HÁSKÓLI ÍSLANDS
Hugvísindasvið

Uchimura Kanzō

The Clash and Conciliation of East and West

Ritgerð til BA-prófs í japönsku

Andrés Björgvin Böðvarsson

Maí 2012

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Útdráttur á íslensku:

Uchimura Kanzō var japanskur kristinn hugsuður sem var uppi í kringum aldamótin 1900. Hann var af samúræjaættum, gekk í vestræna skóla og varð kristinn fyrir tilverknað skólameistara landbúnaðarháskólans í Sapporo. Hann ferðaðist ungur til Ameríku. Sú ferð breytti viðhorfum hans til Vesturlandabúa í raunsæisátt auk þess sem hún styrkti og skýrði trú hans. Að lokinni ferðinni reyndi hann með ýmsu móti að vinna að því markmiði sínu að gera Japönum Biblíuna skiljanlega, en hann taldi að Japan ætti eftir að gegna mikilvægu hlutverki í þróun siðmenningarinnar og kristinnar trúar. Hann gerðist kennari, síðar rithöfundur og loks blaðamaður áður en hann sneri sér að útgáfu Biblíuskýringatímarits.

Hugmyndafræði Uchimura snerist um tvö kjarnaatriði: Jesú Krist og kristna trú annars vegar, og Japan hins vegar. Guðfræði Uchimura var í meginatriðum venjubundin mótmælendakristni að því undanskildu að hann vildi boða japanska kristni, lausa við vestrænar stofnanir, litúrgíu og kennivald. Að baki þessu bjó róttæk sjálfstæðishyggja Uchimura sem m.a. gagnrýndi japanskar kirkjur fyrir að vera undir of sterkum áhrifum útlendra kristniboða. Þessi sjálfstæðishyggja varð til þess að Uchimura lenti oft uppá kant við kristniboðana, japanska kristna og japanskt samfélag í heild.

Markmið ritgerðarinnar er að greina það að hvaða marki vestrænir hugmyndastraumar, sér í lagi kristni, höfðu áhrif á Uchimura og hvernig hann samþættaði þá við austrænan samúræjabakgrunn sinn.

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INTRODUCTION

I for Japan;
Japan for the World;
The World for Christ;
And All for God.[1]

Uchimura Kanzō[2] (1861-1930) wanted these words to be written on his tombstone. He wrote them while he was still in his twenties, working at a hospital for mentally retarded children in Elwyn, Pennsylvania.[3] They can be construed as a manifesto, or a mission statement; one that Uchimura would aspire to fulfill for the rest of his life. Uchimura felt that it was necessary for Japan to adopt Christianity sooner or later, yet struggled personally with how to reconcile the alien faith with his native traditions. Once he had, more or less, resolved this question he faced the questions of how best to spread the Gospel and, in the meantime, how to live as an independent Japanese Christian in a society that rejected his faith, or at least his formulation of it.

Uchimura Kanzō was a Japanese Christian thinker and social critic and one of the most important of the early Meiji Christians. He was from a samurai family and was ushered at birth into a world of social upheaval during which the samurai class was made obsolete. Like all Japanese individuals Uchimura had to find his place in a world filled with alien Western ideas and concepts as Japan raced towards modernization in order to catch up with Europe and America, economically and militarily. Of all the Western innovations that entered Japan during the Meiji period[4] Christianity was most important to Uchimura. He was converted during his college days and, while the new religion brought its comforts and benefits, the alien faith created a dilemma for Uchimura of how to reconcile his adopted Western creed with his Oriental samurai background. On a few years journey in America, where he picked up a second bachelors degree, he came to a fuller understanding of his Christian faith which consummated his conversion experience, and gave him a firm sense of personal mission: He must bring

[1] Miura, p. 53.
[2] This thesis follows the Japanese name order, which puts the family name in front of the given name. Uchimura is Kanzō's family name. Macrons (¯) in romanized Japanese words indicate lengthening of the vowel in question.
[3] Miura, p. 53 (footnote).
[4] The Meiji period was the period between 1868-1912.

the Word of God to Japan. He fumbled about during careers as a teacher, a writer, a journalist, before finally finding an optimal medium through which to propagate his vision: as a magazine publisher and Bible teacher. His bible study magazine, *Seisho no Kenkyū* (*Biblical Studies*)[5], gained Uchimura a sizable group of dedicated followers to whom he preached the words of the Gospel as he understood them, and most importantly, his mission of making the Bible at home in Japan. In order to fulfill this mission he felt Japan needed Christianity stripped of its Western institutions of clergy, liturgy and theology, and of the myriad of denominations that had sprung up in Western history. The result was *mukyōkai-shugi*, or the non-church principle, which would develop into the *Mukyōkai* movement. However, *mukyōkai-shugi* was simply a means to an end for Uchimura. His ultimate mission was to bring Japan to Christ and to help Japan fulfill what he felt was his destined role in history: to receive the mantle of Western progress, with Christianity as a cornerstone, and to take it further into Asia, in a refined form, ultimately for the benefit of the world. To set these goals in motion Japan would need strong independent Christian individuals, and these he sought to provide through his Bible teaching.

The aim of this thesis is to explore how, and to what extent, western ideas, Christianity in particular, affected Uchimura, and how these blended with his Oriental background.

IDEOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

In the latter half of the 19th Century, under pressure from Western powers – the United States in particular – the Japanese Tokugawa Shogunate was forced to abolish its policy of isolation (*sakoku*), which it had maintained from the beginning of the 17th Century in response to Christian missionary activities, the imperialistic connotations of which the Shogunate feared would threaten Japanese sovereignty.[6] The arrival of Commodore Matthew C. Perry's *kurofune*[7] was a rude awakening for the Japanese. In addition to the subsequent political turmoil that would bring the downfall of the Shogunate and the re-establishment of Imperial rule, it heralded a tumultuous period of competition with, and

[5] This could also be translated as *Study of the Bible*, but *Biblical Studies* is the translation that Uchimura himself used on the masthead, according to professor John F. Howes in his biography of Uchimura, *Japan's Modern Prophet* (pg. 136).
[6] Varley, pp. 235-236; *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, vol. 2, pt. 1, pp. 133-134.
[7] Black ships, as the American gunboats were called in Japan.

learning from, the West, in addition to a re-evaluation of tradition, as Japan struggled to find a place in the world that would match the ambitions of the nation and its leaders.[8]

The first two decades of the Meiji period were a time of rampant, often uncritical Westernization. All things Western were in high demand: Western technology, education, clothing, hairstyles, beef etc. Some even went as far as suggesting that English be made the national language of Japan and that the Japanese should hasten to marry Westerners to acquire their ethnic qualities. The government, anxious to secure revision of the so called unequal treaties,[9] and sensitive to Western notions that the Japanese were barbaric, directly encouraged many of these changes, restricting practices that Westerners either found offensive or primitive, like public bathing or the wearing of topknots. In 1872 the Western calendar was adopted, and Sunday was made a weekly day of rest.[10] Many people felt that the driving force behind the success of Western civilization was its concomitant religion. Even Aizawa Seishisai, an opponent of Christianity in the final years of the Tokugawa shogunate, had expressed the opinion that the West derived their power from Christianity rather than from their military might.[11] In early Meiji some were of the opinion that it might be advantageous for the Japanese to adopt Christianity for the sake of modernization.[12]

Christianity was, however, still regarded with suspicion by most of the population.[13] During the Tokugawa period[14] Christianity was demonized as an evil religion (*jakyō*) and its adherents persecuted and driven into hiding.[15] In 1867, when Uchimura was six, Christians were still being persecuted, and it was only tacitly tolerated in 1873 when public edicts against Christianity were removed from public display, only four years before Uchimura's conversion. Religious freedom was finally granted with the Meiji Constitution in 1889.[16] The first Christian missionaries, Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox, arrived between 1859 and 1861, soon after the opening of the treaty ports in 1859. Educational work was an important place for

[8] Miura, pp. 4-7.
[9] The provisions of the treaties granted extraterritoriality to Western subjects, the right to be tried on native soil for crimes committed in Japan, and included a most-favored-nation clause, stipulating that any additional benefit given to one nation should be automatically granted to all other nations with similar treaties. Varley, pp. 235-236.
[10] Varley, pp. 239-241.
[11] *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, vol. 2, pt. 1, p. 528.
[12] Varley, p. 252; Howes (2007), p. 129.
[13] Ballhatchet (2003), p. 36.
[14] From 1603 to 1868.
[15] Jennings, p. 184; Miura, pp. 2-3.
[16] Ballhatchet (2003), p. 36; Miura, p. 21.

missionary work, partly because the ban of Christianity made it impossible to evangelize openly, and partly because it served "as a draw-net to bring the youths of the country under Christian influence, with the hope of their ultimate conversion".[17]

Enthusiasm for all things Western waned during the 1880s as the Japanese began to reassess their previous uncritical acceptance in light of their national traditions. Nationalism began to rise and skepticism towards the West grew partly as a result of the unwillingness of the Western powers to revise the provisions of the unequal treaties, which the Japanese government had been pressured into signing in the 1850s.[18] In 1890, as part of its educational policy based on traditional moral education, the Government issued the Imperial Rescript on Education. The rescript had a Confucian flavor and promoted the new imperial ideology of *kokutai* ("national polity"). It urged the subjects to be filial to parents and loyal to the emperor, whose throne, the rescript claims, is "coeval with heaven and earth". Finally it states: "The Way here set forth is indeed the teaching bequeathed by our imperial ancestors, to be observed alike by their descendants and the subjects, infallible for all ages and true in all places. It is our wish to lay it to heart in all reverence, in common with you, our subjects, that we all thus attain to the same virtue."[19] According to Howes, the rescript was intended to "prepare students to withstand the attractions of Christianity that seemed so unJapanese".[20] One controversial incident involving the rescript centered on Uchimura Kanzō and brought him national attention, albeit negative. It became known as the disrespect incident (*fukei jiken*) and is still mentioned in Japanese textbooks. The incident, which will be covered in detail later on, fueled accusations against Christians of being disloyal citizens.[21]

In this environment Uchimura was faced with the dilemma of how to reconcile his Occidental faith and education with his Oriental heritage, and how to utilize his Western learning for the benefit of Japan.

HOW UCHIMURA BECAME A CHRISTIAN

Uchimura Kanzō was born in Edo[22] (Tokyo) to a samurai family. His father wanted him to have a good Western education so he was sent to private schools to study English

[17] Ballhatchet (2003), pp. 35-36, 39, 42-43, 53; Hastings, p. 108.
[18] Varley, pp. 247-249.
[19] *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, vol. 2, pt. 2, pp. 108-109.
[20] Howes (2007), p. 130.
[21] Miura, pp. 37-38; Hastings, pp. 113-115.
[22] Renamed Tokyo (Eastern Capital) after the Meiji Restoration.

from as early as eleven, and at sixteen he entered Sapporo Agricultural College (SAC) in Hokkaido, on government stipend.[23] Uchimura entered the college at its second year of operation and came under the influence of its founding president, William Smith Clark, a Congregationalist layman on leave from his position as president of Massachusetts Agricultural College. Through Clark's efforts the entire first year of students signed a declaration of conversion called the "Covenant of Believers in Jesus".[24] Clark returned to America after merely eight months[25], but his influence remained alive through the other foreign teachers, as well as the first year students who pressured the second year students to sign the Covenant. Seven out of twenty one did[26] – Uchimura included – although he felt bitter that he had been pressured into signing it, having at one point led the group opposed to signing it.[27]

Converting to Christianity was a big step for Uchimura – as it would have been for any Japanese person, given that the faith had only recently been given tacit toleration by the government. Uchimura's background was in Bushidō[28] and he was unusually reverent towards innumerable Shinto deities, so much so that he often took a longer route in order to reduce the number of shrines and deities to which he felt he had to pay due respects on the way. Once converted, however, he felt great relief in not having to bother with any of the eight million gods and deities in Shinto.[29]

The seven second year Christians at SAC supported their faith by setting up a small church in the dormitory. The students themselves took care of all the proceedings; took turns preaching and providing refreshments etc. According to Uchimura they felt that their little church was quite apostolic, i.e. like the early church during the times of the apostles.[30] After graduation the students from the first and second years came together to set up a unified independent church, based on the Apostle's Creed and on the "Covenant of Believers in Jesus". The students officially belonged either to the Anglican or Methodist Episcopalian Churches in Sapporo and wanted to be united in a non-affiliated church, to the dismay of missionaries from both denominations.

[23] Miura, pp. 15-18; Howes (2005), p. 26.
[24] Oshiro, pp. 101-104; Howes (2005), p. 27.
[25] Uchimura didn't meet Clark until 1885, while he was working in Elwyn, PA, according to Goff, p. 97.
[26] According to Miura thirteen members of Uchimura's class signed the Covenant, but Oshiro (p. 109) and Ballhatchet (2003, p. 44) agree that the number was seven. In any case, only seven of the students formed the church in the dormitory at SAC according to Uchimura (*How I Became a Christian,* p. 23).
[27] Miura, p. 18-19; Howes (2005), p. 35; Oshiro, p. 109.
[28] The Confucian-oriented Japanese warrior code of ethics (Tomikura Mitsuo, *Japanese Religion*, p. 110)
[29] Uchimura Kanzō, *How I Became a Christian*, pp. 7-9, 14-15.
[30] Ibid., pp. 20-25.

Uchimura was instrumental in the running of the church until he decided to relocate to Tokyo.[31]

In Tokyo he entered a community of believers quite unlike that in Sapporo. Although he was initially swayed by the more sentimental Tokyo community he came to feel that their faith and sentimentality were too shallow.[32] Nevertheless, Tokyo gave Uchimura more opportunity to associate with the opposite sex than he had in Sapporo. Soon he met a young woman, Asada Take, whom he felt he wanted to marry. His parents initially objected but relented, probably due to the intercession of Niijima Jō, the Christian founder of Dōshisha University in Kyoto. To Uchimura's devastation, the marriage fell apart acrimoniously after only seven months. Uchimura's decision to divorce Take – who was pregnant with their daughter at the time – rather than accept Take's repeated offers of reconciliation, alienated Uchimura from most of the Christian community in Tokyo. He soon left for America.[33]

Although Uchimura never stated as much, scholars agree that the divorce had a decisive impact on his decision to leave.[34] In *How I Became a Christian* he claims that his reason for embarking on his American journey was to fill "the vacuum in my soul" in a land he imagined he could find "Peace and Joy in a measure inconceivable to us of heathen extraction".[35] The book never explains what it was that caused the vacuum and it fails to mention anything about his marriage. In addition to filling an undefined vacuum Uchimura's aim, according to his book, was to gain "experience, knowledge, and observations extending beyond the limit of my country. *To be a* MAN *first, and then a* PATRIOT*, was my aim in going abroad.*"[36]

Uchimura had lofty ideas about the country that brought the Christian faith to Japan. He soon became disillusioned as he stepped of the boat. He, along with his travel companions, encountered swearing, pick-pocketing, and rampant racism.[37] Furthermore, he disliked how often Christians seemed interested in converting him to their specific denomination.[38] He also cared little for the attitude of the missionary societies towards

[31] *How I Became a Christian*, pp. 60-62, 66-67, 69; Howes (2005), pp. 46-47.
[32] *How I Became a Christian*, pp. 80-83.
[33] Ballhatchet (2007), pp. 188-194; Howes (2005), p. 53.
[34] Ballhatchet, p. 192; Howes (2005), p. 53; Miura, p. 29.
[35] *How I Became a Christian*, p. 87.
[36] Ibid., p. 88, emphasis in the original.
[37] Ibid., pp. 91-105.
[38] Ibid., pp. 120-121.

"heathen converts" who he felt were paraded around like "tamed rhinoceroses" at missionary meetings in America.[39]

In contrast to these unpleasant experiences Uchimura met people who contributed a great deal to his developing faith and helped resolve his spiritual dilemmas. Two encounters stood out in particular: Isaac Newton Kerlin and his wife, and Julius H. Seelye, president of Amherst College. Kerlin was a director at the hospital for mentally retarded children where Uchimura worked as an attendant. He credited Kerlin and his Unitarian wife with teaching him the merits of philanthropy, humanizing his faith, as well as challenging his puritanic orthodoxy.[40]

Seelye was a man Uchimura held in awe. The president took keen interest in the young Japanese student and gave him generous amounts of his time and wisdom, as well as the respect that he craved. Seelye helped Uchimura let go of his self-doubts and feelings of sinfulness, and helped him to fully grasp the doctrine of Christ's atonement for sins. Uchimura was so moved by this experience that he referred to it as his real conversion.[41]

Having worked through his dilemmas and self-doubts, and gained a good understanding of the gospel, he wondered how he would best serve God in spreading the word. After graduating from Amherst College he went to the Hartford Theological Seminary. The materialistic attitude of his fellow students shocked him. Additionally, he felt that the material, based on Western history, was largely irrelevant to his Japanese situation. For these reasons, and for reasons of health, he left the seminary and returned back to Japan determined to bring his country to God.[42]

HOW HE "WORKED" A CHRISTIAN

> I have told you how I *became* a Christian. Should my life prove eventful enough … [my readers] shall have another book like this upon "How I *Worked* [sic] a Christian."[43]

These are the final lines of Uchimura's autobiographical work *How I Became a Christian* where he details the long process of his conversion to Christianity. While he

[39] Ibid., p. 136.
[40] *How I Became a Christian*, pp. 111-114; Howes (2005), p. 57; Kodera, p. 382.
[41] *How I Became a Christian*, pp. 131, 134-135, 139, 153; Howes (2005), pp. 64-65.
[42] *How I Became a Christian*, pp. 165-168; Miura, pp. 33-34.
[43] *How I Became a Christian*, p. 199, emphasis in the original.

never got around to writing the second book on how he "worked" a Christian he, indeed, devoted the rest of his life, from the time he returned to Japan, to the Christian work of spreading the gospel. He would go through a number of careers before settling on an ideal way of fulfilling that work.

First Uchimura turned to teaching. He would work at several schools, most notably as a principal of Hokuetsu Gakkan in Niigata Prefecture, and at Tokyo First Higher Middle School (*Daiichi Kōtō Chūgakkō*). At both of these schools he would run into trouble. Hokuetsu Gakkan was a school organized by Christians that was intended to be Christian in tone without being an evangelical tool of missionaries. However, the school's backers decided to bring in foreign missionaries as volunteer English teachers. Events came to a head when Uchimura wanted to bring a Buddhist priest to address his class. The missionaries objected, the school board sided with them and Uchimura resigned and became determined to reject foreign assistance as far as possible.[44]

Uchimura returned to Tokyo, married a second time in 1889, and secured a teaching post at the First Higher Middle School. In January 1891 at a ceremony held at Uchimura's school in honor of the new rescript all attendants were to bow before the rescript. Uchimura, fearful that the ceremony represented idolatry, hesitated to bow to the rescript, and appears to have taken only a slight bow. His fellow teachers considered this an insult to the nation and the Emperor, he was denounced as a traitor and forced to resign. The incident became so highly publicized that he felt he had to travel under an assumed name to be allowed to stay at inns.[45] Two years later a professor at Tokyo Imperial University, Inoue Tetsujirō, famously used Uchimura's case as a starting point for an attack on Christianity in general, claiming that Christianity was incompatible with the rescript and with Japanese beliefs. Christian beliefs made its adherents disloyal citizens, promoted universalism and treated the emperor as any other national ruler.[46] While he was dealing with the fallout from the incident he caught a life-threatening case of pneumonia. Once he recovered, his wife of two years soon caught pneumonia as well and died.[47]

At this point his teaching career was as good as over. He could not expect to find work at mission schools after his disagreement with the missionaries at Hokuetsu Gakkan; nor would he want to. Now the disrespect incident made it exceedingly

[44] Howes (2005), pp. 70-71.
[45] Hastings, pp. 113-115; Miura, pp. 36-39.
[46] Ballhatchet (2003), p. 38; Howes (2005), p. 80.
[47] Miura, p. 39.

difficult for him to find steady work as a teacher.[48] The next two years he found occasional work through his Congregationalist friends and took two short-term teaching positions that led nowhere. He moved to Osaka where he got married a third time and soon moved from there to Kyoto with the aim of becoming a writer.[49]

In one of his letters to his American friend D. C. Bell, Uchimura gave his reasons and aims for becoming a writer:

> It is a sore disappointment to leave educational work … The main difficulty with me is that I have convictions upon the matter to which I closely stick, and I fail to find in my country a man of power and influence who can join with me in realizing my ideal. … [T]he principle, the strictness, the discipline which I carry into my educational work seem to disagree either with Christian missionaries or with native educationalists. So I am driven to my last resource, to write about my observations abroad, and convictions I came to in my experiences.[50]

Although Kyoto was a relatively cheap place to live, the Uchimuras suffered biting poverty for the first three years, and Uchimura Kanzō ran deep into dept. His works began to sell and in 1895 a publisher in Kyoto agreed to lend him 25 yen a month against future prospects. By then eight of his books, two of which were written in English, had already been published in addition to several important articles.[51] According to Howes's classification his works dealt with themes of lamentation, justification, exhortation and disillusion. The works of lamentation, of which *Kirisuto Shinto no Nagusame* (*Consolations of a Christian*) is the most notable, lament the pain conversion causes a Christian convert. In his English language works, *How I Became a Christian* and *Japan and the Japanese*, he tried to justify to foreigners his personal background, and that of his nation. The works of exhortation urge Japan to take its assigned place in history and the works of disillusion are criticisms of the government and the Japanese nation for apparently failing to do so, as evidenced by the Treaty of Shimonoseki.[52]

[48] Howes (2007), p. 131.
[49] Howes (2005), pp. 77-78, 83.
[50] Miura, p. 40.
[51] Howes (2005), pp. 85-86, 88.
[52] Ibid., pp. 87-88, 104.

One of Uchimura's works of justification was an article that first appeared in the *Japan Weekly Mail* in August 1894 with the title "Justification for the Corean [sic] War."[53] As the title suggests it was written to defend the actions of the Japanese government before foreigners. In it he tried to demonstrate that the war was a "righteous war" similar to biblical and European examples. In the face of Chinese behavior towards Japan as it tried to open it to the world, he claimed, Japan had no choice but to enter into conflict with China, but did so only reluctantly in order to defend Korea's independence and to bring progress to the East.[54] Japan would not stand to gain materially from the conflict: "Then from China, too, we shall exact no more than the just price of the blood we shed, as her prostration is not our aim, but her coming to consciousness of her own worth and duty, and to friendly coöperation with us in the reformation of the East."[55] The Japanese demands at the peace conference at Shimonoseki were an embarrassment to Uchimura's optimistic views and made him furious.[56] He explained in a letter to Bell: "A "righteous war" has changed into a piratic war somewhat, and a prophet who wrote its "justification" is now in shame."[57]

In response Uchimura wrote a long article for *Kokumin no Tomo* (*People's Friend*) entitled "Jisei no Kansatsu" ("Observation on the Times"). It contained scathing criticism of the government, claimed that Japan lacked ethical standards necessary for greatness, and berated his countrymen for not respecting the honor of the Chinese.[58] The article prompted a job offer from *Yorozu Chōhō*, the most successful Japanese newspaper of its day, whose publisher appreciated Uchimura's ability as a critic. At *Yorozu* Uchimura found a well paying and prestigious career as a political commentator, criticizing both foreigners and the government. Uchimura was part of the full time staff of *Yorozu* only for a year, during which time he wrote mostly in English. The remaining five years his attentions were divided between his writings for *Yorozu* and his own publications.[59] In these articles, aimed at foreigners, he tried to correct Westerners' misconceptions about Japan and its mental climate, and he also criticized them harshly for their apparent lack of respect for Japan and its people, and their superficial ideas – although he reserved praise for some outstanding individuals like missionary Guido

[53] Ibid., p. 127.
[54] Uchimura Kanzo, *Japan and the Japanese*, pp. 153-161.
[55] Ibid., p. 161.
[56] Howes (2005), p. 129; Miura, p. 45.
[57] Miura, p. 45.
[58] Howes (2005), pp. 130-131.
[59] Ibid., pp. 133-136.

Verbeck and Queen Victoria. Uchimura eventually abandoned his attempts to elicit respect from foreigners as futile and focused instead on his own people. According to Howes, he was even more critical towards his fellow countrymen. In particular, he singled out other Christians for the shallowness of their faith, and the government oligarchs for shirking their duties and for their manipulative ways.[60] In 1903, disillusioned by the aftermath of the Sino-Japanese War, and under influence of his Quaker friends, amongst other things, Uchimura declared himself an antiwar protester and denounced all wars in general as sinful, adding that guiding a nation's development by the sword was the height of folly. His pacifist stance led to Uchimura's resignation from *Yorozu Chōhō*, along with two socialist columnists, when the paper declared support for the Japanese governments plans to wage war on Russia.[61]

While he was working at *Yorozu* Uchimura went into publishing and started three magazines. The first, *Tōkyō Dokuritsu Zasshi* (*Tokyo Independent*), was a journal of opinion that appeared three times a month, and was modeled on similar American publications that used the word 'independent' to suggest editorial freedom from external pressure. He had a number of sponsors helping him with publication, one of which was his brother, Tatsusaburō. Disagreement among the sponsors ended the magazine in 1900 and appears to have caused a lasting discord in the brothers' relationship.[62] In 1900 and 1901 he started *Seisho no Kenkyū* (*Biblical Studies*) and the *Mukyōkai* magazine, respectively. The monthly *Mukyōkai* magazine ran for only one and a half years. It was intended as a "church on paper" for those without a church. Readers did not respond as Uchimura had intended so he merged the magazine with *Seisho no Kenkyū*.[63] This eighty page monthly was by far the most successful magazine. It continued until his death in 1930, 357 issues in total, with Uchimura writing about half of the material, which was often re-published in book form. It was a fulfillment of an ambition he had harbored ever since his college days in America: to make the Bible at home in Japan. He complemented his publishing work with his Sunday lectures to a select few that he felt were devoted enough and had the right aims and ideas. Through this "high-priced" Christianity he wanted to make people strong enough for their responsibilities as Christians.[64]

[60] Ibid., pp. 139-142.
[61] Miura, pp. 46-49.
[62] Howes (2005), pp. 136, 143; Howes (2007), p. 132.
[63] Howes (2005), pp. 136, 146, 165.
[64] Howes (2005), p. 175; Howes (2007), pp. 132-133).

THE TWO J'S

Towards the end of his life, in an article in the *Japan Christian Intelligencer*, he added a more detailed definition of his stance and his mission as a Japanese Christian:

> I love two Js and no third; one is Jesus, and the other is Japan. I do not know which I love more, Jesus or Japan. I am hated by my countrymen for Jesus' sake as Yaso[65], and I am disliked by foreign missionaries for Japan's sake as national and narrow. No matter; I may lose all my friends, but I cannot lose Jesus and Japan. For Jesus' sake, I cannot own any other God than His Father as my God and Father; and for Japan's sake, I cannot accept any faith which comes in the name of foreigners. Come starvation; come death; I cannot disown Jesus and Japan; I am emphatically a Japanese Christian, though I know missionaries in general do not like that name. Jesus and Japan; my faith is not a circle with one center; it is an ellipse with two centers. My heart and mind revolve around the two dear names. And I know that one strengthens the other; Jesus strengthens and purifies my love for Japan; and Japan clarifies and objectivises my love for Jesus. Were it not for the two, I would become a mere dreamer, a fanatic, an amorphous universal man. Jesus makes me a world-man, a friend of humanity; Japan makes me a lover of my country, and through it binds me firmly to the terrestrial globe. I am neither too narrow nor too broad by loving the two at the same time.[66]

This statement contains the most fundamental elements in Uchimura's belief system: his Christian faith and his nationalism. Even as he enjoyed success as a writer and a social critic these views and how he merged them would set him apart, firstly, from his countrymen, who in a climate of ever increasing nationalism generally viewed Christianity with suspicion – partly due to the disrespect incident – secondly, his fervent nationalism and antipathy towards most foreign missionaries set him apart from the vast majority of other Japanese Christians, whose churches largely depended on foreign missionary support, thereby inheriting the doctrines of whatever denomination the mother church belonged to. Uchimura's most famous contribution to Christianity, his

[65] A derogatory term for a Christian.
[66] Miura, p. 52

Non-Church movement (*Mukyōkai*), was a result of the fusion of these conflicting elements, although the resulting movement was not entirely to his liking, as became apparent towards the end of his life.

JESUS

As his biography shows, Uchimura was a very religious man, even from childhood. Although fearful that signing the "Covenant of Believers in Jesus" might offend the gods of traditional Japanese religions, and that by doing so he would be a traitor to his country, once he adopted it, Uchimura felt that Christianity freed him from the bonds of traditional Japanese superstitions.[67] Uchimura describes himself as having been forced to sign the covenant, and succumbed only after fierce resistance. This version of events has been questioned by John F. Howes. According to *How I Became a Christian* Uchimura supposed his name "stood the last but one or two." In fact it was the sixth from the bottom of the second of three rows of signatures.[68] Although the first year students severely pressured the second year students to sign, only seven out of twenty-one signed.[69] In Howes's opinion, ambition played a key role in Uchimura's decision, as well as the decision of two of his closest friends, Nitobe Inazō and Miyabe Kingo, to sign, whose conversion might leave Uchimura alone.[70] In fact, Uchimura admitted as much in *How I Became a Christian*, saying he welcomed Christianity as a "great engine" for making his country "as strong as Europe or America".[71]

Uchimura had a very wide view of religion's role in human life. In his essay on Nichiren, published in *Japan and the Japanese*, he begins his discussion with a definition of religion:

> Religion is man's chiefest concern. Properly understood a man without a religion is unthinkable. … Indeed we often hear some speak that they are "men of no religion." … But a religion they nevertheless have. … A man's religion is his own explanation of Life ; and *some* explanation of it is an absolute necessity for his well-being in this world of strifes.[72]

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[67] Howes (2005), pp. 35-36; Miura, p. 105; *How I Became a Christian*, p. 11, 14.
[68] *How I Became a Christian*, pp. 10-14; Howes (2005), pp. 38, 309.
[69] Oshiro, p. 109.
[70] Howes (2005), pp. 36-37, 109.
[71] *How I Became a Christian*, p. 119.
[72] *Japan and the Japanese*, p. 107, emphasis in the original.

Many years later he gave the following definition of faith in the *Japan Christian Intelligencer*, as contrasted with thinking:

> Faith is not thinking; what a man thinks is not his faith. Faith is rather being; what a man is is his faith. Thinking is only a part of being; rather a superficial part … The modern man thinks he can know God's truth by thinking … [but] Faith is the soul in passive activity. It is the soul letting itself to be acted upon by the mighty power of God. Passive though faith is, it is intensely active because of the power that works in it. This is the paradox of faith … The Christian … is a newly created soul which engenders special activity called faith. Faith is thus a Christian activity of far higher order than thinking. It is the whole soul in beneficent action.[73]

Whether he wanted to or not, Uchimura did not organize his Christianity into a coherent faith system. Quite probably, he wouldn't have wanted to systemize his faith in this way as he felt that Christianity could be easily grasped without the aid of theology, and that theologians were the worst kind of people. A sense of his personal theology can, however, be gleamed from his writings.[74] Howes has summarized some of the major tenets of Uchimura's faith, as they appear in Uchimura's book *Shūkyō Zadan* (*Conversations on Religion*), in the following way: Uchimura rejected the church as an institution, as it "emphasizes … social graces as opposed to evangelism"; he defined the core truth of Christianity as the facts "that all individuals are sinners, that Jesus is God's son, and that Jesus atoned for our sins"; the Bible is not the work of God but of men influenced by God; prayers are defined as "conversations with our spiritual father God that thank him or request assistance"; miracles are natural to God; the soul is the "core of one's individuality", "the highest form of human life"; "Christ lives and we live by following him. Each of us becomes a small Christ"; life in heaven resembles earthly life but without bad individuals.[75]

In addition to these Howes identifies three major areas of concern in Uchimura's works: the nature of God, the gospel, and faith versus works. God is like an understanding father. He is simple, enduring and peaceful, and one can understand the nature of God by observing nature, through contemplation, by praying and studying the

[73] Howes (2005), p. 336.
[74] Howes (2005), p. 204; Miura, p. 89.
[75] Howes (2005), p. 2005.

Bible. His major concern is with our souls. We serve God by serving humanity. Everyone can become like God. The gospel, as contained in the first four books of the New Testament, describes the relationship between God, believers and their neighbors. Believers must receive the Holy Spirit to be able to love others. Christ came to fulfill God's law, by introducing compassion into it. The gospel tells us how God's grace can help us fulfill the law without having to observe Old Testament ethics in detail. Jesus mediates between individual believers and God, demonstrating his compassion for humans. According to Uchimura, faith in the saving grace of Jesus Christ is more important than works, although works are not unimportant, as they help to develop faith. Works are the natural fruit of faith. Sins are acts that offend God's Will. We stop sinning when we accept God's salvation.[76]

Uchimura's initial view of "Christendom", as he termed it - meaning thereby the Western countries where Christianity was dominant - was one of great reverence, but once he actually arrived in America he was less than impressed:

> My idea of the Christian America was lofty, religious, Puritanic. I dreamed of its templed hills, and rocks that rang with hymns and praises. Hebraisms, I thought, to be the prevailing speech of the American commonality, and cherub and cherubim, hallelujahs and amens, the common language of its streets.
>
> I was often told upon good testimony that money is all in all in America, and that it is *worshipped* there as Almighty Dollar ; that the race prejudice is so strong there that the yellow skin and almond-shaped eyes pass for objects of derision and dog-barking ; etc. etc. But for me to credit such statements like these as anything near the truth was utterly impossible. … Indeed, the image of America as pictured upon my mind was that of a *Holy Land*.[77] (HIBC 91-92)

He soon discovered that the *Holy Land* was not as holy as he imagined and he devotes a full chapter in *How I Became a Christian* on his disillusionment with America. Now he saw it as a country of materialism where "Even charity is bartered"; pick-pocketing; distrust of neighbors, evidenced by the extensive use of keys; and rampant racism, some of which, most detrimentally to Uchimura, was directed at East Asians, all grouped together in the minds of average Americans as Chinese, and derogatorily referred to as

[76] Howes (2005), pp. 206-208.
[77] *How I Became a Christian*, pp. 91-92.

"Chinamen" or individually as "John".[78] Uchimura felt deceived and expressed a wish to return to his old faith, but felt that he could not. However, he resolved never to "defend Christianity upon its being the religion of Europe and America".[79]

Western missionaries were often the object of Uchimura's criticism and he was considered their enemy.[80] Numerous scuffles with missionaries throughout is life only exacerbated Uchimura's antimissionary feelings. Uchimura and six of his classmates were converted through the efforts of a lay Christian whom they never met; at least not on Japanese soil. Isolated in remote Sapporo they fostered their faith far away from the influences of foreign missionaries or other Christian groups in Japan.[81] When, after graduation, the Christian students wanted to set up an independent church they met stiff resistance from missionary J.C. Davison, based in Hakodate. The Methodist mission in Hakodate had initially loaned the founders of the church $400 for a church building, but when informed of their plans to become independent Davison withdrew support and demanded quick repayment of the loan.[82] With great difficulty they managed to repay the loan. According to George M. Oshiro this experience was instrumental in causing Uchimura to develop ideas of non-sectarian Japanese Christianity, which later brought forth the *Mukyōkai* movement.[83] His experience a decade later as principal of Hokuetsu Gakkan, previously noted, also set him decidedly against missionaries. He criticized missionaries for a number of things, including their lack of ability, and apparently of interest, in the Japanese language, even having spent decades in the country. This he took as a sign of disrespect.[84] He also criticized them for teaching Western theologies and isms, as well as "their own manners and customs, such as "free marriages," "woman's rights," and others, all more or less objectionable to us."[85]

However, Uchimura was not absolutely anti-missionary and he apparently felt they could have a place in Japanese society if only they followed his suggestions. He urged missionaries to come "after fighting out Devils in your own souls."[86] Also to teach his countrymen "in Christianity, not in Christian civilization", and to acknowledge that something like Christianity could be "found in thoughts and beliefs of all peoples

[78] Ibid., pp. 92-104.
[79] Ibid., p. 105.
[80] Howes (2005), p. 3.
[81] Oshiro, p. 107.
[82] Miura, pp. 26-27.
[83] Oshiro, pp. 112-113.
[84] Howes (2007), pp. 141-142.
[85] *How I Became a Christian*, p. 193.
[86] Ibid., p. 194.

… There is no need of presenting Christianity as a strange religion to my countrymen."[87]

The most distinguishing feature of Uchimura's view of Christianity is his critical attitude towards the institution of the Church. Uchimura made a clear distinction between two different meanings of the word "church". A church, in the true sense of the word, was not the buildings, the institutions nor the organization of the church. In New Testament Greek this sort of "church" was called *kyriakon*, "the house of God". The true church, on the other hand, was what in Greek was called *ekklesia*, "the meeting of ordinary people". According to Uchimura, when Christ talks about churches in the Gospels, it is in this latter sense of an "assembly". Only later did the word *ekklesia* come to be interpreted as "church" in the former sense.[88] Uchimura was interested in finding the "true *ekklesia*", and his criticism towards the institutional church was rooted in his affirmation of the "true church".[89] In Uchimura's mind the early church was such a church, where there were no buildings or clergy, no doctrine or creed. It was merely a church of believers.[90]

Uchimura claimed that the institutional church of the West often blocked believers from contact with God. Oblivious to the needs of believers, church leaders become self-serving. The institutional church puts premium on preserving itself rather than promoting faith. In contrast to these stark points of criticism Uchimura noted the good points of churches, praising notable individuals, and held that these should be appreciated. Such people were exceptional, however, and the church was in need of a new reformation, a perfected form of Protestantism.[91] Indeed, Uchimura criticized Protestant churches, and Martin Luther himself, for not taking the Reformation far enough.[92] Uchimura also rejected the importance of ceremonies, even holy communion and baptism. Although he himself was baptized, and baptized those of his followers who so wished, he felt that ceremonies did as much harm as good.[93] In fact, Uchimura said, "The rituals are held when the heart's love grows cold".[94]

[87] Howes (2007), p. 142.
[88] Miura, pp. 84-86.
[89] Kärkkäinen, p. 168.
[90] Miura, p. 87.
[91] Howes (2005), pp. 221-222.
[92] Howes (2005), p. 254; Kärkkäinen, p. 167.
[93] Howes (2005), pp. 208-211.
[94] Miura, p. 88.

Another point of criticism that Uchimura leveled at Western churches was that they were sectarian and exclusivist. "We felt for the first time … the *evils of denominationalism*."[95] Uchimura used these words, in *How I Became a Christian*, to describe his encounters with the Episcopalian and Methodist churches in Sapporo, along with his fellow believers, which led to the formation of the Sapporo Independent Church.[96] Elsewhere in the same book he criticizes America for being "a land of sects, where each tries to augment its numbers at the expense of others. Already such strange isms as Unitarianism, Swedenborgism, Quakerism … were being tried upon me. … I made up my mind to accept *none of them*."[97] Uchimura felt that sectarianism was opposed to the spirit of Christianity as Christ was not divided. In any case, believers, even if divided, ought to love and respect each other.[98] Uchimura further insisted that faith could be found, and kept alive, outside of the church, and that to claim otherwise was to place Christ below Confucius and Dante, who could propagate their thoughts without the aid of a church. He criticized the West for the idea of equating Christianity with the church, leading opponents of the church in the West to embrace atheism. He criticized Protestant churches for doing what Luther had protested against, equating faith with the church, making it necessary for a new Luther to arrive.[99]

JAPAN

As he makes clear in his presentation of the "Two J's", quoted above, Japan is a center no less important to Uchimura than Jesus Christ. Uchimura had great concern for the salvation of Japan. He saw Japan as a greatly corrupted society, with all kinds of crimes and immoralities being reported in the news. The root of the problem Uchimura identified as being the incongruity of Japan's adopting Christian civilization without adopting Christianity, the faith from which it sprang. Christianity had, he claimed, contributed immensely to scientific thought, Western education, and the concept of freedom and civil rights. This state of affairs was against the laws of nature and would finally be the ruin of Japan unless the inconsistency of having an Oriental religion within an Occidental civilization was removed.[100]

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[95] *How I Became a Christian*, p. 43, emphasis in the original.
[96] Ibid., pp. 42-43.
[97] Ibid., pp. 120-121.
[98] Miura, p. 78.
[99] Ibid., pp. 89-92.
[100] Ibid., pp. 54-60.

According to Uchimura, Japan needed a new type of Christianity to be saved, i.e. Japanese Christianity. Christianities that saved other countries were powerless to save Japan. He did not, however, intend for Japanese Christianity to be a new religion. It was simply "Christianity received by the Japanese directly from God without any foreign intermediary; no more, no less."[101] Uchimura had this to say to those who accused him of making a nationalistic version of a universal religion:

> I am blamed by missionaries for upholding Japanese Christianity. They say that Christianity is a universal religion, and to uphold Japanese Christianity is to make a universal religion a national religion. Very true. But do not these very missionaries uphold sectional or denominational forms of Christianity which are not very different from national Christianity? Is not Episcopalianism essentially an English Christianity, Presbyterianism a Scotch Christianity, Lutheranism a German Christianity, and so forth? Why, for instance, call a universal religion "Cumberland Presbyteriansim"? If it is not wrong to apply the name of a district in the state of Kentucky to Christianity, why is it wrong for me to apply the name of my country to the same? I think I have as much right to call my Christianity Japanese as thousands of Christians in the Cumberland Valley have the right to call their Christianity by the name of the valley they live in.[102]

The type of Christianity Uchimura thought suitable for Japan would also embrace elements of Bushidō.[103] Uchimura identified Bushidō with the traditional Japanese ethic, and claimed it was the way of the Japanese people as Christianity is the way of God. The two had many affinities, and in response to an English-language book on Bushidō written by his friend Nitobe Inazō he said that "Christianity grafted upon Bushidō will be the finest product of the world."[104] Uchimura was not alone in this view. When Christianity re-entered Japan ex-samurai were disproportionately attracted to Christianity, as it accorded well with their traditional Confucian beliefs, whereby they replaced loyalty to their feudal lord with loyalty towards the Lord Jesus Christ. According to figures from 1889 30% of Japanese Protestants came from the samurai class although they were only 6% of the population at large. In fact, the first generation

[101] Ibid., pp. 65-66.
[102] Mullins, pp. 147-148.
[103] Miura, p. 66.
[104] Howes (2005), pp. 236, 315, 389.

of Christian leaders came almost exclusively from samurai dispossessed by the Meiji Restoration.[105] In addition to Uchimura and Nitobe, Christian leaders, such as Uemura Masahisa, linked Bushidō with Christianity.[106]

In contrast to the popular view of Uchimura as a traitor following the disrespect incident, John F. Howes highlights an event that took place late in 1889, less than two years earlier, where Uchimura spoke to students at a girl's school in Azabu. Reportedly, his topic was evidences of God's favor to Japan. He praised Japan's scenery, taking its chrysanthemums and Mount Fuji as examples. More important, in light of accusations following the incident, is his praise for the Imperial family, which he called "the one great pride of the Japanese people."[107] On the death of the Meiji Emperor Uchimura wrote that he felt like he had lost a father.[108] In response to Inoue Tetsujirō's attack on the loyalty of Japanese Christians Uchimura noted that the Christians Inoue criticized acted out of the same patriotic motives as Inoue himself .[109]

The geographical features of Japan and the national character were clearly linked in Uchimura's mind. He considered Japan to be European in structure, which he thought might explain why the Japanese were the first among Asians to welcome European ideas. On the other hand, Japan's peripheral position contributed to the narrowness of vision he attributed to the Japanese people.[110] Uchimura was ready to acknowledge what he felt the Japanese lacked in national character: "We know our imperfections to be not few, and it behooves us to meet them right manly, and learn to be perfect through ways and means made known to us."[111] The areas in which Uchimura thought the Japanese most lacked were grandeur and what he called "causative originality" [112] . Uchumura felt that the Japanese suffered from the aforementioned narrowness of vision, causing them to prize "peaceful domesticity", eschewing conquest, and to not dare outside of their national boundaries. The lack of originality, at least in terms of novel innovations, Uchimura attributed to the Mongolian origin of the Japanese, in addition to geography and structure, which caused the Japanese to focus on details to the extent of being incapable of drawing generalizations

[105] Ballhatchet (2003), pp. 41, 45; Jennings, p. 185.
[106] Jennings, p. 187.
[107] Howes (2005), p. 72.
[108] Gluck, p. 219.
[109] Howes (2005), p. 81.
[110] *Japan and the Japanese*, pp. 1-3.
[111] Ibid., p. 6.
[112] By this term Uchimura meant originality of the sort that produces new ideas, in contrast to "adaptive originality", mentioned below, which adds innovations to old ideas.

from them. This lack resulted, among other things, in the importation of Chinese characters and of exotic religions.[113] These flaws were more than offset by the merits of the Japanese, such as "order, prudence, speechless industry, [and] economy."[114] Most conspicuous of Japanese merits was their "adaptive originality": "Of no people in the world can this be said more than of the Japanese that they are *eager* to benefit themselves by the superior attainment of every other [idea]. And they are not mere imitators. Soon they begin to assimilate what they imbibed from others, and evolve out a civilization which is essentially their own."[115]

In contrast to his nationalism, and in spite of the caustic criticism he often leveled at Western countries, America in particular, the following statement by Uchimura demonstrates that he also thought of himself as an internationalist, a world citizen:

> If I think that Japan alone is "my country," then I will be disappointed. However, I am a world citizen, not just a citizen of Japan. …
>
> If I think that only Japanese are "my brothers," then I will be disappointed. However, if I consider all men who recognize truth as truth and falsehood as falsehood … to be "my brothers," I need not be disappointed. The Boers … The Filipino Tagalogs … The Finns … they too are my brothers. … As long as all within the Four Seas are brothers, whatever is good in other countries will come to ours sooner or later.[116]

Uchimura believed that just as every individual had a mission, each nation had a mission as well.[117] Japan's mission was to *"reconcile the East with the West ; to be the advocate of the East and the harbinger of the West…* [W]e will improve upon what we receive fresh from the West, that our westward neighbors may utilize and work upon it when the centre of historic activity shifts still westward."[118] In his view Japan was geographically well situated as an intermediary between North America and Asia, holding a position similar to that of ancient Greece, which was an intermediary between Asia and Europe. Britain also held a similar position, and in explaining the similarities

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[113] *Japan and the Japanese*, pp. 6-9; Uchimura, in fact, said: "We have no religion of our own to speak of…" Ibid., p. 9.
[114] Ibid., p. 10.
[115] Ibid., p. 12, emphasis in the original.
[116] Irokawa, pp. 206-207.
[117] *Japan and the Japanese*, p. 143.
[118] Ibid., p. 150, emphasis in the original.

between Japan and Britain as intermediaries Uchimura stressed the importance of the geographical situation of ports. Britain's ports opened either towards Europe, on the one hand, and towards America, on the other hand, making Britain an intermediary between those continents. Furthermore, it was necessary for an intermediary to have great understanding of both sides, and this Japan did have, according to Uchimura.[119] In fact, Uchimura maintained that, "*The Japanese alone of all Oriental peoples can comprehend the Occidental ideas, and they alone of all civilized peoples have a true conception of Oriental ideas.*"[120] The idea of Japan as an intermediary rests on Uchimura's adaptation of a hypothesis forwarded by the German geographer Karl Ritter, and his pupil, Swiss scholar Arnold Guyot. The hypothesis stated that civilization moved westwards from the Middle East. Guyot considered Asia the cradle of humanity, Europe the school of its youth, and finally America as the theater of activity during its manhood.[121] Uchimura took the hypothesis a step further: The march of civilization would not come to a halt in America, but continue on toward Japan where the Western stream of civilization would meet the Eastern stream of civilization, and the two would unite to form a fusion of the best of both worlds. Japan would then diffuse the improved way of life throughout the rest of the world:[122]

> We inbibed [sic] the best of Korea, China, and India, and the assimilation is well nigh complete. Then within the past thirty years[123] we swallowed everything that Europe had to give us, and digestion is going on briskly now. The system that takes in the East and the West will weave out a tissue that shall partake of the nature of both.[124]

In addition to the geographical position, and the assimilative quality of the Japanese, what, in Uchimura's mind, made Japan especially suitable to be such an intermediary was not military might, nor skill in trade, but rather the religious quality of the nation. Uchimura was sure that the materialism and irreligiousness of contemporary Japan was only a passing phase, as the Japanese were religious by nature.[125]

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[119] Miura, pp. 116-117.
[120] *Japan and the Japanese,* p. 148, emphasis in the original.
[121] Howes (2005), p. 118; Miura, pp. 115-116.
[122] Howes (2005), pp. 119-120; *Japan and the Japanese*, pp. 149-150.
[123] The quoted article was first published in the Japan Daily Mail on February 5, 1892.
[124] *Japan and the Japanese*, p. 150.
[125] Miura, pp. 118-122.

How did Japan's mission relate to Christianity? Writing about Japan's mission in 1924 Uchimura expressed his view that Christianity was on the decline in the West. A revival of pure faith was greatly desired. This pure faith was to be found in the Japanese. They had preserved Buddhism and Confucianism when these faiths declined in their countries of origin. They could do the same for Christianity. In fact, Uchimura felt that the propagation of a pure form of Christianity was Japan's most important mission.[126]

The form of Japanese Christianity Uchimura propagated ultimately took the form known as *Mukyōkai*, the nature of which will be explained later in more detail. It aimed to be a more perfected form of Protestantism which "does not set up institutions and attempt to control other people but rather practices mutual love, encouragement and assistance among its members." [127] Uchimura advocated self-sufficient Japanese Christianity "that has grown upon [Japan's] own soil, watered by her own streams, nurtured in her own bosoms, and garbed … in her own oriental attire."[128]

INDEPENDENCE

One of the most salient features in Uchimura's ideology is his unconditional insistence on independence. He considered independence to be the West's great contribution to society[129] and often sang its praises, as in the following poem which he wrote in English and published in *Seisho no Kenkyū*:

Independence

More than gold,
More than honour,
More than knowledge,
More than life,
O thou Independence!

…

Alone with Truth,

[126] Ibid., pp. 114 (footnote), 122-124.
[127] Howes (2005), p. 222.
[128] Ibid., p. 70.
[129] Ibid., p. 120.

Alone with Conscience,
Alone with God,
Alone with Christ,
I am free![130]

Uchimura's attitude is clearly atypical in Japanese society, which retained its traditional group orientation throughout the process of modernization. Japanese individuals are generally expected to subordinate individual desires to the requirements of the group.[131] While there is a felt need for a more independent self in Japanese society the development thereof is, according to Robert Lee, inhibited, on one hand, by the fact that the socialization of individuals occurs within a society "in which the traditional religious understanding of the self tends to coincide with the social roles prescribed in the normative (and sacred) social order," and, on the other hand, because the socialization process "induces love-dependency[132] rather than personal (ego) autonomy as the primary motivation."[133] In this context Uchimura has become a hero of independence to many Japanese, especially in the postwar period.[134]

As a child in a samurai family Uchimura was raised with the notion of loyalty being a cardinal virtue. Traditional Bushidō loyalty required unconditional fulfillment of one's duties in various social interactions, especially between parent and child, and lord and servant. However, according to Lee, by applying this ethic to Lord Jesus Christ, and thereby supplanting the values of society and nation, Uchimura's loyalty to Jesus enabled him to break free from his social role-obligations, while providing an independent personal identity in Christ.[135] Yet, focusing on Christianity as the source of Uchimura's independence is hardly sufficient. Most Japanese Christians did not embrace independence to the same extent. Events and situations in Uchimura's life must also be taken into account. From age sixteen Uchimura Kanzō was made legal head of the Uchimura household and had to provide for his parents from that point on.[136] Secondly, the community of believers in Sapporo was fairly isolated in Hokkaido, far away from metropolitan centers of Christian activities, with only sporadic contact with

[130] Ibid., p. 167.
[131] Lee, p. 5.
[132] The need of an individual for the reassurance of the group to reinforce his or her self image. Lee, p. 6.
[133] Ibid., pp. 8-9.
[134] Ibid., p. 19.
[135] Ibid., pp. 20-21.
[136] Howes (2007), p. 128.

missionaries, the nearest of which were based in Hakodate, a trip to which took several days at the time.[137] As previously noted, the students at Sapporo Agricultural College formed a church in the school dormitory and took care of all the proceedings, including pastoral work. The desire for the students to be unified in a non-affiliated church after graduation and the resulting bitter struggle for independence endeared Uchimura even more to the value of independence. Recounting the event a decade later he said, "A dependent man is the most helpless being in the universe … *Independence is the conscious realization of one's own capabilities*."[138] And finally the church's harsh criticism of his divorce with Asada Take estranged him from the church,[139] and, for a while, the disrespect incident alienated him from society at large.

THE NATURE OF *MUKYŌKAI*

Uchimura's bitter history of relations with denominations, missionaries and to some extent with other Japanese Christians led Uchimura to develop and embrace what he called *mukyōkai-shugi* (non-church principle or non-churchism).[140] He considered non-churchism to be the sort of Christianity that would be most appropriate to Japan.[141] By this principle he wanted to dispense with Christianity's Western garment and the mediation of the institutional church which he so bitterly criticized.[142] When the word *mukyōkai* first appeared in *Kirisuto Shinto no Nagusame* in 1892 Uchimura used it simply as an adjective to denote the fact that he had at one point in his life been abandoned by the church.[143] Eight years later, as he started pulishing the *Mukyōkai* magazine, he started actively promoting *mukyōkai* as a principle.[144]

The attention that the non-church principle and the resulting movement have garnered has been quite disproportional to Uchimura's own interest in the matter. According to Howes less than one percent of his *Complete Works* falls under the heading of "Studies of the Church". Accordingly, Uchimura did not spend much time on working out a clear definition of the concept and his failure to do so would create

[137] Oshiro, p. 107.
[138] *How I Became A Christian*, p. 78, emphasis in the original.
[139] Miura, pp. 28-29.
[140] Miura, pp. 105-106.
[141] Howes (2005), p. 149.
[142] Kodera, p. 378.
[143] Howes (2005), p. 149.
[144] Kodera, p. 380.

problems for his followers.[145] From the outset *mukyōkai-shugi* was most conspicuously defined by what it was not, although it was clearly intended to serve those who stood outside conventional churches:

> 'No Church' may sound like a concept dedicated to serve the cause of iconoclasm as are anarchism and nihilism. Far from it, 'No Church' is a communal shelter for the homeless. … 'No' as in 'No Church' is in the sense of 'without', and not of 'nullifying' or 'ignoring'. As there are many unfortunate folk without money, without parents, without a home, there are many sheep lost without a church.[146]

The concept entailed a Christianity without clergy, without rituals, and without formal organization. One should seek guidance only in the Bible and not with church authorities. On the other hand, Uchimura encouraged his followers to form a church that would not be a conventional church, but rather a spiritual organization without a church building.[147] In Uchimura's view *mukyōkai* believers should have the universe, God's creation, as a church building: "Its ceiling is the azure blue sky … Its floor is the green pasture … Its altar is the mountain peaks and its preacher is God Himself."[148] Should such an organization evolve into a conventional church it should be destroyed immediately and rebuilt.[149] Although Uchimura considered the non-church principle to be especially suitable to Japan, apparently, he did not consider it to be exclusively Japanese. He identified several important Europeans, such as Søren Kierkegaard, Leo Tolstoy, and John Wesley, the founder of Methodism; and biblical figures, such as prophets Elijah, Isaiah, and Jeremiah, as non-church believers.[150]

Uchimura's final year's and ultimate legacy were clouded by a debate with his heir-apparent, Tsukamoto Toraji, over the exact nature of *mukyōkai-shugi*, and by extension, the *mukyōkai* movement.[151] (Howes 357, 363-365). Tsukamoto maintained that only the *mukyōkai* preserved the pure gospel of salvation by faith alone. Because the church, in Tsukamoto's view, forces its authority on people the *mukyōkai* principle

[145] Howes (2005), pp. 150, 363-365.
[146] Kodera, p. 380.
[147] Miura, pp. 106-107, 109.
[148] Kodera, p. 380.
[149] Miura, p. 109.
[150] Ibid., p. 111.
[151] Howes (2005), pp. 357, 363-365.

is of vital importance to Uchimura's followers.[152] Uchimura took issue with Tsukamoto's negative interpretation of *mukyōkai* and tended to be more conciliatory, saying that it was now time to befriend and guide the church.[153] In response to Tsukamoto's interpretation Uchimura gave this positive interpretation of *mukyōkai*: "I am a *mukyôkai* believer just as some are Methodists, some Baptists … I act as I do because my belief meets my convenience … and assists my faith. I do not believe that all people should like me be *mukyôkai* believers. I do not think that my *mukyôkai shugi* will save me."[154] As he explained in an article found after his death, the non-church principle was not the most important part of his message, and neither was he motivated by hate for the church:

> My Mukyokai-shugi was not a principle for the sake of having a principle. It was a principle which, if supported, advanced the faith. … It was not my principle to attack the church but to advance one's faith. Faith in the crucifixion was paramount and faith in Mukyokai-shugi followed as a natural consequence of this. The crucifixion was of primary importance and Mukyokai-shugi came second or third. I occasionally attacked the church hard because in its faith it had things which did not fit in with the truth of the Gospel. … [B]ut [I] never hated the church itself.[155]

The debate eventually resulted in Uchimura's decision to dismiss Tsukamoto from his group of followers, while at the same time encouraging him to promote his views independently. He also ordered the discontinuation of *Seisho no Kenkyū* and his Bible study lectures after his death,[156] and finally, in a post-humous statement, declared his dissassociation with the *mukyōkai* movement saying that he was not "*what is now popularly called a mukyōkai* believer."[157]

CONCLUSIONS

From childhood Uchimura was ushered onto a path of extensive Western learning by which he mastered the English language and aquired two college degrees, the second

[152] Kärkkäinen, p. 172.
[153] Howes (2005), p. 370, 372.
[154] Howes (2005), p. 371, emphasis in the original.
[155] Miura, p. 107.
[156] Howes (2005), pp. 376-377.
[157] Howes (2005), p. 381, emphasis in the original.

one on American soil. Despite having deep reservations, Uchimura adopted Christianity partly for reasons of ambition at a time when such a move was by many considered advantageous. In the 1870s all things Western were regarded with special reverence and Uchimura was no exception. Although he was soon faced with Western elements he considered negative, such as denominationalism and sentimentality, he generally considered Americans to be superior people. This impression was shattered when he saw America with his own eyes. He retained his faith, however, and it was strengthened by his encounters with Americans which he admired. On the other hand, his admiration for America, and the West in general, faded dramatically and his love for was Japan strengthened. Yet, his Christian faith gave wings and a purpose to his independent conscience – independence being an attribute which he considered the West's great contribution to the world. It can be argued, however, that Uchimura's independent mind was not simply a product of his Western experience and his Christian conversion, but also of circumstances in his life.

In spite of his efforts to establish Japanese Christianity, for Uchimura this did not entail an effort to mix Christianity with native beliefs. In fact, Uchimura's theology, apart from his radical ecclesiology, is a remarkably orthodox Protestantism. Although he considered Bushdō a good foundation for Christianity his affinity for the Japanese warrior code merely presents a way of looking at Christianity in a way that would be familiar to Japanese rather than adding any elements that are alien to Christianity.

Uchmura regarded Japan's position in the world as unique and he considered Japan to be charged with a divine mission to purify the Christian faith and to deliver the result to the rest of the world. His efforts to realize that mission led to the founding of a successful Bible study magazine, which aimed to nurture strong independent believers to undertake Japan's appointed task; and indirectly to the formation of a Christian movement that rejects Western institutional elements of clergy, liturgy and church authority. In spite of the founder's post-mortem disassociation with the *mukyōkai* movement it lived on and produced important figures, like Yanaihara Tadao, who came to prominence during the postwar reconstruction. Although the movement's lack of formal organization makes it hard to gauge the true number of *mukyōkai* believers, Miura Hiroshi estimates that they number between twenty and fifty thousand.[158]

[158] Miura, pp. 129-131.

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