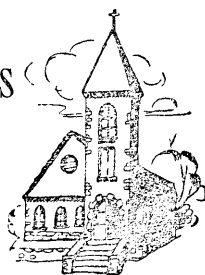


# THE ORIGIN OF THE SOCIAL STATUS OF PROTESTANT CHRISTIANITY IN JAPAN

(1859—1918)

By Fujio Ikado



## Chapter I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Protestantism : an Urban Movement

The Protestant Christian movement in Japan is a middle class, urban movement. This is a matter of common knowledge that needs no scientific corroboration, but for those who want more information than is given in this essay there are a number of careful studies by competent scholars, both Japanese and foreign. Dr. Arimichi Ebizawa,<sup>a</sup> for example, in *A Socio-historical Study of Modern Japanese Religions* states that

Although the church has attempted to penetrate rural districts, a major factor hindering the growth of Protestantism has been that it does not spread beyond the bourgeois class in urban districts.\*

By "bourgeois" or "middle class" present day scholars mean the white-collar class which stands between the rich ruling

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a. 海老沢有道

\* Ebizawa, Arimichi, *Gendai Nihon Shūkyō no Shiteki Kenkyū*. 現代日本宗教の史的研究 (*A Socio-historical Study of Modern Japanese Religions*.) (Tokyo: Natsume Press 夏目書房 1952), p. 110

## SOCIAL STATUS OF PROTESTANT CHRISTIANITY

class and the poor laboring class.\*

The urban character of Protestantism is not a new phenomenon. Dr. Albertus Pieters, a former missionary of the Reformed Church of America, writing in 1909 regarding the church membership of his day, stated that

The Protestant movement in Japan is to some extent a class movement. Almost untouched as yet are the artisan, merchant and farming classes, comprising nine-tenths of the people.†

That was a half-century ago. Even then a larger percentage of the church membership was already coming from the rising white-collar class than from the middle class as a whole, which generally was considered to include the wealthy farming class and the so-called rural intellectual class, as well as the white-collar class in the towns and cities.

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\* Professor Ebisawa defines the urban character of Japanese Protestantism by the expression *Toshi Shoshimin Kaisō*, 都市諸市民階層, which obviously means "the white-collar class in urban areas." However, it is still very difficult to define the meaning of both the middle class and the white-collar class. According to recent research, the members of the so-called middle class, first, belong to the category of the educated; in other words, they are school graduates at least educated at middle school level. Second, their average income is more than fifty dollars a month (in 1956), roughly estimated, while the average income of 87 per cent of the total population is less than fifty dollars. (Sakamoto, "Income System of Japanese Employment," *Chūō Kōron*, No. 11, LXX (November, 1955), p. 103.) This is an extremely simplified sketch, and the population of the middle class in postwar Japan is said to be about 10 per cent of the total population. However, it is a well known fact that some professional people, such as teachers and office clerks, rank very low in the income scale. Therefore, some scholars insist that the percentage of the middle class in the total population must be higher than 10 per cent, judging from the total number of graduates of institutions of higher education.

† Pieters, Albertus, *Mission Problems in Japan, Theoretical and Practical*. (New York: The Board of Publications, Reformed Church in America, 1912), p. 120. See also pp. 144—147.

## SOCIAL STATUS OF PROTESTANT CHRISTIANITY

Dr. Pieters' findings regarding the urban character of Christianity in that period are supported by one of his contemporaries, Dr. A. K. Faust, of the German Reformed Mission, who concluded from his studies which covered both Catholic and Protestant churches that, while Japanese Christians were to be found all over the country, there was a very noticeable disproportion in their geographical distribution. According to Dr. Faust, the prefecture that had the most Christians was Nagasaki,<sup>a</sup> which had 33,819 (mostly Catholic) . Tokyo city stood next with 28,119, and Hokkaido<sup>b</sup> followed with 7,105. Then came Ōsaka,<sup>c</sup> with 6,781, followed by Kanagawa<sup>d</sup> with 5,377, and Miyagi<sup>e</sup> stood sixth with 5,143. Fukui,<sup>f</sup> a stronghold of Shin Buddhism, had less than two hundred converts.\*

This distribution of Christianity, which appears to have become somewhat fixed about the turn of the century, may be accounted for in part by two very significant developments in the social and economic fields. These were (1) a marked decrease in the expansion of Japan's rural and a corresponding increase in the urban population between the years 1893 and 1925, and (2) a tripling of the national income during the period from 1900 to 1920, the increase being almost entirely due to the development of urban industry, which brought about a rapid increase of the salaried class.† This was the period of the rapid rise of modern industry and city culture, and it was a period of stability for the Christian forces. Church leaders appear to

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a. 長崎 b. 北海道 c. 大阪 d. 神奈川 e. 宮城 f. 福井

\* Faust, Allen K. *Christianity as a Social Factor in Modern Japan*. (Lancaster, Pa: Steinman and Foltz, 1909), p. 72.

† *Jiji Nenkan* (Yearbook) 時事年鑑, (Tokyo: Jiji Tsūshin Sha 時事通信社, 1956), p. 924

## SOCIAL STATUS OF PROTESTANT CHRISTIANITY

have been very pleased with the surprising increase of church members which occurred in that period.

The general phenomenon of urbanization was also evident in the occupational distribution of church membership. A survey\* by the Church of Christ in Japan (Nihon Kirisuto Kyōkai),<sup>a</sup> the pre-World War II union of churches of the Presbyterian and Reformed tradition, made a quarter of a century after Dr. Pieters' study indicated that the urban-centric character of the church remained relatively unchanged. For example, in 1933 the ratio of Christians to the farming population was 1 to 55,000, but for clerks, teachers and civil servants it was 1 to 2,000. These and other details may be noted in the following table :

Table I\*

### RATIO OF CHRISTIANS WORKERS AND THE TOTAL NUMBER OF JAPANESE WORKERS, 1933.

<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Workers</i>	<i>Christians among the workers</i>	<i>Ratio</i>
Agriculture	27,000,000	494	1/55,000
Business	7,470,000	614	1/12,000
Factory laborers	4,550,000	106	1/43,000
Hand-work	3,790,000	85	1/45,000
Fishing	1,500,000	29	1/52,000
Civil servants	970,000	415	1/ 2,000
Teachers	570,000	297	1/ 2,000
Medical establishments			
	470,000	299	1/ 1,600
Military officers	300,000	45	1/ 6,700
Office clerks	900,000	450	1/ 2,000

<sup>a</sup>. 日本基督教会

\* The Church of Christ in Japan, (ed.) *Tōzan-sō Kōen Shū*. 東山莊講演集 (*The Collected Addresses of the Tōzan-sō Conference*) (Tokyo: YMCA Press, 1933), p. 184.

## SOCIAL STATUS OF PROTESTANT CHRISTIANITY

In other words, about a decade before the outbreak of the Pacific phase of World War II, the majority of Protestant church members still was composed of civil servants, teachers, doctors, and clerks, that is, the white-collar class.

Moreover, twenty years later in the period following World War II no significant change had taken place. According to an investigation of the membership of 150 Tokyo Protestant churches made in 1952, students studying in institutions above the high school level constituted 40 percent of the total church membership. The artisans, farmers, and the relatively poor, which comprised about 60 percent of the total population, were almost totally untouched either by missionaries or Japanese Christian workers, and thus few were on the church rolls. Even in the rural churches, which were arbitrarily selected for purposes of comparison, the social structure of the membership was almost the same as that of big city churches. A clear majority of the members in these churches was in the educated, intellectual, white-collar class, or in the student class, that is, candidates for the white-collar class.\*

In comparison with some of the powerful sects of Shinto and Buddhism, Christianity has obviously stood out as a religion for a relatively well-off class. The major Shinto sects came into being in order to fulfill the religious thirst of the poor class which had had no contact with the higher education of Western learning. According to a series of studies on the folk religions done by Mr. Hiroo Takagi<sup>a</sup> of Tokyo University, the

a. 高木宏夫 (Mr. Takagi is currently teaching at Tōyō University. Ed.)

\* Kishimoto, Hideo 岸本英夫 (ed.) *Japanese Religion in the Meiji Era*. Trans. by John Howes. (Tokyo: Ōbun Sha 欧文社, 1956) p. 313, and pp. 327-30.

## SOCIAL STATUS OF PROTESTANT CHRISTIANITY

two outstanding characteristics of these sects are that their main following has come from among the rural and the urban poor and that they are very similar to primitive folk beliefs. Traditionally they are rather of a rural nature. Moreover, the same can be said about socially active Buddhism. Except in some cases, such as the Zen sects, the majority of Buddhists come from the relatively lower classes of local villages and from the congested areas of cities.\*

Protestantism in Japan, however, is said to be less rural than in any other Asiatic country, and, as it has become more and more urban, it has become increasingly difficult for the church to penetrate rural regions. This was due to certain well-known sociological factors. In a geographical study made in 1953 the favorable and unfavorable factors for the development of Christianity were outlined as follows:

The districts which have been unreceptive to Christianity are:

- 1) remote places such as the northern part of Hokkaidō and Hida<sup>a</sup>;
- 2) places characterized by seasonal labor, which have a higher rate of mobility so that few can stay in church even for a season;
- 3) places where the traditional suspicion of Christianity by native religions such as Buddhism and Shintoism is widespread, that is, Wakayama<sup>b</sup>, Nara<sup>c</sup>, Toyama<sup>d</sup>, etc.; and 4) places like southern Kyūshū<sup>e</sup> where the transportation system is not complete.

The districts favorable to Christianity are: 1) political and commercial centers, although they have been relatively unreceptive to religions, such as southern Hokkaido; 2) transportation centers, and political and commercial centers such as Sendai<sup>f</sup>, Tokyo, Yokohama<sup>g</sup>, Ōsaka, Kōbe<sup>h</sup>, Hiroshima<sup>i</sup>; and 3) places which have a long Christian tradition like Nagasaki and Yamaguchi<sup>j</sup>.\*

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a. 飛田 b. 和歌山 c. 奈良 d. 富山 e. 九州 f. 仙台 g. 横浜 h. 神戸  
i. 広島 j. 山口

\* UNESCO *Social Tension Survey: The Section on Religion*, Report No. 2, "On Socio-psychological Tension Among Buddhist Groups." (Reported in Tokyo Conference for the Study of Social Tension among Japanese Social Groups in 1953). These reports are in the custody of the Science Council of Japan (Gakujutsu Kaigi Jimukyoku) 学術会議事務局.

## SOCIAL STATUS OF PROTESTANT CHRISTIANITY

Sociologically speaking, urban districts may be characterized as (1) centers of national or local transportation systems through which new fashions easily spread, (2) heterogeneous societies with relatively large, dense settlements of white-collar workers, and (3) districts where there are well-established educational systems and a deeply rooted intellectual class which has been charmed by Western culture.\* Such districts provide a favorable environment for Christianity, which is a newly introduced religion; and it would appear that these factors account in large measure for the urban character of Christianity.

However, this data can be interpreted in a different manner. The concentration of the Christian population in urban areas very likely stemmed also from official restrictions placed on the missionaries when they came to this country. Of necessity early evangelistic activities were confined entirely to the cities where the foreign missionary was obliged to live, and it was in this period that the urban, intellectual aspect of Protestantism developed. Its middle class character became accentuated because of the social and educational background of the former samurai, that is, the new middle class, which was most responsive to the Christian message. Protestants were the backbone of the liberal forces arrayed against the nationalistic policy of the government. The early Protestants were always ready with criticism of every mistake the government made. It was the samurai spirit which was the main source of the spirit of criti-

\* Kobayashi, Tsutomu 小林勤, "Shūkyō Bumpu no Jinmon Chirigakuteki Kenkyū" 宗教分布の人文地理学的研究 (*A Geographical Study of the Distribution of Religious Forces in Japan*) in *Chiri to Rekishi* 地理と歴史 (*Geography and History*) (Tokyo: Teikoku Press 帝国書院), No. 1, November 1953, pp 35—37.

cism and ascetic ethics that characterized the Protestant leaders of Japan in the early days of the church in this country.

### The Spirit of Accommodation and Compromise

Then something seems to have happened. The attitude of Christians began to change. Instead of criticizing they were ready to compromise with the government. Very few observers appear to have noted this, but the easygoing attitude of the Christian students was noticed by the missionaries, one of whom complained that "many graduates take no interest in the church or its work, that they are very worldly in their manner of life, that not a few are a scandal even to unbelievers, and that some seem to be immune to any Christian influence, not only in spite of the fact that they have been educated in Christian institutions, but even on account of it, as if they had once for all had enough of the matter.\*

Dr. Hiromichi Kozaki<sup>a</sup> writing in 1893 said :

Only about ten years ago, each member of the church was responsible for his evangelistic work and did the same job that the minister did; and so Christian work made great progress. But now the idea of the division of labour has become more popular. Only ministers and professional workers engage in evangelistic work and suffer from the lack of funds and workers†

This was also the time when the church almost entirely ceased to put forth any effort to reach the coolies and the lowest class in the Japanese social system.‡

When the government planned the Conference of Three Re-

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a. 小崎弘道

\* Pieters, *op. cit.*, pp 151—52

† Rikugō Zasshi 六合雜誌. Tokyo, 1882—1912. No. 148, April, 1893.

‡ Faust, *op. cit.*, p. 75.



## SOCIAL STATUS OF PROTESTANT CHRISTIANITY

ligions in 1912, Christianity as a minority movement was forced to decide whether it would remain an outsider, that is, a critical minority, or would conform. There were two choices open, persecution and martyrdom, or compromise and accommodation. The Japanese church chose the latter and thus set the pattern for decades to come.\*

Some twenty years later (1930), Mr. J. Merle Davis concluded that the state of the church was intimately related to "the psychology of the townspeople and their inherited social and cultural background." Who were the townspeople? Says Dr. Davis :

There are three groups from which the Church has principally been built up in the Asiatic fields. First, those who crave economic security (and who are the small minority in the Japanese Protestant church). Second, people such as teachers, doctors, minor civil servants and small officials who are loosely rooted and frequently transferred. And third, those in mission employ, or connected with institutions. Thus we find a very small proportion of tradesmen, merchants, bankers, landowners and high officials in the Church. The large turnover of church members in Japan is due to the preponderance of the professional and civil servant class in the membership.†

Dr. D. C. Holtom also noticed the changed attitude but from a different angle. He believed that the original critical spirit had been kept alive and appeared in declarations of opposition, such as, for example, the statement of the Federation of Christian Churches in 1917 against the traditional ancestor worship.

\* Holtom, D. C. *Modern Japan and Shinto Nationalism, A study of present day trends in Japanese religions*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1943), p. 95.

† Davis, Merle J. *The Economic and Social Environment of the Younger Churches*, The Report of the Department of Social and Economic Research of the International Missionary Council to the Tambaram Meetings. (London: The Edinburgh House, 1939), pp 42—43.

## SOCIAL STATUS OF PROTESTANT CHRISTIANITY

Dr. Holtom's basic question regarding this phenomenon was this: Why was the pressure for a national unification of religions, against which the samurai Christians of the Meiji<sup>a</sup> era had fought so bitterly, not resisted by the majority of Christians in the Taishō<sup>b</sup> (1912—1925) and Shōwa<sup>c</sup> (1925— ) periods? That is, why did they decide that they had to compromise with the government? In his opinion the reason did not lie in any external changes. He claimed that whatever changes had taken place had not been in the national religion itself but in the attitude of the Japanese Christians.\*

Dr. Holtom's question is our question. We seek the reason for the changed attitude of the Christians, the reason for the difference between the heroic, steadfast qualities of the early converts and the rather resigned and compliant attitude of the Christians of the later period. The reason, we believe, is related to the general change in the nature of church membership to which reference has already been made, that is, the shift, which began at the beginning of the twentieth century, from the old middle class samurai Christians to the white-collar groups, the modern middle class.

Although the missionaries were restricted to the cities for a period, the early Protestant Christians were actually very keen to expand evangelical work into every social class; but after the Russo-Japanese War the main body of church members seems to have become passive in its interest in the masses. Such leaders as Toyohiko Kagawa<sup>d</sup> and Sakuzō Yoshino,<sup>e</sup> who were acclaimed because of their philanthropic work and social leader-

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a. 明治 b. 大正 c. 昭和 d. 賀川豊彦 e. 吉野作造

\* Holtom, *op. cit.*, pp 99—100.

ship, were exceptions.

This social phenomenon coincided with the expansion of the new middle class. The newly-arisen salaried class, which became the core of the middle class of the Taishō and Shōwa periods, as well of the Christian church in the twentieth century, held an opportunistic philosophy which weakened the political resistance of the church to the developing nationalism. The sober individualism, which had been common among early Protestants and had been sustained by their faith, seems to have been almost forgotten by the new white-collar Christians.

In other words, despite the fact that the total evangelization of the country has long been the ideal of Japanese Protestants, the social narrowness and lack of spiritual zeal on the part of the white-collar class appears to have been the main hinderance to the penetration of the masses. Yet, before we can draw this conclusion, we must trace the history of the movement from the begining in order to know the nature of this white-collar class in some detail, and to discover whether or not there was in fact a real difference between the charactor of this class and that of the earlier Christians.

This study has a three-fold purpose: (1) to discover how Protestantism in the beginning of the Meiji Retoration was able to become intergrated into the rising middle class, the core of which was composed of the lower strata of samurai and merchants who were attempting to get positons of prestige in the new regime; (2) to make clear the extent to which Protestantism supported this new, rising class in its effort to increase in size and to establish its own ethic; and (3) to discover to what extent Protestantism has been influenced by the character of

the Japanese middle class.

The period covered is from the entry of Protestant missionaries (1859) to the end of World War I (1918).

## Chapter II

### PROTESTANTISM AND THE SAMURAI CLASS

(1872—1890)

#### Historical Periods

Traditionally Protestant history in Japan during its first half-century has been divided into five periods; preparation (1859—1873), the establishment of early churches (1874—1882), rapid expansion (1883—1890), testing (1891—1900), and stability (1901—1912). Postwar Japanese scholars, however, prefer the following divisions:\*

1859—1890.....Early churches (1859—1879, the beginning of missionary activity).

1891—1902.....Development of self-supporting churches.

1903—.....Formation of national churches.

For the purposes of this study the later arrangement is more satisfactory, because it conforms to developments in politics and economics. The 1859—1890 period is identified with the for-

\* Sumiya, Mikio 隅谷三喜男 *Kindai Nihon no Keisei to Kirisuto-kyō*, 近代日本の形成とキリスト教 (*The Formation of Modern Japan and Christianity*) (Tokyo: Iwanami 岩波, 1954). Ōuchi, Saburō 大内三郎, "Meiji Kirisuto-kyō Shinsō Shi ni okeru Jiki Kubun no Mondai" 明治基督教真相史における時期区分の問題 ("On Historical Division of the History of Christian Thought in the Meiji Era", (Yamanashi University Hōkoku, 1955). Professor Ōuchi's work is the most prominent in the field of methodology.

mation of a modern government, the 1891—1902 period with the first industrial revolution, and the 1903— period with the “Great Japanese Empire.” Naturally there is no clear line of demarkation. These periods overlap considerably and merely indicate major trends.

### **Period of Social Upheaval and Reorganization**

The period beginning about 1872, when the first church was established in Yokohama, was one of political upheaval and social disorganization. The Restoration of 1868 shifted political power from the hands of the Tokugawa shogun to a government centering in the young Emperor Meiji, and resulted in the collapse of the Tokugawa-fostered class system and a decline in the traditional anti-foreign movement. In this situation the energetic leaders of the new government rushed to lay the foundation for their modernization program along Western lines ; but the general shift in political emphasis was not as quick nor as complete as was the upsetting of the class system and the changes in the social status of the people. This was because, as was indicated in the government slogan “Rich Country, Strong Army ” (*Fukoku Kyōhei*<sup>a</sup>), the political reforms at that time were limited to nationalistic lines, and the concentration of political power was applied primarily to the problem of economic expansion and the development of military power. “Each modernization effort was clearly related to the pressing problem of increasing the wealth and power of the nation, and almost every major move was initiated and pushed by the

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a. 富国強兵

national state in order to serve clearly defined national aims. ”\*

Political leaders recognized that the best way to learn as much as possible from the advanced countries of the world regarding modernization of the state was to utilize the emperor system in driving the nation to a supreme effort at self-education. Thus, the major concern of the political leaders was, on the one hand, to establish as quickly as possible a new political and economic system that would make it possible to maintain a military-oriented industry for the defense of the young nation against the threat of the Occident and, on the other hand, to suppress the not inconsiderable opposition among those people who inevitably suffered most from the changes involved.

### Efforts to Create Unity

The major hindrances to the success of the reforms were the weakening of the government's financial structure by civil war, and the people's concern for Western democracy and parliamentarianism. To break down these obstacles and to strengthen the emperor system, the government developed some unique policies. It promised in Emperor Meiji's Charter Oath,† for

\* Brown, Delmer M. *Nationalism in Japan, An introductory historical analysis*. (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1935), pp 91—92.

† E. W. Clement, *A Short History of Japan* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1915) , p. 112 quotes Ienaga's summary of the Charter Oath in his *Constitutional Development of Japan* as follows:

1. A deliberative assembly should be formed, and all measures be decided by public opinion.

2. The principles of social and political economics should be diligently studied by both the superior and (the) inferior classes of our people.

3. Everyone in the community shall be assisted to persevere in carrying out his will for good purposes.

4. All the old absurd usages of former times should be disregarded, and the impartiality and justice displayed in the workings of nature be adopted as a basis of action.

5. Wisdom and ability should be sought after in all quarters of the world for the purpose of firmly establishing the foundation of the Empire.

example, to rule in accordance with public opinion, but used this as a pretext to get political and economic support for the monarchy from the clans and rich merchants. Then later in the 1890's, it also used it, in the first place, to demonstrate the Emperor's benevolence in establishing a parliament and, in the second place, to prevent criticism of the true nature of the new parliamentary system which was so greatly limited by the imperial power.\*

### Family-Nation Concept and Christianity

In spite of the Charter Oath, which seemed to presage a progressive policy, the government did its best to revive the ancient ethics based on the traditional family-nation concept which required every subject to be obedient to the Emperor.† This was an effective strategy for suppressing criticism. The government clearly saw that rapid reforms would be followed by social disorganization, by effort at counter-reform, and by the political resistance of minority groups. Therefore, it emphasized the ethics of family unity. Everything good done by the government was a manifestation of the Emperor's benevolence. It was everyone's duty to forget all egoistic trends and, in accordance with the Emperor's will, defend the nation from all outside threats. Attempts at counter-reform and resistance were regarded

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\* Brown, *op. cit.*, pp. 92—102. Kishimoto, *op. cit.*, pp. 314—323 This seems to be a well-established theory about the Meiji government's policy. Professor Maruyama, Mr. Toyama and Mr. Inoue are the most prominent scholars in this field.

† Psychologically this family ethics encouraged a certain insularity which has made the Japanese jealous of the wealth of Western countries, and caused them to suffer from an inferiority complex with regard to the military power of the advanced countries.

as threats to parents and as treason against both the family and the nation. In the beginning of the Meiji era a Shinto propaganda program was set in motion which proclaimed the "Japan-as-a-family" ideology, a concept built upon a feudal caste system that denied the equality of all men. This was later strengthened by the establishment of State Shinto, which became the symbol of ideological unity, and the first and the greatest hindrance to the expansion of Christianity.

To what extent did Japanese Christians oppose this nationalistic family-nation concept, the ethical source of authoritarian Japanese nationalism, which was diametrically opposed to Christianity, the backbone of Western democracy and individualism?\*

Under the family system, to be a Christian meant isolation from the indigenous society. For example, one well-known scholar of the period criticized Christianity by saying that "people who profess Christianity would rather desert their lords or fathers than be untrue to their religion.† Therefore, avoidance of the new faith because of the fear of government spies was not infrequent.‡ Opposition in the rural areas was especially intense. Yet, in spite of this the situation was not without a

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\* Holtom, *op. cit.*, Chapter IV.

† Sumiya, Mikio *op. cit.*, Chap II.

‡ Sanami, Wataru 佐波亘 (ed), *Uemura Masahisa to sono Jidai* 植村正久とその時代, (*Uemura Masaharu and His Age*) 6 vols. (Tokyo: Kyō Bun Kwan 教文館), 1937, p. 15

"As Townsend Harris said, the people did not have strong emotional reactions against other religions. Only fear and the eyes of the government spies relentlessly passing among them kept them from Christianity. A Christian merchant (an aristocrat), for example, placed imported goods on sale in his Ginza store. Later, a rumor arose that the police had taken down all the names of persons whom the novelty of these goods had attracted."



## SOCIAL STATUS OF PROTESTANT CHRISTIANITY

note of optimism. After making a very discouraging report in 1871, a missionary wrote the following year that "the great changes which are taking place in the government, the constitution of society, and the ideas of the people of Japan, indicate that ere long the field will be ready for the sower of gospel seed."\* When the ban against Christianity was removed in 1873, this kind of optimism became somewhat general.†

However, the missionaries seem to have been deceived. Actually the government, because of its fear of the complaints of the Western powers, had only switched to a more indirect oppression through less spectacular methods, that is, through education and laws. This was simpler because in general the people had become tired of the government's concern in private matters of belief and tended to completely ignore religion, except on the occasion of marriages and funerals.

### Who Became Christians?

In such a situation, who could accept Christianity, an entirely alien way of thinking and living? Only a person of true courage who was seeking freedom of thought and faith despite the government's interference. Only a man of learning who was well-grounded in the understanding of Christian thought. And the only people who could qualify were the residents of urban areas who had a chance to meet the missionaries and were fortunate enough to be able to hear addresses on Christianity.

This was the "Rich Country, Strong Army" period in which

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\* The American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. *Annual Report* 1871, p. 75

† *Ibid.*, 1872, p. 70

## SOCIAL STATUS OF PROTESTANT CHRISTIANITY

students who mastered Western learning could more easily secure higher positions in the government. Necessarily, then, the first Christians were students of the language schools where missionaries were teachers, and almost all such students were from among the jobless samurai who at that time numbered about two hundred thousand.\*

At the time, while the government was energetically pushing its modernization policy, it was suffering bitter financial difficulties because of civil wars and the resulting inflation. Economic dislocation violently shook the foundation of the whole political system, but all the government could do was to strengthen the monopoly system and exact more taxes from the people. Naturally, those who suffered most were, first, the peasants in the rural districts and, second, the urban poor; and it was just these people along with the unemployed lower class samurai who had lost their old privileges and were desperately trying to find new work.

The first concern of this latter group was to either recover their old privileges or to get better positions in the new regime. This was not strange. A prominent liberal Christian, Isoo Abe, correctly expressed the reason for the samurai's attitude when he wrote that, although his status in the clan had been about the lowest, compared with his low condition at the time, he had formerly lived like a modern bourgeois.† Naturally such men were very bitter in their criticism of the government. Never-

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\* Agatsuma, Tōsaku 我妻東策 *Meiji Shakai Seisaku-shi* 明治社会政策史, (A History of Public Welfare Programs in Meiji Japan.) (Tokyo: Sansei Dō 三省堂 1938). Chaps. I and II.

† Abe, Isoo 安部磯雄, *Shakai-shugisha e no Michi* 社会主義者への道 (A Way to Socialism: an Autobiography). (Tokyo Sansei Dō 1949), p. 1.

theless, they believed everything the government told them about the future of modernized Japan: Japan as the Emperor's family, and the establishment of a sort of democracy in this country. Kanzo Uchimura, one of the most prominent of the samurai Christians was among those caught by the government's honeyed word. In his autobiography he wrote:

I early learnt to honor my nation above all others, and to worship my nation's gods and no others. I thought I could not be forced even by death itself to vow my allegiance to any other gods than my country's. I should be a traitor to my country, and an apostate from my national faith by accepting a faith which is exotic in its origin. All my noble ambitions which had been built upon my former conceptions of duty and patriotism were to be demolished.....\*

### The Samurai Go to School

Before the 1890's schools—private language schools, including mission schools, and small-sized government schools—were the only means for the jobless samurai to climb the social ladder. So the young samurai went to school. As an example of what happened, take Keio Gijuku (present day Keio University), which was established at the end of the Tokugawa era and was one of the largest schools of Western style at that time. From 1863 to 1871, out of 1,329 students entering the school, 1,289 were from the samurai class. Only 12 percent of the entering students in 1872 and 18 percent in 1873 belonged to other classes, such as merchants, farmers, etc.†

This was also the case with mission schools. In the beginning

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\* Uchimura, Kanzo 内村鑑三, *How I Became a Christian*. English Edition. (Tokyo: Keisei Sha 警醒社, 1895), p. 11.

† Watanabe, Ikujiro 渡辺幾次郎, *Meiji Shi Kenkyū*. 明治史研究 (*A History of Meiji*) Tokyo: 1938; pp. 323—24.

a majority of the student body of Doshisha was comprised of those who had transferred from a Kumamoto language school established for young samurai of the Kumamoto clan. Moreover, almost all the Christian leaders who studied in the mission schools in Yokohama were the children of samurai. These were typical. Somehow or other the younger generation of samurai gathered in the big cities to be educated,\* and the schools flourished so much that at Doshisha, for example, even though a new building had been opened in the autumn of 1878, it was at once fully occupied.†

### Character of Early Christians

Who among the students became Christians? Of course, not all, although there were some exceptional cases, such as at the government's Sapporo Agricultural School where almost all the students in the first classes confessed their faith. A majority of students at that time, including mission school students, however, approached Western scholars for language instruction rather than for Christianity. As one of them who was converted frankly stated, "we were very pleased by the kind and exhaustive teaching methods of the missionaries in the school, but we just hated Christianity and made up our minds to break with those who became interested in Christianity."‡

It is almost impossible for a person to entirely free himself

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\* Kishimoto, *op. cit.*, p. 177, pp. 204—11 and Sumiya, *op. cit.*, chap. I.

† The American Board of Commissions for Foreign Missions. *Annual Report* 1878, p. 90.

‡ Washiyama, Teisaburō 鷺山第三郎, *Meiji Gakuin Gojū-nen Shi* 明治学院五十年史 (Fifty Years of Meiji Gakuin.) (Tokyo: Meiji Gakuin 明治学院 1927), pp 104—05.

## SOCIAL STATUS OF PROTESTANT CHRISTIANITY

from the traditional customs that surround him. His social status is a sort of trade mark, which indicates his educational and family background. It is especially hard for a person to accept a religion, which has been prevented by harsh government regulations and social prejudice from penetrating society without having it affect his social status. In that period, more than mere rational, intellectual conviction was needed for a person to confess Christianity and to free himself from the conventional morality of the family system. The young men who became the early Christians had real courage.

Even though almost all of them at first gathered around the missionaries in order to receive English instruction, their enthusiasm for everything new was a sign of their intelligence. It also demonstrated their suppressed, critical, and irritated feelings. In other words, in their courageous opposition to government regulations and in their confession of Christianity, they were sustained by their wounded pride. For except in their intelligence, the samurai were no longer the superior of the common man. In many cases conversion came to those who were disappointed in both the past and the present. They were looking for a new ideal which would never betray them.

It is significant that the early Christian leaders with very few exceptions appeared among the samurai of those clans that had opposed the Imperial forces.\* Most of them were called "Meiji Puritans." and it is easy to understand why they got the name.

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\* To prove this point, there have been a number of scholarly studies. The latest among them are the following: Katakazawa, Chiyomatsu 片子沢千代松, *Meiji Shoki Furotesutanto no Shinto Kōzō* (*Construction of Protestants in the Meiji Era*), *Journal of History of Christianity*, No. 7, October 1956. pp. 52-59.

## SOCIAL STATUS OF PROTESTANT CHRISTIANITY

Professor Saburo Ienaga has pointed out that the samurai Christian's ethical demand was so rigid and extreme that it raised a wall between the masses and Christianity.\* They were too critical to recognize the other's strong points; and oftentimes their very opposition made it impossible for the government to achieve some desirable reforms.

Mr. J. Merle Davis in attempting to interpret this type of psychology quotes J. C. Heinrich's "The Psychology of Suppressed People" to the effect that

"the three chief manifestations of the psychology of the depressed class individual are a direct reaction of resentment, a concealment reaction and an indirect reaction which finds its most unusual expression in the desire to humiliate others and to assert his own superiority. Many were the struggles for adjustment and supremacy between the mental process and outlook of missionaries trained in the concepts of New England puritanism and the highspirited, feudal-minded leaders of the infant church in Japan.†

Mr. Davis thus emphasized a weak point of Christian personality in Japan, and questioned whether the Church had fully considered some of the deepest Japanese motivations in presenting the claims of Christ to the individual. Conversion, be it noted, is often a means of sublimating repressed resentments.

Mr. Davis' position is entirely correct. The conversion of many samurai undoubtedly resulted in part from their resentment against social change. Their consciousness of being "the Chosen" was to some extent an expression of a desire to assert their superiority as intellectuals over the common people. Thus, in

\* Kudō, Eiichi 工藤英一, *Shoki Nihon Purotesutanto no Shakai Sō* 初期日本プロテスタントの社会層 (*On the Social Structure of the Meiji Protestant*), *Meiji Gakuin Ronsō* 明治学院論叢 (Tokyo: Meiji Gakuin 1954), No. 30.

† Davis, *op. cit.*, pp. 49-51.

their early history, a kind of ascetic ethics combined with a sense of superiority drove them as Christians into a state of isolation from the rest of society. As Dr. Hiromichi Kozaki pointed out, many samurai had joined Christian churches as a means of demonstrating their resentment against the new society.\* And, it was their resentment that caused them to move from a simple and sincere confession of sin to a defense of a pure Christian faith free from idolatry, and to oppose the government's abuse of religion in its policy of modernization.

It was their keenness and sincerity, combined with a flexibility, that enabled them to change their religious faith. Another side of their conversion is seen in their seeking a better chance to climb the social ladder. Both of these aspects affected the samurai Christians and enabled them to build up a wall between themselves and the masses. The common people retained conventional family morality and usually confused mere Western utilitarianism with Christianity and intellectual loyalty to individualism. Missionary policy in the middle of the Meiji era, with its emphasis on the expansion of mission schools rather than on preaching, aggravated this separation from the masses.†

### Expansion of Government Schools

In the 1870's the government inaugurated a universal educational system in order to create a stronger ideological unity, introduce Western scientific knowledge, and develop higher educational institutions to train national leaders. A large number

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\* Kozaki, Hiromichi 小崎弘道, *Kozaki Hiromichi Zenshū* 小崎弘道全集 (*The Collected Works*). 6 vols, (Tokyo: Keisei Sha 警醒社 1939), pp. 334—35.

† Perry, R. B. *The Gist of Japan*. New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1897, p. 250

of trained personnel was needed for education, for the expanding bureaucracy, for industrial programs, and for the modern army. Therefore, a Department of Education was set up in 1871, and the next year the Code of Education was promulgated and a normal school was established. Later Tokyo University and the normal school system were enlarged and the government sent instructions to local officials to encourage capable students to go to the big cities to study. In the 1880s the government's effort to develop an educational system along Western lines reached a peak.\* When a progressive Minister of Education even went so far as to propose that English might be substituted for Japanese, which at the time seemed unsuitable for the expression of modern scientific concepts, leading members of the cabinet generally accepted his proposal as sound.†

### Interest in Foreign Language Aids Mission Schools

As the government elementary and middle school education system became more popular, the number of students who wanted to enter higher institutions increased.‡ However, although a knowledge of a foreign language, particularly English, was required in order to enter a higher school, such as Tokyo

\* Brown, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

† Kishimoto, *op. cit.*, pp. 241—42

Wach, Joachim, *Sociology of Religion*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1954).

‡ Stafford Ransome. *Japan of Transition*. . . . . a comparative study of the progress, policy, and methods of the Japanese since their war with China. New York: Harper & Bros., 1899. p. 65—66.

The rate of increase of students (1873—1895):

1873 . . . . .	1,180,000	1879 . . . . .	2,210,000	1885 . . . . .	3,180,000
1891 . . . . .	3,630,000	1892 . . . . .	3,698,536	1893 . . . . .	3,897,491
1894 . . . . .	4,091,110	1895 . . . . .	4,290,487		



## SOCIAL STATUS OF PROTESTANT CHRISTIANITY

University where the majority of prominent professors were still foreigners, because the preparatory school system was incomplete and there were few qualified language government school teachers, it was difficult for government school students to learn enough English before entering a higher school. In fact, except for mission schools, there were very few institutions where a student might devote himself to learning a foreign language under the direction of distinguished teachers. Thus, many students "were concentrating in mission schools which were flourishing because of the incomplete preparatory school system."\*

However, these flourishing mission schools had a fatal weakness: they were mere "stepping stones" to government institutions.† The encouragement of Western learning could aid the government in creating ideological unity and in promoting modernization only under a plan strictly designed and controlled by the government. Naturally, missionaries were pleased by and emphasized "the fact that the Japanese through all grades of society [were] pursuing the study of English with the passionate enthusiasm‡," but they gradually became disillusioned as they understood that the government was merely using the mission schools as a temporary substitute for government preparatory schools, and that this would soon change.

### Missionaries Challenge Japanese Society

At the time, however, the position of the mission schools was powerful enough for the missionaries to challenge Japanese

\* Aizawa *op. cit.*, p. 108

† *Ibid.* p. 108

‡ The Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. *Annual Report*. 1887, pp. 53—54.

## SOCIAL STATUS OF PROTESTANT CHRISTIANITY

society. Therefore, they often criticized the opportunism shown both by the government and the students desperately seeking careers by the English language route.\* Young Christian leaders, mostly former samurai, took the initiative in forming public opinion, and their only competitor was a group of professors of Tokyo University who incidentally rather favored Christianity.

Generally speaking the situation seemed very favorable. The number of Christians in 1890 was more than twenty times that of 1878. Whenever Christian leaders held public debates and preaching, "all meetings were full of students, including Tokyo University students or those who looked liked they had just graduated."† In the period of Westernization (1873—1887), when the government fostered a pro-West attitude as a political gesture which had as its purpose treaty reform, mission schools reached the first high peak in their history. According to one report,

.....never in the history of this school has there been a more successful year than the one drawing to a close. Ferris Seminary, together with almost every other mission girls' school in Japan, is full to overflowing....Scarcely has a week passed since September that we have not had to refuse applications for admission into the school for want of accommodations. Even now I fear we are trespassing upon the laws of hygiene by crowding too much.‡

### Samurai Unemployment Solved

As a result of industrialization and the development of educa-

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\* *Ibid.*, 1886, p. 147

† Kishimoto, op. cit., p. 237; Increase in church membership:  
1878·1,617 members, 1882·4,367 members, 1885·11,000 members, 1890  
·34,000 members.

‡ The Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. *Annual Report*. 1887, p. 74.

tion, the unemployment problem of the two hundred thousand samurai was about to be solved.\* The government was doing its best to build high schools in local districts, which meant that soon the samurai and the intellectuals would no longer have to go to the big cities and cultural centers in order to enroll in schools and to get positions. Yet, for some time a majority of the schools and industries continued to be concentrated in big cities such as Tokyo and Osaka.

### Characteristics of the Period from 1872—1890

Let us now consider briefly some characteristics of the early period from 1872 to 1890 and at the same time summarize some points that have been mentioned.

1. In the period from 1872—1890 the emphasis of Protestant missions was mainly on mission schools. It was only later that the emphasis shifted to the students of the increasing government schools.

2. In the very early period almost all the students of both mission and government schools were boarding students who gathered in the big cities away from their homes. In a later period a majority of the students were day scholars.† It was at about the time of the Russo-Japanese War that day scholars constituted a majority in mission schools and, as the government school system continued to develop, mission schools rapidly lost their unique position as boarding schools.‡ Thus, it became

\* Agatsuma, *op. cit.*, Chaps. IV and V .

† Washiyama *op. cit.*, pp. 144—47, 235—71

‡ Yamamoto, Hideki 山本秀煌, *Fuerisu Waei Jogakkō Rokujū-nen Shi* フェリス和英女学校六十年史, (*Sixty Years of Ferris Seminary.*) (Yokohama: Ferris Seminary, 1931), p. 143.

## SOCIAL STATUS OF PROTESTANT CHRISTIANITY

almost impossible for missionaries to maintain the intensive religious training which they had planned for the boarding schools, and from which they had expected to produce many men of faith.

3. The age for receiving baptism gradually became lower and lower. Whereas before 1888 the average age of baptism was relatively high (33.1), and there were very few cases of infant baptism, in the 1890s the average age became slightly lower (30—31), and the number of infant baptisms rapidly increased.\*

Therefore, in spite of their weak points, samurai Christians were generally men of somewhat mature faith. They were men of independent personality and, once they accepted the faith, they stood firmly in its defence. Moreover, they were generally very active in evangelistic work, and recognized their responsibility to spread the Gospel among their brethern.

4. In the beginning men were more numerous among the converts. This resulted from the fact that "in almost all Christian public meetings around this period the majority of the audience was composed of male students, including Tokyo University students and young men coming up to Tokyo looking for jobs who admired Western learning;" but it was also due to the fact that, in spite of the development of girls education, women were still bound by conventional family ethics. In the formative years, in spite of the fact that Christianity then had

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\* The average age at the present time (1952) is much lower (24.2). Even before 1888 almost all of the ministers and leaders were baptized while they were in schools, the average age at baptism being relatively young (22.9). Since the end of the Meiji period (1912), the average has become still lower (19.9).

## SOCIAL STATUS OF PROTESTANT CHRISTIANITY

more educational institutions for women than for men, the ratio of women to men in Protestant churches was three to four.\*

5. The samurai who became the backbone of the Christian movement sought an opportunity to revive their status as intellectuals. Christians, the samurai Christians, were people from the old intellectual class disrupted by the Meiji government's policies, while, as we shall see later, the Christians in the later Meiji period were mainly from the middle class newly created by the "Rich Country, Strong Army" policy.

— to be continued —

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\* Kozaki, Hiromichi 小崎弘道, *Kozaki Hiromichi Zenshū*. 小崎弘道全集 (*The Collected Works*). VI vols. (Tokyo: Keisei Sha 警醒社, 1939), pp. 332—33.