

RELIGIOUS COMMITMENT THEORY: A MODEL FOR JAPANESE CHRISTIANS

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The Japanese Church today faces difficulty not only in evangelizing non-believers but also in maintaining the believers committed to Church. The precedent theories on religious commitment were primarily conducted in the West where human relationship is individual-oriented and Christianity is dominant. This paper attempts to reconstruct a model of religious commitment based on the precedent theories, in which commitment of Japanese Christians can be better understood.

DEFINITION OF RELIGIOUS COMMITMENT

The definitions of religious commitment diverge according to the scholars' framework of analysis as well as their understanding of the factors of religious commitment. Reviewing some primary theories helps to reconstruct a new model for the theory applicable to non-Christian settings.

Goffman defines religious commitment as "a continual decision making to save face of the person him/herself or others, which assists to maintain the social or ritual equilibrium,"² He primarily focuses on the extrinsic motivation of a member in commitment, and his definition lacks the possible internally-directed morality contributing to the commitment of the member, as Miller critiques.³

Leland Asa, to the contrary, focuses more on the intrinsic aspect of commitment and defines commitment as "the giving of intellectual, emotional, and spiritual assent to a set of beliefs and behaviors."⁴ Although Asa expanded the focus to personal cognition of a believer, his view does not explicitly reflect the communal aspects of religious commitment, which is a crucial element of social structure in non-Western society. Marie Cornwall and Stan Albrecht focus on the communal aspect of the commitment and define religious commitment in two categories: spiritual commitment and Church commitment. They explain the former as a religious aspect which encompasses the believers' relationship with the transcendent and the members' affective orientation toward deity, and the latter as the affective orientation of the individual toward the religious organization or community.⁵

Rosabeth Moss Kanter and Meredith McGuire further their focus on communal aspect of the commitment and discover the linkage between the members and the group, and include the reciprocal mechanism between the two. Kanter defines as follows:

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²Leland F. Asa *The Psychology of Religious Commitment and Development* (New York: University Press of America, 1994), 47. Asa compares several definitions of religious commitment in his book.

³T. G. Miller Goffman, "Social Acting and Moral Behavior," *Journal for the Theory of Social Behavior* 14 (1984): 141-63.

⁴Asa, 47.

⁵Marie Cornwall and Stan Albrecht, "The Dimensions of Religiosity: A Conceptual Model with an Empirical Test," *Review of Religious Research* 27 (1986): 226-44.

Commitment means the willingness of members to contribute in maintaining the group because the group provides what they want and need . . . the group achieves its goals by fulfilling the needs of its members, and the members satisfy their desires by helping to maintain the group. Persons who are totally committed to a group have fully invested themselves in it and fully identify with it. Commitment is the link between the individual and the larger social group.⁶

These diverse views on religious commitment suggest that religious commitment involves three dimensions in the phenomenological level: ideational, communal, and experiential/spiritual (see Figure 1).

Ideational dimension refers to the content of the belief, communal to human relationship within the group, experiential/spiritual to the members' subjective experiences that connects to the Deity. The commitment of the members to Deity intensifies through these three phenomenological dimensions, or at least a part of them. It can be partial because some members can cease the affiliation to the group without forsaking their doctrinal belief, or others can doubt the doctrine without leaving the communal affiliation. Reflecting these three dimensions, commitment can be defined as "a volitional linkage between the members and the group, which produces the willingness of the members to contribute to maintain the group with their doctrinal, communal, experiential /spiritual assent and participation in the group."

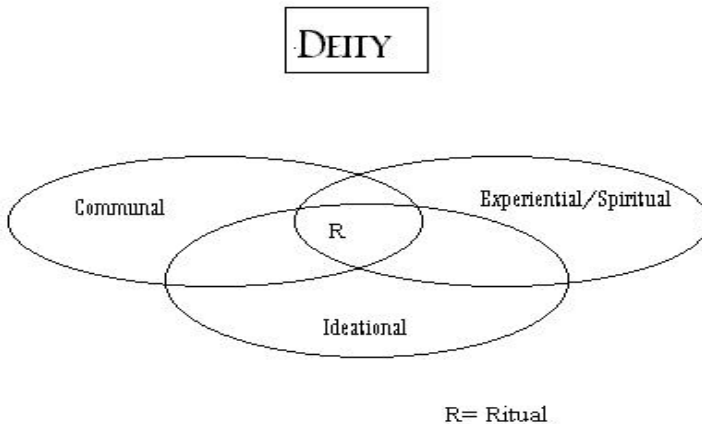
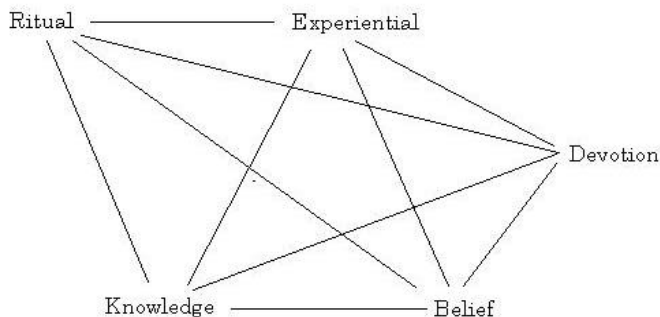


Figure 1. Three phenomenological dimensions of religious commitment

FACTORS OF RELIGIOUS COMMITMENT

⁶ Rosabeth Moss Kanter, *Community and Commitment* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1972), 66.

Theories on factors of religious commitment primarily fall into three categories: a dichotomous view which consists of meaning and belonging; a trichotomous view with cognitive, affective, and behavioral factors; and a multi-dimensional view with more specific factors. These three categories are not mutually exclusive, rather, they are different levels of categorization. Among several multi-dimensional theorists, John M. Finney presented the five-dimension theory on religious commitment: ideological, ritualistic,



experiential, intellectual, and consequential.⁷ The ideological dimension involves the beliefs religious adherents are expected to maintain. The ritualistic dimension encompasses various ways in which religious adherents are expected to practice their religion. The experiential dimension pertains to the intimate and emotional relationship religious adherents are expected to have with a supernatural being. The intellectual dimension refers to “the expectation that the religious person will be informed and knowledgeable about the basic tenets of his faith and its sacred scripture.” Finally, the consequential dimension includes “the secular effects of religious belief, practice, experience, and knowledge.” Finney depicts the correlation of the five factors in the following figure.

Figure 2. Commitment factors by Finney (modified by the author)

Finney’s theory, however, does not explicitly describe the communal factor of religiosity as one independent factor, as it combines participation with the ritual factor, in which the former actually is a phase of ritual. Finney also does not differentiate personal religious experience from the affective level of one’s religiosity. Many other theories also are regarding the religious experience with the affective dimension of religiosity. However, when the factors are selected according to the level of human cognition, religious experience must indicate actual happenings or occasions that affect one’s religiousness on the phenomenological level. Then, these cognitions on the phenomenological level may consequently raise affective responses in believers. Admittedly, religious experience can be highly subjective. However, experiential factors

⁷John M. Finney, “A Theory of Religious Commitment,” *Sociological Analysis* 39, no. 1 (1978): 19-35.

often identified as affective factors, are responses toward the actual happenings or events such as reading the words of forgiveness, hearing the words of acceptance, receiving answers to prayers, dream, miraculous experience, and so forth. This affective response will be followed by volitional determination in the evaluative level, which is commitment.

Thus, Finney's theoretical framework of religious commitment needs to be modified into a new framework, which helps in understanding the mechanism of religious commitment. The new framework focuses on one individual person rather than collective respondents, which is common for precedent statistical research. It integrates an anthropological perspective as well as the sociological one of analysis. The anthropological perspective is based on Paul Hiebert's theory of three levels of the human mental component in terms of culture: cognitive, affective, and evaluative.⁸ Sociological perspectives are based on precedent theories mentioned above. Combining Finney's model with Hiebert's theory on the dimension of culture, an integrated model of religious commitment is suggested as described in figure 3.

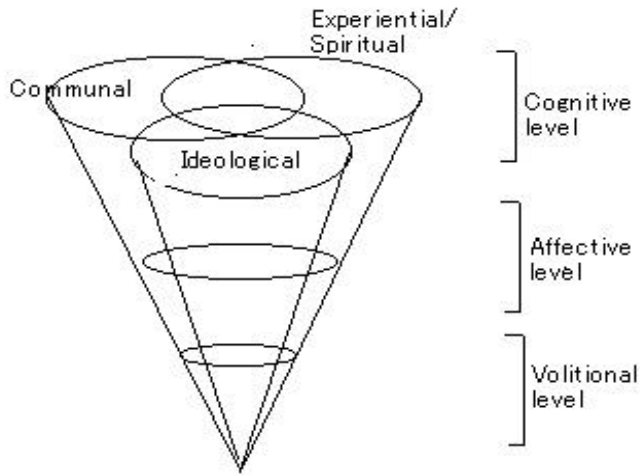


Figure 3. Factors of religious commitment

In summary, the ideational dimension pertains to the belief content religious adherents are expected to maintain. The personal religious experiential dimension pertains to the experience that leads adherents to a more intimate relationship with a supernatural being, including visions, dreams, miracles, a sense of God's presence, a sense of God's punishment, and answered prayers. The communal dimension includes the communal and

⁸Paul Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1985), 30-35.

personal fellowship of the adherents with members of the group. An integral part of the experience/spiritual factor, doctrinal knowledge, and community is ritual.

The affective level is understood to be the outcome of continuous input through three factors on a phenomenological level: ideational, personal religious experiential, and communal. The evaluative level is the consequence of affective affirmation of the validity of religion to the member. Religious commitment, as a volitional act of faith, is the consequence manifested in the evaluative level of human religiosity.

PROCESS OF RELIGIOUS COMMITMENT

Commitment, in its nature, is not a static phenomenon but a process. In order to analyze the religious commitment of the believers, analysis according to the time line is essential.

Cognitive Approach to Religious Commitment

Alan Tippett presents the schematization of religious conversion constructed from the study on group conversion in the mission field. Although he researched on group conversion, his schematization seems applicable to an individual case, as he asserts that group conversion is a multi-individual experience.⁹ Tippett's process of conversion consists of four periods and three points as described in Figure 4.

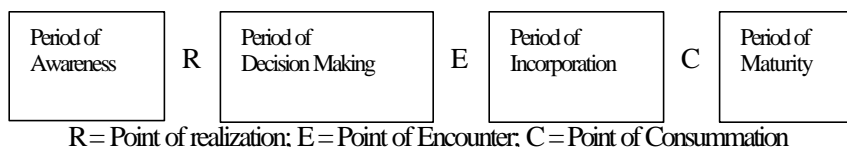


Figure 4. Conversion process (by Alan Tippett)

The first step is the period of awareness. People in a non-Christian tradition and atmosphere first need time to observe Christians in order to build trust in Christianity before becoming seekers. The most common ways to build trust in Christianity are, as Tippett calls, “natural environments” such as Christian education or other social services. Negative factors include “external pressures,” such as economic and political crises, and “internal crises” of individual life, such as loss of loved ones and failure in work. These negative factors contribute to the awareness of and interest in the new meaning system.¹⁰

⁹ Alan Tippett, “The Cultural Anthropology of Conversion,” in *Handbook of Religious Conversion*, ed. Newton Malony and Samuel Southard (Birmingham, Alabama: Religious Education Press, 1992), 192-208.

¹⁰ Meredith McGuire, *Religion: The Social Context* (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1992), 71.

As seekers increase their knowledge and understanding of Christianity, they reach the point of realization that the prior vague awareness suddenly becomes meaningful. This point of realization terminates the period of awareness and brings them to the period of decision making. In the decision-making period, Tippett states that people can respond to Christianity in three ways: total acceptance, acceptance with modification, and rejection.¹¹ In the area where socio-cultural structure is closely interwoven with the traditional religions, becoming Christian may involve mental and spiritual separation from the family and the society. In such contexts, conversion often requires the new believer's total acceptance of and total commitment to Christianity.

Their decision to accept Christianity is usually tested by confrontation of the old value and systems. Tippett calls this the "point of encounter." He asserts that the manifest form of encounter such as destroying idols is clearly related to the subsequent stability of the new religion.¹² In pagan context where rituals play significant roles in the society, the point of encounter usually falls on the decision of baptism or on the occasion that the converts were expected to participate in the traditional rites. The most typical rites, for example, are ancestral veneration and local festivals in which family members or society demands the members to be participants. When the new converts choose to be baptized and refuse the traditional rites, they are ceremonially separated from the old context.

After making a choice to deny the old system, the convert begins to be incorporated into the new system. Tippett does not discuss this period enough. However, the period of incorporation is very important for establishing a new identity in a new community for those who have lost their primary belonging by becoming a Christian. By increasing knowledge and understanding of Christianity, and practicing faith in rituals and other activities, the convert learns the meaning of being a member of a church.

The sixth stage is a "point of consummation." Tippett identifies this with the personal experience of the work of the Holy Spirit within the convert.¹³ He believes that the "point of consummation" is a distinctive experience of the convert similar to the second conversion that the Wesleyan school describes. Tippett contrasts; the first conversion is acceptance of Christianity as a system whereas the second conversion is related more to personal experience of the converts that creates positive assurance of new birth, which the Wesleyan school calls a second conversion. In a pagan society, new converts usually experience this stage in two ways. Those who became Christians through "natural environment" may experience the so-called second conversion after their communal affiliation. Those who were converted through radical change usually experience the personal level encounter with God before their baptism or other forms of confession. For the latter, the point of consummation, therefore, is often the time of confirming their new identity as Christians after their faith trial.

The last stage of Tippett's schematization is an open-ended "period of maturity." He differentiates "incorporation" from "growth in faith" and emphasizes the importance of qualitative growth of the converts, both spiritually and socially, after their

¹¹Kiyoko Takeda categorizes the Japanese way of accepting Christianity in more detail in her book, *Dochaku to Haikyō* (Indigenization and Apostasy). She analyzes that there are five types of Japanese ways to accept Christianity: burying style, isolation style, encounter style, grafting style, indigenization style, and apostasy style (Takeda, 1967).

¹²Tippett, 200.

¹³Ibid., 205.

incorporation into Christianity. This is applicable for the converts who live in a continuous challenge from an antagonistic society, as well as the internal challenge of old worldview. Christian ministry should aim for the change of the converts' worldview, as well as their life style.

Sociological Approach to Religious Commitment

Meredith McGuire also views conversion as a process.

Conversion is a resolution of the individual's problems with former meaning systems and former self, but conversion alone is not sufficient to resolve new problems. The group's commitment processes help prevent the individual's doubts and new problems from undermining the conversion. The final result of the entire conversion process is not merely creating new members but creating members who will invest themselves in what the group is believing and doing. Commitment processes build plausibility structures for the group's worldview and way of life.¹⁴

She approaches the commitment process from the communal point of view, which begins with the initial contact of the new converts with the group to the stage of recommitment. She describes the process of conversion with four stages. (1) Predisposition denotes personal and situational factors, which predisposes people to conversion by making them aware of the extent to which their prior meaning system seems inadequate to explain or give meaning to experiences and events. The Japanese monistic worldview, which represents most pagan worldviews, has a limitation in providing absolute meaning for life experiences and events, due to its lack of absolute standard. Christianity, in such context, seems either to be a strange system to reject or a new system that provides hope for a new life. Deprivation in life can cause people to search for a new meaning system.¹⁵ (2) Initial interaction is the occasion in which people are drawn to a new group. Pre-existing networks often account for the plausibility of the beliefs and the attractiveness of belonging. In oriental society where human relationship is more group-oriented than that of the West, the probability for the contribution of pre-existing networks seems higher. Research in Japan shows that 53.7 percent of interviewees had close relationships with church members before their conversion.¹⁶ In a group-oriented society, strong human ties with Christians can provide opportunities for the new members to come to church. At the same time, human ties in the old networks function persistently to hold them back in the old human ties. McGuire sees the commitment process as the process of withdrawal from rival allegiance. (3) The resocializing stage is a gradual process of the recruit's shaping his identity and worldview to become consistent with those considered appropriate by the group. McGuire discusses

¹⁴McGuire, 81.

¹⁵William Sims Bainbridge holds that among two types of deprivation—absolute deprivation and relative deprivation—the latter plays a greater role in the conversion of the religious members.

¹⁶Lutheran World Federation, Office of Communication. *How Japanese Become Christians: Final Report of the Baptism Motivation Survey of 1973-1974*. A Reader for Wheaton Extension Education, for the course of Audience Psychology (Wheaton, Illinois: Wheaton Graduate School, n.d.), 13.

that the commitment is produced both through withdrawal from the competing allegiances and more involvement in the group. This enhances the sense of belonging to the new members. She asserts, "Activities that draw the member into the fellowship and consciousness of the larger group promote both the cohesion of the group and the commitment of individual members. These commitment mechanisms make belonging to the group an emotionally satisfying experience."¹⁷

(4) Symbolization is the affirmation of the convert to the new identity by some symbolic meaning or rituals. This leads the convert to the new process of commitment. For common Japanese people who are religiously tied to one another through ritual participation, confessing Christianity ritually means the complete separation from the old traditional ties. Baptism, therefore, does not imply the convert's inner change, but the religious identification of the converts to Christianity. This often pertains to the spiritual and social isolation from the old family and human ties. Stages three and four can occur in the opposite order or interchangeably depending upon the individual. (5) The crisis stage is the time the new converts think of disengagement from the new group. Disengagement is often the result of a breakdown or diminished effectiveness of the plausibility structure that supports the religious groups' beliefs and practices. One study reports that this breakdown of plausibility resulted from such factors as reduced isolation from the outside world; competing commitment, such as intimate dyadic relationships within the group or family links outside the group; lack of movement success; and apparent discrepancies between leaders' words and actions.¹⁸ Japanese Christians who live in the cob-web of Japanism often face a crisis of commitment in the stronger challenges to their commitment.¹⁹

FACTORS FOR RELIGIOUS COMMITMENT

While factors **of** religious commitment focused on the internal or immediate experience of the convert, factors **for** religious commitment focused on external and contextual factors that might influence the commitment. Below are some of the most common features among factors for religious commitment.

Family Influence

Few scholars of religion doubt the family's influence on the child's religious commitment. Parents' religious attitudes, behavior, and even language are immediately transmitted to the child. Freudian psychologists provide the foundation for the psychoanalytical approach to religious commitment. They believe children's symbiotic union with the mother serves as the basis for an evolving sense of trust, acceptance, and security. W. W. Meissner asserts that this may be distilled into the people's experience

¹⁷McGuire, 84.

¹⁸Stuart A. Wright, *Leaving Cults: The Dynamics of Defection* (Washington, D.C.: Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, Monograph Series, 1987).

¹⁹Peter Landell calls the Japanism the web of interconnection of worldview assumptions, which seem to cause the Japanese to be resistant to the Gospel. See *Missiology* 23, no. 4 (1995): 401-12.

with their relationship to God.²⁰ He explains that the origin of the ego-ideal is due to identification with people whom the child loves, admires, or fears. Parents are the first objects of identification. Later, teachers, youth group leaders, adventure heroes, and attractive age-mates become objects of identifications for the child. The Freudians believe the parental influence continues into the adult stage; however, the ego-ideal of the adult is a composite of all identifications made.²¹ Although Freud rightly focuses on the parental influence on the children's view of God, his view that religion originated from the Oedipus complex, which comes out of a projection-symbolization of the father-child relationship, is criticized as an overemphasis on the infantile origins of religious development. M. W. Acklin says, "In Freudian view, God is merely a projection of the father-child relationship, and lacks the reality and historicity of God."²² The family is ultimately the model of both religious relationships and values.²³ Hoge and Petrillo discuss that the child's first imaginings of God are set in the image of his or her parents.²⁴ Potvin and Sloane reported that adolescent religion is an extension of parental religion; in about 95% of the cases there is co-construction of religion with the parents.²⁵ Dudley and Dudley found persisting parental influence upon children's religious values. They discovered that the mother's values were greater predictors of the values of youth than were the values of the fathers.²⁶

Earlier Experience

Social influence upon younger children in their values and religiousness is not questioned, as discussed above. Because the Japanese children in a pagan society have less opportunity to be brought up in a Christian atmosphere, early encounters with Christianity become a significant factor upon Japanese conversion and their development of commitment to Christianity. Chie Nakane, in her discussion of human relationship in Japan, points out that the earliness of encounter, length of contact, and strength of relationship determine the social influence on relationship.²⁷ This seems applicable to the cultural and religious situation in Japanese human relationship. Christian education, in this regard, is important both in church and in mission schools, because it is generally respected as good educational method by many non-believing Japanese parents.

Group Ties and Inner Friendship Ties

Douglas McGaw studied the communal effect in religious commitment by comparing two congregations within the same denomination: one with a strong "charismatic" emphasis and the other with more inclination toward "mainline"

²⁰W. W. Meissner, *Psychoanalysis and Religious Experience* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 2:400-405.

²¹Asa, 98.

²²M. W. Acklin, "Adult Maturation Processes and Facilitating Environment," *Journal of Religion and Health* 25 (1986): 198-206.

²³Asa, 1.

²⁴D. R. Hoge and G. H. Petrillo, "Youth and the Church," *Religious Education* 74 (1979): 305-13.

²⁵R. H. Potvin and D. M. Sloane, "Parental Control, Age and Religious Practice," *Review of Religious Research* 27 (1985): 3-14.

²⁶Donald M. Dudley and Margaret G. Dudley, "Transmission of Religious Values from Parents to Adolescents," *Review of Religious Research* 28, no. 1 (1986): 3-5.

²⁷Chie Nakane, *タテ社会の人間構造* (Tateshakai no Ningen Kouzou: Human Relationship in a Vertical Society), (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1967), 54-55.

denominations. He found that the charismatic congregation had a stronger commitment than the other. McGaw explained that the charismatic congregation was effective in providing meaning and belonging to its members through stronger closure, strictness, consensus on authority, and cohesion. These qualities seemed to be the primary reasons for the stronger commitment of the members. He concluded that belonging plays a more central role than is usually suggested in the literature.²⁸

The significance of the communal factor in religious commitment is addressed by a number of other scholars. Daniel Olson studies the relationship between inner friendship ties and commitment of affiliates and finds that desire for church friendships plays an important role in the church attendance decisions of churchgoers.²⁹ Cornwall notes the communal effects on religious commitment in her study of relative influences of religious socialization and personal community relationships. She concluded that religious socialization is important not only because it provides a worldview, but because it channels individuals into personal communities and helps to sustain a particular worldview.³⁰

Sacrifice

The religious groups that gain greater commitment of members often ask the members to sacrifice something for the group. The kind and the degree of sacrifice vary from time and energy to money and property.³¹ Many of the fastest growing new religious groups in Japan often demand a high degree of commitment from the members. For example, the Unification Association, the Moonies, requires members' total surrender of their lives for the organization. In most cases, the members were required to leave their own family and live in an isolated community, contribute their possessions to the group, and be engaged in certain economic activities which exploit their life.³²

The extreme control of time management, economy, and language over the members are reported as methods of mind-control often used by these religious cults.³³ Another form of sacrifice is abstinence from certain kinds of food, alcohol, drugs, or sexual relationships. Celibacy practiced among Roman Catholic clergy and some neo-Pentecostals are examples of this kind. McGuire interprets these sacrifices as forms of mortification, the process of stripping the individual of vestiges of the "old self." She elucidates that these forms of abstinence are not because they are wrong in themselves, but because they support the old self.³⁴ McGuire views the whole process of conversion and commitment as a process of withdrawal from competing allegiances, in which sacrifice plays a significant role.

²⁸Douglas McGaw, "Commitment and Religious Community: A Comparison of a Charismatic and a Mainline Congregation," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 18, no. 2 (1979): 146-63.

²⁹Daniel Olson, "Church Friendships: Boon or Barrier to Church Growth?" *Journal for Scientific Study of Religion* 28, no. 4 (1989): 432-47.

³⁰Marie Cornwall, "The Social Bases of Religion: A Study of Factors Influencing Religious Belief and Commitment," *Review of Religious Research* 29 () :44-56.

³¹McGuire, 82-83.

³²Keiko Kawasaki, 統一教会の素顔: その洗脳の実態と対策 (Toitsu Kyokai no Sugao: Sono sennou no jittai to taisaku), (Tokyo: Kyobunkan, 1990), 46-81.

³³Masayuki Hiraoka, マインドコントロールとカルト宗教 (Mind control and cultic religion) in 神々の時代を問う (Kamigami no Jidai wo Tou), ed. Japan Luther Theological Seminary (Tokyo: Avaco, 1994), 59-104.

³⁴McGuire, 83.

Any degree of sacrifice enhances the individual's commitment because giving up something makes the goal seem more valuable. Sacrifice gives observable evidence to the group that the member is committed, and it "weeds out" members who are not sufficiently committed.³⁵

Cultic groups often encourage the recruits to mortify their old self in order to resocialize them in a new identity consistent with the group's beliefs and values. The psychological boundary created by the physical withdrawal from the world and the old self enhances the group ties.

BIBLICAL EXAMPLES: COMMITMENT IN JESUS' DISCIPLESHIP

The process of discipleship is a process of building commitment in disciples. Jesus disciplined the Twelve in a process which encompassed the three factors of religious commitment discussed above: ideational, experiential, and communal. Carl Wilson studied Jesus' model of building commitments in His disciples, and found seven stages by which Jesus proceeded to build commitment in His followers.³⁶ The first stage is "Repentance and Faith," in which Jesus and His predecessor, John the Baptist, called people to change their mind and accept a new life with God. In His initial ministry, Jesus primarily targeted the Jews who are well acquainted with the Law of Moses and Prophecy. The time and social situation of the Jews in those days ripened the people's expectation for the Messiah. Jesus began his ministry in such a situation (process: predisposition). Then, the followers were challenged to repent of the past sinful way of life and turn to God. As they accept and yield to God, they are willing to develop their commitment to their new life in God. In this case, John the Baptist and Jesus started with the ritual challenge in water baptism (process: conversion).

The second stage was "Enlightenment and Guidance." In this stage, Jesus helped His followers understand who He was in order for them to build a trust in Him as their leader (factor: ideational). At this time, He gathered a small group of people to Himself and disciplined them closely (factor: communal). Jesus identified Himself to the selected ones as the Messiah and He confirmed the claim by his miraculous deeds (factor: experiential). Followers, at this stage, still needed to learn more about Him as God who can forgive sins. The disciples did not just learn about Him, but witnessed His divine nature through His teaching (factor: ideational), deeds (factor: experiential), and interaction with others (factor: communal). Without understanding whom they are following, they could not develop their commitment to the object.

The third stage was "Ministry Training and Appreciation of Benefits." Jesus called the disciples to commit themselves publicly to minister with Him. "Come, follow me . . . and I will make you fishers of men" (Mark 1:17). Advanced commitment was required to those who go closer into the group (factor: communal). In the continued growth of the disciples, some form of ministry involvement of the disciples was needed.

³⁵Ibid., 82.

³⁶Carl Wilson, *With Christ in the School of Disciple Building: A Study of Christ's Method of Building Disciples* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), 79-167.

The more they were involved, the members' sense of belonging to the group became stronger both internally and outwardly (factor: experiential). Jesus continued to perform miracles to affirm His authority and ability as divine Son of God. The disciples continued to observe Jesus' miracles, and were reminded of the benefit of commitment (process: resocialization). During this stage, the disciples understand in their head what God has done for them, and they are better able to teach the truth of God to others.³⁷ Difficulties for developing commitment in this stage are in (1) the disciple's temptation to fear men, (2) resistance to change, (3) laziness and the problem of inertia, (4) being ignorant of how to share their faith and how to do tasks in the ministry, and (5) conflicting priorities.

The fourth stage is "Leadership Development and Government under God." This stage is a consequence of the previous stage of ministry training. Among those who followed and became disciples of Jesus, selected leaders were appointed by Jesus as the Apostles (stage: advanced commitment). They were with Jesus and witnessed what He did, and they were "the sent ones" which the Greek words for apostle denotes (factor: communal/experiential). While this small group of leaders went through training for leadership, Jesus continued ministering to the multitude in the principles of God's government over their lives to model the leadership. Jesus also demonstrated how to overcome opposition for the leaders. At this stage Jesus began facing the confrontation by religious leaders, his own family members; and many of the followers feared.

The fifth stage is "Reevaluation and Separation." This step is crucial for the disciples to remain committed. The eternal values are always in conflict with the temporal values in the disciples' minds. During the ministry training, the disciple began to understand the eternal value of the gospel (process: crisis). They saw Jesus demonstrating the power of heaven by the working of the Holy Spirit (factor: experiential). In the leadership stage, the disciples experienced the Holy Spirit's working through them as they cast out demons and healed and proclaimed the good news of the Kingdom (factor: experiential).³⁸ The early suspicions of the religious authorities had reached the point that they desired to dispose of Jesus (Matt 12:14; Mark 3:6). Jewish authority also won over the great masses of the crowd into the opposition against Jesus. This created a clear separation of the group and the world (process: crisis). To follow Jesus, from this stage, means separation from the world (factor: communal).

The sixth stage is "Participation and Delegation." As the internal organization develops, the disciples needed to learn how to participate and cooperate with other members. Jesus taught how to relate to the Jews, who challenged Jesus on taxes (Matt 17:24-2); to each other so that they might become more effective leaders (Mark 9:33-37); to people who worked independently (Luke 9:49,50); to false teachers within the church (Matt 18:6-10); to anyone who strayed from obedience to Christ and from Christian fellowship (Matt 18:12-35); to those who offend us repeatedly (Matt 18:21-22); to those who reject Christians out of jealousy (Luke 9:51-56); and to those who want to become disciples (Matt 8:19-22; Luke 9:57-62). Throughout this stage, Jesus equipped the disciples to cooperate in unity so that they could face the external and internal problems. Jesus appointed the seventy new apostles at this stage. The appointment of the new disciples was possible only after the internal training was given to the old members (factor: communal/experiential).

³⁷ Ibid, 110.

³⁸ Ibid, 130.

The seventh stage is “Exchanged Life and Worldwide Challenge.” In this last stage, all the previous training is integrated (factors: integrated). The last stage of discipleship does not mean that they became perfect Christians. Rather, they came to the point that they could know why they failed, why they were depressed, why they sinned, and how to be restored to the state of joy. In order to come to this stage, they needed to learn whether they should trust in the flesh or in the power of the Spirit of God. The crucifixion of Jesus shattered the disciples’ confidence and hope in the fleshly victory. Through His death, resurrection, ascension, and the Pentecost experience, the disciples learned that their hope was not in the flesh, but in the Holy Spirit. Thus, empowered by the divine Spirit on the day of Pentecost, the disciples were sent out with the challenge to reach the world.

CONCLUSION

The study implies three challenges to Japanese Christian churches. One is the importance of refocusing on the process of commitment. Japanese Christians, living in a pagan society, tend to focus on conversions of the non-believers at the cost of the significance of nurturing new believers within the church. It is only when mature believers help the new to grow toward maturity that new Christians are ready to reach out to the non-believers. Japanese churches need to provide Sunday school for adults in which they can study and be nurtured by the Christian fellowship. One of the best ways for nurturing the new believers or seekers is to provide mentors for them. The mentors, who must be spiritually mature, can help the new members to learn about faith in practical living and grow in their care.

The second challenge is the importance of refreshing the routine ritual in Japanese churches. Ritual is an integral part of the commitment factors (Figure 1). The Sunday service and Holy Communion can become a highly ritualistic routine without the meaning being understood by the participants. While acknowledging the importance of regularity in rituals, a new liturgy or a new way of conducting rituals would be desirable for refreshing the participants’ attitude toward the ritual and toward God who is the center of the rituals.

The third challenge of the study is the importance of a wholistic approach in ministry. Evangelical Christians are inclined to regard the hermeneutical exercise as the way to Christian spiritual maturity.³⁹ Christians grow through learning cognitively, experiencing God’s presence and power in their lives, and in the fellowship and spiritual support of the members of the church. The critical attitude toward the Christian experience, because of the fear of extreme charismatic influence, and the neglect of social involvement, because of the fear of extreme liberalism, can cause imbalances in the wholistic responsibility of the Christians.

Jesus laid the foundation of His Church in the disciples’ lives. His way of discipling was wholistic. Christians today also need to develop commitment in a wholistic way. God deserves the total commitment of all His followers in all parts of the world.

³⁹Mark S. Young, “Nurturing Spirituality in the Matrix of Human Development,” *Christian Education Journal* 10, no 2 (1990): 87-98. He categorizes spiritual orientation into three groups: escapist, activist, and rationalist. He identifies the Evangelical with the rationalist.