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# Uemura Masahisa (1857-1925) First Generation Pastor, Christian Leader and Instinctive Proponent of Indigenized Christianity in Japan

Addison Soltau

*Concordia Seminary, St. Louis*, [ir\\_soltaua@csl.edu](mailto:ir_soltaua@csl.edu)

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UEMURA MASAHISA (1857-1925)  
FIRST GENERATION PASTOR, CHRISTIAN LEADER AND INSTINCTIVE  
PROPONENT OF INDIGENIZED CHRISTIANITY IN JAPAN

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A Thesis Presented to the Faculty  
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,  
Department of Historical Theology  
in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirement for the Degree of  
Doctor of Theology

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by

Addison P. Soltau

May 1982

Won Yong Ji  
Advisor

Arthur Suelflow  
Reader

Erich Kiehl  
Reader

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## PREFACE

The motivation for this study comes out of a life-long interest in the subject of the transmission of Biblical Christianity from one culture to another. A second-generation Christian, born in Asia, and later a career missionary to Japan, I became aware of the differences of response among people, and more importantly, the complex process of the indigenizing of the Christian faith as it traveled from one country to another.

As a minister of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod, I am committed to the Bible as God's inspired and infallible word. I am also committed to the system of doctrine formulated in the Westminster Standards made up of the Westminster Confession and Larger and Shorter Catechisms.

In my seventeen years in Japan as a missionary engaged primarily in theological education and church extension, I became aware of the Japanese enthusiastic welcome and use of ideas originating outside their own country, while at the same time managing to retain their inner core of Japanese identity.

The same has held true in the church. To any visitor to a Protestant worship service, the order of service, hymns, and so forth is quite familiar. Other than language difference the similarities to a Western church service are many. To the knowledgeable, however, there are notable contrasts, not in outward form but on a deeper level.

Doctrinal differences between churches of differing tradition are minimal. Few of the believers understood the reason for so many so-called evangelical denominations in the country (over one hundred at one counting). Be that as it may, cultural patterns dictate the continuing patterns of denominations, not so much on the basis of doctrinal differences, but because of certain traditions begun by leaders. The vertical pattern of society, documented in Nakane Chie's book Japan Society, in effect since feudal days, has helped to perpetuate "schools" or groups which trace their origins to one man. It is the commitment to a person not to words which determines one's loyalties in Japan.

Seeing this in the church I worked with, and in attempting to acquaint myself more with that tradition, I discovered that Uemura Masahisa<sup>1</sup> had much to do with a major church tradition in Japan, believed by many to be Presbyterian and Reformed. As the conclusions of this paper show, this study led to the conviction that Uemura was neither very Presbyterian nor Reformed and that his basic world view, oriented to Confucian ethics, prevented him from reaching such a position.

Thus this study reflects in part the quest of many years, that is, the search for the essential components which make up Japanese Protestantism, particularly Presbyterianism. More recently this study has centered on the thought of Uemura who remains today one of the most important figures in Japanese church history, yet almost unknown outside his own country.

The painstaking task of researching the thinking of a man in pre-modern Japan reveals much of the Japanese mind, namely, the freedoms

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<sup>1</sup>In the East the surname precedes the given name. This practice will be followed throughout the paper.

the language provides for artistic and aesthetic expression which usually hampers precise translation. However lamentable and irritating to the Western mind, the Japanese much prefer this type of literary expression.

Uemura was an extremely able leader and organizer of men, sophisticated thinker, broad reader, and committed to the Christian faith as he understood it. Part of the fascination of the study lies in observing how the influence of this towering figure and others like him came so quickly to bear upon the church in Japan. Unlike other countries to which the faith has been taken by missionaries, Japan stands out as one in which missionary leadership and influence were replaced by Japanese within thirty years after its introduction. Uemura was one who helped to bring this about. The Christian church in Japan bypassed the usual gradual transfer from missionary initiative and authority to that of Japanese. It came about almost from the start with missionary acceptance and approval. The Japanese believed theirs was an exceptional and unique people. The missionaries concurred. Only Japanese church leadership could be adequate for this formidable task of transmitting and teaching the faith, they thought. Again the missionary body concurred.

Now, more than 120 years after its introduction into Japan, Japanese Christianity remains numerically weak (about) 1 percent of the population. The tantalizing question remains, is this because the Christian faith has not been indigenized thoroughly enough into the thought patterns of the Japanese, as some suggest, or too much, that is, so translated by early Christian teachers that its essential character has been changed?

That question will not be answered in this dissertation, and perhaps not for a long time. What this dissertation attempts to show is the thinking and theology of a man who wished to be both authentically Japanese and Christian.



## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Within the last five centuries Japan has been subjected to three periods of cultural contact and invasion from the West. The first began in 1543 when three Portuguese travelers visited an island off the southern coast of Japan. Christianity was introduced four years later by the Spanish Jesuit, St. Francis Xavier (1506-1552). Thus began the flow of western ideas into Japan, a flow which continued in an ever-widening stream until 1639. In that year, the rulers of Japan banned all foreign personnel and ideas from the country.

Until that time, however, Christianity had begun to make headway under the patronage of powerful leaders. The progress was not smooth but was checked time after time with persecutions which came with suddenness and for no apparent reason. But with equal suddenness, the persecutions stopped, new conversions to Christianity occurred and progress achieved in the spread of the faith.<sup>1</sup> The new religion was welcomed as long as it could serve as an instrument to enhance trade relations with foreign nations and check the power of Buddhist forces in Japan. However, the Spanish and Portuguese missionaries aroused suspicion in the minds of Japanese rulers who worried that they might be part of the imperialistic

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<sup>1</sup>C. R. Boxer, The Christian Century in Japan (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1951), p. 137.

designs of Spain and Portugal. This led to the final expulsion of all foreign personnel from Japan. This expulsion and forced apostasy of Christians went into effect on October 7, 1614, and between that year and 1639 when the Edict on Isolation was enacted, between five and six thousand were killed or martyred and the so-called Christian or Catholic Century brought to an end. One major reason for closing the country to foreign influence was to ban Christianity from the land. By the end of this first period of Christianity in Japan, Christians had come to be known as fanatical, dangerous to the empire, and condemned as evil-doers and rebels. Within that same time frame a pattern for the acceptance or rejection of Christianity was established. When the cultural situation was favorable the faith flourished. When repressive measures were initiated, the faith declined.

The policy of absolute isolation was rigidly enforced for more than two hundred years until July 1853, when a naval force under the command of Commodore Matthew C. Perry from the United States entered Tokyo Bay. After delivering a letter from the President of the United States demanding the inauguration of trade relations, Perry withdrew to the Ryukyu Islands for the winter, promising to return in six months. He returned in February of the following year and the Japanese government had little choice but to sign a treaty with the United States, opening two ports to American ships and more importantly to the encroachments of western civilization. Five years after Perry's historic entry, Protestant, Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox missionaries had begun their work in the country. This was the beginning of the second period.

The persecution of Christians in the Catholic Period (1549-1638) and the subsequent isolation of Japan from the rest of the world had far-reaching consequences. By restricting themselves to their own civilization the Japanese cut themselves off from the changes the industrial revolution was causing in the rest of the western world, and only the forced opening in 1854 compelled its leaders to discover the great disparity between Europe and themselves in important areas of culture, morality and religion. The entry from the West brought more than this, however. The Tokugawa government had reigned supreme for two and a half centuries, but now had been compelled by the Western powers to adopt the policy of opening the land to foreign intercourse. By bowing to the superior military force of Western nations, the rulers lost the confidence of the nation and became vulnerable to attack. The Tokugawa rule ended in 1868, and was replaced by so-called imperial rule.<sup>2</sup> This change in government became known as the Meiji Restoration.<sup>3</sup> The Meiji Era (1868-1912) was a period of great social and cultural turmoil as the Japanese faced the massive influx of things Western which to them represented a superior civilization.

The leaders of the new regime were aware of the military weakness of Japanese forces in the face of United States and European military power. One of their primary aims was to create a Japan capable of

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<sup>2</sup>The new imperial government centered around the person of the emperor. This did not mean the emperor was in control. The new government was in essence an oligarchy in the hands of fewer than one hundred men.

<sup>3</sup>Prior to the Meiji Restoration the emperors of Japan were rulers in name only. Real power was held by a feudal government (the Bakufu) led by a series of military strongmen (shogun).

holding its own in the modern world. To achieve military strength they also realized that Japan needed economic, social, and intellectual renovation. They set out to make Japan strong, and within their own lifetimes they saw their own ambitions realized. Within a few short decades they had made Japan a world military power and won recognition of equality from Western powers.

Christianity had played a major role in the cultural invasion from the West during the Catholic period. It had an even more important part in the transformation of Japan into a modern state during the Meiji era. In the latter period, however, it was Protestantism not Catholicism which was the great protagonist of Christianity. The Roman Catholic Church was too closely associated with France, then in decline, and the Greek Orthodox Church, with Russia in its policy of expansion in the West.

The second period of exposure to the West, began in 1854, included Christianity again as a part of the invading force. Its reputation as an evil, subversive religion first applied in the earlier period had not been forgotten even after two-hundred years. The legacy from the past joined the label of evilness to the idea that Christianity was a part of a planned Western takeover of Japan. Thus when Protestant missionaries arrived in Japan in 1859, public notices containing a warning against converting to Christianity were still standing. Furthermore, these signs were not withdrawn for several years.

Despite this history of repression and persecution, Protestant Christianity in the second period found a receptive audience, especially

among the members of the samurai class.<sup>4</sup> Many of the samurai had supported the Tokugawa regime but now were to suffer the loss of their prized status under the rulers of the new government. From their disadvantaged position they saw in Christianity not only a means of reclaiming their lost status, but a new dynamic for transforming Japanese society. The samurai were among the best educated people of Japan with the mental capacity to grasp the essentials of the Christian faith as it was presented to them by the newly arrived missionaries.

Three of the outstanding leaders in Christianity in this second period were drawn from the samurai class: Ebina Danjo (1856-1937), Uemura Masahisa (1857-1925), and Uchimura Kanzo (1863-1930). They became some of the chief spokesmen and interpreters of the Christian faith. They were aggressive in their evangelistic outreach, successful in making new converts, and more significantly, concerned that Christianity in Japan be fully identified with the Japanese and not remain an imported religion from the West. Each of these men became an influential leader among Japanese Christians and was associated with one of the three major theological traditions in Protestantism.

As leaders they were confronted with the formidable task of introducing and explaining the new religion from the West. While their backgrounds were similar their introduction to Christianity along with their formative years in the faith produced in them differing perceptions of Christianity. Uchimura was primarily concerned for the freedom of the Christian, and to him this meant spiritual independence of

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<sup>4</sup>The samurai class was the highest of four in Japanese society, followed by farmers, workmen, and businessmen in that order. This class was the most highly regarded and set the tone for Tokugawa society.

Japanese Christians against what he saw as overwhelming cultural forms of Christianity from the West. Ebina represented the position of a more radical liberalism which at times struck at the heart of the central doctrines of the Christian faith, that is, the person and work of Christ, the nature of salvation, and the doctrine of the Trinity.

Uemura also shared with them a fierce concern for a Christianity free from Western cultural forms, but the development of his faith took a different path. Uemura was introduced to the faith and received his early instruction from missionaries of the Presbyterian and Reformed Church missions. Out of this he developed a concern for the Church in its organized form and for an orthodox expression of the faith. He differed from Uchimura in his concern for an organized church and from Ebina in his stand on orthodoxy. The former concern led him to join the first church established in Japan and a life-long relationship as the leading pastor in the Nippon Kirisuto Kyokai (Church of Christ in Japan), the oldest and largest Protestant Church denomination in pre-World War I Japan, associated from the beginning with the Presbyterian and Reformed missionaries. Dr. William A. McIlwaine, long-time missionary to Japan and personal friend of Uemura, said of him,

Everyone who knows the Church of Christ in Japan will say at once that Dr. Uemura has left his mark on it as no one else had, that in many ways the Church is Dr. Uemura writ large. . . . His influence upon the whole Protestant Church in Japan was also enormous. It is not too much to say that the history of Protestant Christianity in Japan cannot be written without much space being given to Dr. Uemura and it is impossible to know the Church of Christ in Japan without knowing him.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Aoyoshi Katsuhisa, Dr. Masahisa Uemura, A Christian Leader (Tokyo: Kyobunkan, 1941), pp. 1, 2.

A similar opinion of Uemura is given by Charles W. Iglehart, who wrote a history of the first one-hundred years of Christianity in Japan. Of him, he said,

Almost without peer as pastor, preacher, theologian, author, editor and dominating personality, he was viewed by his generation and by later ones as God's particular gift to the church during its formative years of crisis. He was relentless in his own standard of high quality, and impatient with anything else in others.<sup>6</sup>

Uemura's primary role in the church was that of pastor. For most of his life he served a congregation in Tokyo, one of the largest in all Japan, and he was untiring in his efforts to found and strengthen other churches. Each summer he traveled to many parts of Japan and Asia on preaching and church-planting missions. He also helped to give a particular Japanese flavor to the pastor role in which he was seen not only as a shepherd of a local congregation but also as a spiritual teacher. For such a pastor, no local or personal problem was too insignificant, nor was any challenge from the outside too formidable to engage his concern. Under his guidance the local congregation met faithfully each week to hear a thorough exposition of the Scriptures during the hour for worship.

Another major contribution which Uemura gave to the understanding and spread of Christianity came in his writing ministry. He was chosen to be a member of the committee selected for the translation of the Old Testament but made one of his strongest impacts on the Christian community in the writing and editing of his weekly journal, the Fukuin

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<sup>6</sup>Charles W. Iglehart, A Century of Protestant Christianity in Japan (Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1959), p. 25.

Shimpo (Gospel News). Many considered this weekly Christian journal to be among the best in the field of Christian journalism in Japan.

Although not primarily an educator, Uemura sought to strengthen theological education and to develop it along lines suited to the particular needs of Japan. For this purpose he founded the Tokyo Theological Seminary, the first independent theological school in Japan which sent from its classrooms a steady supply of able, dedicated church pastors.

Uemura further brought attention to the Christian faith through the debates which he had with Ebina Danjo over the doctrine of the person of Christ. This debate, carried on in the pages of the journals of these two men, constituted the most vehement and important theological controversy in the early history of Christianity in Japan. It also established Uemura before the eyes of the Christian community as the foremost champion of orthodox Christianity.

Uemura's desire to promote orthodox Christianity in Japan did not diminish his equal conviction that Japanese Christianity must be independent of foreign influence, and spiritually and financially free to chart its own course. To establish this kind of independence he led his denomination through a series of steps in the church courts to remove the missionaries from places of influence. He was also the primary mover in the denomination's rejection of the historic Reformation creeds as the doctrinal standards of the Church. He objected to them on the grounds that as time and culture bound they would only introduce doctrinal issues into the church which were unsuited and irrelevant for that time. He also felt that to adopt such ready-made formulations into



the church could only inhibit the Japanese from writing their own creedal statements to speak to their time and the issues of that culture. Presbyterian missionary A. K. Reischauer recognized Uemura's orthodoxy and his concerns for an indigenized Christianity and said of him,

No other Christian leader did quite as much as Dr. Uemura did towards naturalizing Christianity in Japan and at the same time making and keeping it thoroughly Christian in character.<sup>7</sup>

It is the dual aspect of "naturalizing Christianity" and "making and keeping it thoroughly Christian in character" which this study sets out to analyze. Uemura was among some of the first to respond to the message of Christianity which the missionaries preached in Japan. After his conversion he determined to become a preacher of that message. His first formal theological preparation, under the guidance of American missionaries, was the first such attempt in Japan, and as such, rudimentary and fragmentary. Later on following his entering the ministry he began to write for the members of his congregation and then the wider Christian community. For the most part his writings consisted of his weekly sermons and brief articles in which he outlined his views on current issues facing the Christian Church.

Japanese historians point out that the period in which Uemura lived was largely non-theological in character.<sup>8</sup> Even after his death in 1925 there were few original works in the field of theology. What was written by Japanese was of a homiletical and devotional nature, touching on matters of the Christian life. The collected writings of

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<sup>7</sup> Aoyoshi Katsuhisa, Dr. Masahisa Uemura, A Christian Leader (Tokyo: Kyobunkan, 1941), p. 8.

<sup>8</sup> Sumiya Mikio, Kindai Nihon no Keisei to Kirisutokyo (The Formation of Modern Japan and Christianity) (Tokyo: Shinkyo Shuppansha, 1950), p. 14.

Uemura do not contain any systematic theological treatment on any subject. This can be understood partly on the basis of the brevity of the history of Christianity in Japan. Another part of the explanation lies in the Japanese attitude towards language. No less an authority than Edwin O. Reischauer, Harvard University professor, former United States Ambassador to Japan, and son of A. K. Resichauer quoted above, defines this attitude with these words.

Japanese have always seemed to lean more toward subtlety and sensitivity than to clarity of analysis, to intuition rather than reason, to pragmatism rather than theory, to organizational skills rather than great intellectual concepts. They never have set much store by clarity of verbal analysis and originality of thought. They put great trust in nonverbal understanding and look on oral or written skills in handling language and on sharp and clever reasoning as essentially shallow and possibly deceitful. Aside from the flat factual statements of newspaper reporting they value in their literature,<sup>9</sup> not clear analysis, but artistic suggestiveness and inference.

This same theme is repeated by other writers. "Latent in the Japanese mind is the conviction that the ultimate truth of life cannot be revealed or grasped by words,"<sup>10</sup> in fact the search for truth may actually be hampered by the use of words. Nakamura Hajime writes, "The Japanese language does not tend to express precisely and accurately the various modes of being, but is satisfied merely with vague, typological expression."<sup>11</sup>

These statements warn the reader that to expect a detailed, theological analysis or treatment from these earlier Japanese writers is not

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<sup>9</sup>Edwin O. Reischauer, The Japanese (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1977), pp. 226-27.

<sup>10</sup>Robert S. Ozaki, The Japanese: A Cultural Portrait (Tokyo: E. Tuttle Company, 1978), p. 231.

<sup>11</sup>Nakamura Hajime, Ways of Thinking of Eastern Peoples (Honolulu, Hawaii: East-West Center Press, 1964), p. 531.

fair or realistic. This was not the kind of writing pattern followed then, or now.

True to Reischauer's analysis, Uemura's sermons do reveal an artistic style rather than precise analysis. Inasmuch as much of his written material had first been preached to his congregation, there is also much of an emotional appeal in it. At a deeper level, his collected writings reveal Uemura's world view and the ways in which this view shaped his understanding of the Christian faith. It was this world view which helped him, to use Reischauer's term, to "naturalize" Christianity and provide him with the assurance that the Japanese were capable of doing this without undue danger of departing from the faith.

As a man born and raised in a samurai home during the Meiji Restoration years, Uemura's thinking typified the value system of that class which was in the process of change. His confidence in the innate abilities of the Japanese people and the place of the Japan nation within the communities of nations provided him with the drive to "naturalize" Christianity almost from the beginning. Just as importantly, Uemura was brought to faith and taught by Presbyterian and Reformed missionaries and this he reflected in his attempts to keep the theology of the church from the extremes of liberalism and individualism. Thus the study of Uemura provides a case history of a first-generation Japanese Christian who took his own culture and history seriously, while attempting at the same time to preserve a Biblical faith as he understood it.

In an effort to see how he did this, the next chapter of this study examines the major influences of his formative years, that is, his home and his mother, the missionaries whom he admired and the church

he joined upon his baptism. The third chapter focuses on Uemura's ministry which evolved through his lifetime out of the way he perceived himself, and the issues which were before his church and people.

A very busy man about the business of the extension of the church throughout Japan and Asia, Uemura gave himself selflessly to building the church in a variety of ways. Chapter III looks at these ways in detail in order to understand Uemura's motivation. The fourth chapter which is pivotal to the entire discussion, provides the key to his theology by examining four major motifs which appear throughout his writings. These motifs are the essential components in and comprise his world view. As such they formed the inner structure of his world view and had much to do with the process of "naturalizing" the faith. An understanding of these motifs prepares the way for a clearer analysis of the formation of Uemura's basic theology.

Chapter V contains an analysis of four selected Christian doctrines within his system. These doctrines are selected to show how his world view caused him to reject what he considered to be a foreign rendering of the Christian message, and the substitution of what he thought was more in keeping with the Japanese way of thinking.

Uemura's style of thinking and writing reflects the pattern suggested above in that it is artistically suggestive rather than analytical. He makes little attempt to write with theological precision. The topics he chose to preach and write about dealt, in general, with matters of Christian living and pastoral concerns. As a Christian pastor Uemura wanted to help his people to grasp the implications of

their faith within their own culture. His purpose was to provide practical advice, not to provide theological treatises.

Uemura was convinced that if the Christian faith was not grasped by the Japanese people within their own thought-forms, it could never survive in Japan. Thus he worked tirelessly to interpret the faith in ways Japanese could understand. At the same time he wanted to maintain a theological position which he believed to be truly orthodox. What he was engaging in therefore throughout his entire ministry was only that which has been tried by many others before him, namely, the accommodating of the Christian faith to what he believed to be the prevailing world view. While the subject has been treated under a variety of titles such as assimilation, adaption, indigenization and/or syncretism, the focus is on the changes which the Christian faith undergoes as it moves from one culture to another. Hendrik Kraemer, who has written on the subject of syncretism in some detail says,

The point just made is simply another way of stating the obvious fact that Christianity, penetrating and establishing itself in foreign, different worlds of spiritual reality and values, cannot act as if it fell into a vacuum, or as if the peculiar historical forms in which it has manifested itself are the only legitimate and possible type of genuine Christian expression. In fact, we are here simply facing the inescapable issue of adaptation, which leads as inevitably to the facing of the problem of syncretism.<sup>12</sup>

Further on in the same discussion Kraemer points out that what he terms adaption is not only unavoidable, but is necessary and imperative.

It means that the Church has to live, to witness, to grow there, in that specific world where God has placed it. Adaptation therefore does not signify compromise, or "interesting experiment,"

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<sup>12</sup>Hendrik Kraemer, Religion and the Christian Faith (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1956), p. 391

but . . . expression of the Christian faith in a style which is . . . not that of a potplant, but of a seed sown in a specific soil.<sup>13</sup>

Christianity necessarily adjusts to cultures. Such adjustment goes on ceaselessly in every age and at every level. In fact the living church, constantly meeting new conditions, lives in a constant tension between the biblical given and the changing culture.

The subject will be discussed in greater detail later on, but suffice it to say at this point the focus of this study is upon the man Uemura, who along with his peers concluded early in the history of Protestant Christianity in Japan, that adjustments or certain adaptations had to be made for the good and the spread of the Christian faith. Of the three named above, Uemura, while making significant adjustments to the culture, remained more closely identified with the orthodox Christian faith than the other two.

Examination of the churches of the nineteenth and twentieth century mission fields often reveals one of two situations. On the one hand the church may be thoroughly western in form, teaching and values and quite unrelated to the cultural ethos. On the other hand, the church may also just as clearly manifest a type of Christopagan form, combining features which are found in Christianity and others which come from native religions.

Uemura was free to criticize both Ebina Danjo and Uchimura Kanzo because he judged that they had travelled too far down the road toward indigenizing the faith, and had lost part of the "core" of the

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 410.

gospel in the process. Some may feel today that Uemura followed too closely behind them in making adjustments beyond appropriate limits. One's own theological perspective will determine in large part the answer to the question of whether or not Uemura was correct in making adjustments to the faith, or whether he overstepped the bounds and became guilty of syncretism.

#### Primary Sources

The major primary sources for a study of Uemura's thought are found in his writings collected and published on three different occasions by three different editors. Most of what Uemura wrote appeared in his private weekly journal which he titled Fukuin Shimpo (Weekly Gospel). It was not unusual then just as it is not unusual today for a leader who has a following of men and women to publish a journal primarily to provide his disciples with pastoral advice on a variety of topics. Uemura's journal contained sermons, speeches, short articles, and on occasion, longer treatises which appeared in the magazine over a period of several weeks. In the beginning years of his ministry before he began a regular publication of his own journal, he wrote for other papers, the lifetime of which was in several cases, extremely brief. Once he began publishing and distributing the Fukuin Shimpo in 1890 he maintained this project throughout the remainder of his lifetime until his death in 1925, a period of thirty five years. Because of the frequency of fires in the Tokyo area plus destructive earthquakes, there are probably only one or two complete sets of the Fukuin Shimpo in existence today, one of them housed in the library of the Tokyo Union Theological Seminary.

The first set of his collected writings appeared shortly after his death under the title, Zenshu (Complete Writings), in 1932, each volume containing more than six hundred pages. No editor is named; instead the word Kankokai (Publishing Committee) appears in the title page. Volumes 1-3 contain sermons; volume 4, doctrinal writings; volume 5, on the Church; volume 6, Uemura's apologetic writing titled Shinri Ippan (Common Truth); and the final two volumes, his articles dealing with literature and personalities plus his personal diary and correspondence. This first set of collected writings was quickly sold out. The discovery of other Uemura-authored articles in later years proved that in fact the collection was not fully complete.

A second and more ambitious project was undertaken by Saba Wataru, Uemura's son-in-law. Saba not only included Uemura's sermons and other articles but his correspondence along with many articles which had been written about him. From the memoirs of other Christian converts Saba selected descriptions of personal conversion experiences, Japanese attitudes regarding foreign missionaries, and some of the discussions which led to the translation of the Bible and Christian hymns into the Japanese language. This multi-volumed work has been updated and re-edited on several occasions with the discovery of new material and presently constitutes one of the most important sources for the study of early Christianity in Japan during the Meiji years. The title of this work is Uemura Masahisa to Sono Jidai (Uemura Masahisa and His Times) and is still in print. This set was first published in Japan in 1936.

The most recent collection of Uemura's writings was published in 1967 but without the design of amassing all his writings. Four editors,



Kumano Yoshitaka, Ishiwara Ken, Saito Isamu, and Ouchi Saburo worked together to bring into print what they considered to be the most significant expressions of Uemura's thought collected under topical headings. More than seven hundred articles and sermons are contained in this set, now also out of print. Chosakushu (Collected Writings) is its title.

Unfortunately for anyone who wishes to make a study of Uemura, there is no indexing of these articles to indicate where they might be located. Those fortunate to have access to all three sets of collected works might find certain articles appearing in all three, others in only two, and still other articles in only one of the collections. Each editor or set of editors has grouped the writings under different headings with no cross references to reply on. With the exception of only one or two brief articles, all of Uemura's writings are available only in the Japanese language and have not been translated into English.

#### Secondary Sources

Introductions and comments on Uemura's thought by other writers appear mostly in books which document the history of theological thought in Japan. Two of them are provided by men who studied under him during their seminary days and self-consciously consider themselves to be within the "Uemura tradition." The first is Kumano Yoshitaka, former professor of theology at the Tokyo Union Seminary and one of the main representatives of the mainstream of Protestant theology in the post World War II period. One of the first Japanese scholars to write a systematic theology Kumano is considered by most to be a follower of Karl

Barth. One of his valuable contributions in writing has been his Nihon Kirisutokyo Shingaku Shiso Shi (History of Japanese Christian Theological Thought) published in 1968 in which he introduces Japanese Christian Protestant leaders from a theological perspective. Among these leaders Kumano discusses Uemura and his contribution, and it is Kumano who applies the description, "fighting theology" to Uemura.

Ishiwara Ken is referred to as "the dean of Japanese church historians"<sup>14</sup> and is the second of Uemura's followers to have written about him. In his book Nihon Kirisutokyo Shi Ron (Essays on the History of Christianity in Japan) published in 1967 Ishiwara deals with the beginnings of Christianity in Japan. In one of the sections he lays great stress on the life of Uemura and his contribution to Christianity in Japan.

The longest single treatment of Uemura is written by Kyogoku Junichi in a book titled Uemura Masahisa, Sono Hito to Shiso (Uemura Masahisa, The Man and His Thought), published in 1966. Mr. Kyogoku is a political scientist and writes sympathetically of Uemura but more broadly than the other writers mentioned above. As a political scientist Kyogoku is interested in placing Uemura within the broader context of a nation and people who were going through a period of rapid adjustment to new social patterns, and he sees Uemura partly as an agent of that change.

Finally, one of several editors of the Collected Writings of Uemura, university professor and church historian Ouchi Saburo has also

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<sup>14</sup> James M. Phillips, From the Rising of the Sun, Christians and Society in Contemporary Japan (New York: Orbis Books, 1981), p. 230.

contributed articles detailing the life and thought of Uemura. Ouchi co-authored Nihon Kirisutokyo Shi (A History of Christianity in Japan) with Ebisawa Arimichi, Ebisawa responsible for the section on Catholicism and Ouchi on Protestantism. In the latter section Ouchi writes about Uemura and the early history of the Protestant church in Japan.

Thus far every author and work cited appears only in Japanese. The one exception to this and the only biography of Uemura is written by Aoyoshi Katsuhisa. Aoyoshi received his higher education in the United States and was sufficiently versed in the English language to write a brief biography for English readers under the title, Dr. Masahisa Uemura, A Christian Leader. Of further interest is the fact that he also wrote a more extended treatment of Uemura's life for Japanese readers in their language titled Uemura Masahisa Den (The Biography of Uemura Masahisa). Neither book is a translation of the other but each written with the widely differing background of the intended readers in mind. Dr. W. A. McIlwaine, friend of both Uemura and Aoyoshi writes in the Foreword,

This biography has a further value which no biography by a non-Japanese could possibly have, of giving the almost unconscious, and therefore authentic, Japanese point of view, which the reader who looks for it may find and thereby gain new insight into the Christian Japanese mind.<sup>15</sup>

Aoyoshi quotes extensively from the writings of Uemura in his English version, bracketing Uemura's words in quotation marks, but rarely pinpointing the source. Because of the many possibilities for

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<sup>15</sup>Aoyoshi Katsuhisa, Dr. Masahisa Uemura, A Christian Leader (Tokyo: Kyobunkan, 1941), p. 3.

rendering Japanese phrases in English, it is nearly impossible to trace Uemura's words quoted by Aoyoshi to their original source.

The only other treatment of Uemura's life in English appears in Richard Drummond's book, A History of Christianity in Japan. Uemura is one of four personalities Drummond writes about in his chapter on Protestantism in Japan and is contained in less than a dozen pages.

## CHAPTER II

### FORMATIVE INFLUENCES IN UEMURA'S EARLY LIFE

#### General Background to Christianity

Uemura's years coincided closely with the years of the Meiji period (1868-1912) and Taisho period (1912-1926). The Tokugawa rule began to disintegrate at the time of Uemura's birth, its complete demise marked by the announcement of direct imperial rule on January 3, 1868. Uemura's death came just one year before the end of the Taisho period in 1926. In the years between his birth and death the nation of Japan changed from a nation of feudal principalities, in virtual isolation from the world, to a modern nation within the world community. The latter half of the 19th century was a period of great turbulence in which the country struggled to lay the foundations for a modern state. It was a period of rapid modernization which amounted to a revolution in Japanese society and government. Unlike Europe, this revolution did not come up from the masses below, but was carefully planned at the top and forced upon the people by a relatively small but extremely vigorous group in control of the government.

The achievements of those years were truly remarkable. The government was reorganized along the pattern of the Nineteenth century West. A modern court and legal system was introduced; monetary reforms and the centralization of the tax structure; the establishment of new schools;

the introduction of a conscription plan for a modern army; and the beginnings of a railroad system and telegraph. A comparison of these accomplishments with those of other countries in the same period of history highlights the magnitude of the changes which were brought about. The speed with which these reforms were effected meant that almost of necessity many of the changes could not be socially and culturally assimilated. This lack of assimilation produced much of the confusion of those years.

In January of 1868, the new government directed the young emperor to officially assume direct rule over the nation. The Emperor's Charter Oath was issued in that year.<sup>1</sup> In this statement, he promised to grant a national constitution with a parliament, govern through ministries, organize provinces under governors, and form a new national army and navy. In the very wording of the oath, "absurd usages of former times" were to be discarded, and "wisdom and ability should be sought after in all quarters of the world for the purpose of firmly establishing the foundation of the Empire." This wording seemed to point to a new style of rule, one which was in accordance with public opinion. The new rulers had the foresight to realize that rapid reforms were certain to bring about social disorganization, and social disorganization would produce resistance. Resistance could be overcome, they thought, by granting the appearance of democratic reforms. At the same time the Charter Oath

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<sup>1</sup>E. W. Clement, A Short History of Japan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1915), p. 112.

called for a new allegiance to the emperor and this they accomplished by re-emphasizing the ethics of family unity, that is, the Japan-as-a-family ideology.<sup>2</sup>

The first Protestant missionaries arrived in Japan in 1859, almost as soon as the treaty which permitted foreigners to reside in five port cities was signed. For the next nine years, the events which led to the end of the Tokugawa rule were unfolding. The Tokugawa policies against foreigners and their religion were still in effect. Public signs banning the Christian faith posted years before were still standing. Christianity was declared to be incompatible with the social structure of Japan and it had been denied the right to exist in Japan. Christianity fared only slightly better in these years than it had in the Catholic century.<sup>3</sup>

In 1870 over 3,000 Catholic Christians were arrested and exiled to clans other than their own. Each clan was ordered to force these exiles to abandon their faith, so much so, that the zeal of their persecutors was in many ways equal to those from the former period.

Thus despite the new government's promise to bring about new reforms it remained firm in its stand against Christianity. Not until 1873 were the public signboards withdrawn, the decision to do so based more on the desire to create good will with Western nations than on a new attitude of acceptance of Christianity. The announcement made to the

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<sup>2</sup>Ikado Fujio, "The Origins of the Social Status of Protestantism in Japan (1859-1918)," Contemporary Religions in Japan 2 (March 1961);16.

<sup>3</sup>On November 1, 1873, Roman Catholics in Japan claimed 15,000 believers, three churches, twenty-seven prayer chapels, two seminaries, seven schools, two orphanages, two bishops and twenty-nine missionaries. See Kenneth Scott Latourette, A History of the Expansion of Christianity, 7 vols. (New York: Harper & Row, 1937), 6:377.

public for the withdrawal of the notices was that the Japanese were familiar with their content and the signs no longer necessary.

The years from 1874 to 1890 produced a new era of openness which replaced much of the fear and suspicion directed against missionaries and new converts. The treaties which had been forced upon Japan by Western powers were being rewritten to include more equitable terms. This in turn produced an abrupt about-face in Japanese attitudes toward the West. Morality, philosophy and religion of the West were studied with great interest. One rather startling statement suggested that Japan adopt English as its official language and Christianity as its national faith.<sup>4</sup> If Japan welcomed Western culture many also reasoned that she must accept the Christian religion which constituted its primary base. The acceptance and adoption of the Christian faith was seen as facilitating the nation's quest for modernization.

The impact of this new open attitude on the general public was great. Mass meetings conducted by evangelists attracted great crowds; new churches were begun, and church membership grew from less than 2,000 in 1878 to more than 34,000 by 1890. Commenting on this phenomena, one author wrote that such success in the growth of the church led some Japanese to believe that Japan would be Christianized in less than a decade, and at least the majority of the government representatives to be returned to the Diet would be Christians.<sup>5</sup> Christianity appeared to be on its way to becoming the leading religion in Japan. Almost as

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<sup>4</sup>Yanagita Tomonobu, A Short History of Christianity in Japan (Sendai: Seisho Tosho Kankokai, 1957), p. 45.

<sup>5</sup>Kozaki Hiromichi, Reminiscences of Seventy Years (Tokyo: Christian Literature Society of Japan, 1933), p. 73.



quickly as the pro-Western period had begun, however, it was ended. Reaction to Western culture replaced the pro-Western sentiment of the previous fifteen years in a way similar to the Roman Catholic period 200 years previously.

The turn from pro-Western to anti-Western feeling appeared to be a sudden change to some, partly because they had not seen beyond popular sentiment. Throughout the 1880s the government had been promoting a series of nationalistic policies, and these policies culminated in two very significant documents, the Meiji Constitution issued in 1889 and the Imperial Rescript on Education brought out the following year. The former was promulgated in the form of a gracious gift to the people by the emperor. It stated clearly that the emperor was the fountain-head of all authority in the state, and carefully protected his right to rule. Some Christians interpreted the new Constitution as guaranteeing religious freedom, but soon discovered that the liberty granted in the document was granted with the proviso that "Japanese subjects do not hinder peace and order and do not violate their duties as imperial subjects."<sup>6</sup>

Though the new Constitution had its part in turning the minds of the people away from consideration of the Christian message, a document which was to have even more serious effect was the Imperial Rescript on Education issued in 1890, "all things considered, the most famous and influential document yet produced in the history of modern Japan."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>D. C. Holtom, Modern Japan and Shinto Nationalism: A Study of Present-Day Trends in Japanese Religions (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1943), p. 39.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 77.

The obvious intent of the Rescript was to bind the whole educational system of Japan to religious loyalty to the emperor and unquestioning obedience to the state. The Imperial Rescript soon became the backbone of Japanese education, and thereby the moral standard of the nation. Copies of the Rescript were sent to all schools and it became mandatory for teachers and pupils to gather on certain days to listen to its reading.

These two documents helped to usher in a new period of intense nationalistic feeling in which Christians were again accused of disloyalty and lacking in proper national spirit. The Christian faith was seen as being incompatible with the religious feeling of the country and again church membership declined sharply and missionary work became more difficult. Christianity was in retreat.

Uemura's conversation and baptism, and his early theological training and ministry took place within these latter two periods.

Uemura Masahisa was born December 1, 1857, the first of three sons born to Tojuro and Tei Uemura, holding the title of Lord and Lady Uemura by samurai ranking. Tojuro, his father, was a member of the hatamoto, the honor guard of the Tokugawa shogun, said to be comparable to Julius Ceasar's Tenth Legion in prestige and honor.<sup>8</sup> The earlier members of this special guard were known as the bravest soldiers under Tokugawa Ieyasu, the first shogun or feudal Lord of the Tokugawa line. The special honor of the hatamoto which was passed from generation to generation belonged to the Uemura family, which stood in that tradition. This was a special

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<sup>8</sup>Hatamoto is defined as a feudatory vassal of the shogun or general.

honor in a class considered to be the highest of the four classes of people in Japanese society.<sup>9</sup>

The professional class of warriors, known as samurai, came into being with the ascendancy of feudalism, sometime during the Middle Ages in Japan. By reason of conflict between Buddhism and indigenous religious ideas the struggle between the imperial household and the warrior chiefs and the rivalries within the warrior class itself, easily resulted in general turmoil. In the twelfth century two groups of such warriors strove for control of the central government. The leader of the triumphant warrior clan decided to permit the imperial court to continue its nominal government at Kyoto unmolested and meanwhile to establish military headquarters in the little town of Kamakura. He took for himself the title shogun and held the actual power of the national government in his own hands. This shogunate system was to continue almost without interruption for the next six and half centuries.

The new warrior class developed Japanese life along practical lines. They encouraged the growth of common-sense ethics. It is within this period that so-called Bushido ("the way of men-at-arms") developed. This ethical code of the military class in Japan was suggestive of the chivalry of feudal Europe. Loyalty was the cardinal virtue. The principles of filial piety, family unity, frugality and simplicity of living, perfect self-control in the face of pain and agony, honor dearer than life, magnanimity to a defeated enemy--these were among the

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<sup>9</sup>These four were the warrior or aristocratic, the peasant class, the artisan class and merchant class, the latter two looked down upon by Samurai as the lowest of human beings who knew neither uprightness nor morality.

outstanding ideals of Bushido. This ethical code profoundly influenced not only the upper classes, for whom it was primarily intended, but the civil population as well. While it was not lived up to by all those who professed to be guided by it, Bushido remained an active force long after the social order that produced it had disappeared.

Though the religion of the Chinese sage Confucius never existed as a separate organized religion in Japan, the influence of its teachings upon the life of the Japanese has been most significant, for it is Confucianism which has contributed most to the content of Japanese ethics. When the Tokugawa Shogunate brought about the cessation of internal strife, the samurai, whose only function was the performance of military service, were left in the position of the leisure class. Many of them turned their attention to the study of the Chinese classics. The result was that the influence of Confucian ethics was brought to bear upon Japanese life much more widely and effectively than ever before.

It was the Confucian emphasis upon the supreme loyalty of subject to ruler which received an especially warm welcome in Japan, for it fitted well into the Shinto belief in the divine descent of the emperor. It also afforded a ready-made scheme for Bushido the ethical code of the samurai, in their relationship to their immediate superiors.

The ideals of Bushido were mediated through the samurai to the Japanese people generally, and became the highest ethics of Japanese life. They were to become both a stepping-stone and a stumbling-block to the entrance of the Christian Gospel into Japan--a stepping-stone because of their appeal to complete self-sacrificing loyalty; a stumbling-block because they did not take into account a loyalty higher than any

within the Confucian scheme, that is, man's relationship to God. It is not surprising therefore, that, as the door opened for the entrance of Protestant Christianity into Japan, it was the samurai from whose ranks came both the warmest friends and the bitterest foes of the Gospel.

#### Uemura's Home and School

Young Uemura was born just at the time when the elite samurai class, as a class, was passing out of existence. In the opening years of the Restoration the samurai class was done away with and the system of status by herédity was replaced by a system based on education and skills.<sup>10</sup> The stipends of the samurai were withdrawn, the immediate effect of which was to throw a great number of them into financial crisis.

The Uemura family, which had been loyal to the Tokugawa shogun, was among those who lost this status and with it its financial income. Uemura remembered the hardships experienced by his family as a result of this upheaval. He wrote,

When the political change of Keio and Meiji took place, many people lost their homes. They were like little boats without rudders, tossed on the wide sea, drifting out upon the world. . . . The worry that my parents had at that time comes back to my mind as vividly as if it were today. It almost rends my heart to pieces, life in Yedo, at last unbearable.<sup>11</sup>

The family was forced to move from place to place and to live in cramped quarters under spartan conditions.

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<sup>10</sup>Edwin O. Reischauer, The Japanese (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1977), pp. 82-83

<sup>11</sup>Saba Wataru, ed., Uemura Masahisa to Sono Jidai, 7 vols. (Tokyo: Kyobunkau, 1966), 1:646. Hereafter this work will be cited as UMTSJ.

During the period we lived in Yokohama . . . we had only one bucket. This bucket had to serve us for washing ourselves and preparing our rice.<sup>12</sup>

The only work which young Uemura could find was selling firewood and raising pigs. He remarked in later years that he knew all about pigs. They needed feeding only twice a day and everything they ate turned into gold.<sup>13</sup>

Uemura's mother was a model of self-sacrifice, and thus fit the pattern of the samurai. She sold personal jewelry to pay school tuition for her sons. She also taught courses in English in her son's small school, even though her knowledge of English was rudimentary. She fought against poverty and maintained her strong ambition against all odds in order to restore the family honor to its former glory. With her samurai husband, Mrs. Uemura was inspired by the prospect of serving one's country with unselfish devotion. She married not for herself but for the consolidation of her home. She also tried to inspire within her sons those same values which were a part of the family heritage. She reminded young Uemura of his background and encouraged him to grow up a man of noble character to raise the family honor.

She also used the figure of Kato Kiyomasa, a general of one of Toyotomi Hideyoshi's (1536-1598) armies, as a model for her son to follow. The general was to become Uemura's boyhood hero. Uemura described the effect this man had on his life.

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<sup>12</sup>Quoted in Kosaka Masaaki, ed., Japanese Culture in the Meiji Era (Tokyo: Pan Pacific Press, 1958), p. 169.

<sup>13</sup>Aoyoshi Katsuhisa, Uemura Masahisa Den (Biography of Uemura Masahisa) (Tokyo: Kyobunkan, 1935), p. 507.

I took Kiyomasa as my ideal hero. Every morning as I woke up, every evening as I finished supper, twice a day, I visited the Kiyomasa shrine without fail. Kneeling before the edifice and praying to him that my fortune might be favoured and my ambition be fulfilled. I often burst into tears from deep emotion. The passersby wondered why I wept. Sometimes, looking at Kiyomasa's imposing picture in full armour, I felt almost in awe--inspired and full of high spirit with myself. And then I returned home with the firm conviction that, where there is a will, there is a way.<sup>14</sup>

In his adult years Uemura remembered these experiences and gave credit to both his mother and Kiyomasa.

Lessons from mother, inspiration from Kiyomasa, those influences did great things for my education and I feel their traces remaining in my mind still.<sup>15</sup>

Both Uemura's mother and his warrior hero exhibited the traits of loyalty, suffering forgetfulness of self and ambition, all of which were a part of the Bushido code of behavior. Commenting on the type of hero worship bestowed by Uemura on Kiyomasa, Aoyoshi, friend of Uemura, and author of two biographical works about Uemura, wrote,

One may consider him an idolater. However, the boy knew nothing about Christianity as yet. The only thing he knew was that nobleness of life lies in sacrifice for the high cause--to sacrifice one's life for his own family, for his feudal master, for something higher than both of them. In life or in death, a true samurai counted himself for nothing and his ideal for everything. Give him a higher ideal, and he would live for it faithfully even unto death.<sup>16</sup>

Next to his mother and Kiyomasa, the greatest source of ideas and values to affect Uemura was to come from an entirely different direction. When Uemura was thirteen years of age, the family reached the

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<sup>14</sup> UMTSJ, Vol. 1, p. 687.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Aoyoshi Katsuhisa, Dr. Masahisa Uemura: A Christian Leader (Tokyo: Kyobunkan, 1941), p. 18.

decision that young Masahisa could best prepare for the future by learning English. This decision was to lead him to his first contact with Western missionaries.

In the early years of the Meiji period, Western learning was judged to be the primary means for the sons of disinherited samurai to climb the social ladder. Students of English and Western learning came from this class. The records of the Keio Gijuku, one of the largest schools for Western learning, established near the close of the Tokugawa era, show that from 1863 to 1871, out of the entering class of 1,329 students, 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.<sup>17</sup>

These young men from samurai homes, gathered in the larger cities to seek an education. They comprised the student bodies of the private language schools, some of which were government sponsored, and others established by missionaries for evangelistic outreach. The majority of the students entered these schools primarily for instruction in English and Western ways, not in Christianity. One such student who later converted to Christianity wrote,

We were 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.<sup>18</sup>

In spite of attitudes like this, the schools in which missionaries were active provided one of the best means for contacting the Japanese. Converts to Christianity in the period 1871-1881 were for the most

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<sup>17</sup>Watanabe Ikujiro, Meiji Shi Kenkyu (A Study of Meiji History) (Tokyo: n.p. 1938), pp. 323-24.

<sup>18</sup>Washiyama Teisaburo, Meiji Goju-nen Shi (Fifty Year History of Meiji) (Tokyo: Meiji Gakuin, 1927), pp. 104-105.



part students or graduates of the missionary-led schools. In many cases the students were young men who had reached one of the most impressionable periods in their lives. They were away from home for the first time and under new influences. As such, they were open to the personal care and concern which the foreign missionaries paid them. The primary influence, however, was to come from the missionaries themselves and fellow students, and it is to these that the focus is now directed.

During the Catholic Century Christianity was introduced to the Japanese by priests of the Roman Catholic Church who came from Portugal and Spain. Over two hundred years later when Christianity came to Japan again the Roman Catholic Church, the Greek Orthodox Church and the Protestant Church were all represented in their missionaries. But it was those from the latter group which made the greatest impact. The great number of Protestant missionaries came from North America and their faith reflected the type of Christianity which prevailed in America during the nineteenth century.<sup>19</sup>

#### Nineteenth-Century Protestant Evangelicalism in America

Nineteenth-century Protestant evangelicalism in America was a remarkable force. Quickened by pietism and the Great Awakening, American evangelicalism launched a great wave of foreign missions from American shores in the early nineteenth century. The message they took with them was one of individual repentance and salvation.

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<sup>19</sup> Winburn T. Thomas, Protestant Beginnings in Japan (Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1959), p. 174.

The main outlines of the American Protestant approach to Japanese culture have been discussed in some detail by other scholars.<sup>20</sup>

Stated simply, American Protestantism challenged the Japanese tradition. Most of the missionaries brought with them low notions of the state of man in the heathen world, regarding all non-Christians in spiritual darkness.<sup>21</sup> The American missionary looked for the conversion of Japan to Christianity and with this he hoped for the modernization of Japanese society. The missionaries were both conscious and unconscious carriers of the American cultural, political, and social traditions. Secular and religious aspects of the West were so indivisible to them that Christianization assumed the character of Westernization, and Westernization implied the necessity of conversion to Christianity.

As for their theology, Calvinism exercised the strongest influence. Up to and including the early part of the nineteenth century, Reformed theology had been a major influence in American life. This was to pass within that century, however. Nevertheless, the missionaries, sent by the main denominations to foreign lands, retained a measure of Calvinistic faith. The twin doctrines of vocation and worldly asceticism sharply differentiated the teachings of Calvinism from other Protestant traditions.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Sumiya Mikio, Kindai Nihon no Keisei to Kirisutokyo (Christianity and the Formation of Modern Japan) (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1954).

<sup>21</sup> See William Elliot Griffis, Verbeck of Japan (Chicago: Fleming H. Revell, 1902), pp. 85, 162.

<sup>22</sup> Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism (New York: Scribner's, 1958), pp. 89-92.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, two important influences had modified the Calvinism of American Protestantism. The first of these was pietism. Pietism had swept over Europe and America during the eighteenth century and had contributed to social reform at home and missionary outreach overseas. As a reaction to orthodoxy, however, pietism tended to downgrade theological precision and thus to allow for cooperation between differing traditions on the basis of common "evangelical" faith. Pietism also concentrated on personal conversion at the expense of concerns for culture, which at best, is regarded as worldly.

The second modification of Calvinism could be found in the concept of Manifest Destiny.<sup>23</sup> The roots of this idea lay in the political and economic drive of Americans to expand toward the western part of their own country. The idea was not confined to the United States but provided some with the concept of bringing democracy to less fortunate peoples.

In general terms, Calvinism, pietism, and the spirit of Manifest Destiny, played a large part in the thinking of the missionaries sent from America to bring Christianity to other people of the world.

The missionaries who left America for mission work in Japan were mature men and women of ability with a strong spiritual commitment. Their linguistic achievements in the face of great obstacles, their patience and endurance, especially in the earlier years, reflected their

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<sup>23</sup>Encyclopedia Britannica, 1965 ed., s.v. "Manifest Destiny" defined as "a persistent and cherished tradition of U. S. history." The phrase, first used by the journalist John J. Sullivan in July, 1845, referred primarily to the desire of American expansionists to extend the boundaries of the USA to the Pacific Ocean.

character. It was their commitment to their ideals and the moral rigor which characterized their lives which was of considerable interest to their young students who valued these same traits from their own Bushido background. Their description of the missionaries with whom they had close association appeared in their letters and memoirs and reveals the awe they held of the missionary spirit.<sup>24</sup> They perceived in these missionaries, attitudes of deep concern for their country as well as for them personally. Uemura said of one of the early missionaries, "His life was spent for the development of Japan and he emotionally enjoyed her development."<sup>25</sup>

The character of the missionaries, the quality of their education and the level of their dedication coupled with the particular stage then reached in political and cultural development in Japan, accounts, perhaps more than any other single human factor, for the influence they were able to exert upon large areas of Japanese life in one of the most formative periods in Japanese history.

Missionaries Samuel R. Brown and James H. Ballagh

The two missionaries who were most influential in Uemura's life were Samuel R. Brown (1810-1880) and James H. Ballagh (1832-1920), both missionaries of the Reformed Church of America. Brown first taught at the Shubunkan in Kanagawa and Ballagh in the Takashima school. In 1871 Ballagh withdrew from this school to open his own, using a borrowed public hall for classroom space. Uemura was among the twenty young men who

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UMTSJ, 1: 487-88.

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Ibid., p. 289.

enrolled in this school and in this way was introduced to the English language and Christianity.

Ballagh was still a young man when he arrived in Japan, but spent almost an entire lifetime in missionary work. Concerning him it was written,

Perhaps no more picturesque figure could be found among the early missionaries to Japan. A living faith, boundless energy and an intense personality made him a man of power in those early days.<sup>26</sup>

The Japanese language, for those not raised in that culture, is one which is difficult to master, and this was especially so for Ballagh. There were no grammars, dictionaries, or other helps at that time to assist the learners. Ballagh's brand of Japanese was described as a unique mixture of Chinese, coolie talk and English. Yet through his words he communicated a loving spirit and fervent evangelistic zeal. His Japanese students perceived him as a man of great piety and sympathetic love, though occasionally mixed with intolerance and emotional excess. Honda Yoichi (1848-1912), fellow student of Uemura and later to become the first bishop of the Methodist Church of Japan said about him, "Mr. Ballagh was full of passion for souls. More than his words I admired his spirit and sincerity. . . . I believed that we needed him and his spirit."<sup>27</sup>

Uemura made several efforts to introduce his teacher, Ballagh, to the public. He wrote articles entitled "On James Ballagh" and "Once Again Introducing Mr. Ballagh" for the Fukuin Shimpo in 1901. He

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<sup>26</sup> Quoted in James A. Cogswell, Until the Day Dawn, (Nashville Board of World Missions, Presbyterian Church U.S. 1957), p. 26

<sup>27</sup> UMTSJ, 1:579

referred to him as a man of great faith and virtue, and while he recognized that his ideas and logic were quite ordinary, he was a convincing speaker.<sup>28</sup>

Ballagh had an unusual gift for drawing people to Christ through personal evangelism. Of him it was said,

Dr. Ballagh's intense passion for souls caused him to range, on foot, far and wide all over Japan from Tokyo to Nagoya, on both coasts and down the central part of Japan. . . . He walked all the way from Yokohama to Nagoya on three different occasions for a double purpose. The first was to preach Christ to those he met who would stop and listen and to those going in his direction as they walked along. The second purpose was to donate the railfare thus saved to the purchase of a lot for a church which he had started.<sup>29</sup>

In contrast to Ballagh who arrived in Japan shortly after completing his theological studies, Brown was fifty years of age when he reached Japan. He had served a church in New York state before going to Hong Kong as a missionary for a period of eight years. His wife's poor health brought them back to America but later improvement in her health opened the way for them to return to Asia again, this time to Japan. That Brown even considered going to Japan at the age of fifty spoke to many of his great vision and strong spirit. The zeal he gave to the study of the Japanese language manifested the same spirit.

Ballagh was the intrepid evangelist; Brown the educator of the two. From his experience in the U.S. and China, Brown had developed a life-long commitment to a teaching ministry which he used as a tool to reach others for the Gospel, especially young people. His effectiveness

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<sup>28</sup>See Aoyoshi Katsuhisa, Dr. Masahisa Uemura, p. 25.

<sup>29</sup>James A. McAlpine, "They Went Before: James Hamilton Ballagh" Japan Christian Quarterly, (April 1955): 168-69.

as a teacher was noted in an article written after his death.

Dr. Brown's pupils are prominent as heads of colleges, professors, editors and pastors in the building of the Christian Japan that is coming and is now. The list of other pupils active in law, medicine, journalism, diplomacy and business is too large to transcribe here.<sup>30</sup>

Brown's passion and sense of mission, no less than Ballagh's drew the admiration of his students. He was quoted as having said, "If I had a hundred years to live, I should give them all to Japan."

These two missionaries had their first contact with Uemura in the English school which Ballagh started, and later he was included in the first theological classes which Brown conducted.

The importance of these small Christian schools cannot be underestimated. From the beginning, Christian schools in Japan had a special characteristic, setting them apart from similar schools in Europe and America. In Japan the schools played the role of churches in themselves. Churches often grew out of the schools and were actually supported by the schools. Almost none of the Protestant schools developed out of local churches.

#### Christian "Bands"

At this point, it is important to take note of the formation of the famous "Christian bands" which constituted important nuclei in the growth of the Protestant church. These bands were formed in the years between 1872 and 1882 and were forerunners of Christian traditions which were to develop out of them. As such they were a unique and important part of the early period.

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<sup>30</sup> Biographic Sketches (n.p., 1909).

The similarity of social and educational backgrounds, the closeness of the new spiritual tie of Christian faith binding these young men together, and their presence as a small minority in a still largely anti-Christian society, all worked together in the Yokohama and other bands to create an exceedingly strong cohesiveness. This went beyond the ordinary ties of students, who in Japanese history frequently formed close associations around the figure of a noted teacher.<sup>31</sup>

The first in point of time was the Yokohama Band constituted by the company of young Japanese Christian men who studied under Brown in Yokohama. Most of those who came to Yokohama and found their way to the homes and schools of missionaries belonged to the "hereditary," or pro-Tokugawa fiefs, which were now out of favor. All, alike, were seeking a great future for their nation, and were eager to find strength to take part in its realization. Those who went through the experience of conversion under Ballagh and Brown became the nucleus of the Yokohama Band. The group was tightly knit together in fellowship and common Christian experience.

The significance of this band and others becomes clearer in noting their similarities and differences, and how the differences were to contribute to the development of different Christian Protestant traditions. Each band reflected in part the personality of the missionary and/or teacher, the background and expectations of the students themselves, as well as the location of the school in which these students were enrolled. The Yokohama Band had for its members, those who had come from pro-Tokugawa fiefs, now dispossessed, but greatly interested in the future of their nation. Of importance is the fact that the significant

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<sup>31</sup>Richard H. Drummond, A History of Christianity in Japan (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1971), p. 167.



teachers in their lives were missionaries Brown and Ballagh, both from a Reformed theological tradition and concerned to plant and build the Church in Japan.

Two other major bands were the Kumamoto Band and the Sapporo Band, named after the respective areas of their origin. Students in these bands were members of schools unrelated to any foreign missionary society. They were attracted to the Christian faith through the influence of American educators, who had been invited to Japan by the schools but whose Christian faith and sense of mission differed only slightly from the official representatives of the Church sent to Japan as missionaries.

The students of the Kumamoto Band came from the School of Western Learning established by Lord Hosokawa in Kumamoto in 1871. At the time of the Restoration the division of liberal and conservatives political groups in the Kumamoto fief effectively blocked participation in the restoration. In the whole Meiji government, there was but one man from Kumamoto. In an effort to recover lost ground two schools were established for the training of the young men of Kumamoto. One was a medical school and the other was the Kumamoto Yogakko (School for Western Learning). The plans first called for a military academy, but these were later changed and the school became a boarding school (with compulsory dorm living) offering courses in mathematics, reading, geography, history, physics, chemistry, geology, and astronomy.<sup>32</sup> Of approximately four-hundred

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<sup>32</sup>A number of articles appear in the April, 1959 issue of the Japan Christian Quarterly, vol. 25, the entire issue featuring the Kumamoto "Gateway." The bands are treated in all the standard historical works of Christianity in Japan.

applicants only fifty were admitted and these only having passing difficult examinations. The people of Kumamoto believed that these students would someday fulfill their hopes by becoming leaders of the new Japan.

Captain L. L. Janes, an artillery captain during the Civil War, came to Kumamoto upon the invitation of Hosokawa. One of the first things he did as director was to set up a new educational system modelled after the strict discipline of West Point Academy. To this he added his own rules and discipline for student life. Janes concentrated on practical studies and ethics during his first three years and refrained from overt Christian witness. Later, with permission of school authorities, he started a Bible study class in his own home with a group of fifteen students. Without special or formal theological training, Janes simply read the Bible with his students and tried to answer their questions.

On January 30, 1876 thirty-five of his students climbed Mt. Hanaoka and made vows of dedication to the Christian faith. They signed their names to a Prospectus of Faith as a pledge of their own. The declaration began with these words, "In studying the faith of the West, we have been deeply enlightened and awakened." The signers of the covenant hoped to propagate this religion in Japan that the way from ignorance to truth might be opened for the people.<sup>33</sup>

This statement marked the start of the Kumamoto Band, characterized from the first by a strong nationalistic and independent spirit. Many of the students who made this public profession of faith were

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<sup>33</sup> Kishimoto Hideo, ed., Japanese Religion in the Meiji Era, trans. John Howes (Tokyo: Obunsha, 1956), pp. 207-208.

persecuted by their families and the school was forced to close that same year. At the urging of Janes, these Christian students transferred to the Doshisha Academy in Kyoto and brought with them the spirit of the band. The tradition started in this band thus found its way to another school and eventually into the Kumiai (Congregational) Church and denomination.

This band was formed by a group of young men from the same clan, selected for specialized education. These young men had a vision for the political and moral stability of their country and they considered the new teaching of Christianity best suited to help them reach that end. Among the best known of the band were Ebina Danjo, Kozaki Hiromichi, Yokoi Tokio, and Kanamori Tsurin.

At a later time several of the Kumamoto group left the church and in some cases forfeited their faith, a fact which suggests that their grasp of the truth was not sufficiently strong to sustain them. Others continued in the faith and in time became proponents of a liberal expression of Christianity, characterized by a nationalistic, moralistic, and Confucian outlook.

Another important band was formed in Sapporo, on the island of Hokkaido. This band was also made up of young intelligent male students, reared in good families. Similar to the others these men also made a commitment to Christ together and from their midst emerged a tradition which took yet another form different from that of Yokohama or Kumamoto.

Kurado Kiyotaka, Secretary for the Colonization of Hokkaido, established an agricultural school in Sapporo in 1876, and as the name indicates, this school was established by the national government for

students who wished to major in scientific agricultural studies.<sup>34</sup> In ways which closely paralleled the Kumamoto school, an American educator was invited to come as its director.

William S. Clark (1826-1886), President of Massachusetts State Agricultural College, who served as an army officer in the Civil War, accepted the invitation on the condition that he be allowed to teach the Bible. A period of two years was allotted for the work he was invited to do, but because he believed that he could better this time he left his wife and family in America and came alone. While in Japan he opened his classes with prayer and held Bible study classes in his home on Sunday afternoons. As a result of his teaching and personal example a total of sixteen members of the first class at school decided to convert to the Christian faith. From the next class of eighteen students, fifteen more made a similar commitment. Together they formed the Sapporo Band and the Sapporo Independent Church.

These first believers were brought together by Clark under "The Covenant of Believers in Jesus" in 1877. In the wording of the Covenant, there is a call for ethical living but no mention of any formal organization of believers. The nature of the Covenant was expressed in the following statements:

1. The Bible is the one direct revelation of God and inerrant perfect guide to the glorious life in the world to come.
2. One God is Father, the Righteous Governor and the Final Judge.
3. By faith in the Son of God we obtain the forgiveness of sins, are guided by the Holy Spirit, protected through the Providence of the Heavenly Fathers and enjoy the blessings of salvation; but those who reject the Son of God shall be lost.

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<sup>34</sup> Charles W. Iglehart, A Century of Protestant Christianity in Japan (Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Inc., 1959), p. 52.

4. The Covenant further states sundry commandments such as the command to love God, to reject idols, not to call the Holy Name of God in vain, respect for the Day of Rest, respect for parents and superiors, the command to refrain from adultery, murder, impurity, deceit, evil to neighbors, and the command to pray at all times.<sup>35</sup>

The group was bound together by a common faith with a common moral purpose but showed little sensitivity or understanding of the "Communion of Saints" or any external ecclesiastical organization. Like Captain Janes, Clark also lacked formal theological training which may have resulted in his seeming indifference to traditional concepts of the church.

Members of this group distinguished themselves in later years in a variety of ways. Two of its most famous members were Uchimura Kanzo and Nitobe Inazo. The Sapporo Band inclined toward extreme individualism, its members indifferent for the most part in uniting with the organized Christian Church. Out of this band evolved what later became known as the Mu-Kyokai (Non-church).

In summary, members of the Kumamoto Band were brought up in clan schools where the mainstay of education was Confucianism. They retained the effects of early Meiji nationalism for many years and produced leaders who wanted to Japanize the church, that is, to bring its institutions more into line with Japanese tradition, and to free it from foreign influence. By comparison, members of the Sapporo Band were graduates of a government school who showed the effects of study in frontier Hokkaido with its comparative freedom from feudal bonds. Many of these stood aloof

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<sup>35</sup> Murata Shiro, "The Character of the Protestant Church in Japan," The Japan Christian Quarterly, 25 (July 1959): 204.

from the organized church while some joined independent churches. Few among the graduates became ministers.

Members of the Yokohama Band were the only ones who came under the teaching of trained theologians. The influence of men like Ballagh and Brown produced in their students a special concern for the church. While the members of this band also possessed an interest in the future of their nation and people, the evangelistic and orthodox thrust of the missionaries seemed to bring a restraint in the lengths which they felt free to take in adapting the Christian faith which they had learned from the missionaries.

These three streams determined in broad outline the future of the Protestant Church. There certainly is great meaning in the fact that evangelism in Japan first succeeded not with members of merchant, craft, or farming families, but with the sons of samurai who had been taught by Shinto to revere the Gods of Japan, by Confucianism to follow the ethic of loyalty, and by interclan competition to strive for national independence. Whereas Jesus' first disciples in Judea were fishermen, farmers and tax collectors, in Japan it was the sons of military men who were first chosen.

#### Uemura's Church

The influence of Uemura's home and mother followed in importance by missionaries Brown and Ballagh takes initial precedence. The other major source of influence of Uemura's early life requiring attention is the church into which he was baptized.

Uemura provided little information about his conversion experience. "One day I learned from Mr. Ballagh that Westerners also worshipped God--only one God. This greatly impressed and astonished me. I immediately grasped and accepted the idea."<sup>36</sup> In contrast to this brief statement he spoke and wrote much about the formation of the first church in Japan. It was in this church and for this church that Uemura was to contribute much of his time and leadership. A description of the origin of this church has been documented but bears repeating.

In January 1872 missionaries and English-speaking residents of the Tokyo-Yokohama area gathered in Yokohama to observe an annual week of prayer. This was suggested and encouraged by the World Evangelical Alliance.<sup>37</sup> Many of the missionaries had been in Japan for at least ten years and in that time the government had shown little inclination towards changing its official position regarding Christianity. Missionary efforts in evangelism were severely limited due to government restrictions. Less than a dozen persons had received baptism during those years and in doing so were under the very real threat of government reprisal. As the missionaries gathered in prayer for the outreach of the Gospel in Japan several expressed the need to extend the time further into the month of February. A few of the Japanese students receiving

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<sup>36</sup>UMTSJ, 1:672-73.

<sup>37</sup>This was a movement begun in London in 1846, as one of the first organs created for interdenominational cooperation. It sought to provide a common basis of belief agreeable to all denominations, and various mission boards in America and England had welcomed the new organization and encouraged its spread in America and Europe and as far away as India and Japan. In 1846 this Alliance established as its doctrinal base a nine-point statement sufficiently broad enough to include most of the regular Protestant denominations in the West.

missionary instruction took this opportunity to attend and join in prayer in their own language. A short time later they began to meet for prayer separate from the missionaries. Uemura offered this description.

On the seventh of January (by the lunar calendar) at the afternoon prayer meeting, Mr. Ballagh had expounded the passages of Pentecost in the Acts. Speaking in Japanese, but far from fluent, he made such an inspiring speech that all those in attendance felt the Holy Spirit of Pentecost present among them. Just as an arrested flood breaks the bank, or as in the cold mountain district of northern Japan flowers of the plum, cherry, peach and apricot burst out simultaneously, his pent-up enthusiasm came out in volcanic eruption, breaking the ten years of suppression and pressure. His ideas and logic, though they were quite ordinary, convinced many people.<sup>38</sup>

The personal diary of Uemura reveals still more about the meetings:

Many samurai are studying language with the foreigners and many of the young men use the free time between lectures to listen to Ballagh speak of Christianity. Their young minds are deeply impressed by Ballagh's teaching and this has been the motivation in forming a prayer meeting such as the missionaries had at New Year. "A" prayed and then "B" prayed. Prayers came one after the other. . . . Some started to cry they were moved so deeply, and others began to shout although they had never prayed before. It seemed to me that there was a great revival right before my eyes.<sup>39</sup>

Nine of those present at these meetings made a decision to confess Christ and these were baptized by Brown and Ballagh on March 10, 1872. This became the occasion to organize the first church in Japan. Its charter members were these nine young men and two older men who had been baptized a short time before. The new church requested Ballagh to serve as kari bokushi (temporary pastor) of the congregation.

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<sup>38</sup>Quoted in Aoyoshi Katsuhisa, Dr. Uemura Masahisa: A Christian Leader (Tokyo: Kyobunkan, 1941), pp. 24-25.

<sup>39</sup>Quoted in Katakazawa Chiyomatsu, "The Beginning of the Yokohama 'Public Christian Meeting'" in The Japan Christian Quarterly, 25 (January 1959): 18.



One of the first decisions of the group was not to affiliate with any Western church denomination. The second article of the church regulations, used as the first constitution, stated that the church was to be a place

where we pray in the holy name of Christ. The Bible shall be our only standard. Anyone believing in it and studying it is the servant of Christ Jesus and our brother. We must love all men as a family. Therefore we name this church Christ's Public Meeting (Kirisuto Kokai).<sup>40</sup>

They purposed to begin the work of evangelism without what they felt were the complications of theology or church politics. Uemura explained why.

They aimed to found a nondenominational church in Japan because they found themselves a small army besieged by overwhelming hostile powers. Eventually they thought it wiser to unite in essential faith giving up trifles.<sup>41</sup>

To find themselves a small army confronted by overwhelming powers could conceivably have led them to ask for the help of others, but this is precisely what they did not do. The first church in Japan established precedent by determining to remain independent and thereby retain their self-respect by assuring themselves and others of a thoroughgoing Japanese church.

Six months later the first general conference of Protestant missionaries in Japan met with representatives of the three missions, Presbyterian, Reformed and Congregational present. Mr. Ogawa, the first elder of the Japanese church, was also present as a member of the convention. Their purpose was three-fold: to arrange for the production

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 19

<sup>41</sup> Quoted in Aoyoshi Katsuhisa, Dr. Uemura Masahisa: A Christian Leader (Tokyo: Kyobunkan, 1941), pp. 26-27.

of a common version of the Scriptures, to discuss methods of Christian work, and to consider the question of church organizations.<sup>42</sup> The latter topic had been discussed several times informally and many of the missionaries felt that the new situation in Japan offered a rare opportunity to avoid the reduplication of ecclesiastical divisions of the church in other countries. The awakenings and revivals in Europe and America had raised this same question, and the matter was fresh in the minds of those attending the conference.

With no clear consensus on how this might be done, a motion was made to refer the matter with the report of the committee to a new committee to report at a future convention. The motion failed and the convention adjourned for the day.

The following day a new motion was made, calling for the tabling of the report and resolution. Before this could be acted upon Samuel Brown offered this substitute motion:

Whereas the Church of Christ is one in Him and the diversities of denominations among Protestants are but accidents which, though not affecting the vital unity of believers, obscure the oneness of the Church of Christendom and much more in Pagan Lands, where the history of the divisions cannot be understood; and whereas we, as Protestant missionaries desire to secure uniformity in our modes and methods of evangelization so as to avoid as far as possible the evil arising from marked differences; we therefore take this earliest opportunity offered by this Convention to agree that we will use our influence to secure as far as possible identity of name and organization in the native churches in the formation of which we may be called to assist; that name being as Catholic as the Church of Christ and the organization being that wherein the government of each Church shall be by the ministry and eldership of the same, with the concurrence of the brethren.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>William Imbrie, Church Unity in Japan, reprinted with additions from the May and June issues of The Japan Evangelist (Tokyo: Kyobunkan, 1914), p. 2.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

This resolution passed.

Brown had persuaded the majority of the missionary community to follow the policy of the recently formed Yokohama Church, namely to work to establish one church in Japan unaffiliated with and outside the control of any Western church denomination. Thus Japanese Protestantism started with the concept of one church even though this was to change at a later date.

Protestant missionaries went on record at their second conference in 1883 that they would continue to encourage the establishment of native churches with a native clergy and native funds. Brown and Ballagh had been working for this principle, and other missionaries had been so instructed by their sending agencies.<sup>44</sup>

While the missionaries believed it good policy to encourage the Japanese to establish an independent, self-supporting church, the first group of Japanese believers saw the whole matter in a much stronger light. The church in Japan was to be independent of all churches outside of Japan, and was to support itself financially. Pastors and church workers were to refrain from receiving financial aid from missionaries.

The spirit of self-support makes Christians think that the church is their own and it cultivates an independent and diligent spirit toward our duties. Once we have received money from others we may feel that the church belongs to others and thus neglect our duties. Pastor and church members must endure together and from this mutual love is born.<sup>45</sup>

Hepburn, an outstanding Presbyterian missionary and among the first to arrive, wrote in his correspondence that the new church was

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<sup>44</sup> Winburn T. Thomas, Protestant Beginnings in Japan, p. 171.

<sup>45</sup> UMTSJ, 2:240-247 and 1:86-88.

determined not to be connected with any foreign sect or missionary society and had shown a great deal of spirit and unity, "no doubt on the advice of Ballagh and Thompson" (a Presbyterian missionary who replaced Ballagh as pastor of the Yokohama church).<sup>46</sup> He noted further that the church had drawn up an appeal asking that other missionaries help them in their determination to remain unaffiliated. This was in reference to a letter sent by the church in 1874 to all missionaries in the Tokyo-Yokohama area asking for cooperation in regard to the independency of the Kirisuto Kokai. The letter was occasioned in part by the changing situation in Japan following the removal of government restrictions against Christianity in 1873. Twenty-nine missionaries had arrived and started new denominational work in that year and among Presbyterian missionaries two distinct groups had formed, one upholding the policies of the Kokai, the other convinced that a Presbyterian Church independent of the Kokai was needed in Japan.

The desire to remain unaffiliated with other denominations convinced the church members that this also meant drawing up their own statement of belief. There is no record of the confession of faith Ogawa Yoshiki, the first ruling elder, made at his baptism. He and Nimura Morizo were the two older men who had been baptized prior to the formation of the Yokohama Church in March, 1872. Both men were led into Christian belief by Ballagh, himself theologically trained in America and a member of a church committed to confessional standards. The document drawn up and

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<sup>46</sup>Takaya Michio, The Letters of Dr. J. C. Hepburn (Tokyo: Toshin Shobo, 1955), p. 125.

agreed upon at the time of the church's establishment in 1872 reads as follows:

1. The Bible is the Revelation of a Divine Spirit and is the norm of faith and conduct.
2. We believe in One God and Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth and all things therein.
3. We believe in Jesus Christ, the Only-Begotten Son of God with two natures, deity and humanity, Who took flesh and became incarnate to be our Only Savior.
4. We believe in the Holy Spirit Who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, and Who cleanseth our hearts.
5. We believe that all those who sincerely believe in Jesus Christ constitute the One Church of Christ.
6. We believe that, through the sin of Adam, the original righteousness of the father of the race was lost.
7. We believe in the forgiveness of sins through the Atonement of Christ.
8. We believe in the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body.
9. We believe in the judgment by Christ, eternal bliss and everlasting punishment.
10. We forsake all the worship of idols and all carnal desires.
11. We shall not deny the Only Savior at the risk of our life.
12. We shall follow the guidance of ministers and elders, cultivate sincere fellowship with the brethren, spread the teaching of the Gospel, and shall reverently observe the Lord's Supper throughout life.
13. We shall teach others with quietness and diligence, respect rulers and superiors, be filial towards parents and observe public laws.
14. We shall in all things work industriously as in the sight of the true God, take care of the people in their suffering, and shall not bend ourselves to contrive at selfish gains.
15. We shall beseech the Lord Jesus to grant us His grace and mercy to protect and help our minds and hearts perfectly to carry out all these articles of our confession of faith.<sup>47</sup>

A study of the confession reveals some familiarity with and some dependence upon past church confessions especially articles 1-9. Articles 10-15 focused on practical injunctions which stressed the responsibilities of the believer in home and society. These practical exhortations show how quickly Japanese Protestants recognized their responsibility to

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<sup>47</sup> Murata, "The Character of the Protestant Church in Japan" pp 201-202.

witness to the surrounding unbelieving society through the observance of public laws, filial piety toward parents, and unselfishness toward others. Compared to the Prospectus of the Kumamoto Band and the Covenant of the Sapporo Band, the confession adopted by this first organized church displayed a quality and sensitivity to the importance of fellowship among the brethren, the church. The level of theological maturity in the document appears to reflect the work and advice of Brown and Ballagh. Finally, there is no evidence to show that either Brown or Ballagh insisted upon the adoption and use of any historic Reformed creeds in the church.

A second doctrinal statement was adopted in 1874 and replaced the first 15-point statement but with no accompanying explanation regarding the reasons for its adoption. The matter is left open for conjecture. The second document which appears below opened with the words, "The Church of Jesus Christ to be established in the Japanese nation shall believe the following articles" after which nine articles were listed.

1. The Bible teaches according to the Divine Spirit and has final authority, and contains what must be believed.
2. The teaching of the Bible is to be accepted and acted upon in accordance with individual judgment and decision.
3. God is One and Triune.
4. Through the original sin of the first parent the whole human race commits sin.
5. The Son of God took flesh and was born, made Atonement for the human race, becoming the Mediator, presenting believers before God and praying for them, and is united with the church as its head.
6. The sinner is saved and justified through faith alone.
7. The re-birth and sanctification of the sinner are accomplished by the power of the Holy Spirit.
8. The immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body are certain--together with the judgment of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, according eternal happiness to the just, and everlasting punishment to the wicked.

9. The ministers of Christ are appointed by God, and Baptism and the Lord's Supper are to be observed.<sup>48</sup>

This second confession dropped the articles on practical and ethical behavior. The later one was almost an exact translation of the statement of the World Evangelical Alliance, purposely drawn up so as not to exclude many differing viewpoints. As a confessional document it was very simple. It did not affirm the divine inspiration of Holy Scripture, and its reference to the church appeared only in an article in which the major emphasis fell upon the person and work of the Son of God.

Uemura had decided opinions on the subject of church confessions. This is examined in another section. Strongly convinced of the worth of simple confessions, these confessional statements which were adopted by the church in the years of 1872 and 1874 would have had his approval. He wrote several years later regarding the early years of the church and simplicity of the faith held by its members. He recalled the statement of their belief in Christ, in the Bible as their standard, and beyond that, only that they belonged to no denomination and took no denominational name. Repeatedly, Uemura recalls that their belief was simple as was their church polity, which made them "free and generous."

The changing attitudes of the Japanese towards Christianity and the character of Protestant Christianity as it developed in Japan formed the broader context in which Uemura lived and died. His home, his school and his church provided the narrower and more significant context, each

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<sup>48</sup>Ibid.

contributing to the shape of his personality, his value system, and his faith. The following chapter focuses beyond the context to a description of Uemura the man, and his ministry.



## CHAPTER III

### UEMURA, THE MAN AND HIS MINISTRY

The measure of the man can best be seen by examining his character traits, in knowing something of the environment in which he worked, and by seeing how he applied himself in this situation in the exercise of his ministry.

#### Uemura's Personal Character

Young Uemura's character traits were formed through influences issuing from his home, his upbringing and the value system embraced by his home and society. Each of these areas in turn were shaped by the Confucian-derived ethic of the samurai. Prior to the Meiji Restoration the samurai class held the highest position in Japanese society, and it was this class, more than any other, which came under Confucian influence during the feudal period. The type of Confucianism introduced in Japan during the feudal period was Neo-Confucianism which came in two successive forms. The first was the synthesis elaborated by Chu Hsi (1130-1200) of Sung China, followed by the school devoted to the teachings of Wang Yang-Ming (1472-1529) of Ming China.

The teachings of Chu Hsi constituted a comprehensive system of thought, the essence of which is found in the theses which he propounded for the guidance of the ideal sovereign in order to develop a well-ordered society. First, the ruler should by precept and example, lead

his people to conduct themselves in accordance with enlightening virtue conferred on them by heaven. Second, he should strive to preserve among his people freshness and purity of heart and mind. Third, he should hold fast to the ideal society thus brought to realization.<sup>1</sup>

It was this system of thought that was seized by many samurai of the early Tokugawa period, who, as government officials, were charged with the task of giving advice on matters of political administration to the shogun and feudal barons in order to bring peace and stability where military victory had already gained control. Thus the teachings of Chu Hsi Confucianism became the accepted moral orthodoxy of Japan due to the adoption of this code by samurai-officials who saw in it not only the means for the cultivation of the inner man, but also a means for the achievement of peace and social stability. Confucianism laid great stress on "rites," customs, institutions and prescribed forms of behavior that give coherence and stability to the social order.

The samurai of Japan who came under this influence were first and foremost fighting men. Their primary responsibility was to strive valiantly on the field of battle and to die an honorable death. They were the main upholders of Confucianism in their society, and Confucianism was the means by which to cultivate inwardly a state of mind that would reinforce their skills as fighters. In terms of human character and relations the Confucian code of ethics epitomized in Bushido (the way of the warrior) gave its highest praise to men who were courageous, self-disciplined and whose lives reflected aesthetic qualities. Of

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<sup>1</sup>Hori Ichiro, Ikado Fujio, Wakimoto Tsuneya, Yanagawa Keiichi eds. Japanese Religion (Tokyo: Kodansha International Ltd., 1972), p. 108.

the first order of importance was the lord-retainer relationship which in Japan committed an entire household of the retainer to serve the household of the lord. This bond between the two was handed down as a family tradition and for all practical purposes was indissoluble. The loyalty a samurai owed his lord held good not only for his lifetime, but for his descendants as well.

Uemura's samurai home upheld the values embraced in the Confucian code of ethics and reinforced by the special hatamoto status passed down through family generations. Uemura quoted his mother's words spoken to remind him of his noble heritage,

My son, you are a son of a samurai. Grow up a man of noble character and raise the family honor. Distinguish yourself.<sup>2</sup>

Reflecting on the past Uemura wrote, "Quoting many illustrations from historical novels, she inspired and spurred me on. I remember her words still."<sup>3</sup> Even in his old age Uemura used to say, "I am what I am solely through my mother's prayers," or "My mother is praying for me in heaven," or, "My mother was worthy to be a samurai's wife."<sup>4</sup>

As a young student Uemura showed exceptional ability to master whatever he studied. He was also known for his fighting spirit. As a samurai son, he was trained in the martial arts of fencing, jujutsu, and wrestling, common to all of that background. From this training Uemura developed a fighting spirit which he retained throughout his life.

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<sup>2</sup>Uemura Masahisa Zenshu, 8 vols. (Tokyo: Fujin no Tomo, 1932), 8:298-99.

<sup>3</sup>Quoted in Aoyoshi Katsuhisa, Dr. Masahisa Uemura: Christian Leader (Tokyo: Kyobunkan, 1941), p. 17.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 39.

His personal appearance gave the impression of physical strength and caused one observer to comment, "Mr. Uemura does not look like a Christian, but more like a general."<sup>5</sup> He had a reputation for rugged honesty and brutal frankness and a disregard for convention. His manner of dress, of speaking and writing only heightened the effect. Too poor to buy ready-made foreign suits, he wore everyday clothes in and out of the pulpit.

He was also known for his pugnacity. On one occasion when Buddhist priests threatened to break up a Christian service where Uemura was present, he began to attack them with his bare fists and with the help of others dispersed them. His reputation as a fighter established in his youth followed him through his adult years.

There was another side, however, which those closer to him were able to see. This was his unselfish and sympathetic attitude towards others, especially those who were in need of help. Takakura Tokutaro (1885-1934), one of Uemura's best known disciples and highly respected theologian, remembered him as a shy man, moved by little things. His book, watch, overcoat and money went to whomever was poorer and in greater need than himself.<sup>6</sup> Uemura's letters to the young woman he was to marry display an attitude of love and respect rare among Japanese men and quite different than the fighter others thought him to be.

Under a window, leaning at a table, I was thinking of you.  
Just then I had a sweet letter from you which gave me exceeding

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 172.

<sup>6</sup> Aoyoshi Katsuhisa, Uemura Masahisa Den (Biography of Uemura Masahisa) (Tokyo: Kyobunkan, 1935), pp. 500-503.

joy. As I read it, I felt that each sentence was invaluable, pregnant with love. How could you have such intense and noble affection?<sup>7</sup>

Besides these personal characteristics, Uemura was also noted for the penetrating insight with which he regarded the gospel and its application to life's issues.<sup>8</sup> Many of the first Christian converts sought in Christianity more an ideology for building a new Japan than an answer to a personal problem of sin. In contrast Uemura maintained that a Christian heart and spirit were necessary for a new Japan. This, he said, could only be found in Jesus Christ.

A summation of his character is offered by S. H. Wainright, missionary to Japan under the Methodist Board:

If a man's character be determined by the purpose which rules his life, no better index to Mr. Uemura's character can be found than in the aim to which his energies were unfailingly directed. His wholehearted purpose was to further Christian life among individuals and society by means of the church and its agencies. His aim was strictly Christian. His mind was not distracted by other channels. With untiring devotion and singleness of aim, and with earnest desire, he devoted himself to the church and to its welfare.<sup>9</sup>

People saw in Uemura the classic traits so admired in the samurai code and tradition, namely, courage and the spirit of daring, veracity or sincerity, self-control, and the duty of loyalty. Much of the respect and admiration which people held for Uemura was due to the high degree of fidelity he exhibited in his modeling of nationally recognized character traits.

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<sup>7</sup>Zenshu, 8:124.

<sup>8</sup>Saba Wataru, ed., Uemura Masahisa to Sono Jidai, 7 vols. (Tokyo: Kyobunkan, 1966), 5:253-57. Hereafter this work will be referred to as UMTSJ.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 1:641.

Later in the chapter it will be necessary to give closer attention to Uemura's perception of his duty and calling and how this was manifested in his ministry. Before that, however, we turn to a brief review of the conditions in Japan which impacted upon Christianity. This will help to place Uemura's life and ministry in clearer focus.

#### The Environment for Uemura's Ministry

In the creation of the modern state of Japan the new rulers were confronted by two major problems. The first was internal, amounting to a revolution in Japanese society and government. The second was the maintenance of Japan's independence in the face of imperialistic policy practiced by Western nations. The goal was to maintain a balance between the two objectives. To reach the second goal, the first had to be successful. Without first becoming a modern nation, Japan would find it difficult to resist the designs of Western powers.

The attitude of the new government of Japan and its people towards the West fluctuated widely in the Meiji era. The government wanted to find a pattern which would preserve the best of old Japan while still allowing for the introduction of the new. Thus there were many incongruities as the new moved in upon the old. In spite of the turbulent conditions, however, Japan did well and as the opening years of the Meiji era passed, a new mood of enthusiasm and confidence could be felt in the nation. There had been no invasion by Western forces and Japan's sovereignty had not been threatened. The general mood of fear and suspicion of the West was replaced by one of friendliness. In

this new atmosphere, and in spite of earlier unfavorable attitudes, Christianity made remarkable progress in the years of 1873-1889. Mission schools became the focal point of Westernization and children of upper-middle class families were eager to enter these schools. There was also a noticeable increase in church membership. For example, the total membership of the Congregational churches had reached 34,000 in 1890 compared to only 11,000 in 1885. This was a 200 percent increase within a five year period. By the same year 274 church buildings had been built. In 1884 a one-time bitter opponent of Christianity, Fukuzawa Yukichi, changed his attitude and argued that Japan should officially become a Christian country.<sup>10</sup>

This situation did not last long, however. By the late 1880's the tide had turned. In reaction to the wave of Westernization which had swept the land, the government promoted a series of nationalistic policies which began to shape the base and structure of the nation in the areas of military affairs and education. Two influential documents were to set the stage for the era of growing nationalism: The Meiji Constitution promulgated on February 11, 1889, and the Imperial Rescript on Education (Kyoiku Chokugo) issued in October of the following year.<sup>11</sup> Both were clear expressions of the Japanese national will which had been antagonized by various Western influences since the opening of the country to the world in 1854. Both laws expressed the major theme that

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<sup>10</sup>Yanagita Tomonobu, A Short History of Christianity in Japan (Sendai: Seisho Tosho Kankokai, 1957), p. 45.

<sup>11</sup>Kami Yoshiyasu, Protestanto Hyakunenshi Kenkyu (Study of Protestant's One Hundred Year History) (Tokyo: Nihon Kirisuto Kyodan Shuppanbu, 1961), pp. 39-41.

Japan was a Shinto country which worshipped the Emperor as a living God. The Rescript stressed loyalty to the Emperor and filial devotion to one's parents. The opening words connected the origin of Japan to the activity of the ancestral gods and demanded "filial affection" to them as well as to their divine-human descendants. This "filial affection" to these divine "Ancestors" was declared to be "Our national polity" and "the true spring of our educational system." On special occasions the Emperor's portrait was brought out before the student bodies of all schools, children and teachers ordered to "make their profoundest obeisance before the portrait," after which the Rescript was read by the school president and explained to the students.

One young Christian, Uchimura Kanzo, who had studied in Christian schools for a brief time in America and was at that time a teacher in the First High School in Tokyo, inadvertently became the center of controversy which was to have wide repercussions. He had refused, momentarily, to do obeisance to the Imperial Rescript and the portrait beside it at the New Year's special service held on January 9, 1891. He was immediately charged with lese majesty and banned from all further teaching in schools.<sup>12</sup>

The incident led to a bitter controversy over the apparent conflict between Christianity and education. More than two hundred articles and nearly thirty books were written in this debate representing two radically opposed viewpoints.<sup>13</sup> One of the principal antagonists

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<sup>12</sup>UMTSJ, 5: 765-72.

<sup>13</sup>Yanagita, Christianity in Japan, p. 49.



against Christianity, Inoue Tetsujiro, professor of Tokyo University, published an article entitled The Collision of Education and Religion. In it he charged Christianity with being a source of rebellion and disunity among the people, a religion which attacked family and clan loyalty with its concept of individual rights, and thus provided an avenue for foreign intervention in Japan.

Other charges were brought against Christianity which focused more on the teachings of Christianity rather than its foreign character. One such charge was that Christianity taught absurd doctrines. The Christian belief in the resurrection drew particular attention partially due to the absence of any such doctrine within Buddhist thought. Christianity was also accused of being obscurantist and at variance with true science and philosophy. This was one of the lesser charges at first, but grew in importance with the spread of secularism and evolutionary teaching in the schools. The article by Inoue incited debates on these and other perceived differences and the discussions continued to be a matter of national significance in the mood of growing nationalism.

The Sino-Japanese War and subsequent victory for the nation advanced the nationalistic sentiments of the people. One of the Christian leaders of that time commented on the effect of the war:

As a result of this war, the people's attention turned completely away from religion. In the years preceding and following it, Christianity made less progress than ever before. Popular confidence increased, and faith in the Western nations, and particularly their missionaries, decreased after the triple intervention over Liaotung. Those who before the war had considered Christianity the

religion of superior nations no longer recognized it as such after the war. Some of them even became anti-foreign.<sup>14</sup>

The church itself was not immune, and as the inner core of the church was nationalized, it gradually became defenseless against the current of nationalism without.

Attacks against Christianity and the growing national feeling was accompanied by a shift in the kind of people entering the church. Before the 1890's the majority of Protestant members were young adults who were converted while studying in mission schools where they had gone for foreign language learning. During and after the 1890's, however, the church gained new members from among young people within the newly established educational system whose major characteristic was mass production. This system was introduced by the government and it became an effective tool in its hands for the destruction of individuality and initiative. The system promoted uniform thinking for the support of the Emperor and the state.<sup>15</sup> Compared to the Christians of an earlier period, the newer church members came from a class of people more compliant, more loyal to the government and better prepared to follow the dictates of the state.

These major challenges to Christianity came from the outside. A new and destructive element also rose from within. Dr. Wilfred Spinner (1854-1919) of the Evangelical Missionary Society (Allgemeiner-Evangelisch-Protestantischer-Missionsverein) arrived in Japan in 1885.

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<sup>14</sup>Quoted in Kishimoto Hideo, ed., Japanese Religion in the Meiji Era, trans. John Howes (Tokyo: Obun Sha, 1956), p. 261.

<sup>15</sup>Ikado Fujio, "The Origins of the Social Status of Protestantism in Japan (1859-1918)," Contemporary Religions in Japan 2 (March 1961):48-49.

He was an exponent of the liberal theology from the European continent, and a member of a mission society, the first to attempt to enter the field of Christian missions on a specific and declared liberal basis.

Dr. Spinner began to publish the magazine Shinri (Truth) soon after his arrival, and it was through this medium that he and his colleagues introduced the subject of Biblical higher criticism, heretofore unknown to the Japanese. The magazine was sent to many of the leading Japanese preachers and soon gained a following.<sup>16</sup> One of their representatives, speaking of the "advanced theology" of the mission, wrote that their aim was a "reconciliation of Christianity with the modern view of the world, striving after an up-to-date expression of the eternal truth of the simple gospel of Jesus, adapted at the same time to the particular needs of the Japanese."<sup>17</sup>

The influence of this new theology was so strong that in spite of the vitality of Christianity during the Meiji period, it secured a place for itself in the thought-life of the church from mid-Meiji in the 1890's, a position consistently alive in many sections of the church until the present.

At the time, the reaction to the new theology among Christians was varied. Some left the faith entirely. Other pastors modified certain doctrines under the influence of liberalism, and still others stood against the stream of liberal thought, Uemura being one of them. The impact

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<sup>16</sup> Otis Cary, History of Christianity in Japan 2 vols., (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1909), p. 181.

<sup>17</sup> Proceedings of the General Conference of Protestant Missionaries in Japan (Tokyo: Kyobunkan, 1901), p. 922.

of this liberal theology can be measured in part by the theological position of those who were opposed to it. Uchimura Kanzo accepted the principles of Darwin and evolution which were spreading in Japan those same years. Kozaki Hiromichi completely rejected the idea of the infallibility of Scripture and accepted the new disciplines of biblical criticism. Uemura's similarities to the position of liberal theology as well as his pronounced differences will become clear in the later sections of the study. He wrote numerous articles on German Theology, differences among the several currents of theology in Japan, and debates on the subject of theology. However, his strongest defense of his own non-liberal position came out in the much publicized debate between himself and the strongest and most influential Japanese exponent of liberalism, Ebina Danjo.

A detailed examination can highlight the differences between these men, but in the eyes of the Christian public, Uemura was without doubt the defender or spokesman for the side of orthodoxy. How much this coincided with his own view of himself and his calling appears in the following discussion.

#### Uemura's Perception of His Calling

From the time he received baptism, Uemura was convinced of his calling to be an evangelist.

Afterwards, however, when I was beginning to study theology great doubts arose. The great ambitions I had cherished were fundamentally changed. I no longer felt I wanted to be a high-ranking dignitary, but instead I suddenly had an earnest desire to become a Christian missionary.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Quoted in Kosaka Masaaki, ed., Japanese Culture in the Meiji Era (Tokyo: Pan Pacific Press, 1958), p. 190.

How he saw this calling he made clear with these words:

I don't care at what age I die, seventy years, thirty years or ten years; but I don't want to die without first performing my duty. It is not my intention to live long. It is also not my purpose to live long for fame or popularity. I want to live in order to perform my duty (gima).<sup>19</sup>

There was nothing in these words to indicate that Uemura conceived of his calling from a theological perspective. His desire to "perform his duty" was not in answer to a "Macedonian" call as much as it was a quickened sense of his "duty" to spread the faith which he had only recently embraced. To do one's duty was one of the hallmarks of the samurai tradition. In a letter to his fiance written before their marriage he expressed his convictions in these words:

As a freelance evangelist, attached to no organization, I wish to serve God. This is my aspiration. I want you as a good helper to help me and this is what I pray for. If I have areas of my life which are inappropriate for an evangelist, please pray for me.<sup>20</sup>

His reference to himself as a freelance evangelist summed up in part his self-perception. A samurai son, Uemura had found a new lord and it was to this new lord that he was now responsible. Admittedly, when he began his evangelistic work there was no church to speak of and therefore no Christian body or group to call or send him. At the time Uemura doubtless felt little need for one. He was determined to be an evangelist, "attached to no organization."

With this understanding Uemura was tireless in his evangelistic efforts, preaching and writing on the subject, travelling for the cause

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<sup>19</sup> UMTSJ, 3:393.

<sup>20</sup> Zenshu, 8:114

of evangelism and helping his denomination to organize on its behalf.<sup>21</sup> His own ministry began with a small group of people located first in the Shitaya area and then in Ichibancho, both located in Tokyo. His ministry in these areas did not hinder him from starting other groups. He was instrumental in establishing groups in Aoyama, Sendagaya, Omori, Shirogane, and Senzoku, all in Tokyo. He would gather unchurched people for Bible study in the homes of the church members. When they grew larger, daughter congregations were organized and in this way Uemura's church became the mother church for more than a score of others.

His interests in evangelism and church extension carried him well beyond the Tokyo area, however. Uemura considered all Japan and much of Asia his parish and travelled annually throughout the empire. Between the years of 1902 and 1920 he visited Taiwan ten times. In the same period he travelled to Korea and Manchuria at least nine times, and to China three times in the early 1920's. He also preached in Mukden and Manchuria in the north, and Singapore in the Maylay Peninsula in the south, places where Japanese forces had already gone and Japanese people had settled.<sup>22</sup>

Uemura also worked hard to form committees and board in his denomination, the Nihon Kirisuto Kyokai (Church of Christ in Japan) to aid the church in evangelism. "Japanese Christians are those who bear the greatest responsibility for evangelism in Japan,"<sup>23</sup> and the church therefore

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<sup>21</sup>Uemura Masahisa Chosakushu, 7 vols. (Tokyo: Shinkyo Shuppansha, 1967), 6:357-427 on the subject of evangelism.

<sup>22</sup>UMTSJ 2:727-38; 3, chaps. 8-12.

<sup>23</sup>"Nihonjin no Nihon Dendo" (Japan Evangelism by Japanese) in Chosakushu, 1:153.

needs to be organized to fulfill its task. The Board of Home Missions of the N.K.K. was formed in 1879 with Uemura its first chairman. He also helped to form the Board of Evangelism and the Women's Home Mission Board. Uemura had a part in the formation of each of these agencies, served on each as chairman, and made space available in his own home for the offices of each.

Uemura knew that the Japanese people were not very receptive to the gospel. Even during periods of openness he doubted that the substratum of society had changed much in its attitude toward Christianity. Therefore he urged that evangelism be carried out aggressively by the entire church.

First the church must look at itself and decide whether it can carry the burden of evangelism. Some feel that the problem exists because the church doesn't have good evangelists. This is partly true, but the cause is deeper, i.e., poor preparation, for both the church as well as the evangelist. We have not been sending out well-trained evangelists and by doing so we have invited poor results . . .

Noble people respect aspiration. Without aspiring to do evangelism and recognizing that this is God's calling, no good results will happen.<sup>24</sup>

Pastors also needed to take evangelism seriously.

Pastors should exert themselves to minister to the souls of men by direct evangelism. Let them as it were die to other things, and as Jesus said, 'Let the dead bury their own dead.'<sup>25</sup>

Evangelism he believed to be his first and great duty, but he also believed that the entire church shared the same responsibility.

Another side of Uemura's calling or duty was found in his prophetic role. He saw his duty not only in the work of the spread of the

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<sup>24</sup>"Nihon Dendoron" in Chosakushu, 1:88.

<sup>25</sup>Quoted in D. C. Greene, The Christian Movement in Japan, Eighth Annual Issue (Tokyo: Kyobunkan, 1909), p. 99.

gospel but as God's prophet to society, and for this role he found sufficient evidence in his background and in the Bible.

He believed his identity as a prophetic evangelist derived partly from his hatamoto status. As heir to this special honor, Uemura could trace his lineage back to Tokugawa Ieyasu, the first shogun and the feudal master of the Tokugawa clan. His roots were in the Tokugawa rule, and thus his sympathies lay more with Tokugawa than with Meiji. This highlighted his sense of independence and prepared him to take a critical stance over against the Meiji government.

I think those who took the side of the Tokugawa and resisted the army of the emperor at the time of the Restoration did so out of a loyalty which Japanese had grown up with since olden times. By resisting, they attacked the frivolous men who truckled to the currents of the age. If none had shed his blood defending the old feudal system, the Japanese conscience would have come to an end. . . . Therefore I cannot agree with those who felt that those who resisted the army of the emperor were traitors. When the fervor of reverence for the emperor has died down, we can rewrite the modern history of Japan.<sup>26</sup>

Uemura was one of many samurai Christian converts who opposed the Meiji government. Had the reforms of the new government been initiated under shogunate leadership many of these same men would have supported them, but because their loyalty was first to the Tokugawa rule, they deeply resented the new oligarchy.

Another reason for his disappointment in the new government lay in what he saw as its secularized hopes and aspirations. He found no seeking after God or His kingdom, the emphasis given wholly to this world, all but ignoring the spiritual aspirations of men. He declared openly

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<sup>26</sup>UMTSJ, 1:657-58.



therefore that he could not serve the Meiji government but must stand against it as its critic.<sup>27</sup>

An understanding and appreciation for Old Testament prophets added yet another dimension to his thinking. In an article titled, "Yogenshateki jinkaku o yoosu" (Need for a Prophetic Personality)<sup>28</sup> Uemura drew out lessons from the example of the prophet Amos. "What the church needs today," he declared, "are people like Amos, i.e., a country man with real insight."<sup>29</sup> The best way to gain such insight, according to Uemura, was not from books, but by being in touch with many different types of people. According to the Biblical portrayal, a prophet is a student of God's word and society. The Christian prophet differs from the common critic because of his love for God, his righteousness, and because he awaits the kingdom of God.<sup>30</sup>

Uemura stressed the importance of a Christian prophet for those times pointing out that the primary role of the prophet is not in foretelling coming events, but in a ministry of warning and critique.

The Christ-like life is one of conquest, and every Christian must bear arms. Moses cried: 'Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, that the Lord would put his Spirit upon them.' Every Japanese Christian is under obligation to recognize and to bear his own burden in evangelizing our country and to live up to the prayer that all the Lord's people may be prophets.<sup>31</sup>

These two roles, evangelist and prophet comprised Uemura's self-understanding in terms of his responsibility to his new lord and the way he carried out that responsibility. The shape of his ministry will now

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<sup>27</sup> Chosakushu, 1:176-77

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 5:327.

<sup>31</sup> Quoted in Aoyoshi, Christian Leader, p. 222.

be considered in the three areas of ministry to which he most ardently applied himself, that of pastoring, writing, and teaching.

#### Uemura's Pastoral Ministry

It is reported that an old man once said to Uemura, "I love Jesus more than food." Uemura was greatly moved by this rough but penetrating statement and later said to his friend, "I like evangelism so very much, even though there may be difficulties I will never stop."<sup>32</sup>

Uemura was baptized by James Ballagh on May 4, 1873 when he was sixteen years of age just four months following the removal of the government bans against Christianity. His formal ministry as an evangelist-pastor began five years later on April 11, 1878 when he was licensed to preach by the Tokyo Presbytery of the Nihon Kirisuto Itchi Kyokai (United Church of Christ in Japan).<sup>33</sup> The following year he was ordained with several of his former classmates from the Brown school in Yokohama. The famous Dr. Hepburn, among the first missionaries to arrive in Japan in 1859, was present for his ordination examination and heard Uemura preach his ordination sermon. Because of difficulty in understanding him Dr. Hepburn urged that he not be passed. S. R. Brown and Okuno the elder came to his defense and pleaded for his ordination on the basis of his known zeal. Their arguments won the day for Uemura and his ordination was approved.<sup>34</sup> Such was the beginning of a ministry which spanned a forty-

<sup>32</sup> Aoyoshi, Uemura Masahisa Den, pp. 60-61.

<sup>33</sup> This name was adopted by a union of churches in 1877. The word kokai (public meeting) was changed to kyokai after it was adopted by the translators of the New Testament as the best rendering of ecclesia. The word Itchi (union) was later dropped.

<sup>34</sup> Aoyoshi, Uemura Masahisa Den, pp. 60-61.

six year period. Before moving on to examine his pastoral gifts a general outline of his church ministry is noted.

Uemura started to minister regularly to a small group of people in a poor section of Tokyo named Shitaya. The group met weekly in Uemura's rented quarters consisting of three small rooms. There these meetings continued until Uemura was able to erect a small church building with a loan of money from the Reformed Church mission in 1881.

Information about this period in his life is sparse. From all indications these were difficult years for Uemura although he learned much at the same time. Much of the struggle he encountered was earning his living. His marriage to Miss Yamanouchi in 1880 added to his financial burden Uemura trying to support the two of them with money earned in teaching and translating books. On one occasion expenses were met by selling some of his bride's furniture.<sup>35</sup> Throughout these struggles Uemura did not lose his positive attitude and his hard work was rewarded in 1883-1884 when a revival of interest among the Japanese brought an increasing number of people to the Shitaya church.

The growth of the church was still very slow and Uemura was glad to accept an invitation to lead a Bible study in the home of the Eastlake family in Kojimachi, about four miles distance from Shitaya. Dr. Eastlake was an American dentist whose wife was Japanese and a Christian believer. They had opened their home for a Bible study with friends and neighbors and invited Uemura to lead it. In comparison to the Shitaya church this group grew rather quickly drawing as many as one hundred

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 129.

people weekly. Many of those who came were students and Uemura was slow to baptize converts until he was satisfied about each one's personal commitment to the Christian faith.<sup>36</sup> Thus despite the high weekly attendance, the actual membership of the group in early days consisted of approximately five families and twenty single people.

The prospects of a wider ministry induced Uemura and his wife to move to Ichibancho in 1886 and from this period on his fame as a pastor began to spread more widely. New members were added more quickly as the church began to draw people in from other groups. Several transferred from the Shitaya church and forty more were added from another group after their missionary pastor was relocated in Sendai, Japan.

In time, this church at Ichibancho became one of the largest and most famous in all Japan. Eventually the size of the congregation grew to number sixteen hundred and from this congregation a number were sent to found other churches throughout the Tokyo area and parts of Asia. Besides the growing number of people the church attracted some better known people in government and military circles. Kataoka Kenkichi, Speaker of the lower House and later President of Doshisha College and Admiral Serata Ryo, Commander-in-Chief of the Yokosuka Naval Station and graduate of the Annapolis Naval Academy in America were members. The church also became known for the people who went from it to found schools, hospitals, and institutions, many of which were famous for humanitarian service.

In 1906 a new church building was erected at the cost of thirty thousand yen, the largest amount ever spent in Japan for a church building

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<sup>36</sup> UMTSJ, 3:80.

The Fujimicho church, as it was later named, completed this project through the contribution of its own members.

The growth and accomplishments of the Fujimicho church and its pastor is impressive in its own right. Further consideration of some of Uemura's personal traits make his accomplishments even more impressive. Because of a speech impediment his sermons were difficult to follow. Honda Yoichi, long-time friend of Uemura, admitted that he thought it highly unlikely that Uemura would be successful as a pastor and that his greatest contribution would come from his writings.<sup>37</sup> Uemura's blunt manner also gave offense at times. He cared too little about his personal appearance and grooming. Speech impediment and personal appearance notwithstanding, Uemura became one of the best known and widely respected leaders of the church in Japan.

To better understand this, attention must be paid to the comments of those who knew him best. Takakura Tokutaro, Uemura's student and successor as president of the Tokyo Seminary wrote this description of his mentor:

I was one of Uemura's disciples. Uemura was a man who gave the impression of a very loving father. He had a very authoritative personality, stern, strong and much revered. He was deep and keen without any noticeable gaps in his makeup, and in the good sense, he was oyabun (a Japanese term for a stern, father-like-boss). He was truthful and trustworthy, spiritual, a charismatic figure. At the same time he was also a very loving, sensitive person. He had a quality which gave the person with whom he spoke the feeling that Uemura understood him best, and that he was a favorite of Uemura.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 152.

<sup>38</sup> UMTSJ, 3:153. In a widely recognized study, Japanese Society, by Nakane Chie (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), the writer points out the fact that more than anything else, the qualification of a leader among the Japanese depends upon his ability to understand and attract

From this description it would appear that Uemura's leadership qualities were less the result of formal training, but developed instead in an intuitive and natural way so that his success in drawing people to himself was on the basis of personal charm. William Imbrie, Presbyterian missionary and friend of Uemura of long standing, pointed to Uemura's great ability to attract people. He modelled, unconsciously at times, the time-valued traits of Japanese society, such as duty, commitment, rugged honesty and others. In the session records of one of the churches he started there appears a description of Uemura's determination and sense of duty.

We held the second meeting on the evening of July 10, 1904. A great storm had been raging since morning, and only a few people had ventured on the streets. The tempest blew umbrellas right out of people's hands and destroyed them. By nightfall none were out except those who had important business; yet on that night we had eight people out for our meeting. Our pastor came in spite of the storm and gave us a thoroughly prepared address on prayer, inspiring us deeply. On July 17, we held our third meeting although it had been raining all day long, with constant blasts of thunder, so that again few people were out. Our pastor came again, and preached an edifying sermon on the seven thunders of the Revelation. Altogether thirteen people were present, five women and eight men.<sup>39</sup>

The pastor referred to in the narrative is Mr. Uemura who had walked some distance in the storm on foot, in darkness and without an umbrella, wet to the skin, but determined to meet his obligations to these people.<sup>40</sup> More than anything else, at least in human terms, this description points to some of the traits which endeared him to others.

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his men. Furthermore, most Japanese, whatever their status or occupation, are involved in an oyabun-kobun relationship. Oyabun means the person with the status of oya (parent) and kobun with the status of ko (child).

<sup>39</sup>Quoted in Aoyoshi, Christian Leader, pp. 229-30.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid.

What about his effectiveness in the pulpit? His stammer and lack of eloquence noted above certainly were no help. How then did he draw such a wide audience? Part of the answer lies in the importance Uemura placed on his weekly sermons. One writer suggests that few other ministers in that day emphasized the place of the weekly sermon as did Uemura.<sup>41</sup> The fact that Uemura began to edit and publish many of his sermons in his weekly paper bears this out and reflects the high priority he assigned to them.

Many of Uemura's peers were regarded as eloquent speakers. Ebina, Kanamori, Uchimura and Miyagawa, friends of Uemura, were among them. This fact must have caused Uemura to work very hard on the content of his sermons to compensate for what he lacked in speaking ability and his hearing and reading audience considered him an effective communicator despite his lack of speaking eloquence. He read widely in the areas of politics, social matters and history and much of this material found its way into his sermons. The titles of his sermons testify to the fact that the Bible and the newspaper both contributed sermonic material. National holidays, the death of the Emperor, and the end of the war were regarded by Uemura as occasions for sermons.<sup>42</sup> Much of his effectiveness therefore rested on his ability to relate Biblical themes to events with which all were familiar and were part of the life of his of his congregation. This leads to a further observation. Undoubtedly Uemura's great desire was to make Christian truth a vital force in the

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<sup>41</sup>Yamatani Shogo comments in Chosakushu, 7:498.

<sup>42</sup>Several examples; "Ninami Kansha Reihai" (New Harvest Thanksgiving; "Nani o Ataen ya?" (What will you give?) preached on the opening of the National Diet; "Kyoan ni okeru Reiteki Komei" (Spiritual Light in the Darkness) delivered upon the death of Emperor Meiji.

lives of his people. He used the Bible as a primary tool in his preaching and his sermons contain many references to the Bible. He did not feel bound, however, by the rules of historical, grammatical interpretation, which allowed him great freedom to apply the language of the text to the point of his sermon. He chose his texts from either Testament but he also chose to ignore the context of the passage when it suited him in order to relate the text immediately to his topic. One example of this is found in his essay on the Japanese defeat of the Russians in 1904.

The proud Russians, who have despised Japan because she is an Asiatic power, are overwhelmed with sorrow and shame and humiliation because of their successive defeats. When the prophet Daniel was an exile in Babylon, and his nation without a home, he naturally felt a sense of indignation and patriotic resentment. At the same time, however, he was deeply conscious of the sin of his own countrymen, and he confessed it in behalf of them before God. The Russians might learn from his example what steps it would be well for them to take in the crisis. Daniel says, 'I have prayed unto the Lord God and made my confession. Lord to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee.' If, similarly, the Russians could come to themselves their defeat would become an occasion for spiritual watchfulness.<sup>43</sup>

When Japan annexed the country of Korea Umeura wrote,

And Moses called unto Joshua and said unto him in the sight of all Israel, 'Be strong, and of a good courage; for thou must go with this people unto the land which the Lord has sworn unto their fathers to give them; and thou shall cause them to inherit it.'

Japan has been related to Korea intimately and long. We feel truly that God has sworn to give it to our fathers.<sup>44</sup>

On the occasion of the death of Emperor Meiji, Uemura chose as his text Isaiah 6:1-8 which records the death of King Uzziah. The title

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<sup>43</sup> Quoted in Aoyoshi, Christian Leader, pp. 204-205.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., pp. 231-32.



was "Spiritual Light in the Midst of Sadness," and in his sermon Uemura compares the rule of King Uzziah to that of Emperor Meiji.

Uzziah was a good king, until near the end of his life. Emperor Meiji had no such bad points, but contributed more than King Uzziah. Thus when he died he was mourned and many are sunk in sadness. Isaiah was also greatly saddened.<sup>45</sup>

In this way Uemura associated incidents from the Bible with daily life in Japan. His sermons did not attract through logical reasoning as they did through emotional and aesthetic appeal. The story is told that before they had met in person Ebina Danjo was greatly impressed with Uemura's writing. When the two met in person, Ebina had difficulty believing that the rather unconventional appearing person before him was responsible for such beautiful prose.<sup>46</sup> The story bears repeating to highlight the fact that Uemura's effective pastoral ministry was further supported and complemented to an unusual degree by his writing ministry. It is important therefore that his writing be examined in close detail.

#### Uemura's Writing Ministry

In the same year he was licensed to preach, Uemura was also asked to serve as a member of the Old Testament translation committee. Until then the only translation of the Bible in Japan was a Chinese version, its use limited to educated Japanese. Uemura was only twenty-one years of age at that time but familiar with the Chinese and Japanese classics and therefore prepared to render a valuable contribution to this task. He was primarily responsible for the translation of the Psalms, Song of

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<sup>45</sup> Chosakushu, 7:271.

<sup>46</sup> Aoyoshi, Uemura Masahisa Den, p. 91.

Solomon, the prophet Isaiah, and the Book of Esther. The Old Testament translation was completed in 1887 (the New Testament was finished in 1880) amid much acclaim, although Uemura was critical of the finished product believing that the work had been done too fast without sufficient attention to good literary style.<sup>47</sup>

Uemura made his debut as a journalist, however, in another way. In the spring of 1880, several of the young preachers and prominent laymen organized the Tokyo Young Men's Association after the pattern of the Y.M.C.A. in America. They decided to publish a Christian magazine under the title Rokugo Zasshi (Cosmos Magazine) and Uemura was chosen as one of the editors. He and two others used the pages of the magazine to debate with such well-known public figures as Fukuzawa Yukichi, Inoue Tetsujiro, and others. It proved to be a powerful weapon for the defense of the Christian faith and Uemura's enthusiastic evaluation appeared in these words: "Except for the Toyo Gakugei Zasshi (The Oriental Magazine for Liberal Arts) our periodical has no other rival in its scientific value."<sup>48</sup>

Many of the young and influential Christian writers of the day such as Uchimura Kanzo were asked to contribute to the magazine, which further enhanced their growing fame. The Rokugo Zasshi made the scholarly world secretly admire the strength of Christianity.

This magazine furnishes a sampling of the enthusiasm with which these early Christian writers joined battle, first with the government,

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Ibid.

48 UMTSJ, 3:410

and then with Japanese society in general. Its editors believed in the Christian God and considered it part of their patriotic duty to make Japan a Christian nation. Even social pressure could not lessen their enthusiasm.

In an article written in 1882 Uemura wrote against what he considered growing government interference.

According to a newspaper, it is rumored that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has decided to hinder the dissemination of Christianity. The government should not interfere with its people's religious freedom. They cannot succeed in any case. . . . The government must not further deteriorate to the place where it constrains our religious freedom.<sup>49</sup>

In 1883 there was what is now referred to as a revival in Japan, in which missionaries and Japanese evangelists alike found a new interest and openness to the Christian message. Several prominent Christians agreed to write and circulate a series of monographs dealing with the Christian faith. Uemura took the responsibility for one volume and in 1884 published Shinri Ippan (Common Truth), his first sizeable literary work. This small book was well received by the Christian public. Yamaji Aizan evaluated Uemura's book in glowing terms:

Mr. Uemura is a finished writer in style and thought. His originality has won many admirers both within and outside Christian society, and nobody can rival him.<sup>50</sup>

An equally positive statement was offered by another writer:

When we read the Shinri Ippan today, we feel acutely a sense of admiration for the luster and the richness of content of this work as compared to other books written at that time. The Chinese sentence structure can be felt to be somewhat severe, and yet when we read on a little, the inner nature of Uemura's spirit is evoked for us.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup>UMTSJ, 5:253.

<sup>51</sup>Kosaka, Japanese Culture in the Meiji Era, p. 180.

The book attracted attention for several reasons. Uemura used a style of argument buttressed by the ideas he had drawn from western philosophers such as Hegel and Pascal along with other classical Christian apologists. This caused Kosaka, a Japanese writer to remark:

This marked the introduction into Japan of a metaphysical theory expressed with originality. This theory stated that the acknowledgement of limits, meant perforce, the acknowledgement of its antithesis - no limits; that the acknowledgement of the natural means perforce, the acknowledgement of the supernatural.<sup>52</sup>

Uemura's book was a criticism directed against evolutionism, materialism, and agnosticism. He attempted to prove the existence of God in opposition to the atheism of those who held these views. His proof rested upon cosmological and moral grounds.

Uemura argued in this fashion:

Essentially we are confined within limits and are creatures who because of our extreme imperfection cannot act independently. We are the weakest creatures in the universe according to Western philosophers. We are short-lived creatures and our narrowness of intellect, too, is plain. Still, our souls are splendid. When an individual thought arises therein, of a necessity its antithesis cannot but arise. When we know ourselves to be limited, of a necessity, the antithesis to this must be the knowledge of the existence of a being without limitation. When we realize our weakness and shortlivedness,<sup>53</sup> we must also be able to conceive of an omnipotent and eternal being.

Another characteristic of the book was its artistic style, Uemura quoted ancient Japanese poems and pointed out to his readers that the exquisiteness of these writings was to be found in the "pathos-laden parts." From the pathos expressed in Japanese poetry Uemura hinted at the felt, but unexpressed needs of Japanese life, which he then went on to explain could only be fulfilled by the gospel of Christ. The value of

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<sup>52</sup>Ibid., p. 182.

<sup>53</sup>Quoted in Kosaka, Japanese Religion in the Meiji Era, p. 18.

the book lay in his skillful use of western arguments for the Christian faith set within a Japanese literary context.

The other pamphlet published under Uemura's name was Fukuin Michi Shirube (Guide to the Way of the Gospel). It served as an introduction to the Christian faith, and in it Uemura reveals his own understanding of the Gospel and his theological method which he followed throughout his lifetime.<sup>54</sup> In the five brief chapters of the booklet Uemura sets out his own understanding of the plight of man and how he may find his way to God.

Religion is necessary for man. In our times, unlike the past when men earnestly sought meaning to life, everyone is going after materialism and the secular meaning to life. . . . Without true religion man and nation cannot be sustained.<sup>55</sup>

Quoting Paul's words recorded in Acts 17 Uemura points out that men have forgotten the true God, have lost their way, but continue to look for something to worship, something eternal. "This," says Uemura, "is a sign of the existence of God."

He uses the same argument in his discussion about the soul of man. The fact that man is able to think of some existence beyond death argues for the existence of life beyond the present one. Uemura uses the Bible sparingly in this book, leaning more heavily on illustrative material taken from history or common life situations. An illustration of this is found in the final chapter.

God's love is illustrated in the giving of his son Jesus. The mother of Mencius moved three times in order to improve the environment for her son. This showed her great love for him. In the same way God shows his love by sending his son Jesus into the world. By

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<sup>54</sup> Chosakushu, 5:1-47.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

his coming into the world Jesus not only took care of our past sins but he makes our hearts righteous, and he has given the way leading to justice.<sup>56</sup>

This small book did not attract as much attention as did Shinri Ippan. Nor did Uemura write pamphlets like this later on. Kumano suggests that his increasingly busy evangelistic and pastoring activities no longer permitted the time for book-length articles.<sup>57</sup> In later years books such as Shinko no Tomo (Friend of Faith), Reisei no Kiki (Crisis of Spirituality), and Inori no Seikatsu (Life of Prayer) were published but these were mostly collections of articles which were published previously in various journals in separate form. While nowhere stated, Uemura appears to have selected articles which had received acclaim and placed them under one title for wider distribution.

A growth in maturity, a change in the climate of the Japanese towards Christianity and a trip to America and England led Uemura to undertake an even more significant writing ministry. By the end of the 1880's the general openness of the Japanese to Christianity had come to an end. Perhaps never again would the church be so close to the intellectual and social leadership of the nation, nor would it attract such wide interest on the part of so many people. The new Imperial Constitution was issued by the government in 1889. One year later a second important document, the Imperial Rescript on Education was issued. These two government-sponsored pronouncements marked the end of the open period. Christianity was to confront naked hostility from many quarters up to the

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<sup>56</sup>Ibid., p. 46.

<sup>57</sup>These comments appear in introductory material to vol. 4, p. 502 of Chosakushu.

end of World War II. Opposition to Christianity and declining membership in the church were caused by public reaction to westernization, a growing patriotism, and a resurgence of faith among Buddhists.

In these changing circumstances Christianity remained a small minority. Uemura returned from his first visit to England and America with a fresh perception of what a writing ministry might accomplish. He had contributed articles to journals in other years, and had served as editor in several publishing ventures. While he did not wish to add to the many publications which were already in existence, he now felt a constraint to begin his own. He announced this constraint in these words:

I have a call in terms of Japan. I have critical opinions about politics, literature, social issues, economics and education. Also, regarding the religion of the present and the future I have a very strong desire. I have the confidence to make my opinions regarding these things public; that is my calling (tenshoku).<sup>58</sup>

The monthly journal thus inaugurated he titled Nippon Hyoron (Japan Review). As the title suggests Uemura wished to publish a journal in which he could review current issues of literary, social, financial and religious interest. For this purpose, Uemura added a number of people, Christian and non-Christian, whom he considered to be progressive thinkers, as regular contributors to the journal.

Uemura's desire to speak as a prophet to his own society was not particularly unique to him. As noted above many of the first converts shared the opinion that as Christians they had much to contribute to their people and nation. Part of Uemura's uniqueness lay in his strong concern for the building of the church in Japan, his plan being

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<sup>58</sup> Chosakushu, 1:11.

to influence and change society through the church. This change, he believed, could only be brought about by Christians who were acquainted with the needs of society and thus could objectively criticize both society and government.

Man is a religious being and when man believes true religion, he becomes true man. The same thing can be said about a nation. My confidence is that true religion is not in Buddhism or Shintoism, but in Christianity. Therefore I want to declare this through the Nippon Hyoron.<sup>59</sup>

The other writing project which Uemura began to publish at the same time was a weekly paper which he modelled after the British Spectator first brought to his attention during his visit to England. The Fukuin Shuho (Evangelical Weekly) as it was first named then later changed to Fukuin Shimpo (Weekly Gospel) grew to have one of the largest circulations among Christian journals in Japan.<sup>60</sup> It drew many favorable comments throughout its history and among them those of William Imbrie.

There are also Christian magazines and newspapers. Among the best of the newspapers is the Fukuin Shimpo (The Evangelist), edited by one of the ministers of the Church of Christ in Japan, and which now more than pays for itself. Regarding this, one of the missionaries of the Council recently expressed what is only the common judgment when he said, 'We cannot be too grateful for a church paper so sound in doctrine, evangelistic spirit, and thoroughly wideawake and sensible. The Japanese evangelists find it most useful for themselves and their inquirers and every missionary will find his knowledge of the church, his interest in it and love for it greatly increased by a regular reading of the Fukuin Shimpo.'<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid. Of passing interest is Uemura's use of non-Christian contributors to gain these objectives.

<sup>60</sup> Aoyoshi, Christian Leader, p. 146.

<sup>61</sup> William M. Imbrie, The Church of Christ in Japan (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1906), pp. 66-67.



Uemura was its chief editor and in charge of every function of the publishing venture, but he often asked others to contribute articles. He also used the paper as a training ground for younger men interested in Christian journalism.

The journal was reputed to have the best editorial staff of all the Christian papers in Japan along with a fine body of contributing writers. Uemura called on such missionaries as William Imbrie, J. L. Amermann, and George Knox as well as his Japanese colleagues Ibuka Kajinosuke, Oshikawa Katayoshi, and Iwamoto Zenji.

The calling which Uemura believed he had to write about sensitive issues in public life brought him into open conflict with the government on more than one occasion. The first government-ordered suspension of the Fukuin Shuho occurred when Uemura came to the defense of his friend and fellow-Christian, Uchimura Kanzo, on the occasion of his refusal to bow before the Imperial Signature attached to the Imperial Rescript on Education in 1891. The government closed the paper because of Uemura's remarks while Uchimura was banned from further teaching. He later wrote several books and established a reputation as an accepted Christian author.

However Uemura refused to be cowed by the suspension of his paper. He simply started out again with a new name on the masthead. His opening remarks reflected the opposition.

The magazine has been born among suffering and attacks, and has progressed amid disagreement and opposition. I bury it with some hesitancy. . . . I tried to stay away from superfluous things and write in defense of justice and truth.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>62</sup>Chosakushu, 1:15.

He then reiterated in the new Fukuin Shimpo the basic stance of its predecessor.

I want to make a defense for the Christian faith, appropriate for every situation, and thus to bring everything to be conformed to the will of God.<sup>63</sup>

Twenty years later, in 1910, Uemura referred to the paper's beginning purpose.

We have not changed from our original design. But while we haven't reached all our goals we wish on the 20th year to re-commit ourselves to the original purpose.<sup>64</sup>

The original purpose he detailed on the occasion of the first issue of the Fukuin Shuho.

This publication is very small and weak . . . . I want to use this magazine as a place among Christians for an exchange of ideas, a platform for the publication of opinions of well-known figures, a place to report on the degree of success regarding the formation of the church in all Japan, and also to help to clear up misunderstandings and questions of unbelievers and thereby lead them to Christ. Thus I want to build up Christian virtues, increase wisdom, and this is the kind of magazine I hope it is. But I want to write not only about the church, but the secular issues of the day.<sup>65</sup>

Aoyoshi wrote that both the Nippon Hyoron and Fukuin Shimpo existed (1) To defend religion among intellectuals who were inclined to be anti-religious; (2) to defend Christianity among the religions, for there were many people belonging to pagan sects in the country; and (3) to defend the orthodox, historic faith among the Christians.<sup>66</sup>

A reading of Uemura's comments in his article written on the 20th anniversary of the journal shows the variety of topics he dealt with in the pursuit of the above three goals.

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Chosakushu, 1:19

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 18

<sup>66</sup> Aoyoshi, Dr. Masahisa Uemura: A Christian Leader, p. 68.

The Shuho was concerned with Christian literature in fact that has been one of its characteristics. Augustine, Henry Martyn, Cardinal Newman, all were introduced as early as 1890. We wish to continue this in the future as well.<sup>67</sup>

In the same article he continued,

The Fukuin Shimpo was interested in the non-alcoholic movement, the anti-prostitution movement, these various organizations all appeared in the pages of this journal. The extreme destructive theology on the one hand, and extreme fundamentalistic theology on the other, all were reported in the Shimpo.<sup>68</sup>

And then about the church.

From the time of the Fukuin Shuho we have also given our encouragement to the reform of the Nihon Kirisuto Kyokai, viz., the movement to bring the Itchi Kyokai (Union church) together with the Kumiai (Congregational) kyokai. We were for that, but it was not successful.

Also we were for the constitution change also. There were those who desired a more complicated confession, but we ascribed to a simple confession. . . . This (Fukuin Shimpo) is not simply a church/denomination organ but at the same time there has been a strong relationship between the Fukuin Shimpo and the Nihon Kirisuto Kyokai and we look forward to contributing to the church in the fourth period.<sup>69</sup>

Finally Uemura included in the same article the way he had used the Fukuin Shimpo to report on social problems, with particular reference to the struggles he had had with the government.

In the problem of Uchimura Kanzo on February 13, 1891 we bow to the emperor, bow to his picture, bow to the Rescript on Education. Whether this is foolish or not, whether it is idol worship or not, we won't declare. But there are many ceremonies which cannot be separated from religious observances. We must say that the harm done through this close association is not only bad for Christians but for the constitution as well. As a Protestant Christian I don't like to worship a picture or image of Christ. If so, why do I have to worship a picture of a living person? We don't worship the Bible why should we have to worship the Imperial Rescript? As a faithful citizen I wish to speak out against this custom. It is the duty of the people of Japan to withdraw these customs.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Chosakushu, 1:22.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., p. 25.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., pp. 30-31.

The editors of the Chosakushu (Collected Works) selected well over four hundred articles taken from the issues of the Fukuin Shuho and Fukuin Shimpo published during almost thirty-five years in which Uemura was the editor. The table of contents in the set of volumes reveals the breadth of Uemura's interests and the areas which he believed merited his attention and comment. Because the paper was fully self-supporting, he was under no obligation to conform to editorial policy other than his own choosing. During those years the Japanese nation was involved in three wars which raised questions regarding the ethics of war, patriotism and nationalism and its extremes which Uemura termed "Nipponism." Christians were not isolated from these issues and Uemura felt "called" to make his pronouncements for the benefit of Christian and non-Christian alike and thus to exercise his prophet ministry. No other Christian periodical was as widely read as the Fukuin Shimpo, ran for as many years, or provided such long-lasting influence for the church and for a public understanding of the Christian faith.

#### Uemura's Teaching Ministry

A discussion of Uemura's ministry would not be complete without reference to that which he said was dearest to his own heart, namely, the Tokyo Shingakusha (Tokyo Theological Seminary). He followed the same policies he had established for his pastoral and writing ministry in his refusal to receive financial aid from foreign mission sources. Instead he carried the financial burden himself from 1904 to 1925, on the strength of his leadership and administrative skills. The seminary became widely known and highly respected in the Christian community. The greatest

number of students were from Uemura's denomination, the Nihon Kirisuto Kyokai, but a significant number came from outside the denomination. After Uemura's death in 1925 the seminary trustees decided to merge the seminary with the theological department of Meiji Gakuin where Uemura had first started to teach. The two schools, Tokyo Shingakusha and the theological department of Meiji Gakuin joined together to form a new school, the Nihon Shingakko (Japan Seminary).<sup>71</sup> It is important however to return to the events leading up to the establishment of the Tokyo Shingakusha.

In the formative years the Nihon Kirisuto Kyokai and cooperating missions relied on Meiji Gakuin's theological department for the training of men for the church ministry. Meiji Gakuin had come into being in 1886 through the merger of several small, missionary-led schools located in the Tokyo-Yokohama area. What theological education there was, was usually carried on by missionaries who used their homes to conduct classes in Bible and theology.

The first president of Meiji Gakuin was Dr. James C. Hepburn, veteran Presbyterian missionary, and he held this post until his retirement in 1892. His successor was Ibuka Kajinosuke, classmate of Uemura's at S. R. Brown's school and Union seminary. Both Ibuka and Uemura had been asked to join the faculty of the theological department in its early history. As a faculty member and trustee Uemura served until 1903 but resigned both positions when challenged regarding his use of a certain text

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<sup>71</sup>This seminary continued to function up to and during World War II. Following the war it was re-established under a new name and became the core of a union of fifteen schools presently named Tokyo Shingaku Daigaku (Tokyo Theological University).

book in the classroom. His resignation from Meiji Gakuin then became the occasion to start his own school. The cause of his resignation merits closer examination.

Meiji Gakuin was first governed by a Board of Directors made up of representatives of the Presbyterian and Reformed missions in Japan and members of the Nihon Kirisuto Kyokai. The arrangement worked well until the question was raised about cooperation with the Southern Presbyterian Mission, newly arrived in Japan. During the discussion it became apparent that there was some difference of opinion regarding the type of theology taught at the school. William Imbrie, Presbyterian missionary reflected this in his correspondence. "I suppose it is undoubtedly true that the theological position of the Northern Church (Presbyterian) is somewhat different from that of the Southern Church."<sup>72</sup> The differences were not clearly identified but they raised the question of future harmony should the venture proceed. The Southern Church was known for its conservative theological stance and its missionaries regarded with suspicion the views of some missionaries of the Northern Church on the faculty as well as Japanese members. A letter from the Southern Presbyterian mission to the mission board in the United States reflects this early suspicion.

Some years ago there were certain teachers in the institution whose views were most objectionable to us; and we clearly and emphatically said so. Two years ago, however, when we went into the institution, we considered that the teachers were all Evangelical and that we could safely unite with them in the great and important work of Theological Education in Japan.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Letter from William Imbrie to Henry B. Price, April 16, 1900.

<sup>73</sup> Letter to the Executive Committee from Charles A. Logan.

In spite of these reservations the decision to cooperate was approved and Mr. Fulton, of the Southern Presbyterian mission was appointed to teach in the theological department of Meiji Gakuin.

All went well for about two years following the decision to cooperate until the summer of 1903 when one of the students of the school was invited to assist a missionary of the Southern Presbyterian mission. The student brought one of his textbooks, An Outline of Christian Theology by William Newton Clarke, Professor of Theology at Colgate University. The book had commended itself for use in Japan because of its simple style. It has also been described as one of the "greatest American works produced in systematic liberal theology."<sup>74</sup> The book was objectionable to members of the Southern Presbyterian mission on several counts, the major one being the author's view of Scripture. The author clearly admitted a change from his earlier beliefs.

I began as a child must begin, with viewing the Bible in the manner of my father's day, but am ending with a view that was never possible until the large work of the Nineteenth Century upon the Bible was done.<sup>75</sup>

He further considered the subject slightly irrelevant.

A better day for the popular faith will have come when discussion has been transferred from the inspiration of the Scripture to the Scriptures themselves. . . . Christ was saving sinners before the New Testament existed, and could do the same today if it had not

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<sup>74</sup>H. Shelton Smith, Robert T. Handy, Lefferts A. Loetscher, American Christianity: An Historic Interpretation with Representative Documents, 2 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1963), 2:257.

<sup>75</sup>Sydney E. Ahlstrom, "Theology in America: A Historical Survey" in James Ward Smith and A. Leland Jamison, eds., The Shaping of American Religion (Religion in American Life, vol. 1) (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), p. 291.

been written. Christianity is grounded not in the inspiration of its documents, but in the reality of its fact.<sup>76</sup>

Clark obviously approved of the higher critical approach to the Bible.

Other objections to the book had to do with the doctrines of the imputation of Adam's sin and the atonement. On imputation he wrote, "there is no such thing as inheriting guilt before God from the first sinner, or from any other ancestor."<sup>77</sup> Regarding Christ's atonement he said, "punishment is absolutely untransferrable and no one can possibly be punished for the sin of another."<sup>78</sup>

Agitation about the book led to its being dropped as a text book, but the damage had been done. Uemura resigned from the faculty and board of trustees, thereby ending his long relationship, even though he continued to approve of the school.<sup>79</sup> In a brief autobiographical sketch, Uemura described all too simply why he resigned and started another school.

Finally, in 1903, some conservative missionaries objected to my using W. N. Clarke's Christian Theology, so I resigned and in 1904 started an independent theological school. Three years later a converted stockbroker gave the school a site and building and a small endowment. It has continued ever since to have twenty or thirty students.<sup>80</sup>

Someone suggested that Uemura used the objections to his use of Clarke's book as an excuse to resign, which then provided him further excuse to start his own school. Yamamoto Shuko wrote that "because the

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<sup>76</sup>William Newton Clarke, An Outline of Christian Theology (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1898), p. 38.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., p. 244.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., p. 331.

<sup>79</sup>UMTSJ, 3:467.

<sup>80</sup>Quoted in Aoyoshi, Uemura Masahisa Den, p. 509.



school was not going according to his plan"<sup>81</sup> Uemura resigned. The only evidence to support such a theory was the understanding Uemura and Serata Ryo, a naval officer and friend of Uemura, had regarding a Japanese controlled and taught seminary. Serata died in 1900 leaving Uemura to carry out the plan.<sup>82</sup>

Whatever Uemura and Serata may have agreed to, the timing of Uemura's resignation is important. By the turn of the century the Japanese had gained a new sense of their identity as a nation. This was reflected in the steps which the Nihon Kirisuto Kyokai had taken in establishing its independence from the parent American organization. Uemura had also established his leadership in the denomination and the Christian community, most recently in the debate he had waged with Ebina on the person of Christ. The establishment of a theological seminary can be seen as further evidence of the determination and willingness of the Japanese to be responsible keepers of their own theological house.

Uemura's motives for the founding of his own seminary were related to his basic convictions regarding Japanese responsibility. He believed it imperative that those desiring to build the church in Japan must have a correct understanding of the times, the conditions and the obstacles which confronted them. He believed that the circumstances in Japan were such that only those with an overpowering determination to win a hearing for the gospel and to build the church could possibly win.

At stake was the theological vitality of pastors, evangelists and lay believers to defend and live their faith before their fellow

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<sup>81</sup> UMTSJ, 3:325

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., p. 527.

citizens. Uemura bemoaned the fact that there were too many preachers who were ineffective, and too few men of character. "The number of men is ample," he said, "but there is some vital lack."<sup>83</sup> What was that lack? In his answer, Uemura quoted Wesley's statement that one hundred men who hated sin and feared naught but God could move the world. "To become genuine Christians is the first and only thing needful," he declared.<sup>84</sup>

One of Uemura's concerns for the church was that pastors and members alike could all too easily give the impression that the church was a refuge for those who wanted to detach themselves from society, or a place where helpless people gathered. To avoid giving this impression the church must be strong, independent and genuinely Christian. One way to forge a church of this kind was to employ the appropriate training methods. To do this Uemura was convinced that he had to form his own school. The statement which appeared in the seminary prospectus contained these sentiments:

Japan needs a Christianity that will be independent of foreign aid and that will have the determination to get on by itself, relying on nothing but on Christ and His Spirit.<sup>85</sup>

To insure this kind of Christianity in Japan the school needed to be administered and taught by Japanese. Serata and Uemura both held to a vision of a purified Yamato Damashi (Spirit of Japan). They believed that the most faithful Christians were Japanese Christians by virtue of

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<sup>83</sup>D. C. Greene, The Christian Movement in Japan, Eighth Annual Issue (Tokyo: Kyobunkan, 1909), p. 100.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid., p. 101.

<sup>85</sup>Quoted in Aoyoshi, Christian Leader, p. 217.

their background and upbringing.<sup>86</sup> They wanted an expression of the Gospel that was not "foreign-smelling" but "Japanese-smelling" or an indigenized Gospel. One of their Japanese friends, Benimatsu, said, "I welcomed the Japanized Gospel which Uemura and Serata carried."<sup>87</sup> As long as ministerial preparation was in the hands of foreigners, Uemura believed that there would be an unmistakable foreignness to it. Foreign teachers were unfamiliar with Japanese culture and unable to impart the heritage of the past to their students. Only Japanese teachers and administrators could overcome the problem.

Uemura reflected upon the spirit behind the formation of the seminary in an article he wrote the year before his death.<sup>88</sup>

For a long time there has been dissatisfaction with the missionary policy regarding evangelism. Because of this dissatisfaction there has been a long dispute over the subject of independence. Financial aid given to seminary students is poor preparation for independence. If a military school doesn't teach independence, the soldier won't become independent. In the same way, if the seminary doesn't teach independence . . . This was one of the reasons for starting the Shingakusha. We had no support from the domestic church or foreign church. This is its "ism." Not dependent on the denomination but on individual aid, that of Japanese Christians. Also some from foreigners, those with aspiration.<sup>89</sup>

The note which Uemura struck on the importance of independence was his way of saying that only those with this kind of spirit could survive. If one wasn't ready to stand by himself, he was obviously not prepared for the rigors of the Christian life in Japan.

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<sup>86</sup> UMTSJ, 3:540

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> "Tokyo Shingakusha Setsuritsu no Kokoromochi" (The Spirit of the Establishment of Tokyo Seminary) in UMTSJ, 3:543.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

The basic or root motive behind the seminary was to have a proper training place for ministerial candidates. But there were other objectives in Uemura's mind when he started the school. He feared professionalism and its debilitating effects on the church. Theology, he believed, belonged to the entire church, not only to an elite class of ministers or theological teachers. The rise of Plymouth Brethren groups and the Mu-kyokai (Non-church) in Japan reflected a certain reaction to a professional clergy. Since neither group supported the concept of a special office for clergy neither had a need for special ministerial training schools.

In contrast, Uemura was strongly in favor of well-taught, well-prepared clergy. The answer to the dangers of professionalism he believed did not lie in rejecting training institutions, but instead in the choice of men for ministry and the kind of training provided for their preparation. Uemura wanted to improve the training methods. He began by naming the seminary the Tokyo Shingakusha (Tokyo Theological Society).<sup>90</sup> This school was to be a community of believers who shared their lives together. The teachers were to model ministry as well as teach it. Teachers and students together studied, discussed, prayed and engaged in the practical things of life. Mutual study and encouragement were to be a part of the entire program.

To further strengthen the theological level of the church and avoid professionalism Uemura introduced various programs for learning. He established three major programs in the seminary, the Department of

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<sup>90</sup>Ibid., 3:562.

Theological Research, the Theological Club for the training of evangelists, and the Department for Women. The Department of Theological Research trained would-be ministers. The Theological Club was to provide continuing education for pastors and its members met weekly to study and discuss theological topics. The third and most unique of all three was the program opened for women. Uemura encouraged women to prepare for ministry in the church.<sup>91</sup> Two of his daughters went to America for theological study and one studied in Scotland after which she returned to Japan to pastor a church. Uemura's desire to educate the whole church led him to the unusual step of including women in the seminary. He also scheduled classes in the evening to attract university students.

Uemura offered no scholarships and no financial aid. He insisted instead that his students pay tuition, a practice no other theological school followed. The high standards attracted twenty or thirty students each year and those who were trained there had the reputation of being able and committed men.

At the same time Uemura argued for a kind of professionalism. In an article titled, "Shiroto Shingaku," (Amateur Theology) he insisted that "the church like the military, must have its professional class."<sup>92</sup>

The church today needs two kinds of theologians, one the professional, and two, the non-professional. By having its professionals Christianity will be guarded and made sound by professors of theology. At the same time there must be a warning. The professional must not give the impression that he is a professional. Jesus was the first non-professional Christian.<sup>93</sup>

In this vaguely worded statement, Uemura reiterated his desire for a theologically well-trained people who would resist the temptation to

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<sup>91</sup>Ibid, 5:597-764

<sup>92</sup>Ibid., 3:522

<sup>93</sup>Ibid

behave arrogantly. A special elite class could only discourage others in the church.

Therefore, Uemura encouraged "amateur theologians," people, well taught theologically, but not professional clergy. Uemura spoke of the positive contributions of such.

1. He will not only grow stronger himself, he will bring profit for the world and people.
2. Amateur theologians will promote a non-professional study atmosphere.
3. They will contribute to the propagation of theology.
4. If amateur theologians continue to increase in the church, the pastors will be forced to study more to keep ahead of them, and finally,
5. The gap between theology and real life will narrow. Elitism will not happen, and theology will become the property of the common man.<sup>94</sup>

It was said that the two important elements which Uemura inculcated in the seminary from the beginning were a spiritually and materially supported school by Japanese, and the promotion of a sound, progressive evangelicalism.<sup>95</sup> The exact meaning of "progressive evangelicalism" though undefined becomes clear in the light of the theological position Uemura maintained, namely, a position between liberalism on the one hand, and fundamentalism on the other. Takakura, Uemura's disciple and successor, tried to define that position in this way.

Next let us contrast evangelical and liberal Christianity. The former places emphasis on the gospel, that is, on the objective historical revelation, while the latter emphasizes the subjectivity of human nature. . . . In contrast to the former's belief in the miracle of the incarnation in Jesus Christ, the latter believe in the universal incarnation within all humanity.

In contrast to the former's emphasis on man's sin and retribution, on the atonement through grace, and on the new life and sanctification through the Holy Spirit, the latter views humanity

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<sup>94</sup>Ibid., pp. 525-26.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid., p. 581.

optimistically, believes in progressive development, and places hope in salvation through education, enlightenment and good works.<sup>96</sup>

In the same essay, Takakura next contrasts the faith with what he termed extreme evangelicalism.

We must also recognize some of the pitfalls into which extreme evangelicalism may easily fall. For example, as seen in extreme evangelicalism's denial of the historical study of the scriptures and in its holding to verbal inspiration as a result of emphasizing the Bible, evangelicalism may deny the demands of our reason, a direction which we cannot consider healthy. Further, extreme evangelicalism may easily fall into the subjectivism of faith . . . and the attitude toward objective society becomes one of unconcern.<sup>97</sup>

Uemura's evangelicalism brought him to belief in the objective, historical revelation of God in Jesus Christ, while not insisting on verbal inspiration for the Bible. This was the kind of theology which he embraced for himself and taught at the seminary. Uemura stressed the spirit of independence and free theological study. As the later chapters of this study will show, he hoped to promote a spirit of research and study among his students by leaving some questions unanswered and theological positions undefined.

In the memorial issue of the Koyu magazine, following Uemura's death in 1925, Takakura wrote the following tribute:

There was no smell of a teacher in Uemura. He was a true teacher. A good teacher must have authority and love, and he had both. He understood students and knew how to bring out their best qualities. Uemura had spiritual imagination, taste, insight in thought, and a very wide knowledge about literature and the thinking of others. He was not a strong systematizer, but had great and keen insight.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>96</sup>"Takakura Tokutaro, Orusodokishi Oyobi Fukuinshugi no Honshitsu" (The Essence of Orthodoxy and Evangelicalism), in Takakura Zenshu, 8 vols., 4:367-68.

<sup>97</sup>Ibid., p. 368.

<sup>98</sup>UMTSJ, 3:581

Uemura started with nothing in 1904. Within twenty-five years the Shingakusha had graduated one hundred and thirty students. The library was said to have one of the best collections of theological books in all Japan.

In 1923 the seminary buildings and library were destroyed in the great earthquake but within a year a new temporary structure was erected and dedicated. Four months later Uemura died.

The seminary, which was very dear to his heart, taxed his energies to their limit. He raised funds, taught classes, advised his students. He combined these activities with other responsibilities of preaching, pastoring and writing.

In earlier times Uemura was fond of saying,

In these days Japan is able to carry on any modern enterprise, governmental or private, without the help of foreigners. Christian work only is still being carried on by foreigners in the main. We must think this over more seriously. If five pastors join their hands to carry on theological education, an independent seminary can be started.<sup>99</sup>

Each center of Uemura's activity contributed in part to the growth of the church in Japan. Each showed the influence and management skills with which he administered; which now leads to a discussion of his world view and how this influenced his theological formation.

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<sup>99</sup>Quoted in Aoyoshi, Christian Leader, p. 217.



## CHAPTER IV

### UEMURA AND HIS RELIGIOUS WORLD VIEW

Uemura, who was converted to Christianity at the age of sixteen and baptized one year later, entered into a ministry of evangelism and church planting after a brief theological preparation, which he continued until his death in 1925. As one of his admirers said, "His life was almost a straight line. Once converted to Christianity there was no turning aside or back."<sup>1</sup> One senses no doubts or misgivings in Uemura, that possibly he had missed a turn earlier in life or made some error of judgment regarding the direction of his life. From the time he first believed till the time of his death he was unwavering in his Christian commitment. He worked energetically for the spread of the Gospel and the establishment of the church in Japan and in many other parts of Asia. As a pastor of a large congregation in Tokyo in the largest and most influential of Protestant church denominations, the Nihon Kirisuto Kyokai (Church of Christ in Japan), his teaching and preaching ministry was well-recognized and his Christian influence far reaching. He was regarded by many Japanese Christians, and a large segment of the missionary community, as the champion of orthodoxy.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ishiwara Ken, "Uemura Masahisa Ron" (Uemura Masahisa) Fukuin to Sekai 20 (October, 1965): 8.

<sup>2</sup>Albertus Pieters, Mission Problems in Japan: Theoretical and Practical (New York: Board of Publication of the Reformed Church in America, 1912), p. 82.

Chapter five focuses on Uemura's theological thought and formation and how it was that he was so quickly associated with what was considered the orthodox position. Important as that study is, however, attention must be paid first to the base upon which Uemura's theological thinking rested, that is, his presuppositions. A study of Uemura's thought reveals an underlying set of assumptions, formed out of his culture, which became the bed or foundation upon which his new faith was to rest.

The way people see reality can be termed their world view. A world view is the way people perceive the world, the way they "know" it to be. What they see is in part what is there, in part who they are, and these combine to form one reality, one world view. The concept is not without some degree of vagueness or ambiguity, but like the concepts of culture and ethos, that vagueness encountered in thinking about a world view stems in part from its comprehensiveness. The world view of a people is the way a people characteristically look outward upon the universe, and in this way, the concept embraces broad areas.

Robert Redfield notes that studies undertaken at Yale University reveal that there are at least seventy-five elements common to the world view of all cultures. These include humanness, the idea of self, the nuclear family, nature, spatial and temporal orientation and so forth.<sup>3</sup> Redfield concludes that all world views could probably be related to the

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<sup>3</sup>Robert Redfield, "The Primitive World View," Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society 96 (1952):30-36.

elements of a triangle, the three sides formed by man, nature, and gods or supernature.<sup>4</sup>

In the case of the Japanese, as with others, their religious world view and their values and ways of thinking, were shaped by their religious cultural heritage. Many varieties of religious traditions have coexisted in Japan.<sup>5</sup> The most important and easily identifiable are: Shinto, the indigenous tradition which has existed for more than two thousand years; Buddhism and Confucianism, both imported from China but which have profoundly influenced the spiritual and social life of the Japanese people since the sixth century A.D.; folk religions entered in the syncretistic religious beliefs and practices which have long been the heritage of the common people; new religious movements, many of which emerged and experienced their most rapid development during the transition from the Tokugawa reign to the Meiji rule; and finally, Christianity, the most recent to enter Japan, but which also exerted a noticeable cultural impact since its first introduction in the sixteenth century and then again in the nineteenth century.

Before the introduction of Buddhism and Confucianism into Japan there was no structured organized religion. Shinto did not originate as a self-conscious tradition and even the term "Shinto" was used only after the introduction of Chinese religions to distinguish the ancient rites of the Japanese from those of Chinese origin.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Hori Jehiro, Ikado Fujio, Wakimoto Tsuneya, Yamagawa Keiichi, eds. Japanese Religion (Tokyo: Kodansha International Ltd., 1972), p. 11.

Shinto deities are called kami, a term at once singular and plural. The kami are numerous, even innumerable. Originally any form of existence that possessed some extraordinary, awe-inspiring quality was called kami. The kami have never been conceived of as absolute or transcendent in relation to man and the world, and therefore the kami idea held by most Japanese is qualitatively different from the idea of God found in the Judeo-Christian tradition. Not discontinuity but significant continuity between God and man has been the characteristic belief.

The Shinto world view was and is basically affirmative, and this-worldly. The present world is regarded as the locus of value, other worlds having little of a positive nature for man. In keeping with this, the Shinto view of man is also affirmative and optimistic. Human nature is essentially good and pure and is accepted for what it is.

The idea of original sin does not exist in Shinto. In old Japanese, tsumi (evil) was an undifferentiated notion. It included not only moral transgressions but also natural disasters, physical disfigurements and disease. Evil or badness was in essence pollution, physical as well as spiritual while goodness was identified with purity. Because man is considered as originally clean, evil was a secondary accretion, a negative entity which could and should be removed by ritual purification.

Unlike religions that begin with dogmas and creeds and try to work out logically the principles by which human behavior should be governed, Shinto stresses inward mystical experience and mystically oriented rites. Worship is so conceived of as that which helps people

regain their original purity and uprightness and live a life of reverence for the kami.

Buddhism was introduced to Japan by way of Korea sometime in the sixth century. It underwent many important changes as it journeyed from India through Central Asia and China to Japan. When it reached Japan it went through more change as it was consciously and unconsciously indigenized. While it brought to Japan the principle of transcendence and world negation, in its encounter with the Japanese, it was converted from a world-denying to a world-affirming religion.

The third most important influence in the shaping of the Japanese world view is Confucianism. Unlike Shinto and Buddhism, however, at no time in history did it take an explicitly religious form. Confucianism has consisted of two distinct components. One is socio-political, the other, moral. The first provided answers as to how a people should be governed and how they should exist in a social order. The second had to do with the ethical behavior of men with other men. Five relations, namely, those between lord and retainer, parent and child, older children and younger, husband and wife, and friend and friend are specified. Combined with a concern for proper behavior within these five relationships was the idea of "the way." As a principle which underlies and governs all things, "the way" indwells not only the world of nature in all its forms, but also the world of human society with its institutions and mores, not to mention its activating presence in the hearts of men. Like Shinto, Confucianism is based primarily on affirmation of the present world, and thus on this-worldly principles. It exercised enormous influence on Japanese culture from the time of its introduction to the present.

Shinto, Buddhism and Confucianism blended together over the centuries to form a reasonably harmonious viewpoint within which the spiritual and social life of the Japanese took shape. Basic in all three was the idea of continuity between the human and divine, orientation toward family or household religion and an optimistic view of man. Furthermore, it provided a group-oriented ethic aiming at social integration.

Many of the first generation Christians in Japan were from samurai homes and their world view was formed from a combination of all three religions with particular influence from Confucianism. The Confucian cultural tradition in which they were raised provided guidelines for relations between members of the society but said nothing about God or gods. Thus when they first heard the message of Christianity they often heard it not so much as an alternative to Confucian doctrine as that which provided the inner meaning to life and an understanding of reality.

The world view of Uemura was common to that of his countrymen, but by virtue of his samurai heritage, more pronounced. He nowhere refers in his writings explicitly to his world view but the assumptions implicit in his world view appear in his sermons and articles. Certain commentators note development and change in Uemura's thought<sup>6</sup> much of which came naturally with age and maturity. Some change notwithstanding, the outline of his basic assumptions or presuppositions appear as often in his later years as they do in the beginning.

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<sup>6</sup> Ishiwara Ken, Nihon Kirisutokyo Shi Ron (The History of Japanese Christianity) (Tokyo: Shinkyō Shuppansha, 1967), part 2, chapter 3.

These assumptions of Uemura, generally referred to hereafter as his basic motifs, formed a sub-strata for his theological formation, that is, an undifferentiated foundation upon which his theological thinking was to take place. As such these motifs were not non-theological or a-theological as much as they were pre-theological. They were the spectacles with which he read and interpreted the Bible. Naturally, it was not all one-sided. The truths of the Scriptures challenged and changed portions of his world view. Moreover, his assumptions worked in both positive and negative ways in his theological formation. On the one hand they prompted and abetted new theological development. On the other, they worked to prevent him from reaching and resting upon a firm biblical foundation which would not only have benefitted him and his generation, but those who came after and were influenced by his teaching and example.

That Uemura's world view formed a significant part of his hermeneutic for the reading and understanding of Scripture is foundational. In many cases his theological reflection did not bring about change in these assumptions but rather confirmed them. Several pivotal points of his theological thinking will be examined in the following chapter and this examination will show how his world view provided guidelines to his theology. In some cases it becomes apparent that he held a type of two-tiered thinking in which he retained his basic motifs alongside Bible truth even though they were not necessarily in agreement. Rather than rejecting one for the other, he worked for some kind of blending with his basic world view winning out over the Bible.

It was in this sense that he became what might be called an instinctive proponent of indigenized Christianity. Uemura's world view, as we shall see, was both grid through which Christian truth was analyzed, and foundation upon which Christian truth was to stand. He learned his theology from the Bible and from other sources, that is, Western theologians and missionaries. He grasped this theology in such a way that many understood was orthodox. But his religious world view was also active in calling into question those parts of the Christian faith which appeared anti-thetical to the Japanese character traits.

As a first-generation Christian pastor and thinker, Uemura embraced Christian truth and desired it for his countrymen. He also believed instinctively that it could best serve and be transplanted as it was fitted to the Japanese mind set. He wanted to remain true to the faith as he had learned it. His motivation for shaping it to the Japanese mind was just as strong, however, and thus the reputation as an orthodox pastor, but also a "naturalizer" of the faith.

A study of Uemura's world view shows how he treated each motif as a given fact or truth not needing a reasoned defense. He gave no particular priority but assumed each to be true. It was the new faith, Christianity, which needed examination, explanation and defense in the light of its differences with commonly held beliefs of the people.

Before examining the motifs found in Uemura thought, however a brief discussion must be given to the subject of the Gospel and culture, a topic which is being widely discussed today, but also one which has been the subject of debate for centuries. "It is," says John



Stott, "the burning practical concern of every missionary, every preacher, every Christian witness."<sup>7</sup>

The fact of the matter is that it is impossible to evangelize in a cultural vacuum. No one can reduce the biblical Gospel to a few culture-free axioms which are universally intelligible. This is because the mind-set of all human beings has been formed by the culture in which they have been brought up. Their presuppositions, their value systems, the ways in which they think, and the degree of their receptivity or resistance to new ideas, are all largely determined by their cultural inheritance and are filters through which they listen and evaluate.

It is self-evident then that if a religion is to win credit as a potentially universal religion, it must show itself capable of adaptation to a great variety of situations. It is equally evident that no other religion so far can compare with Christianity in its capacity for just this kind of adaptability.

The awareness of culture's realities in the communication of the Gospel is not new. In a letter from the Roman Pope, Gregory the Great, to the abbot Mellitus in July 18, 601, this advise is found:

The heathen temples of these people need not be destroyed, only the idols which are to be found in them. . . . If the temples are well built, it is a good idea to detach them from the service of the devil, and to adapt them for the worship of the true God.<sup>8</sup>

Since that time until the present, messengers of the Gospel, particularly

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<sup>7</sup> John R. W. Stott and Robert Coote, eds., Down to Earth Studies in Christianity and Culture (Grand Rapids, Michigan; Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980), p. vii.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Stephen Neill, A History of Christian Missions (Baltimore: Penguin Books, Inc., 1964), p. 68.

in cross-cultural situations, have struggled with the question of the adaption or assimilation of the Gospel message into the thought forms of people, not yet reached with the Gospel. The problem faced can be stated this way: "How can I, who was born and brought up in one culture, take truth out of the Bible, which was addressed to people in a second culture, and communicate it to people who belong to a third culture, without either falsifying the message or rendering it unintelligible?" As noted previously, Kraemer warns that adaption is not only unavoidable, but necessary and imperative. At the same time, it must also be recognized that the problem of adaptation leads inevitably to the further problem of syncretism. In short, while there is the widespread recognition that the Gospel must be clothed in the relevant thought-forms of the people among whom it desires a hearing, there is equal concern that the assimilation of the Gospel message not cloud its true meaning.

Following the lead of Hendrik Kraemer, who has done considerable thinking and writing on the subject of syncretism<sup>9</sup> a discussion of Uemura's thought should be preceded by further reflection on the subject of syncretism. Two points which Kraemer has made can be helpful here. The first is that the syncretistic attitude and the syncretistic apprehension of the problem of ultimate religious truth is an all-pervading and all-determinative issue in the great Asian countries. By this Kraemer wishes to point out that in contrast to other portions of the world, it is within Asian cultures that the problem of syncretism is most keenly present.

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<sup>9</sup>See Hendrik Kraemer, The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World (Grand Rapids: Kregal Books, 1938) and Religion and the Christian Faith (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1956).

The second point which Kraemer makes is that syncretism, while not unrelated to the missionary and to missions, is primarily the peculiar problem of the Christian Church in Asia. By this he wants to make clear that while missionaries, those who take the Gospel message initially, are always concerned with the problem of syncretism, it is the Church itself, especially in Asia, where syncretism is so much a part of life, that has to live, grow and witness in that specific world.

What does it concretely mean when we say that the Church in these countries has to be deeply aware of the challenge of syncretism? We have already pointed out, at the beginning of this investigation into syncretism, that in the last decades the issue has been raised more by Western theologians and students of missions than by representatives of the Asian Churches. The implication of what we have said is obviously that in principle these Western voices are right. It has, however, become increasingly clear to me that the issue has been raised in too theoretical a manner, and with too superficial and too accidental a knowledge of the real problem, at least in regard to the Asian situation of today as the outcome of a long historical process. . . . By "too theoretical" we mean that it is put by Westerners in terms that are too exclusively dogmatic, and therefore from the outset betrays a lack of imaginative insight.<sup>10</sup>

What are the implications of Kraemer's insistence that the problem of syncretism belongs to the Church? "It is of great importance," says Kraemer, "that the Church be truly independent and self-determining, so that it may be clear that she really belongs to the country and is considered to be so."<sup>11</sup> This is, of course, a theme which appears constantly in the thought of Uemura. The motif of independence and the meaning assigned to it by Uemura is discussed later on in this chapter. Those remarks can be anticipated here by noting the importance with

<sup>10</sup>Hendrik Kraemer, Religion and the Christian Faith (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1956), pp. 406-407.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 415.

which Kraemer considers independence in relation to confronting the problem of syncretism.

Another area for attention in the Church's answer to the problem of syncretism lies in theological education. To quote Kraemer again,

It seems to us that assiduous study of the Bible should occupy a central place. This study should not only, not even primarily, be carried out scientifically but rather existentially and theologically.<sup>12</sup>

As it was pointed out in the previous chapter part of the genius of Uemura lay in his insight regarding the necessity of theological education for the Japanese and the responsibility of doing it in their hands.

As the title of this study suggests, Uemura was an instinctive proponent of an indigenized Christianity in Japan. Where did he stand on the adaptation-syncretism scale? Compared to Ebina Danjo, Uemura made concessions to popular liberal thinking but vigorously opposed Ebina especially in terms of the person of Christ. It will be noted that disappointingly Uemura gave less stress to the work of Christ and more to the person of Christ and his divinity. Still Uemura managed to leave the impression in the minds of the Japanese that he was one of Christianity's strongest proponents. Uchimura Kanzo individualized and privatized the faith refusing to recognize the church in its institutionalized and structured form. In doing so he drew a following of major proportions. Uemura was instead a churchman, always working within the structure for the extension of the church. This and much more must have prompted A. K. Reischauer to believe that more than any other Christian

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 416.

leader Uemura did more to naturalize the Christian faith in Japan while at the same time keeping it thoroughly Christian in character. The accuracy of that statement depends on the theological position of the one making the judgment. One can be very sympathetic to Uemura's theological position if he compares him with other Japanese Christian leaders of his time. One can also be sympathetic to the intensity of feeling Uemura had for making the Gospel understandable to the Japanese even while insisting on the uniqueness of the person of Jesus Christ. Whether he overstepped the Biblical parameters and limits in his efforts to adapt the Christian faith, or did not go far enough, will only become clear as we turn now to an examination of the four major motifs in Uemura's world view, and then in the final chapter to see how his world view impacted on his grasp of the Christian faith.

An examination of the four major motifs of Uemura's world view will highlight that each motif has to do with man, not God, which is but a reflection of a world view, the origins of which contained very little, if any, understanding of an absolute, transcendent God. Instead, it was basically affirmative and optimistic of man, and this-worldly in its orientation. With this as his background Uemura's sermons and writings contain much more of an emphasis on what man must do, rather than what God has done. The this-worldly, affirmative, optimistic view shows itself repeatedly. Thus the first motif, not specifically named by Uemura, centered about man's basic orientation to life in this world, his capacity for religion, and a relationship with God. It was an optimistic view in which continuity with God and harmony between God and man was assumed. With this as a basis, the other three motifs go on

to speak of attitudes or postures which man may assume during his life time, attitudes which are possible to him because of his native ability.

The second motif is aspiration (*kokorozashi*). Aspiration is an attitude basic to man. He must aspire for something higher, something better than what he finds at the present. Mere acceptance of the status quo shows absence of aspiration and a satisfaction with the present which Uemura believed to be ultimately self-defeating.

Closely related to this was a third emphasis which comes up repeatedly for attention and discussion, that of man's independence. A Samurai had one final loyalty, that to his lord, and that loyalty superseded all others. There are few other values Uemura treated with more importance and repeated attention than the maintenance of one's own independence. He showed himself an example of this in the way he carried out his ministry and the way he led his church denomination.

The fourth and final motif which emerges in Uemura's writings is the concept of progressiveness. There are similarities between the concepts of aspiration and progressiveness. The former refers more to an attitude which man should possess, the latter to a description of the state of things as they are. Uemura believed in the possibilities which are always before man, the realization of which is within his grasp. Man had the capacity to move forward, he believed, and the Japanese nation had the capacity to take great strides in cultural achievements and contribute to other neighbor countries. Japanese Christians were by nature a progressive people with a significant contribution to make to believers in other lands.

These four concepts appear repeatedly in Uemura's messages, preached and written. His Christian faith was woven in and around these concepts and where they touched, the truths of the Bible were interpreted within the context of what these assumptions said about man. Each must be examined more closely to understand their specific impact upon Uemura's thinking, his theology and his ministry.

#### The Motif of Continuity

A starting point for a discussion of Uemura's motifs can be found in the expectations of the early converts to Christianity, those from samurai families from within domains which were on the losing side of the struggle for political leadership in the Japan of the Meiji Restoration. One great appeal of Christianity lay in what they perceived to be its contribution to the formation of a modern Japan. One of the consistently reiterated claims of these young men was that Christianity was to be accepted for the sake of Japan's modernization.<sup>13</sup> Deprived of their economic, political and social privileges, many of these young men were seeking guiding principles to replace the older morality.<sup>14</sup> They did not come to Christianity primarily because of a deeply felt personal need for God's forgiveness, but more out of a concern for their nation and its people, and possibly their own welfare. Rather than a conviction of their own sin and need of salvation from sin, a greater

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<sup>13</sup>Saba Wataru, ed., Uemura Masahisa to Sono Jidai, 7 vols. (Tokyo: Kyobunkan, 1966), 1:575-77. Hereafter this work will be cited as UMTSJ.

<sup>14</sup>Morioka Kiyomi, Religion in Changing Japanese Society (Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1975), p. 120.

concern was their desire to provide a continuing base for the moral rectitude of the nation in a new situation. Tomeoka Kosuke wrote that it was the realization that Christianity taught equality for all which led him to Christ. "I was impressed with the statement that the soul of the merchant and that of a bushi are equal before God."<sup>15</sup> Niijima Jo, a prominent Christian and founder of Doshisha University, said that he sought to serve God and nation, both missions motivated by the same principles.<sup>16</sup> These two men serve as examples of samurai who converted to Christianity out of the conviction that Christian principles could help in the establishment of a new and strong Japan. Stated in other terms, the first concern of those who converted to the Christian faith was not based on the belief that the nation and its people were suffering from moral decay. They wished instead to help their nation retain its national sovereignty and independence in the face of possible Western incursion.

The way Uemura regarded his nation, his people, and the morality and culture with which he identified himself illustrates this. His emphasis was not upon their moral disruption and degeneracy but quite the contrary. What he did assume was that the Japanese nation and the people were morally upright people who compared favorably with other people, even those who lived in the so-called Christian nations. In an article written about the family in Japanese society, he said,

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<sup>15</sup>UMTSJ, 1:502.

<sup>16</sup>Sumiya Mikio, Kindai Nihon no Keisei to Kirisutokyo (Christianity and the Establishment of Modern Japan) (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1954), pp. 8-9.



Roughly speaking, the moral standard of Japanese homelife, even among non-Christians, can be ranked as high as that in any Christian home in Christendom. By this I do not mean that Christianity is not needed in this country. On the contrary, it means that the ground is all the richer for the cultivation of the Christian seeds. The homes of Japan without Christian ideals would become static and the growth dwarfed, falling into the murser of provincial patriotism.<sup>17</sup>

The tone of this statement is remarkable in that while Uemura argues for the need of Christian homes, he does so within the context of a nation and people whose moral standard is as high as anything which can be found elsewhere. His argument is that due to the high moral standards of the Japanese, the process of evangelization should be that much quicker. Mostly upright people by nature seek a higher level of morality.

At the outbreak of World War I, Uemura struck a similar note when he stated,

We shall find that it is through the Christian spirit that not only western civilization may be rescued, but also the noble achievement of our own Meiji Restoration will find its perfection therein.<sup>18</sup>

Uemura was writing to non-Christian Japanese who were skeptical about the worth of Christianity. Western nations considered Christian in the eyes of the Japanese were warring against one another, a sign of moral decay. Uemura argued that the Christian spirit could rescue these Western nations, and the "noble achievement of the Restoration will find its perfection." In other words, what is already noble will receive further perfection. At the end of the war Uemura commented on the grace of God extended to Japan in the granting of victory.

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<sup>17</sup> Quoted in Aoyoshi Katsuhisa, Dr. Uemura Masahisa: A Christian Leader (Tokyo: Kyobunkan, 1941), pp. 166-167.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 238.

The nation was led by a Higher Power to create a new history for herself, I believe. We owe the deepest gratitude to Him for His wonderful delivery. Japan therefore must realize her position and responsibility and must help in the reconstruction of the world, she must direct her own spirit into a new channel, working in harmony with England and America and with others who are dominated by this high ideal.<sup>19</sup>

This kind of positive attitude and certainty which Uemura had in God's favor upon the Japanese led him to some startling conclusions.

When Japan annexed Korea in December, 1909, Uemura was able to portray this action in a quasi-spiritual light:

And Moses called unto Joshua and said unto him in the sight of all Israel, "Be strong, and of a good courage; for thou must go with this people unto the land which the Lord has sworn unto their fathers to give them; and thou shall cause them to inherit it.

Japan has been related to Korea intimately and long. We feel truly that God has sworn to give it to our fathers. This conviction in the Japanese mind has been so deep-rooted that nothing could subdue it. . . . In genius, ability and responsibility Japan is endowed with a paternal privilege over her junior neighbor. As Korea has always been a hotbed of disturbances Japan should make Korea her territory in order to lead her into civilization, and as a contribution to the advancement of mankind. It seems a most proper and reasonable thing to happen, and nobody can gainsay it.<sup>20</sup>

Using the example of God's covenant promises to His people Israel to give them a Promised Land Uemura argued for Japan's take-over and annexation of Korea. The reasons given were two-fold. Like the Israelites, the Japanese held to the strong conviction that God had sworn the country of Korea to their fathers, and therefore to conquer and subdue it would be in keeping with what they determined was divine destiny. The second line of argument was that Japan had been endowed with a genius and ability making her the natural instrument for the restoration of order and advancement of mankind. The evidence was clear enough that Uemura

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 242.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 232.

did not feel he had to labor the point. He made no attempt to ground his argument in the number of years Christianity had been in Japan, or the growing influence of the Christian faith in the country. His conviction about Japan's right to annex her next-door neighbor was based on the parallels he drew between Israel and Japan. By implication, therefore, rather than explicit statement, Uemura assumed that the grace of God had come upon the nation of Japan. This assumption automatically ruled out the possibility of Japan as a rebellious people who had rejected God and had thereby forfeited the right to know God's purposes through their neglect of His commands or special revelation.

Uemura's remarks about the right of Japan to bring Korea under her control are a part of the larger framework of Uemura's general understanding of Japan, her people, and the way of God's providential preparation of this people for His purposes. Aoyoshi remarked of him, "He never doubted that the Japanese people would be saved; and he was firmly convinced of their special mission from God."<sup>21</sup> This kind of statement recalls to mind an observation made earlier about a general attitude among the early Christian converts. Christianity was interpreted in terms of what it could do for the nation, and only secondarily for the individual. In this way it was natural for Uemura to talk as if God's will was going to be realized upon the nation as a whole not merely upon the few who believed. This type of thinking opened the way for Uemura and others to read the Old Testament as if it could be directly applied to the Japanese situation. If God dealt with the people of

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 204.

Israel in that fashion, he reasoned, surely He would be pleased to work the same with the favored nation of Japan.

Additional evidence found in Japan's background and history buttressed this kind of thinking. Uemura's remarks about Bushido (the comprehensive term includes not only a reference to the samurai himself, that is, the Bushi, but the "way of the Bushi," in effect, the way he lives and acts, his value system and loyalties) made the same point. His basic concern is summed up in these words, "Let the world return to the ancient days of the Bushido. Nay, I mean what I want to see is baptized Bushido."<sup>22</sup> This statement reflects the high value Uemura placed on the code of values held and preserved especially by the members of the samurai class of which he was a member. According to Uemura's estimation, the value system of the past provided a trunk to which Christian values could be grafted. He wrote,

We ought not to reject bushido indiscriminately. Just as the cherry flower is the queen of all flowers, so is the samurai master of all men. We may rightly be proud of our being descendants of samurai. Nevertheless, we have to acknowledge a number of shortcomings and faults in the code of the samurai. Our prayer is that the spirit of the samurai with all its praiseworthy strong points may be grafted to that of the cross through our faith in the Lord of all creatures, the Saviour of the world.<sup>23</sup>

Uemura argued for the belief that Bushido provided a ready-made system which was in basic agreement with Christian values. German tribes were conquered by the armies of the Roman Empire and Christianized. "In this way," Uemura said, "the barbaric characteristics were polished

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<sup>22</sup>Chosakushu, 1:391.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., June 15, 1894.

by Christianity. In the same way Bushi virtues should be polished by Christianity."<sup>24</sup>

Bushido embodied the standard of virtue of the Japanese people. However, with the downfall of the Tokugawa rule and the coming of the Meiji era came the demise of the Bushi system. As those values weakened there were additional signs that people were taking greater interest in their own immediate welfare than they were in their nation. What was the answer? Uemura wrote,

We need a new standard--Baptized bushido, that is, the Christian faith. This Meiji society has no life, therefore as Christians we have to bring life, righteousness, social cures to this fallen society.<sup>25</sup>

The words Uemura used, "baptized bushido," a term which he coined, referred to the Christian faith in which the old values of the Confucian ethic were infused only now with a new spiritual core. Writing about the Bushi temperament,<sup>26</sup> Uemura wrote that Bushido was the Old Testament in Japan,<sup>27</sup> in other words, the preparation for the coming of the new. What he saw was that the nation needed a way to preserve the old values, and this could only be done through Christianity.

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<sup>24</sup>"Kirisutokyo to Bushido" (Christianity and Bushido) in Chosakushu, 7 vols. (Tokyo: Shinko Shappanska, 1967), 1:391

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 396.

<sup>26</sup>"Bushi Kishitsu" (Bushi Temperament), Ibid., p. 413.

<sup>27</sup>A discussion of Bushido by a Japanese Christian who was sympathetic to the idea that Uemura presents in his writings appear in a book by Nitobe Inazo, Bushido: The Soul of Japan (Tokyo: Kenkyusha, 1939). The thesis in Nitobe's book is commented on by two writers, pro and con, in The Japan Christian Quarterly, July 1959.

Anyone who understands the real flavor of Bushi should be able to understand the sacrifice of Christ. The idea of self-sacrifice is native to the Bushi.<sup>28</sup>

Again in another article he wrote,

The spirit of responsibility, obligation, faithfulness, righteousness, these are all important to defeat materialism. Christians have a great responsibility to fight against materialism.<sup>29</sup>

Uemura looked back to his own conversion experience in his youth and saw in it something which could be related to all Japanese conversions. Prior to his becoming a Christian Uemura made it a rule to worship night and day before the shrine of Kato Kiyomasa. This samurai warrior from the past had been held before him by Uemura's mother as a "true samurai of the noblest type." "The lesson," said Uemura, "went home into my heart. I took Kiyomasa as my ideal hero." As a young boy Uemura confessed to a feeling of awe as he looked upon the picture of Kiyomasa dressed in his full armor. It was not uncommon for him to burst into tears of deep emotion during his visits to kneel and pray before Kiyomasa's shrine. What was it about this figure which moved Uemura to these emotional outbursts?

Nobleness of life lies in sacrifice for the high cause--to sacrifice one's life for one's own family, for his feudal master, for something higher than both of them. In life or in death, a true samurai counted himself for nothing and his ideal for everything. Give him a higher ideal and he would live for it faithfully even unto death.<sup>30</sup>

The spirit of self-sacrifice as the noblest expression of life lay at the heart of Bushido. Did not Uemura find in Christ a true samurai

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<sup>28</sup> Chosakushu, 1:413

<sup>29</sup> "Nani o motte bushido no sui o hozon sento suru ka?" (By what can we preserve the essence of bushido?) Ibid., p. 396.

<sup>30</sup> Aoyoshi's comments in Christian Leader, p. 18.

who sacrificed his own life for a higher cause? Commenting on Uemura's faith, Aoyoshi said,

The faith which Uemura embraced was the way of heroism originated by Christ himself, and a responsive loyalty on our side.<sup>31</sup>

Uemura's ideals, supplied by the values of Bushido, and personified in Kiyomasa, prepared him, by his own estimation, to better hear and understand the message of Christ.

However, Bushido provided more than a preparation for the Christian message. Uemura believed that it gave a peculiar significance to Japanese Christianity. He wrote,

If we recognize any elements in which Japanese Christianity is different from that of foreign churches, it must be the fact that in Japan, the spirit of loyalty, inherited from the days of old, has been baptized, its inherent significance having been conceptually heightened. . . . God is our lordly Prince, majestic in dignity, the Lord of hosts who leads the army to fight the cosmic battle against the evil power unto the final victory. We ought to faithfully obey with no selfishness. Thus Eastern Christianity will shine out among the Christian nations of the world by virtue of its steadfastness.<sup>32</sup>

This is the second of at least two positive values which Uemura saw in his own samurai culture. Not only did Bushido prepare the hearts of Japanese people for the Gospel, it added a certain quality to the Christian faith which otherwise would be missing. By drawing on the virtues of an ancient code of chivalry Christianity, he believed, was enriched. Japanese Christians therefore had much to contribute to other Christians in that the combination of the old and the new fused to bring about a better type of Christian.

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 64.

<sup>32</sup>Fukuin Shimpo, June 22, 1898. Quoted in Sumiya Mikio, "Masahisa Uemura and Christianity in Japan" Japan Christian Quarterly, 31 (October 1965): 256

Beginning with the Confucian-oriented optimistic view of man, an affirmation of human nature as essentially pure and good based on the deeper belief in the continuity between Kami and man, Uemura found much good in his culture, in Bushido, and in Japan's religious heritage. If Bushido was the Old Testament among the Japanese for the coming of the New Testament, Japanese traditional religions had a similar function:

The religions of Japan were nothing but the forerunners for Christianity, which God made use of as the preparation for the proclamation of the authentic faith.<sup>33</sup>

In one case Uemura took up the charges which he had heard leveled against traditional Japanese religions. The occasion for these criticisms was the discovery of corruption among Buddhist priests. Some felt that the religions themselves had to be reformed while others believed that the solution to this moral declension lay in importing new religions from abroad. Uemura did not share these opinions but felt that the suggested reforms pointed to a misunderstanding of the nature and significance of religion.

I do not attack the religions in Japan as enemies, for the traditional religions in Japan seem to serve as steps towards Christianity, the true religion. God has made preparation for true religion.<sup>34</sup>

The understanding of Japanese traditional religion as preparation for "true religion," that is, Christianity, gave Uemura a sympathetic attitude regarding religious leaders from the past. Uemura singled out for attention the figure of Honen (1133-1212) and Shinran

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 255.

<sup>34</sup>"Nihon Shukyo no Kotetsu" (Shift in Japanese Religion), quoted in Ishida Yoshiro, "The Concept of Self-Realization in the Uemura-Ebina Controversy." The Northeast Asia Journal of Theology 10 (March 1973):46.



(1173-1262), both important figures in the development of Japanese Buddhism.<sup>35</sup> Honen had divided all Buddhism into two categories: one in which people seek to attain enlightenment through disciplined self-effort, and one in which people seek to be reborn in the pure land through reliance on the mercy of Amida Buddha. Of these two, he opted for the second. Underlying his choice was the belief that the saving power of Amida Buddha was absolute and man was deeply enmeshed in sin. Honen was the first person in Japan to put the problem in such a way as to call for an either/or choice. He believed that the world had reached a final stage in history, and the moral level of mankind had reached a point that they were unable to achieve enlightenment by their own efforts, and could rely only on the compassion of Amida Buddha.

This teaching of Honen reached a new stage of development in the thought of his most famous disciple, Shinran. The pivotal idea which Shinran popularized was the compassion of Amida. All men, he believed, were already saved though they might not be aware of the fact. This idea of the grace of Amida Buddha spread throughout Japan and the organization founded by Shinran grew to become the largest single Buddhist sect in Japan.

Uemura's evaluation of this phenomenon was that God has answered Honen's spiritual quest by granting him the new discovery of the grace and mercy of Amida Buddha. He wrote:

The truth of Buddhism is perfected more fully, more soundly, in the Christian faith. Buddhism is not ineffective as an explanation of Christian truth, but cannot provide a sure foundation upon which to build theistic faith and worship.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>UMTSJ, 5:59-65.

<sup>36</sup>UMTSJ, 5:598.

Uemura was selective in his choice of leaders, and he did not indiscriminately laud all religious leaders. The two he chose were the outstanding ones in Buddhist history who had discovered and popularized the doctrine of the free grace and compassion of Amida Buddha.

Finally, Uemura's underlying optimistic view of man and the basic continuity between God and man was illustrated in his use of religious terms taken from other religions. He didn't limit himself to the simple borrowing of religious terms, but selected concepts behind the words themselves for the explanation of Christian concepts. He wrote about this in "Nisan Nihongo no Kenkyu" (A Little Study of Japanese) which appeared first as a separate article and was later incorporated into a small book titled Inori no Seikatsu (Life of Prayer).<sup>37</sup> In the article Uemura explains the Christian meaning of sin to his readers, using concepts taken from Shinto belief. The word "tsumi" (evil), he said, was related to the term "tsutsushimi" (caution or prudence), both words having the same etymological root. Uemura pointed out the parallels between the Shinto and Christian meaning of sin and concluded,

The ancestors of the Japanese nation practiced exorcism of tsumi (sin). The cross of Jesus Christ has realized what our ancestors primitively practiced and has fulfilled the ideal that they tried to attain.<sup>38</sup>

He made reference to the same article to the word for worship. He thought he had found a clue to clarifying the meaning of Christian worship while exploring the derivation of the term "matsuri" (festival or service). Uemura quoted the famous neo-Shinto scholar, Motoori Norinaga

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<sup>37</sup> Zenshu, 6, chapter 7.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

(1730-1801) who explained that the word "matsuri" meant service, to serve one's lord. Using this as an explanation Uemura noted that the Christian meaning of "worship" also meant service for the Lord, therefore, "to consider worship as service is the most adequate interpretation of the term."<sup>39</sup>

Just at this point it is important to remember that Uemura and his young colleagues, under the teaching of Brown and Ballagh, had used W. A. P. Martin's book, The Final Cause of the Universe as a textbook.<sup>40</sup> Martin had been a missionary to China and had written this book for the Chinese. He interpreted Confucianism so as to make it the precursor of Christianity. He also explained Christian concepts with Confucian terminology.<sup>41</sup> Therefore, in this area at least, Uemura could well have been following the pattern established by Martin.

Uemura's thinking about sin will be treated in greater detail in the following chapter. The results of his basic assumptions about man will become clearer as well as Uemura's failure to treat the subjects of God, the Creator, the Judge. His underlying thought stressed the noble side of man's nature, an assumption imbedded deeply in the thought of the Japanese, and from which Uemura did not move significantly during his life time. He was not blind to evil in society and government, and

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> See Kuyama Yasui, ed., Kindai Nihon to Kirisutokyo (Modern Japan and Christianity), 3 vols (Tokyo: Sobunsha, 1956) I, p. 62. There are three volumes to this set of discussions by a number of Japanese scholars. Volume I covers the Meiji period and II and III cover Taisho and Showa Japan respectively.

<sup>41</sup> See Ralph R. Covell and W. A. P. Martin: Pioneer of Progress in China (Grand Rapids, Michigan, W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1978).

part of his ministry was to speak out against evil. His criticism, however, was tempered by this underlying concept of continuity between God and man, and not discontinuity, and this motif provided a base for his other major assumptions.

#### The Motif of Aspiration

Uemura's occasional use of Japanese religious terms to introduce and explain Christian concepts leads to the identification of his second major presupposition, namely, aspiration. He was fond of using the Japanese word "kokorozashi" (aspiration) in his articles and sermons, in fact, the word appears so often and so prominently, some have concluded that the concept behind the word is one of the major keys to his thought.<sup>42</sup> The concept of aspiration is tied very closely to the nature of man and his religiosity. Because of his positive estimation of man, Uemura can appeal to his readers, Christian and non-Christian alike. He appeals to their nobler side urging them to aspire for that which is higher and better. The dictionary lists a number of meanings for the word including will, mind, intention, motive, object, aim, purpose, ambition, aspiration, wishes, desires, kindness, goodwill, good wishes, a present, a gift. For Uemura, aspiration was an attitude of which all men are in need.

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<sup>42</sup>See UMTSJ 5:439-50; Kumano, Nihon Kirisutokyo Shingaku Shiso Shi (The History of Japanese Theological Thought) (Tokyo: Shinkyō Shuppansha, 1968) and Ishiwara, "Kokorozashi no Shukyo" (The Religion of Aspiration) in UMTSJ; Ishida, "The Concept of Self-realization in the Uemura-Ebina Controversy," The Northeast Asia Journal of Theology 10 (March, 1973):32-50.

Aspiration had to do with the condition of man. Uemura began with the idea that man is a religious being, and religion is indispensable for him. At the same time Uemura also noted that man is not fully satisfied with the way things are in this world. "As we think about this world, Uemura wrote, "we know that it is not perfect."<sup>43</sup> Further, he commented, "Man wishes to express love to others, but doesn't know how and where to seek love in the first place. The world is in desperate straits."<sup>44</sup>

It is the changeableness of the world, its imperfection, that drives man beyond himself to seek something higher. "As we see and think seriously of this world and its condition we cannot help but think on an eternal world."<sup>45</sup>

The three basic questions, the answers for which all men seek, are Where do I come from? For what purpose do I exist? and Where am I going? Until these questions are answered he will have no peace in his heart. As a religious being, who knows as he looks around him that this world is changing, he must seek for true answers to his questions:

The search for truth is no plaything. Truth is originally derived from God. God has given truth that we might serve him. . . . Those who fear committing themselves to truth will never find the truth. Those who doubt religion judge it on terms convenient to themselves. They use religion as a tool. The Greeks followed after sophistry and did not speak the truth as truth for they had no sincerity. On the other hand Socrates is to be praised since he was not like them. He regarded truth as Lord and served it. Socrates took his life for the truth and shamed the sophists in so doing. His was noble action.

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<sup>43</sup>In Shinri Ippan in Chosakushu, 4:9-188.

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

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 22.

Unfortunately, these are bad times, and there are many this-worldly-minded people who think little of Christianity, sad to say. There are others who are willing to sacrifice every preconception in order to follow the truth. . . . This is the duty of samurai who is always faithful to the way.<sup>46</sup>

It is this search for truth which Uemura calls on men to engage in and which he finds so important.

We must not accept the present standards but must put emphasis on the possibility of the future which is the possibility of something greater. Paul said, "we are justified by faith," not as if we had attained everything now, but still look forward to the future for fuller justification. . . . The Wang Yang-Ming school of Confucianism speaks of the importance of aspiration, i.e., this is the life of man, the root of the tree, the source of the stream. It is important for the citizen or individual. Without it the nation will fail, or the individual will fail.<sup>47</sup>

The testimony of Wang Yang-Ming is added to that of Paul to heighten the importance of aspiration.<sup>48</sup>

History, Uemura believed, was full of examples of men who aspired for truth. Socrates was one. The famous Japanese artist, Hokusai Katsushika was another. He gave his entire life to his art, allowing neither

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<sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 38.

<sup>47</sup>Zenshu, 6:15-22.

<sup>48</sup>Wang Yang-Ming (1472-1529) of Ming China, a Neo-Confucian scholar was of particular interest to first-generation Christians in Japan. Confucianism laid stress on "rites," the fabric of custom, institutions, and prescribed behavior to promote order and stability in the human order. Wang Yang-Ming brought a new understanding to human nature which attracted a following. Whereas Chu Hsi Confucianism placed its emphasis on external observances, Wang Yang-Ming placed an even greater emphasis on the heart, on the spirit that gives substance to proper behavior. In the latter part of the Tokugawa period when the feudal system began to disintegrate, it was the philosophy of Wang Yang-Ming with its emphasis on singleheadedness that came to exert a decisive influence on the samurai. The leading intellectual influence in Kumamoto had been the realism of the Wang Yang-Ming school of Confucianism. As one Japanese exclaimed when he read Christian literature, "This resembles Wang Yang-Mingism; disintegration of the empire will begin with this." This philosophy of Wang Yang-Ming had

financial concern nor any other to deter him. Uemura's conclusion, "We need a cause to live by."<sup>49</sup> Without aspiration, there is no hope.

In Nicodemus Uemura also saw a man of aspiration. His spiritual desires were not entirely satisfied, even though he was a member of the Jewish Sanhedrin, those who Uemura believed were for the most part religiously satisfied. "Blessed is the man, who like Nicodemus, even as an old man, never gave up the idea of progress."

These men and others like them were not happy with life around them, but aspired for something higher. They continued to seek the truth, and Uemura holds them up as examples, not primarily because they found the truth in Jesus Christ, but because they never gave up their quest for truth. Solely on the basis of their seeking, Uemura appealed to their example.

Moreover, Uemura recognized that aspiration needed a standard.

What are we to aspire for? This is also very important. Certainly not for anything. Nineteenth century Germany serves as an example. Their aspiration was for power and this became the poison of their spiritual life. Therefore there must be guiding rules. In their ancient books the Chinese said that a wise man has ambition plus a cautious spirit. How do we control such a spirit? Again, the Chinese said that the father should be a model for his children. But this is probably limited. Without true religion we can't rely just on our father's example. Chinese begin with filial piety, but without true religion, even this standard will be bent. We need a more ultimate standard. By reaching out to something more than mankind, to revere heaven (God) we can begin to learn the correct way in which we should walk. We have to learn the way. This is religion. This is aspiration beyond human aspiration.<sup>50</sup>

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certain similarities with Christianity. All the members of the Kumamoto Band had studied Wang Yang-Ming and this made it relatively easy for them to become Christians.

<sup>49</sup>"Seikatsu to Kokorozashi" (Life and Aspiration) in Chosakushu, 1:132.

<sup>50</sup>Zenshu, 6:18.

One begins to find in these remarks what Uemura believed was essential for the life of man. Behind all else was the working of the soul and faith which begins when man looks for something divine. Faith is not satori (the Buddhist concept for enlightenment) nor akirame (giving in or up to God) but a fighting, grasping, seeking to see beyond what is immediately visible, to the essence of things. Thus one comes to faith in the struggles of the heart, and this becomes the starting point of faith. Then one must press on in constancy and integrity until finally he receives the light of a faithful life.

In the Lord's teaching to his disciples about prayer he taught, 'May God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven.' He thus impelled us to adore God's will, to commit ourselves to it, and to give our utmost to efforts by sacrificing ourselves. We live in looking up to the aspiration of God ahead of our own aspiration.<sup>51</sup>

In one of his sermons Uemura asked the question, "Do we really have the same aspiration as Christ?" His answer follows:

If one earnestly attempts to concur with the Lord's aspiration, he must commit his soul to it and be prepared wholeheartedly to make himself available for his service.<sup>52</sup>

Uemura uses the word kokorozashi repeatedly and its varied meaning makes it almost impossible to always reach an accurate translation in English. Uemura preached a sermon titled "Nanji, Ware o Aisuru ka?" (Do you love me?) taken from John 21 and Jesus' question of Peter following his resurrection from the dead. In the latter part of the sermon Uemura explains how one is to know if he loves Jesus or not.

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<sup>51</sup>"Kokorozashi to Shinko" (Aspiration and Faith) in Chosakushu, 1:188.

<sup>52</sup>"Nanji Ware o Aisuri Ka?" (Do you love me?) in Chosakushu, 7:373.



Quoting Archbishop Leighton of England, Uemura speaks of three indispensable elements of love, that is, goodness, joy and request.

A sign of our love of Christ is that we have the same Kokorozashi (mind, will) as Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ came to this world to carry out God's plan and purpose. To have that same will is the sign of love.<sup>53</sup>

Uemura uses "kokorozashi" throughout this sermon which can be translated "will" or "intention" as well as "aspiration."

On another occasion, in a message delivered in 1921, he gives further light to the meaning he attached to this word. The sermon was given the title of "Sukui to Kokorozashi" (Salvation and Aspiration) and in this sermon Uemura gives an exposition of the healing of the man who had lain beside the pool of Bethesda for thirty-eight years.<sup>54</sup> Uemura notes the unexpectedness of Jesus' question. The man had probably given up hope of being healed long before.

The church in somewhat similar ways has people who routinely come to church, partake of the sacraments, study the Bible, even attend prayer meeting, but have no spiritual excitement (hariai). They have no zeal, and their daily life is automatic, formal and with no enthusiasm.<sup>55</sup>

Jesus' question, "Do you wish to be healed?" was asked to see if the man had any such desire, Uemura believed. In effect Jesus was asking, Do you have any such desire? Do you have a will? Do you want to renew your spirit?

The Lord said, "Take up your bed and walk," and the man was greatly encouraged by this word. What he thought was impossible

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<sup>53</sup> Chosakushu, 7:383.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., pp. 353-59.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 355.

was now born again in his mind, and with this hope he determined to stand, and he stood. This is a symbol of salvation and to receive Jesus' salvation, we need courage to believe. If our soul is sleeping salvation is difficult. . . . To make faith operative like this man we need courage.<sup>56</sup>

Uemura's reference to aspiration regarded the time following the man's initial healing experience when the Lord came again to him. While the man had experienced great joy in being healed, he had apparently forgotten Jesus.

When one is sick he often thinks about deep questions, namely the meaning of life, etc. but when the crisis is over, he forgets. There was a great opportunity for aspiration, but he lost it when his health was given back to him. Most people have this attitude about religion. Probably this was the situation with this man who was healed. But the second time Jesus reveals himself again and said, 'You have been healed, don't sin again.' . . . Just because he was healed in his body, there was no reason for him to forget to have aspiration (kokorozashi). Summary: we must have a strong response like this man. If we stand, we must surely walk, not in a cowardly way thinking that we may fall. We must give up a weak, hesitating spirit and fight, even against millions, and have a great spirit.<sup>57</sup>

Commenting on Uemura's use of this concept, Ishiwara, who has written numerous articles about Uemura, says,

The term kokorozashi brought to life a context of moral sensitivity and thought, innate to the Japanese. Here we have a glimpse of the orientation of Uemura's Christian faith toward the Japanese spirit. That is, it is not recreating Christian faith in Japan by relinquishing the Japanese soul, but it implants Christian faith in the Japanese by preserving the treasures inherited from their ancestors.<sup>58</sup>

By Ishiwara's explanation Uemura looked for and found in the word a concept which was well known to his readers. Moreover, the concept was not foreign to the Scriptures nor to the Christian life as Uemura perceived it. The word kokorozashi thus became a bridge to understanding

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., pp. 358-59.

<sup>58</sup> Ishiwara Ken, "Kokorozashi no Shukyo" (Religion of Aspiration) in UMTSJ, 5:439-50.

between the values understood by the Japanese, and Christian values. The idea of aspiration was common in Bushido ethics and Uemura believed that this was a special trait of the Japanese. God gives special character traits to different people, Uemura believed, and aspiration was one of these given to the Japanese and popularized in the Confucian ideal. As such, he believed, it provided a distinct core of understanding upon which to build Christian truth. Thus the substance of Uemura's thought is not European or American but Japanese, and his method is an instinctive utilizing of Japanese concepts in which he finds a parallel meaning in Christianity.

Uemura compared the Christian life to that of a samurai in times of peace. He must always live in a state of preparedness and readiness, ready to answer the call of his master at a moment's notice and without hesitation. These points are illustrated in a sermon preached in 1904 titled, "Kirisuto no Deshitaru koto ikan," (What Should Christ's Disciples Be?).<sup>59</sup>

Jesus said, Take up your cross and follow me, for three reasons; one, those who seek their lives will lose them and those who lose their lives for the Lord's sake will find them. They will find eternal life. Unlike animals human beings have two kinds of life, physical and spiritual. At the fall Adam and Eve lost their spiritual life. Those who now live only to please themselves, are already dead. Those who take no response to God are actually dead. Those who forget to take up their cross, who have no response to God, who indulge only in physical or selfish pleasure are already dead. Why? Because there is no spiritual response. Even if one is an ethical person he is still guilty of a selfish mind. Those bound by this selfish mind cannot take up their cross and thus they move away from God on their way to perdition. As Jesus looked at people he saw their superficial appetite, was saddened because they had lost their spiritual life and it was then he began to speak to them.

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<sup>59</sup>Chosakushu, 7:130-39.

The second reason he gives is found in the question 'If you gain the whole world and lose your soul, what does it profit?' To lose your soul is to find it, in other words, the development of humanity. Man's soul develops to achieve his calling and that is real spiritual life. . .

In the third place, there is man's honor. Whoever is ashamed of me, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed. We must think of this so that we won't be embarrassed when we see God. We must take care now to see that our life is lived correctly so that we can stand before God without embarrassment.

One of the beautiful aspects of bushido is that the samurai carried his cross (duty) so well. This is one of the finest points of bushido. In the same way the church of Jesus Christ must possess spiritual vitality and in this way will be able to attract those who have aspiration like a magnet.<sup>60</sup>

The reader is told by Uemura that to have aspiration means to take up one's cross. To take up one's cross means to lose one's soul which ultimately directs that he will find it and thus develop his humanity. Taking up one's cross means to emulate the example of the samurai and this will have the effect of attracting others.

Uemura makes no mention in this sermon of the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross. Instead his major focus is on the necessity of responding to God spiritually. Man must aspire to please God, not primarily on the basis of God's initial work in Christ, but in the interests of finding one's life and developing it and thus avoiding embarrassment before God. From this sermon, at least, man appears to be judged by God more on the presence or absence of aspiration than the work of Jesus Christ.

Uemura used these concepts to create understanding. He also used them because he believed in them himself and lived by them. He seldom referred to himself, but on the 30th anniversary of his ordination

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<sup>60</sup>Ibid., pp. 135-36.

he said, "There is no graduation point in my life. I must always go on in obedience to Jesus Christ."<sup>61</sup> Man is noble in his aspiration. He is always an unfinished product, and therefore striving, always aspiring and never arriving.

#### The Motif of Independence

Basic to Uemura's thinking, aspiration played an important role in the life of man, and was followed and complemented by two other such motifs, the twin ideas of man's independence and progressiveness. These two rounded out and completed the concept of aspiration. As in the case of the others, Uemura saw no reason to make a defense or apologetic for his ideas on independence. The times alone called for such a spirit. People who aspired to do the will of God especially in Japan amidst much opposition needed to stand by themselves, and to learn to depend upon God alone for survival under these pressures. Uemura preached the necessity of the spirit of independence for others and put this principle into practice in every part of his life and ministry. He urged this spirit upon his fellow ministers and fought to lead his denomination away from dependence financial or otherwise upon mission or government.

The concern for independence was uppermost in the minds of the nation's leaders from the earlier years of the Restoration, and the maintenance of Japan's independence on the international scene was one

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<sup>61</sup>Quoted in Ishiwara Ken, "Kokorozashi no Shukyo" in UMTSJ, 5:439-50.

of the major goals of that period.<sup>62</sup> Ever since the arrival of Commodore Perry's "Black Ships" in 1853 the government leaders were faced with the problem of knowing how to react to foreign visitors. They wanted to avoid all contact with foreigners but discovered that they could not ignore the intrusion. Fearful of being placed in subjugation to the superior powers of the West, they turned to the path of building a modern nation as a defense against Western imperialism. No less an issue before them was the right of Japan to guide her own affairs.

The same desire for independence became evident almost immediately among the early Christian believers. When the first Protestant church was formed in Japan in 1872 two cardinal points were decided upon almost immediately by its members. Their first decision was to refuse to align with any foreign denomination. Their second was to preserve the church's independence.

Only the daring and noble spirit of independence which is an intrinsic Japanese trait could prompt such an adventure in faith. The first Protestant Christians in this country . . . ventured to organize an independent and non-denominational church. Independent from historical traditions and missionary funds, they put full trust in the Almighty.<sup>63</sup>

A convert to Christianity in that period reported that the Christian church in Japan was "full of the spirit of independence from its beginning."<sup>64</sup>

This strong desire to be independent was definitely a characteristic of the Japanese, as Aoyoshi suggests above. This may have been so

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<sup>62</sup> Uchi Saburo, "Kindai Nihon Shisoshi jo no Uemura Masahisa" (Uemura Masahisa in the History of Modern Japanese Thought) Fukuin to Sekai 20 October 1965): 27-37.

<sup>63</sup> Aoyoshi, Christian Leader, p. 26.

<sup>64</sup> Tamura Naomi, Shinko Goju-nen (Faith of Fifty Years) (Tokyo: n.p., 1926, pp. 22-25.

because of their fear of domination by Westerners. Or it could have stemmed from strong anti-foreign feelings which were prevalent in Japan at that time.<sup>65</sup> In any case, the self-conscious effort of these first Japanese Christians to establish independence was not lost on those who formed and organized congregations in later months and years.

Fortunately for the church the Japanese desire for independence blended well with mission societies and missionaries who had as their goal to form self-supporting churches.<sup>66</sup> Several believed that the time and circumstances greatly enhanced the possibilities of establishing a church in Japan without duplicating the divisions of the Western church. In this way the purposes and ideals of both Japanese and foreign missionary complemented one another.

When Uemura began his ministry he did so on a self-supporting basis. He insisted on earning his living, at least to the extent of being free to refuse financial aid from foreign sources. At the time of his engagement to Miss Yamanouchi he wrote to her about his aspiration to serve God. In his letter he described himself as a "free lance, evangelist, attached to no organization."<sup>67</sup> As his ministry developed he understood that for him to be salt and light in the world he needed to remain unattached and be independent. Later on he publically mourned the fact that the degree of commitment he found in lay people was too

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<sup>65</sup> Otis Cary, A History of Christianity in Japan 2 vols. (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1909), 2:121-122.

<sup>66</sup> Winburn T. Thomas, Protestant Beginnings in Japan (Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Co., 1959), p. 171.

<sup>67</sup> Zenshu, 8:114.

often missing among Christian ministers. Too many had become dependent upon the missionary for financial aid and this had contributed to their weak attitude regarding self sacrifice. This observation only strengthened Uemura's resolve to pursue his evangelistic aspirations and endeavors independent of outside help and regardless of problems he might encounter.

The class and status of Uemura's home and its prior commitment to the Tokugawa reign, plus his mother's influence contributed to his unfailing insistence upon independence. He also found passages in the Bible which lent support to this point of view. In the angel's words to the prophet, "Stand on your feet, then I shall speak" (Ezek 2:1), Uemura found an example of Biblical approval of the independent spirit.<sup>68</sup> He also saw in Jesus the way of suffering and of thorns. Those that followed Jesus would also have to suffer as he did, and this Uemura believed required a strong and independent spirit.

The strong note struck for independence found so often in Uemura's writings was not for mere personal satisfaction. What he desired for himself he wanted even more for the church. Uemura's great concern was for the formation of the church in Japan. The church was to be the base for the preaching of the Gospel. The calling of the church was to express the living Christ. What must a church be and how must its nature be conceived in order for it to fulfill its task? Not unexpectedly, the character of the church, according to Uemura, resembled the character of an organization prepared for fighting. For

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<sup>68</sup> Aoyoshi Katsuhisa, Uemura Masahisa Den (Tokyo: Kyobunkan, 1935), p. 172.



Uemura this meant that the church in Japan could not exist simply as a branch of the church in the West, that is, a church whose foreign qualities would prevent it from entering fully into the cultural and social soil of Japan. As the primary base for carrying out evangelism the church had to be free and independent, free from government control, free in its relationship to other church bodies, free in financial responsibility, and free to develop its own theological formulations. The freedom to be this kind of church would also prepare it to meet the demands of the times and society because it had first identified itself fully with the society.

#### Independence from Government Control

To preserve and protect its duty before God, the church must stand independent of state control.<sup>69</sup> The church must keep the law, of course, but the church must be free to pursue its own goals without the pressures of the state. This kind of freedom would not only benefit the church but the state and its citizens as well. Religious freedom is the king of liberties, and therefore in regard to its spiritual affairs, the freedom to conduct worship, administer the sacraments, elect its officers, call its councils and meetings must rest in and with the authority of the church.

The missionaries brought with them a ready-made pattern of free church organization which had been worked out in the American experience of separation of church and state. This free-church pattern proved to be an advantage in Japan, especially because of Roman Catholic mission work which was carried out in Japan between the years of 1549-1650. At that

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<sup>69</sup>Zenshu, 5:569

time the mission had become deeply involved in political intrigue and this contributed in large measure to its subsequent expulsion.<sup>70</sup>

With the re-introduction of Christianity into Japan, Protestants generally sought to avoid political maneuvering, and their free church pattern supported them in this. The phrase in the Meiji Constitution of 1889 regarding "freedom of religious belief" gave many to believe that this provision was in keeping with the free church ideal. Subsequent history proved them wrong.

Uemura was in full agreement with the free church pattern and was constantly on his guard against anything which he believed would violate that principle. After Korea had been annexed to Japan Uemura made several trips to that country in the interests of evangelism. On one of these trips he was urged by the Japanese Governor, General Terauchi, to become responsible for the Christian work among the Koreans at the expense of the government. Uemura flatly refused, not wishing to violate the free church principle. The same request was made later to the Executive Committee of the Synod of the Nihon Kirisuto Kyokai (Church of Christ in Japan), but it also refused the offer.<sup>71</sup> "The church is the fortress for the defense of society, and therefore must maintain its freedom to carry out its calling."<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> See Johannes Laures, S. J., The Catholic Church in Japan: A Short History (Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1954).

<sup>71</sup> Aoyoshi, Christian Leader, p. 233.

<sup>72</sup> Zenshu, 6:114.

## Independence from Mission Control

Organizational

Uemura believed that organizational freedom could be obtained only in a carefully worked-out relationship with the foreign missionaries. This kind of organizational independence of Uemura's denomination was reached by passage of a bill, called the Co-operation Bill in 1904 voted through by the General Assembly. To understand the import of this bill in the church it is necessary to sketch the background of the relationship of the Council of Missions to the N.K.K. (Church of Christ in Japan).

Prior to the year 1886 there had been no formal relations established between the Church of Christ and the several Presbyterian and Reformed Church missions which had organized themselves into a Council of Missions. To advance the work of evangelism and church extension an arrangement was worked out between the two bodies in 1886, through which the missions would contribute three dollars for every dollar contributed by the church. Monies thus collected were administered in each Presbytery by a committee composed of an equal number of Japanese and missionaries. The committee members were appointed by the church assemblies and were responsible to the assemblies. In this way the American missions committed themselves to work with and through the Japanese church for the spread of the Gospel and the planting and developing of new congregations. The expectation was that in time the contributions of the church would increase rapidly as its membership grew, so that within a short period of time, the church's contribution would equal and even surpass that of the mission. The fact that the church had begun to double its membership every

three years led some to believe that by the close of the nineteenth century, the missionaries force could be withdrawn from Japan and allow financial aid to be channeled directly from church bodies in America to the church in Japan.

Circumstances changed rather abruptly around the year 1890 and instead of rapid growth, church membership began to decline. This became a source of embarrassment to the church as it had to struggle to meet even the one-dollar-out-of-four-agreed-upon amount. This led the Council of Missions to suggest that a better situation might result if the church would organize its own board of missions. That suggestion led to the organization of a Board of Home Missions of the Nihon Kirisuto Kyokai in 1904 which meant that the entire financial responsibility and control rested in the church's hands. Uemura became the chairman of the directors of the board. The new system worked well but brought to an end the arrangement through which the church and missions had worked together.

The controversy regarding financial independence did not end there. By this time there were a number of churches under the leadership of Japanese pastors which were self-sustaining and free of mission aid. There were many other smaller churches which because of size, depended heavily upon mission support and which hoped that in time, the support would enable the church to gain growth and finally financial independence. Uemura was disdainful of these small churches and contended that because of their immaturity they did not qualify for representation in church assemblies. For this reason he proposed changes in the church's

polity to deprive these churches of a vote. The resolution, submitted to the General Assembly made these points:

Self-support has been a fundamental principle of the Church of Christ in Japan ever since its founding. The Synod instructs each Presbytery in the following points:

- A. The Presbyteries should not organize churches which are incapable of being supported by their own members.
- B. Each Presbytery should inspect the real state of the churches that have not yet reached self-support and should formulate plans to bring them to actual self-support by September, 1907. Churches which do not meet this standard are to be disbanded because they are incapable of carrying<sup>73</sup> out the very purpose for which the church was organized.

In bringing this resolution before the church Uemura raised two important questions. One, was it right to elevate the principle of self-support so as to make it one of the marks of a true church? In other words, was it fair to punish churches which had not gained self-support by denying these groups a vote in church assemblies? The second question was more subtle. The passage of this resolution meant that not only could these smaller churches be cut off from representation, but with them, the missionaries who were engaged temporarily in doing the work of the pastor.

The proposal came before the church in 1904 but failed, due apparently to an impassioned plea by the aged missionary, James H. Ballagh. The following year it was passed by a comfortable margin. From then on missionaries could only attend presbytery meetings as corresponding members having the right to the floor, but not to vote. The ability of the foreign missionary to control the church in any way other than by persuasion had now been successfully eliminated and thus the question of

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<sup>73</sup> Quoted in Aoyoshi, Christian Leader, pp. 213-14.

the organizational independence and with it the church's integrity was solved in the minds of the Japanese.

Once this was settled, however, the next question regarding the independence of the church had to do with the definition of a co-operating mission. As the wording of the adopted definition will show, the church was not only concerned to be organizationally free of the mission, it had to control the evangelistic efforts of the mission as well.

A co-operating mission is one that plans and executes all its evangelistic operations through a committee, composed of equal numbers of the representatives of a mission, working within the bounds of a presbytery of the Church of Christ in Japan, and of the members of said Presbytery.<sup>74</sup>

There was little or no disposition on the part of the missions to agree to this proposal, and they responded with a definition of their own.

Co-operation is, in the opinion of the Council, best carried on where the Japanese church organization, in its sessions, presbyteries, and synod, directs all ecclesiastical matters, availing itself on the counsels of the missions or missionaries as occasion arises, while the missions direct their own educational, evangelistic and other missionary operations, availing themselves, likewise, of whatever counsel or assistance they may be able to obtain from their brethren in the Japanese church.<sup>75</sup>

The two positions thus stated were different in principle, one suggesting that mission work had to be done under Japanese control, and the other that there be two separate tracks for such work. Interestingly enough neither side felt that a rapprochement had to be worked out just

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<sup>74</sup> Albertus Pieters, Mission Problems in Japan, p. 94.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., p. 95.

then and relations between the two remained cordial despite lack of agreement.

Uemura's resolution on the subject of self-support raised the issue of co-operation again and Dr. Imbrie of the Presbyterian Mission proposed a new definition of a Co-operating Mission, adopted by Synod in 1906. The wording of the new definition appeared as follows:

A Co-operating Mission is one that recognizes the right of the Church of Christ in Japan to the general supervision (often translated 'general care') of all evangelistic work done by the mission as a mission within the church or in connection with it; and which carries on such work under an arrangement based on the foregoing principle, and approved by the Synod, acting through the Board of Missions.<sup>76</sup>

The difference between this definition and the former ones was found in the clear assertion of the right of the church to have supervision over the evangelistic work of the member missions of the Council. Until this time the church had been content to ask that a certain method of procedure be followed.

The discussion which followed this proposal was lengthy and involved argumentation, negotiation and much correspondence. The result of it all was that three of the American missions voted to accept the definition and three others did not. By 1907, however, since only one mission had accepted the invitation offered by the Synod in this definition, the following resolution was passed:

In order to preserve the unity of the Church of Christ in Japan a clear distinction shall be made between the evangelistic work of (a) missions which by September 30, 1908 do not co-operate according to the definition, (b) of our own church, and (c) of co-operating missions, and it shall then be made perfectly clear that the former shall have no connection whatever with the Church of Christ in Japan.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>76</sup>Ibid., p. 99.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., p. 114.

Dr. Ibuka, then president of Meiji Gakuin, provided an explanatory statement in which he made the following points:

By a clear distinction between the evangelistic work of those missions which do not co-operate and that of the church and of the missions which do co-operate is not meant a simple distinction in classification, but a real separation in fact.

Such aided churches and such members of aided churches as decide to remain in connection with the Church of Christ in Japan will be aided by the church to the best of its ability. No undue pressure will be brought to bear. Aided churches which prefer to retain their connection with non-co-operating missions will be entirely free to do so, but they must take their choice. The natural result will be that non-co-operating missions and the aided churches which retain their connection with them will organize a new church, or new churches.<sup>78</sup>

One outcome of all of this was the adoption in the Synod of 1909 of what was called the "Affiliation" plan, which offered a kind of compromise to what had been stated before. The important point of all this was that in a series of resolutions the Church of Christ in Japan moved from a position of full co-operation with missionaries who enjoyed full voice and vote in the church's assemblies, to one in which they had only the right to speak on the assembly floor and finally to the place where the church insisted that to co-operate, the mission had to agree to the principle of church supervision over all evangelistic work.

The resolutions which Uemura was responsible in bringing to the church showed his organizing and political strength. Led by Uemura, the church undertook to establish its organizational independence from the missionaries and the missions which had brought the church into existence. The church was to be independent of government influence and control. But just as important in the minds of the Japanese it was

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<sup>78</sup>Ibid.



also to be independent of those who confessed the same faith, and who worked toward the same goals, but who were not, in the final analysis, Japanese and members of the church in Japan.

### Financial

Related closely to organizational independence in Uemura's mind was the question of financial independence or self-support. He believed that any dependence on a foreign church for support would damage the healthy development of faith in the church and reduce its spiritual power. Church vitality would be discouraged. Financial aid works, he said, to

. . . destroy the principle of free organization and the spirit of self-support will not grow. The church which receives foreign aid will become a religious parasite and like the wooden horse dragged into the city of Troy, will be eaten away on the inside. Moreover, they will become a burden to those wishing to be free.<sup>79</sup>

Uemura argued that he was not anti-foreign or anti-missionary.<sup>80</sup> He believed that the intention of the missionaries was good and that they desired to do the will of God, and therefore he had no intention of hindering the work of those who had a positive attitude toward the Japanese. But he also believed that the independence of the church would not develop in a healthy manner, nor would the Japanese assume their rightful responsibility in the work of evangelism if they learned to rely on others for financial assistance. To assume proper responsibility for evangelism Uemura reasoned that the church had to be self-supporting, self-organizing, and self-administering.

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<sup>79</sup> Zenshu, 5:314.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., pp. 226-230.

While in principle, Uemura agreed that as long as there were no strings attached, it was all right to receive gifts from any foreign country,<sup>81</sup> there was other evidence which seemed to deny this. Uemura likened the Japanese evangelist who received financial assistance to a peasant working the land for the absent land owner.<sup>82</sup> He noted also that when money is received for the work of evangelism, the spiritual impulse is stifled and evangelism becomes an organized function of the church instead of spontaneous work. Evangelism becomes a "safe thing" instead of a sacrificial enterprise.<sup>83</sup> Life and creativity are missing, and when this happens the church stops growing. A dependent church is lukewarm at best and no longer attracts excellent and competent people outside the church. The temptations were so great for the church to depend on outside sources that Uemura could only conclude that it must endeavor to avoid a cooperative relationship and develop in a way which seemed most ideal to her, even though this could entail financial difficulty in the future.

After the Fujimicho Church building was destroyed in the Great Earthquake in 1923, it was reported to Uemura that a missionary had offered financial assistance for the work of rebuilding. One of Uemura's friends, a member of the church said, "If the money comes with no strings, let us accept it." Uemura's reply was a thunderous No! Despite the financial stress which a majority of the members of his church were

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<sup>81</sup> UMTSJ, 4:521

<sup>82</sup> Zenshu, 5:319

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., p. 269.

facing because of the earthquake, which had brought wholesale destruction, Uemura believed it best to receive no outside help.<sup>84</sup>

Besides his personal example and the emphasis he gave to the virtues of financial independence in his writing ministry, Uemura gave considerable energy to helping his denomination gain its financial independence. Attention has already been given to the self-support resolution which Uemura put before the Synod in the opening years of the 1900s. Prior to that, as one means of gaining independence, Uemura had worked for church union. The greater the numerical strength of the church, the less likely it would be to depend on others, and the Christians in the early period were optimistic enough to believe that they could provide for all the essential needs of the Church whatever they were.<sup>85</sup>

In 1877 the Nihon Kirisuto Itchi Kyokai (United Church of Christ) and the Nihon Kumiai Kyokai (Congregational Churches) began talks on possible church union. Uemura was a member of his denomination's committee chosen for these discussions. The two committees met and reached an agreement for union detailed in a report presented to the churches, which, with changes, was adopted. A majority of missionaries and ministers was in favor of the union and the vote for union at that time was unanimous. Ultimately, however, the plan failed.<sup>86</sup> It became clear that one of the leaders in the Kumiai Kyokai was opposed, and part of his opposition stemmed from his desire for American church co-operation

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<sup>84</sup> Oshio Tsutomu, Takakura Tokutaro Den (Biography of Takakura Tokutaro) (Tokyo: Shinkyō Shuppansha, 1955), p. 225.

<sup>85</sup> Aoyoshi, Christian Leader, pp. 55-56.

<sup>86</sup> William Imbrie, The Church of Christ in Japan (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1906). p. 99.

and aid. Uemura reserved some of his sharpest remarks for this man for his part in the failure of the plan.

He raised objection to church unity because he was considering the material needs of his educational work. He tried to utilize the secular power of statesmen and financiers, supported in addition by the powerful denomination in America, to carry out his plan. Niijima's way was to control these three forces and direct them to a good result. Those who proved successful in Christian work in history never took such steps. . . . The steps he took gave a blot to his integrity, checked his spiritual growth and arrested the free development of his ability. . . . Once Niijima had an opportunity to become a great prophet for the Protestant movement in Japan. Unfortunately he missed it and died a baptized adventurer . . . . It is good to be earnest to make the denomination and churches prosperous but what is most important is to serve Christ and his kingdom. Neglect of this fundamental principle is the most serious danger to which preachers are exposed today.<sup>87</sup>

The strong language Uemura uses in the article can only be accounted for by the feelings he had for union which he felt would have placed the church in better position to gain independence. The implication of Uemura's word is that one's commitment to serve Christ rules out, almost automatically financial assistance from others. He calls this the "most serious danger" facing preachers of the Gospel.

Bushido emphasized the spirit of self-sacrifice as the noblest expression of its ethical life. Uemura believed that he found this same spirit in Jesus and Christianity. "The faith which Uemura embraced was the way of heroism originated by Christ himself, and of responsive loyalty on our side. Our absolute dependence calls forth the spirit of independence."<sup>88</sup>

Much to Uemura's great disappointment, the leader who blocked the union had refused to follow the self-sacrificial spirit of Jesus and

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<sup>87</sup>Quoted in Aoyoshi, Christian Leader, pp. 61-62.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid., p. 64.

samurai alike, and in Uemura's judgment, betrayed Christianity and the nation. Uemura did not accept defeat easily and continued to work for church union for some time.<sup>89</sup>

### Theological

The third type of independence which Uemura wished and worked for was theological independence. Uemura was of the opinion that the time was right for a distinctive Japanese theology. He believed that the conditions were favorable for developing a theology, not European nor American, but one selected from the best of both replanted in Japanese soil. Uemura was not satisfied with the idea of importing a theology from another country for use in Japan. The confessions of Augsburg, Dordt, and Westminster were precisely and carefully written, composed for a particular situation in their day and thus not appropriate for the needs of Japan and the peculiar situations which applied at that time.<sup>90</sup> Of greater significance to Uemura were the signs which indicated that this was the proper time for Japanese theological formation. The years of the Meiji Restoration and following meant that many new thoughts were coming into Japan from abroad. It was also a time in history for creative theological thought. The independent mind of Japan was already evident in other areas and this, Uemura believed, pointed to fresh opportunity for creative theological reflection.<sup>91</sup>

In order to set the stage for that kind of thinking, the church needed to be free from the mission society and foreign church. Uemura had both positive and negative things to say about the missionaries. On

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<sup>89</sup>Zenshu, 7:589.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid., 5:160.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid., 4:138.

the one hand, the foreign missionary had been like a father to the new Japanese believers.<sup>92</sup> They had been responsible for introducing the Japanese to the faith and leading them to the truth. On the negative side, however, Uemura also observed that the theological standard of mission societies was low.<sup>93</sup> Their theology was simply not very progressive. It did not keep up with the times. Their attitude toward rationalism was an example of this. They looked upon it as a heresy, but none appeared willing or able to discuss the subject, or even say in what way it was harmful to the church. With a flood of theological thought coming into Japan Uemura was convinced that the Japanese church needed to have its theology to maintain its own identification and provide a base for critique and evaluation of other theologies.

One of the clearest expressions of Uemura's thinking regarding theological independence was made at the time of the discussions on the revision of the confessional standards and form of government of the church. In the case of the latter, the work was undertaken in a very thorough manner. A committee had been appointed for this and took the better part of a year for its deliberations. The proposed constitution submitted by the committee was published in Japanese and English six months before final action was taken.<sup>94</sup>

In the matter of a new confessional statement, however, the same preparation and caution were conspicuously absent. In 1877 the Nihon Kirisuto Itchi Kyokai had adopted the Westminster Confession of Faith, the

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<sup>92</sup>Ibid., 5:317.      <sup>93</sup>Ibid., 5:541.

<sup>94</sup>Albertus Pieters, Mission Problems in Japan, p. 75.

Shorter Catechism, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dordt as its basic confessional standards, only after much debate and out of deference to the missionaries who had strongly urged their acceptance.<sup>95</sup> When the question of confessional revision was raised, it was placed in the hands of the same committee chosen to prepare a new constitution. While recognizing the need for a new confession, the members of the committee did not feel equal to the task of preparing one, and unanimously proposed the adoption of the English Articles, that is, the confession of faith which had been adopted by the English Presbyterian Church<sup>96</sup> as a substitute for the existing standards. As another alternative some members of the Synod strongly urged that the Apostles' Creed, and that alone, be adopted as the doctrinal standard for the church. When some objected to its suitability as a confessional standard, an introductory statement was proposed by way of an answer.

Uemura was strongly in favor of the Apostles' Creed. He wrote,

Leaving such a distinct and simple one as the Apostles' Creed why should some people wish to adopt a confession consisting of 24 articles? The new confession is that of the church of another country. It is the confession of a church full of schisms and division in history. I do not like to see the church in Japan imitating the church of another country in everything. The thing I fear the most is that the church in Japan will inherit the schisms and divisions of the denominations abroad. In these days we already have enough theologically controversial questions not yet settled. If now we take some of these points that are still under discussion and make them our articles of faith I fear it will help on the division of the Church rather than its unity.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> William Imbrie, Church Unity in Japan, p. 11.

<sup>96</sup> Albertus Pieters, Mission Problems in Japan, p. 75.

<sup>97</sup> Quoted in Aoyoshi, Christian Leader, p. 71.

The question of confessional revision thus produced lengthy debate in the assembly and it was during a recess in the proceedings that Dr. Imbrie, a missionary with the Presbyterian mission, drafted a brief introductory statement to the Apostles' Creed which he then presented to the delegates of Synod at the resumption of the meeting. The statement as it appears below was adopted unanimously in its entirety.

The Lord Jesus Christ, whom we worship as God, the only begotten Son of God, for us men was made man and suffered. He offered up a perfect sacrifice for sin, and all who are made one with Him by faith are pardoned and accounted righteous; and faith in Him working by love purifieth the heart.

The Holy Ghost, who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, reveals Christ to the soul; and without His grace man, being dead in sins, cannot enter the kingdom of God. By Him the Prophets and Apostles and holy men of old were inspired; and He, speaking in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments is the supreme and infallible judge of all things pertaining to faith and living.

From these Holy Scriptures, the ancient church of Christ drew its confession, and we, holding the faith once delivered to the saints, join in that confession with praise and thanksgiving: (Then follows the Apostles Creed)<sup>98</sup>

This introductory statement to the Apostles' Creed was prepared by one man, during one of the brief recess periods of the body of the church in its Synod meeting and adopted almost immediately before the church and missionary body at large had any opportunity to study it. The resolution was presented to the Synod by Inagaki, but Oshikawa and Uemura played the leading role in its adoption.<sup>99</sup> In his own comments on the new confession, Uemura wrote,

The Confession of Faith includes all the essentials of evangelical Christianity and excludes all the points of schism and division.

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<sup>98</sup> Albertus Pieters, Mission Problems in Japan, pp. 75-76.

<sup>99</sup> Aoyoshi, Christian Leader, p. 75.



It also preserves the orthodoxy of Christianity and leaves plenty of room for the future development of theology. I do not know yet whether this kind of thing has happened in the 19th century in any other country. Is the church with no creed free? I fear it goes to oppression. The church with too minute a creed, on the other hand, dwarfs the growth of thought and makes the church too conservative. The Confession of Faith which the Church of Christ in Japan has adopted recently is brief and simple, and comprehensive. Preserving soundness of doctrine, allowing broad freedom for strengthening the fellowship of Christians it will give remarkable impetus to the theological development of the future. Its influence will not be limited to this country, but will go abroad far and wide.<sup>100</sup>

In this statement Uemura repeated some of the arguments he made for the adoption of the new confessional statement, namely, that the church needed a creed suited to itself and its time, and that the present circumstances called for a simple irenic confession, one which was equally binding on pastors and congregations. Furthermore, the church in Japan needed a confession which would serve as a sign of unity not of division.

All these arguments aside, the fact of the matter was that the church acted on the spur of the moment to reject previously agreed-upon documents in favor of the Apostles' Creed. The Japanese themselves, were doubtless in no position to know the potential for theological declension in the future. Some of the missionaries present may have known but they were not in a position to offer much effective resistance in the face of such overwhelming Japanese resolve.

Finally, the motives which prompted Uemura to seek organizational, financial, and theological independence led to his resignation from the faculty of Meiji Gakuin, where he had served as both teacher and trustee, in 1903 to prepare for the establishment of his own

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<sup>100</sup> Quoted in Aoyoshi, Christian Leader, pp. 75-76.

institution for ministerial preparation. The details of this will be included in a later chapter. He wanted to be able to demonstrate through the seminary the right and the ability of the Japanese to fund and administer a seminary of their own making. More importantly, he wanted a place of training and teaching in which the students would learn and experience the hardships of preaching in Japan. The struggles of having to pay their own way, and of providing for themselves, would be a significant and necessary part of the preparation they needed for the future.

#### The Motif of Progressiveness

The final block in the foundation which comprised Uemura's world and life view was the motif of reform and progressiveness. Like the others this motif continued to appear throughout his life time in his sermons and writings.

The concept of progress, the fourth major block in his "system" fleshed out his understanding of man. Uemura's optimistic view of man and his high estimation of the Bushido ethic directed him not to call for a radical break with the past, but for a "baptized" Bushido, namely the Christianizing of the customs, mores, and values of the past. But man also aspires for something more, Uemura felt. He desires and therefore looks for a deeper reality. He is never content with his progress but continues to press on. In order to succeed in his aspirations, man must be free of those things which would inhibit him. The Japanese people were experiencing the transition from insular isolation to becoming a part of the modern world of nations. They felt the danger of being taken over militarily and culturally by more powerful Western countries. The situation called for a strong resolve to maintain their

cultural and military independence. They must plot their own course and be secure in their own identity so as to sift through the fresh issues and ideas which were blowing through the land and select that which was good and reject the bad.

The Christian Church was faced with a similar situation but with added complications. It had not only to stand against the temptation of embracing Christianity as a Western import, not necessarily suited for Japan, but it also needed to be on guard against the encroachment of government and secular power. The fight had to be waged on several fronts against a number of real dangers.

Closely aligned with aspiration and independence was Uemura's concept of reform and progress. Man is always in need of a vision, he believed, and the spirit of reform and progress will help to translate that vision into reality. "The Christian life is no mere mystical union with God but progressively becoming more and more like the image of God."<sup>101</sup> And thus he could say, "I want to always be becoming, never to have arrived. I always want room for more progress."<sup>102</sup>

Where did Uemura find this principle? First, in human history. The history of mankind demonstrates the progress man has attained with the passing of time. The history of this world is progressive because the principle of evolution is active, evolution under the controlling hand of God.<sup>103</sup> God's providential evolution leads to a kind of progressiveness. History, therefore, is proceeding to a new heaven and new earth. Human history is still on its way and there is no limit to its development.

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<sup>101</sup>Zenshu, 4:244

<sup>102</sup>Ibid., p. 83

<sup>103</sup>Ibid., 7:231.

From a broad understanding of history Uemura turns to the concept of the nation. From his reading of the book of Revelation Uemura believed that the nations exist for the working out of God's providence. Each nation has a positive contribution to make to mankind. The nation can provide a driving force to help humanity reach a higher stage, a further advancement in its development.<sup>104</sup> Each nation, therefore, has a God-given call to advance the progress of mankind. This did not necessarily point to a particular type of government, and Uemura took no position publicly regarding a choice of political party or type of government. Whatever the type, the freedom of man was to be preserved in the interest of the progress of humanity.

With this concept of the nations, it was but a short step for Uemura to make his statements regarding Japan's special mission to the world. Uemura called for the spirit of reform and progress among people, but he also believed that this spirit was a trait of the Japanese, providing the power to carry out its mission. Signs of deterioration and decay were apparent everywhere in other Asian nations, and Uemura believed that God was going to use Japan for their restoration.<sup>105</sup> During the war between China and Japan (1894-1895) Uemura wrote these sentiments:

Since the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese war the distinction between the Eastern and Western civilizations has become clear. The fate of the East will be sealed if the conservative spirit of China prevails. Japan as the pioneer of the Orient has resolutely undertaken radical reforms and made gigantic advances . . .

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Ibid., 4:209

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Zenshu, 4:213.

When medical science was introduced from Holland during the reign of the Tokugawa clan, Japan made reforms in that line. But these were only the beginning of the deeper reforms Japan then needed. If reforms do not penetrate to the religious and ethical life, they are mere sculpture, outward forms of civilization without spirit. The fanatical conservatives have been aiming to destroy the noble purpose of the great Restoration. Enlightened people, especially the Christians, who are the dynamo of the religious reformation are doing their best to warn, to lead aright and to correct the evil tendencies of the reactionaries.<sup>106</sup>

These statements of Uemura highlight again his positive stance regarding the nation of Japan, even while recognizing the need of a deeper or more thoroughgoing reform. He recalls for his readers that reforms were taken by Japan during the Tokugawa period. But they were only the beginning of the deeper reforms needed. Again he recognizes the positive contribution the Restoration leaders made.

As I recollect the situation at the time of the Restoration I admire the inspiring and thoroughgoing plan that was being undertaken.<sup>107</sup>

What conclusion did this force upon Uemura?

At this juncture, we are being reminded of our nation's mission to mankind. Heaven has blessed us with an opportunity to observe. As long as we indulge ourselves in retrospective delusion, the reactionary air almost suffocates us. Sino-Japanese hostility was necessary in order to force us to the consciousness of crisis. The difference between the Eastern and Western civilizations, the critical situation of Asiatic powers, Japan's mission and the spiritual reformation that is necessary; such phrases must be explained, understood and realized in their deepest sense. . . . For Christians this means a season of ministry. Japanese Christians must rise up and preach the Gospel to their countrymen. They must make clear the mission of the nation and encourage her to meet her patriotic responsibility.<sup>108</sup>

Affirmation of man's nobility and pride in his nation, her peoples, the bushido moral system, together incline Uemura to speak of Japan's great

<sup>106</sup>Quoted in Aoyoshi, Christian Leader, pp. 108-109.

<sup>107</sup>Ibid.           <sup>108</sup>Ibid., p. 110.

mission to mankind as pioneer of the Orient, even while he admits that deeper reforms are necessary. Japan's progressive spirit was a gift from God and with this spirit Japan was to contribute to the further development of the nations of the world.

Uemura's ideals regarding the progress of his nation and the peaceful progress of humanity came into conflict as Japan was involved in war with other neighboring nations. He stood for peace and peaceful progress, but these ideals did not produce in him an anti-war sentiment. Instead, he found that war could be a useful tool for the realization of the ideal world he looked for. Even while he aspired for peace, he could affirm the cause of war in certain cases, namely, those cases in which war was waged in the interests of reformation and progress. He justified Japan's wars with China and Russia in this way,<sup>109</sup> reasoning that if some war contributed to the realization of a stronger nation, then the war was justified.

The concept could be and was applied one step further. If war could bring reformation and progress to the Japanese people it was also quite possible that it could have the same potential for good for other countries. The imperialistic goals of the Japanese, seen in this light, had redeeming value.<sup>110</sup> World War I, by contrast, did not favor such an interpretation, inasmuch as progress was not made. Instead Uemura felt that the war contributed to the neglect of civilization, and therefore could not be justified.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>109</sup>UMTSJ, 5:885-86.

<sup>110</sup>UMTSJ, 4:784-85.

<sup>111</sup>Ibid., 5:909.

In this way Uemura had much to say about the spirit of reform and progress on the broadest level, dealing with humanity and history without any special reference to Christianity. Within the context of Christianity, however, Uemura had much more to say, for Christianity introduced a further dimension to the discussion.

Christ stands before man as the perfect one. He is perfect and discloses perfection. "He is the absolute Savior, the perfect Way and Truth, and undefiled Life."<sup>112</sup> Paradoxically, Christianity is imperfect. Moreover it cannot escape from its imperfection. Nevertheless it must proceed to perfect truth in Jesus Christ. "We with finite minds long after the Infinite." Thus the very principle of progress is embodied in Christianity. Christianity must make progress on its way to perfect truth in Jesus Christ. History and the Bible lead to this conclusion. Ever since the Apostolic age the Christian consciousness has experienced perpetual change and growth. Added to this is the fact that the Bible is a living book, not a dead one, which led Uemura to believe that Christianity was destined to develop and grow perpetually.

The conviction regarding the growth and progress of the Christian faith led Uemura to several significant conclusions. One had to do with the church's confessional pronouncements of the past. Belief in the inevitable progress of theology and doctrine gave Uemura further stimulus to reject older formulations.

There is no need or warrant for believers in Christ passively to repeat stereotyped traditional doctrine. They must discover the meaning of Christianity for themselves; they cannot escape the responsibility of ever afresh making it their own possession.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Zenshu, 4:303

<sup>113</sup> Quoted in Aoyoshi, Christian Leader, p. 222.

Uemura seemed to be saying that the repetition of past doctrinal statements could be the evasion of one's responsibility if their very presence caused passive dependence. The very act of uncritical acceptance of theology from another time was to Uemura a sign of unwholesome conservatism. In another context Uemura had argued that to take over the creeds from the Western church meant a lack of independence on the part of the Japanese. In the context of progress, he argues for the same conclusions, but on a different basis. His belief in progress now places him against conservatism. It is the character of conservatism to look back, to stick to old creeds instead of looking forward. That kind of conservatism is the very denial of progress. For these added reasons, therefore, Uemura again turns his back on what the church has confessed in another age and regards them as "tradition," "stereotype" and "fossil-like."

Uemura believed that the essentials of Christianity were like the formulas of mathematics. There was nothing in the essentials to require reform. Beyond these essentials there is a "vast-virgin soil" which waits cultivation. The inevitability of progress warns against believing that the last word has been said. In other words the very belief in progress creates a remarkable impetus for further development. Uemura's statements highlight his desire to affirm his belief in progress in order that the spirit of study, debate, and the seeking of more truth will be kept alive. For that reason he feared the implications of the concept that all Christian doctrine has been discovered and finalized. This, he felt, could only dampen man's aspiration to mine the Scriptures and gain new truth. In the famous debates carried on between Ebina and



himself, Uemura identified what he thought were the two essentials of the faith, namely the deity of Christ and redemption. Aside from these two about which little more could be added the remainder of Christian truth must be open to the possibility of continual theological progress and insight.

Another conclusion which Uemura drew out of his prior belief in the inevitability of progress in the Christian faith pointed to the special Japanese contribution. While the Christian faith had come to Japan from the West, Uemura was interested in its later development. A dynamic process is involved. This faith is not to be preserved somehow as if in a glass container. The very way the Japanese receive, internalize, interpret, and pass it on is of great importance. When the Nihon Kirisuto Kyokai adopted its new confession, Uemura said optimistically, "The Confession of Faith . . . will not be limited to this country, but will go abroad far and wide."<sup>114</sup> The Japanese people with their unique spirit of reform and progress had a special contribution to make toward Christianity which is still imperfect. On one occasion Uemura wrote,

Our Lord has yet many things to reveal to those who believe in Him in Japan. Christianity has not yet been exhausted in the West. Out of His full abundance on Christians in the Orient will be bestowed many things afresh. Don't allow your minds to become solidified in old customs, merely repeating what has happened in past ages.<sup>115</sup>

Finally, Uemura's belief in progress led him to a rather modern insight regarding methodology. He recognized how his own spiritual attitude had been influenced by city life. From this he reasoned that

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<sup>114</sup>Ibid., p. 76.

<sup>115</sup>Ibid., p. 204.

Christianity was better suited to the city due to the character of the city and the people who choose to live there. The city is an information center for news of the nation and of the world. Those who live in the city become aware of world events. People who moved to the city became or already were non-traditional and progressive in their thinking. The very act of moving to the city meant the rejection of traditional ways. Uemura noted that members of the Fujimicho Church belonged to the new middle class and that the congregation included university students. As a progressive faith Christianity was ideally suited for progressive, thinking people, those who lived in urban areas. Rural people were too narrow-minded and unprogressive for Christianity to find much response among them.<sup>116</sup>

This concludes the discussion of Uemura's major motifs, the essential components of his world view. The following chapter will detail how his world view affected the way he understood the Bible. Already, it has become clear that Uemura's thinking was heavily influenced by Confucian values and these remained with him to a significant measure throughout his life time. These motifs also provided him with the natural tendency to indigenize the Christian faith. His optimistic view of man, especially Japanese man meant to him that the Japanese had a contribution to make to others, and it was important that nothing stand in the way of hindering their own search of the Scriptures. His great admiration and respect for independence means that Japanese could not afford to depend on others. They needed to stand on their own feet in

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<sup>116</sup>Zenshu, 1:504-509 and 3:218-21.

every way, theologically and otherwise, As a "naturalizer" or indigenizer of the Christian faith, Uemura led his own church and denomination to declare their own independence. His emphases were not unique, but as one of the influential leaders in the opening years he established a pattern for the Nihon Kirisuto Kyokai which remains today. Church patterns have changed significantly since the end of World War II, but Uemura's influence is still being felt in the church. The following chapter will detail some of the theological concerns he had and their impact upon the church.

## CHAPTER V

### UEMURA, AND HIS THEOLOGICAL FORMATION

Uemura's preaching and evangelistic ministry began in 1877, and ended almost forty-eight years later at the time of his sudden death in January, 1925. These years overlapped the reign of two emperors, first Emperor Meiji, and then his son who ruled under the reign title of Taisho until 1926. The nation of Japan went through profound changes in those years, especially during the Meiji period, and these changes in turn influenced the attitudes of the Japanese people to the Christian faith newly introduced from the West.

There is general agreement among Japanese historians that the early period of Christianity in Japan was non-theological in character,<sup>1</sup> although opinion is divided regarding the primary cause for this. Some have assigned the cause to the superficial grasp of theology on the part of the early Protestant missionaries.<sup>2</sup> James Ballagh's instruction to some of his early converts is cited as evidence, that is, "Sincere prayer, reading the Bible with pleasure, urgent necessity for direct missionary work and profound friendship."<sup>3</sup> Others, however,

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<sup>1</sup>Sumiya Mikio, Kindai Nihon no Keisei to Kirisutokyo (The Formation of Modern Japan and Christianity) (Tokyo: Shinkyō Shuppansha, 1950), p. 14.

✓ <sup>2</sup>Hiyane Antei, Nihon Kirisutokyo Shi, Zen (The History of Christianity in Japan, Early Years) (Tokyo: Kyobunkan, 1949), p. 847

<sup>3</sup>Takeda Kiyoko, Ningen-kan no Sokoku (Rival Views of Man) (Tokyo: Kobundo, 1959), p. 72.

point to the Japanese rejection of denominational affiliation and creedal identification as the cause. Professor Kumano writes that the theological intention from the beginning was directed to the construction of a national and free church.<sup>4</sup> Overall, concern was concentrated on such problems as the discipline of believers and problems of social life rather than on purely doctrinal problems, and this created a climate of "common-sense theology" in the Japanese churches.<sup>5</sup>

Whatever the reason, the emphasis among Christian churchmen both American and Japanese was ethical and evangelistic. Puritanism and church extension were the primary interests.<sup>6</sup> The texts which were used to provide Christian instruction more often than not emphasized a rational and demonstrable approach to the Christian truth.<sup>7</sup>

Besides the general form which Protestantism was to take in Japan, there were two other forces in the early years which had lasting effect on its character. The first was revivalism, a force which swept across the country in the mid-1880's.<sup>8</sup> According to the memory of one Christian, these series of revivals started after James Ballagh had had a dream. In this dream, Ballagh had seen a flock of sheep gathered on the edge of a sharp precipice. He was surprised to see that the sheep

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<sup>4</sup>Kumano Yoshitaka, "A Review and Prospect of Theology in Japan," The Northeast Asia Journal of Theology, March 1970, p. 69.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 70.

<sup>6</sup>Charles H. Germany, Protestant Theologies in Modern Japan (Tokyo: International Institute for the Study of Religion, 1965), p. 3.

<sup>7</sup>Otis Cary, A History of Christianity in Japan, 2 vols. (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1909), 2:127.

<sup>8</sup>Yanagita Tomonobu, A Short History of Christianity in Japan (Sendai: Seisho Tosho Kankokai, 1957), p. 44.

did not fall, although they appeared about to fall. He noticed that they were not falling because of a ray of light from heaven leading them. Yet their shepherd was taking a nap, at some distance from the sheep. Ballagh concluded from this dream that he and his fellow-missionaries were not working hard enough in their evangelistic efforts. This dream caused Ballagh to redouble his efforts in evangelism, which in turn prompted greater prayer by church members.<sup>9</sup> Revivals soon followed in the Yokohama Theological School, and a girl's school, both of which trained evangelists. Prayer meetings were held day and night in various meeting places, and the movement took on some of the emotional overtones similar to the American frontier experience. The revival soon spread nation-wide and continued into 1884 when it reached its climax at Doshisha Academy when two hundred students were baptized at one prayer meeting. Those who showed the greatest effects were the first and second year students, who had had the shortest contact with the faith. The new converts, seized with an urge to evangelize, sent representatives to the churches around Kyoto where other revivals were started.

There were both positive and negative effects of the revival. The renewed emphasis on sin and redemption off-set some of the ethical moralism which was already observable in the church. That same emphasis also produced a noticeable tendency toward a subjective and individual type of understanding of Christianity and less emphasis on objective truth. Systematic study of the faith and doctrinal concerns

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<sup>9</sup>Kishimoto Hideo, ed., Japanese Religion in the Meiji Era, trans. by John Howes (Tokyo: Obun Sha, 1956), pp. 237-38.

appeared to be of less importance than extending the boundaries of the church as quickly as possible. This statement appeared in the magazine, Rikugo Zasshi:

Trusting in God, we can easily conquer an enemy force of ten million. "If God be for us, then who can be against us!" If all the Christians are moved by the Holy Spirit, and if God will but once again open the hearts of our countrymen, Christianity can become Japan's religion in seven or eight years.<sup>10</sup>

This revival movement left a lasting impression on the character of Japanese Protestantism and produced a number of influential leaders for the church.

The other equally influential force at that time came with the introduction of a liberal type of Christianity by the Allgemeiner Evangelisch Protestantischer Missionsverein (Evangelical Missionary Society) in 1885. The missionaries of this society introduced Biblical criticism in the pages of their magazine, Shinri (Truth), "an organ for the presentation of scientific theology and philosophy,"<sup>11</sup> sent gratuitously to many of the leading Japanese ministers. This German liberalism exercised a pervasive, permeating influence within the Church, an influence further strengthened by the introduction of the books of such thinkers as Schleiermacher, Ritschl and Troeltsch by the 1900's. Not until the 1930's was this seriously challenged, and then by dialectic theology, also imported from the European continent.

Several factors contributed to the appeal of liberal theology to the Japanese. In the first place, there appeared to be a common purpose

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<sup>10</sup> Quoted in Kishimoto, Japanese Religion, p. 238.

<sup>11</sup> H. Ritter, A History of Protestant Missions in Japan, trans. by G. E. Albrecht (Tokyo: The Methodist Publishing House, 1898), p. 214.

in the national process of modernization and in the demands of liberal theology.<sup>12</sup> Japan was moving away from the older traditions of the feudal age and seeking new knowledge for the building of a modern Japan. Liberal theology also decried the conservative stance of the past. Unitarianism was seen as a form of Christianity in which essential Christianity was freed from supernaturalism. Thus, while there was no traditional theology or creed from which Japanese Christianity needed to be freed, the over-all emphasis of liberal theology was compatible with what was taking place on a larger scale, nationally.

Outside the church proper the utilitarian philosophy of John Mill, the theories of evolution derived from Charles Darwin and popularized by Herbert Spencer were being introduced to the Japanese public in the universities. These ideas also worked against the supernatural and transcendent dimensions of the Christian faith and contributed to the appeal of liberal theology.

A third factor was the emergence of a reaction to the West led by a rising nationalism which called for total devotion and loyalty to the Emperor and the rejection of any belief in a deity which would supersede him, and thus weaken his position. The Christian faith was made to appear to be entirely incompatible with Japanese tradition and national unity under the Emperor system.

In summary, during the influential years of the Meiji reign, the Christian faith in Japan was the object of several outside pressures which affected very much the over-all response of the Japanese people.

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<sup>12</sup>Kumano Yoshitaka, "A Review and Prospect of Theology in Japan," p. 72.



Inside pressures also played a large part in the shaping of the faith in Japan. The early Puritan, moral ethical emphasis made by missionaries was responded to favorably by the Confucian-trained Japanese converts. A type of revivalism introduced a new emphasis on religious experience but provided little theological work and reflection, the concentration given to evangelism and the growth of the church. At the opposite end of the theological spectrum and entering Japan in those same years was German liberal theology and its destructive view of Scripture and devaluation of the orthodox understanding of the Gospel. Together, these worked against the establishment of a balanced biblical Christian faith, carefully grounded in the Scriptures, and supported by the historical expressions of the Christian community through the years.

In the midst of social and political upheaval which gripped the nation and the theological currents which affected the Christian church, Uemura was engaged in a preaching and writing ministry to which he later added the complicated and difficult task of ministerial preparation with the establishment of the Tokyo Shingakusha (Tokyo Theological Seminary). His own theological formation was taking place during this time as he aided his church denomination, The Nihon Kirisuto Kyokai, in the formation of its own identity as a responsible body in its culture. Uemura's leadership became clearer as he assisted the church in its adoption of its own confessional position, the founding of the Board of Home Missions, and working out a new relationship with foreign missionaries who represented several church bodies in America and Scotland.

Before examining the general characteristics of Uemura's theology, two basic facts must be repeated again. First, the hearing of the

Christian message and consequent growth and theological formation was preceded by a religious world view characteristic of a samurai-born Japanese. Uemura's underlying value-system was based on the teachings of Confucius, and these values supplied him with his world-view. The components of his world-view, the principle motifs, discussed in the previous chapter, made up the grid through which the Christian truth was passed, and the bed rock upon which it was to fall. Thus his pre-theological world-view, while it did not create a system of thought, did create a loose structure which worked against the adoption of another. Japan's isolation from the other world nations and the pride of the samurai class as the leading class in Japanese society joined to the Confucian view of man which Uemura held produced in him the conclusion that no doctrinal "system" was needed outside of that which the Japanese could produce themselves. Uemura believed that the Japanese needed to develop a theology fitted to their culture and their time. Uemura regarded reliance on theological statements from another culture or time in history as backward and unprogressive. Uemura's theological formation must be understood as one consistent with this outlook.

The second fact to be recalled is that his early theological formation took place under the teaching of his two missionary mentors, Ballagh and Brown. As important as it is to remember who taught him, it is just as important to recall the circumstances surrounding the instruction. The language barrier was a formidable one. The cultural and linguistic differences between student and teacher made communication between the two difficult at best. Neither had a good grasp of the other's first language, and language learning came with the benefit of

few helps. Furthermore, the only texts for class use were written in Chinese or English. None were yet written in Japanese. The struggle to communicate the truths of Christianity was successful to the degree of commitment to the task and the desire of both Japanese student and American missionary.

While Uemura's first theological training was limited in many ways, it was only the beginning of a lifetime of study and learning, primarily through books. The writers he cites and the books he draws upon are many and varied. In an article written in 1919 for the Fukuin Shimpo, titled "Monzen no Kozo" (The Boy Standing before the Gate), Uemura recalls his earlier years, standing, as it were, before the portals of learning. Among the writers mentioned are Jonathan Edwards and his book, History of Redemption, which he found in Brown's personal library. This book, he said, provided him with a foundational knowledge of the Bible.<sup>13</sup> He referred to John Charles Ryle's Expository Thoughts on the Bible, a book which he claimed he could never forget and which only became more interesting as he grew more familiar with the Bible. Henry Venn's Complete Duty of Man, Albert Barnes' The Way of Salvation, Philip Schaaf's The Person of Christ, and Christopher Ernst Luthardt's The Fundamental Truths of Christianity are mentioned in the same article.

At another time Uemura mentioned the names of books he kept on his desk for easy reference. The list included such favorite authors as Alexandre Rodolphe Vinet, who wrote on religion, Immanuel Kant and

<sup>13</sup>Chosakushu, 7 vols (Tokyo:Shinkyō Shuppansha, 1967), 6:78

James Martineau on philosophy, John Milton and William Wordsworth on poetry, and August Neander and John Tulloch on theology.<sup>14</sup> On yet a third occasion, Uemura referred to a more select group of men who helped in the actual formation of his theology.<sup>15</sup> Joseph B. Lightfoot and his commentaries on the books of the Bible and John Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion appeared in that article.

These three factors combine to explain in a general way the direction Uemura's theological formation was to take. His pre-theological world-view tended to preclude the wholesale adoption of any one theological position. Secondly, the nature of his early theological education was sketchy to the point that he received only an introductory course in theology from Brown and Ballagh. Thirdly, Uemura's thirst for more learning was never quenched. He read widely in a variety of writers and theologies. Some of Uemura's followers perceived his theology as fitting best within a broad framework of Reformed theology.<sup>16</sup> It would be more accurate to understand that Uemura identified himself closely with no denomination or theological tradition outside of Japan. This gave him freedom to take or refuse to take any theological position which he felt was not appropriate to the situation. Nor was he particularly concerned to find a theological framework which was logically

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<sup>14</sup>Saba Wataru, ed., Uemura Masahisa to Sono Jidai, 7 vols. (Tokyo: Kyobunkan, 1966), 5:470-71. Hereafter this work will be cited as UMTSJ.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 4:640.

<sup>16</sup>Kumano Yoshitaka, Nihon Kirisutokyo Shingaku Shiso Shi (The History of Theological Thought in Japanese Christianity) (Tokyo: Shinkyō Shuppansha, 1968), p. 248.

self-consistent. Logical consistency was of less importance to him than pertinence to the Japanese mind and situation.

In the absence of theological parameters or tradition, where did Uemura's theological pilgrimage lead? The point becomes clearer later in the discussion, but first of all, Uemura was one who stood against the stream of liberal thought brought to Japan by Spinner and championed by Ebina. At one time there had been a wavering of many non-liberal minded Christians under the influence of liberal theology and for a time Uemura was said to have been swayed.<sup>17</sup> While he admitted to a certain respect for liberal thought,<sup>18</sup> he also recognized what he saw as "destructive power and influence" which made it "not fitted for planting a living Christianity."<sup>19</sup> He wrote several articles about German theology beside the ones in which he debated with Ebina on the doctrine of the person of Christ. He also wrote against the evils of rationalism, unitarianism, and universalism.<sup>20</sup>

If Uemura was against this expression of Christianity, he was equally opposed to fundamentalism. While liberalism was too destructive, fundamentalism was superficial and in low taste. The year before his death Uemura wrote an article titled, "Kirisutokyo no Shiso no Arasoi" (The Battle within Christian Thought). In the article he spoke out against both.

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<sup>17</sup>Germany, Protestant Theologies, p. 13.

<sup>18</sup>Chosakushu, 4:236.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 239

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., pp. 209-10.

I am not against fundamentalism but certain stubborn theologians who make their own position. Theirs is too narrow, and superficial, and gives the wrong kind of atmosphere. Fundamentalism is just the opposite of liberalism. Liberals are too destructive and without caring, and as a reaction to this, fundamentalism came in. Several leaders in Bible schools in Los Angeles and Moody are backward looking and become enclosed in their own system.<sup>21</sup>

In Uemura's opinion, fundamentalists were those who were stubborn in their attitude to new discovery in Bible science, that is, higher criticism.

Those who refuse to throw away any jot or tittle are like those who refuse to throw baggage overboard in a storm. The result is that the boat sinks.<sup>22</sup>

He charged liberalism and fundamentalism alike for failing to produce leaders who could lead the church, and to that extent, Uemura wondered aloud in his paper if American Christendom was not near chaos. He worried that the theological and church battles being waged in America would come to Japan. Specifically he mentioned the controversy between the Northern Presbyterian Church and Harry Emerson Fosdick, and blamed the problem on the fundamentalists.<sup>23</sup>

On the other side Uemura recognizes that there were some good results of fundamentalism in Japan.

The Japanese church has become too concerned with ethics, too satisfied with cultural work, confusing the work of the cross with building schools, even to the point of despising the supernatural part of Christianity."<sup>24</sup>

Fundamentalism, he thought was responsible for providing a needed corrective.

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 239.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 209

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 255

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 258.

If Uemura positioned himself somewhere between these two poles, what further clues were there to identify his position? The answer is very few. In answer to a question which he posed in his own journal, Is the Nihon Kirisuto Kyokai a Presbyterian church or Calvinistic church? Uemura pointed his readers to the church practice of ordaining elders and thus following a Presbyterian tradition. But the comments he made immediately following are more instructive:

I welcome the way of following the leading of the Holy Spirit. But I am against those who wish to follow the Presbyterian polity exclusively. As far as the church being Calvinistic, one needs only to look at the creed. It is not Calvinistic nor Arminian but follows the Apostles' Creed. To ask the question is strange.<sup>25</sup>

The word "exclusive" in the previous sentence provides a key to understanding Uemura's position. While the question and answer refers primarily to the church, Uemura's personal position is quite similar. Commenting on the confessional stance of the church, he wrote an article "Nihon Kirisuto Kyokai no Orthodoxy nani zo ya?" (What is the Orthodoxy of the Church of Christ in Japan?) His answer appears below:

Even though we believe Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and in the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, we do not force the one doctrine of the Trinity to be accepted as orthodoxy. The members of the Nihon Kirisuto Kyokai believe that the doctrine of the Trinity is a great fact and great truth. However, as far as theology is concerned, we leave room for accepting Edwards and Bushnell. The creed of the Nihon Kirisuto Kyokai does not stand only for Calvin nor agree only with Arminius. We hold the same position regarding other doctrines. To sum up, the Nihon Kirisuto Kyokai hopes that the door is open for further debate so that the light of the truth may appear.<sup>26</sup>

Later in the same article he writes,

Briggs is orthodox, Green is also orthodox. He is orthodox who accepts this position. Whoever cannot accept both of these viewpoints

<sup>25</sup> UMTSJ, 4:522.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 765.

and tries to get the Nihon Kirisuto Kyokai to accept one and reject the other is not orthodox.<sup>27</sup>

In this article Uemura clearly intends to shift the meaning of the term "orthodox" to new ground. Instead of the traditional meaning of adherence to the confessions and creeds of the great ecumenical councils, Uemura wishes to define orthodoxy as an attitude which is willing to accept and hold mutually exclusive positions in tension, without having to reject one for the other.

Uemura's dislike of identifying oneself exclusively with one doctrine is made clear in an article titled, "Sanshi no Shingaku" (Three Kinds of Theology).<sup>28</sup> The three kinds of theology he refers to are a theology of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. The meaning of this becomes clearer in his explanation. Certain denominations give "overstress" to each of these.

There are those who overstress the doctrine of God the Father (Presbyterians), others who emphasize the incarnation (Congregationalists), and still others who emphasize the doctrine of the Holy Spirit (parts of Methodism, Pentecostals and Quakers). To give an overstress to any one of these is dangerous.<sup>29</sup>

Why was Uemura loath to identify himself with a theological tradition even that of liberalism and fundamentalism, and furthermore, why did he re-define orthodoxy to mean openness to conflicting positions? Professor Kumano, student of Uemura and long-time professor of historical theology in Japan, suggests some reasons.<sup>30</sup> Between the two pressures of revivalism (fundamentalism) and liberalism, Uemura felt that

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 757.

<sup>28</sup> Chosakushu, 4:210-13

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Kumano Yoshitaka, "Uemura Masahisa ni okeru Tatakai no Shingaku" (The Fighting Theology of Uemura Masahisa) in Nihon Kirisutokuo Shingaku Shiso Shi (The History of Theological Thought in Japanese Christianity), pp. 200-260.



the church was being forced to go in one of two directions. Liberalism and fundamentalism were both theological importations to Japan and both attracted a following. Until 1890 Japanese were for the most part enamoured with Western thought but after that there was a decided change in national sentiment and a consequent new thrust away from westernism and Christianity and toward nationalism. Membership in Protestant churches began to drop, young people were no longer attracted to the Church, and graduates of Christian schools, especially Doshisha who had been involved in Christian ministry began to drop out to follow other vocations. In the light of these circumstances Uemura believed that the only hope for survival of the church in Japan lay in its refusal to be identified as a branch of the Western Church and instead to be a church which entered fully into the cultural and social fabric of Japan. The Japanese people had to somehow feel the need for the Christian church to seek it themselves. And this could only be, in Uemura's judgment, when the Church and its theology was fully of their own making. Out of this situation Professor Kumano believes that Uemura developed what he suggested as a "fighting theology," that is, not a theology indifferent to the issues in Japanese society, nor a theology which, because of its foreign orientation, failed to grapple with the main issues of the day, but a theology which every member could understand and grasp, and by which he could be stimulated to aggressively take the Gospel to others. A fighting theology thus described stands over against a systematic theology in that its orientation was focused less on structure and logical consistence, and more on finding truth which was applicable and relevant to the Japanese. Uemura was persuaded that Japanese

Christianity had a contribution to make to the development of theology and to the life of the entire church worldwide. While he personally depended on theologians, preachers and writers in other countries to further stimulate his own thinking, he believed that to be useful to a particular people, theology had to be sifted through the temperament and character of that people. He saw the effect of liberal theology from Germany and concluded that instead of making a positive contribution to the life of the church, it was destructive and led to the abandonment of the church and the Christian faith by some very able people.

Fundamentalism, he knew, was also imported from another country, and was characterized by a stubborn hold on doctrines already shown to be outmoded by the findings of higher criticism, or in conflict with the latest scientific discovery. Such a theology could not serve to attract the Japanese people, Uemura believed, especially the younger generation who were being exposed to the latest scientific theory in the university classroom. A third alternative which would not be indifferent to the truth of Christianity on the one hand, and which also would not be indifferent to the mentality of those among whom it sought a hearing is what Uemura looked for. Through his efforts he earned the praise of one missionary who believed that no one did as much as he in the naturalizing of the Christian faith while keeping it thoroughly orthodox. The truth of such a claim must be tested, however, both from the side of the claim that he kept the faith thoroughly orthodox, as well as from the side of the statement to the effect that he naturalized the faith.

To use Professor Kumano's term, Uemura's was a "fighting-theology," a theology not formed in the classroom, not confessionally derived, not systematically conceived, but slowly developed as Uemura daily and weekly went about his task of appealing to the Japanese through the written and spoken word, to believe a God and a message entirely foreign to their traditional beliefs. In one sense, therefore, this is not simply an examination of Uemura's personal theological thought, as much as it is a look at the results of a life-time spent in preaching and writing in order to gain a hearing for the Christian message. With a large number of unbelievers in his Sunday congregation, how could Uemura preach so that they would hear, understand, believe, and commit themselves to Jesus Christ? Admittedly, Uemura's task was substantially no different than the prophet Jonah sent to the Ninevites to cry against their sin, or the many others who have taken the Gospel to people who have not heard before. The religious and social world-view of the recipient culture has always been a factor in the transmission of the message. In the case of the Japanese and Uemura, this not only colored their hearing of the message, but Uemura's shaping of the message itself. The major component's of Uemura's religious world-view have been discussed in the previous chapter.

In this chapter attention will be focused on four major doctrinal loci, Uemura's view of Scripture, of sin, of the person of Christ, and finally, the Christian life. These four aid the reader to understand the characteristics of Uemura's thought. Furthermore, the word "theological thought" is chosen with the point in mind that Uemura was not a finished theologian, and that the word "thought" is more appropriate a

term than the word "doctrine." The examination of the four loci provides source material for making judgments regarding his theological orthodoxy and his success in naturalizing or making indigenous the Christian faith.

#### Uemura's View of Scripture

Uemura's positive regard for the Bible is made clear in his use of it in his writings and sermons. Repeated reference is made to Scripture, and the words of Jesus and Paul appear often as statements of truth and therefore authoritative. Uemura showed himself to be familiar with both Old and New Testaments although his references to the latter outnumbered the Old many times. He also cited Jesus and Paul's use of the Old Testament as examples of their dependence upon and familiarity with the Scriptures.

His own honoring of the Scriptures this way led him to deplore what he saw as indifference to the Bible on the part of other Christians.

The Bible is not being used in conversation, sermons, in prayer or in training meetings. Many seek new books and ideas more eagerly than they do for food, but there is little appetite for Bible reading.<sup>31</sup>

"Seisho no Yomu Koto" (Reading the Bible) was the title of an article in which Uemura raised the question of the coldness of Christian prayers. Problems of prayer among Christians were caused, Uemura believed, by a refusal to listen to God's Word.

Good prayer is listening to God. Prayer is inquiring of God and wanting to listen. A person's conscience is also the voice of God.

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<sup>31</sup>UMTSJ, 4:250.

Through nature it is also possible to hear God's word. Various experiences of life also make it possible for us to hear the word of God. But the most clear and certain place is the Bible. Nothing is better or higher than the Bible.<sup>32</sup>

Uemura praises the Bible on the one hand by the assertion that nothing is better or higher. But he also makes it clear that the Bible is only one of several sources for the hearing of God's word. He thus strengthens and weakens the value of the Bible in the same paragraph. He also cautions against using the Bible in a mechanical way as if it dispensed God's word automatically. "The Bible is filled with God's Spirit," he said, "but unless a person's attitude is that of seeking the Holy Spirit, he won't hear God's word."<sup>33</sup> Almost repeating the same thought, he says,

A serious and spiritual attitude are necessary for Bible reading. Without this the Bible is a book which gives no answers. Without the right kind of preparatory attitude, the Bible does not speak.<sup>34</sup>

One must aspire to hear God's word, he said, in order to unlock the treasure of Scripture. With these words, Uemura disavowed both the liberal and fundamentalist understanding and use of the Bible, affirming first of all that it is the "most clear and certain place" to hear God's word, but rejecting the notion that the Bible is God's word and all one has to do is to read in order to receive a divine word from God.

He made further remarks about the Bible in an article on theological controversy in Japan, which appeared in 1916.<sup>35</sup> In it he admitted that he had been taught that the Bible was infallible but after

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 251.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 255.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid.

<sup>35</sup>"Shingaku jo no Haran" (Theological Disturbances) in Chosakushu, 4:259-66.

reading Briggs and Rad he had gained a new understanding. "After reading Briggs' book I deeply understood the subtle taste of the Bible."<sup>36</sup>

Here again, the meaning is not clear, except that he came to believe that those who held to inerrancy were being unfaithful to the Bible.

"The overpraise of the Bible is like the overpraise of people." Briggs and others had apparently convinced him of the worth of a critical approach to the Bible.

There are some things in the Bible which contradict science just as there are passages which differ from one another even though they speak on the same subject. Therefore we cannot say it has no mistakes.<sup>37</sup>

The question of the findings of science versus claims for an inerrant Bible was being discussed by many in Japan and led Uemura to guess that "even among ministers who hold to an infallible Bible, there are probably certain of them who have secret questions in their minds."<sup>38</sup> One could only hold a high view of the Scriptures, that is, a belief in its inerrancy by closing one's eyes to evidence to the contrary. This led him to the conclusion that "the word of God is in the Bible, not is the Bible. The two are not to be equated."<sup>39</sup>

Arguments used by Uemura against what he called "overpraise" of the Bible were for the most part those popularized by Western writers. He first noted that the human element in the Bible precluded a belief that the Bible was inspired word for word.

Sentences are the author's sentences. Personality traits, both negative and positive, appear among the words and phrases of the Bible.

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid.

The tastes, hobbies, abilities of the writers, all these have influenced the writers.<sup>40</sup>

Whatever else this meant to others, to Uemura it meant only that the Bible was a human book and therefore subject to human error. Uemura didn't labor this point with his readers. He assumes agreement on their part that the obvious human involvement in the writing of the Scriptures did not allow for the inerrancy of the Bible according to the meaning usually assigned, that is, without error.

Another part of his disagreement with the belief in the inerrancy of Scripture stemmed from what he saw as a potential danger.

If one mistake is found, the result is that the authority of the Bible is threatened. Because of this, the one who holds to the inspiration of the Bible will no longer wish to read, study and research it. This is the unforgiveable sin for the Christian against the Bible.<sup>41</sup>

The risk of affirming an inspired or inerrant Bible was too great for Uemura. To have a belief in inerrancy shattered by the discovery of mistakes in the Bible could mean disillusionment in the trustworthiness in the Bible and thus to a forsaking of the Scriptures entirely. Better to openly admit mistakes, or at least their possibility, in the Bible than to try to hold to a position which was vulnerable.

A third argument Uemura used against Bible inerrancy centered in his understanding of the Bible as a living book. In the first issue of his journal, the Fukuin Shuho, Uemura wrote about creeds and their formation.<sup>42</sup> In the article he argued that it was a mistake to believe

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<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 133.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 134.

<sup>42</sup>"Shinjoo seitei ni kansuru iken" (Opinions about the Establishment of a Confession) in Chosakushu, 6:109-112.

that theology is simply ancient remains, based on a revealed Bible, that is, a Bible that is already "fixed." "The Bible is not a dead book but living. The Bible is daily becoming new again, and therefore changeable."<sup>43</sup> The only explanation given for the meaning of these words comes in the next statement:

For the generally accepted and basic points of the universal church there is no necessity for reform, but regarding the origin of sin, redemption, the inspiration of the Bible, daily the Holy Spirit illumines the minds of believers for new development.<sup>44</sup>

Uemura does not help his readers to know what those "generally accepted and basic points of the universal church" are. Without naming them Uemura affirms that under the illuminating of the Holy Spirit the finer points of doctrine continue to undergo change. Moreover, "The Christian consciousness is changeable and progressive, capable of discovering new truth at any time." The division of work between the Holy Spirit in illumination and the consciousness of the believer is not made, but the conclusion is clear; the idea of a "fixed" Bible is self-defeating. If one believes that the Bible is a fixed body of truth, a lump of propositions, which, to Uemura, seems to be implied in the idea of inerrancy, at least the way the fundamentalists believed, then there would be no more study, and no expectancy of mining new truth under the guidance and work of the Holy Spirit. By keeping the way open for change, Uemura challenged his followers to expect truth for themselves and their situation.

If the Bible is not inerrant, and one can expect to find mistakes in it, what purpose does it serve, and by what authority does it speak?

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 112

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.



The Bible is useful to show the way of relevance and religious truth. The authority of the Bible is enough for those people who acknowledge the existence of God, who know God's will, taste his grace, experience his salvation in Jesus Christ, and whose spiritual life is fulfilled. The Bible is a book which is spiritually fulfilling. Those who read the Bible will be given the opportunity to touch the spirit of God.<sup>45</sup>

Uemura carries his argument one step farther when he said:

If the Bible develops the spirit of man and provides him with what is necessary to proceed to higher life, then the authority of the Bible will be firmly admitted. The Bible can give enough knowledge for salvation, and that is the business of the Bible.<sup>46</sup>

Uemura makes no attempt to ground the authority of the Bible on the basis of internal or external authority. The authority of the Bible is to be subjectively perceived, that is, if it helps a person achieve or proceed to a higher life. It is "spiritually fulfilling" which is Uemura's way of saying that a person who is seeking help from the Bible will certainly find it there, and that in itself will establish the authority of the Bible to the user. In this way he felt he was guarding the authority of the Bible and thus the use of the Bible from possible destruction in the discovery of mistakes or other evidence which might undermine its use.

Uemura's failure to affirm his belief in an inerrant Bible did not lessen his esteem in the eyes of his followers who saw in him the champion of orthodox historic Christian faith. He pointed them to a middle way which presented the use and appreciation of the Bible in the

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<sup>45</sup>"Sengen moshikuwa Shinjo?" (Declaration or Creed?) in Chosakushu, 6:129.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 132.

Church without having to take a position about the Bible which could prove to be assailable by new scientific evidence.

Finally, his conviction that the Christian faith, to be understood by the Japanese as their own, had to be divorced in their minds from its Western orientation. This led him to reject the historic creeds. These could have served him well if he would have followed the belief which had guided the Church for many years. The refusal to follow the broadly accepted confessions of the Church eliminated the repeated use of clear statements regarding the Scriptures as the word of God.

#### Uemura's View of Sin

The examination of Uemura's world-view through the four major motifs of his thought highlighted his underlying optimistic view of man. With all that Uemura believed man was capable of doing and being, the question naturally arises of how seriously Uemura believed man was affected by the fall, and how the fall affected man's standing before God. Was man's condition of such a nature that his only hope for salvation lay outside of himself and his power?

Before seeking an answer to these questions it is important to recall that there was nothing in the religious tradition of the Japanese which compared favorably with the Christian doctrine of sin. Neither Shinto, Buddhism or Confucianism regarded man's nature as basically evil, and while it may be said that such an idea is characteristic of the archaic ethnic religions of the world, it is also true that this value-idea has survived in Japan to the present day.<sup>47</sup> Man's standing before

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<sup>47</sup> Kishimoto, Japanese Religion, p. 16.

God was never in question, precluded by the belief in the basic continuity between the kami and man. This helps to explain why many of the early converts to Christianity came, not so much because of a concern for their own personal need of salvation, but with a desire to serve their nation through what they perceived was a new moral force. In lieu of direct political service they tended to think of conversion to Christianity as a means by which they could make a contribution to the nation.<sup>48</sup> For these reasons Japanese people have accepted Christianity more for ethical reasons than for any other.

In light of this general understanding of man's nature, how explicit did Uemura become in his identification of man's deepest need, namely, his standing before a righteous and holy God?

In a discussion of Uemura's understanding of man's sin, it is important to note that he used the term widely in his writings and sermons and dealt with the subject in a more-than-passing fashion in his early writings. In the opening statements in his short apologetic work Shinri Ippan (Common Truth) Uemura wrote that he saw things in the world which caused him to conclude that man is limited, but in thinking further he was brought to understand that this limitation of man was actually perversion, not only man himself, but the world in which he lives.<sup>49</sup> Thus early on in one of Uemura's first attempts in writing he identified the limitation of man for what it actually is. "When my conscience testifies to me that I am a sinner, all things accuse me and stand in judgement of me."<sup>50</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 80.

<sup>49</sup> Chosakushu, 4:11.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

The only other booklet-length writing which Uemura undertook was titled Fukuin Michi Shirube (The Road Sign to the Gospel).<sup>51</sup> This little work included five chapters, the fourth titled "Man's Sin." In answer to the question, What is sin? the usual answer is that sin is the breaking of law. But Uemura went on to say,

Of course, it is that, but not only that. Sin is the breaking of God's law, not only regarding outward acts, but inward thoughts as well. There are many evidences of sin in the world--too many to deny. Moreover, sin is actively being perpetuated in the world, nation against nation, person against person.<sup>52</sup>

Uemura recognizes that there are not many who recognize their own failure, and with sin all around us, we usually recognize someone else's problem. There are some therefore who do not recognize, and others who profess, I have no sin. Nevertheless, says Uemura, "Anyone who looks at his own heart will recognize that there is sin there."<sup>53</sup> Paul's testimony in Romans 3 is sure. All are sinners and there is none righteous.<sup>54</sup>

Furthermore, Uemura recognizes that sin is a problem not easily solved. "Sin is a serious problem separating man from God, and whoever sins is a servant of sin."<sup>55</sup> There are those who say that sins can be gotten rid of by good works but the Bible says that there is no one who is justified by keeping the law. Sin is made more clear by the law.<sup>56</sup>

Thirdly, Uemura draws attention to the presence of sin in the world. If sin is not native to the world, nor indeed in the world by God's will, how then did it get there? Uemura maintained that man rebelled against God and refused sound (reasonable) development of himself.<sup>57</sup> Moreover,

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<sup>51</sup>Ibid., 5:1-47    <sup>52</sup>Ibid., p. 29    <sup>53</sup>Ibid.    <sup>54</sup>Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., 4:302    <sup>56</sup>Ibid., 5:30    <sup>57</sup>Zenshu, 4:245.

sin is so serious and the power of sin so great that if man continues in sin, he will lose the chance to repent.<sup>58</sup>

Uemura also addressed himself to the issue of the ultimate destiny of sinners.<sup>59</sup>

There are three commonly held views on the eternal destiny of evil. The first is universalism, the belief that ultimately evil will be done away with and all will be saved; secondly, the destruction of everyone; and thirdly, the eternal conscious punishment of sin.<sup>60</sup>

It is with the third position that Uemura sided. "The person who totally denies Christ will receive very strict and solemn results."<sup>61</sup>

In this way Uemura treats sins, its nature and destiny of those who sin in a manner similar to traditional orthodoxy. He noted in one of his articles that "one of the characteristics of the evangelical faith is a strong sense of sin."<sup>62</sup> Nevertheless while he spoke this way of sin, he neglected to say much about the origin of sin, the Biblical account of the fall of man in the Garden of Eden, or about the lostness of man. Part of this may have been due to Uemura's custom of approaching the topics he wrote and preached about, not directly from Scripture, but from a position or frame of reference which he assumed was common to all his readers. He did not deal with the subject of the plight of man from the Biblical portrayal of man in the opening chapters of Genesis as made in the image of his creator but fallen from God's grace. Instead, he referred to man who is not wholly satisfied with things as they are, and with aspiration begins to seek something with more meaning. Thus while

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<sup>58</sup>Ibid., p. 250

<sup>59</sup>Chosakushu, 4:221

<sup>60</sup>Ibid.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., p. 466.

he can speak of sin and the results of sin in the life of man, Uemura neglects to take seriously all that the Bible says about man's sin. His own optimism regarding man and his natural ability caused him to overlook the demonic, self-glorying, self-justifying part of man's flight from God.

The weakness of Uemura's attitude about sin cannot be detected so much in what he said about sin, but what he failed to say about man's true condition. Much of the time when he wrote about sin, he dealt with the topic in a forthright manner, although at times his remarks were vague and overly general. On the other hand, when he spoke of man and his possibilities, he wrote and spoke in a more optimistic tone. In an article written against what he termed "Nipponism" (Japanese), a word which he used to describe those who made Japan and her welfare their highest goal, Uemura wrote,

An individual, in childhood, is bright and spontaneous, but as he grows older, he experiences the misery and tribulation of human life or he meets some perplexing questions hard to solve, and then gives up his bright spontaneity in order to attain to a sounder optimism and satisfy his moral and rational longings. There are two ways possible for him: the one is to become a full-grown man of good experience, the other is to become a hermit escaping far into the alternatives. . . . Man has religious aspirations, and if we examine man as he is, it will be impossible to live without believing in Heaven, or to satisfy the finite without having communion with the Infinite.<sup>63</sup>

We notice Uemura's treatment of man, not primarily as the Bible treats him, but as he is in this life, that is, "As he experiences the misery and tribulation of human life, or meets some perplexing questions hard to solve." This is the way Uemura introduces the subject. Without direct

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<sup>63</sup>Ibid., 1:336.

reference to the Scriptures and to what God has spoken about man, Uemura reverts back to his more basic viewpoint which is optimistic and affirming of man.

The theology of the 16th century reformers speaks of man who is lost in sin, who is totally depraved, totally in the sense that there is no part of man untouched by sin, and thereby unable to turn to God except he be moved by God. It is this tone which is almost entirely missing in the sermons and writings of Uemura whose understanding of sin was flawed by a deeper conviction regarding his innate goodness and natural ability.

One's understanding of man's plight and his need for a saviour from sin has much to do with how he perceives the means with which God has dealt with that problem. We turn therefore to a discussion of Uemura's understanding of the person and work of Christ.

#### Uemura's View of the Person and Work of Christ

Lying at the very heart and center of Uemura's theological thought, and that which contributed most to his reputation as the champion of the historic Christian faith, was the doctrine of the person of Christ. So central in fact that Uemura returns again and again to the topic, treating it in a variety of sermons and writings. The most extensive treatment appeared in the now famous theological debate which took place between himself and Ebina Danjo, on the topic of the deity of Jesus Christ. The debate carried on in the journals of these two men between September 11, 1901 and July 24, 1902<sup>64</sup> attracted wide interest and was the

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<sup>64</sup>UMTSJ, 5:250.

greatest theological controversy ever to take place in Japan, at least in those years.<sup>65</sup> How that debate came about is important.

In 1897 the Evangelical Alliance of Japan met for their annual meeting in Tokyo, and in light of what was judged to be a new climate for evangelism in Japan, the entire church membership was challenged to undertake a nation-wide evangelistic outreach.<sup>66</sup> The Evangelical Alliance was established in 1877 under another name, primarily for fellowship among Christians in Japan, but also to provide an occasion to bring Christians together with the possibility of negotiating church union. The union plan of the entire church was never realized, but Christians continued to gather at intervals for fellowship and mutual encouragement. The first meeting of the Fukuin Domeikai (Evangelical Alliance) took place in Tokyo, June 26, 1893, followed by a second two years later in Kyoto on April 28, 1895.<sup>67</sup>

After the decision for an all-out thrust in evangelism was reached, a problem arose almost immediately when certain preachers, among whom was Ebina Danjo, were refused the pulpits of certain churches on the ground of their denial of the deity of Christ. Ebina was the well-known pastor of the Ikizaka Church in Tokyo, close to the Imperial University, who had been successful in drawing students and professors, members of parliament and other professional people into his congregation.<sup>68</sup> The refusal of some to open their pulpits to a man of this bearing and

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<sup>65</sup> Aoyoshi, Christian Leader, p. 191.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 170.

<sup>67</sup> Aoyoshi Katsuhisa, Uemura Masahisa Den (Tokyo: Kyobunkan, 1935), p. 334.

<sup>68</sup> Aoyoshi, Christian Leader, pp. 170-71.



popularity brought an immediate response from other parts of the church. At stake was whether Ebina and others like him should be disqualified from ministry throughout the churches because of their position regarding Jesus' deity.

The position which Uemura took in regard to this central question provides further insight into his thinking. "The Evangelical Alliance," he said, "was an organization for fellowship and the carrying out of other limited functions."<sup>69</sup> It had no doctrinal statement which members needed to accept so that all varieties of belief within the Christian faith were welcomed. Its evangelical stance was somewhat ambiguous inasmuch as unitarians were also included in the Alliance.

By the same token, Uemura reasoned, the Evangelical Alliance should not be involved in the work of evangelism, the bringing of men to salvation.<sup>70</sup> This work, he said, must be outside the aim and scope of the Alliance.

It is one thing to accept and cooperate with those who deny the supernaturalness of Christianity, the deity of Christ and his resurrection. It is quite another thing to entrust the responsibility of preaching to them, for then it becomes more than orthodoxy can bear. Anyone lacking this conviction is unfit for evangelistic work. The Evangelical Alliance must not entrust the task of preaching to those who lack the two essentials of faith, i.e., the deity of Christ and his redemption.<sup>71</sup>

These statements prompted new interest and debate on the question of evangelicalism, and at the meeting of the Alliance in 1901, held in Osaka, the question of the very nature of the Gospel became the center

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<sup>69</sup> Chosakushu, 4:399

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Quoted in Aoyoshi, Christian Leader, p. 174.

of the debate. One result of the debate was a motion to change the constitution. The words suggested for the constitutional change were:

What the Evangelical Alliance acknowledges as evangelicalism is to believe the Bible as the perfect model of faith and conduct, and also that we believe in Jesus Christ as God, who came to the world for man and for his salvation.<sup>72</sup>

This motion to amend the constitution needed a two-thirds majority for passage, but lost, with only eighty-one voting for and forty-four against.

When the motion was lost, a similar proposal in resolution form was placed before the body, the new motion reading, "Those who do not recognize Christ as God cannot join the Evangelical Alliance."<sup>73</sup> In contrast to an amendment change, the resolution needed only a majority to win. When this was brought to a vote one-hundred-eighteen supported it, six objected and about fifty abstained. Thus the resolution was passed and Ebina and others holding similar beliefs lost membership in the Alliance. Uemura did not care for the way the entire matter had been handled,<sup>74</sup> since he had argued for their right to membership, denying only the propriety of evangelistic activity by the Alliance.

It was this issue which was before the Evangelical Alliance that prompted Uemura to write his own brief definition of evangelicalism in the Fukuin Shimpo. His remarks were not directly addressed to Ebina, but Ebina read the article and perceived that he was the focus of the article. Ebina's response titled, "A Statement Directed to the Writer

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<sup>72</sup>Ibid.           <sup>73</sup>Ibid., p. 175

<sup>74</sup>Aoyoshi, Uemura Masahisa Den, p. 344.

of the Fukuin Shimpo," then appeared in his journal Shinjin (New Man).<sup>75</sup>

The debate once begun, continued over a course of several months, with Ebina maintaining that the idea of a trinity was a Greek concept current at the time of the early church, then adopted by the church but not binding for succeeding years. God is one, he said, and can't be three. Jesus is not the Son of God, but the holiest and best of humanity.

Every man is of the substance of God but because he is unaware of this, he needs awakening to understand that he is a new creature. The awakening process is called salvation. Not Christ himself but the religion he taught is the center of the faith, Ebina stated.<sup>76</sup>

Uemura opposed these views in a series of lengthy articles in the Fukuin Shimpo,<sup>77</sup> contrasting his views with Ebina's in a summary statement.

Mr. Ebina lays stress on the current ideas of the age. He believes that Christianity in many respects is the compound product of the ideas of the age of its origin. We also recognize the historical development of Christianity, but more than that we trace it to the Divine revelation. We put more stress on the work of God.

Mr. Ebina does not believe in the Deity of Christ; he denies Him worship, and says that Christianity is not centered in Christ himself. We believe in His deity. We believe that He is God made man. We believe in Christ's omnipresence and immanence. We worship Him and pray to Him.

Mr. Ebina looks up to Christ only as a teacher. We do that, but believe Him also to be the Saviour.

Salvation according to Mr. Ebina seems to mean attaining to a higher perception. His Christ is a moral model. We agree with Mr.

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<sup>75</sup> UMTSJ, 5:252.

<sup>76</sup> Aoyoshi, Christian Leader, p. 178

<sup>77</sup> Chosakushu, 4:327-54 and UMTSJ, 5:243-438.

Ebina in this too, but further than that, we believe that salvation from sin is very important.

Mr. Ebina emphasizes learning from Christ. We believe in Him, are united to Him and depend on and entrust ourselves to Him in life and in death.<sup>78</sup>

The contrasts between the two positions were made evident in the series of articles which appeared by the name of each of these men, and Uemura's summary statement only highlights the basic points of disagreement. The position which Uemura took established him as the champion of historic Christianity in the minds of many people,<sup>79</sup> and it is therefore important to examine more closely how accurately he represented the teachings of Scripture and the church regarding the person and work of Christ.

The first extended statement he made about Jesus Christ appeared in the pages of Shinri Ippan in one of his first attempts at booklet-length writing.<sup>80</sup> In the section on Jesus Christ, Uemura first gave his attention to the unusual character of Jesus.

The things Jesus did throughout his whole life are most astonishing and surprising, and the nature and works of Jesus are far superior to human activity. The question, Who is Jesus?, is no less urgent a question today than it was in the time of Christ.<sup>81</sup>

Uemura then selected characteristic traits of Jesus which he believed pointed to the special character of the man. He singled out for attention his sinlessness, his holiness which is universally recognized, his perfect virtues, his strong self-consciousness and perfect integration. Uemura also pointed to the great inner calm of Jesus so noticeable during the time of his death on the cross.

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<sup>78</sup> Quoted in Aoyoshi, Christian Leader, pp. 189-90

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Chosakushu, 4:9-190

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., p. 149

You have to take notice of these and listen to Jesus' own confession that he was the Son of God and then decide whether he was in truth the Son of God, or a deceiver. Since we do not see anything of the deceiver in him, we must believe that Jesus is the Son of God.<sup>82</sup>

The incarnation is a mystery, Uemura declared, but in fact it was anticipated by certain people like Plato and others long before Jesus came into the world.<sup>83</sup> This points to the fact that while man seeks his highest ideal, and wants to see this ideal incarnated, in effect, he makes his own Christ and in reality they are only idols and images. This is so because in his weakened morality man cannot know God. In this way mankind anticipates the true Christ in his own ideals, thoughts, and even idols. Uemura further argued that this desire after Christ is inherent in the human heart, and "since all men seek after Christ, why should there be any who deny him now that he has actually appeared in the flesh?"<sup>84</sup> Everything is waiting for Christ, and He is the goal or final stage of history. Uemura's argument centers around these two points, that is, Jesus came and claimed to be the Son of God, and then showed that he was in many remarkable ways; and, secondly, men are everywhere and everytime seeking the incarnation of their ideals which is always something less than Christ because of man's weak moral condition. Now that Christ has come and shown himself to man it is only natural to see in him the very thing that man has always been seeking.

Note where Uemura places the appeal of his argument. His optimistic view of man leads him to believe that all men are seeking Christ even though unaware. He makes his own Christ, Uemura says, because in

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<sup>82</sup>Ibid., p. 154

<sup>83</sup>Ibid., p. 155

<sup>84</sup>Ibid., p. 157

his weakened immorality he cannot know God. Because he cannot find God by himself, he makes imitations. This is how Uemura understood his own conversion experience.

My family were Shintoists and I devoutly worshipped at the shrine of a blacksmith who had risen to be a great soldier and patriot, praying that I might rise in like manner. But my fellow-students ridiculed my piety, and I stopped my visits to the shrine. One day I learned from Mr. Ballagh that Westerners also worshipped, but only one God. This greatly impressed and astonished me. I immediately grasped and accepted the idea.<sup>85</sup>

Note again the absence of conviction of sin, or a deep personal longing for salvation from sin. Instead he returns to the theme of the universality of man's quest for life's deep meaning.

It is very natural for man to think of the eternity of his soul. This is in everyone's heart and without conscious effort we all think that way. Even materialism is not strong enough to take the idea of immortality away.<sup>86</sup>

In this way Uemura begins his argument by reasserting the religiosity of man which, he says, always causes him to aspire for something spiritual.

Given the premise that all men seek, however ignorantly, for Christ, and that man's desire for Christ is inherent in the human heart, it only remains for man to see the virtues found in Christ to understand that he was, after all, the one whom he has been seeking. Thus Uemura points out those virtues.

According to the Gospels, all the virtues are found perfectly in Christ's character. He had no consciousness of sin and he declared himself to be the judge of mankind.<sup>87</sup>

By the words and life of Jesus, it is clear, says Uemura, that he was the Son of God.

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<sup>85</sup>Brief autobiography found in Uemura Masahisa Den, p. 507.

<sup>86</sup>Chosakushu, 4:125.

<sup>87</sup>Quoted in Aoyoshi, Christian Leader, p. 79.

Confucius, Buddha, Socrates, Plato, none of them was a perfect example. Jesus is the only one in whom no fault is recognized.<sup>88</sup>

In the same article he wrote,

Jesus made clear God's character, made sure of the future, taught morality, gave the example of perfect virtue and thus helped his followers to imitate these virtues. He provided them with aspiration. There have been many who have taught morality, have encouraged people toward the way to eternal life. But Jesus came down from heaven and established the manner of recovery of true human nature.<sup>89</sup>

As he could have but failed to do in his discussion of the problem of sin, so in speaking of Christ Uemura could have gone to the Scriptures, especially to the Old Testament to speak of God's covenant, His message to his people through the prophets, the expectation of the Messiah to ground his argument for the deity of Christ. Rather than that he chose instead to highlight for his readers the virtues of Jesus, his sinlessness, his holiness and his calm in the face of danger.

A more serious question can be raised regarding Uemura's understanding of the person and work of Christ. Uemura makes repeated mention in his sermons and articles to Jesus Christ and the cross, and the necessity of redemption through him.

Jesus was not only a great teacher or just a great example but he gave his own life for redemption from sin. He is the saviour from sin. He rules the souls of men with living power of love. Evangelical faith begins and ends with grace. Cling to nothing but the cross of Christ.<sup>90</sup>

Again in another article,

Jesus Christ came into the world to redeem mankind. We know that we are sinners, also that there is judgment on sin. In the theological

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<sup>88</sup> Chosakushu, 5:44.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 4:479

world there are various theories but redemption is found only in Christ. He is the center of Christianity. By the cross we know the love of God, and by the cross we are assured of our salvation from sin.<sup>91</sup>

Uemura wrote an article titled "Warera no Shinko" (Our faith) in which he spoke first about God's existence, and how we know of His existence. Further in the article he comes to the subject of Jesus Christ.

We believe in Jesus Christ saviour of humanity. How we answer the question who Jesus Christ is is of greatest importance for the destiny of man, life or destruction. Is Jesus Christ simply man or God? If the former, the basis of Christianity is destroyed.

He spoke with extraordinary authority. By him the stream of Christianity began, the direction of civilization was renewed, and new power provided for humanity. He was not just an ethical teacher or proclaimer of ethical morality but king of the spiritual world. Christianity is not mere law or commandment, but obedience to a living person.<sup>92</sup>

Reading these statements and others, the impression begins to form that Uemura's first and primary purpose is to build and strengthen belief in the deity of Jesus Christ. References are made to the cross and redemption, and most of these are vague and not well-defined. It appears that Uemura is more concerned to establish the fact of Jesus' deity than he is to explain in detail how it was that Jesus accomplished salvation for men. In an article quoted previously, "Shinjo seitei ni Kansuru Iken" (Opinion Regarding the Establishment of a Confession), Uemura stated that there are generally accepted and basic doctrines of the Christian faith which needed no reform. On the other hand, topics like the origin of sin and redemption had room for further development.

Additional hints of this bias come to light in the examination of a series of articles which Uemura wrote following his public debate with

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<sup>91</sup>Ibid., 5:86

<sup>92</sup>Ibid., p. 275.



Ebina. The title of the series was "Kirisuto to sono Jigyo" (Christ and His Work) and these appeared in the Fukuin Shimpo in fourteen articles from January through July of 1902.<sup>93</sup> We are told that the series was never completed<sup>94</sup> and this could explain the discrepancy. The examination of the fourteen articles on Christ and his work reveals that Uemura said little about Christ's work, but limited his remarks to further defense of Christ's deity. It can easily be surmised that with the issues of the debate still fresh in his mind, Uemura was convinced that the emphasis needed in Japan was upon the deity of Christ, and that more detailed explanation concerning his work on the cross could come later. However, that is only speculation. What the articles treat are the familiar themes of Christ's sinlessness, his supernatural nature and his resurrection. No mention is made of his life, his earthly ministry or his death on the cross.

Further evidence for this tendency is found in another article, "Kirisuto no shi ni yorite sukuwaru" (Saved By the Death of Christ).<sup>95</sup> In the opening words of the article the question is posed, If salvation from sin is necessary, how shall this be obtained? Uemura provides the answer to his question in a series of statements not having to do with the death of Jesus on the cross or the benefits accruing to those who put their faith in him, but detailing the kind of attitude a person must have toward his own sin. There must first be a proper sense of sin followed by a proper attitude regarding the result of sin. Furthermore, Uemura states, that to receive forgiveness we must die to sin and live to righteousness.

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 4:355-455

<sup>94</sup> Aoyoshi, Christian Leader, p. 190

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 5:116-21

If you really want forgiveness, you must believe that you can be perfectly forgiven. Without that assurance, you won't ask . . . Without this confidence (of the possibility of receiving forgiveness) knowing that you can receive credit for forgiveness, you won't gain assurance of forgiveness in the struggle with your own conscience.<sup>96</sup>

Paul is an example of one who, while greatly disappointed in his own sin, believed in Jesus Christ, and thus was able to give thanks.<sup>97</sup> Uemura concludes the article with the oft-repeated statement that those who have deep aspiration will be able to perceive their own human limitations. The higher the aspirations, the greater one's conscience binds one's heart.<sup>98</sup>

In the light of the evidence, what was the Gospel for Uemura, the substance or core of evangelicalism which he defended so strenuously? One of Uemura's clearest statements is found in his article on evangelicalism titled, "Fukuin Shugi no shinko" (The Faith of Evangelicalism).<sup>99</sup> After identifying various evangelical denominations and groups around the world, Uemura wrote,

Evangelicalism is that Jesus Christ sacrificed his own life . . . . It is not social activity, but the salvation of the soul, and anything besides this is a by-product of that salvation. . . . Jesus was not only a great teacher. Nor was he just a great example. He gave his own life for redemption from sin. He was a Saviour from sin. . . . Evangelical faith begins and ends with grace. . . . God's forgiveness is not a feeling in one's consciousness or what one feels. It is God's forgiveness. By being convinced of the forgiveness of God the soul has peace and one's heart no longer condemns him. In evangelical faith we must not only emphasize the forgiveness of sins but also the removal of punishment and judgment.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid., p. 119    <sup>97</sup> Ibid.    <sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Chosakushu, 4:466-89    <sup>100</sup> Ibid., p. 479.

This statement is clear enough. Unfortunately though, with the possible exception of this article Uemura perceived the gospel as simply the gospel of the Son of God. Evangelicalism is not defined in soteriological terms. Instead it is the recognition and belief that Christ is God. While certain lip service was paid to the atonement, Uemura's energies were directed primarily to the defense of the truth of the incarnation.

Arguing against Ebina, Uemura wrote,

There are only four possible positions we can take concerning the person of Christ. They are (1) To praise the grace of Christ and to say nothing of his person. (2) To be satisfied with making Christ a man. (3) To identify God and man though apparently recognizing the deity of Christ. (4) To believe in evangelicalism, that is to say to believe that God became man actually.<sup>101</sup>

The gospel, according to these statements, is not centered on the objective work which Christ performed on the cross, but in a subjective relationship which the believer sustains to Christ. Uemura repeatedly draws attention to the fact that from the beginning the church believed that Christ was God, worshipped him and prayed to him. Time and again Uemura defended the deity of Christ against all who were content with something less. On the other hand, however, he was extremely reluctant to add anything more to this one statement. When he wrote an article about a church declaration versus a church creed,<sup>102</sup> he was quite willing to grant broad recognition of the many different doctrinal viewpoints in the church. In regard to the doctrine of redemption Uemura mentioned that the viewpoints were many, that is, a moral theory, a government

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<sup>101</sup>Quoted in Aoyoshi, Christian Leader, p. 185.

<sup>102</sup>Chosakushu, 6:126-39.

theory, and the fundamentalist viewpoint, but "to put only one theory of the atonement in the church confession is not desirable."<sup>103</sup>

The question might well be asked about why Uemura felt so strongly about affirming belief in Christ as God while at the same time being so reluctant to reach and declare one's position about Christ's work, the origin of sin, and so forth. Uemura himself provides no answer. It could be that he instinctively knew that anything less than the confession that Jesus is God would be no confession at all. But his weak position regarding the work of Christ and being clear in his own mind in what way the Scriptures taught Christ's substitutionary death was a result of his view of the Scriptures and the church confessions. An instinctive proponent of an indigenized Christianity, Uemura's eagerness to put the faith in forms understandable to the Japanese forced him to adopt views on both the Bible and the church confessions which would have served as a useful corrective.

It remains to be seen how Uemura's view of Scripture, sin and Christ's deity shaped as they were by his Confucian-oriented motifs influenced his understanding of the Christian life. It is to that topic that we turn.

#### Uemura's View of the Christian Life

The fourth and final area of Uemura's theological thought to which he gave special emphasis and which thus merits special attention in this study is his understanding of the Christian walk or life. Uemura often made special reference to Christian discipleship and what form the

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<sup>103</sup>Ibid., p. 136.

life of a Christian should take in this world, and it is the special concern of this study to understand how Uemura's world view affected this part of his thinking, preaching and writing.

Attention has already been given to the underlying premise found in Uemura's writings, that man is a sinner and his sin has separated him from God. The effect of his sin has caused man to think more of his worldly life than spiritual life. Nevertheless, there is something in man's makeup which forces him to realize that there is more to life than what he sees in this world. There is a certain emptiness in his life and until that void is filled with true religion, he remains in this state. Man is unable to find God by himself. Jesus, however, has come into the world as God's son and man's aspiration has been renewed by him. Thus, as Uemura observed the conditions in Japan around the turn of the century, he wrote,

The religious mind of the nation seems to be slowly awakening and its interest in spiritual things is beginning to deepen. . . . If I'm not mistaken, our nation is on the verge of a religious awakening. Pantheism has a long history in Japan, and the minds of the people are infected by it to the core. To crush these errors and establish the Christian view of life based on the Incarnation and Resurrection of Christ will be accomplished only through a decisive spiritual battle. The time to decide the issue is near.<sup>104</sup>

It is on this Christian view of life based on the incarnation and resurrection of Christ that this study focuses.

A clue to Uemura's understanding of the Christian life is provided in the accounts of his boyhood by his biographer. In the edition which was written for English-language readers, Aoyoshi speaks of the

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<sup>104</sup> Quoted in Aoyoshi, Christian Leader, p. 198.

respect which the young Japanese Christian converts had for American missionaries.

The heroic spirit of the samurai caught fire from the missionary in the spirit of vicarious suffering. In this regard feudalism in Japan left her sons a noble heritage, paving the way for Christianity.<sup>105</sup>

The same point is stressed later in the book.

The way of a samurai always emphasizes the spirit of self-sacrifice as the noblest expression of its ethical life. In other words, it is heroism ever willing to suffer for the sake of others . . . . The faith which Uemura embraced was the way of heroism originated by Christ himself, and of responsive loyalty on our side.<sup>106</sup>

The key words in these statements of Aoyoshi are "heroism" and "vicarious suffering," and apparently it was this which the young men of Japan saw in the Christian missionaries and the faith which they brought with them. The way of the samurai stressed the values of loyalty to one's liege lord even to the point of death. Being from a samurai home, Uemura had been taught these values and what he knew of Kato Kiyomasa brought him to pray daily before his shrine.

The boy knew nothing about Christianity yet. The only thing he knew was that nobleness of life lies in sacrifice for the high cause-- to sacrifice one's life for his own family, for his feudal master, for something higher than both of them. In life or in death, a true samurai counted himself for nothing and his ideal for everything.<sup>107</sup>

What was true of Uemura as a boy was no less true in his adult years except that he became a follower of Jesus Christ and a minister of the Gospel. It is instructive therefore to note similarities between this next description with the previous one.

To him, the religion of Christ was the way of the cross, that is, the teaching of self-sacrifice with willingness. God is the Great Sacrificer, who by his sacrifice originated our faith and leads it

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., pp. 63-64

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

to perfection. What we sacrifice is a poor imitation of His great self-sacrificing love, and only sacrifice in Christ and for Christ is the sound foundation of his church.<sup>108</sup>

Both of these assessments come from Aoyoshi's perception of Uemura and his ministry. A closer examination must be given to see what brought him to this conclusion.

"Do you realize that pain and poverty have no power over us?" wrote Uemura to his wife from London during his first visit to England.<sup>109</sup> His experience with poverty extended over much of his life as Uemura had to work to stretch the funds he had to meet the several financial obligations he was always involved in. His insistence on self-support and financial independence never slackened and each new project such as his weekly journal, and the seminary only added to the financial burdens which he carried most of his life.

Part of the reason for his financial difficulties came about because his spiritual vision was greater than his material resources. At the same time his relative poverty was part of his own choosing. It was his life purpose to give up human pleasures in order that he might partake of divine suffering.<sup>110</sup> To be poor, to undergo suffering, he felt, was to follow the way of the cross.

In keeping with his convictions about aspiration and the spirit of progress which he believed to be inherent in all men, Uemura was concerned that people would not have a mistaken impression of what it meant to be a Christian. "The Christian faith and/or church is not a place where one comes to relax," he repeatedly warned!<sup>111</sup> Even the faith

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid., p. 147

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., p. 91.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., p. 92.

<sup>111</sup> Chosakushu, 7:133.

itself is not something men should think about apart from life. Faith is action and the Christian life is work and commitment. "Too many believe that the Christian life is like a train ride from Tokyo to Osaka. A person pays a small offering then reclines in his chair while the train carries him from one place to another."<sup>112</sup>

Uemura warned against taking such a view. "The Christian faith is not an easy, comfortable thing," he said, "but the taking up of one's cross." This emphasis must be given because it is the natural tendency to take the easy way, and therefore those who desire to enter the Church must understand the high cost of commitment.

Uemura found on the one hand that the Christian life demanded commitment. He saw also that commitment held its own appeal. People of strong commitment had the tendency to influence others. He recalled for his readers the example of certain Daimyo (fief lords) during the early years of the Meiji Restoration<sup>113</sup> who owned and ruled over their own fiefdoms but who were willing to sacrifice these possessions for the new nation. Unselfishly they returned their property to the state for redistribution along prefectural lines. In other words, they possessed a sacrificial spirit. Uemura also noted the example of Francis of Assisi who had such a spirit.<sup>114</sup> He was born into a wealthy home, but he gave all this up to follow the Lord. In doing this, he had a great influence on others, and many followed after him.

For the most part, Uemura reasoned, people are encouraged by righteousness. Therefore when they observe commitment on the part of

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., p. 130

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., p. 131.



Christians they too will be encouraged. More importantly, to find the Christian faith attractive, people of high commitment must be able to witness this spirit among Christian believers, a sense of commitment to a great cause.

There is another and deeper side to this need of commitment. According to Uemura the idea of taking up one's cross and of self-sacrifice is fundamental to the Christian life. God was the Great Sacrificer, in the giving of his son, in love.<sup>115</sup> Jesus Christ came to this earth, giving up his prerogatives, even to his own life. Jesus Christ serves as our example, therefore, and we are sent into the world to be like him.<sup>116</sup> We must determine to stand in the world with a mind like his. This, said Uemura, is the Christlike life.

A brief summary of his ideas appears in a message he delivered to the World Student Christian Federation Convention held in Tokyo in 1907 under the title, "The Christ-like Life the Ideal to be Emphasized in Student Evangelization."<sup>117</sup> In this message Uemura characterized the Christlike life as one of conquest. Every Christian is called to bear arms.

Every Japanese Christian is under obligation to recognize and to bear his own burden in evangelizing our country and to live up to the prayer that all the Lord's people may be prophets.<sup>118</sup>

Uemura repeated the request of the mother of Zebedee's two sons to Jesus. She asked that her sons might be allowed to sit at the side of the Lord. "But," said Uemura,

Christianity will never prosper by the methods of Zebedee's wife and sons; it cannot be maintained by the easy means desired by the rich

<sup>115</sup> Aoyoshi, Christian Leader, p. 147.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., p. 224.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., pp. 220-27

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., p. 223.

young ruler. Except we truly represent the spirit of Christ, we can by no means build up his kingdom."<sup>119</sup>

The rich young ruler is another example of the same spirit. This young man asked the Lord what he should do to inherit eternal life. Uemura did not repeat Jesus' answer. Instead, he said,

Eternal life is not a thing that can be inherited; it cannot be taken over like property received from one's ancestors without a stroke of work. In Christianity we cannot be satisfied with the principle of inheriting by primogeniture. If we do trust to any such principle, we invite certain decay in Christian life. . . . Especially do we Christians in Japan need to examine ourselves in this particular and to make sure that we are ever pressing forward by the quickening power of the Holy Spirit of Jesus.<sup>120</sup>

Uemura's stress to both illustrations points up what he considered to be a misunderstanding of the rich ruler and the wife of Zebedee. Their misunderstanding was over the quality of work and commitment demanded of the Christian. In the case of the rich man he thought that the Christian life could be inherited. Zebedee's wife thought that her sons could simply be given a place of honor. Their questions revealed a basic misunderstanding of the Christian life.

Uemura continues to build his case. The Christian takes up his cross in self-sacrifice as a part of his witness to people outside the church who have high aspiration. He also takes up his cross because he wants to follow Christ's example. A third reason for taking up one's cross stems from the very words of Jesus. "Take up your cross and follow me." The Lord spoke these words for three reasons. The first is,

Those who forget to take up their cross, who do not respond to the Lord, who indulge only in physical or selfish pleasure are already

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<sup>119</sup>Ibid., p. 224.

<sup>120</sup>Ibid.

dead. . . . Those who are bound by this selfish mind cannot take up their cross.<sup>121</sup>

Admittedly these words do not appear to be an encouragement to follow the Lord, but it may be assumed that Uemura is speaking this way to show what happens to people who refuse to carry their cross. They aren't alive, but dead already.

The second reason suggested for Jesus' words is the great loss one experiences when he refuses. Enjoyment of God is far superior to that of the world, and ultimately worldly profit is not really profitable,<sup>122</sup> it only appears that way.

Finally, the taking of one's cross is related to honor and shame. Uemura looks into the future and recalls Jesus' words in Matthew 8. He said, "Whoever is ashamed of me, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed." If man takes care to live his life correctly, to take his cross and follow Jesus he will not have to suffer embarrassment when he stands before God.<sup>123</sup>

In conclusion Uemura comments on the beauty of Bushido. The samurai was taught to carry his cross. Samurai code taught a man what his duty was and called for a life-long commitment to that duty, even to giving of one's life itself. It is this kind of spiritual vitality which is needed today, Uemura reasoned, and if Christian discipleship were understood this way, there would be many more attracted to the church.<sup>124</sup>

The topic was touched upon again after the great earthquake of 1923 which caused such loss of human life and property in the Tokyo

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<sup>121</sup>Chosakushu, 7:135-36

<sup>122</sup>Ibid., p. 138

<sup>123</sup>Ibid., p. 139

<sup>124</sup>Ibid.

Yokohama area. Titled "Kirisuto no jujika, warera no jujika" (Christ's Cross and Our Cross),<sup>125</sup> Uemura's sermon was an attempt to bring the sufferings the Japanese people experienced in the earthquake into some perspective. "Man," he said, "ever seeks for God. He is far away from God and his heart is lonely and empty."<sup>126</sup> In this situation how is man's heart lifted to God? Human effort and discipline is needed, answered Uemura. Self-discipline must be exercised to elevate one's self, and this is a form of cross bearing. By way of explanation Uemura stated it this way:

To face danger and suffering is the cross for us, for God and for the world. Any trouble which is related to God or to our spiritual walk, that is our cross. Even if those troubles are a result of our fault or sin, if they bring about introspection, repentance, aspiration, return and prayer, then they may be considered the cross. These are all ways on the road to self-elevation. Suffering is the best school, and it shall be the best opportunity to find the truth. As long as our sufferings cause us to relate them to God we can understand their significance. Sufferings, happiness, good things, bad things, these are all sanctified or cleansed in the cross, and we shall see all things which are happening in our lives by means of the cross.

The cross of Jesus Christ is the example or norm of our lives. The cross of Jesus Christ is God's cross that provides forgiveness of sins, never the cross of human beings. . . .

Daily we must experience the forgiveness of Christ, experience the grace of God, take up our own cross. . . . The cross of Christ is not only the starting point for a Christian life. It is also during one's walk, and also at the end we must depend upon the cross. Wherever we go we have to be saved by Jesus Christ, the Rock of Ages. With this faith we live now, self-improve and develop in the future.<sup>127</sup>

This quotation from Uemura's sermon illustrates the liberties he took with concepts taken from Scripture. It also illustrates the oriental use of emotive language over against the kind which appeals to the Western mind. He seems to suggest to his listeners that suffering is a form

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid., p. 486

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., p. 487

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

of cross bearing since it stimulates reflection on life's meaning and thus brings a person farther along on the way of self-elevation and self-improvement. He then declares that the cross of Jesus Christ is an example for our lives from start to finish. But Uemura did little or no explaining of what these words meant. Without the conscious desire to do so, Uemura reduced the true meaning of the cross of Christ by reducing its historical meaning and comparing in some way the sufferings which man confronts daily.

The same style can be seen in an address which Uemura delivered in 1907 at the World Student Christian Federation convention held in Tokyo. The title of his address was "The Christlike Life the Ideal to Be Emphasized in Student Evangelization."<sup>128</sup> In the development of his message Uemura stressed the newness of life in Christ.

The more we know of Jesus' work and teaching the more earnestly we follow him, the more new things do we find in him. . . . There is no need or warrant for believers in Christ passively to repeat stereo-typed traditional doctrine. They must discover the meaning of Christianity for themselves; they cannot escape the responsibility of ever afresh making it their own possession. . . . The Christlike life is one of conquest, and every Christian must bear arms.<sup>129</sup>

Later in the same message Uemura draws attention to the appeal of one who is committed to Christ.

The Christlike life is bright as an incandescent light; its voice is like a peal of thunder; its influence is mighty. The soul in whose depths there is this abundant life has the power of piercing other souls. Deep answereth to deep. If the Christlike life

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<sup>128</sup> Aoyoshi, Christian Leader, p. 220.

<sup>129</sup> Quoted in Aoyoshi, Christian Leader, pp. 221-22.

is deeply rooted in our hearts we shall be able to recall men to their true selves to make them understand the truth.<sup>130</sup>

Uemura elaborates on this theme using the figure of the prodigal who wanders to a far country. One day, stricken with homesickness he meets one who is a believer and this one, full of the joy of his Christian experiences awakens the prodigal and others like him to their right mind and leads them to resolve to return to their father. Such, says Uemura, is the central aid of evangelism.

This Christlike life, Uemura believed, can be attained in the recognition that Christ died for men and was raised again and in tasting deeply of the cross and the meaning of its salvation. Uemura quoted an English writer with these words, "On this side of the cross all history is, or ought to be, a different thing to what it is on the other, and every one who carries the cross, insofar as he carries it, is a better citizen, a better philosopher, and a better man than he would have been otherwise."<sup>131</sup>

After reading this essay on the Christlike life, the meaning and substance of it remains elusive. Uemura insists that it cannot be inherited and must be maintained by hard work. It is a bright light which draws others to it and can be obtained by recognizing Christ who died and rose again. It also means an end to the self-seeking life.

The words of Uemura are full of emotional appeal. At the same time they are not devoid of Scriptural truth. The habit he had of grouping several aspects of God's truth under one topic tended to obscure the

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<sup>130</sup>Ibid., p. 225

<sup>131</sup>Ibid., p. 227.

clear meaning of the Bible. His treatment of these important topics often did more to hide than to make clear the true meaning of Scripture.

A more serious question must be raised, however, regarding Uemura's treatment of the Christian life and cross bearing. It has already been pointed out that his treatment of the doctrine of Christ placed greater emphasis on the incarnation and Christ's deity than it did upon his work. Uemura warned against insisting upon one theory of the atonement, and he was reluctant to teach the clear meaning of the cross of Christ and what Christ accomplished on the cross. The historic creeds of the church were not allowed to be heard for fear that these voices from the past would inhibit theological freedom and creativeness on the part of Japanese believers. The Scriptures were also not given a proper and adequate treatment to permit the Word of God its rightful voice.

The cross and its meaning were neglected in the discussion of the person and work of Christ but received greater attention when Uemura discoursed on the Christlike life. In the latter, the cross is the way of suffering and self-sacrifice. To Uemura the Christian religion was the way of the cross, the teaching of self-sacrifice with willingness. The cross of Jesus Christ by Uemura's suggestions loses its meaning as the place where Christ became sin and gave his life as a substitution and instead is reduced to nothing more than a pattern for men to follow as they live their lives out on this earth.

The concept of self-sacrifice and suffering for a great cause compared favorably with a similar concept in the samurai code of ethics. When Uemura spoke in this fashion his words must have held much appeal

to those already familiar with these ideas. In this way he was successful in eliciting a positive response from those who heard him preach and who read his sermons and articles. The question regarding the content of their understanding remains, however, because for all of their beauty his explanation could only reduce the meaning of the cross as God's gift of His only Son in answer to man's greatest need, to become a pattern or model for man's daily life. The repositioning served to remove the scandal of the cross and thus its power, leaving in its place a mere sentimental idea.

However orthodox-sounding Uemura's words and thoughts were to those who knew him, especially in comparison to other Christian figures like Ebina and Kanamori, the underlying premises upon which his words were based reflect a theological orientation which was not truly and consistently Biblical. The self-affirming, positive attitude toward man only worked to blunt the Scriptural teaching of man's position before a righteous God. This in turn permitted Uemura to place much of his emphasis on the incarnation rather than a full-orbed declaration about the person and work of Christ, and finally, reduced the meaning of the cross in the life of the sinner and believer by focusing on it as a pattern for a life of cross bearing and not the event by which Jesus restored sinful man to a place of standing before God the Father clothed in the righteousness of Jesus Christ.



## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

Bishop Stephen Neill, who documents the history of the spread of Christianity, points out that at the beginning of the 19th century it was not clear that the Christian faith was ever going to be more than the white man's religion.<sup>1</sup> While it had been carried to many parts of the world it remained by and large the domain of the Western Europeans. The 19th century, the Great Century of missions, changed that. The further spread of the Gospel and its deeper penetration into cultures brought the increasing realization of the need for a church indigenous to the culture in which it lived. The paternalism of the colonial days was replaced with a new concern for the indigenization of the church which has led more recently to a call for indigenous or contextualized theologies.

In spite of two centuries of missionary effort in Japan, the church there has failed to attract more than one percent of the population. One Japanese writer argues that Christianity in Japan has remained an imported religion from the West and needs to be transformed into something wholly Japanese before it can take root in the Japanese

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<sup>1</sup>Stephen Neill, A History of Christian Missions (Baltimore: Penguin Books, Inc., 1964), p. 244.

mind.<sup>2</sup> Other religions which have been brought to Japan, even when they have come from other parts of Asia, have gone through this process.<sup>3</sup>

The most recent exposure of the Japanese to Christianity came in 1859 when Protestant missionaries arrived and began their work. Born just two years before they arrived, Uemura Masahisa was introduced to the Christian faith through English classes and baptized when he was sixteen years of age. Uemura stood at the beginning of one of the three major traditions in Protestant Christianity. Due to their samurai up-bringing and the times they lived in, the leaders of these traditions made serious attempts to make the new faith compatible to the Japanese mind. Regarding Uemura's efforts along this line his biographer said of him, "As a theologian his profound insight and his faithfulness to the historic faith were made known impressively to his contemporaries."<sup>4</sup>

A few sentences later he adds:

The life of Uemura presents an answer to the question of religion among our people, the Japanese, for example, such questions as: Can Japan be converted to Christianity? Is Christianity, in fact, the only way of salvation for the Japanese as for other races and nations among which it has proved itself to be such? Can the absoluteness of Christianity be established in a country in which all the Oriental religions have exerted a degree of influence and still make vigorous protest against the exclusive claims of the Christian religion?<sup>5</sup>

A. K. Reischauer, Presbyterian missionary to Japan said of Uemura, "no other Christian leader did quite as much as Dr. Uemura did toward

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<sup>2</sup>Shusaku Endo, Silence, trans. by William Johnston (Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1969).

<sup>3</sup>See Kishimoto Hideo, ed. Japanese Religion in the Meiji Era, trans. by John Howes (Obun Sha, 1956).

<sup>4</sup>Aoyoshi Katsuhisa, Dr. Masahisa Uemura: Christian Leader (Tokyo: Kyobunkan, 1941), p. 2.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

naturalizing Christianity in Japan and at the same time making and keeping it thoroughly Christian in character.<sup>6</sup>

In the light of such testimony, now that several years have passed and it is possible to evaluate his influence more objectively, how faithful was Uemura to the text, the Bible, as well as to the context, the people of Japan?

Speaking to the second point first, one can hardly read the accounts of Christianity in Japan in those early years without feeling empathy for the efforts Uemura made to obtain a hearing for the Christian message among his people. He grasped instinctively from the beginning that if Christianity was to survive and find entrance into the hearts and minds of the Japanese, it would have to come in Japanese dress. When Uemura read Jesus' words about his purpose in coming to earth, that is, "I have come to fulfil and not to destroy," he applied them to the Japanese situation. He believed that Jesus had come to fulfil the true aspirations of the Japanese people, to complete and make perfect that which was not yet incomplete and unknown. Thus he spoke of "baptized bushido" the word he used to describe Christianity as the renewer of ancient Japanese values and the true ethic for the Japanese people. These Confucian-oriented values provided, he believed, the "Old Testament" for the Japanese people, to prepare them for understanding Jesus Christ. Thus he introduced Christianity, not as something strange and exotic but as a faith which was natural to embrace, a faith for which everyone aspired.

Unlike Ebina and others Uemura also realized that Christianity had to stand against culture. The naturalness of belief did not

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<sup>6</sup>Quoted in Christian Leader, p. 8.

eliminate the necessity for a conscious struggle to be waged by every believer. He argued strenuously, therefore, for a "fighting theology," the reflection of a vital faith which was on guard against all that might weaken or try to control. Any refusal to enter the fight or relax one's spiritual guard could only result in serious spiritual declension.

One sign of a strong faith was an independent spirit, able to stand alone amid the obstacles to faith. The church needed to be independent to ward off the ever-present pressures of government control. The church also needed to be independent of mission control be it organizational, financial, or theological. With Uemura's urging the Nihon Kirisuto Kyokai made changes in their constitution thereby eliminating direct missionary participation in church courts. Independence, for Uemura, also meant being free to reject any statement of faith not representative of their own culture and time. Anything which might lessen the determination of the Japanese church to depend upon the Lord alone must be abandoned. To raise up a theologically sensitive and well-trained church Uemura brought the Shingakusha into being, the thought being that only the Japanese would know how to train their own people for evangelism in Japan.

The Confucian world-view which prompted this kind of thinking in Uemura had both positive and negative effects. Positively, it caused Uemura to work tirelessly to bring his church to what he considered to be a responsible position. To survive, the church had to stand on its own feet. It could not use the strength, whether financial or theological, of another to bolster its own. The pride and the strength of these early

samurai leaders among whom was Uemura, brought the church in Japan to undertake their own destiny within a very short time.

On the negative side, Uemura's insistence on independence undercut the authority of the Scriptures and the voice of the church in other countries and the past. Uemura could only believe that doctrinal standards of another church did not meet the need of the Japanese church. Better to start with a simple creed like the Apostles' Creed than to take over some other document, another example of dressing a David in Saul's armour. Looking back on the events surrounding the founding of the first Protestant church in Yokohama, Uemura noted that for several reasons, "they thought it wiser to unite in essential faith, giving up trifles."<sup>7</sup> This meant that in order to stand alone from the foreigner they had to stand together. In order to stand together, they needed to "give up trifles," that is, any creedal or doctrinal differences which might divide them. Therefore, as Aoyoshi says, "For this reason they had nothing to do with Calvinistic theology or the Westminster Confession."<sup>8</sup>

From a Presbyterian and Reformed point of view, it would appear obvious from that statement alone, that the Japanese church which emerged from those early years was not Presbyterian or Reformed except in whatever they unconsciously accepted in their own system of beliefs. At least it can be said that they were not self-consciously Presbyterian or Reformed. But if not that, what about the faith they held in common? In a recent book titled Essentials of Evangelical Theology<sup>9</sup> the author

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., pp. 26-27

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Donald G. Bloesch, Essentials of Evangelical Theology (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978).

lists the major areas of evangelical concern, namely, the sovereignty of God, the primacy of Scripture, man's total depravity, the deity of Jesus Christ, the substitutionary atonement, and salvation by grace alone. Uemura touched on all these topics in his sermons and articles with the possible exception of man's depravity. However, only one of these doctrines, the deity of Jesus Christ, received detailed and repeated treatment. Out of fear of (1) becoming too dependent, (2) blocking progress by repeating doctrinal statements from the past, or (3) inhibiting the Japanese from making their own doctrinal formulations Uemura insisted on very few theological positions. Orthodoxy to him was making allowances for a number of differing positions. History records that in several instances in the past, missionaries from the West have been loathe to recognize any other theological expressions than their own. Uemura is an example of a reverse way of thinking, that is, a national background and consciousness which held him back from taking any hard line for fear that it would break up harmony, or not fully represent the Japanese mind.

As a small minority struggling against great odds it was natural that the church in Japan would reject certain denominational distinctives of the Western church in order to stand together there. But some of the things which Uemura may have thought of as "trifles," the conviction of the absolute sovereignty of God and the absolute authority of the Bible as God's Word, were the very beliefs which the church needed for its struggle with the state, a struggle which Uemura anticipated to some degree but failed to understand adequately. One of the great ironies in the history of the Church of Christ in Japan was its capitulation to

government demands despite all that Uemura had said about the importance of being independent. Uemura undermined the very things he tried to accomplish by refusing to take the Scriptures seriously. A proper regard for the context should have followed a theologically responsible regard for the text, God's Word. A reversal of these priorities contributed to a church the likes of which could be seen in the years of the second World War.<sup>10</sup>

Compared to many other Christian pastors Uemura's spirited defense of the deity of Christ provided the entire church in Japan with an example of what was needed for the whole body of Christian truth. Had he extended his defense to include all the major loci of Christian truth he would have contributed to the overall strengthening of the Church. His one selection of Christ's deity was insufficient in and of itself to raise the church to the place Uemura wished for it to be and with the vision he wanted it to have.

In this day of proliferating "theologies" and the cry for the contextualization of the Gospel, Uemura example serves as a warning. Those engaged in the task of transmitting the gospel from one culture to another must always be sensitive to the culture and the thought patterns of the people to whom he wishes to bring God's message. Any viewpoint, however, which refuses to take the Scriptures seriously, for whatever motive, risks forfeiture of the right to proclaim the whole counsel of God to the ruin of the church.

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<sup>10</sup> See Richard Terrill Baker, Darkness of the Sun (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1947), especially chapters 2-5.

## APPENDIX

### BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF UEMURA MASAHISA

Uemura Masahisa was born into the home of Lord and Lady Uemura in December 1857, just prior to the end of the Tokugawa period and just before the beginning of the Meiji rule commonly known as the Meiji Restoration. Uemura's father was a samurai with the additional status of honor, the position of hatamoto inherited from his forefathers. With the changeover in governments the samurai class went out of existence leaving families in difficult financial circumstances. The parents decided to send their eldest son, Masahisa, to school to study English with the hope that he could improve his future prospects. It was in a school for English that he met Western missionaries and eventually came to embrace the faith they taught. Uemura was baptized in May 1873 when he was sixteen years old, entered theological school four years later and was licensed to preach in April 1878 at the age of twentyone. He was ordained pastor of the Shitaya Church in Tokyo one year later where he remained ten years before moving to another congregation a short distance away. He maintained his pastoral relationship with this congregation until his sudden death in 1925.

Uemura married Miss Sueno Yamanouchi in 1880. Three daughters resulted from his union, two of whom died. The third, Uemura Tamaki,



served a long and distinguished career as pastor to her father's congregation following his death.

Uemura's literary activity took different forms, but his first well-publicized work was published in 1884 titled Shinri Ippan (Common Truth). Not until after his first trip to the West in 1888 did he begin to publish his own journal on a regular basis. He began with two magazines, Nippon Hyoron (Japan Review) and Fukuin Shuho (Gospel Weekly), the former a monthly magazine, the latter a weekly journal. He stopped publishing the first after two years, but continued the other right up to the time of his death. He used it for the dissemination of his sermons, articles, theological essays, and comments on a variety of topics. It was highly regarded within the Christian community.

In 1903 Uemura resigned his position on the faculty of Meiji Gakuin and one year later started up his own theological school, the Tokyo Shingakusha. The seminary became known for its graduates who served the church throughout Japan and many parts of Asia. The seminary remained in existence until 1929, four years after his death, when it was merged with the theological department of Meiji Gakuin to form a third, distinct school named the Nihon Shingakko (Japan Theological Seminary).

Uemura travelled widely in the interests of evangelism. Almost every summer he would visit different places in Japan as well as more distant parts of Asia. He travelled two more times to America and England the last trip in 1922 when he also visited Canada, Scotland, and then returned to Japan via Europe and the Middle East.

He died suddenly of a heart attack on January 8, 1925 just over a year after the great earthquake which took such a heavy toll in lives and property in the Tokyo-Yokohama area.

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