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MY OWN CONVERSION.

The reason why I speak of my own conversion, is not that I have had any remarkable experiences. It is simply because I was one of the first converts in Japan when Christianity was not diffused in Japanese society at all. And therefore my case may represent some others at the time in many respects, and you may know in what condition the minds of Japanese young men of the time were, and at the same time you may find peculiarities of some Japanese Christians even now.

In 1859 the four first Protestant missionaries (Dr. Brown, Dr. Verbeck, Bishop Williams and Dr. Hepburn.) arrived in Japan from America. They were the pioneers in this virgin soil, because Japan was secluded from other parts of the world for about three centuries, and the Christianity once propagated by Jesuit Missionaries was entirely annihilated by bloody persecutions. And ever since it was prohibited by the law. They arrived in Japan safely, but they could not approach the people to accomplish their mission, for the prohibition was still in force. By the grace of God they waited for thirteen years with unconquerable perseverance. At last the time came to carry out their mission.

In 1868, the great restoration of Imperial power took place, and the open door became the national policy, and the whole nation saw the necessity of adopting western civilization in order to make the nation strong enough to keep up with other nations of the world. This caused hundreds of young men from different parts of the country to come to the missionaries, to get a knowledge of the western languages and sciences. This was a providential opening for missionaries to give them something better than mere knowledge of the languages and sciences. Yes, they tried to give them the Bible before they gave some other things. The time was ripe. Many young men accepted this new doctrine, facing the persecutions. They were ready to endure any hardness for the cause.

vague and indefinite, and was never skeptical of the existence of the spirits of ancestors and heroes. I used to visit the tombs of our feudal lords and my ancestors at least once a month. It was simply to pay respect but not to expect any blessing. Confucius, as a moral teacher and statesman, was my highest ideal. But after all, I had no spiritual and heart searching overseer above or within me, but I was my own master. Once I made special effort myself to be true, pure, and just by the light of my conscience, according to the doctrine of Confucianism. Oh how hard it was; I had furious fightings with temptations day and night. One day I succeeded a little, another day I was utterly defeated. Always surrounded by fears, finally I was sick in my soul and body. Thus, while I was staggering about, knowing not what to do, the time draws near for the restoration of Imperial power, and there was great confusion throughout the country. I was unconsciously influenced by this political change and became ambitious and adventurous like other young men of the time. Then the civil war occurred. The young men who took part in the political agitation, being away from home, became very loose in their conduct. Looking back to the time I can not help feeling humiliated. It is horrible to think of the bad habits imprinted on my mind and heart. Fortunately, the war did not last very long. Taking the defeated side, I was disappointed and disgraced.

In 1870, I could resume my study as before in my native city in the north of Nippoa. At that time I saw a Chinese Bible which a friend of mine brought out of curiosity from Yokohama, an open port. I borrowed it from him out of curiosity also, and read the first part of Genesis with my other friends very secretly. This was the only copy ever introduced to north Japan, and I was 21 years old. In the first line I found, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." That struck me, and it was so sublime and majestic. But having no help for studying the Bible I could not go on any further.

In 1871, I went to Yokohama for study. Here I had a chance

In 1872, on the 10th of March the first Protestant church was organized by eleven young men under the guidance of American Missionaries. And on the first Sunday of May the speaker was also baptized,—(with one young man and 3 young women)—, and enjoyed the privilege of joining the infant church. And ever since I have been thankful for the privilege of being a son of God.

Now before proceeding in detail, it seems to be convenient to state a little the general condition of religions in Japan at that time. Shintoism—native religion so called—was nothing but homage to the and worship of the spirits of ancestors and departed heroes. They have no systematic doctrines. Its temples are clean and simple, no images, no idols except tablets with a name or relies, with a round mirror, signifying brightness and perfection of virtue. Its forms are very serious. They were supported by the public funds. They never preached to the people, as now they do.

Buddhism, the religion most prevailing among the people, was mostly supported by the public funds, central and local. They did not endeavor to teach the people of their truth. The secrets of their hold on the people were their prayers for their departed souls, and also their testimony that they were members of the Buddhist Churches. Confucianism, the most influential among the Military class, was a politico-ethical system. It does not teach a spiritual world, either divine nor human.

When I was young, the religions of Japan were in a sleeping condition. Under such a condition of religions, being a son of a military family, I never recieved any religious training, except Confucianism, which is not properly to be called a religion. My moral instruction was simple. It was, in short, to be faithful to my feudal lord, to obey my parents, teachers, and elders and to do my best for the state, without regard of self-interest, whether in the present or future. This was the common ethics among the military class which also influenced all common people.

It was my constant aim not to disgrace my clan and family by my misconduct. I had an implicit belief in heaven, though very

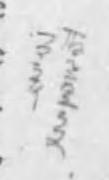
struggle in my soul began to take place. Having no Christian friends around me within 500 miles I could not consult with any body. I hastened to Yokohama. It was still cold winter. I spent 24 days on the way to Tokyo. I came to Yokohama at the end of Feb. 1872. I found there my fellow students, who had been very indifferent or rather opposed to Christianity, were ready to be baptized. This surprised me and also encouraged me to seek the truth more earnestly for my own salvation. Here again the scriptural light came to me directly, recommending Jesus Christ as my only Savior, and also demanding my sincere repentance and reliance upon him who died for me. I was on my knees unconsciously. I confessed my sins and made unconditional surrender to Christ. But I did not think of future rewards, or, I should say, I did not know to think of futurity, because my religious sentiment was not yet well cultivated. I simply fled to Christ from the accusation of my conscience, and then from my faith in Christ. I was led to believe in the Fatherhood of God. In addition to this simple faith in Christ, my strong motive in embracing Christianity was for the sake of my own country. Finding our country was so behind, compared with the western nations in many respects, we were very anxious in bringing our country to the same level with the advanced nations.

In closing I testify honestly that the most essential secret of the spiritual life is the personal communion with Christ in simple faith. Since my conversion I have passed through different stages of life, although my principal work has been in school and church. For a time I was a member of a provincial congress in my native prefecture, before our National Parliament was organized. I had the chair in the congress for two years. Thus having connection with political society, I had hard experiences in order to keep my Christian character without blame, among so called politicians, whose morals were so loose and low. Jesus Christ was my only refuge. A prayerful heart was my only shield against the fiery darts. In such a time, thank God, I had got a new spiritual ex-

to come in contact with American Missionaries, and I had to study the Bible before I took other studies every day. From the first I could accept the belief in the existence of God, but in many things I could not agree with them, and was offended against Christianity. For instance, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." Gen. 2; 24. That offended me very much, and I thought that is a strong evidence that Christianity is an evil sect which will destroy the order and peace of society, and deserves to be prohibited. But there was one thing which could soften my offended mind so as to make me to be patient and thoughtful. That was the kindness of the Missionaries to me, and their prayers, so earnest and sincere for their pupils and the nation, while the people were watching for a chance to drive them out of the country.

This was a great question to me, as well as to my fellow students.

In 1871, another great change occured in the country. The feudal system was abolished entirely. Consequently the military class families lost all the privileges from the clans to which they had belonged for centuries. Those young students with big hopes and ambitions suddenly became helpless. A thick cloud was hanging over the way of my life. I was obliged to go back to my home utterly discouraged. It was cold winter, I travelled (in a chair, being sick,) over five hundred miles, spending 3 weeks on the way, and I found my family very unsettled in a poor village. There was no steamer, no rail, no jinriksha. The disappointed young man felt that every thing in the world is uncertain, and he himself so weak and insignificant. The circumstance made me very humble, and led me to see the real situation of a sinful man. Then strangely, many good lessons and doctrines in the Bible, which I studied very indifferently, became fresh to my mind, and my moral sense became sharp and vigorous, and my ideals higher. I felt deeply that I was a sinner and my moral responsibility so great toward God and men, and I could not save myself. A severe



Christianity in China and Korea will become strong enough to influence Japan. The last war in Manchuria well illustrates this case. Before Port Arther was taken, the Japanese Army could not take Mukden. Japan is the Port Arther, though smaller than Mukden,—China. Or Japan is 203 metre hill. Until Gen. Nogi sacrificed his two sons with several thousand brave men for this one hill, Gen. Stoessel did not lift up a white flag. Japan can not sleep till all China is converted. She will influence for good or evil all her neighbours. To be frank, I am sorry to say so but this is a fact, even now, through several agencies in Japan all sorts of bad isms and evil influences, new and old, are being introduced into China and Korea. Such things are very injurious to Japan, but much more so to China and Korea.

Dear friends in Christ pray for us and help us as much aspossible.

perience by close communion with Christ out Lord. It was a sweet hour when I was conscious I was with my Lord, with all of my heart and will wholly surrendered to his own. There is power. There is courage and peace. All fears and anxieties disappeared.

Christian friends, you have much advantage in learning of spiritual experience. You have fathers and mothers with spiritual experience. To us Christianity is new in Japan, so we have not many experienced men to lead us. We can learn advanced theories through books and addresses by scholars. But books are books, theories are theories. We need something more. We need the influence of living agents. And you have these advantages in spiritual affairs. You have your experienced fathers and mothers, if only you listen to them with humble spirits.

Friends, come to Jesus closer and closer. Let your light shine to glorify the Father and the Son the Savior, and I wish you to arouse a missionary spirit among you. Now all the world begins to awake in searching for the truth. The better time has come for Missionary work. Missionary work is more than philanthropic. It is the Lord's work. The Lord wants his people to go to all nations to teach them and to save them. Missionary work is for all men. All men need salvation by nature. They need the true knowledge of god. They want eternal life. They need well prepared warmhearted, broad-minded men. Salvation can not be done by machines, but by personal agents who know the will of the Savior. Friends, think over this matter. May God. the Father lead you, guide you in your thinking, and give you the right decision.

We hear that many in Europe and America are thinking in reference to missionary work in the Far East, that it would be better to evangelize China and Korea first, then come back to Japan, when the work would be easier. Or they think it would be sufficient, at the present, to leave Japan in the hands of Japanese Christians. This would be a great mistake. Our Christians, however, ambitious they may be, are too weak to be responsible for the whole work, and it will be at least several generations before

正正

纂者

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