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## Problems Related to the Acceptance of Protestant Christianity in Modern Japan

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# Problems Related to the Acceptance of Protestant Christianity in Modern Japan

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This year marks the 139th anniversary of the start of Japanese Protestant Christianity, which began in 1859 with the dispatching to Japan of six missionaries from American Protestant churches.

According to the 1998 edition of the Christian Year Book, the total number of Japanese Protestants, from all denominations, is approximately 600 thousand. This is approximately 0.5 percent of the total population. (Even when the numbers of Roman Catholics and Orthodox Church members are included, the total number of Japanese Christians does not quite reach 1 percent.)<sup>(1)</sup>

This 139-year history amounts to virtually nothing when compared to the long histories of Shinto and the old established Buddhist sects (religious orders) in Japan. Nevertheless, with nearly a century and a half behind it, Protestantism in Japan cannot continue to be dismissed as a foreign religion with a short history, few followers, and little hope of taking root among the Japanese.

Within these 139 years, a mere two periods may be identified as times of a "Christianity boom," which captured the attention of society at large. The first boom can be placed in the tenth year of the Meiji period (1877), during the years of Westernization, and the second boom occurred right after the end of World War II. Both booms were shortlived. Furthermore, both occurred during periods of rejection of Japanese thought and tradition, when the focus was on emulating the West. With the fading of the Euro-American boom, the

Christianity boom also petered out.

It is within this context that the image of Christianity as a foreign (Western) religion has become firmly imprinted in the minds of the Japanese at large.

Why have the Japanese had trouble making Christianity their own? What are the special traits of the Japanese that have led them to reject Christianity? This is a difficult question, with no simple answers.

This paper will look at the concrete details of the first half-century of Japanese Protestantism, examining the way in which Protestant Christianity was transmitted, what sort of people were drawn to it, and what sorts of problems it faced. I have focused on the first half-century in part because my own specialty is the history of Modern Japanese thought, but also because it was in the first half-century that the salient features of today's Japanese Protestant Christianity were born.

## **1. The Period of Preparation 1859-1873**

### **1-a The First Missionaries and Teachers**

In July of 1859 the Shogunal government ended its more than two centuries of strictly enforced isolation, opening ports in Kanagawa (Yokohama), Nagasaki, and Hakodate. As if they had been just waiting for this moment, Protestant missionaries arrived in Japan. J.Liggins and C.M. Williams, missionaries from the American Protestant Episcopal Church, arrived in Nagasaki even before the treaties went into effect, in May and June respectively.

Following on them, J.C. Hepburn, M.D., of the American Presbyterian Church arrived in Kanagawa in October. In November three missionaries from the American Dutch Reformed Church arrived in Japan; S.R. Brown and D.B. Simmons, M.D. at the port in Kanagawa, and G.F. Verbeck at the port in Nagasaki.

These six, dispatched from the various American denominational

Churches, were missionaries of the early period of Japanese Protestantism. It is worth noting that of the six, Liggins, Hepburn, and Brown had had experience in China as either missionaries or doctors, and could understand Chinese, while Verbeck was of Dutch descent and could understand Dutch. Educated Japanese people of the day could read Chinese, and since even during the years of isolation Nagasaki's Dejima island had been the one place where trade with Holland had been permitted, some Japanese in Nagasaki could speak Dutch. These facts were taken into consideration when the missionaries were dispatched.

In 1860 J. Goble, of the American Baptist Free Mission Society, arrived. In 1861 J.H. Ballagh, from the American Reformed Church, followed, with David Thompson of the American Presbyterian Church being sent in 1863. These three settled in Kanagawa, which is near the capital. They, like the six before them, were also American.

In addition to these missionaries, another group of people who played a noteworthy role were hired foreign teachers, specifically American ones. From around 1887 the influence of Germany, especially in the fields of government and culture, replaced that of America, but until then American influence was large. On the cultural front the hired foreign teachers played an important role, and not just on the cultural front: they too, like the missionaries, played an important part in the protestant mission.

One representative foreign teacher was L.L. Janes, who taught at the Kumamoto School for Western Studies from 1871 to 1876. Another representative figure was W.S. Clark, who in 1876 headed the Sapporo Agricultural School for a year.

These two are responsible for the formation of the "Kumamoto Band" and the "Sapporo Band," both of which played a large part in the early history of the acceptance of Protestant Christianity.

We must not forget, however, that among the hired teachers there were many who, unlike Janes and Clark, were uninterested in or even critical of Christianity. Representative of these is E. S. Morse, who

took the post of professor at the Imperial University in 1878 and who became famous for his discovery of the Omori shell mound. A supporter of the Theory of Evolution, he attacked Christianity. Since Christianity had been accepted only grudgingly in 1873, this was significant to its future growth and development.

As for the missionaries, while Christianity was still prohibited, they studied languages and taught English. all the while preparing for their missionary work.

1-b Salient characteristics of the American missionaries and teachers of the Early Period.

In John Howes's *Japanese Christians and American Missionaries*, the following is written concerning the faith of the American missionaries and hired teachers J.C. Hepburn, J.H. Ballagh, L.L. Janes, W.S. Clark, and J.D. Davis:

These five men brought a specific kind of faith with them. It had grown originally in New England and was spreading rapidly in the American west. It emphasized personal conversion, implicit faith in the Bible, moral rigor, and a sense of mission.

Another feature of this faith was its rigorous moral demands upon the individual. Strict sexual ethics, abstinence from the use of liquor and tobacco, care in the observance of the Sabbath, and a sense of stewardship: all formed part of the ethical code.

As Howes makes most clear, the most striking feature of the American missionaries and hired teachers of the early period was their Puritanism. It is possible to get an accurate picture of this Puritan faith by examining the early Meiji-period Japanese converts.

For example, if one reads Kanzo Uchimura's *Diary of a Japanese Convert*, a portrait of a Protestant convert from the first ten years of Meiji period, one is struck by the prominence of strict observance of the Sabbath, strict sexual morality, and alcohol and tobacco prohibitions in the religious life of the convert.

About his student days at the Sapporo Agricultural School, Uchimura writes:

One main objection of the non-Christian part of the class against Christianity was that it did not allow them to study on Sundays. We the Christians accepted this Sabbath law; and though our examinations began always on Monday mornings, Sundays were days of rest to us, and Physics, Mathematics or any thing that pertained to "flesh" was cast aside on holy days.<sup>(3)</sup>

Later, after graduating and entering society, he remained a teetotaler, even though alcohol was practically unavoidable.

Still tenaciously holding teetotalism as a part of my Christian profession, I was scrupulously careful not to touch the fiery liquid even if presented with most plausible reasons.<sup>(4)</sup>

Even entering a theater or participating in traditional festivals was felt to be sinful, and therefore forbidden.

As is reflected in Uchimura's acceptance of Protestant Christianity during this early period, the salient features of the American missionaries of the early period were conservativeness of position, a strong emphasis on morality, and a rejection of liberal theology and higher criticism in Bible studies as heresy.

#### 1-c The people who accepted Protestant Christianity

The first Japanese to become a Protestant did so November 5th, 1865, six years after the arrival of the first missionary, and eight years before the rescinding of the edicts against Christianity, in 1873.

J.H. Ballagh baptized the first Protestant Christian, one Genryu Yano. Yano was an acupuncturist and had become S.R. Brown's Japanese teacher after having been introduced to him by one of the Shogun's councillors. In addition to teaching Brown and Ballagh Japanese, Yano participated in translating the Chinese version of the New Testament into Japanese. He showed an interest in the Bible and decided to be baptized. Very shortly thereafter he died from illness.

As in Yano's case, a typical feature of converts from the early

period of Japanese Protestantism is that they became Christian after happening, purely by chance, to have some dealings with the missionaries. In an especially large number of cases, converts came to know the missionaries through the study of English, and then become Christian. However, it must be realized that not all Japanese who studied English with the missionaries or the fervent Christian teachers became Christians.

Hirobumi Ito (One of the main leaders of the Meiji Restoration and the first Prime Minister of Modern Japan), Shigenobu Okuma (a prime minister and the founder of Waseda University), Kaoru Inoue (foreign minister), and others who studied with G.F. Verbeck did not become Christian, while Ballagh's Academy, located in Yokohama, was attended by, among others, sons of former daimyo, who also did not convert.

As for those who did convert, in most cases the impetus came with studying English, with most of the converts coming from those classes in society with a tradition of scholarly pursuit; namely, samurai families, well-to-do farming families, and families in the medical profession. They also tended to be in their twenties, an impressionable age when people show an interest in new learning and are capable of understanding new ideas.

Of those from samurai families, the majority came from provinces other than Satsuma, Choshu, Tosa, and Hizen (which had all played central roles in the Meiji Restoration) and were low to middle ranking.

These young men, though facing adversity, wanted to do what they could, as the sons of samurai, to participate in the building of a new Japan. They felt that to do so, they must master English (and Western learning in general) and accept Christianity, which they saw as being at the heart of the ethics and values of their role models for modernization: Europe and America. This was the reason for their conversion.

An interesting feature of these early converts' acceptance of

Christianity was that it focused heavily on Christian ethics while neglecting or positively ignoring the religious aspect.

#### 1-d The rescinding of the edicts against Christianity

The Meiji Government's Council of State, inheriting the Shogunal government's policy of prohibiting Christianity, issued the following edict in March 1868:

The evil sect, called Christian, is strictly prohibited. Suspicious persons should be reported to the proper offices and rewards will be given.

Immediately thereafter the government began the suppression of the Japanese "hidden Christians," who revealed themselves at the end of the Tokugawa period, after the construction in Nagasaki of Oura Cathedral.

It was no doubt the judgment of the Meiji government, still not at all firm on its foundation, that even if Japan were to be opened to the world, and a window on the world opened in Japan, to lift the prohibition on Christianity, which for two and a half centuries had been reviled throughout the whole of nation as an "evil sect," would be to cause undue anxiety among the populace, especially as public opinion was not unified on the matter, if done clumsily, might result in a lack of confidence in the government that could be fatal to it.

And yet, in a mere five years, the new government found it had to change its policy, rescinding the edicts in 1873.

Two developments caused this turn of events.

One was foreign pressure. Specifically, the resident diplomatic ministers and missionaries from Christian countries reported back to their home governments and churches in minute detail on the Meiji government's anti-Christian outlook and on its oppression of Christians. At just this time the government, hoping to renegotiate the unequal treaties it had been forced to enter into with Europe and America, dispatched Tomomi Iwakura as plenipotentiary ambassador heading a fifty-men delegation. This occurred in November of 1871.

The delegation was unable to achieve its aim, with one reason the treaty countries gave for their refusal to renegotiate the treaties being disapproval of the Meiji government's prohibition of Christianity and its oppression of Christians.

Confronted with this sort of foreign pressure, on the 26th of February, 1873, Foreign Minister Taneomi Soejima handed the American and Italian ambassadors a memorandum to the effect that the anti-Christian edicts would be rescinded. As for the Japanese populace, Edict 68 from the Council of state, dating March 24th, informed them that:

Concerning the previously decreed matter, as the public now understands its nature thoroughly, it has been decided hereafter to revoke it.

With that, the edicts were rescinded. It is interesting to note that this edict nowhere says that the prohibition has been lifted, nor does it say anything with regard to freedom of religious beliefs. Rather, the tone is one of grudging acquiescence.

Foreign pressure was thus directly responsible for tacit permission for Christianity. If one sees the issue as an internal problem, then the fact that the government buckled under foreign pressure and permitted Christianity so easily points to a failure somewhere behind the scenes in the government's policy with regard to religion.

The Meiji Restoration's political changes occurred beneath the fanfare of the imperial restoration. In the July 1869 departmental reforms, the Department of Divinity, one of the Meiji government's seven original departments, was established as the highest organ of government, even superior to the Council of State. Shinto priests fell into this department, in a move that revived a past long before the medieval period, dating back to the faraway days of the Taiho Codes (701-757). The principal of unity of church [religion] and state, led in January of 1870 to the issuing of the "Great Promulgation Decree," which sought to exalt Shinto. Behind this was the amalgam of revivalist Shinto National Learning (the driving intellectual force of

the Restoration) and the pro-Shinto backlash against the Tokugawa government, which had been cold toward Shinto. All of this developed into the extremist "Reject Buddhism and Throw Out the Buddha" movement.

And yet this policy of making shinto the state religion was most strongly pushed for only a few years after the start of the Meiji period.

The opening of Japan turned the country toward modernization with a certain inevitability. Nonetheless, the Hirata National Learning Faction had been a driving force behind the Restoration and when (due to their influence) the policy of Shinto for state religion was adopted, modernization and Revivalist Shinto ceased to be able to tolerate each other. Government advisors, paying close attention to foreign trends, eventually removed Revivalist Shinto members from their ranks, and as a result, on September 22nd, 1871, the Department of Divinity was demoted to the status of a ministry and renamed the Ministry of Divinity, only to be abolished on the 21st of April, 1872.

Thus, governmental policy on religion, while advocating unity of state and religion, was unable to make Shinto the basis for such a union. Deference to foreign trends and desire for "Civilization and Enlightenment" led to the exclusion of the Hirata Shinto faction from the ranks of governmental advisors, after which there was no one left with a specific religious agenda to stress, and Christianity easily won tacit acceptance.

While the government pursued its tortured path, March of 1872 saw the founding, by eleven initial members, of the first Japanese Protestant church outside the foreign community living in Yokohama, the Church of Christ in Japan. The Anti-Christianity Edicts were still in at the time.<sup>(5)</sup>

## **2. The Spread and Development of Christianity, 1874-1890**

2-a "Civilization and Enlightenment" and Christianity

This period was the period of "Civilization and enlightenment." Men like Yukichi Fukuzawa (founder of Keio University) were travelling to Europe and America, and actually experiencing Western society, culture, and progressive thought for themselves, then returning to Japan to argue that for Japan to modernize, it must also Westernize.

The people who studied English in Yokohama with the missionaries S.R. Brown and J.H. Ballagh, and who, under their influence, received baptism during the years 1872-1874, are called the "Yokohama Band." Representative of them were Masayoshi Oshikawa, Yoitsu Honda, Masatsuna Okuno, Kajinosuke Ibuka, and Masahisa Uemura. These men would play a central role in the Church of Christ in Japan.

Another nexus of Christians formed in Kumamoto, around the teacher L.L. Janes's Kumamoto School for Western studies. These converts were known as the "Kumamoto Band," and representative members included Danjo Ebina, Hiromichi Kozaki, Tsuneteru Miyagawa, Tokio Yokoi, and Tsurin Kanamori. These men received baptism in and around 1876, went on to study theology at Doshisha University, and became the guiding force behind the Kumiai Church (Congregational Church) of Japan.

Those who attended the Sapporo Agricultural School and who either directly or indirectly received the guidance of W.S. Clark in 1877, and who were baptized by M.C. Harris in 1877 and 1878, were known as the "Sapporo Band." The students of the very first year, who had direct contact with Clark, became Christians in 1877. These included Shosuke Sato and Masataka Oshima. The students who entered in the second year, who were influenced by Clark indirectly through the first year students, were baptized the following year, and included Kanzo Uchimura, Inazo Nitobe, and Kingo Miyabe. Unlike the Yokohama Band and the Kumamoto Band, this group was not aligned with a specific religious denomination.

These converts to Christianity during the period of "Civilization

and Enlightenment" became Christians simply because they believed that in order to build a new Japan, a modern Japan, one had to accept that which was, they felt, at the foundation of the modern West; namely, Christianity. Old Japanese traditions were outdated; the progressive technology and social institutions of the West all were rooted in Christianity. They were also not left with many alternatives as young intellectuals: Confucianism, which had supported the feudal state of the past two and a half centuries, was crumbling; Shinto, while being the supposed pillar of the unity of state and religion, was unable to organize its body of thought; and Buddhism was seen as the bastion of foolish old men and women, a mere superstition.

One Christian recorded the reasons for converting to Christianity in those days as follows:

Simply put, Christianity is the religion for a civilized nation. Shinto and Buddhism are no good. I could not get it out of my head that Japan could not become a civilized nation such as those of Europe and America without Christianity. I had some idea of God, but spiritual matters concerning Christ or our redemption by him were unable to control my heart in the least.<sup>(6)</sup>

Again, it is interesting to note that, as is evident above, there are almost no examples of converts from this period who converted to save their souls or because Christianity provided a solution to the problems of life.

In addition to being drawn to Christianity for its ethics and associated civilization rather than its religious content, the converts shared another characteristic: the traditional school of thought that had hitherto most interested them, being the intellectuals that they were, was Confucianism. Upon becoming Christians, they naturally compared Confucianism with Christianity, but in the end they converted without these two systems coming into final conflict.

For example, the concept of a single, personal God was new and foreign to the Japanese, brought up in a polytheistic tradition, so naturally, when it came to accepting this idea, a conflict arose

between the new idea and, the traditional one. And yet they managed to accept the idea by explaining "God" in the manner of the Confucian "Heaven" made personal, or by seeing "God" as the same as the Confucian "Supreme Being" (Shang-ti)<sup>m</sup>, or as like a warrior's feudal lord. One reason that these perceptions could come about was that the missionaries' understanding of Japanese traditional thought was shallow; although they could teach, they lacked the ability to carry out a comparative analysis of traditional Japanese thought and Christian thought.

Thus, the intellectuals who grew up with Confucianism accepted Christianity as following on and perfecting Confucianism. It is important to remember that this Confucianism was not the Neo-Confucianism that was employed in support of the Tokugawa feudal state, but rather that of the school of Wang Yang-ming. The Wang Yang-ming school placed a strong emphasis on an internalized sense of ethics, which corresponded closely to the ethical make-up of Christianity.

From around 1877 the People's Rights Movement, which sought political freedom and democratic policy for the people of Japan, flourished. The people wanted a National Diet and pressed for the creation of a constitution.

The government opposed these moves and tried to suppress the movement, but it became more and more popular, until in 1881 the promise of a National Diet and constitutional government was made, to be in place in ten years' time.

## 2-b Westernization and Revivalism

In preparation for the opening of the National Diet and the creation of a constitution, Hirobumi Ito, who had departed for Europe in March of 1882, returned to Japan in August of the following year. Bismarkian doctrines of sovereignty struck a sympathetic chord with him, and aiming to establish the Emperor System (imperial absolutism), he introduced a new governmental policy. First, he established

five ranks of aristocracy (duke, marquis, count, viscount, baron) in preparation for a House of Peers. He then abolished the Council of State and settled on a Cabinet system of government (1885). To enhance Japan's international prestige, he felt the necessity of renegotiating the unequal treaties Japan had been forced to sign, and to make such renegotiation possible, he engaged in a campaign of Westernization, symbolized by the masquerade balls held at the Rokumeikan, aimed at impressing the Western world. As a result, there developed among the upperclasses and the court a passion for imitating things Western, in everything from architectural styles to manners and customs. Some went to extremes: "There are those who advocate abolition of the use of Chinese characters, and others who argue that the law should require that after a pre-determined period of time, dressing in Japanese style clothing be forbidden."<sup>(8)</sup>

This policy of Westernization changed the government's attitude toward Christianity. The government deemed it necessary even in matters of religion to resemble the West and therefore welcomed Christianity. Foreign Minister Kaoru Inoue invited missionaries and pastors and praised Christianity, facilitating missionary work. Reflecting the current of the times, even those in the upper classes who had hitherto had no connection with Christianity began to move toward it.

At the house of Yanosuke Iwasaki (and his older brother Yataro, together founders of the Mitsubishi Zaibatsu) a group met to study Christianity. Supreme Court Justice Taizo Miyoshi, Professor Kenzo Wadagaki of the Imperial University, the wife of Count Iwao Oyama, and the wife of Count Taro Katsura all, as Christians, attended church. As for politicians, Kenkichi Kataoka and Nobuyuki Nakajima of the Liberal party and Saburo Shimada of the Progressive party were baptized in 1885 and 1886.<sup>(9)</sup>

Nor was the warming to Christianity limited to aristocrats and politicians: representative intellectuals, who up until a few years earlier had opposed Christianity, did an about-face and now defended

it. Hiroyuki Kato (president of Tokyo Imperial University), who had formerly opposed the People's Rights Movement and Christianity, such that the pastor of his church said of him, "He encouraged his family to attend church, and even went himself, on occasion, in the capacity of a researcher."

Yukichi Fukuzawa had used almost every issue of the magazine *Jiji Shinpo* [News and Current Events] as an occasion to publish articles attacking Christianity, but then, with the changing times, published an editorial in which he supported making Christianity the national religion. Another intellectual whose opinion changed drastically was Masakazu Toyama (president of Tokyo Imperial University and minister of education), who one year earlier had written *Yaso Benwaku* [Jesus Criticism], in which he opposed Christianity, then came out with *The Relationship between Christianity and Societal Good*, in which he took the exact opposite position, saying that Christianity was advantageous to society and therefore ought to be adopted.

Naturally the thinkers did not arrive at their pro-Christian stance based on an in-depth study of Christianity's tenets. Rather, they were simply praising Christianity in alignment with the government's Westernization policy. Behind their support lay the ideas of National Sovereignty, of making the government's direction and foundation the same—advocacy that benefitted the government's ideologues.

With the failure in 1889 to renegotiate the treaties with the West adequately, the welcoming mood toward Christianity, hitherto an important part of the Westernization policy, began to fade, and those who had been baptized under the influence of the Westernization policy, especially members of the upper classes and of the governmental bureaucracy, began to abandon the practice of Christianity in a period of reactionary feeling.

Nonetheless, the Westernization policy continued to push Christianity into every corner of the country, onto everyone it could. People thronged to churches to be baptized, and the Christian population

soared. In 1882 there were only 4,367 Christians, but in 1885 this number rose to 11,000, and in 1890 it increased to 34,000.<sup>11)</sup>

This sudden increase in converts was not due simply to the government's Westernization policy. Another factor was the revival movement going on at the same time.

In January 1883 the Revival sent up its first sprouts with the First Week Prayer Meeting in Yokohama. The following year it spread to Tokyo, Kobe, Osaka, Kyoto, and Kyushu, with the believers proselytizing passionately. The number of believers increased at a breathtaking rate, such that it was even said the within ten years all of Japan would be Christian.<sup>12)</sup>

Nor did the Revival content itself with increasing the number of Christians. Whereas up to now Christianity had been accepted for political or pragmatic reasons, with the Revival it began to be considered from a religious and spiritual perspective, and experienced as religious truth.

Hitherto the acceptance of Christianity had, with many, been only an intellectual acknowledgment of its truth: but now there came to them a real sense of personal sin, an acceptance of Christ as a personal Saviour, and an earnest desire for the spiritual welfare of others.<sup>13)</sup>

In the coming period the Emperor System would be established and Christianity would lose its influence, both political and intellectual, continuing to exist in Japan only in the religious sphere, where it was acknowledged for its religious truths. The move in this direction had its beginnings with the Revival movement.

We must not forget, in considering the Christian trends during the period of Westernization, the fact that a great number of mission schools and Christian schools were founded at this time. One reason for this was that as Protestant Christianity was accepted by intellectuals, intellectual demands grew, and it became necessary to create facilities of higher education to meet these demands. The idea was to create well-educated intellectuals who could combat anti-Christian

intellectual currents such as evolutionism, materialism, and agnosticism. Concerned with the low status of women in Japan, the missionaries went so far as to establish women's schools in many different locations, with the hope of improving women's place in society. Of the over forty Christian women's schools established by 1890, about half of them date from this period of Westernization.<sup>60</sup>

## 2-c The Meiji Constitution and the Imperial Rescript on Education

The acceptance of Christianity by the governmental advisors who had advanced the Westernization policy, and by government ideologues who sympathized with the plan, was merely superficial. At the heart of it all was the issue of national sovereignty, and when the unequal treaties failed to be successfully renegotiated, a "Restoration of Sovereign Rights" movement arose, along with ultranationalism and the rejection of foreigners and Christianity—all of which shows just how shallow the acceptance of Christianity had been.

In and around 1887, pro-Japan ultranationalism experienced a sudden rise to power, but this was not an unexpected phenomenon brought on simply by the failure to revise the unequal treaties. Beginning in 1881 and 1882 with the Confucian ethics revival, the way had been steadily paved, and even at the height of the Westernization movement, there were those who feared and criticized the policy.

For instance, in December of 1886, Shigeki Nishimura gave a three-day lecture series at the Imperial University in which he criticized Westernization and earned the wrath of Hirobumi Ito. In 1886 this lecture series was published under the title, "A theory of Japanese morality." In 1888 Shigetaka Shiga, Setsurei Miyake, Jugo Sugiura, and the Buddhist priests Enryo Inoue and Mokurai Shimaji formed a society called Seikyosha [State Religion Society] and founded its journal *The Japanese*, in which they advocated a pro-Japanese stance.

As ultranationalism and anti-foreign feeling continued to grow stronger in the form of criticism of Westernization, a new

constitution, the Meiji Constitution, was promulgated. This happened on February 11, 1889.

Although on the surface this constitution promised constitutional government and participation of the people in government, in fact the right to vote and indeed the constitution itself remained something benevolently bestowed upon the populace by the emperor. It was not a "people's constitution," for the Emperor System remained the central philosophy.

As for freedom of religion, Article 28 read, "Japanese subjects shall, within limits not prejudicial to peace and order, and not antagonistic to their duties as subjects, enjoy freedom of religious belief" —a severely curtailed freedom at some remove from the basic concept of freedom of religion. Thus, at the same time that the freedom to practice Christianity was guaranteed by the constitution, that very freedom was usurped.

Which is to say that Christianity had attracted its followers because it was at the base of the European society upon which Japan had been modeling itself, because it was seen as providing new ideas to revolutionize—or overthrow—old Confucian ideas, ideas with which to usher in a new age. It was bound to be opposed to the new constitution, which denied the sovereignty of the people and placed the emperor at the top of a class society. Therefore, Christianity was seen as "prejudicial to peace and order," and the practice of it "antagonistic to [the people's] duties as subjects," and Christians could be legally subjected to governmental pressure and oppression.

The Christian Minister of Education Arinori Mori committed an act of irreverence at the Great Shrine of Ise, said a false rumor, leading to Mori's being stabbed to death while trying to attend a state ceremony on the day of the promulgation of the constitution. The act could be taken as symbolic of Christianity's future prospects.

On October 30th, 1890, the year after the Promulgation of the constitution, the Imperial Rescript on Education was delivered as an ethical statement in support of the Emperor System. Then in June of

1891, Ministry of Education Statute Number 4 made worship of the imperial portrait hung in schools compulsory, along with the contents of the Imperial Rescript, thus building into the educational system ideas and ethics supportive of the Emperor System.

### 3 Confronting The Emperor System: 1891-1905

#### 3-a Kanzo Uchimura and the Disrespect Incident

The Imperial Rescript on Education was delivered on October 30, 1890, with the seven government-run higher preparatory schools (First, Second, Third, Fourth, Fifth, Yamaguchi, and Kagoshima) each receiving a copy signed by the Meiji Emperor Mutsuhito himself. To commemorate this event, solemn "readings of the Rescript" were performed.

The First School held this ceremony on January 9th, 1891. Kanzo Uchimura, who had become a part-time instructor on September 2nd of the previous year, attended the ceremony with the approximately 60 other fellow instructors.

The ceremony began at 8:00 in the morning in the Ethics Lecture Hall. In the lecture hall, photographs of the Emperor and Empress were centrally displayed, and on a desk in front of them was the copy of the Rescript signed by the Emperor. First, the instructors and students were to pay worshipful respect; then the Deputy Principal Kyugen Kuhara was to read the Rescript. After that, the instructors and students, in groups of five, were to come before the Rescript, offer worship, and return to their places.

It is clear from the above description that the object of worship was not the imperial photograph, but rather the Rescript and the imperial signature.

At the First School there were three Christian instructors: Kanzo Uchimura, Shunkichi Kimura, and Rikizo Nakajima. On the day of the reading ceremony Kimura and Nakajima were absent; only Uchimura attended. Uchimura felt no particular opposition to the contents of

the Imperial Rescript.<sup>16</sup> He was simply worried about the nature of the reverence to be paid the Rescript—was it religious worship? He too had considered absenting himself from the ceremony, but unable to do so, found himself participating. He was at the time wrapped up in Carlyle's biography of Cromwell, which impressed upon him the nobility of freedom and independence. Although Uchimura only taught for a few short months, he had a devoted following among some students, who loved and trusted him and who were waiting to see how he would react, as a Christian, to this situation. Being in the third group to approach the Rescript, he had no chance to prepare himself fully. While the other instructors and students made a deeply respectful bow, he "bent his head slightly."<sup>17</sup>

Afterwards many newspapers and magazines misreported the incident, saying that Uchimura had said, "It is contrary to the principles of Christianity to worship a piece of paper," and thus rejected the worship.<sup>18</sup> In fact, although he did not make a deep bow, he did lower his head in a gesture of respect. The ceremony ended that day without incident.

However, the age of Westernization was over; nationalism and ultranationalism were rearing their heads, and the youths at the school, sensitive to the trends of the times, took issue, along with some of the instructors, with the fact that the Christian Uchimura had not made a deep bow. At first it was merely a problem within the school, but on January 17th a newspaper picked up the story, after which other newspapers and magazines ran the story, one following the next<sup>19</sup> until the incident became a large problem.

As the problem had grown so large as to be called the Uchimura Disrespect Incident, Principal Hirotsugu Kinoshita, who had been under medical treatment and unable to attend the ceremony, risked illness to try to clear things up. In order to save the situation, he requested that Uchimura make a proper bow before the Rescript, the same as everyone else. Uchimura complied with the principal's request. He wrote about the situation to his American friend David C. Bell as

follows:

He [the principal] wrote me a very kind letter, approving and applauding my conscientious act, and almost imploring me *to conform to the custom* of the nation, assuring me that the *bow* does *not* mean worship, but merely *respect* to the Emperor. Then he described the real state of the school, that to appease the students who could not understand me, the only course will be *to bear humiliation on my part*. The letter touched me, especially as I was in great physical weakness. That the *bow* does *not* mean *worship*, I myself have granted for many years. Here in Japan, it often means no more than taking of hat in America. It was not *refusal* but *hesitation* and *conscientious scruples* which caused me to deny the bow at that moment; and now that the Principal *assured* me that it was *not worship*, my scruples were removed, and though I believed the ceremony to be a rather foolish one, for the sake of the school, the principal, and *my* students, I consented to bow.<sup>60</sup>

After the incident, Uchimura fell ill with influenza, so his fellow Christian, Shunkichi Kimura, went in his place on January 29th.

Regardless of what it may have been that Uchimura was denying, upon the request of the principal, he did perform (albeit by proxy) the necessary bow. It looked like that would be enough to calm things down, with one newspaper reporting "with regard to this matter, the students' indignation has subsided, and it is said that the principal has returned their petition to them."<sup>61</sup> However, this was not the end of the matter. Newspapers and magazines continued to take up the issue, and on February 3rd, Uchimura was permitted to resign, supposedly "in accordance with his wishes."

Kimura, who had performed the bow in Uchimura's place, received his share of criticism, and on the 23rd of February he was forced to resign. Although he insisted that he had done nothing, certainly had not demonstrated lack of respect, to merit such a punishment, and took his case to the Minister of Education, Kimura's plaint was

ignored.

The Uchimura Disrespect Incident had grown larger than a personal problem; it had become a more fundamental problem concerning Christianity's perceived incompatibility with the Emperor System and a conflict between religion and education. Professor Tetsujiro Inoue of the Imperial University, a critic of Christianity, had "A Discussion with Mr. Tetsujiro Inoue on the Relationship between Religion and Education" published in November 1892 in *Contemporary Education* (No.272), the first voice on this new, larger issue.

In response to Inoue, Yoitsu Honda spoke up for the Christians and had a questionnaire published in No. 276 of *Contemporary Education*, which came out on December 15th. Inoue took the challenge and in the issue published January 15th (No.279) began a series on the topic "The Collision of Religion with Education"

Inoue's point of argument was that the Imperial Rescript was nationalist and had at its heart an ethics of loyalty and filial piety, while Christianity was nonnationalist (internationalist) and egalitarian, and that therefore the two were incompatible. Because the atmosphere of the times was moving in a decidedly anti-Christian direction, Inoue's assertion had considerable influence on those concerned with education.

[Mr. Inoue] the German-educated university professor and popular man of letters has put forth a theory to which the public's reactionary mood adds force, like wings bestowed upon a tiger. Most educators, making a golden rule of this theory, already burn hotly with anti-Christian sentiment. Within schools, persecution of Christians has begun. As for teachers, it has reached the point where they can no longer openly admit to being Christians.

In opposition to Inoue and those (Buddhists and ultranationalists, for instance) who sympathized with his attacks on Christianity, the Christians launched a counter-attack, starting with a piece in the biggest magazine of the day, *The People's Friend*, and afterward in a

large number of newspapers, magazines, and books. Of these, a few asserted outright that, indeed, Christianity and the Emperor System were incompatible. These magazines and books were subsequently banned. However, most of them insisted that Christianity was in no way incompatible with the Emperor System and the ethics of loyalty and filial piety. From this period onward, most writings gradually began to tread a path of acceptance for Christianity within the framework of the Emperor System.

The Kanzo Uchimura Disrespect Incident and subsequent collision of Christianity and education make up one of the most difficult problems in the history of modern Japanese thought. The imperial system of government was not just political; absolutism was emphasized in intellectual endeavors as well. It became a tool for controlling the populace. With the Emperor System's triumph in this incident, ties with Shinto were strengthened, and trend toward deifying the Emperor (regarding him as a living deity) began to develop.

### 3-b New Theology

At the same time Christianity was being pressed to confront the ideas of the Emperor System, it also needed to resolve the internal conflicts arising with the ideas of New Theology. The question of how to relate, as Japanese, to the Emperor System, was a large one, and Japanese Christians were not able to come up with an answer all could agree upon. New Theology, which presented intellectual problems within Christianity, made the matter all the more complicated.

Until the arrival of New Theology, Japanese Christians' understanding of Christianity conformed to the traditionalist teachings of the missionaries, but New Theology brought them face to face with differing interpretations and inspired reflection and introspection on the topic of Christian thought itself. It is worth noting that this occurred at a time when nationalism was rampant, and represented a home-grown understanding of Christianity rather than a foreign one.

New Theology is a term used to refer to a liberal school of

theological thought, as opposed to the traditional, conservative faith the first missionaries had preached. The three groups responsible for introducing this liberal thought were Allgemeiner Evangelisch-Protestantischer Missions-verein the Unitarians, and the Universalists. Their missions began with the arrival in Japan in 1885 of the Swiss missionary Wilfried Spinner (of Allgemeiner Evangelisch-Protestantischer Missions-verein), the American missionary Arthur Knapp (a Unitarian, he arrived at the end of 1885), and the American Universalist missionary George Perrin in 1890. The three had subtle differences, but shared a rationalist, human-centered world view that was critical of the concept of the Trinity and of the Cross as the vehicle of mankind's redemption. These views appealed to intellectuals.

New Theology was extremely influential. Previously, Christianity's quick spread among the Japanese had been under the influence of the "Civilization and Enlightenment" drive and Westernization. This was evident, for example, in the interest in Western music of worship on the cultural front or in social welfare action that put the law of love into practice.

During the twenty or so years that had passed, there had been very little reflection on the doctrine and thought behind Christianity. Divinity Schools had been established early on, and courses on theology offered, but the mainly American missionary teachers taught a conservative, traditional brand of theology, which the students accepted uncritically. Virgin birth, miracles, the divinity of Jesus, redemption by the Cross, infant baptism, etc., were not concepts easily understood by the Japanese, but having been taught that the Bible was the word of God, and that to criticize it was a sin, they accepted the doctrines and ideas as the missionaries taught them.

In Europe, however, Professor F. C. Baur of Tübingen University was engaged in historical criticism of the Bible, while Max Müller and others were beginning to study religion as a phenomenon in itself, leading to the possibility of people perceiving the truth in religions other than Christianity, and indeed, seeing the truth in Christianity as

being relative. New Theology made use of these new academic accomplishments to explain Christianity.

In New Theology, morality was seen as the single most important factor, with Christianity viewed as superior to other religions by virtue of its superior morality. The evolutionistic idea that faith in many gods progressed to a faith in one God was popular at the time, and if Japan's faith in many divinities was one day going to evolve into belief in one divinity, then from this perspective too Christianity seemed superior. However, while conservative Christianity would have roundly condemned Japan's polytheism as idol worship, New Theology was able to see that along with polytheism, Japanese religion was in possession of certain meaningful truths. This power of perception was one of New Theology's strong points.

For intellectuals, New Theology's rationalism and willingness not to reject Japan's religions wholesale opened up a path to easily understanding Christianity, while for Japanese Christians, who had hitherto had only a conservative understanding of Christianity, New Theology had even greater influence. They discovered that the doctrine of the Trinity, redemption through the Cross, and the divinity of Christ were sticky points that had been debated for centuries in Christian countries and that in defining them, battles with heretical schools of thought had not been infrequent. The final product had been taught by the missionaries and accepted uncritically, but before the new converts had had a chance to digest their new faith, they came up against completely contradictory ideas, which shook them up considerably. Just as criticism was focusing on Christianity, somehow freedom of religion was recognized and tensions began to abate; similarly, the same era that saw the zealous faith of Revivalism also greeted the rational comprehension that was the reaction to such fervor.

By 1889 the influence of New Theology began to be felt more concretely. In that year, Hiromichi Kozaki lectured at the First Summer School (held at Doshisha University). His topic was "The

Bible's Inspiration," and he "discussed the mistakes of the doctrine of verbal inspiration. He also for the most part admitted the results of Higher Criticism and accepted the historical actuality of the Bible, emphasizing that the writers of the Bible all wrote under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and in the most noble of spiritual states. He thus advocated the so-called Ethical Inspiration Theory."<sup>28</sup> In response to this, the missionaries at Doshisha, J. D. Davis and others, who believed in Biblical infallibility, deemed Kozaki to have "viewpoints that are intellectually extremely dangerous," and they decided not to include his lecture in the collection of Summer School lectures.<sup>29</sup>

At this time, Danjo Ebina also supported New Theology, but Tokio Yokoi and Tsurin Kanamori still held with the conservative Bible infallibility theory. However, in 1891 Kanamori published "Japanese Christianity Today and Tomorrow," and the following year he published his translation of Otto Pfleiderer's *Liberal Theology*, thus gradually moving away from conservative faith. Tokio Yokoi came to criticize traditional Christianity even more strongly, publishing "The Problems We Japanese Have With Christianity" in 1894. Both men gave up being pastors and entered the political arena. With famous pastors criticizing traditional Christian thought and indeed leaving the Christian world behind, both the ministry and lay community were badly shaken. What with this coinciding with the anti-Christian atmosphere of the times, those years saw a stagnation with regard to conversion to Christianity.

From the perspective of increasing the numbers of Christians, New Theology was more of a hindrance than a help; however, from the standpoint of intellectual content, New Theology opened up true theology and theological thought for the Japanese, in addition to deepening the hitherto simplistic notions of Christian thought. In addition, New Theology allowed the Japanese to conceive of a sort of Christianity that, drawing on traditional Japanese ideas, was especially suited to them. The Kumamoto Band was the group most strongly influenced by New Theology, but it is not overstating the

case to say that in the six -or seven-year period beginning in 1890 or so, all pastors and parishioners were influenced in one way or another by New Theology.

The debate in 1901 between Ebina and Uemura, called the first Christian theological debate among the Japanese, was in essence a conflict between conservative theology and liberal theology, with these two positions first made clear during the period of New Theology's influence.

### 3-c Christianity during the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese Wars

With victories in the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese wars, Japan demonstrated both to those at home and those abroad that it had become a "wealthy nation [with a] strong army." During this period, it became, in appearance at least, the equal of the modern capitalist states of the West. It was also during this period that the doctrine of imperial divinity became firmly established.

During this period Protestant Christianity in Japan divided into four main intellectual currents. These were nationalist, individualist, socialist, and church-oriented.

The nationalist current saw nationalism and Christianity as compatible, and was able to accept Christianity within the framework of the Emperor System by blending the two.

Christianity had found itself on the front line with the Uchimura Disrespect Incident and the education-religion conflict, and those in the nationalist current sought to find common ground for Christianity and nationalism and the Emperor System, so that Christianity would continue to have a future in Japan. Those churches and Christians who hoped for Christianity's continuation under the rubrics of a nationalism that had the Emperor System at its core were for the most part active collaborators in the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese Wars. Especially with regard to the Sino-Japanese War, it is difficult to find any who took an anti-war stance. The churches joined together and dispatched pastors throughout the country to preach that the war was

just, thereby playing up Christianity's patriotic spirit.

Uchimura, who would oppose the Russo-Japanese War, supported the Sino-Japanese War, writing *Justification of the Korean War* in August, 1894. In Uchimura's case, observing the deterioration in morality and the trampling of Korean independence that took place after Japan's victory in the Sino-Japanese War led Uchimura to become a pacifist. In addition to Uchimura, Gien Kashiwagi was also a pacifist, as were the Quakers, but these cases were the exception.

Uemura, speaking from the vantage point of orthodox theology, delivered an address in church called "Christianity and War," in which he argued against those like Tolstoy and the Quakers, who held that Jesus' teachings in the Sermon on the Mount meant that Christianity was absolutely opposed to war. Rather, Uemura argued, Christianity acknowledges just wars. For this reason, Uemura did not become a pacifist during the Russo-Japanese War; Danjo Ebina, Hiromichi Kozaki and other powerful church leaders also believed in the necessity of war in some circumstances. The churches actively cooperated with the military, sending out condolence bearers. Yoitsu Honda and Kajinosuke Ibuka went to Europe as unofficial envoys, but with governmental blessings, to tell the world that Japan was waging a just war against Russia. Thus, between the Sino-Japanese War and the Russo-Japanese War, Christianity's method for living together with nationalism quickly took shape.

There were, however, Christians who did not approve of Christianity bowing down to the demands of the times and letting itself be absorbed into nationalism and the Emperor System. These were the Socialist Christians. With the Sino-Japanese War acting as an impetus, capitalism in Japan advanced, in an industrial-revolution-like manner. As a result, Japan was faced with the various problems capitalism brings with it. Especially with the rise in the number of wage laborers, labor-employer conflicts arose, and strikes were called. In 1898 a "Socialist Research Group" was formed with Isoo Abe, Sen Katayama, Tomoyoshi Murai, Shusui Kotoku, Kiyoshi Kawakami,

and, a little later, Sanshiro Ishikawa—the central members. The aim of the group was to research the principles of socialism and explore the possibilities of applying these principles. The first meeting was held at Tokyo's Unitarian Church, with subsequent meetings held there once a month. When one realizes that of the six men at the heart of this "Socialist Research Group," all but Kotoku were Christians, the close ties between the Japanese Socialist movement and Christianity are clear.

Three years later, on May 18, 1901, they left conceptual and intellectual research behind in favor of putting these ideas practice, becoming the Democratic Socialist Party. The founders were the six men mentioned above. The government, however, ordered the Party's dissolution the same day.

Christians were also active in supporting the farming folk who were affected by the contamination of the Watarase and Tone rivers due to the copper poisoning incident at Ashio Copper Mine, a disaster that ranked as the worst societal problem of the 1890s.

The Christians who founded the socialist Research Group and those who aided the victims of the Ashio Copper Poisoning Incident concerned themselves with societal problems out of intellectual commitment to Christian humanism. This was an era during which materialistic socialism and Christian humanism walked hand in hand, thanks to the mutual understanding gained from working together with men like Kotoku. With the advent of the Russo-Japanese War, however, Kotoku and his fellow French-influenced materialists parted company with the Christian socialists.

Among Christian socialists, some, unable to withstand the oppression socialism faced at the hands of the police under the Public Peace and Order law, backed away from socialism. Others, disgusted by the sight of powerful churches and leading church members meekly going along with nationalism, turned away from Christianity toward materialist socialism.<sup>28</sup> In general, Christian socialists moved away from the main stream of Christianity on the one hand and on the

other hand were unable to continue their socialist activities due to governmental pressures, so that by around the time of the Russo-Japanese War it is safe to say that the Christian socialist path was by and large closed.

As it became clear that the path of Christian socialism was closed, individualism and church-oriented ideology became prominent. Unlike socialism, these ideologies did not take a stance opposing nationalism and the Emperor System. As a result, they ended up acknowledging nationalism and the Emperor System, if not actively supporting it.

Kanzo Uchimura is the representative Christian individualist. As a reporter for *Yorozu Cho Ho* [Ten Thousand Mornings Bulletin], he aggressively addressed political and social issues. With *Yorozu Cho Ho*'s 1903 endorsement of war, however, pacifist Uchimura and the paper no longer saw eye to eye, and Uchimura resigned, thereafter devoting himself exclusively to the magazine *Seisho no kenkyu* [Bible Studies]. His case is in interesting contrast to that of Shusui Kotoku, who also resigned in protest against the declaration of war and who moved from democratic socialism to anarchism. Uchimura's anti-war stance, unlike that of the socialists and the Quakers, did not require the concomitant practice of pacifism; once war began one was to carry out one's duty as a citizen and pray for peace. It is often considered a half-hearted, opportunistic sort of pacifism.<sup>30</sup> Saburo Ienaga, writing in *Nihon Shisoshijo no Uchimura Kanzo* [Kanzo Uchimura in the History of Japanese Thought] says that from here on Uchimura's social awareness retreated, and cannot be evaluated from the perspective of social intellectual history.<sup>31</sup>

The period during and around the Russo-Japanese war saw Uchimura lose heart in both politics and society. He came to the conclusion that to improve politics and society, the individual must be reformed. To that end, he threw himself wholeheartedly into publication of *Seisho no kenkyu*. It happened that while Uchimura passionately struggled to save individual souls and *Seisho no kenkyu* sold

thousands of copies, an increasing number of people—mainly intellectuals—ignored or even scorned Japan's extreme inclination toward nationalism and ultranationalism, choosing to focus on the inner qualities of the individual instead. Intellectuals, especially youths sensitive to the movement of the times, felt critical and skeptical of the outwardly focused life of politics and society, their interests turning to a quest for spiritual freedom and to religious and philosophical questions.

The May 1903 drowning suicide in Kegon Falls of Misao Fujimura, a student at First School, whose reason was "the meaninglessness of life," focused Japan's attention on so-called philosophical or intellectual suicides. The Buddhist thinker Manshi Kiyozawa's spiritualism took Japan by storm, for these were times in which people were looking inward and worrying over the problems in life that people face as individuals. Uchimura was to spend the rest of his life reaching out to such people with his individualist-tinged Christianity, that aimed to save each individual soul.

Masahisa Uemura is the representative figure for church-focused ideology. Uchimura, with his concentration in individualism, cried out that no churches were necessary, but Uemura, closer to traditional Western Christianity, put his strength behind the form and make up of churches.

Like Uchimura, Uemura had, until the Russo-Japanese War, actively dealt with problems in society and politics; the magazine he supervised had twice been shut down by the government. When he began publication of the church-oriented magazine *Fukuin Shinpo* [New Bulletin of the Gospel] (first called *Fukuin Shuho* [Weekly Gospel Bulletin]) he also began publishing the generalist *Nihon Hyoron* [Japanese Criticism] as a link between himself and society. Some years later, however, he gave up *Nihon Hyoron* and concentrated his energies on *Fukuin Shinpo*. From the Russo-Japanese War onward his whole strength went into the form and make-up of churches rooted in the Gospels. He buried himself within the world of Christianity, his

pronouncements on politics and society declining notably.

Christianity, that alien Western entity that combined religion with political and social ethics, that revolutionary religion seen as suitable for the building of a new Japan, a change from the Confucianism and Buddhism of the past, was alternately welcomed and opposed. Until the middle of the Meiji period, it was deeply involved in politics and society, an active intellectual current shaping history. However, with divine absolutism bestowed upon the Emperor System through the Meiji Constitution, and given ethical and intellectual backing by the Imperial Rescript on Education, and with the confidence gained in fulfilling the aim of "Rich Nation, Strong Army" through winning the Sino- and Russo-Japanese Wars, the socio-political, and ethical side of Christian thought retreated completely, leaving only the religious side, that is, the salvation of individual souls, to continue.

The government appraisal of the situation was that Christianity, having withdrawn from the sphere of politics and social ethics to concentrate only religious matters, was now no more threatening than Buddhism, which was also concerned with the salvation of individual souls of the Japanese populace, and therefore, so long as Christianity kept away from political and socio-ethical issues, the government would cease to persecute it. From then on Christianity became the religion of individualists, that is to say, of the spiritually muddled knowledgeable middle class, and among their ranks gradually increased the number of its converts.

#### **4. Concerning Danjo Ebina (1856-1937)**

Lastly, let us look at the famous representative of the Kumamoto Band, Danjo Ebina, to see in what fashion he accepted Christianity and what sorts of problems he encountered.

Ebina was born in 1856 in Kyushu's Yanagawa Province, the eldest son in a samurai household. 1856 was three years before the

first missionaries were to arrive. As the child of a warrior, he was taught from a young age the mental attitude befitting a warrior, and similar martial things, all in daily family life. Central to all this was the idea of loyalty to one's lord, for whom one had to be prepared to lay down one's life.

At the age of nine he entered the province school, and his proper schooling began. The chief topic was the Chinese Classics. He was 12 when the Meiji Restoration occurred. Although he was still just a boy, he was old enough to understand the importance of the event. He witnessed the destruction of the feudal system and the burning of his own lord's castle, along with the violent death of his lord, who was only a boy, and in fact a year younger than Ebina himself. Overwhelmed, for a while he lost all hope for the future.

In the fall of the year that he turned 16, he enrolled in the second year at the Kumamoto School for Western Studies, established just the year before. There he saw his first Westerner, and first learned from one. For four years he was taught English, geography, history, mathematics, physics, and astronomy in the disciplined school atmosphere established by his teacher, Captain Janes, a graduate of West Point.

In Ebina's third year, Janes invited any interested student to come to his house for a Bible study group. This was during the era of tacit acceptance of Christianity. The policy of Kumamoto Province, which had established the school, was that while the students would study Western science, morals, ethics, and values were to be dictated as before by Confucianism, and this meant that there was resistance to the Bible study group. However, the students already knew from their studies with Janes that behind Western culture there was Christianity. Janes's high-principled behavior in daily life, and the thought that Bible study might be useful in their studies of English, gradually led to more and more people participating, so that by the end of the year 60 students had joined.

In his fourth year "catechumen fever" was high. Kumamoto had

gone into Western education with the hope of catching up with such provinces as Satsuma, Choshu, Tosa, and Hizen, all of which were central to the Meiji Restoration. As a consequence, many of the young men at the school dreamed of going into politics in the future and becoming ministers of state, even prime minister. Now, however, they were all dreaming of becoming clergymen and saving their country in that manner. Before graduating with his classmates, Ebina was baptized by Janes and decided to study theology at Kyoto's Doshisha University, at that point just one year old.

He studied theology at Doshisha from September 1876 for three years, graduating in June of 1879 as a first-time graduate. The fifteen graduates were all former students at the Kumamoto School for Western Studies.

At Doshisha, Joseph Neeshima taught the New Testament, E. T. Doane the Old Testament, D. W. Learned church history, and J. D. Davis systematic theology. All of them were grounded in a fundamentalist literal verbal inspiration theory of the Bible's composition, especially the Old Testament teacher, Doane, who taught that heaven and earth were actually created in 4004 B. C. In later years, when New Theology was to shake up the ranks of the clergy, and a large portion were to leave the religious profession, the numbers from Doshisha would be especially large, prompting some to say that this was in reaction to the sort of theological education they had initially received. Ebina carried his fundamentalist traditionalist theology with him from Doshisha to Neeshima's native area, Annaka where he worked as a pastor, but when he came in contact with liberal Christianity and New Theology through reading materials and the activities of Spinner's Allgemeiner Evangelisch-Protestantischer Missions-verein he decided to establish his own theology. This was around 1890.

From then on his life's task, one of great importance, was economic and theological independence from the missionaries. The church's independence was gradually accomplished, but independence

for his theology proved indeed to be a task that lasted the rest of his life. The reasons he felt it necessary to free himself from the fundamentalist theology of the missionaries included the importance with which he viewed science, especially the theory of evolution, which the missionaries opposed, but most important was the issue of how to understand Japan's traditional religions.

For example, to the family-oriented, ancestor-revering Japanese, the question of the fate of one's ancestors, who had died without the opportunity to hear of the Christian gospel, was very serious indeed. Whenever the pastors were out preaching the good news, that was one question they were always asked. According to the missionaries and their orthodox theology, Buddhism and Shinto were idolatrous religions, and those who died believing them could not be saved, but were consigned to hell. Furthermore, they demanded that those who would become Christian throw away their Buddhist altars and Shinto household shrines.

At first Ebina thought like the missionaries, but then he began to question that position. Coming in contact with Max Müller's Science of Religion first, and then with Allgemeiner Evangelisch-Protestantischer Missions-verein that incorporated Muller's ideas, and also with liberal Christian theology, Ebina was able to repudiate the position that only Christianity was a true religion. Believing that other religions could participate in the truth, he decided that Buddhism and Shinto also possessed elements of truth. Because Buddhism and Shinto were precursors of Christianity, one's ancestors, who had had no direct contact with Christianity, could be saved. Ebina was convinced of this.

Ebina's Christianity, which neither contradicted science nor condemned Japan's traditional religions and culture, was popular with a large number of youths. Ebina's period of full maturity was the period from the ages of 41 (1879) to 63 (1920), when he was pastor of the Hongo Church. The church was close to Tokyo Imperial University and therefore an easy place for student to congregate, but

that alone can in no way account for the fact that at its height, the Hongo Church had a morning worship attendance of 500 on average (with most of these being students) and over 600 on crowded days. In those days, Ebina's popularity was such that there was probably not a student in all the humanities who had not once heard his sermons.

Ebina's Christianity, which could see the truth in Shinto, Confucianism, and Buddhism, was considered a very Japanese Christianity, and branded heretical by the more orthodox missionaries and the Japanese clergy. But Ebina was firmly convinced that for Japan, the answer was not merely to import the Christianity of the West and Western culture, nor to merely take in Western theology as it stood. He observed that the concrete reality of Christianity was that it existed in Greek, Latin, German, Roman, and Anglo-Saxon. These branches, each with its own understanding of Christianity, were independent of one another, and could not be interchanged. By the same token, Christianity in Japan should take shape against the background of Japan's culture and traditions, he reasoned. This would not mean a change from already established Christian streams, but rather an enriching addition to them, he believed.

Ebina's Japanese Christianity was comprehensive enough to embrace Confucianism for its ethical aspect and Shinto for its religious aspect, but was unable to get much actual development, ending when Ebina's life ended. It should have seen concrete development and systematization in the following generation, but unfortunately after World War II traditional thought and especially a high estimation of Shinto was believed to be linked to militarism and the Emperor System, and Ebina's high regard for Shinto was dismissed and rejected without any investigation of its contents. Postwar Japanese theology has been dominated by Karl Barth's theology, and Ebina's Japanese Christianity, which could accept the truths in Shinto, Confucianism, and Buddhism, has been, along with Ebina himself, forgotten.

I would like to see Ebina once again properly esteemed, and the

Japanese Christianity he had intended to create receive serious consideration.

- (1) *Kirisutokyo nenkan* (1998 edition) Kirisuto Shinbunsha, 1998.
- (2) Marius B. Jansen, Ed. *Changing Japanese Attitudes Toward Modernization*. Princeton University Press, 1965. pp.344-345.
- (3) Kanzo Uchimura. *The Diary of a Japanese Convert*. Fleming H. Revell. p.64.
- (4) *Ibid.*, p.95
- (5) It was later confirmed that two of these men were Buddhist monks and government spies.
- (6) Naoomi Tamura. *Shinko gojunen shi*. Keiseisha, 1924. p.24.
- (7) Kaiseki Matsumura. *Shinko gojunen* Keiseisha, 1926. p.255. references.
- (8) Wataru Saba, ed. *Uemura Masahisa to sono jidai*, Vol.5. Kyobunkan, 1976. p.25.
- (9) *Ibid.*, pp.27, 28, 862-8. Also Mikio Sumiya. *Kindai Nihon no keisei to Kirisutokyo*. Shinkyo Shuppansha, 1968. pp.83-90 references.
- (10) Hiromichi Kozaki. "Nihon Kirisutokyoshi." in *Kozaki Zenshu*, Vol.2. Kozaki Zenshu Kankokai, 1938. p.97.
- (11) Antei Hiyane. "Nihon Kirisutokyoshi," Vol.5. Kyobunkan, 1940. p.40. references.
- (12) Mizutaro Takagi. *Kirisutokyo Daijiten*. Keiseisha, 1911. p.987. references.
- (13) Otis Cary, *A History of Christianity in Japan*. Tuttle, 1976. p.169.
- (14) Akio Dohi. *Nihon Purotesutanto Kirisutokyoshi*. Shinkyo Shuppansha, 1980. pp.77-80. references.
- (15) "Recognizing ahead of time that it was liable to be a problem, my fellow Christians were absent on purpose. I thought about being absent, but in the end couldn't do it." from Taijiro Yamamoto, trans. Kanzo Uchimura. *Beru ni okutta jijodenteki shokan*. Shinkyo Shuppansha, 1949. p.61. People connected with Kimura said that he had in fact caught a cold, so the truth of the matter is not clear.
- (16) *Uchimura Kanzo Zenshu*, Vol.2. Iwanami Shoten, 1980. p.128. references.
- (17) Taijiro Yamamoto, trans. op. cit. p.61
- (18) Saburo Ozawa. *Uchimura Kanzo fukei jiken*. Shinkyo Shuppansha, 1980. p.70.
- (19) Saburo Ozawa says that between January 17th and March 31st, there were 143 articles and editorials on the incident in 56 different newspapers and magazines, but this is not a complete figure; if an exhaustive search could be performed, the number would be greater. Saburo Ozawa, *Uchimura Kanzo fukei jiken*, pp.126-132. references.
- (20) *Uchimura Kanzo Zenshu*, Vol.36. Iwanami Shoten 1983. p.333.
- (21) Saburo Ozawa. Op. cit., p.72.
- (22) *Ibid.*, p.120.
- (23) Aizan Yamaji. *Kirisutokyo Hyoron/Nihonjinminshi*. Iwanami Shoten. p.108.
- (24) Masahisa Uemura's *Fukuin Shuho* published "Fukeizai to Kirisutokyo" [Lese Majesty and Christianity] in its No. 50, 1891 issue, and was closed down. It was closed down again in 1893 for Ligule and Chota Maeda's "Shukyo to Kokka" [Religion and the State]
- (25) Hiromichi Kozaki. "Nanajunen no kaiko" in *Kozaki Zenshu*, Vol.3. Kozaki Zenshu Kankokai, 1938. p.61.
- (26) *Ibid.* p.61.
- (27) *Uchimura Kanzo Zenshu*, Vol.12. Iwanami Shoten, 1981. p.425. references.
- (28) According to Yasushi Kuyama, ed. *Kindai Nihon to Kirisutokyo*, Sobunsha, 1956. p.227,

between Meiji 35 and 40, the number of factories went from 7,560 to 10,598, and the number of workers from 430,000 to 580,000.

- ② Sen Katayama, one of the Christian members of the Socialist Research Group, later founded the Japanese Communist Party.
- ③⑩ *Kosaka Masaaki Chosakushu*, Vol. 7. Riso Sha, 1969. p. 329.
- ③⑪ Saburo Ienaga. "Nihon shisoshijo no Uchimura Kanzo" in Toshiro Suzuki, ed. *Kaiso' no Uchimura Kanzo*. Iwanami Shoten, 1962. pp. 114-120 references.
- ③⑫ Janes was a layman, not a pastor, but as a result of his consultation with Rev. Davis, who was in Kyoto, he was able to perform his students' baptism.

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