pp. 323-341.

bureaucrats and a few Christian leaders, acknowledged the significance of religious freedom in the context of universalistic human rights, and in the legal uniformity of the Meiji Constitution and the Imperial Rescript on Education. The majority of the Japanese, however, stuck to the particularist values, subordinated religious freedom to the total community or national particularity, and overlooked the universalist principles drawn up in the Meiji Constitution and the Imperial Rescript on Education. The employment of Inoue Tetsujirō by Minister of Education Yoshikawa Akimasa of the Yamagata Aritomo cabinet, for the composition of the official commentary on the rescript and its distribution by the millions to the nation's education machinery helped confirm the strength of the particularist identity.

The Imperial Rescript on Education grew out of the ethico-political ideal of Confucianist Motoda Eifu, who fundamentally disagreed with the introduction of the Western ideologies including the constitutional principle of religious freedom. He was seconded by the forces of the authoritarian Yamagata Aritomo, who opposed the limitation of governmental powers by the representative will of the people.

This reactionary program was opposed by the advocates of the constitutional principle within the government. By participating in drafting the rescript, Inoue Kowashi, an important drafter of the Meiji Constitution, pushed the fundamentals of constitutionalism of Western origin which Itō Hirobumi and his partners adopted in order to modernize Japan's traditional society.

The Imperial Rescript on Education was a product of compromise between those conflicting orientations, the traditional-

communal-indoctrinational represented by Motoda and Yamagata and the modernizing-individualistic-autonomous represented by Inoue and Itō. Because of this, the contention and the power of the Inoue-Itō viewpoint modified the original scheme of Motoda-Yamagata to the extent that the completed document came to include statements of the universal standard of civil life.

The promulgated rescript, however, went beyond Inoue's control. Despite Inoue's scheme to eliminate the competent minister's countersignature in order to minimize the document's legal authority, the very fact that it was issued only with the signature of the Emperor furnished it with a symbolic meaning, and permitted the Education Ministry to treat it even more significantly than ordinary legal rescripts and to build it into an object of worship without relevance to its ideological content.

The deification of the rescript promoted by the Education Ministry collided with the free exercise of religious conviction by Christians. A series of disputes ensued. These arguments succeeded in enlarging the conflict of orientations which existed between the drafters of the constitution and the promoters of the rescript among the people at large. A few citizens recognized that the incident was a threat to the religious freedom principle in terms of the constitutionally guaranteed civil right and argued to protect the non-conforming action of the Christian based on his religious scruples. By and large, however, both Buddhists and Christians failed to observe the issue in terms of religious freedom.

The essential problem of the Uchimura incident was fun-

damentally that of the religious symbolism of the Imperial Rescript on Education. Neither Uchimura nor Uemura criticized the educational principles listed in the document. Infallible, the content of the document never became a source of controversy for half a century, nor was it contradictory to the principle of religious freedom. What Uchimura and Uemura criticized was the treatment of the rescript which in effect made the document a symbol of the sacred. Not only the authorities of the Education Ministry, but the people at large including the majority of Buddhists and Christians accepted the rescript as a symbol of the divine. Heroin started the succession of human tragedies. Stories of educators who sacrificed their life to save the piece of paper and their position because of making a mistake in reading the document abounded in pre-war years. Once the religious symbolism of the rescript was established, it was thus nothing but the implement of worship of the state cult. As such the function of the Imperial Rescript on Education fundamentally contradicted the principle of the separation of religion from government and of the freedom of religious belief.

Inasmuch as the Meiji Constitution was the monument of the victory of the Westernization faction, the Imperial Rescript on Education embodied the deep-rooted traditional ways of thinking. As the Meiji Constitution symbolized the establishment of a legal nation and the adoption of Western ideas, so the functions and disfunctions of the Imperial Rescript on Education symbolized the ideal of a moral nation derived from the Confucian principle of the ethico-religious government. The Imperial Rescript on Education confirmed the traditional men-

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tality in its social application, and, notwithstanding its modern language, in practice it acted for the nullification of the constitutionally guaranteed freedom of religious belief.

(To be continued.)