MISSIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF JAPANESE RELIGIOSITY

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Today the religious situation in Japan is quite complex. Not only the traditional religions of Shinto and Buddhism, but also more than 6000 minor religions compete in the country. Japan is rightly nicknamed, "department store of deities" or "rush hour of gods." A closer examination of this phenomena and analysis on this religious situation will give direction to Japanese mission today.

JAPANESE RELIGIOUS STRUCTURE

A statistic indicates that 65% of the Japanese people are without religious belief.[1] In another survey the religious population adds up almost double of the actual Japanese population.[2] This conflicting phenomenon reflects the multiple structures of the historical development of Japanese religions and their inclusive and pluralistic characteristics. Akira Idogaki depicts Japanese multiple participation of the religion with a two-layered triangle; family religion on the bottom and personal religion on the top (Figure 1). At the family level, entire households are registered in the local Buddhist temple as a social tradition.[3] At the personal level, individuals choose to affiliate with

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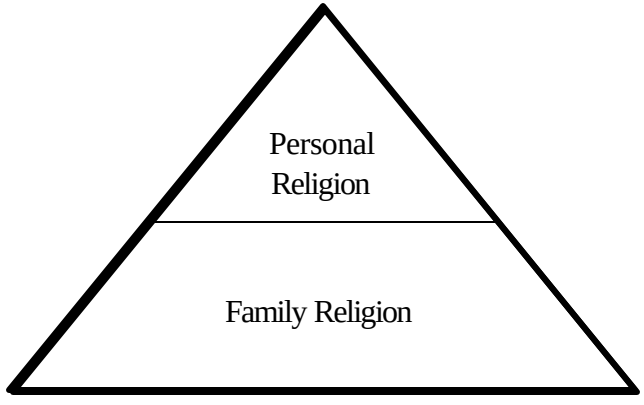
[1]Ian Reader, *Religion in Contemporary Japan* (Oahu, Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press. 1991), 5-10.

[2]Akira Idogaki, *Konokunide Shu ni Shitagau* (Following the Lord in this land) (Tokyo: Word of Life Press, 1985).

[3]This tradition traces back to 15th-century law called, "Terauke System," in which all Japanese were commanded to be members of local Buddhist temples. This law was ordered by Nobunaga Oda, one of the Shogun, to eliminate Christianity from the country.

certain religious groups. Often times, personal religion attracts members with beliefs and group ties, and the members' commitment to the organization is stronger. See Figure (1)[4] below:



Two-Layered Structure of Japanese Religion

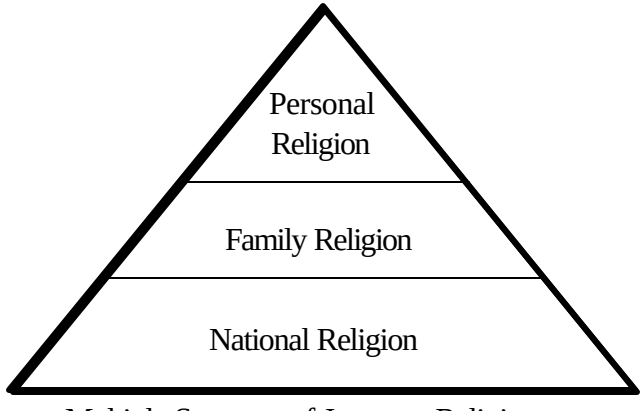
Figure (1)

However, there is another level of religious participation among Japanese people: the national level of religion. At this level, all the Japanese are considered to be Shintoists. Just as all Jewish persons born in the nation are regarded as members of the religious group of Judaism, all born in Japan are regarded as Shintoists. The religion at the national level and the family level is often highly ritualistic, even though the meaning of the rituals are not often understood nor questioned by the participants. They are not concerned with doctrine and organization. In this sense, the Shinto is more than a religion, but rather a worldview. To the contrary, personal religions are often more doctrinally structured. Representatives of this category are Christianity and New Religions. Christianity, for example, has systematized doctrines and an organization, which is quite structured. The same pattern is observed also in Shin Shukyo (New Religions) such as Soka Gakkai and

[4]Idogaki, 37.

Tenrikyo.[5] The organizational tie of the lower two levels differs from that of the personal level. While the latter creates members' commitment to the organization and their agreement with the doctrine that results in stronger group ties, the household level and the national level do not maintain doctrine or organizational structure. Therefore, at the two lower levels, geographic and household boundaries play the role of framework for the religious organization. This implies that religions at these levels demand the same commitment from their members as their families demand. This is one of the difficulties for Japanese to be converted on a personal level of religion.

People who do not choose to affiliate with the structured religious groups on the personal religion level are in the 65% of the population, who are supposedly without religious beliefs. They declare that they do not believe in any religion, while family temples and local shrines count their numbers as affiliates. This explains the far-exceeding religious population over actual population in Japan. A suggested diagram for the Japanese multiple structure of religiosity is as follows in Figure (2):



Multiple Structure of Japanese Religion

Figure (2)

[5]Missiologists point out that doctrines of New Religions are often modifications or mixtures of traditional religions.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

The religious complexity in Japan seems to have roots in its historical development. The pre-historic Japanese religion was proto-Shinto, which was a shamanistic practice with an animistic belief system. Archaeological discovery suggests that the primary object of worship in proto-Shinto was a sun-goddess, which might be identical with Amaterasu Omikami (Great God who shines the whole heaven), the ancestral deity of the emperor.[6] Daoism and Confucianism arrived before Buddhism that came in the sixth century AD. As Buddhism grew more influential in Japan, Shintoism needed to develop its doctrinal and organizational structure as a counterpart to Buddhism. Kojiki and Nihonshoki were produced as Shinto canon. Due to the political purpose of the books, their contents are quite mythical in order to deify the emperor. In the course of Shinto development, in the 19th and 20th centuries, another attempt to revive Shintoism occurred against Christian expansion. In this latter Shinto revival, the central figure of the movement, Atsutane Hirata, is known to have plagiarized Christian theology for his books of Shinto theology.[7]

Prior to the Roman Catholic missionary, Francis Xavier, who is often known as the first missionary to Japan, there were three Nestorian missionaries who arrived in AD 736 according to Zoku Nihon Shoki. Although their historical record as Nestorians is limited, their influence upon society was observed in different forms.[8]

Catholic mission first arrived at Japan in 1549. Their mission in its initial stage was successful. Historical records indicate that within three

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[6]K. E. Kidder Jr., "Religious Life in Prehistoric Japan," in *Religion in the Japanese Experience: Sources and Interpretation*, ed. Byron H. Earhart (Belmont, Califronia: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1974), 186-89.

[7]His work on theology of Shinto, *Honkyo Gaihen*, includes a great portion of plagiarism from *Sanzan Rongakki*, a work of the Catholic missionary, Aleni, in China.

[8]Nestorian influence is reported about Empress Komyo (AD 701-60). She was taught by the Nestorian missionary, Alopen (Abraham), and became a believer. She established Hiden In, the first orphanage or shelter for needy people, and Seyaku In, a free pharmacy for the poor. The work and influence of the Nestorians in Japan should be further researched.

decades, the number of churches grew to 250, and the number of communicants became 150,000. It reached a peak of half a million by 1615.[9] However, Catholics faced severe persecution under the Tokugawa Shogunate for more than 250 years. The reason for the persecutions were extrapolated in three points: the rapid growth of Catholicism threatened the existing authority, the Christian teaching of equality for all humans harmed the Tokugawa political policy for ruling the country through social hierarchy, and the conflicts among the Catholic orders created a fear of colonization among the rulers. Although the persecution was thorough and a number of members were either murdered or proselytized, some Catholic believers preserved their faith as hidden or disguised believers.

Protestant mission arrived when the country reopened to the West in the nineteenth century. As the country went through the Meiji Restoration, "takafuda" (a board of government edicts which declared the banning of Christianity) was removed from the local villages. Various denominations sent missionaries into the potential mission field. At first, the result of their mission was small. Only fifteen baptisms were reported in the first fifteen years. Later, the missions that incorporated educational ministries were successful and there was a Christian revival in several locations.[10] However, the movement was limited to the upper middle class, and Christianity became a religion for the intelligent. This was followed by a hundred-year period of the pendulum swinging between "internationalism", the openness toward Christianity, and "nationalism," the resistance to Christianity.

While the Japanese people accommodated continental religions such as Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism, and while Roman Catholicism spread to the extent that it became a threat to the authorities, Protestant Christianity had difficulty in rooting in the soil. The reasons seem to be in its emphasis on the Scriptures and doctrine, strict denial of ancestor worship and the fundamental worldview

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[9]Gordon H. Chapman, "Japan: A Brief Christian History," in *The Church in Asia*, ed. Donald Hoke (Chicago: Moody Bible Institute, 1975), 303-27.

[10]The Christian revival in Japanese history is analyzed from a sociological point of view in Tetsunao Yamamori, *Church Growth in Japan* (Pasadena, California: William Carey Library, 1974).

differences between Japanese religiosity and Christianity. Today, the protestant churches are still struggling to grow.

In the uprootedness of social change after the Meiji Restoration, various new religions emerged. One of the largest groups was Soka Gakkai. And in wartime, another kind of new religion emerged to meet the needs of people. Since the middle of the seventies, a period which sociologists regularly define as the outset of the postmodern era in Japan, "Neo-New Religions," represented by the Aum Shinri Cult, blossomed.

The complexity of Japanese religiosity is also in the interchangeability of the religious phases among these religious traditions developed in the course of Japanese history. Japanese values and customs are widely derived from all these traditions, and influence the attitude toward religious challenges, especially toward the religions that emphasize the exclusiveness of the truth; Protestant Christianity is one of them.

DOCTRINAL CHARACTERISTICS

Although a variety of Japanese religious traditions have been developed and remain today, there is an archetype of Japanese religiosity that persists throughout the stages of Japanese history. Isaiah Ben Dasan calls it, "Nihonkyo" [Japanism].[11] Masao Maruyama relates it to a musical term, "*Basso Ostinato*" [obstinate base], which describes a base sound that repeats under the main theme and influences the theme from below.[12] Maruyama describes Japanese characteristics that usually do not appear on the surface, but influence the culture from beneath. And most sociologists and missiologists agree that this archetype of Japanese culture is, in its nature, Shintoistic.[13] Paul Clark

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[11]Isaiah Ben Dasan, *The Japanese and the Jew*, trans. Richard L. Gage (New York: Weatherhill, 1972).

[12]Masao Maruyama, "Genkei, kosou, shitsuyou teion" (Archetype, old layers, Basso Ostinato), in *Nihon Bunka no Kakureta Kata* (Archetype of Japanese culture), ed. Kiyoko Takeda (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1991), 91-158.

[13]Along with Maruyama, *idem*, Shinichi Kato, "Nihon shakai, bunka no kihonteki tokucho (Basic characteristics of Japanese society and culture in Japan)," in *Nihon no bunka no kakureta kata* (Archetype of Japanese culture), ed. Kiyoko Takeda (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1991), 91-151; Peter Lundell, "Behind Japan's resistant web:

explains:

> True Japan is the Japan of the Folk-Shinto-Amaterasu tradition. The power of myth to organize a people is as evident as the ancient Greeks. ..A historiography of Japanese religion demonstrates that the key to understanding the Japanese mind, in view of her many religious traditions is to recognize that Japan has lived by one basic tradition from prehistoric times. ..The interaction with other religious traditions has only revealed a desire for definition and enhancement of the tradition.[14]

Peter Lundell also writes, "If Nihonkyo [Japanism] has a theology, it is likely Shinto tradition of the sun goddess Amaterasu, who is the mythological creator of Japan and the ultimate ancestor of the emperor."[15] Hisakazu Inagaki views Japanism as an animistic belief, and points out that the Japanese worldview classifies all the entities in the universe into one category. God is viewed within and along a continuum of humans, animals, plants and non-living things. God, the absolute transcendent Creator, is not recognized. Inagaki concludes, "Japanism, in its essence, is a magico-shamanistic practice and ancestor worship."[16]

The animistic, henotheistic and shamanistic Japanism entails relativism in its value system and pluralism in religiosity.[17] As it claims eight million gods, the definition and the concept of *kami* (gods or God) is far from Christian. A famous Shinto scholar in the 18th century, Norinaga Motoori, defines the Shinto concept of *kami* as "whatever extraordinary, whatever superior, and whatever awesome, we call them *kami*."[18] Kitaro Nishida, a Japanese philosopher, represents the Shinto view of *kami* with a pantheistic structure:

> *Kami* is a substance of the whole universe. ..I do not see God as a creator outside of

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understanding the problem of Nihonkyo," *Missiology: An International Review of Mission* 13 (October 1995): 401-412; Hisakazu Inagaki, "Nihon bunka no sekaikan (Worldview of Japanese culture)," in *Kamino keiji to nihonjin no shukyo ishiki: Gendai ni okeru senkyo no setten wo motomete* (God's revelation and Japanese religiosity: seeking for the missiological contact point in contemporary Japan), ed. Susumu Uda (Tokyo: Inochi no Kotobasha, 1986), 135-217, hold this view.

[14]Paul Clark, "Understanding the Resistance of Japan to Christianity," *Japan Harvest* 36 (1986): 27-30.

[15]Lundell, 401-12.

[16]Inagaki, 155.

[17]Harold Netland, "Developing a Biblical Worldview in Contemporary Japan," *Japan Harvest* 36 (1986): 21-25.

[18]Norinaga Motoori, *Kojikiden 3 no maki.* Quoted in Inagaki, 152.

> the universe, but *kami* is a foundation of this existence. The relationship between God and the universe is not like the relationship between artist and the art, but that of between substance and phenomenon. Universe is not a masterpiece of *kami*, but a manifestation of God.[19]

Thus, due to the lack of the concept of the absolute, Japanism has neither a core nor a unifying grid to systematize its beliefs. Consequently, unlike Christianity, it develops no complete system of belief. In this sense, Japanism is a mere mosaic of ancient myths and practices of ancestor rites. Thus, the lack of doctrinal backbone might have contributed to the openness to foreign religions in the course of Japanese history.

Japanism also demonstrates a syncretistic nature. When Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism came to Japan, they were transformed into forms acceptable to the Japanese culture. Ichiro Hori elucidates this syncretistic nature of Japanism:

> These borrowed ethical, magical, and religious elements were blended, reinterpreted, and resystematized into Japanese religion as one entity, through the processes of cultural contact and interchange with the indigenous beliefs, rituals, and customs of primitive Shinto. They intermingled so completely that they lost their individual identities, and they have actually played the traditional roles of state religion and /or family religion.[20]

The Japanese accommodated Buddhism, a structured religion with systematic doctrines, only by modifying the main philosophical doctrines. When Mahayana Buddhism was brought to Japan, it was accepted primarily among the high caste due to the philosophical nature of the teaching. In the Kamakura era, however, various indigenous forms of Buddhism with simplified teaching were popularized among common people. Particularly, modified Buddhist teaching regarding life after death was acceptable to the Japanese who valued ancestor veneration. Later, the idea of *Honchi Suijaku* (original place and appearance) was created to justify the authority of the Shinto deity, *kami*, in the system of Buddhism.[21]

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[19]Kitaro Nishida quoted in Nobuji Horikoshi, *Nihonjin no kokoro to Kirisutokyo* (The Japanese mind and Christianity) (Tokyo: Word of Life Press, 1986), 47. (my own translation).

[20]Ichiro Hori, *Folk Religion in Japan*: *Continuity and Change*, ed. Joseph Kitagawa and Alan L. Miller (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 10.

[21]Nobuo Watanabe, *Kirisutokyo to Nihon no Shukyo* (Christianity and Japanese

Understanding the complexity of Japanese religiosity, Masatoshi Doi concludes that Japanese mentality is pragmatic rather than philosophical, synthetic rather than analytical, syncretistic rather than monolithic, relativistic rather than absolutistic, and emotional and intuitive rather than rationalistic.[22] As Doi describes Japanese religiosity in its depth and surface, he does not emphasize the ideational dimension of religion. When the ideational framework is absent, the religious practice eventually becomes superficial and formal.

Personal Religious Experience

The lack of emphasis on doctrine in Japanese religiosity implies that its emphasis lies on the experiential aspect of religiosity. Transcendent values and the deeper questions of life seem not to attract the common Japanese. Their interest revolves around the everyday-life benefits bestowed by deities. Religions in Japan, therefore, are often evaluated in pragmatic ways. The salvation that they seek is a solution for their life struggles or is simply material gain. Thus, the magico-religious orientation is related to the pragmatic attitude toward religions among Japanese. A famous Japanese saying, "turn to gods in times of trouble," expresses this orientation. Most Japanese seek after deities mainly for security, prosperity and success, for better life partners, restoration of human relationships, healing from sickness and so forth, and not for salvation of the souls.

Traditionally, these religious experiences are mediated by spiritual practitioners. They guide clients in their significant decisions or difficulties in their lives. Among these are "religious calendars," zodiacs, geomancy, fortune telling, horoscopes, and palm reading. These practices are common even among those who claim to be atheists. A statistic shows that sixty percent of respondents in their twenties believe in the existence of spirits, and fifty-four percent believe in fortune telling, while seventy-four percent of respondents in another statistic claim to have no interest in religion. This indicates that Japanese religiosity is more present-world oriented, and is more

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religion) (Tokyo: New Life Shuppan, 1983), 61.

[22]Masatoshi Doi, "Religion and social structure of Japan," *Japanese Religions* 5 (1967): 48-62.

focused upon experience than doctrine.[23] Without knowing the religious roots, Japanese people are involved in various magico-religious practices.

Thus, in the midst of technological advancement, the Japanese retain a magico-religious orientation in the various aspects of life today. There are more than 180,000 religious organizations apart from the non-organized religious groups that number above 5,100.[24] From birth to death, the average Japanese life is full of religious activities to observe. Although a great portion of them is primitive religious practice, they do not desert them. A number of Japanese companies with high technology have a shrine of the guardian deity in their buildings. The emphasis on religious experience over doctrine and belief might contribute to this preservation of religiosity.

COMMUNAL CHARACTERISTICS

Most Japanologists agree that Japanese religiosity is intensively human-centered and community-oriented. The lack of doctrinal structure, as mentioned above, explains this tendency. People in rice-planting culture need cooperation, and thus religions function as a spiritual bond in such communities. Natural religions, therefore, have this tendency to emphasize the human bond.

The communal character of Japanese religions is also often related to the lack of self-identity in the Japanese mind. Individual identity in Japan is often absorbed into the group identity. The individual is not an independent being or a counterpart of the group, but is fused tightly into a group identity. The group produces values and makes decisions and controls the choices and lives of the individual members.

Chie Nakane views this characteristic of Japanese human relationship in terms of "frame" in contrast with "attribute-oriented human relationship."[25] She explains the term "frame" as a name of a

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[23]Horikoshi, 89-107.

[24]This number is from a report of Japan's Cultural Ministry Department cited in Tateo Nishijima, *Shinshukyo no Kamigami* (Gods in new religions) (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1988), 62.

[25]Nakane's theory is described in detail in my article, "Group Orientation in Japan: Analysis and Application to Missions," *Torch Trinity Journal* 4 (November 2001): 34-

company suggesting that in a frame-oriented society, people are concerned with which company the person belongs to, regardless of which position he/she holds in the company. Whereas in an attribute-oriented society, people are concerned with which position or skills the person holds regardless of the company. Nakane elaborates the characteristics of a frame-oriented society; while rules and covenants connect people in attribute-oriented relationships, the structure or framework of the relationship itself binds people in frame-oriented relationships. Because the boundary connects the members, the sense of "insiders verses outsiders" plays a predominant role in relationships. Because frame-oriented relationships require the involvement of the total person, the relationships among the members within the frame become heavily emotional. Whether the person is favorable or not becomes the criterion for the evaluation of the person. Moreover, the frame-oriented relationship allows a person to have only one primary frame to which he belongs. And the primary frame demands total involvement and commitment of the members to the group.

Bin Kimura, a psychiatrist, approaches the issue of self-identity of the Japanese people from a pathological point of view. He points out that the Japanese individual identify exists between persons. In other words, the Japanese recognize the self only when they encounter "unself." Kimura asserts that the force existing between persons controls the relationship. This relationship, Kimura believes, is from the lack of the concept of the Absolute in the Japanese worldview. Because of the lack of a standard to see themselves as individual beings, the Japanese depend on the force that exists "between people" as the standard to determine their identity. Kimura elucidates:

> Just like God is the absolute reality for Christians, the reality of the "place between persons" for Japanese is the reality that decides the ultimate human existence and behavior. Behind all the Japanese phenomena in human relationships, there exists this "place between persons."[26]

This explains the significance of human relationships in Japanese religions. The communal tie exerts a strong influence on the Japanese

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[26]Bin Kimura, *Hito to hito no aida: Seishinbyorigakuteki Nihonjinron* (Between a person and another: a pathological analysis of Japanese society) (Tokyo: Kobunsha, 1987), 65.

mind, and often times it becomes a control over members. Sociologists observe that in Japan religions are tools for the enhancement of the social structure, rather than providing the answers to the ultimate questions of life. Robert Bellah articulates the religious character in Japan and its communal force saying, "whatever has happened in the realm of explicit ideology it remains true that the human nexus continue to be more powerful and salient in Japan than either ideas or individuals."[27]

RITUAL CHARACTERISTICS

Japanese formality in behavior is often compared with American casual-orientation. Although the meaning is not fully understood, the Japanese regard rituals and forms very important. Therefore, life is guided by rites of passage that are often based on Shintoist and Buddhist traditions. Primary ones are birth rites, seventh-fifth-third-year celebrations, initiation rites, and years of peril, mortuary rites, and calendrical rites. Among religious rites, the Bon festival, New Year celebration, and memorial days are popular ones in Japan. Though rituals play important roles in the lives of Japanese, both as individuals and as a community, the meaning of rituals are not always understood by common folk. A survey of university students indicates 75.8 percent of the respondents practiced calendrical rites out of the obligation for the social custom, and only a few were religiously motivated. Mark Mullins suspects that the lack of doctrinal understanding in Japanese religiosity is the primary reason for empty rituals. The human-centeredness of Japanese religiosity explains these phenomena from a sociological point of view.[28]

IMPLICATIONS FOR JAPANESE MISSION

Japanese religiosity was analyzed in terms of structure, historical development and characteristics. Based on this analysis, several

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[27]Robert Bellah, *Tokugawa Religion: The Cultural Roots of Modern Japan* (New York: Free Press, 1985), 594.

[28]Mark R. Mullins, Susumu Shimazono and Paul Swanson, *Religion and Society in Modern Japan* (Berkeley, California: Asian Humanities Press, 1993), 86.

suggestions for Japanese mission may be proposed.

Suggestions from Analysis of Religious Structure

In Japanese society, religion is regarded as the mental backbone of the family and community as well as the nation. When a Japanese person makes the decision to become a Christian, the person is breaking family and community ties, which are the primary "frames" to which the person is committed. Therefore, church should provide a reliable framework for the new convert to feel adequately supported. Paul, the apostle for the gentiles, convinces the gentle and Jewish Christians in the Early Church that all the followers of Christ are members of God's family (Gal 6:10; Eph 3:15; cf. Heb 2:11; 1 Pet 4:17). He further describes the new identity of believers as part of one body (Rom 12:4,5; 1 Cor 10:16; 1 Cor 12:12-27; Eph 2:16; 3:6; 4:4, 12, 16, 25; 5:23, 30; Col 1:18, 24; 3:15). Therefore, the communal support is crucial for the new converts to remain in faith. Secondly, while incorporating the new converts into the body of Christ, we also should reach out to their families. Utilizing the formal and ritualistic tendency of Japanese people, the church can provide ceremonial functions for outreach. On the occasion of Baptism, for example, the church can prepare a formal celebration and invite family members officially for the function as in a wedding ceremony. And as a follow-up, the church can provide various programs for the family members so that they can understand and enjoy Christian fellowship. In the Early Church such efforts can be observed in the book of Acts:

> They devoted themselves to the apostle's teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ..Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved (Acts 2:43-47).

In sum, the historical development of Japanese religiosity furnished by foreign religions explains the present complexity in Japanese religiosity. However, despite the Japanese accommodation of the foreign religions, Shintoism persisted as the underlying Japanese spirit throughout her history. It influenced the foreign religions from beneath and altered its teaching and structure into the Shintoistic forms before they could settle in the land. Buddhism was one example. As the

Buddhists in affiliation might have a Shintoistic worldview underneath, Christian converts can have Shintoistic perspectives in their worldview. Christian evangelism, therefore, needs to view conversion as a process of worldview change, and the church needs to help the new converts build up the Christian worldview. In order to do so, the church must provide post-conversion nurturing assistance. Considering that the worldview development for a person is achieved through the wholistic care of the people around him/her, the Christian task needs to be wholistic. Discipleship is an effective way in forming the Christian worldview in new converts for it is an effective approach for nurturing and building up Christians with a biblical worldview.

Suggestions from Analysis of Religious Characteristics

We found that the contemporary Japanese religious situation is a complex and syncretistic mixture of different religions imported for over two millennia. However, at its core lays a pantheistic, animistic, monistic, magical, and shamanistic worldview. In all these orientations, Japanese religiosity firmly denies the concept of the absolute being that is transcendent and eternal. The concept of God, therefore, if expressed in the Japanese Shinto *kami* may not be understood as the Absolute God. Rather, the perception can be associated with the Shintoistic view of gods, idols, or spirits. In Christian evangelism, defining *kami* clearly in biblical concepts is crucial for Japanese to be converted at their worldview level. Conversion should happen not only at their affiliation level, but also at the worldview level. The entire Old Testament records God's approach to fallen humanity. He revealed not only His existence, but also His various attributes, His nature, and His intension of saving humans. The Law given by God also functioned for the identification of God and His character, and humans as *imago dei.* The Israelites had known the term God for centuries, but they needed to understand God's attribute and character through His intervention and interaction. The Japanese church should refocus on post-baptismal ministries until new believers have a deeper understanding of God and the various aspects of His character.

Without the doctrinal support, Japanese religiosity heavily depends on its formal rituals to maintain the system. Whether the believers understand the meaning or not, the members participate in the ritual,

because participation provides the sense of belonging. Ritual in this orientation can become superficial and empty. Japanese Christians need to examine if they have retained this tendency in their ritual practices within the church, such as Holy Communion or baptismal ritual as well as Sunday services. In order to break the superficial routine of rituals, altering the form helps the members focus on the meaning. Often times, Japanese churches follow the denominational tradition in the forms of ritual and in the styles of worship. However, the Bible, a book written in the middle-eastern cultural milieu, records totally different forms of ritual and styles of worship than the "traditional service" today. Japanese religiosity demonstrates its pragmatic tendency. Faith is primarily for the physical/material benefit from *Kami*. The Bible, to the contrary, focuses on spiritual benefit. The Bible rather regards things in this world, whether good or bad, as temporal pleasure. Real benefit is always related to God. In the New Testament, *makapios* which renders happiness or blessedness appears 54 times. All of them do not have an immediate connection to worldly blessing. Instead, most of them are related to God, Kingdom, Word, Jesus Christ, and Spirit. Moreover, the term is often used with expressions of suffering, trials, and endurance. Christians are privileged to taste God's joy in the midst of the affliction in our lives. Prophets also knew the mystery of faith in God:

> I heard and my heart pounded, my lips quivered at the sound; decay crept into my bones, and my legs trembled. Yet I will wait patiently for the day of calamity to come on the nation invading us. Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stall, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior. The Sovereign Lord is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to go on the heights (Habakkuk 3:16-19).

CONCLUSION

The structure and characteristics of Japanese religiosity have been discussed and analyzed. The frame orientation of Japanese human relationships and the worldview difference of the Japanese religion from that of the biblical one can be a major hindrance for the Japanese understanding of God in the Bible. Creating the realm of the absolute is crucial for evangelism, and the worldview transformation from the pantheistic ones to the biblical one is necessary for the real conversion of Japanese people, even after Baptism. Providing the meaningful ritual

to Japanese believers and seekers is another crucial dimension of Japanese mission, since the Japanese are highly ritualistic. Considering all these factors for the mission to Japan, the most important and urgent task for the Japanese church is discipleship. The wholistic approach in discipleship heeds all the suggestions above. And in discipleship, Christians can fulfill the Great Commission of Jesus Christ to "go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." And his commission and promise are applicable to us today, for Jesus includes all the believers in his disciples, "And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matt 28:19, 20).

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