I have not, like e.g., Shiina Rinzō or Miura Shumon, chosen Christianity. I received baptism as a child, at the suggestion of my mother. Christianity to me was like a western suit my mother made me wear when I was growing up. (But for this I am now, of course, grateful to my mother.)

However, from my youth, I began to suffer from the fact that this western suit did not fit. To my body, this western suit was a western suit and not an eastern dress. Either the sleeves were too long or the pants too short.

How often have I thought of throwing away this suit. How often have I tried to wear something which fits my body. Nevertheless, I was unable to throw it away, because I had nothing else to put on, and moreover because of my love for my mother and because of the strength of the Christianity which my mother made me wear.

When I was a student in the preparatory division of Keiō University, I was living in a hostel whose director was Yoshimitsu Yoshihiko. At that time this Catholic philosopher was teaching at Tokyo and Sophia Universities. Besides specialized works on Pascal, Descartes and mysticism, he wrote also such beautiful works as Shi to ai to jitsuzon in which he speaks of Rilke and Dostoevski. Yoshimitsu's opinion of modern times, to put it in one word, was that this is a period in which the fulness of the Middle Ages has been lost, and that the painful cries of man who has lost this fulness are to be heard in modern poets and authors.

Whenever I come near to the place where this hostel once stood at Shinanomachi, I remember myself as I used to be at the time I was engrossed in reading the works of Yoshimitsu. At that time I probably was not able to understand the deep ideas of my master, but it is also quite sure that I felt some opposition to his opinion on modern times. My doubts centered on the question of how much real meaning for us Japanese there could be in such words as “a period which has lost the fulness of the Middle Ages;” “modern times have lost sight of God,” etc. For us in Japan there were no Middle Ages such as they are described by Jacques Maritain, the teacher of Yoshimitsu, and consequently neither was there a renaissance which took man as the center.
of everything. Thus, at that time, I was always wondering whether the meaning of modern times was not different in Japan and in Europe.

Finally, this was also a doubt about my own "western suit." The reason was that I felt that this western suit did not fit my body.

While still a university student, I wrote a short essay Kami to kamigami to which was published in Shiki on the recommendation of Kaminishi Kiyoshi. This was my first work, but as is clear from the title, my theme had already taken shape at that time. Also in my next essay, Hori Tatsuo-ron, I threw the spotlight on Hori from the point of view of the distance between Japan and Europe. That, indeed, was my theme.

In almost all of my novels, too, this problem serves as the warp. When I now reread them I become embarrassed by their unripeness, but the same warp runs through Shiroi hito and Kitôro hito. The same can be said of Umi to dokuyaku and Ryûgaku. In every one of these works the reader will find the theme of Christianity and Japan, or of Europe and the Japanese. This is, no doubt, because I wanted to speak in them about the distance I came to feel between myself and my western suit which, even though it was given me by my mother, did not fit.

When I write this way there probably will be many Japanese readers who will wonder how far I really do believe in Christianity, how far I am convinced of it. I will give a clear answer. I believe that of all systems of thought, the doctrine of Christ is for me the deepest and most exalted truth. Trust in the doctrine of Christ lies now deep in my heart. The longer I wrote novels the less I am able to imagine a directive or an aim for my life besides Christ. The longer I write novels, the deeper I have come to believe in Him, and this conviction is not likely to change in the near future.

Nevertheless, there are many elements in Christianity which I cannot accept. I mean a Christianity formed especially by European thought, in particular by Thomistic thought. Of course, that is not the sum total of Christianity. It is part of it. But while it is not more than part of it, it is now being spoken of as if it were its totality, and it is also being taught in that form in Japan. It is for that reason that I spoke earlier of a "western suit." However, my inner trust in the teaching of Christ makes me think that a "western suit" is not necessarily the sum total of all clothes. I believe that a Japanese dress which fits the body of the Japanese is not contrary to the teaching of Christ. (If a Christian theology had not developed with the accent on Thomism, but had grown with the accent on the theology of St. Augustine, the situation might be different.)

While I have repeatedly read the works of Western novelists who are also Catholics, e.g., Mauriac, Julian Green or Graham Greene, I could not help thinking of the difference between them and myself. Of course, they are great writers with whom I cannot be compared, but they did not have to think too much about something which is an unavoidable problem for me. When they step out of their homes, they are in a city with big churches, and they can meet immediately with people who share the same faith and the same Christian feelings. In short, they share the same situation with their readers.

In my case (and I believe it is the same for Shiina Rinzo), however, it is different. To make it short, most readers who have read this far will have thought that my problem does not touch them. They will have thought that what I am saying is too peculiar, too uncommon a problem. What has puzzled