

Barriers to Contextualizing Christianity in Japanese Society and
Plans for the Implementation of Contextualization as a Ministry
Strategy

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by

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Title: Barriers to Contextualizing Christianity in Japanese Society and Plans for the Implementation of Contextualization as a Ministry Strategy
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This study will focus on the problems of contextualizing Christianity in the society in Japan and on the plans for implementation of contextualization as a ministry strategy as the method for solving the problems. The proposed general aim of the project is to demonstrate the fundamental problems which lie in the mind of the Japanese people and are core elements against contextualizing the Gospel or Christianity in their culture, and then to search out the basic practical method to solve this problem.

The specific objective of the study is to consider numerous elements. First are the specific problems related to contextualizing Christianity to Japanese society: (1) The historical issue. The history of Christianity in Japan testifies to persecution and compromise on the part of the church. (2) The cultural issue. This issue involves the worldview of the Japanese, contextual logic, syncretism, and mass psychology. (3) The Tenno (emperor) system. This issue does not discuss the system itself, but rather Tennoism which means 'Tenno within us.' Henotheism is discussed from the point of view of polytheism. (4) The church. Do the churches involve any elements which are hindrances to contextualization? (5) *Kokutai*. The structure of the nation has been influential in every corner of the country. (6) Resistance. During World War II, the Japanese churches did not resist the *kokutai* policy of the state, but compromised with it. (7) The Japanese people. This is the most fundamental root of Japanese culture, good or bad. This issue includes *on*, immutability, and duality of the people. The second part of these objectives is the methodology which is based on the focus of the Grace Theological Seminary, Doctor of Ministry seminar topics. Effective communication, small group ministry, contextualization, foundation for ministry, and practical leadership, all these are the categories which are yet to be studied and practiced in the churches in Japan in terms of concept and practical application.

The study addresses these two issues from two perspectives. First, the project examines the biblical data. Japan has adopted almost all Western categories: culture, science, technology, industry, learning. Why has it perpetually rejected biblical values? Next, the study examines methodology. There are a number of discussions on the problems which hinder contextualization, but very few discussions on a method of how to solve the problems. In Japan, the practical categories of the doctoral seminar topics for the ministry are yet to be developed. Many Japanese pastors and theologians have steered us toward academic theology and away from a practical spirituality and operational theology for everyday life.

The proposed answer to these two issues is that Japanese churches are reluctant to search and develop intentionally and positively the creative methods needed. The main role of the leaders is to recognize this reality and to train followers to be leaders who can deal with the problem of contextualization and who will, in turn, train others to be leaders.

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*"Barriers to Contextualizing Christianity in Japanese Society and
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Strategy"*

Chapter One: An Overview

1. The Nature of the Ministry

Sowing fields with seeds of the word of God has been practiced in Japan throughout the centuries since Christianity first landed in 1549. These seeds sown, however, have yet to see thick growth in Japan. According to a report of the Church Information Service Center (CIS) in Saitama, Japan, on the first of May, 1998, which estimated the actual spiritual reality of Japan, the total Protestant Christian population is less than 0.50 percent. The figures in the following table presents us with the reality. The total population of Japan is 125,257,061.¹

	<u>Baptized</u>	<u>Member Believers</u>	<u>Number of Churches</u>	<u>Worship Attendants</u>
1991		512,523		
1992	8,651	524,425		
1993	9,210	533,668		
1994	10,123	521,703		
1995	10,008	537,945		
1996	9,263	531,924		
1997	8,728	531,199	7,726	267,764
1998	8,633	530,956	7,755	265,716

Japan contains a low percentage of Christians. This is not a new fact to any Christian workers, whether they be Japanese or missionaries called to Japan from foreign countries. They all have recognized this painful spiritual situation of present-day Japan. They have sought the causes of this missiological ineffectiveness. They have tried to

¹ "Japan Protestant Church in 1997," *Statistics in Japan Protestant Church*, CIS News 47, 1998, Shinbori Niiza, Japan.

reshuffle strategies and have been challenged to counteract the slow spiritual growth. They have experimented with methods hoping for a turn for the better. Many good writings have been published. Much good thinking has occurred. Many editorials, lectures, talks and conventions have been implemented. All these efforts have yet to accomplish a practical effectiveness on the mission field of Japan. Healthy spiritual prosperity has not yet developed.

Expectations have increased among Japanese pastors and Christians for a change of lean organizations into those with large attendances. Traditional small buildings have been enlarged. Legalistic denominational loyalty has been in decline. Finances for new church buildings are larger than ever. However, nothing has adequately captured the ordinary Japanese Christians' passion to see the seed sown in their country with all zeal.

Thinking of the barriers to Christianity in Japan, one must remember the uniqueness of the Japanese culture. Japanese culture is one of the oldest in the world. Japanese culture contains varieties of quality which are the envy of other cultures in the world. Shintoism and Emperorism, however, have maintained a strong influence over it, which has produced a supernatural worldview that is unique among the nations.

This reality has been obscured by the powerful leading roles of economy and advanced technology in Japan. Dr. Tom Stallter once said that American Christians have paid less attention to the spiritual needs of Japan than for other countries because of the high level of economic growth. His observation is correct and agreeable. Some American Christian leaders have a question why Japan has been blessed with prosperity by God, though Japan is not a Christian country. Japanese economic growth, however, has not brought biblical change and spiritual prosperity to Japanese society.

At the same time, Japanese Christian churches have not endeavored enough in the struggle against supernaturalism. Some of them have tried to persuade non-Christians to convert to Christianity on the foundation of proclaiming the genuine "truth" out of the

Bible. However, unchurched Japanese people hold their own traditionally “true” philosophy of the world born out of Shintoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. Research to uncover the core problem which hinders Christianity in Japan has remained fruitless.

What should we do? There will be no missiological success unless something happens to change our approach to evangelism in Japan. James 2:17 reads: “Faith, by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.” Usually people only attribute the missiological ineffectiveness to the uniqueness of the Japanese culture. However, uncritical abolition or rejection of culture, because of its heresy, will not accomplish the task of ministry. We should utilize functions of culture in ministry. How? In the seminar classes at Grace Seminary a quality of biblical values in the ministry in four areas were presented. They were effective communication (manner, style, and content of preaching), small group ministry (church growth), foundations for ministry (basic interpersonal relationships), and practical leadership in ministry (leadership). These are principles through which the contextualization of Christianity in Japanese society will be implemented.

The practical approach to these categories is little known in the churches and in the consciousness of Christian leaders in Japan. These are the current concerns that churched Japanese people have. For a long time they have desired to reach people effectively for Jesus Christ. To adopt these approaches is the next step for turning the Japanese society to Christianity. These will make a significant impact on the churches which are sincerely seeking for church growth in the 21st century in Japan.

2. The Present Situation of the Church

According to the CIS news in 1998, the total population of the Protestant Christians in Japan was 530,956 and the number of Protestant churches was 7,755. The average number of members for one church should be about seventy. The local churches, however, are only averaging twenty or thirty active members and often less.

This real number shows us that churched people are concentrated in big cities such as Tokyo, Osaka, Sendai, etc. They should be made up of very dedicated believers. However, churches and Christians have been struggling with financial and personnel needs. In order to be a church, people think that a building and a paid pastor are needed. The churches are relatively small in size and it is hard for them to support a full-time person. Many churches are trying to do this, but it is a constant financial battle for them and for the pastors and their families.

Alongside of this hardship is a shortage of leaders. Those who feel led to become pastors, as a rule, leave the rural areas to go to Bible schools located in the big cities. Many of them have support problems while in school; some of them do not return.

There are also no provisions made for continuing education of these leaders. While there is at least the possibility of getting training in Bible and related subjects for those who can go away, for those who can not leave their homes, families, and jobs, it seems that there is practically no way for them to get training. What is offered on a local level is usually quite limited.

Yet these people who cannot get further training are, in many instances, the real leaders of the church. It is out of a concern for reaching them with more advanced training. This is a big subject for us to think about. How can they be trained? Surely there must be a way, not only to train them, but also many of those who would otherwise go off to school somewhere and then be lost to the churches.

Besides the problem of leaders and training mentioned above, there is also the problems of slow growth or no growth among the churches, and a seeming lack of goals as well as a lack of methods for making disciples. All of these problems might be interrelated to the cause of the slow growth of the church.

3. The Theoretical (Extra-Biblical) Foundation

Rick Warren writes:

In 1974, I served as a student missionary to Japan. One day, while rummaging through the missionary's library, I picked up an old copy of *HIS*, a Christian student magazine published by Intervarsity Christian Fellowship. The article described how McGavran, a missionary born in India, had spent his ministry studying what makes churches grow. McGavran brilliantly challenged the conventional wisdom of his day about what made churches grow. With a biblical basis and simple but passionate logic, McGavran pointed out that God wants his church to grow; he wants his lost sheep found! The issues raised by McGavran seemed especially relevant to me as I observed the painfully slow growth of churches in Japan.²

Mr. Warren read the McGavran article and felt God directing him to invest the rest of his life discovering the biblical, cultural, and leadership principles that produce healthy, growing churches. He asks why some churches grow and others die on the vine.

Stan Conrad writes in his "Encountering Japanese Resistance" as follows:

Some years ago while in Japan I was very challenged by this topic and read David C. E. Liao's book *The Unresponsive: Resistance or Neglected?*, in which he stated, "Sometimes unresponsiveness is due to hardness of heart, pride, or aloofness, but more often than we like to think, it is due to neglect" (Liao 1972:7).³

He summarizes by saying that anyone with a minimal amount of exposure to missions in Japan has heard that Christians in Japan number less than half percent of the population. He adds that the ratio of churches to population is around one for every seventeen thousand people. He believes that there are two main historical factors which have caused great harm to the spread of the gospel in Japan: historical factors and cultural factors.⁴

² Warren, Rick, *The Purpose Driven Church*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995), 29-30.

³ Conrad, Stan H., "Encountering Japanese Resistance," in *Reaching the Resistant Barriers and Bridges for Mission #6*, J. Dudley Woodberry, ed., (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1998), 117.

⁴ Conrad, Stan H., "Evangelical Missiological Society Series," *Reaching the Resistant-Barriers and Bridges for Mission*, J. Dudley Woodberry, ed (Pasenada: William Carey Library, 1998), 118

In the years after World War II Japan exulted in the free society which it had never known before in its history. Ministry should have been multiplied several times over. Has it multiplied in terms of quality and quantity? *Kyodan Shinpoo* (a report of the denominational *Kyoodan* church, 1991) reports that thirty percent of the Kyodan churches are managing financially with less than three million yen (\$27, 273) and fifty percent manage on less than five million yen (\$45, 455) a year. Idogaki writes:

More than fifty years have passed since the war. The Law of Religious Body was abolished. Have Christian churches begun to undergo a new revolution with reflection on the experience of the war?⁵

Though Japan is considered to be free and is one of the richest countries in the world, this financial report proves how Japanese Christian churches are struggling with the growth of the church. Idogaki points out in the same paper that it is important for us not to think that slow evangelism in Japan is caused merely by the exercise of the government's power.

What is the main reason for missiological retardation in Japan? Idogaki writes again:

It is so-called "Japan," which was culminated during the Pacific War when the church of Christ became the church of Japan and served not Christ but the government.⁶

He attributes the religious distortion in Japan to "the Law of Religious Body" which was enacted in 1939. This law forced all the religious bodies in Japan to unify into one body which was under government control both before and during World War II. The reason for the law was to "establish a healthy development of religious body which

⁵ Idogaki, Akira, *Nihon-no Kyokai-wa Doko-e?* (Tokyo: Inochi-no Kotoba-sha, 1992), 4

⁶ Ibid., 5

would influence deeply the heart of the nation in this time of emergencies.”⁷ Almost all of the Japanese Christian churches, both Protestant and Catholic, compromised their convictions to come in line with governmental policy and became the servants of the state. Planting churches, and the inauguration of church leaders came to be practiced with permission of the government. Following the law connotated a danger of rebellion against the truth of the gospel. However, almost all of the churches were unified into one religious body and accepted the government policies. The unified national power forced nations to the Pacific War. The unified church was put under the control of the Ministry of Education. All church commissions were requested to get permission of the Ministry for their activities. The church of Christ became the church of the state. Church and social structure became one. This is called “*kokutai*,” the unified power of national structure. The terminology was shifted to the Tenno System (Emperor System) after the war. The purpose of “*kokutai*” is to unify the worldview of the nation. Japan has become one big national family. All the nation is one in this *kokutai* structure.

Idogaki attributes the religious distortion in Japan to the Religious Bodies Law, but Fukuda attributes the slow growth of the churches in Japan to the lack of contextualization. He writes:

Japan still remains with less than one percent Christian population in spite of having more than four hundred years span of time since the endeavours of evangelism began. One of the profound reasons for the slow growth of the church comes from the lack of contextualization.⁸

Christianity in Japan can be likened to a potted plant in a flowerpot which has never been transplanted, and is regarded as an alien idea with no relevance to the Japanese people. Fukuda writes that the intellectually centered Christianity of the West is

⁷ Ibid., 5

⁸ Fukuda, Mitsuo, *Bunmyakuka Kyokai no Keisei*, (Shizuoka: Harvest Time Ministry, 1993), 247.

distanced from the real sense of the life of the mainstream people of Japan. It is limited to people living in a separated capsule. Looking at the history of evangelism in Japan, it is easy to conclude that the strategy for the transmission of the gospel has been developed on the premise of the need to reject Japanese culture. As a result, Christianity in Japan remains a peculiarity in the social life of the people. The relevance of the gospel to culture is a necessary ingredient for evangelism. Fukuda writes, “It is a pioneer’s responsibility to attempt to gain the contextualized formula of the Christian church in Japan.”⁹ Boxer writes as follows:

The progress of Christianity has been slow in Japan. In fact, percentage-wise, there are less Christians today than there were back in the early 1600s, over 350 years ago, when approximately 300, 000 out of a total estimated population of 20 million were believers.¹⁰

One of the reasons for this is the persecution which occurred after the 1630s. Some other reasons may be the late arrival of Christianity (1549), its exclusivism or its “western-ness”, the competition of other religions and so on. However, persecution is not one of the biggest reasons, as it was with the Anabaptists or the early Christians in history. It is simply indifference to the Gospel because Japan has confirmed excellent philosophies of Shintoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism which have been perpetuated for centuries in people’s hearts. According to the figures mentioned in the table above, there is little indication that the situation is changing for the better. It seems as if there were no hope it would improve. The growth of the church has been painfully slow, especially in the more rural parts of the country of Japan. Sprunger comments as follows:

Some of the churches have very serious problems. They simply are not growing, or growing only very slowly. Qualitatively there has hopefully been

⁹ Ibid., 249.

¹⁰ Boxer, C.R., *The Christian Century in Japan. 1949-1650*, (Berkley: University of California Press, 1951), 320.

growth in all of the churches. But quantitatively, growth has been very slow and uneven. Lack of growth is certainly one of the main problems facing the churches today. The biggest problem of the church in Japan today would be lack of growth, lack of leaders, and lack of goals.¹¹

4. The Purpose of the Study

Imagine what would happen to the study about the issues of contextualizing Christianity to Japanese society if we were to try to research it academically. Japan consists of isolated islands. The research would need to be implemented geographically. The research would need to be done historically because Japan has more than three thousand five hundred years of history. Japan is a spiritually backward country, but an economic miracle has occurred in the country. The research focused on defining economy would be an important factor to find the barriers to contextualization. Similarly, examining the issue ecologically-they say that the economical power of Japan has destroyed the environment of the world, linguistically-Japanese language has four different forms of writing, politically-four prime ministers are often rotated in two years, ethnologically-nobody can prove where the homogeneous Japanese are from, sociologically-Japan is a typical hierarchical society with a form of top-down communication, and religiously-Japan is said to have eight million gods. The study of each of these categories would lead us to discover many barriers. This kind of academic research, however, is not my main concern in this paper.

Many elements which are relevant to the topic are important to think about: Is there no problem in the church itself? Yesterday's innovator is not today's successor. Principles and structures of churches which are innovated in America in the past are not applicable to today's Japanese churches. Shintoism and Tennoism (Emperorism) has been particularized in Japan for more than three thousand years. This is a tremendously

¹¹ Sprunger, W. Frederic, *TEE In Japan-A Realistic Vision*, (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1981), 2.

different context from that of the church in America which was formed by Puritanism at the beginning of its history. Yet Japanese churches try to survive by imitating the form of those in America in pastor's life style, in missiological methods, in worship, and so on. How can we change the church to fit the context of the Japanese society?

Change accompanies creativity. The Japanese, however, value imitativeness rather than creativity, tradition rather than change. Japan holds to its own dynamic and unique heresy which retards Christianity. Christian churches are challenged to create their own strategy of effective evangelism, not imitate strategy from the United States. Do Japanese churches accept people who are different, who have new ideas? The church will regard them as ridiculous eventually, while they accept all that is imported. But such people will bring about creativity and change into the church.

It is not the primary focus of this thesis to analyze the problems of the individual church, but to search out what lies at the core consciousness of the Japanese people that retards the growth of Christianity. Their consciousness holds a nationally prevalent fear of Christianity; it dislikes it, rejects it, and tries to avoid biblical contextualizing. I want to call this 'race consciousness.'

Japan has intertwined excellent traditions, unique culture, and confirmed religious philosophies for centuries in its structure, and it has managed things successfully through these. It is hard for Japan to accept Christianity because it requires change. Their institutions have worked too well for them to accept the exclusive Christianity. They do not need any new revelation of God.

The Japanese are not conscious of only one eternity. There has never been a sense of one's sinfulness, and the heed for repentance and holiness before the eternal God. They have not had a concept of glorifying the eternal God through serving Him.

During World War II, people watched Japanese Christian churches compromise their convictions to come under the state and understood that there were no differences in

Christianity from other religions such as Shintoism or Buddhism. If Christianity had no differences from other religions, people had no sense of the need to change their traditional religion to a new religion, Christianity.

The Biblical foundation for ministry must be laid first among Christians. However, one often encounters many Christians who do not like to expose themselves as Christians in their daily social lives, though they are intentional in their church lives. It seems as if they were “ashamed of the gospel” (Romans 1:16). Their open declaration of faith in Christ in public would bear witness of the difference of Christianity from other religions.

Japanese people speak with consciousness of the social atmosphere. They give the chance of speaking to others and then wait for an opportunity when the time seems right for them to start speaking. It depends upon the atmosphere when to speak. They take heed of other's consciousness and value the mood of the whole group. This may be behind the ineffectiveness in the field of missiology in Japan. This may never be able to encourage Japanese Christians to reach out to others. Naotsuka contrasts the indirectness of the Japanese with the directness of Americans: “If you don't speak out, it means that you have no opinions, and are a fool in American society.”¹² To hold an opinion is one thing, but to express it in public is another. Japanese Christians are too much shy of speaking about Christ in public. Luke 19:40 reads, “If they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.” Japanese Christians need to be bold enough to take the risk to declare simply and directly that the gods of Shintoism, Buddhism, or any other gods are not the true God, and that they can not save people.

Christianity is a religion of giving, dedication, and service. The Lord Jesus himself said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). Many Japanese

¹² Naotsuka, Reiko, *O-beijn-ga Chinmoku suru toki*, (Tokyo: Taishukan Shoten, 1981), 9.

people do not like this form of religion. They come to church to pray and worship God who gives them earthly benefits: money, happiness, social status, health, and so on. Christianity, even among Christians, is a religion of receiving-benefits. The concept of glorifying God under conditions of persecution is hard to understand. Our witness or testimonies should be a statement of how the living God revealed his glory to us when we were in a certain condition. It should not be a statement about how many benefits God gives us. This kind of mental conditioning or concept of God keeps the Japanese Christians away from reading the Bible and makes them reluctant to reach out. This is also a big barrier.

Christianity is monotheism, not henotheism. The God in the Bible is God for everyone; the Bible is the same Bible for everyone, regardless of ethnicity, language, or culture. Christianity, however, has ended up promulgating the gospel of Christ as an American religion or as a Western religion alienating it from non-western peoples. Many committed Christians accept unconditionally all that missionaries tell them, even if they teach something wrong. Making mistakes is not a problem. Everyone makes mistakes and theologians can make mistakes. The problem is the people's immaturity. This also becomes barrier to Christianity.

Many pastors claim that their denomination is of the providence of God even though we read in the Bible "one Lord, one faith, one baptism" (Ephesians 4:5). I can understand their claims when we look at Catholicism which holds one Pope, one Mary, one human authority. But why are there so many Protestant denominational conflicts? It is well said that in Japan, if a Christian wants to shift from church A to church B, it is much harder for a Mafia (*Yakuza*; in Japanese) to secede from the *Yakuza* system. When Japan re-opened the door to Christianity in 1859, a lot of denominations were introduced to the homogeneous country, Japan, instead of the one true God. Many contemporary Japanese regard Christ our Lord as a top God among many gods (denominations). They

say there is no difference between Christianity and other religions.

Educational thinking is also one of the elements of hindrance. School functions on a five-and-a-half-day week. Since everyone must go through at least junior high (nine years of compulsory education), literacy is almost 100 percent. Beyond that, there are high schools: commercial, industrial, agricultural, college preparatory, and so on. To get into a high school, students must pass a difficult exam, so preparation starts early, beginning in kindergarten. To get the best possible job, one must graduate from the best schools all along the way. Competition is, therefore, intense. One's classmates are one's competitors, though everyone has an equal chance at a good education.

To get into the university of one's choice, the students must also pass a very difficult exam. University exams are referred to as "examination hell." It is very difficult to enter the university, but once one gets in, he or she is almost assured of graduating. And once he or she graduates and enters a company, you are virtually certain of lifetime employment. There is a considerable amount of security in the system for those who make it.

There are very few colleges at the local level, so most of the students must go to one of the larger cities to study where many remain to work after graduation. Under the stress of having to study hard every day, at school, at home, at *Jyuku* (prep schools), young people have no time for thinking about life and the eternal God. They have no priority in their life for coming to church to worship God and having fellowship in Christ with others.

There seem to be many other elements which make it difficult in contextualizing the message of the Bible to the society of Japan. One of the sons of my Korean friend, Dr. Yoo, once confessed to me that Japan was the pride of all Asian nations. He said that Asian nations had nothing to be proud of except Japan. It seems that he would be correct if Japan were a Christian country. Galatians 6:14 reads, "May I never boast except in the

cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Near the end of 1949, after the war, General MacArthur is said to have told the chief of the Religion Section at General Headquarters: “I do not think that Japan will be converted to Christianity in the near future because their national pride will hinder their conversion.”¹³ It seems that what they call the “pride” of the Japanese may be a simple stubbornness or an unwavering loyalty to traditions.

In any case, I do not mean to probate the articulations of the problem which seem to have been a hindrance to contextualization, or to cast aspersions on individuals (Christians), or on organizations (churches) or on any other social institutions. Romans 13:1 reads: “Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established.”

Why has the economically dynamic and educationally established country of Japan remained at the spiritually low level of 0.43 % Christian population for four hundred and fifty years? What is the cause of this underdevelopment of Christianity? What should we do to unlock the people’s hearts? How can this problem be solved?

One should never criticize any method that God is blessing. However, the figure of 0.43 % tells us that it is important for us to examine and analyze what remains in Japanese churches now, that is, what “live and move and have its being” (Acts 17:28) in churches now. This thesis does not intend just to look back at the things that happened in the past. The ministerial target of this thesis is to search out a new foundational missiological strategy and methodology to change the churches in Japan. These are the questions with which we would struggle:

1. What are the core problems that hinder Christianity in Japan? What are the barriers to growth of the churches? What causes churches to stop growing?

¹³ Lee, Robert, ed., *The Japanese emperor System-The Inescapable Missiological Issue*, (Tokyo: Tokyo Mission Research Institute, 1995), 42.

2. How much of what we do is just culturally traditional or of a foreign culture?
3. How can we help the churches grow?

My project is to search out the core problem which hinders Christianity in Japanese society and to develop a possible strategy to strengthen churches to grow. Somebody must do something about the missiological problem in Japan. It seems that we need to develop the sense of urgency in the spiritually immature so that they are committed to outreach among those of their own country.

5. The Intended Outcome and Possible Benefits of the Project

In examining the cultural practices of the Japanese people, to discuss only the religious forms will not be enough to solve the problem. I would like to refer to contextualization as a meaningful principle, small group ministry as an effective approach for church growth, and practical leadership in ministry as an approach for making disciples.

Missionary activities such as planting churches, opening a Bible school, launching language institutes (English, German, Chinese, Korean, Greek, Hebrew, and Japanese), opening Bible and book stores, building a Christian center, these are the projects which are part of my vision for the future ministry. I have learned the basic philosophy for the implementation of these projects in each of the seminar classes at Grace Seminary. It is required of me to examine integrally all the subjects of the seminars. This philosophy will bring about a practical and effective outcome of ministry in Japan. Japan is one of the largest spiritual markets. I would like to examine the market and the competitive realities.

The integral religious system, including the Tenno (emperor) system and Tennoism, and the history of Christianity in Japan, need to be examined. Except for the religious system, the dynamism of the historic Japanese cultural system will not be analyzed in this thesis.

Japanese culture cannot be expressed in one word. There is a variety of categories

in the study of the culture. One can study it according to district, generation, or social status. As an example, the contextualized church will not take only one form. Strategic means of communication of the gospel should be created by each church according to their type of community and each church should develop their own methods. Through this project, sincere Japanese churches with goals, hopes, plans, and strategy for church growth will benefit. In Japan, the category of practical theology has been left behind. I pray that all the topics discussed at the seminar classes at Grace Seminary would be of help toward encouraging church growth.

6. Preview of how the project will proceed

My study started out with a desire to find out what are supposed to be the core problems which hinder contextualizing Christianity in the society of Japan and to establish some strategies which will solve the problems. My major interest was not to find the problems only to bring accusation and to be critical about them, but to establish a strategy for solving the problems. There is no method and strategy in the churches in Japan today. Rather, there is a vacuum that must be filled with a plan for action.

Two categories emerged when considering the strategy. One is intellectualism and another is variations in cause. Conrad points out:

An isolated academic atmosphere is detrimental to church growth. The high importance of intellectual attainment, as over against a pastoral ministry, is counter productive. One survey of pastors revealed that, in terms of usage of time, theological study rated fourth and evangelism sixth. This occurs in a land that is less than one percent Christian.¹⁴

He calls this intellectualism.¹⁵ I would like to initiate the task of discovering a fundamental strategy for solutions to the difficulty of contextualizing Christianity in

¹⁴ Conrad, Stan H., "The Relationship of the Japan Evangelical Free Church Mission and the Japan Evangelical Free Church Conference: A Survey and an Analysis," (D. Miss. project, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1993), 125.

¹⁵ Ibid., 125.

Japan. Theologians debate this question and come up with as many questions as there are theologians. Each of the following is considered to be a barrier which each theologian holds as his own perspective of the core problem.

Idogaki contributes the problem to Religious Bodies Law, Fukuda to the lack of contextualization; Furuya to the emperor system; Woodberry to the language and liberalism, and Sprunger to the education system. In any case, the numerical average of 0.43 percent of Christian population remains fruitless. Japan is conspicuous by its low percentage of Christian population. This fact is outstanding in comparison with other countries.

What is the single most important task in preparing for the contextualization of Christianity in contemporary Japan? What should we do? Where, when, how? Who will destroy the wall of missiological ineffectiveness? Finding the problems is of primary importance to the process of establishing the strategy.

A. A Preview of Chapter Two: Theological and Biblical Rationale for Contextualization

There are numerous biblical passages which pertain to the subject of contextualization, each providing valuable insight into the topic of developing church growth. However, the scope of this ministry project will focus primarily on the methods which will break the wall of missiological ineffectiveness in the church, as well as building the road for effective contextualization which will help to give the church an understanding of the importance of the creativity of methodology for ministry.

According to Nehemiah 1:3, the remnant that survived the exile told Nehemiah that the wall of Jerusalem was broken down, and its gates had been burned with fire. Nehemiah prayed before God for rebuilding the wall. Joshua was commissioned by God to march around the city of Jericho to collapse the wall. Both of them had vision for the future. The tasks were clear and their strategies were simple. God called to Moses to rescue the chosen nation from the hand of the Egyptians.

Churches today should know exactly what God has called them to do. The church members and pastors need to have a clear-cut identity that their purpose is to win the world for Jesus out of the hand of Satan. The driving force behind them should be God's intention. God works through His church today. Each local church should be built on the purpose of God.

In addition, Chapter Two will investigate the validity of contextualization. The incarnation of Jesus unites human personality to the personality of God. The incarnated Jesus contextualized the kingdom of heaven for the legalistic Jewish society first of all. Jesus has a deep relevance to our culture and is a transformer of culture, for we live and move and have our own being in Him (Acts 17:28). Contextualization is making the true Gospel understood within a cultural context and developing a strategy for impacting that culture with the relevance of that message of Christ.

B. A Preview of Chapter Three: Core Problems for Contextualization

Japanese society is modeled after the Western culture only outwardly. It keeps the deep traditional and conservative indigenousness below the surface. It will be less meaningful to look at the surface structure of Japan in terms of the spiritual and social. It is important rather to look at what is called "Japan Spirit," which sustains the culture and social systems of Japan. The 'Japan Spirit' is said to be its pride, its emperor system, its worldview, and its closedness, which characterize the uniqueness of their culture.

There are certain limitations in this study. A thesis of greater depth would be necessary to consider the problems from many facets such as ethnological, economical, political, and educational points of view. Wider scope would become very academic which has already been suggested as a problem. Here I only deal with the facets of religion, the culture, the emperor system, the church, and the Japanese people.

1. This study will not be an exposition of all the problems and the methods for solutions. I deal with a part of the fundamental aspects of the problems

which are the core elements.

2. As there are many facets of the problems that serve as barriers to contextualization, so are there many facets to the methodology.

3. The aim of church growth does not mean simply numerical development. It is the commission of Christ. In Matthew 28:18-20 we read, “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.” Matthew 16:18 reads, “On this rock I will build my church.” Since then ‘age of the church’ began. Christ is the head of the body, the church (Colossians 1:18). In considering the present situation of the church in Japan, it is important to study the practical facets, rather than academic facets, through which the accomplishments of His purpose are carried on in the life of the church.

C. A Preview of Chapter four: Plans for Implementation of Contextualization as a Ministry Strategy

Just as there are varied problems, so there are many strategies for solving them. There can not be one simple method. Developing the strategic plans for contextualization in this ministry project will be accomplished from two perspectives. One is that the plan should be put into immediate practice. Another is that the topics considered are those which are lacking in the church in Japan. Each topic is large enough to compose one independent thesis. However, I have chosen all of them because I feel they are essential elements to consider for effective ministry in today’s Japan.

In this regard, I have defined four strategic plans based on the seminar topic focuses. They are effective communication, small group ministry, foundations for ministry, and leadership for ministry.

D. A Preview of Chapter Five: Evaluation

The purpose of chapter five is to evaluate the material in chapters one through four. The first four chapters were sent for evaluation to two experienced Christians. The men are individuals who have a record for leadership in ministry. Bruce Anderson is a former commanding officer of Iwakuni Marine Base in Japan. He has lived in Japan for eleven years and has been a student of Japanese culture for fifteen years. David J. Hesselgrave, a former missionary to Japan, is a professor emeritus at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. He is the author of more than a dozen books on Scripture and strategy.

E. A Preview of Chapter Six: Final Observations, Recommendations, Conclusions

The project concludes with a brief survey of what I have desired to accomplish, highlighting related topics which are deserving of future research. One of the primary needs this project is intended to address is the further development of potential methodology which will overcome the barriers to contextualization. The plans and strategies here can be adopted and studied to serve as a model for development of ministry in the churches in the 21st century in Japan, as well as generate potential church leaders.

Chapter Two

The Theological and Biblical Rationale for Contextualization

A. Reality

Japan can be illustrated as a country described in Matthew 13:4-6 where:

Some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up, or some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they were withered because they had no root.

Many seeds have been sown but they have not grown large. Japan seems to be a rocky place where the ground is shallow on top of solid rock.

Japan can be considered, in a sense, to be stationed at high level morally and ethically because of the traditional teaching of Confucianism. The Bible describes the story of interpersonal communication between Jesus and a young rich man:

A young rich man came up to Jesus and asked, “Teacher, what good things must I do to get eternal life?” Jesus replied, “If you want to enter eternal life, obey the commandments: do not steal, do not give false testimony, honor your father and mother, and love your neighbor as yourself.” “All these I have kept,” the young rich man said. “What do I still lack?” Jesus answered, “Go, sell your possessions and give it to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” The young man heard this and went away sad because he had great wealth. Then Jesus said, “It is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 19:16-23).

Is Japan a rich and moral young man who rejected coming to and following Jesus? This young man was rich but spared the expense of the glory of God. His money management was not effective enough to help him enter the kingdom of heaven. Leith Anderson writes about effective stewardship concerning money:

The evangelical potential of economics is enormous. Tough times bring more people to spiritual decision than prosperity. When money is not plentiful, people look for a God who is dependable. Those in crisis know that the building

with the cross on top may provide food, clothing, shelter, and hope when all the other social service agencies say no. They should also know the church as the place where practical money management is effectively taught.¹⁶

Japan has practiced effective money management in terms of becoming rich but has been poor at stewardship concerning the money before God. Their value system is such that they place no value on God only on their money. They lack any understanding of stewardship. Japan is the same as the young rich man who was not a good steward with his money. Japan has become a rich country but almost all churches in Japan are struggling with lean budget.

Isaiah 6:9-10 reads:

He said, “Go and tell his people: Be ever hearing, but never understanding; be ever seeing, but never perceiving. Make the heart of this people calloused; make their ears dull and close their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed.”

The New International Version Study Bible comments that “Isaiah’s prophetic commission will have the ironic but justly deserved effect of hardening the callous hearts of rebellious Israel and so rendering the warnings of judgment sure.”¹⁷ Never understanding and never perceiving represent a paradox. While God desires definitely that the chosen nation understand and perceive, God knows that the nation will harden its heart. God’s strong desire is expressed by the expressions, that the nation one day, however, will be freed from deafness and blindness and will be able to see and hear: “In that day the deaf will hear the words of the scroll, and out of gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind will see” (Isaiah 29:18). God is calling for the nation’s repentance in the true sense of the term. So is He calling the nation of Japanese.

¹⁶ Anderson, Leith, *A Church for the 21st Century*, (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1992), 30.

¹⁷ Barker, Kenneth, Donald Burdick, John Steck, Walter Wessel, Ronald Youngblood, eds., *The NIV Study Bible-New International Version*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 1026.

Japan is also a typical country described in Matthew 4:8:

The devil took Jesus to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. And he said, 'if you will bow down, I will give you all this.'

Surely Japan has been given all the world's splendor and yet it is the greatest idol worshiping country in the world.

There has been a constant flow of the same repeated concept of proclaiming the gospel in Japan. It seems that as if a new and innovative concept of proclaiming the gospel would never be brought about in the church in Japan. In I Corinthians 3:6-7 we read:

I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but God, who makes things grow.

Is Japan a country where God does not make things grow? Many of us often ask ourselves about the reality of the relationship of proclaiming the word of God to church growth. To many of us who are concerned about the church and are involved in its activities, valid theological training was thought to have solved the problems of the church growth. However, when we think of weak churches, we must reflect upon the forms of evangelism in Japan. There must be new, creative methods which will bring about a radical change in the churches in Japan.

Should ministry in Japan be different from what it is typical in other countries? Or, is Japan different from Africa, Latin America, or other Asian countries in the practice of ministry? The percentage of Christian population in these country is much larger than that of Japan. While considering the painfully slow growth, or non-growth, of the Christian church in Japan, one of my friends from South Korea once asked me, "Who are the Japanese? What is the social and cultural situation in Japan? Why do they reject Christianity?" His concern is honest and sincere. The next question will be "How can we

solve the problem?" Some Japanese theologians have thought and are challenged to answer these questions, but no adequate answer is given.

The Christian population has never reached one percent of the total population in the Christian history of Japan since 1549.¹⁸ Japan has a population of more than 120 million now and only 0.43 % of the population is Protestant Christian.¹⁹ I call this the icy "Great Wall." Why do they remain at such a low percentage? What is the matter? How can we break down this spiritually icy, cold 'Great Wall'?

Joshua 6:20 reads: "When the trumpet sounded, the people shouted, and at the sound of the trumpet, when the people gave a loud shout, the wall collapsed." It is high time that the trumpet be sounded and the people should give a loud shout to collapse the Great Wall. The collapse of the ungodly wall of the city of Jericho was nothing less than a miracle. Breaking down the Great Wall in Japan will take a miracle, too. God's people in Japan need to know what their part will be in that miracle.

Nehemiah was told that the wall of Jerusalem was broken down, and its gates had been burned down. Nehemiah felt a burden to meet a need and prayed before God (Nehemiah 1:1-3), realizing that only God can ultimately meet the need (Nehemiah 1:4-11). He asked the King for timber to make beams for the gates of the citadel by the temple and for the city wall. He also asked the King for army officers and cavalry to carry out the plan to meet this need (Nehemiah 2:1-8). He assessed the need and was encouraged by the vision God had given him to build the wall and the gates (Nehemiah 2:11-18). There are numerous Old Testament examples of God expressing vision to his people. Nehemiah was one of those examples. He implemented the God given vision to build the wall and gates. Ecclesiastes 3:1-3 reads that there is a time to tear down and a time to build. Now is the time that we should have a burden coming from a detailed

¹⁸ The Catholic faith was first brought to Japan in 1549 by a Spanish missionary, Francis Xavier (1506-1552).

¹⁹ The Church Information Service center (CIS) in Japan, May 1998.

assessment, make a conceptual plan, and be inspired to tear down the icy cold Great Wall and to build a godly wall in Japan, realizing that only God can ultimately complete it. Japanese people, however, have been perpetual builders of idols to worship. Jeremiah 2:27-28 reads:

They say to wood, “You are my father,” and to stone, “You gave me birth.” They have turned their backs to me and not their faces; yet when they are in trouble, they say, “Come and save us!” Where then are the gods you made for yourselves? Let them come if they can save you when you are in trouble! For you have as many gods as you have towns, O Judah.

Japan is said to have eight million gods. This number of idols is much more than the number of towns they have. Throughout history Shinto has been a religion of the nation, and Buddhism is the individual's home religion in contemporary Japan. Every town and city, regardless of its rank of importance, has its own Shinto pantheon. Almost every individual home keeps a *Butsudan* (a Buddhist moveable shrine for deceased ancestor worship). Paul “was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols” (Acts 17:16) and he “reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there” (Acts 17:17). He would be just as distressed to see Japan. Japan has retained its reputation in religious philosophy through the years and has maintained a leading educational system in today's world. Japan, however, worships more idols than any country in the world.

Japan must be rescued. God called to Moses and said, “I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land” (Exodus 3:7). What are the strategies of God to rescue Japan from spiritual retardedness? How and when is God planning to lead an exodus of the Japanese people out of hands of Satan? Will He come to rescue or will He come to judge?

B. Affirmation of the Commission

It is necessary that the invasion of the world by the gospel begins at a particular point of time with a particular people, who in turn are responsible to carry that gospel to the other nations and people. The church is commanded to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ to all the world (Matthew 28:20, Mark 16:15). Matthew 28:19-20 reads:

Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

“All nations” and “baptizing” stand for their union with and commitment to Christ.²⁰ In considering the validity of the evangelization of the nations of the gentiles, we see that the faith of the centurion (Matthew 8:10-11) and the faith of the Canaanite woman (Matthew 15:22) had already forecast the day when the good news would be proclaimed to the gentiles. It is to the gentiles that the good news must now be proclaimed. Matthew 24:14 reads: “This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.”

Jesus confronts His disciples, and through them the church in every age, with a mission which extends to the end of the earth-Japan. Our Lord charges us to pursue His work, to proclaim His salvation. He will be present in our midst (Matthew 18:20) everywhere and always. Christ is with us to the end of the world. “The end of the world” involves the end of the present world. It involves Japan, too. Japan may be the spiritual end of the world.

Beginning at Jerusalem, the mission was to extend, through Judea and Samaria, to the ends of the earth. In Acts 1:8 we read: “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria,

²⁰ NIV Study Bible, 1489

and to the ends of the earth." NIV gives a comment on this:

This is a virtual outline of Acts: The apostles were to be witnesses in Jerusalem (chs. 1-7), Judea and Samaria (chs.8-9) and the ends of the earth including Caesarea, Antioch, Asia Minor, Greece and Rome (chs.10-28).

They began this task when they were equipped with the power of the Spirit (Acts:4-5). To accomplish this formidable task, the church would require (Luke 24:29) and receive (Acts 1:8) the aid of the Holy Spirit. In carrying out the Great Commission, the disciples would encounter opposition (Matthew 10:16) and persecution (John 15:20). Some would even suffer martyrdom (John 16:2).

The gospel to preach includes not only the historic facts of Christ's death and resurrection but all the teaching of our Lord (Matthew 28:20). We know that we are challenged to a vast endeavor. If we are waiting until we are properly and completely equipped and duly sent out, we may never get to the task. We have not been baptized for conducting a narrow ministry, but for the worldwide ministry.

C. Rationale for Contextualization

1. Example of Incarnation

The incarnation with a view to human redemption is the supreme mystery. However, Christianity is a fact, rather than an idea or a particular view of life. It is not speculative. The incarnation is the foundational fact that God contextualized Himself to the world. This was a movement of divine compassion towards man. It is an assumption of human nature by the Son of God so that He might restore human nature to His own divine eternity. It is written in John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life."

Incarnation unites human nature to the personality of God. This is an act of grace that we are able to have fellowship with Him. I John 1:3 reads: "We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us." Walker writes:

Jesus had a definite mission from the Father, to be the representative of God and of man in the World, and in all that pertained to the ethical and spiritual life and to His mission as Founder of the Kingdom of God.²¹

In His teaching, in its ethical and spiritual sphere, we find the deepest and truest philosophy; above all, we find it in His life. He studied the Scriptures and spoke of God's thought in its highest forms. It is written in the Bible: "When the crowds heard this, they were astonished at His teaching" (Matthew 22:33).

According to the testimony of the Gospels, Jesus drew his knowledge of the needs of the ministry from his work among people in the world as the Messiah as it is written, "My Father is always at His work to this very day, and I, too, am working," (John 5:17). He also drew his knowledge from actual experience of the needs of men, "When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd" (Matthew 9:36). The incarnated Jesus, our Lord, had to, first of all, contextualize the concept of the kingdom of heaven to the traditional and legalistic Jewish society. Jesus said, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel" (Matthew 15:24). However, it is Japan today which needs the incarnated Lord first of all among the nations.

2. The Validity of Contextualization

In order to impact the culture with the gospel, pastors in Japan need to know and understand the time and reality of the situation where they are standing. We read in I Chronicles 12:32a, "And the sons of Issachar, men who understood the times, with knowledge of what Israel should do." Dr. Gill writes:

God has called pastors to more than teaching believers the Bible and trying to maintain numbers and offerings on Sunday mornings. We are called to impact our culture with the gospel.²²

To impact our culture we will need to understand it. When we think of culture we

²¹ Walker, W. Louise, *The Spirit and the Incarnation*, (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark, 1907), 355.

²² Jeffrey, A. Gill, "The Practice of Ministry Leadership PM 801" (D. Min. Syllabus, Grace Theological Seminary, 1999), 62.

understand it as Hiebert defines it:

There has been considerable debate about a precise definition of the concept, but for our purpose we can define culture as the integrated system of learned patterns of behavior, ideas and products characteristic of a society.”²³

Nida defines it as follows:

Culture is all nonmaterial traits which are passed on from one generation to another. They are both transmittable and accumulative, and they are cultural in the sense that they are transmitted by the society, not by the genes.²⁴

Gibbs draws on the Willowbank Report for his definition of culture and six views of Christ's interaction with culture and states as follows:

Culture is an integrated system of beliefs (about God or reality or ultimate meanings), of values (about what is true, good, beautiful and normative), of customs (how to behave, relate to others, talk, pray, dress, work, trade, farm, eat, etc.), and of institutions which express these beliefs, values and customs (government, law courts, temples or churches, family, school, hospitals, factories, shops, unions, clubs, etc.), which bind a society together and give it a sense of identity, dignity, security and continuity. (Willowbank Report 1978:7).²⁵

When the gospel is proclaimed and the church begins to emerge, there is an inevitable interaction between this new church and its culture. We need, therefore, to understand the relationship of the gospel to culture in general. Gibbs presents H.R. Niebuhr's five views.²⁶ Niebuhr's views affirm for us the validity of our contextualization, because of Jesus' deep relevance to our culture.

The first view is Christ against culture. This sets the church against the world. When the individual turns to Christ he rejects the world, for the world is in the power of

²³ Hiebert, Paul G., *Cultural Anthropology*, (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1976), 25

²⁴ Nida, Eugene A., *A God's Word in Man's Language*, (New York: Harber and Row, 1952).

²⁵ Gibbs, Eddie, *I Believe in Church Growth*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1981), 88.

²⁶ Ibid., 88-92

the evil one. John 12:31 reads: "Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out." It is a place of tribulation for believers, which has to be overcome by the Lord. John 16: 33 reads: "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." Gibbs says that this 'Christ against culture' position was adopted by Tertullian in the fourth century and Tolstoy in recent times.

The second view is Christ of culture. In this view Christ is regarded as the inspirer and perfecter of culture. The best ingredients of each culture are selected which most express His character and purposes for mankind. Gibbs comments that this was the position held by many of the Gnostics. He writes that some would claim that the concept of deity is the product of that culture, being no more than an idealization and personification of cultural elements, without any objective existence. In the case of the Judeo-Christian concept of deity, this can be strongly challenged on the grounds of the historical basis of divine revelation. For the Christian, Gibbs writes, this revelation comes to fullness in the incarnation of Christ.

The third view is Christ above culture. Gibbs writes that this is the position of Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, and Thomas Aquinas, who see Christ as 'the fulfillment of cultural aspirations and the restorer of the institutions of true society. Yet there is in him something that neither arises out of culture nor contributes directly to it. He is discontinuous as well as continuous with social life and its culture. Christians who adopt this conceptual framework recognize that within culture there are laws in addition to those expressed by Jesus Christ which are also from God. They must therefore seek to achieve a synthesis of those God-imposed requirements rendering "to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22:21).

The fourth view is Christ and culture in paradox. Gibbs comments that this view accepts the 'Christ above culture' position, but fails to achieve a workable synthesis. It therefore places them in a paradoxical relationship and leaves the believer to live with

the tension of relating to the world. This dualistic position can be detected in the writings of the apostle Paul, a view endorsed by Luther, where the Christian is described as “under law, and yet not under law but grace; he is a sinner, and yet righteous, he believes as a doubter; he has assurance of Salvation, yet walks the knife-edge of insecurity. In Christ all things have become new, and yet everything remains as it was from the beginning.” Gibbs is writing that in its negative assessment of human effort it is akin to the “Christ against culture” position, yet differs in response to that situation.

The last view is Christ the transformer of culture. Gibbs comments that this represents a more positive attitude towards culture than those mentioned above, and this is more critical than the second position. He comments that, while culture remains under the judgment of God it is also subject to His saving rule. This view is represented in the positive responses in the Gospel of John to the world: “God so loved the world that He gave His son” (John 3:16). John regards him as Savior of the world and records Jesus’ declaration to be the light of the world (John 8:12). Gibbs states that Augustine and John Wesley have identified with this emphasis. For them culture is there to be converted rather than replaced by something entirely new. Kraft writes in his book:

Though God exists totally outside of culture, while humans exist totally within culture, God chooses the cultural milieu in which humans are immersed as the arena of His interaction with people.²⁷

Gibbs gives a comment that Jesus acts redemptively with regard to culture. It includes judgement on some elements but also affirmation on other areas, and a transformation of the whole.²⁸ Gibbs continues: “No one lives outside a cultural context. We are all to a great extent the product of our culture.”²⁹

When we read Genesis 1:26-30, we understand that from the beginning man was

²⁷ Kraft, Charles H., *Christianity in Culture*, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1979), 114

²⁸ Gibbs, 92

²⁹ Ibid., 93

entrusted with a cultural mandate to exercise authority over his environment. This cultural mandate was not abolished by the fall of man, it simply became more complex. Every culture displays confusion and contradictions. They have become different from the original human culture which was made by divine command in the early days of creation. Genesis 11:1-9 tells us that this happened because of the rebellious pride of man. In spite of the fact that man's sin is evident in all cultures, each of the different cultural frameworks in which we have been raised provides us both security and significance. However, we do not have simple one culture but many and they do not always give us security and significance. Gibbs points out the relationships between cultures:

Beyond those frontiers are alien cultures which impinge on our own for good or ill. Sometimes the relationship is one of coexistence-two cultures exist side by side but in separate compartments. At other times they may exist in competition, each endeavoring to gain influence in a third area. Yet again, they may give rise to conflict. At other times they serve to enrich each other through the mutual benefit of cross-fertilization.³⁰

The fact that cultures differ from each other for historical and environmental reasons is understandable from the source of the Bible. Contextualization does not mean a simple transmission of biblical truth from one culture to another. Gibbs questions if this is desirable. He asserts that this is an important question for the future expectations for the mission of the Church.³¹

The validity of contextualizing lies in the fact that the biblical revelation must be displayed in each culture. The Bible itself testifies that divine revelation is of God. God uses language and imagery which communicate the truths he wishes to convey to a specific audience, whether it be the audience of a solitary individual, a group, a nation, or a number of nations. Kraft writes:

³⁰ Gibbs, 93-94

³¹ Ibid., 95

In crossing the gap between himself and his creatures, God does not merely build a bridge halfway across, calling to us to construct a structure from our end to span the unspanned area. Rather, God employs our language, our culture, the principles of communication in terms of which we operate. He reveals himself in a receptor-oriented fashion.³²

Pastors are called to impact culture with the gospel through contextualization. Contextualization starts with knowing and understanding the culture. God uses our language and culture.

3. The process of Contextualization

As mentioned above, we are called to impact our culture with the gospel. We must understand not only the times but the people and their values, beliefs, and assumptions, to have the knowledge of what we should do. In I Corinthians 15:1-8 we read: "For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance" (15:3). Paul links himself with early Christian tradition. He was not its originator, nor did he receive it directly from the Lord. His source was other Christians. In NIV it is commented:

The verbs he uses are technical terms for receiving and transmitting tradition. What follows is the heart of the gospel: that Christ died for our sins not for his own sins, and that he was raised from the dead.³³

To stop with "knowing and preaching the word" is the death of effectiveness in reaching the society with the gospel. To know the message is only one thing we must focus on. We have our being in Him whose message we are to know. In Acts 17:28 we read: "For in Him we live and move and have our being." Dr. Gill comments:

"It takes a lot of time to be in tune with heathen culture and really understand how unsaved people think and live. Many conservative, evangelical pastors are isolationists and intimidated by the unsaved."³⁴

He points out two major characteristics of the average non-believer in his society

³² Kraft, 169

³³ *NIV Study Bible*, 1755

³⁴ Gill, 62

(America) today. These make it hard to evangelize people. One is that they are choice-oriented people. People expect and even demand choices. The church has attempted to respond to this with offering a variety of ministries (children, youth, singles, seniors, etc.). “The problem is,” he writes, “that all we seem to be able to effectively reach in these categories are believers, because we do not understand our culture very well.”³⁵

The second is that they are needs-oriented people. Dr. Gill comments that people want their personal needs met, and that we have to determine the difference between “catering to the flesh” and “meeting the needs of broken, sinful people” to structure the ministries accordingly. The third is that the people are image-oriented. They get the news from TV. The situation seems to be similar in Japan except the fact that Japan has strong characteristics which are fostered by traditional pagan culture.

Contextualization is required to develop a strategy for impacting the culture with the message. In Acts 17:22-23 we read that Paul started with where people were, what was familiar to them, and then presented the message with relevance. We understand that Jesus modeled this in chapter four of John with the Samaritan woman. When we read I Corinthians 9:19-23, it gives us what the basis for contextualization is to be. It reads:

Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law, so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law.

Implementing a strategy must flow from a heart of passion and compassion as Paul had in Acts 17:16. He was greatly distressed to see that the city (Athens) was full of idols and started to reason in the synagogue. Japan is not a city but a country and is full of idols in visible and invisible forms. Dr. Gill writes that “we do ‘all things for the sake of the gospel,’ which includes being students of our culture.”³⁶

³⁵ Ibid., 62

³⁶ Ibid., 63

D. Contextualizing

1. Significance

Dr. Stallter writes:

Contextualization means finding out why people act the way they do and hold the values they hold so we can know what scriptures to use and how to apply them meaningfully for change on the deeper levels of values, beliefs and worldview assumptions.³⁷

Fukuda comments that some Japanese local church pastors think that God confronts Japanese culture. Some missionaries from foreign countries think that God supports Western culture. Some pessimistic Japanese Christians think that it is an unfinished dream to try to contextualize Christianity in Japanese society. Some Japanese Christians of the Gospel denomination say that contextualization (Christianity taking on truly Japanese forms and expression) is a kind of new Pentecostal church or a new denomination of Christianity.³⁸

All these concepts come from a lack of study concerning contextualization. In spite of all these pessimistic views about contextualization, our expectations are that God will manifest his power among those who are powerless through contextualized churches in Japan. Thanks to God's common grace, we will be able to find some gifts that He has bestowed on the Japanese culture.

However, spontaneity will not make for effective contextualization. It is very important to be intentional. Preaching and teaching, and working through small groups in the church, are important ingredients for contextualization in Japan.

The chronological span of Japanese churches is very short in comparison with Western churches. The work of contextualizing, its study and research, has been left behind among Christian churches in Japan. The practice of building up contextualized

³⁷ Stallter, Tom, "Contextualization for Meaningful Ministry" (D. Min. syllabus, Grace Theological Seminary, 1999), I

³⁸ Fukuda, 249

churches has just begun. However, the same Bible is being used by all ethnic nations, and it is the same God, same Savior, and the same Holy Spirit, for all nations. It will not long before Japanese Christians recognize the significance of contextualization.

Japan has kept unique relationships with God because of its unique cultures, unique history, and unique traditions. In order to penetrate Japanese society with the gospel, Japan needs contextualized churches. Japanese Christian life should be born in its uniqueness which God accepts. If Japanese Christians can create their own Christian life style, the churches will become alive. Then people will turn to Christianity and begin to recognize that the God in the Bible is a true, living God and He will meet their needs. God blesses all churches in the world through the churches which maintain their own culturally relevant style “as each part does it work” (Ephesians 4:16).

The history of Christianity in Japan is a history of persecution and compromise. This is the background of present-day attitude in the church. It will be necessary for Japan to create its own culturally relevant church life style which will be different in some ways from that of the United States, which maintains a contrasting religious history to that of Japan. The Creator permits unity in cultural variety and manifests Himself in a relevant way only through a contextualized church and message.

2. Theme

The Japanese have their own questions which come from their own unique worldviews. *Otomono Tabibito*, one of the most famous ancient poets in Japan, read a short poem in an anthology which is called *Manyoshuu* or *Banyoshuu*:

*Kono Yo nishi
Tanoshiku araba
Komu Yo niwa
Mushi nimo Torinimo
Ware wa narinamu*

A literal translation would be: If I can live this earthly life with joy and happiness,

I do not mind to be cast into hell or to become a bird or an insect, in the next generation.

This is a realistic worldview of the Japanese people. People call this view ‘realism of the Japanese people.’ This view is influenced by the thought of incarnation from Buddhism. The church must answer them. The Japanese worldview of supernaturalism and mass psychology, and their realism generate questions which are particular to them: What is God? They have their own God, which is religious philosophy. They think they do not need another revelation of a new god. What is truth? (John 18:38). This earthly life is all for them. What is sin? Their intellectualism keeps them away from acknowledgement of that concept. The concept of sin before the living God has never been perceived in the history of Japan. What is eternity? They think they become *hotoke* (god) after death. They have a concept of perpetual incarnation. What is repentance? Love? Humility? Servitude? Their hierarchical society will make it hard for them to accept these humble concepts. Life in this world is all there is for them. The contextualized churches have a purpose and a mission to answer these questions dynamically and positively. A contextualized church should expose them to a new self-recognition and help them develop their knowledge and thoughts about a personal relationship with Christ.

The key to leading the pagan nation to Christ is for each church to develop its own creative and effective methods of communication based on its own unique culture. In order to contextualize the Bible in Japanese society, the dynamic activities of small groups in the church, basic theological teaching and powerful biblical preaching, a mentoring system employed by leadership, and deepened healthy interpersonal relationships as a ministry foundation, are all to be implemented into “a fitting and orderly” manner (I Corinthians 14:40).

3. Historical Survey

Dr. Stallter writes, “Contextualization must happen on two levels: that of the

message itself and then on the level of the application of that message which affects behavior.”³⁹ Concerning the biblical message, Japan aspires to have militant defenders of historic Christianity, who “endure hardship like a good soldier of Christ” (II Timothy 2:3). Such defenders firmly hold to the faith that the Bible is the authoritative (Colossians 2:10), inerrant, and verbally inspired word of God (II Timothy 3:16), which will outlast the heavens and earth.

Contextualization, then, is seen in the form of defending. The attitude of Christian churches toward paganism and idolatry stems from the churches’ view of Bible truths. As mentioned in chapter three, one of the main reasons that most of the churches in Japan went down in defeat, during the state pressure to unify religious bodies into one and to compromise with idolatrous worship during the second world war, was that the churches’ faith had already been undermined by western modernistic scholarship. Woodberry writes, “In addition to nationalism, another contributing historical factor to Japan’s resistance to the gospel has to be liberalism in the church.”⁴⁰ Persecution and inner weakness of faith brought almost entire churches in Japan into open sin in actual spiritual adultery with the worship the posterity of the mythical Sun Goddess, Amaterasu. These diluted or syncretized religious substitutes (Revelation 3:15-16) only obstructed a successful contextualizing of Christianity into Japanese society.

Mark 12:17 reads, “Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s.” This means that collisions between Christian conviction and heathen practices are inevitable even today. The Christians within the Roman Empire would not worship the spirit, or genius, of a deceased Emperor, nor those living Emperors who demanded worship. They preferred to die cruel deaths of torture. To the world, it looked as if this would lead to the complete destruction of Christianity and the church of God, but in

³⁹ Stallter, 12

⁴⁰ Woodberry, 119

actually it spread Christianity throughout the Empire. Moreover, by 313 A.D., the Emperors themselves were professing Christianity. This was just the manifestation of what Jesus said in Matthew 16:25, “For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it.” It was the Christians’ conviction of that time under the Roman Empire that the only way to preserve the life of the church of God was to die rather than compromise the purity of their confession. In other words, the early Christians’ convictions against compromise between the two realms enabled them to spread Christianity throughout the Roman Empire.

Efforts were made to bring Christianity to Japan twice but both efforts ended in a failure to contextualize biblical truth in Japanese society.

- (1). 1549 - 1638 The Catholic faith first landed. Believers were persecuted and went underground. Christianity disappeared from the surface of the society for more than two hundred years.
- (2). 1859 - 1945 The Protestant faith first landed. The Pacific War broke out and Christian churches were persecuted by state powers. They compromised and failed to make Christianity a reality in Japan.
- (3). 1946 - Present Now for the third time such an effort is being made under the most favorable social context, with the greatest open door ever given Christianity in the country, with high economical growth, and with the best educational system.

Church growth has been painfully slow, and church funds are extremely lean in comparison with the nation’s economical power. If success is to come now where others have failed, it must be gained through the efforts of the most devoted Christians. They must create a new missiological approach by their own hands, not by imitating other country’s forms. We learn from history that in times of persecution the church that tried

to save its life by compromising with pagan demands would lose its life, while the church that was willing to lose its life in martyrdom would find its life. Martyrdom was one of the meaningful vehicles or means of strengthening Christianity. Dr. Stallter writes:

Culture is relative, but the Scriptures are absolute. If the message is put in contextualized forms, compromise, accommodation, and syncretism can result if the concept is used without regard for the integrity and inerrability of the Scriptures as inspired by God.⁴¹

In the history of Japan, we see the effort to save Christianity and the church sabotaged by the compromising of their convictions of biblical inspiration and the purity of their confessions and accommodating the demands of the state worship with the result that the church has grown very weak instead of growing strong.

4. Language

Contextualization becomes as important as exegesis. Leith Anderson writes:

A careful exegete recognizes that the eternal truths of the Bible are set in a historical, cultural, geographical, political, and linguistic context. Culture and language are intertwined. Study of Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek as a language independent of culture is nonsense. Exegesis presupposes that revelation always comes in cultural context. Exegesis of Scripture seeks to lift the transcultural eternal truths of God out of the original language and culture. Then, since revelation always comes in cultural context, the exegeted truth has practical value only when it is related to another cultural context. This means that the exegeted truth must be newly contextualized.⁴²

Hesselgrave writes, "One of the obvious elements of contextualization is the concept of context."⁴³ He writes that the cultural context in which communication takes place can be defined in terms of the relationship between culture and language.

Obviously language is the important component in expressing the content of thoughts in

⁴¹ Stallter, 1

⁴² Anderson, Leith. "Practice of Ministry in 21st Century Churches," *Bibliotheca Sacra*. (Oct. 1994): quoted in Tom Stallter, "Contextualization for Meaningful Ministry," D. Min. syllabus, Grace Theological Seminary, 1999), 1

⁴³ Hesselgrave, David J. and Edward Rommen. *Contextualization: Meaning, Methods and Models*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989), 158

a given culture. Sapir writes:

It is impossible to show that the form of language has even the slightest connection with national temperament. No causal relationship between the development of language and culture exists. Culture is defined as what society does and thinks. Language is a particular flow of thought.⁴⁴

There is, however, a correlation between the structure of a language and culture. The users of the language interpret their environment and experience in that culture using that language for thinking. In this way, language enables us to define and adapt to reality. It is not just a means of solving the problems of communication or thoughts. Hesselgrave quotes Sapir and writes, “The fact of the matter is that the real world is to a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group.”⁴⁵ We see, hear, and experience because language gives us a way of interpreting that perception in our community. This phenomenon can be demonstrated at both the behavioral and conceptual levels. Hesselgrave quotes Whorf’s research and explains that his research verifies the effect that language can have on one’s worldview.⁴⁶ Whorf shows how the differences between the grammatical structure of standard European languages and Hopi speech determines the way in which time, space, substance, and matter are perceived by each group. In the grammatical structure context, reality is analyzed in terms of objects plus modes of extensional but formless existence that is called substance or matter. As a result, existence is viewed as a spatial form plus a spatial formless continuum which is analogous to the outline of a container and its contents.

Whorf continues that this approach is a result of the three-tense system of standard European language verbs. The central structure of this language is objectification of time which enables us to arrange units of time sequentially. As a result, we can construct and contemplate in thought a system of past, present, and future as an

⁴⁴ Sapir, Edward. *Language*, (New York: Harcourt, Bruce and World, 1921), 8

⁴⁵ Hesselgrave and Rommen, 159-160

⁴⁶ Ibid., 160

objectified configuration of points on a line.

Hopi verbs have no tenses. Instead they have validity-forms, aspects, and clause-like forms that yield even greater precision in speech. The validity-forms denote that the speaker (not the subject) simply reports the situation. The aspects are used to denote different degrees of duration and tendency. The result is that the Hopi language favors an analysis of reality in terms of events, which are referred to either objectively or subjectively, with the goal being to validate the action.

Objectively events are expressed mainly as outlines, colors, movements, and other perceptive reports. Subjectively events are viewed as an expression of invisible intensity factors, upon which their stability and duration depend.

The difficulty and complexity of the Japanese language has been one of the troublesome things that prevent missionaries from foreign countries from effective contextualization the biblical truth among mainstream people in Japan. According to Whorf's analysis, Japanese language is similar to Hopi speech, though it has three tenses. This linguistic characteristic of Japanese language gives much influence on how they view the world. It is well known among the Japanese that, when astronaut Armstrong landed on the moon in 1969, many Japanese were said to have mourned that the land of beautiful *Kaguyahime*⁴⁷ was contaminated. This fact presents us that Japanese people view objective and subjective events in a manner which is different from European language users.

Japanese language is an "aspect" language, a "clause-like forms" language. *Haiku* is a good example of this. This language art expresses one's deep view of life or the view of the vast universe in only seventeen condensed syllables. As an example, the next haiku

⁴⁷ This story tells that a beauty who came from the moon to a pure-hearted Japanese old couple without a child for their happiness. People named the beauty *Kaguyahime*, who went back to the moon when she grew old enough to marry. This is one of the examples that they mainly view the substance as outlines, colors, and movements.

is the most famous one which was composed by a poet *Matsuo Basho*:

Furuike-ya Kawazu tobikomu Mizu no Oto

The literal translation is; *An old pond, a frog, jumped into it, making a sound.* In this very simple and short clause-like form the Japanese people read a vast and deep secret of truth, eternity or thought about the universe which are beyond the human aspects.

In Japanese culture, there is another way of communication which is without language. They call this way of speechless communication *Ishin Denshin* in Japanese. A Japanese-English dictionary translates this as a “tacit understanding.” The Japanese think that successful interpersonal communication is to be practiced without speaking. It can be done through hearts and hearts. They think communication can be accomplished without uttering language or speech. If you can express the deep truth of the living environment in the fewest syllables, it is regarded as an excellent language art, *haiku*. Japanese is an aspect language. Another example of my own work in seventeen syllables:

Banshyu-no Mori-ni tatazumu Megumi Gakuen

The literal translation is: *In late autumn, in the forest, standing still, Grace College and Seminary.* This is not a master-piece, but this *haiku* stands not just for the reality that the Grace College and Seminary building is standing still being surrounded by forests in late autumn, but also refers to the staff and students; how peacefully they are living and learning together under the blessings of the Creator. Something more is in this *haiku* that is not expressed verbally, and ideas such as the thankfulness or adoration or exultation of the original writer.

This non-verbal language, or extremely shortened syllabic language (some scholars call it ‘case language’) of Japanese reveals an entirely different dimension of communication to the western person. The ideas of Edward T. Hall are now common

among cross-culturalists. The title of his book, "The Silent Language,"⁴⁸ is now a part of common parlance when speaking of non-verbal communication. Through his writing we now understand a great deal about the 80 - 90 % of communication that does not regard words.

Concerning the silent language, Hesselgrave cites William S. Hall's writing:

The norms of non-verbal interaction involve kinetics, the purposeful use of the body to transmit meaning; proxemics, the use of space and physical relationship of those in communication; and paralanguage, vocal elements other than those integral to the spoken words, etc. Interwoven, they constitute the non-linguistic codes of a culture.⁴⁹

Hesselgrave comments that other specialists refer to other types of non-verbal communication, but kinetics, proxemics, and paralanguage are perhaps the most important.⁵⁰ In any case, these studies tell us that the context of the communicative event is determined by the use of a specific nonverbal language with which the foundation of the culture is associated.

5. Critical Contextualization

Dr. Stallter writes that contextualization is, through:

(1) an understanding of the nature of biblical revelation; (2) an understanding of the message of the Bible; (3) an understanding of one's own cultural values and their functions; and (4) an understanding of the audience in their cultural and social situation, a faithful yet meaningful and relevant translation, interpretation, and application of the biblical message in a second culture.

He continues that, after the four preparatory steps above, we must arrive at the process itself of telling those of other cultures (a) what the Bible says; (b) what that means; and (c) what they are to be and do in response to the implications of that inspired

⁴⁸ Hall, Edward T., *The Silent Language*, (Greenwich, Conn: Fawcett, 1966)

⁴⁹ Hesselgrave and Rommen, 207

⁵⁰ Ibid., 208

and inerrant message.⁵¹ But this message must be done in such a way that the target audience can understand the message and see its relevance to their lives and culture. If either the message or the people's understanding is sacrificed in this process, we have failed and cannot move on to the next step, an authentic or legitimate application.⁵²

The gospel message has to be communicated in ways the people understand. Hiebert writes that this understanding avoids the ethnocentrism of a mono-cultural approach by taking cultural differences seriously by affirming the good in all cultures.⁵³

Dr. Stallter also points out that there are two problems contextualization is concerned about. One is the maintenance of our own orthodox formulations of God's truth without regard to relevance. The other is the problem of making efforts at cultural relevance without concern for preserving the truth as revealed by God.⁵⁴

Hiebert writes about a low view of culture and a high view of biblical revelation that generates the doctrine that there is nothing good in the non-Christian culture, every aspect of the traditional non-Christian culture has to be destroyed and the result is that the gospel is seen as a foreign gospel.⁵⁵ Hiebert writes about uncritical contextualization:

It is reductionist and acultural-it does not take other cultures and religions seriously. It is ethnocentric-it judges other cultures and religions by its own standard and finds them wanting, while assuming that its own ways are right. And in the end it hinders the missionary task. The foreignness of the gospel is a barrier to evangelism, and syncretism is not prevented.⁵⁶

Hiebert refers to the definition of non-contextualization, uncritical contextualization, and critical contextualization in his article *Critical Contextualization*:⁵⁷

⁵¹ Stallter, 5

⁵² Ibid., 6

⁵³ Hiebert, Paul G., "Critical Contextualization," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 11 (3 July, 1987), 108

⁵⁴ Stallter, 6

⁵⁵ Hiebert, 108

⁵⁶ Ibid., 106

⁵⁷ Ibid., 104-109

Non-contextualization

A doctrine that there is nothing in the non-Christian culture and traditional non-Christian culture must be destroyed before Christianity is built up.

This brings about ethnocentrism and cultural foreignness.

Uncritical contextualization

This approach avoids the ethnocentrism of a monocultural approach by taking cultural differences seriously, and by affirming the good in all cultures. This approach shows that one theory or paradigm or culture is no longer better than another. There can be no longer absolutes or truths. This brings about relativism and syncretism.

Critical contextualization

The epistemological foundation of this approach is critical realism. The critical realism affirms both the objective and the subjective nature of knowledge. In critical realism, information is shown to be true by means of reality testing. Theories are limited in the information. Theories are not totally subjective, relative, and arbitrary. Moreover, theories, like maps, are complementary. Consequently, contradictions between them must be taken seriously. In critical realism, theories and paradigms are not incommensurable. So what we must do with traditional cultural beliefs and practices is, as the first step, to study the local culture phenomenologically, for exegesis of the culture.

Dr. Stallter also refers to non-contextualization or to an uncritical contextualization. An emphasis on contextualization must be placed on the church in local social structures and on the gospel and theology in local cultural forms.⁵⁸ An uncritical contextualization, however, has its own problems.

Hiebert writes concerning uncritical contextualization that the denial of absolutes and of truth itself runs counter to Christian claims about the truth of the gospel and uniqueness of Christ.⁵⁹ He claims first that in the case where the gospel is contextualized, checks against biblical and theological distortion must be practiced. Second, in the society in which form and meaning are inextricably interwoven, religious rites are performances, not just the communication of message. The separation between the form and meaning verifies that we are blind to the people of that society. Third is when

⁵⁸ Stallter, 6

⁵⁹ Ibid., 108-109

contextualization places the emphasis solely on the accurate communication of meaning, it ignores the emotive and volitional dimension of the gospel. It is dangerous for us to reduce the gospel to a set of disembodied beliefs and to forget that it has to do with discipleship. This is a very significant point for the missionaries from foreign countries. Fourth is the ahistorical nature of uncritical contextualization. Contemporary cultural contexts are taken seriously, but historical contexts are ignored. Christians can learn much from church history. The church is an exegetical and hermeneutical community which includes saints both within and outside the culture, and from all eras of history. Hiebert comments that to become a Christian is to become a part of a new history and that the history must be learned. The fifth concern is that uncritical contextualization provides us no means for working toward the unity of churches in different cultures. Instrumentalism is built on the belief that different cultures and paradigms are incommensurable and there is no basis for mutual understanding. The sixth concern about uncritical contextualization is its weak view of sin. It affirms human social organization and cultures as essentially good.

Sin is confined to personal evil. This is one of the typical worldviews of the Japanese people. However, social cultures and systems are human creations and are marked by sin. Finally, Hiebert comments that a call for contextualization without an equal call for preserving the gospel without compromise opens the door to syncretism. Hiebert concludes that there is an offense in the foreignness of the culture which must be eliminated. However, there is the offense of the gospel itself which we dare not weaken.

The gospel must be contextualized, but it also must remain standing in judgment on what is evil in all cultures as well as in all persons. Non-contextualization takes us to ethnocentrism and cultural foreignness.⁶⁰ The easy coexistence of Christianity and

⁶⁰ Ibid., 104

paganism leads us to syncretism.⁶¹ If we stay in extreme forms of contextualization, we are confronted with relativism.⁶² What shall we do? Our missiological survival depends upon how we think and how we work together with different cultures, different peoples, and different nations. Hiebert recommends that we must move beyond dependency and independency to interdependency.

Theoretically speaking, we are moving beyond modern science. The epistemological foundation now emerging is critical realism which affirms the objective and the subjective natures of knowledge. According to Hiebert, theories and paradigms are not incommensurable with critical realism.⁶³

Hiebert asks what all this has to say to the question of contextualization? What do we have to do with traditional cultural beliefs and practices? He recommends two prepositions quoting Jacob Loewen and John Greetz.⁶⁴ One is critical contextualization. Another is checks against syncretism.

The first step in critical contextualization is to study the local culture phenomenologically. The purpose here is to understand the traditional ways, not to judge them. If at this point the leader shows any criticism of the customary beliefs and practices, the people will not talk about them for fear of being condemned. In Japan, the local church leaders often hear phenomenological questions from non-Christians in their first stage of church life or just before being baptized: Can I attend a Buddhist funeral? What should I do if my relatives perform a Shinto wedding ceremony? Can I serve *sake* (popular alcoholic drink made of rice) and beer when my husband's friends visit us? And the questions go on. At this point we should seek to understand and not judge. In the second step, the pastor leads the church in a study of the Scriptures related to the

⁶¹ Ibid., 106

⁶² Ibid., 109

⁶³ Ibid., 109

⁶⁴ Ibid., 109-111

questions at hand, about death or resurrection, translating the biblical message into the cognitive, affective, and evaluative dimensions of another culture. If the audience does not grasp the biblical message as originally intended, they will have a distorted view of the gospel. This is a crucial problem for church leaders in Japan. Many unchurched people regard “love one another” (I John 4:7) as homosexuality, incarnation and resurrection as *rinne*. *Rinne* stands for metempsychosis or transmigration of the souls of the deceased in Buddhism. Once you die you will become a cow or a horse or some other life form in the next life. When it dies, then he or she or it will be born again as some other person. Repetition of this transmigration will finally lead you to become *hotoke* (god in Buddhism). For many of non-churched Japanese people, even today, Christianity sounds very similar to Buddhism unless it is properly understood. Drummond writes:

Xavier (1506-1552)⁶⁵ and the other missionaries were first regarded by the Japanese, including Buddhist monks, as representatives of another sect of Buddhism. Indeed, Xavier himself was astonished to find many practices and institutions in Buddhism which resembled those in the Catholic Church. The elaborate ritual of Buddhism made use of symbols and instruments surprisingly similar: praying beads, sacred vestments, bells and chanting, images, incense and holy water. There were monastic institutions for both men and women, the invocation of “saints was practiced, as was the making of pilgrimages.”⁶⁶

Hiebert insists this is where the pastor or leader, along with theology, anthropology, and linguistics, has the most to offer in an understanding of biblical truth and making it known in other cultures.⁶⁷ The audience needs to be involved in the study of Scripture. It is necessary for them to grow in their own abilities to discern the truth. Hiebert also insists on the same page that leaders must have the metacultural grids that enable them to move between cultures. He comments, without this, biblical meanings

⁶⁵ Francis Xavier; he first brought Christianity, (i.e.Catholic faith) to Japan in 1549.

⁶⁶ Drummond, 37

⁶⁷ Hiebert, 110

will often be forced to fit the local cultural categories. The result is a distortion of the message.

The gospel is not simply an information to be communicated. It is a message to which the audience must respond. In the light of their new biblical understanding, they must make decisions to respond to their newly found truth by themselves. Leaders must lead the audience to make the final decision in evaluating their past customs. For the Japanese Christians, separation from their custom of drinking *sake* (alcohol) with meals, smoking, and burning away *butsudan* (small movable altar of Buddhism) or *kamidana* (small movable shrine of Shintoism) in the house is a crucial matter. So the third step is for the audience to evaluate their own past customs critically in the light of new biblical understanding and to make decisions before God. Any sincere Japanese Christians who are changed and different in forms and manners from their non-Christians neighbors will be respected and accepted by them. If non-Christian people see little difference between them and Christians, they will never accept Christ. These Christians' explicit form and manner is far more meaningful for non-Christian Japanese people. Christians need to create new symbols, rituals, manners, and attitudes to communicate Christian beliefs in their own explicit cultural forms.

Finally, after having led the audience to analyze their old customs, leaders must help them arrange the practices that express the Christian meaning of the event. This is one of the important roles of the leaders in the church. Hiebert questions on the same page, "What checks do we have to assure us that critical contextualization takes the Bible seriously?" Through continued study and spiritual growth we are able to come to a greater understanding of the truth.

Hiebert calls this study and growth a hermeneutical community. He writes on the same page that the church should act as a hermeneutical community:

The priesthood of believers is not a license for theological lone-

rangerism. We need each other to see our sins, for we more readily see the sins of others than our own. Similarly, we see the ways others misinterpret Scriptures before we see our own misinterpretations. Along the same line, we need Christians from other cultures, for they often see how our cultural biases have distorted our interpretations of the Scriptures. This corporate nature of the church as a community of interpretation extends not only to the church in every culture, but also to the church in all ages.

One thing which matters for Japanese churched people is that if someone finds sin or misinterpretation on the part of others, people regard it as judgment and confrontation. Leaders' leader (pastor) is called for in this area in the Japanese church. The work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers can open them to God's leading in this area. Hiebert also refers to theologians and writes:

Just as one can often see the sins of others better than they do themselves, so also theologians can often detect the cultural biases of theologians from other cultures better than the latter do themselves. Out of the exercise of the priesthood of believers within an international hermeneutical community should come a growing understanding on key theological issues that can help us test the contextualization of cultural practices as well as theologies.⁶⁸

The individual Japanese church today seems to be operated from a mono-denominational perspective, or from the pluralism of incommensurable denominations. It seems as if the audience would never be able to find themselves in "one belief, one God, one baptism" (Ephesians 4:1-6). This kind of spiritual context in the church in Japan today seems to be a core problem and barrier to contextualization in Japanese society. The Japanese church needs critical contextualization now.

Hiebert, however, concludes his discussion on critical contextualization so excellently:

Critical contextualizaton does not operate from a monocultural perspective. Nor is it premised upon the pluralism of incommensurable cultures. It seeks to find metacultural and metatheological frameworks that enable people in one culture to understand messages and ritual practices from another culture with a minimum of distortion. It is based on a critical

⁶⁸ Ibid., 110-111

realist epistemology that sees all human knowledge as a combination of objective and subjective elements, and as partial but increasingly closer approximations of truth. It takes both historical and cultural contexts seriously. And it sees the relationship between form and meaning in symbols such as words and rituals, ranging all the way from an equation of the two to simply arbitrary associations between them. Finally, it sees contextualization as an ongoing process in which the church must constantly engage itself, a process that can lead us to a better understanding of what the Lordship of Christ and the Kingdom of God on earth are about.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Ibid., 111

Chapter Three

Core Problems to Contextualization of Christianity in Japan

A. Historical Issues

1. Catholic Faith (Kirishitan)

There have been two main religions in Japan: Shintoism and Buddhism.

Shintoism is indigenous to Japan and originated from the early legend age and is related to Tennoism (Emperoism). Confucianism was introduced to Japan in 405 A.D. This was not a religion, but rather an educational doctrine on morals and ethics. Buddhism came from China by way of Korea in 552 A.D. and gradually came to take its place alongside Shintoism as one of the traditional religions. To this day Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples dot the land wherever you go. A third religion has also taken its place beside the other two, and that is Christianity.

There have been three main waves of Christianity on the shore of Japan. The first was with the arrival of the famous Catholic missionary, Francis Xavier (1506-1552), at Kagoshima in 1549. This was almost a thousand years after Buddhism had come, but Xavier, and those who came after him, had considerable success, so great in fact that by 1580 there was a total Christian community of 150,000.⁷⁰ It looked as if Japan would soon become a Christian nation, and it might well have, except for the fact the government, began to persecute the Christians. This persecution continued for about fifty years. It finally culminated in the Shimabara Rebellion of 1637-1638 by Catholic Christians in which about 37,000 of them were slaughtered.⁷¹ Several Catholic Christians on the Shimabara Peninsula near Nagasaki rose up in arms against persecution. The Catholic faith was crushed severely and after that, the Catholic believers, who are called "Kirsishitan" (being distinguished from today's usage for "Christian") went underground.

⁷⁰ Sprunger, 23

⁷¹ Drummond, R. Henry, *A History of Christianity in Japan*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1971), 105-198.

Visible Christianity, though it survived underground in a certain community in Kyushu, was virtually brought to an end in Japan. This event is said to be the immediate cause for closing of Japan to the rest of the world, and it remained isolated from the rest of the world for the next 200 years. Japan closed its door to the world from 1639 through 1859.

2. Protestant Faith

After two centuries of silence, Commodore Perry's ships arrived and Japan was forced, through the threat of warfare, to open itself to the world again. This paved the way for the second coming of Christianity. This second coming took place in 1859, three hundred and ten years after the first one, with the arrival of several Protestant missionaries. Samuel R. Brown, Guido F. Verbeck, and James C. Hepburn were some of the more famous of these, and like a number of the other first Protestant missionaries who came, two of them had been former missionaries to China.

The initial entrance of Protestant missions this time saw a response in which "every three years the membership of the church doubled." Drummond writes:

A little preparation with public notice would fill a hall or theatre with a congregation that for four or five hours would listen to one speaker after another. Christianity seemed to have the power of self-propagation. In every three years the membership of the church doubled; and churches were paying their pastors such salaries that self-support seemed a thing of the near future.⁷²

The years from 1859-1890, which corresponds roughly to the Meiji period, were called the golden years of Christianity in Japan. In 1890, however, nationalism came to the front and The Imperial Rescript on Education was issued. This sought to affirm ancient Confucian virtues, and the law made the "ancestors" into "divine emperors."⁷³ Ultimately the veneration of them became the test of State Shinto.⁷⁴ The book of

⁷² Drummond, 192

⁷³ Conrad, 119

⁷⁴ Holtom D.C. *Modern Japan and Shinto Nationalism*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1943), 80

“Religions in Japan”⁷⁵ describes Shinto as a State Religion like this:

During the years between the Meiji Restoration and the surrender of Japan, Shrine Shinto, the primitive indigenous Japanese religion which was perverted by militarists and ultranationalists to endanger and foster a military spirit among the people and to justify wars of expansion, was manufactured into a cult or civic institution termed “State Shinto” or “National Shinto.”

Young, who was once a missionary in Japan, refers to the “Rescript” as “the most damaging blow that ever struck the Christian cause in Japan.”⁷⁶ There are several reasons why nationalism came to be powerful, but one of them is focused on the cult of veneration of the emperor which took more and more of the form of religious faith.

Idogaki refers to another historical event that was a barrier to the gospel. In 1941, The Religious Bodies Law was issued. This law aimed to enforce all religious organizations-Shintoism, Buddhism, Catholicism, and Protestantism-into one unified body and the government controlled their management in every detail. The Japanese Christians did not resist the law but rather they compromised to accept the policies of the government. The unified Christian church was called “*Kyodan*.” The government aimed to concentrate all the energy of the nation into one focus. Soon after this was actualized, the war broke out. The *Kyodan* cooperated with the government during the war. After the war the leaders came back to their churches as they were, as if nothing had happened. Idogaki writes that the Religious Bodies Law was established and that the Christian churches that compromised in regard to it without resistance were left with total distortion after the war.⁷⁷

B. Cultural Issues

⁷⁵ General Headquarters, Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, Civil Information and Education Section, Religious and Cultural Resources Division, *Religions in Japan*, (Tokyo: March, 1948), 130

⁷⁶ Young J., *The Two Empires in Japan*, (Tokyo: Bible Times, 1958), 44

⁷⁷ Idogaki, 19

1. Worldview

Japanese live in a country which is modernized (westernized). The people think that scientific methodology and technology takes precedence over all other ways of coping with life. This materialistic worldview opposes the biblical view of the world. Genesis 1:26 reads, “Let us make man in our image, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” Delegated sovereignty was bestowed on humanity by the Creator, not by methodology. Conversely, they admit that there is a world of spirit and that man can control all other existences by manipulating it in this world.

This contradiction of modernism and traditionalism characterizes modern Japan and produces tension among the people of the nation. This kind of contradiction might not be particular to Japan. Many developed countries are rapidly rushing into a post-modern society and these post-modern societies are characterized by high technology, and rapid change of culture.

The context of post-modernism requires close interpersonal relationships and has brought about the revival of traditional religion among the people in Japan. Inagaki comments: The sense of vanity which is caused by the post-modernism is fulfilled by the dynamic revival of religions, such as the occult boom among the youths.⁷⁸

Japan lies in two different cultural layers. Modern rationalism which was imposed by the west and is not particular to Japan. The other is the culture which is indigenous to Japan. This indigenous culture is the traditional Japanese view of the world, which is a supernatural and spiritual worldview. Inagaki calls this “Japanism,”⁷⁹ which is normally called “Japanese supernaturalism” among the people.

⁷⁸ Inagaki, Hisakazu, *Post Modern Japanese*, (Tokyo: Japan Harvest Press, 1990), 8.
⁷⁹ Ibid., 8

Figure 1 Inagaki's figure

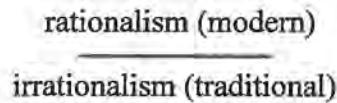
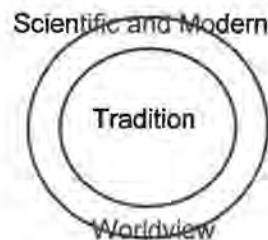


Figure 2 Hayashi's figure



Hayashi's model in figure 1⁸⁰ tells us the outside layer is produced by the practice of compromising with the scientific and modern worldview. It tells us that it is thinner than that of the inside. Hayashi's figure shows us more clearly that the Japanese traditional peculiarity is superior to the outside layer. This traditional utilitarian, spiritual, mysterious, and divinational religion emerges repeatedly in the history of Japan in different forms. Today's new and ethnic religions are simply the revival of the Japanese traditional religion, which construct the frame of the conceptual context and cosmology of modern Japan.

This new and yet old worldview is the worldview of the Japanese people. This view lies at the bottom of the soul of the contemporary Japanese people and holds a dynamic influence over the whole culture of Japan. This Japanese supernaturalism has been rooted so deeply in the heart of the people that it makes them hardened toward the truth of the Bible.

2. Contextual Logic

Contextual logic lacks the concept of the existence of absoluteness. This is the theme of the Japanese worldview. They think it their sacred purpose to maintain and to

⁸⁰ Fukuda, 57

strengthen human relationships and try hard to value much in human relationships and mutual dependency. This gives them valuable information. It is necessary to understand this context in order to carry on effective communication. Nakamura writes about this:

The tendency of contextual logic of the Japanese people is caused by affirming the given environment in the daily living.⁸¹

Japanese people would not admit an absolute existence which has close relevance to their environment, the world in which they are living. Phenomena themselves, visible or invisible, in which various things happen, are meaningful to them. Fukuda writes:

The western people regard that this world is degraded. Antithetically, Japanese people regard the nature and this world as a real world. They do not search for the providence or meaning which is beyond nature and the world.⁸²

The Japanese people hold little interest in events beyond eternity. It is hard for them to understand the existence of an absolute, invulnerable, and sacred law. It is hard for them to imagine the only one living God who is sovereign and has unchangeable laws. The things on which they can put their trust are the opinion of the group to which they belong, or of the leader with whom they work. For them righteousness is what is profitable for the majority.

Righteousness or morals are relative, which is opposite to the doctrines of God in the canon. The uttered words and thoughts, or the appointment which was made with others can be altered easily by the context. If the intention of the mass group is changed, the manners and values of the individuals can be changed easily. Izaya Pendasan writes about the structure of mind of the Japanese people. He claims that it is ‘Japan religion’ or ‘Japan doctrine.’ The fundamental idea of the ‘Japan doctrine’ lies in humanity. He writes:

⁸¹ Nakamura, Gen, *Nihonjin-no Shii Hoho*, (Tokyo: Shunjyuu-sha, 1989), 13

⁸² Fukuda, 66

The fundamental principle of the values of the Japanese are human. There is no theology but the learning of humanity in their society.⁸³

The word conformity is the key word to understand the Japanese worldview. Japanese society values conformity and lacks the theory of an absoluteness. They seek after mutual benefits and mutual survival in the mass or group to which they belong. Lack of absolute righteousness motivates people to seek after conformity, not confrontation, and to try to be stick to or to be obedient to the group. They hate “being isolated” by practicing things different from others and endeavor to avoid confrontation and controversy. The isolation is called “*murahachibu*”⁸⁴ in Japanese, which causes one to be sad and frustrated in his daily life. The sincere Japanese Christians would experience the true meaning of what is described in Philippians 3:20, “our citizenship is in heaven,” because they must live among those who live as enemies of the cross of Christ (3:18), whose god is their stomach and whose mind is on earthly things (3:19). This worldview has been a barrier to getting the message out to people. Mita writes:

Japan has traditionally and historically absorbed surging foreign cultures with a powerful appetite. At the same time Japan has excreted or digested those cultures that did not meet their needs and have had them changed completely in quality.⁸⁵

The Japanese favorite attitude toward conformity and peacefulness is brought about from their energy to reject those foreign events and cultures which they think would destroy them. It is now quite a hard task for one to implement contextualization of biblical content or truth to Japanese society.

Characteristics of the primitive Shinto can be clearly witnessed in the process of

⁸³ Pendasan, Izaya, *Nihonjin to Yudayajin*, (Tokyo: Yamamoto Shoten, 1970),104

⁸⁴ This term can be translated as “segregation.”

⁸⁵ Mita, Sosuke, *Gendai Nihon-no Seishin Kozo*, (Tokyo: Koobundo, 1965), 164

its absorption of other cultures. Spae comments that it will be one of the hardest works to write about Shinto using Western categories because it has no canon, no established doctrines, no hermeneutics. He questions if Shinto is a religion or ethic or just a life style of the Japanese People.⁸⁶

The basic Shinto was an animistic composite without name. It had never been systematized, worshiping nature and ancestors. Lack of an absolute value enabled it to coexist with other religions. It has kept its basic frame unbroken as an ethno-religion in the isolated country until now. This is one of the biggest characteristics we can perceive in Shinto. All through the history of Japan, the influence of Shinto upon the nation has been maintained combined to a great extent with Tenno (the emperor) system.

The reason the frame of basic Shinto has been kept unbroken until now is by the use of the theory of contextual logic. This is normally called syncretism, meaning Shintoism-Buddhism-Confucianism become one religion or facets of it. Syncretism never permits absolute existence and never rejects the value of this world. There is no concept of sin before the true God, eternal existence, repentance, or salvation in syncretism. People just seek after secular happiness, and pray to *kami* (gods of Shinto) or *hotoke* (gods of Buddhism) that their disease would be taken away. They pray for earthly success, peacefulness of home life, and their happiness in this world. In Shintoistic religion, they think that religion is a psychological structure on which people put trust only when they are in need.

3. Syncretism

Religion in Japan is seen in the form of coexistence. Shintoism, Buddhism, Christianity, traditional and ethical Confucianism, Taoism, rites and faith in ethno-religions, and many other various new religions; all these are coexisting.

⁸⁶ Spae, Joseph J., *Japanese Religiosity*, (Tokyo: Orient Institute for Religious Research, 1971),17

This does not mean that people in a certain district believe in a certain *kami* (gods) and people in other area believe in *hotoke* (gods in Buddhism). This complicated, multi-structured religious phenomenon has been promoted by new culture imported from China through Korea. Japanese culture involves a strong tendency to absorb and digest other cultures. Goki writes: "In Japan, the tradition of the earlier religion still remains in the society in spite of the entry of Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, and Christianity."⁸⁷

Many religious, ethical ingredients have been fused in the process of contact between other cultures and indigenous, primitive Shinto. These religious ingredients have been reorganized into Japanese culture. Hori writes:

Those ingredients were mixed so deeply that they lost their own identity and were used for the benefit of the state religion or home religion in Japan. Confucianism and Shintoism borrowed metaphysics and psychology from Buddhism. Buddhism and Shintoism borrowed theoretical and ethical ingredients from Confucianism. Both Confucianism and Buddhism lost their own original characteristics and were appropriated into the indigenous religion of Japan completely.⁸⁸

It is hard to understand each Japanese religion independently. The name Shinto or the name Buddhism stands for just one phase of the syncretized religion. Murayama points out that even the Japanese misunderstand this and writes:

Many Japanese regard Shinto as the national religion and Buddhism as an imported religion. The fact is that Shinto had been already transformed by the influence of Taoism before it came into contact with Buddhism. Buddhism came to Japan as a syncretized religion being mixed with the thoughts of China before Japan accepted it. So the syncretism of Shintoism and Buddhism does not mean a simple mixture of the two religions, or a simple joining of nationalism and foreignism.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Goki, Jyu, *Kami to Hito: Kodai Shinkoo no Genryuu*, (Tokyo: Asahi Culture Books 58, 1986), 164

⁸⁸ Hori, Ichiro, *Folk Religion in Japan-Continuity and Change*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968), 10.

⁸⁹ Murayama, Shuichi, *Henbo suru Kami to Hotoke tachi*, (Tokyo: Jinbunshoin, 1992), 2.

Religion in Japan can not be defined as separate one because it has never belonged to one religion exclusively. Many religious forms have been carried out in mixed traditions. Individuals have used each religion according to their own convenience. Fukuda quotes Miyake's description about the Japanese manner toward religions and writes:

Japanese people worship Shintoism and Buddhism. They go to the Shinto shrine at New Year, and go to the Buddhist temple at *obon*.⁹⁰ They visit church when Christmas comes. When life crises fall upon them, they turn to the new cult.⁹¹

In the syncretistic society one can by no means find the concepts of eternity, sinfulness, repentance, salvation, and gospel of the cross. Japan is a syncretistic society and people often have to recognize that the cultural differences between believers and unbelievers are barriers to getting the biblical message out. For many Christians, therefore, there is always a danger that adapting their biblical culture to the society becomes theological liberalism and relativism.

4. Mass Psychology

Individualism and modernism were brought into Japan at the same time when it opened to the west. Individualism and traditional group logic are contradictory. Fukuda comments that this fact has caused the Japanese people to form disunion.⁹² Japan is traditionally a mass-psychological nation. Individualism, which is contradictory to mass-psychology, was introduced to Japan when it started modernizing. This conflict has formed an uneasy spiritual disunion among the people. In Japan, the group is the priority over the individual. Individuals are required to control and adjust their emotions for the

⁹⁰ It means 'welcoming season of the dead ancestors home coming.'

⁹¹ Fukuda, 60.

⁹² Ibid., 61

benefit of the group. Individuals have to focus themselves on the advantage or on the purpose of the group to which they belong. Araki writes that in Japan individuals follow group logic and that the group renders them security and hospitality in return.⁹³

If biblical contextualization were to be implemented successfully in Japanese society, the result might be the mass conversion of the nation to Christianity because of their strong collectivity. The Christian population might rise from 0.43 percent to 4.30 percent or 43.0 percent in a breath. This is possible only through the work of the Holy Spirit of God.

Mass-psychology is far greater than the individual in the Japanese society. Kato writes:

The content of mass-psychology is the fact that it has a pressing power on the people for conformity. This conformity is practiced from on the part of mass-logic to the part of individual when the values of individual and the purpose of the group collide. The principal is that the individual gives precedence to the purpose of the group. There is little importance about which is righteous in their measures. The value lies more in the sense of reverence for fellow workers with whom the individual works. If a certain particular person leads the mass, the mass psychology is revealed obedience to that person.⁹⁴

The values of the group are pressed on the individuals when there is an encounter between their values and the purposes of the group. This is illustrated in corporated organization. There is little importance assigned to whether a measure is righteous. What is important is to revere seniors with whom the individual works. If a certain person is senior in the group, the mass psychology is revealed by obedience to that person.

This characteristic of the Japanese is often called *kyodo dantai shugi* (literal translation is ‘mutual cooperate partism’ or ‘co-dependency’ or ‘group cooperation’),

⁹³ Araki, Hiroyuki, *Nihonjin-no Koodoo-Yooshiki*, (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1973), 53

⁹⁴ Kato, Shinichi, *Nihon-no Kokoro, Bunka, Dentoo to Gendai*, (Tokyo: Shin Nihon Seiatsu Co. Ltd., Secretarian Section Publicity Press, ed., Maruzen Press Company, 1987), 87

which aims to profit both group and individual. It emphasizes conformity or friendliness among the group members. Westerners take their stand independently on the part of individualism. The Japanese people consider the relevance of and harmony with others as well as themselves. So the Japanese lack subjectivity endorsed by individual power and expertise. With respect to the Japanese cooperative culture, Fukuda writes:

They are well aware of their duty and are faithful to it. They pay much attention to the whole of the business and try to coordinate with fellow workers or those who are concerned. It seems as if they were the supervisor. It can be described that the Japanese have subjectivity or autonomy on the mass level.⁹⁵

This sounds like selfless devotion or loyalty to their business. The reality is far from selflessness. Where there is selflessness, there is a reward for the most part. The Japanese people, though they lack subjectivity on the individual level, are self-sacrificing, and often reject their happiness or their own will for the sake of the purpose of the group. This is regarded as mutualism in the mass or group. Fukuda asks why the Japanese take so much care of the personal relationship in the group, and writes that it is because of the consciousness of dependency of the people.⁹⁶

The Japanese worldview of group logic requires strong personal relationships with other people. It does not require any relationship with the absolute existence. It cannot ignore the mass concerns to which the people belong. Mass group is where they find the purpose for their existence. It is the frame of their daily living. It is hard for them to recognize any absolute value which exists beyond the interests of the group. The consciousness of dependability on the mass or group to which they belong produces quite a strong sense of their identity.

This consciousness of co-dependency has established mass-psychology among the

⁹⁵ Fukuda, 62

⁹⁶ Ibid., 63

people. This sense causes them to fear being separated from the group. Unless a group believes Christ, the individuals will not believe. If a mass group accepts Christ, then individuals will easily accept Jesus Christ. Japanese history tells us about this reality. When Xavier brought the Catholic faith to Japan in 1549, some of the feudal lords accepted the Catholic belief. Then all the folks in their fiefdoms accepted it.

The consciousness of dependency also has them avoid the breakdown of interpersonal relationships within the group. Minami refers to this as follows:

The cause of this kind of uneasiness, which is in the mind of the people, is a sense of unrest in the individuals. This uneasiness can be deleted or lessened when they have a group or destiny on which they can depend.⁹⁷

In a sense, the Japanese fear being isolated more than death. This sense of fearing isolation strengthens the need for personal relationships. Japan is a personal relationship-centered society, not an absolute principle-centered society.

C. Emperor System

1. Tennoism

There will be few Japanese today who believe the traditional folklore that the Imperial House is descendant from the Sun Goddess, Amaterasu, (not Artemis in Acts 19:24, 27-28, 34-35). The Imperial House, however, in all historical ways had been made into a symbol which is placed beyond all reach of domestic controversy. The Imperial House is inviolably sacred, and it represents the succession from one unbroken family for eternity. Tenno (the Emperor) is a symbol of loyalty far surpassing all other things. Japanese statesmen have planned well in secluding Tenno as a sacred chief of society and in removing him from the daily business of life. By doing so in Japan "he can be served to unify all people in unambivalent service to the state"⁹⁸

⁹⁷ Minami, Hiroshi, *Nihonjin-no Shinri*, (Tokyo: Iwanami Whoten, 1983), 10-12

⁹⁸ Benedict, Ruth, *The Crysanthemum and the Sword*, (Rutland, VT: Charles E. Tuttle Company, Inc., 1981), 125-128

Tenno is symbolized in the constitution but is still the sacred chief who may not take part in administration. Tenno's participation in mundane affairs would not measure up to his status for the Japanese people. If there is a value "that makes Japan a nation of Japanese,"⁹⁹ it is the Tenno system which has been preserved all through the long centuries of the history of the nation.

There is a term, *on*, in Japanese which has been rarely heard in recent days in Japan but is still living in the heart of the Japanese people. When the term *on*, which is a sense of obligation, is used for Tenno, it is used in the sense of limitless devotion to him. I would call this "Tennoism." Tennoism is the thorough reverence of the Japanese people for their imperial, sacred chief. It cannot be compared with any other thing. Even if his function is superfluous from the western point of view, Japanese look at him differently from the customary view of the hierarchical role. However, Ruth Benedict comments on the hierarchy mechanism saying that the reliance of the Japanese people on order and hierarchy and American's faith in freedom and equality are poles apart and it is hard for Americans to understand it as a possible social system.¹⁰⁰ Ruth Benedict analyzes Tennoism like this:

It is one's first and greatest sense of indebtedness to him. It would be impossible for them to be glad of one's country, of one's life, of one's great and small concerns without thinking of receiving these benefits. In all Japanese history this ultimate person among living men to whom one was indebted was the highest superior within one's horizon.¹⁰¹

Nothing will sting the Japanese people, she adds, to bitterness than deprecatory words against Tenno or attack on him.¹⁰² This '*on*' as Tennoism will be ridiculous for foreigners, but Benedict advocates the particularity of Japan and writes:

⁹⁹ Ibid., 13

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 43

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 101

¹⁰² Ibid., 30

These protagonists of One World have staked their hopes on convincing people of every corner of the earth that all the differences between East and West, black and white, Christian and Mohammedan, are superficial and that all mankind is really like-minded. This view is sometimes called the brotherhood of man. I do not know why believing in the brotherhood of man should mean that one can not say that the Japanese have their own version of the conduct of life and that Americans have theirs.¹⁰³

Japan has its own particular social context, social conduct, and worldview. This is the uniqueness of Japanese culture. Benedict emphasizes:

Encouraging culture differences would not mean a static world. England did not lose her Englishness because an Age of Elizabeth was followed by an Age of Queen Ann and a Victoria Era. It was just because the English were so much themselves that different national moods could assert themselves in different generations.¹⁰⁴

Benedict wants to say that Japan is the Tenno system which has been perpetuated for thousands of years without being broken. Tennoism (emperorism), which Furuya calls “the emperor system within us,” rather than the Tenno system, is an inescapable missiological issue as an unchanging spiritual core of Japan. Questions such as why the spiritual core has not changed need to be considered from several perspectives. Furuya attributes the reason to the substantial continuity of the emperor system. He writes:

The arrangement of the continuity of the emperor system and his indirect rule through the former bureaucracy during the occupation period has survived even today.¹⁰⁵

In spite of the transformation of the divine emperor into a symbolic emperor after the war, the emperor system has been left intact with great power. Furuya writes:

The Occupation Forces directed people to deny the divinity of the emperor

¹⁰³ Ibid., 14

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 15

¹⁰⁵ Lee, 39

and opened the way to the symbolic emperor system. The Occupation Forces thought that the principles of religious freedom and the separation of religion and politics had been secured and that the principle of democracy, pacifism, and human rights could not be endangered by the continuing emperor system.¹⁰⁶

Furuya's comment means that the occupation forces seem to have expected that with the principle of religious freedom and the separation of religion and politics, Christianity would spread, the number of Christians would increase, and that they would contribute to the democratization of Japan. However, it is hard for the Japanese to stand and move and live on 'principle'. Principle is not what they really value but rather they value contextual logic.

The spread of Christianity through this principle of religious freedom and the separation of religion and politics was the expectation of General MacArthur. In the speech he gave at the ceremony of the surrender of the Japanese army on September 2, 1945, he said that the occupation is "fundamentally a theological issue, a spiritual rebirth and reformation of human nature."¹⁰⁷

Speaking of theological thinking, what he referred to as the "theological issue" is the henotheistic issue, which he left intact. It emphasizes one value, one core among the many. "There is one kind of oneness which does not exclude the idea of plurality (i.e., henotheism).¹⁰⁸ "The spiritual rebirth" was not brought about and the "reformation of human nature" of the Japanese people is yet to take place.

2. Henotheism

It is well said that there are eight million gods in Japan. Polytheism is a form of faith in and loyalty to many gods. In contemporary Japan polytheism represents a pluralism of values. People pursue many different values and goals at the same time. On

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 41-42

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 42.

¹⁰⁸ Eliade, Mircea, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Religion Vol. 6*, (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987), 266.

the other hand, one value and goal centered upon Tenno has not gone entirely out of the mind of people. Furuya writes:

Polytheism in its extreme form leads to radical individualism and egoism, atomizing society and finally bringing on anarchy, one god out of many claims supremacy and tries to subordinate other gods. That is why in the polytheistic culture of post war Japan the henotheistic emperor system continues.¹⁰⁹

Furuya also comments that western history shows that when polytheism reaches its climax, a reactionary movement arises to return to henotheism.¹¹⁰ At first glance, Japan seems to be a polytheistic society. In reality, however, it is a henotheistic society, which values one thing out of many. The Encyclopedia of Religion defines henotheism:

Henotheism (Gr. *henos*, one; *theos*, god) is a term invented by Muller (1823-1900) to describe the stage between polytheism and monotheism in the evolution of primitive religion. He concluded that in the Vedic and other religions there was a process in which worship and all divined attributes were centered successively in a single one of the gods. He called this kathenoteism (Gr. *kathena*, one after another) or simply henotheism.¹¹¹

It is a mythology which indicates relative, rudimentary monotheism, whose idea of God is prehistoric consciousness, tracing the origin and first growth of human thought. This term designates a peculiar form of polytheism that is characteristic of the description of the gods connected with nature. However, to the mind of the supplicant, each god is at the time a real divinity, supreme and absolute, not limited by the powers of any other gods.¹¹²

The religious and political institutes of the west have for a long time been monotheistic, due to the influence of Christianity. However, historically monotheism has been in continual conflict with two other forms of faith, henotheism and polytheism.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 46.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 46.

¹¹¹ *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 265.

¹¹² *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Religion*, 46.

Summarizing what Niebuhr says henotheism, a primitive form of faith and society, is faith in one god out of many and pledging of loyalty to that deity. In the contemporary world, nationalism is henotheistic in that one nation out of many is absolutized and divinized, becoming the ultimate value for the commitment of one's life.¹¹³

Niebuhr offers as examples Nazism in Germany and Fascism in Italy. However, Furuya comments:

The pre-war Japanese nationalism, post war nationalism with its unchanging spiritual core, and the emperor-centered, *Shintoistic Japanism* are also forms of henotheism.¹¹⁴

Furthermore, the special characteristic of henotheism is that it leads to the formation of what French philosopher, Henry Bergson, calls a "closed society."¹¹⁵ It can be said that this is true of Japan today, which talks much about internationalization, but is criticized internationally for being a "closed society." Japan appears to be tolerant, in reality, however, it is intolerant. Furuya says that there can be only one center of value and object of loyalty, be it a nation, a race, or a civilization.¹¹⁶

This henotheistic closed society is also a barrier to contextualizing biblical content to the society of Japan today.

D. The Church

1. Religious Bodies Law

In 1939, the Religious Bodies Law was approved by the Diet. Japan was in a state of war. It had already seceded from the League of Nations, and the National Mobilization Law had been passed by the Diet. A war had broken out in Manchuria and was expanding. Japan aimed at building up its war time structure and tried to unify

¹¹³ Niebuhr, H. Richard, *Radical Monotheism and Western Culture*, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960), 11-71

¹¹⁴ Lee, 46

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 46

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 46

thoughts, and all national energies into one. The Law's purpose was, "in view of the situation of emergency, to guide the healthy development of the religious bodies which exert significant influence upon the public feeling."¹¹⁷

The Law required the religious bodies to be authorized by the government to plant churches, to establish a church organization or to organize any religious events. For example, inauguration of church leaders came to be controlled by the government. The responsible minister in the government was authorized to ban or control all these religious activities.

2. The Church

The situation was such that it was difficult for the Christian churches to rebel against the state. It might have been impossible for them to live on if they had resisted the government. Idogaki writes:

The general tendency of the churches went with the tide and turned their faces toward the direction as the state directed. The churches volunteered to accept the purpose of the state as if it were their own.¹¹⁸

There are some sample statements which the churches made at that time:¹¹⁹

We try to understand the historical significance of the war which aims at establishing mutual prosperity in great Asian countries, to accept the purpose of *kokutai*¹²⁰ and help the state with carrying on the responsibility of establishing a mutually prosperous sphere in Asian countries.¹²¹

True Christianity in our country is 'Japan Christianity.' Japanese Christianity is based on the Japan spirit. Christianity should be motivated and promoted by this spirit. This spirit has been kept *kokutai*-centered. The superiority and quality of the spirit has been nourished throughout the history of the past 3,600 years. We Christians must stand firm on the Christian faith based

¹¹⁷ Idogaki, 21

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 22

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 22

¹²⁰ *Kokutai* means 'national structure or system for political purpose'

¹²¹ Idogaki, 23. (Nihon Kirisuto Kyodan Jiho. July 15, 1942).

on this spirit and must carry on our responsibilities to the state.¹²²

Japan Christianity comprehends the essence of the Japan spirit. Both loyalty and filial piety can be disciplined thoroughly by faith. Christian faith is the most powerful ingredient for establishing the heart of patriotism.¹²³

We pray, O eternal God! We thanketh Thee that Thou hast created our Imperial Country according to Thy providence. We also thanketh Thee that Thou hast blessed us with Tenno (Emperor) which is from one unbroken eternal family and which hast been ruling this country for more than 3600 years, since God created the world. We thanketh Thee that Thou hast brought us today's prosperity. We pray, God, that Thou wilt enable us to serve and dedicate ourselves for world peace and for building the world of God according to our faith in Thee.¹²⁴

We can understand from these statements that the Kyodan Church of Christianity of Japan (*Kyodan* in short) was "Japan Christianity" which served the state policies under the control of the government. This was not necessarily implemented by the force of the government, rather, the church leaders volunteered to have the churches compromised. Takashi Fukuda, professor of Japan Bible Seminary, once commented at a meeting of The Day of Religious Freedom, February 11, 1993, that this was, this is , and this will be the reality of the Christian faith in Japan. The Japanese Christians would be ready to betray our Lord again when a certain difficulty at the national level breaks out.

3. Kokutai

Kokutai, National Structure or System, stands for the values, historical viewpoint, and Japanese self-view of humanity. The name shifted to "emperor system" after the war.¹²⁵ This term seems to be more inclusive and sentimental than a structured system. They say that the entire Japanese nation was identified as one under the *kokutai*. This meant one nation as one family.

¹²² Ibid., 23. (Kyoto Kyokai Kaki Shuyokai Hokoku. July, 1942).

¹²³ Ibid., 24. (Kyoto Kyokai Hyakunen-shi. 557-558).

¹²⁴ Ibid., 24. (Torisaka Kyokai Hyakunen-shi. 265, 276).

¹²⁵ Idogaki, 24.

The previous statements by Christian leaders attempted to harmonize Christianity and *kokutai* values. The mission of Christianity was to serve, to lift up, and to expand the spirit of the *kokutai*. Idogaki comments that the Pacific War was carried out for actualizing the purpose of the state to bring about peace and prosperity in the Oriental countries through the *kokutai* spirit.

What should the Christian churches in Japan have done before the war and during the war? Idogaki writes: “Christian churches should have died with Japan when Japan was defeated and they should have made a new start as renewed churches after the war.”¹²⁶

If the churches were the ‘Japan Church’, then when Japan was defeated, Christianity, which fought together with the state under the *kokutai*, should have been defeated and died with the state of Japan. The renewed church should have been birthed after the death of Japan but it was not. Church leaders returned to church after the war as if nothing had happened.

4. Resistance

In Acts 5:29 we read, “We must obey God rather than man.” This was the basic doctrine of the early church. Resistance is a positive manner to walk righteously before God. It is not just disobedience to this world, nor suffering by persecution. By resisting, Christians can present to the nation the fact that there exists an authority to which even a state must submit, and that there is an authority and value which even a state cannot intervene. Resistance displays Christians’ obedience to the Kingdom of God, but also presents to people the righteous way. Resistance often takes the form of suffering, legal punishment by the power. Resisters are often cast out of the family or the society as criminals. Even though, biblical resistance takes the form of non-violence, it often leads to disobedience, and martyrdom. The believers’ resistance comes from the belief that the

¹²⁶ Ibid., 4

victory of the Kingdom of God is given when our Lord comes again.

There exists a value which is beyond the state law, that is the Bible. Christians should obey that value. Japanese Christians should have resisted even to death during the war. In Japan, resistance that risks their lives, as we saw in the event of Shimabara Rebellion by *Kirishitan*, is very rare. Why did Japanese Christians not resist during the war? Idogaki writes:

It is because of “the Japanese.” For the Japanese people, conformity and unification is valued more than eternal truth. The Japanese people think that if individuals assert their own opinion and never yield, the human co-existence will come to an end.¹²⁷

The Japanese people think that to live with others without conflict is to love them, and to assert their own opinion is self-centered. The state is *kokutai* (the United Structure or System of the Nations) and to follow *kokutai* is righteousness for them. It is evil to resist *kokutai*. Faith is just a matter of an individual’s inner mind. Obeying the order of the state is another thing. This approach of faith is often witnessed among the average Christians. Many excellent Japanese Christian leaders in the church often avoid speaking the name of Christ in the market place even today. They often abhor a pastor’s verbal prayer in the sick ward when they are visited in the hospital. The individual’s inner faith in the Lord and openly declared faith in the Lord are manifested in different manners. In Romans 1:16 we read, “I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation.” In Japan, however, Christians are ashamed if it conflicts with the cultural way of conformity.

E. The Japanese

1. Human Bondage

“Being Japanese” is one of the core issues which hinders the contextualization of Christianity to Japanese society. Idogaki writes:

¹²⁷ Idogaki, 197

When the Religious Bodies Law was about to be established, in the early stage of discussion, Christians were against it. When once it was established they suddenly changed their attitudes and volunteered to accept the Law and became servants of the state. Where does this kind of change of attitude come from? It comes from being a Japanese.¹²⁸

The ingredients which constitute the characteristics of the Japanese people are generally said to be *Giri-Ninjyo*, *Chuu-Ko*, and *On*. Literal translation of these terms in the Japanese dictionary are simply as follows:¹²⁹

Giri: a duty, an obligation, a sense of honor

Ninjyo: human feelings, humane feelings; humane, kind, warmheartedness

Chuu-Koo: loyalty and filial piety (duty, obedience)

On: a kindness, a favor, a benefit, an obligation, a debt of gratitude

Gi or *Giri* (obligation) connotes a specific meaning. Ruth Benedict explains the specific meaning of it as follows:

Both the Chinese and the Japanese have many words meaning "obligation." The words are not synonymous and their specific meanings have no literal translation into English because the ideas they express are alien to us. The word for "obligation" which covers a person's indebtedness from greatest to least is *On*. In Japanese usage it is translated into English by a whole series of words from "obligation" and "loyalty" to "kindness" and "love," but these words distort its meaning.¹³⁰

She explains that if this *On* meant love or even obligation in English, the Japanese could speak of *On* to their children but it is not appropriate. It does not mean loyalty either. Loyalty is expressed *Chuu*, which is by no means *On*. She continues:

On is in all its uses a load, an indebtedness, a burden, which one carries as best one may. A man receives *On* from a superior and the act of accepting an *On* from any man not definitely one's superior or at least one's equal gives one an uncomfortable sense of inferiority. When they say, "I wear an *On* to him" they are saying, "I carry a load of obligations to him," and they call this creditor, their

¹²⁸ Idogaki, 207.

¹²⁹ Masuda, Tsuyoshi, ed., *Shin Eiwa Chuu-jiten: Kenkyuusha's New School Jaoanese-English Dictionary*, (Tokyo: Kenkyuusha, 1968).

¹³⁰ Benedict, 99-100.

benefactor, their “*On* man.”

Benedict comments that this *On* is similar to the term for love in English but it connotes something more complicated than love. It means a sense of indebtedness for someone’s sacrifice, a sense of responsibility which one should render some day to the person to whom he is indebted. If the term is used with regard to parents, it refers to their love, and thankfulness for all that they do for the son or daughter. It refers to their sacrifices. It connotes also a sense of return upon this indebtedness to the parents. When this term refers to Tenno (emperor), it implies a sense of limitless devotion to him because one’s existence is owed him. Benedict refers to it as follows:

The term is used of one’s first and greatest indebtedness to Tenno, it is one’s “Imperial *On*.” This is one’s debt to the emperor, which one should receive with unfathomable gratitude. It would be impossible, they feel, to be glad of one’s country, of one’s life, of one’s great and small concerns without thinking also of receiving these benefits. In all Japanese history this ultimate person among living men to whom one was indebted was the highest superior within one’s horizon. It has been at different periods the local seigneur, the feudal lord, and the shogun. Today it is the Emperor. Which superior it was is not nearly so significant as the centuries-long primacy in Japanese habit of “remembering *On*.” Modern Japan has used every means to center this sentiment upon the Emperor.¹³¹

This sentiment of obligation, *On*, is called by two different terms. When it is used for the obligation and repayment to parents, it is called *Koo*. When it refers to one’s senior or Tenno (emperor), it is called *Chuu*. The Japanese *Giri-Ninjyo* (sense of obligation and human kindness), which is in another word for *On* or *Chuu-Koo*, is deeply rooted in the mind of the Japanese people at a subconscious level. It is entangled in their minds and becomes human bondage in their daily living. This sense of obligation constitutes fundamentally the structure of the psychology of the Japanese people.

Interpersonal relationships among the Japanese are based on this structure. To accept Jesus Christ as their Savior and to serve our Lord obediently means to abandon

¹³¹ Benedict, 101

this sinful psychological structure, which is difficult for them to do.

2. Immutability

Protestant churches are either stagnating, or immovable. Many sincere and committed Christians want their churches to catch up with the times, to meet the challenges of economic growth and technology, but they do not know how. Others are fighting against inevitable changes for the sake of traditions that would be better abandoned. The current leaders lack the vision for church growth. Most of them lack creativity and are managing others' dreams. Some question desperately what is happening in churches and spiritual organizations in Japan.

Leith Anderson says that all institutions have a natural tendency to resist change, especially religious institutions.¹³² Reluctance to change and complacency are strong barriers to growth of the church. However, Japanese religious leaders and organizations are to fulfill their God-given mission and to try to overcome the barriers.

In the Bible we find that change is one of the biggest themes. In the Old Testament prophets proclaim quite often that the people should repent and return to God to live (Ezekiel 18: 31-32). Paul says "What counts is a new creation" (Galatians 6:15). Our Lord said, "No one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again" (John 3:3). In the church society in Japan, however, the term "change" is seldom heard. They do not know why change is necessary. Churched people need to know the significance of how to effect change that builds and strengthens the church. Woodberry writes:

It is actually true that there are Japanese pastors who do not want their churches to exceed fifty in number because this is the number that they can handle and that can support a pastor financially.¹³³

¹³² Anderson, Leith, *Dying for Change*, (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1990), 110.

¹³³ Woodberry, J. Dudley, ed., *Reaching the Resistant-Barriers and Bridges for Mission*, Evangelical Missiological Society Series #6, (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1998), 123

He cites Takakura's comment on this by stating:

Once a church building is built and the local congregation is able to stand on its own feet, all its energies are poured into maintaining itself, and it ends in the establishment of a small, in-grown, self-satisfied clique.¹³⁴

Anderson says that change is an unavoidable part of life and that change would be challenging enough if each person were an isolated island unconnected to anyone else.¹³⁵ People on an isolated island, however, tend to avoid change. The Japanese people have a basic dislike for changes. Ruth Benedict writes about this value for immutability of the Japanese people as follows:

The battle cry that ushered in the modern era in Japan was "Restore the Emperor and expel the Barbarian." It was a slogan that sought to keep Japan uncontaminated by the outside world and to restore a golden age of the tenth century before there had been a "dual rule" of Emperor and Shogun. The victory of the Emperor's party meant to his supporters the humiliation and expulsion of foreigners. It meant reinstatement of traditional ways of life in Japan. It meant that "reformers" would have no voice in affairs. The great Outside Lords, the *daimyo* of Japan's strongest fiefs who spearheaded the overthrow of the Shogunate, thought of the Restoration as a way in which they, instead of the Tokugawa, could rule Japan. They wanted a mere change of personnel. The farmers wanted to keep more of the rice they raised but they hated "reforms." The samurai wanted to keep their pensions and be allowed to use swords for greater glory. The merchants, who financed the Restoration forces, wanted to expand mercantilism but they never arraigned the feudal system. The cry that went up from Japan was *Isshin* - to dig back into the past, to restore. It was the opposite of revolutionary. It was not even progressive. The nation supported the program of going back to a golden age of isolation and the few leaders who saw how impossible such a course would be were assassinated for their pains (efforts).¹³⁶

Japan is a non-revolutionary country. One of the causes of Japanese immutability is derived from the ethnic homogeneity. Anderson writes, "the enormous tension facing our society in general, and our churches in particular, is how to justly assimilate persons

¹³⁴ Takakura, Toru, *Issues Confronting the Japanese Church Today*, (Tokyo: Kyoo Bunkan, 1970), 19

¹³⁵ Anderson, *Dying for Change*, 110.

¹³⁶ Benedict, 74-76.

of color and still encourage ethnic identity.”¹³⁷

Japanese churches need to encounter this kind of ethnic challenge. People who are different based on ethnicity, values, doctrine, or denomination will change the church, and the people who are the same will keep the church from changing. If the church institutionalizes self-perpetuation with strict rules to keep out anyone who is different in denomination, the organization can be very stable and very slow to change. The Japanese church should open itself to establish systems to attract and incorporate people who are different, who are from whatever denomination or background. In the Proverbs 27:17 we read, “As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.”

3. Duality

The contradictions of Japanese behavior is seen in its discontinuity and is deeply imprinted in the character of the people. From a psychological point of view, this comes from contextual logic. Ruth Benedict writes about this contradiction of the Japanese as follows:

During the past seventy-five years since Japan’s closed doors were opened, the Japanese have been described in the most fanatic series of ‘but also’s’ ever used for any nation of the world. When a serious observer is writing about peoples other than the Japanese and say they are unprecedently polite, he is not likely to add, ‘But also insolent and overbearing.’ When he says people of some nation are incomparably rigid in their behavior, he does not add, ‘But also they adapt themselves readily to extreme innovations.’ When he says a people are submissive, he does not explain too that they are easily amenable to control from above....All these contradictions, however, are the warp and woof of books on Japan.¹³⁸

She comments that the sword and the chrysanthemum are a part of the picture. The Japanese are, to the highest degree, both aggressive and unaggressive, both militaristic and aesthetic, both insolent and polite, rigid and adaptable, loyal and

¹³⁷ Anderson, *Dying for Change*, 28.

¹³⁸ Benedict, 1-2.

treacherous. They can indulge in pleasure and ease, no matter to what lengths they go in accepting extreme obligations.¹³⁹

This dualism creates tensions to which each responds in different ways. Their behaviors and opinions are changeable with ease according to the context. It is quite hard for them to be obedient perpetually to one truth, to one principle. When they encounter different times, different places, and different peoples, they change their thoughts and behaviors. This manner in their character creates tensions. Each has his own solution for the same basic problem. Some stake everything on ruling their lives like pedants and are deeply fearful of any spontaneous encounter with life. They become dependent. Some are more disassociated. They express themselves on a higher level of aspiration which has given them a leadership in the orient and economic power in the world. However, these tensions are a heavy strain upon individuals. They must be always watchful lest they fail, or lest anyone belittle their performance in a course of action which has cost them so much abnegation. They must always keep paying attention to the context so it will not cost them much abnegation and give them benefits. This tension has given them dynamic powers for prosperous economical growth. However, this has left an amazing ineffectiveness in the missiological category.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 291.

Chapter Four

Plans for Implementation of Contextualization as a Ministry Strategy

Spiritual retardation is a reality in Japan. The implementation of contextualization, through the four areas as methodology, will result in the contextualization of Christianity in the society of Japan. The strategy for implementation is to understand and grasp well the concept, thoughts, philosophy, and purposes of these four areas. Without understanding the fundamental principles which lie beneath each area, the effect will end up being simply superficial. Things will remain perpetually unchanged in the churches in Japan. Understanding principles such as the why, what, and how of the methodology, will create a starting point for strategy of effective ministry.

This chapter discusses the four areas as a methodology for the implementation of contextualization.

A. Effective Communication

1. The Biblical Foundation

a. The Sermon

Professor Shin Funaki, President of Japan Bible Seminary (JBS), once said in the class that one could not convert a man into Christianity by sermons only. He did not mean that we can minimize the significance of a sermon but tried to identify the effective communication of the good news to the benefit of salvation of the Japanese people. He did not suggest that sermons disappointed hearers, were poor substitutes for real preaching, or were merely tolerated by hearers who knew sermons were inadequate.

Dr. Sunukjian also writes:

Preaching alone will not accomplish the maximum spiritual growth in an individual. Preaching alone will not build the largest church that could be built. But preaching brings excitement and anticipation to the total church ministry. Preaching is the initial point of contact with newcomer.¹⁴⁰

One of the impressive characteristics of Jesus' ministry was that it attracted crowds. In Mark 12:37 we read, "The large crowd listened to him with delight." Seekers loved to listen to him and often thronged to wherever he was even if it meant traveling a long distance. Matthew 4:25 reads, "Enormous crowds followed him wherever he went." How do we minister to people the way Jesus did? There were at least two major characteristics of Jesus preaching that drew people to Him. When we read Matthew 13:34 and Mark 10:1, we understand that Jesus taught them in interesting and practical ways. The crowds also were amazed at his teaching, because Jesus taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law (Matthew 7:28-29). People were profoundly impressed (Matthew 22:33). They were enthusiastic about his teaching and enjoyed listening to him (Mark 12:37). There has never been a greater communicator than Jesus Christ.

All these biblical statements show us that to capture the attention of unbelievers like Jesus did, we must communicate spiritual truth the way Jesus did. Jesus must be our model for preaching. Unfortunately, some homiletics books and lectures advise us to pay more attention to the topics in the newspaper, TV, or magazines than to biblical truth or how Jesus taught. In the midst of all the bad preaching to which we are required to respond properly, "there are still good sermons being preached out of the traditional homiletics manner, and without transforming new homiletics."¹⁴¹

¹⁴⁰ Sunukjian, Donald, "Biblical Preaching," (D. Min. syllabus, Grace Theological Seminary, 1999), 4.

¹⁴¹ White, Richard C., *Biblical Preaching: How to Find and Remove the Barriers*, (St.Louis: CBP Press, 1988), 9.

When Jesus preached his first sermon at Nazareth, he announced what his preaching ministry would be. He read Isaiah 61:1:

The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners.

Jesus applied these verses to himself in the synagogue. The statement may refer to Isaiah in a limited sense but the Messianic servant is the main figure intended.¹⁴² His first declaration was about the Holy Spirit. He was filled with Him. This fact is very stimulating for all contemporary preachers. When congregations present reluctant attitudes toward sermons, it is not necessarily because the sermon is poor but could be because the preacher is not filled with the Holy Spirit. The congregations are far more sensitive to true spirituality than preachers imagine. Jesus' message offered practical benefits to those who listened to him. He said he came to "set people free" and bring blessings to their lives and people wanted to hear the good news.

The good news, the gospel, offers lost people what they are searching for: forgiveness, freedom, security, and strength. It provides answers our past. It is meaningful to the present and assures our future. People come to church to hear good news, not to hear the latest thing people need. They come to church for anyone or anything which can give them hope, help, and encouragement. Jesus knew this well. In Matthew 9:36 we read: "When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd." Rick Warren writes:

By beginning with people's needs when you preach or teach, you immediately gain the attention of your audience. Every good communicator understands and uses this principle. A good teacher knows to start with the students' interests and move them toward the lesson to be studied.¹⁴³

¹⁴² *NIV Study Bible*, 1106

¹⁴³ Warren, 225

He also adds that a good salesman knows the customer's needs as well as the product. A wise manager knows to begin with the employee's complaint not his own agenda. Preachers start where people are and move them to where they want the people to be.¹⁴⁴

Jesus spoke about John to the crowd in Matthew 11:7-9:

What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed swayed by the wind? If not what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear fine clothes are in kings' palaces. Then what did you go out to see? A prophet?

What do people go to church to see? What do they come to church to hear? What do they attend church to do? No wonder they come to church to have the power of the Word preached in Sunday School classes and in the pulpit. The pastor's job is not evaluated by earthly things. People aspire to hear biblical sermons. White writes:

In the best biblical preaching, engagement of the pericope uncovers significant dimensions of its reality that we have not known before, even though the pericope is a familiar one. It does not merely repeat what we good Christians already know about this text and its lesson. What the texts records having happened in the ancient event happens again in the sermon, so that we witness and vicariously share it. Because the sermon enables a replay of the ancient reality in our presence, we encounter, not just a theological concept or moral teaching, but the persons, attitudes, situation, issues, events—the richly detailed dynamic components of that ancient reality. This reality has more to say and do than is grasped by reducing it to a lesson we already know is true. In the biblical sermon the first goal is that we learn, encounter, and experience more of the rich contents of the text because, in a sense, that ancient reality has happened in our presence. A biblical sermon visits the ancient world, not just the abstract world of true ideas.¹⁴⁵

In Japan, expository preaching is valued rather than biblical preaching. Biblical preaching would be far more significant in Japanese churches than ever.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 225

¹⁴⁵ White, 11

b. Love

Jesus attracted people not only by his sermons but by loving unbelievers. Jesus said that it is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners (Matthew 9:12). He was even called the “friend of sinners” (Luke 7:34). Jesus enjoyed being with unbelievers far more than being with the religious leaders. Loving the unbelievers and being with them was one of his ways of effective communication. Rick Warren says that the most overlooked key to growing a church is that we must love unbelievers the way Jesus did.¹⁴⁶

Christians know well that the command to love is the most repeated command in the New Testament. Love is the central, primary and essential element. In John 4:8 we read, “Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.” How can we love the unbelievers? More than 99.5 percent of the Japanese people are heathens, opponents, foes or enemies, and resistants to Christianity. Jesus said, “love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Matthew 5:43). Korean Christians, whose percentage of the population is twenty-five percent of the nation, often point to the Japanese churches’ lack of crowds as proof that they are biblical, orthodox, or spirit-filled. This means that their small size is proof that they are a pure church, and that they have not compromised their beliefs. It may actually mean that the Japanese Christians do not have love for both God and neighbors (Mark 12:30-31). Loving unbelievers is accompanied by being uncomfortable. It is not easy for many Japanese Christians to maintain loving God and others without feeling social shame in the society in Japan. However, Psalm 69:9 reads, “zeal for your house consumes me, and the insults of those who insult you fall on me,” and in Psalm 119:139 we read, “My zeal wears me out, for my enemies ignore your words.” The NIV comments on this that zeal for God’s law awakens righteous anger against those who reject it and brings abhorrence of all that is

¹⁴⁶

Warren, 209

contrary to it; but it draws together those who honor it.¹⁴⁷ Rick Warren writes that there is no method, program, or technology that can make up for a lack of love for unbelievers.¹⁴⁸ Japanese Christians should not be always ashamed of the gospel but be awakened in righteous anger against those who reject it.

c. Needs

Jesus said, “What do you want me to do for you?” (Matthew 20:32). Jesus tried to meet people’s needs-their physical, emotional, spiritual needs. In order to establish evangelism, to meet a felt need of the people is one of the most important parts of effective communication. If we can establish personal relationships that uncover the felt needs of their hearts, we will find ourselves in a position where the Holy Spirit can win their souls to Christ. To find out their needs is the precious task of Christians because it does matter why they come to church. While it may be difficult and take time to discover their needs, discovery is an initial factor for effective communication. When we read the Bible, we see James giving a strong rebuke to Christians who think the answer to every need is prayer or a Bible verse. In James 2:14 we read, “What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them?” Meeting people’s needs, regardless of what they are, is an initial starting point of communication. People are more open when they can see a benefit.

2. Music

Japan Bible Seminary in Tokyo sets up two different courses for students. One is a theology course and the other is a music course. Thanks to the music course, students’ lives are highly enriched for their future ministries after graduation from the seminary because they are trained in singing and playing instruments. The training policies of the seminar are being blessed very much. We cannot imagine our daily lives without music

¹⁴⁷ NIV Study Bible, 856, 917

¹⁴⁸ Warren, 218

even if it is not church music. Music is an integral part of our lives. We sing before we eat, we sing when we are walking and working and driving. We sing when we are happy and even at funerals. Singing songs often encourages those who are discouraged and frustrated. Songs are a precious means for effective communication for ministry and evangelism. In Psalm 40:3 we read:

He put a new song in my mouth,
 a hymn of praise to our God.
Many will see and fear
 and put their trust in the Lord.

A new song is celebrating God's saving act. In Psalm 96:1 the psalmist sings:

Sing to the Lord a new song;
 sing to the Lord, all the earth.
Sing to the Lord, praise his name;
 proclaim his salvation day after day.

Song itself is a biblical element for celebration and for Christians' daily lives. There are strong connections between music and evangelism. They sing and "then they will trust the Lord." They sing and then they "proclaim his salvation day after day." Music can often touch people in a way that a sermon can not. It takes away intellectual barriers and sends a message straight to the heart of the people who sing or hear it. In Colossians 4:16 we read:

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

The 'Word of Christ' refers especially to Christ's teaching, which in the time of Colossians was transmitted orally.¹⁴⁹ The NIV comments that some of the most important doctrines were expressed in Christian hymns preserved for us now in the Bible. For example, in Ephesians 5:14 we read:

¹⁴⁹ NIV Study Bible, 1817

Wake up, O shepherd,
Rise from the dead,
And Christ will shine on you.

By repetition of words, Paul is stressing the all-pervasive nature of the light of God and its inevitable effect. In I Timothy 3:16 we read:

He appeared in a body,
was vindicated by the Spirit
was seen by angels,
was preached among the nations,
was believed on in the world,
was taken up in glory.

His incarnation, in all aspects (particularly his saving work), is the source of genuine piety. The words are printed in poetic form and probably come from an early creedal hymn. The Holy Spirit vindicated Jesus and enabled him to drive out demons (Matthew 12:28) and perform miracles. Most importantly, the Spirit raised Jesus from the dead and thereby vindicated him, showing that he was indeed the Son of God.

There are three different words used in Colossians 4:16; psalm, hymn, and song.

The NIV comments:

Psalm: ‘Psalms’ refer to the Old Testament psalms (Luke 20:42, Acts 1:20), some of which may have been set to music by the church. ‘Psalm’ could also describe a song newly composed for Christian worship.

Hymn: A ‘Hymn’ was a song of praise, especially used in a celebration (Mark 14:26, Hebrew 2:12), much like the Old Testament psalms that praised God for all that he is.

Song: A ‘Song’ recounted the acts of God and praised for them (Revelation 5:9, 14:3), much like the Old Testament psalms that thanked God for all he had done (Ephesians 5:19).¹⁵⁰

The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament defines them as follows:

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 1817. (Colossians 3:16).

Psalmos: psalm. It was often used of the psalms in the Old Testament and has the idea of a song with musical accompaniment.

humnos: hymn. The word is used of a song which is a praise to God.

odais: song. This is the general word for any kind of a song.¹⁵¹

Music is a force that can not be ignored. In Japan they have two different styles in the trend of music. One is the traditional Japanese folksongs, which are so difficult for all to learn and usually sung by mainstream people at a drinking party. The second style is the rhymes of the Children's folksongs. They are sung by all generations. Some of them are improvised as praising songs at church, similar to Negro Ballads in America.

It may be impossible to appeal to everyone's musical preference and taste, as it is said "There is no accounting for tastes." Music is well said to be a divisive issue that separates congregations, and yet a church without a song cannot be imagined. The churches in Japan need music leaders who are specialists and who are gifted with leadership. The music leader chooses the music style and teaches the congregation. "Hymns that are only sung at services" will never become beautiful or effective communication. We study church history and find that some of the medieval reformers like Martin Luther (1483-1546) used music as a means of effective communication at church. John Wesley (1703-1791) organized choirs as small groups and succeeded in raising up spiritual revival in England. King David was a politician, a sportsman, but also, he was a psalmist.

Whose responsibility is it to decide the style of music and the piece of music to use in the service? Is it the pastor's responsibility or music leader's? Do all pastors know music well? We recognize it is important for us to maintain healthy communication. Music is a means of communication in the church. There are, however, few music leaders who are trained in Japanese churches because of tight budgets in each church.

¹⁵¹ Rogers Jr. Cleon L. & Rogers III, Cleon L., *The New Linguistic and Exegetical Key to the Greek New Testament*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998), 468.

Sincere pastors want their sermons and music at the celebration to be influential factors for reaching people for Christ, and to make the churches grow. It will be one of the most critical decisions the pastors make in the life of their churches besides the preparation of the sermon. The church which keeps the style such as - they attended, sang songs, listened to sermons, and went away - will define the church as unattractive in the community. Church music, including the music style, will define the church's position in the community. It will be the pastor's prerogative to set the direction of the church in far more ways than people expect. The sermon and music will determine the kind of people the church attracts.

How can we decide on music? Normally, church people try to adjust the worship music to the theme of the sermon the pastor preaches. However, is this always possible? Are there good and bad forms of musical worship? Rick Warren writes:

The kind of music you like is determined by your background and culture. Certain tones and scales sound pleasant to Asian ears; other tones and scales sound pleasant to Middle Eastern ears. Africans enjoy different rhythms than South Americans.¹⁵²

The senior professor of the music course at Japan Bible Seminary often said that what makes a song sacred is its message. That is, the words make a song spiritual. If there were a tune without any words, it would never be a Christian song. It is a matter of the interpretation of the words. He used to say that a tune was a homiletical procedure. White comments that the interpretation of the words (scripture) through tunes will remove the barriers of intellectuality in church life.¹⁵³ Music is an international language. The biblical message through songs can be communicated in a wide variety of music and styles.

As mentioned above, throughout church history, great theologians have put God's truth to the music style of their day. Warren writes:

¹⁵² Warren, 281
¹⁵³ White, 39

The tune of Martin Luther's "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" is borrowed from a popular song of his day. Charles Wesley used several popular tunes from the taverns and opera houses in England. John Calvin hired two secular songwriters of his day to put his theology to music.¹⁵⁴

Japanese children's folk songs such as "*Yuuyake Koyake*" and "*Akatombo*" sound like a lot of music available for contemporary church in Japan. Through the use of tunes of folksongs which are indigenous to the country, the barrier alienating Christianity can be taken away from the hearts of the Japanese people.

Music exerts a great influence on human emotions. Many Japanese people who are not Christian sing some hymns. Music is therefore a preferable method of contextualizing Christianity to Japan. At any church, in Japan or in America, worship is a celebration. The style of music is to be upbeat, bright, and joyful. The atmosphere in the service that is brought about when we have some seekers becomes very important. How does any tune make people, seekers or Christians, feel joyful and bright? Is it style, or tune, or lyrics? Or is it a combination of all of these? Congregational singing is a powerful, and emotional element. When believers sing in harmony together, it creates a sense of intimacy or amazement in the hearts of the seekers. It is not only a beautiful tune which stirs up their hearts, but also the expression of unity and friendliness of the church. Each person sings his part while listening to the others in order to blend. There is something attractive about believers singing together in harmony. It is a good witness for anyone to see that normal-looking people really have a healthy relationship with Christ and with each other in singing heartfelt praise in harmony. Therefore, it is a critical element that each church has a good music leader to bring this about. Through effective music performance contextualization is possible.

3. Communicating

a. Communicating Purpose

¹⁵⁴ Warren, 283

Effective communication is not just making announcements. Effective communication through contextualization is one of the significant processes of creating change in the church and in a community such as Japan. Proverbs 13:17 reads, “A wicked messenger falls into trouble, but a trustworthy envoy brings healing.” The messenger’s tactful, honest approach benefits both.

Nehemiah completed the wall of Jerusalem in fifty-two days. To do this, Nehemiah rallied the people to work by communicating the project and recasting the vision. At many local churches in Japan today people have lost their sense of purpose and become overwhelmed with fatigue, frustration, and fear. They have come to be awkward and reluctant at re-building the “wall.” The book of Nehemiah, however, teaches us that he renewed the people’s vision and purpose by communicating with them often. This approach will keep the churches moving in a healthy and right direction. It is important to communicate the purpose of the church every two weeks or at least monthly. In other words, once the purposes of the church are defined, they must be continually clarified and communicated to everyone in the congregation. Kotter writes:

Communicating the change vision is to use every vehicle possible to constantly communicate the new vision and strategies, and to have the guiding coalition role model the behavior expected of employees.¹⁵⁵

This will be the foremost responsibility of leadership. There are several ways to communicate the vision and purpose of the church, which are suggested by Rick Warren:¹⁵⁶

- (1). Scripture: Teach the biblical truth of the church passionately. Teach the doctrine of the church frequently. Show how every part of the church’s vision is biblically based by giving Bible verses that explain and illustrate your reasoning.

¹⁵⁵ Kotter, John P., *Leading Change*, (Massachusetts: Harvard Business School Press, 1996), 21.

¹⁵⁶ Warren, 112-114

- (2). Symbols: Symbols can be powerful communication tools because they elicit strong passions and emotions.
- (3). Slogans: Slogans, maxims, mottos, and pithy phrases are remembered long after sermons are forgotten: "Every member is a minister," "All leaders are learners," "We are saved to serve," "Win the lost at any cost."
- (4). Stories: Matthew 13:34 says, "Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; he did not say anything to them without using a parable."
- (5). Specifics: Offer a detailed plan for implementing the purposes. Plan programs, schedule events, dedicate buildings, and hire staff for each purpose. The most specific way to communicate the purpose is to apply it personally to each member's life.

Warren comments that it is important to personalize the purpose of the church in communicating them, because the way to personalize the purpose is to show how there is both a privilege and a responsibility connected to each of them. He presents five goals for every believer:

- (1) God wants me to be a member of His family
- (2) God wants me to be a model of His character
- (3) God wants me to be a minister of His grace
- (4) God wants me to be a messenger of His love
- (5) God wants me to be a magnifier of His name.¹⁵⁷

It is important to personalize the purposes of the church in communication. It is also important to state them over and over again. A single sermon or a single announcement on the church's purpose will not perpetually define the direction of the church. Printing them in the bulletin will not be enough to expect the people to read and understand them. Warren presents a law of advertising and says that a message must be communicated seven times before it really sinks in.¹⁵⁸

b. Communicating Vision

It is an enormously challenging task to get hundreds of people, whoever they may be, to understand and accept a particular vision. It is also a hard task to create a vision at church, school, or business firm. In order to develop a transformational vision, the leaders

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 114-116

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 117

must know their organizations well. They must spend many hours collecting information, analyzing it, digesting it, considering alternatives, and eventually making choices. If the church has a great vision, it will be able to serve a useful purpose even if it is understood by just a few key people. But Kotter says:

The real power of a vision is unleashed when most of those involved in an enterprise or activity have a common understanding of its goals and direction.¹⁵⁹

It seems a lot of effort is spent on communicating the vision, but usually the vision is communicated poorly. Why does this happen? Because it is announced as mere information? Or, because it is not transformational? If the pastor does not guide communications correctly, there will be difficulty in creating and sending appropriate messages. How can we effectively communicate vision? Kotter writes:

The time and energy required for effective vision communication are directly related to the clarity and simplicity of the message. Communication seems to work best when it is so direct and so simple that it has a sort of elegance.¹⁶⁰

He suggests as the key elements in the effective communication of vision: (1) simplicity; (2) metaphor, analogy, and example; (3) repetition; (4) leadership by example (5) explanation of seeming inconsistency; and (6) give and take.

Communication seems to work best when it is so simple and direct. It requires clarity of thought. However, simple and direct communication will be a challenge. It will be much harder to be clear and concise than overcomplicated and wordy. As the old saying goes, “If I had more time, I would write you a shorter letter.” This means that we should spend much more time in preparation. Kotter writes:

The time and energy for effective vision communication are directly related to the clarity and simplicity of the message. Focused, jargon-free information can be disseminated to a large group of people at a fraction of the

¹⁵⁹ Kotter, 85

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 89

cost of clumsy, complicated communication.¹⁶¹

It can be a challenging task, both intellectually and emotionally, to accept a vision of the future. Jesus teaches us about proper communication with the Heavenly Father in Matthew 6:7 saying, “When you pray do not keep or babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words.” In the old saying it is said, “Brevity is the soul of wit.”

c. Usage

Kotter says that all professions develop a specialized vocabulary, partly because of necessity when needed language does not exist, partly as a means of differentiating themselves.¹⁶² It helps us much to use specialized language when we talk to our comrades in the same profession, but it will be confusing for those outside the profession if we use the same jargon. “Whenever jargon is used, some people understand and feel included while most of the audience will feel confused and left out,” Kotter continues. We have been repeatedly warned not to use the jargon of Greek or Hebrew in sermons. Kotter writes again:

Well-chosen words can make a message memorable, even if it has to compete with hundreds of other communications for people’s attention. Really good advertising people are skilled at this sort of word/image selection.¹⁶³

d. Failure

There are many cases of failure in communicating vision. Why does this happen? Kotter comments, “When the urgency rate is not high enough, people do not listen carefully to information about the vision.”¹⁶⁴ People have to have a felt need that the vision touches. In addition, the vision must be clearly related to that need. If the vision itself is too obscure or a bad idea, communicating it will be a tough job. If the leaders are

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 89

¹⁶² Ibid., 91

¹⁶³ Ibid., 93

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 86

not right in communicating, they will have difficulty in both creating and sending an appropriate message.

Failure to communicate vision is often “attributed to either limited intellectual capabilities among lower-level employees or a general human resistance to change, and hence, to acceptance of information about change.”¹⁶⁵ Ruth Benedict writes about the Japanese, “Japan is a non-revolutionary country.”¹⁶⁶

Liao writes:

The missionaries often encounter indifferent or resistant populations. Sometimes unresponsiveness is due to hardness of heart, pride, or aloofness, but more often than we like to think, it is due to neglect. The gospel has been presented to an “unresponsive” ethnic unit.¹⁶⁷

And Woodberry writes:

Are the Japanese resistant? “Yes” if we think in terms of the historical developments and cultural aspects of this great nation. “No” if we look at the obstacles to church growth, whether internal or external, as challenges that can be met if, and when, the needed sacrifices and commitment are made.¹⁶⁸

Are the problems and difficulties inherent to the nationality, to the process, or to other elements? In any case, we must use much more time in creating the approach for effective communication. We are required to further study effective communication. What do we communicate? Who communicates to whom? When, where, and how? We Christians must communicate the contextualized biblical message, its vision and purpose, to the Japanese society, anywhere, anytime, “in season or out of season.” (II Timothy 4:2). The success of this depends on the time we take and the skill we bring to the task of compelling communication.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 87

¹⁶⁶ Benedict, 74

¹⁶⁷ Liao, David C. E., *The Unresponsive: Resistant or Neglected?* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972), 7

¹⁶⁸ Woodberry, 130

B. Small Group Ministry

1. Why Small Groups?

The reason to use small groups is not because history shows they have been successful. It is because Jesus used them. They are the best and actually the only tool to get personal spiritual growth accomplished. Professor Gilliam writes:

Every renewal effort has depended on the use of small groups to provide the primary structure for change and spiritual revival throughout history. Every time revival has occurred, it has been used the structure of small groups. This is true, not just because small groups are the best tool for changing dead churches, but because they are the way Jesus himself intended us to normally minister.¹⁶⁹

Jesus used them. That is why history shows they were successful. When we read the Bible, we see that Jesus did not model a ministry of just preaching in temples and synagogues. If that were all there was that was relevant to him, he would have been able to do it quite easily. Instead, his primary model was the small group.

The method he used to make disciples was not to make them by focusing most of his time on evangelizing the masses. His way of contextualizing the kingdom of heaven for the Israelites was to focus on building his leaders before building his followers in a broad sense. He spent most of his time with the twelve, not the masses. He trained them and taught them for three years before entrusting them with leadership. He planned to reach the world primarily through quality, trained leaders, not primarily through mass evangelism.

However, small groups need to work in conjunction with other corporate structures to be effective. Professor Gilliam illustrates this by citing Richard Covelace as follows:

The local congregation is like a whaling vessel. It is too large and unwieldy in itself to catch whales, so it must carry smaller vessels aboard for this

¹⁶⁹ Gilliam, Bob, "Small Group Ministry in the Local Cjurch," (D. Min. syllabus, Grace Theological Seminary, 1999), 113-114

purpose. But the smaller sailboats are ill-advised to strike out on their own apart from the mother ship. They can catch a few whales, but they cannot process them. The smaller boat can easily be destroyed by the storms.¹⁷⁰

We are to train and test persons before deploying them as leaders through small group. We cannot make disciples by first emphasizing quantity. Instead, we make disciples by first emphasizing quality.

2. Biblical and Practical Apologetics for Small Groups

What does the Bible say about the small group? There is a wealth of information about small groups in the Bible. A study of these principles will help to show us one of the essential methods for bringing Christianity to Japanese society. A successful implementation of small groups will bring about changes in the church in Japan. There are several potential ministry formats available to the local church in the Bible, but small groups have the greatest biblical support. The term ‘small group’ is not used in Scripture, but it is a logical extension of the fact that God exists within the divine form of a small group. God declared, “This is my son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him” (Matthew 17:5). Jesus said, “I will ask the Father, and he will give you another counselor to be with you—the spirit of truth” (John 14:16-17). This fact means that we need to employ the use of groups.

a. Old Testament

First of all we see the concept of groups in the attributes of God Himself.

McBride writes:

The small group begins with the very nature of God. Genesis 1:1 launches the biblical record with a simple yet profound statement that God (Elohim) is the Creator of all that exists. The word Elohim is plural, designating or incorporating more than one person. Although interpreted as singular throughout the Old Testament, the word expresses the unity of three persons in the one God - the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The trinity pictures for us the pivotal concept

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 114

of relationships within a group.¹⁷¹

Secondly, God created man and woman for the sake of relationship between Himself and them (us), and among themselves (ourselves). The Lord God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him” (Genesis 2:18). Man does not live alone. The small group situation is the best situation where we can love God and love one another.

It was important for the people to be involved in a group in the Old Testament. It was God’s plan that His chosen people to belong to a group. God did not expect His people to have a relationship with Him in isolation, but in community with other believers. McBride and Sheely sum up like this:

(Nation): The Israelites were a chosen people (group), set apart by God from all other people on the face of the earth (Deuteronomy 7:6).

(Tribes): The house of Israel, by virtue of its descent from the twelve sons of Jacob, was divided into twelve sub-groups (Genesis 49:1-33).

(Clans): Tribes were further broken down into groups of extended relatives, resulting in fifty seven clans (Numbers 4:21-22).

(Household): Literally “house,” the various clans were divided down into family sub-groups, several generations of relatives living in the same dwelling (Genesis 50:8).

(Fathers): As a patriarchal system, the immediate family, including a husband, wife and children was the smallest group within the Jewish community.

Worship, faith and the law were based upon a lifestyle of belonging to these different groups.¹⁷²

b. New Testament

There are two clear examples of the use of small groups in the New Testament. First, Jesus spent the majority of his time with his twelve disciples, a small group (Luke 6:13). This small group was Jesus’ only organization and he spent significant time with these twelve men. Secondly, the early church met in homes (Acts 2:46, 8:3, 20:20). In

¹⁷¹ McBride, Neal F., *How to Lead Small Groups*, (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1990), 13-14

¹⁷² Sheely, Steve, *Director’s Workbook for Small Groups*, (Littleton: Serendipity House, 1994), 42

Acts 5:42 we read:

Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ.

Mcbride writes about Jesus himself, “Jesus’ involvement in a small group is the most convincing rationale for why local churches need to seriously consider including groups as an integral part of their congregational lives.”¹⁷³ Jesus began his earthly ministry by establishing his small group—the disciples. It was his public ministry to form his small group. He elected disciples to establish and minister within a framework of interpersonal relationships. The small group was not established spontaneously. Jesus did it intentionally. Among all the disciples who sought to follow Jesus, only the twelve were members of Jesus’ designated inner group. In Matthew 8:19-22 we read:

A teacher of the law came to him and said, “Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go.” Jesus replied, “Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.” Another disciple said to him, “Lord, first let me go and bury my father.” But Jesus told him, “Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead.”

Jesus established his group intentionally. He elected one as his disciple but rejected another. There were some who wanted to follow him unconditionally, but others had more pressing concerns.

Jesus was actively involved in both large and small group ministry contexts. Large and small groups were not hindrances to one another. Jesus proclaimed his kingdom to the large crowds (Mark 12:37). In the same manner, he met with small groups in homes (Matthew 26:6). It was the small group that provided the platform for Jesus’ ministry to large groups of people. When Jesus proclaimed the good news to the multitudes, the twelve disciples were seen with him and he often withdrew to the familiarity of his chosen small group, the disciples (Mark 3:7). They were together

¹⁷³ McBride, 15

constantly, traveled together, shared meals, experienced hardship, and lived together.

Jesus' teaching was not building organizations but relationships. This was his central method for contextualizing the kingdom of heaven for his disciples as well as for others. The kingdom he sought to proclaim was not an organization but rather a heavenly realm (Luke 17:20-21). His practical demonstration of the gospel was implemented by spending his time with people in caring, healing, listening, forgiving, encouraging, teaching, and preaching to them. His only organization was his small group. It was not an academic experience, but Jesus taught and modeled spiritual truth by being with his disciples.

Jesus' goal was to equip this small group of disciples to implement the task of spreading the gospel after his ascension. McBride writes:

Success was to be measured in terms of their future ministries, not in present achievements. Jesus selected common man-unlearned and ignorant by worldly standards (Acts 4:13)-who were ready to follow him and were teachable. In turn he poured his life into these men and thrust the future of his whole ministry on them (John 17). They received God's word (17:14) and Jesus' protection (17:12). Thanking the Father for "the men whom Thou gavest me out of the world" (17:6), Jesus further asked for their sanctification in the truth (17:17). It would be "through their word" that many would come to believe (17:20).¹⁷⁴

c. The Definition

What is a small group? Sheely defines this by citing Roberta Hestenes:

A Christian small group is an intentional, face to face gathering of three to twelve people on a regular time schedule with the common purpose of discovering and growing in the possibilities of the abundant life in Christ.¹⁷⁵

According to this definition, the main priority of a small group is to build strong relationships by discovering and growing, by having an abundant life in Christ. Non-Christians will discover what Christianity is all about. In Japan most people regard

¹⁷⁴ McBride, 17

¹⁷⁵ Sheely, 19

Christianity as a system, denomination, building, or rites. However, Christianity is a relationship. Groups can be built around similar relationships, interests, spiritual development, ministry passion, sports, reading, Christian maturity, cooking. It will be wonderful if people can meet for the purpose of introducing their friends to Christ.

3. Types

Most Japanese Christians think that a small group is a small church. They think a small group and a cell group are different. The fact is that there is no end to the different types of groups. Sheely says, "As long as the small group is fulfilling your goals and fits your definition, it is still a small group, no matter what 'flavor' it is."¹⁷⁶

Sheely organizes small groups into four categories: Relationship Groups, Assimilation Groups, Affinity Groups, and Recreation Groups, and suggests that we should think how different groups can meet people's needs and accomplish the goals of the church. Examples:¹⁷⁷

- (1) Need-based group
- (2) Enrichment group
- (3) Support group
- (4) Recovery group
- (5) Shame-based group
- (6) Discipleship group
- (7) Bible study group
- (8) Sermon discussion group
- (9) Christian skills group
- (10) Topical study group
- (11) Growth group
- (12) Accountability group
- (13) Prayer group
- (14) Graduation group
- (15) Ministry group
- (16) Service group
- (17) Policy setting group
- (18) Administrative group
- (19) Outreach group.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 22

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 24-30

Which of these groups the church needs depends upon the pastor's imagination, people's needs, and the goals, history, and traditions of the church. Sheely divides some of these groups into two sub-divisions as follows:¹⁷⁸

Support Group

- Sunday: Conquering Compulsive Behaviors, Career Builder's Workshop, Survivors of Suicide, Conquering Co-Dependency
Monday: Cancer Conquerors
Tuesday: Positive Christian Singles, Men at Peace, Learning Effective Attitudes, Healthy and Serenely, Smoker's Anonymous, Gambler's Anonymous
Wednesday: Conquering Fear of Success, Alcoholic Anonymous
Thursday: Overeater's Anonymous, Spatula, Women Who Love Too Much, Fresh Start

Ministry Group

This is where we would like all our members to be. Ministry, however, without the support of sympathetic people, can lead to burn out. A ministry group is a great way to harness the dynamic energy of a small group and put it to work in accomplishing the work of Christ. (This list of Ministry Groups is from the First United Methodist Church in Tulsa, Oklahoma):¹⁷⁹

- (1) Legal Counseling Ministry
- (2) Used Car Ministry
- (3) Ministry to the Hearing Impaired
- (4) Jobs First
- (5) Odd Jobs Ministry
- (6) Ministry with the Poor, Hungry, and Homeless
- (7) Prison Ministry
- (8) Aviation Ministry
- (9) Tutoring Ministry with Adults
- (10) Ministry with Unwed Mothers
- (11) Jewish-Christian Relation Ministry
- (12) Adopt-A-Family
- (13) Christian Financial Ministry

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 25

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 29

(14) Christian Business Ministry.

4. Historical Example

(1). Small Groups and the Church

There is no lack of material or models concerning the use of small groups in America or in any other country today. As an example, small groups have been central to the growth and vitality of Paul Cho's Yoido Full Gospel Church in Korea. He chose some key persons to lead small groups out of the congregation and trained them as leaders. Pastors and lay people around the world must be convinced that the small group experience is a necessary ingredient to personal and corporate renewal. Recently, small groups of Pentecostal churches have experienced renewed vigor and spirituality on the global level. Small groups are also used extensively as a means of evangelism and discipleship in many parachurch ministries such as Campus Crusade for Christ, the Navigators, Inter-Varsity, and Young Life. Activities through small groups are the base common to these parachurch ministries. The small groups of four or seven students at secular college meet once a week. They are trained in the study of the Bible and in memorizing Bible verses. They return as leaders to their own churches, community, college, and market place, and perform the work of personal evangelism. The leaders reproduce disciples and send them to mission fields as delegates of the church. There are a variety of groups: Bible study group, person to person evangelism group, visiting group, men's group, girl's group, and prayer group. They meet altogether at a certain place once a month or every two months for unification. The main purpose which is common to these parachurch is to help the small groups of students.

However, Mitchel writes, "Many of the groups in vogue today bear little resemblance to those in the past in terms of the setting in which they existed and their primary purpose."¹⁸⁰ As mentioned above, the history of small groups takes us back to the

¹⁸⁰ Mitchel, M. Stewart, *The Use of Small Groups in Early Pietism*, (The Faculty of

source of Christian tradition, the Bible-the Old Testament and the New Testament.

Mitchel writes:

Since the days of the New Testament, earnest Christians have sought to return to the primitive ideal of small groups as the basic units of church life. But the church lineage of these groups from the early church to the present day has yet to receive full recognition because it demands a reinterpretation of data. Most scholars recognize early Pietism as a key period in the historical development of the small group concept.¹⁸¹

Mitchel comments that in this setting of small groups as the basic units of church life, three men and their use of small groups stand out: Philip Jacob Spener and his Collegia Pietatis, Nikolaus Zinzendorf and his Bands and Choirs, and John Wesley and his Class Meetings, Bands and Select Societies in Methodism.¹⁸² The following is a summarized discussion of the three from the thesis of Mark Stewart Mitchel.

Most historians credit Spener for two things. First, his book *Pia Desiera*, was the formal starting point of Pietism. Second, they recognize his use of the Collegia Pietatis as the primary means by which Pietism took root in the churches. These Collegia Pietatis were small groups of devoted lay people and pastors who met in homes regularly to discuss scripture, sing, pray, and encourage one another in the pursuit of holiness.

Nikolaus Zinzendorf was raised in a strong Pietistic home where the Collegia Pietists met regularly. He became a devout Pietist minister who found his life's calling wrapped up in a small band of Moravians looking for a refuge where they could restore the Unity of the Brethren which they had shared prior to the Reformation. As the leader, Zinzendorf organized his community into small bands of just a few members and larger Choirs where Christian fellowship could flourish.

Wesley learned of Zinzendorf's Bands and Choirs on a visit to Herrnhut on August 1, 1738. Wesley returned to London where he used small groups as the central

the Conservative Baptist Theological Seminary, 1988), 3

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 3-4

¹⁸² Ibid., 4

organizing principle in Methodism. Each Methodist Society had three levels of small groups appropriate for the particular stage of spiritual growth of their members.

Pietism flourished in Germany and England in the seventeenth century. Why did the small group arise in this context as a distinctive method of Pietism? Many have noted social conditions such as social unrest, depersonalization, and the breakdown of authoritarian traditions as conditions conducive to small groups.

Besides the outward conditions, the aspects of each man's life with regard to small groups and the relationship of small groups to the institutional churches to which they were related are to be discussed. Spener and Zinzendorf formed their groups in the context of the Lutheran Church in Germany, while Wesley did so in the context of the Church of England. In order to assess the relationship of these groups to the church, certain aspects of each man's ecclesiology are important to note.

In each case the use of small groups constituted a standing criticism of the church. The existence of the small groups reminded the church that there was something more to experience than what was available in the mainstream of church life. At the same time, however, these men professed a love and loyalty to their churches. These men did not intend for their small groups to exist apart from the institutional church to which they were related. Their main purpose was to bring renewal to the church through the renewal of individuals. These groups were conceived as "little churches in the church." Where separation did eventually occur, as with Zinzendorf's and Wesley's movement, it happened without the leaders' approval. In these cases, separation came as the inevitable result of practical demands relating to the growth of their movement, as well as the opposition from the Orthodox members.

The small groups of Spener, Zinzendorf, and Wesley not only reflect their ecclesiology, but also their theology of discipleship. In each case, these groups expressed and enriched a particular theological emphasis relating to how one interacts

with God in this world. Their theology of discipleship stood for how one faithfully experiences and expresses the grace of God.

The three leaders conceived of that discipleship somewhat differently. To the extent they did so, their groups were different in purpose and structure. It is necessary for us to focus on their purpose and their theology of discipleship which made up the structure of the small groups in their context of making disciple.

(2). Theology and Discipleship

a. Spener

Spener's organization of believers into small groups is a reflection of his theological emphasis on such doctrines as regeneration, sanctification, illumination, and eschatological hope. He placed more emphasis on regeneration than on justification in the salvation process. Regeneration is necessarily followed by the working out of the new life in the process called sanctification. The good works associated with sanctification were inseparable from the faith which saves. Regeneration is the work of the Holy Spirit but the responsibility for sanctification is in the hands of the believer. He also believed the role of the Christian is essential to bring eschatological events into historical reality. His enthusiasm in his emphasis on theological concepts was seen in his use of the Collegia Pietatis as small groups. Lay people and pastors met in homes regularly to discuss and encourage one another in the pursuit of holiness.

b. Zinzendorf

Zinzendorf's theology had a Christocentric emphasis. His small groups were the arena in which his emphasis on Jesus Christ's death was experienced. The end of his theology was affection for Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God. He was opposed to all systematic theology that did not place the experience of Christ's redemptive act as central. The task of theology was not to ensure correct belief, but rather to express God's revelation in Christ in a way that evoked a rich experience of his love.

Though evoking religious feeling was central to Zinzendorf's theology, he did not make feelings the final criterion for religious truth. Though his biblicism was Christocentric, he viewed the Bible as the testimony to Christ upon which all religious truth is founded.

Deliverance from sin came not from a planned asceticism, but from an inward and natural recognition of the wounded Savior's presence. He viewed Christ's death not only as the ground of sanctification, but also as the ground of the church's unity. Christian fellowship in small groups resulted not from agreement but from the common experience of the death of Jesus in the heart. His small groups cannot be seen as a means of grace by which the believer was progressively sanctified. He rejected the idea that believers are progressively sanctified by any means of grace.

The key to understanding his small groups theologically is his preoccupation with experiencing Jesus Christ and the unity believers have through his death. For him the small group was the ideal place to express that unity.

c. Wesley

John Wesley's small groups were an expression of his theological emphasis on preventient grace, justification by faith, and sanctification with its goal of Christian perfection. Wesley envisioned his Class Meetings, Bands, and Select Societies as means of grace. He defined the means of grace as outward signs, words, or actions, ordained of God, and appointed for this end, to be the ordinary channels whereby we might convey to men, justification, or sanctification.

The only prerequisite for joining a Methodist Society was a desire to flee from the wrath to come, to be saved from sin, which meant that many of those in the Class Meeting had not been justified and were experiencing the emotional struggle precipitated by preventient grace. The Class Meeting acted as one of the prudential means by which one cooperated with God for salvation.

Thus, the Class Meeting was an extension of Wesley's doctrine of preventient grace, and provided a disciplined structure of accountable discipleship during the difficult process preceding justification. Then, how does grace allow for us to foster a lifestyle of constant obedience? It was the Band which fostered this lifestyle more than the Class Meeting. Mitchel writes that Wesley said of the Bands that this closer union of the believers prayed for one another to be healed of the faults they confessed.

People are in need of the means of grace to maintain their constant obedience. Along with their continuation in the Bands, Wesley formulated a third level of small groups as a means of grace, called the Select Society, for those continually walking in the light of God. Each man's small group, though somewhat different, clearly reflected his theological emphasis, which was discipleship.

5. Purpose of small groups

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the concepts of our ecclesiology will determine the use of small groups. The examples of Spener, Zinzendorf, and Wesley are in a sense the answer to the questions why small groups exist and for what purpose they exist. Bill Donahue introduces the mission statement for the purpose of small groups at Willow Creek and says how small groups are used to accomplish their overriding mission. The statement says:

To connect people relationally in groups (four to ten individuals) for the purpose of growing in Christlikeness, loving one another, and contributing to the work of the church, in order to glorify God and make disciples.¹⁸³

Gilliam writes about the purpose of small groups, "It is a sub-set of the purpose of the church and our definition of 'discipleship' determines everything else."¹⁸⁴ We can

¹⁸³ Donahue, Bill, *Leading Small Groups*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 21

¹⁸⁴ Gilliam, 16

understand from these two statements that making disciples is one of the important purposes of small groups. Disciple-making can be accomplished through one-on-one practice, but in the New Testament, small groups are also the answer to what the Great Commission commands, not just a certain kind of disciple but all (Matthew 28:19-20). A small group is a sub-set of the church for the purpose of inviting all people, not just a particular people, to make them disciples. Through the activities of small groups we can make ‘all’ people disciples.

Disciple making has been done as a group event. The Scripture writes that Jesus met with the twelve disciples. Meeting in groups allows disciples to grow in Christ by experiencing teaching, mentoring, love, encouragement, and exhortation. When we look at one-on-one encounters between Jesus and Peter, Paul and Timothy, Paul and Silas, we understand that it was leadership development relationships that are modeled, rather than the making of disciples.

Training rising leaders is important. However, most of the time we can accomplish disciplemaking goals better through group-based discipleship (Mark 3:14, Matthew 10:5-42, Acts 13:2). Gilliam says that making disciples creates an environment of mutual support, ministry, accountability, and training. He also emphasizes that it is important to be intentional in making disciples because preaching and teaching to large or middle sized groups do not make disciples.¹⁸⁵ Spontaneous meeting without a clear purpose does not make disciples.

Then how do we define disciples? We need to define disciples before we create small groups. Gilliam writes that there are four problems involved in developing a definition of a disciple:¹⁸⁶

- A. The need to focus on wholistic change without neglecting the behavioral

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 18

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 19-24

focus of Jesus' command.

Balance is required for the definition by including beliefs, priorities, attitudes, behavior, and habits. However, Gilliam writes that we must usually use behavior and habits as the final indicator of success.¹⁸⁷

B. To be functional, the product must be defined in stages, not just in its final form.

Therefore, we must develop a definition at each phase of the process. Gilliam presents us with four phases in how Jesus made disciples: (1) Come and see; (2) Follow me; (3) Be with me; and (4) Remain in me.¹⁸⁸

C. It is very difficult to develop a definition for each disciplemaking phase if you use an exclusively analytical approach to the gospel.

Some people say that if it is God's truth, it will be simple and easy to discover the disciples, but this is not biblical. There are some difficulties we must overcome in the small differences of each phase until we see the big difference. Gilliam comments that the particulars of each phase are best seen when looked at in contrast with other phases, and he presents an example of distinctives in each disciplemaking phase as follows:¹⁸⁹

Intention

Come and See--To attract and win to Himself

Follow Me--To train for task

Be with Me--To deploy as disciple makers

Remain in Me--To replace Himself

Disciples involvement

Come and See--Mostly watched

Follow Me--Somewhat watched

Be with Me--Quite involved

Remain in Me--Involved in leading leaders

D. We must take into consideration the differences between the time of Jesus and the church age.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 20

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 17

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 23

Gilliam presents characteristics at the end of each phase as follows:¹⁹⁰

Come and See

- a. has made a decision to trust Christ as Savior (John 1:49).
- b. has assurance of salvation (John 1:50-51).
- c. understands the needs for worship, Bible study, prayer, and fellowship (Mark 1:14-18).
- d. Understands the purpose of the church and his/her need for it.
- e. has observed ministry that is relevant and is developing a taste for it (John 4:2).

Follow me

- a. has learned to be intentional in the ministry he/she chooses to do (Mark 1:38).
- b. has learned the importance of submission to God and desires to submit (Luke 5:5).
- c. is beginning to recognize God at work (Luke 5:8).
- d. has a vision to be instrumental in reaching others for Christ (Matthew 9:37-38).
- e. spends social time with unbelievers who need exposure to believers (Mark 2:15-17).

Be with Me

- a. has completed about two years of relevant ministry.
- b. is modeling Jesus' ministry (Matthew 10:25).
- c. is boldly declaring God's truth to a lost pagan world (Matthew 10:5-7).
- d. maturely handles rejection (Matthew 10:14).
- e. is willing to suffer, to lose all, or even to die for Christ (Luke 14:26).

Remain in Me

- a. continues to grow in godly character (John 16:16).
- b. continues to reproduce self in others (II Timothy 2:2).
- c. continues involvement in ministry (John 15:8).
- d. continues to share Christ (Matthew 28:19).
- e. is often sent into the world as God's servant (Acts 1:18).

Larry N. Hoskins extends his interpretations about the four phases of discipleship in the gospels and limited portions of acts, defining the product at the end of each disciplemaking phase as follows:¹⁹¹

Phase one "Come and See" (John 1:38-39)

Not all are believers in this phase, although they are being challenged to trust Christ (John 1:46, 6:60-66).

Phase two "Follow Me" (Matthew 4:19, 9:9, Mark 1:16-20, 2:13-14)

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 44

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 39-43

They learn to be intentional in the ministry they choose to do (Mark 1:37-38, Luke 4:40-44).

Phase three “Be with Me” (Mark w:14, Luke 6:13)

They learn specific characteristics that God expects of His followers (Matthew 5:3-12).

Phase four “Remain in Me and Go, Make Disciples” (John 15:7-8, Matthew 28:18-20). The Holy Spirit is now resident within them (John 14:17, 20:22).

6. Principles

Now we can design small group systems to make disciples based on the principle of developing relationships. *Small Group Leaders' Handbook* reads, “Friendship makes discipleship more enjoyable, and discipleship makes friendship more significant.”¹⁹²

Gilliam presents three necessary levels of relationships: (1) Unity; (2) Fellowship; and (3) Intimacy¹⁹³. Unity is a surface relationship with other believers based upon the common roots and common purpose given to all who have personal relationships with Christ (Acts 4:32). Fellowship is doing together, not just being together. ‘One-another passages’ depend on fellowship. Such commands require a knowledge of another person and a limited size group. Intimacy is an in-depth relationship that can only be maintained with a few persons.

Gilliam also presents four principles necessary to develop these levels of relationships.¹⁹⁴ (1) The principle of Seventy: This relates to the fellowship level of relationships. Most people can only keep up with about seventy to ninety names of people in a group in which turnover is occurring. (2) The Principle of Seventeen: This relates to the level at which our ability for intimacy is saturated. Many persons feel uncomfortable becoming intimate in groups of less than seven or more than seventeen. (3) The Principle of Competition: Most adults will only attend one group with the same

¹⁹² Long, Jimmy, Ann Beyerlein, Sara Keiper, Patty Pell, Nina Thiel, and Dong Whallon, *Small Group Leaders' Handbook*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 103

¹⁹³ Gilliam, 45

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 46

dynamic, style, and purpose. To keep from competing, churches must have three kinds of groups, one for each relationship level:

- a. Celebrations--groups over 70 in size
- b. Congregation--groups 17 to 70 in size
- c. Cells--group 7 to 17 in size

(4) The Principle of Continuation: Since one major function of each group is to build relationships, these groups must be continual in nature. The best way to short-circuit intimacy in cells is to meet for less than a year then turn over.

Gilliam's Diagram

Simple Diagram of Group Size¹⁹⁵

Unity



Celebration: Over 70

Fellowship



Congregation: 17-70

Intimacy



Cells: 7-17

Figure #1

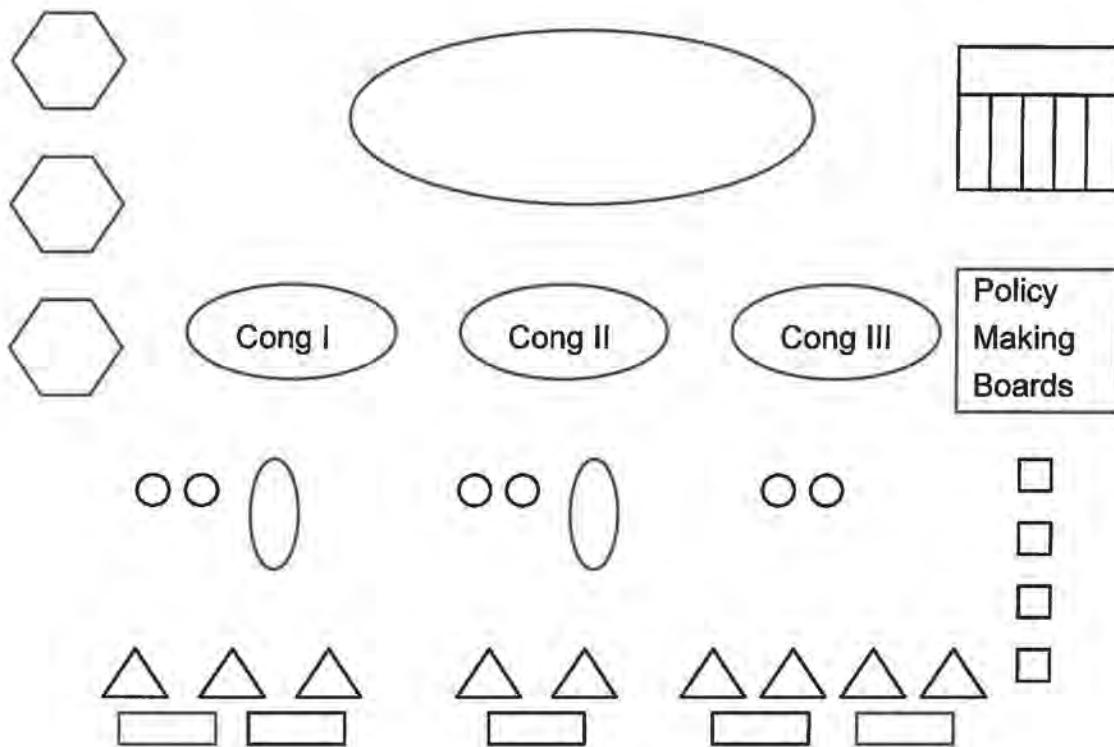
¹⁹⁵

Ibid., 48

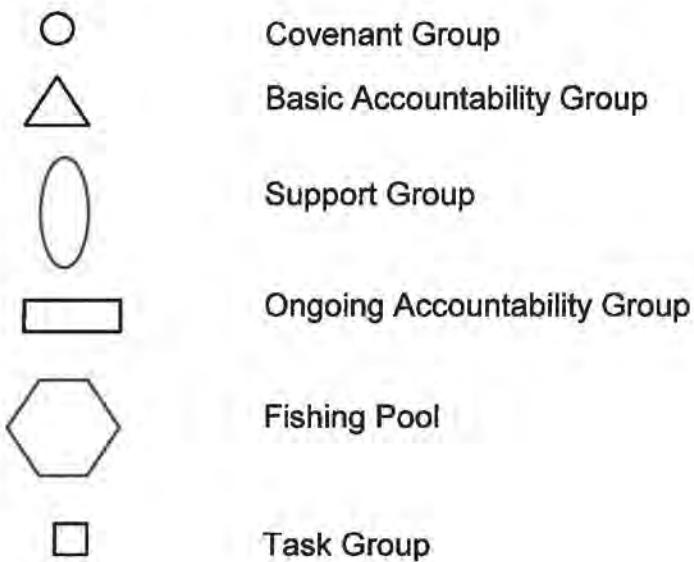
Gilliam's Total Church Infrastructure to Accomplish Disciple Making¹⁹⁶

Fishing Pools

Ministry Community



LEGEND AND DEFINITION OF GROUPS



196

Ibid., 56

Figure #2

notes: Fishing Pools - small group outreach for people with a purpose of leading them to church or Christianity. For example; English Class, Cooking Class, Calligraphy Class, *Kimono* (Japanese traditional clothes) Class, *Soroban* (Japanese traditional calculating tool) Class, Youth Rally, Bible Study Club, Sports Club, Archaeology Club, Piano and Organ Class, Painting Club, Singing Class, Reading Club, Discussion Club.

Covenant Group - small groups which are open to any non-Christians.

This is an inreach ministry of the church. For example; Sunday School for non-Christians, Men's Club, Women's Club, Newly-wed counseling.

Basic Accountability Group

- (1) Christian's small groups which are open.
- (2) Christians small groups which are closed.

Ongoing Accountability Group - mature Christians small groups which are closed. Some leaders are involved in this group.

Task Group - task-driven small group whose tasks are translation, secretarial work, counseling, choir leading, accounting.

Support Group - small groups whose main task is to do anything which is relevant to those who are in need.

Policy Making Boards - They are deacons.

C. Foundation for Ministry

1. Person

Slocum writes, "It is of critical importance for us as ordinary Christians to understand who we are, what we are supposed to do, and where we are supposed to do it."¹⁹⁷ In the beginning of the twenty first century, the church in Japan is in a desperate struggle to gain effectiveness in evangelism. Sincere Japanese Christians often dare to ask, "What kind of a man at church will be effective for the gospel ministry in the next century to change the church in Japan?" Slocum writes:

At the moment, interest in the ministry of the laity is emerging in congregations, denominations, ministry organizations, seminaries, and lay study centers. Interest in the ministry of the laity is expanding far beyond a few experimental congregations and study centers. There is a growing awareness throughout the entire church that the future of the local congregation is

¹⁹⁷
7.

Slocum, Robert E., *Maximize your Ministry*, (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1990),

somewhat locked with the future of the ministry of the laity.¹⁹⁸

What about Japan? Cheryl Johnson Barton comments, "Something is different these days in Japan. Could it be that the winds of revival are finally blowing over the nation today?"¹⁹⁹ However, she concludes, "Despite such enthusiasm, some Japanese leaders are reluctant to pronounce revival as already here."²⁰⁰ They are in need of both ordinary Christians and leaders who are mobilized, empowered, and walking spiritually.

The Japanese church must devise or create and put into practice a new strategy for making Christians effective in the church ministry to bring about spiritual change in the country. They must try to find out new levels of effectiveness in their obedience, service, and love of God. Professor Peugh writes, "According to Scripture, loving God is the highest duty of mankind. Are you really able to 'dedicate yourself to prayer and the ministry of the word?'" (Acts 6:4).²⁰¹ Ordinary Christian men and women are struggling to find a shape for their obedience. Leaders are seeking for competent Christians for the effectiveness for revival in Japan in this century. Japan still remains in the spiritual third world.

Many Christians sense that the church's ministry should be done by pastors. Pastors are asked several questions. Peugh writes:

What primary factors have hindered your good growth and victory in prayer and in the ministry of the Word? What have you done to overcome hindrances to good growth in your personal spiritual walk with the Lord? What things would you most like to learn about prayer?²⁰²

These fundamental questions, which are seldom considered in Japanese churches, are directed to both pastors and the congregations. Many pastors are truly concerned

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 11

¹⁹⁹ "Evangelism and Mission Information Service," *World Pulse* 34, No.22 (1999); 1

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 2

²⁰¹ Peugh, Roger D., "Foundation for Ministry," (D. Min. syllabus, Grace Theological Seminary, 1999), n.p.

²⁰² Ibid.

about the effectiveness of the church's ministry and the personal role they must play. However, new strategy is yet to be created to mobilize and empower ordinary Christians in ministry in Japan. Peugh also questions if we are growing satisfied with our prayers and devotional role-modeling in our ministry. Christians, both pastors and ordinary Christians, will find purpose and meaning when they count for God. Leaders are to cling to biblical foundations, to lead their congregations in the hope of finding purpose and meaning in spite of the weak situation in the church now. In the process of finding purpose and meaning in the ministry, Christians will confront confusion. This confusion for Christians will be spiritual conflict. Professor Peugh questions if we have experienced a deep level of personal spiritual conflict with the power of evil and darkness.²⁰³ He advises us to be ready to give advice to a person who has come to us for help when he or she is suffering deep spiritual conflict. Pastors are to provide the foundation of the biblical truth that will be most effective in helping others. There should be a strategy. Pastors and audience are to realize that they are partners in the quest of seeing all God's people come alive and become effective to the full potential.

2. Education

All these discussions mentioned above are on a person. Japan is well known as an educated country. In the field of education, from elementary education to higher education, it has been customarily repeated and emphasized among concerned educators and company executives that a person is needed, a person is important. Developing and educating the individual person is very important.

This means that a person who is tolerant in his personality, being trained in knowledge and skill, competent in managing and leading, a positive, and proactive peace maker with others in the market place is a valued asset. This goal is the foundation for

²⁰³ Ibid.

education which prevails upon all through the educational process in Japan. They call this, literally translated, ‘personal edifying education,’ which means ‘developing the individual person emotionally, physically, and intellectually through education.’ We are amazed to discover that many discussions, funds, and studies are spent on this strategy in the process of developing the educational goal to be effective all through the country every year. Many opportunities for staff studies are given on the national level for personal improvement of each staff person concerned. The Japanese education system is to a large extent productive.

An advancement in the fundamental study of church education and discussions on the ministry and on church growth are urgent business in Japan. In order to attain this goal, what is required of the church today? What is the fundamental ingredient for developing churched people individually?

Dr. Bickel shared a very instructive and suggestive concept through the Test of Ministry Match. It says:

(The Ministry Match) is a multiple-construct assessment tool which clarifies many aspects of who you are as a person. It is designed to help you understand yourself more completely as a person who has been gifted by God to serve Him in a particular ministry or job situation. We believe that until we discover how God made us and where He wants to use us, we will not feel completely fulfilled. This process is very helpful in locating exactly what type of ministry position you would most enjoy. The process can provide you not only with several opinions for positions you would work best in, but also with information regarding what your own strengths are and what type of people you need around you in order for you to function best. The process can give you insight into why you relate to certain people the way you do, why you struggle to get along with some people, and what you can do about those struggles.²⁰⁴

This fundamental process for ministry is neither teaching nor commanding, rather it is illuminating. It does not answer every question but does become very significant as a

²⁰⁴ Bickel, Kenneth E., “Foundation for Ministry,” (D. Min. syllabus, Grace Theological Seminary, 1999).

part of church education. A person is questioned before God, not the kind of “from-the-top-down” form of assessment as they usually do in Japan. This statement suggests to us that theological education is not the only church education, but that people in ministry can learn how to do better in their work in a practical way.

It was the Foundations for Ministry seminar class that confirmed how important it is for us to know ourselves for the work of effective ministry. It started our thinking about why people have such a hard time figuring out what to do with their lives. The sources which Dr. Bickel presented tell us that we have many facets in our personalities and are complex. It is important to look at each aspect of strength individually.²⁰⁵

The sources tell us that God has given each person a multifaceted design of gifts and abilities that is unique to us. However, we lack confidence as to how to validate our ministry strengths and what to do with them. Most churches do not know how to assess the strengths of pastoral candidates or how to match those strengths with their own needs.

How do we match God’s design with a ministry position? How do we find the ministry location where we can use His gifts most effectively? Paul knew his position clearly and said of himself: “Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God” (Romans 1:1, I Corinthians 1:1, II Corinthians 1:1). In Galatians 1:1 he said, “Paul, an apostle-sent not from men nor by man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father.” The NIV comments that he emphasized himself as one sent on a mission with full authority of representation; an ambassador.²⁰⁶ He knew himself well. It was in Ephesians 4:11 that Paul instructed the church in Ephesus saying:

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the fullness of Christ.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ *NIV Study Bible*, 1781.

Paul also confessed that he was a very wretched man and prayed someone would rescue him from that body of death (Romans 7:24). He knew well of himself and of his ministry position. This confident cognition of himself was his foundation and strength for ministry. But how can we find ourselves and our ministry position?

Dr. Bickel's sources write:

In order for people to be productive in ministry, history has shown us that the following aspects for the individual need to be defined:

(1) Approach to Ministry:

- a. How do you approach ministry?
- b. How do you solve problems?
- c. What part are you motivated to play in a project?
- d. How pro-active or responsive are you in your relationships with others or on the job?
- e. How do you relate to other people?

(2) Ministry Gifts:

What are your God-given strengths? What are you naturally good at?

(3) Ministry Values:

- a. When you approach a task, what types of things are important to you?
- b. What is it that you want to have happen as a result of your efforts?
- c. What things motivate you, and what things de-motivate you?

We are able to understand ourselves better with the information these questionnaires provide for us. Dr. Bickel gave us other forms of questionnaires: 'Personal and Professional Inventory' and 'Relational Skills Evaluation' for us as leaders which are also very helpful for evaluating our place in ministry.²⁰⁷

3. Interior Foundations

a. Heart

How can a person who has accepted a transcendent power over his own life enable others to accept their own lives? What is our simple most important task in preparing for life and for founding ministry?²⁰⁸

²⁰⁷ These forms are attached as Appendices.

²⁰⁸ Southard, Samuel, *Pastoral Authority in Personal Relationships*, (Nashville and New York: Abington Press, 1969), 7.

Are these central questions of pastoral mission a matter of authority or a matter of interior strategy? The first answer is that the authority of the pastor appeals most when it comes through a broken heart. The Bible often refers to the importance of the heart, “...and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time” (Genesis 6:5), “Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at heart” (I Samuel 16:7), “...has already committed adultery in his heart” (Matthew 5:28), “I am he who searches the hearts and minds”(Revelation 2:23).

The heart is one of the greatest themes in the Bible. The task of developing our inner being, our hearts, is the foundation for ministry. Christians who develop their hearts will make progress at winning other souls. Slocum writes:

In ‘The Gamesman,’ Maccoby concluded that all two hundred fifty managers who took part in his seven year study had highly developed cognitive and intellectual skills. But they were spiritually and emotionally stunted. In particular, they lacked the ability to give and receive love easily.²⁰⁹

This occurs because the major part of their heart is on developing skill. This is what Jesus said, “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Luke 12:34). These workers and managers have highly developed earthly heads and skill but underdeveloped hearts, because their hearts were on developing ‘cognitive and intellectual skills.’ This fact tells us that as leaders we need to develop our hearts as well as our heads.

The matter of the heart is one of the most critical issues that the church in Japan is facing. The heart of the audience is focused inwardly rather than on outreach to unchurched people. The church historically has held the key to life-changing power to heal and to develop the heart. Theological seminaries have been trying to gain the ability to give spiritual form to life, but the ordinary Christians who are working in society must

²⁰⁹ Maccoby, Michael, *The Gamesman* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1976): quoted in Rommen E. Slocum, *Maximize your Ministry*, (Colorado Springs: NavPewss,1990), 82.

have this ability too if they are to move out to be the church in society. Theological seminaries are necessary but they are no royal road to the effectiveness of evangelism. Personal inward strategy for developing the heart is required.

b. The Language Problem

Almost all men have a desire to develop their heart to be mature. When we read the Bible we find that there is a linguistic problem for understanding the idea of "heart." There are three Hebrew words and two words in Greek which can be translated into English as 'heart,' and they all mean the same thing. Slocum, however, writes that in the English language 'heart' simply is not adequate to convey that meaning.²¹⁰ As the term 'heart' appears hundreds of time in the Bible, there will be the possibility of missing the intended meaning until a definition of the term is made.

Hebrew: (1) leb (Deuteronomy 20:8)

(2) lebab (Psalm 73:26)

(3) libba (Ezekiel 16:30)

Greek: (1) kardia (Mark 7:6)

(2) psyche (Ephesians 6:6)

All these Hebrew and Greek words can be translated 'heart' in English.²¹¹ The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia defines 'heart':

- (1) physical organ of the body
- (2) center of the inner or psychical life
 - a. emotion
 - b. volition and purpose
 - c. intellectual activity, perception, and knowledge
- (3) center of the ethical and religious life
- (4) synecdoche

Psalm 139:23 reads, "Search me, O God, and know my heart. Test me and know

²¹⁰ Slocum, 85

²¹¹ Ibid., 88

my anxious thoughts.” The NIV comments that the term heart is biblical language for the center of the human spirit, from which spring emotions, thought, motivations, courage and action.²¹² Proverbs refers to the heart, saying “Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.” The NIV comments that if we store up good things in our heart, our words and actions will be good.²¹³

When Jesus designated the highest commandment, he focused on the heart, saying “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength” (Matthew 22: 36-38, Mark 12:30, Deuteronomy 6:5). It is clear to us what a priority it is for the Christian to develop his “inner man,” his heart for God and for ministry.

c. The Concept

The concept behind “with all your heart” does not mean physiological heart. Developing the head (brain) is not the same but similar to developing the heart, but not the same. One failure in the Japanese educational system is that they regard developing the head as the same as developing the heart. In Mark 12:29 we read, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.” Slocum analyzes:

If the head is not the opposite of heart, perhaps mind is. The word *mind* describes mental functions such as meditation, diagnostic thinking, analytical thinking, and various mental manipulations. The words *mind* and *heart* as used in the Bible are similar. But Hebrews are not precise in chopping up the word meanings. *Heart* and *soul* often appear together in the Bible but they do not mean the same thing. In Scripture, the word *soul* describes the life force in a physical body, whether human or animal. When a *soul* and body are present, you have a living being. When a *soul* fades from the body, death has arrived.²¹⁴

Another word sometimes confused with heart is spirit:

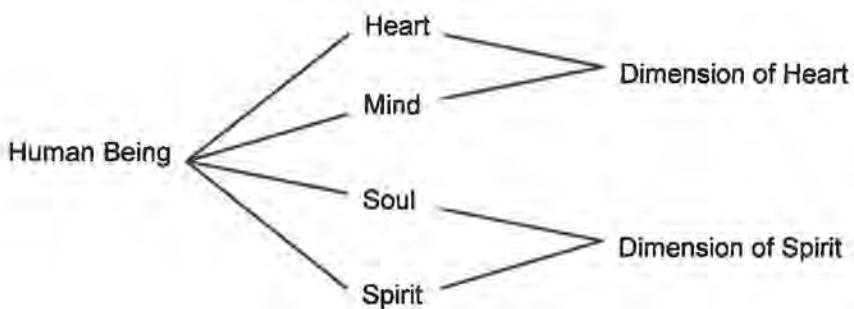
²¹² NIV Study Bible, 933

²¹³ Ibid., 951

²¹⁴ Slocum, 87

A *spirit* is a living being that may or may not be attached to a body. God or the devil or anything that is alive has a *spirit* whether or not it has a physical body. In biblical usage, *soul* and *spirit* are often used interchangeably, and *soul* is pictured as a *spirit* that is attached to a body.²¹⁵

According to his analysis, ‘heart and mind,’ and ‘soul and spirit’ have a similar meaning in the Bible. The Bible is not precise in describing word meaning in detail and has no interest in dividing human life into finely detailed categories. His assumption can be integrated like this:



We recognize that the concepts of soul and spirit are distinct from the heart.

d. The Heart of God

Heart is applied to God in much the same way as to humans. God seeks people after his own heart, “The Lord has sought out a man after his own heart” (I Samuel 13:14). The words coming to Eli in I Samuel 2:35 read, “I will raise up for myself a faithful priest, who shall do according to what is in my heart and in my mind.” In Hosea 11:18, God, in contemplating judgment, speaks of the ‘overthrow’ (Hebrew: hapak) of His mind (RSV: my heart recoils within me, NIV: my heart changed within me), the reversal of his own decision.

The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia comments that the kindness of His heart (Lamentation 3:33) and the profound way in which human evil has grieved Him to His heart are readily apparent.²¹⁶ The decision in the ‘heart’ of God, which turns against

²¹⁵ Ibid., 88

²¹⁶ Lamentation 3:33 reads, “For he does not willingly bring affliction or grief to the

His decision of anger, has been sealed for all nations in Jesus Christ. Faith of all nations in God is the same but the heart is different. The heart defines the direction of Christianity.

e. Dimensions

Slocum gives the heart five unique dimensions that characterizes a human life:

- i. The emotional dimension
- ii. The volitional dimension
- iii. The ethical dimension
- iv. The intellectual dimension
- v. The spiritual dimension²¹⁷

Each dimension gives a unique insight into the nature of a human being. Slocum says that the ‘heart’ reflects the fact that we are actually made in God’s image since the heart of God is mentioned by the biblical writers.²¹⁸ He details the heart’s dimensions, summarized here:

i. The emotional dimension

The heart covers an emotional range of positive as well as negative extremes in the Scriptures, the heart produces love but is also the source of hate. The heart covers the total range of human emotions.

ii. The volitional dimension

The heart refers to the will. This dimension also ranges from positive to negative extremes. From the heart come both the will to do a courageous act and cowardly betrayal. The heart runs the total spectrum of the human will.

iii. The ethical dimension

Discernment of good and evil in our lives and world is the function of the ethical dimension of the heart.

iv. The intellectual dimension

We are apt to regard the head and the heart as opposite. The Biblical goal for the intellect is the understanding of God.

v. The spiritual dimension

The heart reveals spiritual values and the reality of Christ.²¹⁹

children of men.”

²¹⁷ Slocum, 88-90

²¹⁸ Ibid., 88

²¹⁹ Ibid.

f. Authenticity

The church of the 21st century must venture forth boldly to empower ordinary Christians in the church for ministry in Japan. Many of them will hold a strong inner strategy in their heart-in their intellect, emotions, ethic, and will toward God. They will be able to have authentic contact with spiritual reality-Christ. God will reveal His thoughts, feelings, good and evil, and will to those who are authentic in their heart growth. The next question will be, “who is the authentic leader in the 21st century?” Slocum writes that the goal of an inward strategy of the *heart* is to reshape the interior of our lives according to God’s plans for the heart.²²⁰ When this happens, God can use His people to reshape the churches in the world as well as in Japan. Biblical contextualization will be implemented through a sincere *heart* on the part of Japanese Christians. Only then will the church in Japan (or anywhere) experience growth.

D. Leadership Ministry

1. The Concept of Leaders

New approaches of leadership to turn followers into leaders based on the New Testament principle will make church ministry more effective and productive. When Rush says, “The church is desperately in need of more godly leaders if we are to fulfill the command of taking the Gospel to a lost and hurting world,”²²¹ he means contextualizing the Gospel to the lost and hurting world so they can understand it and readily apply it to their needs. His view about new leaders is that they must not only be able to help people to grow in their walk with Jesus Christ, they must also know how to train leaders like themselves. Jeffrey Gill calls such leaders ‘leading and developing leaders’ in his seminar text book.²²² Leaders turn the followers into leaders. Gill’s intention, however, is to involve such leaders as those who will lead leaders who are

²²⁰ Slocum, 90

²²¹ Rush, Myron, *The New Leader*, (USA: Victor Books, 1984), 137

²²² Gill, 70

already training leaders. In any case, Gill comments that a leader will follow someone he respects, admires, and trusts. Gill focuses on the core point about a leader. Gill also regards a leader as an agent for change and asks what the unique challenges and barriers of implementing effective change in the church are.²²³ This is a question that needs to be asked in Japan.

The concerns about leadership are not simply the matter of the church but also of the business world. Kotter writes:

Major change efforts have helped some organizations adapt significantly to shifting conditions, have improved the competitive standing of others, and have positioned a few for a far better future. But in too many situations the improvements have been disappointing and the carnage has been appalling, with wasted resources and burned-out, scared, or frustrated employees. To some degree, the downside of change is inevitable. Whenever human communities are forced to adjust to shifting conditions, pain is ever present. But a significant amount of the waste and anguish we've witnessed in the past decade is avoidable.²²⁴

Kotter's statement seems to include almost all the necessary elements which we must consider about a leader. He refers to organizations, shifting, future, personnel, resources, and possibilities. Kotter suggests an eight stage process of creating major change in the firm; (1) establishing a sense of urgency (need of change); (2) creating the guiding coalition (unification); (3) developing a vision and strategy (purpose); (4) communicating the change vision (communication); (5) empowering broad-based action (non-traditional ideas and actions); (6) generating short-term wins (visible improvement); (7) consolidating gains and producing more change (reproducing); (8) anchoring new approaches in the culture (effective leadership and management).²²⁵

There seems to be a lot of analogy in needs between churches and business firms.

²²³ Ibid., 67

²²⁴ Kotter, 3-4

²²⁵ Ibid., 21

Myron Rush makes some strong statements concerning the ineffectiveness of the church, placing most of the blame on the traditional approach to leadership. Rush writes:

We are headed for even greater leadership shortages in Christendom unless we redefine the functions and purpose of leadership. A shortage of leaders tends to produce a more serious leadership shortage. A shortage of leaders creates a shortage of followers. And a shortage of followers produces a shortage of future leaders. A new approach to modern leadership is to be examined.²²⁶

The situation of the churches in Japan is the same as Rush's statement concerning this leadership crisis. The slow growth of the church can be contributed to the shortage of leaders. "The growth and spread of Christianity happen in proportion to the supply of effective leaders."²²⁷ Without proper leadership, they will not be able to expect a highly successful church growth. Training church leaders is the key to their success in church growth.

Using Jesus Christ's life as an example and copying the principles of leadership taught and applied by Him and the early church leaders, Rush redefines a leader as:

One who recruits people to follow his example and guides them along the way while he is training them to do what he does.²²⁸

What does he mean by the term 'traditional approach' to leadership? Rush explains that the difference between the traditional leader and the leader copying Jesus Christ's approach to leadership is that the traditional leaders usually stop at (1) recruiting people to follow their example and (2) guiding their followers along the way. However, the most important task of effective new leaders is to learn how to reproduce themselves in others.²²⁹ The leader's purpose is to help followers become leaders like himself.

²²⁶ Rush, 9

²²⁷ Ibid., 12

²²⁸ Ibid., 16

²²⁹ Rush, 16

2. Leadership in the Bible

What is a leader? A leader is not simply one who leads and guides by showing the way. Leadership taught by Jesus Christ and practiced by the early church is far more than that. Rush calls this “a new approach to leadership.”²³⁰ He recommends one to take a close look at what Jesus did as a leader, saying that Jesus’ main purpose was to develop leaders out of His followers.

When we read the Bible, we understand the definition of what he calls ‘new approach’ to modern leadership. However, Jesus’ model as a leader is not in reality new. We read that Jesus’ task as a leader was not complete until he had actually reproduced himself in the lives of his twelve disciples and turned them from followers into leaders (Luke 9:1-6). Leadership as taught by Jesus Christ and practiced by the early church did not stop with just leading the way. Jesus (1) led His followers to the cross (2) showed them how to live a godly life (3) and taught them the principles of leadership and applied them by developing leaders out of His followers.²³¹

An effective way of leading people is one thing and turning followers into leaders is another thing. How to lead followers must become how to turn followers into leaders. John 17:18 reads, “As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.” This verse gives us a clear picture of Jesus Christ’s purpose in leading His disciples, to make them leaders. John 17:4 reads, “I have completed the work you gave me to do.” Rush gives a comment on this verse:

Jesus told His Father He had completed His work. He had not healed every sick person in the world. He had not cast out all of the demons. He had not fed all of the starving and hungry people. But he had completed the task of training His disciples to do what He did.²³²

²³⁰ Ibid. 15

²³¹ Ibid., 15

²³² Ibid., 55

Rush tries to emphasize how important it is to turn followers into leaders. This is what Gilliam calls the ‘phase’ of how Jesus made disciples, the phase from “Come and See” to “Remain in Me.”²³³ John 14:12 reads, “Anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing.” Jesus’ goal was to help His followers learn how to do what he did. Luke 9:1-6 gives us the knowledge that leaders are given responsibility, power, and the task of preaching the Good News to the “lost and dying world.”²³⁴ Jesus contextualized the gospel through his disciples. They were a great leader and a great contextualizer.

II Timothy 2:2 reads, “And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.” This is the foundation verse for the call to make disciples for Jesus Christ. It also teaches the heart of New Testament leadership principle. It commands us to turn followers into leaders. Leaders in Christian churches must be willing to do more than the traditional approach to leadership-collecting and leading followers. They must turn followers into leaders who will turn followers into leaders. He must train followers to become effective leaders like Jesus Himself.

3. The Foundations for Leadership

The study of Bible and church history teaches us the importance of purpose, vision, unity, and team cooperation on the part of the leaders. Matthew 28:18-20 gives us the great command to go to make disciples out of the followers and teach them to do what we are doing. Once Jesus had trained His followers to become leaders like Himself. He commanded them to go to make disciples or followers in every nation in the world and teach those followers to obey everything Jesus had taught them. Rush writes, “The Great Commission is more than a commandment to reach the world with the Gospel. It

²³³ Gilliam, 17, gives four phases how Jesus made disciples: (1) Come and See (2) Follow Me (3) Be with Me (4) Remain in Me.

²³⁴ Rush, 55

also provides the plan to accomplish that end.”²³⁵

Paul wrote Timothy a formula for making disciples of Jesus Christ, which is also a formula for developing effective leaders who in turn know how to develop effective leaders (II Timothy 2:2). Rush writes:

There is no greater leadership challenge to help our followers become leaders capable of training their followers to be leaders also. The leaders' purpose is to focus on training followers to be effective leaders. One of the great things that makes a leader is the ability never to lose sight of the real purpose. Every good leader has two purposes. One is the purpose or cause to give his life to. This first purpose is the one that motivates him to step forward and volunteer to set an example for others to follow. The second purpose is to train the followers to be effective leaders so that the first purpose can be accomplished more quickly and effectively.²³⁶

Another important leadership principle for ministry is developing unity among Christians. Rush writes:

There has never been a time in world history when the need for unity among Christians was as great as it is today. While the church faces increasing criticism and attacks from without, it is being steadily undermined and weakened from within.²³⁷

This is to be crucially applied to Japan today. While the longstanding traditional faiths of Shintoism and Buddhism have been firmly established as the major ideological values in the hearts of mainstream Japanese people, church leadership values have yet to be strengthened. If Jesus had not “built the church on this rock” (Matthew 16:18), the Japanese churches would have been swept away a long time ago.

Denominationalism has been rendering churches in Japan powerless for ministry. This may be said to be the biggest barrier for contextualizing Christianity in Japanese society. When we open the book of church history, we understand the church has rarely

²³⁵ Ibid., 56

²³⁶ Ibid., 57-58

²³⁷ Ibid., 67

been destroyed from without. The churches in Japan, however, have been annihilated from within. If the churches continue to be busy fighting from within, they must realize that they will never be able to expect effective and relevant biblical ministry in Japan. Luke 11: 17 reads, “Any kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and a house divided against itself will fail.” Today, the church is its own worst enemy.

In Galatians 5:15 Paul says, “If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.” Paul sends the same warning that the church in Japan is on the verge of being destroyed from within because of its lack of spiritual unity (Ephesians 4:3). Even if it is not destroyed, its painfully slow growth will remain unchanged.

Rush calls this ‘superior spirituality’ and writes:

Each group tends to set itself up as the authority by which all others should be judged. This feeling of superior spirituality is one of the main reasons for disunity and decay in the organized church today.²³⁸

In John 13:34 we read, “Love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples.” This was Jesus’ new commandment. Jesus expected and required that Christians love one another in harmony and unity. The church trademark is strong love for one another. Rush writes, “It is time for our leaders to recognize that unity begins with leadership.”²³⁹ The churches in Japan desperately need more leaders with a renewed commitment to love more than academic degrees. It is time that the leaders stand together. Rush says that the effective leader combats disunity by concentrating on teaching followers the necessity of developing strong bonds of love between one another.²⁴⁰

How can we develop effective unity within the church? Today’s church leaders

²³⁸ Ibid., 68-69

²³⁹ Ibid., 73

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 74

must actually understand that teamwork is effective in building unity in the ministry. A team is not just a group of people assigned to one leader, manager, or department. Rush defines:

A team is two or more people moving along a path of interaction toward a common goal. That definition has two important aspects. First, moving along a path of interaction requires effective communication. Second, team members have a common goal. They are all working for the same thing.²⁴¹

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 gives us some reasons for team work. It reads:

Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work. If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him. Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

We can find some important principles for teamwork in this passage. Rush writes:

- (1) two people working together as a team will be more productive than two people working separately; (2) a team not only accomplishes more work, but the work accomplished is of better quality; and (3) team members are quick to help each other out of difficult situations.²⁴²

When group members are not working as a team, a person in a seat of leadership will be confronted with cases by those complaining about the lack of unity in the group organization. A team is unified for a common cause. Rush comments that a good team is one in which each person relies on another for support, help, and protection, because they realize that they need each other in order to accomplish their purpose.²⁴³ This can be called ‘team unity.’

How can we organize a sense of team unity in the church? It is the role of the team leader. A good leader can put together an effective team to accomplish a goal and

²⁴¹ Ibid., 99-100

²⁴² Ibid., 101

²⁴³ Ibid., 102

work with individual team members to develop their leadership skills. Rush writes:

Team leaders need to create a productive work environment, lead their teams in effective planning, be proficient in evaluating individual and team performance, and be good managers of time. Team leaders are members of the team accepting ultimate responsibility for the team.²⁴⁴

Myron adds that unity around a common goal and team ownership of the goal foster high commitment among team members.²⁴⁵ Leaders need to know how to create teams.

4. Small Group Leadership

When Rush refers to leaders who turn followers into leaders, he means, in short, what we normally refer to as disciple-making. The word ‘discipleship’ is a catch phrase in the church today. However, discipleship will not occur without faithful Christians being intentional about it. The process of disciple making is a dynamic relationship between Christians, churches, and their Lord through the work of the Holy Spirit. Jeffrey Arnold writes:

Disciplemaking must be intentional in order for small groups to take root and grow. You cannot look at it as one aspect of ministry. It must be the goal of all ministry that people will come to faith and then grow to maturity as Christ’s disciples. This first principle will become a reality in your church or fellowship if even just a few people take Christ’s command to make disciples seriously and start acting on that basis.²⁴⁶

McBride suggests four basic goals which all types of groups and teams in the church should share. First is to foster biblical love (John 13:35, I Corinthians 13:13, Galatians 5:13, Ephesians 5:2). Second is to promote fellowship and unity (Acts 4:32, Romans 12:5, I Corinthians 12:12, 25, Ephesians 4:3, 5,13, I John 1:3, 6-7). Third is to build the body (Romans 14:19, Ephesians 2:19-22, Colossians 1:10-12, 2:6-7). And the

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 105

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 106

²⁴⁶ Arnold, Jeffrey, *The Big Book on Small Groups*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVasity Press, 1992), 20

fourth is to nurture spiritual gifts (Romans 12:6-8, I Corinthians 12:4-11).²⁴⁷

All of the activities of the local church should, to some degree, contribute to attaining one of these goals. McBride also presents some qualifications that every group leader should possess: (1) an understanding of spiritual principles (I Timothy 5:22); (2) a growing relationship with Christ (II Peter 3:18); (3) a commitment to caring for people (I Corinthians 12:25); (4) a desire to serve (Galatians 5:13); (5) a willingness to learn (Ephesians 5:10); (6) and a resolve to spend the necessary time (I Corinthians 14:40).²⁴⁸

Any further qualifications you can list depend on the situation of each church. In order for leaders to facilitate the process of organizing a healthy and effective ministry, however, Jeffrey gives us seven basic questions to prayerfully consider. Here are some fundamental questions he gives us:²⁴⁹

- (1). What is the vision for small groups at our church?
- (2). Who will lead the group?
- (3). What kind of accountability we will require of leaders?
- (4). What kind of ongoing training will we provide our leaders?

These are overall visions for what team leaders can or will do in the church. Jeffrey claims that few people function at maximum effectiveness when left to their own devices. The leader's task is to help develop partners in discipleship. At the same time, the leader has another phase that people "will follow someone whom they respect, admire, and trust."²⁵⁰ Leaders need to be someone whom people respect, admire and trust. Disciple makers, that is leaders, are also models to those who are learning to follow Christ. I Timothy 1:6 reads: "We first imitated the Lord and then you learned from us how to imitate the Lord." Jeffrey warns, however, that "we must be careful not to

²⁴⁷ McBride, 26

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 30

²⁴⁹ Arnold, 199-200

²⁵⁰ Gill, 70

duplicate ourselves.”²⁵¹ Creativity is required in establishing leadership in Japan.

This approach of thought on the basic issue of leadership should be adopted by leaders in all categories in Japanese society, especially by those of the Christian world which has been struggling for church growth. This can ensure the success of a healthy ministry. In the process of helping develop partners in discipleship, Jeffrey claims that there is one fundamental question, and writes: “What kind of small group ministry do you envision?”²⁵²

²⁵¹ Arnold, 20

²⁵² Ibid., 199

Chapter Five

Evaluation

The framework of ministry strategy in the local church is critical in Japan. In the churches in big cities, the attention of churched people has been focused on academic theological study. There is little focus on methodology as a ministry strategy, let alone any study of methodology in the local church. However, the attention of churched people, as well as those of theologians, is beginning to shift toward practical methodology rather than toward the study of theology.

This practical methodology in the implementation of contextualization as a ministry strategy requires that the implementation must be founded systematically and theoretically on the basis of biblical righteousness. This is an urgent business for the churches in Japan. The urgent business of the contextualization of this methodology to Japan must remain, however, on a biblical basis.

As will be covered in chapter six, the study must go beyond merely discussing problems and teaching individuals at church how to minister. The Scriptural focus is on implementation of the strategy for development of church growth. Chapter four sought to establish a series of the methods as practical ministry strategies. In each chapter I attempted to state this idea of practical strategy designed for implementation in the local church in terms of contextualization.

However, the study is on things pertaining to Japan and the work was to be done in English. I was a little concerned if evaluators would understand the present spiritual situation of Japan in my study and if my English was sufficient for them to understand the focus of the study.

I intended to state that a substantial approach to contextualization as a ministry strategy is made up of understanding in four areas. The four areas are effective communication, small group ministry, foundation for ministry, and leadership ministry.

The four areas mentioned in chapter four were written as the actual implementation of contextualization as a ministry strategy. The four areas are not yet studied enough in Japan.

Strategy for evaluation

On September 6, the proposal was examined by Dr. Bickel. He advised me to ask some missionaries who had experience living in Japan. On September 11, Dr. Stallter examined the proposal. Dr. Stallter recommended to me Dr. David Hesselgrave as one of the evaluators. On November 11, we had a joint meeting for re-examining the proposal, and the framework for the chapters of the dissertation was set up.

Once chapters one through six, except chapter five (evaluation), were completed roughly they were sent for critiquing and reviewing, with a note specifying that this draft was not a completed one, to two veterans in the area of Japanese church culture and its ministry. The title was *Barriers to Contextualizing Christianity to Japanese Society and A Plan for Implementation of the Strategy for Evangelism*.

The veterans were Professor Hesselgrave and Mr. Bruce Anderson. Professor Hesselgrave is a former missionary to Japan, and is professor emeritus at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. He is the author of more than a dozen books, including *Scripture and Strategy*, *Today's Choices for Tomorrow's Mission*, and *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally*. Mr. Anderson is an on-going student of Japanese culture for fifteen years having lived in Japan for eleven years and having been a former commanding officer of Iwakuni Marine Base in Yamaguchi prefecture. Before he retired in May, 1999, he had served for Secretary of Defense at the Pentagon in Washington D. C. for three years.

The evaluators were requested to read the draft and review the contents of the ministry project. They were busy but I asked if they would send me their critique by January 5, 2000. They graciously did so. The following is the summary of their

evaluation.

The Result of the Evaluation

Each of the two evaluators offered helpful feedback for the better understanding of my study.

Evaluation by Bruce Anderson

In a fax letter sent on January 3, 2000, Mr. Bruce Anderson commented that the study is an excellent think-piece and action strategy for analyzing the historically-slow growth of Christianity and effecting a counter action plan in Japan. As evidenced by historically paucious Christian conversion rates, the little work that has been done to date has been ineffective. Therefore, the author was absolutely correct to point out that a new strategy is needed, and author's plan to emerging contextual practices bears exciting potential for progress in the white fields of harvest. He sent me his three basic comments and three recommendations for my consideration. The following pages are a quote by Bruce Anderson.

Comments

1. Japanese Culture or Religion?

Rather than Japanese culture being the obstacle slowing conversion rates, consideration should be given to becoming fully knowledgeable in how the tenets of Shintoism, Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism developed and still affect current national thought patterns:

- (1). The four religions are the basis of Japanese culture.
- (2). They are the foundation for Japanese thinking.
- (3). The Japanese thinking creates self-perpetuating family, educational, and governmental institutions.

To study Japanese culture as a source-obstacle to the spread of Christianity is like studying a cough, rather than the virus which causes the symptom. One of the primary

obstacles to acceptance of Christianity, is unquestioned obedience to authority and group co-dependency. The questions should be asked:

- (1). How did these tendencies develop?
- (2). Why are they rational in the Japanese mind in light of God's perfect 'Truths'?

Most likely, group co-dependency had roots in Shintoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism. In A. D. 701, Confucian legal codes codified specific punishments for neglecting spiritual responsibilities or failure to obey parents or superiors. Punishments were delineated and ranked according to degrees of harshness and included whipping, beating with sticks, hard labor, being sawed in half, exile and death. Specifically defined were the relationships between lord and retainer, parent and child, senior and junior, brothers and sisters, husband and wife, friend and friend.

2. Apologetics

Once the development of Japan's religious and cultural roots are thoroughly understood by the ministry, definitive apologetics can be introduced in a variety of forums to erode their intellectual foundations. As the average Japanese citizen dwells in a world where education is deeply respected, the internal and external inconsistencies between these contrasting religions will defeat each other's credibility. As the culture has always attempted to avoid conflict through moderation and tolerance, the distinctions between Shintoism, Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism have been blurred to a point where they are barely recognizable from their ancient beginnings....If effectively brought to the attention of the masses, Japan's religious foundation will at least crack, if not substantially disintegrate.

3. Christian Rationalism

In contrast to Japan's syncretized religious foundations, Christianity is defendable and has a concrete basis in prophecy and historical and scientific fact. As the Japanese dwell in a world where education is a mark of status, sermons, tracts, books and

videotapes that repeatedly emphasize not only the fallacious nature of often modified Japanese religiosity, but also the substantial and remarkable fulfillment of Christian prophecy will certainly open doors for discussions to prove the accuracy and inerrancy of the Bible.

Recommendations

1. Apologetics

Given the Japanese cultural abhorrence and avoidance of conflict, especially in the sensitive areas that currently define their national identity, the methodology to introduce apologetical material must first be extremely well thought out prior to introduction. For these reasons, strong consideration should be given initially to find a respectable foreigner, whose finances are independent of the Japanese Church, and who demonstrates the sincere, reflectable love of Jesus Christ for Japan. These truths should be introduced through tracts, lectures, books and videotapes available through the average Japanese Christian book store. Further, Japanese church leaders should form a collective body to identify and translate the very best apologetical books and tapes available throughout the world. These materials, if interesting, convincingly done and readily available, can be easily shared and viewed by modern Japanese citizens who live in an environment that is more free from religious persecution than at any time in their past.

2. Getting the Message Out.

Not to be condemnatory, but Japanese Christian leaders have long been marked by the personal characteristics of meekness, timidity, and compromise. Very few in Japan have ever heard the clear message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and have not been afforded the opportunity to accept Him as Savior and Lord. Many church congregations have only family members and a few, close neighbors filling their pews for decades. The Gospel has not been spread out of fear for losing one's livelihood and reputation.

Americans should not judge this situation, since we face little retribution for sharing the Gospel with friends and colleagues. In Japan, becoming a Christian can result in rejection by family members, friends, and employers. Therefore, it is recommended that Japanese church leaders fund a daily ten minute Christian radio message anonymously without the social pressure from fear of discovery. The message must be boldly presented and must emphasize the fallacies of Japanese religiosity, the marvelous credibility of the Bible and the agape love and message of salvation that is always available from our Savior.

3. Creation Science Lecture Series

The Creation Research Institute has already prepared a multitude of tapes and books which fully support and explain creationism. Japanese church leaders should contact CRI and fund the translation of these materials into the Japanese language. Further, they should support the physical presentation of these factual materials into Japanese educational institutions (which say ‘evolutionism’ is a fact). Japanese educational dogma regarding evolutionism must be challenged publicly. If Japanese leaders will not do it, then foreigners must. Since CRI already has noteworthy materials on these subjects, they can be easily translated or presented to large Japanese audiences by American lecturers.

Conclusion

My understanding of Japanese cultural development is slightly different than what was expressed in your paper. But I bow to your superior education and wisdom in all differences of understanding. I personally feel that Japanese religions formed Japanese culture, and the Japanese culture determined the Japanese mindset. The Japanese mindset created all Japanese education and government institutions. Therefore, the actions and thinking of all Japanese today is basically a reflection of indigenous Japanese religions.

Evaluation by J. David Hesselgrave

In our telephone conversation on December 23, 1999, Professor Hesselgrave

indicated that he had had limited time before leaving on a two-month itinerary, and there had not been time to do more than overview my thesis and make some basic observations. In a letter written on December 30, 1999, Hesselgrave offered the following thoughts in three categories. First, he mentions the strong points of my study. Second he describes the weak points, and thirdly, he offers advice.

Strong Points

The strengths of your paper:

- (1). have to do with the objectivity with which you analyze the problems faced by the churches in Japan.
- (2). Your reticence to settle on simple solutions.
- (3). Especially, the breadth of materials that you draw upon in an effort to develop a viable strategy for evangelism and church growth.
- (4). You are to be commended for making the kind of effort required to bring together such a vast amount of relevant materials - especially so because you are operating in the language, concepts and thought process of a second language.

Weak Points

At the same time, these strengths make for certain weaknesses. Within the scope of a paper such as this it is difficult if not impossible to do all that you set out to do and still do it well.

- (1). From your title I would understand that you have set out to explain barriers to effective evangelism, devise a strategy or plan of evangelism, and propose ways of implementing it.
- (2). From the text I gather that, inherent in this entire understanding, is a contextualization process.

This is indeed a large undertaking. At its present stage you have been successful in providing a large amount of information pertaining to the Japanese context and also

many ideas that bear upon contextualization. What is lacking is:

- (1). a clearly defined contextualization methodology
- (2). and especially, the contextualized evangelization strategy itself (to say nothing of implementation).

Advice

I would suggest that:

- (1). you lower your sights somewhat.
- (2). Capitalize on the area where your paper is strongest (the treatment of the barriers).
- (3). Lay out very clearly both a theory and method of biblical contextualization designed to overcome these barriers (there are many meanings and methods of contextualization and by no means all of them defensive and useable).
- (4). Conclude by suggesting a series of contextualized strategy proposals designed to overcome the aforementioned barriers to the evangelization of Japan.

Conclusion

Of course I am not your mentor. I only say this to indicate one way of narrowing your focus so as to make your thesis more “doable.” I have spent considerable time with both missionaries and Japanese (some of whom you refer to in your paper) exploring strategy issues. Some who write on the subject are no more successful in implementation than others who simply work hard at evangelism. Good ideas and well-thought-out strategies are needed. But it seems that no one has all the answers. We must keep thinking, but also praying and working.

Personal Responses in Light of the Evaluation

Bruce Anderson was quite humble in writing that his understanding was too simple. He asked me to read his paper and use whatever information I thought necessary to assist in the work. He spent fifteen years in the study of Japanese culture, having lived

in Japan for eleven years. His thoughts presented in his fax letter are developed and refined. There is no difference whatsoever between his thinking and that of mine. Only one thing which may be different will be the fact that I have attempted to arrange the problems and methodology rather rudimentally based on biblical and historical principles. He has a good grasp of the actual situation of the churches in Japan.

After reflection on Hesselgrave's encouragement on the study, it began to dawn on me that the title and the intention of the study did not coincide. I changed the title from *Barriers to Contextualizing Christianity to Japanese Society and A Plan for Implementation of the Strategy for Evangelism* to *Barriers to Contextualizing Christianity in Japanese Society and Plans for the Implementation of Contextualization as A Ministry Strategy*.

Professor Hesselgrave pointed out as lacking in the study was a clearly defined contextualization methodology. I added in chapter four that the methodology of contextualization in this study was the implementation of the four areas. Especially he emphasized "the contextualization strategy itself," I added in chapter four that understanding the essential concept, thought, and philosophy which lie under each of the four areas was the initial step for the contextualization and implementation of the four areas as methodology. I tried to avoid ending up with the study being merely a theoretical discussion.

His final advice was to conclude by suggesting a series of contextualized strategy proposals. I added a note in conclusion specifying that the strategy is not tactful acts but understanding the thoughts which lie at the bottom of each area. The strategy for the implementation of effective communication using contextualization is to understand the significance of cultural belief and values as they relate to sermon and communication, which are seldom discussed in the church in Japan. Ministry through the small groups in the church has brought about historical proof for church growth. Wherever there was a

spiritual revival, there were small groups in the church. The concept of ‘contextualization’ itself is yet to be understood and prevail among churched people in Japan. It is essential that the basic concept of contextualization is grasped by the Japanese Christians. Foundations for ministry as a ministry strategy emphasized the interpersonal relationship. New leadership is to turn followers into leaders who turn them to leaders.

Chapter Six

Final Observations, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Final Observations:

Team leader, group leader, pastor, teacher, prophet, or apostle, whatever name you may choose and whatever method you may take in order to bring about change in the church, effective, gifted, and committed persons as leaders are required. Just as the problem of barriers to contextualizing Christianity to Japanese society involves many facets, so does the strategy for the implementation of effective ministry. It takes a perpetual study of this category of theological practices to implement the effective ministry in the church in Japan.

Japanese church culture duplicates too much the western church which has left an alien taste of Christianity among the people. The topics discussed in Chapter Four are practical suggestions to overcome existing deficiencies in Japanese churches. Each church needs to develop its own methodologies, intentionally and creatively, and to develop ministerial strategies to increase church growth. This thesis is dedicated to establishing the fundamental principles for that express purpose. The humble heart of exploring the creative method will be the initial step for contextualizing Christianity within Japanese society.

Conclusions:

There is no single cause for the barriers to contextualizing the gospel to Japanese society. There is no single method for solving the issue of contextualizing Christianity to the Japanese society which is education centered, sophisticated, heretical, economically developed, and culturally unique.

I had thought for the first time when I began to do this thesis that only Tennoism, not the Tenno system, was the practical precedent core problem which hindered contextualizing. I have recognized now that there are a number of qualitative ingredients

that hinder contextualizing structurally, spiritually, socially, traditionally, and ethnologically. The problem is hard and complicated.

The fact is that there are many theologians who discuss the issue of the cause of ineffective contextualization from their own point of view. That is, they have dealt helpfully with what are the problems of the slow growth of church in Japan. They have shown us many aspects of the problems but offered scant help concerning how to solve the problems, what one may use as the method to produce the solution. If such works are to be found, they have approached the solution more ideologically than functionally. Comments on methodology are few and usually superficial.

In the process of researching this thesis, I recognized that it was much more important to find methodology than to point out the problems. When I began Chapter four I also recognized that this was more difficult than finding the problems. There is little systematic and rational research of the methods which will produce the solution.

I have also recognized that many of these answers I seek are embedded in the rules, structures, and the values of the Japanese religion and culture. The answer can be found more satisfactorily by exploring that culture with people who are living in it, and the religion in which those people put their trust. For the core problem lies in the Japanese people themselves, as Idogaki points out.²⁵³ From this point of view we may say the issue of contextualizing Christianity to Japan may belong to the category of the cultural anthropologist or ethno anthropologist.

It is required of me to look at the problem not just as a religious problem but as a cultural problem, the way the people themselves live. It is required that I know the mind-set behind their opinions and actions. It is necessary for me to keep myself as far as possible from jumping to the easy conclusion that the matter is simply the fact that the non-Christian Japanese will not do in a given situation what we Christians will do. It is

²⁵³ Idogaki, 197

hard to understand how non-Christian Japanese view and interpret Christianity through their own eyes. It became an issue of critical importance for me to understand the Japanese, even though I am a Japanese, which involves many contradictions which should not be ignored concerning the way they behave and why they behave that way.

Through the study of "Contextualization for Meaningful Ministry" and "Intercultural Communication" at seminar classes, I find it necessary to take into account the different Japanese habits of behaving and thinking. In order to spell out what the Japanese people are, from the stand point of a Japanese, for the purpose of effective contextualization, it is important to find the answer to these questions about them. Whether the issue is religious or cultural, to know the people, whose determination is never to accept Christ, is important. The problem does not lie in the outward phenomena. In all the problems we are considering, we have to know not just their aims and motives, not just the long history of Japan, not just the economic growth and educational system, but we have to know who the Japanese are and what they expect from Christianity.

We have to try to understand the people, the habits of their thoughts, and their emotions and behavior patterns which they have established. To discover an intentional and creative method will be the final strategy for solving the problem of contextualization.

Recommendations:

As one of the practical and effective methods, I have chosen the four areas based on the seminar topic focuses. As I tried to find out the principles of each area, I discovered that it is not enough to answer those problems which are barriers to contextualization. However, I am convinced that these are practical theological methods which will be highly helpful for effective ministry, because these four areas are weak points in the church in Japan.

My prayer for this study is that individuals or groups of ordinary Christians would

be pleased to consider each chapter and work through the discussion about the core problems to contextualization and to try to develop a new method for ministry. Sincere Christians who search for the growth of the church will take much account of these four areas. They will then put them into practice in their field of ministry and see God's church grow.

My intention is not to put much trust on the methodology but upon God. However, each topic in chapter four holds a valid message for writing up one thesis. I should continue to study each of them further to organize and reemphasize their purposefulness for the church in ministry. I shall also try to be faithful in prayer for these areas for all the Protestant churches in Japan.

Appendix One
Relational Skills Evaluation

A. Ability to work well with others in a team relationship	1 2 3 4 5
B. Has the respect of friends and co-workers	1 2 3 4 5
C. Uncontentious	1 2 3 4 5
D. Ability to respond well to constructive criticism	1 2 3 4 5
E. Able to communicate kindness & caring for others	1 2 3 4 5
F. Approachable and sensitive to others	1 2 3 4 5
G. Has respect for and shows respect for a wide variety of people	1 2 3 4 5
H. Possesses a forgiving spirit	1 2 3 4 5
I. Cheerful	1 2 3 4 5
J. Friendly	1 2 3 4 5
K. Tactful	1 2 3 4 5
L. A good listener	1 2 3 4 5
M. Exerts a positive influence on others	1 2 3 4 5
N. Truthful	1 2 3 4 5
O. Shows courtesy and consideration toward others	1 2 3 4 5
P. Able to control temper	1 2 3 4 5

Appendix Two

Personal and Professional Inventory

Personal Growth

1. I react well to a wide variety of situations and people.
2. I am faithful to the Lord, as indicated by my devotional life and personal holiness.
3. I have established a visible commitment to biblical family value.
4. I have established a healthy interaction with my local church.

Biblical Interpretation

5. I have developed competence in the use of biblical language and related tools.
6. I understand and can apply proper principles of biblical interpretation.
7. I have developed good skills in biblical and theological synthesis and analysis.
8. I can distinguish between direct biblical teaching, inferences drawn from biblical statements, and the theological constructs with which biblical interpreters explain the meaning of the Bible.
9. I am competent in applying Scripture appropriately for people in their contemporary setting.
10. I can appreciate and apply the contributions from historical theology, church history, philosophy, and other related disciplines, with particular regard to gaining a historical consciousness of the development of biblical interpretation the western world.

Cultural Sensitivity

11. I am aware of the strengths and weaknesses of my own religious and cultural traditions and values.
12. I can evaluate and explain, in an appropriate Christian manner, differing traditions, new movements, and competing doctrinal systems and values.

Leadership

13. I can demonstrate the understanding that character, rather than the authority of a position, is essential in leadership.

14. I am developing the habit of service for others, rather than the expectation of being served.
15. I demonstrate initiative, vision, faithfulness, and the capacity to motivate others in a non-manipulative fashion toward fruitful life and ministry.

Professional Skills

16. I have developed a personal philosophy of ministry which drives and guides me in my Christian service.
17. I have assessed my own personal abilities and limitations.
18. I have developed a capacity to identify ministry needs.
19. I have demonstrated a willingness to delegate responsibility and to support the service of others.
20. I see myself as flexible and progressive in administrative style.
21. I am committed to maintaining a balance between various ministry responsibilities such as teaching, preaching, visitation, counseling, administration, community and family life.

Communication Skills

22. I realize that communication involves more than good verbalization.
23. I understand that communication is intended to not only promote understanding but to foster change in the mind and heart of hearers.
24. I understand that good communication of a biblical message involves integrity of life as well as excellence of speech.

Evangelism and Discipleship

25. I feel a love for eternally lost people and a confidence that produces boldness in regularly sharing the gospel.
26. I demonstrate in life, public ministry, and regularly planned private encounters the abilities to encourage and confront with compassion , while assisting others in spiritual development.
27. I am sensitive toward people of varied cultural backgrounds in leading them to informed decision to follow Christ.

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