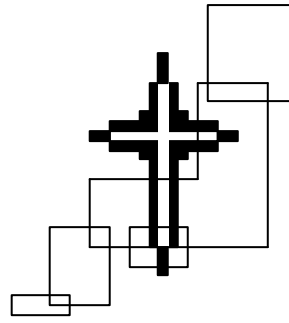


INTERCESSORS FOR JAPAN

PRAY FOR THIS NATION
Newsletter

March 31, 2003



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Preface to Japan Missionology (4)

Rev. John H. Minagawa

Christianity that came to Japan

[Fourth Wave] August 15, 1549

Arrival of Tenshu-kyo

“How can I withstand such cruel torture and death?”

I asked myself this question, but I could not answer it immediately. It was during the New Year holidays in 1941 (16th year of Showa). I became a Christian on the previous Christmas Day by baptism. “Since I became a Christian, it is a shame if I don’t know the Christian history in Japan,” thought I, so I bought two volumes of “the History of Japanese Christianity,” which I had my eye on for a long time with my New Year’s Day gift money from a used book shop, Kimei Doh, at down town Yokosuka. I was engrossed in reading flowing and elegant sentences of Hideteru Yamamoto, the author, in a kotatsu (the Japanese foot warmer with a quilt over it). It described in the beginning that Nestorian Christianity, Keikyo, came to Japan in 736 AD (8th year of Tenpyo). Between 1156 and 1159 AD, Europeans came to Japan by black ships to spread Christianity without any

success. After entering the main subject, it described how Tenshu-kyo (Christianity was so called then) came to Japan in 1549 and spread all over Japan as Kyushu and Kinki as the leading areas. This was the end of the first volume. After entering the second volume, the history of Christian persecution during the Tokugawa period unfolded. Due to indescribably cruel various tortures, some recanted and some kept true to their faith resulting in martyrdom. After having finished reading the second volume, I had a big problem. It was a question:

“Can I bear such cruel torture?” Of course, in my mind is a thought that says, “I cannot possibly withstand such torture.” But, at the same time, I admired the martyrs. “What is the secret of their courage and power of those who withstood tortures, kept their faith, and martyred?” I prayed every day saying, “Jesus, how can I acquire courage and power of those Christians? I am a weak human being, but I do not want to betray you. Please teach me.” Then, one day, I received an answer from Jesus. “The courage and power will be given to you at that time.” When I heard this response, it instantly filled me with redoubled courage, and my mind

cleared up like a blue sky. It was the time of war when Japan plunged into the Greater Asian War from the China Incident; the Christians were facing various persecutions, and it was only expected to get worse. To the third grader at the secondary school and 15 year old boy, the Lord had granted me the secrets of the faith at the first step of my Christian life. Also, I visited my father's native village (Fujisawa-cho, Iwai-gun, and Iwate-ken) for the first time, and I learned that my ancestors were Christians. I saw a Buddhist stature, an artifact of "the underground Christian," which is treasured by the head family. With it I became convinced that I did not become a Christian by accident but as a result of earnest prayers of the martyred blood of my ancestors.

Well, an introductory remark has become too long, but let me address the main theme. I would like to discuss using the following sequence for the sake of convenience.

- (1) What is Tenshu-kyo?
- (2) Arrival and the nationwide growth of Tenshu-kyo
- (3) Background behind the acceptance of Tenshu-kyo
- (4) Persecution against Tenshu-kyo and its decline
- (5) Reasons why Tenshu-kyo was not accepted in Japan

(1) What is Tenshu-kyo?

Tenshu-kyo is the Christianity, which was introduced into Japan on August 15, 1549 by a missionary of the Roman Catholic Church. Tenshu-kyo spread throughout Japan and declined due to persecutions, but they existed as "the underground Christians" for 324 years until the ban on Christianity was lifted by the Meiji government in 1873. In Tenshu-kyo, Deus was not translated as "God." In the beginning when Francisco Xavier came to Kagoshima (1549) Deus was translated as "Dainichi" and

was preached as such, they were misunderstood as a Buddhist sect that believed in Dainichi Nyorai. So, the "La-Po-Nichi Dictionary*," which was published in 1595, used "the natural law of heaven and earth, the heavenly entity, and the Lord of Heaven" for Deus. The word, Tenshu, was used as equivalent to Deus, is seen from Mateo Ricci's "Tenshu-kyo Jitsugi" published in 1595, and the Tokugawa government appointed Masashige Inoue as the Grand Inquisitor, "Tenshu-kyo Kohsatsu." Also, as another expression of Tenshu-kyo "Kirishitan Shumon" was used, and this became official. In "Doctrina Christam," a Catechism written by Mateo Ricci, Deus was written as D and was pronounced, "Deus." So, I have decided to use "Tenshu-kyo" (Kirishitan), which was the official word used by the Tokugawa government.

*Ref. "Latin, Portuguese, and Japanese Comparison Dictionary."

(2) Arrival and the nationwide growth of Tenshu-kyo

Francisco Xavier, who is a Roman Catholic Jesuit and Spanish, was sent to Goa, India. When his evangelization effort among Portuguese was not going anywhere and was in a desperate mood, he met a Japanese trader named Anjiro. Xavier heard the story of Japan from Anjiro, and believing that Japan was a promising place to evangelize he left Goa behind. He arrived in Kagoshima with Anjiro's guidance on August 15, 1549. In Kagoshima he was welcomed by the Lord Takahisa Shimazu and granted a permission to engage in missionary work. This was because Takahisa wanted to further promote the trade with Portugal. Although Christianity was welcomed as a sect of Buddhism in the beginning by Buddhists, they began to protest against Xavier's missionary work. Also, the fact that a single Portuguese ship did not arrive did not

help the situation. Takahisa ordered Xavier and the company to leave the country. Since their missionary work bore fruits of more than 100 Christians by September 1550, Xavier left them under Anjiro's care and left Kagoshima for Kyoto.

Xavier had two primary missions in Japan:

I To go to the place where the king (Emperor) resides and seek audience to obtain the permission to engage in missionary work and for the protection.

II To go to universities (Kohya San, Hiei Zan, and Ashikaga School) to ascertain them.

In order to accomplish these two objectives, Xavier headed for Kyoto.

When he arrived in Kyoto on January 1, 1551, Kyoto was devastated from wars, its population had decreased by one half, and the Emperor's authority and power were practically non-existent. So, Xavier gave up seeking an audience with the Emperor, he switched to a strategy to seek the protection of a powerful lord in the provincial area. So, he went to Yamaguchi, where it was called Kyoto of the West, sought an audience with Yoshitaka Ouch and was granted the permission to engage in missionary work. Although about 50,000 were converted to Christianity in a little over two months, persecution by the Buddhist became very severe. Xavier preached "Deus" as "Dai Nichi," but the Buddhist side teased it as "Dai uso (big lie)." So, they decided to use the Latin word, Deus, as in the original language as much as possible. And, after staying in Ohtomo's Bungo, Kyushu, he left Japan for Goa on November 15, 1551. The biggest harvest for Xavier's missionary effort in Japan was Lorenzo, one-eyed lute player. The early Christian churches born in Japan consisted of various social classes including the intellectuals such as the Bushi and Buddhists, the merchants, the farmers, the traveling lute players and needle venders. Lay Christians actively contributed for the mission work on foot.

Since then the number of missionaries of monastic orders of various sects reached 300 by 1643. The monastic orders included the Society of Jesus, Franciscan, Dominican, and Augustinian. Furthermore, as organizations to help them, "Dojuku," which consists of evangelists and preachers, "Komono," who are servants, and "Kanbo," who managed the church and took care of the believers.

In this way the missionary work advanced, and the gospel spread to Yamaguchi, Kyoto, Bungo Funai, Chikuzen Hakata, Hirado, Arima, Shimabara, Kuchi-no-tsu, Goto, Amakusa, Nagasaki, Nara, Kawachi, and Gifu; the number of Christians reached about 20,000 with 40 churches. The membership further increased to 130,000 in the next 10 years. The number of churches reached 150. By the time of the Missionary Expulsion Decree of Hideyoshi Toyotomi in 1587, the number of Christians reached 200,000. After the death of Hideyoshi, when the Tokugawa government issued the nation wide decree banning Christianity in 1614, the Christian population was about 370,000, but according to the other report it was 500,000. In 80 years between 1549 and 1630, it is estimated that about 760,000 became Christians. [Ref. Page 12, "The History of Christianity in Japan," by Takashi Gono, Yoshikawa Kobun-kan. Since the Japanese population of those days was 1,230,000, the percentage of Christian was about 0.6%. Considering the current Christian population is less than 0.1%, it was a considerable number. The area of mission work was wide spread from Hokkaido to Okinawa in south.

(3) Background behind the acceptance of Tenshu-kyo

Let me list some of the reasons why Tenshu-kyo, which was a foreign religion and the absolute monotheism, gained the believers in the short time and expanded its membership, while it was opposed and persecuted by

Buddhist temples and the Emperor and the nobles.

I. The Japanese at that time was seeking salvation through a strong religion in the time of social chaos. They sought the salvation in the after life and the divine favor in this world.

Tenshu-kyo promised the salvation, i.e., "Gloria" in the after life, but it also taught to pray to Deus and the Son Jesus for daily meals and peace not to succumb to temptations. And missionaries healed and liberated the sick, lepers, blind, mute, and those possessed by demons, built hospitals, and fed and helped the needy through Misericordia (mercy team) and Confrere (society of faith). However, those who became Christians through these activities appeared to have understood Deus as the same kind of god as Shintoism and Buddhism.

II. The faith in the Virgin Mary played an important role in Japanese conversion. It was because the Goddess of Mercy was worshipped as the guide and the intermediary to the Western Pure Land. Bodhisattva, but the Virginia Mary was probably believed to be better intermediary than the Goddess of Mercy.

III. The reason why Christianity spread among the Japanese intellectuals was a change in Japanese philosophy. It is said that the Japanese religious philosophy was in transition from polytheism through pantheism to monotheism. The philosophy of the ways of heaven of the Yoshida Shinto, which proclaimed the monotheistic Shintoism, is noteworthy. The philosophy of the ways of heaven was born and spread with the basis on the trinity of God, Confucianism, and Buddhism or that of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism. Samurais and intellectuals seemed to have accepted Tenshu-kyo through the philosophy of the ways of heaven. Missionaries also taught that the ways of heaven was equivalent to Deus.

IV. The Japanese high literacy rate at that time also contributed to the acceptance of Tenshu-kyo. "The Elements of Theology," by

Pedro Gomez and "The Doctrina Christam," a Tenshu-kyo catechism spread from the intellectuals to the common people, and the Christian learning was accumulated.

V. The political situations of Japan in those days also helped the progress of Christianity. Japan then was not a centralized unified nation but the age of rival warlords. Each war lord rushed to purchase guns and ammunitions from Portuguese ships. Also, the method of evangelization of the Society of Jesus, that converted the local lord first, then his subordinates, and the people. Christian lords used the faith as the tie to unify the lord and the people, and helped missionaries "The Doctrina Christam" further instilled filial piety that taught loyalty and submission to one's master and the lord.

(4) Persecution against Tenshu-kyo and its decline

Persecution against Tenshu-kyo took place where missionaries called "Bateren (from Portuguese Padre)" resided to some extent. However, the systematic large scale persecution started from July 24, 1587.

I. Tensho Era's Expulsion Decree of Missionaries

Hideyoshi summoned the famous Christian lord, Ukon Takayama, in the evening of July 24, 1587, ordered Ukon to abandon his faith, but he not obey the order. So, Hideyoshi stripped Ukon's title, his land, and buildings. Also, at the same time, he ordered Coelho, vice bishop, the expulsion of all missionaries from Japan and banned their return. The reason behind this decision was the accusation that missionaries circulated among the people, forcibly converting them, and destroying shrines and temples, the punishable offences. Also, Hideyoshi ordered one Christian lord after another to abandon their faith. He regarded the strong unified war lord and his people were an obstacle to the unification of the

nation.

II. San Felipe Incident and the Martyr of 26

During the voyage from the Philippines to Mexico, the San Felipe encountered the storm, the rudder was broken, and a Spanish galleon drifted ashore at Urado of Shikoku on October 17, 1596. The lord of Tosa, Chosokabe confiscated the cargo of the ship drifted ashore according to the Japanese custom. The captain tried to appeal for the return of the cargo through Baptista, a Franciscan, who was in Kyoto, but Nagamori Mashita who was one of the five magistrates reported the result of his interrogation of the navigator. He reported that "the Spanish is a conqueror of other nations; they first send monks, and they will send the troops to conquer the country." Hideoyoshi, upon hearing this flew into a rage, and ordered the punishment of Franciscan monks who engaged in missionary work against the decree. In this way, 26 Christians were arrested, sent from Kyoto to Nagasaki, and they were crucified at Nishisaka, Nagasaki. They, including 12 year old Ludovico Ibaraki and 13 year old Antonio, all with dignity suffered and died with joy in returning to Heaven with life of everlasting sprit. It can be said that their martyrdom helped to spread Christianity to many people.

III. Nationwide Ban on Christianity of Keicho-era

On January 31, 1613 (December 22, 18th year of Keicho-era), Ieyasu Tokugawa suddenly issued the nationwide decree banning Christianity and expulsion of foreign missionaries from Japan. This was the beginning of the merciless persecution that lasted for two hundred and several ten years under the Tokugawa government. The argument for the expulsion of missionaries was that since Japan is the country of Buddhism and Shintoism, Tenshu-kyo which was used as a means to conquer Japan by foreign countries was heresy and must be expunged.

IV. Great Martyr of Genna-era

Ieyasu passed away in June of 1616 (April of 2nd year of Genna), and the Second Shogun Hidetada succeeded him. In September of that year, Hidetada issued "the Decree on Banning Christianity," strictly prohibited Christianity, and controlled the foreign trade of the lords. Also, the cruel persecution was conducted on a large scale nationwide at Nagasaki, Kyoto, and Sendai, etc.

V. Shimabara Rebellion

In October of 1637, the farmers of the Amakusa and the Shimabara regions could not stand any longer the cruel heavy taxes levied against them by Shigemasa Matsukura rose in a riot and entrenched themselves in the Hara Castle in the Shimabara Peninsula. The rebel force upholding "Shiro Amakusa," the son of Jinbei Masuda who was a former retainer of Yukinaga Konishi, were 27,000 farmers who were unified by the Christian faith and led by farmers who were former samurais, ronins, landlords, and clan leaders. They fought well against the government's ally forces that was 126,000 strong, but they were totally annihilated by a government's all-out attack in April of 1658. The government's casualties reached 13,000.

VI. Establishment of Religious Inquisition System

After quelling the Shimabara Rebellion, the government strengthened the system of religious inquisition throughout the country, and established a closed-door system. The five-family neighborhood unit which is a collective responsibility system, the rewarding for the informants, the stepping on plates with Christian symbols, the certification of conversion to Buddhism, and the certification of family belonging were used to thoroughly crack down Christians. As the result of this, the number of Christians drastically decreased, and they had no choice but survive as "underground Christians."

(5) Reasons why Tenshu-kyo was not accepted in Japan

I. Missionaries of Tenshu-kyo who came to Japan aggressively attacked Shinto and Buddhism as the teaching of the devil and adapted the confrontational approach toward other believers by calling them “Zenko” (means pagan). Also, they failed to receive the popular support by destroying shrines and temples. This type of intolerant attitude that denies the freedom of other religions was not only manifested in the 16~17th century European thinking but is the characteristic of the

Western Christian churches. The Japanese spiritual climate probably will not accept it.

II. The invasion policy of European imperialism existed behind the missionaries.

III. The fear that Christianity was heresy and something to be feared was imprinted in the Japanese collective consciousness through cruel persecutions.

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[References]

* “Japanese History of Christianity” by Takashi Gono, Yoshikawa Kobunkan

I would like to add that I am heavily indebted to this book in writing this report. (John Hisakazu Minagawa)

* “Christian history in Japan” by Hideteru Yamamoto, 2 volumes, Shinsei Do.

* “History of Japanese Christian Martyrs” by Yakichi Kataoka, Jijitsushin Sha.

* “Prohibition of Christianity and the Religion of the People” by Sanae Murai, Yamakawa Shuppan Sha.

* “Japan: Xavier Saw” by Peter Milward, translated by Tama Matsumoto, Kodansha Gakujutsu Bunko.

* “Doctrina Christam” (Nagasaki Edition), ascertained by Arimichi Ebisawa, Iwanami Shoten.

* “St. Francisco Xavierio” by Jun Kanazawa Chuoshuppan Sha.

REGIONAL INTERCESSORY PRAYER MEETINGS

1. HOKKAIDO

Sapporo: Sapporo Grace Kirisuto Kyokai,
Rev. John H. Minagawa
Sapporo Grace Christ Church
3-27 Nishi 5chome Kita 32jo Kitaku
Sapporo 001-0032
Tel 011-717-1801

2. IWATE-KEN

Mizusawa: The Revival•Tohoku House of Prayer,
Mr. Noriaki Takahashi
Restaurant Praise, 26 Naka-machi, Mizusawa-shi, 023-6813
3rd Sun. 7:00 a.m., Tel 0134-62-3561

3. SAITAMA-KEN

Warabi: Warabi Intercessory Prayer Meeting, c/o Sagitani
Minami-cho, Warabi-shi, 335-0003
One Holiday, Every Month, 2:00 p.m., Tel 0484-42-0967

4. TOKYO-TO

Tokyo: (1) Tokyo Central Intercessory Prayer Meeting,
Waseda Hohshien Seminar House (2-3-1 Nishi
Waseda, Shinjuku-ku), Contact Rev. John H. Minagawa,
6-1-17 Kamitsuruma, Sagamihara-shi, 228-0802,
Tel 0427-47-5703, Fax 0427-46-2119
3rd Mon. 6:30-9:00 p.m.
(2) Kirisutokyo Fujin Kyofu Kaikan, B1 (2-23-5 Hyakunin-cho,
Shinjuku-ku),
Contact Mrs. Moto Yamaura, King's Garden, Shuno Sono,
612 Shimo-Kosaka, Kawagoe-shi, Saitama-ken 350-0812,
Tel 0492-34-7049, Fax 0429-31-5552
1st Mon. 1:30 p.m.

5. KANAGAWA-KEN

Yokohama-shi: The Bible and Tea Meeting, Ms. Hisako Yoshida
8-9 Mankigahara, Asahi-ku, Yokohama-shi, 241-0836
Tel 045-363-5657, Every Friday, 2:00 p.m.

Sagamihara: Sagami-ono Kirisuto Kyokai, Rev. John H. Minagawa
6-1-17 Kamitsuruma, Sagamihara-shi, 228-0802
Tel 0427-47-5703, Fax 0427-46-2119
3rd Wed. 7:15 p.m., 3rd Thu. 10:15 a.m.

6. NAGANO-KEN

Chiisagata-gun: Maruko-machi Kirisuto Kyokai, Rev. Rieko Matsuyoshi
1710-1, Kami Maruko Kawahara, Maruko-machi,
Chiisagata-gun, Nagano-ken, 386-0404

3rd Wed. 7:30 p.m., Tel 02684-2-5264

7. SHIZUOKA-KEN

Shizuoka: Living Way Church, Richard Gordon 4-6-16-7
Kamiashigara
Shizuoka-shi, 420-0841
1st Sun. 2:00 p.m., Tel 054-248-4058

8. KYOTO-FU

Kyoto: Kyoto Prayer Group, Sister Eva F. Cereghino
5th floor, Catholic Kaikan, Kawahara-machi, 3 jo-agaru,
Nakakyo-ku, Kyoto-shi, 604-8006
Every Tue. 7:00 p.m. (ENGLISH), Tel 075-241-3867

9. OSAKA-FU

Neyagawa: Hinode Kirisuto Kyokai, Rev. Chitose Takimoto
26-9 Nakakida-cho, Neyagawa-shi, 572-0835
3rd Thur. 2:00 p.m. Tel&Fax 0720-22-9232

10.HYOGO-KEN

Takasago: Takasago Kyokai, Rev. Masaaki Tezuka
1-34 Kamicho Arai-machi, Takasago-shi, 676-0015
4th Wed. 9:30 p.m.-12:00 a.m. Tel&Fax 0794-42-4854

11.FUKUOKA-KEN

Fukuoka: Fukuoka Shinsei Kirisuto Kyokai, Rev. Hiroshi Takeda
3-33-1 Miyake, Minami-ku, Fukuoka-shi, 815-1344
2nd Wed. 7:30 p.m., Tel 092-561-4232

Ito Kirisuto Kyokai, Rev. Tokuji Tomono

12-4-1 Imajuku Ijiri, Nishi-ku, Fukuoka-shi, 819-0197
3rd Wed. 7:30 p.m., Tel 092-807-9080, Fax 092-807-2298

12.OHITA-KEN

Beppu: Full Gospel Iesu Kirisuto Kyokai, Rev. Seiji Nagano
10-1 Noguchi Moto-machi, Beppu-shi, 879-0933
Tel & Fax 0977-26-3692
e-mail:fg-jesus@poppy.ocn.ne.jp
Fri. 7:30 p.m.

13. OKINAWA-KEN

Naha-shi: Hosana Kirisuto Dendosho, Rev. Shinshu Kase
9-6, 2-chome, Wakasa, Naha-shi, 900-0031
Sat. 6:00 p.m., Tel 098-868-5641

Focus of our Prayer for April 2003

(1) Pending Subjects for Prayer

1. That the Koumei To (the Clean Government Party) is eliminated from the coalition government, and their influence will be greatly diminished.
 2. Let's pray that those who are leaving cults will come to Christian church for salvation.
[Editorial]
* When the founder Asahara and other executives of the Aum True Religion were arrested, temporarily lost the momentum, but they are rebuilding it as "the Alef" religious order with Mr. Joyu as its leader. Let us watch this organization.
 3. Let's pray that the Emperor will be saved and abundantly blessed by the Lord Jesus Christ and the blessings will spread over the entire Japanese people. Also, pray that the Emperor's presence among the peoples of the world will be used as the foundation of blessings. And pray that the Japanese people understand and respect the Emperor as the leader and work toward the world peace.
[Editorial]
* That the Emperor recovers well after the surgery.
 4. Let's pray that the Christian Church and the Jews, Catholics, Protestants, Pentecostals, and various denominations and churches that criticize and feud against each other repent and reconcile with one another.
[Editorial]
* The Intercessors for Japan movement through prayers is creating the unity across various denominations.
 5. That the works of the Markorsh Mission will progress. Since the number of subscribers of the Revival Shimbun has reached 2,700, let us pray that it will increase to 5,000. Also, pray that the contents of the Revival Shimbun be further enriched.
[Editorial]
* We see many Christian bookstores continue to have financial difficulties. Many retail shops are being closed. That Markorsh will recover from its financial difficulties.
 6. That the journalists who engage in TV, radio, newspaper, and magazine will cease arrogant and prejudiced reporting, and they will stop the news gathering practice that ignore human rights. That they will play fairly in fear of God. Let's pray that those who are aware of such problems will raise their voice in protest and ask for retraction, and for them to play a role of the watchdog of Japan.
[Editorial]
* The Asahi Shimbun has been consistently reporting from the left leaning position since the end of WW II. For example, they praised Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il in their articles. They depicted North Korea as the Paradise on this earth. With the premise that no abduction took place, they are indifferent. In the article of November 5th of last year, they commented that the victims of kidnapping who returned to Japan should be allowed to return to North Korea and let them decide their future.
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7. Let's pray that the tendency to have a smaller number of children, that will destroy the nation to stop, and the policy that will encourage having a larger number of children according to the will of God will be practiced with blessings of the entire society.

"God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase, fill the earth and subdue it.'"

Genesis 1:28

[Editorial]

* Since the responsible principle is not established in pension and welfare policies, the burden they appear to force upon the weak is out of proportion. Also, the policy to seek funds from increasing the consumption tax will only exacerbate this trend.

(2) Timely Prayer Subjects

1. That the Koizumi cabinet, in fear of God, will not set the wrong course for Japan, they will govern in such way that will contribute to the world peace while they securely maintain the Japanese independence.

[Editorial]

* The Koizumi cabinet, having no long term strategy, seems to act on the spur of the moment trying to gauge the mind of China and the U.S. in politics, economics, foreign policy and military affair. They should be aware of the fact that only Japan can protect Japan's peace, prosperity, and happiness, and they should devise the long term national strategy that combines knowledge and spirit of our nation.

* If the Koizumi cabinet is unable to do so, we should pray for the strong leader to replace it.

2. The Evangelization of All Japanese People Movement permeates widely among Japanese Christians, and that they can advance the movement in a progressive manner.

[Editorial]

* Rev. Masaaki Tezuka, considering strong suggestion by Rev. Shin Ken Kin, chairman of the Korea's "Evangelization of All Korean People Movement" and that similar movement already started in the Kanto area, decided to advance the "Evangelization of All Japanese People Movement" in cooperation with its Korean counterpart. Its Japanese executive director is Rev. Masaaki Tezuka.

3. That the abduction of Japanese citizens by North Korea becomes the top priority of diplomacy, and the family members of the abductees will come back to Japan.

* Let us pray that the spiritual and physical health of the Yokotas, who has been confused and exhausted by conflicting information.

* That the unconfirmed survivors of abduction will be kept safe and return home.

* That more than 100 abduction victims and their families not to abandon hope and fight toward solving the problem.

4. Let us pray that North Korea will soon abandon nuclear weapons and bio-chemical weapons.

5. That the Japanese who were imprisoned for "the Melbourne Affair" for a crime they had not committed be released immediately.
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[Editorial]

* “The Melbourne Affair” took place in June of 1992 at the Melbourne Airport, Victoria, where when 13 kg of Heroin was discovered in Masaharu Katsuno’s (34) and four other’s false-bottomed suitcases, and the five tourist were caught red-handed. Mr. Katsuno is a Christian. The three of them: Mr. Masaharu Katsuno, Mr. Mitsuo Katsuno, and Kiichiro Asami were paroled without the declaration of innocence on November 7 of last year and returned home..

6. We pray that Japan would develop her own independent visions for diplomacy and defense.

[Editorial]

* In the normal session of the Diet that is currently held, they plan to deliberate important bills such as “the emergency defense legislation” and “the personal information protection bill,” etc. It is important to debate thoroughly based on vision for the above subject and decide in the deliberations at the Diet. Let us pray that easy steamrolling will be avoided.

* That we can have the diplomatic stance that will welcome Mr. Li Tonko of Taiwan to Japan. For your information, “the Friends of Li Tonko” was organized last December in Japan. Also, those who opposed Li Tonko from coming to Japan are Prof. Tomoyuki Kojima of Keio University, Prof. Masahiro Kuroda, Managing Director, of Keio University; Hitoshi Tanaka, Director of Asia Pacific Basin, an Hidehisa Horiuchi, Director of China Section, of the Foreign Affairs; Tetsuro Yano, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs. (Dec. 2, 2002 issue of the Shukan Bunshun)

7. In spite of the prolonged recession, first of all Christians can continue to hold on to the future and dream, in which this country will be utilized by God and the people in Christ. And, that the people can continue to talk about their dreams in the Lord.

[Comment]

(Modifying the orientation of prayers)

In the past I have consistently supported the structural reform of Mr. Koizumi, but I would like to change my position to that of neutral base and pray from a different perspective. I will state my reasons below:

The biggest problem we face today for the Japanese economy, I believe, is that not sufficient capital is funded to the growth industry and the promising field. So, the next generation of money making industry and the company leaders do not emerge. The investment of financial institutions such as banks made to unprofitable companies and industries became frozen and bad debts, so they have lost reserve lending power. And to make the matter worse, in the field of the export industry (electrical appliances and material industry) which Japan used to make an enormous profit, Japanese “winning” companies are losing competitiveness and gradually losing ground to the newly industrialized countries such China with low labor cost as their weapon. These companies cannot raise sufficient fund and the research & development stays stagnant, so the investors in and out of the country who lose hope in future of these companies sell their stocks. As the result, stock prices steadily go down (asset deflation) → companies restructure → unemployment increases, people’s consumption decrease (price deflation) → companies’ performance worsen, stock prices stagnate, raising fund becomes more difficult (assets deflation), so we now have the vicious circle (deflation spiral).

As you can see from the above, the fundamental problem is after all is the problem of financial institutions. That is to say it is the paralysis of credit creation power. The objective of the Koizumi structural reform is to fix this. That is to say, through accelerated dealing with bad

debts by forcibly calling the loan extended to the non-profitable department (if this is implemented the debtor companies will bankrupt, financial institutions with insufficient reserve to absorb the loss will go bankrupt – this is actually happening now) and reorganization of the financial structure (flow of money), so that we will have “the structure” in which once again the financial institutions can aggressively and adequately engage in credit creation and invest necessary fund into the companies that need financing. Thus, even though it accompanies pain, having thought it will give us the fresh start by wiping out the negative legacy, we prayed for the execution of the Koizumi reform.

However, the problem is from where we bring this vast amount of funds that is necessary for this financial structural reform. This is the largest problem of the Koizumi reform, but the government appears to use the public funds (funds obtained from the national bonds and the national investment and loan funds obtained using postal savings, etc. as capital) as the main source of funds. But, the problem is, since the public funds is a debt from the people, it must be paid back. Then, where does the government find the money to pay us back (who is going to pay for it)? – What has become clear is “introduction of foreign capital.” That is to say, let foreign investors pay for it. To sum up, if the Japanese industry and companies depend on the global international investment and investing funds (introduction of private funds), the government believes that it does not have to come up with money (by issuing the national bonds or extending the public funds). This is the reason why the Japanese companies are encouraged through the revision of the commercial law to reform them to withstand the evaluation of the global investment market.

Certainly, the Japanese capitalistic economy, whether one likes it or not, is incorporated into the global market structure, is in a relationship neither too close to nor too remote which in itself is either good or bad but we must accept it as the fact. But, is there another way? If we really want to reform the Japanese financial structure and industrial structure into those full of vitality, is there no alternative but to rely on foreign capital? When we think about that this would bring about “cruel realities” where the “the deflation spiral” that will make many people miserable and will ask the people to demand patience and assume self responsibility beyond the limit, we could not help but ask is this the only choice? We have been anguishing about this.

However, after reading an article (3rd page of January 26) of Richard Verner, a Christian economist, reported in the recent Revival Shimbun, “Wait a minute, without excessively depending on the global international funds, if Japan exercises its sovereignty and have the courage to execute the financial policy by making the identity of “Japanese nation” clear, perhaps, we can solve it,” I thought. His opinion is that, in short, the key is that Japan, to be more precise, the Bank of Japan, who has the authority to issue the currency, can increase the amount of credit creation as a whole to the extent at which the Japanese companies’ potential growing power can be exhibited. The Bank of Japan, on purpose, not creating the necessary and sufficient amount of credit was the reason for the failure to transform the Japanese economic structure after the bubble burst (refer to “the Master of Yen, Sohshi Sha). He is very consistent in his opinion. Since “the yen” is not the base currency, for those winning companies such as Toyota and Sony need more and more financing (dollar financing) from the global capital market. For this purpose, the current Koizumi reform’s direction may be expedient. However, for the great majority of small and medium sized companies that support Japan’s industries, it will bring about the unbearable severe realities as we have seen above. And this means no other than that at the sacrifice of

great many people would enrich only a part of the international exporters, resulting in the greater disparity of rich and poor.

As a conclusion, we have not reached the conviction to the point to pray along the opinion of Mr. Verner, but at least, he made me think to watch at the economic policy of the Koizumi cabinet from a neutral or skeptical point of view. Regarding this topic, I welcome the opinion and thoughts of you, the coworkers.

8. That US war on Iraq will end soon.

[Editorial]

* Ken Joseph reports that 1,200,000 Christians live in Iraq. (refer to the Kirisuto Shimbun, 1/18/2003)

9. Let us pray for the peace of Israel.

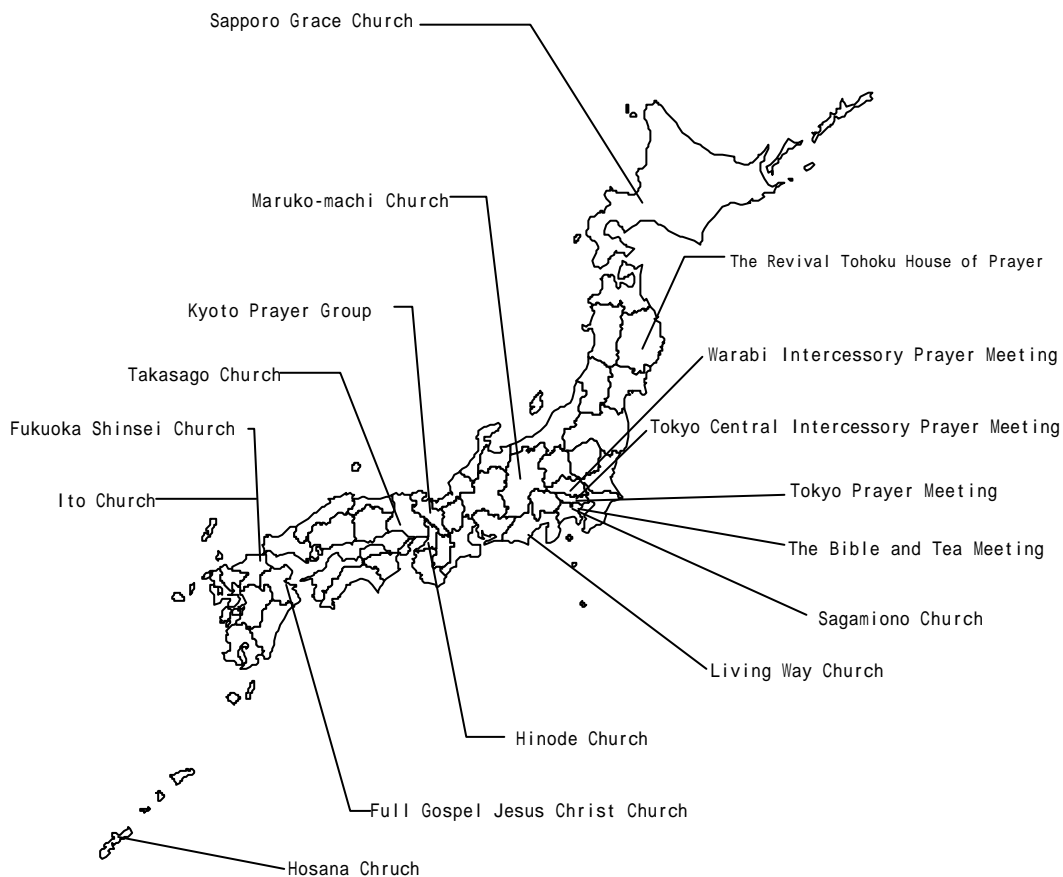
“The guardian of Israel does not doze or sleep.”

Psalm 125:5

[Editorial]

* That suicide bombings will cease completely and the peace to be born through the intercession of God.

* As the result of the general election of the Knesset, the Israeli parliament, was held on January 28, the right wing party in power, Likud, lead by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon took 37 seats out of 120 and became the leading party. That Prime Minister Sharon will not head for the wrong direction.



《FINANCIAL REPORT》 (OCT. 1, 2002~NOV. 30, 2002)

(Unit = Yen)

INCOME	AMOUNT	EXPENSES	AMOUNT
Offering	76,520	Travel	29,120
		Printing	2,620
		Materials	13,300
		Postage	10,380
		Office Expenses	0
		Bank Charge	190
		Telephone	7,138
SUB TOTAL	76,520	SUB TOTAL	62,748
Brought Forward	99,887	Balance Carried Forward	113,659
National Activities Fund, Income	0	National Activities Fund, Expense	0
B.F.	15,700	C.F.	15,700
International Conference Fund	0	International Conference Fund	0
B.F.	35,474	C.F.	35,474
TOTAL	227,581	TOTAL	227,581

【Names of Contributors】

Takasago Christ Church (Hyogo)	2
Hinode Christ Church (Osaka)	1
Sagami-Ono Christ Church (Kanagawa)	2
Sapporo Grace Christ Church (Hokkaido)	2

[Editorial Post Scripts]

* We deliver the April issue of the Newsletter.

*The feature article this time, the continuation from the September issue of last year, is “Preface to Japan Missionology – Christianity that came to Japan (4),” [the 4th wave] the arrival of “Tenshu-kyo,” 1549AD. The author is Rev. John Hisakazu Minagawa.

* Our prayer has been heard, and I am pleased to report that four new committee members joined.

1. Yoshito Kugimiya, Committee Member
Pastor, Kirisuto no Fukuin Ohita Kyokai
2. Nobuo Haegawa Committee Member
Pastor, Musashino Aino Kyokai (Tokyo)
3. Makoto Machida, Associate Member (Chiba)
4. Kohei Nakahara, Associate Member (Chiba)

* “The Vital Points of Church Growth,” by Masaaki Tezuka, Markorsh Publication, 2400 yen, was published on January 15, 2003.

* We listened to the pros and cons whether the Koizumi cabinet’s structural reform can be trusted when it was first announced. But, we proceeded with the assumption it can be trusted. Rev. Yukizawa commented on it time to time. However, we agreed unanimously year that we have some doubts about its trustworthiness.

By John H. Minagawa

《Next Committee Meeting of Intercessors for Japan》

Date & Time: 12:30 pm, Mar. 31, 2003

Place: Takasago Christ Church

Japan United Church of Christ

