

CHRISTIANITY--THE FOREIGN RELIGION OF JAPAN

by

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Christianity as a religion, has existed for 2,000 years. During this time period Christianity made its way into Europe, and much of North and South America, so that they have in effect become Christianized. Christianity, however, has met with closed doors in most of what is now considered the Far East. Christianity did not reach Japan until one and one-half milleniums after the advent of Christianity. Even today Christianity struggles to exist on Japanese soil. It is the writer's purpose to discuss some of the conditions and factors which existed in Japan when Christianity first made its appearance, even up until the present time in history.

Christianity was first introduced into Japan by the Roman Catholics of Europe. The priests were fervent in their efforts, but more often than not, the shogun (the ruling authorities) used the priests for their own ends in political gain and battles. Although the foreigners were admired for their chivalrous qualities, the Japanese plied them for their knowledge in technical abilities, while scorning or ignoring their foreign religion.

Many Japanese people did embrace Christianity at its introduction. How many truly converted Christians there were is impossible to determine. So much persecution ensued, however, that many recanted their faith. After Christianity's expulsion, so much dread was laid to this foreign religion that two and a half centuries passed before the Japanese even dared allow it to again enter Japan.

Christianity has never been considered a Japanese religion by the Japanese people, except by those who are truly born-again believers. Even today many in Japan see Christianity as foreign, although it is not feared as it once was. Many families, however, still consider it a disgrace and shame for a member of the household to be a Christian.

It is the conclusion of this writer that much prayer, much hard work by both Japanese national Christians and missionaries, and the Lord's outpouring of His Spirit on Japan, will bring change in Japan's attitudes and acceptance of Christianity, so that the Japanese, too, may know of God's wondrous saving love.

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## CHAPTER I

### HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY

#### From the 1500's to the 1800's

Little did the unsuspecting Japanese realize what the 1500's would mean to them. Wrapped up in the safe cocoon of their island country, they were hardly prepared for their first contact with the West during that century. The year 1542, began an eventful period for Japanese history for this was the year that Portuguese traders first made contact with Cipango--the European name for Japan.

The Portuguese were responsible for opening Japan for trading purposes since they wanted to expand their already large trading empire, reaching from Africa to India, and the "spice islands" in Macao, off the Chinese coast.

A little over a decade later, at the peak of the Counter Reformation in Europe, the first Jesuit Spanish priest set foot in Japan along with the Portuguese missionaries. The year was 1549 and the priest was Francis Xavier. Christianity had made its first formal appearance on Japanese soil.

Christianity did not make a tremendous impact at first. Rather, with the coming of Westernism came the smoothbore musket--the most valuable import to the Japanese

at this time. They were able to manufacture the musket with great skill, and it proved to be valuable in use because of the political changes occurring.

One military clan, the Tokugawa Shogunate, in particular, used this weapon to quell the growing anarchy under the Ashikaga Shogunate.

The political scene in the mid-1500's sheds light onto the Japanese acceptance of foreigners and their Christian religion.

At this time three men are prominent in Japanese history.

Oda Nobunaga (1534-82) who worked to re-unify Japan at a time of warring feudal barons.

Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536-98) followed Nobunaga. He was considered a genius, being equal to Napoleon in military skill. An efficient administration system and increased commerce are credited to him.

Tokugawa Ieyasu (1546-1616) brought the work of his predecessors together to form the Tokugawa Shogunate.

When the Europeans first arrived, the Japanese did not take much notice. The Japanese, under a new order trying to restore peace and the subsequent longest period of peace in Japan, were not impressed with what the foreigners had brought.

Xavier, however, was highly impressed with Japan and had high hopes of converting its people. Xavier had done much traveling before reaching Japan and knew the Japanese were different. Kyoto was an even greater city than any European city at that time.

In a letter to Spain Xavier said, "It seems we shall never find among the heathens another race to equal the Japanese. They are people of very good manners, good in general and not malicious; they are men of honor to a marvel, and prize honor above all else in the world."<sup>1</sup>

The city of Kyoto quickly adapted Western ways--clothing became European, words came into use which still exist ("pan"--meaning bread), tobacco was smoked for the first time. Even crucifixes were worn.

Although the missionaries were admired for their discipline, bravery, knowledge, and sense of superiority, their impact was minimal at first. The West's mechanical devices were eagerly sought, but its philosophy was rejected.

As Xavier began preaching after his arrival in Kyushu, he had hoped to preach to the masses and convert Japan but actually found the opposite to work better--one on one.

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<sup>1</sup>Scott F. Runkle, An Introduction to Japanese History (Japan: International Society for Educational Information Press, Inc., 1976), p. 19

As an alien religion, however, the priests were only able to reach less than two percent of the population at this time--300,000 out of 15-20 million.<sup>2</sup> Many declared converts may have seen Christianity as Buddhism in a different form. The people were really more impressed with the conduct of the missionaries than they were with their doctrine.

The turning to Christianity may have been in part due to the wide-spread corruption among Buddhist priests. The Jesuits met with approval because of their devotion to their religion and its duties as well as their honesty. Honesty is one quality greatly admired and revered by the Japanese.

The year 1559 saw another priest, Father Gasper Vilela, intent on winning the upper echelon of society, namely the Shogun ruler in Kyoto. He found Kyoto a teeming society and began his work there among the outcasts, including medical care. Kyoto also saw the conversion of a rather large group of Samurai (warrior class) due to the priests' work.

Other priests in Kuyushu were working as well, and in a desire to please Portuguese traders who had

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 19

brought the Jesuit priests to Japan, several lesser Japanese lords ordered mass conversions of their people. They had hoped for special concessions for their action.

In spite of continuing missionary efforts no priest was even able to see the Shogun until 1568. Father Luis Frois, Vilela's successor, was given a personal interview with Oda Nobunaga.

Nobunaga really had no personal desire to be converted to Christianity. He was simply very interested in Western scientific developments. The missionaries were knowledgeable in this area and Nobunaga wanted information.

Although Nobunaga himself did not want to become a Christian he tolerated the foreign religion. He admired their samurai virtues which have already been mentioned.

The Shogun encouraged missions through his support. He endorsed the priests for fourteen years until his death in 1582.

Hideyoshi followed Nobunaga as Shogun under the Tokugawa era. He was content to tolerate Christianity at first, as had Nobunaga. He even seemed friendly towards it after a visit to the Jesuits in Kyushu in 1587.

Some people around him, vassals and those in his private life, were Christians, although others openly hated and despised the new religion. Hideyoshi granted

special favors to the missionaries, who in turn entertained him on a small Portuguese warship.

In 1587, however, a somewhat unexpected change occurred in Hideyoshi's thinking. He had been out on a conquest trip, having been to Kyushu to fight the daimyo (local lords) in the Satsuma province. Having won the victory he started returning home. No sooner was he on his way than he issued an edict against the Jesuits. He ordered them to leave Japan in twenty days.

Why the sudden change in Hideyoshi? He believed the Jesuits were encouraging the persecution of Buddhist and Shinto adherents, as well as believing the Portuguese merchants were having a part in the selling of Japanese people overseas as slaves. The conduct of the European merchants was far from the way a true Christian would act. The Japanese were quick to catch onto their behavior. Hideyoshi in particular noticed what was happening. It also may have been true that Hideyoshi was looking for a way to come down hard on the Christians, so that he could bring them under his control and use them as political tools.

Nevertheless the edict itself was not properly enforced, although strict. It was, as well, disregarded by the missionaries. The Jesuits did not convince Hideyoshi that he was wrong in his charges against them. The



missionaries only made a pretense of leaving Japan when in actuality they went into hiding in various places around Nagasaki. They were helped by many devoted followers, and the Jesuits quietly continued making converts.

Hideyoshi punished no Christians at this time, although he most likely knew they had not obeyed his orders. He seemed to let the matter lie quietly. He even permitted some foreign priests to remain in Kyoto near his palace.

One of these priests included Father Organtino, whom Hideyoshi cared for and protected. He liked Organtino, who was an aged man.

The friendly relations between the missionaries and Japanese authorities were never quite the same after 1587, although there was a calm, a time of waiting and watching before the year 1597--then the "storm" hit.

The political distrust occurring during this time seeped down to the missionaries because of their continued work despite the ban.

When the "storm" hit, twenty-six Kyoto Christians were mutilated and executed. The leaders of the group consisted of seven Spanish Franciscan priests. They had preached Christianity in complete disregard of Hideyoshi's edict. They had defied the edict, and they did this even though they had entered Japan illegally. They had centered their efforts on Kyoto and Osaka. These incidents concerning

the Franciscan priests infuriated the more wary Jesuits.

The 1597 persecutions had led to martyrdom. This was something more severe than had occurred previously. The martyrdoms, however, were small compared to those of Europe, and the ones occurring later on in Japanese history.

Hideyoshi again became lenient after sudden action against Christianity. How can his actions be accounted for--his strict edicts one time and leniency another?

There were several reasons. He was an autocrat who needed to constantly assert authority. Also, this was a period of history which was wrapped up in the need for internal peace, conquest outside of the Japanese boundaries, and the succession question, who would follow in Hideyoshi's place?

The 1587 edict had possibly been only a warning. He had won his victory over the Shimazu family in the Satsuma province in southern Kyushu but he had not been pleased with the power of Christianity in northern Kyushu.

There had been hundreds of thousands of converts in that area, including local officials. Nagasaki was a major port run by the Jesuits. Christianity was much stronger in this locality than in Kyoto. This strength did not please Hideyoshi.

To prevent any further zealous missionary activity, it was necessary to bring the situation under his control. Not too much control, however, for valuable Macao trade would be hindered if too much pressure was put on the Christians.

The 1597 martyrdoms were somewhat different. Some Japanese, as well as the Spaniards, desired a breakage of the Portuguese monopoly of foreign trade. Trade between Japan and the Philippines had by this time become regular.

Japan, aware of Spain's power in the military, felt threatened. Portugal itself was not as strong and did not threaten Japan as Spain's power did. Hideyoshi "adopted a typical half-warlike, half-conciliatory policy towards the authorities in Manila."<sup>3</sup>

Events came to a head when Hideyoshi confronted the Spanish captain of a galleon, which was named the San Felipe. The ship had run aground at Shikoku. It was full of gold and Hideyoshi tried to seize it. The Spanish captain bravely objected. He knew of the might in the Spanish military. One of the men on his ship boasted that this power was somehow connected with the power of Roman Catholicism.

Hideyoshi had had enough and decided to prove to both the governor of the Philippines and the king of Madrid

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<sup>3</sup>R. H. P. Mason and J. G. Caiger, A History of Japan (Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Co. 1972), p. 151

who was "boss" in Japan. As a result, Franciscans and Japanese converts were killed. They had become political instruments for Hideyoshi's use. The Franciscan friars had entered the country as an official embassy from the Philippines, and not as priests.

Hideyoshi seethed in rage. Some of the words he may have said at this time are:

"My States are filled with traitors, and their numbers increase every day. I have proscribed the foreign doctors; but out of compassion for the age and infirmity of some among them I have allowed them to remain in Japan; I shut my eyes to the presence of several others, because I fancied them to be quiet and incapable of any bad design, and they are serpents I have been cherishing in my bosom... I am not anxious for myself; so long as the breath of life remains, I defy all powers of the earth to attack me; but I am perhaps to leave the empire to a child, and how can he maintain himself against so many foes, domestic and foreign, if I do not provide for everything incessantly?"<sup>4</sup>

At the turn of the century, the early 1600's brought not only Spanish Dominican friars, a new Roman Catholic "denomination", but also traders from Manila, Holland, and England. The Japanese welcomed them with tolerance and friendliness.

England and Holland were warring with each other at this time and as they began trading in port Hirado in Kyushu, the Portuguese asked that they be crucified as pirates. Ieyasu, who had since been given a position of

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 151

leadership in Hideyoshi's government, thought this a bit extreme. He wanted foreign trade. He also closed his eyes to the Christians because of his desire for foreign trade. Hideyoshi's edict did not amount to much.

Eventually the great religious zeal of the Jesuits brought about reports which said that this group of priests was possibly the leading group in an attack for military intervention.

King Philip II had a vast territory during this time. The Portuguese had parts of Asia and Africa, much of Europe and the conquests of North/South America. Philip was not beyond the capability of trying to make Japan a conquest.

The 1610's-1620's saw the Tokugawa regime convinced that Christians were not trustworthy. Religious quarreling by this time had broken out between the Catholics and the Protestants from Europe, as well as between Dominican and Jesuit priests. The priests involved had hoped to discredit and eliminate the other sectors of priests. These quarrels not only amazed but troubled the Japanese.

Add this to a government already striving to maintain the status quo among its people in a feudal land, and it can be seen that a very unstable situation was rapidly developing.

Christian schools had been established by this time. These were to train Japanese priests. "Christian painting and engraving were developed to a standard which won admiration to foreigners."<sup>5</sup> Along with the schools, it seemed the Christians were growing too rapidly, which aroused suspicion as well.

Christianity also claimed absolute faith and allegiance. This seemed strange to the leaders. "... they, (Christians) were seen as undermining feudal law and order as a possible threat to national unity. Forces of suppression were therefore put in operation, leading to a decline as rapid as the rise."<sup>6</sup>

The Shoguns had great admiration, as well as fear, for the huge ships and cannons of the "Southern Barbarians", as the Japanese called the Portuguese. However, in 1614 when a reported plot reached the ears of the Japanese, their fears climaxed. The report which resounded throughout Japan, cast heavy doubts on the Japanese Christians. The attacks between the priests did nothing to endear themselves to the Japanese leaders. The two groups, the priests and the Japanese Christians, were both included in the report

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<sup>5</sup>Charles W. Forman, ed., Christianity in the Non-Western World (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1967), p. 16

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 17

as trying to overthrow the Tokugawa government. This was enough to cause the expulsion of all Westerners, except for a few Dutch traders.

Systematic persecution and suppression now began, directed against the Christians. The persecution gained force under Hidetada, Ieyasu's son, and Iemitsu, Hidetada's son, both successors to Ieyasu.

The Tokugawa government put into effect a decree that no Japanese was to leave the country. Death was the alternative for disobedience.

Hidetada was responsible for the Great Martyrdom in 1622, in which fifty-five Christians were killed. Iemitsu, following his father's example, had fifty Christians burned at the stake in the Great Martyrdom of 1623.

The believers were "fortunate" to be given a choice of martyrdom or apostasy. Those Christians who did remain worshipped secretly, if at all.

It was during this decline that the greatest persecution of Christians ever recorded in history occurred. Many, as has been said, were burned at the stake while others were tortured in unimagineable ways which had to be invented.

The torture did have a "desired" effect. Christians defected in large numbers and Christianity all but disappeared. Only a few remained faithful, reaching all

the way to the 1870's when the country removed its prohibitions on foreigners entering the country.

The oldest centers of missionary activity in Kyushu and western Honshu remained to defy the government. One of these centers was Shimabara Peninsula, located east of Nagasaki. An open rebellion occurred in 1637. The rebellion occurred because of the zeal of the remaining Christians, and because of the resentment over a heavy taxation which was imposed.

The Shimabara Castle became a refuge for thirty-seven thousand men, women, and children. They stayed there four months until their provisions diminished.

An army of one hundred thousand soldiers was sent in and in the course of time, only one hundred and five of the thirty-seven thousand remained alive.

The suspicions of the Shogunates were reinforced through all these events. The Tokugawa leadership became even more prejudiced against the foreigners.

Because of Shimabara a policy was adopted--strict exclusionism. This became a major political topic of the time. The year was 1636 when the Closed Country Edict was issued. (See page 16 for a copy of the Edict). Every year after this the people of Nagasaki were required to trample on a cross. Christians who renounced their faith



had to sign a statement requiring them to deny God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost, all angels, saints and Mary. They also had to agree that Christianity was an evil religion.<sup>7</sup>

The "greatest" achievement for the Europeans, after ninety years of work in Japan, was to cause the Japanese to go into two and a half centuries of seclusion. The only port open at all was Nagasaki, and here the ships were restricted. Foreigners were forbidden to set foot on shore.

Western Imperialism had influenced their quest for knowledge but the doors of Japan were firmly shut. The Tokugawa regime managed to have one of the most peaceful eras of Japanese history, but the Europeans helped little--even with their Christian message.

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 17

The Closed Country Edict

1. No Japanese ships may leave for foreign countries.
2. No Japanese may go abroad secretly. If anybody tries to do this, he will be killed, and the ship owner(s) will be placed under arrest whilst higher authority is informed.
3. Any Japanese now living abroad who tries to return to Japan will be put to death.
4. If any Kirishitan (Christian) believer is discovered, you two (Nagasaki governors) will make a full investigation.
5. Any informer(s) revealing the whereabouts of a bateren (priest) will be paid 200 or 300 pieces of silver. If any other categories of Kirishitans are discovered, the informer(s) will be paid at your discretion as hitherto.
6. On the arrival of foreign ships, arrangements will be made to have them guarded by ships provided by the Omura clan whilst report is being made to Yedo (Tokyo) as hitherto.
7. Any foreigners who help the bateren or other criminal foreigners will be imprisoned at Omura as hitherto.
8. Strict search will be made for bateren on all incoming ships.
9. No offspring of Southern Barbarians (Europeans) will be allowed to remain. Anyone violating this order will be killed, and all relatives punished according to the gravity of the offence.
10. If any Japanese have adopted the offspring of Southern Barbarians they deserve to die. Nevertheless, such adopted children and their foster-parents will be handed over to the Southern Barbarians for deportation.

11. If any deportees should try to return or to communicate with Japan by letter or otherwise, they will of course be killed if they are caught, whilst their relatives will be severely dealt with, according to the gravity of the offence.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 20

The late 1600's and the early 1700's thus began a 250 year self-imposed closure of Japan. Signs were posted everywhere--on bridges, by the wayside, seaports, etc.--stating:

"As long as the sun shall warm the earth let no Christian be so bold as to come to Japan; and let all know that the king of Spain himself, or the Christian's God, or the Great God of all, if He violate this command, shall pay for it with his head."<sup>9</sup>

Mr. Eugene Stock comments on the above edict in Japan Missions.

"Who is 'the Christian's God,' so curiously distinguished in these shocking words from the 'Great God of all'? Is it Christ? Or is it the Pope? One of the letters carried to Pope Gregory XIII by the four Japanese nobles was thus addressed, 'We can honor the zeal and self denial of the Jesuit missionaries. We can believe that among their converts there were some who in much ignorance did trust their soul to the Savior. But

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<sup>9</sup>R. H. P. Mason and J. G. Caiger, A History of Japan (Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Co. 1972), p. 34

the responsibility for the blasphemous proclamation, which for two centuries and more shut out Christianity from Japan, must lie at the door of Rome."<sup>10</sup>

Buddhism, never completely diminished in spite of Christianity, was still seen as strong. It became approved by official endorsement over Christianity. Each family was required to register at a temple. This also had administrative uses because a 1720 national census was taken and the compulsory temple registration was highly beneficial at the time. Buddhism was the force of aesthetics and literature, while Confucianism remained prominent for intellectual purposes.

The middle of the 19th Century saw a turn in Japan as far as Christianity is concerned. The people still saw Christianity as untrustworthy and something to be feared and avoided. Indifference greeted the first missionaries, if not downright hostility. Christianity was not fit for Japanese or any other Orientals.

"From official government sources there had circulated the notion that Christianity was an 'evil', subversive religion of the foreign devil; its missionaries were the forerunners in disguise of foreign intervention or perhaps of colonizing armies."<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 34

<sup>11</sup>Robert Lee, Stranger in the Land (New York: Friendship Press 1967), p. 36

It was Commodore Matthew Perry who appeared on Japan's shores in 1859. He was ultimately responsible for the opening of the doors since he politely demanded that Japan begin trading again, and he brought a treaty to prove he meant business.

This was the break, long awaited, which Japan needed to once again have contact with the outside world. Christianity could at least quietly come in again.

The missionaries arrived during the Meiji Era in July of 1859. The people were afraid--Westerners were so totally different. These Japanese had never seen non-Orientals because of the ban. Difficulty ensued in accepting the foreigners.

Signs were still up warning people of Christianity. Three thousand Catholics in Nagasaki were imprisoned at this time for being brave enough to come out openly. The Western nations protested strongly enough that the Japanese government backed down.

February of 1873 saw the removal of the signs which had been posted warning against Christianity. It was under Perry's new treaty that the ports again opened and both Catholic and Protestant missionaries made their way to Japan. Christianity grew slowly--from 1859-1871 only ten converts were won in the Protestant work. These had to be baptized in secret. Fifty thousand Catholics remained in Kyushu who

secretly kept the faith, passing it on from generation to generation. Persecution did break out and people were again tortured or deported.<sup>12</sup>

Political pressure from overseas made it possible for missionaries to preach in Japan. From 1883-1888 Christianity was very popular. Converts rose from four thousand to twenty-five thousand. Much of this, however, was due to a mis-conception of having to adapt to Christianity in order to complete Western dress and ways, as well as believing it would bring material improvement and kind treatment from overseas. They felt it would even be helpful if the Emperor were baptized so Japan could be recognized as equal by the West.<sup>13</sup>

Revival after revival swept the country during this period. Mass meetings were held. The churches, within seven years, tripled to over three hundred with membership going from one thousand six hundred seventeen in 1878 to thirty-four thousand by 1890.<sup>14</sup>

Christianity truly saw a favorable time at this point. Hiromichi Kozai, a Christian leader in Japan remarks concerning the public meetings, "The success of these

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<sup>12</sup>Dorothy Pape, Captives of the Mighty (Chicago: Moody Press 1957), p. 30

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 30

<sup>14</sup>Robert Lee, Stranger in the Land (New York: Friendship Press 1967), p. 38

gatherings produced on all present the conviction that Japan would be Christianized in less than a decade, and that at least the majority of the representatives to be returned to our Diet would be Christians. (Some in the Diet were Christians at the time--writer's insert.) Today such a conviction may seem groundless and even fantastic, but not so then."<sup>15</sup>

This time the revival included all classes of people, including farmers. Christianity, being the religion of advanced nations of the world, was seen as a superior religion and to be regarded as such by all in Japan.

Japanese involvement in Christianity seemed to have won its day in just a few short decades. Would the trend continue? Unfortunately, Satan was not pleased that his stronghold was being shaken. Something needed to be done and it came with the title of nationalism attached.

In the late 1880's came nationalism, putting its "best" foot forward to squelch a seemingly triumphant Christianity. Previously, mass crowds attended meetings--now Christianity once again suffered under suspicion, doubt, and anti-foreign feeling everywhere. It was still a foreign religion.

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid, p. 38



Shintoism, being ultra-nationalistic, was now advocated by the Meiji era government. This government in 1880 issued an Imperial Rescript on Education which put religious freedom into strict and rigid confines. Conformity to the imperial system was demanded--meaning that all who did not show supreme loyalty to the Emperor were accused of treason.

From the Early 1900's

Progressing into the 1900's the missionaries felt keen antagonism. They were a curiosity object, something to be ridiculed. Children veered away from them, and adults would not easily befriend them. "Foreigner! Hairy Foreigner" was the title attached to them. The people of Japan still remembered the Tokugawa era and its misfortune with Christianity.<sup>16</sup>

Christianity's setback continued through the early 1900's. The open-hostility prevailed during the Japanese-Russian War in 1905. Japanese Christians tried to serve in areas of welfare work and hospital visitation to show and express their loyalty, but Roosevelt's act of inadequate distribution of spoils after the war only proved to be a catalyst to open up hostility. Roosevelt was President at the time the Japanese won the Japanese-Russian War. The Japanese demanded compensation payments from Russia. Roosevelt opposed it, thus angering the Japanese. Relations became strained between the United States and Japan. Many believed war was near. A "Gentleman's Agreement" was negotiated, however, thereby abating war. The Christian churches were raided and burned. Christians were merely tolerated.

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 40

Once again, Christianity was not aided during the early 1900's by feuds among denominations. Conservatives and liberals showed little Christian love towards each other. Many missionaries acted as though superior, being somewhat arrogant, although it may not have been a conscious act. Nonetheless, these attitudes did not further Christianity.

The times between the World Wars is characterized by what James Yashiro calls "the retrogression of the Churches."<sup>17</sup> This is a good description of these early years for it was a very difficult time for Christianity.

A time span of a few years made some improvement in attitudes towards Christianity, but these were small in real significance. In 1922 the National Christian Council was founded; some gains were seen. In 1923 the Great Kanto Earthquake occurred; Christians gained favor as a result of their help. In 1924, these slight gains were nullified by the Oriental Exclusion Act by the United States Congress which was designed to keep the Japanese out of the United States, as well as the Chinese. Their agricultural labor was so cheap the farmers had difficulty competing. Christianity became a private religion again.

In 1925 a law was passed which was a renewal of the earlier 1887 law, involving the Emperor system. If

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 42

anyone was found who was not loyal to the Emperor he could be arrested and punished. Christian churches wanted to prove their loyalty to the Emperor and they did as they were asked to do to show that the Christian faith and the Emperor system could be united. This meant having special services on the Emperor's birthday and offering prayers for his family.

This Rescript had not been issued as a loyalty test to the Emperor. Rather, it involved the ethical principles which the Emperor himself lived by and which his subjects were to copy. However, it soon turned into a loyalty where one had to bow to the signature on the Rescript.

This demand, of course, caused many problems for the Christians. Since Christians refused to bow, Christianity was again slandered as being non-nationalistic, a disturber of peace and order; Christians did not fulfill their obligations as loyal subjects, and they were accused of showing disrespect to the Emperor. Besides all of this, Christians upheld a foreign flag.

Since many Japanese people believed Christianity would not fulfill their religious needs, Christianity suffered a drop. Buddhism and Shintoism were revived at Christianity's expense.

Finally, 1931 was the year marking the Manchurian Incident and the consequences which followed it. This was

the beginning of military growth which led up to Pearl Harbor and the advent of World War II, and eventually Japan's defeat.

Between 1931 and World War II Japan again showed suspicion and hatred towards foreigners. Christians again underwent abuse, although strangely, the government did not destroy the churches at this time. Instead, the government looked for a way in which to encourage nationalistic goals in the churches. Church leaders played an important part in the government plan.

The Japanese Christians soon began asking themselves who their God was--the Emperor or Christ, since many followed government policies prior to World War II. Only as police began questioning the national pastors of things concerning their faith--their attitudes of worship towards the national gods, their idea of deity, and their view of the Emperor--did Christians take a serious look at their faith.

As World War II began reaching the eruption point, Christians were again suspected. They were called spies and anyone friendly to foreigners was a suspect. War propaganda pointed to Christians as troublemakers--they were often seen in films as coming out of Christian churches. Christianity was now seen as not only foreign and enemy, "but it was universal, professing not to be bound by

allegiance to a single nation."<sup>18</sup>

Professor Antei Hiyane states, "What was oppressed was liberalism, and on the assumption that Christianity was liberal and individualistic, the churches as well as Christian people were suspected by the government. As Japan became isolated from the whole world, Christian churches were criticized as the hothouse of spies because churches had relations with America and England."<sup>19</sup>

The foreign religion was again the enemy of ultra-nationalists.

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 44

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 44

## CHAPTER II

### INFLUENCE OF CHRISTIANITY

#### During Early History

What influence did Christianity have during its early history? Were the Christians in Japan really Christians or just Christians in name only? What was different about this religion than any Japan had previously seen?

When Xavier first arrived in Japan he was given permission, along with other priests, to preach publicly. He traveled throughout many areas of Japan, preaching as he went. Nagasaki was the base of Christianity but such places as Yamaguchi-ken (province) and Kyoto were included.

Xavier soon became unpopular among the Buddhist priests. He would often enter their temples, questioning them of their beliefs and ended by preaching the Gospel. He denounced their worship of Dainichi, which included a Buddhist Trinity of the Shingon sect. Dainichi was a personification of wisdom and purity. Against this god Xavier whole-heartedly preached, declaring that worship of him was actually worship of Satan.

The worship of the devil was seen in their idols created out of wood and stone--inanimate objects. Xavier preached that they had forsaken their true Creator, the

One True God of Heaven.

Xavier clearly pointed out these sins to the Japanese people. Other sins especially included the killing of unborn or hours' old babies by their mothers. Sodomy, with which the king of Yamaguchi-ken was involved, was also denounced.

Many people listened, but many people despised this new religion. They mocked at a religion which told that man having more than one wife was wrong; that one needed to be "saved" from a God who was all-righteous, who would damn them unless they believed in Him.

Other sects of Buddhism also caused trouble for the missionaries. They saw the work of the Christians and how it would effect the ruin of the monasteries, and they did all they could do to put an end to it. The Buddhist monks "told the people not to listen to the foreigners, and circulated various rumors concerning them, such as they ate human flesh. To increase suspicion, they threw blood-stained rags about the house occupied by the missionaries."<sup>20</sup>

The ruling authorities announced an edict saying that no one was allowed to become a Christian. Death would result if a person committed himself to this foreign religion.

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<sup>20</sup> Otis Cary, A History of Christianity in Japan (Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Co. 1976), p. 37



Those already Christians were allowed to remain so, however.

One man in particular did much of the preaching while he and Xavier traveled together. He was Father Fernandez. One particular incident is recorded that tells of a man who was standing amongst a large crowd of people, listening to Fernandez. This man worked his way to the front of the crowd, acted as if he were going to whisper in the priest's ear, only to spit upon his cheek. The crowd watched, wondering what would happen. Fernandez, without even pausing in his message or looking at the offender, wiped his face and continued.<sup>21</sup> The crowd indeed looked at Fernandez, greatly impressed. An important man in the crowd, having been totally against Christianity began thinking, "A religion that enables its followers to practice such virtue must surely be divine."<sup>22</sup> He followed Fernandez home that day. He later became the first baptized member in the city. His example was influential upon many others.

It was known in Yamaguchi that Xavier, as reported by his biographers, had an amazing ability from God to answer immediately any questions given him by inquisitive hearts and minds. So much was he remembered for his ability that in later years people commented that the teachers of

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 45

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 46

Christianity were much slower in giving answers than Xavier.<sup>23</sup> This notion is somewhat over-done, but Xavier's influence was still felt. Christianity still flourished in many areas.

Thousands of Japanese people did have questions. Their hearts were thirsty for a refreshing drink--a drink which could satisfy all the deep longings of their hearts. Christianity during this time period in Japanese history grew at a tremendous rate. More so than at any other period of Japanese history. People often secretly, if not openly, made profession. Some would do so at all costs. Many were persecuted, tortured, or even killed.

Many influential people became Christians during this time of prosperity for this foreign religion. The first daimyo (territorial lord) to accept the faith was a man named Sumitada from a city called Omura. He promised the missionaries they would be treated well.

Sumitada became a Christian in 1563, showing his allegiance by being baptized. Twenty-five retainers were also baptized at the same time. He had much zeal for his new faith and showed it by going into the temple of the Goddess of War, tearing down the idol and cutting off its head with his sword. Ordinarily daimyo who were going to war would go into this temple and worship this idol. But Sumitada and his body-guards saw fit to change this custom. He afterwards burned the temple and put a cross up in its stead. He

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 46

and his warriors then marched off to war with their cross emblazoned armor and standards, winning the campaign--which he believed showed God's favor upon him.

Sumitada was also responsible for many temples being turned into churches. He threw all the ancestral tablets of his adoptive family into the fire; he refused to worship his ancestors, as is the Japanese custom. Later, even after experiencing persecution and difficulties, he still maintained his Christian stance and saw his city of Omura become almost entirely Christian--at least outwardly. In 1576 a daimyo from Arima became a Christian after a defeat in war. He, too, was so zealous that through his example and urgings some 20,000 were reported to be Christians in his territories.

Another major figure appeared between 1563-1565. His name was Takayama, a commander of the Takatsuki castle, midway between Kyoto and Osaka. This man believed he could refute the Christian doctrines purely on the basis of his own wisdom and ability. He believed he could even force the Christians to see how false their religion was. He, therefore, went to hear one of the priests of Christianity, with the intent of showing the man his false belief. Takayama heard the priest and began discussing this religion with him. The result--Takayama became a Christian. His wife and son followed. This man

became one of the most famous Christians of his time.

He urged many people to accept his faith. It was as a result of his zeal that high ranking men, such as Naito, the daimyo of Kameoka in Tamba province, were baptized.

It was after 1565 that Christianity, a now thriving, growing belief in Japan, began to run into some difficulties, although it did continue.

Were the Christians of this era really Christians? It is hard to say. It can safely be said that thousands were truly committed to Christ and His cross. Thousands died because they would not recant the faith to which they held fast. Tortures were administered which have unequaled any other in other times.

One such torture involved being suspended upside down into a large pit, with blood being restricted to the head area. Often people were tied in a sack. The person was lowered in a pit which sometimes was filled with offal--entrails of butchered animals. One hand was left free to sign a recantation. A person could last this way for some days.

Others included being burned on wooden crosses. The Japanese had never thought of using a cross as an instrument of torture until the advent of Christianity. Others were burned alive.

The largest number of Christians to be slaughtered at one time was seen at the Shimabara castle. Thirty-seven thousand people were killed for their faith, some of them having been thrown from the rock of Pappenberg into the sea. This incident has been named the Christian Rebellion.

Not all Japanese people who had professed Christianity held true to their faith. Many recanted, signing a paper renouncing their faith. They were ordered to trample on a tablet of the crucifix, this custom continuing particularly in Nagasaki every year even up until the 1880's when Christianity again entered Japan.

Christianity is truly seen as unique in its adherents since no other religion in history has seen the results, as well as lives given, to keep it alive.

During Latter 1800's

Down through the next two and a half centuries many people remained in the Christian faith. Their faith passed on from generation to generation, even up to the mid-1800's when a number of secret Christians were discovered.

Upon the opening of Japan's doors by Western America and Perry's "Black Ships", Christianity again saw its opportunity. It took advantage of the situation and gently made its way past somewhat hesitant, fearful and reluctant keepers of those doors.

Japanese had not forgotten the Barbarians of times past, nor the religion they promoted. It was with trembling and caution that the Japanese allowed Christianity to come into Japan. Townsend Harris was the first American consul who negotiated to procure freedom for the Americans to practice their faith. This was restricted to Americans--they were not to proselytize their belief among the Japanese.

Christianity, not too popular previously, was shunned. One redeeming factor entered the picture, which gave the Protestant church its beginning--the teaching of English.

The teaching of English has had a strong impact on the Japanese nation, even up until the present time. The missionaries who arrived in Japan in 1859 began teaching

English using it as a means by which they could incorporate the Bible and other religious material. They had been warned to teach only English and other subjects of benefit, i.e. science. Gradually these classes merged into Bible studies and prayer meetings. These were held in homes of the missionaries and they invited their students to come. Some attended out of a sheer curiosity while others did not want to offend these foreigners. It took courage in the face of opposition to do so.

One group of students who were interested in Christianity did suffer. "Some were placed in solitary confinement at home; some were cast out by their families; all were subjected to strong pressures of various kinds to renounce Christianity. One mother tried to make her son recant by threatening to commit suicide; another parent confronted his son with a drawn sword."<sup>24</sup>

People were highly displeased with these events. But still the lighter side reveals how some who went to these meetings did so under the guise of wanting to be instructed so they could rid Japan of the evil foreign priest; they later actually became Christians. Japan still had not accepted the foreigner or his religion.

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<sup>24</sup>Robert Lee, Stranger in the Land (New York: Friendship Press 1967), p. 32

The first missionary from England was Rev. George Ensor who arrived in January of 1869. He encountered the same difficulties mentioned above. The "Evil Sect", meaning Christianity was strictly forbidden. No preaching in the streets or buildings, no Sunday Schools--nothing was allowed. He waited, every day observing the edicts posted to warn against this "evilness" of his faith. He gave himself to prayer, quietly hoping for the Japanese Nicodemus to come. Ensor soon had his prayers answered. And even sooner men and women alike came to learn of his belief. Ensor knew the sacrifice of these men and women because it was still unsafe to be a Christian in this land. He himself was safe as a foreigner.

Ensor had an experience with a Japanese man named Futugawa, a man who feigned his interest in Christianity only to wait for an opportunity to "make his kill." Futugawa never reached that point. Through the teaching of the Cross and its story he was convicted of his sin and turned his life over to Jesus Christ as Savior. This was only the beginning as a new Christian.

Futugawa later was seized by enemies and thrown into prison, where he suffered for his faith. Ridicule, mockery, torture, starvation, all were part of his existence in prison. Had he been willing to renounce his faith he would have been set free--but he was steadfast. He was typified as Joseph in that he found favor with the prison keeper;



like Paul in that he refused to be silent about his love for Christ--all in the prison listened as well as prison officials. Between 700-800 men were in this prison. Not less than 70-80 of these men began reading God's word.<sup>25</sup>

He was finally released. First to Nagasaki, then on to Tokyo, saw him in the streets preaching. Futugawa preached Christ wherever he went, at all times. He included temples in his ministering. He would preach to the priests and was responsible for some who expressed an interest in Christianity. God used him to truly win others.

A change was occurring among the Japanese, although it came slowly. Protestant missionaries were soon asked to teach English, with American texts, in authorized schools. The American text books were of basic Christian truth--which was picked up by the students. Eager to learn, many asked after these things. Discussions were often held concerning Christianity. Many students began purchasing Bibles to study, but quietly as Christianity was still prohibited. But it was a beginning. The year 1873 saw the real turn of events when Christianity surged ahead. Many missionary societies began appearing now. Things seemed to be turning around.

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<sup>25</sup>Jesse Page, Japan-Its people and Missions (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co. 1900), p. 25

Westernism and the Japanese love for new knowledge cannot be ignored here. Because Christianity was (and still is) considered a Western religion, it suddenly became popular, the "thing to do" to be modern and up-to-date, to include Christianity in one's zeal and desire for Western ways. The Japanese have never liked the idea of being behind in advances. The missionaries brought with them new technology, new ideas from the West. Japan's self-imposed exile, now over, created within the Japanese people a desire for Western ways.

One significant area was in the medical field. People with physical problems would come to Christian homes of the doctors, such as Dr. Hepburn of the American Presbyterian Board. Other men such as Dr. Simmons, a medical missionary and Dr. J. C. Berry, who was appointed to assist in a large area of Kobe, also worked in this area of medicine. Dr. Berry was appointed by the Government Medical Director of the Public Hospital of Kobe.

"His work was very extended, for he had the oversight of a large region, and made a great point of being able to get the native doctors together and instruct them how to proceed upon lines of Western treatment of disease. The immense advantages of medical skill were soon fully appreciated by the clever Japanese leading men and it was resolved to send to Europe medical students to qualify

and return to their native land."<sup>26</sup>

The government in 1875 sent these men overseas as a result of medical missionary efforts.

In many medical places where missionaries were located people not only were healed physically, but also spiritually. Often Bibles were in places of easy access, along with tracts and other materials.

Red Cross even set up a Japanese Society of Benevolence. The Emperor's family involved itself in this aspect of American mission work. It too was used to further the Christian faith.

From 1877-1887 the Protestant church made great strides with rural people, and (samurai) sons of former samurai, but this ten year period was short-lived.

Many shizoku (warrior class) young men wanted to take advantage of Western education so they moved to the city so they could be taught English. Men who were merchants and businessmen also came to the city to do their work. It was a result of these contacts of the Japanese with missionaries that the missionaries later began their Christian Schools. The first churches were made up from the samurai class.

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 107

The missionaries did all they could to use education as a way of sharing their faith.

Why did Christianity appeal mostly to the samurai class?

A. The samurai class was in the process of disintegration and they were accepting it as such, but an emptiness was in their hearts--a perfect time to meet their needs.

B. They were the intellectuals of their day and their training had prepared them for it. Many were open to this new faith.

C. They wanted Japan to be a nation among nations. Some of these people who came were more interested in learning how to bring Japan's powers up to Western powers. Others genuinely came to learn of Christianity. They recognized Christianity behind Western power at its core, and they believed their hearts would have to change before their country would.

D. They watched the lives of these missionaries and saw something in their innermost beings and their conduct which influenced them towards Christianity.

E. They were able to accept Christianity more easily than other classes because they were the freest of all from the traditional mores of Japanese society. They

had moved from the country to the city and were not held back by parents and family.<sup>27</sup>

Why did Christianity survive even for a short period of time among rural people? They would probably be the group voted "least likely to succeed" when Christianity was introduced. Farmers, even today, are the hardest to reach because of strong family ties, strong village ties, strong ties to shrine participation and festivals. The 1500's tragedy also was still in the back of people's minds. Why then did some of these people, though by no means the majority, embrace Christianity?

Some Reasons Include:

A. The rural converts were usually "landlords, men of repute, and small industrial manufacturers of bean paste and soya sauce or of sericultural products. And they were among the 'literate and those of at least the middle-class...who, in the nature of their occupations, tended to be city dwellers.'"<sup>28</sup> They were more socially aloof, with ideas of progression into which Christianity fit.

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<sup>27</sup>Tetsunao Yamamori, Church Growth in Japan (California: William Carey Library 1974), p. 35-36

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 37

Many families would make up a church in a rural area. The father, who was baptized, would be followed by his family. Many servants followed suit to be loyal to the master.

Rural people were still greatly influenced by Buddhism so without support from someone, a Christian would soon "give" under the pressure.

B. Areas of a "developed region" were receptive to Christianity. Again industrialization played a major role in Japan's acceptance of the foreign religion, including those areas outside the city which were more "modern".

C. A people's rights movement was prevalent at this time. Taxes and government ordinances for modernizing Japan hit Japanese rural people hard, due to land taxes. The rural people knew of the idea behind Christianity concerning democratic ideas. Therefore, large numbers of Christian meetings were well attended.

These were just some of the factors involved in the spread of Christianity during this ten year period. From 1887 to 1900 the church again suffered.

Christianity in its growth had seemed to forge ahead with thousands listening to the gospel, churches growing, open-air tent meetings thriving, even rural people coming to Christ, they being the hardest of all to reach.

Now a slowing down gradually came. Once more Japanese nationalism emerges. A revival of Confucianism, Buddhism and Shintoism occurred--Christians again are seen as unpatriotic.

Political disturbance, failure of a treaty revision between the East and West, and financial conditions in Japan all added together to slow down the excessive pro-Westernism the Japanese have seen for several decades. What was to follow in the years before World War II?

### During Time Before World War II

The turn of the century once more saw Christianity flourish. Political reasons helped people to see the foreign religion in a more favorable light. Just as failure of treaty negotiations turned the Japanese anti-Western, so successful negotiations influenced pro-Westernism again.

The Sino-Japanese war of 1894-1895 helped in that Japanese Christian soldiers showed courage and valor in serving their country. It was also due to Christians at home who helped the servicemen, those wounded and lonely, as well as comforting others, that shed a more favorable light on Christians. Japanese Christians also distributed Bibles and tracts among the soldiers.

The year 1900 was disastrous for many provinces in northeastern Honshu. A rice crop failure caused many problems, accompanied by the snow which cut off any food supplies left. Many were in danger of starvation. Through the aid and considerable help of Christian missionaries many were saved from starving. Children whose parents had died were taken care of as well. Much of the funds for this aid came from Christians and overseas relief.

Another action which changed the minds of people was the willingness and love shown by the Christians when they helped people during a devastating earthquake. In 1891



twenty-two thousand people were killed and one million five hundred thousand were left homeless. In 1896 thirty thousand people were killed in another quake, which also demolished twenty-five hundred homes. In 1898 another quake destroyed many villages in Hokkaido.<sup>29</sup>

Christians of all national origins, as well as the Red Cross which was considered associated with Christianity, were actively involved in helping many wounded, homeless people. A religion that could be this kind could not be so evil, the Japanese pondered. Many Japanese were won due to Christian action.

Urbanization-industrialization accounted for some changes in thinking. Many people in search of modernism or work in the city left their birth places, their customs and traditions, their families to start a new way of life. Nuclear families started springing up, where once the extended family had been the center of one's life. Independence, and loneliness with it, made Christianity more of a possibility to city dwellers.

The Christian church at this time was engaged in mass evangelistic campaigns with all denominations working together. Individual denominations also had their own evangelistic meetings.

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 88

From 1901-1902 a nationwide evangelistic campaign was held. It was called "The 20th Century Grand Evangelical Movement." Mainly middle-class people responded--they were city dwellers. By the end of 1902, twenty thousand people had signed cards stating they were inquirers.<sup>30</sup>

The Osaka Exposition of 1903 held for five months starting March 1st, resulted in over sixteen thousand out of two hundred forty-six thousand signing decision cards. Hymns were sung and sermons preached, all conducted by people from several large Protestant denominations who sponsored the Exposition.<sup>31</sup>

The National Evangelistic Campaign of 1914-1917 resulted in: three thousand four hundred seventy-two meetings, six hundred forty-two thousand five hundred fifty-five persons who attended, and twenty-one thousand four hundred fifteen inquirers.<sup>32</sup>

These numbers, had they all actually been real and lasting conversions, would be phenomenal. Many were saved at these meetings, but some who signed cards were already church members, or those who did want to make a commitment often lacked the real courage to follow through.

The campaigns, though, did further the cause of Christianity. People were far more favorable, and were willing to listen.

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<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 96

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 96

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 96

The white-collar workers of Japan were influenced most during this span. The farmers in their rural areas had by this time receded into their old unshakeable mores, while the city-dwellers had been uprooted from traditionalism. People in the city were the most mobile of all classes. This meant they were the freest to do as they wished. Always desirous of learning, this portion of the population was eager for new techniques involving industrialization. Christianity, therefore, appealed mainly to this group of people.

Because industrialization brings about much competition and striving to "get ahead" there usually comes with it a sense of insecurity, a desire to be accepted by someone. Many city people found the Christian church to be the answer. Acceptance is an extremely important part of people's lives and the fact that people found that acceptance in a "foreign" religion points out that Christianity had to have had something--that it was not just another religion.

Several other factors which particularly drew the middle-class were: the use of famous educational men and evangelists as speakers in churches. Intellectual people enjoyed this type of meetings and would attend them.

Also white-collar workers, and students had the most time of all people to attend church.

All of these, of course, left out those who were non-intellectual, as well as people who had very little free time.

Coming up to the time from 1919-1939 two completely different mind-sets will be seen concerning Japanese attitudes towards the foreign religion.

The 1920's were probably as much pro-Western, pro-Christian as the 1880's. Churches continued growing, people were saved. The ideal of democracy over authoritarianism in World War I helped Christianity remain popular. Success seemed to be behind the Western countries. Behind the Western countries stood Christianity. The Japanese, therefore, viewed Christianity as the reason for this success.

Internationalism also became important. Japan participated in the League of Nations and many Japanese were very world-conscious. Westernism still played a role in Japanese thinking towards Christians.

The 1930's, however, changed everything for Christianity. Military involvement and ultra-nationalism came in to view. Japan closed her doors once again against Western ideas. Christians were again put on the defensive to prove themselves as patriotic.

### During Period Since World War II

The 1940's were an extremely difficult time for the foreign religion. Membership in churches fell drastically. People who attended the churches were few. Faith became silent--its only hope for survival. Those who were not quiet suffered persecution, oppression and at times imprisonment.

Christians in some prominent Christian schools protested the war, resulting in either resignation or being fired. Some men, such as Motozo Akozawa of the Japan Methodist Church, proclaimed concerning Japan's invasion of China, "It is not right, we do not belong there. God cannot bless it."<sup>33</sup>

Daikichiro Tagawa, a public affairs man, spoke before the National Christian Council declaring nothing but defeat for the Japanese armies in their march against China.

Toshio Suekane who served with the Japanese YMCA in China spoke these words at an Easter Rally in Tokyo in 1946 to thousands of Christians, "All the remainder of my life will not suffice to make amends to the people of China for our deeds, but to make amends shall be the purpose of my life."<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>Charles W. Iglehart, Cross and Crises in Japan (New York: Friendship Press 1952), p. 134

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 135

Many Christians during this time saw the destruction of all they possessed; their homes, families, and their churches. By the end of the war one-third of all churches had been destroyed or damaged. Tokyo had nine out of one-hundred sixty-nine Protestant churches still standing by then. The Christian church struggled to remain alive barely breathing at times, but God did not desert His floundering, hurting people.

The end of the war came with Japan's humiliating, agonizing defeat. The American troops entered Japan. Would these Americans prove to be cruel, vindictive, power-grabbing, who would now take their revenge upon the Japanese people? The Japanese saw to the contrary, that the Americans were not barbarians.

"Having girded themselves to expect the worst excesses of a vindictive invader, the populace found that instead they were in the hands of men who roamed the streets of their cities unarmed, who were kind to their children, and who (with remarkably few exceptions) inflicted none of the cruelties that were anticipated. The fact that the victors for the most part had a Christian upbringing was not lost sight of."<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>Robert Lee, Stranger in the Land (New York: Friendship Press 1967), p. 45

Not only did the Japanese see the kindness of American soldiers but people from America also took an active part in helping war-torn Japan. The Church World Service alone was responsible for the supply of five million five hundred thousand pounds of relief and reconstruction supplies in the year 1948.<sup>36</sup>

A "Christian Deputation to Japan" was sent in 1945 to particularly bring Christians back together again. This profoundly impressed the Japanese nation since the Christians of America really showed their concern. Love speaks in any language.

The Christian faith grew rapidly in post-war Japan. People were once more eager to learn of a belief which shows compassion and concern. From a 1944 membership of eleven thousand five hundred twenty-three to a 1954 membership of three hundred twenty thousand shows how the people responded to Christianity.<sup>37</sup>

With their world having collapsed around them the Japanese people began seeing life from a different perspective at this point. They needed something to help them rebuild their lives. Of course, the fact that the Japanese viewed the Americans as the victors, with their religion behind them, helped to shape their views towards the church.

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 46

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 46

Many believed that if this kind of power was behind American success, then they, too, wanted that power. Suggestions were made throughout Japan that the country ought to be "Christianized" as a whole. Christianity, however, by being the type of religion it is would make this suggestion of no value or use. Christianity requires the personal acceptance of Christ as Savior and it is doubtful if all Japanese would have done this to become Christian. They probably had more in mind the adapting of principles and practices of the Christian faith.

The immediate post-war period of Japan was again a favorable time for Western ways. Many traditional ways and religions were pushed aside for more "modern" ideas and trends. Shintoism as a state was apparently no longer existent. Many traditional religions were replaced with new ones, although at this writing, some of these old religions are being re-established.

Up through the 1950's the Christian church did grow, but it did see a leveling off trend. People were not hateful and hostile to the Christian faith, but simply indifferent. This remains true today. Through the Holy Spirit's working there are exceptions, but it is largely true that many of the people of Japan are uncaring about most religions, including Christianity.



The religious freedom of Japan after the war was due mainly to Christian missionary influence. The year 1951 was a year of resurgent Shinto worship, not only at the shrines but also in schools. Prominent men in the government were all in favor of bringing back the Imperial Rescript on Education, which would again bring problems to the Christians. Not only did the Christians have to fight this but also the revived Shinto state had to be fought. Children were to bow and pray silently upon different occasions within the schools. This praying involved praying to the dead spirits of particular people. On one such occasion the students were ordered to offer "mokuto" (silent prayers) to the spirits of these who had died in the war. This was to be done at the time of the signing of the Peace Treaty in San Francisco. Some Christians refused to bow.

The National Constitution of Japan states in its 20th article, "No person shall be compelled to take part in a religious act, celebration, rite, or practice....the State and its organs shall refrain from religious education or any religious activity."<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup>John M. L. Young, The Two Empires of Japan (Tokyo: The Bible Times Press 1959), p. 166

This clearly fits in with Article IX of the Fundamental Law of Education. "Religious tolerance and the position of religion in social life shall be valued in education. The schools established by the State and local public bodies shall refrain from religious education on their activities for a specified religion."<sup>39</sup>

Japan had a new post-war constitution declaring these rights and yet these religious rites were being reinstated through the re-introduction of Shintoism.

The Japan Bible Council met, a group consisting of evangelical missionaries from all over the country. They could see the trend going back to a loss of religious freedom. The four leaders of the group, along with the signatures of two hundred ninety-six missionaries, sent a letter to the Times Union stating clearly their beliefs and positions concerning "mokuto" in the government school. A direct appeal was also made to the Minister of Education concerning the matter. No further incidents were reported after this of forced "mokuto" in the government schools.

Shintoism, however, did not completely die out and Christians were confused in their thinking. Since during the pre-war-time period they had no clear-cut guidance concerning shrine worship due to compromising, they now had trouble with shrine worship. Some believed they could still "report" to the ancestors without bowing to them.

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<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 166

The missionaries, of course, strongly objected to this thinking.

Shintoism and Christianity struggled together during the 1950's. The missionaries were most prominent in the battle against this state religion coming back to life to wholly inundate the Japanese way of life, thus bringing to an end the total religious freedom in Japan.

Not only did missionaries in Japan protest Shintoism but other Asian Christians and churches protested as well. The FECCC (Far Eastern Council of Christian Churches) in 1953-1956 protested sharply. They had held their Third General Assembly in Singapore to discuss the issues, and sent a resolution of the meeting to the Prime Minister of Japan and Minister of Education.<sup>40</sup>

The FECCC knew that it was their responsibility to protest Shintoism because it was this evil which had brought persecution and bondage to the Asian churches earlier. If they did not stop it the Church of Christ would once again suffer this same fate.

Countries represented were Japan, China, Formosa, Hong Kong, Philippines, Indonesia, Singapore, Australia, New Zealand, Thailand and India.

Through the efforts of Christians, including many Japanese Christians, there is religious freedom today in the post World War II era. Christians are no longer

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<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 189

openly persecuted for their faith by the government. Christian churches are seen all over Japan, and although membership continues to be low compared to other religions, Christianity's "heartbeat" is still felt in Japan. Approximately one hundred fourteen thousand consider themselves Christian--only a fraction of these professing Christians are truly born-again, worshipping Christ as Savior.

Professor Tomonubu Yanigita in his article, "Problems of the Evangelical Missions to Japan, Today and Tomorrow," lists four types of professing Christians in Japan today.

1) The "Apostate type"--those Christians who ask if Christ is really God. They deny Christ's deity. Along with this statement comes the fact that about 80-90% of those baptized in Japan later leave the Christian faith.

2) The "Compromising type"--Christians do not feel a reluctance to stop worshipping or contributing to Shinto Shrines. One priest stated that he believed that it was physically impossible for a person to be completely Christian.

3) The "Escape type"--these are the Neo-orthodox and some evangelicals.

4) The "Wrestling type"--these are the true Christians, "men who believe in testifying for (pro) the truth and protesting against the error which would undermine it.

They have heard the call to evangelize Japan with the Gospel of salvation, and with zeal seek to do it, but they know this is not all. They know the problems of ministering the holy gospel in a pagan land cannot be escaped but must be wrestled with, in the power of the Holy Spirit, and overcome without compromise...Love of Him is their highest motive... They know, too, that a church which will not practice discipline will not long maintain its purity."<sup>41</sup>

Japan today needs the fourth type of Christian. Christianity's influence over this generation of Japanese will come to nothing if the Christians seek only compromise, or if they deny the Lord's diety. There is no room for the first three types of Christians if Christianity is to grow in Japan. God needs Daniels, Davids, and Solomons in courage, devotion and God's wisdom among the Japanese Christians. Only the wrestling type will succeed in spreading the gospel message.

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<sup>41</sup>Ibid., pg. 223

## CHAPTER III

### EXPANSION OF SOME PROMINENT JAPANESE RELIGIONS

#### Introduction

Since World War II many new religions have come into existence in Japan. Religion has always played a major role in Japanese life, but for the greater part, most if basically not all, the religions in Japan have been foreign to some degree except for Shintoism. Buddhism, modified to fit the Japanese way of thinking, originally began in India and slowly progressed through China until it reached Japan. Once there, Buddhism grew. Today many people, when asked in what country Buddhism is most prominent, will probably say Japan.

Japan has a variety of Buddhist sects, just as Protestantism in America can be found in different denominations.

In this section the writer will be discussing one of today's more prevalent religions in Japan, its methods and reasons for growth.

Buddhism and Shintoism, which have played major roles in Japanese history, will also be briefly discussed.

Soka Gakkai

Soka Gakkai dates back to the 1200's to a Buddhist monk named Nichiren (meaning "Sun-Lotus"). He derived his name from a supposed experience he had on a mountain top. While looking at the rising sun he seemed to sense an identity between the Buddha-reality in the sun and the truth revealed in the "Lotus of the Good Law."<sup>42</sup>

Nichiren was known as a radical in his day. He was not pleased at all by the Buddhist sects he observed. In fact, he openly denounced them. He believed that they had strayed from the original beliefs of Buddhism and he intended to go back to them.

At one point in his career Nichiren predicted Japan would be destroyed for its sins by an invading foreign enemy. Nichiren was known for his outspokenness against the evils in his time and his prediction caused much anger among his countrymen. They had him banished to a remote area, but eventually he was brought back because his prediction almost came true. A Mongol fleet nearly succeeded in reaching the southern coast of Japan, not long after Nichiren's proclamation. Nichiren was brought back to further help his nation.

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<sup>42</sup>John B. Noss, Man's Religions (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc. 1974) p. 174

The Nichiren sect viewed the spirit of nationalism and Japan's welfare as central. This is true even today in the religion which has sprung up from Nichiren's beliefs. Soka Gakkai is, in fact, the only true Japanese Buddhist sect since it was begun by a Japanese. This is highly revered in Soka Gakkai today as will be pointed out later.

Soka Gakkai is also involved in political and social affairs today. One political party, the Komeito (Fairness Society) stems from this religion.

The influence of Soka Gakkai has been tremendous in Japan since World War II. It has only been since the war that this cult has seen any increase. Tetsunao Yamamori describes its growth as "phenomenal." It is probably the fastest growing and most powerful religious sect in post-war Japan.

Soka Gakkai's meaning in English is "Value-Creating Society." There are a number of factors why this religion has surged ahead while other religions struggle for existence. Some of the growth factors, which will be discussed, apply to other religions also, but Soka Gakkai has uniquely put together a formula which works. Listed here is a chart of new religions since World War II, and their growth rates compared to Soka Gakkai.



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GROUP	1950	1955	1960	1964	1968
Soka Gakkai	9,000	900,000	5,000,000	14,000,000	19,854,000*
Rissho Koseikai	312,305	1,122,973	1,618,733	1,980,348	
PL Kyodan	276,075	543,604	983,394	1,164,814	
Seicho-no Ie	956,420	1,469,844	1,530,108	1,477,140	
Sekai Kyuseikyo	164,785	385,644	415,428	591,133	

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\*This figure is based on 3 persons making up one family which accounts for the large figure. <sup>43</sup>

Soka Gakkai started out slowly but has now surpassed all the others. Four aspects will be considered here of possible causes of growth.

#### A. Creedal Aspect

Soka Gakkai has a theory of values as follows:

- 1) The end of human life lies in the pursuit of happiness.
- 2) The content of happiness is not the pursuit of truth, but the creation of value.

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<sup>43</sup>Tetsunao Yamamori, Church Growth in Japan (California: William Carey Library 1974), p. 143

3) There are both positive and negative values.

4) Positive value consists of beauty, profit and good; negative value consists of ugliness, harm and evil.

5) The end of human life is to win positive value in terms of beauty, profit and good.

6) Now, beauty is temporal value, profit is individual value, and good is social value.

7) Unless man seeks good, he cannot be really happy.

8) In good, there is major good, medium good and minor good. The end of human life is to realize major good, and this can only be done by believing in the only religion: The Nichiren Shoshu. Furthermore, the life of major good guarantees to an individual both beauty and profit.<sup>44</sup>

Each of these values is seen in Soka Gakkai.

In relation to the Creedal Aspect:

1) Teaching is simple. The question is asked, "What must I do to be saved?" The answer, "Believe only in the Worship Object and recite the Daimoku, and you will be saved."<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 144

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 145

The Worship Object is named the Gohozon and is fundamental to entrance into buddhahood, even on this earth. Satori (enlightenment) is received just by looking upon the Gohozon.

The Daimoku is prayer. All that needs to be said is "Namu myo-ho renge-kyo" or "Hail to the Wonderful Law of the Lotus Sutra." The Daimoku should be said as often as possible so that credit can be piled up for a person's happiness, both here and in the afterlife.

2) The notion of happiness is major. "The end of human life lies in the pursuit of happiness."<sup>46</sup>

This happiness consists of all material wealth, as well as "freedom from personal habits and adversity, long life, sound health, and domestic harmony."<sup>47</sup>

Soka Gakkai also claims to be the only, true religion by which one can obtain happiness and buddhahood. Since Soka Gakkai places an emphasis on material blessings the people have responded because of the post-war pre-occupation with material things. This idea appeals especially to lower class people.

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<sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 145

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 145

3) Teaching is tradition-oriented. Soka Gakkai had its beginning in Japan three hundred years before Christianity. Although three hundred years is not a long time, it is long enough in Japanese eyes to warrant it better than Christianity, especially since it was begun by a Japanese. It has no foreign flavor, no Western connotation. It is traditionally Japanese.

4) Soka Gakkai gives hope. Happiness can be obtained now. No waiting till after death, no "pie-in-the-sky" religion. It offers relief to the oppressed right now in the present situation. This appeals most to economically and educationally lower-classed people.

5) Teaching is nationalistic and internationalistic. The Japanese people see Soka Gakkai as a national religion--it had its origin in Japan. Soka Gakkai is, therefore, symbolized by the Japanese flag, the fan, and Mt. Fuji. This brings the notion that "with Japan as the base, we will throw a bridge to every nation on the earth."<sup>48</sup>

Soka Gakkai people believe that they have been chosen to bring the world the true salvation--they who were defeated and broken in World War II.

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<sup>48</sup>Ibid., p. 146

The belief that Soka Gakkai and Japan were to bring salvation to the rest of the world, helped sooth their shame over a lost war.

#### B. Cultic Aspect

Worship in Soka Gakkai does not involve a type of church service as Christians conceive of a service. Rather it includes home worship twice each day.

A family member will sit in front of his home altar bowing before the Gohozon, repeating the Lotus Sutra prayer five times (this is separate from the Daimoku). The same performance is repeated in the evening, saying the prayer only three times. The Daimoku is said as often as possible throughout the day.

Group meetings are held, and are very close in resemblance to a Christian testimony meeting.

People gather in other members' homes to share problems, burdens, joys, and prayers answered.

People feel open in sharing personal difficulties. It is a release for them in discussing problems with those who accept them. Soka

Gakkai meets the people where they are.

Members are led by group leaders in the home meetings. The leaders encourage the members.

People often get up and tell how they have obtained "divine favors" because of their faith and belief in Soka Gakkai's way of life.

The main temple of this religion is located near Mt. Fuji. It is here that occasionally members from all over Japan congregate for a formal worship. This temple worship has been in existence for 670 years.<sup>49</sup> Recorded here is the procedure of their worship.

"Several thousand members are ushered into the large worship hall at midnight. For about twenty minutes they continually recite the Daimoku. The amplified voice of several thousand people create a unique, hypnotic effect upon the crowd. The chief priest of the temple reads part of the Lotus Sutra. Then, once again, the voices chant the Daimoku accompanied by ear-splitting beats on the drums. At 1:30 A.M., the crowd is led back to their sleeping quarters."<sup>50</sup>

Soka Gakkai's one vocation is that of shakubuku--the winning of converts. Through group encouragement and zeal people go out to win others--for this is the only way they will earn credits, thereby obtaining happiness.

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<sup>49</sup>Ibid., p. 147

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., p. 147

### C. Moral Code Aspect

The moral code is not rigid, but it is believed that anyone engaging in worldly things, drinking, gambling, sex, cannot really be happy. Common-sense is the key here. A well-adjusted life is sought.

Another aspect includes the idea that all members, upon entering, are considered equal. No one is looked down on, no matter what age, sex, or social position one is. A person can, by working at it, become a professor or teacher in the organization. This means there is hope for the lower-class person to "make something" of himself by obtaining a high position within the group. This aspect clearly shows how Soka Gakkai is a value-creating society, and explains somewhat the influence it has on Japanese people, since in ordinary Japanese life rank is important.

### D. The Organizational Aspect

The last aspect concerns the way Soka Gakkai incorporates its members (all lay people) into the whole religion. There are three areas here.

#### 1) Vertical

The grouping extends out from the individual, to the squad (10-15 members), to the company

(30-100 members), to the district (500-1000 members), to the region, general region, local headquarters, and central headquarters in Tokyo. This is comparable to kinship ties which are important in Japan.<sup>51</sup> Each group ties into the other.

2) Horizontal

This is geographical. Those within a geographical area remain closely tied.

3) Diagonal

This area is based on age, sex, and/or interest. Women's/men's groups, athletic groups, housewives, cultural activities, and a political party are just some of the diagonal areas.

Other considerations in organization include:

A. Low membership requirements

Upon conversion the only requirement to be a member is to go to the nearest Soka Gakkai temple for a 25 minute ritual ceremony. A member receives a Gohozon upon the understanding he will follow the home worship faithfully. He promises to lead three people into the faith. He becomes active in the activities provided for him by subscribing to their paper.

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<sup>51</sup>Ibid., p. 148



#### B. Incentive system

Here again, people are able to raise themselves up. They have a chance to better themselves. A merit system of "good works" creates a desire to work hard to gain good things for themselves.

#### C. Sense of belonging

People who are lonely, of the "wrong sort", etc., can come into this group without fear of rejection.

#### D. Sensitivity to changing values

Japan is rapidly changing and Soka Gakkai is aware of this. They try to meet these changing values and to meet spiritual needs through this change.

#### E. Dynamic, charismatic leadership

The present and third president of Soka Gakkai, Daisaki Ikeda, is all that people believe a leader should be. Talented, organized, young, handsome, and with a charismatic personality.

#### F. Low membership leakage

Soka Gakkai's growth has occurred because people remain in the group. Whole families are concentrated on for conversion. This makes for a tightly knit group. With the importance of the family in Japan, Soka Gakkai concentrates on keeping this group together. This has been one of Christianity's

problems--many members are lost through family opposition.

Not only Soka Gakkai has flourished but other religions as well. The other religions named in the chart have seen substantial growth. Many of these other religions stress peace and international involvement also. Missionaries are sent out to evangelize and establish churches.

These groups seem to have met the needs of people; not only spiritual but physical. Has Christianity done this in post-war Japan?

According to the second leader of Soka Gakkai, Josei Toda, it has not. "Christians never get on the train. They spend all their time studying how it is made. Hence they never reach the destination--happiness. We are happy!"<sup>52</sup>

The post-war religions of Japan claim to reach the peoples' real needs--not just highly intellectual ones. Christianity supposedly only talks about the needs. Johai Kamomiya, who is connected with the Rissho Koseikai states a reason why Christianity has grown so slowly in Japan. "Christian pastors are too much concerned with theology and abstract speculation. They would be better off to do

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<sup>52</sup>Robert Lee, Stranger in the Land (New York: Friendship Press 1967), p. 140

their preaching in the context of life situations, rather than just repeating doctrinal formulae. If Christians would seek to put the love of Christ into action, there would be much better result."<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 148

## Buddhism

Buddhism has had a long history in Japan. 552 AD marked the year in which Buddhism first entered Japan. A Korean correspondent sent the Emperor Kimmei a gold-plated image of Buddha, some sacred writings, flags, umbrellas, and a "letter concerning the excellent but difficult Buddhist doctrine...."<sup>54</sup>

Buddhism has penetrated into Japan from India, coming through China and Korea. This religion from India did not immediately gain entrance into Japan; rather the people were cautious thinking this religion would anger the Kami, the native gods of Japan. In fact, a pestilence broke out in the Soga clan after the Buddha image had been passed on to this family by the Emperor. He wanted to find out by trial if the Kami would be angered by the new religion. It appeared they were, so Buddhism died out, with the image being thrown into a canal.

Later, another group from Korea once more brought sacred writings, a nun, image-maker and priests. Another trial run of the religion was given, and another pestilence broke out. The images once more likely found their way into the canal, but the pestilence continued in spite of it.

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<sup>54</sup>John B. Noss, Man's Religions (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc. 1974), p. 152

People wondered now if it was not the Buddha who was angry. The Japanese people began seriously considering this new religion. This was Buddhism's introduction into Japan.

When speaking of Buddhism there is often the idea that it is one religion which pervades all belief in Japan. Buddhism, however, can be closely paralleled to Western Protestantism. Just as Methodists, Congregationalists, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Covenant, Free Methodist, Episcopal, Baptist, including Southern, American, the Independent Baptists, etc. are side by side, so it is with Buddhist denominations.

Under Amida Buddhism comes: Pure Land sect, True Pure Land sect. Under Zen Buddhism comes: Rinzai sect and Sōtō sect. Later came the Tendai sect, the Shingon sect, and even later came the Nichiren sect which grew into the Soka Gakkai religion which has been discussed in the previous section. These are just a few of the branches of Buddhism which exist in Japan today.

The highlights and contributions which some of these various sects have had on Japanese life will briefly be mentioned.

The Amida Buddhism is very closely parallel in some respects with Christianity. Faith is a necessary aspect. Works are considered unnecessary for obtaining salvation--all one has to do is repeat Amida Buddha's name

and that is sufficient (unlike Christianity). Humility plays an important role.

Amida Buddhists, however, believe that other paths to salvation are quite good. One does not need to just follow this path to obtain salvation.

Since Amida Buddhists believe Amida's love and grace have already been bestowed, the repetition of his name is not a prerequisite to salvation--it only shows one's gratitude and devotion. Faith in Amida comes from Amida himself, from Amida's spiritual presence in the heart.<sup>55</sup>

In Zen, the Japanese have found great aesthetic appreciation. Through Zen has come flower arranging, haiku poetry, and the tea ceremony.

Two ideas characterize Zen. Non-duality in which man, and any object he ponders, become united. This unification with nature comes through Zen meditation.

The second aspect of Zen is sensory reality, or an aesthetic response to it. One begins by seeing a tree as a tree, then in the process of coming to terms with it, it is no longer a tree. When enlightenment finally occurs, a tree becomes a tree once more. The enlightened mind accepts all aspects of the Buddha-reality.

Included is a haiku poem written by Basho, one of Japan's most famous Zen monks and haiku authors. Nature

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<sup>55</sup>Ibid., p. 165

plays an extremely important part in this type of poem.

As I come along the mountain path,  
What a heart-warming surprise,  
This cluster of dainty violets.

Zen Buddhism practices a technique of meditation which is very disciplined and demanding. Mental and spiritual discipline is sought. Many Japanese are attracted to Zen because of its discipline--it is for serious-minded people. Monks have spent as long as eighteen hours per day for days on end in this type of meditation.<sup>56</sup>

Zen philosophy is clearly seen in the everyday life of the Japanese people.

More can be said about Buddhism, but the purpose of this brief section is only to introduce Buddhism as seen in the Japanese culture, and its relationship to the Japanese mind when seeking to convey Christianity.

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<sup>56</sup>Ibid., p. 170

### Shintoism

Shintoism and Buddhism have co-existed in Japan for centuries. No incongruities are seen in the two religions existing side by side.

Unlike Buddhism, Shintoism is a native religion. The essence of Shintoism is "a reverent alliance with familiar realities encountered in Japanese life: in nature, society, and in the home."<sup>57</sup> Until recently Shinto did not even have doctrines--it was a "heart" religion.

The Japanese have a tremendous, almost unshakeable loyalty and love for their country, every part of it. Until recently the Japanese believed Japan to be divine. Every Emperor was a direct descendent of the Sun-goddess, Amaterasu. The Emperor was worshipped as a divine being until 1945 when the present Emperor, Hirohito, was so bold as to announce he was not divine. A crushed Japan had much to face with this announcement, as well as its defeat to the Allies.

The word Shinto comes from a Chinese expression meaning "the way of the higher spirits or god."<sup>58</sup> In Japanese the words are: kami-no-michi, or the kamis' way. Early in Japanese history, only the kami (gods) supposedly lived in Japan. Later, all nature was permeated with kami-powers. Shinto is an expression of religious faith concerning Japan and its history.

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<sup>57</sup>Ibid., p. 308

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., p. 309



Ancestor worship and nature worship had its beginnings in Shinto, as seen in the Emperor worship. Buddhism, when it did arrive on Japanese shores, did not oppose nature/ancestor worship.

As Buddhism came into being the kami were considered to be protectors of Buddha's Law.<sup>59</sup> Later, the situation reversed itself so that the kami actually needed Buddha's salvation.<sup>60</sup> Even later still, Buddhism threatened to snuff out Shinto belief.

Gradually Buddhism introduced into the Shinto rites such things as images, incense, sermons, and elaborate ceremonies. Elaborate decorations now graced Shinto shrines; pagodas, drum towers, large bells and assembly halls for preaching were added. Even the Shinto gateway (torii) became curved and ornate decorations were added.

It was during the 1600's when Japan was trying to eradicate all Christians that Shinto priests asked to become free of Buddhism and to become a separate religion once more. All Japanese were to secure a certificate from a Buddhist temple to prove non-allegiance with Christianity. Shinto priests were annoyed by this recourse, hence the request to be recognized as a separate religion.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup>Ibid., p. 315

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., p. 315

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., p.317

Shinto saw a restoration in its more "pure" form around the 1870-1880's. Because of its entanglement with Buddhism, Shinto never quite experienced the release it wanted. People really favored both religions.

Up until 1945 Shinto was divided into two parts, the State Shinto and Sectarian Shinto. The State Shinto involved patriotic rites. Age-old traditions were revered. The Sectarian Shinto has been the heart and center of the god-shelf (kami-dana) which most Japanese homes still possess today. The god-shelf is important in every day life. Offerings of food, prayers, etc. are given each day.

If a special occasion, be it a festival or a crisis occurs, then the lighting of tapers, offering of rice-brandy, sprigs of the sakaki tree, clothes in place of food, are offered while the family together bows and prays.<sup>62</sup>

Shinto still exists in Japan today. The government no longer interferes with the religions of Japan as it did in the time prior to World War II. Some of the new religions of Japan since World War II are off-shoots of Shintoism.

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<sup>62</sup>Ibid., p. 330

### Conclusion

In spite of the long history of Christianity in Japan only about one percent of the population is called Christian today. This figure includes nominal as well as fundamental, orthodox believers.

Japan is now pervaded by skepticism. Young people in particular find their "god" in modernism and materialism. Not even Shintoism and Buddhism attract them. Science and its technology have replaced religion. Evolution is taught throughout Japan.

Disbelief and indifference are the attitudes towards religion in general. Around 1920-1930 a student census was taken in the University of Tokyo. "Out of a total of four thousand six hundred eight, two thousand nine hundred eighty-nine listed themselves as agnostic, one thousand five hundred eleven as atheists, and only one hundred eighteen as adhering to Christianity, Buddhism or Shinto."<sup>63</sup> Today those figures will have changed in number but the majority would still claim atheism or agnosticism.

Christians need to pray that God will keep the doors of Japan open to Christianity. It is only through Christ that the Japanese will experience ultimate peace.

"Jesus said unto him, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh to the father, but by me'".  
John 14:6

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<sup>63</sup>Ibid., p. 319

## CHAPTER IV

### VIEWS OF CHRISTIANITY IN MODERN JAPAN

The close of World War II began the era of modernization for Japan. No longer does Japan keep its doors closed to the outside world. Technological and medical advancements have made the Japanese very aware of the position they hold in world powers today. They are an extremely well-educated and intelligent people, and they have come to be recognized as such by the rest of the world.

The foreigner is no longer feared, or looked at with distrust. Rather, foreigners are welcomed and invited in so that the Japanese may gain from the knowledge of the foreigners. It is a form of prestige today even to know or to be connected in some way with a foreigner.

Never before in history have the Japanese ventured out of their country as now. Exposure to the outside world through travel, television, radio and the printed word, has eliminated the Japanese fear of the foreigner. An influx of tourists to Japan's scenic country has also helped the Japanese to view the foreigner with less fear.

With the increased contact with the outside world also came increased contact with the once dreaded Western and foreign religion of Japan, Christianity. In an effort

to somewhat determine the present views that the Japanese hold concerning Christianity now, the writer prepared questionnaires for both Japanese Christians and Japanese non-Christians. They were translated into Japanese by a Japanese friend of the writer, sent to missionaries in Japan, distributed, returned and translated back into English. Since the Japanese person translated these questionnaires into English, the writer believes it more beneficial to keep them as is with the English usage given.

The questionnaires provide some thought provoking statements about attitudes and acceptance of Christianity at the present time. Out of thirty which were sent, twenty were returned. Eleven were answered by Christians, and nine by non-Christians (one Christian was given the wrong form and filled out a non-Christian one).

General Observations Concerning the Christian Questionnaires:

Out of the ten people who answered, six are female, four male.

Ages range from sixteen to sixty-eight, with the majority (6) being in their thirties.

All but one of the ten became a Christian under the age of thirty-five. The oldest age was forty-two, at which age one woman became a Christian. Two people, one male and one female, accepted Christ at age fifteen, the youngest age in this category.

All of the people first heard about Christianity at a fairly young age; one man first heard about Christianity at the age of twenty-five, the highest of all ages, while one girl was raised in a Christian home, and had grown up hearing about Christ. Over half of the people first heard about Christianity under the age of ten.

General Observations Concerning the non-Christian Questionnaires:

Out of the nine people who answered, six are female, three male.

Ages range from thirty-four to sixteen, with the majority (five) being under twenty.

Only one person claimed to have any religion other than Christianity, that being Buddhism. He claimed this only because his family practiced it. One girl had been baptized a Catholic, but was dissatisfied with the church and left. She claims no religion at this time.

Only one person believes Christianity to be a foreign religion, but she could not see any difference between Christianity and the other religions. She believes, however, that Christianity is the most beneficial of all religions.

Of the other eight people, five believe Christianity is not much different from other religions; of these,

five, three believe Christianity is the most beneficial. The Bible and prayer are seen as the major differences among the religions. Only one person claims to have no family or friends who are Christians. Another states that he knows fifteen; another knows ten. All of the people have had contact with Christians. Five of them had contact with Japanese Christians; one with a missionary; one with both a Japanese Christian and a missionary; one with an American Christian while in the States; one specified only that the person was a Christian.

### Conclusion

Although these questionnaires are few in number compared to the millions of people in Japan, some generalizations can be seen:

First, the views towards Christianity are changing. This religion is no longer necessarily seen as foreign, particularly by the young people.

Second, those who do become Christians do so at a relatively young age. It is important, therefore, to reach the children while they have impressionable minds.

Third, the young people today in Japan have no religion, and desperately need to be given the Gospel. They need to be shown how and why Christianity is set apart from all other religions.

Fourth, the Japanese Christians have a vital role in winning their own people, since they themselves can relate in a special way to their own people.

Possibly in this new decade of the 1980's God will send revival to Japan so that His Word might be made known among the Japanese. Then they will know that Christianity is for them as well.



## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

Christianity's struggle for existence in Japan has clearly been seen. Satan's stronghold and grip have been sure for centuries in Japan. Japanese Christians today see the need to evangelize their own people. Many are very concerned in their efforts to reach their nation with the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is a bitter hardship for many of them since they are often looked down upon by their own families. These Christians, however, want the assistance of the missionaries to help them in the task of evangelizing. It is not an easy task since out of one hundred fifteen million people only about 1% can be classified as Christian. This figure includes those who are considered nominal Christians, as well. The total of truly born-again Christians is even fewer in number.

Without God's intervening power and compassion, without the willingness of people to go to the mission field, without the God-given courage and perseverance on the part of Japanese Christians, Japan will never know God's love.

## APPENDIX A

Christian Questionnaire

1. Your present age and sex (M-F).
2. The age at which you became a Christian.
3. The age when you first heard about God and Christianity and where - Sunday School, reading a Bible, tract, friend or relative, etc.
4. What was your first response or impression when you were confronted with the Gospel message?
5. Were you told the Gospel by a Japanese Christian or a missionary?
6. Are you the only member of your immediate family who is a Christian? What about your extended family? If not, how many of your immediate/extended family are Christians? If so, how does your family accept the fact of your Christian faith? Do they accept it, believe it is something which will not last long, or do they completely reject it as a foreign religion?
7. Have you ever held the belief that Christianity is a foreign religion in Japan? In what way do you view Christianity now as a Christian?
8. If you were involved in some other religious group before conversion, list it and explain briefly how you became involved and why you stopped.
9. What about Christianity appealed to you so that you no longer wanted to participate in another religion?
10. What suggestion(s) do you have, if any, which might help both the Japanese Christians and missionaries convey to non-Christian Japanese that Christianity is not just another and foreign (Western) religion, that Christianity does belong to the Japanese people?

Name :

1. 52 years old--Female
2. 42 years old.
3. About 4 years old.
4. Thought I would like to believe it.
5. Japanese.
6. None. I do not know. Trying to understand.
7. Only one world.
- 8.
- 9.
10. Self-satisfaction, being delighted.

Name:

1. 33 years old--Female.
2. 23 years old.
3. My aunt was Christian so I knew a little about Christianity through her. I don't remember exactly how old I was (maybe 5 or 6 years old). But later I seriously started to think about Christianity. I was a sophomore in high school then and we were studying about the subject of the relationship between Christianity and Japanese literature.
4. First I thought how Jesus Christ was conceited and he was considered as God (could not believe that Jesus who is just a human is God) but later began to believe that there could be just an answer for my questions and problems while studying Christianity and Jesus Christ which are actually an answer by themselves.
5. By Japanese Christian.
6. None in my family except my aunt who lives far away. My family (their religion is Tenrikyo) care not particularly against my religion as they seem to think that to believe Christianity I chose is my own business. (Freedom of Religion.)
7. A little maybe at the beginning but now I believe Christianity is the only religion for any country's people to understand true God.
8. Nothing in particular for past years.
9. God's eternal Love.
10. No religion emphasizes eternal life except for Christianity. Christianity has love and righteousness in God. Love and righteousness in Christianity are compatible.

Name: Akira Tanake

1. 68 yrs. old--Male
2. 26 yrs. old. When I really was assured of was October 1978.
3. By my mother (when I was 25).
4. Obey the God. Must live by God's words and law.
5. Missionary
6. Family (my wife and I). At present we are living with my daughter's family. Daughter--1 grandchildren--2. Among other family who live away one daughter is a Christian.
7. I think the people except Christian may think it's a foreign religion. I myself never accept any religion except Christianity. (I'll deny any other religion.)
8. Our school time was when we were forced to pray to Emperor's photo every day at school and also give a prayer to shrine and temple.
9. God is the only one (Christianity).
10. The group I belong to hold praying group locally or have a home meeting in order to get a member.

Name:

1. 37 years old--Female
2. 34 years old.
3. Tract
4. Heard like superstitions story especially Resurrection of Christ.
5. Japanese Christian.
6. None  
  
They think it is nice to have religion to believe in but they can lead their honest lives strongly, not depend on religion.  
  
About Christianity they show a little understanding.
7. Never thought it was a foreign religion.  
I think it's rather salvation for mankind.
8. Monomino Tō (Tower) just studied.  
At least tried but so hard that could not understand at all, rather pain.
9. Now is the time for belief and benefaction.
10. It's known that religion has no frontier.

Name :

1. 30 years old--Female.
2. 16 years old.
3. Was raised at Christian home (during my childhood).
4. Accepted without any doubt.
5. By Japanese Christian.
6. Whole my family are Christian (6 in a family).
7. Never think it is a foreign religion.
8. Never been any other religious group.
9. There is eternal life.
10. -



Name :

1. 33 years old--Male.
2. 32 years old.
3. 15 years old--Church in Sapporo when I was asked to attend English conversation class.
4. Could not believe it.
5. Missionary.
6. One of my family who lives away.
7. First I thought that Christianity was foreign country's. At present I don't think so. Christianity brings us so close relationship to God. Jesus died on the cross for our sins. By God's love, our sins are forgiven.
- 8.
9. Our traditional culture was based on the comparison with others to value happiness and joy which never gains true peace or thankfulness. Yet Christianity is almighty, God who created heaven and earth. I believe only this God and the relationship between God and I which is ideal, also well balanced.
10.
  - a. Individual who was saved by believing in Christianity is able to thank God by blessing.
  - b. To lead daily life, remembering what's said in Bible.
  - c. Having home meeting (discussion often), strengthen the communication among the family members.
  - d. To use either TV or radio.

Name:

1. 16--Female.
2. When I was 15 years old.
3. At age of 4 in Kindergarten.
4. When I heard about it (at age of 4), did not think of any but later at the age of 15 I thought this was what I was looking for.
5. Japanese Christian.
6. Only I. My family is against about my being Christian but I think they are trying to understand a little.
7. There is no difference to believe either Christianity or Buddhism as I believe there exists only one God, which is my relief. Love and everything.
8. I never belonged to any other religious group.
9. Love, Truth.
10. Love, Relief and Truth.

Name :

1. 30 years old--Male.
2. 19
3. 13 at Mission School.
4. I accepted without doubt, thinking it was a great belief.
5. Japanese Christian.
6. Family member (1).
7. First I thought, it's foreign, specially America. Now I don't think so, but my own religion.
8. Nothing in particular.
9. Sins and Forgiveness (Jesus died on the cross for our sins.)
10. In order to lead our lives. Christianity means lots. Many people don't understand the meaning of sin. There are many people to think they're almost perfect that they can live without God. Try to understand original sin and all kind of sins which can't be cut off from us except by being forgiven by Jesus Christ. Some people might think that Christianity is for old time.

Name: Hideyuki Nishida

1. Age 19--Male.
2. When was 15.
3. When was 7 at Sunday School.
4. Thought it was the God of foreign country.
5. Japanese Christian.
6. Two I live with.  
Three living away from my family.
7. Thought as I mentioned above (4). Now  
I believe it was the true guide to lead  
my life. It's not just the religion.
8. I've never involved in any religious  
group before.
9. I believe only one God. True God which  
justices all things. Because God is also  
love.
10. Teach infants Christian education starting  
at Nursery school. Grade school to High  
school. Also by music or through TV channel.  
It will be ideal to have Christian TV studio.  
  
Bad points--it will cost too much. There  
won't be enough qualified stuffs for this  
field.

Name: Fumiko Tamamoto

1. Age: 35, Female.
2. Age: 18.
3. When I was 8 years old, at Sunday School I was told about Jesus.
4. I don't remember the impression of my 8 years well. And later I felt Christianity is one of Western people's religion.
5. First, from Japanese pastor. Second, it's my high school days from Swedish missionaries.
6. I'm only one Christian in my family. They think it's okay that I'm a Christian but they think they (someone in my family) have to follow traditional Japanese life ways.
7. Yes, I thought so. It's a very difficult question to tell simply for me. I accepted Jesus as my Savior. So Christianity is not only a kind of foreign religion.
8. My parents are Buddhist, so naturally I was a Buddhist (?). But they never urged me to follow any Buddhist customs. Buddhism is a kind of tradition to them. So I think Christianity is the only one that I've encountered in my life.
9. First, I was very much impressed with Swedish missionary couple's personality. Later, I've encountered the Bible.
10. Sometimes, missionaries urge people to become a Christian and never try to understand the customs and traditions. One of most important things is learning Japanese language.

## APPENDIX B

Non-Christian Questionnaire

1. Present age and sex (M-F).
2. What religion do you practice, if any, not including Christianity? How long have you participated in this religion? How has it helped you?
3. Have you ever had contact with anyone who is a Christian? If so, was this person a Japanese Christian or a missionary?
4. Give me your idea of what you believe the Christian religion is all about--in other words what do you know about the Christian faith?
5. According to your experience, how does God (Supreme Being) view man's bad habits and conduct (sin)?
6. Are any of your family or friends Christian? If so, how many?
7. Is the life of a Christian different from a non-Christian according to your observation? If so, how? (answer #7 only if #6 is applicable)
8. Do you believe from this observation that Christianity offers something which other religions do not have?
9. Do you view Christianity as a foreign (Western) religion? If not, why not?  
If so, why?
10. Do you have any objections to people speaking to you about Christianity?
11. What religion in your estimation has been the most beneficial to the Japanese people, and in the world?
12. Do you believe that mankind ever needs religion at all?

Name :

1. 34 years old--Female.
2. It has been three years. Very happy, great joy.
3. Japanese Christian.
- 4.
5. Deplore.
6. Family (2) Friends (3)
7. Live our daily lives with prayers, centering God.
8. In Christianity, we pray to True God. (not human being).
9. No. Because it's the faith God gave thru Jesus Christ to us, sinful being.
10. No.
11. Christianity.
12. Yes, only Christianity.

(Writer's note) Apparently this person is a Christian but received the wrong questionnaire.



Name :

1. Male--30 years old.
2. Japanese has a strong tie between "Home" (Family) and Buddhism but individual does not seem to have religious mind. My family belongs to Buddhism so I only participate family religious activities (services and prayers) a few times a year.
3. By American. When I was an exchange student (high school) in Omaha, Nebraska. At present my wife is a Christian.
4. The population of Christian is the biggest in the world. Maybe Christianity is the fundamental religion.
5. I don't know. (I never thought of.)
6. Family (one). Friend (one).
7. I think there is not much difference only except saying prayers.
8. I don't know.
9. I don't think it is a foreign religion. We, human beings are all the same as far as we live on the earth. The place you are in does not make any difference. I stress that each has a freedom to select religion of his own.
10. I do not have.
11. I do not know.
12. I think it's necessary as the spirit and mind (heart) need someplace to rest or lean on.

Name: Chieno Hirao

1. 18 years old--Female.
2. I don't have any religion in particular.
3. Missionary.
4. To believe one thing (never look around or changed) is splendid and I envy those who can. I myself cannot decide which one to believe.
5. Will be very deplorable.
6. None in family. Among friends, two.
7. I do not know.
8. Never know any other religion.
9. No, there is no boundary in belief.
10. No.
11. Don't know as I know so little about religion.
12. Better than none at all.

Name: Masakatsu Fukushima

1. 35 years old--Male.
2. -
3. Yes, it was a Japanese.
4. I think, it's wonderful.
5. Maybe deploring but at the end forgiving.
6. About 15 (friends).
7. No difference basically.
8. Yes, I do.
9. No, Christianity is beneficial in order to lead the life happily with plenty of love, also richly in heart.
10. No, I do not.
11. Japanese---Christianity.  
World---Maybe also Christianity.
12. I think it's necessary from the view of history.

Name: Mr. Toshiyuki Shimoda

1. 26 years old--Male.
2. None.
3. Yes (a Japanese Christian).
4. He has met Christians who are ashamed of their sins; they are humble. And the Christians he knows are not active in their faith at all; they believe this is being humble. He feels Christians are negative people.
5. He believes God exists in the world--he knows about Genesis. His concept is God of Bible. He believes that God controls any law in the universe. God does not care about what happens in the world. God's power is not effective in the world. After the creation God "slept in" and never rose up.
6. None--4 Christian friends.
7. First different point is: Christian has prayer. No other differences otherwise. Christians live same way in every day life. Christians do read the Bible and let it control them, but he feels this is not an important difference. We cannot classify Christians and non-Christians.
8. Original sin and love which heals the original sin.
9. Christianity is an international religion. Christianity is unchangeable or immutable, so we have missionaries from foreign countries in Japan.
10. It is very important that people mind about Christianity. It is important to discuss the essence (subject) (trouble) in our lives. Everybody has interest in this life (as well as) love. It is difficult to understand about sin and redemption and Jesus Christ being crucified for our sins, but I can't understand about that at all and why do we need such a thing for our salvation, I do not understand?

11. Animism, because in Japan we have a good native world and we obey it in our lives and we have four seasons, so Japanese mind is very changeable or emotional, and the conception of the relativity to everything in the Japanese mind. We cannot mind about absoluteness.
12. Everybody has a consciousness of God. Without faith we cannot live. If we do not have faith we cannot live, because we need belief in something which is supernatural. Sometimes we do not need a God who has omnipotence or with personality. Also, some existentialists take such a god--a god who is not omnipotent. We do not need the essence or deep meaning of religion. We need some faith of a figure or idol.

Name:

1. 16 years old--Female.
2. Nothing in particular.
3. Yes, with Christian.
4. Splendid.
5. I don't know.
6. One (my aunt).
7. No different.
8. I don't know.
9. I don't think it's foreign countries'  
as we have many churches in Japan.
10. Yes.
11. I don't know.
12. Never thought about it--I don't know.

Name :

1. 16 years old--Female.
2. Not being Christian doesn't mean to have any other religion.

I am not a Christian, but I believe that Christianity is the only true religion. I attended Catholic school since my first grade. I was baptized in Catholic church but I never truly accepted that church, so began to go to Protestant church. It was when I was 6 grader. I did not think this church is the one I really want to belong to but I understood the meaning of God's love and the cross Jesus died on. At the sametime I knew how sinful we were and our weakness and so on.

3. By Japanese Christian.
4. Christian is thought as a very straight person, humble and honest, knowing his weakness so that depends on the help and love of Jesus Christ. Some people I know at the church always show off little knowledge they have about Christianity and look like very much self-centered in own thinking, very small minded, almost make me think they might be thinking that the person who is not a Christian is not a human being. Perhaps those atmosphere of the church keeps me from not going but there are all kinds of people not only among the members of the church but everywhere.
5. God loves us all, including our sins, bad habits and so on. God is waiting some day we are coming to Him as he knows we, humans are weak persons and sinful. Some day we all need Help (God's).
6. Only my mother is a Catholic. My father, brothers and sister are Protestant. A few friends of mine who go to the church are Christian.

7. There are not much difference except reading a bible and pray to God.
8. Yes.
9. No.  
Christianity has a nationality. If Christianity were only a foreign religion, could have died long time ago (at least in Japan). On the contrary the members of Christian are increasing throughout the world.
10. It's difficult for me to accept the person who speaks nothing but religion or any subject connecting with religions. Specially stress nothing but religious thinking only from the view of Christianity, but maybe this is when I am not open to other people myself, so that I cannot accept the person whom I mentioned above.
11. There should not be any necessity to decide what religion to whom or what country. Yet to us all. Christianity is very beneficial, as Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sins, all our sins.
12. Yes.



Name :

1. 15 years old - Female.
2. Never belong to any religion.
3. Yes, by both.
4. Splended.
5. Feeling sad.
6. None in my family. Friends--10.
7. Shirakawa Gakuen, which takes care of the handicapped. There is always love.
8. Am able to have a firm belief that God is always watching me.
9. No. I have being told since my childhood that Christianity is always near to us.
10. Meaningful and beneficial.
11. Most beneficial in the world.
12. Yes, need religion.

Name: Takaguchi Katzuko

1. 34 years old--Female.
2. I belong to none.
3. Japanese Christian.
4. Christian may believe forever paradise after death and his daily life looks ideal because of leaving everything to God's hands. Whatever happens, happens yet I myself feel resistance.
5. Never thought deeply.
6. Friends--5.
7. Christian people are always gentle, specially women, not so self-centered, well disciplined. Open minded and ready to face any situation.
8. No criticism to other religion. Passive. They leave other people's life alone. Not political.
9. No.  
Christianity is spreading, comparing any other religion.
10. No objection. It's good and adaptable.
11. I do not know.
12. It's necessary, as far as we exist on the earth.

Name :

1. 15 years old. Female.
2. I don't belong to any religious group.
3. Christian (Japanese).
4. There are many Gods in Japan. I hear but Christian belief is splendid.
5. Pitiful.
6. None.
7. -
8. Yes, there are not any difference.
9. Yes because God loves us all.
10. No, I do not have.
11. Christianity for Japanese.  
Christianity for other nations.
12. Yes, I think we all need.

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