



University
of Glasgow

The Gifford Lectures

Christianity In The Japanese Religious Melting Pot

Two lectures by

PROFESSOR MARK WILLIAMS

Vice-President at International Christian University
ICU -Tokyo

10th and 11th of May at 5.15pm

Room 253 – The Yudowitz Seminar Room 1,
Wolfson Medical School

University Avenue, Glasgow, G12 8QQ

More information, including how to register
for free tickets: <https://www.gla.ac.uk/gifford>

2023 Gifford Lectures, University of Glasgow

Mark Williams is Vice President at International Christian University (ICU) in Tokyo. He took his BA in Japanese Studies at the University of Oxford in 1979 and a PhD in Japanese Literature at the University of California, Berkeley in 1991. He joined the University of Leeds in 1988 where he helped start the Japanese Studies programme. He served as Head of East Asian Studies between 2000-04, and Chair of the School of Languages, Cultures and Societies between 2006-11. He was also President of the British Association for Japanese Studies, 2008-11. Between 2011 and 2014, he was seconded to Akita International University, Japan, where he served as Vice President for Academic Affairs. He joined ICU in 2017 where his remit includes responsibility for international academic exchange.



His PhD dissertation focussed on the fictional works of four 20th Japanese authors of Christian persuasion and, since then, he has continued to investigate the literary contribution of these authors, with a particular focus on the oeuvre of the postwar author, Endō Shūsaku. At the same time, he has written extensively, in both English and Japanese, on the role of Christianity in the Japanese context. His major published works include *Endō Shūsaku: A Literature of Reconciliation* (Routledge), and co-edited volumes such as *Christianity and Japan: Impacts and Responses* (Macmillan); *Representing the Other in Modern Japanese Literature: A Critical Approach* (Routledge); *Imag(in)ing the War in Japan: Representing and Responding to Trauma in Post-war Japanese Literature and Film* (Brill); *The Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Japan* (Tenkō); *Cultures of Political Conversion in Transwar Japan* (Routledge); and *The Handbook of Japanese Christian Writers* (Japan Documents). He is also the translator of *Foreign Studies* and *The Girl I Left Behind*, two novels by Endō Shūsaku.

The Glasgow Gifford Lectures MARK WILLIAMS

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About the Gifford Lectures

The prestigious Gifford Lectures are a series of talks delivered annually at the universities of Glasgow, Edinburgh, St. Andrews and Aberdeen.

The first Gifford lectures were given at Glasgow in 1888 by Max Müller, inaugurating an annual series of talks by important thinkers invited to address the subject of “Natural Theology in the widest sense of the term”. They form part of an endowment by Adam Lord Gifford (1820-1877), senator of the College of Justice in Scotland, to the four ancient universities, Glasgow, St. Andrews, Aberdeen and Edinburgh, and have featured speakers from a very wide range of fields, from philosophy, political science and the arts to physics and neuroscience.

The formidable roster has included figures such as William James, Henri Bergson, Mary Douglas, Werner Heisenberg, Hannah Arendt, Noam Chomsky, Charles Taylor, Iris Murdoch, Paul Ricoeur, Martha Nussbaum, Vilayanur Ramachandran and Judith Butler.

<https://www.gla.ac.uk/events/lectures/Gifford/about>

Lecture 1: The Japanese Religious Melting Pot and the Significance of Christianity

How are we to account for the fact that two (ostensibly equally reputable) censuses cite the percentage of Japanese who claim affiliation with the indigenous Shintō tradition as 80% and 3% respectively? The answer depends, in large measure, on how one defines the concept of religious “affiliation” – and it is certainly true that few Japanese would describe themselves as “Shintō believers”. Equally significant in this regard, however, is the nature of Japanese religiosity itself. In this talk, we shall be exploring the context that leads to such divergent data – and the reasons behind the seemingly disproportionate influence of Christianity, an imported tradition typically seen as never having reached more than 1.5% of the Japanese population in the more than 450 years since its introduction into Japan, on contemporary Japanese society.

Lecture 2: Voices in the Wilderness: Writing Christianity in 20th century Japan

Building on the first lecture, this lecture will focus more specifically on what I shall be citing as the inordinate influence of the series of authors of Christian persuasion active on mainstream literary circles in twentieth century Japan. With particular emphasis on the contribution of Endō Shūsaku, Japan’s best-known author in this regard, this talk will include analysis of the struggles that Endō shared with several of his peers as a result of their all-too-frequent categorization as “Japanese” “Christian” “authors”, and, with examples from a series of their fictional constructs, will seek to analyse the literary qualities of these works.