

A Short History of the IARF

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The International Association for Religious Freedom, or IARF, is the oldest international interfaith organization. Its history spans the 20th century and reflects many of the difficult issues that confronted religious leaders and scholars during that tumultuous period, particularly in Europe and in the United States. Unitarians and free or liberal Christians provided leadership throughout the century, and in the last two decades they have been ably assisted by Japanese lay Buddhists and shrine Shinto priests and also Indian Brahmos, Buddhists, Christians, Sikhs, Muslims, Unitarians, and members of the Ramakrishna Mission.

This brief summary of the history of the IARF cannot do justice to all those who have contributed to its work over so many years. Perhaps, however, it can help the reader at the beginning of the 21st century appreciate the struggle of visionary men and women for tolerance and understanding with freedom among the diverse peoples of our one world. Lessons may be learned from such a reflection, for the past is not altogether different from the present and may well bear upon our common future.

International Council of Unitarian and Other Liberal Religious Thinkers and Workers

The IARF began in 1900 on May 25th in Boston, Massachusetts at the 75th anniversary meeting of the American Unitarian Association. Its original name was the International Council of Unitarian and Other Liberal Religious Thinkers and Workers. "The object of this council," its founders declared, "is to open communication with those in all lands who are striving to unite *Pure Religion* and *Perfect Liberty*, and to increase fellowship and cooperation among them."¹ The first president was Joseph Estlin Carpenter, an English Unitarian professor of theology and religious studies at Manchester College in Oxford. The secretary for the first two decades was Charles W. Wendte, an American Unitarian minister who had helped organize the 1893 Parliament of the World's Religions in Chicago. The first Executive Committee included ten other men: four from Holland, two from Switzerland, and representatives from France, Germany and Hungary.

The initial Congress was held in London in May 1901 in response to an invitation from the British and Foreign Unitarian Association. It lasted three days and as many as 2,000 persons attended its sessions. As a result, 770 individuals from 21 different religious groups and 15 countries became members of the Council. Most of these were from Europe and the United States. B. C. Ghosh of India brought greetings from the Brahmo Samaj movement, but Z. Toyosaki representing liberal religious groups in Japan did not arrive from Tokyo in time for the Congress. Proceedings were published under the title *Liberal Religious Thought at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century*.²

The 2nd Congress was held in September 1903 in Amsterdam under the title "Congress of Religious Free-thinkers" and was hosted by the Vergadering van Moderne Theologen of Holland, an association of liberal ministers.³ Sixteen countries were represented and 900 persons enrolled as paying members. The Dutch hosts led an opening service of worship and provided several excursions for foreign guests. More than twenty papers were given in English, Dutch, German, and French by scholars from the Netherlands, England, France, Germany, Switzerland, Hungary, Belgium, India and Japan. J. Estlin Carpenter from Oxford spoke on "The Place of Christianity in the Religions of the

1 Charles W. Wendte, ed., *Freedom and Fellowship in Religion: Proceedings and Papers of the Fourth International Congress of Religious Liberals* (Boston: International Council, 1907), p. 1.

2 W. Copeland Bowie, ed., *Liberal Religious Thought at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century* (London: 1901).

3 P. H. Hugenholtz, Jr., ed. *Religion and Liberty: Addresses and Papers at the Second International Council of Unitarian and Other Liberal Religious Thinkers and Workers, Held in Amsterdam, September, 1903* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1904).

World." S. A. Eliot of Boston addressed the question of "Liberal Christianity in the United States." V. R. Shinde from Calcutta presented a paper with the title "Liberal Religion in English India," and S. Toyosaki of Tokyo reported on "The Progress of Liberal Religious Thought in Japan." In 1904 Brill in Leyden published the proceedings of the Council as *Religion and Liberty* edited by P. H. Hugenholz, Jr.

The Council held its 3rd Congress in 1905 in Geneva under the title "Congress of Religious and Progressive Christians." A few Roman Catholics participated, and over four hundred reports on the Congress appeared in European newspapers. The five religious services in French, German and English were held in the ancient Cathedral of St. Peter, and 568 persons enrolled as members of the Congress. On the occasion of that meeting a society was organized to assist French-speaking Protestants in Switzerland and a recommendation was approved to publish the beliefs and purposes of the affiliated religious organizations.⁴

In 1907 the Council returned to Boston to hold the "Fourth International Congress of Religious Liberals." On behalf of the Executive Committee of the International Council, Charles Wendte reported that 2,391 individuals had registered for the Congress and paid the fee. Of these, 172 were from countries other than the United States. Great Britain accounted for 122 of the overseas participants, but religious liberals were also present from Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, Holland, Hungary, Italy, Sweden, Switzerland, Australia, New Zealand, India and Japan. Affiliated societies included Unitarian, Universalist, free and liberal Christian, free religious groups in Europe, North America, Japan and South Africa, and the Brahma Samaj and Arya Samaj in India. Rabbi Charles Fleischer of Boston addressed the Congress, and M. Barakatullah of India presented a liberal Muslim perspective. Official delegates were received from 88 religious associations and 33 separate church fellowships, and 106 honorary Vice-Presidents were recognized for their assistance in promoting the event.

The opening ceremony of the 4th Congress included Jewish, Muslim, Hindu and Roman Catholic participants, but Protestants and Unitarians were in the great majority. Charles Wendte characterized all the participants as "religious liberals" and their movement as "liberalism." He affirmed that their main purpose was to develop the religious life: "We believe that the religious sentiment is natural to man and of surpassing importance; that, whatever may befall its accidental and transitory embodiments in dogma, sacrament, and ritual, religion itself will endure forever, the very life-blood of the soul of man, the inner power which lifts him above the solicitations of the senses and the distractions of the world into communion with God and self-sacrificing devotion to mankind."⁵

Rev. Thomas R. Slicer of All Souls' Church in New York spoke to the Congress on the "Glory of God," and a chorus sang Handel's arrangement of the text from Isaiah: "And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it."⁶ The 1907 Congress, however, urged participants to embrace liberal religion and resist orthodoxy. "Liberalism is to us a temper, an attitude of the mind, a disposition of the heart towards truth. Liberalism is the supremacy of the spirit over the letter in religion. It is the mind in a state of growth, and is thus differentiated from orthodoxy, which is the type of a mind that has stopped growing, which accepts finalities in religion and claims that its opinions are infallible."⁷

In keeping with this commitment, Wendte urged Congress participants to maintain "a tolerant and sympathetic spirit" toward all those with whom they might differ. "The true liberal not only speaks the truth but he speaks it in love . . . He is not impatient with error if it be error held in the spirit of truth. The only unpardonable sin in his eyes is uncharity,—a loveless heart, an intolerant mind."⁸ To an audience that more than filled the largest hall in Boston, Wendte affirmed with the

⁴ The proceedings were published as *Actes du III^e Congrès Internationale de Christianisme Libérale et Progressif* (Geneva: 1905), edited by E. Montet.

⁵ Charles W. Wendte, "Report of the Executive Committee of the International Council, in *Freedom and Fellowship in Religion*, 3.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 64.

⁸ *Ibid.*

apostle Paul that "where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." He concluded his opening remarks by inviting those gathered for the Congress to help "build the Universal Church."⁹

Several women spoke to the Congress in 1907 include Julia Ward Howe of Boston, who also composed a hymn for the event. In an address entitled "Good Will to Men" Booker T. Washington, Principal of the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, expressed "a peculiar debt of gratitude to those of the liberal faith" who helped to banish slavery from American soil. "Such gatherings as this," he affirmed, "are helping to hasten the day referred to by Christ when he said, 'You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free'."¹⁰

In his opening address Samuel A. Eliot, the president of the Council, proclaimed: "The significance of this gathering is that it is composed of men and women who in the pursuit of truth and righteousness dare to commit themselves unreservedly to the control of the law of liberty."¹¹ Eliot appealed to "conscience, reason, and experience" and called upon the "Brethren of the Liberal Faith" to unite as "pioneers of pure religion and perfect liberty" in order to bring peace to the earth.¹² To promote the purposes of the Congress, follow-up meetings were held in Ann Arbor and Chicago and at churches in Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, St. Louis, and Berkeley, California.

International Congress of Free Christians and Other Religious Liberals

The 5th Congress was held in Berlin in August 1910 as the "World Congress of Free Christianity and Religious Progress." In "A Summary and Appreciation" Charles Wendte explained that the Executive Committee meeting in Berlin had decided the original name of the Council should be changed to conform more closely to the participation of religious liberals in the meetings held in the first ten years of the twentieth century. Unitarians had been in the majority at first, but liberal or free Christians became more numerous by the middle of the decade, particularly in Europe. This fact was reflected in the names given the Congresses during the first decade of the century. In Berlin, Unitarians on the Executive Committee suggested the name of the Council no longer explicitly refer to Unitarians and proposed that the title of the Boston Congress be used for the Council. After two meetings of the Executive Committee unanimous support was achieved for the name, "International Congress of Free Christians and Other Religious Liberals." The latter phrase was intended "to include in its fellowship all phases of reverent free thought and all progressive forms of ethnic and world-faith outside of Christianity, such as liberal Judaism, Hindu Theism, advanced Buddhism, and Mohammedanism."¹³

In addition to the change of name in 1910 the Executive Committee was enlarged from twelve persons to include five members from Germany, four from Great Britain, four from the United States, three from France, two from Switzerland, two from Scandinavia, and one each from Italy and Hungary. Proposals to include Jewish, Hindu and Buddhist representatives on the Executive Committee were deferred to the 1913 Congress. Before arriving at the Berlin Congress foreign delegates stopped at Cologne to participate in a demonstration under the auspices of the Friends of Protestant Freedom in the Rhinelands, an association of over four thousand members that supported the rights of individuals and congregations within the German State Church. The demonstration concluded with the singing in German of Luther's stirring hymn, "A Mighty Fortress is Our God."

Speakers to the Berlin Congress included the German liberal scholar Adolf Harnack, who distinguished between the earliest gospel account in the New Testament and the later gospels representing the theologies of the early churches; the American theologian Walter Rauschenbusch, who presented an address entitled "The Social Awakening of the American Churches;" and the German historian Ernst Troeltsch, who spoke on "The Possibility of a Free Christianity." After the

9 Ibid. The application for membership in the 1907 Congress contained the following statement: "No assent to any formal dogma, or adhesion to any particular Church, is required for membership in this Congress. All who desire to increase religious enlightenment, freedom, and tolerance, and to make the world better, are cordially invited to participate in it." (Ibid., 7.)

10 Walker, "Good Will to Men, in *Freedom and Fellowship in Religion*, 46.

11 Eliot, "Opening Address of the President," in *Freedom and Fellowship in Religion*, 48.

12 Ibid., 51, 52.

13 Charles W. Wendte, "A Summary and Appreciation, from *The Fifth World Congress of Free Christians and Other Religious Liberals*, reprinted from *The Christian Register* (Boston: American Unitarian Association, 1910), 15.

Congress, participants joined excursions to Wittenberg and Weimar to visit the homes of Martin Luther, Goethe and Schiller.

The proceedings of the 1910 Congress were published in German, but Charles W. Wendte and V. D. Davis edited an English version that was printed in London.¹⁴ Seventy addresses are grouped under the following headings: "What Religious Liberals of Other Nations Owe to the Religious Life and Theological Science of Germany," "A Presentation of German Theology and German Church Life," "Papers by Foreign Delegates," "Sympathetic Relations Between Different Religious Denominations in Christendom," "Sympathetic Relations Between Christianity and Other Great World-Faiths," "Religion and the Social Question," and "Supplementary Addresses at Weimar and Eisenach."

A decade after its founding, what would become known as the IARF was taking shape. A Council that was at first largely Unitarian had become an interfaith Congress. It was concerned with religious freedom, tolerance, and cooperation among religious groups. Reason and goodwill were promoted to redress social issues, and women as well as men were chosen as leaders. By 1910 a Congress included interfaith devotions, presentations and programs in the languages of its major participants, a concern for the rights of religious movements in the country where it was held, and pre or post Congress excursions or other programs.

The last meeting of the Congress before World War I was held in July 1913 in Paris. When the Congress reconvened after World War I in October 1920 in Boston, W. H. Drummond began his service as secretary. In August 1922 at the Congress at Leiden, Holland twelve nations were represented: England, France, Germany, Belgium, Holland, Denmark, Italy, Switzerland, Austria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and the United States of America. Academic issues concerning the scientific study of religion and the use of historical criticism to study the Bible and other religious scriptures were set to one side in order to consider the future of Christian civilization. Encouragement was given to a new League of Youth for Free Christian students, and the speech in German by the Unitarian Dr. Capek from Prague stirred all the participants to strive for a rebirth of liberty in Europe.¹⁵ A year later a youth section was founded under the name "Leiden International Bureau," which later took the name "International Religious Fellowship."

The first *Bulletin* of the International Congress of Free Christians and other Religious Liberals appeared in December 1922. It published a greeting from J. Estlin Carpenter in Oxford, the first president of the Association, who remarked: "we have joined in the age-long quest for Truth, and we seek to learn the meaning of each other's experience, and feel the value of combined endeavor."¹⁶ As Charles W. Wendte was also unable to attend the Congress, the *Bulletin* printed his letter of greeting. Wendte noted that: "The reactionary tendencies in church and state which are the common and deplorable inheritance of all nations engaged in the recent struggle, give us an additional reason for existence as a useful agency for promoting tolerance, progressive opinions, and a spiritual, rather than a dogmatic religion. To hearten and encourage the minorities which in all lands are bravely striving for religious freedom and a rational faith; to bring into fraternal and helpful relations with each other the scattered individuals and congregations, the world over, who are seeking and maintaining advanced and unpopular opinions on religious and ethical topics; to comfort and aid the victims of political and ecclesiastical oppression in their demands for liberty, justice and equal religious rights—these are among our aims as an international and religious Association."¹⁷

World War I brought to a temporary halt the movement that had begun in 1900, and it was more than five years before the "Seventh Congress of Free Christians and Other Religious Liberals" was convened in Prague in September 1927. Only about 150 persons registered for the Congress, but open sessions drew 1,500-2,000 participants. Recovery from the material and spiritual devastation of the war was slow. The hopes and plans of many of those participating in international efforts to promote tolerance and understanding had been shattered by the violent passions of the war.

The International Association for Liberal Christianity and Religious Freedom

¹⁴ Charles W. Wendte and V. D. Davis, ed.s, *Fifth International Congress of Free Christianity and Religious Progress: Proceedings and Papers, Berlin, August 5-10, 1910* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1911).

¹⁵ W. H. Drummond, "The International Congress at Leiden," *The Inquirer* (September 9, 1922.)

¹⁶ J. Estlin Carpenter, "Letter of Greeting," *Bulletin*, no. 1 (December 1922):11.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 12.

Then in 1930 at Arnhem, Holland the thirty-year old movement was organized officially and renamed "The International Association for Liberal Christianity and Religious Freedom." A secretariat was established and staffed by the Dutch Central Committee for Liberal Protestantism, and L. J. van Holk became the first secretary. In 1931 the Independent Church of Filipino Christians in the Philippines joined the Association, and a year later the 1932 Congress in St Gallen, Switzerland approved the new constitution.

In 1934 the International Association for Liberal Christianity and Religious Freedom held the "11th International Congress of Religious Liberals" at Copenhagen. One of the topics addressed by the Congress was "Liberal Religion and the Church Universal." Materials from this Congress use the acronym "I.A.R.F." and note that 350 members attended. International Sunday was introduced in 1934 on the first Sunday of October, and the *Bulletin* no. 15 was published in November of that year. When the Executive Committee of the IARF met in 1935, it scheduled International Sunday for the second Sunday in January. It also decided to produce a *Handbook on the I.A.R.F.* that was published in London the next year and cost one British shilling.

IARF Bulletin no. 17, which was published in 1935 contained a statement by W. R. M. Noordhoff of Holland that called on the Association to demonstrate its commitment to freedom. "In 1900 'religious freedom' meant: freedom *in* religion," Noordhoff wrote. "At that time the individual claimed his rights for personal freedom over against the stubborn orthodoxy of many Christian Churches." Three and a half decades later, he suggested, "'religious freedom' means: freedom *for* religion: freedom to the powers of religious thought and will to exercise their influence upon the life of humanity, freedom to let religion *work*." Therefore, "In this fight for freedom we need not only a number of individuals who have a strong faith in the things which they hold true and righteous. What we need equally much is a *demonstrative community*."¹⁸

Beginning in 1936 the *Bulletin* was published in German as well English. Writing in issue no. 19, H. Faber suggested that the IARF was in the "second period" of its development: "We realize that it has to fulfil a real task in the present world situation. This task is not only to unite the liberal Christians and other religious Liberals the world over, but to give testimony of what Free Christianity is and strives after."¹⁹ In 1936 the IARF held an International Theological Conference at Arnhem on the theme, "Liberal Christianity: Its Aims and Outlooks." About 60 IARF members attended this gathering, and a report of its conclusions was published in the July 1937 issue of the *Bulletin*.

The 12th IARF Congress was held in 1937 at Oxford with the theme, "Liberal Christianity: The World's Need." A report on the activities of the IARF between 1934 and 1937 was presented to the Congress by its three secretaries: W. R. M. Noordhoff, H. Faber and C. J. Bleeker. The annual subscription for individual members was set at 2 1/2 Dutch Guilders and 41 persons from 6 countries paid it; 14 of these were from England, and 18 were from Holland. Contributions were also received from 15 affiliated organizations in the United States, Great Britain, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Estonia, France, Holland, Romania, South Africa and Switzerland. The financial situation of the Association was aided by earnings from the "Charles W. and Abbie Grant Wendte Fund" established by Mrs. Wendte prior to her death.²⁰

A small theological conference was held in 1938 in Bentveld, Holland but was followed in 1939 by war in Europe and the occupation of Holland in May 1940, which led to the closing of the Secretariat for five years. Soon after the liberation of Holland on May 4, 1945, the IARF Secretariat reopened and began relief work in the distressed parts of Europe. Preparation meetings for the next IARF Congress were held in 1946 in Cambridge and in 1947 in Bern. The 13th Congress of the IARF was initially planned for Prague in 1948 but that proved to be difficult, so the Congress was convened at Amsterdam in 1949.

The theme of the 13th Congress was "The Mission and Message of Liberal Religion." At the time of the Congress the IARF had member groups in Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, India (Brahmo Samaj), the Philippines (Independent Church of the

¹⁸ W. R. M. Noordhoff, "What We Need: A Demonstrative Community," *IARF Bulletin*, no. 17 (March-July, 1935):3.

¹⁹ H. Faber, "Our Growing Task," *IARF Bulletin*, no. 19 (December 1935-March 1936):3.

²⁰ *Report of the Secretariat, Report of the Treasurer, August 1934-July 1937* (Utrecht, Netherlands: IARF, 1937), 3-15.

Philippines), Romania, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States. "As religious liberals," the Congress participants affirmed: "We stand for Religion against the rising tide of secularism in a world that has very largely accepted a materialistic, if not an atheistic philosophy. We stand for Tolerance in a world that is increasingly dominated by sectarianism and bigotry. We stand for Liberty in a world that has at many points surrendered to arbitrary authority. We stand for Reason in a world that has succumbed to an alarming degree to blind emotionalism. We stand for Individual Responsibility in a world that puts its trust chiefly in mass movements and a regimenting State. We stand for the Ethics of Jesus in a world that seems to have reverted to the ethics of the jungle. We stand for these things uncompromisingly and openly. We do not expect to find it an easy position to hold. But we believe that we shall have many powerful allies when the real issues are made clear."²¹

In his sermon during the Congress worship service Frederick May Eliot of Boston argued that the biblical image of "the kingdom of heaven" when properly understood "is the message and the mission of liberal religion in our modern world."²² Similarly, the Theological Section of the 1949 Congress took a clear theistic position and used biblical Christian images to set forth a Unitarian vision: "We believe in God, the Unfathomable, the eternal Creator of the world and of man, Who creates man in His own image, and thereby gives him a dignity he can never lose. He has placed man as a limited but free creature over against himself, in order that man may surrender himself to Him in trust and love. We believe that the freedom with which man has been endowed is such, that he can use it either for salvation or for destruction. If he pursues his own ends, he destroys himself, if he opens his heart to God and to his neighbor he finds the true life. We believe that Christ shows us what divine love means. He shows us the Father, to whom we can turn in all our guilt and need. He shows us our neighbor as our brother, as one for whom we are responsible in all his guilt and need."²³

In August 1952 the IARF Congress met in Oxford, England. The theme was "Authority and Freedom in the Modern World," and the Congress was divided into five sections: Theology, World Religions, Sociology, Religious Education, and Science and Religion. The section on Theology addressed the question: "How can the liberal resolve conflicts arising between faith and reason?" The section on World Religions discussed how religions other than Christianity recognized freedom, and the section on Sociology sought restraints on individualism through "forms of community life in which the individual and society are properly balanced." The section on Religious Education looked for ways to help children "grow freely into a world motivated by the ideal of freedom while at the same time helping them to discipline their freedom in terms of the needs of the community." And the section on Science and Religion asked: "To what extent do the results of scientific investigation have an authority for the religious minded layman?"²⁴

Speakers at the 14th Congress included James Luther Adams, professor of ethics at the University of Chicago, Claas Jouco Bleeker, professor in the history of religions at Amsterdam University, Fritz Buri, professor of theology at Basle University, James Chuter Ede, former British Home Secretary, Rev. L. A. Garrard, New Testament scholar at Manchester College in Oxford and the Unitarian College in Manchester, Friedrich Heiler, professor in the history of religions at Marburg University, and L. J. van Holk, professor in philisophy of religion and ethics at Leiden University.²⁵

In 1953 the Association sponsored an International Conference on Tolerance in Geneva, and in his "Message for International Sunday 1954" IARF President Percival F. Brundage summed up the conclusions of that gathering: "Our message to all of the churches . . . is that the world today needs to understand and practice Tolerance. The greatest prophets of all religions have expressed the same idea but no one has phrased it more broadly or beautifully than Jesus Christ when he said: 'Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men do to you do ye even so to them.' (St. Matthew 7:12)"²⁶

²¹*Proceedings of the Thirteenth Congress* (The Hague, Netherlands: IARF, 1949), 6.

²² Frederick May Eliot, "The Message and Mission of Liberal Religion," *Proceedings of the Thirteenth Congress*, 1.

²³ *Ibid.*, 6.

²⁴ *Fourteenth Congress*, (The Hague, Netherlands: IARF, 1952), 1-4.

²⁵ *News Digest*, no. 16 (June 1952):4-5.

²⁶ Percival F. Brundage, "Message for International Sunday 1954," *News Digest*, no. 21 (January 1954):5.

In 1955 the IARF held its 15th Congress in Belfast, Northern Ireland on the theme, "Liberal Religion in an Age of Anxiety." Afterwards, Frederick M. Eliot of Boston wrote: "the significant thing about the Belfast Congress . . . was the obvious desire of everyone to rise above a dogmatic liberalism and affirm the truly inclusive nature of the fellowship of the I.A.R.F." He noted that this spirit was present in 1900, "but in the period between the first and the second world wars there developed what might have proved to be a divisive and ultimately fatal emphasis on doctrine as more important than freedom." At Belfast in 1955, however, he felt it was plain that "the original spirit will prevail."²⁷ Also in 1955 the IARF published a revision of the booklet, *The I.A.R.F.: Its Vision and Work*, and in this booklet one of the secretaries of the Association, S. van der Woude, wrote: "Some of our churches and groups got their continuous tradition directly from the Reformation, some have their origin in the Enlightenment or in other spiritual developments, but we belong to the same organization, spread over the whole world, which has written in its standard the golden words: 'LIBERTY AND TRUTH'."²⁸

The 16th Congress of the IARF was held at the University of Chicago in August 1958 on the theme, "Today's Religions Can Meet the World's Needs Today." The evenings of this Congress were devoted to addresses by members of "the five great world religions." Dr. Wilhelm Pauck of Union Theological Seminary gave an address on "The Prospects of Protestant Liberalism." Sir Muhammad Zafrulla Khan, the foreign minister of Pakistan from 1947 to 1954 and the leader of the Pakistan delegation to the UN from 1947 to 1951, delivered a speech entitled "The Contribution of Islam to the Solution of the World's Problems Today." Philip Randall Giles, the General Superintendent of the Universalist Church of America, later commented wryly on his surprise at finding Muslim pamphleteers "handing out propaganda on that world faith" at every door of Rockefeller Chapel after the address.²⁹ Dr. Kalidas Nag of Calcutta spoke to the Congress on "Hinduism," and the Honorable Justice Thado Maha Tbray Sithu U Chan Htoon of Burma, a former Attorney General and the founder of the World Fellowship of Buddhists, spoke for Buddhism. Rabbi Dr. Solomon B. Freehof of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations delivered the fifth evening address on the topic, "Liberal Judaism and the Modern Need."

Panel discussions met daily to address the following subjects: Philosophy and theology, Growing Tensions: Social, Racial and Religious, Science in the Modern World, Worship, Education and the Arts, Ethics and International Relations, and Human Values and Economic Forces. Each panel submitted findings and suggested resolutions that were adopted by the Congress. The preamble to these findings and resolutions contains the following paragraph: "The liberal religious outlook is freedom-loving, freedom-seeking, freedom-giving. This search for freedom calls for communication between the great religious traditions and perspectives, for the dialogue that elicits creative integrity. Through sympathetic conversation between perspectives, there emerges new mutual understanding, new discovery of the latent meanings of the perspectives, and new recognition of common responsibilities. Of such genuine dialogues we refuse to predict or to prejudge the outcome. To prejudge is to impede or pervert the conversation. Genuine conversation leads to new possibilities. Precisely this confidence in communication is the confidence that a power greater than ourselves, and greater than we know, works when we respond to its demands. It is out of this conversation with others and with the transcendent that integrity overcomes arrogance with creative love."³⁰

After the 1958 Congress many of the participants took part in a tour by bus to Pittsburgh, Washington, DC, and Boston. At the time of the Congress the IARF had 25 member groups from: Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, India (Brahmo Samaj), Japan (Japan Free Religious Association), Netherlands, Northern Ireland, Poland (Old-Catholic Congregation of Krakow), Rumania, South Africa, Surinam (Evangelical

²⁷ Frederick M. Eliot, "Letter," *News Digest*, no. 28 (December 1955):5. This is the first issue of *News Digest* to have printed on the front cover the statement: "having Consultative Status with U. N. Economic and Social Council, and with UNESCO."

²⁸ H. Faber, "Short History of the I.A.R.F." in *I.A.R.F. Sixteenth Congress: Chicago 1958* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1958), 130.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 6.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 62.

Lutheran Congregation), Sweden, Switzerland, and the United States of America. The International Union of Liberal Christian Women, the International Religious Fellowship, and Albert Schweitzer College in Switzerland were registered as associate member groups.

The purposes of the IARF in 1958 were: "(1) to bring into closer union the historic liberal churches, the liberal element in all churches, and isolated congregations and workers for religious freedom; (2) to draw into the same fellowship free religious groups throughout the world which are in essential agreement with our ways of thinking; and (3) to open and maintain communication with free Christian groups in all lands who are striving to unite religion and liberty, and to increase fellowship and cooperation among them."³¹ In 1959 the *News Digest* of the International Association for Liberal Christianity and Religious Freedom announced to those who had not attended the Chicago Congress that steps were being taken by the IARF to establish an inter-faith center.³²

In 1961 the 17th Congress was held in Davos, Switzerland on the theme, "The Unity of Mankind in Our Divided World." Morning lectures addressed issues concerning world community and the relationships between the West and Africa and Asia. Panel discussions in the afternoons dealt with social issues such as food and population growth, racial discrimination, strains on the family, and the influence of technology on spiritual values. The Albert Schweitzer College in Churwalden offered a seminar on scientific study and technology prior to the Congress, and tours were available to participants afterwards.³³

In his report following the Congress its President, H. Faber, reflected on the need to consider: "the place of our movement in growing world unity. The suggestion to strike from the name of our organization the words 'Liberal Christianity' and to keep only the words 'Religious Freedom' was intended to make it possible for non-Christians to take an active part in the movement, which from its start in 1900 has stirred interest in all parts of the world." European participants at the Congress were generally opposed to this suggestion, and thus a decision was postponed. Looking beyond the question of a name, Faber hoped that the IARF would be able to "make a contribution in the field of international and also of interfaith relations."³⁴

Two distinguished leaders of the IARF attended Vatican Council II in 1963 as observers and pondered the implications of the changes in the Roman Catholic Church. L. J. van Holk confessed that the experience led him to admit: "there are flaws in our own approach to religious life. Our excessive spiritualism often degenerates into vagueness. Our taste for liberty often degenerates into pure anarchy. Our predilection for simplicity often underrates the value of symbolism."³⁵ James Luther Adams observed that: "from a liberal perspective, every judgment about Roman Catholicism, and therefore about the Council, is conditioned by a profound objection to the Roman conception of doctrinal authority." But he also saw that the "new spirit" in Catholicism would "present a more vigorous competition to Protestantism than in the past" and might help Protestants reinterpret "the genius" of their tradition and "find a new relevance in coming to terms with the problems and needs and insights of our modern world."³⁶

In March of 1964 an open letter signed by H. Stewart Carter, J. Luther Adams, and J. van Goudoever of the IARF Commission on International Affairs was published in the *News Digest*. This letter asserts that: "the possibilities inherent in Liberal Christianity can only be fulfilled by our Association when it helps to make contact with representatives from the world's religions in order to show that relationships other than missionary and conversion can be achieved." The authors urged greater efforts to involve "representatives of world religions" in cooperating to confront pressing world problems: "Today all world religions are called upon to transcend their native culture and tradition in the hope that they can come together on a world platform to meet the world's religious, ethical and moral problems in a cooperative and critical spirit."³⁷

31 *1958 IARF Congress Handbook*, 19.

32 H. Faber, "The Liberal Contribution to Inter-faith Contacts," *News Digest*, no. 40 (Autumn 1959):2.

33 "I.A.R.F. Congress," *News Digest*, no. 43 (October 1960):2-3.

34 H. Faber, "In this Issue . . .," *News Digest*, no. 47 (November 1961):1-2.

35 L. J. van Holk, "My experience at the Vatican Council," *News Digest*, no. 51 (June 1963):6.

36 J. L. Adams, "Vatican Council II: Pro and Contra," *News Digest*, no. 51 (June 1963):12.

37 H. Stewart Carter, J. Luther Adams, J. van Goudoever, "World Religions and the World of Tomorrow," *News Digest*, no. 53 (March 1964):15.

In 1964 the IARF Congress was in The Hague at the Vrijzinnig Christelijk Lyceum, where 450 persons gathered around the theme, "A Religion for the World of Tomorrow." Representatives of the Roman Catholic Secretariat to further Christian Unity were present along with representatives from the World Council of Churches, the International Union for Progressive Judaism, and the International Humanist and Ethical Union. An "Interfaith Meeting" was held during the Congress to discuss attracting more non-Christian groups to join the IARF, but the General Meeting was divided over a proposal from American members to change the Association's name and the matter was referred to the Executive Committee.

A report by the IARF Secretariat for the years 1961-1964 included the candid admission that: "There still seems to be too wide a gap between Liberal Christianity in the form in which it is dominant on the European Continent and that free religious spirit which, especially in the U.U.A., does not always primarily derive its vital force from the Christian tradition. It has for years been one of the main concerns of the I.A.R.F. to uncover the common ground Unitarians and Universalists in N. America and Liberal Christians in Europe stand on. And indeed it is probably one of the main weaknesses of our Association that there is still a lack of real understanding between these two main trends in the I.A.R.F."38

In 1966 the 19th Congress was held in London on the topic, "The spiritual Challenge of Mankind Today and Our Response." Three commissions were formed, and these are described by Lajos Kovacs, former Bishop of the Unitarian Church in Romania and the 23rd president of the IARF, as follows:

"The first wanted to unite those whose main interests were historical Christianity and the new ecumenical spirit. It included the Unitarian Christian Churches of England, Romania, Hungary, and the United States, as well as other religious bodies of European liberal Protestant churches. The aim of the second commission was to create international relations with those who were looking for new forms of religious expression in a secularized 'post'-Christian society. These were the religious humanists, mainly in the United States. The program of the third commission was to create a larger and most systematic connection with the liberal-minded representatives of the world religions."39 Max A Kapp, Director of Overseas and Interfaith Relations of the Unitarian Universalist Association and Secretary of the IARF, suggested that once the three commissions were in place the words "Liberal Christianity" should be removed from the name of the IARF, but no decision was taken on his proposal.40

Jewish and Roman Catholic representatives attended the 1966 Congress, and a presentation was made by the Imam of the Shah Jehan Mosque in Woking, England. In the discussion that followed this presentation of Islamic theology one IARF member commented, "that if the word 'Koran' in the Imam's talk had been replaced by the word 'Bible' the talk might have been given by Billy Graham!"41 The devotional service for the Congress was held in the Unitarian Essex Church in London and included scripture readings by a Hindu and a Jew as well as chanting by a Muslim cantor. The service and the Congress ended with the recessional hymn, "Forward through the Ages," and a benediction.42

International Association for Religious Freedom

In 1969 the IARF Congress returned to Boston and addressed the theme, "Religious Encounter with the Changing World." The 20th IARF Congress focussed its discussions around four areas of concern: (1) "The Christian in the Modern World," (2) "The Religious Approach to the Modern World," (3) "Dialogue of World Religions," and (4) "Peace, Justice and Human Rights."43 In Boston the name of the IARF was changed from the International Association for Liberal Christianity and Religious Freedom to the International Association for Religious Freedom. Also in 1969 Japanese Shinto and Buddhist groups—the Konko Church of Izuo and

38 A. W. Cramer, "Report of the I.A.R.F. Secretariat to the General Assembly, 1961-1964," *News Digest*, no. 55 (February 1965):23.

39 Lajos Kovacs, "A Short History of the IARF," *Dharma World* (June 1984).

40 "Wednesday, August 3rd," *News Digest*, no. 60 (Spring 1967):11.

41 "Thursday, August 4th," *News Digest*, no. 60 (Spring 1967):17.

42 "Congress Service," *News Digest*, no. 60 (Spring 1967):34.

43 Ibid.

Rissho Kosei-kai—joined the Association, and the following year Tsubaki Grand Shrine was enrolled as a member.

Reflecting on the 20th Congress, H. Faber observed that: "in an IARF dialogue the participants will first discover what divides them and only after that what unites them." In Europe, he noted, religious life is dominated by established churches, which means that there "liberalism must be church-oriented" and "must try to renew the spirit and the organization of the institution." On the other hand, in America liberals have greater flexibility because of the congregational style of religion. Despite these differences, however, Faber argued that European and American liberals confront the same problem: "how to evaluate modern ideas about tolerance, emancipation, revolution and a new morality." And he urged that "the American-European dialogue in the IARF . . . center around this all important problem."⁴⁴

In 1972 the IARF Congress was held in Heidelberg, Germany on the theme, "Man, His Freedom and His Future." An international youth camp was held prior to the Congress at the same time as the International Union of Liberal Christian Women held its triennial conference. In 1973 Diether Gehrman began as full-time general secretary of the IARF, and the following year the Secretariat was moved from Holland to Frankfurt, Germany. Also in 1973 the IARF sponsored its first conference in Africa in Lagos, Nigeria. In 1975 the IARF Congress was held in Montreal to address the topic, "Our Unity in Diversity," and in 1976 an IARF trip to Japan enabled many American and European members to learn more about Japanese religious life. The following year an IARF study tour went to India for encounter and dialogue with various religious groups. In 1978 the Congress returned to Oxford to discuss the theme, "The Limits of Toleration Today," and in 1981 the theme of the Congress held in Noordwijkerhout, Holland was "The Tide of Religion."

In the 1980's Lucie Meijer of the IARF Secretariat organized the IARF Social Service Network to support IARF members sponsoring community development projects in Northern Ireland, Eastern Europe, the Indian subcontinent and the Philippines. IARF national conferences were also organized in India and in the Philippines, and Muslims, Sikhs and indigenous communities from South Asia joined IARF. In 1983 a theological conference was held at Leuenberg, Switzerland to prepare issues for the 1984 Congress that was held in Tokyo on the theme, "Religious Path to Peace: Eastern Initiative and Western Response." The IARF Congress in Tokyo had the greatest number of participants since the Congresses held before World War I, and home visits were offered for the first time. In 1984 the first film of an IARF Congress was made by Rissho Kosei-kai, and the IARF Japan Liaison Committee that met regularly prior to the Congress continued afterwards to meet almost monthly. The IARF Japan Chapter was also organized at the time of the 1984 Congress and since that time has published a regular newsletter and held an annual conference.

In 1987 the IARF Congress was held at Stanford University in California. The theme of the Congress was "World Religions Face the 21st Century," and for the first time small group discussions called "Circle Groups" were introduced into the program. A revised statement of purpose was approved at the General Assembly of the Congress that included the following statement: "IARF is an inter-religious, international, intercultural organization. It advocates religious freedom in the sense of: (a) free, critical and honest affirmation of one's own religious tradition; (b) religion which liberates and does not oppress; (c) the defense of freedom of conscience and the free exercise of religion in all nations. IARF advances understanding, dialogue and readiness to learn and promotes sympathy and harmony among the different religious traditions. It is dedicated to a global community of mutual cooperation among religious communities and adherents of different religions. It strives for an attitude of openness to truth, to love and to justice."⁴⁵ As in 1984, the *Proceedings* of the 1987 Congress were published by the Frankfurt secretariat, and once again Rissho Kosei-kai produced a film of the IARF Congress.

In 1990 the IARF held its 27th Congress at Hamburg, Germany on the theme, "Religions Cooperating for One World." Hans Küng delivered the opening address with the now well-

44 H. Faber, "Europeans in Boston," *IARF: Twentieth Congress (Boston/July 12-20, 1969), Information Service*, no. 67/68 (Spring 1970):11-15.

45 *Proceedings of the 1987 IARF World Congress* (Frankfurt, Germany: IARF, 1987), 29.

known title, "No Peace in the World Without Peace Among the Religions,"⁴⁶ but the end of the Cold War in Europe was foremost in the minds of many Congress participants. The General Assembly passed a number of resolutions concerning religious freedom that affirmed international law, the process of democratization in Romania, and increased advocacy by the IARF on behalf of religious freedom. The General Assembly also passed a resolution on the purposes and inclusiveness of the IARF that identified: "The need to broaden the IARF's membership to include all the world's major religious groups."⁴⁷ A tour after the Congress took participants to Romania to visit Unitarian churches in Transylvania. Diether Gehrman retired in 1990, and Robert Traer began his service as general secretary.

In 1993 the IARF held a three-day Congress in Bangalore, India and then co-sponsored a four-day centennial observance of the 1893 Parliament of the World's Religions in Chicago with the World Conference on Religion and Peace, the World Congress of Faiths, and the Temple of Understanding. IARF members from South Asia were able to attend the 1993 Congress in larger numbers than ever before, and new member groups from Russia and Korea were also represented. After the Congress the IARF Japan Liaison Committee hosted an international conference in Japan and arranged for visiting IARF members to take part in an ancient Shinto ritual at the Ise Shrine. The following year the IARF published in India the *Proceedings* of the 1993 Congress, and the International Interfaith Centre established in Oxford by the IARF and the World Congress of Faiths published materials from the 1993 centennial observance under the title, *Visions of an Interfaith Future: Proceedings of Sarva-Dharma-Sammelana*.

After the 1993 Congress the IARF Secretariat moved to Oxford, where it shares office space with the International Interfaith Centre, the World Congress of Faiths, and the UK representative of Rissho Kosei-kai. The International Interfaith Centre sponsors an autumn lecture in Oxford and annual conferences on resolving religious conflict. Between 1993 and 1996 the IARF established regional offices in South Asia, Europe, the Philippines, and New York, and Buddhists from the Republic of China, Israeli Jews, Palestinian Christians and Muslims, and Reconstructionist Jews joined the Association. Dr. Gianfranco Rossi began to represent the IARF in Geneva at the UN Commission on Human Rights, and Sue Nichols, an IARF representative to the UN in New York, organized and served as the first president of the Non-Governmental Organizations Committee on Freedom of Religion or Belief. In 1994 an IARF European conference was held in Cluj, Romania on the topic "Human Rights in Europe" and its proceedings were published and are available. In 1995 the IARF Japan Liaison Committee and the IARF Japan Chapter co-sponsored a concert in Tokyo to raise funds for the victims of the horrendous earthquake in Kobe, Japan.

In 1996 the IARF held its 29th World Congress at Iksan City in the Republic of Korea, in cooperation with Won Kwang University on the occasion of its 50th anniversary. The Won Buddhists hosted a Congress that was marked by a significant dialogue between Japanese and Korean members of the IARF, a large number of young adults who met before the Congress and participated throughout it, and a moving interfaith service at the Demilitarized Zone for peace on the Korean peninsula. Representatives of Palestinian and Israeli IARF groups stirred the Congress with their speeches, and Muslim participants from Bangladesh and India also made striking presentations. The Congress *Proceedings*⁴⁸ were published for the first time on the Internet at the IARF web site,⁴⁹ and Rissho Kosei-kai produced a Congress video that is currently available in PAL and NTSC formats.

Since 1996 the IARF Chapter in India has sponsored many interfaith forums to promote tolerance, and the Social Service Network has initiated a revolving loan fund. New IARF members include an indigenous community from Mindanao in the Philippines and a research group of young Muslim scholars in Egypt. In 1997 the International Interfaith Centre co-

46 Hans Küng, "No Peace in the World Without Peace Among the Religions," *Proceedings: 27th IARF World Congress: Europe 1990* (Frankfurt, Germany: IARF 1991), 70.

47 *Proceedings: 27th World Congress of the International Association for Religious Freedom: Europe 1990* (Frankfurt, Germany: IARF, 1991), 324-326.

48 *Proceedings: International Association for Religious Freedom World Congress 1996, Iksan City, Korea*, ed. Sandy Martin (Oxford: IARF 1997).

49 The web site address is <http://iarf-religiousfreedom.net>.

sponsored the first interfaith peace conference in Northern Ireland. European conferences with young adult programs co-sponsored by the International Religious Fellowship were held in 1997 at Hilversum in the Netherlands and the following year at Bad Boll in Germany. Also in 1998 the IARF Coordinating Council for South Asia convened a young adult conference in Leh-Ladakh in the Himalayas that included the first interfaith public event in that region.

In 1999 the IARF will hold its 30th Congress at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada. A Young Adult Program will precede the Congress, and tours will follow. As in the past, the International Association of Liberal Religious Women will hold its triennial conference prior to the Congress. The theme of the 1999 Congress is "Creating an Earth Community: A Religious Imperative." Information may be found on the IARF web site, and the Congress *Proceedings* will again be published there. A Congress video will also be available before the end of the year. The Council elected in 1999 will have 6 or 7 women among its 21 members from Canada, Germany, Hungary, India, Japan, the Netherlands, the Philippines, Romania, the Republic of China, the United States, and the United Kingdom and will include Buddhists, Christians, a Hindu, a Jewish rabbi, a Muslim, Shinto priests, Unitarians, and Unitarian Universalists.

Because 2000 is the centenary of the IARF, the 30th Congress will include a study group on IARF history. The opening ceremony of the Congress will present an historical overview, and a centennial book will be published in 2000 with essays from IARF members covering various periods of the IARF's history. The next century of the IARF will begin this year at the 30th IARF Congress in Vancouver.

A Concluding Reflection

For almost a hundred years the IARF has addressed questions concerning liberal religion, free Christianity, and the relationship of both to the world's religions. In 1900 liberal religion was the originating inspiration, but a decade later the focus had shifted to free Christianity. These two major themes in the history of the IARF largely reflect the concerns of Americans and Europeans active in the Association. From 1910 until after World War II the concern for free (or liberal) Christianity was predominant, but the theme of the 1949 Congress concerned liberal religion. The Congresses in the 1950's reflected on Western liberalism in relation to the world religions, and throughout the 1960's there was debate about removing the phrase "Liberal Christianity" from the name of the International Association for Liberal Christianity and Religious Freedom. In 1969 in Boston the name of the IARF was finally changed to the International Association for Religious Freedom, and Shinto and Buddhist groups were accepted into membership. Since that time Japanese member groups have taken an active part in the work of the IARF, and in the 1980's and 1990's Indian IARF members also came to play a more important role.

Of the three major strands in the IARF tradition, it seems the two that were dominant for most of this century are now subordinate to the third. At the end of the 20th century, only a few IARF European members are trying to advance free (or liberal) Christianity through the Association. Moreover, American Unitarian Universalist members who support liberal religion now emphasize promoting religious freedom (for all religions) and supporting the interfaith cooperation that is championed by Japanese and Indian members of the IARF.

Commissions were established in the late 1960's to allow these differences to flourish and to encourage dialogue about them, and in the 1990's regional IARF programs have similarly permitted diverse religious and cultural interests within the IARF. Christian IARF members in Europe have pursued theological topics in summer conferences, whereas India IARF members from Brahmo, Buddhist, Christian, Muslim, Sikh, Unitarian, and the Ramakrishna Mission groups have promoted interfaith harmony in South Asia through local programs and community development projects. Lay Buddhist and shrine Shinto members of the IARF have continued to support interfaith activities in Japan and have brought to international events a concern for consensus that is challenging for Westerners. IARF activities in the Philippines have reached beyond the traditional Christian and Unitarian member groups to include Chinese Buddhists in Manila as well as indigenous communities and Muslims in Mindanao.

Is the International Association for Religious Freedom now fragmented by religious and regional differences? Or, has the IARF integrated the diverse themes of its history by affirming religious freedom as a fundamental human right and interfaith cooperation as a primary strategy

for achieving tolerance? Neither of these conclusions seems justified. Perhaps in the years ahead the IARF will continue to seek a synthesis of the commitments that have been central to its life in the 20th century.

April 13, 1999

Swiss Union for Liberal Christians: Founding Member of IARF

Max U. Balsiger

The Swiss "Union for Liberal Christians" was founded in 1871 as an organization of theologians and laics, who pleaded against the narrowness of the old confessions as well as against any clericalism. Dogmatics should definitely be less important than Ethics and social behavior. The Swiss Union was among the founders of IARF in 1900. The IVC representatives were active in the engagement for a dialogue between liberal groups in different religious communities. In the sixties the Swiss became a tiny minority and tried to find a possibility for forming a Christian section within IARF. At last that got reality in 1998 with the founding of a "European Liberal Protestant Network".

The roots of Liberal Protestantism in Switzerland lie in the age of Humanism and Reformation (Erasmus and Zwingli) and in the age of Enlightenment and Idealism. Early republican structures left room for the development of liberal thoughts in politics and in church. But liberal thinking was rather a matter of individuals or small circles.

In the first part of 19th century the politically inspired wave of Liberalism reached Switzerland and was not oppressed as it was the case in other European countries, where it led to Restoration. In 1848 the Swiss Confederation was founded. The constitution gave the Swiss citizens more rights and liberties than elsewhere. But it was not yet time for a formal declaration of freedom of faith and conscience (that came finally with the first revision of the constitution in 1874). But on the whole rules for the community got more and more liberal, not without heavy conflicts. A very important element was the federalism:

There was more political power in the cantons than on the level of the confederation. And after the short civil war (1847), which was a conflict between protestant and catholic cantons, the freedom of settlement led to a certain migration from canton to canton. In many cantons which used to be typically catholic or typically protestant, the confessional minorities were respected according to the freedom of faith and conscience. This principle of political origin had even an influence on the churches, especially on the "Reformed Church", which was not led by a hierarchy, but by an organization which in a certain sense can be called democratic: the parishers elected a board (presbyterium) to administer and conduct the community. The central authority was not very strong, there was no bishop, who reigned over his diocese. The community was more important than the leading board.

The most significant difference to almost all other churches is the fact that the Swiss churches in the cantons did not know an instance to fix and to control the right doctrine. Even within the church the principle of freedom of faith and conscience was respected to a certain degree. This liberty of course led to discussions on several levels, especially at the theological faculties of Universities, which were run by the state and not by the church! In Zurich (1839) and Berne (1847) the appointment of (German) professors of theology (Strauss and Zeller), known as "very liberal", caused an enormous Opposition, and under the pressure from the orthodox majority in the parishes they had to leave after a short time. But it was not a church authority that condemned them as heretics. A certain minority around liberal ministers in the parishes was tolerated.

This fact can explain the significant difference to Germany, where the liberal elements were expelled from the church by the clerical authorities. They were forced to establish new forms of independent faith communities outside the churches. This meant the birth of "free—religious" communities: later a part of them found (under different names) the way to IARF, where they met the

Swiss Liberal Protestants who had stayed within the church. In fact Switzerland does not know any “free-religious” communities, at least not under this name which is completely unknown in our country.

In the second half of 18th century it was the question of the confession of faith, which caused heavy discussions. In fact the so-called Apostolic confession was in use in the churches, but not as strictly and compulsory as in German churches. Under the influence of a growing liberal stream at the theological faculties the opposition against the Apostolic Confession spread in the parishes. Finally several cantonal churches (Berne 1874) declared the freedom of confession in the sense, that the ministers were not put under oath to the Apostolic Confession (Apostle’s Creed?) and were no longer forced to use it in every service, especially not at baptism. That left room for “modern” texts of confession avoiding the historically questionable statements in the Apostolic Confession.

In this period the liberal movement got more and more popular and had to find a form of organization, obviously within the church, since it was no reason to separate for founding a new church.

In the sixties unions (Vereine) “for Liberal Protestantism” were established in several cantons and partially even in parishes, especially in towns. They tried to bring their ideas of a “modern” view of the biblical message among the people. Dogmatics should definitely be less important than Ethics. (Unions of all kinds as Politics, Culture, Sport played a very important role in the development of democracy in Switzerland in the 19th century). In 1871 an umbrella—organization for the whole country was founded, the “Swiss Union for Liberal Christians”

(“Schweizerischer Verein für freies Christentum”). This is the organization which at the end of the 19th century belonged to the founding members of the International Association for liberal Christianity and religious freedom. The Swiss delegates at that time may have found themselves a little isolated as representatives of a mere “union” among so many independent “churches” like the important “Unitarians

My first contacts with IARF go back to the year 1947, when IARF gathered for the first post—war—conference in my hometown Berne, where I was studying theology. Our liberal professors were engaged in the organization of this international meeting. They asked us students for help in the administration. In this function I followed the whole congress and got my first impressions about this worldwide organization. One of the main subjects was the organization of help for the member—groups that had suffered damage during the war.

One year later I got an invitation for an international term, organized by the Unitarian Manchester College Oxford. The invitation was mediated by IARF through the Swiss Union for Liberal Christians, to which I had contact through my teacher Martin Werner, the leading liberal theologian of Bern University. It was quite unusual for students of theology to go to England, because most of them had not learned English in college. I had chosen English, and so I had the chance to accept this invitation for April to June 1948. We were half a dozen guest students from the Netherlands (2), Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Germany and Switzerland. The two guest lecturers were Prof. van Holk (NL) and Dr. Fritz Bun (Cli).

The next great event with IARF was the participation at the congress of Davos in 1961, where I met several people I had known at Oxford. I noticed that for many participants from overseas the IARF—congresses in the interval of three years elonged to their greatest events in their social life. This was certainly not so for me. I dare say that most Swiss people, especially in our liberal circles, are (by nature?) not very keen on meetings of this kind. In any case, the Swiss Union had always difficulties in finding representatives for the big congresses. This may explain, why the Swiss Union, in spite of having been a founding—member, was not a very active participant at the congresses.

Soon after Davos came the opening of IARF to the Far East which a remarkable change of accents and targets. At the beginning of the century our “ancestors” were mainly interested in getting in contact with liberal Christians from other countries for theological dialogue. The original name was “International Association for liberal Christianity and religious freedom”. Within a short time the majority of non-Christian members got overwhelming, and the Christians lost their influence. A certain time we could avoid the change of the name, but finally “liberal Christianity” disappeared in the official name. And it was in fact a logical development, because the subjects which were treated, were, according to the needs and wishes of all the new members, directed to the meeting with foreign religions in the sense of inter-religious dialogue. That is a very interesting subject, which was already

treated by several other organizations. But it was not on the line of our interests. What we needed, was an international dialogue of representatives of a liberal faith, which in the churches was more and more pushed back by a majority of new kinds of orthodoxy. We were a tiny minority and wanted to meet with like-minded people in other countries. For that IARF was our only possibility.

We tried to find new patterns of activities in organizing on our own conferences on the European level. The Swiss Union was disillusioned and more than once we were near to leave IARF. But we decided to stay, especially for not losing contact with our best friends in the IARF, the Unitarians in Transylvania, Hungary and Great Britain.

In the nineties we tried to realize our idea of a Christian Group within IARF. It was not easy, but last year finally it was possible, with the help of the secretariat, to found a “European Liberal Protestant Network”.

Max U. Balsiger was born in 1924 in Bern, capital of Switzerland. 1943-1949 studies in theology at the Universities of Bern, Zurich and at Manchester College Oxford. Most important influence from Martin Werner, the leading interpreter of Albert Schweitzer's theology. 1950-1989 minister of the national Reformed Church in two parishes. Four sons and one daughter. Beside the main function Teacher for Religion at a High school and lecturer for Practical Theology at Bern University. In the eighties member of an IARF commission. Active in preparing two European theological conferences in Geneva and one in France (1992). At present Central President of the Swiss Union for Liberal Christians.

100 Years of the IARF in India

Kalyansri Dasgupta

This article commences with a description of the interest aroused in India when the IARF was founded, and goes on to trace the formation of the member groups and their participation in the various activities of the IARF during the last 100 years. Representation of the member groups in the IARF council, participation in the triennial Congresses, the regional conferences and the social projects in which the IARF has collaborated with the member groups are covered in detail, sounding an optimistic note about the future of the IARF in India.

Just as the Renaissance and the Reformation were followed by the Enlightenment in Europe, there came in India a similar period of enlightenment, which is sometimes inappropriately called the ‘Indian Renaissance.’ This period began towards the close of the eighteenth century, and continued through the nineteenth century till the present day. The man who paved the way for this Enlightenment was Raja Rammohun Roy, who is generally accepted as being the Father of Modern India. Centuries of dogma and bigotry through the medieval ages had created an India where rational thought had been ruthlessly suppressed by vested interests, and religion had degenerated into meaningless and sometimes, cruel, rituals, sustained and nourished by a caste system which sought to deny all semblance of human dignity to the so called lower castes.

It was at this time that the seeds of the French Revolution had been sown in Europe, and the cry for ‘Liberty, Equality and Fraternity’ wafted throughout the world. The intelligentsia in India responded to this cry by demanding social and religious reform, and Rammohun Roy was soon joined by the elite of the nation who, together with him, ushered in the age of Enlightenment in India. He established the Brahma Samaj, a liberal church with avowed universalist ideals, While orthodox Hinduism and orthodox Christianity put up a front of strong opposition, his ideas were supported throughout India and the world by the liberal churches, notably, the Unitarian church. Ever since, the Unitarian Universalist Association and the Brahma Samaj have evinced strong bonds of friendship arising out of common aspirations and ideals.

The Chicago Parliament of Religions in 1893 brought together religious leaders from all over the world. It is generally accepted that one of the major findings of this Parliament was that while there may be differences of opinion, the process of dialogue is of inestimable value in bringing people together. While establishing the Brahma Samaj, Raja Rammohun Roy in the Trust Deed proclaimed that “...the said message or building, land, tenements, hereditaments and premises with their

appurtenances, to be used occupied enjoyed applied and appropriated as and for a place of public meeting of all sorts and descriptions of people without distinction as shall behave and conduct themselves in an orderly, sober, religious and devout manner, for the worship and adoration of the Eternal Unsearchable and Immutable Being who is the Author and Preserver of the Universe, but not under or by any other name designation or title peculiarly used for and applied to any particular being or beings by any man or set of men whatsoever, and that no graven image, statue or sculpture, carving, painting, picture, portrait, or the likeness of anything shall be admitted within the said premises ...”

With such a background it was only natural that the Brahma Samaj would enthusiastically participate in the Parliament, and Mr. Protap Chandra Mozoomdar, a devout Brahma missionary, was sent to represent the Brahma Samaj. His inspired lectures were appreciated by all, and newspapers were eloquent in his praise.

The IARF was founded in 1900 after a series of meetings in Paris and Boston. These meetings aroused a great deal of interest in India, and the main journal of the Brahma Samaj, viz. ‘The Indian Messenger’ carried regular reports of these meetings. The following excerpts from the ‘Indian Messenger’ will serve to show the degree of interest aroused:

IM - Jan.31, 1897 The Proposed Universal Religious Congress

A proposal is already on foot to hold a congress of all religions under the above name in connection with the Paris Exhibition in 1900. A number of leading Frenchmen have already formed themselves into a sort of committee for that purpose. These organisers of the present movement have the excellent record of the Chicago Parliament, compiled by Dr. Barrows before them, and the work of carrying out this new scheme would be much easier for them than it was for Dr. Barrows and his colleagues. We wish all success to the new movement.

IM - Feb.28, 1897 The following is the text of the address presented to Dr. J. H. Barrows by the members of the Southern India Brahma Samaj, Madras:

"On behalf of the Brahmos of Southern India we beg leave to approach you with this address and offer you a hearty welcome on the occasion of your visit to our capital city. It is with feelings of utmost pleasure and gratitude that we looked forward to the day of your arrival in our midst—pleasure because we, an essentially religious body, see in you the worthy President of the Parliament of Religions, where members of different nationalities and leaders of different faiths met together on a common platform and expounded their principles with feelings of brotherly love and sympathy unto the glorification of our common Father, and gratitude because of the kind cordiality and warm affection with which you greeted our representative and brother Babu P. C. Mozoomdar will never fail to evoke a kind and sympathetic response in the heart of every Brahma . . . As a community which seeks to establish a connecting link between the East and the West we convey to you and Mrs. Barrows our deepest and most heartfelt regards, affection and love, and wish you a happy stay in our midst."

IM April 22, 1900 The Liberal Congress of Religion

The Liberal Congress of Religion in America, to which Mr. P. C. Mozoomdar goes as the representative of the Brahma Samaj, proposed to hold a meeting in Boston in the last week of April. "A very large committee," says the Christian Register, "has been appointed and plans are making to secure the co-operation of eminent men representing many different forms of religious belief. The spirit of co-operation is in the air, and many are moved by it more than they know. If wisely planned and magnanimously conducted such a meeting must reveal the secrets of many hearts. For many loyal to their own convictions and associations are desirous of showing their respect for others who have faith in a different form, and to express their confidence in those who, honestly seeking the truth, work in other ways than their own. The names of the persons who have already consented to serve, and those who have allowed their names to be printed as members of the local committee, furnish sufficient guarantee that the effort will be made in good faith to magnify agreements, to unify differences, and to bring about unity of spirit and co-operation in good works. According to the announcements that we have received, the meeting seems to be entirely in the hands of the local committee, of which Dr. L. G. James is the chairman."

IM June 10, 1900 The Boston Congress of Religions

“The first installment of the sayings and doings of the religious congress of Boston has reached us. The first thing noticeable is that the word "Liberal" as signifying the character of the Congress was omitted from the title for the purpose of, says the *Unity* reporter," avoiding the

misapplication and double meaning which has gathered around even this one of the best of words." "The Congress," the reporter continues, "recognised that in its antecedents, constituency and purpose, it was not in any sense a congress of 'Liberals' versus 'Orthodoxy', but a congress including 'Liberals' and 'Orthodox'. The following resolutions, indicative of that spirit of inclusiveness, perhaps, were unanimously adopted:

"The Congress of Religion, assembled at Boston, in its sixth general session, would set forth the spirit that it seeks to promote and the principle for which it stands.

"It recognises the underlying unity that must characterise all sincere and earnest seekers of God, and welcomes the free expression of positive convictions, believing that sympathetic understanding between men of different views will lead to finer catholicity of mind and more efficient service of men. Hence it would unite in fraternal conference those of whatever name who believe in the application of religious principles and spiritual forces in the present problems of life."

"Believing that the era of protest is passing and men of catholic temper are fast coming together, it simply seeks to provide a medium of fellowship and co-operation where the pressing needs of the time may be considered in the light of many spiritual resources.

"It lays emphasis upon the value of this growing spirit of fraternity, it affirms the religious value and significance of the various spheres of human work and service, and it seeks to generate an atmosphere in which the responsibilities of spiritual freedom shall be heartily accepted equally with its rights and privileges."

"We were not aware that the word "liberal" had come to have such a bad odour as to need its omission. Without deprecating this spirit of inclusiveness, we feel liberal religion as distinguished from orthodoxy has need for strength of organisation."

When the IARF was founded in 1900 the Brahma Samaj was one of the founder members and at the first of the triennial congresses held at Amsterdam in September 1903 the Brahma Samaj was represented by V. Ramji Shinde.

There appears to be a gap after this until the interaction between the IARF and the Indian member groups recommenced with the visit to India in February 1980 of Ms. Lucie Meijer of the IARF secretariat and Ms. Christine Hayhurst, Deputy Secretary of the British Unitarians. The two representatives met and exchanged views with different member groups in India, viz. Unitarian Union of Meghalaya, Seng Khasi also of Meghalaya, the Ramakrishna Mission at Calcutta and Narendrapur, and of course, the Sadharan Brahma Samaj. Likely areas of involvement of the IARF in various social projects were discussed.

This was followed by the visit of Punyabrata Roy Choudhury, then the Assistant Secretary of the Sadharan Brahma Samaj, to the IARF Secretariat in Frankfurt in March 1980, and subsequently a delegation from the IARF, including Diether Gehrman, then General Secretary, Lucie Meijer, and several members from different parts of the world visited India.

From 1981 onwards a number of social service projects were taken up by the IARF and the member groups in India, the earliest projects being in Meghalaya with the Unitarians, the Balya Bhavan (orphanage) and the Mahila Bhavan (womens' centre) of the Sadharan Brahma Samaj in Calcutta. The triennial Congress in 1981 at Amsterdam had a number of Indian participants, and the author of the present paper was invited to deliver the keynote address. Punyabrata Roy Choudhury was elected a member of the IARF council, the first Indian to be so elected.

The first All India IARF conference was held at the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Calcutta, in early 1982. An IARF India chapter was formed with a steering committee being elected with representatives from the Unitarians, the Lokasiksha Parishad of the Ramakrishna Mission of Narendrapur, the Brahma Samaj, the Guru Nanak Foundation, the Seng Khasi and the Donyl Polo Mission of Arunachal. Subsequent IARF India conferences were held at New Delhi, Bangalore, Mumbai, Chennai and Narendrapur. The last such conference was held in March 1998 at Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu. Indian member groups were represented at successive IARF congresses at Tokyo (1984), Palo Alto, Stanford (1987), Hamburg (1990), Bangalore (1993) and Korea (1996)

Punyabrata Roy Choudhury continued to be a council member till the Congress in Korea. He had been elected the international president at the Congress in Hamburg in 1990 for a period of three years. S.S. Chakraborty of the Lokasiksha Parishad, Ramakrishna Mission was elected to the council at Bangalore in 1993 and subsequently to the post of Treasurer at the Korea Congress in 1996. Other

council members from India at present include Dr. Mohinder Singh of Bhai Vir Singh Sahitya Sadan and Bhikku Sangasena of the Mahabodhi Society.

The Congress at Bangalore was especially significant as it coincided with the centennial celebrations of the Chicago Parliament of Religions. Apart from the IARF congress an All Faiths Conference was also held. The 1993 Congress also marked the shifting of the IARF headquarters from Frankfurt, Germany to Oxford in the UK.

At this time it was also decided to decentralize the activities of the secretariat and form regional coordinating councils. Accordingly, the South Asia Coordinating Council was set up consisting of India, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka with S. S. Chakraborty as its chairman. In order to coordinate social service projects a social service network was formed with Harish Jain as the coordinator. After Mr. Jain left the IARF due to ill health, Dr. P. S. Datta became the coordinator for South Asia.

Efforts were also intensified to properly reorganize the individual members of the IARF through the IARF Indian Chapter. It was decided to have a national chapter with branches all over India. Elections were held for office bearers of the National Chapter in November 1995. Punyabrata Roy Choudhury was elected National President, C. N. N. Raju (Bangalore) as the National Secretary and A. V. Ezhilarasu as the Treasurer. Efforts commenced to build up a strong base of individual members throughout the country. A constitution was drawn up and formally adopted at a meeting of the National Chapter held in 1997 at Bangalore.

Punyabrata Roy Choudhury and C. N. N. Raju were reelected President and Secretary of the National Chapter for three years with S. R. Hiremath as the Treasurer. Elections were also held to fill other posts of the Executive Committee. The strength of the Chapter is growing steadily. The coordinating council has been meeting twice a year, overseeing various social service projects and spreading the ideals of the IARF. Its constitution has been finalized, and a revolving fund has been set up to assist beneficiaries involved in projects through loans etc.

The following projects are running today in India with the involvement of the IARF:

- | | |
|---|---|
| • Indian Christian Association, Chennai | Dispensary |
| • R. K.Math – Jamtara, Bihar | Tribal Development Program. |
| • Harinavi Brahmo Samaj, Calcutta | a) Paraprofessional Nurses' Training
b) Community Development Program. |
| • Unitarian Union, NE India, Meghalaya | Education Project |
| • Mahabodhi Centre, Ladakh | Health Project |
| • Calcutta Social Project | Girls' Craft Centre |
| • Asian Youth Centre, Chennai | Young Hotel Workers' Project. |
| • Bhai Bir Singh Sahitya Sadan, New Delhi | Self-Help Project for Women. |

The most noticeable achievement of the IARF in India of late is to be found in the increased awareness among the young people of the member groups about what the IARF stands for and what it is trying to achieve. If this trend continues into the new millennium then the future of the IARF in India is indeed bright.

Dr. Kalyansri Dasgupta holds a Ph.D. in electrical engineering from the University of Manchester, U. K., and is also a fully qualified Cost Accountant. He retired in 1996 from the Calcutta Electric Supply Corporation. He has been a minister of the Brahmo Samaj in Calcutta since 1967, and is currently an emeritus Permanent Minister of the Brahmo Sammilan Samaj. He attended IARF Congresses in 1981 and 1993, and also a number of regional conferences in India. He is the author of several papers on engineering, finance, management, philosophy and religion. The author is indebted to the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, Calcutta and Mr. Punyabrata Roy Choudhury for help in collecting material for this article.

The History of Japan Chapter

Yutaka Furuta and Takahiro Miwa

The Japan Chapter, which was established in 1985, is in its sixteenth year. If we look at the history of the Japan Chapter, we can see five stages of development. Dr. Yutaka Furuta, who was the first chairman of the Japan Chapter, served two terms (six years) as Chairman. The second Chairman, Rev.Hodo Tahara, served a single term from 1991. The present chairman, Dr. Fumihiko Katayama, has served as Chairman from 1994.

Rev.Yukitaka Yamamoto, Chief Priest of Tsubaki Grand Shrine had wanted for a long time to create an IARF Chapter in Japan. Before the Japan Chapter was formally organized, the staff in the Tokyo office of Tsubaki Grand Shrine managed the Japan Chapter and issued Chapter newsletters.

In Japan, IARF has been known not only by religious people, but also by the public after the 25th World Congress in Tokyo, which was held in 1984. Rev. Yukitaka Yamamoto served as Chairman of the executive committee for this Congress, and he asked Dr. Yutaka Furuta, who participated in this Congress as a member of Tsubaki Grand Shrine, to vote in the General Assembly as a delegate of the Japan Chapter. This vote was the first on behalf of the Japan Chapter in official activities of the IARF.

Start of Japan Chapter

In 1985, a year after the Tokyo Congress, Rev. Yamamoto asked Dr. Furuta to organize a Japan Chapter. He also sent Rev. Takahiro Miwa, a young Shinto priest who had participated in the Tokyo Congress, to attend the IARF Purpose Committee held in Chicago from February 22-24 in the same year.

Dr. Furuta gathered some people, who had participated in the Tokyo Congress, and opened the first meeting of the Japan Chapter at Tsubaki Grand Shrine on August 17, 1985. This was the first general assembly of the Japan Chapter.

In this first meeting, we decided on the membership of the Japan Chapter and selected Dr. Furuta as the first Chairman. Rev. Takahiro Miwa was chosen as the General Secretary, and all the people who attended the first assembly were enrolled as members. The inauguration of the Japan Chapter was reported at the fourth meeting of the Japan Liaison Committee held on Aug. 30th. After that, the Japan Chapter was included as a member of the JLC.

The constitution of the Japan Chapter contains three basic points. First, the Chapter must be based on the idea of IARF. Second, freedom except subversive activities must be respected. And third, the equality of all members must be assured. This constitution was approved in the second general assembly, which was held on September 18th in 1985.

Activities of the Japan Chapter in First Stage

In 1985, after the establishment of the Japan Chapter, we recruited members and started to issue a leaflet about the Chapter. These activities were done with great intensity, because they had to be finished before the opening of the IARF 26th World Congress at Stanford University, which was planned for 1987 (two years later). This would be the first IARF World Congress in which the Japan Chapter would participate. On the other hand, members of Japan Chapter began to visit the religious groups that were members of the JLC to understand better the purposes and programs of the IARF. In the World Congress held at Stanford, 25 members of the Japan Chapter participated, and the women of the Chapter also presented an old Chinese dance known as Japan as *Kakaken*.

At this time, the Japan Chapter planned the Passport Program and the Grass Roots Summit. The Passport Program was a way to offer a home stay or some other form of hospitality to foreign IARF members who visited Japan, and to encourage mutual understanding through dialogue. This system was also approved by the Secretariat of the IARF.

The Grass Roots Summit was held for the purpose of preparing for the IARF World Congress, and also to enable the members who could not participate in the World Congress to experience the spirit of the Congress. We called this meeting a Grass Roots Summit so as to make a discussion at the worldwide level, although each of us was a person at the grass roots level. The first Grass Roots Summit was held on the theme of peace and preserving our heritage.

In the 27th IARF World Congress held at Hamburg, 15 members of the Japan Chapter participated and engaged in dialogue with European IARF members, mostly from Germany.

Maturity and Stability of Japan Chapter

From 1991, Rev. Hodo Tahara served as a second Chairman of Japan Chapter. The Grass Roots Summit became an annual study and training program each summer. In 1991, we discussed peace in the Middle East and the outbreak of the Gulf War. In 1992, we took up the theme "Living our Faith," which was the theme of the 28th World Congress held in India the following year. Dr. Gene Reeves gave us a lecture about it.

47 members of Japan Chapter participated in the World Congress held in India in 1993. In late August of the same year, a Centennial Celebration of the World's Parliament of Religions was held in Ise, a sacred place in Japan. Rev. Yunitaka Yamamoto served as the President of this event, and over 1200 people from Japan and other countries participated. The Japan Chapter contributed a great deal to its preparation and success.

From 1994, the Japan Chapter has held a study and training program entitled "Free Religion's Forum" once every two months, which was suggested by Rev. Tahara, the chairman of the Japan Chapter. At this meeting guest lecturers are invited to speak on problems concerning religion.

Growth and Development of the Japan Chapter

In the summer of 1994, Dr. Fumihiko Katayama became Chairman of the Japan Chapter, and he continues in that capacity. He is a Shinto priest, and also a medical doctor. In the Grass Roots Summit of 1994, he was the lecturer and we discussed the problem of life and religion. Shortly thereafter, the "Free Religion's Forum" began to visit other religious bodies, which are different from IARF member groups, and also to have exchanges with other voluntary groups. In the summer of 1995, the Japan Chapter held a charity concert for the children who were victims of the great earthquake and disaster, which occurred earlier in the year. The concert was held at Fumonkari, one of large halls of Rissho-Koseikai, and over 3000 people participated in it.

21 members of the Japan Chapter attended the IARF 29th World Congress in Korea. In this congress, the JLC held a workshop on the theme of Japanese and Korean relations. It consisted of two programs. The first was about the history and future of Japan and Korea, and the second was about the use of State Shinto as a tool of subjugation in Korea and critical reflection on this practice. The Japan Chapter fully supported the planning and implementation of these dialogue programs in order to deepen mutual understanding between the Korean and Japanese people. As a result, in the summer of 1998 there were meetings between Japan Chapter members and Koreans, who had taken part in the 1996 IARF Congress, about the prospects for establishing an IARF Chapter in Korea.

In the Grass Roots Summit in 1997, we invited speakers from the JLC member groups, who had greatly contributed to the IARF. The main speaker was Rev. Dr. Yunitaka Yamamoto, the President of the IARF from 1996-99. At this summit, we discussed the formation, meaning and future of the IARF.

In 1998, ten year memorial events of the Heisei Shinto Kenkyukai, the main executives of which are Dr. Fumihiko Katayama and Rev. Takahiro Miwa, were held at many places in Japan. In these events, lectures and discussions about Japanese culture and Shinto were presented, from the viewpoint of different religious disciplines. The Japan Chapter participated in these events for the purpose of promoting more understanding about Japanese culture and religions.

The details of these activities have been published in the Chapter newsletter. From 1991, this newsletter has been prepared on a computer and has been published in English and Japanese. It is issued twice a year, and may be sent to foreigners who wish a copy. Ms. Kayoko Yokota, chief editor of our newsletter, is the new President of the IALRW and was elected in 1999 to the IARF Council.

Today, we have about 70 members in Japan Chapter. Most of the members have joined in the past few years. Thus, the Japan Chapter continues to make progress.

We have looked back at the history of Japan Chapter. This essay will be included in the centennial memorial document of IARF, and this means that the history of the Japan Chapter will be handed down to the next generation. We want to do our best for the Japan Chapter in order to encourage new members, who may then reflect on the efforts of those who led the Japan Chapter in its first few years.

Dr. Yutaka Furuta served for thirty years with the Japan Atomic Energy Research Institute in the fields of nuclear and radiation physics. He presented papers at IARF Congresses in 1984, 1990 and 1996. Rev. Takhiro Miwa is Chief Priest of Hiyosi Shinto Shrine and Secretary of the Japan Chapter. He is one of the authors of *An Explanation of Shinto* (1985) and presented two papers at the IARF Congress in 1996.

British Involvement in the International Association for Religious Freedom

Peter B. Godfrey

The article looks at the involvement of British people in IARF from the earliest days of help with its formation to present-day involvement. It looks at British participation in the Congresses and mentions people who have been officers of the Association and the part they have played in the work and development of the IARF. Mention is made of the work of the IARF British Chapter and of the people who have served it the past and the present.

Beginnings

British involvement in the one hundred years' life of the IARF has been vital and wholehearted from the beginning of the Association. This involvement has taken many forms from the ability and high-standing of the British men and women who have served as IARF officers and as members of its council and committees to the volume and strength of support given to congresses, several of which have been held in Britain, and other IARF events and activities.

The first President of the International Council of Unitarian and Other Liberal Religious Thinkers and Workers (the first name of what became the IARF) was Rev. Dr. Joseph Estlin Carpenter. Dr. Carpenter was a Unitarian minister who became Professor of Old Testament, Ecclesiastical History and Comparative Religion, then Principal and finally President of Manchester College, Oxford. He was an expert in Sanskrit and a leading pioneer in the early days of what was then called Comparative Religion. He was Oxford University's Wilde Lecturer in Comparative Religion. There is no doubt that Estlin Carpenter's standing as a scholar and his rapport with leading personalities of all the major faiths was an important factor in the extraordinarily high standard of the speakers and other participants in the pre-World War I congresses.

Dr. Carpenter became Case Lecturer in Comparative Religion and Biblical Studies at Manchester College, Oxford, in 1900 and it is pleasing to report that the centenary of this appointment will be specially commemorated in Oxford on the 29th. June 2000.

The second secretary of the International Council was Rev. Dr. William Hamilton Drummond. Dr. Drummond was another leading British Unitarian. He was minister for many years in Cambridge and Editor of *The Inquirer* from 1909 to 1918. He took over from the great Dr. Wendte at a time when Europeans were struggling to come to terms with the horror of the World War I and to see a way forward out of the disillusionment of that period.

Early Congresses

The very first Congress was held in London in 1901. It lasted three days and something like two thousand people attended. It was an impressive start for the new organisation. Seven hundred and seventy individuals from twenty-one religious groups and from fifteen countries became members of the International Council.

In the early years Congresses were held bi-annually. The fifth Congress, in 1910, gives some awareness of British involvement in the Congresses. At this Berlin Congress Estlin Carpenter presided. Speakers included the great German liberal scholars Ernst Troeltsch and Adolf Harnack. A British Unitarian minister Rev. W.G.Tarrant delivered the Congress Sermon, on 'Hope'. Two papers were presented on the theme 'What Religious Liberals of other nations owe to the

religious life and theological science of Germany'. Both were read by British participants in the congress - one by Estlin Carpenter and the other by Rev. Dr. Tudor Jones. Under the heading 'Religion and the Social Question' Mr. H.G.Chancellor, a British Member of Parliament, read a paper on 'The Temperance Movement in Great Britain'. In the session on 'Religion and Universal Peace' there was a paper by the Unitarian Dr. W. Blake Odgers, KC, the Recorder of Plymouth and Director of Legal Studies at the Inns of Court, London. With the inclusion of the preliminary meetings seventy papers were presented at this Congress!

Mrs. Herbert Smith and Miss Helen Brooke Herford, both representing the British League of Unitarian and Other Liberal Christian Women, spoke on 'Women and Religious Work'. They brought from the British Women's League the suggestion 'that an International Society might be formed and the German women join hands with their English, American and Hungarian sisters'. This initiative led directly to the founding soon afterwards of the International Union of Liberal Christian Women - later renamed the 'International Association for Liberal Religious Women'.

Strong early encouragement for and involvement in Congresses came from British Unitarians. However, it can be seen quite clearly from this 5th. Congress that British people of other Christian denominations and from Judaism were also involved. To give just two examples, Mr. Claude Montefiore, from London, spoke on 'The relations between Liberal Christians and Jews' and Rev. A.L.Lilley, Anglican Vicar of St. Mary's, Paddington in London, spoke on 'Modernism as a basis of religious unity'. Claude Montefiore was a Liberal Jew who wrote one of the first Jewish commentaries on the Gospels.

The list of delegates and representatives to the Paris Congress in 1913 shows how many British organisations supported the international organisation - The British and Foreign Unitarian Association, the National Conference, the Women's League, the Irish Association of Churches, the Scottish Unitarian Association, the South East Wales and South Wales Unitarian Societies, the London District, the Western Union, the Liverpool District, the North East Lancashire Mission, the Sunday School Association, the Manchester District Sunday School Association, the Central Postal Mission, and the Missionary Conference.

Presidents and Other Officers and Executive Committee Members

The second British person to be President of the international organisation was Rev. Dr. Alfred Hall (1873-1958), a President of the British General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches. Dr. Hall used his IARF Presidency to travel as widely as possible in order to encourage all member groups of IARF and to strengthen their sense of unity and common purpose. In this work Dr. Hall has been very ably followed by all the British people who have been President since. Rev. Henry Stewart Carter (1905-1956) was another Cambridge minister. The Right Honourable Chuter Ede (1882-1965) was a Member of Parliament and Home Secretary during a Labour Government. He was created a Life Peer in 1964 MP. Rev. Dr. John Kielty and Dr. Roy Smith. were both outstanding General Secretaries of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches and Dr. Smith still maintains his wide international contacts.

From the beginning there have been British men and women on the Executive Committee. For example, after the 1910 Berlin Congress the British Executive Committee members were Estlin Carpenter, Principal of Manchester College, Rev. W. Copeland Bowie, Secretary of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association, Rev. A. Lilley, Vicar in Paddington, London and later a Canon in Hereford Cathedral, and Rev. R.J. Campbell, Pastor of the City Temple, London. By the time of the Paris Congress in 1913 Claude Montefiore and Rev. T. Rhondda Williams of Brighton were also on the committee.

Britain has also provided officers of the IARF in addition to the Presidents. Rev. W.H.Drummond was secretary through the 1920s and Dr. Roy Smith, Secretary of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches, was the Association's treasurer for several years.

Congresses

British involvement in IARF has also been seen in the excellent Congresses that have been held in Britain. There was a long gap between the 1901 Congress in London and the 1937 Congress in Oxford, but after World War II there were Congresses in Oxford (1952), Belfast (1955), London (1966), and Oxford (1978).

As there are sometimes gentle complaints that there is too much talking at IARF Congresses it is worth mentioning that British IARFers Eila Forrester (née Kielty) and Rev. Eric Wild pioneered a Quiet Room at the Heidelberg Congress in 1972. Rev. Dr. Diether Gehrman had seen a Quiet Room and attended services therein at a British Unitarian General Assembly. He invited the General Assembly's Worship Sub-Committee to arrange services at the Heidelberg Congress. Eila and Eric represented the Worship Sub-Committee at Heidelberg and organised the Quiet Room and the morning devotional services. This was the first time services had been led by invited people from a range of IARF groups and countries. The services included contributions from the USA, Britain, Romania, Holland and Japan. The Japanese contribution had a stunning impact on those who attended this meditation service. The Quiet Room had huge and magnificent photographs specially commissioned from British IARFer John Hewerdine. The Craftsman's Potters of London had lent pottery and ceramics. Romanians contributed embroideries. The Japanese used pebbles brought by Eila from Wales and flowers from the Heidelberg flower market to create beautiful displays. The market moved each day to a different part of town and had to be chased.

Peter Sampson and Malcolm Sadler created the Quiet Rooms at the 1975 Congress in Montreal and the Oxford Congress in 1978.

Another result of British involvement at Congresses was Spiegeleye. This was an unofficial (often very unofficial!) newsheet prepared overnight for delegates to digest at breakfast time the next morning. Dr June Bell was one of the instigators of this venture at the London Congress in 1966. There were Spiegeleyes thereafter at Heidelberg, Montreal, Oxford (where the editors were Rev. Austin Fitzpatrick and Howard Hague) and Holland.

An interesting feature of the 1978 Congress in Oxford was the encouragement given to the International Religious Fellowship (IRF) to meet conjointly with IARF. This was considered to be something of a risk, but it worked. Certainly in Britain a number of IRFers joined IARF and have been invaluable members.

Post World War II

In the years after the Second World War IARF contacts between British members and continental Europeans began again. There were very many problems and people such as Rev. Dr. John McLachlan visited Holland and Czechoslovakia as often as possible in order to help fellow IARFers in those countries as they struggled to revive their liberal religious causes. John McLachlan had been in Eastern Europe in the months immediately before war broke out helping with the terrible refugee problem. Dr. McLachlan was later a President of the British General Assembly and of the British Chapter of IARF. In 1945 he travelled to Holland to greet and encourage the Dutch members of IARF who formed the majority of the secretariat before and after the war. Several days were spent in conference and in the renewal of friendship and there was an opportunity to broadcast through the international radio station.

In the 1950s and early 1960s an enormous amount of time, money and concern was spent trying to ensure the presence of East European representatives at IARF events - people from Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Transylvania especially. Rev. Dr. John Kielty, General Secretary of the British Unitarian General Assembly, was an active member of the IARF Executive Committee and spent a great deal of time on the matter. The Right Honourable Chuter Ede, a Member of Parliament, was President of IARF for part of this time and used his political influence to help this work.

British IARFers always maintained contact with liberal religious groups in the Eastern European Communist-ruled countries, though it was never easy. Help was regularly given to pay for visitors from those countries to come to IARF Congresses and other liberal religious events. As the Communist regimes of Eastern Europe collapsed it has been possible to do much more, especially for the particularly hard-pressed churches in Romania. Dr. Roy Smith and Rev. Austin Fitzpatrick have initiated and encouraged numerous ways of helping people in Romania.

Dr. Kielty was also actively involved in the very lively 'debate' in IARF between the humanist wing of American Unitarianism and the more Christo-centric Dutch and Swiss groups. Some Europeans had a fear of being taken over by the American dollar and by America's wider range of belief. There was real tension and fears of division. The British had a foot in both camps and people such as John Kielty, widely travelled in both Europe and the USA, managed to steer IARF to calmer waters.

During Dr. Roy Smith's period as treasurer and then president a key issue was that of making IARF more inclusive and Dr. Smith was a guiding figure in encouraging the admission to IARF of more religious groups. This is something that has been extremely beneficial to IARF and its work for wide religious understanding.

The British Chapter of IARF

In view of the strong involvement of British men and women in IARF it is rather surprising to note that the IARF British Members' Group (now 'Chapter') was not formed until 1962. Its first chairman was Rev. Benjamin Downing, a British Unitarian minister whose mastery of languages was very useful. Ben ably led a good committee that consisted of Rev. John Kielty, Rev. Gabor Kereki (who became secretary), Rev. Kenneth Twinn, Mr. Millard, Miss Garry and Miss Weaver. Kenneth Twinn was also a linguist with contacts all over Europe, and was especially encouraging and helpful to comparatively isolated liberal religious groups in Italy and Denmark.

In 1963 there were thirty-two members. In 1969 there were one hundred and seven members - the increase was partly due to the advent of large groups of IARFers visiting one another and attending Congresses. After the 1910 Berlin Congress the General Secretary, Rev. C.W. Wendte wrote: 'Rank after rank in the crowded hall sat hundreds of pastors, teachers and students of theology'. For many years IARF meetings were gatherings of scholars and intellectuals. Several factors contributed to a change that has seen IARF Congresses involve 'ordinary' women and men and not just clergy and theologians. One factor has been the linking of Congresses with tours for participants before and after the Congresses. These tours have sometimes involved the 'tourists' having private hospitality with people in the country hosting the Congress.

A tour that showed what could be done was the one when Peter Godfrey hired a Pan Am plane and took one hundred and sixty-six people to the USA in 1967. All participants had to be members of the British Members' Group of IARF and the trip did wonders for membership numbers. The trip was arranged with the blessing of the IARF. Participants began by staying at Emerson College in Boston and had trips to Unitarian churches in New England. After a weekend of private hospitality the group had a few days staying with Unitarians in the Washington DC area before moving to New York. In New York the visitors stayed first at Columbia University and then had private hospitality again. Rev. Richard Boeke, then minister in Flushing NY arranged IARF meetings and other activities in New York. Both Peter and Richard were at the beginning of long service with IARF. This trip established many long-lasting friendships. As it was so successful Peter organised tours to various parts of North America before the Congresses in Boston and Montreal. Since then there have been parties from Britain to most other Congresses as well as mini-tours to India and Japan. On a trip to Rome one group was blessed by name by the Pope. Travel is now much more expensive so the size of the parties is smaller. It is pleasing that the IARF itself now formally arranges for pre- and post-Congress tours.

Congresses have benefited greatly from this 'wider' participation, as has membership of and support for IARF chapters. In Hamburg at the 1990 Congress British members were actively involved in group leadership and Rev. John Clifford was on the Congress staff. As usual, links between various religious and national groups were strengthened, particularly, on this occasion, between German and British Unitarians.

Until very recently the British Members' Group/Chapter organised conferences for members in the years when there was not a Congress - usually at Westhill College, Birmingham. These were very successful and included speakers from a wide variety of faiths as well as visits to synagogues, mosques and temples in the Birmingham area. As travel and accommodation became more expensive the practice now is to have two or three one-day conferences in different parts of the country. From 1984 to 1997 Peter Godfrey edited an annual British Members' Group Newsletter. Austin Fitzpatrick now edits this. Peter Sampson has been secretary of the group since 1982. Annette Percy has been treasurer for even longer and is additionally of great value because she speaks the Czech language and has relatives and many friends in the Czech Republic. Peter Godfrey was Chairman for about twenty years. Rev. Geoffrey Usher now holds that office.

The British Members' Group/Chapter has not only given support to and raised money for Eastern European liberal religious groups, it has also been an active supporter of the 'Donate One Meal Campaign'. At every annual General Assembly Meeting of British Unitarians participants are

encouraged to miss one lunch and give the money to the campaign. During the lunch time when the meal would have been taken the British Chapter organises some appropriate gathering.

The British IARF Chapter was a Founder Member of the Inter Faith Network for the UK and several members support the work of the International Interfaith Congress and the World Congress of Faiths - Dr. Richard Boeke is a joint Vice Chairman of the Congress - and also Secretary of the International Council of Unitarians and Universalists. After the IARF Congress in Bangalore in 1993 British members of IARF along with others from all over the world, joined with the World Congress of Faiths, the World Conference on Religion and Peace and the Temple of Understanding to commemorate the centenary of the 1893 World Parliament of Religions - Sarva-Dharma-Sammelana.

The British General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches re-constituted its Interfaith Subcommittee in 1998 and all of its members are members of the IARF British Chapter. The General Assembly has a Romania/ Hungary Fund that evolved from IARF contacts between the countries involved.

Several British Unitarian congregations have been active for decades in local interfaith work and many of them were the first in their locality to hold inter faith services.

Peter Godfrey now edits the bi-annual liberal religious journal Faith and Freedom. The journal regularly carries articles on inter faith matters, for example by Marcus Braybrooke and Robert Traer, General Secretary of IARF, and reviews of books about world religions.

One of the world's keenest workers for interfaith understanding and co-operation is Rev. Marcus Braybrooke, a Member of the Modern Churchpeople's Union that is affiliated to IARF. The MCU was originally an association of liberal members of the Church of England but now has wider membership. For many years Dr. Edward Carpenter, Dean of Westminster, was President of the MCU and he was also President of the World Congress of Faiths which has associate membership of IARF. There has been a long history of co-operation between IARF and the WCF. Lord Sorenson of Leytonstone, Reginald Sorensen (1891-1971), one of the first British politicians to advocate Indian independence, was a Unitarian minister, Chairman of the WCF and a member of IARF.

Marcus Braybrooke is an Anglican vicar and is currently Joint President of the World Congress of Faiths. He has attended several IARF Congresses. His book Pilgrimage of Hope - One Hundred Years of Global Interfaith Dialogue (SCM Press 1992) has excellent chapters on the history of the IARF.

The visits of IARF members abroad have sometimes led to individual churches initiating help for and interest in foreign churches. One example is the great help and encouragement the Glasgow and Edinburgh Unitarian Church give to the Unitarians in Madras, India. Dr. Charles Whittaker of the Glasgow church played a key role in this endeavour. Charles was a particularly active member of the British Chapter of IARF and his death in 1998 was a deeply felt loss. For very many years British IARFers have been actively involved with liberal religious groups in India. Rev. Margaret Barr, a Unitarian minister, worked for many years in the Khasi Hills of Assam and her work has inspired many people to spend time in India. A regular visitor is Mr. Geoffrey Head, former Treasurer and President of the British Unitarian General Assembly. Mr. John Hewerdine is another frequent visitor and his wonderful pictures of the Khasi Unitarians have helped to make Indian Unitarians well known. Every help is given to help Indian Unitarians to attend IARF Congresses and the annual meetings of the General Assembly. Indian visitors to these meetings are very popular and warmly welcomed.

British involvement in IARF has been evident for the whole of its history. The involvement has taken many forms. In the spirit of the early workers, and encouraged by their example, British members of IARF will continue to support this Association in its invaluable and very necessary work.

Rev. Dr. Peter B. Godfrey is a retired British Unitarian minister. He had ministries in Lancashire, Cheshire and Yorkshire and finally was for nine years District Minister for London and the South East of England. He was for twenty years President of the British Chapter of IARF and is a regular attender at IARF Congresses. He edited *The Unitarian* for sixteen years and has edited *Faith and Freedom* for the past fourteen years. His Honorary DD from Meadville Lombard School of Theology, Chicago, was given in part for his international 'bridge-building.' Peter Samson, who has served as the Secretary of the British Chapter for many years, assisted with this paper.

Canadian Involvement in IARF

Phillip Hewett

Canadian involvement was on a small scale before the past three decades, though in 1931 a statement from Canada prompted an IARF declaration on what was then its attitude toward faiths other than Christianity. The Canadian Unitarian Council, formed in 1961, became an IARF member-group in 1972, and the following Congress was held in Montreal. Since that time, Canadian attendance at Congresses has consistently been among the largest from any member-group, and Canadians have played an increasingly prominent role in IARF work.

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Canadian involvement in IARF has been almost exclusively confined to the second half of the century, and, until very recently, to Unitarians. In the earlier period, Canadian Unitarians were few in numbers and not well enough organized to have significant international involvement. The widely scattered congregations were affiliated both with the British and Foreign Unitarian Association and with the American Unitarian Association, but had no national organization of their own.

The IARF had an early and indirect impact upon Canada as a result of these pre-existing affiliations. The official delegates from Britain to the 1907 Congress in Boston travelled by way of Canada and made a point of visiting all the congregations. In Boston they consulted with their American colleagues, and the result was a jointly sponsored project for Unitarian extension in Western Canada.

Individual Canadians attended some of the early Congresses, but made no distinctive contribution, nor was there any constituency to which they could report back at home. A minor ripple occurred in 1931 that anticipated the evolution of IARF by some decades. An organization had been created under the name of the Canadian Conference of Universalists, Unitarians and Kindred Religious Liberals. Despite this long and somewhat pretentious title, this consisted in practice of a little group of Universalists from Quebec and the Maritime Provinces, gathered by one energetic organizer, Charles Pennoyer. The IARF had just made one of its many changes of name, and Pennoyer took exception to the most recent one: International Association for the Promotion of Liberal Christianity and Religious Freedom. His conference passed a resolution of protest, saying that the singling out of Christianity for special mention was discriminatory, and urging a return to the name of International Congress of Religious Liberals.

The protest was duly noted in the Secretariat's quarterly report for March 1932 (on note paper headed by a logo including the letters I.A.L.C.). Professor van Holk replied on their behalf, pointing out to the Canadians that the name of the Association had not only varied from Congress to Congress but had also been variously rendered in the respective languages of its member-groups, so the question was not one of returning to an earlier generally accepted name. The rationale for the new name was primarily one of tactics and organization. The immediate need, which the Association was in a position to address, was the promotion of a liberal spirit within Christianity, as one step in the direction of 'a worldwide union of all the forms of liberal religion'.

'It has always been the idea of the leaders of our movement', continued the statement, 'to start at the different historical forms of religion and to find a way towards unity in the spirit of liberty and tolerance even while these different historical forms remain, as they too belong to the essentials of religious life. That is why the present name of our international organisation should not in the least be felt as a limitation of scope. No less than before the importance of perpetual contacts with other religions is realised. But the world is not helped with a vague and dreamy sort of idealism that overlooks the real situation and denies the varieties in religion. It is our task as indeed it has always

been to work toward international cooperation of liberal Christianity in its various national forms -- and of liberal Christianity with the "left wings" of the other religions.'

At its meeting the following year, the 'Canadian Conference' noted that 'though pleasing in its spirit, this answer is not at all satisfactory as to the question of the universal fellowship and unity of religions', that their own proposal 'has nothing to do with erasing differences between the religions, except as the sense of the symphony of all religions gives a place to all thinkers and doers of good', and that 'neither pure Christianity nor any other true religion has anything to lose but everything to gain, by this sense and practice of the universal unity.' There the matter ended, as this was the last conference held by the organization in question.

During the 1950s a groundswell gained momentum which would eventually bring the Canadian Unitarian Council into being as a national organization in 1961. But at the time of the 1958 Congress in Chicago, official participation from Canada was limited to the inclusion of one Canadian in the delegation from the American Unitarian Association, as had been the practice for some years. There was resentment in some quarters that such appointments were made in Boston without consultations in Canada, but since there was no organized body in Canada with which to consult, the policy was at least understandable. In the same way, the long list of sponsors of the Congress included two Canadians who had responded to an invitation from the AUA: Brock Chisholm and Lester Pearson. Neither actually attended, but there were nineteen Canadians in attendance, and awareness of the IARF in Canada had grown, because 65 delegates from Europe had arrived by sea in Montreal and had been entertained both by the congregation there and by the one in Toronto on their way to Chicago.

Three months before the next Congress the Canadian Unitarian Council came into existence. One of the actions taken at its founding meeting was to consider its relationship to the IARF, and its board was authorized to begin negotiations for membership if this seemed appropriate. The Canadian member of the delegation from the equally newly-formed Unitarian Universalist Association had already been appointed, but it was voted to send an observer from the CUC to the 1961 Davos Congress to report back with recommendations. Douglas Borden from the Montreal congregation was chosen. His report to the November board meeting recommended that the CUC apply for membership and promote IARF in Canada. The CUC would then represent Canada at IARF events in the future; North American 'continental' groups, he added, inevitably appear to all outsiders as '100 percent American.' The board thereupon voted to seek IARF membership.

Difficulties, however, arose. The UUA, as a powerful presence within IARF, opposed the application on the grounds that the Canadian churches were already represented through having a member on its own delegation. Lengthy discussions followed. It was pointed out that the IARF was an organization of national member-groups, and that the Canadian situation was parallel to that in South Africa, Australia and Ireland, where the national associations had IARF membership although their congregations were also members of the British General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches, as indeed were the Canadian churches. The Americans did not budge. All that could be agreed upon after further negotiations was that they would not oppose a CUC application for associate membership. In 1966 the CUC annual meeting endorsed such an application, together with a recommendation that they be consulted with regard to the UUA appointment of a Canadian member of its own delegation; they also appointed their own observer to the upcoming Congress.

The stalemate continued. In 1969 a protest was lodged that the UUA had again appointed a Canadian delegate without consultation with the CUC. By this time relationships between the two bodies had become strained over a number of issues, and a vote that Canada should withdraw completely from the UUA was narrowly defeated at that year's CUC meetings. This marked the turning point. Joint consultations looked at the Canadian grievances, and the UUA agreed not only to withdraw its opposition to CUC membership in IARF but to sponsor it. The following year's CUC meetings voted to renew the application, which was placed before the 1972 Congress in Heidelberg, where it was unanimously accepted.

Loose ends had still to be tied up. On more than one subsequent occasion Canadians again received notice of appointment as UUA delegates to IARF Congresses. One of the anomalies in the 1969 situation was that the planning committee for the Congress was chaired by a Canadian as a UUA representative, as a by-product of the situation that this was being planned as a joint gathering with the UUA General Assembly, and he was already chair of the planning committee for that Assembly. By

this time, too, a North American Chapter had been established on a continent-wide basis for individual IARF members. Early in 1970 the chapter applied for affiliation with the CUC, which prompted an investigation of the existing situation. It was discovered that the chapter had only five Canadian members; when they were consulted, the consensus was that now that the CUC was a member they would prefer individual membership through it rather than through the chapter, so it was recommended that to avoid confusion the latter rename itself simply the American chapter.

The Heidelberg Congress of 1972 was a momentous occasion for Canadians, though only nine of them were able to attend. They were received into membership and represented for the first time by their own elected delegates, Phillip Hewett and Jean Cumming. These delegates presented an invitation for the following Congress, in 1975, to be held in Montreal, and this was enthusiastically accepted. It was mentioned that this was a particularly appropriate choice, since two of the IARF's major member-groups, the British and the American Unitarian associations, were both celebrating their 150th anniversary that year, and the Canadians were members of both. Not only that, but it also marked the 75th anniversary of the IARF. A further Canadian contribution at Heidelberg was a proposal by Charles Eddis for a worldwide annual IARF Day to promote awareness of the organization and raise money for its Emergency Relief Fund. This too was accepted.

Preparations for the Montreal Congress now became a major preoccupation for Canadian Unitarians. A fund of more than \$6000 was raised to help cover expenses, and a local committee worked long hours to cover the practical details. When the time arrived, over three hundred liberal Christians, Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims as well as Unitarians and Unitarian Universalists gathered on the campus of McGill University; the theme was 'Our Unity in Diversity'. One consequence of the event was that Canadian attendance at congresses from that point onward was consistently among the largest of all national groups: 41, for instance, made it to Tokyo in 1984. Another outcome was the formation of a Canadian chapter, energetically promoted by Margaret Hewett, which by 1990 had gathered well over a hundred individual members. The CUC annual meetings always included an event sponsored by the IARF chapter.

Canadians also began to play a more prominent role in IARF proceedings. Up to that time, practically the only occasion when a Canadian name had been before the entire constituency was when an article by Phillip Hewett on 'Liberation and the Liberal' had been published in 1971 in the IARF newsletter. For the 1987 Congress, Marilyn Flitton from Vancouver was on the planning committee, while three of the working groups had before them papers prepared by Canadians Joyce Griffiths, Sheilah Thompson and Phillip Hewett. The last-named also chaired the committee that framed the Congress Declaration. The Canadians contributed a worship service on "A Sense of Place" at the Congress, which included a contextual use of art and poetry. Again in 1990, Joyce Griffiths prepared a paper for one of the working groups, and in 1996 Harold Rosen and Phillip Hewett did the same. From the latter Congress, Ellen Campbell, executive director of the CUC, was elected to the IARF Council.

Now, at the time of writing, Canada looks forward once again to playing host to an IARF Congress. Just as the 75th anniversary of the organization was marked in Montreal, so its centenary will be marked in Vancouver. Over the intervening quarter of a century, the constituency of the IARF has become much broader, vindicating the hopes expressed by Charles Pennoyer in 1931, and the same has certainly been true of the energetic working committee gathered by Harold Rosen in preparation for the 1999 Congress. Canada, with an increasingly multicultural and multifaith population, can both learn from and contribute to the ongoing IARF tradition.

Phillip Hewett is minister emeritus of the Unitarian Church of Vancouver, where he served as minister for 35 years. He ministered briefly in England before moving to Canada in 1956. He has attended most IARF Congresses since 1952, usually as a Canadian delegate. He was chair of the planning committee for the 1969 Congress and of the committee to prepare the Congress Declaration in 1987. In 1983 he and his wife Margaret were joint recipients of the Award for Outstanding Service to International Liberal Religion presented by the American chapter of IARF.

IARF Chapter in India Since the Late 1990's

Prof. Dr. Mumtaz Ali Khan

The International Association for Religious Freedom (IARF) is dedicated to promoting humanism. Since the 1990's its role has become more diversified and practical. Through its various regional councils and chapters, it is catching the attention of millions of people throughout the world. One of the significant changes in its approach is the emergence of a Young Adult Program (YAP). Youths are encouraged to play a vital role. IARF is also extending economic support to its member groups and branches to enable poor people to come up in life. Interfaith activities form the core dimension of IARF.

The International Association for Religious Freedom (IARF) is completing its centenary in 1999. A historical perspective of this world organization would reveal its noble gesture to making irrespective of religious, caste, racial, ethnic and other sociological considerations. Its main goal is to restore the confidence and faith in the earth community. The word 'restore' would imply that there was such a healthy network of human relationship in the past but that it is missing now. Thus we need to recover the social fabric that had the effect of bringing together people of different social groups to one common platform and bringing them together, all in the name of humanism for the overall development of mankind for a peaceful and cooperative existence.

It is this central theme of IARF that has caught the attention of people all over the world. Another significant feature of the philosophy of IARF is its emphasis on the social reality that humanism can be better understood and practiced even without faith in any religion. In other words, religion is not indispensable if there is confirmed and spontaneous faith in humanism as a solution to man's self-created problems that undermine mutual understanding, goodwill and peaceful co-existence.

Changes Since 1990

The structural and functional status of IARF underwent radical changes since 1990 as changes were deemed essential and inevitable for better results. It was during the 1993 Congress at Bangalore, India, that seeds of changes were sown and very soon, the International Council of IARF felt that in order to obtain better results, democratic decentralization was imperative. Over centralization of power and functions in the hands of the International Council and its secretariat had to be re-examined. This would result in more effective management, greater participation of members, a sense of belonging, better coordination, more effective working relationships and practical strategies.

It was in this context that the concept of regional councils was thought of and without loss of time and after due consideration, concrete steps were taken. Three regional councils were set up: the North American Coordinating Council, the European Coordinating Coordinating Council, and the South Asian Coordinating Council. Each Coordinating Council has a certain number of members including the chairman and Coordinator.

The Coordinating Councils meet as often as is deemed necessary in their respective regions and transact the business in a democratic way. The major concern of these councils is to plan and execute measures for promoting peace, understanding, and harmony among members of different faiths. The proceedings are reported to the International secretariat at Oxford. Generally, all the members of the Council attend the meetings. All policy matters are laid down by the International Council.

Regional Set-Up in South Asia

Though many parts of the world have their own socio-political problems and infighting, South Asia has fundamentally different problems, often distinct from other regions. All the four regions of South Asia were once part and parcel of united India. For various reasons, often politically motivated, there were divisions. India was partitioned. Apart from rivalry and prejudices from the four nations, what is distressing are internal differences and infighting on the grounds of religion, caste and ethnic compulsions.

India is a plural society with many religions, cultural pluralism and so on. The Hindus constitute the majority population with 80%. Next comes Islam, an alien religion with 12 % of the population. India has the second largest Muslim population in the world; only Indonesia has more Muslims; Christians account for 4%. The founders of the Indian Constitution decided to make India a secular state in which all citizens are to be treated alike and have their religious rights and freedom. The state is not to interfere in their religious matters, nor is there to be state religion.

In spite of these rights and guarantees, the social situation is sometimes not free from communal biases, conflicts and tensions. Religious fundamentalism prevails and this vitiates the otherwise peaceful and healthy environment. There are some socio-political groups with strong religious prejudices working hard to communalize the social situations. Hatred is spread in the very name of religion. Religious festivals sometimes lead to tensions, conflicts and killings. But the majority of the people are peace loving and are determined to ensure secularism.

It is in this context that there is an imperative compulsion to make the best use of IARF. The various member groups and branches of the Chapter lend valuable support, directly or indirectly, to bring people of different faiths to common platforms, to promote better social interactions and provide opportunities to better understand their own religious principles for the betterment of mankind and also to respect the other religious principles and practices. IARF has a greater role to play in this direction as time passes on. People professing different religions are generally very receptive to the philosophy of IARF and it is for this reason that the IARF movement is gaining momentum and popularity. Members of IARF member-groups and branches command respect and importance.

The need for IARF is equally important in Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Bangladesh. In all these countries, there are communal, ethnic and other differences that weaken the social fabric. Mischief makers are busy in poisoning the minds of people so that they can easily kill the spirit of humanism and create uneasiness, followed by arson and looting. The ethnic conflicts in Sri Lanka disturb the society and create a nightmare. The tensions and conflicts between the mulki and non-mulki groups and also the shabby treatment meted out to the minorities, particularly the Christians in Pakistan, call for serious and immediate attention and action. It is here that IARF can play a vital role. Even in Bangladesh, there is an immediate need to take steps to promote better understanding and harmony among people of different religions and cultural groups.

IARF activists are busy in meeting various religious leaders, intellectuals and other like-minded groups. The present experiences, gained in a very short period, indicate a bright future. Dark clouds with thunder and lightening will definitely give way to blue sky and a bright sun. Oneness of man and oneness of God will be the main desire of every man and woman, irrespective of their religion and caste. This, of course, needs time, proper direction and selflessness. Optimism is the inspiring instrument for a radical social transformation.

The South Asian coordinating Council has four countries (regions) under its jurisdiction. These are: India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. A brief report about the Indian Chapter is already presented. So far as the chapters of other countries are concerned, not much significant development is seen. Pakistan's chapter is not active at the moment due to some internal problems. The set back could be temporary and something has to be done to make it more active and useful. However, it played an effective role at the 1996 Congress in Korea.

Bangladesh had an active chapter under the leadership of Mr.Md.Nural Alam. The team from Bangladesh participated at the 1993 Congress. Subsequently, Mr Nurul Alam did not show the same amount of enthusiasm and interest. He developed certain strong differences and forced temporary suspension of the works. Efforts are being now made to ensure meaningful participation of the Bangladesh Chapter.

The Sri Lankan Chapter played well for sometime, but it is not very active at the moment. There were some internal differences with the executive members of the Chapter. There was no proper constitution. Mr Harish Jain, the IARF Coordinator and myself had been to Sri Lanka to meet all concerned and see that the Chapter worked well. A draft constitution was finalized and the secretary was requested to have it registered. But things are not moving as desired. Fresh efforts are being put in to make it very active. As said earlier, Sri Lanka has its own problems due to ethnic conflicts between the original inhabitants and the Tamil migrants. No third party has so far been able to bring about reconciliation. Peace, harmony and development are retarded. It is for this reason that an organisation like IARF can get involved and play an effective role.

One of the significant changes in the IARF movement in India is the emergence of the Indian Chapter. Though it has been working for sometime, it did not have set procedures and formalities. In a sense, it was like an ad hoc body representing India. But recently, a new face lift was given to it. A constitution was drafted, adopted and registered. This newly acquired legal status has given fresh impetus, dynamism and direction. It is registered under the society's Act and periodical elections are held. It has a set of office bearers elected by the branches at the Scheduled General Body. Two veterans hold top positions. Mr Punyabratha Roy Chowdhury, former President of IARF International Council, is now the President and Mr C N N Raju, one of the senior members of IARF, is the National Secretary.

Branches

The Indian Chapter consists of the various branches established from time to time. A well-coordinated structural and functional relationship exists between the chapter and the branches. Each branch is to have a minimum number of 25 members who are enrolled after payment of the prescribed annual fee or life membership fee. The chapter gets a certain share of these collections to meet its own expenses. Generally, the Chapter does not depend upon the financial support from the Coordinating Council or the International Secretariat. This is a very healthy tendency. When locals pay and become members, this would reflect on their real desire to sever the cause. The Chapter conducts annual conferences and workshops and thus make allowances for people of different faiths and regions to interact among themselves and participate in programs for the spread of interfaith. Currently, there are 42 branches under the Indian Chapter. Though there is heavy concentration of such branches in South India, branches are also found in many other parts of India. It is heartening to note that there is a steady growth in the number of these branches. As awareness of the importance is growing, the demand for opening new branches is on the increase.

Once like minded persons gather together to form a branch, a formal structure emerges on payment of the prescribed fee, either on an annual basis or on a life membership basis. Each branch will have a President/Chairman and a Secretary. It comes directly under the Chapter. At the time of inauguration of the branch, a brief orientation is given on the structure, functions and aims of IARF, duties and responsibilities of the Chapter and branches, relationship between the Chapter and the branches and so on. Branches play a vital role in the management of the Chapter. Representatives of the branches elect the office bearers of the Indian Chapter every three years. Care is taken to ensure the presence of members of different faiths on the committees.

The Coordinating Council conducts Orientation/Training workshops for the benefit of the members of the branches. Regional as well as National conferences are also held periodically. Such conferences/workshops are essential for various reasons such as establishing personal contacts, sharing knowledge or experiences, strengthening of the attachment to the IARF's philosophy and goals. What is further gratifying is that such meetings are devoid of obtaining any personal gains. In fact, bubbling enthusiasm is witnessed. A major portion of the expenses are borne by the organizers and partly by the participants. Local leaders resort to mobilization of resources, not depending too much on IARF grants. It is true that IARF releases some financial assistance. But this is just a fraction of the total expenses involved in conducting the workshops. Thus, the "self-reliance" approach is gaining momentum.

What is sociologically significant here is that such conferences/workshops are conducted without depending on IARF. In some places such conferences resemble celebrations or festivals. Participation is regardless of religious and cast considerations. Muslim women, too, participate in such conferences. This is no simple achievement, because generally Muslim women remain secluded. Muslim religious leaders share the dias with the Hindus and Christian religious leaders. This has a profound impact on the ordinary people belonging to these religious groups.

Member Groups

There are currently 13 member groups in India, 7 in Bangladesh and one in Sri Lanka. Thus, there are 21 member groups. The Coordinating Council of South Asia is the link between them. Member groups have a great role to play implementing the philosophy and goals of IARF. Member groups have not yet come up to the expected standard. Much more has to be done. These member groups have some religious color and affiliation. Therefore, they have to take up the responsibility of

correcting the erring social behavior and foul play in the name of religion. There is no link between the various member groups. Each group works in isolation. They do not have interactional opportunities. In the case of the branches, the social situation is different. There is an association. Annual Meetings and conferences are held at selected places. Exchange of views takes place. Above all, there is the India Chapter, which is the apex body coordinating with all branches.

Perhaps it is desirable to have similar associations among all member-groups. They should meet at periodical intervals and exchange their views. They can share their experiences, This will enable member groups to develop primary relationships and their combined efforts will strengthen IARF. Someone has to take the lead.

There should be some linkage between the Chapter and the member groups, or the apex body of member groups, if formed. This will enable the two wings of IARF to have closer understanding and sharing. They can also arrange common programs whenever needed.

Young Adult Program (YAP)

The emergence of the concept of a Young Adult Program is one of the most significant developments in the brief history of IARF in India. It was felt desirable to involve and encourage the youngsters in IARF activities so that they could take up the responsibility of managing IARF in due course of time. Secondly, youth power can be identified and harnessed for positive results, to produce and sustain a healthy earth community. Presently, a vast majority of the promoters of IARF are those who have crossed 50 years of age. Even though they are still active, enthusiastic and charismatic, they can not play their role effectively beyond a particular time frame. They have to yield to others as advanced age becomes a disadvantage for them as well as IARF itself. But they can still play an advisory role. They have to motivate, inspire and guide the youngsters.

It is for this reason that the Young Adult Program (YAP) was launched just after the 1993 congress at Bangalore. YAP was entrusted with its expected role, perhaps on an experimental basis, at the 1996 Congress at Seoul, Korea. All eyes were focussed on it. These youngsters were in the age group on 18 to 35 years. But the majority are around 30 years old. Much importance was given for enrollment of females, as their role is vital in spreading the ideology of IARF. They were given orientation at Ramakrishna Mission, Calcutta, before leaving for Korea. Specific responsibilities and duties at the Congress were entrusted to them. There was a risk involved. If these youngsters failed to impress, the very movement would have been nipped in the bud. But these youngsters did wonderful work, which caught the attention of IARF leaders and also participants. The result is that the very International Council had great admiration and decided to continue their involvement at the 1999 Congress in Vancouver, Canada. In fact, the YAP training program at Bangalore and subsequently at Leh-Ladakh gained a lot of momentum.

Due credit should do to Mr Amitava Khandait, the YAP Coordinator and his able colleague Mr P.K. Ghosh in conducting the camps at Bangalore and Leh-Ladakh. Of course, this was possible because of the patronage of Rev. Dr. Robert Traer and Mr. S. S. Chakraborty, and Mr R. Mukherji. Further, the coordinating council had the services of Mr Harish Jain, who was Coordinator at the time. He is a gifted person who has practical social vision, ability to push through programs and decisions. His impressive selfless personality has lent valuable weight to the advancement of the Council.

Promotion of interfaith rests generally on the attitudes of the people involved. A sense of commitment, dedication and realism are the driving force of the interfaith movement. Money need not be a main factor. But certain socio-economic programs to provide relief to the suffering and deprived people would go a long way. Though IARF is not a money-lending agency, it is still committed to help the poor. But it is also laid down that any such help should be coupled with interfaith commitment. Any organization affiliated to IARF in some form or the other should promote interfaith harmony as its primary function and, when it receives some financial assistance, it should manage the grant so that all groups of people practicing different faiths may be involved.

There are channels through which these activities can be undertaken. The concept of a Revolving Fund was introduced to help the member groups and branches take up economic activities. This Revolving Fund is a loan scheme. It carries a reasonable rate of interest. The principal amount and the interest amount are payable as per the schedule of repayment mutually agreed upon. Desirous member groups at branches have to submit a proposal in the prescribed form for consideration by the

Coordinating Council at its annual meeting. Feasibility as well as repaying capacity is looked into. If the Council approves the scheme, the loan will be released to the concerned organization.

The very nomenclature of this scheme indicates that the loan amount gets back to the corpus fund along with interest. On the one hand, the principal amount is intact and then it increases because of the interest amount. All possible precautions are undertaken to prevent the misuse of loans. There is no question of deviating from the original terms and conditions laid down for getting a loan. The member groups or the chapter branch has a moral responsibility, besides its legal obligation to ensure proper utilization and repayment.

The interfaith movement has an additional dimension of great importance. Generally, IARF is expected to play its role to promote better understanding of human relationships through appropriate actions with the help of the member groups and branches. But the new dimension introduced since 1990 relates to promotion of economic and social activities. This is subject to the following conditions:

Economic

- The beneficiaries should be poor,
- They should undertake economic activities that produce income,
- This income should be sustainable,
- The beneficiaries should represent different religious groups so that the interfaith dimension is not overlooked,
- The schemes are for a particular period.
- Human resource development is also kept in mind. Some of these activities are:
- Initial help in main training orphanages or destitute homes,
- Assistance to training institutions for nurses,
- Assistance to running educational institutions,
- Maintenance of hostels for children,
- Assistance in training hotel workers, etc.

The present rate of interest is 10% for the groups and 12% for the individuals. The procedure for obtaining a loan from the Revolving Fund is very simple. When the procedures and hurdles involved in obtaining Government loans through banks and other financial institutions are examined, horrible experiences surface. Sometimes even a bribe has to be given. As against this hard situation, the Revolving Fund is a real contrast. Absolutely no procedural wrangles and hurdles are encountered. A mere application in the prescribed format with relevant statistical information and documents is adequate. When the Evaluation cell is convinced about the “bonafides” of the organization and the purpose, the Coordinating council is likely to approve the Program and the financial assistance is released.

The other IARF scheme is called Social Services network grants (SSN) grants). The objects of this scheme are akin to those of Revolving Fund. But there are two major differences. First, SNN grant is not a loan and as such not repayable. Secondly, this can be obtained either from economic activity or social service orientated program. Even to obtain this grant, concerned projects have to send their requests in the prescribed format with all relevant documents. Ultimately, the Coordinating Council has to take a decision on sanctioning this grant.

Quite a number of member groups and Project partners have taken advantage of this scheme. Integrated Family Welfare Unit (IFWU) had the privilege of this scheme on a few occasions. The first program was to help rural women in sericulture (silkworm cultivation). This was introduced in three villages. The Project had a good impact on the people and led to their further progress. The people derived two advantages. First, child labor was minimized, as the nature of this economic activity requires the involvement of women. Children were involved only in their spare time. Second, women used to be employed by landowners for daily wages that were not reasonable. A lot of exploitation was observed. When women became involved in sericulture, they were released from the clutches of the landowners.

An objective critical review of both the Revolving Fund and SSN grants would reveal that there is a need to make these schemes more popular among the member groups and branches. Interested persons have to be trained to submit the applications free from defects, so that the

applications can be accepted and placed before the Coordinating Council for approval without much loss of time and correspondence.

There is a tendency to obtaining SSN grants rather than Revolving Fund because the former is freely available, whereas the latter is a loan carrying interest. Human nature is such that when something is available for free it is preferred rather than a loan with interest.

The need for continuing the SSN grants scheme has to be re-examined. So long as this scheme is in vogue, the demand for the Revolving Fund loan will be marginalized. SSN grants will be liquidated unless IARF releases further grants. This, there is no end to the grants. Further, project partners develop the tendency of dependency rather than self-reliance. It is true that the Coordinating Council has been urging the project partners to mobilize internal resources and build up their own funds. In sum, it is desirable to wind up the SSN grants scheme at the earliest date and motivate branches, member groups and project partners to draw on the Revolving Fund in the larger interest of themselves and the Revolving Fund scheme itself.

Once a decision is taken to scrap SSN grants, the need for utilizing the Revolving Fund loan will gain impetus and momentum. Rules governing the Revolving Fund loan scheme will have to be revised so as to make this scheme more useful. Some suggestions, illustrative but not exhaustive are:

- There should be liberal flow of funds from the IARF secretariat for some time. The corpus fund should be quite sizeable.
- Procedures for utilizing the loan will have to be simplified and should have a time frame both for utilization and repayment.
- Loans should be released only for viable project.
- Applications can be made by member groups, branches of the IARF Chapter, or other NGOs recommended by the IARF member groups or branches.
- Legal guarantees for recovery of the loan and interest should be well defined and strictly followed.
- Adequate security from the applicants and also collateral security from the member groups and branches should be obtained.
- As an incentive, the member groups and branches may be given a small percentage of the interest amount received from the borrowers.
- Similarly, those taking loans may also be given some incentive out of the interest amount for regular and prompt repayment.
- Loans should be granted only after a thorough examination of all aspects of loan applications and after obtaining feasibility reports from such persons as decided by the Coordinating Council.
- Recoveries made from the projects may be kept in a separate account and be treated as local money outside the purview of Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) as in India. This should be treated as a Reserve Fund that can be tapped only when the flow of funds from the International Secretariat stops.
- Whatever is done in the name of the Revolving Fund should be linked to interfaith cooperation.

Sustainability

The Coordinating Council in general and the Chairman, Mr S. Chakraborty in particular, have decided to ensure that the economic assistance that IARF provides is for a temporary period to enable projects to stand on their own. Besides this, it is also expected that the recipient projects motivate the beneficiaries to stand on their own. This concept of sustainability plays a very effective role in the real development of the poor. Otherwise, there is every possibility of developing a tendency to depend for ever on external assistance for self-development. This is suicidal and should not be allowed.

The experience of the Integrated Family Welfare Unit in Bangalore, India is presented here by way of illustration. After having received economic assistance for promoting sericulture and also to run the rural hospital (major help comes from the Christian Children's Fund), it was felt desirable to think of self-reliance. A small portion of the income earned by the rural women out of sericulture operation was collected and pooled. Medicine in the rural hospital was not given for free, but the actual cost of medicine was collected. No consultation fee, however, was charged. Similarly, no charges were collected for administering injections etc. This collection gradually helped the organization to get a sum of one hundred thousand rupees. Another one hundred thousand rupees were

donated out of farm income. The total amount of two hundred thousand rupees has now been kept on fixed deposit for five years. It will double in another two years. It is planned to redeposit this amount, that is, as four hundred thousand rupees for another five years, so that it becomes eight hundred thousand rupees. Then this amount will be invested so that the organization gets regular income to run the rural hospital when no more funds are available from any other source.

Women involved in sericulture do not require our assistance now as they are able to reinforce their activities, expand the scope of silk production, and are confident of further progress.

Thus, this short version of the case study of IFWU aimed at sustainability is a very encouraging factor. Whatever help the IARF extended in the initial period has led to positive results.

My Involvement in the IARF Movement

Though I have been involved in the promotion of interfaith, communal harmony and peace for a pretty long period, all this was in my individual capacity as I developed a strong desire right from school days for such activities. In fact, as a student of high school I resisted the very idea of playing soccer for such teams as based on communal consideration. My upbringing and early socialization processes had a profound impact on my interpersonal relationships. My playmates and classmates belonged to different religious groups. I really enjoyed this type of composite grouping and cultural setting. I used to invite a few non-Muslim friends to my house for meals whenever we used to celebrate our Muslim festivals. Similarly, my non-Muslim friends used to invite me to their houses for meals whenever they used to have their religious functions. As I was active in the Scout movement, I used to visit Hindu temples, churches and Muslim shrines. All this educated me on the importance of human understanding and harmony. These early influences helped me later on at the college level and also when I got employed in the University to have intensive social interactions and intimate friendships with non-Muslims, too.

However, my involvement in an organized manner in promoting interfaith activities was started only in the late 1980's. This was specifically so after 1989 when I had the privilege of meeting Ms. Lucie Meijer and Mr Atkinson, who had come to Bangalore to explore the possibilities of holding the 1993 IARF Congress at Bangalore. One particular evening, I was called to attend a meeting at the city YMCA. I did extend my support to them. It was Mr. C. N. N. Raju, the present National Secretary of the Indian Chapter of the IARF, who introduced me to them. The IARF representatives were impressed with me and early the next morning I had a phone call. Ms. Lucie informed me that I would be invited to participate at the 1990 Congress at Hamburg, Germany. I was thrilled. The seeds of passion for the IARF were sown at Hamburg and by 1993 when the Congress was held at Bangalore in 1993, young saplings of the IARF had taken birth.

The preliminary visit by the Rev. Dr. Robert Traer and his associates to finalize the programs and facilities before the start of 1993 Congress brought me very close to these people. My intensive social interactions with them inspired me to get deeply involved in the IARF activities. I was named one of the coordinators in charge of the Congress at Bangalore.

The post-Congress scenario was a great influencing factor in my life. Khwaja Ghrib Un Nawaz Welfare Centre (KGN) became very active. We applied for membership in the IARF. KGN became an associated member and during 1998 it became a permanent member. Though membership per-se need not be the only motivating factor, it still has its impact on the nature and activities of the KGN. It rather received an impetus to get involved more actively and purposefully.

It was realized that without social action programs the KGN would not make its mark. Two-way approaches had to be kept in mind. On one hand, the philosophy, goals and messages of the IARF had to be propagated by holding meetings, conferences and workshops. This would promote intensive processes to pave the way for better understanding of not only one's own religion, but also that of others. There are deeply rooted prejudices, egotistic tendencies and wrong perceptions about the religion of others, often not realizing that knowledge of one's own religion is totally inadequate and not free from bias. Therefore, the KGN felt that the first step should be to establish a healthy, objective and fair approach for better understanding one's own religion and then the religions of others.

The measures adopted in this regard are:

- Small group discussions were held with women and female youths, followed by men and male youths.

- Lectures were given on the significance of New Year's Day, as felt by the members of various religious groups.
- Lectures were given on the significance of various religious functions and religious leaders. On all these occasions youths and adult women of all major religious groups were present.
- Efforts were made to educate Muslims about the Islamic spirit of tolerance and inter faith cooperation. The various instances of the Holy Prophet Muhammad's personal life, to promote better understanding, mutual trust, tolerance, forgiveness etc. were highlighted.
- Respect for leaders of other religions, which is an essential feature of Islam, was stressed time and again in meetings.

It has to be stressed here that, in India, religious issues generally revolve around the Hindu-Muslim relationship. There is a deeply rooted thinking that Islam promotes violence: Islam is for the protection of Muslims against Hindus; intolerance is the cardinal feature of Islamic culture. But all this is baseless. Islam stands for peace, tolerance, submissiveness, etc. Many Muslims and a large number of Hindus need to be properly educated to remove misconceptions. The KGN is actively involved in this. The task is tough and risky, because hard core Muslims have to be won over.

More than these theoretical mechanisms, sincere attempts were made to support action programs. In this process, KGN became a pioneering religious group to break the unhelpful and rigid traditions and demolish the walls of social isolation. The following measures were undertaken.

Visits to places of worship. Muslims have their own cultural upbringing that generally secludes them. KGN took steps to motivate Muslim youths to visit Hindu temples. Initially there was some hesitation because of the fear of violating Islamic mandates, for the general understanding is that a Muslim should not visit temples. But the Muslim youths were made to believe that Islam is against idol worship. Visits to temples per-se will not vitiate the Islamic spirit, because no worship is done. Respect to Hindu religious institutions and gods does not offend Islamic ways of life.

With these pre-visit trips, Muslim youths (particularly girls) were able to visit the various temple towns of South India and understand Hindu customs and culture. They were also excited to see the large and gigantic temples. These youths did not feel bad. They realized that in a plural religious society, like India, there is a need to adopt different approaches to have a clear understanding of the religions of others. Their parents, too, did not make adverse comments.

A few religious festivals are observed commonly. Idd-Milad un-Nabi, the Birthday of Holy Prophet Muhammad, is celebrated every year. Muslim, Hindu and Christian boys and girls participate. Deejpavali and Ganesha festivals have great social significance to the Hindus. For non-Hindus, these functions afford opportunities to get interested by participating in them. Muslim boys and girls enjoy lighting deepavali lamps, burning crackers, etc. Muslims youths are also encouraged to participate in Ganesha festivals. Care is taken to ensure that Muslims do not do any sort of worship. This experiment again produced positive results.

Christmas is celebrated by the children, youths and adults on a grand scale. No religious restrictions are imposed. Some well-known Christian leaders are invited besides Muslim and Hindu leaders. This is an occasion for highlighting the unifying force behind this great religion. A dance program is arranged to indicate the significance of Christmas Day. A vast majority of Muslims had no knowledge of the significance of Christmas and how close Christianity is to Islam.

One of the most significant outcomes of all these celebrations is that so far no adverse comments have been received. No Muslim parents raised any hue and cry when their children participated in non-Muslim functions. This would reveal that people are not averse to participate in all religious functions. All that is required is that organizers are careful in planning and executing such religious functions. Religious fundamentalists would be waiting to seize the opportunities at the earliest to create problems, if something went wrong. Religious sentiments are not to be offended. This is what the IARF stands for.

The KGN has decided to institute annual awards for outstanding persons who have lent valuable support to the cause of interfaith harmony, peace and social interaction. The 1997 award was bestowed on Mr. C. S. Gojer, National Director of Christian Children's Fund, India for his efforts to promote social integration through the various programs for the educational, economic, cultural and health advancement of children and their families belonging to Hinduism, Islam and Christianity. Generally, benefits offered by the Muslim and Hindu organizations will accrue to members of their own groups. But Christian organizations permit non-Christians also to benefit. It is here that CCF has

played a great role. Mr C. S. Gojer is known of this dynamic leadership, always believing in universal brotherhood. A few years ago, there was heavy rain in Bangalore City. Several mud houses of the poor Muslims collapsed. These families were on the road. I rang up Mr Gojer in the early morning and informed him of the situation. He permitted me (I hold a project, Integrated Family Welfare Unit, affiliated to the CCF) to go ahead with relief measures. A large number of Muslim families were helped through the good will of a Christian Organization, while offering assistance.

Again, any people died and houses were raised to the ground because of the earthquake in Maharashtra. Mr Gojer took the lead in releasing several thousands of rupees for rehabilitation of these people belonging to different religious groups. There are many such instances where Mr Gojer has displayed his sterling qualities of humanitarianism.

Besides this, several hundreds of poor Muslim boys and girls are being helped to come up in life. Their parents are also helped for sustainable development. In recognition of all these efforts of Mr C. S. Gojer, the KGN took pride in conferring the first KGN interfaith award on him.

The 1998 award was given to Justice Nittoor Srinivase Rau, former Chief Justice of Karnataka High Court and the First Vigilance Commissioner of India. He is now 96 years old, but very active. He is widely respected by all sections of the society for his commitment to harmony and peace. His very presence is a great source of inspiration. When I mooted the idea of felicitating him, there was spontaneous and wholehearted support from many top Muslims.

This was a very unique function where a Brahmin gentleman was honoured by a Muslim religious organization, namely Khwaja Gharib-un-Nawaz Welfare Centre. Many Hindus were also surprised, but were happy. The auditorium where he was felicitated was "jam-packed". Speakers included Justice H.G. Balakrishna, former judge of the High Court and Mr Maqsood-Ali Khan, former Member of Parliament and Minister and now the Chief editor of a popular Urdu daily newspaper. Mr Maqsood Ali Khan was very particular that I should not delay the felicitation program. Mr Veerappa Moily, former Chief Minister presided over the function. Every speaker spoke very highly of Justice Nittoor Srinivas Rau and also appreciated the efforts made to honor him. In my welcome address, I narrated the background of IARF and its commitment to the cause of humanism. This program has a great impact on hundreds of thousands of people because of the coverage by T.V. and newspapers. Though I had initial hesitation, as the KGN was honoring a Brahmin and was unsure how the Muslim community would react, it was gratifying to note that this step was welcomed by all as this was a positive step to bring Muslims and Hindus together. Everyone felt that there should be more instances of this type where people who work for the cause of Hindu-Muslim unity and understanding are recognised and awarded by the social organizations.

The name of stalwart in this movement needs to be mentioned. That is the name of Mr Virendra Mohan Trehan, an industrialist of great reputation. He is deeply committed to the cause of unity. He is the founder and president of the Foundation of Amity and National Solidarity (FANS). He is a driving force for the KGN. He is a great supporter of our cause. KGN is happy to place on record his services.

Prof. Dr. Mumtaz Ali Khan hails from Bangalore, India. He has Master's and Doctorate degrees in Sociology and a Bachelor's degrees in Law and Hindi. He was a professor of Rural Sociology, a visiting professor of Mysore University, a member of the Senate of Bangalore University, Board of Regents of Agriculture University, State Planning Board. Currently he is the Director of Centre for Research and Development of Dalits, Integrated Family Welfare Unit, Khwaja Gharib Un Nawaz Welfare Centre. He is also the Commissioner of Scouts. Prof. Khan is the author of 21 books in English. He is committed to the "Inter Faith" movement through social action and social work.

Perspective of the Unitarian Union in North East India

Carleywell Lyngdoh

In 1972 at the IARF Congress in Heidelberg, the Unitarian Union NE India was formally been accepted as an Associate Member of the IARF. Active participation of the Unitarian Union started from 1979 which we called the "New

Era” for the Unitarian Union, when Rev. Diether Gerhmann, the IARF General Secretary, paid a personal visit to the Khasi Hills in NE India in April 1979 and met with senior leaders of the Unitarian Union. This was followed by the visit of a strong IARF delegation of 65 persons from IARF member groups in America and the European countries in December 1979.

Again in 1980, Dr Lucie Meijer, a staff member of the IARF Secretariat, and Ms Christine Hayhurst, Deputy Secretary of the British Unitarians, visited the Khasi Hills to explore the possibility of introducing the Social Service Network of the IARF into NE India. It was in 1981 at the IARF Congress in Holland that the IARF upgraded the Unitarian Union's status from Associate to Member group, and so the Union was allowed two voting delegates. From 1981 the IARF sponsored the establishment of primary schools in the interior villages of the Khasi Hills, where there are Unitarian Churches.

The second “New Era” started in 1991 when Dr Robert Traer, (Bob) joined as the new General Secretary IARF. We saw new policy emerge, as the IARF decentralized the powers to the grassroot level and formed regional councils, which in turn formed a national chapter to make the IARF closer to the people at the grass root level and allowed them to decide themselves what is best for the interfaith development and understanding. This has led the IARF to endear more to the people. All have to work hard to make the IARF a strong base for interfaith development and understanding, and we are learning how to stand on our own feet and not to depend entirely on the IARF Secretariat.

The Unitarian faith in North East India began during the Religious Reformation Movement in the later half of the 19th Century, which saw the birth of many Liberal Religions in India. It was on the 18th of September in 1887 that Hajom Kissor Singh founded a Unitarian Church at Jowai on the principles of liberalism, tolerance, equality and fraternity of all humankind. These principles are the base that endears the Unitarians to the ideals of the world religious body, the IARF.

It was in 1972 at the IARF Congress at Heidelberg, that the Unitarian Union was formally accepted as an Associate Member of the IARF. From 1979 the Unitarian Union North East India entered a New Era of progress and development when the Rev Diether Gerhmann, the then General secretary of the IARF, paid a personal visit to the Khasi Hills in Meghalaya (India) to explore the possibility of the Unitarian Union actively participating in the Programs of the IARF.

He met the senior leaders of the Unitarian Union at the residence of the Rev. Devision Marbaniang at Shillong in NE India. This paved the way for further interaction and inter-religious dialogue with the IARF. Subsequently, in December 1979, Rev Gerhmann came again and led a strong delegation of 65 persons from IARF American and European groups. They visited Shillong and Jowai. Their visit led to the establishment of the first IARF project at Jowai, the “Universal Printing Press,” which is one of the earning projects giving employment to unemployed youths of the region.

In 1980, Dr. Lucie Meijer, staff member of the IARF Secretariat along with Ms Christine Hayhurst, the then Deputy General-Secretary of the British Unitarian General Assembly, paid a visit to Shillong and Jowai in the North East India and met the General Secretary of the Unitarian Union NE India and a few Unitarian Union Leaders. A series of constructive discussions led to the installation of the “Annie Margaret Barr Memorial Hostel” for poor students from the interior villages, who have the privilege to study at Jowai.

From 1981 the IARF sponsored the establishment of a few primary schools in the villages where there are Unitarian Churches. Since there are no school buildings, the students had to be accommodated in the Unitarian Church buildings. With the encouragement that the Unitarian Union received from Dr Lucie Meijer, more schools in the villages were opened, which increased the number of primary schools to 21 with 69 teachers in 1990. With the increase of enrolment, more teachers were appointed and in 1997 the numbers of teachers had increased to 78, where 54 teachers were sponsored by the IARF and the rest by the government and the Unitarian Union.

As mentioned earlier, the schools were held in the Church buildings but with the increased enrolment new school buildings had to be constructed. The IARF gave financial assistance for a few school buildings and the rest were sponsored by the government of Meghalaya and the Unitarian Universalist Association. At present almost all the schools have separate school buildings.

It is a blessing in disguise for the Unitarian Union in the Khasi Hills with the establishment of primary schools in the villages and towns in the Khasi Hills, because many unemployed educated youth were appointed as teachers. It also helped to strengthen the weaker Churches of the Unitarian Union, as those teachers were looking after the regular performance of the Churches in the interior villages. At the same time it gave ample opportunity to the neglected children in the villages to get education right at their own doors.

The Unitarian Union's status was changed from Associate to Member in 1981 at the IARP Congress in Holland and the Union was allowed to 2 delegates. Under the Leadership of Rev Gerhmann from 1972 to 1990, the decision making power was centralized in the IARP Secretariat in Frankfurt (Germany). Direct relationship were maintained between the IARF Secretariat and the member groups, and that was sometimes time consuming. In spite of this fact, there was a smooth functioning of the organization, and there was no interference from the other group members.

From 1991 the IARP entered the Second New Era

With the retirement of Rev Gerhmann, General Secretary of the IARP in 1991 at the IARP World Congress in Hamburg (Germany), Dr Robert Traer was appointed and took charge as the new General Secretary. The IARP Secretariat has changed the policy of the IARP and decentralized the powers of the IARF at the grassroot levels. It has entrusted more power to the IARP Regional Co-ordinating Councils and the IARF National Chapters and their Branches. These Policies have endeared the IARF more to the people, because the members are encouraged not to depend entirely upon the IARP Secretariat but to stand on their own feet as all the group members have a sharing of power in the IARP as a whole. That means that the IARF has moved towards a democratic system of administration and does not depend entirely on the direction from the IARP Secretariat. Instead, it encourages IARF members to form interfaith religious organizations in their own villages, towns, cities and countries under the banner and constitution of the IARF.

I found that Bob (Dr Robert Traer), the General Secretary of the IARF, was not interfering in the functions of the Regional Co-ordinating Councils or National Chapters. He watched and whenever necessary gave sound advice, and he always encouraged them in their endeavor to strengthen the IARF from the grass root level by the people of the respective regions.

From 1991 the Unitarian Union is trying to stand on its own feet. In 1990 the Unitarian Union was raising Rs. 20,000 annually for its education project, but in 1997 it raised Rs. 100,000 for the education project and also collected rice. Every Unitarian family is asked to contribute a handful of rice every day, and the money made from selling that rice goes to the education project. Also now we are organizing an annual fete, and also collecting fees from the students every month. In 1998 the Unitarian Union raised about Rs. 150,000 for the education project. We hope to keep raising the amount of this collection each year, until we can say that we can stand on our own feet. That is our ambition, so that we don't have to depend on the IARF for a longer period.

The Unitarian Union is very grateful for all that the IARP has done and is doing to make the Unitarian Union NE India stronger than it was before joining the IARP, so that all the unemployed youth can have shelter to work for their food, and the organization as a whole is improving, progressing, and developing from one year to another. The credit goes to the IARF, which opened its door to the Unitarian Union to enter a new era of interfaith understanding and development.

The IARF was founded in 1900 by Unitarians and subsequently joined by the Brahma Samaj. One of the basic principles of the Unitarians is to respect all other religious organizations, and this principle has been adopted by the IARP Co-ordinating Council to promote interfaith and religious understanding among all the religions, irrespective of caste, creed and color. Respecting the beliefs of other religions without any discrimination brings peace and stability to the world through the religious path to peace. This is the work of the International Association for Religious Freedom. It promotes the brotherhood of man and the Fatherhood of God so that everlasting PEACE can be sustained in the WORLD.

From 1981 to 1997, I think the Unitarian Union NE India has had the largest number of individual members in the IARF Indian Chapter (150 to 200 every year), which proves that the members of the Unitarian Union strongly support the IARF.

Carleywell Lyngdoh was born in 1930 at Jowai in NE India. He graduated from the Guwahati University in Assam and has two sons and three daughters. His wife is Mercia Pariat. He was elected General Secretary of the Unitarian Union NE India in 1965, and continues to hold that position. He joined the IARF in 1979 and attended the IARF World Congress in Holland in 1981, Japan in 1984, USA in 1987, Hamburg (Germany) in 1990, Bangalore (India) in 1993 and South Korea in 1996. He was elected Chairman of the IARF India Steering Committee from 1988 to 1992 and as Senior Vice President IARF Indian Chapter from 1996 and was served as member of the IARF Co-ordinating Council for South Asia during the last two years. He formed the IARF Branch in North East India, which is composed of different religious organizations. IARF is now a well-known religious organization in this region.

Religious Liberalism in Germany and the IARF

Manfred J. Paul

This paper reviews the development of "free religion" in Germany and its relationship to the IARF over the last one hundred years. The paper identifies three distinct theological/philosophical roots and describes the associated communities, all of which became members of the International Association for Religious Freedom. They are: the Liberal Christians (*Bund für Freies Christentum und Schweizerischer Verein für Freies Christentum*), the Free Religious (*Freireligiöse Landesgemeinde Baden, Frei-Religiöse Gemeinde Offenbach*) and the Unitarians (*Unitarische Kirche in Berlin, Unitarische Freie Religionsgemeinde Offenbach Main, Deutsche Unitarier Religionsgemeinschaft, Hamburg*). The paper also reviews the way in which three German IARF Congresses (Berlin, Heidelberg, and Hamburg) in this century have helped to define free religious identity in Germany.

Each birthday is a reason for joy. This is also true for round birthdays of institutions. Therefore, it is a great joy when an organization, which is calling itself today the International Association for Religious Freedom, looks back at its century of existence. Internationally speaking, this is unique among free religious institutions. The IARF constitution reads: *It is the purpose of this Council to reach out to those countries striving for uniting pure religion with absolute freedom and to strengthen a sense of community and cooperation among them.*

In her own history "Germany" was preoccupied often and for long periods of time with religious wars, both domestically and in the foreign relations. At the height of the Middle Ages, the German Catholic State Church ranked superior to the Emperor, and made painfully slow progress in learning to exist side by side with other Christian confessions, and other religious and *Weltanschauung* bodies. In the most favorable circumstances they were merely tolerated. This was true again after the Reformation, and particularly after the Enlightenment up through the 20th century. The claim of the traditionalists that there is only one true Christian Church for everybody, in part, has an effect on German society up to the present.

The Constitution of 1919 (Article 137) stated: "There exists no State Church." However, six months after Hitler's seizure of power, the Holy See achieved the concordat with the Reich on July 20, 1933, granting far-reaching privileges to the established churches. Subsequently and to make matters worse, many small religious groups were prohibited by the state. The Constitution of 1949 reinstated freedom of religion and the relatively liberal Church Articles of 1919. However, the strong privilege system between the established Catholic and Protestant churches on the one hand (each with roughly one third of the population) and the State on the other hand goes on and on, taking the form of public church tax collection, public subsidies of military clergy, of Theological Faculties, of confessional schools, religious (i.e. Christian) education in public schools, kindergartens, church hospitals, etc..

Germany's Religious Landscape Today

Today it is good that the number of Jewish congregations and their members in Germany has been on the increase, especially after 1990. The number of Muslims in Germany has also grown continuously since the end of the 1960's and today numbers approximately 2.9 million. Nearly 80% are of Turkish descent; and there are roughly 2,600 places of prayer. (The first Muslims came to Prussia in 1732.)

But religious freedom is also intended for all those who describe themselves as not being religious or who don't want to join any congregation. This big portion of the population is probably the fastest growing one. Therefore, in summary one can say: in a country where roughly every third person belongs to a non-Abrahamic religion/ideology, i.e. he/she is neither Christian nor Muslim nor Jewish, in a country whose church and state structures are shaped in a conservative and only slightly liberal way, it is of decisive importance to preserve religious freedom for the citizen. More decisive yet is to guarantee the religious liberalism or life orientation for the individual; in other words: to create and develop further social conditions that one may come to one's own belief and way of life, free in one's own decision, without dogma and constraint.

Why is this emphasized in this context? After the unification process of the country, 1989/90 and later, 17 million Germans joined the thus far Western German population, more or less also in terms of the Constitution. The East German population was, for several reasons, Christian only to a minor extent. The obvious thing to do would have been to take a census of the whole (united) population, also, of course, in terms of religious or ideological affiliation. I once posed this question of a census to a social scientist with well-established contacts in Bonn. He agreed that it would have been desirable, but such a census would not have had a chance in the various bodies to be carried through. Things like this happen more or less often in many modern democracies, but a peculiarity of this country appears to be that for the leading or regional media, events like this mostly do not qualify as news, possibly for lack of substance or political correctness, or for other reasons.

In spite of the Concordats with the Catholic Church and State Treaties with the Protestant Church, both Churches have been increasing their lobbying forces at the federal level within Germany. They have also sought to influence European Union cultural policy with lobbying forces in Brussels. However, this presents the churches with a possible dilemma: on the one hand the vision of Pope John Paul II and others of a re-Christianization of the "pagan" East let alone West has, so far, not been realized; on the other hand the churches fear for their quasi-monopoly-status as partners of the state in questions of values of any type in society, whatever this modern term may mean.

The Churches are still benefiting from the lack of public religious statistics, which makes them appear bigger than they actually are. In addition, as a lobbying force, the "non-Abrahamic" third portion of the population is extremely badly organized. Indeed they are barely organized at all as many millions of those in this category choose not to belong to any kind of religious or ideological institution. A "National Association for the non-adherents and non-joiners" has yet to be invented. This may well be a task of responsibly minded groups in the decades to come.

The IARF in Germany was seen and welcomed primarily for its role as an association for freedom in religious self-realization and autonomy. An institution like that is still needed by this country! Whenever the IARF held its Congress in Germany, this did the visitors good: the individual person's dignity was given priority over the hierarchy of big collective bodies, liberal persons could speak out and often reaffirm each other from their respective minority situations, the wind of change was blowing.

It was pure chance that the two last General Secretaries of the IARF were 'introduced' to their tasks during Congresses in Germany: 1972 in Heidelberg Rev. Diether Gehrman (coming from the Free Religious Community in Offenbach, Germany) and 1990 in Hamburg Rev. Dr. Robert Traer (minister of a Presbyterian congregation in the United States). During the Study Group on IARF History on the Congress 1999 in Vancouver, there were presented quite a few papers, one of them by Dorle Gehrman, with regard to her husband. She said, "Diether always understood his work as a ministry – an international ministry with a far-flung parish. ... he built up a well-staffed, well-functioning, well-financed secretariat."

In his history of the IARF Traer has noted that at the Fifth IARF Congress in Berlin in 1910 E. Troeltsch and A. Harnack lectured. Dr. H. Todt, the former minister of Unitarische Freie

Religionsgemeinde (Deutscher Unitarierbund) in Frankfurt/M., reports in his periodical 1967 that quite a few well-known professors were present at the Congress 1910, but also some younger colleagues as well. Protestants included: R. Otto and A. Schweitzer. Philosophers included: R. Eucken (1908 Nobel Prize Winner for literature), Th. Lipps, P. Natorp and E. Spranger. At the General Assembly in Berlin the Member of the Reichstag, Karl Schrader, was elected President of the IARF.

For the rest of this paper I will examine the development of free religion in Germany. However, I will limit this history to those organizations that became members of the IARF.

How does free religion in Germany manifest itself and from what sources does it come? What role has the IARF played? Three sources, all of which have their roots in the middle or second half of the 19th century, must be named. For each, cooperation with the IARF was attractive or even a part of their identity. They are: 1) the Liberal Protestants, for whom the unfolding of the single person is essential; 2) the Free Religious, who are striving for a living religion, also in a pantheistic and in a humanistic sense; and 3) the Unitarians, who are trying to combine the anti-Trinitarian goals of the 16th century (a liberal mentality, reason and tolerance) with defending their conviction in human dignity in the secular society of today.

It seems that the views bundled up here stem from Martin Luther's Reformation, on the one hand; and, on the other hand, intend to strengthen the individual person in religious matters. As a bearer of human dignity he/she is autonomous, hence he/she can and will bear responsibility. That means also an increase in democracy because the individual can elect and can be elected.

The personal religious center, where conscience freely decides, is virtually taken into private ownership. This in turn leads to questioning the claims under public law of the traditional State-Church-Establishment.¹ The essence of God, of the Divine is affirmed less and less "as a person". Instead, it is seen more as an energetic reality, embracing both reason and spirituality, which can be experienced or felt inside this world. The self-responsibility of the individual is strengthened if one can act freely and, by this, develop one's own talents.

The *Bund für Freies Christentum*, abbreviated as BFC, was founded in 1948 by individual persons who mostly belonged to an *evangelische Landeskirche*, i.e. the various bodies of the German Protestant Church within the several states, *Länder*. Its liberal theological roots date back to 1863 and earlier. When, in 1900, the IARF was founded in Boston, there was among the fifteen Council members one from Germany from the *Protestantenverein*.

Central to the BFC is the achievement of personal freedom from the spirit in the New Testament and from the ideas of the Reformation and of the Enlightenment. Free Christians experience God's action and God's revelation in their religion, but they recognize equally God's presence and revelation in other religions. As its IARF membership since 1949 has shown, the BFC fosters contact with similar groups, above all with those who are active in the inter-religious dialogue or those who support the heritage of A. Schweitzer, P. Tillich and F. Troeltsch. The last BFC-presidents were the theologians U. Mann (1970), U. Tworuschika (1987) and H. H. Jenssen (since 1995).

The IARF Conference in the *Evangelische Akademie*, Bad Boll (July 1998) offered an audience to the liberal, though by Rome discredited Catholic Bishop J. Gaillot from France. Bishop Gaillot considered justice, peace, the preservation of creation and "access to the source of life" to be the urgent duties of the religions of today. "No religion has a monopoly on truth and sense;" each one has something that the others do not possess (A. Roessler, *Evangelisches Gemeindeblatt für Württemberg*, July 12, 1998, page 8). During this Conference an informal European Liberal Protestant Network within the IARF was founded, whereby the mutual contacts among the Christian groups of the IARF European region are to be improved.

¹ Regarding the principle of self-responsibility, cf. H-D KAHL, *Aus unitarischer Geschichte, unitarische blätter* (DU-RG) 1998, page 39: ... At the Imperial Diet in Speyer (1529) adherents of Luther and Zwingli justified themselves with a common "Protestation" saying "that ... in the matter of God's honour and our souls' ... salvation everybody stands before God ... on himself, hence ... no-one may be excused ... by other persons' resolutions." - By this the Protestant *first principle* was put into words which is valid not only for the *evangelischen* but for all reforming streams of this (16th) century, not exempt the later Unitarians and their predecessors...

BFC and the Schweizerischer Verein für Freies Christentum, abbreviated as SVFC, have been friends for a long time. The SVFC was founded in 1871; but its liberal Christian origins go back to 1830. The members of the SVFC have continued to be affiliated with their respective Cantonal reformed Church, but the liberal influence - in the congregations more than in the theological faculties - is a considerable one. The SVFC provided the IARF with a president twice: 1905-07 Ed. Montet and 1966-69 P. Dalbert. The latter promoted "the harmonious cooperation of the various streams of consciousness" inside the IARF 2 by his initiative and contribution the establishing of several Commissions of which he was the coordinator since 1970. The Commission member U. Neuenschwander became well known for his research on A. Schweitzer to whom the IARF dedicated a conference at the Alsatian Le Kleebach in 1992.

The periodical *Schweizerisches Reformiertes Volksblatt*, edited by Rev. M. U. Balsiger, often reminds its readers of prominent religious liberals. Apart from those already mentioned are: F. Heiler, G. Mensching, and M. Werner. As an early mentor of "liberal" theology, F. Schleiermacher (1768-1834) has been acknowledged several times, also in this journal. Two hundred years ago in 1799, he anonymously published *Über die Religion. Reden an die Gebildeten unter ihren Verächtern* (On Religion: Speeches to those of the educated who belittle it). "To observe the universe is the most general and highest form of religion" (p. 55). This was not simply a matter of perception or recognition of the universe, but in essence dealt with the "influence of the object of perception on the observer." "...the universe is acting incessantly and reveals itself to us every moment. Any form which it brings forth, any creature to whom it gives - the the plentitude of life - an existence of its own, any occurrence born of the every fruitful bowls of the earth, is an acting of the universe upon us. Thus, to take and to understand the particular as a part of the whole, the limited and finite as a manifestation of the infinite, that is religion." (p. 56).

An IARF Congress has been held twice in Switzerland, once in 1932 in St. Gallen and in 1961 in Davos. At the 1932 Congress in Prof. M. Werner, from Bern, spoke about "the meaning of redemption" and afterwards, in a session chaired by Rev. Dr. N. Capek, a Unitarian from Prague, the Statues were changed in Article 2 as follows: "... to admit to the Association other free religious communities all over the world which, essentially, correspond with the Association's way of thinking." 3

This leads us to the second German source of religious liberalism within the IARF to be discussed in this paper: *the Free Religious*. Two congregations: the Freireligiöse Landesgemeinde Baden in Mannheim, and the Freireligiöse Gemeinde Offenbach (am Main), have been members of the IARF since the 1950's. The roots of the Free Religious movement are, however, much older.

Under the leadership of Rev. L. Uhlich (1841 in Halle/Saale) a circle named *Protestantische Freunde* developed from an amalgamation of rationalistic Protestant ministers. This circle was called *Lichtfreunde* (Friends of the Light), because it applied the light of reason to the interpretation of the Bible. Aroused by the speech "Whether Scripture, whether Spirit" made by G.A. Wislicenus, the *Lichtfreunde* Circle (1844 on its Whit Sunday assembly) asserted that scripture was to be interpreted in light of the Spirit, which is present in each person. Shortly thereafter, these rationalistic ministers were dismissed from their churches.

A liberal Catholic (*deutschkatholische*) root goes back to 1844, when the Silesian Rev. J. Ronge wrote a letter criticizing the mass pilgrimage to the exhibited "Holy Shroud of Christ" in Trier. The letter was directed at the initiating bishop and had an immense impact on the public. In 1847 about sixty to eighty thousand people from the central and south western parts of the country left the church and joined many newly founded Free Religious communities. Ronge was excommunicated by the episcopacy; and, after the failure of the 1848/49 Revolution, he was also persecuted politically. He lived from 1849-61 mostly in England. He edited a periodical and was much sought after as a speaker (e.g. 1876 in Alzey/Rheinhessen). "With the help of this journal he wanted to influence the liberal forces both in the Catholic and in the Protestant Church, hoping for a reconciliation and cooperation of all religious communities with actively tolerating each other." (Dr. H. Todt, UFR, in a letter dated Sept. 1999 to the author.) In Austria and Bavaria the (*deutschkatholische*) movement remained prohibited. While on a journey, Ronge died in Vienna in 1887.

2 F. Lazarraga, *Geschichte des Weltbundes*, 1975, page 255.

3 F. Lazarraga, op.cit, page 139

R. Blum was organizer and co-founder of the *Free Religious* movement (Prayers and Hymn Book, Church Conferences 1845 and 1847). In the Frankfurt National Assembly of 1848 he became leader of the liberal faction and, as such, Vice President of the first democratic parliament in Germany. In October 1848, Blum traveled to Vienna in order to encourage the democrats in their political fight against the government; but he was captured by anti-revolutionary forces, sentenced to death by a military court, and was shot in November 1848. This execution of a leading member of the Frankfurt Parliament was a deliberate break with the democratic movement. The indignation in Germany was considerable. On November 8, 1998, 150 years after his death, many participants remembered Robert Blum in a full-day-commemoration ceremony.

In 1848 there were about 250 *deutschkatholische* and 80 *Lichtfreunde* congregations in Germany. Due to persecutions, particularly in 1849 when the Revolution had failed, adherents of the Reform had emigrated to England and to the USA where, politically, Carl Schurz is a prominent example. Some Free Religious congregations were founded there, e.g. 1846 New York, 1850 St. Louis, 1871 San Francisco, 1873 Washington. Other emigrants joined Unitarian congregations. In July 1859 the two wings of *Deutschkatholiken* and of *Lichtfreunde* amalgamated and founded in Gotha the Federation of German Free Religious Congregations/*Bund Freireligiöser Gemeinden Deutschlands*, (BFGD). Their basic idea was: 'Free self-determination in all religious matters'. Many liberal Jews became members of the Free Religious congregations.

For the *Freireligiöse Landesgemeinde Baden*, abbreviated FLB, 1845 was the founding year for congregations in Heidelberg, Konstanz, Mannheim, Pforzheim, etc. Their structure was democratic, non-hierarchical, and without creed or dogma. Apart from the Ronge/Blum root, there was also a Free Protestant movement known as the *Lichtfreunde*, "Friends of the Light," which attempted a continuation of reform based on the Enlightenment. In 1859 the congregations of both roots merged in Gotha into the *Bund Freireligiöser Gemeinden Deutschlands* (BFGD). Many liberal Jews also belonged to these congregations. However, after democratic efforts in Germany were driven back by the Restoration of 1848, many Free Religious persons emigrated to the United States. Some later joined Unitarian congregations. On the political front, Carl Schurz, was a prominent emigrant of the day.

The FLB president in 1972 H. Schlötermann published an extensive report on the IARF Congress theme in Heidelberg: the Human being - his Freedom - his Future. After 1966 he was moderator of the newly founded IARF Commission II "Religious Encounters with our Modern World." After 1969 Commission members included A. Rieser and after 1972 the subsequent FLB president Dr. E. Pilick. Dr. Pilick completed a part of his education and training for the ministry in the United States. (To a certain degree an educational exchange exists between FLB and UUA students and ministers in the USA.) The FLB is editor of the publication *Wege ohne Dogma*.

Dr. Pilick was honored by another FLB publication in 1997, *Das Paradoxe zog mich an. Festschrift für Eckhart Pilick* (The paradox attracted me). Among the publication's essays was an article by Rev. S. Kalk (Alzey), a retrospective to 1876, the year in which the *Religionsgemeinschaft Freie Protestanten in Alzey (Rhein Hessen)* was founded. Together with me, a member of the DU-RG, and my papers events may be summarized as follows: 1876 the Free Protestant/Unitarian Community is founded. For 78 years the two wings share a common destiny. 1954 marks the year in which the two wings part on good terms into: 1) the Free Protestants, regionally concentrated in Rhein Hessen and 2) the Unitarians, scattered in all the Western Federal German States (*Deutsche Unitarier Religionsgemeinschaft, DU-RG*) which have been cooperating with the IARF for the past 30 years.

Regarding the Free Protestant branch and the term "Unitarianism" coined by Rev. R. Walbaum (1869 - 1948), the "Free Protestants in Rhein Hessen would never wholly identify with it ... The consciousness of a separate and free Protestantism showed itself clearly" In 1996, at the 120th anniversary, they changed their name into *Freie Religionsgemeinschaft Alzey (Humanistische Gemeinde Freier Protestanten)*. Thus, after 85 years since 1911 the term "Unitarian" completely disappeared from the name of this branch.

The Free Protestant movement owes much to the charisma and leadership of one of its founding fathers, B. Matty (1804-83) who, incidentally did not begin ministering to this new community until 1876 at the age 72. Chr. Elssner was elected deputy minister to the congregation in 1877. While it is now the Free Religious Congregation of Alzey that considers B. Matty and C. Elssner to be their "spiritual fathers," many a modern Unitarian may strongly identify with Elssner's

lucid statement concerning the rejection of the personal conception of the God of Christianity. He defined the "Divine" as the eternally fruitful "All-life" inherent in the world.

The *Free Protestantism* ('Freiprotestantismus') is a peculiarity of the Alzey /Worms district (Rheinessen), but its historical lines, to a large extent, are the same as for FLB and FGO. Originating in 1876, B. Matty was the outstanding figure at the beginning of FRA. A member of the Hessian Diet (1849-1855), a Protestant pastor and a convinced democrat, his superiors dismissed him from his ministry. "First of all it is Matty's merit that the Free Protestant Community of Rheinessen so quickly drew large crowds", as Rev. St. Kalk notes in a publication of 1997. Chr. Elssner succeeded the founder and served from 1881 to 1896. In his book on *Religious Education* (1881) he writes: "We are a religious community, because we recognize the need and the duty to strive for an always purer knowledge of the divine and the eternal and, with such an achievement, to harmonize our feeling, thinking and living. We call ourselves free, because we ... realize that religion will remain in need of a steady maturation and perfection."

In August 1910, at the Association's Congress in Berlin, Rudolf Walbaum spoke on the 'Relation between Christians and Free Thinkers' which, he says, is generally tolerant. He admits, however, that his community in Alzey is principally Unitarian. F. Ehrlicher comments (*unitarische blätter*, No. 6, 1989): "With this (confession) he met with friendly approval by the strongly represented Unitarians from Great Britain, the United States and Hungary. It is to assume that a sort of 'spiritual affinity' that was felt among each other, persuaded Walbaum, to adopt the term 'Unitarian' for his own religious thoughts." Another Congress participant in the Berlin Congress, Norbert F. Capek from Prague, went home and founded a Unitarian Community in his country.

After attending the second Congress (1913 in Paris) Walbaum wrote in 1915 the essay 'Was ist der Unitarismus'. These thoughts met with a good response from Clemens Taesler who, 3 years later, minister in the then Free Religious Community Frankfurt/M. (which, since 1948, has called itself Unitarian). In 1927 Taesler (with his Community) and Walbaum (as an individual person) founded the 'Deutscher Unitarierbund' in Frankfurt/M. (DUB). In May 1934 Walbaum founded *Freie Religionsgemeinschaft Deutschlands* where the FRA became a member and, in this way, avoided being banned by the Nazi authorities. The constitution of 1934 allowed interested persons from any province of Germany to join the FRA.

After 1945 Walbaum received support from English Unitarians (e.g., Rev. Magnus Ratter) and American Unitarians (e.g., Director Herbert Hitchen). At 75 years of age, Walbaum revived and strengthened the relations to the diaspora members, disseminated flyers and a new periodical "Glaube und Tat" (Faith and Deed), appointed 'curates' (Gemeindefeiler) and organized new (Free Protestant/Unitarian) congregations, the first in Hanover 1946. Since 1946 the Alzey Community has called itself *Freie Protestanten – Deutsche Unitarier*. At the beginning of 1948 there were twelve (Free Protestant/Unitarian) congregations in Northern Germany.

In 1949, when the Federal Republic and the Länder were founded, Rheinessen belonged no more to Hessen, but to the newly created state Rhineland-Palatinate. In 1953 this state gave to the Free Protestants within its jurisdiction the status under public law that they had received in 1928 (Körperschaft des öffentlichen Rechts). In 1954 the largest portion of the Rhineland-Palatinate Free Protestants left the Free Protestant/Unitarian Community, which was constituted by several congregations all over the country and in all (West-German) Länder. In 1996 the Community changed its name to *Freie Religionsgemeinschaft Alzey (Humanistische Gemeinde Freier Protestanten)*.

To sum up, one can say that the Free Protestants were founded in 1876 and 35 years later were a Free Protestant/Unitarian Community. After 78 years the 'mainly Free Protestant' members left the Community, leaving behind the 'mainly Unitarian' members. These became the Deutsche Unitarier Religionsgemeinschaft (DU-RG), which is scattered in all the (West German) Länder. It is organized under private law (eingetragener Verein), its members raise their own funds through contributions, and elected lay persons serve as Gemeindefeiler. DU-RG has been cooperating with the IARF as its member since 30 years.

The history and philosophical development of the Offenbach Free Religious Congregation (*Frei-Religiöse Gemeinde Offenbach*) abbreviated FGO is similar to that of the FLB (*Freireligiöse Landesgemeinde Baden*). Both are members of the Association of German Free Religious Congregations (*Bund Freireligiöser Gemeinde Deutschlands*). Via this association they are members of the International Humanist and Ethical Union (IHEU).

Central to all free religious thinking is the theme of “a religion by doing” rather than by dogma. In a recent flyer, Rev. H. Manteuffel of the Offenbach congregation describes the current free religious way of thinking by quoting the UUA historian E. M. Wilbur: “This movement’s development is mainly characterized by its steady and growing dedication to the following three ideas: Full spiritual freedom of religion instead of bonds to dogmas. Unrestricted use of reason in religious matters instead of reference to formal authority or tradition. Generous tolerance of various religious views and customs instead of insistence on uniformity in doctrine, tradition and administration.”

In an FGO presentation for the 1993 IARF Bangalore Congress Proceedings it reads: “The spiritual predecessors of our Free Religious movement can be found in the philosophy of the ancient world, in some heretical schools of ‘Christian’ thought, in German mysticism, in the left wing of Reformation, and in the epoch of Idealism and Enlightenment (18th/19th century).”

K. Patton had made an appeal to all the participants in the final ceremony of the IARF Congress at Palo Alto/California in 1987, using a translation of a text written by the Offenbach minister H. Keipp, which included the following:

The Community of free religiosity has reunited us.
The Community be home and a meeting place to all of us.
May we never devalue this Community by superficiality and lack
of interest, by indifference and thoughtlessness.

...

Let us realize that we humans have, in the end, to prove ourselves before us
and before our fellow humans and that we have to justify ourselves.
Let us not remain standing.
Let us go ahead – on to peace!

1845 was the year in which the Offenbach congregation was founded. In 1877 it began to publish the journal, *The Dawning (Die Morgenröthe)*, which today has nearly the same name, *Die Morgenröte*. Its references to the IARF date back to 1929 when it reported on the first international youth contacts (the youth group now known as the IRF), and later on the re-establishment of contacts to British and American Unitarians in 1948. “The last visit of an IARF friend before the war”, Dorle Gehramm said 1999 in Vancouver, “was Rev. Magnus Ratter, Unitarian minister from London, in the summer of 1939. As Max Gehrman recalls, Ratter warned him: ‘There is going to be war.’ After the war, contacts were re-established with British and American Unitarians. In 1958 the FGO became a member in the “International Association for Religious Freedom and Free Christianity,” as the Weltbund was called then. Both Rev. D. Gehrman and Rev. H. Manteuffel completed a part of their theological studies at Unitarian) Divinity Schools in USA.

During his time as the IARF General Secretary from 1972-1990, when the Secretariat was located in Frankfurt, Rev D. Gehrman promoted, among other things, the growth of the IARF by welcoming new members from Japan, South Asia, and other countries. Within Germany he founded, together with the German Unitarian, E. Mohnike, the IARF Welthilfe Deutschland e.V.. IARF Welthilfe was able to procure state development subsidies from the German government for the purpose of social, educational, and development projects particularly in India.

An associate IARF member is the “Jugend und Bildungsstätte Klingberg,” JBK. It was founded in 1979 by the DU-RG as a place for youth encounter and education. At its opening ceremony Rev. A. B. Downing from England delivered the key note address. (6) Several international meetings and conferences have been held at the “Klingberg” center. These include a conference entitled “Developments in Free Religion,” organized by JBK and the Reverend-Gehrman-Foundation in honor of the late Offenbach minister Rev. Max Gehrman on the occasion of the 20th anniversary since his death.

For many years Free Religionists, liberal Christians and Unitarians have been meeting at ‘Haus Mühleck’ in Iggelbach/Pfalz (1978) and the Evangelische Akademie in Bad Boll (1979 through 1998). A conference bringing them all together is planned for the IARF groups in Europe for Oct. 26 – 29, 2000 in Klingberg. The theme is: “How Can Liberal Religion Develop further ‘A Soul for Europe’?”

The third and final source for German religious liberalism to be described in this paper is the German Unitarian movement. For historical reasons this involves describing three distinct communities: 1) the Berlin Unitarian Church (*Unitarische Kirche in Berlin*) - abbreviated UKB – the

latest German congregation within the IARF family; 2) the Unitarian Free Religious Community (*Unitarische Freie Religionsgemeinde*, founded in 1845), Frankfurt/Main - UFR - a member of the IARF since the 1950's; and 3) the German Unitarian Religious Community - DU-RG, an associate member in 1969 and a voting member in 1975.

The Unitarian Church in Berlin was founded in 1845 by Rev. H. Remus (1908-83). He was the descendant of an East Prussian family of Protestant ministers, who could trace their roots back to the Gwiazdowsky family who converted from Catholicism to Unitarianism in 1580. The family was eventually expelled from Poland in 1658 but was able to take refuge with House of Brandenburg Prince in East Prussia.

M. Schröder, who had been deputy principal at a grammar school, was inducted as a minister in 1977. He took part in the IARF Congress in 1990 in Hamburg and was organizer for the Post Congress Tour - three days in Berlin before the group continued its journey to Romania. In 1988 the UKiB joined the 'Association of Churches and Religious Communities in Berlin', where all democratically based religious bodies with common interests in their public relations are cooperating (for example, Rev. Schröder speaks for his Unitarian Church in the Sunday series 'The Word for the Day' on Deutschland Radio Berlin). Rev. Schröder took part in the IARF Congress in 1990 in Hamburg and helped with the Post Congress Tour for three days in Berlin, before the group continued its journey to Romania.

As guest speakers before the congregation, the UKB has invited Bishop L. Kocacs from Budapest in 1988 and Rev. J. L. Gould in 1998 (formerly from Liverpool, and since 1999 inducted in Hale, Styal & Dean Row; cf. *The Inquirer*, April 1999)⁴. The UKB holds regular services that center around common prayer and encourage spiritual strength. It celebrates the movable and immovable Christian feasts throughout the year and sees in them a meaning transcendent of the orthodox Christian interpretation.

The "creeds" and "commandments" of the UKB center around the belief in the individual's capacity to tap into an underlying energy that encourages harmonious practice with the world, with ones neighbors and with oneself. Some members of the UKB consider a chain of earthly lives as the only way to fulfill the high task of being human. A task that they consider to be the ultimate purpose of all major religions is to be as accomplished as the Father in Heaven. M. Schröder said in a telephone call with me: "We are the Conservatives among the Unitarians in Germany."

But how has the word "Unitarian" come to describe a variety of congregations in Germany today? As described earlier, in the case of the Berlin Church, the term was passed on from generation to generation in an extraordinary unbroken line for nearly 400 years. This took them back to the days of Fausto Sozzini in the Southern Polish area Rakau and Krakau.

In contrast to this straight-forward etymology for the UKB, we can only indirectly trace the term for the remaining two Unitarian communities: the German Unitarian Religious Community, and the Unitarian Free Religious Community. Common to both of these communities was the thinking and influence of R. Walbaum (1869-1948). However, there is still much research to be done on how the terms "socialism" and "Unitarianism" emerged and influenced religious history in the German speaking territories (including Holland) for approximately 300 years.

The formation of the *Unitarische Freie Religionsgemeinde Frankfurt am Main* (about 1845) – abbreviated UFR – is part of the emergence of the Free Religious movement in Germany. The Community "was founded as a 'deutschkatholische' congregation. After the merger between the deutschkatholische and the Protestant *Lichtfreunde* in 1859, it used the name "Free (and) Religious" and then "Free-religious" congregation. Since 1948, it has been calling itself *Unitarische Freie Religionsgemeinde*. (H. Todt's letter to the author, dated Sep. 4, 1999). In a letter to the author Rev. M. Tögel wrote (Sep. 11, 1999): "The 1847 elected minister, F. W. Flos, fostered contacts with American Unitarians, and he translated and publicized sermons of the Unitarian preacher Frothingham from New York". In 1859 the Community was given the status under public law (by the City of Frankfurt) and, also that year, it was a co-founder of the BFGD.

⁴ The IARF General Secretary R. Traer and Rev. Dr. M. Tögel from the UFR in Frankfurt sent a message of congratulations to the fiftieth anniversary of the UKB in 1998.

In 1910 Walbaum attended the IARF Congress in Berlin. According to Dr. H. Todt⁵ Walbaum spoke of and encouraged “the sympathetic relationship which should exist between the Christian and the Free Thinkers.” In this context he used the word “Unitarian,” as a way of characterizing the religious beliefs of *his* community, the Free Protestants of Alzey. As its origins in 16th century Transylvania specify, he used the word as a counter statement to Trinitarian. In his Congress speech Walbaum stressed that he and his congregation firmly rejected all antiquated dogmas, “namely the dogma of the divinity of Christ and the Trinity of God. We are basically Unitarian...”⁶

Walbaum’s essay *Was ist Unitarismus* was published in 1915 and was read attentively by the then 28 year old Clemens Taesler. It induced the latter to present, also in 1915, in the weekly *Der Freireligiöse* two basic schools of thought in the Free Religious movement: “... an atheistic one which excludes completely the word and the notion of ‘God’ from its religious experience, and an agnostic one which considers all that as being unrecognizable what some pretend to represent an absolute, an external ground for existence of the world.” With these schools he compares, as a sort of alternative, a third thought, namely the religious Unitarianism as supported by Walbaum.⁷

Walbaum may have intended other nuances of meaning for the term “Unitarian.” This would require further research and clarification, which is beyond the scope of this paper. Suffice it to say that 1910 heralded Walbaum first attendance at an IARF Congress, 1913 in Paris was his second and 1922 in Leiden was his third and, as far as we know, his last. Whether or not he took the word “Unitarian” from an oral or a written source or whether it dated back to his theological studies in the 1890’s remains an unknown mystery. What is certain is that in 1911 Walbaum gave his periodical *Der Freiprotestant* (The Free Protestant) the subtitle *Deutsch-unitarische Blätter*, (the German Unitarian Leaflet); such was the influence of the 1910 Congress. To this day the German Unitarian Leaflet is the name given to the periodical of the DU-RG. In general, the IARF Congress Berlin was a key event in initiating the history of German Unitarian identity for the next 90 years.

In 1926 the Free Protestants of Alzey (*Freie Protestanten (Alzey)*) celebrated their 50th anniversary. Walbaum, the fourth minister of the congregation and in service since 1909, saw in the anniversary celebrations an opportunity to reach out to like-minded communities in the region. He also sought a wider foundation and consolidation of the Unitarian religion.

Clemens Taesler (1887-1969), was at that time (and indeed from 1918 - 62) a minister for the Free Religious Community in Frankfurt (founded 1845) (*Freireligiöse Gemeinde Frankfurt, Main*). Taesler had already in 1915 discerned in his weekly *Der Freireligiöse* two lines of thought in the Free Religious movement: “... an atheistic line which excludes completely the word and the concept ‘God’ from its religious experience; and an agnostic one which considers that which is the reason for all existence to be unknowable.” In addition to these two lines he encountered in Walbaum a third: religious Unitarianism.

When Taesler heard of Walbaum’s Unitarian initiative in 1926, he agreed with the aim of a wider foundation and consolidation of the Unitarian religion and subsequently renamed his periodical so that Unitarian thought could be included. Dr. H. Todt writes: “We must be grateful, above all, to the 18 years younger Clemens Taesler, vigorous and gifted in spiritual and organizational matters, that the Deutsche Unitarierbund (DUB), based in Frankfurt (Main), was founded in June 1927.”⁸

Walbaum worked tirelessly up to an advanced age as the spiritual head of the Alzey Community, which since 1947 called itself the *Freie Protestanten-Deutsche Unitarier*. He died shortly afterwards on April 6th, 1948. In 1948 Rev. C. Taesler renames the Frankfurt Community into the *Unitarische Freie Religionsgemeinde Frankfurt am Main* (founded 1845); and in March 1950 the Alzey community elects to undergo a further renaming and becomes the *Deutsche Unitarier Religionsgemeinschaft*, founded 1876.

In 1948 C. Taesler describes the essence of being Unitarians follows: “A Unitarian reflects on the reverence for God as the content of religion, in other words: as the fundamental attitude; God is regarded as a power: eternally - one, uniting nature and mind/spirit (*Geist*) ... A Unitarian believes in God’s light in the human’s soul. She/he professes her/his faith in a concealed eternal aim and object of all existence...”⁹ Though

⁵ *Unitarisches Mitteilungsblatt of the UFR*, Frankfurt, Feb./March 1970, page 4.

⁶ Loc cit: “Funfter Weltkongress für freies Christentum und religiösen Fortschritt, Berlin, 1910. Protokoll der Verhandlungen”. Editor D. Max Fischer und D. F. M. Schiele, Berlin 1910 (*Book of Annotations 1*, page 612).

⁷ Sigurd Taesler, Ehrfurcht. *Humanität. Toleranz*, Frankfurt 1982, page 137.

⁸ *Unitarisches Mitteilungsblatt of the UFR*, Frankfurt, Feb./March 1970, page 4.

⁹ Dr. H. Todt, editor: *125-Jahr-Feier der Unitarischen Freien Religionsgemeinde (U7FR)*, Frankfurt, page 45.

it appears that Taesler never attended an IARF Congress, and that the spiritual leaders of the DU-RG and UFR (Frankfurt) are unlikely to have met often, it should nevertheless be seen clearly that these men were kindred spirits.

In order to describe the development of the DU-RG, it is necessary, first of all, to conceive it as the result of a series of bigger increases within the Free Protestant membership. The minister's office and the administration of the group *Freiprotestantische Religionsgemeinschaft Alzey* (FRA) are based in Alzey. It was founded 1876, registered (under private status) since 1902 and (under the status of public law) from 1928 to 1945. The new members want to identify themselves with the 'absorbing' community as much they can, with its way to see oneself, with its organization and its history, because they consider themselves as joining an existing group and 'being admitted' by its previous members. Hence, for *all* members as subjects of a common identity, 1876 is the founding year for their community.

The first 2 ½ years of the FRA period of increase (until Walbaum died in April 1948) are 'shaped' by the aura of the sprightly man in his mid. F. Ehrlicher sees him as "a founder father of the German Unitarians"; F. Bednarski-Stelling writes in *unitarische blätter* (No. 4, 1986, p. 157): "The feeling of an inner kinship with the Free Protestant thoughts made the efforts of coming together so successful that, in 1946, Hanover was the first congregation, followed by Peine, Siegen, Detmold, Hameln, Hamburg (1947), Kiel, and Lübeck." H. Kramer comments (loc cit: p. 154): "In the prison camps after WW II the Churches tried to get humanitarian relief for their Church members. Many who did not belong to any Church, at that time joined it. Others who did not feel obliged to the Christian tradition, received help from Rudolf Walbaum who did so much also for those who were no Church members. By that the member figures of the Free Protestants increased considerably."

In July 1982, the DU-RG President H. PREM was invited by IARF to participate in a commemoration at the concentration camp of Dachau, where Norbert Fabian Capek, the founder of the Czech Unitarians, had died 40 years earlier. After affirming the injustice committed in the German name against so very many people, Prem also spoke about the dignity inherent in the human person and about the rights belonging to human beings. "If public institutions or single persons disregard human rights, they do not only violate the worth and dignity of those individuals, but they intrude definitely upon these persons' civil rights and liberties. ... Just because the education towards freedom shows us the limits of any freedom, we realize our responsibility as individual humans to contribute to shaping a future in peace." (*unitarische blätter* No. 5, 1989, p. 215 ff.)

Previous presidents of the DU-RG (Hamburg) were F. Ehrlicher (1971), H. PREM (1977) and Mrs. G. Hartmann (1991). The current president is E. Moller, Hamburg (1999). It was under the leadership of Mrs. E. Lazarraga (1967), responsible for international relations, that DU-RG entered into membership with the IARF. For the 75th IARF anniversary in Montreal she made her book a gift to the Association: "Wiedergeburt schöpferischer Religion im Weltbund für religiöse Freiheit. I. Geschichte des Weltbundes". Other leaders of the DU-RG international relations office were G. Kramer (1979), Mrs. F. Schmidt (1987) and W. Jantz (1991). The aforementioned Education Centre Klingberg/Baltic Sea and the Unitarian Social Service Network were chaired by Mrs. G. Mohnike, Mrs. E. Brandes (1991) and B. Mohnike (1991).

As far as organizational and spiritual support to the IARF Congress preparations is concerned, each of the three roots of religious liberty in Germany has been host to a Congress: the Liberal Christians 1910 in Berlin the Free Religious 1972 in Heidelberg the Unitarians 1990 in Hamburg.

In conclusion a final thought towards the future. Is there something that the author would like to suggest to the one or the other reader? Yes, definitely! The key word here is: cooperation. Cooperation among the individual communities on a national level (including Switzerland) should be improved! This is also the ambitious wish of Mrs. Peronne Boddaert, Amsterdam, in her vision and ministry as the IARF European Coordinator.

We have seen that the "IARF family" in Germany is varied, yet here really richness and chance can be found. Whether the International Association for Religious Freedom will continue to speak up for more liberal-mindedness in religion in Germany, will depend to a large extent on the participants in the single Associations or Communities, on the imaginativeness and cooperation on a

national, European and international scale. For religion is evolutionary, is continuously unfolding. From its real core, religion is based on the principle of liberty.

Abbreviations in the text:

BFC	Bund für Freies Christentum, Blaubeuren
BFGD	Bund Freireligiöser Gemeinden Deutschlands
DU-RG	Deutsche Unitarier Religionsgemeinschaft, Hamburg
FGO	Frei-Religiöse Gemeinde Offenbach, Offenbach (Main)
FLB	Freireligiöse Landesgemeinde Baden, Mannheim
IARF	International Association for Religious Freedom, Oxford / GB
IRF	International Religious Fellowship (Youth-group of the IARF)
JBK	Jugend- und Bildungsstätte Klingberg, Scharbeutz / Ostsee
SVFC	Schweizerischer Verein für Freies Christentum, Meikirch / CH
UFR	Unitarische Freie Religionsgemeinde, Frankfurt (Main)
UKB	Unitarische Kirche in Berlin, Berlin
UUA	Unitarian Universalist Association, Boston / USA
Weltbund	Weltbund für religiöse Freiheit (IARF)

Manfred J. Paul holds a degree in Commerce from Hamburg University (1961) and a Masters of Business Administration (MBA) from INSEAD, Fontainebleau, France (1962). He worked for 32 years in the fields of Accounting, Management Consultancy and Internal Control, in the coal mining and energy sector. His work included travel to North America and East Africa. He has served and continues to serve as a lay leader within the German Unitarian Community '*Deutsche Unitarier Religionsgemeinschaft*' in various functions, and is a member of the Liberal Party's National Commission on Religious Matters. He has been an IARF Council Member since 1996. He has attended seven IARF Congresses.

German Liberal Christian Participation in the IARF

Rev. Dr. Andreas Rössler

The Bund für Freies Christentum, which was founded in 1948, has been an IARF Member Group since 1949. The members of the Bund für Freies Christentum belong to the Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland (EKD), the established Protestant church in Germany, or to the "Tempelgesellschaft", a liberal free church. Its involvement within IARF is mainly in promoting theological concerns and inter-religious dialogue on a personal and constant level.

The Bund für Freies Christentum (Association for Free Christianity) unites Protestant Christians of a liberal religious attitude. Most of them are members of the established Protestant Church in Germany (Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland, EKD). Since 1983 a liberal Free Church, the "Tempelgesellschaft e.V.", has been a corporate member of the Bund für Freies Christentum.

The "Deutscher Bund für Freies Christentum" was founded in 1948 in Frankfurt am Main, as a nation wide union of local and regional liberal Protestant groups. It has been a member group of IARF since 1949.

The connection of German liberal Protestant Christians with IARF goes back much further. In August 1910 a World Congress of IARF ("Fünfter Weltkongress für Freies Christentum und religiösen Fortschritt") took place in Berlin, the capital city of Germany, and there the elite of academic German Protestant theology participated. Amongst the speakers of the congress were Adolf von Harnack, Hermann Gunkel, Georg Wobbermin, Otto Baumgarten, Wilhelm Bousset and Ernst Troeltsch.

After the Second World War the organised liberal groups within German Protestantism were small. Karl Barth, a definite anti-liberal, theologically influenced the leadership of the "Bekennende Kirche" (Confessional Church), which resisted Nazi ideology and politics between 1933 and 1945. These Barthian church leaders and theologians took over Church government and academic theology after 1945, although liberal-minded theologians such as Paul Tillich (who emigrated to the USA in 1933), Friedrich Heiler and Kurt Leese also resisted Nazism. A second reason for the smallness of

organised liberal Protestantism in Germany is the fact that many or most of the liberal principles were adopted by the established church as well as conservative, evangelical, pietistic and confessionalist positions.

In 1999 the Bund für Freies Christentum has 160 individual members. The corporately associated "Tempelgesellschaft" has about 700 members in Germany. The magazine "Freies Christentum: Auf der Suche nach neuen Wegen" (now published six times a year) has about 330 subscribers.

In 1998 the Bund für Freies Christentum published a book with articles which have been published in its magazine "Freies Christentum" during the last 50 years: Hans-Hinrich-Jenssen (editor): *Offenes Christentum. Ein Lesebuch*, Shaker Verlag, Aachen.

In spite of its small membership, the Bund für Freies Christentum is an active and engaged member of IARF. At the IARF congresses it has been represented by speakers (Peter Gerlitz, Jutta Reich and others), by commission leaders (Andreas Rössler and others) and by active participation in the International Association of Liberal Religious Women (Renate Albrecht, Jutta Reich). Several times, the Bund für Freies Christentum has been represented on the IARF Council (Renate Albrecht, Andreas Rössler, Jutta Reich, Peter Gerlitz).

The Bund für Freies Christentum is mainly engaged in theological questions. Political responsibility and social work takes place within the Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland (EKD), and in this context liberal Protestants are active in social and political matters.

Within IARF, the Bund für Freies Christentum puts an emphasis on theological considerations and inter-religious dialogue. The purpose of this dialogue is encounter, mutual understanding and a basic agreement in questions of justice, human rights, freedom, social welfare and tolerance. Another purpose is deeper religious insight. Liberal Protestants are convinced of the finality of God's revelation in Jesus Christ, but they interpret this revelation in an inclusive, not exclusive, way. They are convinced of a universal and ongoing revelation of God, that definite truth is to be found not only in the Judaeo-Christian tradition, but also in other religious traditions, in philosophy and in wisdom. For the Bund für Freies Christentum, IARF is a place where this inter-religious encounter goes on, and its special offering is personal and ongoing dialogue and friendship.

In the context of the German IARF member groups, the Bund für Freies Christentum engaged in inter-religious encounter with free religious believers and the German Unitarians. Especially during the IARF leadership of General Secretary Diether Gehrmann, this dialogue went on intensively. The "Iggelbacher Religionsgespräch" which took place in March 1978 has proved an outstanding opportunity for a formulation of basic agreement and disagreement between liberal Christians, free religious believers and German Unitarians. The regional IARF conferences in the Evangelische Akademie Bad Boll which have been held since 1975 are also a place of serious inter-religious dialogue between adherents of different religious traditions.

In the "Hanauer Sätze" of November 1968, one of the basic position statements of the Bund für Freies Christentum on inter-religious dialogue is treated in article 13: "We intend a new relation to non-Christian religions. To dismiss them as sheer illusion or error is arrogant and contradicts the spirit of Jesus. We do not want to promote the position of 'anything goes'. But Christians can communicate some meaning and orientation to others, and they can also learn from them."

According to the leaflet of the Bund für Freies Christentum from 1997, a liberal Christian freedom has to be understood in four regards: (1) freedom from doctrinal fixations;

(2) freedom to accept biblical tradition on the line of the spirit; (3) freedom of conscience, religious liberty; and (4) "freedom to encounter people of other faiths in the desire of learning and without anxiety; with the purpose to get familiar with each other and to understand each other; in the mutual attitude of openness to the unconditional ground of truth".

Dr. Andreas Rössler, Stuttgart/Germany, born 1940. Lutheran pastor, full time chief editor of the weekly church newspaper for the Evangelische Landeskirche in Württemberg since 1992. Council member in the Bund für Freies Christentum since 1970. General secretary of the Bund für Freies Christentum 1987-1990. IARF Council member 1984-1987. Author of several books (latest: "Welche Wahrheit braucht der Mensch? Zwischen Beliebigkeit und Unfehlbarkeit", Stuttgart 1997).

Involvement of the French Association Libérale 'Evangile et Liberté'

Robert Serre

The Association Libérale was founded in 1949, with Albert Schweitzer as Honorary President, to pursue issues of importance to liberal Protestants in France. The Association has been active in the IARF during the latter part of the 20th century. It was instrumental in forming at an IARF European conference held at Bad Boll, Germany in 1998 the European Liberal Protestant Network.

A brief history

The Reformation in the 16th century, asserted that the Bible and the Holy Spirit have greater authority than tradition and ecclesiastical structures. Human salvation by faith alone has replaced the Catholic concept of salvation by works. From the early years of that century, the wars of religion led to the persecution of French Protestants, many of whom went into exile. From his refuge in The Netherlands, Pierre Bayle promoted religious toleration in the Kingdom of France, and thus become the precursor of the idea of tolerance.

In the 19th century rationalism influenced French Protestantism. Samuel Vincent, as pastor at Nimes, recommended the personal study of the scriptures, and he thus became the pioneer of liberal Protestantism. In fact, it was the Synod of the Reformed Church in 1872 that indirectly required liberal Protestants to regroup and organize themselves. They could not accept the declaration of faith proposed by the Synod, and disputed the requirement that future pastors should sign this declaration. They therefore distanced themselves from orthodox Protestantism in order to safeguard the principles of freedom of conscience.

Thus, in 1885, liberal pastors created an association, which became the Association Fraternelle des Pasteurs Libéraux de France, which in turn evolved into the Association Libérale. In 1905, just before the separation of Church and State, they drew up a Declaration of Principles by which they claimed “for each member of the Church the Right and Duty to decide for himself, from Holy Scripture, and from spiritual experience, his own faith and his beliefs”. And they confirmed their wish to “maintain the true protestant watchwords: Gospel and Liberty”.

It is in this spirit that, in 1913, the monthly journal *Evangile et Liberté* was launched, after merging with *Le Protestant*, a journal with liberal leanings, and with *La Vie Nouvelle*, with Social Gospel leanings. In the same way, the Association Libérale, the French branch of IARF, was created in 1949 with Albert Schweitzer as Honorary President. Since then, the Association Libérale “Evangile et Liberté” has organized Annual Days of Liberal Protestantism, conferences, and radio broadcasts.

What is the Association Libérale “Evangile et Liberté”?

The description of the Association that appears regularly in *Gospel and Liberty* outlines clearly its tenets: “In concern for the truth, in faithfulness to evangelicalism, and in rejection of all authoritarian systems, we affirm:

- The primacy of faith over doctrines.
- The inherent human need for liberty.
- The continual need to rethink and reform
- The relative importance of church institutions.
- Our desire to create a sense of kinship of human beings who are all, without distinction, children of God”.

In summary, the Association Libérale “Evangile et Liberté” is focused on: liberty of conscience within one’s faith, reasoned responsibility in one’s beliefs and commitments, tolerance, religious pluralism—always with the Gospel as the basis for personal reference. Such liberal thinking, in fact, brings it up to date with that of the School of Paris, with Auguste Sabatier and Eugene Ménégoz, who claimed for humanity “salvation by faith independently of beliefs but not without beliefs”. This concept was developed through the principles of Charles Wagner and the Social Gospel of Wilfred Monod up to the theological renewal initiated by Albert Schweitzer, Rudolph Bultmann, and Paul Tillich.

It is thus clear that the Association Libérale's previous active membership of IARF was completely justified, particularly if one takes into account the fact that, at the time, IARF was called "The International Congress of Free Christians and Other Religious Liberals", then "The International Association for Liberal Christianity and Religious Freedom", each with, essentially, ethical and theological objectives and an open approach to other religions.

Currently, two key points underscore this justification: defense of religious freedom and ecumenical activity as core IARF principles, and the existence of a European Liberal Protestant Network within IARF.

IARF activities of most importance to the Association Libérale

Defense of religious freedom - Today, in many countries, people are oppressed, tortured, and executed. The reason for such acts is nearly always discrimination, whether social, ethnic, linguistic, or religious: all the ideologies—racism, nationalism, fundamentalism—that often violate human rights, oppress minorities, and even whole populations. In many cases it is the brutal affirmation of absolutist religious truth or intransigence in the strict observance of ritual and religious prohibitions that are the pretext for this oppression.

Peace is achievable only through understanding and tolerance in the sense defined in 1995 by UNESCO: "Tolerance is the respect, acceptance, and appreciation of the richness and diversity of cultures in our world, in our modes of expression, and our ways of expressing our worth as human beings. It is encouraged by knowledge, open-mindedness, communication, and freedom of thought, of conscience, and of belief". This definition therefore excludes all oppressive religious extremism, but also all proselytism that does not respect freedom of the individual, and all restrictive missionary activities.

Defense of religious freedom and tolerance constitutes a key IARF principle. With its congresses and regional conferences, IARF allows each participant representing a religious association to liaise with most religions and world cultures, to be informed about conflicts that exist in the world due to rivalries and religious misunderstanding. After meetings concerning the exchange of information and viewpoints, each participant can then help his or her national association to understand situations of conflict and to devise programs of information and action in the context of tolerance and of freedom of religion and belief. This becomes a positive contribution—however modest—to the peace of the world.

It is clear that the Association Libérale can support UNESCO's 1995 statement about tolerance only by ensuring that tolerance does not imply laissez-faire. Tolerance is respect, but also an affirmation of authenticity. It demands freedom of expression of identity and religious belief. Nevertheless, the Association Libérale is aware of the potential offered by IARF for a meeting of minds between religions, and learning how religion is practiced in different countries. Clearly, IARF international meetings are more wide-ranging and meaningful than are national meetings.

Political action at international and national level - As tolerance and religious freedom are dependent on national legislation and therefore on state authority, the role of IARF as an NGO working alongside international organizations—UN, UNESCO, the Council of Europe—is very important for the defense of religious liberties and religious minorities, and for the search for peaceful solutions to conflict. In this kind of activity IARF has a comparative advantage because it unites different religious associations worldwide.

Inter-religious dialogue - IARF congresses and conferences are occasions for encountering different religions. But they ought to be—perhaps more than at present—places where knowledge and understanding of the spiritual teaching of these religions can take place, and where their original texts can be studied. Also, instead of focusing on anti-dogmatic humanism supported by all participants, there is a need in these meetings to explore in depth the differences and similarities between religions, without any proselytizing. In these days of globalization, knowledge and understanding of others and their identity are particularly necessary, and a source of mutual enrichment for each religious tradition.

Inauguration of the European Liberal Protestant Network

It was at the IARF Regional Conference in Bad-Boll, Germany, in 1998 that this European Network was constituted by founding members who came from France, Germany, Ireland, The Netherlands, Romania, Switzerland, and the UK. It effectively brought together most of the liberal

trends of European Protestantism. The network's constitution specifies that "it is open to churches, groups and individuals who are committed to the Christian tradition in a self-critical and responsible way", and that "it is a place in which to search for truth and to share beliefs in a climate of freedom and tolerance". The Network aims to facilitate exchanges of viewpoints and the holding of meetings between different trends of liberal Protestantism to improve the understanding of each one. Conferences and publications that address these theological and ethical themes will seek ways of defining a liberal Christian position on current concerns in the news and on world events.

Conclusion

It is interesting to note that the birth of this Network in effect recalls, but also brings up to date, the ideas that led to the creation of IARF (even though these related to a limited sphere of Protestantism). Strengthening the theologies and ethics of different religions, referring to their original texts or writings of their founders, and expressing the way of life that emerges from their beliefs seem to be indispensable elements in genuine inter-religious dialogue, and in the defense of religious freedoms that have to be accorded to all people.

It is, it seems, in this sense that IARF should assert its distinct character with regard to other religious or humanitarian organizations, to participate in activities that may bring about peace in those parts of the world where religious intolerance is the source of oppression and conflicts.

Robert Serre earned an Electrical Engineer Diploma in 1956 from the Ecole Nationale Supérieure d'Electricité de Nancy. His work as an electrical engineer until his retirement in 1992 has taken him to Japan, Taiwan, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Singapore, North and South America, the Middle East, Africa and to many countries in Europe. He attended IARF Congresses in 1996 and 1999.

Irish Involvement in the International Association for Religious Freedom

David Steers

Irish involvement with the IARF has mostly been centred on the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland (NSPCI), a liberal church which originated in the 17th century and which has been a pioneer in ecumenical ventures and schemes to promote reconciliation in Northern Ireland. Non-subscribing Presbyterians have been active within the IARF from its foundation in 1900. The international Congress has been held in Ireland once. This was the 15th Congress held in 1955 when the venue was Belfast, many of the events being hosted by All Soul's Church. The theme of the Congress was "Liberal Religion in an Age of Anxiety". In the 1970's and 1980's the IARF was introduced to various projects in Northern Ireland involving cross-community work and integrated education (ie. education for Catholic and Protestant Children together) through the NSPCI representatives Rev Bill and Sheila McMillan. An Irish Chapter was founded in 1996 which draws membership from both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Inaugural meetings, addressed by Dr Robert Traer, were held in Belfast (at Lagan College, the first integrated secondary school in Northern Ireland) and Dublin (at the Irish School of Ecumenics) in February 1997.

The foundation of the 'International Council of Unitarian and Other Liberal Religious Thinkers and Workers' in 1900 was welcomed in Ireland by the Association's only Irish member group - the churches that today make up the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland. The NSPCI is a relatively small but historically important liberal Christian Church that has been consistently involved with the IARF from its foundation to the present day. In a country where churches have often been characterised by a somewhat insular attitude the NSPCI has always valued its international contacts. Strengthened by its participation in the IARF the NSPCI has many close links of its own with various liberal groups around the world. These include ties, stretching over the last 150 years, with

churches in Canada and the United States as well as deepening links, forged in the twentieth century, with Unitarians in Romania and Hungary, liberal Christians in Switzerland and Remonstrants in the Netherlands.

The NSPCI has always striven to be an ecumenical church and has been keenly involved in schemes for the promotion of reconciliation and understanding in Northern Ireland, especially since the onset of 'The Troubles' in the late 1960s. It is perhaps important to point out that although formally founded only as recently as 1910 the constituent elements of the denomination all have their roots in the 17th century when Presbyterianism was established in Ireland. In 1725, following the first subscription controversy within the Presbyterian Church, those who refused, on principle, to subscribe to the Westminster Confession of Faith were separated from the bulk of the Presbyterians in Ireland and placed in their own Presbytery of Antrim. One hundred years later yet more liberal Presbyterians were expelled from the larger body when, under the leadership of the Rev Henry Montgomery, the Remonstrant Synod of Ulster was formed. The Remonstrant Synod, the Presbytery of Antrim together with the historic Synod of Munster, representing churches in the South of Ireland, form the NSPCI. The Church has always been characterised by a stress on reason and tolerance of those who differ in opinion.

Unusually for an Irish Church the NSPCI has also had a long-standing openness to interfaith co-operation. As early as 1830 Henry Montgomery, the leader of the Non-Subscribers in the North of Ireland, could declare: "I do not believe with the Calvinist in "the utter damnation of the heathen world." The justice, the mercy, and the Word of God rise up against this awful doctrine. Equity demands that they should be judged according to their knowledge and opportunities, and by that "natural law, which God hath given them." Neither do I believe that salvation will be confined to the members of any Christian Church, or the professors of any particular creed. I firmly believe that many of all creeds and all churches "shall be brought to see the salvation of the Lord."1

At a time when many Christians were more than content to proclaim the damnation of many other branches of Christianity, let alone of non-Christians, this was a remarkably enlightened attitude. Early 19th century Non-Subscribers were also keenly interested in the life and career of Rammohum Roy, the pioneering Indian religious reformer. His death in 1833 was mourned by the Rev Dr William Hamilton Drummond of Strand Street, Dublin in a published sermon which revealed that at the time of his death Roy was planning to visit Ireland.2 Later in the 19th century Non-Subscribers promoted what could be termed the first example of interfaith worship in Ireland. On 22nd July 1883 Baboo Protap Chunder Mozoomdar preached in the meeting house of the Second Congregation, Belfast (now All Souls' Church) on the subject of "Prayer", "The preliminary portion of the service was conducted according to the ritual of the Brahmo Somaj, and passages from the works of the Hindu writers, and from the Bible, were read.3

It is not surprising then that when the IARF was launched in 1900 Non-Subscribing Presbyterians were involved from the start. The first meetings held in London in 1901 were attended by the Rev William Napier, minister at Clough in County Down, as the official representative of the Association of Irish Non-Subscribing Presbyterians. The Rev James Kennedy of Larne also attended and others may have made the journey from Ireland.4 The Association of Irish Non-Subscribing Presbyterians was a loose organisation that co-ordinated the various Non-Subscribing bodies before the foundation of the NSPCI in 1910. Unfortunately because of a shortage of documentary evidence it is not always easy to identify which persons from Ireland travelled to be at the various Congresses in the earlier years of the IARF.

1 Henry Montgomery, 'The Creed of an Arian', 1830, printed as Appendix F in John A. Crozier, *The Life of the Rev Henry Montgomery*, L.L.D., London 1875, p 564.

2 William Hamilton Drummond, *A Learned Indian in Search of Religion: A Discourse occasioned by the death of the Rajah, Ram Mohun Roy: delivered in the Presbyterian Church of Strand-Street, Dublin, on Sunday, October 27th, 1833*

3 S. Shannon Millin, *History of the Second Congregation of Protestant Dissenters in Belfast*, Belfast, 1900, p110.

4 Minutes of the General Purposes Committee of the Association of Irish Non-Subscribing Presbyterians, 16 April 1901, 21 May 1901 (I am grateful to the Rev Dr John Nelson for providing me with access to the minutes of the Association).

Yet, we know that Non-Subscribers were present at all the earliest meetings. At the Third Congress held in Geneva in 1905, for instance, we know that the Association of Irish Non-Subscribing Presbyterians was formally represented by the Rev Richard Lyttle the minister of the congregation at Moneyreagh. He was accompanied by a member of his congregation, A.K. Stewart. However, we only know that Lyttle was there because of his unfortunate death at Bristol on the way home.⁵ At the 1907 Congress in Boston, however, two NSPCI ministers were present - Rev J.A. Kelly and Rev Thomas Dunkerley.⁶ At this time the President of the Association of Irish Non-Subscribing Presbyterians was the Rev William Hamilton Drummond, the grandson of the Dublin minister of the same name who had been a correspondent of Rammohun Roy. The younger Drummond was the minister of All Souls' Church, Belfast (the same congregation of which his grandfather had been minister before his removal to Dublin one hundred years previously) from 1900 to 1909 when he moved to London. After the First World War he had been one of the first Western Europeans to make contact with the Unitarian churches in Transylvania and in 1920 himself became the general secretary of the International Congress of Free Christians and Other Religious Liberals as the IARF was then styled.

However, the connection between the IARF and the NSPCI seems to have remained on a fairly informal basis up until the time of the Second World War. Soon after the war moves were made to put the relationship on a sounder footing. At the 1952 Congress in Oxford the denomination was represented by the Rt Rev J. Arnold Williams (Moderator) and the Rev John Radcliffe (Clerk to the General Synod) and the NSPCI became formally represented on the Council of the IARF.⁷

The culmination of this process of formal recognition was undoubtedly the highly successful fifteenth international Congress held in Belfast in 1955. In an era of post-war austerity the organisation of a major international conference was no small feat for a relatively small denomination of no more than 30 thirty churches. But judging by the contemporary reports the Congress was a great success and keenly enjoyed by all the participants. Percival F. Brundage, the outgoing President, remarked that: "The Fifteenth Congress of the I.A.R.F. was a memorable one. The programme was well balanced, the subjects well chosen and the speakers excellent. The discussion leaders were skilful in developing the essential points. Our hosts were most hospitable and all of the details were so well arranged that the Belfast Congress will go down in history as one of the most enjoyable, interesting and productive conferences we have ever held".⁸

The theme of the Congress was "Liberal Religion in an Age of Anxiety" and some 370 delegates attended, mostly from Europe and the United States. The main venue was All Souls' Church, Belfast where an attractive delft plate still hangs in the vestry in commemoration of the event.

Blessed by good weather the contemporary reports speak of a lively and congenial gathering. The Congress Service was held at Belfast's First Presbyterian Church and conducted by the Rev Dr John McLachlan. The preacher was the Rev Dr E.L. Allen of the University of Durham. Other special services were held outside Belfast at the historic Non-Subscribing Presbyterian meeting houses of Larne, Downpatrick, Dunmurry, Dromore and Comber. Dr Allen also gave the keynote address at the opening of the Congress which dealt with the threat posed to human personality and individual thought by the increasing complexity and mechanisation of society. Professor Georg Wunsch of Marburg delivered an address on "the economic and political causes of modern man's sense of insecurity", and Professor S.W. Tromp, a Dutch geologist and member of UNESCO, gave a paper on the Western world's responsibility towards the Third World. Two discussion groups on "Religious Education" and "The Church, the Family and the Home" featured as part of the Congress.

The Congress obtained much favourable publicity in the local media. The main Belfast newspaper *The Belfast Telegraph* reported that "It is good to have clear and enlightened views, but it is still better to show that such beliefs possess a moral dynamic, and can make men lead strong,

⁵ Minutes of the General Purposes Committee of the Association of Irish Non-Subscribing Presbyterians, 17 October 1905, 16 January 1906, printed minutes June 1906. W. McMillan, *History of Moneyreagh Congregation*, Belfast 1969, p 60.

⁶ Minutes of the General Purposes Committee of the Association of Irish Non-Subscribing Presbyterians, 17 October 1907, printed minutes June 1908.

⁷ *The Non-Subscribing Presbyterian*, October 1952, 551, p 113.

⁸ *The Non-Subscribing Presbyterian*, September 1955, 586, p 100.

courageous, and helpful lives" 9, and the BBC broadcast a report on the Congress made by the Rev John McCleery, minister at Dunmurry. Among those who attended parts of the Congress were the Right Hon. Brian Maginess, Deputy Prime Minister of Northern Ireland, Edward Anderson the American Consul-General, and the Very Rev. J.E. Davey, the Principal of the Presbyterian College in Belfast and one of the foremost Presbyterian scholars of the twentieth century, whose theological radicalism had led to a charge of heresy being levelled against him within the General Assembly of his own denomination. The Rev Dr F.M. Eliot, President of the American Unitarian Association and Percival Brundage together with their wives were invited to lunch with the Governor of Northern Ireland, Lord Wakehurst, and to a lunch at Stormont with members of the Northern Ireland Cabinet. Delegates were also invited to special receptions at Belfast City Hall and to the Northern Ireland Houses of Parliament buildings at Stormont where they assembled for a large group photograph. As the newly appointed President, the Right Hon. J. Chuter Ede, remarked "the Congress was an invigorating and inspiring experience".¹⁰

For a number of years the NSPCI was represented on the IARF Council by a member of the Society of Friends based in Oxford. In 1961 the Rev William McMillan succeeded him as representative of the Non-Subscribers, a position which he held for a number of years. During his time as NSPCI representative Northern Ireland became world-wide news with the onset of 'The Troubles' in the late 1960s. Through the efforts of Mr McMillan the IARF was able to learn something of the situation on the ground in the Province and become actively involved in some of the works of reconciliation. Bill McMillan had become involved with the establishment of cross-community Mothers and Toddlers Clubs, which attempted to bring people together from both sides of the divide. Funds from the IARF and member groups became available which enabled these groups to prosper.

There have been Irish representatives at virtually every Congress since 1952 and at many other IARF events although not usually in large numbers. One of the largest Irish delegations ever present at a Congress was that at the 1972 Congress in Heidelberg. Representatives from Northern Ireland included the Rt Rev Robin Williamson the Moderator at the time, who was an outspoken opponent of the sectarian violence that was then troubling the Province. Delegates were able to hear first hand of the situation in Northern Ireland in a speech given by Bill McMillan which was subsequently reported in the press and published in a number of different journals in Europe and America. The Congress passed a pledge of support to the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church, a gesture of support that was much appreciated by the denomination.¹¹ Bill McMillan's work and that of his Church was further recognised internationally with the presentation of the Albert Schweitzer Award at the 1978 Congress in Oxford.

Bill McMillan was succeeded as NSPCI representative by his wife, Sheila, in 1981. Through Mrs McMillan's representations the IARF and some European member groups became close supporters of the establishment of Lagan College, the very first integrated secondary school in Northern Ireland. The aim of integrated education is to enable children from Protestant and Catholic backgrounds to be educated together in a mutually respectful environment. Lagan College has become a great success and has been joined by a number of other similar schools all over the province.

In the 1980s direct NSPCI representation on the IARF Council was abruptly ended. This was keenly felt in Ireland. However, following the appointment of the Rev Dr Robert Traer as general secretary there has been a renewed confidence in Irish involvement in the IARF. The 1990s have seen closer ties and contact. In 1996 the present writer was elected to the IARF Council by the Congress held in Korea and in the same year an Irish Chapter was founded with Sandra Gilpin as secretary. Although in terms of membership the Irish Chapter is still largely dependent upon the NSPCI, the Chapter attracts people from both major traditions to its public meetings as well as representatives from non-Christian faiths. The Chapter's membership is also drawn from both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland and the inaugural meetings, addressed by Dr Traer on the subject of 'Interfaith Cooperation: A Strategy for Peace and Freedom', were held in both Belfast (at Lagan College) and

9 *The Belfast Telegraph*, Saturday, 30 July, 1955.

10 *The Non-Subscribing Presbyterian*, September 1955, 586, p 100.

11 *The Non-Subscribing Presbyterian*, November 1972, 791, p 166.

Dublin (at the Irish School of Ecumenics) in February 1997.¹² The following weekend an IARF service was held at Dromore NSP Church, at which Dr Traer preached. Members of the Irish Chapter work closely with the recently formed Northern Ireland Inter-Faith Forum and have been involved with a number of cross community and inter-faith schemes. Members have been involved in discussions for schemes for the development of courses for the study of world religions, for the provision of an interfaith prayer room at the international airport and for cross community work on one of the 'peace lines' in Belfast, a project which has yet to get off the ground. Public meetings have heard speakers on interfaith cooperation, 'brotherhoods' in Ireland and religion in modern Russia and successful social occasions have been held.

The NSPCI is also an enthusiastic supporter of the recently founded European Liberal Protestant Network which has been set up, with the secretariat's blessing, by liberal Christian IARF member groups in Europe.

The Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland is pleased to have been associated with the IARF throughout its history, it values that link which brings it into enriching contact with a world wide family of people who share in a belief in religious liberty. Both it and the Irish Chapter look forward to sharing in the opportunities of the new millennium with their brothers and sisters in the IARF and, who knows, perhaps the Congress could be welcomed back to Belfast in the not too distant future?

The Rev David Steers has been minister of All Souls' Church, Belfast and Chaplain at Queen's University, Belfast since 1989. A minister of the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland he has served on the Executive of the Irish Council of Churches, the Department of Theological Questions of the Irish Inter-Church Meeting, the Irish National Committee of Christian Aid and other ecumenical organisations. He is also a member of the Council of both the Unitarian Historical Society and the Presbyterian Historical Society of Ireland. He has been a member of the IARF Council since 1996. He and his wife, Sue, have four children.

The Development of IARF in Japan and the Japan Liaison Committee (JLC) My Reflections on the IARF

Yukitaka Yamamoto

Rev Yamamoto was elected the 29th President of IARF in 1996. He reviews the development of the IARF in Japan by looking back at his 32 years as a member of the Association.

In 1893 26th year of the Meiji era, that is 106 years ago, the first World Parliament of Religions was held in Chicago. In order to attend this historical conference, Shinto, Buddhist, and Christian delegations from Japan risked their lives to cross the raging waves of the Pacific Ocean.

They spoke at every opportunity, intent on explaining in what way Eastern religions have universality and tolerance towards foreign religious people.

In 1900, the year of the Meiji era, IARF was formed as the Council of Unitarian and Other Liberal Religious Thinkers and Workers in Boston. In the following year, the first IARF Congress was held in London, with the theme "Liberal Religious Thought in the early 20th Century."

Since then, we have had IARF Congresses every three years in member nations on various issues. Last year, in July 1999, 11th year of Heisei, we had the 30th Congress in Vancouver.

I was elected 29th President of IARF at the 29th Congress which was held in the Republic of Korea. I fulfilled my duty for three years and retired from the post at the 30th Congress.

This year is the 100th anniversary of the founding of this, the world's oldest international interfaith organization, and also, the first year of the 21st century. Considering this historical moment for the human race, it is significant for us to look back on the activities of IARF in Japan.

¹² *The Non-Subscribing Presbyterian*, April 1997, 1087, p 70-73

I would like to review the process of the development of IARF in Japan by looking back on my 32-year-long relationship with it.

(1) Dr Shinichiro Imaoka

When looking back on the history of IARF in Japan, I can never forget Dr Shinichiro Imaoka. He has diffused free religious thought in Japan. He is the pathfinder for cooperation amongst religions in Japan.

In 1814, 14th year of Meiji, Dr Imaoka was born near Matsue city in Shimane prefecture and got into Matsue middle school. He attended church near by in order to learn English and was baptized, which made his parents disown him. He had no choice but to distance himself from the Buddhism that had been preserved by his ancestors in his household.

After high school, he graduated from the Department of Religion in Japan Imperial University (presently Tokyo University) in Tokyo. He continued studying Theology at Harvard University in the US, and came back to Japan when he finished his studies. In 1925, 14th year of Taisho, he founded Kiitsu Kyokai and became minister. He also established the Seisoku High School in Shiba, Tokyo, and worked as both the director of the board and the principal.

In 1932, Showa 7, Mr J W Mason, an American journalist, who had been to Harvard with Dr Imaoka visited him. He told Dr Imaoka about his interests and asked him to become his interpreter. His interests were to study the Japanese mind, Japanese classics, such as the Kojiki and the Nihon Shoki, and Shinto itself by visiting shrines all over Japan. With the help of Dr Imaoka, Mr Mason devoted himself to the study of Shinto for about 5 years.

In 1937, 12th year of Showa, when I was in middle school, Dr Imaoka took Mr Mason to Tsubaki Grand Shrine where I am currently serving. According to Rev Yukiteru Yamamoto, my father, when he expounded that Shinto is the way of Kannagara and it has been the way to live with Nature from remote ages, Mr Mason understood the principles of Shinto described in classics, which is “the way with Kami” and the way to live in harmony with the flow of the four seasons. Dr Mason understood that this is the way that human beings should follow and pursued his studies further.

Visiting shrines gave Dr Imaoka opportunities to listen to Shinto priests as well. Through this experience, he came to think highly of Shinto’s values, i.e. emphasising practice rather than principles. I have heard from Dr Imaoka himself that Shinto is the ethical way that human beings should follow, and that he realised the importance of practice.

Although he was a Christian minister, he held great interests in Nature and found that he could better find the principles of living together with Nature in Shrine Shinto than in Christianity. He obtained a clear view of truth, principles and reason in Shinto, and read through the sutra of Mahayana Buddhism. He then organised the Kiitsu Kyokai in Shiba, built up the mixed theory of Christianity, Buddhism, Shinto and talked about truth to university scholars, ministers, intellectuals, and the general public. His church activities were carried out by encounter, dialogue, and mutual understanding.

In 1952, 27th year of Showa, Kiitsu Kyokai officially joined the International Association for Liberal Christianity and Religious Freedom (IARF in those days) which was the first Japanese member group to join.

Following Kiitsu Kyokai, in 1969, 44th year of Showa, with an introduction from Dr Imaoka, Rev Nikkyo Niwano, President of Rissho Kosei Kai (present founder of Rissho Kosei Kai), Rev Toshio Miyake of Konko Kyo Izu Church, Rev Yukitaka Yamamoto of Tsubaki grand Shrine participated in the 20th Congress in Boston and these three religious organisations officially joined International Association for Liberal Christianity and Religious Freedom.

Rev Takeshi Nishida of Ittoen in Kyoto joined IARF in 1981 at the 24th Congress in Leiding. Shitennoji Temple in Osaka, the oldest Buddhist temple in Japan, joined in 1990 at the 27th Congress in Hamburg and Rev Sonkyo Takito delivered the keynote speech as their representative. Also in 1993 and 1996, at the Congresses in Bangalore, India and Ikusan, Korea, representatives of Shinennoji participated in both.

(2) Japanese Religious Groups become members of IARF

In 1967, 42nd year of Showa, 2 years before I became a member of IARF, I visited Dr Imaoka at Kiitsu Kyokai Shiba, on the introduction of Mr Soichi Kato, who was a resident in New York and a member of Unitarian and New York Community Church.

Mr Kato told me that New York Community Church had a request for the performance of a Shinto ceremony. Dr Imaoka suggested that I participate in an annual general meeting of the Unitarian Universalist Association as a guest. I believed that I could contribute to world peace by letting the world know about Shinto and Kannagara. Therefore in 1968, 43rd year of Showa, I took part in the annual general meeting of UUA in Cleveland, Ohio.

This was my first visit to the US and the beginning of the international and interfaith activities of Tsubaki Grand Shrine.

After the prayer for world peace in the ceremony, I was allowed to give a lecture on Shinto and Kannagara. Rev Nezu of Rissho Kosei Kai was there too. I performed both the great purification ritual and the memorial service for the deceased at the Community Church in New York and had a talk about IARF with Dr Harrington who advised me to become a member of the IARF.

The official entry of three Japanese organisations into IARF took place in 1969, at the 20th Congress in Boston. The topic “Change and Encounter” created a sensation, and in particular, the joining of Buddhism and Shinto seemed to have a big impact on Western members.

I was in the Church Centre of United Nations in New York at that time, taking the opportunity to conduct a Shinto Ceremony to pray for the success of Apollo 11. The launch was on the 15th of July 1969, and it landed on the moon safely on the 21st of July. My prayer was fulfilled and they gained honour. Three daring astronauts and my Shinto ceremony were televised all over the US. I remember this event as if it happened yesterday and so the Boston Congress was very impressive for me.

The reason why the Boston Congress had great impact on western members was that Buddhism and Shinto talked about the tolerance that IARF believed in, and the western members found that our thinking had universal aspects as well as a commitment to world peace. Japanese participants discussed the differences between doctrines, founders, and commandments with people from all over the world and reached mutual understanding. The Japanese agreed to lay emphasis on the basic idea of IARF, which was to launch grass-root activities and mutual dialogues.

During the Congress, Japanese religious organisations held Hoza, a Buddhist ceremony, and Peace Prayer in Shinto ritual, for which other members showed understanding and respect. It is beyond dispute how influential their ceremonies were. Because of the entry of these three Japanese organisations the name of the association was changed. They omitted “Liberal Christianity” and renamed it as International Association for Religious Freedom (IARF).

IARF used to be “International Council of Unitarian and other Liberal Religious Thinkers and Workers”, since it had started off as an international movement of Unitarian thought.

However, in 1910, since Unitarianism is a specific denomination, the name was changed to the International Congress of Free Christian and Other Religious Liberals. In 1958, at the Chicago Congress, a move to delete the term Christians was made, which was once rejected and carried over on account of the objection of European members. In 1969, at the Boston Congress, where American representatives upheld Japanese membership, the name became International Association for Religious Freedom.

Since then they had become free religious people both in name and reality and had begun to lead the path of dialogue and cooperation with religions other than Christianity.

That year, IARF included a research committee for peace, justice and human rights, which clarified that the IARF aim was to contribute to peace by dialogue and cooperation amongst religions. Japanese members, of course, changed drastically in order to maintain religious cooperation with the IARF.

In 1981, 56th year of Showa, there was an epoch-making event. Rev Nikkyo Niwano, President of Rissho Kosei Kai was elected as the first Japanese Council Member. Moreover, it was decided to have the World Congress at Rissho Kosei Kai in Tokyo, for the first time in Asia, in 1984, 59th year of Showa.

This meant that Japanese entry into IARF gave other members the opportunity to understand the religious mind of the three Japanese organisations. Western people became aware of the Bosatugyo of Rissho Kosei Kai and universality and generosity in Shinto. I was very much impressed by the fact that Western friends understood the various ascetic practices in Shinto such as Misogi or waterfall purification and Chinkon Gyoho, Shinto meditation to cultivate spirituality as well as the profound philosophy of Buddhism.

Since then a number of IARF members from all over the world have travelled to Japan to experience Misogi at Tsubaki Grand Shrine and Hoza at Rissho Kosei Kai and to visit Ittoen and the Izuo Church of Konko Kyo, as they share the view that ceaseless efforts for mutual understanding is the springboard to peace and the shortcut to coexistence and co-prosperity.

I was installed as Vice President of IARF at the Congress in India, in 1993, 5th year of Heisei, and then as 29th President at the Congress held at Wong Kwan University of Won Buddhism in Ikusan City, Korea in 1996, 8th year of Heisei.

At the Congress in Bangalore, Ms Natalie Gulbrandsen became the 28th President of IARF. I have known her for many years as my best friend and have respected her for her tremendous energy and capacity to deal with everything with warmth and sincerity. I have so many wonderful memories about her.

(3) Growth in Japan

1. Establishment of IARF Japan Liaison Conference and IARF World Conference in Japan.

In the history of IARF activities in Japan the 25th World Congress in Tokyo held at Rissho Kosei Kai was by all accounts a very important event.

At that time, the IARF Secretariat was located in Frankfurt, West Germany and the General Secretary was Rev Diether Gerhmann. I believe that, without his strong leadership and exertion, the Japan Congress would not have materialised.

Among all things worthy of mention, the decision to have IARF World Congress in Japan (the first time it was held in Asia), led member groups in Japan to found IARF Japan Liaison Conference (JLC) to prepare for and run the Congress.

At that time Rev Nikkyo Niwano, the President of Rissho Kosei Kai and also the President of IARF, gave us everything to hold this first Asian Congress. Rev Niwano provided us with a meeting place for the Liaison Committee meetings and Rissho Kosei Kai kindly managed the JLC office during this Congress year. Rev Nikkyo Niwano and Rissho Kosei Kai helped us to fully organise this event and it is thanks to them that every step of the preparation went smoothly.

I cannot find words to express my gratitude for their contributions and their constant service. I would also like to thank everyone of the Liaison Committee that helped all participants of the World Congress to tackle the theme "Religious Path to Peace" and the sub-theme "Eastern Initiative and Western Response." Two or three members from each religious group took the lead in intense discussion at each of the different study groups.

The success of the congress was the result of the many detailed agreements reached by JLC members. It was not an easy task for different religious groups to unite and cooperate to accomplish the same goal. However I have never felt the importance of the mission of IARF as much as I did by taking up this difficult task. It made me strongly realise once again that this attitude is truly the contribution and the commitment that is needed to make our way towards peace.

2. Second World's Parliament of Religions, Japan Conference.

I would like to mention that IARF Japan member groups successfully organised, at Ise Shrine, the 100th anniversary event of the historic World Parliament of the Religions held 107 years ago in Chicago. This was also a landmark event in the history of IARF in Japan.

1893 was the year that the first World Parliament of Religions was held and since 1993 was the 100th anniversary year of the conference, Dr Imaoka had strongly requested that the event be held in Japan. I took up his request and called for the second World Parliament of Religions to be held at Ise city with the cooperation of the Ise Shrine, Kogakukan University and the city of Ise. When all

permissions were taken, I submitted the plan to the IARF Japan Liaison Committee. There it was unanimously decided to take up the plan, and it was brought to fruition.

I was then the Vice President of IARF and undertook the post of the conference chairperson. Rissho Kosei kai, Konkō Kyo Izuo Church, Ittoern, Japan Free Religious Association, Tsubaki Grand Shrine, Shitennoji, and Japan Chapter were all strong supporters of the conference. 70 representatives from many different religious groups in Japan and from overseas met in Ise city. More than 1200 people participated in this great event, and it was truly a magnificent sight. I was able to feel from the bottom of my heart the meaning of our mission at this event. I realised that our mission is to know ethics as believers in faith and to contribute our strength to world peace. Dr Robert Traer joined us in the IARF Japan Liaison Conference as well as in the grand event.

Gosengu is a traditional Shinto ceremony which started 1300 years ago at Ise Shrine. It takes place every 20 years and fortunately 1993, the same year of the 100th anniversary of the World Parliament of Religions, was a year before the 61st Shikinnen Sengu and a special ceremony was due to take place. This special ceremony is called the Oshiraishi Mochi in which white stones are to be carried to the Inner Sanctuary, the most holy place in Ise Shrine. The stones were placed in a wooden bucket covered by white cloth. The stones were carried by American and European members through the streets of Ise city. Many people came out to watch this holy ceremony. After they had marched through the city, they entered the sacred place and offered the stones under the floors of the shrine. It was the first time in history that foreigners took part in this ceremony. We especially asked the Ise Shrine for permission for this occasion. It was a great pleasure to be part of this event, and I am sure that every participant helped to make it a very meaningful occasion.

As everyone can see, JLC has a record of positive performances in the past. Their conferences are held almost every month and they continue to be very active. As of this May, they counted their 100th meeting since the Tokyo Congress held in 1984.

JLC member groups include Rissho Kosei kai, Konkōkyo Izuo Church, Ittoen, Tsubaki Grand Shrine, Shitennoji, Japan Free Religious Association and the Japan Chapter, and IARF Women's League. We collect JLC member's fees from each group and the JLC office is rotated annually.

It is the result of all the member groups' effort that IARF activities have attained such great development. I would like to express great gratitude to all the members of the JLC.

3. The Start of the Japan Chapter

One of the main reasons why IARF activities have grown so much so as to firmly establish themselves in Japan is the effort made by the Japan Chapter. I believe Japan Chapter is the core of the IARF activities.

IARF is a place where everyone can communicate openly. Within the IARF discussions are only based on what each of us believes. There may be times when we may disagree with one another, but we are still able to keep respect and honesty with one another, and to create trustful relationships. With this, our organisation will become more active and bring out the possibilities of much greater achievement. The wonderfulness of IARF, I believe, resides here in this thought, commitment and practice.

IARF Japan Chapter started in 1985, the year after the 25th World Conference in Tokyo. The idea of establishing the group had long been under consideration when it finally materialised. The preparation to establish the organisation began soon after the Tokyo Conference. Dr Yutaka Furuta agreed to be the representative of Japan Chapter. Later, in February 1985, JLC sent Rev Takahiro Miwa, Secretary of Japan Chapter to the IARF Purpose Committee as a Chapter member. The Japan Chapter then defined its statutes as:

1. Japan Chapter stands upon the basic principles of the IARF
2. Respect for freedom except subversive activities.
3. All members are equal.

This was reported to the 4th JLC Conference in August the same year and the Japan Chapter was recognised as a member of the JLC.

IARF Japan Chapter has organised and proposed the passport system as one of their activities. In 1987 they joined the 26th Congress in Stanford USA for the first time from the Chapter and it was here that they proposed the passport system to be used within the IARF organisation.

The passport system that allows members of this organisation to mingle with one another very easily. A member group or an individual would provide housing and hospitality at home to another visiting member. This will allow more movement within the organisation and give members a chance to get to know others at ease. If this system starts to work, I believe it will contribute greatly to the grass root activity for peace.

Although this is not yet an official activity of the IARF, the heart to give hospitality to visitors is already widely supported by all the members. It is very likely that the number of members taking this opportunity to get to know one another will increase. Why not recognise this wonderful passport system as an official program of IARF?

This passport idea was once discussed at the Executive and Council Meetings at Oxford. Based on the idea, one hundred members have already visited Japan.

Another main activity of the IARF Japan Chapter is the grass-root summit. It is held every three years. During this meeting we visit each of the different Japanese religious groups that are members of IARF. We listen to each other's words, experience each other's customs and discuss important issues. Through these activities we believe we can understand more about the spirit of IARF.

Japan Chapter also publishes "IARF Japan Chapter Tushin" in both Japanese and English. This is made possible only by the effort of volunteers who get together to publish the newsletter twice a year. The newsletter itself is a work that, I profoundly believe, should be recognised internationally.

As everyone can see, JLC and Japan Chapter now have the ability to propose ideas and be active in letting the world know what they need to say. They have both become influential bodies of the IARF in Japan and the world.

(4) IARF and WCRP

As I look back at my deep involvement with the IARF, I can differentiate my involvement into two totally different kinds of religious cooperation with the IARF. One is my personal relationship as an individual. My other kind of cooperation with IARF was as one of the administrators in this organisation. Administering an organisation was work which keeps one in touch with reality. I had to confront many problems in doing so.

As I continue to work to run the organisation and make efforts for the growth of the organisation, I feel the reality hardships we face. I realise then the importance of WCRP, another similar international religious cooperation organisation, that today still continues to function actively.

Here I would like to present my opinion about the difference between IARF and WCRP.

1. IARF

The activities of IARF are at the grass-root level between individuals. We gather to lay bare each others true feelings about our faiths and seriously discuss them. Through this kind of communication we pursue mutual understanding of each other. By spreading our links to many people across borders, our goal is to create a world where everybody can coexist in peace and prosperity.

Each religious group observes other religious practices, and takes part in them. We share among us different prayers, to experience them and to know them. We should then realise what each of us have in common in each of our beliefs and through our shared experiences, together we become more conscious of our unity. This is the goal of the IARF.

The following are the Goals of the IARF which were resolved in the IARF Congress in Palo Alto in 1987.

IARF General Assembly 1987 Resolution "Statement of Purpose"

Whereas the purposes of IARF are subject to regular reformation to reflect the need of the contemporary age,

Whereas a specific committee was appointed for our purposes and made a recommendation to the IARF Council and ,

Whereas all member groups have been consulted in this process,

Be it resolved that the Purpose of the IARF be described as follows:

General

IARF is an interreligious, international, intercultural organisation. It advocates religious freedom in the sense of:

- a. free, critical and honest affirmation of one's own religious tradition;
 - b. religion which liberates and does not oppress;
 - c. the defence of freedom of conscience and the free exercise of religion in all nations.
- IARF advocates understanding, dialogue and readiness to learn and promotes sympathy and harmony among the different religious traditions.

It is dedicated to a global community of mutual cooperation among religious communities and adherents of different religions. It strives for an attitude of openness to truth, to love and to justice.

Religious

IARF seeks to create opportunities for religious dialogue, interchange and practice, so that individuals may enjoy a depth and richness of experience which leads toward growth and spiritual development both for individuals and for religious organisations.

Cultural

IARF seeks to facilitate cross-cultural exchanges through such activities as congresses, regional conferences, youth encounters, and other encouragements to experience valid cultures. It is an objective of IARF to increase the participation in such exchanges by those who are thus far under-represented.

Social responsibility

IARF is involved, through both study and activities, in social responsibility – promoting and providing social service to individuals and groups, advocating reverence and responsibility for the natural environment, working for human rights, international disarmament and peace, and encouraging the change of social structures which create and sustain poverty and oppression.

Scholarly

IARF seeks to facilitate heightened understanding of the diversity of human cultures and religious traditions through conferences, publications, exchange of scholars, sponsored research in the theoretical understanding of the nature and history of religious faiths and traditions. Further, it seeks to facilitate interchange between scholars of diverse religious traditions and people in science, arts and practical affairs.

Organisational

IARF seeks to enhance the life and welfare of its member organisations through such means as a network of mutual support and exchange of professional and lay religious leaders. IARF seeks to involve the general membership of its member organisations so that its activities and their regular activities are interrelated.

Educational

IARF seeks to educate and to enlighten by encouraging its individual and group members to learn through study, mutual understanding, experience and action.

I think the above clearly describes the characteristics of IARF.

2. WCRP

On the other hand, the historic origin of WCRP started in 1970, when the first Peace Conference of World Religions was held at Kyoto International Conference Hall.

The direct motive for holding this start-up conference for WCRP came from the strong appeals adopted in 1967 at the International Congress of Religion held in New Delhi which called for actions for peace in order to avoid crisis.

In the America of the 1960's, there was a social background which caused rapidly increasing numbers of people to join new religious organisations, those which allowed individuals free will under God, instead of the rigid Christian Societies.

One of those notable new organisations was the Unitarian Church. At the time, this was led by President Rev Dana MacClean Greenly, who also served as one of the board members of IARF and made great efforts to establish WCRP along with Rev Nikkyo Niwano of Rissho Kosei-kai, and thus agreed to hold the first Peace Conference.....

As a result of the effort made by these two people, a Japan-US Kyoto Conference of Religions was held in January 1968. After this Rev Greeley visited Rev Nikkyo Niwano guided by Dr Imaoka of the Japan Free Religious Association. This conference and the dialogue between Rev Greeley and Rev Niwano were the first steps to establishing WCRP.

In the next year, 1969, the 20th Congress of IARF in Boston had adopted the position of moving forward to invite all representatives from religions around the world to a peace conference, with the consent of the UUA and contacts with the Vatican in Rome. The first such peace conference was held in Japan again the following year, that is, in 1970.

In Japan, those existing religious organisations, Honganji, Zenkoku Bukkyo Kai, Enryakuji Temple, Koyasan Kongoji Temple, Konkokyo and Japan Free Religious Association, Ise Shrine, Head quarter of Shrine Shinto and all the Jinja who wished to join, all expressed their affirmation to hold such a conference. They understood that this kind of conference would only be possible in Japan.

Because both the Catholic and Protestant churches, and also other Islamic, Jewish religions are all monotheistic and exclusive of each other, it would have been extremely difficult for them to get together and discuss in the same venue.

Christianity, Islam and Buddhism are the three main religions of the world, involving two thirds of the entire population. There were Hinayana Buddhism and other smaller religions, and Jinja in Japan. Each nation has its own native religions. As those religions have their own specific leaders, commandments and precepts, it would be extremely difficult for their representatives to gather in one place.

However, in comparison with foreign countries Japan was unique in the sense that its religions have gone through the way of the Kannagara, with no exclusion of other religions. Foreign religious organisations such as in Buddhism, Confucianism, and Christianity have grown up with the basic principle of the way of the Kannagara together with the generous and Mahayana spirits, and any war on religion was highly unlikely to happen. These and historical facts would make Japan the only possible place for such a conference. Thus the four organisations, who were members of IARF started preparatory work for it.

Under these difficult conditions, WCRP had agreed to realise peace, to make financial contributions, with a special focus on aid activities such as for human rights, demilitarisation, and respect for life, with a common understanding that saving refugees and people in hunger should fit the principle of "coexistence and co-prosperity" and the purpose of our religions, with the attendance of high officials from WCRP.

Of course all this would not be achieved single-handedly by IARF. And WCRP was chosen for the forum of mutually exclusive religions to commit financial contributions for the future peace of the world.

Currently more than 65 nations have joined in WCRP with only 27 nations and about 80 regions in IARF. But IARF endeavours to form a community of experience of prayer, exchange of spirituality and mutual dialogue, being a grass-root movement for peace. Both organisations share their goal of achieving eternal world peace and "coexistence and co-prosperity", even though they differ in their own principal activities. If the two work together, the movement of IARF and aid by WCRP, moving forward like two wheels through cooperation, their goal will be realised in time.

Although there have been some disagreements with this idea, the fundamental principles of WCRP were drafted jointly by Rev Greeley and Rev Niwano, Rev Homer A Jack of the Unitarian Churches, and Rev Sutherland, President of Meadville Lombard School of Ministry. And with their

appeal throughout the world, and great support by Rissho Kosei kai, the representatives of world religions gathered there for a week long discussion. I was among the participants in this conference.

It can be said that WCRP was born out of IARF for both IARF and WCRP were based upon dialogue between different religious organisations. WCRP's aim is to build a road to peace with mutual funding by its members. I guess that it was because the Unitarian Church has its won tolerance similar to Japanese religious philosophy that both Rev Greeley and Rev Niwano could meet in their minds, resulting in the establishment of WCRP. Looking back from now, I cannot but feel that there was really a remarkable foresight between them, and it was so good.

When we think about cooperation between IARF and WCRP, it reminds me of Sarva-Dhama-Sammelana in 1993, which was held for four days after the conference in Bangalore, India, co-organised by WCRP, WCF and the Temple of Understanding.

In that year, World Parliament of Religions were held both in Chicago and in India. The one in India was held in New Delhi and titled as the second World Parliament of Religions by its co-organisers. This conference, too, was very farsighted, and I feel that each organisation had made really courageous decisions for that.

(5) The Future of IARF

IARF is today an organisation composed of eighty religious groups from twenty-five countries. I became the twenty-ninth President of this organisation, but this year, 1999, I will end my term of service at this thirtieth world convention, here in Vancouver, Canada.

For the past thirty-two years, I have participated in many of these world congresses and other meetings, and have helped overcome some problems that we encountered in administering this organisation. This IARF World congress is the last to be held in this century, and the way in which we should stand against challenges in the new era.

For this important congress, I would like to make the following proposals:

1. Based on our hundred years of history, we must take pride in IARF and at the same time think back to the beginnings of mutual cooperation. We are the oldest organisation of many interfaith religious groups and a gathering of diverse believers. And since it was established in 1900, we can reflect on 100 years of history. Through IARF, discussions that seem impossible in a singly-god-religion are made possible. We must re-recognise that good points in which mutual cooperation organisations are strong.
2. As we enter the 21st century, no matter what happens, what changes may come about, IARF must continue its activities. At present the world is at a turning point where the new age welcomes policies that concentrate primarily on the uniqueness of an individual. The new era will respect one's originality most. Moreover, a new common concept will be formed among those people. However, no matter how people may become individual-centred or religious group-oriented, we must respect our magnanimous nature and cooperate with others holding the common idea. To do so, we must maintain among us the sense of community, and together demonstrate our magnanimity, learn from each other, enjoy many activities and through cultivating each one's own spirituality contribute to world peace.
3. Let us take actions in accordance with the decisions made among the religious groups in IARF.
4. Officially recognise the Passport Program and take immediate actions accordingly. As I have once already mentioned, it is not an issue whether you participate as an individual or as a group. Members from each country ought to communicate more with members from another country during their visit. By knowing each other's religious traditions, we should become closer and further our understanding of each other. I call this the grass-root level activities, and IARF should offer helpful interventions between members. Having IARF connections in different countries, it allows everybody here to be no stranger visiting another country.
5. Encourage the development of spirituality. Let us put together a report on the practices of each religious group, publish it and establish a method in which we all could share those various experiences.
6. The Congress must take place every three years. By taking part in the Congress, we will prove to ourselves our consciousness toward IARF and world peace.

7. Hold regional meetings for mutual understanding. All members should form meetings in groups by local regions once every year or at least every two years. Japan will get together with people from South East Asia as a group and people in the North and South America and Europe should form regional groups.
8. Always stay in close contact with WCRP and put enthusiasm in to each other and strengthen our cooperation system. WCRP has only thirty years of history. Their basic policies originate from IARF. In Japan, leading members of WCRP are the same people who are the key IARF members or leading figures in peace movements. Therefore, it is quite easy to link the two networks in Japan and bring out the best of both sides.

I believe that all these issues confront us as problems that we must overcome. The policies to overcome these issues will be an important base to secure the future of IARF.

We must proceed more than ever to let the world realise the importance of the activities of IARF. I would like to know how everyone else feels.

Rev Dr Yukitaka Yamamoto, the 69th High Priest of Tsubaki Grand Shrine, was born in August 1923 as the second son of Yukitoshi Yamamoto, who was one of the first conscientious objectors in Mie prefecture. Rev Yamamoto graduated from the specialist college, Takanan Juku, in August 1942 and, as a political officer in the Japanese Navy, was dispatched to New Guinea. One of 12 Japanese survivors in New Guinea at the end of the war, Rev Yamamoto became determined to prevent warfare in the future. In 1946 he entered Kogakkan University to study for priesthood in the Shrine Shinto tradition, which is totally different from State Shinto. Between 1955 and 1965 he engaged daily in misogi (waterfall purification) in order to cultivate his spirituality. In 1968 the reconstruction of Tsubaki Grand Shrine joined the IARF in 1969 and Rev Yamamoto has served on the IARF Council since 1981 and as President since 1996.

PART II - PERSONAL REFLECTIONS BY IARF MEMBERS

Personal Memories of the IARF

Richard Boeke

My experience of the IARF began in 1962 with a trip about the world in which I visited Kenya and India, met with Rev. Quimada in the Philippines, and with Dr. Imaoka in Japan. In July 1964, I traveled to Eastern Europe with Don and Wilma Harrington, including a "bear hug" from Bishop Kiss Elek at Kolisvar. In August I attended the IARF Congress in The Hague and met my future wife. In 1969 the IARF Congress was held jointly in Boston with the UUA General Assembly. RKK President Niwano led Rissho Kosei kai into IARF Membership. But even as UUs reached out to the world in different ways there was a drop in U.S. UU membership and financial support. Budget cuts meant the end of the Department of Overseas & Interfaith Relations. To fill the gap at the next UUA General Assembly 40 of us gathered to form the U.S. Chapter of the IARF. I was elected first President and served for the next three years from my church in St. Petersburg, Florida. Our newsletter was INTERDEPENDENCE, an early use of the current popular word. In 1977 our U.S. Chapter hosted IARF San Francisco. *Uniquist* published the proceedings as background for 1978 IARF Oxford: *The Limits of Tolerance*. I became chair of IARF Commission III on the *'Dialogue of World Religions'* which reported to IARF Holland 1981, *The Tide of Religion*. The 1981 IARF had more celebration: Twenty members of our Berkeley Unitarian Choir came to sing! For many of us the 1984 Japan Congress was the high point of the IARF. Again the Berkeley Choir came, now 40 strong. On Festival night hundreds of delegates danced round and round the drummers. At Tsubaki Shinto Shrine, the high point for most of us was not food but ritual, climaxed by Misogi under the waterfall. *We were filled with humility*. What could we do to return such gracious hospitality? As co-chair of the Host Committee I helped to organize IARF 1987 Palo Alto cooperating with the Program Committee led by Dr. Gene Reeves.

Some talk of the IARF makes it very serious and dull. As you think about coming to Vancouver in late July 1999, think fun! Think of the wonderful tribal museum at the north edge of the Campus where we will be staying, great RAVEN illuminated as a shining KAMI. Think of the beautiful Japanese Garden on the West of the Campus, built as a gift of peace and a place of peace. Think of the wonderful beaches down the cliff to the west of the campus, and the delight of plunging into icy water on a hot summer day. Think of it as MISOGI (Japanese "purification by water").

Think of chatting with new friends from around the world as you walk to sessions across the campus. Think of the new people and visions you may discover. The beauty of singing "Spirit of Life" in worship. At IARF Palo Alto, many discovered that song and took it home translating it into at least three languages. Think of the joy of after hour conversations. Think of the warm welcome of our Canadian Hosts, led by friends Rev. Harold Rosen, Ellen Campbell, and Philip Hewett.

The optimist and the pessimist look at the same world. But the optimist has more fun. On BBC radio, a story of Sir Thomas Beecham, the conductor, was told. He was rehearsing Handel's "Messiah" in Australia. The women were singing, "For unto us a child is born." Beecham stopped the rehearsal. He said, "Ladies, please think of the joy of conception, not the pain of childbirth." Then the men's chorus came in, "Wonderful!"

Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "We shall either learn to live together as brothers, or perish together as fools." The IARF is dedicated to the proposition that human beings around the world can network together as friends. In this brief article, I will tell you some of my memories of "networking."

I was a Southern Baptist Chaplain in the US Air Force. My last year in the Air Force, I read Albert Schweitzer, and became convinced of the rightness of his teaching of "reverence for life." As I looked at our bombers and our atomic weapons, I realized that this MADNESS must end. I left the Air Force at the end of 1958 and became a Unitarian Universalist minister.

When I was called to the Unitarian Church in Flushing, New York, two college students from Kenya lived with me. Partly because of this Kenya connection, I made a trip around the world in the summer of 1962. A month in Kenya and Uganda (including an interview with Jomo Kenyatta). A visit to our 200 year old Unitarian Church in Madras.

Then a week in the Philippines where I was one of first American UUs to meet Rev. Quimada, the founder of the UU Church of the Philippines. He brought with him his translations of the American UU Hymnbook. I realized that anyone who would translate an entire hymnbook was serious. Dr. Dana Greeley helped raise money for Rev. Quimada to make mimeo copies of the hymnbook for his congregations. The work of Rev. Quimada continues to receive support from the IARF. His daughter, Rebecca, has studied at Meadville Theological Seminary and will be ordained in the Philippines in April 1999. Less than a year after Rev. Quimada attended the 1987 IARF Congress, he was murdered by paramilitary and his home and papers were burned.

My round the world trip continued in Japan, where I was greeted by Dr. Imaoka, Unitarian Minister and High School Principal. After I climbed Mt Fuji and made a pilgrimage to the Atomic City of Hiroshima, Dr. Imaoka hosted me at a dinner with many Japanese religious leaders. This was part of Dr. Imaoka's leadership in using his Japan Free Religious Association to bring Rissho Kosei kai, Tsubaki Grand Shrine, Itto-en, Konkoyo, and other non-dogmatic religious groups into the IARF. His efforts met success as Rissho Kosei kai was welcomed into the IARF in 1969, and Tsubaki Grand Shrine joined a few years later. Dr. Imaoka was very generous.

I will never forget joining Winifred Norman in presenting an IARF award to Dr. Imaoka, which was accepted by his son. The son said, "My father was a very bad father. He gave away everything. During the war, my mother had to hide food so we would not starve." The son went on to praise his father. But his opening words stuck in my mind when Dr. Imaoka died at the age of 106. I stood in line in the rain with over a thousand as we paid our respects at his home. I thought of a poem of his friend, the Japanese Christian Kagawa:

Penniless,
for a while
I can live.
But it breaks
my heart
To know

I cannot give.

In the summer of 1964, "The Grote Beer" (the Great Bear) sailed with over 1,000 students from New York to Amsterdam. I was Protestant Chaplain, holding discussions and song fests every day. Sea Sick. You bet! I would go up to the front of the "forcastle" and face into the wind, a bit like the couple in the movie "Titanic." After a day or two, I got my "sea legs." With beer 10 cents a bottle, I think the ship left a solid trail on the ocean floor. We landed in Rotterdam to a brass band and a welcome speech by a Dutch Prince.

I was soon on a train to Switzerland, and what was the "crown jewel" of IARF centers, Albert Schweitzer College in Churwalden. High in the Alps, with 25 to 30 students for one year courses. In winter they could ski right from the front door to a ski lift. Some of the Americans brought in marijuana, and the college was a bit in trouble with the Swiss. But overall the college was good for the liberal Swiss Protestants and dialogue for students between countries. How wonderful it would be if we still had Schweitzer College as a center for young adult dialogue and training lay ministers.

But only two or three years later, American UUs led in trying to make things better. Another location was picked near Geneva, and a Director imported who liked to live well. I visited once, to find no students. It was a beautiful spot with a pear orchard. A cheese warehouse was right across the road. Lovely afternoons, eating pears and cheese with a little Asti wine. The college went broke. But Churwalden was a simple basic rooming house with dining room and classrooms. With only modest continuing support, it could still be going.

In mid-July Dr. Max Gaebler (minister of the UU Church designed by Frank Lloyd Wright in Madison, Wisconsin) and I left Schweitzer College to fly to Prague. Pilsner Beer and good wurst on Czech airlines. At Prague, we met 30 members of our tour group led by Don and Vilma Harrington. In our group were Rev. Jack Daniels and his wife Thelma. Also there was the grandson of John Haynes Holmes. We celebrated in the Unitarian Church on Karlova Street, warmly welcomed by Rev. Dusan Kafka and Rev. Bohdana Hasplova, the daughter of Norbet Capek (founding minister of the Czech Unitarians, who was taken from Concentration Camp Dachau to death in a gas chamber in 1942).

Then from Prague by bus to be welcomed by the Unitarians of Hungary and Romania. When we arrived in Cluj, Romania in the middle of the night, they had been waiting with dinner for us for six hours. At the top of the stairs, Bishop Kiss Elek greeted each of us with a huge bear hug. Sitting next to me at the dinner table was the Bishop's grandson, Tibor Szasz, who had just won the Romanian Young Pianist Competition. With plum brandy we encouraged Tibor to play. He gave us the first movement of Beethoven's Waldstein Sonata. From Cluj we went from village to village, our bus covered with flowers. We were welcomed as some of the first Unitarians to visit since World War II. Now, 34 years later, 200 North American UU Churches are linked to 130 churches in Easter Europe in the Partner Church program.

In early August, I was back in Holland for the 1964 IARF Congress in den Hague. The Congress opened with a gracious reception hosted by the Mayor of the Hague. And there a friend and I both saw a lovely young Dutch woman standing with Dr. and Mrs. Jacob Trapp. We both were properly introduced by the Trapps. We both asked her out. Less than a year later, Johanna and I were married in the Unitarian Church in Summit, New Jersey, with Dr. Trapp performing the wedding. As Dr. Trapp wrote in one of his hymns: "Wonders still the world shall witness, ..."

1965 was a critical year in the Civil Rights Struggle in America. UU Minister James Reeb was murdered in Selma, Alabama, and hundreds of UU ministers from all over North America marched with Martin Luther King, Dana Greeley, and Homer Jack through the police lines in Selma. We became a transformed denomination. It opened us up for the next steps in world involvement: opposing the U.S. Military Presence in Vietnam.

We hoped that the IARF could meet in Romania in 1968, to celebrate the 400th Anniversary of the founding of Unitarianism. For that reason, the next IARF Congress was held in London in 1966, with most of the meetings at the Quaker Center near Euston Station. Then we continued to hammer out the major changes that would transform the IARF. At that time, the full name was the International Association for Liberal Christianity and Religious Freedom. I got up and spoke in favor of a change. I asked, would we join "The International Association for Liberal Moslems and Religious Freedom?" Sitting to me was the former Treasurer of the United States, Percival Brundage. He gave me his hand in support. The necessary amendments passed. Some of us discussed names

such as Unitas," "The International Association for Liberal Religion," (The Canadians objected because of the Liberal Political Party in Canada), and the International Association for Free Religion.

When the name was changed, included in the proposal were four Commissions, one of which dealt with our links to the Christian World, another deal with Human Rights, and Commission Three was the Dialogue with World Religions, which would involve me in the years to come. We learned that the Communists would not allow the IARF to meet in Romania in 1968. A small celebration was held in Romania. I did not go to the celebration in Romania that year. I served as summer minister in Leicester, England, and flew back to the USA in time to serve as a Peace Delegate to the National Democratic Convention in Chicago. Still following the vision that led me out of the Air Force. At Chicago I helped organize a candlelight procession for peace for 400 delegates. Playwright Arthur Miller lit his candle from mine. Our candidate did not win the nomination. But in four years, the Viet Nam War came to an end.

The next IARF Congress was held jointly in Boston with the UUA General Assembly in 1969. This was probably the most dramatic General Assembly ever held as hundreds of UUA delegates walked out to insist on the funding of one million dollars to the Black Affairs Council. At the same time hundreds of IARF delegates were arriving. President Niwano led the five million members of Rissho Kosei-kai into IARF Membership. Dana Greeley as IARF President led us into the next decade. Rev. Diether Gehrman was hired as the first full time General Secretary of the IARF. He started work in the old office in the Hague, but soon moved the IARF Offices to Frankfurt, Germany, where they remained until the move to Oxford ten years ago.

The friendship of Niwano and Greeley took another step as they jointly founded the World Congress for Religion and Peace (WCRP), an organization that included leaders from more traditional religions. Homer Jack as General Secretary of the WCRP made many contributions to the peace dialogue.

But even as UUs reached out to the world in different ways there was a drop in U.S. UU membership and financial support. Budget cuts included the end of the Department of Overseas and Interfaith Religions. To fill the gap at the next UUA General Assembly 40 of us gathered to form what was then the North American Chapter of the IARF. Later, the Canadians pulled out, and we became the U.S. Chapter. I was elected first President and served for the next three years from my new church in St. Petersburg, Florida. Our newsletter was INTERDEPENDENCE, a forerunner of the current popularity of the word.

By the 1975 Congress in Montreal Canada, I was minister of the First Unitarian Church of Berkeley, California, where I remained for 21 years. Early in my ministry in Berkeley, I held several discussions with Chief Priest Yukitaka Yamamoto of Tsubaki Grand Shrine, Japan. Rev. Yamamoto was hoping to find a location to establish a North American Branch of Tsubaki Shrine. This later resulted in the establishment of Tsubaki America in Stockton, California. On one visit Rev. Yamamoto asked about joining the IARF. He gave me the money for membership. I had the honor of sending in the IARF membership application of Tsubaki Shrine, which was gladly accepted.

With the 1978 IARF Congress in Oxford, I became chair of IARF Commission Three on the Dialogue of World Religions. The 1981 Congress in Holland on the "Tide of Religion" was a most intellectually satisfying event. I remember discussing our theme with Cambridge Theologian Don Cupitt. In 1984, he did a now famous series on BBC Television called "The Sea of Faith." This launched the "Sea of Faith Movement" in England, which now has 1,000s of members and a large conference each summer. Perhaps "The Tide of Religion" inspired "The Sea of Faith?" That summer I had exchanged pulpits with Frank Walker. Frank and his family went to Berkeley, and I went to Cambridge, England. It was an easy trip from Cambridge to Holland for the IARF Congress. An added joy was that twenty members of our Berkeley Unitarian Choir came to sing at the IARF Congress.

For many of us the 1984 Japan Congress was the high point of the IARF. Again the Berkeley Choir came, now 40 strong, and its members were thrilled to sing in the great Fumon Hall of Rissho Kosei-kai, and making friendships with the Kosei Choir, and with the choir from Sepulveda, California. The Festival night we danced round and round the drummers.

Rissho Kosei-kai local groups in many parts of Japan were charming hosts. The guide on our bus was Mr. Ono, who now is director of the Niwano Peace Foundation. We were awed by Hiroshima, fed royally at Konkoyo Church in Osaka, and at Tsubaki. But at Tsubaki, the high point

for most of us was not food but ritual, climaxed by our Misogi under the waterfall. We returned from Japan with the knowledge that the UUA would host the next IARF Congress.

We were filled with humility. What could we do to return such gracious hospitality?

In between Congresses, I had been helping to host IARF Conferences in North America. In 1967, I chaired the IARF Conference at Columbia University, which featured Philip Rieff and Science Fiction Author Frederick Pohl (a Unitarian). In 1971, we asked Dana Greeley and the Unitarian Parish in Concord, Massachusetts, to host an IARF Conference which featured Huston Smith, author of "The World's Religions." Doris Hunter and Orlanda Brugnola hosted an IARF Conference at Colgate Rochester Seminary prior to the UUA General Assembly at Cornell University.

Thus, I had some experience as I went with Phyllis McKeeman to Chicago to set up arrangements for the 1987 IARF Congress. In the discussion, UUA President William Schulz agreed the UUA would fund a half time staff member for two years. I became co-chair of the local committee with Rev. Jay Atkinson. We quickly surveyed the San Francisco area and picked Stanford University as site for the 1987 Congress. Rev. Ann Heller was hired as coordinator. With her help we got our act together. 600 registered for the Congress. High points were the circle groups organized by Rev. Frank Robinson, the large Celebrations in the Stanford Chapel led by Rev. Mark Belletini, the Hiroshima Candlelight Service at the Stanford Fountain led by Rev. Jun Yamamoto, and the worship in the auditorium at which we sang "Spirit of Life" at each service. Honored guests included two time Nobel Prize winner and IARF Patron, Dr. Linus Pauling. Pre and Post Congress Tours added to the richness of the experience for many. I'll never forget over 100 guests from Japan and Germany doing Misogi in Lake Tahoe. Then taking everyone shopping in Reno, Nevada.

Aiding in preparing the Congress were Risho Kosei-kai members who had recently moved into their new church in Pacifica, California, and Marge Flaherty who had spend a year in Japan with her family as the last UUA Envoy. At their home in Stockton, Marge and John hosted dozens of students from IARF member groups in Japan. Tsubaki America had found difficulties with a site in Oakland, California, which was sold (several years later the Oakland site was burned in the Oakland fire which destroyed 1,000 homes). Tsubaki purchased a site in Stockton where Jun Yamamoto, Hitoshi Iwasaki, and a series of Tsubaki priests serve for a time and then return to Japan.

To help the world understand Shinto, Tsubaki America and four of its board members have published books on Shinto. Rev. Yuktaka Yamamoto's book, KAMI NO MICHU, has helped many of us understand the Japanese experience of War and desire for Peace (other Tsubaki authors are Delmer Brown, Stuart Picken, and George M. Williams). In recognition of Rev. Yamamoto's dedication, Starr King School for the Ministry awarded him an Honorary Doctorate. In return, Dr. Yamamoto set up a scholarship at Starr King which every other year brings a student from Starr King to Japan to experience Tsubaki for two or three months.

In 1990, over 30 members of the Berkeley Choir came to sing at IARF Hamburg. It was an exciting year in Germany. We stopped in Berlin and saw the Wall that had come down only a few months before. We then traveled by bus to worship with the Unitarians of Prague. Then, thanks to friends of Dr. Joseph Fabry, we gave a concert in the Grand Ballroom of Town Hall of Vienna. Then on Transylvania, where we sang in the great Unitarian Church of Cluj, and I had the honor to preach with Janos Erdo translating for me. Our visits to partner churches in the Homorod Valley brought the pilgrimage to an emotional close (I am co-leading another pilgrimage to Transylvania from Budapest May 10-18, 1999).

In 1992, I was asked by the IARF to host an interfaith gathering. With the help of a grant from the Dana M. Greeley Foundation, the 1992 Pacific Parliament of Religions took place at Pacific School of Religion. Over 500 people attended the opening talk by Matthew Fox at the First Congregational Church. The event brought together Marcus Braybrooke of the World Congress of Faiths, Robert Traer General Secretary of the IARF, and the General Secretary of the 1993 World Parliament of Religions in Chicago.

In 1993 the IARF joined with the World Congress of Faiths in a joint Congress in Bangalore, India, partly in celebration of the 100th Anniversary of the 1893 World Parliament of Religions. After Bangalore, many of us were part of a celebration at Ise, Japan, organized by Tsubaki Grand Shrine. Robert Traer joined several thousand at the 1993 Chicago World Parliament of Religions (WPR - the next WPR will be in Cape Town, S.A., starting late November 1999).

In 1996 at IARF Korea, in recognition of his dedication & support, Dr. Yamamoto was elected President of the IARF. As he comes to the end of his term at IARF Vancouver in August 1999, we honor a man who survived the jungles of New Guinea to dedicate his life in a religious quest for understanding and peace. May his tribe increase.

As theologian Hans Kung said at IARF Hamburg in 1990, "There will be no peace in the world until there is peace among religions."

Richard F. Boeke was born 2 March 1931, Atlanta, Georgia. Studied at Iowa State University and Yale Divinity School before becoming a U.S. Air Force Chaplain for three years. He became a UU minister in 1959 and served churches in Nevada, New York Florida, and California. He married Johanna Baarslag in 1965: two daughters, Elinore and Diana. Johanna became a minister in 1987. In 1995 they left the UU Church of Berkeley, California to become ministers in England. Dr. Boeke is Vice Chairman of the World Congress of Faiths. He also serves as Secretary of the International Council of Unitarians and Universalists (ICUU).

IALRW in Relation to the IARF

Nelly de Rooy Janse

The International Association for Liberal Religious Women has held its triennial meetings in conjunction with IARF Congresses and traces its roots back to the IARF Congresses of 1910. In this essay a president of the IALRW muses on her experience through the years in the IALRW and the IARF.

The first Congress I attended was held at Oxford, England in 1978 and the theme was "Communication." It was here that I became acquainted with the English way of chairing meetings. During the meeting Ank Faber was appointed vice-president and President Carolyn Howlett asked one of the members at the meeting to introduce her. But Ank said right away, "Oh no, Nelly should do the introduction."

And there I was, with no preparation and no information except what I already knew. Later I asked Ank, "Why did you do that?" She said, "That lady does not know me at all. What could she say? You know me, and so I asked you to introduce me." This first experience made me a conscious member of IALRW and IARF.

The following year I participated in a course on "Management" at Oxford University in St. Anne's College. One of the students was a young woman from Ghana. She had a job at the UNESCO office in Ghana, and we talked a lot in our free hours. One morning she came to me crying because she had not received any letters from home. I asked, "Who looks after your children and where do they stay?" She told me, "With my mother. My husband has a big job and no time to write. My mother and sisters cannot write or read, none of them."

I asked, "How is it that you can read and write?" She answered, "I was placed at a monastery school in our village but my sisters were not. I was selected by the nuns."

"But why did you not teach your sisters in the evening what you learned during the day from the nuns?" I inquired. "Oh that was only for me. I was not selected for the others." she answered. I said, "Then it is your own fault that you do not receive letters from home." If she had showed her mother and sisters what she learned during the day, she would have been receiving letters.

I started thinking. How could things be improved? What could women do together?

Jane Lauriat (who was elected president of the IARLW in 1981) and I came up with the theme "The Changing Role of Women in Society" to think more concretely about what we could do for women of the world. Through contacts with the IARF and Council member Punyabrata Roychoudhury, we located a project at Harinavi Brahma Samaj teaching literacy to women and girls. We had full support from the IARF Council and a promise that if we were able to raise funds, the IARF would match them. We are all very thankful for that gesture and particularly for the help of Jane Lauriat and Punyabrata Roychoudhury in this project.

The project, which took place in the surroundings of Calcutta, India started under the leadership of Bulbuli Ganguly. She was young, and with her enthusiasm she was able to reach out to four villages, Govindapur, Mallikapur, Jagannathpur and Hariharpur. This project brought the

IALRW and the IARF closer together. The project was always an item on the agenda of the IALRW conference and was also reviewed by the IARF. Bulbuli made presentations about the project and showed slides about her work with the women. The IARF Newsletter (no. 47) published the story of women from the four villages, describing what they had been given and how life had changed because of their education.

Japan 1984

In 1984 I was elected as Vice President of IARLW, and in 1987, during our conference at Palo Alto (USA), as President. The themes of these conferences were:

“The Cultural and Spiritual Roots of our Lives.”

“Time and Space Together.”

“Building Bridges through Sharing.”

During the 1990 conference at Goslar, Germany I completed my term as President, and Gladys McNatt was elected. She had been Vice President from 1987. We had worked together as a good team, and the work went on with great enthusiasm.

In India in 1993 I attended the IARLW conference and the IARF Congress in Bangalore. I also visited our project at Harinavi. I met the women in the four villages and was greatly impressed to see what had been accomplished. The women spoke only Bengali, their mother tongue, and some Hindi, so I could only look and listen. But they could already write their own name and read a text. Literacy opened a completely new world for them, and they were very proud and thankful. They could also read recipes and patterns for knitting and crocheting, and they could understand instructions for embroidery.

Financial support from IARF made it possible to get better rooms for the lessons and to obtain more materials. The IARF and IARLW thought that it was very important for the teachers not only to speak the language of the village people, but also to have the same religion as the village women. Language and religion are the most important aspects of culture in the villages and, therefore, understanding them is of great importance for the community.

Autorickshaw

IALRW women from the Netherlands sent money to buy an autorickshaw for the Harinavi project. This was important for the contacts between teachers and the villages, as teachers were walking to the project. Also, Bulbuli, who was coordinating the whole project, walked hours from village to village. With the rickshaw she could use her time much more efficiently. Unfortunately, the autorickshaw driver earned much more than our teachers, but with support from IARF the salaries of the teachers were improved in time. The differences in salaries was largely because the driver is a man, whereas the teachers are women.

Bangalore, India

Good friends gave me money to take to India for the project. In consultation with Bulbuli and the IARF president, a decision was made to get a weaving loom. In fact, they were able to purchase four looms and the necessary materials for weaving. The women are now also able to read the instructions, and that was a tremendous experience for them. For these women, reading instructions is as important as reading books.

Bags

The women in the project wove Congress bags for IARF and IARLW and for the last conference in Korea they made a book-cover with the logo on it. That was how all those women were present at the conference and Congress—through their own work. Development is important. It alters peoples' view of the world, inspires them to attend the village council to improve their lives in relation to the larger community, and helps them to learn to respect others wherever they live.

When the women are brought together to be taught, their young children come with them and, while playing around, they learn what the women are taught. So, by listening, there is an awakening of interest in both the boys and the girls. This is how, through women and young girls, the whole family may be taught to read and write. The project spreads and affects the community. If a woman becomes literate, then the family becomes literate.

Presidential contacts

The IALRW President is a member of the IARF council. That is very helpful in selecting the location and theme for IALRW conferences and IARF Congresses. For the IALRW it has always been important to address the theme in their own womens' conference. The participants in the IALRW have the opportunity to think about the theme and draw some conclusions. Similarly, it is refreshing to become familiar with the English/American system of running a meeting. It is impossible to say which system is better, but we have to adjust to this way of meeting and drawing conclusions. Sometimes it seems like there are wheels within wheels. In the English/American system not only one motion, but a second is needed before a vote. If there is no second, a motion does not come to a vote. This can lead to stagnation, or it can inspire people to work more closely together. Working together requires trust and respect for the views of others.

The council meetings of IARF are always held for two days and include one evening together to relax and have a good meal. That time is perfect for getting to know the other Council members and staff. Real friendships are created at that time. After a meeting I would think to myself: "Did I learn something this time?" And I wondered, "Am I able to have an influence on the total work of IARF and IARLW together?"

Every person has ideals and we carry these with us on our path through life. In the IARF and the IARLW our ideals include freedom and peace for all people. Religion comes from the Latin word "religio" and means connection between what is human and what transcends human existence. Religion can also mean rituals. There should be respect for the values of others, but we are allowed to expect the same respect for ourselves. Respect for each other is a wonderful foundation that the IARF and IARLW can build on together.

Making choices

Human beings always have to make choices. What do we wish, what do we expect, what do we do, and what is important for ourselves and for the organisation? It is neither easy nor simple to weigh our choices.

During the Congresses of the IARF we always have an opportunity to learn more about other religions which have members in the IARF and IALRW. All the participants learn a lot from the other participants about their religions and scriptures. Study of these scriptures is fascinating and valuable for an active and interested member of the IALRW.

The backgrounds of the member organizations of the IARF and IALRW must always be liberal, because without that liberal background it is impossible to change thoughts by meeting in person or by writing. One has to accept the other as he is.

Art and Culture

We cannot understand religion apart from art and culture. The culture of a nation is based in religion and holds valuable aspects of both culture and religion. We see that manifested in forms of art in words, images, sculptures, and gestures. But let us not only think of religious art, because folk art (songs, dances, paintings and narratives) also has a great influence.

The unknown approximation of the Sacrosanct in a religion is something to think about. It is important to try to learn the background. So stories told in the northern countries and the music there are sometimes dark-tinted and severe. The southern countries have more playfulness and light-spirited stories. In these parts of the globe, they dance and act out their stories to remember and bring to life their past. The performance can last many hours.

A totally different form is to know, to feel, that everywhere and in all things there is a secret. An Eskimo I once met told me that even within the most simple material a secret is kept. Eskimos collect stones in summer and store them in the igloo. In winter, during the dark hours they take a stone and hold it for a long time until the stone gives its secret and its wonder to the hand. Then the Eskimo starts to work and the wonder is freed. The wonder can be a butterfly, a bird, a figure, a flower, etc., but the beauty often takes away one's breath.

The artist feels like an instrument of the Sacrosanct who let him do this.

75 Years Anniversary

The celebration of the IARLW's 75th anniversary was held at Goslar, Germany. We stayed at Haus Hessenkopf and had a good time preparing for the IARF congress at Hamburg. We experienced something of the hard times after the reunification of East and West Germany in these days. Goslar is a special city and we saw very impressive art and splendid architecture as well as folk art and costumes. To prepare for this conference I went to Goslar with my husband. We had a lovely trip through the snow in December 1989 to the "kopf." It was like a fairy tale. In the autumn of 1990 after the conference we went back for a holiday, and that was again lovely and is now a very special memory.

IARLW in relation to the IARF

This relationship has given us an opportunity to see our world together and what is happening to our planet. We know that nothing is totally good and nothing totally wrong. All people do look somewhere for unity, unity for all people. Everything has a turning point and in between those points we try to find out the "truth."

Everybody, every religion, looks for the truth, then thinks it is found, but ... and that is it. My personal truth is that my husband inspired me to do whatever I have been able to do. Together we asked ourselves, what do we want? What do we expect? What can we do?

The Big Chance

We had an opportunity to get to know about the old scriptures, what they are and what they teach. It was special to get to know about 'TO BE'. It is the power, the desire for the secret, the blind corner, the mystery, and the incapability to reach the special part of creation that is locked for humanity.

It is the remembrance of time— "God was with humanity."

In the IALRW and IARF we have encountered the astonishing moments that reflect the holy scriptures, where the special actions of the big mystery have been recited – spoken – played. We all try to find and to know how it was at the beginning in the original primitive world and to renew the time of paradise.

How we call it:

Paradise
Garden
Hof
Kerio
Dilum
Hof of Eden

It has called up remembrances. The IARLW and the IARF give people a chance to see what goes on all over the globe.

Wemeldinge, September 1998

Dr de Rooy-Janse is President of the European Chapter of IALRW and has attended IARF Congresses regularly since 1978.

The IARF 1958-1972: A Personal Recollection

Max D. Gaebler

The IARF Congress in Chicago, conceived on a grand scale, succeeded largely in demonstrating that its theme, "Today's religions can meet the needs of our time," was, in 1958, wishful thinking. But on the more modest level of

promoting personal friendships and fruitful institutional relationships, it was much more successful. Davos, in 1961, witnessed the return of substantial representation from member groups in Eastern Europe. Maintaining relationships with these groups was surely one of the major accomplishments of the IARF in these years. As membership expanded beyond the Judaeo-Christian world, questions of identity and purpose rose to the fore. The result was the establishment of four Commissions at London in 1966 to represent the broad range of the Association's concerns and the abbreviation of the Association's name at Boston in 1969. The period under discussion ends with the Heidelberg congress in 1972, with the appointment of Diether Gehrman as full-time General Secretary and the moving of IARF headquarters from The Hague to Frankfurt. For me personally such major experiences as my attendance at Vatican II and my year as Exchange Minister with the Free Religious Congregations of Baden could not have happened without the IARF. These experiences and the friendships formed during these years have made the IARF a major factor in my life.

The IARF Congress in 1958 was held in Chicago, and with it began an association that has become a major part of my personal as well as my professional life. In those days Europe seemed to me more remote than Rwanda does today. So my eager curiosity reached a high pitch as I headed for Chicago with half a dozen other participants from Madison. We felt a special involvement since we were to host the IRF conference immediately following the Congress.

Though there had been three Congresses since the end of the war prior to Chicago, this one was planned on a scale to rival some of the great gatherings early in this century. Frederick May Eliot, President of the American Unitarian Association (AUA), had devoted all the resources at his command to assemble a stellar program and to attract as wide and varied participation as was then possible. Alas, he collapsed and died on the steps of All Souls Church in New York City only weeks before the Congress was scheduled to begin. By request of the Board of the AUA the Rev. Ernest Kuebler stepped into this gigantic void both as President of the AUA and as the designated candidate for the Presidency of the IARF.

Though Frederick Eliot's absence cast a pall over the opening of the Congress, his careful planning produced an outstanding program indeed. Recalling the spirit of the memorable 'World Parliament of Religions' held in conjunction with the Chicago 'World's Fair of 1893', the program had been designed to lift up the meeting of the world's great religions. As religious liberals we felt it to be our unique opportunity — indeed our obligation — to get beyond the missionary mentality of earlier generations and to seek ways in which people standing in widely varied religious cultures might responsibly address the profound social, political and ethical issues raised by the experience of World War II.

We had the advantage of having within our own ranks members of the Brahma Samaj, one of our founding groups, as well as the Japan Free Religious Association (JFRA), a small but remarkable organization under the energetic leadership of its founder, Dr. Shinichiro Imaoka. But for the Chicago Congress Frederick Eliot had searched far beyond our own limited ranks for inspiration.

Five major addresses had been scheduled, all of them to be held in the University of Chicago's great Rockefeller Chapel. They were designed to be major public events, with the public at large invited to join the more than 700 Congress participants. These high anticipations were at least in some respects fulfilled.

Prof. Wilhelm Pauck, a distinguished church historian, opened the series, speaking eloquently from the perspective of liberal Protestantism. On the second evening the speaker was Mohammed Zafrulla Khan, a former head of the Pakistani delegation to the United Nations who by 1958 was a member of the International Court of Justice in The Hague. His presentation, as I recall it, was a very careful and modest description of Islamic resources for meeting the challenges of the contemporary world. I say "careful and modest" because he must have been aware that his presentation was likely to be observed closely by Muslims concerned lest his presumably more liberal interpretation of Islam be allowed to stand unchallenged. In the event, a number of young men did indeed ring the entrances to the Chapel handing out to all comers leaflets warning us not to be misled by liberal interpretations of their heritage. Well aware of the dangers in such a situation, Zafrullah Khan said little either to disturb his Muslim critics or to encourage his non-Muslim audience.

Third in this distinguished series was the Hindu Dr. Kalidas Nag, President of the Association for Adult Education in West Bengal. He was followed by the Burmese Buddhist scholar, U Chan Hoon. The final — and for me by far the most forceful and relevant — lecture was presented by Rabbi Solomon Freehof of Pittsburgh.

As a Unitarian I had long since come to regard Reformed Judaism as our closest religious neighbor. Moreover, I had heard Rabbi Freehof on an earlier occasion, an address I remember to this day, one in which he made the often remote figure of Jesus come vigorously alive in the context of the Judaism of his day.

These lectures, as already noted, had been planned by Frederick Eliot to build on the heritage of comity established at the World Parliament of Religions in 1893. Alas, the intervention of two World Wars and the consequent rise of Christian neo-orthodoxy and of similar revivals of exclusivity in other religious traditions made it evident that the goal of this Congress remained remote indeed. To affirm, in the words of the Congress theme, that “Today’s religions can meet the needs of our time” was, in 1958, evidence of wishful thinking.

Nevertheless, at the more modest level of creating an environment in which personal and even institutional friendships could be formed and strengthened on a world-wide basis, the Congress was, at least for me, enormously important. It was there, in Chicago, that we arranged for the patriarch of Scandinavian Unitarianism, the Rev. Thorvald Kierkegaard of Copenhagen, to speak one August Sunday morning at our Madison church. I shall never forget that visit from him and his daughter Gudrun, a visit I had the opportunity to reciprocate some six years later.

In conversation with Spencer Lavan, then President of the IRF, and his colleagues we completed plans for that group’s conference to be held in Madison immediately following the Congress. The Rev. Donald Harrington of New York’s famed Community Church was to be the principal speaker. And the Rev. Heije Faber of Wassenaar in Holland was to be the preacher Sunday morning. He had served a liberal congregation in that city for some fifteen years, but he had just accepted an appointment to the faculty of the University of Leyden. I remember asking him how it felt to pull up roots and to move after so long a time with one congregation, little realizing that I was myself destined to serve our Madison congregation for thirty—five years. What astonished me at the time was his response “But we’re not moving. Leyden is just a fifteen—minute drive away.” Only when I visited the Fabers at their lovely home in Wassenaar a few years later did I come to appreciate the difference in scale between Western Europe and the open expanses of our own American Middle West.

Dr. Faber subsequently had a distinguished career, introducing the field of pastoral psychology in Holland (if not indeed in Europe). He and his family remain to this day our oldest European friends; we have visited each other several times over the years.

A highlight of the IRF conference was surely the party on Saturday evening, for which each national group prepared a skit. How easily the barriers of language and culture are overcome among young people! Language problems were in any case minimal, since even then most European students learned English in school and were far more accustomed to finding themselves in multi-lingual settings. I remember how impressed I was to discover that in Holland everyone was required to study French, German and English. After living in Germany for a time fifteen years later, my wife and I realized that even in the larger countries of Western Europe one hardly passed a day without hearing at least one foreign language being spoken. Such an experience would have been unimaginable in the American Middle West in 1958, though happily things have changed at least a little in recent years.

One consequence of the 1958 Congress was that a long-time member of our Madison congregation who had been among the participants was sufficiently impressed with my enthusiastic involvement both in the Congress and in the IRF conference in Madison so that he undertook to raise a fund among our church members to enable me to go to Europe for the Davos Congress in 1961. My generation had had less opportunity than our parents to travel abroad. The Great Depression of the 1930’s, followed by the war in the 1940’s, had virtually eliminated the possibility of foreign travel for us in those years of early adulthood during which, for example, my father had spent the summer of 1911 in Japan. So this generous initiative created a major opportunity for me.

It was clear, of course, that the fund thus raised was only one of two major gifts that made the trip possible. The other was my wife’s willingness to stay at home with four children between the ages

of four and thirteen. As it turned out, this trip opened up new vistas, which eventually affected our whole family's orientation to the world.

Though I had been fascinated with geography all my life, there still lurked in my innermost center of awareness some uncertainty as to whether there really was another continent on the other side of that endless expanse of water over which we flew. As the sunlight of the dawn gradually brightened, I was ecstatic to catch sight of the landfall ahead. As we neared the shore it became obvious that we were over the Emerald Isle en route to London's Heathrow Airport. A few days of relentless sightseeing in London followed by a brief visit to Holland, where I was a guest of the Fabers, led to a quick tour of the lower Rhine, a few days in Paris, a train trip to Geneva, and finally my arrival in Davos.

The hotels in this famous resort still revealed their service in an earlier era as retreats for sufferers from tuberculosis. One could easily imagine the scenes of Thomas Mann's Magic Mountain. The spacious rooms with their wide balconies, where once the patients lay to inhale the pure and healthful mountain air now housed our truly global assembly of more than six hundred religious liberals.

Most noteworthy was that for the first time since the end of the war colleagues from Eastern Europe were present in force. Bishop Novak of the Czechoslovak Church had been present in Chicago, but he had been the only representative of a religious body in any Warsaw Pact country permitted to leave his homeland. For Davos the Czech and Hungarian Unitarians had also been able to obtain exit visas. I recall vividly an afternoon stroll on a mountain path with Dusan Kafka, then leader of the Unitarian Church in Czechoslovakia. He had attended Meadville Theological School in Chicago and spoke excellent English. It was from him that I first began to understand the conditions under which intellectual and religious life managed to survive in a totalitarian society. His experience gave moving substance to the descriptions in Czeslaw Milosz's wonderful little book Captive Mind.

I have spoken two or three times of the linguistic skills exhibited by so many of the Europeans I met at Chicago and Davos. Never were such skills more brilliantly exhibited than in the instantaneous translations provided at Davos by Diether Gehrman and Rudy Gelsey, both of whom were born in Europe but had lived for years in America. At later Congresses, especially after the list of Asian member groups in the IARF had both grown and diversified, translation services at Congresses became more professionalized, with booths for translators and earphones for delegates.

A further adventure, more impressive even than the Congress itself, was yet to follow. Through some happy chance I had signed up months earlier for a post-Congress trip to Hungary and Romania under the leadership of the Revs. Vilma and Donald Harrington. Vilma was a birthright Unitarian born and educated in Transylvania. She and Donald had been married in a Unitarian chapel in Budapest, and many of her family still lived in Transylvania. The Rev. Voltan Nagy and his wife, also native Transylvanians and birthright Unitarians, were in our party, too, though for very good reason they were with us only in Hungary, fearful that crossing the border into Romania would be too risky in their particular situation.

This is not the place to tell the story of that truly historic visit, the first by an organized group from the West to visit those oldest of all Unitarian churches since before World War II, a lapse of twenty-five years. Our reception everywhere touched our hearts and left us with warm memories of spirited and heroic people.

At that time, in 1961, the openness of our present relationships with our friends in Transylvania through the Partner Church Council would have been inconceivable. The Transylvanian churches then were limited to the holding of formal religious services. No religious education classes for children, no women's groups, no youth groups, no church newsletters or journals, no summer camps or conferences — nothing was permitted. As it turned out, our visit heralded a relaxation of political pressures sufficient to permit the Unitarians of Transylvania to send representatives to all subsequent IARF Congresses, a participation which has surely been enriching for all of us.

One thing seems always to lead to another. As my participation in the Chicago Congress had led to my trip to Davos, so that excursion into Hungary and Romania resulted in an invitation from Dana Greeley, then President of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) and a member of the Harrington party visiting Eastern Europe, to join his staff as Director of Overseas and Interfaith Relations. My wife and I were unwilling to leave the parish ministry, but we agreed to take a year's

leave of absence while I undertook to organize the program Dana Greeley had envisioned. It turned out to be a fascinating and, I hope, productive year.

We had scarcely settled in our rented house in Arlington, Massachusetts, when I learned that I was scheduled to set out with Dana Greeley on a round-the-world trip within the month. We began by helping to dedicate the recently acquired church home of the Honolulu congregation, then continued on to Tokyo. There at the airport to greet us was Dr. Shinichiro Imaoka. As we drove to our hotel, he outlined the program he had arranged for our three-day visit. It began with a dinner that evening. Given the time lag between Honolulu and Tokyo, we were dining at what, by Honolulu time was after midnight. Fortunately both Dana Greeley and I had hardy constitutions.

Following that meal a distinguished Japanese scholar addressed the gathering of some seventy or eighty people in perfect English. He was followed by an address in equally fluent Japanese by Dr. Charles Fahs, son of Sophia Lyon Fahs and at that time serving as cultural attaché at the U. S. Embassy.

In addition to visits to the Universalist Church in Tokyo, to Seisoku High School (a private school for boys of which Dr. Imaoka had been headmaster for many years, and where headquarters of the JFRA were maintained), to the American embassy, and an evening at the Kabuki theater, we had meetings with the officers of the JFRA and with representatives of two groups Dr. Imaoka was eager to introduce to the IARF. One was Konkokyo, one of the older so-called “new religions” in Japan; the other, one of the newer “new religions” was described simply as a laymen’s Buddhist Association. Only later did I realize that this was Rissho Kosei Kai, which has now become one of the pillars of the IARF. At any rate, those meetings were the seed-bed from which emerged the major roles played by our Japanese friends in the decades since that visit.

The next stop on our trip was the Philippines, where we met with all three of the member groups then affiliated with the IARF. My most moving memory is the long evening I spent with the Rev. Toribio Quemada, founder and leader of the Universalist Church of the Philippines. He had translated our entire American hymnal and was eager for help in publishing it for use among his members, scattered through rural villages on the southern island of Negros. This meeting, it turned out, was the occasion for his very first visit to Manila. We kept in touch over the years, and I count myself fortunate to have had opportunity for extended conversations with him during the 1987 Congress at Stanford. He took sick during that Congress and entered the University hospital, where I visited him. Not long after his return to the Philippines he was attacked and murdered in his own home. In my mind he remains one of the true heroes of religious freedom in our time.

From the Philippines we went on to Calcutta, where the Sadharan Brahma Samaj welcomed us with high celebration and warm hospitality. From there we proceeded to the Khasi Hills, where the Unitarian Union provided dramatic contrast. Founded in 1887 by a remarkable Khasi, Hajom Kissor Singh, the Khasi Unitarian Union had profited enormously from the life-work of Margaret Barr, a British Unitarian minister whom we had met at our UUA General Assembly in Chicago the preceding Spring. She was off on a long planned trip to England when Dana Greeley and I were in the Khasi Hills, but she had prepared everything for our arrival.

The Khasi Unitarians were largely rural people, some two thousand of them in sixteen congregations at that time. I remember their then President, Devison Marbaniang, telling us that their ranks included no one with a college degree and only twenty-five or thirty people who had finished secondary school. I mention this because when I had the opportunity to revisit the Khasi Hills with Kenneth MacLean in 1995, their numbers had more than quadrupled, the number of churches more than doubled, and there were among them a substantial number of college-educated, culturally sophisticated, and extremely able young men and women.

A major reason for this dramatic change was Margaret Barr’s suggestion in 1963 that we, together with the British Unitarians, undertake to make it possible for Devison Marbaniang to resign his government job and devote full time as a Church Visitor. One of our missions when we visited the Khasi Hills later that year was to follow up on that suggestion. From that modest beginning, thanks particularly to the devoted and inspiring leadership of Mr. Marbaniang, the Unitarian Union now has five ministers, three of them full-time, and ten church visitors, two of whom are full-time.

The Executive Secretary of the Union, Mr. Carley Lyngdoh, was President of the youth group when we visited there in 1963. I have shared many happy times with friends from the Khasi Hills at

IARF Congresses and even had the opportunity to share in welcoming Devison Marbaniang to Germany and to entertain a young lady from the Khasi Hills at our home in Madison.

Leaving India, we headed for Rome and the second session of the Second Vatican Council. The IARF had been invited to send two observers, one European and one American. Most of the time during all four sessions of the Council these seats were occupied by religious scholars: Prof. I. J. van Holk of Leyden and Profs. James Luther Adams and George H. Williams of the Harvard Divinity School. But for one week early in the second session, the first presided over by the new Pope, Paul VI, the American seat was occupied by Dana Greeley as President of the ULTA. Though I was simply tagging along, I was welcomed into the midst of the official observers. Richard Cardinal Cushing, who had known Dana Greeley back home in Boston, had brought a young faculty member from the diocesan seminary to serve as his theological advisor. So when I turned up with Dana Greeley, he assumed I must have been fulfilling a similar function. I have ever since maintained that on no less an authority than that of Cardinal Cushing I qualify as a theologian.

It is impossible to convey in a few brief sentences the spirit that infused those remarkable days. Renewal, complete openness in discussion, camaraderie across all sectarian lines, high hope for the future of the world and for organized religion as a significant and constructive factor in the world, the healing of ancient wounds and a genuine commitment to religious freedom — all this had a profound influence not only in Catholic circles but in the whole world of religious discourse. Though the present Pope, John Paul II, has moved ever farther from the commitment to religious freedom he advocated so eloquently as head of the Polish hierarchy, the “fresh air” Pope John XXIII invited into the Church cannot be entirely expelled. Relations between the Church of Rome and the rest of the Judaeo-Christian world were almost non-existent prior to the Council. Once the genie of renewal was out of the bottle, however, it became impossible ever to stuff it completely back in. As a result, for example, I enjoy relationships with the Catholic college and the Benedictine ecumenical center in my home city of Madison as well as close and cordial personal relationships with numerous Catholic clergy and religious. All this would simply have been impossible before Vatican II. For me, attending the Council was one of the most valuable opportunities I have ever had; it could not have happened without the IARF.

From Rome we flew to Holland for a meeting with the Secretariat and principal officers of the IARF. From that moment on I was heavily engaged with the three Dutch Remonstrant clergy who then constituted the Secretariat. These were Wim Cramer, Joost Wery and Jan van Goudoever. In addition, the President and Treasurer of the IARF were both Dutch and the office, under the devoted leadership of Bertha van Gennep, was located in The Hague. Sharing with this strong Dutch contingent in preparing for the upcoming Congress in The Hague that next summer became a large part of my work during my year on the UUA staff.

There were other dimensions of my year at the UUA that also involved the IARF. Indeed most of what I was doing related in one way or another to the program and purposes of our international organization. For example, at the invitation of the Green Street Friends Meeting in Philadelphia I attended the biennial gathering of the Friends General Conference at Cape May, New Jersey. There I spoke on the IARF and expressed a widely shared hope that the Conference itself would join the IARF. Their Executive Secretary, Lawrence Miller, attended two or three of our Congresses and strongly supported this invitation. Alas, the reliance of Friends on a unanimous “sense of the meeting” doomed the proposal to failure by default. Getting all the eight yearly meetings that comprised the Friends General Conference to agree simply proved too daunting.

Then there was the initiative of the Rev. Richard Boeke, then minister of the Unitarian Universalist Church in St. Petersburg, Florida, which led to the organization of what has become our American chapter of the IARF, a prototype for other national organizations within our worldwide membership. And there were opportunities to meet many interesting visitors from far and wide. Two I particularly remember are Robert Steyn and his wife from Capetown. Then a distinguished and courageous newspaperman in South Africa, Mr. Steyn was in Cambridge, Massachusetts, that year as a Nieman Fellow at Harvard. A leading member of the Capetown Unitarian congregation, he later attended theological school in England and became that church’s minister. We met again at later Congresses, and the Steyns were very generous to one of our daughters during an extended visit in South Africa.

Another memorable moment was my visit, along with Joseph Fisher, then a member of the UUA Board and later the Congressman from his Virginia district, to the Hon. Petre Bălăceanu, Romanian Legate (relations between Romania and the United States were not yet on an ambassadorial level). Our purpose was to press the case for release of the sixteen Unitarian ministers still held in Romanian prisons. We were received cordially by Mr. Bălăceanu, who had done his homework and knew in detail the cases that concerned us. He presented his government's position clearly, but he also listened attentively to our case. There is no evidence whatever that our intervention had any effect, but all sixteen prisoners were indeed released within the ensuing year. I concluded then and there that if the IARF did nothing else but maintain our contacts with friends behind the Iron Curtain it would far more than justify its existence. Nothing was more important for our colleagues than the knowledge in official circles that they had friends in the West who were watching.

The 1964 Congress met in Scheveningen, the beautiful seaside suburb of The Hague. The opening service, at which my friend and mentor Duncan Howlett, then minister of the vibrant All Souls Unitarian Church in Washington, D.C., and whose wife, Carolyn Howlett, later served as President of the IARF, was the preacher, was held in a most impressive Remonstrant church. Equally memorable was the so-called "theologians' luncheon." A Congress fixture, this was in fact a gathering of all the clergy in attendance at the Congress. On this occasion the speaker was Prof. G. J. Hoenderdaal of the University of Leyden. His perceptive and eloquent account of the situation of liberal Protestantism evoked animated discussion. The most sensitive issue had to do with the appropriateness (or inappropriateness) of the name of our organization: International Association for Liberal Christianity and Religious Freedom.

As I have previously noted, the Brahma Samaj was among the groups that organized the Association in 1900. And the Japan Free Religious Association had been a member since 1952. But the base of the Association, both in membership and support, had always been in Europe and North America among groups firmly rooted in the Judaeo-Christian tradition. With growing participation from other parts of the world and other religious traditions, and with new currents rising among many of our long-time European and American members as well, the question of identity surfaced as an increasingly cogent and sometimes contentious issue. The discussion following Prof. Hoenderdaal's address at that meeting in Scheveningen remains in my memory as the occasion when this matter moved prominently onto our Association's agenda.

Another feature of the 1964 Congress that remains fresh in my memory is the presence of official observers from the World Council of Churches and the Vatican, as well as several other smaller religious bodies. There had been observers at earlier Congresses, but the role of such fraternal delegations took on fresh meaning against the backdrop of the Vatican Council, then in mid-stream. I recall particularly the Vatican observer's humorous comment that it was his experience, having attended many ecumenical meetings, that when a meeting was held in Germany the focus was on theology; when it took place in France the emphasis was prayer; in England, he said, we simply have a jolly good time; but in Holland we organize.

During the business meeting in Scheveningen Bishop Kiss, head of the Transylvanian Unitarian churches, surprised all of us (no one more than his Transylvanian colleagues) by inviting us to hold a Congress in Koloszvar in 1968, the four hundredth anniversary of these, the oldest Unitarian churches in the world. The Congress enthusiastically accepted this invitation, though Bishop Kiss and his colleagues indicated that it would be necessary to clear all arrangements with the Romanian government's Ministry of Cults.

Many of us realized that there would be genuine problems in holding an official international meeting in Romania. Indeed, it turned out that Bishop Kiss and his associates were able to organize a great celebration of this important anniversary, and some five hundred visitors from Western Europe and North America did in fact attend as guests. But it was not — indeed, could not have been — a formal meeting of the IARF.

At that time, of course, despite uncertainty as to whether it could in fact be a Congress, we had to adjust our schedule to accommodate that possibility. So we decided to change, at least temporarily, from triennial to biennial Congresses, the next to be held in 1966 in London, with the potential Koloszvar Congress to follow in 1968. Since that celebration turned out not to be a Congress, we later reverted to the triennial schedule with the 1969 gathering set for Boston.

After the Schevening Congress I stayed on in Europe for several weeks. Once again I joined a party led by the Harringtons, this time visiting not only 'Hungary and Romania but Czechoslovakia as well. Prof. Miloslav Kaak of the Hussite church, a distinguished church historian, led us on a tour of the old city of Prague that I shall never forget. He knew the story behind every stone in the city. Some years later my wife and I were guests at the home of the Kanyaks, and Prof. Kanyak himself visited us in Madison during the course of a quarter he spent as a guest lecturer at the Meadville/Lombard Theological School in Chicago. It was on that 1964 visit to Prague that we also met Bohdana Hasplova, daughter of Norbert Capek, and her husband, Karel Haspl, Dr. Capek's successor as leader of the Czech Unitarian churches.

Perhaps the most memorable of those post-Congress weeks was the one I spent as a guest lecturer at the Albert Schweitzer College in Churwalden, Switzerland. My roommate and fellow lecturer was Bruce Findlow, then minister of St. Mark's Unitarian Church in Edinburgh and later Principal of Manchester College, Oxford. Albert Schweitzer College, a project initiated and supported chiefly by our Swiss IARF member group, served for several years as a magnet for young people from our affiliates in many countries. Its contribution to the experience of many young religious liberals was significant. Its subsequent history, however, was complex and unfortunate. But this is not the place to tell that story.

I have spoken above of the impact of the so-called "theologians' meeting" at the Scheveningen Congress. Such meetings had often consisted simply of a luncheon followed by a speaker. But in 1964 the discussion had raised issues that many of us thought needed to be lifted up and addressed more comprehensively. After the Congress the three Dutch members of the Secretariat, with whom I was then meeting as an unofficial American representative, began making plans for the London Congress in 1966.

We decided that a longer time was needed to provide opportunity for extended discussion among our religious professionals so that all of us could discover more adequately where our colleagues from other countries were coming from. After all, useful interchange can take place only if we know something about the differing contexts, in which we live and work.

A second concern was to engage more of the younger ministers from all member groups in active IARF participation. The older generation had earned the admiration and gratitude of all of us. They had persevered, many of them under wartime hardships we from America could scarcely imagine, and had brought the Association back to life after the war. But the time had come when we needed to reach out to involve actively the younger leaders and potential leaders of our member groups. The result was to replace the "theologians' luncheon" with a two-day conference of theologians preceding the Congress. Many of today's IARF leaders were among the group that gathered at the Dutch Church in London in 1966.

A further consequence of those plans was that Dr. Peter Dalbert, the Swiss theologian who was elected President of the IARF at the London Congress, proposed dividing the work of the Association among three (ultimately four) Commissions. These were designed to reflect the variety of concerns our various individual and member groups brought to our agenda.

During the Congress itself the identity and question of purpose were central both in the principal addresses and in the group discussions, especially those surrounding the establishment of the Commissions. The closing service, held at London's historic Essex Church, gave moving expression in its liturgy to the renewed and expanded sense of purpose widely felt among the delegates.

The Commissions did indeed get to work. Their correspondence and occasional reports culminated in the Boston Congress, where they provided both the structure and substance for the program. That Congress, in 1969, was held, on Dana Greeley's invitation, in conjunction with the annual General Assembly of the UUA. In 1966 no one could possibly have predicted the turmoil and disarray which marked that General Assembly. Profound division over the appropriate ways to deal with the wider issues of race relations in American society, together with efforts of a newly formed Youth Caucus to establish itself so occupied the attention of American Unitarian Universalists that they scarcely noticed the IARF delegates from abroad who were among us. The issues confronting the General Assembly were substantive, but it was the highly confrontational tactics employed by some that made the whole occasion so emotionally difficult for many Americans that we were far from being the gracious hosts and hostesses we would wish to have been. Fortunately, our attention was at

least briefly lifted to the heavens by that almost unimaginable event, the first human landing on the moon.

The Congress and the UUA General Assembly overlapped but did not precisely coincide. The major program sessions of the Congress came toward the end of the General Assembly and were scheduled so as to permit maximum attendance. The General Meeting of the IARF came at the end. I remember that meeting well, because our President, Dr. Peter Dalbert, feeling insecure in English, asked me to preside in his stead.

The reports of the three Commissions formed the main business of the Congress and a fourth Commission was added. It was clear that we were moving in new directions, and there was high hope that the IARF was indeed finding its way into the new religious environment of the late twentieth century.

One consequence of the Boston Congress for me personally was an invitation to join Commission III, whose area of concern was "The Dialogue among the World's Religions." As a result, when the Commissions gathered at Burg Stettenfels near Heilbronn late in the summer of 1971, I was there as a participant. The conversations within our Commission and among all four Commissions constituted the most focussed deliberation I have experienced within the aegis of the IARF.

The major importance of the Burg Stettenfels meeting for me, however, lay elsewhere. The Free Religious Congregations of Baden were to host the Heidelberg Congress in 1972, so it was only natural that their Senior Minister, Dr. Heinz Schlötermann, should make the arrangements for us at Burg Stettenfels the preceding summer. After all, our work was intended to prepare the way for the agenda at the Heidelberg Congress. So it was at Burg Stettenfels that I really got to know Dr. Schlötermann and to meet his young colleague Dr. Eckhart Pilick.

This turned out to be important for me and for my family. In the winter of 1972 Dr. Schlötermann, as Vice President of the IARF and host for the upcoming Congress, made a brief visit to the United States and Canada to stimulate interest and attendance at Heidelberg. We eagerly welcomed him to Madison and to the nearby town of Sauk City, where the last surviving German Free Religious Congregation on our side of the Atlantic continues to this day.

In the course of that visit Dr. Schlötermann raised the possibility of my coming to Germany for a year to serve as a minister with the Free Religious Congregations of Baden. To make a long story short, my wife and I discussed this fascinating but demanding opportunity, I again arranged for a year's leave of absence from the Madison church, and we (my wife and I and our two youngest children, then aged eleven and sixteen) spent the academic year 1973-74 in Emmendingen, a city just north of Freiburg-im-Breisgau. This turned out to be one of the decisive experiences of my career, and it could not have happened without the IARF.

In between, of course, came the Heidelberg Congress. Indeed it was during the Congress that I was interviewed by Herr Peterson, President of the Free Religious Congregations of Baden, as a result of which I was formally offered the position in Germany. The Congress itself was notable in a variety of ways. For one thing the program focussed entirely on the reports of the four Commissions. There were no formal lectures; instead, maximum opportunity was afforded for small group discussions, person-to-person conversation, and a variety of recreational and cultural activities. Once again I was asked to preside at the business meeting, this time by President Dana Greeley, who felt unable to use German.

Most important of all was the decision to entrust leadership of the day-to-day work of the Association to a full-time General Secretary. The Rev. Diether Gehrman, who had served congregations both in Germany and the United States, was named to this post. His leadership and the subsequent move of IARF headquarters from The Hague to Frankfurt initiated a new era in the life of the IARF. Membership in Asia among religious groups wholly outside the Judaeo-Christian world grew rapidly. More ambitious social service programs were launched, providing opportunities for many individuals and organizations within our ranks to become directly involved with member groups in other parts of the world. Indeed, in more recent years three Congresses have been held in Asia, the first ever convened outside of Europe and North America.

These more recent accomplishments will, I am sure, be dealt with by other contributors to this Centennial volume. Though I have attended five of the eight Congresses since Heidelberg and expect to be at Vancouver in 1999, it is the experiences and the personal contacts of the years from Chicago

in 1958 to Heidelberg in 1972 that have been most important in my own life. And since my part in this volume is, by design, a very personal one, I have chosen to focus on the people and events that have most profoundly affected my life. Attending the Vatican Council, spending a year (plus a three-month return engagement two years later) in Germany, forming enduring friendships with such people as the Fabers, the Kanyaks, the Schlötermanns, the Pilicks, Lajos Kovacs and his wife, Ben Downing and Devison Marbaniang and Toribio Quemada and so many others — these have constituted the wonderful part the IARF has played in my life. I rejoice to have this opportunity to express my enduring gratitude.

Born in Watertown, Wisconsin, in 1921, Mr. Gaebler graduated from Harvard College and the Harvard Divinity School. The major part of his career was his 35-year ministry at the First Unitarian Society of Madison, Wisconsin, widely known for its Meeting House designed by Frank Lloyd Wright. Upon his retirement in 1987 he was named Minister Emeritus by the Society. International interests have played a major role in Mr. Gaebler's career. He used two year-long leaves of absence to serve, in 1963-64, as first Director of the UUA Department of Overseas and Interfaith Relations and, a decade later, as Exchange Minister with the Free Religious Congregations of Baden. Since his retirement interim ministries have taken him and his wife to Adelaide, South Australia; Auckland, New Zealand; and Vancouver. With the Vancouver Congress Mr. Gaebler will have participated in fifteen of the last eighteen IARF Congresses, beginning with Chicago in 1958.

The 27th Hamburg IARF Congress in 1990

Peter Gerlitz

In 1990 the IARF Congress was held in Hamburg, Germany. The end of the Cold War greatly influenced the proceedings. Dr Gerlitz describes the issues taken up in the study sessions, and reflects on the impact of visiting the former concentration camp at Neuengamme.

Looking at the proceedings of the 27th IARF World Congress Europe 1990 and the subject the Congress was dealing with, we are impressed by the many different facets of the congress theme "Religious Co-operation for one World". There was an attempt to reflect this vast theme with a spiritual and intellectual view and with the vision that religious people will be able to realize their hopes in concrete terms one day; that means: Making human rights a reality; peace and social justice will be possible if spirituality and faith become the preconditions of accepting our responsibility for the world, especially for the oppressed in the Third World. To pursue this aim, the congress was arranged in three main groups: Worship and congress services of the different groups and their contributions to a world-wide religious understanding and interreligious dialogue.

1) The congress started with the opening service, an impressive act of worship, celebrated by representatives of the different faiths (but where was the Baha'i religion?). Christian hymns, Buddhist Sutras, Sikh and Muslim prayers made the service a festival of faith and hope. Although even here we could see the enormous differences between the religions, differences in their doctrines and practices, which are hidden behind a facade of harmony and consensus.

The same thing could be observed during the devotions in the morning: Each religion demonstrated an impressive self-projection with statements and thoughts concerning their faiths and hopes, - but did not even make an attempt to find ways to achieve a constructive dialogue. Thus the opening service as well as the morning devotions seemed an artificial conglomeration of religions. Instead it should have been an example of different races practising living together under one common roof of mankind. What I deplore is the separation of the spirit. Each group "fulfilled" its role without knowing what its neighbour was doing.

2) On another level, namely the intellectual one, we could see how the same problems were reflected in a much more intensive way: while listening to the plenary addresses, the so-called "key notes", we got a special orientation concerning the "Humanum" or the conception of a "World Ethic" exemplified by the problem of peace, justice and human rights. So Hans Kung's thesis was (and of course still is!) that the influence of spiritual religious life on secular world security is still enormous; there can be "no peace among nations without peace among religions". Kung thinks that the solution to the quest for peace is to be found in the search for truth. But truth may only be used as an

ecumenical criterion if it is connected with the "Humanum". Thus the realization of the "Humanum" is the consequence of religious tolerance.

3) All members of the different study groups did indeed try to point out this problem in their contributions concerning the interreligious dialogue. So for instance Eshin Nishimura in his essay "Interreligious Dialogue and Buddhist Spirituality" or Jakob von Uexküll in his "Ecological Commandment", and of course the ever-present "Vision of one World" (Dianne E. Ararkawa, János Erdö, Manfred Haustein, Spencer Lavan in Study Group 1, "One World". "Spirituality and One World" have accompanied the IARF like a vision. Even in Hamburg Study Group 2 dealt with these topics, and Richard Boeke used the famous ora-et-labora-pattern to show how both interlock and fit. The subject of spirituality often dealt with prayer and meditation, showing that they both complement each other. Prayers cover the personal aspect of God, whereas meditation is "an exercise for the transparence to the real being" (K. Graf Dürkheim by Jutta Reich); or: spirituality has a divine and a human dimension, as Y. Yamamoto-san exemplified when he interpreted the Shinto term "reisei".

The members of Study Group 3 discussed the essential concern for Peace, Disarmament and Human Rights with the aim of creating a demilitarized world. However, the problem was how to find a way from a Utopian One-World-Vision in the IARF to a realization of what is possible for a non-governmental organization. Homer A. Jack pointed out that there is a "growing constituency for peace" in the UN which is more powerful than it has ever been before. There is a heightened awareness of a new generation of problems common to all nations (Proceedings, 203). For the Buddhist world that means a "disseminating of the Lotus Sutra" all over the world (Y. Saito).

The topic of Study Group 4 dealt with the global ecological crisis and the survival of our planet. The authors pointed out that awareness of the present situation, responsibility and cooperation in pursuit of global change is a challenge to our age. Shiva Shankar, n , Cakraborty, Rama Krishna Mission emphasized the close connections between Hindu beliefs and the practice of development strategies in present-day India. It is a pity that the ecological basis of Indian religions was not mentioned in this connection. We could have learnt that the classical Indian religions have a kind of ecological concept long before secular Western initiatives with the benefits of Western scientific knowledge started their campaigns against pollution and environmental contamination, etc..

The members of Study Group 5 studied the symptoms of economic crisis in connections with poverty, famine, health, population growth etc., demonstrating the interdependence of armament and human rights (M. Haustein and J. Paul), economy and a "religious perspective" (Jay Atkinson), etc.

When visiting the former Nazi concentration camp at Neuengamme we were made aware of the "omnipresence of the holocausts in the world" and the fact that terror and fear are still the inhuman companions of mankind which have not been overcome. The IARF, with its high ideals of a new world with mankind living in harmony, thinks that it bears responsibility for a future where holocausts will never happen again.

When considering the subject of the IARF congress 1990 "Religions Cooperating for One World" it came up with the "Donation One Meal Campaign" as well as brief visits to different Christian and Unitarian communities and an impressive Agápe prepared by Protestant laymen on the topic of "Creator and Creation". We have fond and lasting memories of these events

((The IARF Albert Schweitzer Award was presented to János Erdö, Romania; the Distinguished Leadership Award to Dieter Gehrman, for many years the reliable and capable General Secretary of the IARF.))

The 27th IARF Congress concluded with a number of resolutions: resolutions concerning environmental pollution, disarmament, human rights and the right to freedom of religion.

The World Congress of the IARF 1990 in Hamburg was an impressive testimony to the cooperation between religions all over the world and a remarkable spiritual attempt to fight for religious freedom, human rights, peace, justice and the protection of nature and creation. These were our great visions. Now we must try to make some of these high ideals, or at least parts of them, a reality. We hope that we will be successful one day; but we must accept the fact that perfect religious harmony and harmonious religious unanimity will remain utopian ideals and can - probably - never be achieved by human beings - unless one day we receive them as grace and mercy from our Gods.

The Rev Dr Gerlitz is a teacher, author and minister within the Bund für Freies Christentum, a member group of the IARF.

IARF at a Hundred

Gene Reeves

In this brief discussion of the hundred year history of the IARF, its development is set within a wider history. Its creation flowed in large part from the Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in 1893, itself a sign of the growth of religious liberalism against a background of inter-religious hostility. But in the years preceding the second world war, the IARF declined rapidly, as did both the number and size of its member organizations, against a backdrop of international animosities related to the rise of Nazism, the growth of “neo-orthodox theology”, especially in Europe, and the Unitarian and Unitarian Universalist movement away from mainstream, liberal Christianity. It was in this context that two great international and interfaith leaders emerged—Dana Greeley and Nikkyo Niwano. Niwano’s introduction of a variety of Japanese religious leaders to IARF, their participation in it, and the great 1984 Tokyo Congress were a post-WWII high point for IARF, lifting it out of its decline. The IARF had reached a crossroads and chosen a path forward. Today, it has reached another crossroads. This one also related to a movement in the wider culture, a movement that began as Christian ecumenism and quickly expanded to become a growing interfaith movement, including the emergence of a variety of interfaith organizations to compete with the IARF for loyalty, money and human resources. In the past, the IARF is fortunate to have been led by people of great vision. Will it be led by people of vision in the future?

I’ve been asked to speak about IARF history. I’m a very bad person to be talking about history. For one thing, I’ve not been involved with IARF for very long. My first IARF Congress was here in Tokyo in 1984. Many people have participated in more congresses than I, some of them are in this room, such as Nezu-san and Yokota-san, and probably Williams-san as well. But that’s not all. A second reason why I should not talk about history is that I have a very bad memory, especially for factual details. Nezu-san takes a lot of notes, and remembers what he doesn’t write down. I take few notes, lose those, and remember very little accurately.

There is a third reason why I should not try to tell you much of IARF history: there are now, at the IARF web site, several papers about IARF history, one a fairly substantial account of the whole history written by the General Secretary, Robert Traer from official records, and several more personal accounts covering more limited periods of time by individuals, including Mr. Nezu and Richard Boeke, whom many of you know. You can download and read any of those interesting papers. Or, if you don’t own a computer, you can ask someone to download them for you, so that you can read them.

What I want to do this afternoon, therefore, is not to tell you the IARF history, but to make a few observations about it, especially about the context of it, and I’ll close with a personal reflection.

In an important sense, the IARF story begins in Chicago (my hometown), in 1893. We Americans were taught that Christopher Columbus discovered America in 1492. Of course, native Americans, so-called American Indians, did not know they had been lost and needed to be discovered. But, with the voyage of Columbus, Europeans discovered the American continents, and such things as tobacco, tomato, and corn. Chicago was designated as the place to celebrate the four-hundredth anniversary of Columbus’ discovery with a huge world’s fair known as the “Columbian Exposition.” But, as often happens with fairs in Chicago, the fair did not run on time. They could not get things ready in time for 1892 and had to postpone the opening until 1893.

For this fair the Ferris wheel was invented, and there was a magnificent variety of amusements, parades, games, gambling, demonstrations of the latest inventions, and lots of interesting buildings and statues were put up—all the things that usually go with big fairs. But they also wanted to do something different—to have this fair be not only a display of technological progress but as well a display of culture and intellect. And to this end twenty different “parliaments” met during the summer of 1893 related to various aspects of culture—art, music, literature, etc. And one devoted to religion met for 17 days in September. And it, the Parliament of Religions, was the first time in history that

people of many countries and many religious faiths gathered together to share their traditions with other religious folks.

In East Asia, different religions have often gotten along together pretty well, so well that Taoism and Buddhism were often mixed and confused in China as were Shinto and Buddhism in Japan. That's why today you can find a Buddhist temple at Tsubaki Grand Shrine and the local Shinto Shrine is named after Hachiman, who is both a kami and a "daibosatsu." But in Europe it was very different. There Christianity sought to wipe out all traces of older religious traditions, and wars between people of different faiths, especially between Catholic and Protestant Christians and between Christians and Muslims, were frequent and very bloody. In Europe and America people were put to death for having "false" religious belief. And when in the 18th and 19th centuries colonialism spread its tentacles over virtually the whole world, people of other non-Christian faiths were put on a par with native "pagans" and understood to be in need of civilizing and Christianizing, while being economically exploited of course. Within Christianity, for the most part, people of other faiths, whether they were of other Christian faiths or of non-Christian faiths, were understood to be evil and dangerous. Where I grew up, as recently as 50 years ago it was forbidden for Roman Catholics even to enter a Protestant Church, never mind a Buddhist temple or Shinto shrine.

I tell you all of this because I want you to understand that in its Western context the 1893 World's Parliament of Religions was a fantastic thing. Fantastic both in its conception and in its execution. Among those who worked on the preparations there were some who thought the Parliament would be a great opportunity to demonstrate the superiority of Christianity before the rest of the world. But there were also some who really believed that people of different cultures and different religions could learn from each other through dialogue and conversation. What was fantastic about the execution of the Parliament was its popularity. Held away from the lights and bustle and entertainment of the fair, the Parliament was attended and applauded every day by thousands of ordinary citizens. And following the Parliament itself, Swami Vivekananda was warmly welcomed virtually all over the United States, as Daisetsu Suzuki, sent back to the States by Shaku Soen who participated in the Parliament, would be welcomed a few years later.

The IARF flowed from the Parliament, was created in its spirit, mainly by people who had participated in the Parliament. Universalists, and especially Unitarians, were heavily involved in both. They were in those days the liberal wing of Protestant Christianity. But they were far from alone, as much of Protestantism and segments of the Catholic Church as well, were becoming more and more liberal and tolerant.

Thus, in its early years, the IARF, or what was to become the IARF, consisted mainly of liberal Christians in Europe and America, including quite a few British and American Unitarians. But it did include participation from India's liberal and reform-minded Brahmo Samaj as well. Perhaps the IARF leaders of that time should be faulted for not making a greater effort to recruit people of Buddhist and other religious traditions from China and Japan, but I suspect that language was more of a barrier than religious faith, as it is today. Indians, after all, spoke English, and well-educated Brahmos spoke very good English. Also, of course, travel was a bit more difficult, time-consuming and expensive, especially getting across the Pacific Ocean.

In any case, for a while the IARF seems to have prospered in many ways, and held six very successful Congresses, five in Europe and one in Boston, before the First World War.

My own first encounter with the IARF was in 1962 when I happened to be in the Netherlands on other business and visited the IARF headquarters in The Hague. The facility was one, somewhat small and dark, room. The staff consisted of two not-so-young ladies working part-time, one afternoon a week I believe. I gained the impression that the IARF was about to die.

A bit later, a man who would later become a good friend of mine, Joseph Kitagawa at the University of Chicago, wrote an article on the Parliament of Religions and its legacy, claiming that not much had come of the event, now "all but forgotten" in Chicago. Later, when I discussed it with him and asked why he had made of the IARF as a legacy of the Parliament, Dr. Kitagawa said that not much had become of the IARF.

What had happen to cause the Parliament to vanish from memory and the IARF to fall into a kind of Dutch darkness? It's a long and complicated story I suppose, but it had to do in part with the Second World War and events leading up to that war. Many liberal religious intellectuals were fleeing

from Nazi Germany, and relations among the European countries were anything but friendly. The kind of friendly interchange that IARF fostered was simply out of place in such an environment.

Even more important, was the related growth within Christianity of what was called “neo-orthodox” theology. This was a kind of thinking and behaving which rejected, often with great anger and disrespect, what had been a growing liberalism within Christianity. Liberalism in all its forms was ridiculed, in part because it was liberal Western culture, which had led to the nightmares of the wars. During this period, religious liberalism seriously declined in Europe and interest in sharing across cultural and religious boundaries waned. In America the Universalist church seriously declined in numbers. The Unitarians were not doing a whole lot better, but more important, they had become over these years more and more separated from other Christian denominations. Clinging to what was often perceived by others as an “old-fashioned” liberalism, the Unitarians, soon to become the Unitarian Universalists, were simultaneously being pushed away from the more conservative Christians and themselves seeking new and less Christian ways to express themselves religiously.

It was in this situation that Dana Greeley emerged as the leader of the Unitarian Universalists, a man with one foot planted firmly in the past of liberal Christianity and the other planted firmly in the future which was to be created. Greeley was what you might call an “expansive” man—open-minded, generous, friendly, outgoing, optimistic, positive about nearly everything.

We don’t often run into people of the size of Dana Greeley, which is probably a good thing, as a lot of them would completely exhaust the rest of us. But there was another man much like Greeley in many ways. He was Japanese and Buddhist—Nikkyo Niwano, founder of Rissho Kosei Kai. He too was an extraordinarily “expansive” man, reaching out with enthusiasm to all who would welcome him. With an important push from Dr. Shin’ichiro Imaoka, Greeley and Niwano became good friends and colleagues.

Greeley and Niwano were both infected with a kind of enthusiastic missionary zeal, not the usual kind of missionary zeal that seeks to capture new converts for the organization, but a kind of missionary zeal in which someone brings the whole world into his ken, sees there is much to be done to make the world a healthy and happy place for all, and—most important—believes that something can be done about it, believes that the world can be saved.

But they understood very well that this could not be done without friendly cooperation among people of quite different cultural and religious traditions. And here in Japan Imaoka and Niwano encouraged others to join the IARF, especially the Rev. Toshio Miyake of the great Konko-kyo Church of Izuo in Osaka, and Yamamoto-guji-san of Tsubaki Grand Shrine. And so they, along with many others, worked both to create the World Conference on Religion and Peace and to develop and strengthen IARF. As you know, Yamamoto Guji is the current President of the IARF. In addition to the office of IARF President, he seems to have inherited some of the same “expansive” personality of Greeley and Niwano.

One could say, I believe, that Japanese participation in IARF saved it from its doldrums, from its sleepiness, bringing to it new energy and new perspectives. This was most evident in the Tokyo Congress of 1984. Not only was it larger than any since well before the war, but it exhibited a kind of enthusiastic joy that had not been seen for some time, an enthusiastic joy that could be felt as much in the closing, largely spontaneous final speech by Dr. Imaoka as in the dancing in the parking lot of Horin Kaku. Yes, some people talked too long, and yes, there were lots of problems with translations, which turned well-crafted phrases into nonsense. But people managed to get through or under or around all of that to create and strengthen close human relationships.

Meanwhile, the neo-orthodox theology I spoke of earlier had gradually faded away to near total death, and Christians of many kinds were discovering that there was much to be gained from closer relationships across denominational lines. The so-called “ecumenical movement” was launched.

One important manifestation of the ecumenical movement is the World Council of Churches. Mr. Nezu and I attended its huge assembly as non-Christian observers at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver in 1983. It included a marvelous collection of liberal Christians from all over the globe. It was there that I first met Philip Potter, who would later receive the Niwano peace prize and Desmond Tutu, who would later receive the Nobel peace prize. Many things about the WCC impressed me. One was the friendliness and openness of almost all the participants. I was not allowed to be a mere observer, but was asked to join important deliberations and wound up writing most of the report of the educational commission. No one seemed to care that I was an observer and Unitarian.

And a group of native Americans in prison carved a great totem pole to present to the WCC. It was installed in a non-Christian religious ceremony in which we all participated and danced joyously. In Japan it would be nothing at all for Buddhists to participate in a Shinto ceremony, but Christian participation in such a pagan ceremony simply could not have happened even a few years earlier. And the people participated joyfully, among friends.

That friendliness, and many long-term friendships, were fostered in part by small groups which met twice every day for the two weeks or so of the conference. Later, when some of us were making plans for the IARF Congress in Stanford, I remembered those small groups and proposed that we have at the IARF Congress what came to be called “circle groups.”

At first the ecumenical movement was pretty much a matter of more friendly relations among Christians, and in some cases among Christians and Jews. Under the leadership of Pope Paul VI and the 2nd Vatican Council, even the Roman Catholic Church adopted a much more open and liberal stance toward nearly everyone, including non-Christians, now to be called not “pagans” but “people of God.” And once Protestants began to realize that they did not have the whole truth in their own sect, that they might learn something from Baptists for example, it was not much of a step to realizing that they might learn something from Jews, or even from Buddhists, or even from Muslims.

One result of this is that today we have not only the IARF and the WCRP, which was in some ways a child of IARF, we also have the World Congress of Faiths, the Temple of Understanding, the Inter-religious Federation for World Peace, the United Religions Initiative, the Parliament of the World’s Religions, and no doubt several other international interfaith organizations. A variety of summits of religious leaders have been held in several countries. And the UUA itself has created a new international organization called the International Council of Unitarians and Universalists (ICUU).

What this means, of course, is that both the IARF and the world in which it lives and works have changed, especially in the past few decades. Internally, the IARF is today much more diverse than it was when under the dominance of the Unitarians. Not only have several Japanese groups joined, but also groups from the Philippines, Korea and Taiwan and from many groups from South Asian countries, and other places as well. There were 88 member groups in 1907. In 1958 this had declined to 25 (including the Japan Free Religion Association). Today there are about 80. This is both more rich and more confusing. At the Korean Congress, for example, my biggest language problem was not with German or Korean, but with people who speak “English” whom I could hardly understand at all. To some, the IARF now seems to be less focused.

At the same time, as an organization the IARF faces much more competition—for members, for funds, for public attention, etc.—from other interfaith organizations. For nearly half of this century, the IARF was the only place where people or organizations could encounter each other in a friendly atmosphere. Today, people and organizations have to make choices. And some will choose to be less active in IARF or to provide less support for IARF.

The future is notoriously difficult to see, even dimly. Think back to a hundred years ago. Almost nothing of major importance in the 20th century, save perhaps the automobile, could have been foreseen—not the world wars or the wars of liberation that brought an end to colonialism, not the Russian Revolution or the collapse of the Soviet Union, not the gas chambers of the Nazis or the nuclear bombs, not the televisions or desktop computers, not airplane travel or Internet communications.

To look at our hundred years of IARF history is, in a sense, to look at our ancestors, some of whom are, of course, still alive. But soon enough, we will become ancestors. What will we look like to those looking back at us a hundred years from now? What will be thought and said of us, if anything?

IARF is clearly at a crossroads. The near future is certain to be bumpy. The IARF was at a kind of crossroads in the early sixties. It might have died. But people of great energy and vision emerged then. Do we have the energy and vision to give shape and direction to the IARF of tomorrow?

I urge all of you to go to Vancouver this summer, not as mere spectators, but as creative participants, with vision and energy. The Lotus Sutra teaches that we have all been given a power by which we can improve both ourselves and the world around us. Other traditions have similar teachings. Now, as much as at any time in the past, the IARF needs your creative power.

Remember, please, that the IARF is a very human thing. Its accomplishments are often found in the depths of individual human spirits. If you have not done so already, I urge you to read Yamamoto Guji's account of his experience in IARF in the recent Japan Chapter newsletter. It's a very personal talk. It illustrates well the very personal, human being to human being, character of the IARF.

Well, for me too it has been a very personal experience. At the Tokyo Congress I stayed at Yoseikan. (I think George Williams was on the same floor.) Today I live in Taiyoso. It's only a few meters away, but you can't imagine how long that journey from Yoseikan to Taiyoso was—or how rich and rewarding and inspiring for me. I can't begin to say how indebted I am to many of you, including of course my wife Yayoi, and to many who are not here today, and especially to Kaiso-sama and Rissho Kosei Kai, for enriching my life beyond my greatest dreams. But I would never have known either Yoseikan or Taiyoso, or any of you, were it not for IARF.

I love and cherish the IARF. If you do not already, I hope you will too. The IARF was begun by people of great vision. They had great vision not because they could see the future well. They couldn't. So too, we should not be surprised or disappointed by how little we can see. Rather, we should be amazed and delighted that we can see at all. The IARF was founded by people of great vision; it was renewed and its vision expanded by Greeley and Niwano and other people of great vision in the 70s and 80s; it will ride into the future on your visions, fueled by your warmth and devotion. I trust that it will be a good voyage.

Gene Reeves is currently studying, teaching, and writing on Buddhism and process thought in Tokyo, Japan. A consultant and teacher at Rissho Kosei Kai, he was recently a research fellow at Rikkyo University and prior to that retired from Tsukuba University, where he taught for eight years. Prior to going to Japan in 1989, he was the head of Meadville/ Lombard Theological School and Professorial Lecturer in the Divinity School of the University of Chicago. Before Chicago, he was assistant to the President of Wilberforce University in Ohio, where he had been an Academic Dean and Professor for several years. During these years he was also Minister of the First Unitarian Church of Dayton, Ohio. He has also taught at Tufts University and at Antioch College. One who tries to be both Christian and Buddhist, he has been active in interfaith conversations and organizations, serving as Chair of the Planning Committee for the 1987 Congress of the International Association for Religious Freedom (IARF) at Stanford University and being one of the founders of the Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions. In Japan he has been an advisor to the Japan Liaison Committee of the IARF, a frequent speaker at IARF Chapter functions, a participant in the Religious Summit at Mount Hiei, and a participant in various activities of the World Conference on Religion and Peace.

My Encounter With The IARF

Mohinder Singh

This article describes Mohinder Singh's commencement as an IARF member, and his experiences when attending the Congresses and Council meetings as one of the only Sikh members at that time.

This was the first time that a Sikh religious group had been invited to participate in a major conference in Tokyo and because of my distinct identity, wearing a turban and having uncut beard and hair, I attracted a lot of attention from the Japanese group. Another reason for special interest in my presentation on Sikh spiritual practices was the army attack on the Golden Temple that I have mentioned above. People wanted to know about the Sikh problem and I distinctly remember that after finishing my paper I was asked questions which were not exactly related to the theme of my paper and it was very difficult to handle this sensitive issue.

I really did enjoy the Japanese hospitality, in spite of the fact that most of them did not understand my language. They expressed their generosity in different forms as, for example, when I wanted to board a local train to visit Tokyo University, and I tried to explain my requirement with the

help of sign language and the city map. Somebody caught my hand, took me to the railway station and even purchased a ticket for me and put me on the right train.

Attending the conference was in itself a great experience. Some of us were taken for the pre-congress retreat in the largest Tsubaki Grand Shrine and the experience is something which most of us will not forget for the rest of our lives. On the first day we were given a welcome reception, on the second day there was a Shinto wedding where a married couple was married again according to the Shinto tradition. A feast followed as usual. On the third day there was again reason to celebrate because we were leaving and there was a grand farewell party. At the retreat we were asked to participate in the Misogi, a ritual where you had to take a bath in water flowing from a fountain. However, I explained my difficulty in that I had long hair and wore a turban and, unlike other delegates, I could not have a quick bath and come back. There was another rather embarrassing experience. We, in the Indian tradition, are not used to all having a bath in a common pool without any clothes on and I felt rather awkward on finding my other colleagues happily enjoying themselves naked in the swimming pool.

In Tokyo University I also met a Japanese scholar who was learning the Punjabi language. Later he visited India for formal education in this language and we became good friends.

In the main Congress, apart from group discussions and lectures, every evening there was some form of entertainment. I was greatly moved by the beating of the musical drums by the Japanese girls and by the farewell on the last day. We also had the opportunity to watch a Japanese Tea ceremony. The home visit was another enriching experience. This was where some of the delegates were picked up by some local Japanese families, taken to their homes, given a demonstration of their religious and other cultural routines and served Japanese meals followed by an exchange of gifts. While I have forgotten most of the things about my Tokyo visit, I particularly remember this, because I continue to correspond with the Japanese family to whom I was taken for a home visit along with two other American ladies.

In keeping with the main IARF objective of closer co-operation between the East and West, two other major Congresses were also held in Asia - one in Bangalore and the other in Korea of which I will talk later.

After the Tokyo Congress the Guru Nanak Foundation had the honour of hosting the Asia conference of the IARF where delegates from most Asian countries, including some from Europe and North America participated. Although we could not provide lavish hospitality like the Japanese, we did our very best for the delegates.

On one occasion, when two of us entered into a big book store, my friend Angela Dietrich was acting as my interpreter. On noticing my turban a man asked me who I was. I told him to guess, and lo and behold, he claimed I was a Sikh. However, he did not know much about the members of this community and when I tried to explain, he quickly correlated my turban with the extremist activities in Punjab and pointed out that I was a Bhindrawale. I told him that Bhindrawale had been killed by the Indian Army. His next observation was that in that case I could be Bhindrawale's brother. This pained me because as a result of Indian Media's negative projection of the whole Sikh community, ordinary people at home and abroad had developed a new stereotype about the Sikhs being militants and terrorists. When I explained to him the basic tenets of Sikhism he was very happy and we developed a friendship although I could not correspond with him further.

In 1993 the IARF decided to hold its 28th Congress in Bangalore to mark the Centenary of the World Parliament of Religions. In the meantime I had moved from the Guru Nanak Foundation to Bhai Vir Singh Sahitya Sadan and the IARF had also accepted my new institution as a member group. The first meeting was presided over by Dr G S Dhillon, former Speaker of the Indian Parliament and former Indian High Commissioner to Canada, and attended by Dr Karan Singh, Father Paulos Mar Gregorios, Chief Metropolitan of Delhi, Rev Marcus Braybrooke of the World Council of Faiths, Rev John Taylor, Secretary-General of the WCRP, and Swami Gokulananda from the Ramakrishna Mission.

During the Congress at Bangalore we tried to reciprocate the gestures shown by our hosts in Tokyo, Stanford and Hamburg. Not only were we able to put up a good show, but we also organised home visits in Bangalore. Bhai Vir Singh Sahitya Sadan, with the help of the Temple of Understanding, headed by Dr. Karan Singh, organised a post-congress conference called the Delhi Centennial Celebration, which was inaugurated by Shri PV Narasimha Rao, the then Prime Minister of

India. It was at this Congress that Rev Robert Traer honoured Rev Nikyo Niwano. Rev Naganuma on behalf of Dr. Niwano received the citation.

Later Bhai Vir Singh Sahitya Sadan hosted a dinner for the delegates and organised Gidha and Bhangra traditional Punjabi dances performed by young boys and girls. We also organised home visits in Delhi and visits to various religious places such as the Bahai Temple, Jama Masjid, Red Fort and the Sikh Temple Bangla Sahib.

It was at the Bangalore Congress that I was elected as a Council Member of the IARF and had the privilege of representing my faith on the Governing Body of the IARF for six years. During my association with the IARF I have learnt a great deal about other faith traditions and the spirit of interfaith co-operation and friendship demonstrated through the actions undertaken by IARF groups. The 1996 Congress was again held in an Asian country, South Korea. Through the IARF initiative Japanese and Koreans developed cordial relations. What greatly moved me was the story of a young Japanese girl who left her country and started helping old patients in a Korean hospital. Because of strong anti-Japanese feelings in Korea, a sick old woman, when she discovered the girl was Japanese, was abusive towards her, but the young girl, who was determined to atone for the sins of the Japanese during the second world war, would not give up and gradually won over the old woman in the hospital through her dedication, love and spirit of sacrifice.

The Won Buddhists who were the hosts, also showed us great love and affection and extended hospitality as the Japanese had done.

During my 15 years long association with the IARF I have been greatly moved by the IARF ideals of building bridges of friendship between the East and the West, and between various cultural and religious traditions throughout the world, and I look forward to taking part in future Congresses.

Mohinder Singh was born in what is now Pakistan. He has a Ph.D. in Sikh history from the University of Delhi and has taught history at Baring College, the University of Delhi, and Punjabi University. He is a founding editor of Studies of Sikhism and Comparative Religion, and has published many writings on Sikh religious history and culture. He served as the Director of the Guru Nanak Foundation from 1982-1990 and is presently Director of Bhai Vir Singh Sahitya Sadan. In 1993 Dr Singh joined the IARF Council.

The Philippine Involvement in the International Association for Religious Freedom

Sebellon Wale

In 1934 Bishop Gregorio Aglipay of the Philippines Independent Church attended an IARF Congress, which was held in Denmark that year. There was no further contact, however, until the late 1970's. In the next decade the IARF drew into membership the Independent Church of Filipino Christians as well as Silliman University and the Unitarian Universalist Church in the Philippines. In the 1990's a Chapter was developed and the Minoba tribe in Mindanao joined the Association. The work of the IARF in the Philippines has involved community development projects and interfaith dialogue between Christians and Muslims.

In our observance of the 1999 World Congress in this beautiful country, Canada, I am privileged to share a report on the Philippines involvement in the International Association for Religious Freedom (IARF). I come with the feeling of gratitude because this occasion provides us with an opportunity to pause and reflect on the Philippines involvement in the Association. I also come with a deep sense of humility. It is humbling for someone like me to speak before a noble audience such as this, and I must state with all honesty that I only came to know the IARF a few years ago.

Be that as it may, the IARF Philippines has come a long way. It was Sixty-eight years ago, when in 1931 Bishop Gregorio Aglipay of the Philippines Independent Church traveled to the United

States and Europe. It was at this time that his Church was invited to join the IARF, making the Philippines the first Asian member admitted to the organisation.

Three years later in 1934, Bishop Gregorio Aglipay attended the IARF and Liberal Christians Congress in Denmark. For a while, from 1934 to 1975, about 41 years, communications between the Philippines and the IARF ceased (although I am not aware as to the reason for this).

By God's grace, communication was resumed in 1976 when the Rev, Diether Gehrman, IARF General Secretary, wrote to the Independent Church for Filipino Christians (ICFC), thereby renewing the Philippines relationship with the IARF. In 1980 Rev Gehrman formally visited the Philippines which also marked the beginning of IARF Financial Assistance to the Social Service Network (SSN) projects in the Philippines.

In 1984 during the IARF World Congress in Tokyo, the late Rev Toribio Quemada of the Unitarian Universalist Church in the Philippines received the Albert Schweitzer Award. This was in recognition of his selfless and inspiring church work among the rural poor in the areas of insurgency.

In 1985 the IARF Youth Encounter was held in the Philippines at the Philippines International Convention Center in Manila. Two years later, in 1987, during the IARF World Congress in Palo Alto, California, Mrs. Bituen Pablo, of the Independent Church for Filipino Christians (ICFC) was elected as a member of the IARF International Council.

This was followed in 1987 and 1988 with the hosting of the Philippines IARF Conference held at the University of the Philippines in Diliman, Quezon City and Silliman University in Dumaguete City, respectively. The year that followed, 1990, marked the election of the Rev. Robert Traer as IARF General

Secretary (during the IARF World Congress held in Hamburg, Germany). Meanwhile, the IARF continued to extend financial assistance to fund SSN projects and Rev. Robert Traer strengthened the IARF support with his visit to the Philippines in 1992.

The IARF World Congress in 1993, held in Bangalore, India marked my first exposure to an International Congress of the IARF. At that time, there were a good number of delegates from the Philippines.

It was also in Bangalore where plans to hold conferences in the Philippines were made. The conferences were subsequently held in Makati and Pasig, Metro Manila in 1994 and 1995, respectively. These conferences were attended by no less than the IARF President, Mrs. Natalie Gulbrandsen and the General Secretary Rev. Robert Traer and members of the IARF Secretariat. It was also in 1994 that Rev. Traer set-up the IARF-Philippines Regional Office headed by Ms. Karinna Pablo, and at the same time, he formed the IARF-Philippines Coordinating Committee.

Another momentous event occurred in the year 1996 during the IARF World Congress held in Won Kwang University, Republic of Korea, where a wife and a husband team, Dr. Fe L. Sycip and Dr. Sebellion M. Wale received the Dr. Albert Schweitzer Award in recognition of their humanitarian services in the health ministry. Their concern was to improve the health of the rural poor and to make health care available to people of all religious traditions existing in the region, that is Muslims, Hindus, Indigenous Peoples and Christians from various churches. Their work has often meant travelling into areas of insurgency. They raised funds through their church contacts abroad to provide medical services to the rural poor who would not have enjoyed the benefits of medical services.

In 1996 the Indigenous Peoples of Central Mindanao were accepted as associate members of the IARF. 1996 also marked the reorganization of IARF Philippines Chapter into Branches, with Mrs. Bituen Pablo who just retired from the Council as President.

1997 and 1998 were also fruitful years for the IARF Philippine Chapter. In 1997 the IARF Conference was held in Dauin, Negros Oriental. Dr. Sebellion M. Wale was designated IARF Philippines Chapter President, after Mrs. Bituen Pablo, relinquished her position. And for the first time, in 1998, the IARF Conference was held in Cotabato, Central Mindanano where peace and order were bad. Here the IARF was at the forefront of arranging a dialogue between the Muslim rebels and the government forces. The theme of the conference was "*IARF Initiative for Harmonious (and Peaceful Coexistence Among God's Creation.*" More than 100 delegates from the Visayas Region and Mindanao participated.

Finally, the 1999 World Congress held at the University of British Columbia, Canada, again marked a momentous event wherein Dr. Sebellion M. Wale was elected member to the IARF International Council.

IARF Philippines Partnership in Development:

I was personally introduced to IARF on January 19, 1984 during the visit of Ms. Lucie Meijer, then member of the IARF Secretariat. Our meeting was an offshoot of a letter that I sent to IARF in 1983, after a friend introduced me to the aims, purposes and activities of IARF. Being the University Extension Program Director whose main job was to source funds for our community projects, I was exploring possibilities of a cooperation between Silliman University and the IARF in relation to the Social Service Network. At the time there were only three groups in the Philippines were members of IARF. They were the following: Independent Church of Filipino Christians, the Unitarian Universalist Church of the Philippines (UUCP) and the Bataan Christian Youth Civic Circle (BCYCC). Although the IARF parameter of service activities has been widened since 1984, for reasons beyond IARF's control, IARF was unable to further pursue the discussion with Silliman University. However, as time passed by, the picture had changed and by 1987 it was possible for the IARF to re-establish its connections with Silliman University and in that year I met with the General Secretary Diether Gehrman.

Our discussions were centered on a development project proposal which would be acceptable to the donors to the Social Service Network and subsequent meetings with Rev. Gehrman, Ms Lucie Meijer and other IARF staff further strengthened the relationship between Silliman and IARF. A small group composed initially of Silliman University Extension Program staff was organized in 1989 which eventually became the core of the Dumaguete City Branch in cooperation with the Unitarian Universalist Church of the Philippines and a group in the Municipality of Sibulan headed by Ms. Angelita Grapa.

Several branches were organized in Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao. In Luzon there are six branches. Other branches will soon be organized in other parts of Mindanao, which is inhabited with Indigenous Peoples (such as those in Regions 9 and 13 of Northern Mindanao). Exploration for the introduction of IARF in these regions is underway.

At this point in time, we see the urgency of bringing IARF to the region because of the deteriorating peace and order in the locality wherein young indigenous peoples are being trained by the rebels to fight against the government. IARF Philippines would like to play a vital role in establishing a harmonious relationship in the region through dialogue. We can easily do this because we belong to the same tribe. We have done it in Cotabato, Central Mindanao, wherein IARF-Philippines initiated a dialogue between our brother Muslims and the Christians during the Philippines IARF Conference in Cotabato. I am confident that we will be able to replicate the process in Northern Mindanao.

It is worth mentioning at this point that the IARF has done so much in the alleviation of the socio-economic status of all the branches through its Social Service Network (SSN) Program. SSN has assisted more than 20 projects with a total budget of US \$72,480.00 / Ps2,754,240.00.

Because of this grant of Ps2,754,240.00 IARF has indeed reached the hearts of people and at the same time has demonstrated its concern for the least fortunate brethren in this part of the world. It has once again, demonstrated the mighty power of God that if we trust, follow and obey his commandment he is ever ready to provide our needs.

I would like to close this presentation by challenging those who are fortunate enough to represent the interests of the least fortunate. We must assist in the holistic development of the person, a development that is aimed at justice, self-reliance and growth toward economic, social, political, interfaith cooperation and cultural transformation.

Sebillion Wale is a medical doctor who has devoted most of his life to community health. He graduated from the School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine at the University of London in 1973 and since then has worked at Silliman University Medical Center in Dumaguete City. In 1990 he became Director of the Silliman University Extension Program, and in 1994 he was appointed Director of the Office of External Affairs of Silliman University. His wife, Fe Sycip Wale, is also a physician and received in 1996 the IARF Albert Schweitzer Award in recognition of her community health work for the rural poor of the Philippines.

PART III – REFLECTIONS ON PROGRAMS AND ISSUES

The IARF: 1950 - 1970

H. Faber

Dr. Faber discusses the impact of modernist movements with in Western culture during the middle of this century on liberal Christian groups and comments on decisions made by the international Council of the IARF during the period when it was known by the name, “International Association for Liberal Christianity and Religious Freedom.” He served as General Secretary for the IARF from 1933 to 1970.

Let us start with a quotation: “International Modernism of Protestant origin works in slow and laborious course at its great historical task”. Slow and laborious, for progress is very difficult and responsibility very heavy of that spiritual Movement, which for a few centuries the Western hemisphere has come to know under different names; first from a theological-philosophical aspect, now for sixty years as a modern and popular Movement. From the latter point of view - I am bold to say - seen from God’s point of view in the struggle for His Kingdom - a lot is asked and expected.

The meaning of Modernism in a world’s spanning sense lies in its preparatory work for the future and in the evident fact that it is an adaptation of the question concerning the form that religion has to assume in that characteristic period in history we call “Modern times”. This quotation is adopted from a speech on the “Unity and Organization of Liberal Protestantism,” which was delivered in 1923 by the famous professor K.H. Roessingh at a meeting of modern theologians in Amsterdam, Holland. Shortly afterwards Roessingh was, among others, present at the birth of “International Union of Liberal Christianity”, later known as the IARF. This speech offers an excellent example of how “Liberals” felt at the beginning of this century, and offers insight into the two decades being considered in this article.

Liberalism had become a frail vessel trying to find its course, not only in the restless waters of a turbulent society (two World Wars, the rise and fall of National Socialism and Communism, economic crises, disturbances in the Sixties), but in the religious - ecclesiastical maelstrom as well (neo-orthodoxy, ecumenical movement, fundamentalism, Vatican Council).

In the period 1950 - 1970 several objectives were basically important. In the first place, after World War II, the IARF Secretariat had to start a new organization, repair broken contacts, bring “enemies” together, and prepare meetings in a time of poor communications. But there was more. The world had changed thoroughly, and this was soon felt. Distances had shrunk, people were more mobile, globalization had intensified.

Old connections were loosened; a process of privatization and individualization became apparent. Science soared sky-high, industry spread its wings. The world shrunk, and Western countries were confronted with alien cultures. Religion and church had to deal with an exodus and also radical theologies, rituals and theories from elsewhere.

Liberal Protestantism also had its share of the crisis in religion and church, its organization and mentality weakened. It questioned itself regarding its identity, ideals and duty in this new community. As an IARF secretary, it was this question that kept me especially occupied. We, as a staff, reorganized and prepared our meetings as usual. But we became conscious of a new future and of the need for a new vision.

In the religious communities surrounding us several changes were noticeable. The Roman Catholic Church held the second Vatican Council, and the ecumenical movement in Protestantism started several promising initiatives. In America as well as in Europe there were signs of a desire for renewal in Liberal circles. We all know the outcome of these endeavors: they died against a wall of conservatism, although a few continue to have a marginal existence.

In this article we try to sketch the situation of Liberal Protestantism. After the Second World War the question of identity was unavoidable: where did we come from, what did we want, and how did we develop? The quote of Roessingh, mentioned above, gives background to the answers. Against this background we want to shed some light on important matters.

In the first place this quote mentioned theological Modernism. The expression “theological” is used on purpose. The roots of Modernism, sprung from the 19th century, were nourished in the soil of Christian culture, in the religious stirrings of the Renaissance - Erasmus, Servet, Socinus, and in the Enlightenment. But the driving force behind the great evolutions of this century has been modern science. Modernism also started along scientific lines and forced an ecclesiastical renewal. The results of exegesis and the study of religious history have led to changes in preaching and in the devotion of parishioners. A profound reflection on the bases of Christian belief and led to the revision of theology and piety.

This Modernism clearly was a West European - American phenomenon. Alien religions were looked at differently, but it stayed intrinsically Christian. The Brahmo-Samaj in India is a typical example of the way people in the 19th century connected Western thinking with the world of Hinduism, as it became a kind of Western Hinduism.

Modernism started to take “alien religions” seriously, but did not research the relations of religions. In this Movement the prominent people of science and church felt, at the end of the 19th century, the need for an international organization, to exchange thoughts and especially to inspire each other and their followers. The themes of international conferences held in Berlin, Boston and Amsterdam bore a scientific character and gave evidence of a new vision of Christian belief.

We do not exaggerate in saying that, thanks to the American Wendte, eminent scientists from many countries were willing to speak at this meeting. It was the spirit of American community: active, pragmatic, visionary and international, which shone through him in his attempt to expose the paramount importance of religious Modernism.

After the Second World War, however, the world had changed beyond recognition. Confidence and progress had suffered a severe blow.

In 1923 the quotation of Roessingh shows a different approach. At the end of the Twenties I became involved, as a young secretary, with the International Association for Liberal Christianity, founded with American help. It differed fundamentally from the former loose organization of the prior meetings. In my opinion the period between the two World Wars, in which we tried to give this new union a new body and a new face, was marked by two facts. In the first place the Congresses no longer brought only scientists together, but people interested in the citizens of other countries, to experience the wider horizon of their beliefs. Secondly, the responsibility was no longer one man’s business. The Association had become an assembly of churches with a chosen executive committee and an appointed secretariat, bearing together the responsibility for the future of Modernism and specifically for the meetings.

The emphasis ceased to lie on a select group of scientists but it was placed on the churches and their members. So a new problem was born. Modernism needed people functioning as a “brain-trust”, analyzing situations, designing a future, but because of the turbulent developments since the First World War it became apparent that theological contribution of Modernism at the Western universities had practically vanished. At the same time the question of a different name for the Association, satisfying both left and right wing had arisen.

The left wing was firmly rooted in the Enlightenment and German idealism. The connection with “official” Christianity was filled in by “heretical” churches, for instance the Unitarians. The right wing wanted to reform the Christian tradition and was mainly concerned with matters of liturgy. At the foundation of the Association the German members insisted on the word “Christianity” in giving the Movement its new name. They feared that if left-wing radicalism dominated, the Movement would deteriorate into a superficial syncretism.

The left wing preferred a name expressing the conviction that one should co-operate in pursuit of tolerance towards non-Christian religions. The word “Christianity” should be left out in order to include members of other denominations. Tension between right and left, already present before the Second World War, became manifest afterwards. The liberal wing in the European churches had weakened considerably, for instance in Germany, and had practically disappeared. Hardly noticeable

formations outside the church, mainly in Germany, began to knock at the door. They felt at home with the Unitarians who tried to interest Liberal groups outside Christianity for the Association.

The responsibility of the Secretariat consisted of two aims. First, it sought to promote the evolution of the Movement in the spirit of Roessingh's quotation, without any personal prejudice. Second, the Secretariat attempted to ensure the quality of development, as not every change is an improvement.

For me, Christianity was linked with the roots of Christian tradition. In the universal approach of assembling many under the banner of Freedom, I feared a loss of religious quality. In a lecture entitled "Keeping your own Integrity" that I gave in The Hague in Holland, I have mentioned these problems and their responsibility. The changes during the years 1950 - 1970 became visible in the new name of the Association decided at the 1958 Congress in Chicago. In the opinion of many, I represented a European party within the Association that resented this step.

The harvest of progressive theological publications in the past was an obvious result of adhering to these roots of Christian tradition. For that reason Modernism was able, in the 19th and in the beginning of the 20th century, to give such an impressive impulse to religious - ecclesiastical life in the Western world. In the 20th century Modernism has considerably weakened and lost the inspiration of theological revival. But the Liberal-Christian member-groups were still connected with the traditional roots. After the Second World War, however, two issues became decisive. In the first place the organization and mentality of these member-groups hardly had any connection with the origins of the Movement. The new generation of ministers and theologians was searching for a deep re-orientation. The thoughts of the modern fathers of the Association were no longer credible and had to be coined again in a radical manner. Should the Association also take part in this re-orientation?

Here the second issue became apparent. The world was smaller; it was necessary to strengthen the mutual relations by meeting members of the main religions. An old ideal of Modernism, slumbering between the World Wars, became reality. Our American friends took the initiative and introduced Japanese groups. Why had this old ideal slumbered so long in these years?

The answer will clarify the facts that played a part in the significant decision to change the name of the Association. From the beginning Modernism has aimed at a different approach toward the main religions, differing from the traditional and mostly hostile relations of former times. The first scientific studies describing the history of religions and the first publications concerning the new relations between the religions originated from Liberal circles. Between the World Wars it was difficult for the Secretariat to pursue this course for two reasons. Liberal thinking in the Western World and elsewhere was focused on National Socialism and Communism, throwing their dark shadows. An aversion to Liberal principles sprouting from the 19th century and an inclination towards orthodoxy was evident. Free intercourse between equal partners outside Christianity hardly existed.

As I said before, the Association had shifted from a body of theologians and had become a large group of pastors and laymen from many churches. In those times that was no forum with authority for an inter-religious dialogue.

In the years after the Second World War the global changes in religion were momentous. Distances dwindled, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists are our neighbors and belong to the daily horizon of our existence. We are all dependent on each other, politically and economically. Inter-marrying is a common feature nowadays. For people at the grassroots, inter-religious dialogue is of vital importance.

Religion is major part of life. Therefore, a different name for the Association, and following another course at the same time, became urgently necessarily. In the Fifties, I made, at a conference in Chicago, a proposal to further these ends.

I think one will understand my initial reluctance. What were the origins behind this name? Could we dispose of the required structure and the people congenial to this different course who could eventually be the bearers of authority?

Shortly afterwards I gradually retired from international work, partly because of health reasons. I also found an occupation in pastoral psychology and clinical pastoral education. But I was still involved and saw how an enthusiastic staff sustained the impulse to expansion and new projects. An experimental and pragmatic progress marks the present situation; for the time being "Ein Gebot der Stunde."

I think, however, that searching for the roots from other rites and visions united in this Movement, and the pressing need for a deeper constructive dialogue over these issues, will prevail in the future. The Christian principles of the Western hemisphere, as laid down in the first decades, are still dimly discernable. But what about those from non-Christian religions? And, above all, what is the mainspring of this profound relationship?

What is our message to the world?

Looking back on a long life, as a pastor, as an organizer, as a scientific research worker, and as a teacher in religious matters, it is my conviction that a fundamental desire exists in humanity. A desire to find together the path to revelation of a reality in which Love will unite humanity in freedom. God will be all in one and all. In that light I see the IARF.

Dr. Faber was General Secretary of the IARF for thirty years in the period after World War II up to the end of the 1960's. He has written many books about liberal Christian faith and pastoral counselling. Dr. Faber and his wife continue to take an active interest in inter-religious affairs in the Netherlands, where they live in retirement.

Opening Address to the 1984 IARF Congress

Diether Gehrman

On the occasion of the first Congress held in Asia, Rev. Gehrman reviews the history of the IARF and highlights the growing relationships between religious leaders from the East and the West. He offers a special word of thanks to Rev. Nikkyo Niwano for hosting the 1984 Congress in Tokyo at the headquarters of Rissho Kosei-kai. Rev. Gehrman is a retired Unitarian minister.

This is a most significant day in the history of the International Association for Religious Freedom. We are gathered from East and West and North and South to open the first Congress held in Asia by our Association. My profound gratitude for having taken the initiative for convening this Congress in Japan goes foremost to three persons: to Dr. Shinichiro Imaoka, the Honorary President of our Congress, to IARF President Nikkyo Niwano and to Rev. Yukitaka Yamamoto, Chair of our Japanese Executive Committee. We are honoured by the presence of distinguished leaders of the religious community. We are privileged by key representatives of the capitol and government of Japan and of the diplomatic community joining us for this celebration. And we greet our members outside Tokyo who are listening to us over the loudspeaker in many churches.

More than 8 decades ago, our predecessors in our religious communities had a dream, a vision. Separated by oceans and immersed in their different cultural heritages and religious traditions, they nevertheless recognized the interdependence existing among them, and they envisioned a world community of Service and of progress in religion throughout the world. This dream was articulated by the President of the American Unitarian Association, Rev. Samuel Eliot. He said: "We desire some form of fellowship, some organization that can stand as the evidence and agency of our unity and liberalism. Let us see if we cannot make here some strong cord on which to string the fugitive beads of our separate and independent organizations."

Thus the IARF was founded in the year 1900 in Boston, USA. The first step was taken from separation towards unity, from independence towards interdependence. The initiative came from the West, but the East participated in this venture from its very beginnings. As far back as the beginning of the 19th century there were already contacts between our groups in North America, Britain and India - Christians on the one side and Brabmo Samaj on the other. Although this was the age of colonialism, theirs was an encounter and dialogue among equals, among partners, among friends. Although this was the time of a domineering Western mission, they were seeking a common path of insight and spiritual growth in East and West. It is this spirit and vision, which led to the founding of IARF and which ultimately has brought us to this truly inter-religious 25th Congress 1984 in Japan.

Already at the 2nd Congress of IARF 1903 in Amsterdam, Holland the first General Secretary of the Association, Rev. Charles Wendte, set the goal when he said: "The presence among us of delegates from India and Japan brings us into fraternal touch with that oriental world, whose ancient

civilizations and religions were the cradle of innumerable faiths, including our own. It is one of our cherished hopes, that IARF shall yet hold a Congress in the Valley of the Ganges and the land of the Rising Sun, if only to vindicate the great central doctrine of our faith, that, while religions are many, religion itself is one.”

He laid the ground work for a great pilgrimage to Asia, to a four week encounter in Japan, with preparatory conferences in Europe and India, and with San Francisco on the West Coast of America being the post-Congress event. The time was to be the autumn of 1914. However, his dream was abruptly shattered by the guns of World War I. The following decades were marked by a mood of resignation, and this not only in IARF. The vision of „one world” and the common path to insight and service suffered severe setbacks. The horizon was narrowed down again to the limits of one’s own faith tradition only. But it is the genius of IARF that the dream was never completely abandoned, that new initiatives were taken, old bonds renewed, and that again the path was continued from where it had been stopped in 1914.

And so I salute the men and women of our Association who have been bridge-builders between East and West, and between the generations past and present. Most especially I today salute Dr. Shinichiro Imaoka here among us at his blessed age of 102 years, he who - already decades ago - earnestly urged that a Congress be held in Japan. He took decisive steps on the path, which eventually has brought us here together. I am happy and proud that this dream has now become reality.

Headed since 1981 by Rev. Nikkyo Niwano, as our first IARF President from Asia, our Association could finally undertake this formidable task. Without his personal support and the dedication of the Rishso Kosei-kai members together with our other associates in Japan, a Congress of these dimensions would have been impossible to accomplish - it is the largest in our history in overall attendance. Never before did we have such a range of programs before and after the central Congress week; each program uniquely designed to deepen our understanding of Japan, its culture, spirituality, and religious dynamics. 700 hardworking staffs and countless volunteers are each contributing their best to the success of our Congress. I have never experienced such an enthusiastic and wholehearted engagement in all my professional life. And I am deeply moved by the warm hospitality, friendship, and openness heart to heart conveyed to us participants from overseas.

We have come here from all parts of the globe, some of us from the other side of the planet. We have come with high expectations from the West to learn about the spirit of the East, and I dare say that our experience will by far surpass the dream of those who pointed out the path to this Encounter of IARF in the East. We take pride in the fact, that IARF is the oldest inter-religious organization with a global dimension and of continued existence. But this tradition and continuity is only part of our strength. Rather, it rests in the religious communities of East and West, which have committed themselves to be part of a greater unity. And through them it rests in the grass-roots membership of these our communities.

It is the people, the ordinary members from all walks of life, that lend IARF its vitality. It is you, people, who are assembled here today, who are listening to us over the loudspeakers in your churches, who have celebrated our larger fellowship at the encounters during the last days, who will join our Congress Service and Festival on Sunday, and who will be with us again at our encounters, heart to heart, across the country after the Congress week, culminating with our IARF Peace Memorial in Hiroshima. It is you, the people of IARF, that make of our Association a world family, a kinship, a living reality of religion in community and action.

Our Religious Path to Peace is for the sake of the people everywhere. It is for the sake of their worth and dignity, for the sake of their liberation from oppression and injustice, from hunger and need. Our Religious Path to Peace is for the sake of overcoming their fears and suffering, giving them instead the hope for a world and a future without war and destruction. And beyond our common humanity, the Path to Peace points further to the Unity and interdependence of Life itself.

On our path we follow the exemplars, who lead the way to greater visions and deeper commitments. One of these was Albert Schweitzer. He belonged to IARF as honorary member and honorary president of our member groups in North America and Germany. One year before his death he wrote from his hospital in Lambarene in Africa to one of our member groups in Germany on the occasion of their annual assembly:

”Dear friends, never shall I forget the meetings I had with you, but the work to be done here does not permit me anymore to travel. I belong fully to my hospital. Only from here can I address

myself to other matters. Now I am deeply concerned about the threat of nuclear weapons. 1955 I entered with Einstein, who is my friend since years, into the campaign against nuclear armament. This struggle I will not give up. I am glad to hear, that you will speak at your annual assembly about my ethics of reverence for life. Reverence for life will continue on its way into the world. And now I must close. I think of you. Albert Schweitzer.”

Albert Schweitzer is no longer among us, but his spirit endures. As that of those before him. As our own faith and commitment will be carried forward by the generations coming after us in IARF. On our common path, of East and West and North and South, to peace.

Rev. Diether Gehrman is a retired Unitarian minister. He is the son of the Rev. Max Gehrman and Erna Gehrman, and he now administers a foundation in his late father's name. Rev. Max Gehrman began working for the Free Religious Congregation in Munich in 1920 and from 1934-1977 served as Free Religious Congregation in Offenbach/Main. During this period he was active in the IARF. Rev. Diether Gehrman was the first full time General Secretary of the IARF and served the Association from 1972-1990.

Partners in Progress

Building the IARF Social Service Network 1979-1992

Lucie Meijer

The IARF commitment to social service became a central part of its work after Rev Diether Gehrman began to serve as the General Secretary. A project in Belfast and cooperation with the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee were the first steps, and in 1979 with the help of the Veatch Program in the United States the IARF Social Service Network was launched. The SSN has been the key initiative of the IARF in South Asia and the Philippines, and has also had an impact on the IARF in other parts of the world.

Introduction

The International Association for Religious Freedom was founded in 1900 as the first international and interreligious organisation in the world. Needless to say, this was a moment of historical importance. In Europe and North America, maybe elsewhere as well, religious institutions at that time did not pursue or appreciate the goal of mutual acceptance between religious people, although most religions teach us to treat our neighbors as we would ourselves. Around the turn of the century there had already been numerous contacts between liberal religious people in India, Europe, USA and other countries. The newly founded Association provided a framework within which such contacts could be systematically maintained and expanded. In the year 2000, the International Association for Religious Freedom will have completed one century of encounter, dialogue and co-operation between people from different denominations. In the light of these outstanding aims I venture to say that if IARF did not exist, it would have to be created today.

The ideas which led to the formation of the Association are adequately expressed in its logo: The circles are the religious communities. They are not closed but open and touching one another. The arrows point to all directions symbolizing outreach to North and South, East and West, with IARF in the center as the world community to which we belong, which gives us strength and widens our horizons. It is our world community for service and peace.

From its beginnings in 1900 IARF has been devoted to mutual understanding through dialogue, like other interfaith organizations founded in later years. The words of study groups, reports and declarations however, become flesh and reality through concrete actions of humanitarian service, through acts of solidarity and mutual support. In the following essay I will try to describe how the IARF Social Service Network was built albeit the survey is in no way is complete.

The early years

In the decades from 1900 up to the 1960s, IARF members responded to individual situations of need. For example, money, books and clothes were sent by North American members to refugees in Europe during World War II. In particular, the Unitarian Service Committees in Canada and USA rendered support to war-stricken Eastern European churches.

It is not surprising to see that over the years, ideas and trends which were current in society in general, also surfaced in our Association. Looking back to the 1950's in Europe, we see that the post-war years focused on reconstructing shattered lives and homes and on building economic growth and expansion. In general, people were first and foremost oriented towards their own community and country. It seems that around 1960, at least in Europe, a more general awareness about the responsibility of religious institutions for the larger society, was generated by the favourable socio-economic conditions. The 1960s demonstrated a rapid internationalization of commercial and personal contacts, and this led to actions which were, at this stage, mostly bilateral initiatives. Thereafter, a multi-lateral approach became popular. In the 1970s, many groups adopted a One World approach, with its connotations of institutional responsibility for the whole world. Thus the role of international bodies such as United Nations and its affiliated non-governmental organisations gained weight.

IARF World Emergency Relief Fund

In 1967 the first collective initiative was taken in the form of the IARF World Emergency Relief Fund. Money was sent to the Brahmo Samaj for flood relief efforts in and around Calcutta after the terrible floods in the river Ganges, which inundated West Bengal. When an earthquake hit Romania in 1974, Unitarian churches were also affected. Generous donations were channeled through the IARF Relief Fund to the headquarters of the Unitarian church in Cluj/Kolosvar to help repair the damaged buildings. The civil war in Northern Ireland, even now (1999) not brought to a halt, has claimed innumerable victims over the years. Our members of the Non-subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland (NSPCI) have always taken a stand for reconciliation between Catholics and Protestants. By doing so they became susceptible to criticism from both sides. In those years (preceding the first IARF service project) grants were made by the IARF Emergency Relief Fund to Northern Ireland to aid victims of this cruel conflict.

Bilateral initiatives

In addition to these emergency appeals, there are several examples of bilateral support between IARF groups in those days: Annie Margaret Barr, a British Unitarian who went to live and work in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills of Meghalaya, India for 37 years (1936-1973), was a living example of such "one-woman ministry of education". Her legacy lives on in the numerous village schools managed by the Unitarian Union North East India and in the rural community center in Kharang, where Kong (sister) Barr used to live. In that same village, Kharang, a hospital was opened, four years after her death, thanks to the funds obtained by the Dutch Remonstrant Brotherhood through a nationwide ecumenical appeal. It was the era of bilateral co-operation.

International commitment

At the international level, the Congress in Heidelberg (1972) adopted the following resolution: "This meeting of the IARF expresses its shocked and deep sympathy with our member group the NSPCI and the people of Northern Ireland, and wishes to place on record its desire to assist our liberal religious churches and the people of Northern Ireland in their present need for reconciliation, peace and righteousness, and asks the executive committee to inquire as to in what ways the member groups of the IARF can help their friends."

Here we observe the beginning of a corporate commitment of the organisation to the plight of one of its affiliated groups. Please note that the resolution speaks of ...assisting the NSPCI and the people of Northern Ireland, thereby indicating that our solidarity goes to the community-at-large, while working through our member group. This same approach would later be adopted by the Social Service Network. It is an important feature, because in so many instances liberal people have a tendency to care for 'the whole world' forgetting that their numbers are small. Through IARF they are able to support other communities through their liberal counterparts. Our contribution is meaningful

because it is related to the role of a liberal religious community in the society at large, and it is a way for our members to be actively involved at the grass roots level.

The first IARF Project

In January 1973 the first full time IARF General Secretary assumed office. Diether Gehrman energetically paved the way for a systematic implementation of the resolution made in 1972. Thus in 1974 the IARF Executive Committee resolved to visit Belfast in support of its embattled member group, and did so in 1976. Rev. William McMillan of the Dunmurry congregation of the NSPCI, IARF Council member, was invited to tour groups in Germany, the Netherlands, USA and Canada and report first hand on the drastic situation. When spontaneous contributions started coming in, Rev. McMillan suggested a target which was consequently adopted as the first IARF Social Service Project: a Mothers and Toddlers' Play group in a mixed Catholic and Protestant area of Belfast, jointly administered by the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) and the NSPCI. A presentation by project leader Mrs. M. Morrow of the NSPCC at the IARF Congress in 1978 received widespread response, which showed that the member groups were ready to engage in multilateral support for projects. In other words: the time was ripe to move beyond sporadic and unrelated endeavours, and to accept tasks which exceeded the resources of local groups or a single denomination. The adoption of project targets called for co-ordinated effort of all socially concerned individuals and groups within IARF.

Social service and social responsibility

Answering to that challenge, in 1979 I was hired jointly by the IARF and the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC) to identify initiatives from IARF member groups, to assess on location the needs and conditions for social service projects co-sponsored by these groups, and to involve the larger IARF constituency in moral and practical support for these projects.

The co-operation with UUSC resulted in the publication of a Social Responsibility Newsletter, drawing attention to various social concerns and activities from the member groups. Let me quote from these publications the issues and concerns of that time: National moratorium on prison construction (USA), country holidays for needy children (UK), new biography of Ferencz David (Hungary), Apartheid's toll - the Crossroads squatter camp (South Africa), Adult education programme (India). In 1981, Congress resolutions address the following issues: Elimination of discrimination against women, infant nutrition in developing nations, Religious persecution in Iran, Law of the Sea, Family roles, Aging and ageism, Disarmament.

Disarmament and Peace filled the headlines in the last decade of the cold war. A peace vigil was held during the 1981 IARF Congress in front of the Peace Palace (International Court of Justice) in The Hague. IARF President Nikkyo Niwano spoke at the United Nations 2nd Special Session on Disarmament in 1982, and groups in Hungary, Japan, India reported on sessions devoted to stop the nuclear arms race. In Britain the Unitarian General Assembly sent a telegram to Margaret Thatcher pleading for an immediate military de-escalation in the Falklands and for United Nations arbitration.

The joint IARF-UUSC arrangement lasted from 1979 to 1982, thereafter IARF continued the staff position for the Network on its own.

The IARF Social Service Network

In 1979, the IARF Social Service Network was established with the special assistance of The Veatch Program (USA) and the Niwano Peace Foundation (Japan). The Network was announced with the following words:

“IARF World Community: a living relationship from person to person and group to group. Moving from openness to encounter and dialogue, from understanding to acceptance and interdependence. A Network spanning the globe... Soon, the Social Service Network or SSN became an in-house word uniting initiatives around the world.”

The visit of an IARF group to India, touring the Indian groups for an East-West dialogue around Christmas/New Year 1977/78 had opened up new horizons for all participants. It was IARF General Secretary Diether Gerhmann who actively and successfully brought these groups to participate on all levels in the organisation. Until the 1960's the IARF Council had known a predominant European and North American representation (with representation from Japan since the

1970's). In 1981 the Indian group which was among the founders of IARF, the Brahma Samaj, finally joined the Council, followed in 1987 by the Philippines (the Independent Church of Filipino Christians had been affiliated since 1930) and Nigeria. Thus the Network also brought about a more balanced composition of the IARF Council.

Growth of the Network

The groups implementing the first three SSN projects were the Brahma Samaj in Calcutta and the Unitarian Union in North East India. My first visit to project sites was in 1980. Little did we know at that time that the person who had been charged to meet us upon arrival in Calcutta, Punyabrata Roy Choudhury, was later to become the first Indian President of IARF (1990-93) and the backbone of the IARF Social Service Network activities in India. Equally, we could not foretell, at that stage, that the Network would expand from 3 projects in 1981 to 60 projects 10 years later. This rapid expansion was made possible through a special fund which enabled the Unitarian Universalist Association in USA to sponsor project work in India (the funds were restricted to India) whereby the IARF Social Service Network became one of the recipients.

In 1982 IARF General Secretary, Diether Gehrmann, travelled to Nigeria and the Philippines, establishing closer contact and co-operation with the IARF groups in these countries, and identifying targets for project work. Here too there were small beginnings: in the Philippines where the Unitarian Universalist ministers were using hand-copied guidebooks, there was a need for duplication equipment. The Independent Church of Filipino Christians (ICFC) was trying to rebuild its seminary in Batac after the original institution had been taken over by a faction which split off from the denomination to join the Protestant world. In Africa the church supported a kindergarten and a vocational training programme for women. The work in these countries also grew steadily through the generous assistance from our groups in Japan, especially Risho Kosei-kai. Rev. Olatuni Matimoju of Nigeria and Mrs. Bituen Pablo of the Philippines were elected to the IARF Council in 1987.

The first five years

The survey published in 1983 on the occasion of "5 Years Social Service Network" shows that on the implementation side, there are activities in India, Bangladesh, Philippines, Northern Ireland, Eastern Europe and Nigeria, whereas on the donor side there is substantial involvement from USA, Japan, Great Britain, Netherlands and Germany. Looking back it is clear that the concept of the Network responded to a need felt strongly in those days, namely the need for some "interaction" between Congresses. The time when people believed that the world would change through resolutions made at distinguished gatherings once every so many years, was over. The younger generations of the '60's and '70's kept asking: "but what are you doing..."

"IARF, Continuity and Commitment" was the title of the IARF newsletter in 1983. "Continuity" because the connections forged by the Network were not a whim or a fashion, but a step in the long history of belonging to the same movement. "Commitment" because both donor and recipient had to commit themselves to the cause which was the SSN project, a cause which each of them had to make the focus of their attention for a number of years, were it not to end as a 'development ruin'.

On occasions I have been asked, in discussions with the recipient groups, about the source of the money. Sometimes people feared that there were political strings attached. Some older members in the Philippines expressed their doubts about the intentions of an international organisation such as IARF, with regard to its respect for the religious tradition of the group, as there had been a traumatic experience in the past with other ecumenical contacts. In these cases I was able to reassure the recipients that the Network was based on an approach as expressed in the IARF Newsletter in 1985, "from encounter and dialogue to mutual support and joint action". The local members had the authority to determine which concerns, activities, existing or new projects should be taken up together, with due respect to the local group and the local community.

Other activities in connection with the Network

To realise this approach new programs were introduced: beginning in 1984 we organised annual All India IARF Conferences where the Indian groups could meet and exchange ideas: 1984 Calcutta, 1985 New Delhi, 1986 Bangalore, 1987 Mumbai (Bombay), 1988 Chennai (Madras), 1989

Narendrapur. The first IARF Conference in the Philippines was held in 1988 in Manila, the second one in 1989 in Dumaguete (Negros Island). In all these gatherings members from Europe, USA and Japan also took part.

From 1983, a series of Youth Encounters took place in locations close to project sites (India, Philippines). Each time they included a work camp element which was carried out in an IARF project in order to provide first hand experience of the conditions of the people living in these circumstances. Naturally, only a relatively small number of youngsters could participate in these programmes, as they involved high travel expenses for those coming from overseas. But at the same time these programmes had an enormous impact on the participants both from overseas and from the country itself, as they allowed third world youth to come in contact with their peers in larger numbers than before. The local youth also discovered the project activities of which they had not been aware before. The Indian youth was so inspired by the visit of their overseas friends that they began to study the religious precepts and history of their own (in this case Brahmo) movement, to the delight of the elders.

IARF Information Tours

In order to bring the saga of the project work closer to the people in local congregations, several 'IARF Information Tours' were held whereby project leaders visited congregations of sponsoring groups overseas. In 1982 and 1987 I had the pleasure to accompany Kalyani Karlekar and Ripnar Lyngdoh respectively to the USA and Canada, and our colleague Irmtrud Schmalenbach went to England in 1983 to assist Nongbri in New York in conveying the message of SSN. In 1989 Bituen Pablo (IARF Council member from Manila) visited several women's groups in the Netherlands accompanied by Nelly de Rooy.

Project leaders' meetings and training

From 1987 onward, special project leaders' meetings were organised on days following the regional conferences. In 1987 the Social Service Network had grown to such an extent that the need was felt to open SSN field offices in India (Calcutta) and in the Philippines (Negros Island). With a relatively small budget, the field staff was able to assist the Secretariat to administer the projects and to develop new initiatives such as local project leaders' meetings. In the Philippines they were organised by Rebecca Sienes of the Negros office. She also organised training courses in the management of agricultural co-operatives for the IARF members. The courses were directed by a Catholic group. Such developments gave the projects the necessary professional input and at the same time enhanced their visibility in the local community.

In India, the Network has been very fortunate to have the professional guidance of the staff of the Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Social Education, Narendrapur. As early as our first visit to Calcutta in 1980 they taught us the principles of 'integrated rural development': the danger of doling out money without proper preparation of the beneficiaries and structures to manage the funds; the importance of involvement of youth as a basis for development, and the emphasis on local contributions. The example of women saving a handful of rice each day in order to eventually bring a bag full of mixed rice to the 'grain bank' as their first deposit made a big impression. Mr. S.S. Chakraborty, development expert, illustrated this by saying that, in fact, money is not the problem in development, there is theoretically speaking enough money around in developing countries, from private or even government sources, to help the poor. What is lacking, however, is the education and self-organisation of the poor people, who need to gain access to information and local and national resources. On the latter point, organisations such as Ramakrishna Mission and IARF can play a role, by creating local leadership, and encouraging the people to identify their own problems and find their own solutions. In the words of Swami Vivekananda, "All the wealth in the world cannot help one little Indian village if the people are not taught to help themselves."

A new round of emergency appeals

We have seen that the idea behind the Network was as described above: to assist the member group and the community in which it was located. While the emphasis in the beginning had been on the service to the local society, in 1986 the Council resolved to re-establish the 'emergency relief' aspect of the Network funds. We realised that besides serving the 'community-at-large' we should not

overlook the immediate situation of our own members, especially if they were weakened by natural catastrophies or wide spread tragedies in conflict situations. Thus in 1986 an appeal was launched for church repair in Romania, which was (once again) hit by an earthquake in 1986; for distressed families in Northern Ireland where terrorism (still) caused suffering of innocent people; and for the Philippines where members on the island of Negros were in trouble due to the change of government, collapse of the sugar industry and frequent typhoons.

The year 1988 also saw a crisis situation in Transylvania (Romania) due to dictator Ceaucescu's plans to eradicate the homes and cultures of minorities such as the Hungarian speaking Unitarian communities. IARF groups responded overwhelmingly, both in the form of resolutions as well as financially. Groups in USA, Canada, Britain, The Netherlands and Australia made representations to their governments in defense of the human rights in Romania. It was reported that the contributions from Europe had quadrupled in 1988 in response to the Transylvania Relief actions. The IARF Secretariat staff bought a second hand bus, loaded it with goods, medicines, coffee (then used as 'emergency currency') and other food stuffs, and our colleague Klaus Glindemann drove the bus to Cluj/Kolosvar while local groups sent packets or valuta transfers to Unitarian congregations on a regular basis. Support was also given to the Unitarian Church in Hungary to help refugees from Romania.

Finally, the year 1989 brought a revolution to Romania, putting an end to this crisis.

Focus: Women and Literacy

1990 was International Literacy Year, as proclaimed by the United Nations and UNESCO, to which IARF is affiliated. IARF's contribution in this field became apparent in several literacy projects, among which the most extensive was the Integrated Literacy Service Project for women co-sponsored by the International Association of Liberal Religious Women (IALRW) and IARF. Started in 1986 as an initiative of the IALRW, the Harinavi Brahma Samaj formed a project group and appointed Bulbuli Ganguly as project leader. Beginning with teaching women the three R's (reading, writing, arithmetic) in four villages, the project grew into a model project in which teaching was combined with training to self-organisation and self-employment. Literacy classes were followed by vocational courses in weaving, tailoring, knitting, embroidery, fruit preservation, mushroom cultivation and bee keeping. The congress bag at the IARF Congress in 1990 was produced by students of this project. In addition, a little shop called the Congress Boutique was selling items produced by the projects from various countries, with the proceeds going to the Network.

In 1989, a vocational training centre could be opened on the premises of the Harinavi Brahma Samaj, thanks to a major grant obtained from the co-financing scheme of the German government through the efforts of the German section 'IARF Welthilfe'. This extension gave the project a boost and it is flourishing until the present day, thanks to this extraordinary young woman, Bulbuli without whom this project could not have developed the way it did.

Fundraising

On one other occasion IARF projects benefitted from government funds: in 1989-1990 the Dutch Humanist Institute for Development Co-operation (HIVOS, co-financed by the Dutch government) made a substantial contribution to the IARF Social Service Network. Several project partners in India and Philippines were selected as recipients of these grants and a HIVOS staff member came to personally visit and evaluate these projects. He also attended the 2nd IARF conference in the Philippines.

Donate-one-Meal campaign

But there are more ways than one to fundraise for social service causes. In 1981 the Japanese groups introduced the Donate-one-Meal campaign to the other countries in IARF: skipping one meal at a Congress was a practice which could be repeated at home once a week or once a month, and made known in the local congregation, youth group etc. Rissho Kosei-kai had been promoting this activity since 1975 and it was mostly intended to be a tool for reflection and discussion. Outside Japan it was recognised by many people as what is known as Lent Appeal, saving money to give away during fasting time before Easter. Soon after the introduction of the Donate-one-Meal campaign it became a

tradition in IARF which would be kept until the present day, showing how the example of one member group becomes a source of inspiration for others.

Sponsorship Fund

In order for representatives of IARF groups to meet, a Sponsorship Fund for participants from countries with currency restrictions (Eastern Europe, Developing World) was administered under the Social Service Network. At every congress this appeal found a widespread hearing among the donor countries. The policy has always been that the participation of sponsored persons would not be an occasional appearance, but instead a reinforcement of the ongoing relationship between our groups and network partners. In reciprocity for the sponsorships, these delegates have offered overwhelming receptions and hospitality in their respective home countries to visiting IARF groups.

IARF Albert Schweitzer Award

And, last but not least, I am happy to remember that the IARF Albert Schweitzer Award for 'Distinguished Service to the Cause of International Liberal Religion' was given to great personalities with whom I had the privilege of working. The award was proposed in 1972 and in 1975 Bishop Lajos Kovacs (Unitarian Church, Romania) was honoured as the first recipient. One cannot forget his short, round figure, his sense of humour, his perseverance, his hospitality. The 1990 congress sermon which he delivered was as 'down to earth' as he himself, used to be. Bishop Kovacs died in 1994.

The recipient in 1978 was Rev. William McMillan (of the non-subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland), who proposed the first IARF Social Service project. Who among us would not be impressed by his lively personality and his staunch advocacy of human rights and reconciliation. He was small in stature yet strong in voice and at the same time deeply religious, a great lover of nature, and an expert in flower arrangements. Obviously, his social engagement has made a lasting impact on the Association.

The recipient in 1981 was Devison Marbaniang (Unitarian Union of North East India). He was a lay pastor of modest appearance and a strong willed personality. Rooted in the culture of the Matrilinear Society of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills of Meghalaya, the Union has been practising its liberal religious tradition since 1887. The IARF honoured Devison for unselfishly serving the remote congregations on foot or by jeep, and for managing the Kharang rural hospital, a service project which dated back to the days of Margaret Barr.

In 1985 the recipient was Rev. Toribio Quimada, founder of the Unitarian Universalist Church of the Philippines. During several visits as Social Service staff I had the privilege to go around the island of Negros Oriental with him, crossing rivers, rice fields and mountains, admiring his wit, energy, love for people and total dedication to the communities he served. The tensions on the island became most tangible when Rev. Quimada was murdered in his house on Negros Island in May 1988. His high hopes for a church centre on the coast were never realised, but the denomination lives on and continues in his footsteps.

In 1987 the recipient was Mrs. Kalyani Karlekar (Calcutta). She was a social activist since the Second World War and founder of the Calcutta Social Project. Assisted by her sister Mrs. Nalini Das and a team of volunteers her approach is to combine service with education, to aid programs with training and self-help efforts. She organised the garbage pickers living on the dumping grounds of that overcrowded city. She captivated audiences in the USA and Canada with a slide-and-sound show. She was both strong and humane; a real hero.

Partners past and future

These names, and many others, represent people who have been, and still are, 'partners in progress'. The early pioneers have gone, but their words echo in our minds, and the fruit of their labour remains.

In 1990 the new IARF General Secretary took up his office, and in 1992, when I returned to my home country, The Netherlands, my successor was appointed. Since then we have seen that the IARF Social Service Network continues with greater strength and outreach on the regional level.

In closing, let me say that I feel greatly indebted to Diether Gehrmann for sharing his vision of the IARF as an active world community for service and peace and thus paving the way for the IARF Social Service Network. We had the unique opportunity to work with so many dedicated people who

built this Network and continue to do so. It was a privilege to be a pioneer and to be part of the SSN team.

Amsterdam, April 1999

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Ms Meijer was responsible for the SSN from 1979 – 1992 and is a former Deputy General Secretary of the IARF.

Widening Interfaith Perspectives in the IARF

Anne McClelland

In 1900 when the International Council of Unitarian and Other Liberal Religious Thinkers and Workers was founded, the focus was mainly on enabling freedom of expression and conscience in religion. This for many was synonymous with “liberal” and was for Unitarians a very live issue. The Boston Congress in 1907 gave itself a much more widely inclusive title — Congress of Religious Liberals — and many would much have preferred this to be officially adopted rather than the one determined in 1910 — International Congress of Free Christians and other Religious Liberals — which some felt to be “retrograde.” Only in 1969 with the International Association for Religious Freedom, today’s name, could many faiths really be included. Underlying the name changes were profound changes in frame of mind, social circumstances, political circumstances and also an enlarging of the whole concept of religious freedom. The criterion is no longer just, or even necessarily, freedom from creeds but the giving of space to people of other faiths freely to follow their own religious paths, with the essential corollary that those enjoying freedom, themselves affirm others and give them credence. Then those of very differing religious stances can work together to bring healing and peace to the society they share. The people of IARF can feel profoundly pleased that they have come to this broader stance. That it took a good many years is not so important as the fact that there was the possibility of change and the insight to prevail.

Anyone who looks at the *Proceedings* of the early congresses of the IARF could not help but be warmed by the enthusiasm and idealism of the leaders and by their fervent wish to be inclusive in their invitation to share in the proceedings. “All under whose eyes this notice may fall, of any church or of no church, who are willing to come together for the study of the essentials of Religion ... all who desire to see the world become better and who are willing to work together for this betterment, are cordially invited to the meetings of the International Council”.¹ Perspectives on interfaith approaches may have been shaped by different understandings over the years since then but people’s deep recognition of one another as spiritual persons as they make direct contact with each other, is witnessed to again and again at every congress - as expressed, for instance in these words of the Revd. Joseph Estlin Carpenter, Principal of Manchester College, Oxford and first President of IARF, as he wrote to apologize for not being able to come to the Congress in 1907: “May those who come from the

¹ Bowle, W. Copeland, editor. *Liberal Religious Thought at the Beginning of the 20th Century. Addresses and Papers at the International Council of Unitarian and other Liberal Religious Thinkers and Workers* (London, May, 1901

East and the West, from the North and the South, feel that they do indeed sit down in the kingdom of God which is not the dream of a distant future, but the constant presence of the spirit within us.”²

As they entered the new century, people felt themselves to be at a crucial point in history. This Estlin Carpenter clearly conveys in his Presidential address to the first Congress. They were, he felt, continuing the work “but half effected by the Reformation four hundred years ago.”³ Indeed, it was almost like a second Renaissance, with fresh ‘scientific knowledge’ which Carpenter felt Liberals could warmly welcome, new translations of the ancient sacred literature of the East - which had Carpenter coming to the radical conclusion that “no single historic religion can in reality become universal.”⁴ Increased facility in travel made it possible to visit the countries where these faiths were professed and “knit the whole earth into a unity undreamed of before.”⁵

The Revd. Charles W. Wendte, first General Secretary of the Council, could rightly claim “the formation of this Council was timely.”⁶ It was also of its time. Unitarians were the prime movers in its foundation. They were seeking fellowship and cooperation for those looking for liberty of expression in religion. They knew what it was to feel isolated and threatened as a minority, as having a different approach. They themselves had suffered from the imposition of orthodox belief and so naturally linked liberty with absence of dogma, whilst still advocating friendly relations with the orthodox. Charles Wendte, as Secretary of the Council, received many letters that “disclosed the loneliness and hardships borne by isolated liberal thinkers and congregations throughout the world”⁷ and their joy at the birth of the *International Council of Unitarian and other Liberal Religious Thinkers and Workers* (first name of IARF). Liberals at the turn of the century tended to make the distinction, current at the time, between the form and the spirit of religion, to rank creeds as second to what they were trying to express and to be striving ‘to unite pure religion and perfect liberty’.⁸ At the end of the first Congress, people felt that they were entering a new era, a new wave of religious understanding the world over - Carpenter again: “We have had a week of unique and solemn joy, a week quite without parallel in my experience, in the way it has made us feel that we here in England are in touch with a larger movement of thought and of religion, which in reality is pervading the great civilized nations of the world.”⁹

This was the spirit, too, of the second meeting of the Council in 1903 in Amsterdam. People were able to speak freely - as, for example, V.R. Shinde from the Brahma Samaj: “Christianity and Mohomedanism have visited the land, but only to worse confound the confusion”¹⁰ but they were very positive, too. Charles Wendte summed things up: “The prevailing spirit of the meetings was enthusiastic and fraternal. Nothing occurred from first to last to mar the perfect harmony of the proceedings”.¹¹ The third Congress in Geneva in 1905 had also great warmth of relationship - religions were ‘sisters’, rising out of the divine life that circulates in everything and always will do.¹² It was, however, clearly underlined that the meetings were between religious liberals. “We are not a parliament of religions. What we are is a parliament of religious liberalism”.¹³ There was a real sense of learning from one another - as for instance in the address by Prof. Benoyendra Nath Sen of the Brahma Samaj, who felt that East and West had much to teach each other and that we were witnessing the dawn of a new life.¹⁴

Already much concern with social circumstances was being expressed and envisaged as part of the compass of interfaith work. The Rev. W.G.Tarrant, London, felt this strongly and emphasized

² *Freedom and Fellowship in Religion. Proceedings and Papers of the 4th International Congress of Religious Liberals* Boston 1907, p. 630

³ *Liberal Religious Thought*, p. 1

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 327.

⁷ *Lib. Relig Thought*, op.cit, p. 324

⁸ *Ibid.*, Statement of Purpose, facing p. 1.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 352

¹⁰ *Religion and Liberty. Addresses and Papers at the Second International Council* 1903, p.181

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 424

¹² “Opening Address,” Professor E. Montet, *Actes du IIIe Congres International du Christianisme Liberal et Progressif* 1905, p. 7

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 102 *et seq*

that people were workers as well as thinkers: “if the crying need for Social Reform does not seriously affect Liberal Religion, kindling in it more and more the fires of a sacred passion, perish such liberalism from the face of the earth!” The Revd Minot Savage from New York was saying the same thing: “What is it that makes men better? It is simply the development of love, of sympathy, of the sense of justice, of the willingness to cooperate and be brothers; it is helpfulness and care; it is these spiritual qualities, these religious virtues, that make men and women civilised, that lift up and lead on mankind.”¹⁵

Charles Wendte in his foreword to the *Proceedings* of the 4th International Congress held in Boston in 1907 continues to give a considerable emphasis to the liberal nature of the Congress and feels the need of liberals for support in their struggle. Perhaps we do not appreciate enough today the struggle there still was in those days. “This International Council seeks to bring into closer union, for the exchange of ideas, mutual service, and the promotion of their common aims, the historic liberal churches, the liberal elements in all churches, the scattered liberal congregations and isolated workers for religious freedom and progress in many lands. It aims to be a source of encouragement and strength to them in their struggles against dogmatic intolerance and ecclesiastical tyranny.”¹⁶

Overall the spirit was tolerant, sympathetic and large minded and there was continuing that perception of each other’s spiritual being, which was so precious - but there were times when enthusiasm seems to have overridden sensitivity in a way that would, thankfully, bring a blush today. Charles Wendte again: “Liberalism is the supremacy of the spirit over the letter in religion. It is the mind in a state of growth, and is thus differentiated from orthodoxy, which is the type of mind that has stopped growing, which accepts finalities in religion and claims that its opinions are infallible.”¹⁷ All the while the Congress was already fulfilling the role which a later advocate would define for it - that of being a ‘demonstrative community’, showing how people from different faiths can benefit from relations with one another and know togetherness of spirit.” Once again the religious world is afforded the edifying spectacle of a great body of men and women, belonging to some thirty different households of faith and distinguished by large varieties of opinion, coming together in peace and goodwill to exchange ideas, and to consort and worship together in the spirit of freedom, reverence and charity.”¹⁸ The Local Committee had catered for 1500 people. In fact 2400 registered and even more came. “The supply of badges, reception tickets, programs, guide-books and other souvenirs also fell short of demand. But all short-comings were graciously borne ... the general satisfaction over the Congress overcoming all individual annoyance.”¹⁹ Even so, this conference was again a good experience!

There was emerging a concern about the name of the organization. Some thought it inappropriate for ‘Unitarian’ specifically to feature in it. The Revd. Charles Wendte sums it up like this: “Our Boston Congress of 1907, though under the auspices of the Unitarian denomination, was catholic enough to omit the word Unitarian from its name. It realized that the time had arrived for a change in its title, since four-fifths of its membership belonged to other Christian and non-Christian bodies. It called itself simply a ‘Congress of Religious Liberals’. It was at the congress in Berlin, three years later, that, for local reasons, the committee yielded to the insistence of its German and French friends and inserted the words ‘Free Christians’ into the name of the association. The British and American members of the committee were not in favour of this change, deeming it a retrogressive act.”²⁰ In the context of an inter-faith association, it does in fact seem strange to be replacing one particular name with another, and insensitive to the presence, evidently so much appreciated, of those from other faiths.

When one listens to the enthusiasm of Estlin Carpenter - “The Congress widened its borders, and so far rose above sectarian limitations that Catholic and Mohammedan could be seen at its sessions side by side”²¹ - and of Charles Wendte - “A striking feature were the East Indians present - a

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 237.

¹⁶ *Freedom and Fellowship in Religion. Proceedings and papers of the 4th International Congress of Religious Liberals* Boston 1907, p.1.

¹⁷ *Op cit.*, p. 64.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 62-3.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 25

²⁰ *New Pilgrimages of the Spirit* 1920, p. 85-6.

²¹ *Fifth International Congress of Free Christianity and Religious Progress Berlin* 1910, p.1.

tall Sikh professor from the Punjab, with impressive turban and flowing yellow robes, an intellectual looking Buddhist teacher from Ceylon, clad in yellow silk garment ... a dreamy-eyed Brahmin, plunged in meditation even in the crowd, a swarthy representative of the Hindu Theists ... Japanese with finely chiseled, mobile features, Chinese students, impassive, yet keen to note the proceedings, even a red Indian from America, Jewish types, dark-skinned Armenians - it was a truly international gathering, and all seated together in the greatest harmony and goodwill”²² - it is hard to reconcile this with the newly chosen title *International Congress of Free Christians and other religious liberals*. It must be that this again is of its time and that other religious traditions, though heard of with interest, were not yet dealt with officially on an equal footing - and evidently and sadly were prepared not to be.

It would be true to say, over against any quibbles with the title, that people’s direct perception of each other at the Congress would in reality carry more weight. The ‘religiousness’ of the conference was commented upon particularly as was the patience and courtesy of the listening: “Very impressive too was the prevailing open-mindedness, patience and courtesy displayed by the audience towards ... speakers and by the speakers towards each other. The presentation of novel or even distasteful opinions rarely provoked an expression of dissent... From the Socialist doctrinaire to the apostle of individualism, from an uncompromising and austere orthodoxy to the extremes of Protestant dissent, from the intense affirmation of the personality of Deity by Jewish Monotheist and Hindu Brahmin to the nihilism of Buddhist faith and the pantheistic ethics of the school of Spinoza - all alike listened with patience and courtesy” - this sometimes from 8.30 in the morning till midnight! There was also the factor of national and local patriotism, very much the way at the time in Germany, making “such large hospitality to foreign nations and foreign ideas ... a moral triumph of the first order.”²³

So, the name of the Congress was changed and would not be made more inclusive of those of other faiths until 1969 - almost sixty years in which interfaith dialogue prevailed in spite of it, and more than that, sixty years during which real encounter and cherishing happened, two world wars and other difficulties notwithstanding. The President of the Berlin Congress, Karl Schrader, spoke at the beginning and at the end about the desire for better understanding: “This congress has no desire to found a new church; ...But they do wish ... to help to breathe new religious energy into the different religious organisations and to furnish a basis for better understanding between them.”²⁴ “Above all differences of religious conceptions we were lifted by one fact: We all wanted religion, our thoughts all turned to God and through this one thought we are able to bear the differences of conception, even though we did not approve. This is a great step forward ... in our religious development - this entirely unpartisan, friendly treatment of opponents.”²⁵

Such a fanfare of faith and different faiths in Berlin in 1910 and then in Paris in 1913, some overshadowing of a smaller Congress by troubles in Europe. The proofs of the French edition of the *Congress Proceedings* were corrected under enemy shell-fire.²⁶ There were some very distinguished religious leaders present, and Pasteur Wagner in his opening address was very positive urging people not to be put off by superficial impressions but to look deeply and to know that “we are in the process of giving birth to a renewed world of the spirit”²⁷ and that “together we wish to prepare the dawn of tomorrow in the twilight of today.”²⁸ The tireless secretary, Charles Wendte reported a very wide correspondence and visits all over the world, including Syria, Egypt and Turkey and everywhere the encouragement of finding liberal thinking. He referred to the Congress held in 1910 in Germany and to the heresy trials in which some of the speakers had been involved afterwards - though some were present at the Paris congress.²⁹ Plans had been made for further visits in 1915. There were some excellent papers and some important issues treated for interfaith dialogue - for instance “The Duties of Liberal Believers towards Traditional Believers” by Professor Wilfred Monod, who wanted very much to have dialogue and put it in a rather wry nutshell: “very broad Christians ought, by definition, to

²² Ibid

²³ Ibid., p. 4

²⁴ Ibid., 18.

²⁵ Ibid., 547.

²⁶ *Travaux du 6e Congres International du Progres Religieux*, p.325

²⁷ Ibid., 5.

²⁸ Ibid., 6.

²⁹ Ibid., 184

support very narrow Christians”³⁰ and “Relationship of Liberal Believers with Non-believers” by his colleague, Paul-Hyacinthe Loyson of Paris, who also wanted dialogue between these two groups.

So the work of healing began. In 1922 Estlin Carpenter wrote some words of greeting at the invitation of W.H. Drummond the new secretary. This letter appears in the first issue of the *Bulletin of the International Congress of Free Christians and other Religious Liberals*, December 1922. “We are all convinced that the only real power which can ultimately heal the wounds of our disordered state lies in that Life of the Spirit which will lift us above rivalry and suspicion and fear into righteousness and peace and goodwill. To gain that life for ourselves and to diffuse it among others is our united aim. It is not confined to any one Church or to any particular theology. In varying forms it belongs to all. But for its fullest manifestation it needs two essential conditions, freedom and sympathy.... We seek to learn the meaning of each other’s experience, and feel the value of combined endeavour. Much can be done by correspondence and exchanges of literature, but still more by personal intercourse, when new hopes are awakened, new energies are aroused, and mutual confidence is established.”³¹

It seems to me that he is referring here to that sense of the kingdom of heaven, which he had in early meetings, and that direct perception of each other’s depth of spirit, which so many have witnessed to at congresses, and that this will be an increasingly important way of understanding and interfaith relation as more and more different faiths belong to the association. In fact, this seems to be the foundation of the demonstrative community that in 1935 Noordhoff urged the British General Assembly in Liverpool to see as one of the most important features of IARF. “What we need ... is a demonstrative community. ... Our Association should become a demonstration of the firm belief of a large group of people in the ways and methods of Liberal Religion, a community able to help “reinforcing the spiritual agency in human affairs which will ultimately decide the fate of humankind”. This community should be national and international, and should live and work not only for itself, but in the service of that other Community which is “at hand”.³²

In the 1930s another change was made in the name of the Congress. This time it was largely one of organization. The new name was: *The International Association for Liberal Christianity and Religious Freedom*. The Congress to which individuals and groups had belonged was replaced by an Association of organised groups. Individuals would belong to the Association via these groups. In orthodox Christian groups, there was an increasing problem in the oecumenical. movement with the inclusion of groups like the Unitarians, though there were those like the Bishop of Edmunsbury and Ipswich who spoke up in their defense (*Inquirer* Sept 14th 1935) “There must be frank recognition of the full equality of standing between ourselves and them (C of B and Free Churches). I include that body of Christians which calls itself Unitarians”. Another method of interfaith relation would be cooperation to redress social ills. In the 21st and 22nd issue of the *Bulletin* there is reference to the fact that in England there tends to be no distinction between the sacred and the secular - this would lead to cooperation later of the faiths in social service network activities - another form of interfaith activity and one already featuring in the ‘Workers’ of the first name.

There was a growing sense of the approaching of fresh hostilities. Dr Capek of Prague, sadly to be a victim of the war, wrote to affirm friendship and blessing: “if the present threatening should last or even become acute, then let this letter serve to affirm once more the bond of friendship and brotherhood which unites us all personally and as churches and groups. We remember gratefully how this bond was laid, extended and strengthened through meetings, letters and cooperation in many forms. And we are sure that nothing can separate those who are united in spirit and truth. We commend you all to the grace and guidance of God.”³³

The second world war did of course intervene, brutally. Even so the office of the IARF in Holland did survive and remarkably when peace was declared, within a few hours the office was in action again and in 1949 a congress was held in Amsterdam. John Howland Lathrop expressed the Joy felt: “To look into each others eyes after the years of tragedy which have involved us all is a deep satisfaction” - that direct communication of the spirit again which is a leit motif of interfaith relations.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 321

³¹ *Bulletin of the International Congress of Free Christians and other Religious Liberals*, December 1922, pp. 10-11.

³² *Bulletin* No. 17 1935 p.3

³³ *Bulletin* No. 26 1938 p.3

There was encouragement for theoretical acknowledgment of other religions and what is true and good in them, with this reservation from the Resolutions of the World Religious Section “but the Christian Gospel has for us a decisive and supreme character.”³⁴ Prof. A. Victor Murray would take this further at the Oxford Congress in 1952: “The free man and the educated man are men who have been able to come to terms with the world without any compulsion save that of a respect for other men’s convictions.”³⁵ Dr. Carola Barth in Amsterdam had asked for foreign women to write to German women to help in the regeneration of their country: “The moral situation in post-war Germany is very sad, but there are brave women who in spite of the worries exert themselves to the utmost to make their houses into true homes ... The German women are thankful for the spiritual help they get from abroad. It will be a good thing if foreign women will write to German women. Personal bonds are the best way to bring nations together again.”³⁶

Between the two world wars and especially after the second world war there can be seen at Congresses a move away from concern with biblical and textual criticism to a more urgent concern with how liberal religion can address the world’s needs - for instance, *Liberal Religion in an Age of Anxiety*, Belfast 1955 and *Today’s Religions can Meet the World’s Needs Today*, Chicago 1958. People of different faith traditions were still meeting to learn about one another’s tradition, but especially that they may ‘meet the world’s needs’. The address at the Chicago conference given by the Honourable Justice Htoon, Judge of the Supreme Court of the Union of Burma and Secretary General of the Buddha Sasana Council spells this out: “We meet here, not to make conversions or to establish superiorities, but to help one another towards a better understanding of certain fundamental principles we all share, and which are necessary to the right conduct of human affairs.”³⁷ There was of course the factor that by now people were living much more closely with people of other faiths in their own communities and needed to be able to manage life together on a daily basis.

The 16th Congress in Chicago was very much a water-shed, many felt. People saw parallels, not only in the place where it was held, but also in its content and approach, with the Parliament of Religions in 1893. Bishop Miroslav Novak of Prague was one of these, “The five great religions were given equal opportunity. In the first Congress of Religions in Chicago, 1893, Christians holding Christianity as the only universal religion tried to evangelize among Asiatic religions, but this time I felt a missionary trend in the messages of non-Christians.... Without distinction of race and creed we were together but still there was not enough love with us. In comparison with the *Congress for the Progress in Religion* in Prague in 1927, which I first visited as a student ... the Chicago Congress is a big step forward. It is the beginning of a broader fellowship. And every beginning is full of hope. With this hope in the future I left the United States. Sitting in the plane so near to the stars I thought of all the friends I met and in my heart deep bonds of friendship and understanding witnessed that our being together was not in vain”.³⁸

Miss Gudrun Kierkegaard of Copenhagen was another who drew comparisons: “Here I was together with my father in Chicago August 1958 at an IARF world conference which was similar to that of 1893. We heard not only eminent theologians and scholars from the US and Europe but also a Hindu from India, a Moslem from Pakistan, a Buddhist from Burma and a Jewish rabbi who all spoke about their own beliefs. This is a wonderful demonstration of liberalism which showed that where people earnestly want to understand each other, it is possible to find a way.”³⁹ The Revd. Georges Marchal, Paris, has an important point to make with regard to the limits that usually come in dialogue. “The Congress seems to us to have gone beyond this delicate problem (of limits) in adopting not a solution but an attitude - an attitude of sympathy, of fraternal respect, of moral, social and spiritual collaboration. Jew, Muslim, Buddhist, Christian have remained themselves, but they have shown in what way for them the liberal element was a factor in progress and a principle in union. It is in truly loving one’s own family that one learns to love other families”.⁴⁰

³⁴ *Proceedings of the 13th Congress* - no paging at this point

³⁵ *Authority and Freedom* 1952, p. 26

³⁶ 21st July 1949 in *Proceedings of the 13th Congress in Amsterdam 1949*. No paging

³⁷ Independently printed *Address*, p. 1

³⁸ *IARF Chicago 1958*, p.113-4.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 115

Carl Scovel in reflecting on the Congress in the *News Digest* suggests that their very living together at the congress was religious communication. "Perhaps what they did not realize was that they, among themselves, formed a religious and inter-religious community. They were not only thinking but actually living out the process of understanding. And, while they were talking about the need for religious communication, they in their lives at the conference were beginning this very process of religious communication."⁴¹ People were beginning to speak also of the need for a center of 'reflection, inspiration and leadership' - no doubt where this communication could be deepened and continued. Many were moved by the symbolic lighting of individual candles from "the United Religions Light" at the closing ceremony. As Dana McLean Greely puts it "as we lit our candles from a single light at the concluding worship service ... so ... as one family of religious liberals may we carry a common light into all the world"⁴².

They were also clear, though, that they were not looking for syncretism, so in the *Findings of the Congress*: "Each of the world's religions reflects this undying flame in its own way ... we neither wish nor expect the varying perspectives to disappear. Nor do we expect them to lose their identity in synthesis or syncretism."⁴³ This had already been clearly stated in the *News Digest* of July 1956 prior to the Congress: "the success of this Congress will depend on the measure in which all the participants will be able to realise that the 'others' are really others, whom to know is an adventure of the spirit!"⁴⁴ They were united in their experience of the spirit in each other - as had been said at many congresses: "Our task now is to find in many tongues, the appropriate words capable of expressing the spirit which in our most exalted moments united us in our contemplation of the present and our hope for the future."⁴⁵

After the important Congress in Chicago, the emphasis seems to have been on 'unity in diversity', as for instance in the words of Dr. Kurt Guggisberg, Switzerland - "Real unity is only possible through loving recognition of the manifold types of modern man, and by pulling down prejudices"⁴⁶ - and Dr. Andre Bouvier, Geneva - "Real unity is unity in diversity. Uniformity is the antithesis of unity ... There is no real unity without liberty. Differentiation is not division."⁴⁷ All religions are not alike. This is asserted strongly by Dr. Faber in *IARF News Digest* 1964: "Religion is a living whole with a centre and cannot be mixed with other religions. It can only be clarified, enriched or deepened in and around its centre. Every religion is not the same."⁴⁸ Such assertions were essential and were also helpful in preparing the ground for the change of name, which would enable a broader membership. They constitute also a move away from the old distinction between spirit and form. The vast scientific and technical knowledge that was flooding in was bringing new responsibilities to people all over the world. It was becoming ever more essential for religions to associate widely in facing the challenges of the age.

The decision to drop the words *Liberal Christian* from the title of the Association in many ways followed from the changed situation just outlined. It was not easily made. In the Summer 1969 issue of the *IARF Information Service*, No. 66 there is stark discussion as to whether the church in Czechoslovakia, for instance, should remain in the IARF. Many feel they should not because of the 'humanistic groups and certain movements in non-Christian religions that are associated with it' as well as on account of the fact that the main Christian group is the Unitarians. G.J Hoenderaal (not a Unitarian) argues for remaining in it (and does in fact do so, becoming Chair of Commission 1) because he welcomes the possibility of encounter with other faiths. The debate must have been fanned by the fact that Unitarians were no longer welcome in the World Council of Churches. It was a question that exercised many painfully - a question of remaining true to oneself but also of remaining true to others, as one person put it.

A.W. Cramer, the Executive Secretary at the time, reflects on the decision in this extract from his 1969 report of the Secretariat: "Can we hope that the IARF will function as a way out of our own

⁴¹ *News Digest* 39, p. 7.

⁴² Proceedings of the Chicago Congress 1958 p.3

⁴³ *Findings of the Congress*, 61.

⁴⁴ *News Digest* 30, July 1956, p. 1

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 5. Chuter Ede, London

⁴⁶ *News Digest* 45, p.6.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 11

⁴⁸ *IARF News Digest* 1964, p. 36

spiritual provincialisms, as a way towards a recognition of common concerns? ... Only then the Association will move with the creative forces in the present spiritual climate.... The freedom we are concerned about is perhaps primarily a freedom of religious communities to accept a change of attitudes and beliefs as a normal corollary to the emergence of a world culture ... A freedom which is religious in character arises out of the religious quality of the life of individuals and communities. It is through peace and justice, it is through the self-realisation given by love, that man attains true religious freedom”.⁴⁹ The decision was made in 1969 in Boston at the Congress with an appropriate theme ‘Encounter with Change’. J.W Wery of the Secretariat follows with these words: “the name of the Association was officially changed into International Association for Religious Freedom with the special purpose to open as wide as possible the door of the Association for groups and individuals of different persuasions and to invite them to come in and to share in the quest for mutual understanding and tolerance and the service of a more humane world.”⁵⁰

The dropping of the word ‘Christianity’ from the title did in fact admit certain groups straight away, including Risho Kosei-kai, a new Japanese lay Buddhist group. The dropping almost incidentally of the word ‘liberal’ opened the door, too, to more orthodox groups, as perhaps for instance Shinto groups, quite properly it seems to me, but in a way which would not have been possible in the early days. The criterion is no longer just, or even necessarily, freedom from creeds but the giving of space to people of other faiths freely to follow their own religious paths. There will be a certain degree of ‘natural selection’ in the sense that any faith communities, enjoying that degree of freedom, which could not affirm others and give them credence, would not *ipso facto* be able to relate fully with others.

Such breadth of inclusion, though desirable, does not naturally make for clarity of approach and it can feel difficult to have a full grasp of the aims of the Association. The themes of the congresses help in this as we can see from those that followed Boston: ‘Man, his freedom and his future’; ‘Our Unity in Diversity’; ‘The Limits of Toleration Today’; ‘The Tide of Religion’; ‘Religious Path to Peace Eastern Initiative, Western Response.’ The Commissions also helped in defining areas and issues - though in a rather formal way for growing trends in thinking. ‘The Religious Path to Peace’ was a milestone, being held in Japan - the first Congress held in Asia. Greetings were received from the Vatican, WCC, WCRP and CPC (Christian Peace Conference). Eugene Pickett, USA, said in his Opening Address: “It is our first Congress to be held in Asia and it represents the broadening and expanding scope of the work and influence of the IARF”.⁵¹ The Revd. Charles Wendte had said in 1903: “It is one of our cherished hopes that IARF shall yet hold a Congress in the Valley of the Ganges and the land of the Rising Sun.”⁵² His wish was in the process of being fulfilled.

At the Congress in North America (Stanford University) in 1987, a Resolution was passed on the Statement of Purposes of the IARF. The Theme of the Congress would encourage this: ‘World Religions face the 21st Century’. Much was confirming and challenging in it. “The IARF advances understanding, dialogue and readiness to learn and promotes sympathy and harmony among the different religious traditions ... It strives for an attitude of openness to truth, to love, to Justice.”⁵³ The purposes include religious, cultural, social responsibility, scholarly, organizational and educational elements. Their spirit is summed up in these words among others (World Congress N. America 1987 Proceedings, p.31) “ Only an acceptance of the variety of traditions and cultures as a source of mutual enrichment, rather than any attempt to impose conformity to one idea and practice, however loftily conceived, can lead us forward in hope. ... We affirm that all religious traditions express universal human experiences and aspirations, which are expressed in a great variety of particular manifestations according to local history and culture.”⁵⁴

⁴⁹ *IARF News Service* 66, p.18

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁵¹ *The Religious Path to Peace – Proceedings of the Congress in Japan 1984, Opening Address by Eugene Pickett* p.44.

⁵² *Religion and Liberty – Address and Papers at the 2nd International Council 1903 in Amsterdam* p.67 Charles W Wendte.

⁵³ *World Religions Face the 21st Century – Stamford University 1987*

⁵⁴ *Ibid* p. 31

Phillip Hewett (Canada) in his paper to Group One, emphasized the continuing need of the particular to come to the universal,⁵⁵ and Professor Doris Hunter (USA), looking imaginatively at the Japanese Tea Ceremony and the parallels with doing theology, was grounding theological experience in everyday doing. "Both performing the tea ceremony and the doing of a theology of the future would recognize that spirituality is not finally an exercise in linguistics but is a discipline in relating to the other in terms of universal human need."⁵⁶ The report of the General Secretary, Diether Gehrmann, the first full-time General Secretary who did so much to cross frontiers, was very encouraging. 800 people were registered for the Congress; 5 new groups had joined; 4-5 conferences were being organized world-wide each year; in addition there were Chapter programs; the Passport Program, suggested by the Japanese, would facilitate home visits; the Social Service Network had organized 50 projects; the International Year of Peace had been widely observed; the position of women was being enhanced in the projects of the association and there had been youth encounters; there was outreach through non-governmental organizations.

The work of the IARF has continued to broaden throughout the century, its membership to enlarge, the participation of people from different traditions to increase - there have been now Presidents from India and Asia, Congresses have been held in India and in Korea. The focus in a veritable kaleidoscope of interests and faiths is sharpened through choice of study groups and individuals are brought together in circle groups so that they may learn about other faiths through contact with particular persons. The vastness of the embrace need not be overwhelming but ways will keep being sought of enabling people to learn more about each other and to interact. There are several strands of interfaith relationship at work dialogue between people of different faiths; sharing in social service projects springing from the impulse of our various faiths together; joining with United Nations and other non-governmental bodies in enabling people to live with dignity and justice. Through all of these and essential to all of them, runs the recognition of the spiritual depth of the other, each perception of it a revelation and a source of real joy throughout the history of the Congress. People are conscious today that they are incorporated in the one state of being in which all exist - human beings, animal life, the natural world, all part of one interdependent whole.

The theme of the 1999 Congress in Vancouver illustrates this 'Creating an Earth Community'. Some words of Robert Traer, the General Secretary of the IARF from 1990-2000 and a Presbyterian minister, from his Address in Hamburg evoke that spirit in which interfaith relations best thrive: "all we need to do is love our children and grandchildren, and then live so that they may live. All we need to do is love the flowers and the birds, and delight in their beauty and song, and then live so that they may live. All that we need to do is love our religions and cultural traditions, our hymns and our chants, our prayers and our precepts, our scriptures and our sutras, our rituals and our rites, and then so live that we all may live. All we need to do is love our God and our world, the heavens and the earth, the seas and the soul, and then love so that all life may live."⁵⁷ So may it be as we enter the new millennium.

Rev. McClelland is a retired British Unitarian minister. She was President of the British General Assembly of Unitarian Church in 1995-96, is married and has one son, two daughters and two grandchildren. She is a founding member of the Richmond Interfaith Group and served for a number of years as a member of the Executive Committee of the Interfaith Network for the UK. Presently she is a trustee of the International Interfaith Centre at Oxford and also Chair of the Merton branch of the United Nations Association in the UK. She was elected to the IARF Council in 1999.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 200

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 201.

⁵⁷ *Congress Proceedings 1990*, p. 317

IARF's Recent 30 Years: East and West

Masuo Nezu

The paper entitled as "IARF's Recent 30 years: East and West" includes episodes at the Boston Congress in 1969, the Montreal Congress, in 1975, the Japan Congress in 1984 and the events commemorating World's Parliament of Religions in India, Chicago, and Japan in 1993. The paper, which tries to illustrate the general picture of Japanese involvement in IARF for the last 30 years, tells us the leadership, episodes and the views of Dr. Imaoka, who was the first member of IARF in Japan. Also, the paper explains about Dr. Greeley and Rev. Niwano, the two men who closely worked together for 20 years in order to promote religious cooperation and world peace, and their tremendous efforts for IARF and WCRP.

The essay also includes grassroots involvement and encounters between East and West referring to the efforts by Rissho Kosei-Kai and other Japanese member groups at the Japan Congress. The writer finally tries to give us some suggestions for interfaith activities in the future based on the history of these two international interfaith organizations.

The noted British historian Arnold Toynbee (1889-1975) once said something to the effect that in future centuries historians will mark the twentieth century as "the century of interreligious cooperation." The International Association for Religious Freedom (IARF), founded in 1900, began as a dialogue among religious liberals. Cooperation begins with dialogue. The IARF celebrates its one hundredth anniversary this year as "the first international organization of religious cooperation in the world."

The IARF will hold its World Congress in Vancouver, Canada in July to commemorate the Centenary Anniversary. At the same time, this year marks the thirtieth anniversary of Rissho Kosei-kai's affiliation with the IARF.

A Fine Day Today

I would like to reflect on the Japanese commitment to the IARF. The first person to become involved was the late Dr. Shin'ichiro Imaoka (d. 1988), then head of the Japan Free Religious Association. He thought it appropriate to introduce Rev. Nikkyo Niwano, the founder and then president of Rissho Kosei-kai, to Dr. Dana McLean Greeley, who was then president of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) of North America.

In the first half of his life, Founder Niwano devoted himself wholeheartedly to spreading the teachings of the Lotus Sutra. In the second half, his activities in the social sphere have deepened and widened to become international in scope, with emphasis on interreligious cooperation. He has had a number of important "encounters" with other people.

In addition to his private meeting with Pope Paul VI at the Second Vatican Council in 1965, which raised the founder's expectations for interreligious cooperation from a mere possibility to a firm conviction, one encounter deserving special mention was the one with Dr. Greeley, with whom he began a lifelong devotion to peace activities with a strong sense of unity of purpose.

On January 22, 1968, the Japanese-American Inter-religious Consultation on Peace (which later gave birth to the World Conference on Religion and Peace, or WCRP) was held in Kyoto. Following its conclusion, Dr. Imaoka brought Dr. Greeley to the Great Sacred Hall in Tokyo, where they met Founder Niwano. On this occasion the Founder and Dr. Greeley, following up on their initial meeting in Kyoto, talked for more than three hours frankly and openly and cemented their lasting friendship.

"Some people say that Unitarians are Christians, while others say they are not," Dr. Greeley said, as he sought a "truth" that transcends individual faiths and sects.

"The goals of all religions are the same. All religious people should cooperate in their common tasks," Founder Niwano responded.

The two men found they had much in common in their religious views and, with the joy that came from finding strong colleagues in each other, they felt there was a bright future for interreligious cooperation.

After seeing Dr. Greeley off, the Founder looked very happy in the elevator returning to his office and said, "It is a fine day today."

Dr. Imaoka remembered the encounter as a fortunate and dramatic one. My serving as interpreter for the two men made the day unforgettable for me.

In the summer of that year, the General Assembly of the UUA was held in Cleveland, Ohio. With letters of introduction kindly given to me by Dr. Imaoka, I attended the Assembly and read a message from the Founder at a plenary session. Rev. Yukitaka Yamamoto, chief priest of Tsubaki Grand Shrine in Mie Prefecture and now president of the IARF, was also present and offered a Shinto prayer in his formal Shinto robe.

After the General Assembly I traveled to several cities in the United States and visited the UUA headquarters in Boston, where I spoke personally with Dr. Greeley. When I arrived at the airport on my return to Tokyo, I was surprised to find the elderly Dr. Imaoka waiting for me. I was very grateful, and realized how enthusiastic about interreligious cooperation he was.

IARF for "Dialogue," WCRP for "Action"

In July 1969, the Twentieth Congress of the IARF was held in Boston. Founder Niwano attended for the first time. Rev. Toshio Miyake, senior minister of the Konkokyo Church of Izu in Osaka, also was present, as he was to attend the WCRP Executive Committee meeting with the Founder. Dr. Imaoka attended the Congress accompanied by his much loved younger brother's grandson as his personal physician.

The theme of the Congress was "Encounter with Change." Dr. Greeley was elected president of the IARF at that time. Rissho Kosei-kai became formally affiliated as a member organization and Founder Niwano was elected a member of the Executive Committee. After some serious discussion, the words "Liberal Christianity" were deleted from the name of the IARF. The theme "Encounter with Change" was symbolic because the IARF was soon to expand among various religious faiths.

During the Congress a Sunday service was held at a historic Unitarian church in Boston. Representatives of the participating countries all offered lighted candles. When he offered his candle, Dr. Imaoka said, "I brought this light all the way from Japan." Those words, reflecting the deep sentiments he had held for decades, greatly impressed us. Dr. Imaoka had studied at the Harvard Divinity School in 1915 and 1916. In addition to his religious studies, he had friendly exchanges with many Unitarian and

Universalist leaders and scholars. His wish for international interreligious cooperation seems to have started in those days.

Following the Congress, the first International Executive Committee Meeting of the WCRP was held in Cambridge at Endicott House on the campus of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, across the Charles River from Boston. Both Founder Niwano and Dr. Greeley attended. From that time on, for some twenty years, they worked together, hand in hand, for interreligious cooperation and world peace, attending world conferences and congresses of the two organizations, U.S.-Japan bilateral conferences, United Nations-related activities, and more, playing central roles in them.

The IARF has historically emphasized "dialogue," while WCRP has been more "action-oriented." The two organizations have their own distinctive features, but at the same time they emphasize interreligious cooperation as the crux of their work and have certain similar aspects. There have been and still are many religious leaders who join both. Among those in Japan who have done so are Rev. Miyake, who joined the WCRP on its founding, Rev. Yamamoto, and many other leaders of various religious groups.

With Seminarians in Montreal

Founder Niwano attended consecutive IARF Congresses in Heidelberg, in 1972; in Montreal in 1975; in Oxford in 1978; and in Holland in 1981.

The Twenty-second Congress was held in Montreal under the theme "Our Unity in Diversity." It marked the first time that students from Gakurin, the Rissho Kosei-kai seminary in Tokyo, attended an IARF Congress.

Ten of the students introduced the organization under the title "Meet Rissho Kosei-kai" by means of slides, role-playing on such topics as "Hoza, its function and history" (hoza is the term for the organization's group counseling sessions, in which participants sit in a circle), chanting the Lotus Sutra in the manner of daily devotionals, followed by a question-and-answer session.

Founder Niwano watched them with rapt attention, and many of the Western participants expressed deep interest in this new religious movement from Japan.

Despite his own busy schedule at the Congress, the Founder invited the students to dinner at a Japanese restaurant and gave personal guidance to each of them in a relaxed atmosphere. The seminarians were touched by his consideration and warm encouragement.

Among the students were two who were then studying at U.S. graduate schools. One day Founder Niwano called them to his room and presented them some cordial handwritten instructions, saying, "As I awoke at four this morning, I pondered over how you students can explain the essence of the Lotus Sutra so that Westerners will genuinely understand its spirit. On this piece of paper I have put down what I think is most important."

One of the two is now dean of the seminary. Many of the other nine are serving as ministers of local or overseas branches or heads of various departments and sections of Rissho Kosei-kai.

UUA Emissaries

Unitarian minister Dr. Felix D. Lion, now retired, taught English at Gakurin in 1970. Decades later, he recalls Founder Niwano's warmth toward and expectations for its students. Here is what he wrote in his diary for March 1 that year: "New students enter Rissho Kosei-kai Seminary." Followed, he remembers, by "this very poor attempt at a haiku:

"Beaming Niwano,
Feast for ten. Last Supper? No.
Radiance melting snow."

A light snow had fallen during the night, Dr. Lion recalls, but, near noon, it was melting, which he attributed, in poetic fashion, to Rev. Niwano.

In his recent letter, Dr. Lion wrote, "The head of the seminary and his assistant had met Founder Niwano at the seminary entrance and escorted him upstairs to a large room with cushioned Western-style chairs surrounding a low table. Tea was brought in. The two seminary officials and Founder Niwano's chauffeur or secretary left. So remaining were Founder Niwano, the ten students (I think all were new first-year students), including two women, and myself. I remained totally silent, but the students, encouraged by Founder Niwano, soon were asking questions. Rev. Niwano spoke and listened in turn, as if among equals.

"I particularly remember one student asking which among all the religions of the world was the true one. The Founder answered along these lines (although of course I did not catch every word, nor could I remember exactly at this late date): The great religions of the world developed out of varying civilizations and varying human experiences. It is as if a number of people from widely scattered villages started to climb a sacred mountain like Mount Fuji. The higher they climbed, the closer their paths approached each other. The sages and prophets of each faith, as they ascended the heights and gained larger truth, became very close, regardless of whether they started as Buddhists, Hindus, Christians, or members of some other faith.

"That was my first close contact with Founder Niwano, except for a formal handshake in Boston in July 1969. I came away profoundly impressed by his humanity and the depth of his concern."

Like earlier emissaries from the UUA to Japan, Dr. Lion's time at the seminary contributed to strengthening the relationship between that organization and Rissho Kosei-kai.

Here I want to introduce briefly other emissaries of the UUA to Japan. They were the Rev. Robert Swain, 1964--65; the Rev. Dr. Robert Green and Mrs. Carole Green, 1965-66; the Rev. John Goldthwait and Mrs. Barbara Goldthwait, 1966-67; Mr. John Flaherty and Mrs. Marjorie Flaherty with their two sons, 1967-68.

Along with interfaith activities with several Japanese religious groups, they taught English to Rissho Kosei-kai staff and lay members, and helped as proofreaders at the Kosei Publishing Company during their stays in Japan.

Rev. Swain studied the Japanese language, traditional calligraphy (shodo), and the Japanese tea ceremony. After returning to the United States, he even prepared a room for the tea ceremony in his house in Seattle and, from time to time wrote us letters in Japanese. He also practiced calligraphy, taking back Japanese brushes (fude), and ink sticks (sumi) with him.

Dr. Green studied the history of Japanese religions while serving in Japan. When he returned to the United States, he made an extensive presentation at the UUA General Assembly on Japanese religions both contemporary and those of centuries ago, using many slides and other helpful materials. Many who were interested in Japanese religions gathered and listened attentively.

The Goldthwaits continue to exchange Christmas cards with Rissho Kosei-kai friends every year even now, though he is no longer in the UUministry.

The Flahertys, after going back to their home in Stockton, California, invited a series of Rissho Kosei-kai seminarians to stay at their residence so that they could study at a college nearby. This helped develop international educational programs of the seminary in various ways, such as sending students to many universities overseas for their post-graduate studies, particularly those in America.

The Flahertys' sons, Sean and Casey, were young boys when they first came to Japan. They soon started practicing Japanese swordsmanship(kendo), at the Kosei Martial Arts Hall. After going back to America, they returned to Japan several times. Casey, the younger son, practiced Shinto at the Tsubaki Grand Shrine and appeared on Japanese TV wearing Shinto robes. He married a Japanese girl and settled in Japan, while Sean, the elder son, continues to live in Stockton. His wife is Japanese-American.

An Aloha Shirt and a Suit

Among the many memories shared by Dr. Greeley and Founder Niwano, who worked together in many corners of the world, is an episode that took place at the Second U.S.-Japan Inter-religious Consultation in Hawaii in 1972.

Dr. Greeley showed up for a meeting wearing a Hawaiian aloha shirt. The Founder, like a proper Japanese gentleman, appeared in a suit and tie. As they exchanged greetings, they noted the difference in their attire. Following a lunch break, they returned to their rooms before continuing their meeting. Now, the Founder appeared wearing an aloha shirt, while Dr. Greeley was in a suit and tie. Though this caused a big laugh among the others present, the episode shows the attitude of the two men: always think about things from the standpoint of others, try to understand others, and make an effort to promote interreligious cooperation that will be fitting for others.

In meetings for peace activities over many years, Founder Niwano thought highly of Dr. Greeley's views. The latter, too, listened carefully to what Rev. Niwano said and often supported him by expressing agreement.

First Congress in Asia

Another highlight of the IARF's history was the Twenty-fifth Congress, held in Tokyo from July 23 to Aug. 10, 1984. The theme, "Religious Path to Peace: Eastern Initiative, Western Response," was epochal. Several months before the Congress, I received a letter from Dr. Imaoka in which he wrote, "Eastern initiative is the will of Shakyamuni Buddha" and he quoted the words of the Buddha: "Make of yourself a lamp, . . . make a lamp of the Dharma." As a Buddhist, I was much impressed. Dr. Imaoka genuinely sought religious truth and desired a future in which religion transcended sectarianism. It was such a desire, I suppose, that led him to arrange the first "encounter" between Founder Niwano and Dr. Greeley, who then worked together for interreligious cooperation and world peace.

During the Congress, Dr. Imaoka delivered an address in Rissho Kosei-kai's Fumon Hall. He had prepared a Japanese text, and read a sentence or two of it. But he stopped, set the text on the lectern, and improvised his talk in English. At that time he was well over one hundred years old. The participants from many countries made a great stir, and when he finished his speech, applause echoed throughout the hall.

"Japan is the most appropriate place for mutual understanding among religions," he had thought, and with that in mind for several decades had wanted to hold the Congress in Japan. His address sounded like an expression of his own deep feelings about this.

What were the special features of the Japan IARF Congress? There were three main ones: (1) as the first ever held in Asia, it reflected Asian thought and spirituality; (2) it marked the first time an IARF Congress included peace in its theme; and (3) eight hundred participants, about half from overseas and half from Japan, came together from twenty-two countries. Rev. Diether Gehrman, then the IARF general secretary, with his wife, Dorle, and their sons, and the International Secretariat came to Tokyo a

couple of weeks early and worked very hard on the preparations with the Japanese staff.

The programs were rich in content. Tours to Japanese religious sites were arranged before and after the Congress sessions so that overseas participants could learn firsthand about Japanese religions. They visited the Buddhist temple Enryaku-ji and Ittoen in Kyoto; Tsubaki Grand Shrine and Ise Shrine, in Mie; the Konkokyo Church, at Izu; Toshogu Shrine, at Nikko; and various local branches of Rissho Kosei-kai. Their experiences were reflected in the discussions at the Congress. Workshops on traditional Japanese culture also were arranged in facilities at Rissho Kosei-kai headquarters.

Two hundred and forty people from overseas took part in a "home visit" program to experience everyday Japanese life. In groups of two or three they visited homes of Rissho Kosei-kai members in Tokyo, greatly improving mutual understanding at the grassroots level.

Congress participants enthusiastically discussed their views and exchanged ideas each day. Their dialogue helped people of different faiths from both East and West to deepen their understanding of each other and reflected one aspect of the IARF spirit, "learning from one another." At the Congress service in the Great Sacred Hall, some 7,000, people prayed and rededicated themselves to the one single purpose common to all-world peace. A Buddhist sutra was chanted, and devotions were offered by Hindu, Christian, Shinto, Islamic, and Sikh representatives.

As the twenty-fifth president of the IARF, Founder Niwano delivered an address entitled "Today's Perspective on Our Religious Mission." He said in part: "Before the dangers that face the entire human race, I believe that there can be no greater joy and comfort than the consciousness that religionists must put aside their differences and unite in their attempts to force open the heavy door on a new era."

The "Festival of Japan" held during the Congress aroused excitement and enthusiasm. In addition to the Congress participants, 3,700 young members of Rissho Kosei-kai joined in and danced hand-in-hand, bringing everyone a feeling of deep unity.

"When you come to Japan, visit my home." "Please send me a letter telling me something about your country." Children from Rissho Kosei-kai families all over Japan sent in paintings and drawings to the Tokyo headquarters with their names and addresses and such messages on the back. These were presented to the overseas participants, who expressed great appreciation.

On Aug. 5 and 6, about 260 overseas IARF Congress participants visited Hiroshima and attended the annual memorial service for the atomic bomb victims and renewed their vows for peace, adopting the IARF Hiroshima Appeal.

Eyes Were Opened

What fruits did the 1984 Japan Congress bear? Here, I would like to introduce some of the comments and letters of thanks of many of the overseas participants.

We thank you, out of [our] whole heart for the wonderful hospitality, the warmth, openness, friendliness, and readiness of service that we experienced from all of you during the whole time of our stay in Japan, which made this Congress memorable for us for the rest of our lives.

Lajos Kovacs and Janos Erdo, Romania

Each of us truly had a once-in-a-lifetime experience Δ one we will not soon forget.

Paul M. Morse, Sepulveda Choir

It is difficult to find words to express our gratitude for the many special arrangements and kind and thoughtful acts. We were deeply impressed by the organization of the events and the content of the workshops and services. We renewed our determination to work for peace in the world.

Harlings F. Litton and Norman Heys, Canada

It was a "dialogue" through meeting people by which I myself could be changed.

Dr. George Rupp, then dean of the Harvard Divinity School

As tokens of the spirit of the Congress, four images remain in my mind: 1) the children's smiles during our visit to a Rissho Kosei-kai branch; 2) the staff members who led the Congress to great success from behind the scenes; 3) the experiences of overseas participants in hoza, misogi, and other Japanese religious practice; and 4) Dr. Imaoka's presence and his speech.

Prof. George Williams, California State University

The "home visit" was wonderful. I can bring many spiritual souvenirs back to my country and my own home.

John Eceneza, India

Official Rissho Kosei-kai participants in the 1984 Congress numbered fifty. However, those who worked as staff members and volunteers, such as the members of the "Language Service" (LS) who served mainly as interpreters between English and Japanese, visitors to the Prayer Service, along with those involved in many other ways meant that the number who committed themselves to the Congress amounted to several tens of thousands.

Among their reactions were these: "I really sensed that people from all over the world were sharing the right Dharma"; "Through meeting with the foreigners who asked serious questions in hoza, I renewed my awareness of the true faith"; "Meeting with people of other faiths from many countries made my own faith much stronger"; "By describing the teaching of the Buddha to overseas participants, my understanding and faith become stronger. With more confidence, I have become able to disseminate the teaching of the Buddha"; and "Foreign participants were 'blue-eyed bodhisattvas.'"

Since the time of the Japan Congress, from the top to the grassroots level wider participation in the various international activities of Rissho Kosei-kai has increased remarkably.

Always Thinking of Others

In his last years, Dr. Greeley suffered from cancer. Hearing that he had undergone surgery, Founder Niwano frequently wrote to him expressing concern and encouragement, along with his with prayers for a full recovery.

It was said that Dr. Greeley underwent several operations, both major and minor. A strong-willed man, he once seemed to have made a miraculous recovery. Surprisingly, he was even able to attend the IARF Congress in Tokyo, together with his wife, Deborah. At the Congress, he was honored with the 1984 IARF Distinguished Leadership Award (the first recipient in 1981 had been Dr. Imaoka). The award was presented by Rev. Niwano, as the IARF president.

Less than two weeks after the Japan Congress had ended, Dr. Greeley traveled to Nairobi to attend WCRP IV. At these two world meetings, he continued his passionate, almost superhuman efforts for peace, without showing any signs of weakness, thus touching the hearts of the other participants.

In the United States at that time (although not in Japan), informing cancer patients about their disease was already standard practice. Therefore, people's eyes were wide with astonishment at the activities of this man with an incurable disease. The general feeling was that even in such poor health, he always thought of other people instead of himself.

One day in Nairobi, when too many people showed up for a workshop, there were too few seats. Dr. Greeley brought a chair from the next room, carrying it on his shoulder, and handed it to a participant who was standing. As this seemed quite an ordinary gesture, the recipient may not have been aware that it was Dr. Greeley who gave him the chair, or that he was a man fighting a fatal disease.

Over the next two years his condition worsened. He was unable to attend the 1986 Asian Conference on Religion and Peace (the third such conference, held in Seoul). Participants were informed of his passing during the conference. Several days before his death, Dr. Greeley recorded a final message on tape. Dr. Malcolm Sutherland, a close colleague, brought the message to the conference. The international officers gathered in a room to hear the tape, along with an explanation by Dr. Sutherland.

The recording began with Dr. Greeley saying, "Rev. Niwano" and then in turn reciting the names of the other officers who had worked with him from the beginning of the movement. His message continued with words of farewell to his colleagues and a prayer for the success of the Conference. Dr. Greeley's voice was hoarse, and he seemed to be having some difficulty breathing, so that speaking required great effort. Everyone in the room was deeply moved and prayed from the bottom of their hearts that Dr. Greeley's soul would rest in peace. Founder Niwano, after returning to his hotel room, recited from the Threefold Lotus Sutra as a further prayer for Dr. Greeley.

Dr. Greeley's Spirit Is with Us

The Dana MacLean Greeley Foundation for Peace and Justice was established in 1985 to honor and continue Dr. Greeley's efforts. Dr. Greeley assisted in its formation and his spirit continues to be embodied in the Foundation's work for justice, as well as in the IARF and the WCRP.

"Dr. Greeley's spirit surely is with us still, and his activities will continue for years to come," Founder Niwano said at that time. With this thought in mind, the Founder has detected Dr. Greeley's farsighted intelligence in subsequent WCRP activities, and he has encouraged the leaders of WCRP/USA from time to time.

"To hold a World Conference on Religion and Peace it is necessary to have enthusiasm, wisdom, and funds." Those significant words were uttered by Dr. Greeley in Istanbul, a historic point of contact between East and West, in 1969 when the very first Interim Advisory Committee meeting of the WCRP was held there.

One day during WCRP II in Louvain, Belgium in 1974, the discussion continued until very late at night. Addressing Founder Niwano, and shaking hands with him, Dr. Greeley said, "Since it is already well after midnight, we should say 'yesterday was a very great day!'" When reflecting on those days as he looked over old photographs of the conference, The Founder's heart seemed very full.

To the UN with Passion

In June 1988, when he traveled to New York to address the Third Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly Devoted to Disarmament, Founder Niwano paid his respects at Dr. Greeley's grave. On the day after his arrival, he made a one-day visit to Boston. It happened to be the Sunday nearest the second anniversary of Dr. Greeley's death. In the First Parish in Concord, Mass., where Dr. Greeley served for many years as senior minister, his widow, Mrs. Deborah Webster Greeley, and many others who deeply admired Dr. Greeley and worked closely with him, were awaiting the Founder's arrival.

At their request, Rev. Niwano spoke from the pulpit Dr. Greeley had used to deliver his sermons. "This week, I am going to make an appeal for the third time at the Special Session on Disarmament of the UN. I want to do that with the passion of the late Dr. Greeley," he said. Then he visited the offices of the Greeley Foundation and the Lexington cemetery where Dr. Greeley is buried, along with several historically prominent American writers. The Founder offered flowers, burned incense brought from Japan, and prayed wholeheartedly.

At the Greeley home, some seventy distinguished people who had been close to Dr. Greeley gathered to share memories of him with Mrs. Greeley and Founder Niwano. All were in a reminiscent mood, recalling bygone days and Dr. Greeley's great personal magnetism. The Founder ended his busy one-day trip by visiting Dr. Edwin O. Reischauer, who served as United States ambassador to Japan between 1961-66, whom he had visited with Dr. Greeley two decades earlier.

"Many people welcomed me warmly in Concord," Rev. Niwano remembered. "It was almost as if Dr. Greeley had been there. I felt that his spirit protected us all day."

Mrs. Greeley had an herb garden at her home from which she picked some rosemary to present to the Founder in symbolic memory of her husband. After Rev. Niwano returned to Japan, the rosemary was replanted in the Horin-kaku garden at Rissho Kosei-kai headquarters. Although the

latitude of Boston is close to that of Hakodate in Hokkaido, Japan's northernmost island where the temperature and climate are very different from those in Tokyo, the plant thrived for years.

Centenary of World's Parliament of Religions

When the World's Parliament of Religions was held in Chicago in 1893, Dr. Imaoka was a 12-year-old boy. Along with holding an IARF World Congress in Japan, another dream that he cherished for many decades was that the IARF should plan something very special for the centenary of the Parliament.

Between August and September 1993, three commemorative events to mark the one hundredth anniversary were held in Bangalore and New Delhi, India, in Chicago, and at Ise in Japan. Of course, the IARF played an important role in all these events.

The International Interfaith Organizations Coordinating Committee (IIOCC), comprising four religious and interreligious organizations (IARF, WCRP, the Temple of Understanding, and the World Council of Faiths) organized a multireligious conference in Bangalore.

The IARF held its 28th World Congress there for four days from Aug. 15. Most of the participants also attended the Centenary of the World's Parliament of Religions that followed between Aug. 19 and 22. One hundred and five religious organizations representing 12 religions from 39 countries were represented. As many as 670 people took part.

Rissho Kosei-kai held a workshop on its founding principles, on the teaching of the Lotus Sutra, and on interreligious activities at its branches. The 80 attending religionists heard how members apply Buddhist teachings in their daily lives.

During the centennial celebration in New Delhi on Aug. 25, the IIOCC presented a Centennial Award to Founder Niwano. Rissho Kosei-kai's chief director, Rev. Motoyuki Naganuma, accepted the prize on the Founder's behalf from India's prime minister at the time, P. V. Narasimha Rao.

The 1993 Parliament of the World's Religions was held in Chicago between Aug. 28 and Sept. 5, with some 6,000 people participating, including representatives from the IARF, WCRP, and Rissho Kosei-kai. On Aug. 31, Rissho Kosei-kai conducted a two-hour program entitled "The Contemporary Interpretation and Application of the Lotus Sutra." Four presentations, "Interreligious Cooperation," "Modern Interpretation of the

Lotus Sutra and its Practice," "The Donate One Meal Campaign," and "Efforts as a Religious NGO for Global Issues," were offered by a department head from Tokyo headquarters, ministers of the U.S. branches, and myself. It was the first time the Chicago Branch had taken part in such a large convention.

Together with the Buddhist Council of the Midwest, Rissho Kosei-kai Chicago one evening sponsored a reception for mutual communication and understanding in honor of the delegates. More than 200 people attended and exchanged views.

IARF member organizations in Japan sponsored an interfaith conference at Ise on Aug. 29-30 under the theme "Toward the Twenty-first Century: the Role and Responsibility of Religionists" to mark the centenary. It drew some 1,200 participants. Addresses were delivered by prominent scholars and a symposium with five panelists, including a Rissho Kosei-kai member, was held. At the conclusion, the "Ise Appeal" was

adopted, calling on people of religion to repent their past dogmatic rivalries and meet their responsibilities for fostering the spiritual and social progress necessary for human harmony.

Inheritance of the Lamp of the Law

The First Inheritance of the Lamp of the Law Ceremony in Rissho Kosei-kai's history was conducted solemnly at the Great Sacred Hall in Tokyo on Founder Niwano's eighty-fifth birthday, Nov. 15, 1991. The organization's presidency was entrusted to Rev. Nichiko Niwano, the Founder's first son, on that day.

To further celebrate this historic installation of Rissho Kosei-kai's second president, three commemorative events were held: a reception on Nov. 21, a consultation with foreign religious leaders on Rissho Kosei-kai's past and future contributions to world peace on Nov. 22, and a symposium on Nov. 23, with the participation of many distinguished guests from at home and abroad.

Rev. Nichiko Niwano had attended the IARF World Congress in Holland, in 1981, and of course the 1984 Congress in Japan, and had visited the International Secretariat in Frankfurt during his

1988 trip to Europe. When Dr. Robert Traer, the IARF general secretary, or other officers visit Tokyo, President Niwano always meets with them.

With the rapid development of Rissho Kosei-kai's international activities, a division of labor gradually has taken place. Since being elected the organization's second president, Rev. Niwano is now also an international president of the WCRP, and chief director Norio Sakai is a member of the IARF international council.

Juzu

In June 1998, thirty full years after the first meeting between Founder Niwano and Dr. Greeley, I contemplated a trip to visit those with whom I had become acquainted and worked closely when I assisted the Founder. (I also wanted to let my wife see with her own eyes some of the people of my 30 years of international activities, for which she had long provided background support.)

The major reason for the trip, however, was to pay our respects at Dr. Greeley's burial place for a second time. We also hoped to meet Mrs. Greeley, if she was in good health. When we arrived in Boston, our good friend Rev. Richard Kellaway kindly informed us of the arrangements that had been made. We were scheduled to visit Concord on June 13. On that day the Greeley Foundation was holding its board meeting, at which Mrs. Greeley and the other directors would be happy to meet us.

June 13 was the exact date of Dr. Greeley's passing twelve years earlier. Buddhists traditionally hold a special memorial service for the deceased on the date of death at that time, marking the start of the thirteenth year after the decease. My wife and I were very surprised at the coincidence of the date of our visit, and even felt that it was somewhat of a divine arrangement. Rev. Kellaway and his wife Jean drove us to Concord. When we arrived at the First Parish Church, Mrs. Susan Foley Larson, chair

of the Greeley Foundation, was at the entrance and cordially guided us to the meeting hall, where Mrs. Greeley and the others welcomed us with smiles.

In the center of a huge table, around which some 20 people were seated, was a string of juzu (Buddhist prayer beads) made from seeds of the Bodhi tree in Bodh Gaya, India. They had been presented by Founder Niwano to Dr. Greeley when they were devotedly working together for peace. It is said that after Dr. Greeley's death, the foundation began to place the beads on the table whenever they held board meetings, beginning their meetings with a prayer and continuing their activities in the spirit of the two men. The meeting place at the First Parish in Concord thus served as a symbolic remembrance of their friendship. A life-sized portrait of Dr. Greeley hangs in the center of one wall. A Unitarian, he had received the juzu from Founder Niwano, a Buddhist, whose hopes they embodied. The leaders of the foundation, headed by Mrs. Greeley, had inherited the spirit of Dr. Greeley and treasured the inspiration of Founder Niwano. We were deeply moved.

Although it was an important meeting, I was given a little time to speak and talked briefly about the relationship between the two men. Absenting themselves from the meeting for a while, two of the Greeley daughters, Faith and Penelope, kindly accompanied us to the cemetery, where we offered incense, flowers, and our prayers.

After leaving Concord, we visited Dr. and Mrs. Sutherland at their home. They, too, are 30-year acquaintances and good friends. We chatted about our joyful first encounter. On the following day, the Kellaways took us to the UUA headquarters in Boston, where we met Dr. John Buehrens, the current president. In the evening we met with Rev. Kenneth MacLean, Mrs. Natalie Gulbrandsen, Rev. and Mrs. Herbert Vetter, and others. We then flew from Boston to Victoria, Canada, where Dr. and Mrs. Lion warmly welcomed us. We had a good cordial meeting after so many years.

Two months after our reunion with her, Mrs. Greeley, who was well advanced in years, became ill. She died in October 1998. It is admirable that, together with her four daughters, she supported the great work of her beloved husband until the very last day of her life.

Rev. Niwano and Dr. Greeley

Among the progressive religious leaders of the United States, Dr. Greeley endeavored from early on to establish the WCRP. Even earlier than that he devoted himself to IARF activities and continued to do so for many years. The IARF was one of the seeds that led to the formation of the WCRP. As I noted earlier, many people work for the world congresses and other activities of both organizations. Occasional correspondence and contacts between the general secretary of the IARF and

the secretary general of the WCRP indicate their awareness of the need for cooperation. The "Boat People Project" and many other action programs demonstrate the characteristics of the WCRP. Although the IARF puts emphasis on dialogue, it also expanded its programs into a social service network beginning in the 1980s. Many years ago, the Donate One Meal Campaign that started in Japan was taken up and put into practice at the world congresses of both bodies.

In Japan, the Niwano Peace Foundation seeks the sound and stable development of a peace movement based on interreligious cooperation. In the United States, the Greeley Foundation manifests the will of a late great religious leader. Born from dialogue mainly among liberal Christians, the IARF gradually advanced into cooperation on an interfaith basis and began interchanges with other organizations devoted to interreligious cooperation.

When we reflect on these two men working together on the concrete tasks of interreligious cooperation, we should note the following points:

1. The two made the IARF and the WCRP two pillars of their cooperative activities. They recognized the need for mutual activities in which the two would complement each other for a greater purpose.
2. They sought to cooperate by finding the common values of the two bodies.
3. To achieve this, they solicited the participation of many religious leaders.
4. Transcending the boundaries of their own religious organizations, they had a much wider vision in which people think of the entire world and all of humankind. This required activities on a larger scale, and one result was that their own organizations also bore new fruit.
5. From decades ago, they were always forward-looking and positive-thinking, linked by their global vision. The IARF, which was mainly centered in Europe and North America, has been expanding for more than 30 years among various faiths in Asia and elsewhere. From the inception of the WCRP, Japan, the United States, and Europe have been considered its three main areas of support. After WCRP II, the Asian Conference on Religion and Peace (ACRP) was born, and gradually most of the world has become involved. Many of the officers of both the IARF and the WCRP are basically of the same mind.

For the Future

From the beginnings of Rissho Kosei-kai, Founder Niwano has consistently emphasized that "interreligious cooperation is the destiny and the mission given to our organization," and he has taught the members that "interreligious cooperation is our sacred duty."

After inheriting the Lamp of the Law, President Nichiko Niwano declared, "I inherit the road of interreligious dialogue and cooperation that the Founder has trod and will do my utmost for its further development." President Niwano often tells Rissho Kosei-kai leaders, "Think globally, act locally."

Interreligious cooperation is spreading horizontally and inter-organizationally among the IARF, the WCRP, and other interfaith groups, as well as among people in different fields, such as UN officials, scholars, social workers, diplomats, and the like.

Vertically, the movement started by top religious leaders is now putting down deep roots at the level of ordinary members. In the twenty-first century, these trends must be further strengthened.

"The world is my home." Thinking in that way, Dr. Imaoka was fond of reading books on history, in particular following Toynbee's belief that there is no need for distinctions between the ancient, medieval, and modern ages, since all ages are the present to a historian.

When Dr. Imaoka sat in contemplation in his study, he thought, "When I am alive to history, the actions of heroes, saints, wise men, and ordinary people, throughout the world and from ancient times to modern days, appear before my eyes. It is the greatest happiness to be able to be in contact with the whole of humankind."

Dr. Imaoka was an individual who transcended the size of the globe and thought about things in cosmic proportions. What do you suppose he would foresee for interreligious cooperation in the twenty-first century?

Born August 19, 1932, MA, Sophia University in Tokyo, (International Studies Far East). Those served: Kosei Publishing Company, (Editor, Director), Rissho Kosei-kai, Director, International Affairs Department, Director, Chief Secretarial Department, Vice-chairman, Board of Directors, Hoju Vocational College for Women,

Chairman Board of Trustees. Regarding the International activities, assisting Founder Niwano as interpreter and secretary committed from the very beginning of RKK involvement in both IARF and WCRP and other related activities. Also assisted President Nichiko Niwano.

The IARF at the United Nations

Ruth Neuendorffer and Sue Nichols

Since 1955 IARF has worked at the United Nations for human rights, disarmament, sustainable development, and more. IARF UN representatives Ruth Neuendorffer (1970-1994) and Sue Nichols (1986-) reflect on efforts by many IARF members, beginning with the visionary activism of Elvira Fradkin. In particular, IARF has encouraged and supported UN work for universal religious freedom, working both with the Committee of Religious NGOs and the NGO Committee on Freedom of Religion or Belief and with UN human rights structures. At the UN General Assembly Special Sessions on Disarmament, IARF leaders (Paul Carnes in 1978, Rev. Nikkyo Niwano in 1982 and Dr. William Schulz in 1988) stressed the work of the IARF for world peace. At the UN Millennium Forum and in the future, IARF's voice will continue at the UN.

The United Nations Yearbook in its 1955 Edition, lists the International Association for Liberal Christianity and Religious Freedom as one of fewer than 300 non-governmental organizations "registered" with the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). In the early years, the International Association for Liberal Christianity and Religious Freedom held its consultative status with UNESCO. In 1972, IARF applied to ECOSOC for consultative status, and this was added. In 1981, IARF also obtained consultative status with UNICEF. In 1995 the IARF was granted General Consultative Status with ECOSOC.

IARF's priorities and actions closely parallel UN priorities and programs. Note, for example, a few words from the *IARF Manifesto on World Community* adopted by the 1975 IARF Congress in Montreal: "We accept a responsibility to help shape the world around us so that we and our fellow human beings can have more fulfilling, harmonious, creative and joyous lives . . . We resolve to focus our social concerns activities on the world community, both because of the decisive importance of its challenge and because, as an international organization, the world community is a natural forum for expressing our common concerns."

The Manifesto emphasizes critical needs for general and complete disarmament and the ending of colonialism. After articulating a number of goals for the end of the century, including, "policies which will permit all people in all countries to enjoy the basic necessities of life by the year 2000. This includes, at a minimum, the rights to food, shelter, health, economic security and a basic education."

Referring to the UN, the Manifesto affirms: "We advocate that the United Nations be given the funds and authority which are necessary to achieve the above-named goals effectively."

The United Nations and NGOs

The United Nations itself, of course, is strictly an association of sovereign governments, established, as the opening paragraph of its Charter clearly states, "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war." Promotion of human rights, justice, International legal standards and social and economic progress are also mentioned in the Charter's preamble, but, in the minds of those who set up the UN and wrote its Charter, these clearly were given lower priority than the prevention of future wars.

NGOs serve as a balance to the political orientation of governments and act as bridges between civil society and government policy and practice. NGOs, with their Idealistic, humanitarian and practical approaches, bring important resources to bear in such diverse areas as disarmament and security, social and economic development, environmental responsibility and human rights.

Official legal international recognition of NGOs has been acknowledged as beginning with the Geneva Convention's 1929 recognition of the International Committee of the Red Cross, described as

“an international organization with special status in international law.” Following the pattern of the Red Cross, other organizations, including the Unitarian and Universalist Service Committee, worked to meet humanitarian challenges during World War II. At the conclusion of the War, when the San Francisco Conference met in 1945 to draft the Charter of the United Nations, NGOs were present—in large part to insist that human rights be included in the UN’s mandate. 42 NGOs were named by the US State Department as consultants for this process.

As a result, Article 71 of the UN Charter reads: “The Economic and Social Council may make suitable arrangements for consultation with non-governmental organizations which are concerned with matters within its competence. Such arrangements may be made with international organizations and, where appropriate, with national organizations after consultation with the Member of the United Nations concerned.” Precise “suitable arrangements for consultation” are, to this day, under continuing scrutiny and revision. Since the first UN Conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm in 1972, and increasingly since the 1992 “Earth Summit” held in Rio de Janeiro, participation by NGOs has increased and changed.

Today there are approximately 3000 Individual NGOs and, in New York, 18 NGO Committees working with CONGO. In Geneva there are six NGO Committees, and in Vienna, five. The New York NGO Committees cover a wide variety of areas of concern: Aging; Disarmament; Human Rights; Narcotics and Substance Abuse; Human Settlements; Southern Africa; Sustainable Development; Trade, Investment and Entrepreneurship; Social Development; Population and Development; the Family; the International Decade of the World’s Indigenous Peoples; the Status of Women; Youth; Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice; Freedom of Religion or Belief; Mental Health; and UN Reform.

IARF has maintained long-standing interests in the promotion of human rights, sustainable economic and social development, disarmament, and other major issues on the United Nations agenda. In particular, IARF has worked actively to promote United Nations efforts to enhance and protect the universal right to freedom of religion or belief

IARF at the United Nations—Early Memories

Ruth Neuendorffer, long-time IARF UN Representative and former Secretary of the NGO Committee on Disarmament, has written the following reflections on IARF’s early participation at the United Nations. Mrs. Elvira Fradkin, an American Unitarian who lived in Montclair, New Jersey, is responsible for persuading IARF to relate to the United Nations. This occurred when Mr. Percival Brundage, also a Unitarian from Montclair, was President of IARF.

Mrs. Fradkin had been a devoted supporter of the League of Nations and a student of international affairs in the 1920s and 1930s. She was present at the founding of the United Nations in San Francisco in 1945 and was active with citizen groups supporting the UN. Mrs. Fradkin, a dynamic and knowledgeable speaker, often addressed Unitarian and other groups around the country. Mrs. Fradkin interested members of the New York League of Unitarian Women and the New York Association of Universalist Women in assisting her in planning and carrying out United Nations seminars.

Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt was the speaker at a memorable seminar dinner held at the Community Church of New York in the mid 1950s. She described her trip to the Soviet Union to an eager audience of Unitarians and Universalists from the United States and Canada. In addition to Community Church of New York, the Fourth Universalist Society, All Souls Unitarian and the First Unitarian Congregational Society of Brooklyn were most cooperative in hosting dinner meetings for the UN Seminars.

At the UN, Mrs Fradkin was active in the NGO Community. She attended the weekly briefings, the NGO Committee on Human Rights, and inter-religious sessions on a regular basis. She sent informed reports and analyses on various UN issues to IARF Secretariat in the Netherlands. I knew Mrs. Fradkin through helping with the UN Seminars where I was often in charge of the “Books and Materials Table” on the second floor of the Church Center for the United Nations (777 UN Plaza). Unitarians and Universalists from all over the US and Canada attended these UN Seminars—as is true today.

In 1969 the IARF Congress was held in Boston. Mrs. Fradkin acquired a speaker from the UN for this IARF program. Later in 1969 Mrs. Fradkin asked me to serve as the Alternate Representative

of the IARF at the UN, starting in January 1970. Mrs. Fradkln took part in at least three UN undertakings away from New York. One was a trip to Berlin at the time of the Berlin Airlift. In 1970 she went to San Francisco for the 25th UN anniversary celebration. In 1972 she went to the first UN Conference on the Environment in Stockholm.

United Nations support for freedom of religion or belief derives from the Universal Declaration of *Human Rights*, adopted without a negative vote by the UN General Assembly on December 10, 1948. The Universal Declaration's Article 18 reads, in part: "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest religion belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance."

On November 25, 1981, the UN General Assembly adopted the *Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief*, (UN General Assembly Resolution 36/55) which states: "It is essential to promote understanding, tolerance and respect in matters relating to freedom of religion and belief... Use of religion or belief for ends inconsistent with . . . relevant instruments of the United Nations . . . is inadmissible."

IARF, with a number of other NGOs, had a key role in the drafting and adoption of this declaration. As early as 1962, the UN General Assembly had recommended that the Commission on Human Rights draft such a Declaration, but it was not until 1981 that the Declaration was completed and accepted by the General Assembly. August Raynald Werner, IARF's Representative in Geneva, was a major actor in this effort.

In 1986, in an effort to implement the 1981 Declaration, the UN Commission on Human Rights appointed a Special Rapporteur on Religious Intolerance. Since then the Special Rapporteur has reported regularly to the UN Commission on Human Rights and to the General Assembly on the worldwide situation of freedom of religion or belief. The NGO Committee on Freedom of Religion or Belief works closely with the Special Rapporteur, assisting him with his work.

The NGO Committee on Freedom of Religion or Belief has, from its beginning, depended heavily on the efforts of IARF members. This NGO Committee grew out of a Working Group of Interested NGOs, the majority of whom were IARF UN Representatives. In 1989 this Working Group, under the leadership of the Rev. Homer Jack, commissioned and funded a study on the feasibility of adopting a UN Convention on the Elimination of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief. In contrast to the 1981 Declaration, which is simply an agreement on principles by UN Member States, a Convention would be a binding treaty, to be ratified and then formally implemented by governments. The study, "The Question of a United Nations Convention on Religious Intolerance," written by Dr. John P. Salzberg, was completed in November 1990.

To follow up on the study, members of the Working Group agreed, in 1991, to form the NGO Committee on Freedom of Religion or Belief. IARF became a founding member of the NGO Committee, which was formally recognized in 1992 by the Conference of NGOs. In consultative Status with the UN Economic and Social Council, IARF's strong participation in this NGO Committee continues, as the NGO Committee seeks to strengthen the effectiveness of UN efforts to decrease intolerance and to oppose discrimination based on religion or belief. About 80 people, members of more than 50 organizations, are on the New York Committee's mailing list. About 25 generally attend monthly meetings, held from September until May. Speakers for the monthly meetings have included members of the UN Human Rights Committee, representatives of such UN agencies as UNESCO, UN diplomats and leaders of NGOs that are working to promote freedom of religion or belief.

IARF members of the NGO Committee on Freedom of Religion or Belief have taken leading roles in meetings with Professor Abdelfattah Amor, United Nations Special Rapporteur for Religious Intolerance. On January 28, 1998, during the Special Rapporteur's two-week visit to the United States (following visits to Australia, China, Germany, Greece, India, Thailand, Pakistan, and the Sudan Professor Amor visited Atlanta, Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, Salt Lake City, Washington DC and Black Mesa, AZ. His single day in New York was very busy, including an breakfast meeting sponsored by the International League for Human Rights and three hours of hearings at which a variety of groups made presentations to the Special Rapporteur. IARF's General Secretary Robert Traer was one of those presenting testimony on this occasion.

Each November the NGO Committee on Freedom of Religion or Belief organizes a major event to observe the anniversary of the November 25, 1981 adoption of the *Declaration on the*

Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief (UN General Assembly Resolution 36/55). The Annual Days for Freedom of Religion or Belief have been co-sponsored by the NGO Committee on Freedom of Religion or Belief, the NGO Committee on Human Rights, the Committee of Religious NGOs at the United Nations, and the Values Caucus.

Keynote Speakers have included, among others, the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights, the Honorable Mary Robinson; the UN Commission on Human Rights Special Rapporteur, Dr. Abdelfattah Amor; His Excellency Dr. Nedzib Sacribe, Ambassador-at-Large for Bosnia and Herzegovina; and Dr. Samuel P. Huntington, author of *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. Each year, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Special Rapporteur for Religious Intolerance have been joined by Ambassadors from as many as 50 UN Missions representing nations in all regions of the world, as Honorary Patrons of the Annual Day for Freedom of Religion or Belief.

The NGO Committee has been active in promoting *Freedom of Religion and Belief: A World Report* published in 1997 and edited by Australian consultant Juliet Sheen and Kevin Boyle, Professor of International Human Rights law, University of Essex (United Kingdom) and long-time participant in UN Human Rights work. This reference work covers religious attitudes and practices in 57 countries. The Permanent UN Missions of all countries considered for the *World Report* were contacted by one of IARF's UN representatives on behalf of the *World Report's* editors, to inform them about the *World Report* and to invite their comments. 50 were interviewed. In addition, the IARF representative worked with NGOs, both those already active on the NGO Committee on Freedom of Religion or Belief, and others not yet involved, to encourage them to provide material for the *World Report*.

Disarmament—Another IARF Priority

When the Rev. Homer A. Jack, a well-known Unitarian Minister, represented the World Conference on Religion and Peace at the UN, he organized the NGO Committee on Disarmament at UN Headquarters in New York, and was its first President. Ruth Neuendorffer, the first Recording Secretary for the Committee, also served on the Publication Committee of *Disarmament Times*, the newspaper published by the NGO Committee, starting in 1978. Later, IARF members James Olson and Vernon Nichols also served as Presidents of the NGO Committee on Disarmament.

Three Special Sessions of the UN General Assembly devoted to Disarmament, held in 1978, 1982 and 1988, attracted considerable attention throughout IARF. It was an honour for IARF to have prominent IARF leaders (Rev. Paul Canes, President of the Unitarian Universalist Association in 1978; the Reverend Nikkyo Niwano, Founder and Leader of Rissho Kosei-kai in 1982; and the Reverend William Schulz, UUA President in 1988) chosen to address these three Special Sessions of the UN General Assembly on Disarmament.

Ruth Neuendorffer recalls standing on First Avenue to distribute copies of *Disarmament Times* to demonstrators in front of the UN during these UN Special Sessions. She also remembers attending an NGO Conference on Disarmament at the UN in Geneva, Switzerland in the early 1980s. She also observed sessions of the newly formed UN Conference on Disarmament, which was meeting there. Ruth writes: "At that time Japan was represented by Mr. Ryukichi Imai, a nuclear physicist, who was the husband of Kazuko Tenabe Imai, whom I had met in the 1950s. By chance, my friend was observer at this same session. We renewed our friendship." She continues: "On July 28, 1981, a bus load of IARF Congress participants visited the Peace Palace in the Hague, Netherlands, and held a daytime vigil in front of the World Court—an event was organized by the Rev. Homer A. Jack."

Vernon Nichols attended the World Disarmament Campaign Conference in the USSR in 1989. Homer Jack led IARF representatives' participation in the International Conference on the Relationship Between Disarmament and Development, held in New York in 1987.

Other IARF Interests

Human Rights - In addition to IARF's major commitments to disarmament and freedom of religion or belief, the UN's broader human rights agenda has been a focus for IARF throughout its years of affiliation with the UN. IARF members have monitored the UN Commission on Human Rights, the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, the Human Rights Committee, the Commission on the Status of Women, and other bodies of the UN's Human

Rights Network. IARF's Geneva Representatives, August Raynald Werner, Frank Field and Gianfranco Rossi, have made numerous submissions to the Commission on Human Rights, including taking extensive action, in cooperation with other NGOs in connection with preparation of the UN Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief, adopted in 1981 as UN General Assembly Resolution 36/55 (as mentioned above).

IARF representatives were present at the World Conference on Human Rights (Vienna, 1993), and collaborated with several other NGOs in drafting discussion materials for this conference. These materials, submitted by NGOs active in the NGO Committee on Freedom of Religion or Belief, urged that these issues receive major attention from the World Conference.

Aging - The NGO Committee on Aging was at one time a major point of activity for IARF's UN Representatives Eva Opton, Peggy Weiri and Winifred Latimer Norman. IARF Representatives attended the World Assembly on Aging in Vienna in 1982.

Women's Rights - Dr. Winifred Latimer Norman was also active on the NGO Committee on the Status of Women, serving for a few years as one of its bureau members. With two other official IARF representatives, she also attended the NGO Forum connected with the World Conference to Appraise the UN Decade for Women, where the "Forward Looking Strategies" to achieve "Equality, Development and Peace" were approved. IARF Representatives Howard and Rita Taubenfeld and Lucile Schuck were present at an International Conference on the Status of Women in Mexico City (1975). IARF was also represented at the International Conferences on the Status of Women in Copenhagen (1980) and Beijing (1995).

Environment - UN actions on environmental concerns have also interested IARF. As mentioned above, Elvira Fradkin attended the Forum associated with the 1972 Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment. 20 years later, IARF members were present at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. In preparation for this conference, IARF presented a draft of an Earth Charter for use in conference discussions.

Youth - Joy Osborne served for several years on the NGO Committee on Youth. Throughout the world, TIARF members organized participation in several projects of International Youth Year in 1985. Much of this effort was organized through IARF's clearinghouse set up for this project in Tokaiso, Japan. In 1980, 50 young people from IARF member groups in Eastern and Western Europe and Japan came to the UN for a day during their visit to North America. Youth and children were also featured in an exhibit set up in the Visitors' Lobby of the UN in New York in 1987, where IARF was one of 17 international organizations taking part. IARF's section of this exhibit included photographs of one of IARF's Khasi Village Education Projects and the Arapanch Village Rural Development Project (both in India), and the Negros (Philippines) Fishery Development Project.

IARF Representatives have been active with the Committee of Religious NGOs at the United Nations for many years. While not formally affiliated with the United Nations through ECOSOC, this *ad hoc* group of representatives of many religious organizations of all faiths has done excellent work through its regular meetings, the multi-faith services that it organizes to mark special occasions at the UN, and through its special projects. Will Baker, IARF Representative, is currently serving as President.

Other Interests - On the international level, and especially in its member groups, IARF members have held events connected with UN International Years. Limited space prevents mention of more than a handful of these. For example, the IALRW Literacy Project in Harinavi, India had a major celebration in connection with International Literacy Year in 1991.

The International Year of Peace (1986) was widely observed by IARF member groups. Two of these, Rishso Kosei-kai and the Unitarian Universalist Association, received Peace Messenger Awards, presented personally to the IARF member group representatives by UN Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar. Dr. Lawrence Egbert represented TARP at World Population Conferences in Bucharest (1979) and Mexico City (1984). Dr. Donald Smith, former Chairman of the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs, represented IARF at the International Conference on Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking held in Vienna in 1987. Kim Larsen and Akinsanya Ori-Orisan (from Nigeria) attended the International Habitat Conference in Vancouver in 1976. IARF was also represented at the Habitat Conference held in Istanbul in 1996.

Edris Artis and Eleanor Mason attended the World Summit on Social Development (Copenhagen, 1995). The many projects of IARF's Social Service Network should be recognized here

as part of the extensive NGO network that supports the goals of this important UN Conference. IARF's members possess many kinds of expertise; thus IARF's interests at the UN have been wide-ranging, as indicated by IARF's attendance at a number of UN Conferences on the Law of the Sea (1974-1980), the UN Water Conference (Mar de Plata, Argentina, 1977, attended by Milton Johnson) and the UN Conference on Science and Technology for Development (Vienna, 1979), attended by William Douglas).

The UN at IARF Congresses and Study Tours

It has been customary for IARF's UN representatives to lead workshops at IARF's triennial Congresses to explain IARF's UN work in Geneva and New York, and to make presentations on IARF's participation at UN conferences. On a 1970 trip to Japan led by the Revs. Dana M. Greeley and Max Kapp, Ruth Neuendorffer spoke briefly at Rissho Kosei-kai Headquarters in Tokyo. In 1984, when the IARF Congress met in Tokyo, Japan, she spoke about the UN at the Konko Church of Izuo in Osaka.

Notes from Ruth Neuendorffer - In July 1972 the IARF Congress was held in Heidelberg, Federal Republic of Germany. I supplied this Congress with a good selection of UN materials, set up a display, and tried my best to relate Congress participants to their UN.

In 1974, when the Rev. Dana McLean Greeley was President of the IARF, he arranged for an IARF-related conference to be held in Lagos, Nigeria, hosted by the Unitarian Brotherhood Church of that city. The Rev. Mr. Abowaba, a leader of the Unitarian Brotherhood Church, had participated in the 1969 IARF Congress in Boston. I was delighted to accept the invitation to speak in Lagos about the UN, and took a large suitcase full of UN materials. Never had there been so much interest in UN materials as at this Lagos Conference. I was thrilled.

IARF Congresses held in Montreal, Canada (1975); Oxford, England (1978); the Netherlands (1981) and Tokyo, Japan (1984) all included displays of UN materials. UN-related discussions led to Congress resolutions in support of the UN. UN materials were also distributed at the Conferences of the IALRW (International Association of Liberal Religious Women).

Some Last Words by Sue Nichols

Throughout my work on this essay I have enjoyed Ruth Neuendorffer's first person writing style. Now it is my turn. This article would not be complete without a few words of recognition of those Directors of the Unitarian United Nations Office (UU-UNO) who also served as IARF UN representatives. Dana Klotzle, the first paid Director of the UU-UNO, brought considerable knowledge, experience and sensitivity to all of his varied work as UU-UNO Director. Special thanks must go also to his wife, Ruth, who capably "held the fort" after her husband's untimely and unexpected death. Thanks also to other Interim Directors—Lili Hahn, Eva Opton and Lois Olson. Robert W.C. Brown brought considerable scholarly resources as well as energy and imagination to his work. James Olson was thoughtful, innovative and intelligent—important qualities for any position, especially one connected with the United Nations. Finally, my husband Vernon, known and appreciated by many for his diplomatic skills, his wisdom and his patience, not only served as UU-UNO Co-Director for nearly eight years, but has worked with the NGO Committee on Disarmament for as long as I have worked in the UN Human Rights System. To all of these, to those mentioned in this article, to those who helped me write it (especially Ruth Neuendorffer) and to all IARF members who work so hard to bring progress various parts of the UN's Agenda, I say three words: "Thank you!" and "Courage!"

Ruth Neuendorffer was for many years an IARF representative to the UN in New York. Sue Nichols is presently representing the IARF at the UN in New York. She was the first president of the NGO Committee on Freedom of Religion or Belief in New York and she presently serves as the Program Chair for that NGO Committee.

