UCHIMURA'S CONCEPTION OF THE CHURCH

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I

Generally speaking, it is stated that Uchimura (1861–1930 A.D.) is not a systematic writer. His sentences are, to be sure, full of prophetic insight, but these are too short and simple for us to grasp the logical meaning of his ideas. He wrote his ideas when he was feced with argument, in order to drive home his point. His character is passionate and intense. He is not intellectual, though he is a man of intelligence. Therefore, when we try to work out a systematic and orderly presentation of his thought, we are puzzled at the paradoxical and sometimes contradictory presentation in his writings, especially in his discussion of Japan and the church. It is necessary to have insight into the inner and basic idea of the various expressions which he uses.

Uchimura is convinced that his view of the church is Biblical and that it is derived from the essential nature of the Christian faith. The question, therefore, may be asked whether the Holy Scriptures themselves contain the idea of Mukyokai, that is, Non-Churchism, as he insists. But the crucial problem seems to be concerning his interpretation of the Bible, namely, from what point of view does he understand the Bible. I propose to investigate his idea of the church in terms of his basic way of thinking about Christianity rather than in the light of the Biblical doctrine of the church.

There are probably various kinds of historical circumstances, as a result of which he became convinced of his idea of non-churchism. For example, unlike the members of the Yokohama Band, he had little experience within the existing church-life; the situation in the American

and Japanese churches of his day was a bitter disappointment to him ; and he could not reach agreement with many Japanese Christians in their thought and activities concerning nationalism in Japan. But these circumstances alone do not explain his insistence on Non-Churchism. There must be a deeper reason for it within his way of thinking, within his basic thought as a whole, and broadly speaking, within the Christian mission in Japan.

From these various points of view mentioned above I will present a brief survey of his conception of the church.

II

What is the church ? According to Uchimura, the word "ekklesia" is etymologically quite different from "church" or "Kirche" which meant temple or chapel, being derived from "kuriakon". Ecclesia means originally an assembly or congregation of common people. It is obvious that Jesus meant rather to build up a home-like and spiritual community than to legislate a government-like institutional system or party. When He said to Peter, "On this rock I will build my ekklesia", He intended to build such a church in the sense mentioned above, since "oikodomeso" means to form a home rather than build a house (Chosaku-shu, i. e., Selected Works, Vol. X, pp. 248 ff.—to be abbreviated W. X, pp. 248 ff.). The true church is the spiritual and brotherly communion of believers in Christ, for "when two or three are gathered together in His name, there Christ is in the midst of them" (Mt. 18 : 22). The crucial problem is whether or not Jesus Christ is there. Therefore, the so-called church, which has bishops, presbyters, theologians, con-stitutions, creeds and institutions for the expansion of its own power like a kind of government or party and which asserts itself to be able to save the people—such a church is not the church of Christ (W. X, p. 223). Against this conception of the church, Uchimura maintains Non-Church, because the true church is not an institution and does not have secular power. What he envisages is the church as the

deepest and holiest communion of true believers in the name of Jesus Christ (ibid., p. 224).

Uchimura also believes that the church is spiritual and therefore formless. Christianity as the Life of God cannot be an institution or an organization. Life, in the Hebrew term, is "ruah", that is, a wind, breath. The Gospel of John states, "The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know whence it comes or whither it goes, so it is with everyone who is born of the Spitit" (3 : 8). Where the wind blows, there the Life of God is. And as the wind has no form, so the believers who are born of the Spirit do not need any specific form. Therefore, they are not members of an institutional church, but simply formless Christians. To be sure, the Life of God cannot do without some kind of form in the world. But since many errors and defects do arise when the spiritual is regarded as identified with and controlled by the institutional, the spiritual Christian is obliged to forsake and oppose the latter in order to live in the former. It is in this way that Non-Churchism comes into being (ibid., p. 227).

Salvation comes to man only through Jesus Christ, the Saviour, His death and resurrection. And the response to it is sola fide. Therefore anything other than this faith is not qualified to be the condition of salvation. Uchimura rejects the Sacraments so long as these claim to be something indispensable for salvation. He says, "I don't believe in baptism and the Holy Communion as rites of the church. However sublime they may be, a ritual has no power to save a man's soul. The water in the baptism is always water, having no power to wash away man's sin, and the bread and the wine in the eucharist are always bread and wine, having no power to provide eternal life. The grace of God is not given by a ritual. The evidence for the truth of this statement can be seen in the fact that there are evil men who were baptized, and good men who did not receive baptism, and that so-called Christians who partake of the eucharist are yet indifferent to doing evil. The rites of baptism and the eucharist performed in the church have

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nothing to do with the salvation of a man's soul" (ibid., pp. 285–286). Yet Uchimura believes in baptism and the euchraist as symbols of faith. The Sacraments meant originally sacred matter and mystery, and later became the symbols of sacred matter. If that is so, the Sacraments cannot be limited only to baptism and the eucharist, for everything is "sacramental" in the eyes of the Christian who lives in the spiritual and sacred world. As to baptism, he recognizes it as a symbol of the Christian's death and resurrection with Christ, but not as a rite washing away man's sin nor as a ceremony signifying entrance into the true church. The most important thing in baptism is not the ritual itself nor whether one is baptized or not, but the faith in the resurrection of Christ, by which the believer is given new life and becomes a new man (ibid., pp. 287–288). Regarding the Holy Communion, he recognizes it simply as a symbol for the memorial of Christ's death and also thanksgiving for His death. The significance of the lies in the participation in the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ, namely, Holy Communion in His Life. Jesus says, "It is the Spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail ; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life" (John, 6 : 63). The flesh, even if it be the "flesh" of Christ, is "of no avail" for building up the spiritual life of believers. Much less the bread and wine of the eucharist. Therefore, the observance of the so-called eucharist is meaningless, and listening to and following the word of God by studying the Holy Scriptures is the true participation in the Holy Communion (ibid., pp. 288 ff.). These words, however, do not mean that Uchimura completely rejects the celebration of the Sacraments. A little before the death of his beloved daughter, named Ruthko, he made her participate for the first and last time in the bread and wine of the eucharist with thanksgiving to divine grace (Zenshu, i. e., Complete Works, Vol. XIX, p. 202 ff. to be abbreviated, CW. XIX, p. 202 ff.). A while after he found the true meaning of Christ in His crucifixion, under the influence of Julius Seelye, president of Amherst College, he was filled with gratitude and celebrated to

partake of the Lord's Supper by himself (W. I., pp. 154–155). His idea is seen in the following words. "I do not disturb other people in their reverence toward the host and golden chalices; and I do not wish myself to be disturbed in my preference in these matters. The pitch of the whole affair is He (Christ) Himself and men do differ in their ways of appropriating Him. Liberty in non-essentials" (ibid., p. 155).

Where the believers gather together in the name of Christ, there is the true church of Christ. The true church consists of the believers who have fellowship in the name of Christ. Therefore, Uchimura maintains that the church does not need ordained ministers and religious institutions, for everyone as sent by Christ is regarded as a minister, priest, and evangelist. He insists on the priesthood of all believers. According to him, the priest stands as a mediator between God and man, introducing God to man and interceding for man before God. Man can become a priest not by the laying on of hands, but by the power of Life given by God. He is not necessarily recognized by the existing church as a bishop, minister or evangelist. The true priest must be called by God and not by man (W. X, pp. 268–269). Uchimura also maintains that one need not study theology and pass examinations in order to become a priest. He can become a good priest in his present position and circumstances as set by God. If he believes in Christ and follows Him, he will give witness to the Gospel of Christ. Thus, he is qualified to be a true priest, whatever he may be—a craftsman, a fisherman, a businessman, or a merchant. "It is neither by joining the party of the offspring of the Levites, nor by belonging to the set-organization of bishops, presbyters, and ministers, but by entering into the group of Jesus Christ, the friend of sinners, that we are able to become lay-priests of the common people" (ibid., p. 271).

III

From Uchimura's point of view, there is a sharp distinction and

acute contrast between the Word of God and the words of man, be-
tween the Christ-believer and the institutional church, between faith
and ecclesiastical ritual, and between spiritual life and formal organi-
zation. "Protestant, I understand," he says, "is Christ versus human
ingenuities, faith versus churches. It is simplicity arrayed against
complexities, living organism against dead organization" (W. VII, pp.
24, 26). He is convinced that the Word of God is more precious than
anything and that faith in Christ is the only way to salvation. There-
fore, he rejects all other things, including the institutional church. It
is his essential view of Christianity that "Christianity is not an insti-
tution, a church or churches; neither is it a creed, nor dogma, nor
theology; neither is it a book, the Bible, nor even the words of Christ.
Christianity is a person, a living person, Jesus Christ, the same yester-
day, today, and forever. If Christianity is not this, the ever-present
living He, it is nothing. I go directly to Him, and not through churches
and popes and bishops or any other useful or useless officers" (ibid.,
p. 12). All else that appears to be Christianity and the Christian church
in the world are something superimposed by man. And the man-made
ecclesiastical institutions today pretend to be "orthodox" and exclude
the prophetic believers who stand against them. Uchimura marshals
evidence for his point of view from the history of Christianity; e. g.
the strife between Amos and Amaziah, Savonarola and Alexander VI,
Luther and Leo X, and Cromwell and William Laud (W. X., pp. 264 ff.).
Generally speaking, life and form are always against one another in
history, because these two are different "in their own existential ground"
(ibid., pp. 272–273). The stronger the formal and material institution
maintains its reality in history, the more radically the spirutal power
should be emphasized by those who are convinced of its reality. As long
as ecclesiastical institutions continue to exist and to pretend to be divine
institutions, the spiritual believers are obliged to oppose them resolu-
tely in order to produce a positive affirmation of the living and spiritual
church. It is in this way that Uchimura's idea of Non-Church comes

into being. It must be noted that he is not satisfied with mere negative criticism and rejection of the existing ecclesiastical institutionalism, but he seeks to liberate the true church from the bond of formal ecclesiasticism and to make manifest the living reality and dynamic power latent in the true church. The negative particle in Non-Churchism is not a mere negation or denial, but signifies that radical resistance and protest against the existing institutionalism by which the spiritual believers build positively the true church. The Christian of Non-Church, to quote Uchimura's words, is "like a destroyer, yet a constructor, he is despicable to look at, yet he is lovable, having the heart of a lamb clothed in a bear skin" (ibid., p. 229).

It seems distinctive of Uchimura's thinking that he holds the dualistic idea that the true church is always in contradiction to the institutional church, and that spirit or life and form are consistently in opposition to one another. Theologically speaking, Uchimura cannot make accomodation for the view that the Word of God is revealed to and entrusted to the church, although the church existing in the world stands not only under the grace of God but also under divine judgment. He maintains that the spiritual must be formless and that when any kind of form is attached to spirit then the spiritual loses its pure and simple vitality, though he at the same time admits that the spiritual cannot exist in the world without some kind of form. Uchimura towards the end of his life confesses that rather than protest against the weak church existing in Japan he is assuming an attitude of indifference towards it, because the matter of the existing ecclesiastical institutions seems to him to be different from that of the Gospel of the Cross and therefore to be of a non-essential nature (ibid., p. 247). From the beginning the matter of the church which degenerates with potentiality and actuality in the world is regarded by him as of no consequence to his own faith in its basic nature. So far as the fundamental character of his conception of the church, apart from his activities relating to the church, is concerned, he does not enter into

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dialogue in a responsible way with the church in the world. He seems to be against the following view, namely that, to be sure, the ecclesiastical forms or institutions stand always under the criticism of the spiritual faith, and, therefore, these should be renewed in the light of Christian faith in accordance with the historical situation, but these are also a relative expression and production of believers and a way of witness of Christians in the world. He is too afraid of the secularization proper to the historic form of the Christian church to acknowledge any meaning in the existing institutional church. So far as this idea is concerned, he is far from the life of Christ who being in the form of God was found in the human form of a servant.

Uchimura is persuaded that the man-made institutions should be destroyed and yet believes that, when called by the Spirit of God, each believer seeks fellowship in the one faith in Christ and organizes a community of believers. The Word of God is directly revealed to each believer through the Holy spirit and not through the church. The true church can be organized only by individual believers, and not vice versa. The source of authority in the church is the independent and individual believers who are created by the Word of God, and who gather together to form their community. Therefore, the church is regarded as a free association and fellowship composed of individual Christians. Around Uchimura were organized voluntarily many Bible-study groups and associations with a common interest. The theological ground of formation of the church is in the eyes of Uchimura always a subjective decision of each believer and not an incorporation into the objective reality of the Body of Christ which has been given in and with the fact of His incarnation.

IV

Uchimura declares that the church today needs a second Reformation. "The Reformation of the sixteenth century ended as an arrested movement. Protestantism institutionalized was a return back

to the discarded Roman Catholicism.   We need another Reformation
to bring Protestantism to its logical consequences.   The new Protest-
antism must be perfectly free without a trace of ecclesiasticism in it,
——a fellowship, not an institution,——free communion of souls, not
a system or organization" (W. VII, p. 286).   The neo-Protestantism
must be centred around faith in Jesus Christ.   It is neither a creed nor
an institution, nor the Bible, but a living and simple faith in Christ,
the Saviour.   Protestantism carried to its logical conclusion must be
a formless religion, a pure and spiritual faith, as affirmed by Non-
Churchism.

　　According to Uchimura, Luther rediscovered the Gospel of Christ
and bequeathed the great faith of Protestantism to the Christian churches
of later days, but he did not succeed in the formation of the true church.
He depended too much on the power of secular authority and the Bible.
Since he accomplished his reformation of the church by means of the
protection of the German nobility and their patriotism, his church was
inevitably under their control just as it had been in the middle ages
under the Roman pope.   The second weapon with which Luther at-
tacked Roman Catholicism was the Bible, whose authority he now raised
above the church.   To be sure, the Holy Scriptures are the repository
of the precious treasure of the way of salvation.   But Luther's high
reverence for the Bible became responsible for the strife and divisions
among the Protestant churches, because each church maintains that
her own doctrine and creed are based on biblical truth.   One of the
roots of denominationalism, according to Uchimura, is Luther's over-
emphasis on the Holy Scriptures (W. XVI, pp. 266–276).

　　In Uchimura's opinion, the sectarianism of the Western mind is
the cause of denominationalism.   "Sectarianism", he declares, "seems
to be in the very make of their (Western people) being.   Every one
of them seems to believe that he or she is right in politics and in
religion. ... He is absolutely sure that his views on religion are right
as on politics; and he considers it his bound duty to convert all others

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——the whole world, if he can,——to his own views on God, Life and eternity. So, though they call themselves Christians, there are practically as many kinds of Christianity as their number, every one of them forming a sect by himself, and trying to make all others believe just exactly as he does. Roughly they are divided into churches, which are practically religious parties, only parties religious are more numerous than parties political. ... And every one of them (denominations) claims to be in possession of the absolute truth; every one of them has one or more missionary societies, to bring not only poor benighted heathens, but also other Christians, differently persuaded, to its own fold. How extremly complicated, embarrassing, even exasperating! What heathen can make right choice out of these at least six hundred kinds of Christianity presented to his acceptance? ... Surely, sectarianism is opposed to the very spirit of Christianity. Christ is not divided; and even if division is unaviodable under the present circumstances, the divided members should love and respect one another. Some one has called Christianity the religion of humility, and so it is, I sincerely believe. But sectarianism is the opposite of humility. It is an arrogance approaching that of evil one, who presumes perfection of one's imperfection, and of God's perfection to be realized in all His creatures. A man or a party (call it a "church", if you will) which says that it alone is right, places itself in God's place, and arrogates to itself an honour which belongs only to the Almighty" (W. VII, pp. 264, 266, 268, cf. ibid., p. 116). The criticism which Uchimura levels against Western denominationalism may also be levelled against his own church. But he maintains that the non-church is not and should not become a sect or denomination. The Non-Church is a spirit by which the Christian believer attacks the degenerated ecclesiastical institutions, and is the prophetic group which aims at a return to the fundamental truth of the Christian church. Therefore, he never thinks of his Non-Church as an exclusive sect. If it becomes a sect, it will lose its original and spiritual vitality and become like one of the many denomi-

nations. Under the title "The Progress of Non-Churchism", he says,
"Non-Church should become the church. I do not mean, however,
that it should return to the existing church, but that it should become a
churchless church, namely, the spiritual community of churchless be-
lievers. I admit readily that this community is very likely to become
the so-called church. If that should happen, it shall be again broken
down immediately by Non-Church" (W. X, p. 231). Denominationalism,
according to Uchimura, is a product of the Western mind, especially
that of the Anglo-Saxon people in the modern ages.   The Western
people have produced a marvellous modern civilization especially in
the fields of politics, economics, and technology.   In the field of re-
ligion, however, Western civilization has only produced a complexity
of quasi-politicial denominations and ecclesiastical institutions which
have lost the spiritual vitality of the Christian truth and have as their
dominant concern the formal and material nature of the church. These
tendencies do not only reflect the this-worldliness of modern techno-
logical civilization but also follow the traditional culture of the West
which originated in Greek intellectualism and Roman legalism (W.
VII, p. 52, 218). Therefore, the second Reformation which Uchimura
envisages in his idea of Non-Churchism cannot be accomplished by
Western Christendom.

V

After pointing out that Biblical Christianity and Protestantism are
formless and spiritual religion, he goes on to say, "And Europe, in-
cluding America, trained by schools of Greece and Rome, cannot rest
satisfied with a formless Christianity.   A thing must be defined and
institutionalized in order that it may be accomprehended and he secured
against dissolution. The Orient has, I think, an ability to grasp spirit
as spirit." (ibid., p. 220).   The Orient, like the Hebrew prophets and
the Christian apostles, can apprehend spiritual faith as such apart fom
forms (ibid., p. 52). Therefore, the formless Christianity of Non-Church

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will be proclaimed by the Oriental people, especially the Japanese, because its idea fits in exactly with "my Japanese or rather samurai (warrior) frame of mind" (ibid., p. 218). He does not mean that the Japanese people can claim perfect spirituality in religion. Uchimura is well known as one of the most severe critics of the policy, morals, and education of modern Japan. What he envisages in Japan is an ideal type of the Japanese mind which has been formulated in the long traditional course of Japan's history.

The question, then, must be asked, in what way did the "Japanese" element influence Uchimura's conception of the church? According to his view, when a Japanese truly and independently believes in Christ, his Christianity is Japanese Christianity (ibid., pp. 66, 152). "The spirit of the Japanese inspired by the Almighty is Japanese Christianity. It is free, independent, original and productive, as true Christianity always is" (ibid., p. 152). Therefore, the Christian church in Japan should be built by those believers who are free from and independent of foreign missionary Christianity. His spirit of independence is derived not only from his Christian view that having been made by and being led by God man is free and independent (ibid., p. 118), but also from his Japanese conviction that Japan is independent and that she should not depend on foreign hands in everything (CW. IX, p. 85). Non-Churchism, henceforth, answers "non", and declines any spiritual and material aid from Western Christendom. It proclaims the rejection of and claims independence from Western Christianity, its denominational ideas, institutions, worship, and also financial support. Uchimura is persuaded that Japan herself has excellent and representative men whose thoughts and activities should be introduced to foreign countries. It is his conviction that Japan by her own cultural heritage and spiritual insight can rediscover the true Gospel and produce her own Christianity without the aid of any foreign intermediary. Non-Churchism seems to him to be nothing other than this kind of Japanese Christianity. He is also noted for his emphasis upon financial independence (CW. II, pp.

195 ff., 925, XIII, p. 893, etc.).   He believes that the Japanese church becomes weak and slavish so long as it receives financial support from foreign mission boards and does not reject their spiritual interference in religious matters.   His aim is to found an independent and self-supporting church and to make it a spiritual power by virtue of its own religious life.   It should be noted that his idea of financial independence comes from Bushido (warrior spirit) which he regards as the finest product of Japan.   The bushi stood above the merchant-class in feudal society and was trained to be extremely fastidious in meney matters (W. VI, pp. 233–234).

Japanese Christianity must have its own church built on its own foundation.   Its organization must be truly Christian and at the same time Japanese.   "Any institution", Uchimura maintains, "which is not Christian and at the same time is not national has but very little of my sympathy" (CW. XX, p. 191).   In his letter dated in 1890 A.D. to D. Bell, one of his best American friends, he writes as follows, "I believe, time is coming when Japan shall have that form of Christian church which is peculiarly her own.   She shall clothe the essence of puritanic faith with garbs as symmetrical as her guardian mount Fuji, and fair as her national flower, cherry.   New England Congregationalism as well as all the shades of Episcopalianism are either too clumsy or too pompous for the people whose ideal in all such matters is *artistic simplicity*" (ibid., pp. 199–200).   The essential frame-work of Non-Churchism is simply the Bible-study group from which emerges faith in Christ and fellowship of true believers.   All other institutional and ritual matters are excluded from that group as non-essential and secondary.   The prefix "non" of Non-Churchism, therefore, is regarded as a negation of complicated forms and an affirmation of simplicity. These principle of Uchimura remind the Japanese of the spirit of Zen-Buddhism and its relation to the sense of beauty and of simplicity. Daisetsu T. Suzuki, a well-known Zen-Buddhism scholar discusses the influence of Zen-Buddhism on Japanese culture in the following terms.

Zen undertakes to awaken transcendental wisdom which makes one look into the reality of things beyond their phenomenality. But that wisdom is generally found slumbering under the thick clouds of the Ignorance and Karma which come from unconditional surrender to the Intellect. Therefore, Zen revolts against it and reverses the ordinary course of knowledge by a specific method of training, such as almost speechless Mondo (conversation) and Zazen (sitting on the mat). It disdains the bulk of knowledge by reading and memorising and scientific analysis and speculation, and aims to attain the intuitive mode of understanding which emerges from the depth of human being and which penetrates deeply into the very foundation of existence. From this fundamental attitude towards intellect arises general atmosphere of Zen, characteristic trends of thought and feeling towards things of the world. "1. Its concentration on the spirit leads to the neglect of form. 2. Or, rather, it detects in form of any description the presence of the spirit. 3. Deficiency or imperfection of form is held to be more expressive of the spirit, because perfection of form is likely to attract one's attention to form and not to the inner truth itself. 4. The depreciation of formalism, conventionalism, or ritualism tends to make the spirit stand in all its nakedness or aloneness or solitariness. 5. The transcendental aloofness or the aloneness of the absolute is the spirit of asceticism, which means the doing away with every possible trace of unessentials. 6. Aloneness translated in terms of the worldly life is non-attachment. 7. When aloneness is absolute in the Buddhist sense of the word, it deposits itself in all things from the meanest weeds of the field to the highest form of nature." (D. T. Suzuki, Zen Buddhism and Its Influence on Japanese Culture, 1938, pp. 11–12). One of the artistic expressions emanating from Zen is simplicity, that is, Tanpakusa, in Japanese. Zen's habit of mind to break through all forms of human artificiality and to take hold firmly of what lies behind them has helped the Japanese not to forget the soil but to be always friendly with nature and to appreicate her unaffected simplicity.

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Zen has no taste for complexities which lie on the surface of life. Therefore, Japanese artists influenced by Zen-Buddhism have favoured the use of imperfection or even of ugliness in order to make alive the inner life of spiritual and transcendental reality. To them, beauty does not necessarily spell perfection of form, and imperfection itself becomes a form of imperfection (ibid., pp. 13 ff.). The tea-house with a single flower and a simple brush-painting placed in the beauty place, and the garden of one-corner style characterize adequately this artistic simplicity. It is, to be sure, unquestionably clear that Uchimura's Christianity is essentially different from the Zen-Buddhism of the absolute emptiness and the transcendental aloneness. Although he appreciates the Bushido highly and his Christianity is clearly in contact with that spirit which has been affiliated with Zen, the relationship between his Christianity and Bushido seems to remain within the bounds of the ethical way of life and is not regarded as extending to the dimension of his theological way of thinking as a whole. Moreover, he says almost nothing about Zen-Buddhism in his numerous writings. But the above-mentioned thought and feeling of Zen-Buddhism moulds Japanese culture and seems to be deeply embedded in the Japanese character. Just as in the Kamakura era Zen asserted itself as a destructive force against the trends of the Tendai and the Shingon sects, which were rich in ritualism and whose ceremonies were conducted in a most elaborated style appropriate to the taste of the refined class of the royal family and the nobility, so Uchimura's Non-Churchism today claims to be the spiritual power against the opposing Western ecclesiastical institutionalism and ritualism. His views on the relation between spirit and form and between simplicity and complexity are related to Zen's negation of form or its detection of the spiritual reality in imperfection of form. Is it inappropriate to say that Zen and, broadly speaking, the Japanese longing for nature are somehow related to Uchimura's poetic expression of finding the existence of Non-Church in the universe and in nature? "What and where is our church in the world? It

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is the universe and nature that is the church of the believers of Non-Church. Its roof is the blue sky; its board is ornamented by the stars its floor is the green ground; its mat is colourful flowers; its musical instrument is the branch of pine-tree, and its musician is the little bird in the forest; its pulpit is the mountain peak; its preacher is God; this is the church of Non-Church men" (W. X, pp. 230–231).

VI

Visser't Hooft, in The Ecumenical Review discussing the contribution of the Asian Churches to the ecumenical movement, speaks in the following terms. The twentieth century is the period of post-Christendom. The church is, because of the secularization of the state and of the new sense of independence of the church, more and more vis-à-vis the state. The large part of the human race lives in societies dominated either by other religions or by Communist ideology. The Western world is inevitably under the influence of this-worldly and man-centred technical civilization. The Christian mission, therefore, as in former times, cannot count on the power of a friendly government or on alliance with supporting culture. There are those who ask whether the Christian church can possibly have a future. But the Word of God is not bound and the history of the church as the instrument of the Word is not to be adequately described in terms of the law of human institutions. To be sure, the life of the church as an empirical human institution is largely influenced by political and social factors. But church history has at the same time its own specific laws. The church which is truly the church, that is, the church which depends on the Holy Spirit, is not merely the product of historical causality. The church imprisoned in cultural and social patterns can hardly be ecumenical. The ecumenical movement is in every sense a movement of liberation of the church from specific cultural causality and of the Christian witness to Christ as the Lord of the whole world. "The Churches in Asia have to prove their freedom to those who still con-

sider them as an outgrowth of the bygone period of Western expansion. They must make it clear by their spiritual independence, by their true rootedness in Asia, by their evangelistic passion, that the historians who speak already of the failure of the Christian mission in Asia or of the inevitable decline of Christianity in Asia which will naturally result from the end of Western dominance, are wrong" ("The Significance of the Asian Churches in the Ecumencial Movement" in The Ecumencial Review, July, 1959, p. 375). That is the chief point in the dialogue between the Asian churches and the ecumenical movement. In the historical process of the renewal of the church for which, as Visser't Hooft mentions, the Asian Christians are largely responsible, there arose especially in the beginning of the twentieth century, inevitably, a somewhat critical dialogue of the churches between Asians and Westerners, and without it the Asian churches could not accomplish their freedom and independence of Western Christendom. In the earliest stage of the Christian mission in Japan Uchimura was nothing but a remarkable prophet and pioneer who had attempted this task through his own religious insight. He tried not only to liberate the Gospel, that is, the true treasure of the church which was imprisoned within the ecclesiastical institutions and religious and social patterns of the Western world, but to make it relevant and indigenous to the spiritual and cultural soil of Japan. It seems a great misfortune and an irony of history that he was not willing or able to remain in the historic church as a critic and reconstructor but ended his life as an outsider from the church. From this point of view, Japanese Christians should re-evaluate Uchimura's idea of Non-Church, and study the place which he occupies in the story of the growth of the Christian Gospel in Japan.