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Japanese Church History: Historical Background and the Issue of Identity

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In this article I shall outline the history of the reception of Christianity in Japan. To understand how Christianity was accepted, or rather rejected, in Japan, it is indispensable to consider two things: international and domestic politics of Japan. Its history must be told, therefore, in relation to the political situation of the country. Christianity in Japan has about 450 years of history, since the introduction of Catholicism in the middle of the sixteenth century. Unlike Buddhism and Confucianism, which came from overseas a millennium ago and eventually became indiginized, Christianity was never adopted or used by the governing power whether that was an emperor and the nobles or a feudal ruler (shogun). Throughout its history, Christianity was generally considered as a "foreign" religion: a religion of "Southern Barbarians" or "the West".[1] The road Christianity took in Japan was thorny and daunting, often being brought into conflict with and persecuted by the political authorities. Today, Christians in Japan make up less than 1% of the whole population,[2] and each existing church is small in number. Many Japanese people consider themselves non-practising

[1] Since Portugal and Spain had colonies to the south-east of Japan, these countries were called by this name around the time when Christianity was brought to Japan. Later, when Protestantism was brought to Japan, it was understood to be the religion of the West.
[2] This figure is based on church membership.

"Buddhists" or "Shintoists." For many of them, religion is a set of social conventions: they go to a Shinto shrine on New Year's Day, get married in a Christian chapel, and have a Buddhist funeral. While many people believe in some spiritual existence, the Judeo-Christian notion of one creator God has never become prominent. This article will survey the history of Christianity in Japan, paying particular attention to the relationship between the church and the state, placed in a larger context of Japan's relationship to the outside world, especially with the Western powers.

1. Francisco de Xavier and the Jesuit Missionaries

During the age of discovery and subsequent conquest, Spain and Portugal, the two major sea-powers, aggressively sought to extend their influence over new lands. In 1494, through the mediation of Pope Alexander VI, the two countries agreed the Treaty of Tordesillas, which divided the world along a meridian 370 leagues west of the Cape Verde Islands. All newly discovered lands in the eastern hemisphere were allocated to Portugal; all those in the western hemisphere to Spain. The Portuguese travelled from Lisbon, via the African west coast and Cape of Good Hope, to Goa in India, which was their base. From Goa, they reached Japan via Malacca and Macao in China.[3]

In 1543, three Portuguese were on board a Chinese junk that was driven off course by a storm and made landfall in Japan. At that time Japan was divided by feudal lords, who engaged in continuous civil strife with each other, and the Portuguese found an ideal market for their firearms.[4] The Jesuit missionary Francisco de Xavier (1506-1552) heard about Japan when he was in Malacca en route to Goa at the end of December 1547.[5] He was then introduced to a Japanese man called Yajiro, who already spoke a little Portuguese. Having heard about this newly discovered rich and populous country with a cultivated society, Xavier was ready to seize this great opportunity to proclaim the Gospel.

Xavier and his company had been sent east by Pope Paul III at the request of King John III of Portugal, who was dissatisfied with the work of the Franciscans in India.[6] When Xavier left Lisbon in 1541, it was only a year after he and Ignacio

[3] Kentaro Miyazaki. 'Roman Catholic Mission in Pre-Modern Japan'. In: *Handbook of Christianity in Japan*. Ed. by Mark Mullins. Leiden: Brill, 2003, pp. 3-4.
[4] C. R. Boxer. *The Christian Century in Japan* 1549–1650. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951, pp. 24–8.
[5] For information on Xavier's life and work, see Georg Schurhammer. *Francis Xavier: His Life, His Times.* 4 vols. Rome: Jesuit Historical Inst., 1973. Also Daniello Bartoli. *The Life of St. Francis Xavier, Apostle of India and Japan.* London: Thomas Jones, 1858; Henry James Coleridge. *The Life and Letters of St. Francis Xavier.* London: Burns and Oates, 1872. For a more recent study, see Andrew C. Ross. *A Vision Betrayed: the Jesuits in Japan and China*, 1542-1742. Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 1994.

de Loyola with five others had founded the Society of Jesus (*Societas Iesu)*.[7] Xavier and his companions, Father Cosmo de Torres, Brother Juan Fernandez, and three Japanese converts including Yajiro, who had been received into the Catholic faith, arrived in Kagoshima, a southern part of Japan in August 1549. In his letters to a colleague in Goa dated November 5, 1549, Xavier wrote that Japanese people were good-natured, courteous, and valued the concept of honour. By this time, Xavier had encountered people of different classes, farmers and feudal lords, as well as the Buddhist priests, whom he engaged in doctrinal debates. He also showed his eagerness to learn the Japanese language, and reported that Yajiro, now called by his baptismal name, Paulo de Santa Fé, was helping him translate "everything which is necessary for the salvation of souls".[8] He concluded his letter by saying that Japan was a suitable land in which to propagate Christianity.

The sixteenth century was a time of war and turmoil as local leaders fought each other. The majority of early converts were poor peasants or fishermen, who were burdened by high feudal land taxes.[9] During the two years of Xavier's stay, 700 people converted.[10] During the period after the Great Discoveries by Spain and Portugal, and as the countries in Middle and South America, Southeast Asia, and Africa were colonised, the native religions were to be eliminated, often by the "sword", to impose Christianity. In East Asia, such as in Japan and China, however, the Jesuits esteemed the native culture highly and did not impose Christianity by force.

After Xavier left to continue his mission in India and China, Cosmo de Torres remained and continued their work. Torres and his companions followed Xavier's approach in trying to understand Japanese customs, politics, and religions, and to adjust themselves to the ways of Japanese society. The Jesuit missionaries became vegetarians like the local people, wore silk clothes in accordance with the custom among the religious figures, and studied Buddhism to be ready for the debates with monks.[11] Since the Japanese people placed great import on cleanliness, examples of which are scrupulous cleanliness in dress and housing

[6] Takashi Gonoi. *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*. [Christian History in Japan]. Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kobunkan, 1990, p. 30.

[7] Arimichi Ebisawa & Saburo Ouchi. *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi.* [Christian History in Japan]. Tokyo: Nihon Kirisuto Kyodan, 1970. On the Jesuits, see, for example, Andrew Steinmetz. *History of the Jesuits.* London: R. Bentley, 1848; Giovanni B. Nicolini. *History of the Jesuits: Their Origin, Progress, Doctrines and Designs.* Edinburgh: J. Nichol, 1853; Polgár László. *Bibliography of the History of the Society of Jesus.* Rome: Jesuit Historical Institute, 1967; Jonathan Wright. *The Jesuits: Missions, Myths and Histories.* London: HarperCollins, 2004.

[8] 'Extracts from a Letter Written by Francis Xavier, S.J., to the Jesuits at Goa dated Kagoshima, November 5, 1549' in *The Christian Century in Japan 1549–1650*, pp. 401–5.

[9] Ebisawa & Ouchi, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 55.

[10] Gonoi, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 44.

[11] Ebisawa & Ouchi, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 41. Luis Frois, who joined the Jesuits' mission in

and the custom of bathing every day, the missionaries were also expected to meet these standards.[12] At the same time, Torres made use of Portuguese merchant ships for their advantage in negotiating with local rulers. The Jesuits gradually became an indispensable part of the trade between the Portuguese and the Japanese: as translators, as brokers, and also as investors, with the intent of meeting the expenses of their growing communities.[13] While the feudal lords protected the missionaries for their own political interest – namely, to be in a good relationship with Portugal and to promote the trade between two countries – Catholicism in Japan grew exponentially in the first fifty years, and one of the reasons why the Jesuits' work was not interrupted during this time was their involvement with the Portugal–Japan trade.[14] The period of 100 years from 1549 is often called the "Christian century" of Japan. The converts were called *Kirishitan* [吉利支丹, later 切支丹,[15]], which comes from Portuguese *Christão*.[16] According to Luís de Cerqueira (1552–1614), who served as bishop of Japan from 1598 to 1614, the Kirishitan population in Japan was about 350,000 in 1603.[17]

Initially, the Jesuits found a niche among the poor and needy by providing medical treatment and thus were known as "healers".[18] Later, however, the focus of their propagation shifted to the feudal lords and the privileged samurai class, in spite of many of the converts being farmers or peasants.[19]

Japan in 1563, wrote of his experiences in Japan. Luis Frois. *Historia de Japan*. Lisbon: Biblioteca Nacional, 1984. This work was translated into Japanese; Kiichi Matsuda & Momota Kawasaki. *Frois Nihonshi*. Tokyo: Chuou Kouroun, 2000. In *Historia,* Frois mentions that he and another missionary, Organtino Gnecchi-Soldo, learnt from a Buddhist monk two hours every day for a year. Frois, *Historia de Japan,* Part 1, ch. 102; Gonoi, Nihon *Kirisuto Kyōshi.*

[12] Boxer, *The Christian Century in Japan 1549–1650*, p. 214.

[13] ibid., pp. 112–21.

[14] Some feudal lords were baptised and protected the missionaries in the hope of trade advantages. In the Kyushu area, Ōmura Sumitada was baptised in 1563, Ōtomo Sōrin in 1578, Arima Harunobu in 1580. See Miyazaki, 'Roman Catholic Mission in Pre-Modern Japan', p. 7. Yet it should be noted that some feudal lords who did not have access to the port towns also converted and promoted the religion in their lands. One of the most influential and famous Christian lords was Ukon Takayama (1552–1615). See Arimichi Ebisawa. *Takayama Ukon*. Tokyo: Yoshikawa Koubunkan, 1958. *Takayama Ukon*

[15] The characters changed because one of the later Shoguns had the letter 吉 in his name, and did not wish to have any association with Kirishitans.

[16] Miyazaki, 'Roman Catholic Mission in Pre-Modern Japan', p. 5.

[17] Gonoi, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi,* p. 190. Miyazaki comments on the statistics of 1630: "after eighty years of missionary work, the number of converts in the early 1630s totalled 760,000. The total population of Japan at that time is estimated to have been 12,000,000, so that figure is equivalent to approximately ten times the percentage of Catholics in present-day Japan." This figure, however, includes those who were baptised as infants, and is thus debated among scholars. Miyazaki, 'Roman Catholic Mission in Pre-Modern Japan', p. 7. See also Gonoi, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 129; Christal Whelan. *The Beginning of Heaven and Earth: The Sacred Book of Japan's Hidden Christians.* Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1996, p. 77.

[18] Boxer, *The Christian Century in Japan 1549–1650,* pp. 202–3

[19] ibid., pp. 227–8

2. Hideyoshi Toyotomi and his Policy on Kirishitans

Before 1603, which was the year Tokugawa Shogunate (*Bakufu* [幕府]) was established and the country unified under a Shogun, there were relatively few persecutions of Jesuits and Kirishitans. For example, Oda Nobunaga (1534–1582), the first unifier of Japan in the *Sengoku* (civil war) period before the Shogunate, favoured the Kirishitan religion largely because he did not have support from the Buddhist monks and priests, and thus adopted an anti-Buddhist policy in the power struggles.[20] Buddhist temples and clergy therein were respected by the populace in general, and also had political power and fought as soldiers against feudal lords if necessary. Some of the Jesuits' views on these Buddhist sects can be known from their correspondence. Gasper Vilela (1525–1572), for example, reported in his letter to compatriots in the Benedictine convent of Aviz, on October 6, 1571 that bonzes (Buddhist clergy) used to say "matins, tierce, vespers and complines for the Devil wished them to imitate the things of our Lord in everything."[21] He also concluded that their cleanliness and the beauty of the temples and the gardens were due to their disbelief in a future life, thus attempting to create paradise in their present life, and eventually dismissed them as pederastic hypocrites.[22] Vilela continuously reports that the monks were addicted to "sodomy".[23] Luis Frois (1532–1597) also reports his disappointment over the death of a Christian lord, and expressed delight when he heard the news of Nobunaga's massacre of an enemy force, including Tendai temple on Hieizan mount where the all the villagers on the mount were hunted down and killed regardless of their age or gender.[24] This negative view of Buddhist priests was not necessarily shared by all the Jesuits working in Japan, and Alexander Valignano (1539–1606), the vicar-general and Visitor of East Asia for the Jesuits since 1582, found out how the Buddhist priests were distinguished and respected by the people for their dignity and gravity, and thus held them as models for the Jesuits missionaries to follow.[25]

Alexander Valignano first arrived in Japan in 1579, tasked with policy-making and inspection of the ongoing missionary work. While his predecessor Francisco Cabral (1528–1609), who despised Asiatic races and opposed both treating

[20] Masahiko Sawa. *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*. [History of Christianity in Japan]. Tokyo: Sofukan, 2004, p. 64
[21] Boxer, *The Christian Century in Japan 1549–1650,* p. 66
[22] ibid., p. 66
[23] Boxer, *The Christian Century in Japan 1549–1650,* pp. 66, 69. Kwok Pui-lan points out the concept of "homosexuality" played a role in colonial discourse, and the biblical association of homosexuality with other religions, and in later Christian traditions. See Kwok Pui-lan. *Postcolonial Imagination & Feminist Theology.* Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005, pp. 138–41.
[24] Boxer, *The Christian Century in Japan 1549–1650*, pp. 69–71.
[25] ibid., p. 83.

the Japanese as equals of Europeans and ordaining them as priests, Valignano strongly advocated for a native clergy, saying that the Japanese should be taught everything the Jesuits could teach, especially because the language skills of the European Jesuits were so limited.[26] It was Valignano's position that was taken for the mission in Japan, and Cabral was replaced by Gaspar Coelho (ca.1531–1590).[27] However, even though the Japanese could enter the Society, the singular difficulty for them to be ordained as priests was that the Japanese novices experienced great difficulty learning Latin, and the required standard of proficiency of Latin had to be lowered for the Japanese brothers.[28]

In 1582, Valignano took four young boys, about the age of thirteen, from the Jesuits institutions for primary education to present them to the Pope. His purpose was to collect donations, and also to educate the youths by showing them Christianity in Europe. His mission was successful, and the youths received a warm welcome and made a visit to the Pope. By the time they returned to Nagasaki in 1590, however, the situation in their homeland had changed significantly.

After Nobunaga was assassinated, Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536–1598) became the dominant ruler.[29] At first, he continued Nobunaga's policy on the missionaries due to his interest in international trade, especially in acquiring warships from Portugal.[30] However, in 1587, he suddenly issued a decree to expel all the missionaries within twenty days [伴天連追放令]. There have been several reasons suggested as to why Hideyoshi changed his mind. One of the main factors may have been that Takayama Ukon, who was a prominent Kirishitan protector, did not renounce his faith when Hideyoshi demanded. Hideyoshi was displeased with the fact that he could not manipulate Takayama to control the Kirishitans in the country.[31] It was also suggested that Gaspar Coelho, the Vice-Provincial, could not keep his word to Hideyoshi about assisting him to acquire two Portuguese warships. The failure to secure the ships caused Hideyoshi to distrust Coelho. Coelho asked Hideyoshi for six months until a ship would arrive from Portugal, and planned a military movement to protect the land they had been

[26] ibid., pp. 85–9.
[27] The admission of Japanese to the society was limited to those of gentle birth, sons of nobility or samurai. See ibid., pp. 220, 223.
[28] ibid., pp. 206, 219.
[29] During the time of Nobunaga and Hideyoshi, P. Alessandro Valignano, the Visitor of India, was the most prominent figure in the Jesuits' mission. One of the best biographies of Valignano is J. F. Shütte. *Valignanos Mission Principle for Japan*. [Translation of *Valignanos Missionsgrundsätze für Japan*. Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1951]. Institute of Jesuits Sources, 1980. See also J. F. Moran. *The Japanese and the Jesuits: Alessandro Valignanos in Sixteenth Century Japan.* London, New York: Routledge, 1993.
[30] Gonoi, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, pp. 143–4.
[31] ibid., p. 147

granted in Nagasaki. He asked for help from Kirishitan feudal lords and the Superior in Macao, yet none of them approved Coelho's plan. Even Valignano opposed the armaments. Valignano came to Japan in 1590, but Coelho had passed away before his arrival. As a result of Valignano's intervention, not as a missionary but as the ambassador of the viceroy of India, Hideyoshi's wrath subsided, and the law gradually fell into disuse.[32]

3. The San Felipe Incident and the Twenty-six Martyrs

When Hideyoshi threatened to invade the Spanish colony in the Philippines, the Spanish King, Felipe II (Felipe I of Portugal) sent a Dominican (1592), and a Franciscan (1593) as his envoys, even though Pope Gregory XIII had issued a decree to entrust mission work in Japan exclusively to the Jesuits.[33] From this basis, the Spanish Franciscans and the Dominicans sailed to Japan from the Philippines with the help of Spanish merchants who coveted the trade relationship between Portugal and Japan, and started their ministry, which caused confusion in the mission field, especially since the Franciscans did not follow the culturally and politically sensitive stance of the Jesuits. A Jesuit, Organtino Gnecchi-Soldo, who had been engaged in urban ministry in Kyoto, warned the Franciscans to be circumspect in their actions and to take account of possible reaction by the authorities. The Franciscans did not heed his warning.[34]

It was against this background that the *San Felipe* incident occurred. In 1596, a Spanish ship, the *San Felipe*, was cast ashore. A crewmember, on questioning by Hideyoshi's diplomat, bragged about Spain's glory and how it conquered and colonised so many lands. When the diplomat asked whether Spain sent missionaries before the conquest, it is said that the man answered, "Yes."[35] Hideyoshi was angry and harshly criticised the Franciscans. The incident led to the martyrdom of twenty-six Christians – six Franciscan missionaries and seventeen converts by Franciscans, and three Japanese Jesuit lay brothers, who were included by mistake. They were taken from Kyoto, marched to Nagasaki and crucified there on 5th February 1597.[36]

[32] ibid., pp. 147–67; Ebisawa & Ouchi, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, pp. 78–82.
[33] Miyazaki, 'Roman Catholic Mission in Pre-Modern Japan', p. 10.
[34] Gonoi, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, pp. 178–9
[35] Gonoi, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 182
[36] Boxer, *The Christian Century in Japan 1549–1650*, pp. 164–6; Gonoi, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi,* pp. 182–3; Ebisawa & Ouchi, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, pp. 85–6; Sawa, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi,* pp. 43–4. See also L. Pagés. *Nihon Nijyuroku Seijin Jyunkyouki*. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1931. In 1861, Pope Pius IV declared the 23 Franciscans saints, and the three Jesuits also became saints the following next year. See Gonoi, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi,* p. 183.

4. Tokugawa Bakufu and Kirisitans

After the death of Hideyoshi in 1598, Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543–1616) completed the unification of the country and established the Shogunate [*Bakufu*]. Real anti-Kirishitan measures began around the time of this unification. In the beginning, Ieyasu, though a practising Buddhist, took a tolerant attitude to the Jesuits, just as his predecessors did, precisely because the Jesuits were essential intermediaries for the trade with the Portuguese. However, the situation gradually changed as the Jesuits lost their monopoly as trade translators. The appearance of rivals, Dutch and English, for the Japan trade reduced the importance of the trade with the Portuguese, which also affected the value of missionaries from the *Bakufu*'s perspective.[37] The *Bakufu* also became alarmed about the possibility of Kirishitans, or worse the Christian countries such as Spain, allying with the clans or clan-less warriors who were anti-Shogunate.[38] With a ban in 1614, many of the missionaries were expelled from the country.[39] The propitiatory decree stated that Japan was a country based on Buddhism and Shintoism, and Kirishitans were believing a false religion that not only confused and defiled the traditional Japanese gods but also confused society.[40] When Ieyasu died in 1616, his son, Hidetada issued another ban against Kirishitans. From that time on, priests and anyone who sheltered them were killed. This time, the persecution was persistent. People who did not renounce their faith were tortured and killed. The massacre and torture was so horrendous that Nagasaki, where most of the inhabitants were Kirishitans, was almost depopulated.[41] Ironically, members of the non-samurai warrior class such as farmers and peasants, the people whom the Franciscans and Dominicans targeted for propagation, were the ones who remained most faithful unto death.[42]

The anti-Kirishitan policy of the *Bakufu* was even accelerated on the succession of Hidetada's son, Iemitsu. In 1637, there was a peasant uprising in Shimabara, Nagasaki. The revolt was due to oppressive taxation, but because they were Kirishitans, their faith nurtured in the community was their common foundation. The following year, the allied forces of the *Bakufu* launched an attack

[37] Boxer, *The Christian Century in Japan 1549–1650*, pp. 308–9.
[38] Gonoi, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 205.
[39] What triggered this veto originally was a bribery case between two Catholic feudal lords. One forged a letter from Ieyasu. When this came to light in 1612, he was burnt at the stake, and the other was sent into exile. ibid., p. 200.
[40] ibid., pp. 203–4.
[41] The magistrate's office in Nagasaki adopted a torture using boiling water and high temperature steam in a natural hot-spring region. Many people were scalded to death. ibid., p. 215. For the torture of Christians, see Chie Tsuyama. *Kirishitan Goumonshi.* [The History of Torture against Japanese Christians]. Tokyo: San-ichi Publishing, 1994.
[42] Boxer, *The Christian Century in Japan 1549–1650*, p. 339.

against the peasants who had barricaded themselves in a fort. Approximately 25,000 people, including women and children, were killed, and about 8,000 died on the side of the allied force.[43] In 1639, the *Bakufu* banned merchant ships from Portugal all together.

Consequently, by the early 1640s, there were no missionaries in Japan, and Kirishitans were forced to go underground.[44] In the meantime, the *Bakufu*'s national isolation policy was completed by 1641.[45]

5. The End of National Isolation

The isolationist policy was maintained until the nineteenth century with a very few exceptions: Korea was the only country that kept diplomatic relations with Japan, and this was implemented only through the clan of Tsushima, not through the central government. Some private Chinese traders and the Dutch East India Company were still permitted to operate in Nagasaki. After the Opium Wars (1839–1842) resulted in China being forced to open its ports to international trade, Western countries expected Japan to follow a similar route. The news of the Opium Wars spread rapidly among Japanese political leaders and intellectuals, and affirmed the superiority of Western military technology. Especially for the United States, Japan's national isolation laws caused resentment as it prevented the American ships from calling at Japanese ports for water and supplies, and also because shipwrecked American sailors were ill-treated in Japan. Moreover, the establishment of formal authority in California and Oregon in 1848 accelerated the United States' interest in opening Japanese ports, as Japan was on a direct line from San Francisco to Shanghai.[46] With a letter from President Millard Fillmore to the emperor of Japan requesting friendly relations, Commodore Matthew C. Perry arrived in Edo Bay with his squadron. Perry demanded the opening of Japan's ports and courtesy towards American ships as "a right" and to be expected from one civilised nation to another. Overwhelmed by Perry's *Kurofune*, or "black ships", a term first used for the Portuguese carracks in 1500s, Japanese officials became convinced that acceding to the demand that Japan's ports be opened was the only means of survival. In 1854,

[43] Gonoi, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, pp. 221–3.
[44] Sawa, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi,* p. 50
[45] The Portuguese, whether merchants or missionaries, were excluded in 1639 and only the Dutch were permitted to enter Dejima (an artificial island) in Nagasaki. Japanese were forbidden to travel abroad under penalty of death, and foreigners were not allowed to enter the land. John Witney Hall, ed. *The Cambridge History of Japan*. Vol. 4. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, p. 300.
[46] Marius B. Jansen, ed. *The Cambridge of History of Japan*. Vol. 5. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, pp. 268–9.

the two countries signed an agreement that opened the two ports of Shimoda and Hakodate for American ships to obtain coal and other necessary supplies.[47] This was not a treaty for trade.

However, with persistent pressure from not only the United States, but also Britain, the Netherlands, Russia, and France, Japan recognised that the opening of trade was not a matter of choice. In 1857, the American Consul-General Townsend Harris came to negotiate details of a trade treaty. *The Treaty of Peace and Commerce* was signed between the United States and Japan in 1858. Japan also signed equivalent treaties with the other four Western countries.[48] It was an unequal treaty, especially in two respects: foreigners in Japan were to be judged according to the laws of their own countries, not by Japanese law; and the Japanese government could not control import and export duties without negotiating with the foreign countries. The effect on the Japanese domestic economy was disastrous. The Harris trade treaty said "Americans may freely buy from Japanese and sell to them any articles that either may have for sale, without the intervention of any Japanese officers in such purchase or sale, or in making or receiving payment for the same…" (Article 3).[49] Accordingly, the trade relationship started. Yet there were problems. Harris insisted that the Japanese and American coins should be exchanged weight for weight, but Japanese silver coins contained a higher percentage of silver than dollar coins. Also in Japan the ratio of the value of silver to gold was 1 to 5, instead of the world ratio of 1 to 15. Consequently, Japan lost a significant amount of gold in two years. In 1860, the government issued a new gold coin, worth one-third of an old gold coin. This increased the amount of money in circulation by almost 150%, which resulted in severe inflation. Moreover, the demand for silk and tea pushed up the prices of these products. (The British government later apologised for this.) About 30% to 50% of silk was exported, and farmers gave up growing rice and other crops to grow more tea. The fear of the future and discontentment toward the *Bakufu* stirred up strong resentment over the government's signing of the treaty. Under the slogan, "Honour the emperor, expel the barbarian," there were attacks on individual foreigners in Yokohama and Edo (the new capital). This social turmoil eventually led to the end of the *Bakufu*, and its replacement by the new social and political structure of the Meiji Restoration (1866-1869).

[47] Jansen, *The Cambridge of History of Japan*, p. 269.
[48] ibid., pp. 271–84.
[49] ibid., p. 280.

6. The Return of Missionaries

In the Harris trade treaty, there was an article on the freedom of religion for Americans who lived in Japan.[50] Townsend Harris was a practising Christian, and criticised Japan's policy on Christianity as the Christians were persecuted and almost exterminated during the Tokugawa Shogunate. Based on the treaty, missionaries came to Japan, at first for the ostensible reason of ministering to their fellow countrymen.[51] Following the United States, France signed a trade treaty. Over two centuries after their expulsion, Catholic missionaries came back to Japan in 1862 alongside Protestant missionaries.[52]

In 1865, French missionaries built a chapel in Oura, Nagasaki. The western-style building attracted much attention from the inhabitants and tourists, and it was called, "*Furansu Dera*" [French Temple].[53] Hearing the rumour about the chapel, many underground Catholics heard about the chapel and visited the priest. When the Catholic missionaries came back, not all of the underground Christians reconnected to the Catholic Church. During the persecution, the underground Christians pretended to be Buddhists on the surface and maintained their Catholic faith. They denied Christianity in public, registered as Buddhists, and participated in Shinto ceremonies. Under the pretence of having Buddhist gatherings, they held Christian meetings. When a Christian died, the law required them to bury the person with a Buddhist style, so they had a small and private Christian ceremony before sending for a Buddhist monk. They had sustained their faith through the years of national isolation. After 250 years of being hidden and disguised, the underground Christians' faith became syncretistic with Buddhism, Shintoism, or other indigenous religions. In 1892, there were approximately 50,000 underground Christians, half of whom reconnected to the Catholic Church; the other half became sectarians and maintained their rituals. Even today, there are some groups descended from underground Christians in parts of Nagasaki.[54] The new government initially persecuted the Kirishitans who emerged from underground. In June 1868, more than 3,000 Catholics were arrested, imprisoned, and tortured to coerce them into apostasy, but many of them stood firm in their faith.[55] Western public opinion was against the persecution of Christians by the Japanese government, which led the government to release the Catholics in 1870 and eventually to abolish the law against Christianity in

[50] Akio Dohi. *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*. [History of Protestantism in Japan]. 5th ed. Tokyo: Shinkyo Shuppan, sha, 2004, p. 10; Gonoi, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 247.
[51] Sawa, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 73.
[52] Greek Orthodox priests also came with the Russian consul in 1859. Gonoi, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 250.
[53] ibid., pp. 248–9.
[54] ibid., pp. 243–5; Sawa, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi,* pp. 51–4.
[55] Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi,* p. 37; Ebisawa & Ouchi, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi,* p. 159.

1873.[56] Although the law itself was repealed, the Japanese government did not make an official announcement to the people, who continued to understand that Christianity was banned.[57] Legal permission for Christianity had to wait until 1889, when the Meiji Constitution was established.

Among the Protestant missionaries who came to Japan in the late nineteenth century, Americans were the majority.[58] The Protestant missionaries emphasised that they were distinguished from Catholic missionaries by criticising the Catholic religion so that the Japanese people would not confuse the Protestants with the Kirishitans whose religion had been prohibited during the time of the Shogunate.[59] Meanwhile, missionaries, alongside other foreign professionals took part in educational, medical, and social work and contributed to Japan's improvement in each area. In this contact of the West and Japan, the colonial discourse, the concept developed from Foucault's use of the word "discourse" by Edward Said, was evident.[60] The missionaries and those who considered themselves as representatives of the western civilisation employed a system of statements that asserted the superiority of their civilisation over that of Japan, to create, for themselves and the Japanese, a reality that told that Japan was inferior to the West in its culture, social order, language, political structure, and that therefore Japan and the Japanese needed to "rise up" to the standard of the West in every sense to be considered as an equal, or simply as something more than frivolous.[61] The missionaries' presupposition was that European scientific, industrial, and military prowess was inseparable from its religion. To accept this religion was a fundamental step that Japan must take if it would join the civilised nations of the world. Thus, overseas activities of American missionaries especially were often inspired by the sense of being "elect" as the people who carried out God's plan in "uncivilised" lands.[62] The approach of missionaries in the context of late 19th century imperialism was thus different from the approach of the Jesuits in the sixteenth century, who learnt Japanese customs and attempted to adjust to the ways of Japanese society. Consequently, those who became interested

[56] Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi,* pp. 263–7; Ebisawa & Ouchi, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 159.
[57] Sawa, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, pp. 22, 24.
[58] In 1882, among 226 missionaries, 75% were American. According to Sawa, the American missionaries attracted Japanese people with their message and attitude of freedom, equality, philanthropy, democracy, and respect for the individual. They were also perceived as light-hearted and positive. On the issue of the amendment of the unequal treaties, the American missionaries supported the Japanese government, which helped to defuse the notion that the missionaries were the political instruments of the Western countries. ibid., p. 74.
[59] Gonoi, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi,* p. 27
[60] Edward Said. *Orientalism*. Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978, p. 3; Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffins & Helen Tiffin. *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge, 2007, pp. 36–8, 62–4
[61] ibid., p. 37
[62] Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, pp. 31–3

in Protestant Christianity were initially attracted to Western civilisation by its power and wealth. Christianity, as presented by the missionaries of the nineteenth century, was the religion of the wealthy Western countries and the religion of the sophisticated and educated. This understanding of Christianity is in striking contrast to the Catholicism spread by the Jesuits among the poor and the common people in the society.[63]

The missionaries can be categorised into three groups in terms of their understanding of Christianity.[64] One group was the Evangelical Christians who were influenced by Methodism and the Great Awakening in the United States. They emphasised the joy of salvation and subjective aspect of faith, and challenged Deism by stressing the importance of a pious lifestyle. The second group was the theological liberals. The most prominent mission organisation was the German mission, *Der Allgemeine Evangelische-Protestantische Missionsverein*, whose background was the *Altliberalismus* of the Tübingen school, which started its activities in 1888. Another group of theological liberals was the Americans Unitarian Association. Even non-Christian intellectuals welcomed Unitarians.[65] In Japan, this type of liberal theology was called the "New Theology." The last group was a group called fundamentalists or revival—ists.[66] Geographically, Yokohama, Kumamoto, and Sapporo were the three areas where the Protestant missions were successful. Missionaries founded schools and many future Christian leaders were educated at and graduated from these schools.[67]

7. The Meiji Government and The Restoration

The Japanese government took the colonial discourse to its heart. Modern Europe, enjoying scientific, medical, and industrial development, held a sense that the present is superior to any time in the past. Ashcroft et al. pointed out how this sense of superiority was projected into the relationship between the European powers and the rest, "the other".

[63] The anti-Christian policy of the old government was especially pervasive in rural areas. One of the characteristics of nineteenth century Protestantism in Japan was that conversions were almost always of individuals, rather than groups. In small villages, the bonds of the people were so strong that conversion of an individual was difficult. Gonoi, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 270; Sawa, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 80.

[64] ibid., pp. 18–24

[65] Ebisawa & Ouchi, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, pp. 317–9

[66] Their denominational backgrounds varied from low church in Britain to ones who were inspired by Dwight L. Moody in the United States. Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 24.

[67] There were prominent missionaries in each area: Leroy L. Janes (1838–1909, Kumamoto), William S. Clark (1826–1886, Sapporo), James C. Hepburn, a medical doctor and educator (1815–1911, Yokohama), James H. Ballagh (1832–1920, Yokohama), Samuel R. Brown (1810–1880, Yokohama). As will be mentioned later, Uemura Masahisa was from Yokohama, Ebina Danjo, from Kumamoro, and Uchimura Kanzo and Nitobe Inazo, from Sapporo.

> "As European power expanded, this sense of the superiority of the present over the past became translated into a sense of superiority over those pre-modern societies and cultures that were 'locked' in the past" primitive and uncivilised peoples whose subjugation and 'introduction' into modernity became the right and obligation of European powers."[68]

One of the pressing tasks of the new government was to reform Japan so it could rise up to a standard equal to the Western countries. It understood that to amend the unequal treaties, it was important to establish a modern country that was acknowledged as such by other Western nations.[69]

The Meiji Restoration in a narrow sense was the shifting of the authority from Tokugawa *Bakufu* to a new group of leaders who held up the emperor as their political leader, though in fact, the emperor's function was no more than symbolic. To replace the declining Shogunate, a new framework was needed to wield political authority. Japanese tradition and the recent political climate suggested that the only alternative that could become a powerful enough political symbol was the emperor. The emperor was originally the head of one of the strongest and oldest noble families in Japan. During the feudal period, the position of emperor existed, but held little effective power. In the new system, however, the emperor replaced the top of the feudal hierarchy. The leaders of the Restoration brought the boy emperor Matsuhito, who was 15, from Kyoto to Edo, where the Shogun had resided for 250 years. The city was renamed "Tokyo", meaning 'the palace of the east', because of the position of Tokyo relative to Kyoto. This shift of authority from Shogun to the emperor, symbolised by the act of bringing the emperor to Japan's political centre, is the hallmark of the Meiji Restoration. It was not that the *Bakufu* had not begun any administrative reform after the treaty; in fact, the *Bakufu* was making changes on the advice of a French Minister. The civil war, or coup, and the subsequent establishment of the new government had more to do with a power struggle among the warrior class than any lack of reforms on the *Bakufu*'s part.[70]

In a broader sense, the Meiji Restoration was a long evolutionary process of making Japan a "modern state", which was defined in European terms as a centralised political system under which popular participation is structured through the parliamentary institutions of a constitutional order. This notion of a modern state is a thoroughly Western idea in its origin, history, and nature.[71] Japan eagerly imported Western ideas and technologies: the military

[68] Ashcroft, Griffins & Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, p. 131
[69] To this end, the government acquiesced in or even encouraged the growth of Christianity in 1880s. Sawa, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi,* p. 81; Ebisawa & Ouchi, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi,* pp. 162–6.
[70] Jansen, *The Cambridge of History of Japan,* p. 352.
[71] ibid., p. 432.

technologies, as well as philosophy, political theories, social structure, clothes, hairstyles, and so forth. For example, 48 people from the new government leaders sailed from Yokohama to American, Britain, and other Western countries for 18 months to learn Western politics and economics. At the end of the journey, they concluded that Japan was only thirty to forty years behind those countries, where there had been no railways or modern weapons in the beginning of the century.[72] Japan thus needed many substantial changes to become like a western country: namely, creation of a central government, training of bureaucrats to run the state, institution of a conscript army and navy, organisation of a legal system, fostering of a capitalist economy, abolition of feudal privilege and the class system, consolidation of a system of education, and finally, import of European customs.[73]

A nationwide effort was made to import Western civilisation to make Japan the equal of a Western power. Okubo Takeki describes the *zeitgeist*: "It is not 'culture' if it is not Western."[74] Souseki Natsume (1867–1916), a novelist and thinker, observed with dismay the modernisation and westernisation of Japan. He did not oppose the idea of modernisation per se, but lamented the fact that the process was too hasty as a result of being provoked by an outside force rather than being a spontaneous development from within.[75] The government hired scholars and engineers from the West to help in building a society modelled after the West. The anthropologist Harumi Befu described this process as "auto-Orientalism" or "do-it-to-yourself Orientalism," and calls it a "psychologically masochistic process."[76] What they did was, in fact, self-colonisation: that is, Japan took the colonial discourse and fully applied it to itself. This process can also be described in postcolonial terms as "appropriation" of the imperial culture by Japan to avoid direct political control by the West.[77] It was perceived to be the only way for Japan to survive as an independent country.

This "turning to the West" had two dimensions. One is to import modern ideas and technologies, and the other was to adapt and even emphasise Japanese indigenous or traditional cultural elements. To accelerate the process of the former and to make sure of the latter, the emperor was again utilised. Namely, all the national effort to become equal to the West was done in the name of the emperor, who was the embodiment of Japan itself with all its history and tradition.

[72] ibid., p. 26.
[73] Jansen, The Cambridge of History of Japan, p. 352.
[74] Takaki Okubo. *Nihon Bunkaron no Keifu.* [A Genealogy of Treatise on Japanese Culture]. Tokyo: Chuou Shinsho, 2003, p. 3
[75] Tamotsu Aoki. *Nihon Bunkaron no Hen'yo*. [The Transformation of Propositions on Japanese Culture]. Tokyo: Chuko bunko, 1999, p. 9
[76] Harumi Befu. *Hegemony of Homogeneity*. Melbourne: Trans-Pacific Press, 2001, p. 127.
[77] Ashcroft, Griffins & Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts,* pp. 15–7.

The reason for this is obvious. If the government were only imitating the West, it would inevitably experience a backlash from the people. Any new political institutions needed to incorporate a traditional Japanese element. The government put forward new policies to unify the nation based on this "emperor system," in which the emperor is the ultimate authority of all" he is the sovereign, and the benevolent and respected father of all. This political system was ideologically supported by the national Shinto religion, which especially emphasises the legitimacy of the imperial lineage and exalts the emperor as the source of Japanese value, custom, and identity. This "national" symbol helped the former feudal country to be unified rapidly, and also to establish a sense of "national identity", which is a crucial aspect of a "modern nation-state".[78] In 1880s, also as a reaction to rapid Westernisation, conservatism took shape.

The national Shinto religion provided a myth to support this system and the idea of the superiority of the Japanese race. Shinto was originally an animistic religion that was indigenous to Japan. The religion evolved around a myth (whose text was collected and edited in 712 CE), that explains the birth of Japan as a creation of the gods. The highest god is the sun goddess, Amaterasu Omikami, from whom the emperors were descended (The first legendary emperor was a grandchild of Amaterasu.). However, the government was also aware that the nationalisation of Shinto did not sit well with the idea of separation of religion and state that was considered as one of the marks of a modern nation by the West. Thus the government adopted the policy of using State Shinto as the ideology without officially legislating it.[79] The government argued that national Shinto was not a religion such as Buddhism or Christianity.[80] This rhetoric eventually led to special treatment for national Shinto as the government tried to regulate the other religions.

8. Social Background of the Japanese Christians in the 19th Century

Protestant Christianity from the United States was also considered a part of Western civilisation. While many Japanese were still indifferent or even hostile to Christianity, there were some who accepted it.[81] Many of those who accepted Christianity came from the warrior class of the feudal society, especially the ones who later became influential leaders in the Japanese Church.

[78] For a discussion of this point in post-colonial nations, see Paul Collier. *Wars Guns & Votes*. London: The Bodley Head, 2009, pp. 66–73.
[79] Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 38.
[80] ibid., p. 133.
[81] Ebisawa & Ouchi, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, pp. 171–5.

Those new Christians were in privileged places in the social hierarchy, yet because their feudal clans supported the Shogunate, they could not obtain prominent positions in the new government.[82] However, with the surge of patriotism in Japanese society based on the emperor system, even when they lost an opportunity to be involved with ongoing politics as politicians, they maintained the sense that it was they who would contribute to the advance of the nation. Accordingly, they were very much interested in gaining Western knowledge and accepting the values and philosophies of Western civilisation. They learnt from missionaries who were invited to public schools or who opened private schools.[83] Through learning English and other subjects, they came to know the missionaries, and many became Christians through their personal interactions with them.[84]

Also, those Japanese Christians were well educated in Confucianism, which taught them to live according to chivalry – the Bushido, the unwritten code of moral principles.[85] In a sense, the loyalty and filial piety of Confucianism became a foundation when they accepted Christianity. Many of them were impressed with the high sense of morality of the missionaries, who had Puritanism as their background.[86]

Coming from this background, many Japanese Christian leaders in the Protestant Church initially came to know Christianity as a part of the Western knowledge that would make it possible for them to overcome their present difficulties and give them better prospects for the future. Christianity was presented to them as the foundation of the modern nations. To become a powerful

[82] ibid., p. 168.

[83] For example, Uchimura Kanzo (1861–1930) learnt in the Sapporo Agricultural School, Ebina Danjo (1856–1937) in Kumamoto Western School taught by Leroy L. Janes, and Uemura Masahisa (1858–1925) taught by James H. Ballagh, a missionary from the Dutch Reformed Church in America.

[84] Ebisawa & Ouchi, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, pp. 167–8.

[85] Nitobe Inazo (1862–1933), who was a Christian and a classmate of Uchimura Kanzo in Sapporo Agricultural School in Hokkaido found by William S. Clark, wrote a book on this Japanese moral principle. The book is entitled *Bushido: The Soul of Japan*, was written originally in English and published in 1905. Because of the attention given to Japan in the world after Japan's victory in the First Sino-Japanese War, the book a became a bestseller. Nitobe explains *Bushido* as "the code of moral principle which the knights were required or instructed to observe." The fighting knights (Bushi) were a privileged class in feudal Japan. With privilege, they soon realised, came great responsibilities. This sense of being one of the elite led the warriors to hold a common standard to carry out their responsibilities and to act honourably towards each other. The sources of Bushido, according to Nitobe, are Buddhism, Shintoism, and the teachings of Confucius and Mencius (one of the prominent interpreters of Confucianism). Inazo Nitobe. *Bushido: The Soul of Japan.* Boston: Tuttle Publishing, 1969.

[86] Gonoi, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi,* p. 268. Gonoi suggests that one of the reasons why Christianity did not succeed in modern Japan was precisely because of its rigid sense of morality. In one denomination (Japan Church of Christ), for example, from 1891 to 1899, 7,770 were baptised. However, the number of the people who were excommunicated was 3,795, which, according to Gonoi, indicates a rigid moral standard. ibid., p. 278. Also, based on the teachings of Confucianism, women were not encouraged to attend meetings. Sawa, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi,* p. 80.

and wealthy nation like the Western countries, the new Japanese Christians concluded, Japan needed to import the foundation of Western civilisation as well as its technology and customs. They chose Christianity because their sense of nationalism and the Japanese moral code fitted with the kind of Christianity that was presented to them.[87] For them, Christianity was one of the philosophies of the elite and the ruling class. The logic behind Protestant Christianity from the United States was clear-cut eurocentrism, which assumed the superiority of the Western civilisation and personal character, of which Christianity was the foundation. This rhetoric seemed to work well, both in the late 19th century and in the middle of the 20th century when Japan was defeated in the Second World War: outside these periods, however, the elite either considered themselves already equal to the West or disillusioned with it.

9. Emergence of the Japanese Protestant Theologians

Although Catholic missionaries re-opened their theological schools in 1870, "unlike the newly arrived Protestant missionaries from America, French Catholic missionaries could not attract young people, especially students and intellectuals."[88] Among the first generation of Protestant theologians were three noteworthy Japanese Christian leaders: Ebina Danjo (1856–1937), Uemura Masahisa (1858–1925), and Uchimura Kanzo (1861–1930).

9.1. Ebina Danjo

Ebina Danjo was born in Northern Kyushu as a son of a warrior, and as such was educated in Confucianism. When his feudal clan was abolished under the new government, he began to seek a new lord to serve.[89] He was enrolled to Kumamoto Western School, a school originally founded by Kumamoto Clan in 1871.[90] Under the influence of Leroy L. Janes, who was invited to teach there, Ebina became a Christian.[91] In 1877, however, the Kumamoto Western School was closed down, and Ebina went to Doshisha University. They contributed to the foundation of the Congregational Church in Japan [日本組合基督教会].[92]

[87] Akio Dohi rightly points out that the wealth of the Western countries was not only the result of Christianity as a cultural base, but the result of slavery, colonialism, or exploitation of the lower classes, which was overlooked by the Japanese Christians. Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi,* p. 57.

[88] Yasuo Furuya, ed. *A History of Japanese Theology*. Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, p. 7; Ebisawa & Ouchi, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, pp. 123–5.

[89] Furuya, *A History of Japanese Theology*, p. 13.

[90] Sawa, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 78.

[91] In Ebina's theology, his two major religious experiences play an important role. First was when Janes taught Ebina that prayer is a duty of creatures to the creator. Then, he realised that the relationship between God and a human was just like the relationship between the lord and his vassal. Later, he

Ebina came to the conclusion that the 'heaven' of Confucianism and the God of Christianity were identical.[93] Just as Confucianism provided a moral structure for the Japanese to be loyal to their nation, for Ebina, Christianity provided the sense of justice and fairness for being a faithful citizen of Japan. Ebina explained his relationship to God by using the idea of a "father-son relationship" in Confucianism. The relationship of father and son is one of the five essential relationships in Confucianism, and based on this idea, Ebina understood Christianity analogous to Confucianism. For Ebina, the Christian's relationship to God as *Fushi Ushin*, father and son relationship, was the most essential: "Man can overcome all his desires if he becomes united with God."[94] The father-son relation is at the centre of his Christology.[95] In Confucianism, a son is to be obedient to his father who is his higher authority. Accordingly, for Ebina, Christ is not God, but a human who lived with strong religious consciousness. Christ is only divine in the sense that every person is divine.[96] Later, Ebina attempted to bring Christianity into line with Shintoism. He believed that "if Shintoism were purified, it would become Christianity."[97] Ebina's approach to Christianity was one of harmonisation, especially with Confucianism.[98] He was also one of the first theologians who adopted German higher biblical criticisms and liberal theology.

Ebina's work may be considered as an example of vernacular hermeneutics as he tried to understand Christianity from his local resources, and to translate it into a form that would be accessible to other Japanese people. However, his nativist approach was criticised by those who accepted and tried to maintain Protestantism as it was presented by the West. One of the critics of this type of theology was Uemura Masahisa.

came to another realisation from his struggle to be obedient to God. He desired to serve God, but realised that he always leaned towards fame. In this struggle, Ebina found a refuge in the fact that God is his father and he was God's son. In this sense, Ebina recounted, his ego was crucified with Christ and the sinful self died where he himself became one with Christ. Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, pp. 173–4.

[92] Sawa, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 78. A literal translation of the name of the Congregational Church in Japan is "Japan Associations of Christ Church." The reason why "Congregational" was avoided was to emphasise the Church's independence from the Congregational mission in the United States. Ebisawa & Ouchi, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi,* p. 253.

[93] Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 173.

[94] Furuya, *A History of Japanese Theology*, p. 14.

[95] Danjo Ebina. *Kirisutokyou no Hongi.* [The Essence of Christianity]. Hidaka Yurindo, 1903, p. 95. Regarding filial piety, see Eun Chul Kim. 'The Fulfillment of Filial Piety: The Development of Korean Protestantism and the Shape of a Theology of Filial Piety'. Ph.D. Thesis. University of St Andrews, 2001.

[96] The sense that one is a child of God, according to Ebina, is the basic and universal religious conscience of human beings. Thus, God is immanent in the conscience of individuals. Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 174.

[97] Furuya, *A History of Japanese Theology*, p. 14.

[98] Ebina considered Christianity superior to Confucianism where Christians are able to call God as the Father. He argued that the truth of Christianity is inherent in Confucianism.

9.2. Uemura Masahisa

Uemura's importance as a theologian lies in his strong influence on later generations. Uemura was born a direct feudal vassal of the Tokugawa Shogunate. Later he entered the private school founded by missionaries from the Dutch Reformed Church in America.[99] After graduating from the school, he became a pastor and educator.[100] When liberal theology was introduced to Japan, Uemura criticised theologians such as Ebina who adopted it earnestly.[101] Uemura did adopt the historical criticism of German theology of the time, yet maintained his view of Scripture as the life of Christianity throughout history.[102] Uemura criticised liberal theology as an attempt to know the truth of spirit and soul solely by reason without any sense of piety. Uemura's argument against Ebina was that Ebina did not understand the concept of sin and sinfulness, and thus did not understand the significance of redemption. Ebina argued against Uemura, saying that he did understand the concept of sin: in fact, that is what led him to his religious experience. He understood sin as egoism, which needs to be transformed into the theo-centric self.[103]

Uemura's philosophy of nation is worth mentioning. He understood that a nation exists to secure individual freedom, by which each person fulfils their human nature by contributing to the progress of the world. If each person is improved and obtains a sense of justice, the nation will be reformed. In that sense, he argued, Christianity has much to offer to the country.[104] However, Uemura's theology does not suppose the possibility of governmental infringement on a person's freedom. The concept of "freedom" in a political context is itself an idea imported from the western nations where this type of freedom was already established. In the same way as in his theology, Uemura continued to join in the theological discourse of the West. Because of his westernised theological position, however, Uemura was able to advocate for women in the Church and for their concerns in public life, which was not accepted in Japan of his time.[105]

[99] Furuya, A History of Japanese Theology, p. 16.
[100] Uemura became a leading theologian of the Church of Christ in Japan [日本基督教会], which used to be called Japan Christ Union Church [日本基督一致教会], and which was founded by American Presbyterian mission, Reformed mission, and Scotland Presbyterian mission in 1877.
[101] The debate between Ebina and Uemura is now known as the Uemura–Ebina controversy. Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, pp. 181–3.
[102] Furuya, *A History of Japanese Theology*, p. 14.
[103] Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 183.
[104] R. S. Sugirtharajah. *Asian Biblical Hermeneutics and Postcolonialism.* Sheffield Academic Press, 1999, p. 185
[105] John C. England et al., eds. *Asian Christian Theologies: A Research Guide to Authors, Movements, Sources*. Vol. 3. Delhi: ISPCK/Christian Publishers/Orbis Books, 2004, p. 322.

9.3. Uchimura Kanzo

Uchimura Kanzo, one of the most well-known Japanese theologians, is unique in his theological standing because of his ecclesiology. Like the theologians already discussed, he was the son of a warrior. He is known by his love for two J's: Jesus and Japan.[106] He believed the love of Jesus cleanses the love of Japan, and the love of Japan make the love of Jesus clear. In 1884, he went to the United States and attended Amherst College and Hartford Theological Seminary.

Uchimura is the founder of the Non-Church. He held a meeting every Sunday in his house, where he gave lectures. The meeting was reminiscent of the Pietistic movements in Germany or northern Europe.[107] The difference is perhaps that "Non-Church" was determined neither to belong to nor to create an established church denomination.[108] His ecclesiology is closely linked to his hermeneutics of Scripture. For Uchimura, the Bible was the infallible word of God. One should interpret the Bible with one's knowledge about history, humanity, and science to be consistent, yet one should not need the doctrines of the Church or teachings to interpret the Bible. Uchimura believed that the more one focuses on forms and organisations, the more one tends to ignore the spiritual life. There should be "no" institution, thus, his meetings were called, "Non-Church."[109]

Uchimura argued that Japanese people have a strong sense of independence and their own rich tradition. From his personal experiences of living in the United States, he also concluded that Christianity in the West had deviated from the truth of the gospel. Uchimura believed that Western Christianity never agrees with the Japanese temperament, and that the Japanese Church should be independent of any foreign missions or their ways.[110]

Although the influence of Ebina and Uchimura and their unique contributions to Japanese church history are immense, it was Uemura who nurtured emerging theologians. He founded a seminary, where he encouraged young scholars to study British or German theology rather than American theology. As observed above, Uemura was the most westernised of the three, and therefore, it is not surprising that his followers' theological works adopted the European issues and methodologies and were less concerned with the Japanese context.

[106] Uchimura literally used this phrase, which is engraved in his tombstone. Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 114.
[107] Very similar phenomena could be seen for example in Swedish Lutheran Church. See Karl Olsson. *By One Spirit*. Chicago: Covenant Press, 1962.
[108] Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, pp. 118–9. Uchimura and his colleagues, who were baptised by a Methodist missionary, nurtured a strong sense of independence when their numbers grew. Eventually they established an independent church in Sapporo, and cut ties with the Methodist denomination. ibid., pp. 66, 67.
[109] ibid., p. 188.
[110] Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 189.

All three first-generation theologians were from the warrior class and maintained a strong sense of patriotism. Today, efforts to harmonise Christianity with traditional thought such as Confucianism is often criticised, especially among evangelical churches in Japan. There are two main reasons. First, the effort of synchronisation is perceived as making an "impure" version of Christianity. Second, because of the history of Japan, it appears as though some theologians were in agreement with the imperial policy of Japan because they tried to contextualise Christianity in Japan by affirming some aspects of Japanese tradition. The first argument inevitably leads to the conclusion that there should be as little change in theological methodology and dialogue as possible after Christianity was transmitted by the missionaries, because their version is "purer". All the historical context during the development of the Protestant Christianity in the West is either ignored or entirely affirmed by the all-embracing concept of "God's providence". In this argument, therefore, there is no ground to critique the eurocentrism embedded in the Christian theology of the West, but simply to succumb to it. Thus, theologians and adherents of the religion remain "the elite" of the society, who have access to education such as obtaining language skills (e.g., English or German) and the resources to connect to the result of research done in the West. The second argument is *post hoc ergo propter hoc*, the fallacy of false cause. Those who supported or acquiesced in Japanese imperialism did so because their theology was a consequence of their social positionality. When theologians were distant from the government and thus had limited access to power, they became critical of the government's policy without entirely embracing theological eurocentrism.

10. The Constitution, the emperor System, and Christianity

In the late 1880s, the unequal treaties had not yet been revised although the Japanese government had been making efforts to be recognised as an equal of the West. One task the government needed to accomplish was establishing a national constitution. In 1883, Ito Hirobumi, later Japan's first Prime Minister and the chief composer of the constitution, was assigned to go to Europe to study various national constitutions. The existing political leaders disliked the British style of government, in which power would depend on the rivalry of political parties, and instead preferred the Prussian constitution. Ito and his delegates visited the German jurist Rudolf von Gneist in Berlin, but Gneist's advice was not very encouraging. He essentially told Ito that a nation that is not culturally advanced would not be able to create a meaningful constitution. In spite of this humiliating experience, the drafting of the constitution was started in 1885 by a team composed of Ito, three other Japanese, and two German legal advisers.

The constitution needed to be of a fairly western style, yet maintain traditional Japanese sentiment. Ito observed that in Europe, history and religion form the backbone of constitutionalism. Without some equivalent foundation, he thought, Japanese constitutionalism would not only fail, but society would be disturbed by the opposing factions. Since there was no religion strong enough to provide this foundation in Japan, Ito concluded that only the imperial institution supported by Shinto ideology could serve.[111] Ito wrote, "All the different legislative as well as executive powers of State, by means of which he reigns over the country and governs the people, are united in this most exalted personage, who thus holds in his hands, as it were, all the ramifying threads of the political life of the country."[112]

The Meiji government promulgated a new constitution in February 1889. In this constitution, the emperor was stated to be "sacred and inviolable" (Chapter 1, Article 3), and "The Empire of Japan shall be reigned over and governed by a line of Emperors unbroken for ages eternal" (Article 1).[113] The emperor exercises "the legislative power with the consent of the Imperial Diet" (Article 5), yet "has the supreme command of the Army and Navy" (Article 11).[114] The constitution proclaims the separation of legal, administrative, and judicial powers, yet each was granted its authority by the emperor.[115] The imperial institution, however, was not based on the emperor's responsibility to the government or people, but on his "eternal lineage," which was purposefully ambiguous and mystical. Despite all the power thus ascribed to the emperor, there was no constitutional procedure through which the emperor could influence political decisions: however, he could do so through informal contact with politicians. The cabinet was not responsible to the Diet, and free from its intervention. This was also the case in terms of finance, where if the annual budget proposal were rejected, the previous year's budget would apply.

Japanese Christians' primary interest was whether the new constitution would support the freedom of religion. Christians joyfully accepted, therefore, Article 28 of Chapter 2, "Japanese subjects shall, within limits not prejudicial to peace and order, and not antagonistic to their duties as subjects, enjoy freedom of religious belief." However, this freedom of religion was not based on an understanding of human rights. This freedom was a freedom granted by the

[111] Hirobumi Ito. 'Constitution...'. In: *The Cambridge of History of Japan*. Ed. by Marius B. Jansen. Vol. 5. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, p. 663.
[112] ibid., p. 664.
[113] An English translation of the Meiji Constitution is available through Hanover Historical Texts Project from http://history.hanover.edu/texts/ 1889con.html.
[114] The military did not require the consent of the Diet, which eventually led the military to act independently.
[115] The Diet was a support apparatus for the emperor (Chapter 1 Article 5; Chapter 3 Article 49), while the respective Ministers of State gave advice to the emperor (Chapter 5 Article 55).

emperor.[116] Moreover, "within limits not prejudicial to peace and order, and not antagonistic to their duties as subjects" allowed a range of interpretations. Two years before the promulgation of the constitution, the government had passed the Peace Preservation Law (1887), through which the police were given the power to remove from the capital any person suspected of planning a disturbance.

11. Uchimura Kanzo's Lese-Majesty Incident

After adopting many ideas and institutions of western origin, the Meiji government promoted strong conservatism to secure its power and the social order. The Imperial Rescript on Education [*Kyoiku-chokugo*, 教育勅語] was a product of this conservatism and the creation of a rigid national orthodoxy. The Imperial Rescript on Education was an ordinance issued in the name of the Meiji Emperor in 1890. "The final document, issued shortly before the opening of the Diet (parliament) on October 30, 1890, was the product of drafts by many in the government."[117] This ordinance concerned the moral conduct of Japanese people based on Confucianism, which had been a tradition influential in Japan alongside Buddhism. The ordinance was distributed to all the schools in Japan. By the time of Showa Emperor, however, the Rescript was considered not just a moral exaltation, but sacred along with the picture of the emperor [*Go-Shin-ei*, 御真影].

The incident that made clear the tension between the government's policy and Christian religion happened soon after the promulgation of the constitution and the Rescript on Education. In 1891, Uchimura Kanzo, who was teaching at one of the Imperial High Schools, did not bow deeply enough to the Imperial Rescript of Education during the ceremony for its dedication at the First High School of Tokyo. Both teachers and students were expected to bow to show their respect to the Rescript that carried the emperor's sacred signature. Uchimura, on the other hand, was not sure if a bow is a gesture to show respect to the emperor or a religious action of venerating the deified emperor.[118] Because he was uncertain, he slightly bowed, which was yet severely criticised by his colleagues, students, and the public. Uchimura was told by the school principal that the bow is not a religious act but an expression of respect, and if he would not bow, the situation would become out of control. Hearing what the principal said, Uchimura "with a clear conscience", agreed to bow to the Rescript.[119]

[116] As a result, some Christian leaders understood freedom of religion to be a result of the emperor's mercy. Dohi cites Masahisa Uemura. Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 112.
[117] Jansen, *The Cambridge of History of Japan*, p. 684.
[118] In his letter to David Bell in March 6, 1891. See Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 113.
[119] Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 113. In the same letter.

However, the damage had been done. The criticism was so strong that Uchimura became physically ill with pneumonia, and in the same year, his wife died from hardships she went through both from criticisms from the society and taking care of Uchimura in his sickbed.[120] He also lost his position in the high school. Uchimura was a very patriotic man, and being accused of committing an act of treason was devastating to him.[121]

Christian leaders' opinion to this incident varied. Some stated that the bow to emperor's picture or to the ancestors was not a religious act but non-religious ritual, thus it should not conflict with Christian faith. Uemura Masahisa did not affirm that the bow to the picture of emperor or to the ordinance was idolatry. However, he also stated that Christians do not even worship the image of Christ, let alone a written document such as the imperial ordinance. To venerate such a thing is childish and confuses the meaning of respect for the emperor. Therefore, this type of wrong concept of respecting the emperor should be criticised by the civilised educators and the people of Japan.[122]

Uchimura's Imperial Rescript incident provoked criticism from the outside of the Church. Inoue Tetsujiro (1855–1944) was a Confucian philosopher whose interpretation of the Imperial Rescript on Education became considered normative. He publicly criticised Christianity, and a huge controversy arose between Inoue and the Christians. Inoue argued that Christianity teaches equality, which disregards the loyalty and filial piety of Confucianism. Also, the teaching of love for all conflicts with Japanese idea of loyalty to the emperor and love of the country. Thus, Christianity is anti-patriotic, which is against what the Imperial Rescript promotes.[123]

Against Inoue's arguments, there were basically four different responses from Christians:[124]

1. Christianity is not an anti-patriotic religion. In fact, Christianity can support the loyalty to the emperor and love for the country. If there is any conflict, Christianity should be altered to be able to harmonise with Japanese values.[125]

[120] Ebisawa & Ouchi, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 380. Uchimura remarried the following year to Okada Sizuko.
[121] ibid., p. 380.
[122] Masahisa Uemura. 'Hukeizai to Kirisuto Kyo'. [Lese-Majesty and Christianity]. In: *Hukuin Shuho* (Feb. 1891); Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi,* p. 115; Ebisawa & Ouchi, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi,* p. 285.
[123] Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 116.
[124] The government prohibited the sale of any articles or writings against Inoue by Christians. Gonoi, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 282.
[125] This argument was adopted by Tokio Yokoi (Congregational Church in Japan) or Yoichi Honda (Methodist Church in Japan). Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 116.

2. Christianity does not conflict with the Japanese values, but fulfils them: Christian values make the true Japanese morality possible. This was the position of Uchimura Kanzo or Uemura Masahisa.[126]
3. Hajime Onishi (1864–1900), who was a Kantian scholar, argued against Inoue that the foundation of morality is the conscience of individuals. The Rescript is addressed to the Japanese people, yet it should not be the universal norm of ethics. Loyalty and filial piety cannot be considered as the highest moral principle among others. To think about religions or ethics, free discussion is crucial, and academic freedom is indispensable.[127]
4. Kinoshita Naoe (1869–1937), who was a journalist and became Christian in 1893, accepted Inoue's argument: Christianity is indeed against nationalism and the government's education policy. The emperor system is opposed by the Christian view on humanity, especially the equality of human beings and the love for all.[128]

Among the four positions, the first was the most widely supported. When the First Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895) broke out, the churches publicly supported the national interests in the war by publication, public speaking, or visiting the soldiers on the battlefield. This reflects the Christians' wish to be accepted by the society and the government.[129] Uemura Masahisa stated that this war was between an uncivilised country (China) and a civilised country (Japan) in Asia. The foundation of civilisation and progress is Christianity, thus Christianity should not support the uncivilised. In his article in *Fukuin Shinpo* published on 10th August 1894, he says, "It was Japan's 'special calling' to pay 'close attention to the reformation of neighbouring Korea,' and in this context the Japanese Christians were 'called to pioneer in developing the spirituality of the nations of the East'." The Russo-Japanese war was, for Uemura, a war between a country of autocracy (Russia) and a country of constitutionalism (Japan). Uchimura Kanzo also supported the Sino-Japanese war, which he understood as the punishment of China for exploiting Korea. Later, however, he saw Japan's policy against China and regretted his support for the war, and became a pacifist.[130]

[126] Kashiwagi Gien, who was a teacher at a Christian school, argued that even though the emperor is supreme and sacred, he is not the authority on religion, morality, or education. Therefore, even the emperor cannot infringe on the people's freedom of thought, belief, and conscience. Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 117.
[127] ibid., p. 118.
[128] ibid., p. 119.
[129] Myong Kwan Chi. 'Korea and the Japanese Church: 1892–1920'. In: *Japan Christian Quarterly* 44 (Spring 1987), pp. 67–9; Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, pp. 124–5, 213.
[130] ibid., pp. 124–5, 213.

In 1899, the government passed a law prohibiting religious education or any other religious activities in schools.[131]

12. Liberal Theology, Karl Barth, and the Churches in Japan

The growth of the Protestant churches was stagnant from the late 1880s to 1900. Besides the oppression from the government, another reason was the introduction of liberal theology. As was mentioned above, what was called "New Theology" by the Japanese was promoted by the German mission and American Unitarians. The German mission introduced the historical-critical method of biblical interpretation and questioned supernatural elements in the Christian doctrines such as the virgin birth or resurrection.[132]

The New Theology confused the evangelical churches in their growth process. The Japanese churches had never experienced the Enlightenment or the Scientific Revolution themselves, and thus had a difficult time adopting the liberalism that had existed in Europe during those periods. However, those who adopted the New Theology believed that it would allow them to become independent of the missionaries and their teachings and would prepare Japanese Christians to be more sophisticated than the missionaries.[133] Because of the many arguments between the liberals and the evangelicals, many intellectuals and members of the educated class left the Church. There were some Christians who simply thought that the New Theology revealed that what Christianity taught them was wrong, and left the Church.[134] The difference in understandings of the basic doctrines also caused divisions among the churches.[135]

At the dawn of the 20th century, theological researches and teaching in Japan began to be undertaken by the Japanese themselves. However, theological methodologies and tendencies from this period are dominated by German scholarship. Most of the theologians were students of Tokyo Imperial University (now called Tokyo University). Hatano Seiichi, a Christian scholar from this time, wrote in his book, *The Origin of Christianity* (1908), "If you want to study the history of Christianity today, you have to study in the German academic world."[136] The introduction of German scholarship was explained by the new

[131] ibid., pp. 127–30.
[132] Ebisawa & Ouchi, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, pp. 324–6.
[133] ibid., p. 324.
[134] ibid., p. 322.
[135] Gonoi, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, pp. 284–6.
[136] Seiichi Hatano. *Kirisutokyo no Kigen*. [The Origin of Christianity]. Tokyo: Sougensha, 1908. The phrase is quoted in Furuya, *A History of Japanese Theology*, p. 44.

educational policy of the government, which decided around 1887 to follow the German model. The German language became the second language in the state universities, and those who graduated from the universities went to Germany to continue their higher education. Some went to the United States to study theology, yet they too had to learn German later to be active in academia in Japan.[137]

When the dialectic theology and the theology of the Swiss theologian Karl Barth (1886–1968) were introduced around 1930, Japanese theologians accepted them with open arms.[138] The dialectic theology itself was imported in the latter half of the 1920s, and treatment of the theology of Karl Barth began to be published in the late 1930s.[139] One possible reason for the wide reception of Karl Barth in Japan is Barth's critique of the modern liberal theology. The young Japanese churches and theologians were deeply disturbed by the New Theology, and now found a good compromise in the theological ground of Barth. It is noteworthy that Barth had already been accepted widely among Japanese theologians before his opposition to the German mainline church and to Hitler's regime became clear. The Barth introduced to Japanese theologians in 1930s onward was not necessarily the Barth of the "Confessing Church", who fought against Nazi policy. For the Japanese theologians of this time, reading Barth was about learning a theological method to adapt themselves into the theological discourse in Europe.[140] As was already mentioned, Christianity was received by high class or intellectual people, yet the assumption of society at large was always that Buddhism and Confucianism provide deeper thoughts than Christianity. When Japanese scholars encountered Barth, they found it intellectually fulfilling. Consequently, Barthian logic was often used to refute Christian socialists, and the influence of Barth did not guide the Japanese Church to follow the path of the Confessing Church in the face of the aggressive imperialism of their own country. Instead, the Japanese churches were unified under the control of the government and compelled to cooperate with the cause of the state. Theological justification of the invasion of other Asian countries was even attempted.[141]

[137] ibid., pp. 46–7.
[138] Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, pp. 384–91.
[139] For example, Takizawa Katsumi. *Karl Barth Kenkyu.* [A Study on Karl Barth]. 1941.
[140] For the reception of Barth in India, Cf. Sugirtharajah, *Asian Biblical Hermeneutics and Postcolonialism*, p. 10.
[141] Furuya, *A History of Japanese Theology*, pp. 56–8

13. Japanese Theologians and the Annexation of Korea

The Sino-Japanese war strengthened the centralised government and contributed to industrialisation. In 1894, the effort of westernisation finally persuaded Britain, and then the other countries, to implement the treaty revision. On the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War in 1904, the Christian Churches in Japan actively supported the war as an opportunity for them to show their loyalty to the country. There were a few Christians such as Uchimura Kanzo, Kashiwagi Gien, and some Christian socialists, opposed to the war.[142]

In 1910, Japan's occupation of Korea was completed with Japan-Korea Annexation Treaty.[143] The Congregational Church in Japan started missionary activities in Korea in 1910. The mission was mostly run by Watase Tunekichi (1867–1944). He believed that the Japanese people should be the spiritual leaders of the Koreans, and thus were obliged to educate them. The education needed to be done by the Church. Some Japanese government officials donated money to the "mission." Kashiwagi Gien severely criticised Watase, saying that assisting an imperialist invasion is not evangelism at all. Kashiwagi also pointed out, "Did Jesus evangelise Jews, sponsored by Romans? "[144]

Watase's missionary movement was also criticised by Christians from outside of the Congregational Church. Uemura Masahisa and the Church of Christ in Japan were critical about the mission. Sato Shigehiko (1887–1935), a pastor of the Church of Christ and Uemura's contemporary accused the mission's secretary Murakami Todayoshi of spying for the Japanese government. Sato criticised Murakami's organisation, saying that the secretary Murakami "ferreted

[142] When capitalism developed rapidly in Japan and the proportion of manual workers increased, labour problems also became an issue. While mainline churches were indifferent to the problem, Christian socialists, many of whom were Unitarians, were interested in social issues and became actively involved. The socialist movement in Japan itself was largely influenced by the Christian Socialist movement of the United States. Katayama Sen, for example, studied theology in the United States, and engaged in a socialist movement after returning to Japan. In 1902, Katayama and others, many of whom were Christians, founded a social-democratic political party. Katayama later abandoned his religious faith. Gonoi, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, pp. 288-90; Sawa, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, pp. 90–8. Uchimura, Uemura, and Ebina initially supported the Christian socialist movement, yet they defined their responsibility as evangelisation, not social movement. However, the working class was never the target of their evangelisation. Gien Kashiwagi, on the other hand, engaged in the socialist movement. He believed that Christianity and Socialism could coexist. Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 208. The Government tried to silence the socialists. Once the government started to suppress the movement, the churches purposely disassociated themselves from the socialist movement. Under the influence of Barth, the Japanese theologians condemned the socialist movement as liberal humanitarianism, and focused simply on the word of God, which for them meant the Scripture. Sawa, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 96.

[143] Uchimura Kanzo did not oppose military service: rather, encouraged those who were conscripted to go to war and die to show how in vain a war could be. Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, pp. 393–8.

[144] ibid., p. 312.

out the headquarters of the Korean independence cabal and brought various documents with him." Sato says that such a thing occurred because the Japanese missionaries loved neither the Koreans nor their country. He writes, "I myself had many contacts with the Korean people, who are the objects of those evangelistic programs, and they suspect that the Congregational evangelists unconsciously look down on Koreans and lack any human feeling toward them – just the attitude one expects of government officials."[145]

In 1912, Buddhist, Shinto, and Christian leaders were invited by a government minister to a dinner to discuss Japan's morality and its future. The Christian leaders were proud of the fact that they were acknowledged as a religious group that was equal to Buddhism and Shintoism, and publicly announced that the Christian churches were loyal to the emperor. This acknowledgement by the government, however, was presented as the acknowledgement by the emperor and an act based on his mercy.[146] In 1925, the Peace Preservation Law was issued throughout the Japanese Empire.[147] This law was a legal embodiment of the power of the government to suppress anyone who conspired or rebelled against the government and the social structure of which the emperor was the centre. Under this law, socialists and communists were imprisoned and punished. In the same year, the Ministry of Education and the army agreed to assign each school a military officer in order to discipline students and cultivate the "corporate spirit."[148]

For Korea, the peril of colonialism did not come from the West, but from its neighbour Japan, so the sense of association between Christianity and the colonial power is weak.[149] Patriotism and Christianity were not seen as alternatives for Koreans whereas in Japan Christianity was often seen as the enemy of patriotism, and thus an opponent of the state. Mark Mullins makes a strong case for this being a fundamental reason for the comparative success of Christianity in Korea. He argues that the acceptance of a foreign religion depends on the relationship between the group that propagates and the group that receives the religion. For Japan, Christianity came from "the source of Japan's greatest enemy" while Koreans perceived Christianity as a source for resistance against Japanese imperialism.[150]

[145] Chi, 'Korea and the Japanese Church: 1892–1920', p. 75.
[146] The leaders from Shinto did not represent *state* Shinto, which would not have been considered as a religious group according to the government. Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, pp. 135–6.
[147] Japan occupied Taiwan as a result of the First Sino-Japanese War, and Sakhalin after the Russo-Japanese War.
[148] Gonoi, Nihon Kirisuto *Kyōshi*, p. 295.
[149] Daniel J. Adams. 'Church Growth in Korea'. In: *Perspectives on Christianity in Korea and Japan: The Gospel and Culture in East Asia*. Ed. by Mark R. Mullins & Richard Fox Young. Lampeter, Wales: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1995
[150] Mark Mullins. 'Christianity Transplanted: Toward a Sociology of Success and Failure'. In:

After eliminating Chinese and Russian influence in the peninsula, Japan colonised Korea with consent of the United States and the United Kingdom. Japanese theologians expressed their views on the annexation in their theological journals and bulletins. Ebina had supported annexation even before the Russo-Japanese War. Ebina understood the annexation as the liberation of Koreans from Russia and China, and a great opportunity for them to join Japan. To become Japanese would be an evolutionary step for Koreans, and Christianity should support the unification of Japan and Korea. From this perspective, Ebina criticised Korean people's desire for independence as "enmity" or "political ambition."[151]

Uemura first understood this annexation as the opportunity given to Japan by God. He initially thought the annexation was Japan's task as an advanced nation, and that it simply acted as a parent to Korea.[152] However, his "just war theory" changed over the years of Japan's colonisation of Korea. Uemura himself visited Korea for the purpose of evangelism around the time of annexation, though the evangelism to Korean people by Japanese Christians bore little fruit. On his trip, Uemura made contact with the Korean churches.[153] On 1st September 1910, Uemura expressed his anxiety in the essay, "Korea as part of Great Japan." He asked a question, "Will Japanese power mean freedom for or discrimination against the weak? " While Uemura never argued against Japan's social and political system, he nonetheless expressed some concern about how the Korean churches would be treated after annexation.[154] Uemura came to admire Korean Christians' faith and spirit of independence.[155]

Uchimura Kanzo is known as one of the very few Christians who expressed grief over the annexation while showing admiration to the churches in Korea for their strong faith.[156] Acknowledging the fact that the 1907 revival of Christianity in Korea was partially because of Japan's invasion, Uchimura wrote in his essay, "The Fortunate Korea" (Oct. 1907), that Korea had lost its political freedom and independence, yet gained spiritual freedom and independence. God granted Korea not military power but the Holy Spirit, and he expected Korea to be a leading nation to proclaim the gospel of Christ.[157]

Perspectives on Christianity in Korea and Japan: The Gospel and Culture in East Asia. Ed. by Mark R. Mullins & Richard Fox Young. Lampeter, Wales: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1995, pp. 72–3.

[151] Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 304.

[152] ibid., p. 305.

[153] Chi, 'Korea and the Japanese Church: 1892–1920', p. 74.

[154] ibid.

[155] ibid., p. 77. Myong Kwan Chi quotes 'Christianity in Korea'. In: *Fukuin Shimpo* (Sept. 1910).

[156] Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, pp. 306–7.

[157] ibid., p. 306.

14. March First Independence Movement

It was plain that the annexation was unacceptable to the Korean people. Observing the political climate, the Japanese government was sensitive about any possibility of a Korean movement against Japanese rule. The Japanese government perceived that the Church might be an organisation that would oppose Imperial rule, and tried to eliminate the risk using persecution and by favouring Buddhism.[158]

Despite American Protestant missionaries to Korea stressing personal salvation and a pious lifestyle over renewal of the social structure, many Korean Christians discovered that Christianity also provided political grounds to resist Japanese Imperialism.[159] "The Christian community… was established in all parts of the nation and among all classes. Thus as a group, it constituted the one organised social bloc that could oppose the Japanese imperialists on social, intellectual, and spiritual grounds."[160]

The non-violent character of the March First Independence Movement was a result of the majority of people who were involved being Christians. The Christian churches were used as the established link to "filter down information about the planned peaceful demonstration against Japanese rule."[161] Thousands of Koreans marched at Pagoda Park in Seoul crying for independence from Japanese rule on March 1st, 1919, on the day of the funeral of the last emperor of Korea, Kojong. Grayson cites a statistic that shows that approximately ten percent of the population participated in the demonstrations, including the ones that took place on the 1st of March.[162] In response, Japan used its military to suppress the movement.[163] "Japanese government statistics alone record that the police killed more than 7,500 persons. More than twice that number were wounded, and forty-six thousand people were sentenced to prison…Forty-seven churches are known to have been burned down."[164]

When this news came to Japanese churches, many were distressed. Uemura Masahisa criticised the government for the violence.[165] Uchimura Kanzo

[158] James Huntley Grayson. 'Religion, Nationalism, and State Policy: the Conflict Between Christianity and State Shinto in Colonial Korea, 1910–1945'. In: *Japan Christian Review* 60 (1994), p. 115.
[159] Mullins, 'Christianity Transplanted: Toward a Sociology of Success and Failure', p. 73.
[160] Grayson, 'Religion, Nationalism, and State Policy: the Conflict Between Christianity and State Shinto in Colonial Korea, 1910–1945', p. 115.
[161] ibid., p. 116.
[162] ibid.
[163] Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, pp. 317–32; Ebisawa & Ouchi, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, pp. 554–6.
[164] Grayson, 'Religion, Nationalism, and State Policy: the Conflict Between Christianity and State Shinto in Colonial Korea, 1910–1945', p. 116.
[165] Chi, 'Korea and the Japanese Church: 1892–1920', p. 78.

expressed his remorse in a letter to his American friend, yet he only insisted on the hope of the Second Coming.[166] There was some attempt to collect donations for the aftermath, but the criticisms remained on the individual level and there was no public condemnation of government policy by the churches.

15. The Churches in the Time of War

Around the time of the Manchurian Incident in 1931, veneration of the emperor was strongly enforced by the government and became an accepted idea. With that "corporate spirit" as a background, the incident of Sophia University students' refusal to pay their respects at Yasukuni Shrine occurred in 1932.[167] When the students of the university were taken to the Yasukuni Shrine by a school military officer, they consulted the principal, a Catholic missionary, about whether they should bow to the Shrine. Since the missionary did not give a positive answer, students refrained from bowing to the Shrine. Like Uchimura's Imperial Rescript incident, the students' action caused a social disturbance. The Catholic universities in general were severely criticised in papers and on national radio. The Ministry of Education claimed that the shrines were not religious organisations, and the visitation to shrines should be done for educational reason, and a bow is a sign of patriotism and loyalty. Sophia University defended itself by asserting that the university was not a religious organisation. After this incident, the military authorities labelled the Catholic missionaries as spies and destroyed churches' and monasteries' properties.[168] The Catholic missionaries, consequently, withdrew altogether from Japan in 1934.[169]

In 1939, the government passed a law to tighten its control over religious organisations. The Religious Bodies Law, officially named "The Law of Control of Religious Institutions and Propagators," was applied to every religious group

[166] Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, pp. 230, 318–20.

[167] Sophia University was founded by the returned Jesuits missionaries in 1908. Gonoi, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 292. The Japanese government promoted Shinto worship in Korea, where there were about 500,000 Christians. A Japanese pastor, Mitsuru Fukuda, who was sent by the government, visited Pyongyang as the chairman of the Church of Christ in Japan, and gathered more than 120 Korean Christians to encourage them to adopt the Shinto worship. ibid., p. 299; Sung-Gun Kim. 'The Shinto Shrine Issue in Korean Christianity under Japanese Colonialism'. In: *Journal of Church and State* 39 (1997), pp. 503–21.

[168] Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 214. The Catholic students of Sophia University later participated in another ritual in front of the imperial palace. In a meantime, Jean-Baptiste-Alexis Chambon, Archbishop of Tokyo, appealed to Catholic schools in Japan to participate in visiting the Yasukuni and Meiji Shrines. Gonoi, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*,p. 296.

[169] ibid., p. 296. The Vatican made a donation to the Japanese government for national defence asking for the protection of the Catholics in Manchuria, China, and Korea in 1937. When, in 1937, Italy joined the Anti-Comintern Pact, which was signed by Germany and Japan in the previous year, Pius XI made an anti-Communist and pro-Japan statement. ibid., p. 298.

except the State Shinto.[170] It declared support for religious organisations as long as they were loyal to Imperialism and served the purpose of the government's policy. To be acknowledged as a religious organisation, each group needed approval from the government on their organisational structure and doctrines. If a group or a leader "disturbed the Imperial ideal," they would be punished under this law, and each religious body would be under the government's close surveillance.[171] Article 16 of the law condemned any teaching, which "disturbs peace and order, or proves contrary to the duties of national subjects," or anyone who "commits an act prejudicial to public interest." Article 26 "In case a teacher (person) or missionary has contravened the restriction, prohibition or suspension of work provided for in Article 16… he shall be punished with penal servitude or imprisonment…" The duties of national subjects include Shinto worship and bowing towards the Imperial palace. Also due to the passing of this law and the demand from the government, thirty-four Protestant denominations joined and became the United Church of Christ in Japan [*Kyodan*, 日本基督教団].[172]

As the nation became involved in the Asia-Pacific War, the intervention of the government in the churches became more frequent. The churches were forced to omit the phrases "Maker of heaven and earth" and "from whence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead" when reciting the Apostle's Creed because these phrases conflict with the idea of emperor's divine descent. The sermon topics were prescribed by the government, and the first five minutes of each Sunday service was dedicated to the ceremony of bowing to the portrait of the emperor or toward his palace, which was a requirement for the licensed churches. The churches also prayed for the war heroes, and the superintendent Tomida Mitsuru (1883–1961) urged the churches to support fully the nation.[173] The Education Ministry required the representatives of the United Church of Christ in Japan to be trained in an intensive course at the Meiji shrine for a month.[174]

[170] ibid., p. 300.
[171] Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 349; Kun Sam Lee. *The Christian Confrontation with Shinto Nationalism.* Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1966, p. 145.
[172] One third of the churches in the Anglican Episcopal Communion in Japan joined two years later because of the persistent pressure from the government. Still, two thirds of the churches refuse to merge, and six bishops formed a council. The government considered this council as a secret society, and the representatives were imprisoned. Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 301; ibid., p. 355.
[173] Lee, *The Christian Confrontation with Shinto Nationalism*, pp. 146–8.
[174] John Breen. 'Shinto and Christianity'. In: *Handbook of Christianity in Japan*. Ed. By Mark Mullins. Leiden: Brill, 2003, p. 266.

16. Shinto Shrine Worship in Korea

Some time after the March First Independent Movement, the major leaders of Japanese churches passed away and the churches experienced a change of leadership.[175] Japan was experiencing a depression after the wave of prosperity during the First World War. With the economic decline, the current of democracy and freedom faded away and was replaced by militarism and totalitarianism.

The military gradually took control of the Japanese government, which led to the rise of nationalism based on the State Shinto. Shinto worship became compulsory in 1937 in Korea, where there were about 500,000 Christians. It was a part of the state's policy to facilitate the Japanisation of Koreans, followed by giving them Japanese names in 1939.[176] By that time, the Japanese Churches had agreed with the argument that Shinto worship is not a religious act but an expression of patriotism and thus a duty of the subjects.[177]

A Japanese pastor, Tomida Mitsuru, who was sent by the government, visited Pyongyang as the chairman of the Church of Christ in Japan, and gathered more than 120 Korean Christians to encourage them to adopt the Shinto worship.[178]

17. The Resistance of the Korean Christians

The resistance by the Japanese Church to the Japanese government during the Imperial rule was minor compared to the resistance shown by the Korean Christians.[179] The Korean resistance was an expression of their nationalism and patriotism, but both the March First Independence Movement and the Non-Shrine Worship Movement (a movement resisting any Shinto ritual or emperor worship) were led by Christians based on their Christian beliefs.[180]

[175] Ebisawa & Ouchi, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 542. Uemura Masahisa died in 1925, Uchimura Kanzo in 1930, and Ebina Danjo in 1937.

[176] Kim, 'The Shinto Shrine Issue in Korean Christianity under Japanese Colonialism', p. 503.

[177] Lee, *The Christian Confrontation with Shinto Nationalism,* pp. 136–7. According to Kun Sam Lee, "The last attempt of the Japanese Church against the Shinto worship was the memorandum presented to the Association for Investigation of the Shinto System in the names of 55 churches and organisations on May 28, 1930. The memorandum is asking the government to answer whether the Shinto worship at shrine was a religious act. If it was not a religious act, all the religious elements should be taken away, and the worship should not be forces upon the people, based on the constitution that stated the freedom of religion and conscience."

[178] Gonoi, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 299; Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 323; Ebisawa & Ouchi, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi,* p. 559.

[179] Sawa, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi,* pp. 126–32.

[180] This is supported by the fact that Buddhism, Confucianism, and Shamanism received protection from the colonial authorities. See Kim, 'The Shinto Shrine Issue in Korean Christianity under Japanese Colonialism', p. 504. Also, it is interesting to note that Christian leaders who were involved with the March First Movement were theologically liberal while many Christians who were involved with

By the time of the annexation, the churches in Korea "became the place of refuge for the patriots and the intellectuals of the nation."[181] When the pressure from the Japanese government to bow before the emperor's portrait or attend a Shinto worship, many Korean Christians resisted because worshipping any creature, whether the emperor or a man-made god, is idolatry, which is prohibited in the Bible.[182] "It was an offence both nationally and theologically."[183]

When the government discovered their resistance, it applied pressure to the Presbyterian General Assembly to accept the interpretation of Shinto worship as a "non-religious duty of citizens." At the Assembly, there were more than one hundred policemen present. The motion submitted read, "Resolved that obeisance at Shrines is not a religious act and is not in conflict with Christian teaching. It should be performed as a matter of first importance thus maintaining the patriotic zeal of the Imperial subjects…" The affirmative vote only was called, and the motion was accepted. Sunday worship was allowed to take place only in places registered with the government.[184] After this Assembly, the Japanese police ruthlessly forced Christians to participate in Shinto worship, and if anyone refused, the police arrested them and asked the church to expel them because they "did not obey the Assembly's resolution."[185]

Even though the Assembly was forced to pass the motion, individual churches met in private homes and maintained their resistance against the Shinto worship. Pyongyang was one of the places where the resistance movement was most active. A meeting took place during superintendent Tomida's visit to persuade Korean Christians to cooperate on Shrine worship, after his speech, a Korean pastor Choo Kochul stood up and said, "We admire your excellent and rich knowledge. Nevertheless, we cannot accept shrine worship, according to God's Word written in the Bible." He was arrested three times and died in prison on April 21, 1944.[186]

The resistance continued at the local church level, and a number of Korean Christians were imprisoned, tortured, and killed. Since the Presbyterian General Assembly "compromised," those who were in the Non-Shrine Worship Movement

Non-Shrine worship movement were theologically conservative. See Grayson, 'Religion, Nationalism, and State Policy: the Conflict Between Christianity and State Shinto in Colonial Korea, 1910–1945', p. 118.

[181] Lee, The Christian Confrontation with Shinto Nationalism, p. 166.

[182] Theologically conservative churches (Presbyterians in Korea) showed more resistance than Methodists and Catholics. See Kim, 'The Shinto Shrine Issue in Korean Christianity under Japanese Colonialism'.

[183] Grayson, 'Religion, Nationalism, and State Policy: the Conflict Between Christianity and State Shinto in Colonial Korea, 1910–1945', p. 118.

[184] ibid., p. 120.

[185] ibid., pp. 167–70; see also Daniel J. Adams. 'Ancestors, Folk Religion, and Korean Christianity'. In: *Perspectives on Christianity in Korea and Japan: The Gospel and Culture in East Asia*. Ed. by Mark R. Mullins & Richard Fox Young. Lampeter, Wales: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1995, pp. 98–9.

[186] Lee, The Christian Confrontation with Shinto Nationalism, p. 172.

in the province of Kyungsang-south abandoned the Assembly and tried to create a new and non-conformist Assembly.[187] In doing so, however, there was little sense among them that they were making a political statement. The protest was understood to be an exclusively religious one. Those Christians were religiously motivated, based on their belief that they will be with God in heaven even if their physical body perishes.[188]

In Japan, while the United Church of Christ in Japan supported Japanese Imperialism, the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society in Japan (the Jehovah's Witnesses) refused to join any rituals at the shrines or to bow to the picture of the emperor, or to join the military. Two hundred and fifty members were arrested and imprisoned under the Peace Preservation Law, and four of them died in jail.[189] The Japan Holiness Church experienced persecutions because of their doctrinal beliefs and refusal of Shinto worship. They believed that Christ was above the emperor, and that the emperor will be judged when Christ comes again.[190] By the end of the war, eight of their members had died in prison.[191] The Non-Church inherited Uchimura's pacifism.[192]

18. After the War

On 15th August 1945, for the very first time, the Emperor spoke directly to his people by radio. Though the common people were unable to understand the Emperor's formal language, the point was clear: the war was over. Japan had lost. Japan surrendered to the Allies and was subsequently occupied. The Potsdam Proclamation asserted that fundamental human rights should be acknowledged by Japan.[193] The occupying powers annulled the Peace Preservation Law, State Shinto, and the Religious Organisation Law. A new

[187] Lee, The Christian Confrontation with Shinto Nationalism, p. 178; Adams, 'Ancestors, Folk Religion, and Korean Christianity', pp. 98–9.
[188] Grayson, 'Religion, Nationalism, and State Policy: the Conflict Between Christianity and State Shinto in Colonial Korea, 1910–1945', p. 121.
[189] Sawa, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 131.
[190] The Japan Holiness Church was a Wesleyan-Methodist denomination founded by Japanese Christians and missionaries who were not sent by any foreign denominations or missions. It was already a part of the United Church of Christ in Japan. More than 100 ministers of the Church were arrested in 1942, and 41 people were sentenced to imprisonment of up to four years. ibid., pp. 126–7; Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, pp. 159–62.
[191] Sawa, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi,* p. 131.
[192] ibid., pp. 128–30.
[193] Article 10 reads, "We do not intend that the Japanese shall be enslaved as a race or destroyed as a nation, but stern justice shall be meted out to all war criminals, including those who have visited cruelties upon our prisoners. The Japanese Government shall remove all obstacles to the revival and strengthening of democratic tendencies among the Japanese people. Freedom of speech, of religion, and of thought, as well as respect for the fundamental human rights shall be established."

Constitution of Japan was written under the guidance of Allied commander, Douglas MacArthur. Freedom of religion was guaranteed in Chapter 3, Article 20.[194] The Allies recognised the practical use of the emperor, so the Emperor was not judged in the war-crimes tribunal, and the "constitutional monarchy" remained. A picture of General MacArthur and Emperor Hirohito standing together caused a sensation when it was published in a Japanese press, as the Emperor seemed small next to MacArthur. The impact of the photo established the authority of MacArthur among the people and the fact that he would "stand next to" the Emperor.[195] The emperor was stripped of his former position as the commander of military, and became a symbol of peace and democracy. The "Rescript to Promote the National Destiny" printed in newspapers nationwide on New Years Day 1946 is known as the Emperor's "declaration of humanity." In this rescript, the Emperor "renounced his divinity." Its language, however, was again esoteric, and the renunciation was not even the central part of the speech. The Rescript did not directly deny the significance of the old myth: it simply mentioned that it was mistaken to think that the Emperor was a "god in human form." The Rescript was accepted positively in the United States, however, and interpreted as the Emperor's repudiation of the pretence to divine descent.[196] The American people's interest in this issue was formed by their Christian presuppositions, and for them, the idea of "emperor worship" was blasphemous because it seemed that the Emperor usurped Christ's position. For the Japanese people, the Rescript had little impact.

Because the Allies supported Christian missions, their propagation of Christianity was successful from 1945 until 1947, when the growth stopped. As anti-American sentiment increased among the intellectuals and academics, the churches ceased to attract those people.[197]

19. The Church and War Guilt

In 1967, the United Church of Christ in Japan (*Kyodan*) adopted a Confession on War Responsibility during the World War. In the confession, it states:

[194] "Freedom of religion is guaranteed to all. No religious organisation shall receive any privileges from the State, nor exercise any political authority. 2) No person shall be compelled to take part in any religious acts, celebration, rite or practice. 3) The State and its organs shall refrain from religious education or any other religious activity." The Constitution of Japan, Chapter 3, Article 20, translated by the Japan Institute of Constitutional Law, available from http://www.jicl.jp/kenpou_all/kenpou_english.html.
[195] John W. Dower. *Embracing Defeat*. Norton, 2000, p. 294.
[196] ibid., pp. 308–12.
[197] Gonoi, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 307.

> "It was indeed on this very occasion that we freshly realized yet again the mistakes we committed in the name of the *Kyodan* at the time of our formation and during the following war years. We therefore seek the mercy of our Lord and the forgiveness of our neighbors…Indeed, even as our country committed sin, so we too, as a church, fell into the same sin. We neglected to perform our mission as a "watchman." Now, with deep pain in our hearts, we confess our sin and ask the Lord for forgiveness. We also seek the forgiveness of the peoples of all nations, particularly in Asia, and of the churches therein and of our brothers and sisters in Christ throughout the world; as well as the forgiveness of the people in our own country."[198]

The confession, however, does not specify what kind of mistakes the Church made and why they were mistakes. This ambiguity is because of the anxiety that specific language in the document might cause divisions among the churches in the Kyodan.

Japanese theologians' obsession with Karl Barth did not lead the Church on the path of the Confessing Church in Germany. Japanese Barthians, on the contrary, locked themselves inside of the Church and focused on the "word of God." Barth's Theology, in Japanese context, made churches inwardly focused and exclusive in their logic. Barth was interpreted to mean that the mission of the church is primarily to be obedient to the word of God which is expressed in the Scriptures. Unfortunately, this notion of "being obedient to the word of God" did not lead Japanese theologians and church leaders to actively engage with the world to realise justice, but instead, they became very sceptical about any engagement with the society.[199] Because the Church did not develop the skills to connect with the world outside, it ended up being uncritical towards the state and its imperialism and colonialism. Barthian theology is often blamed for the result by later generations.[200] Wartime Japanese Theologians' reading of Barth lacked practical implications, and many of them did "only theology as though nothing had happened."[201] Also, after the war, Barth's theology of reconciliation did not help the Japanese Church to reconcile with the churches in Asia. Barth's assertion that God in Christ completes reconciliation fails to

[198] United Church of Christ in Japan. *Confession of War Responsibility during the World War.* Masahisa Suzuki, moderator. Approved by the Kyodan Executive committee, Feb, 20, 1967. Issued on Easter Sunday, March 26, 1967. Revised English translation issued Jan, 20, 1982.
[199] M. William Steele. 'Christianity and Politics in Japan'. In: *Handbook of Christianity in Japan*. Ed. by Mark R. Mullins et al. Brill, 2003, p. 361.
[200] Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, pp. 384–9; Sawa, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*,p. 148.
[201] Haddon Wilmer. 'Karl Barth'. In: *The Blackwell Companion to Political Theology*. Ed. By William T. Cavanaugh et al. Blackwell, 2003, p. 124. A phrase which is often quoted to accuse Barth.

point out the fact that reconciliation between human beings takes human effort. Many Barthian scholars fell into the dualism of religion and politics, and neglected the Church's role as the salt of the earth. Kitamori Kazo (1916–1998) pointed out that Barth's negative attitude towards indiginisation of Christian theology hindered the political awareness of Japanese Christians.[202]

20. Christianity and the Imperial Institution Today

The assessment of Japanese imperialism and imperial institution during the former part of the 20th century is a controversial issue in Japan and people's opinions vary. National symbols, such as the flag and anthem have been considered negatively since the war, especially in areas where people suffered intensely, such as Okinawa, Hiroshima, or Nagasaki. The flag indicates the rising sun, which suggests the superiority of the Japanese race and reminds one of invasions done under the ideology. The anthem, Kimigayo, literally means "the emperor's nation" and sings of its eternity. The flag and anthem were not officially national symbols until 1999 when a special law was passed to declare them "national." Even then, some schoolteachers resisted joining in singing the anthem and some students burned the flag from the negative understanding of the colonial period and wars. In 1999, a high school principal in Hiroshima hanged himself on the eve of the graduation day, when singing of Kimigayo was mandated. He had been caught between the Prefectural Board of Education, representing the Ministry of Education of the central government, which had been pressuring him to display the flag and sing the Kimigayo anthem at the graduation, on one hand, and members of teachers' unions opposing the government position.[203]

Japanese churches after the war in most denominations became pacifist, are against the revision of the pacifistic constitution, and also, from concern for the separation of state and religion, oppose Prime Ministerial visits to Yasukuni Shrine, where dead Japanese soldiers, including some convicted war criminals, are enshrined.

Today, because of their history and the tension with the government throughout their existence, the churches in Japan are detached from the state; rather they tend to be critical of the government and its policy. The churches view their past negatively – especially what happened during the Second World War – and many denominations published confessions of sin and repentance

[202] Yoshio Inoue. *Sengo Kyokaishi to Tomoni*. [Along with the Church after the War]. Tokyo: Shinkyo Shuppansha, 1995, p. 129.
[203] Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity*, p. 97.

over the war responsibility as organisations. It is perhaps commendable that Christianity in Japan is no longer an uncritical servant of the state. Having learnt from the past, the churches tend to critically assess the government's policies. The churches have not become a tool for the ruling class. However, because the Christians are a minority and theology in Japan has been mostly characterised as a direct import of western theology, the churches have not recognised their own context, and thus are theologically naïve in their political stance. Their theological naïveté may lead the churches to be uncritical about the fact that their understanding of Christianity may serve their own bourgeois class interests and ignore social injustice, which is condemned by Moltmann, Metz, and liberation theologians such as Gutierrez.

Another issue is that European- or American-born political theologies are often not applicable in the context of the Japanese churches. For example, the claim of so called "public theology" to interpret social or political issues from "Christian" perspectives and promote "Christian" values instead of "modern anomie," or "sinful ways," could not take a very significant role where Christians are such a minority. Moreover, the recent emerging tradition of "postliberalism" is also problematic in this context, as its supporters are quick to condemn any group but "the Church." In the case of Japanese Christianity, mutual understanding and cooperation with non-Christians or people who practice other religions is crucial.

21. Conclusion

From the very beginning, Christianity in Japan faced tension with the government. The state, whether the *Bakufu*, the Meiji government, or the military government, tried to control religion. The authorities in every age never found the value of Christianity, but only permitted it when there were pressures from the Western countries. The Kirishitans did not have power to fight through persecution by the government, and soon their religion was driven underground. Protestants in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, on the other hand, chose, consciously or unconsciously, to compromise with the state.

Protestant Christianity was accepted as a Western religion, which would be superior to any Japanese religion, by the warrior class, and later by the middle classes, who were increasing in numbers with the growth of capitalism. As the government's policy became more nationalistic and public opinion followed, the churches became apologetic. While theology, undertaken by those who were educated in the West, remained essentially "Western," the effort of the churches in Japan was made to claim how Christianity and their patriotism were in fact complementary, not contradictory. The dissenting voice was suppressed

in the heyday of Japanese militarism. At the end of Japan's imperial ambition in 1945, with the persecution and oppression by the government ended, the churches ceased to be drawn to Japanese nationalism and instead absorbed yet further the current of theological thought of the West.

This phenomenon is further exacerbated by the fact that Christian theological academia was born and formed in the West according to the issues and concerns of the people thereof, and to be accepted to such a society, the only possible way for the Japanese Christian scholars was to join the discourses of the West.