Education and Christianity in Japan

A Personal Account of Four Generations

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MY MATERNAL GRANDMOTHER was promised in marriage by her parents before her first birthday. After she married, her husband became a pastor, so grandmother became a pastor's wife. My mother married my father just after he finished his seminary studies in preparation for becoming a pastor. My husband is a pastor and next spring, my eldest daughter will marry a pastor. Four generations of women in my family have married pastors. When I reflect how, for almost a decade, these four generations of women were alive at the same time, I cannot help but feel God's guidance. My grandmother passed away never doubting her role as a pastor's wife, but my daughter sees the meaning of her work and her fiance's work differently and wants to maintain this difference after their marriage.

Japanese women have seen many changes in the past one hundred years. At the same time, there have also been many changes in Japanese education, most of which occurred as a result of our defeat in World War II and the subsequent reform of national laws. It is true that the new laws were not written solely by Japanese but with the assistance of the United States. Nevertheless, we may think of them as our own laws because they were realized only after tremendous sacrifice. With its high priority on individual human rights, the postwar legal system is often incompatible with Japanese society because of our "groupism," family system, and nationalism, which still places the emperor at the head of the nation. Further, the essential principles underlying the postwar legal system are being gradually eroded under the leadership of the Ministry of Education. Although some superficial changes can be seen in our society and educational system, in reality, the traditional way continues.

Even with Japan's phenomenal economic growth, it is still questionable whether or not Japan can be changed. The younger generation gives me a sense of hope, but I am afraid that most Japanese have been swallowed up by the pervasive nationalism at the heart of our hierarchical society. In the future, Japanese Christian groups must take up this struggle since Christianity's emphasis on individuality makes it impossible simply to coexist with the monolithic groupism of Japanese society.

Most Japanese mistakenly think that having the freedom to buy whatever they want is the same as having individual freedom of thought or belief. Their eyes have been blinded by affluence. In schools, children have similarly suffered the loss of their freedom of expression, and eventually, some of these children will become teachers who will in turn suppress the individualism of their students. Thus, this mentality of control is transmitted from generation to generation, even in Christian schools. These conditions lead us to question the role of Christian education and the meaning of Christian faith in the Japanese context.

Against this background of conformity and groupism, I will try to reflect on the

realities of Japanese education and the role of Christianity, using the experiences of four generations of my family.

MY GRANDPARENTS' ERA

My grandfather, a descendent of a samurai family, was born on the outskirts of Tokyo in 1866. When he turned fifteen, he moved to Tokyo to attend junior high school. Later, he went on to major in Chinese literature at three different colleges. After graduation, he became a primary school teacher. Soon after taking up his first teaching post, he met a Canadian Methodist missionary, was baptized, and decided to study theology in order to become a pastor.

In 1895, my grandmother was also born into a samurai family. She studied for four years at a primary school and was married, as arranged by her parents, at the age of sixteen. In those days, women had to follow their husband's religion. As her husband was a Christian, she too was baptized soon after their marriage. After she had given birth to eleven children, her husband was tragically killed in a train accident. Grandmother was only thirty-four years old at the time.

Japan's Ministry of Education was first established in 1871, when my grandfather was only five years old. It was founded on the following three principles: 1) education should be made available to all Japanese, regardless of social class; 2) the content of education should focus on practical skills that can be put to use after graduation; and 3) parents should pay school fees. Many Japanese farmers and others at the lower end of the economic spectrum could not afford to send their children to school. In fact, only thirty percent of all Japanese children attended school, and of that number, only fifteen percent were girls.

Just as my grandfather was entering his teens, the Ministry of Education transferred the responsibility for educational policy to local self-governing bodies. As a result of this shift, many private schools sprung up all around the country. Unfortunately, this period of local educational autonomy was very short-lived, and from 1880, the Ministry of Education enforced the teaching of a government-authorized curriculum. The following virtues are emphasized in a teachers' guidebook for 1881: 1) morality; 2) loyalty to the emperor; 3) love of nation; 4) honor of parents and superiors; 5) trust of friends; 6) kindness (*Shōgakkō kyōin kokoroe*, 1881). It was during this period that my grandfather became a primary school teacher.

In 1885 the first government cabinet system was organized, and the first Minister of Education selected. His goal was to educate children who would contribute to the economic success of Japan as it began to compete economically with other countries. To fulfill this nationalistic educational goal, popular movements among the Japanese people had to be suppressed (*Kokumin kyōiku kenkyūsho,* 1971, 80). Toward that end, teachers were trained in a strict militaristic fashion.

The first article of the 1889 Meiji Constitution states that Japan should be ruled by the emperor. In the following year, the Imperial Rescript on Education was promulgated. The rescript remained the centerpiece of Japanese educational thought until the end of World War II. It focused on the notion of a god-like emperor as the ultimate national value. It implied that Japanese culture and customs were superior to those of other nations. All Japanese children were taught to believe that Japan's greatest pride is its emperor system, with its 2,500-year history. A copy of the rescript was sent to all schools in Japan. From 1903 all Japanese school texts were published by the government. During this time of momentous change, my grandfather spent his boyhood, encountered Christianity for the first time, and became a pastor.

My grandfather had mastered the basic skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic, and had studied Chinese literature before his first contact with Christianity.

> One day as some people were preaching on the street about Christianity, a number of us stopped to listen. Suddenly, some samurai rushed in, attacked the speakers, broke some people's bones, and committed all kinds of violence. In spite of this, one of the speakers said, 'I do not mind if I am killed for Christ,' never moving from where he stood. The man was hit on the middle of his forehead with a wooden sandal (*geta*), and though the blood flowed down his face, he continued standing with his hands in his Japanese gown (*hakama*). I was also born into a samurai family, but I was awed by that Christian's behavior. From that time on, I began to understand more and more about the teachings of Christ. I will never forget that saint's appearance and voice as he said, 'I do not mind if I am killed for Christ.' I can still hear that saint's voice (Hatano, "Kami no koe o kiku," 1929, 10).

My grandfather's faith was clearly "a Christianity grafted onto the spirit of Bushido" (Iinuma 1991, 202). Yanaihara Tadao said, "It is not how we live but how we die that is at the heart of the spirit of Bushido" (Yanaihara 1964, 174). For those first Japanese Christians, the cross of Jesus represented the ultimate fulfillment of Bushido. Becoming a saint meant overcoming self-love for the love of Christ.

Grandfather's way of thinking fit in well with the emperor system. He said, "We Japanese bow our heads involuntarily when we stand in front of the emperor. We can feel God's invisible authority through the emperor. However, in Christianity we can see God through Jesus Christ!" (Hatano, "Kami o miru hō," 1929, 8). He saw no contradiction in viewing the emperor as the prime saint of Japan, and Jesus Christ as the saint of his faith.

Through his study of Chinese literature, my grandfather was also deeply influenced by Confucianism. For him, Jesus Christ represented the ultimate model because he proved his devotion to God by being willing to suffer the extreme torture of crucifixion. The center of Grandfather's faith was not the Jesus who stood with the poor and weak, but the Jesus who obediently followed God's absolute authority, even to death on the cross. Previously, he had pursued the way to sainthood through Confucianism, but now through the example of Jesus, he saw the way to achieve sainthood was by overcoming his self love.

My grandmother was born at a time when Japan's national government was tightening its control over its citizenry. The primary schools of her day taught that "if women stopped staying in the home and started working outside, it would be disastrous to our society" (Iketa 1982, 158). The Minister of Education announced, "There is a very urgent need to educate women to serve Japan." He also stressed the importance of teaching that "Japan is unique among all the countries in the world because it is divinely ordained" (158).

Since Grandmother was educated under the Confucian ethos at home and at school, she could never express her true thoughts or feelings. She was forced to accept all of life's circumstances with patience. While the Confucian way stressed sainthood for men, Japanese women were raised to be the slaves of those saintly men. I never once heard my grandmother express her own ideas or feelings. Even after her husband was killed in a train accident, leaving her with eleven children, she said, "His was a truly glorious death" (Hatano, "Junkyō no shi," 1929, 15). She had been taught from childhood that the expression of one's true feelings was contrary to the Confucian way, so she acted as if my grandfather were still

alive. She had been taught that a samurai's wife never wept, so she always praised her deceased husband and expressed her pride in the wonderful life he had led.

The Confucian ethic and the importance of the emperor were two concepts that were fused in my grandmother's mind. Under the weight of a silent and persevering devotion to her nation and children, Grandmother was robbed of her humanity. With its emphasis on self-denial, the Christianity of that era further reinforced this sacrificial oppression of Japanese women. Grandmother firmly believed that she was being a good Christian witness and pastor's wife by being an obedient Japanese woman. She followed her husband, accepted his religion, and unreservedly gave herself and her time to the church. I still wonder whether or not her Christian faith gave her any real joy. For Grandmother, keeping the faith meant being faithful to her husband, even to the point of refusing to remarry after his death.

MY PARENTS' ERA

My father was born in 1903 on Tokunoshima, an island located between Kyushu and Okinawa. One of his ancestors was a samurai sent from the domain of Shimazu to control Okinawa. However, after the nineteenth-century abolition of the traditional social classes, the wandering sword-wielding samurai suddenly lost their former privileged status. As my paternal grandfather owned many acres of land, the family initially did not have to worry about food. Later my grandfather began trading sugar and sweet potatoes, but when his business failed as a result of a growing recession, the family fell into poverty. Finally, after losing his mother when he was nine years old and his father when he was fourteen, my father supported his siblings by weaving. When he was seventeen his beloved grandfather died, so he decided to move to Tokyo where a friend had been living and studying. He worked while attending school, began going to church, and was eventually baptized. When he was twenty-three years old, he entered the Theology Department of Aoyama Gakuin University, becoming a pastor after graduation.

I remember my father as a kind man who expressed his feelings directly and showed much concern for others. He knew from his grandfather that he was descended from a samurai family, so in spite of his poverty, he was able to live with pride.

At the time he entered primary school, the national government was beginning to control the curriculum by publishing textbooks to be used in all Japanese schools. Those textbooks stressed that even the poor can become great if they study hard. Particular emphasis was given in the social ethics class to famous persons who had worked while attending school. Those stories gave him much encouragement because Father also had to work his way through school.

My father first encountered Christianity during his primary school days in Tokunoshima. When he attended a Christmas service with a friend, one of the women of the church sang a song with these words: "When you are poor, people forsake you, but here you have friends in God's love." He was deeply moved by that song. He knew that the words, "When you are poor, people forsake you," were true because the teachers in his school had ignored him or treated him harshly. When he attended the Christmas service the following year, he heard about the only true God—a great contrast to the eight million gods of Japan. He also heard that this loving and righteous God guides us all, even the poor, day and night. He was attracted by the words of one children's hymn: "God kindly leads even the sparrows sitting on the eaves." Though circumstances prevented him, from that time on he wanted to attend church (Hida 1978, 140).

After he moved to Tokyo, having been strongly influenced by Uchimura Kanzō, he was eventually baptized in a Methodist church. Like many young people of his generation, he was attracted to upper-class society, but he realized that the pursuit of spiritual greatness was more important to real human happiness than wealth, social status, or authority. He became a pastor. In contrast to the oppressive constraints that the emperor system imposed upon the thinking of Japanese people, Christianity seemed to offer some real freedom.

After becoming a pastor, he devoted himself to the study of theology and translated some books by Charles Wesley into Japanese. Unfortunately, the outbreak of war with the United States forced the cancellation of their publication. This experience greatly shocked and bitterly disappointed my father.

He was also harassed by the Japanese military police who came to our house to ask him questions about the comparisons between the Christian God and the emperor. Thus, the Peace Preservation Law had an incredibly disturbing effect on my father's pastoral work. In addition, because of their poverty, his wife became ill and their third child, my younger sister, died.

He later told me that at the time, there was a real power struggle going on within the headquarters of the Japanese Methodist Church. Some pastors enthusiastically endorsed the nationalistic and militaristic forces while others, who kept their antiwar sentiments to themselves, tried to maintain their churches and find some consolation in the study of theology. My father clearly felt more affinity with the latter group. He could not bring himself to agree with the nationalists who claimed that the United States and England were devils. After all, England was the birthplace of the Wesley brothers, and the United States was the home of the missionary who had baptized him.

Since his childhood days, my father had always despised anyone who persecuted the weak. At the time he began primary school, the government had started to send teachers with military training to the local schools. My father endured ostracism and physical abuse at the hands of those teachers. He also resented the new teachers' emphasis on hard physical training.

Persecuted in the pursuit of his calling and barely able to eke out a living in the isolated northeastern part of Japan, I can imagine how defeated my father felt. Happily, we were transferred to a rural community near Tokyo with a long Christian history. The church gave us a small income and a large farm. We managed to avoid any major confrontations with the other villagers. After the war, we were warmly received by the community because we had been able to survive on our farm produce without accepting any government rations.

Despite his vocation as a Christian minister, my father was deeply influenced by early teaching that higher social status is attained only by diligent work and study. It never occurred to him that the Japanese family system and its obsession with social status are behind the problems of discrimination in Japan. As a result, he respected famous Christians, particularly those who had achieved a high social standing.

At the same time, his approach to authentic Christian living was based on the biblical ethics of the apostle Paul. Believing that a good Christian keeps his personal ambitions in check, he was never able to give full expression to the gifts he had evidenced from childhood. Also, in spite of his hatred of militarism, his belief in the biblical ethics of Paul and his acceptance of the Japanese social hierarchy produced in him a natural attachment to the emperor. He had a special feeling for the emperor and from primary school had been thoroughly indoctrinated in the belief that the emperor is the father of the nation. When the emperor

renounced his status of divinity after World War II, many people, particularly youth, mocked him. In spite of this demythologization, my father told us, "If the emperor suddenly appeared here, I would cry." As a child, while grieving deeply over his mother's death, he was comforted with the thought that "even Emperor Meiji died."

Because he saw the God of Christianity as the invisible, highest authority, he probably could not grasp the significance of Jesus' rejection of social status and authority. That is why, although he was a Christian, he could not relinquish his faith in the emperor system. Although the emperor system had worked in tandem with Japanese militarism, Father managed to keep the two separated in his mind. How could he accept the emperor system that had derailed his pastoral mission? Perhaps it was Father's acceptance of the Japanese family system and social hierarchy that led him to an uncritical acceptance of the emperor system. Lacking a critical historical perspective, his privatistic faith shrouded the truth.

The Japanese family system has survived to this day through the family registry system. Japan's achievement ethic is transmitted from one generation to the next through the competitive educational system. On the one hand, the family system as organized under the emperor system was necessary for strengthening Japanese nationalistic sentiments. On the other hand, an achievement ethic was necessary for sustained economic growth. The government cleverly avoided the huge financial burden for education by encouraging students to work while attending school. The Ministry of Education was not at all concerned with developing children's individual abilities or gifts but only wanted to use them to further Japanese imperialism. The government taught devotion to the emperor and fostered a nationalistic spirit through children's games, songs, and special services at schools on national holidays. Such audio-visual techniques were skillfully employed so that even illiterate Japanese could understand. Moreover, as a practical way of dealing with poverty, the government emphasized that success in life was only earned through diligent study.

We may say that the emperor was my father's ultimate spiritual support because, although he was consciously sustained by the Christian God, he was unconsciously sustained by the emperor throughout his life. The towering presence of the emperor had been deeply implanted in his mind by the quasi-religious education he had received as a child.

During the early part of this century, there was a short-lived freedom movement in Japan that took various forms. Those who participated in that movement sometimes wrote the Chinese character for "freedom" on their sake cups or printed it on their kimono. The influence of Western culture and Christianity had made some Japanese people aware of their human rights for the first time.

However, by the time my mother was born in 1910, seven years after her husband, Japan had colonized Korea and was about to enter World War I. Girls were required to wear sailor blouses and skirts to school, and boys had to wear black suits with gold buttons, which resembled military uniforms. Teachers' opinions were tightly controlled. Military training was instituted in the schools, and through government-approved textbooks, girls were taught the "correct" role of women in society. Here is a small excerpt from that textbook:

> Women should stay in the house, take care of their families, and do their best to create a positive, calm atmosphere in order to enrich the customs of our country. The way women bring up their children influences their personalities and is a major determinant in the future rise or decline of our nation (Iketa 1982, 158).

Despite the hard times my mother, a pastor's daughter, was fortunately able to attend a Christian junior high school for women in Tokyo. At that time there were many children, particularly girls, who could not go to any school, so it was a special privilege for her to be able to attend this junior high school, which had been founded by foreign missionaries.

What kind of influence did the Christian education there have on the students? "The Bible was taught, and also how to live as a Christian, but very few students were baptized. However, women educated there developed good judgment and courage, which enabled them to act with an independent mind" (Murakami 1969, 374). Women missionaries from the United States had a particularly strong influence on these young Japanese women. This education led many of them to become involved in movements to institute monogamy, abolish licensed prostitution, and allow women's participation in making national policy.

Nevertheless, the road to equality between men and women was very difficult. At the time, women themselves did not really understand the meaning of equality. An examination of Hani Motoko's perspective on women's roles makes this evident. Hani's articles in *Fujin no Tomo* (Women's Friend) greatly influenced women then and are still widely read today. She wrote on the importance of personal equality between men and women and the duty of women to use their God-given abilities. On the other hand, she believed that real equality in the home could be achieved not when women used their abilities to earn money themselves but when they carefully budgeted and controlled their husbands' incomes. In effect, Hani's ideal of "equality in the home" restricted women to their homes. She asserted that if women wanted to maintain a middle-class standard of living, they must be moderate in their use of money, time, and abilities. This emphasis on reason was a result of a stoicism in Hani's understanding of Christian faith (Kindai joseishi kenkyūkai 1978, 155).

In contrast, Ebina Miyako, the wife of Pastor Ebina Danjō, published a magazine entitled *The New Women's World* in which she wrote: "Japanese women possess the beautiful characteristics of faithfulness, obedience, and patience, but in addition, they should have a greater knowledge of social affairs and be independent-minded like foreign women."

Clearly, there was a conflict between independent thinking and the traditional virtues of faithfulness, obedience, and patience. Since the virtue of faithfulness to one's husband was so strongly encouraged, it was impossible for women to strike a balance between faithfulness and independence in the marital relationship. For most Japanese women, becoming knowledgeable on social affairs and other matters and becoming involved in social movements were only dreams. The Christianity of that time espoused a home-centered ideal of husband and wife in their "appropriate" places. Although they were not very socially minded, most women in the church were quite individualistic. This explains why women fell in step so quickly with the government's educational goals, which stressed doing one's best for nation and home. My mother accepted those influences as a matter of course.

Christian schools were a great stimulus to women, but they also transmitted a decidedly middle-class consciousness. This elitism was tied to the Christian understanding of "vocation," which created a subconscious assumption that Christians were somehow a privileged group of people. Moreover, because certain of the apostle Paul's writings concerning women closely resembled the ideas promulgated by the Japanese government, there was little conflict between the government's curriculum and the way women were educated in Christian schools.

Educators who were not deep thinkers easily accepted this ideological harmony between religion and state. In this way, Christian education for women in Japan actually lent spiritual support to the government's educational program.

Churches and Christian schools did produce a few women leaders who made significant contributions in the field of human rights. Many of those women who struggled with the issues of discrimination and women's rights were influenced by Christianity but eventually left the church.

American culture and Christianity were accepted most readily by upper-class Japanese. However, there were simply too many cultural differences in clothing, music, and forms of service for Christianity to make any lasting impact on the common people. Furthermore, though some women may have learned something from Christianity about individual human freedom, they were generally forced into submission by the feudalistic ethos of the time. Thus, it is not surprising that most Christian women had no interest in human rights or discrimination.

In 1922, when my mother was twelve years old, the *Buraku* people founded the *Suiheisha* (Leveling League). At the top of their founding document was the symbol of the crown of thorns, indicating that the memories of the persecution of Christians in Japan since the seventeenth century were still alive in the present experience of the Buraku people. Admittedly, most Japanese Christians during my mother's era were totally unaware of Buraku people's situations, and even today there is discrimination against Buraku people within the Japanese church.

My mother had the faith of a child. She always told me, "Whenever you have problems, pray to God. I know God hears you." Her pure faith has provided a foundation for my family's faith. However, her almost total lack of social concern was the result of a fusion between this privatistic kind of faith and her education as a Japanese wife. In contrast to my grandmother, however, my mother worked before she decided, on her own, to marry my father. Still, although she sometimes had a different perspective from her husband and her nation, she never expressed what she was thinking. Spiritually, she interpreted this silence as a "storing up of treasure in heaven." This was her favorite phrase. Her faith was indeed beautiful, but today I often wonder about my mother's life. What is Christian education if it fails to teach the God-given dignity of each human being? We will never be able to truly respect the dignity of others until we are awakened to our own humanity.[1]

MY ERA

I was born on the outskirts of Tokyo in 1933, the year following Japan's withdrawal from the League of Nations as a result of the Manchurian Incident. Two years after I was born, the Catholic Church in Japan declared that the nation was turning to a form of nationalism that they called "Japanism."

I was sent to a small church-related kindergarten run by a Canadian woman missionary. I have few recollections about the education I received there, but I do recall how surprised I was to discover the new crayons, scissors, and paper in my desk drawer on the first day of school. In those days, practically no Japanese school child owned such things. Although we had very little, people always seemed willing to share. It was not unusual for a homeless family to be given a house from a friend.

The death of my younger sister and my mother's sickness are two painful events strongly etched into my childhood memories. When I was two years old, my family moved to northern Japan. The heavy winter snow was piled high on our roof, and we survived on a diet that consisted mostly of apples. Even my father's book shelves were

made from apple crates. It was an apple-growing district, so they were affordable.

There are two other events I remember. The first is watching the soldiers march past our house. The second is a government investigator's visits to our house. While the investigator talked with my father, my mother kept us children quiet in the corner of another room. I remember hearing my father's voice coming from his room.

The only specific memory of my own education in the Christian faith is that of praying in our home. There was one experience, however, that made a deep and lasting impression on me. That was meeting Helen Keller. When I was about five years old, she came to visit the area where we lived. My father took me to meet her and told me to bow to her, which I did. Without any warning, she pressed my head against her knees very strongly and held it there. I felt as if I would choke and tried to raise my head, but she continued to hold me down. Strangely, I forgot about this incident until I saw my daughter reading a book about Helen Keller. Then I finally realized why she had kept pushing so hard on my head. She had been praying for me! From that time on, I vowed to live in faithful response to Helen's prayer.

I was seven years old when my father was transferred to a church in a rural area near Tokyo. Japan had declared war on the United States. From that point on, we were known by our neighbors as the family who believed in the enemy's religion. Ironically, because the village had a Christian history, there were no temples or shrines. But in spite of that history, only one elderly couple attended Sunday services besides our family.

Our teachers in the primary school were kind to us, but the other children in the village were cruel. My brother and I came home crying from school every day just because we lived in the house associated with the enemy's religion. We sometimes tried to run away, but we always came back. Every morning, we pondered the best way to get to school unharmed.

At school we were thoroughly indoctrinated in the belief that "Japan is a divinely ordained country." Every day we had to recite by heart the names of all the emperors from the first to the present one. There were about fifty in all, though the first one was a name from Japanese mythology. On national holidays we had to go to school for a special service held in front of a photograph of the emperor and empress. As far as we could tell, the faces in those photographs looked human, not divine. Some of us wondered how the first emperor, a god, could be related to today's emperor, a human being, but we were strictly prohibited from asking about this. Although I could not understand it all, I also had to memorize the Imperial Rescript on Education. At least it was not as difficult as the Lord's Prayer, which was recited in an archaic Japanese literary style. The daily recitation of the Rescript and the list of the emperors' names influenced us children greatly.

With the exception of one sickly eighteen-year-old boy, all of the young teachers at our school eventually joined the military. By the end of the war, only one elderly teacher and the headmaster remained. Those two men routinely hit us children with a green bamboo rod.

Each day we finished our studies before lunch. In the afternoon we did some work for the war effort, such as gathering hay for the soldiers' horses. We brought dried locusts to school, and in the autumn, we filled our desk drawers with acorns. I thought it was strange that our strong soldiers had to eat such things as dried locusts or acorns.

When I was eleven years old, we began to help with the farm work. The farmers needed our help because most of the men of the village had been forced to go to war. We hungry children were glad to help since we received a rice ball (*onigiri*) or potato for our

efforts. I gradually made some new friends through these shared experiences. We played together in the church's garden in the evening.

My primary school education was almost totally centered on the emperor. As we had little time for studies during school hours, I spent most evenings doing mathematics and Japanese language homework. I loved to read. I was allowed to choose books that looked interesting from my father's collection, but the time that should have been devoted to my education at school was stolen by the war.

Of course, this was the result of the educational policy of the Japanese government. Three years after my birth, the government officially announced the following policy: "In our country, religion, government policy, and education represent a fundamentally inseparable union..." ("Waga kunini oitewa," 1936). It also stressed that Japan's history had begun with an emperor who had come down from heaven.

When I was seven, the name of our school was changed from "primary" to "national." The reasoning behind this shift in nomenclature was threefold: 1) to enforce the complete acceptance of the Imperial Rescript on Education; 2) to solidify the mythology of Japan as a nation under the emperor in terms analogous to the relationship of a father (emperor) and baby (people); and 3) to proclaim the emperor a descendent of the god who created our nation ("Kongowa sensō suikō no zōkyō," 1943).

When I was ten years old, the government announced its resolve to concentrate all its attention on supporting the war effort. Around the same time, part of our homework involved putting small Japanese flags on maps showing where our military had landed. In March 1945, when I was twelve, the government announced that all students must work in food production and war industries. That August, the war ended.

Soon afterwards, our teachers instructed us to block out some parts of our textbooks with black ink. They did not explain the reasons for this. We were no longer the emperor's babies, and we did not have to bow to his picture anymore. There was a sudden feeling of freedom in the air. Despite the terrible lack of food after the war, we figuratively and literally felt better and lighter. During the war we had not been allowed to use lights at night, but now we could enjoy brightness night or day. We did not have to sing *Kimigayo*, which symbolized the continuity of the imperial reign, and nobody flew the *Hinomaru* flag, even on national holidays.

The following year, I went to a girls' junior high school. Two years later, the whole Japanese education system was changed. Compulsory education was extended for three years beyond primary school. Our junior high school became a girls' high school. I was automatically able to advance to the high school. Then the government announced a new policy of coeducation. We could study at a boys' high school if we so desired. I transferred to a boys' school for the last year of high school because the educational level was higher.

Thus, the names and curriculum of all Japanese schools had changed since my primary school days. I had lived through the transition from a militaristic to a democratic style of education. This important and dramatic educational reform meant that education was now conceived not as a duty but as a right. However, before we were able to fully grasp this new concept of "right," Japan would again chose the path toward militarism under the security umbrella of the United States.

In the shadow of the Korean War, the Cold War division of East and West, and the ensuing anticommunist fever, the world seemed headed for yet another showdown. At the same time, though I was taught in world history how the Christian church had played a key role during the period of colo-

nization, I never learned what the Japanese military did in other Asian countries.

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, the Christian church in Japan, seen as a kind of cultural center, attracted the attention of many Japanese young people. In their dealings with our people, the victorious United States Occupation Forces were clearly not as cruel as our own troops had been to the peoples of China and Japan. They gave bread and milk to hungry children. As a result, we had a distinct impression that a Christian country was very different from our country. The victorious and affluent United States became an object of Japanese envy. At the time, we Japanese Christians tended to believe that God's blessings fell naturally upon Christian countries.

For a long time no one noticed how the introduction of bread and milk into postwar Japan changed the traditional diet and resulted in the rapid acceleration of imports from the United States. Also, because we had to work exceptionally hard in order to free ourselves from starvation, we were not aware of the gradual revival of Japanese militarism and thought control that was happening under the security umbrella of the United States.

I had equated Christianity with the United States, so I remember being very shocked the first time I heard a young teacher criticize Christianity and the United States. The teacher said that in the history of the world, Christianity was clearly one of the worst religions. It is true that colonialization and Christian mission were simultaneous movements in many countries. I also believed it was wrong to use Christianity to colonize other countries, but I thought the teacher was mistaken to completely reject Christianity itself on that basis. Now I can understand that he was thinking of Christianity in the absolutist framework he had learned under the emperor system. He put Christianity in the emperor's place. Having had no experience of a nation comprised of different peoples, he saw Christianity as a state religion, controlling the affairs of state from the top down.

At the same time, the Ministry of Education stressed the necessity of nurturing a patriotic anticommunist sentiment and began to publicly reassert the importance of Kimigayo and the Hinomaru flag. In 1953, less than ten years after the end of the war, former wartime bureaucrat Amano Teiju, who had been tried as a war criminal, was appointed Minister of Education. He in turn appointed a former executive officer from the wartime special police, Odachi Shigeo, to a high position within the Ministry of Education. This man began to monitor closely the thinking of Japanese teachers.

OUR DAUGHTERS' ERA

At the time our eldest daughter entered elementary school, most teachers participated in the teachers' union, which opposed many of the plans of the Ministry of Education. These teachers struggled to realize the democratization of education. A committee on education appointed by the mayor, not elected by the citizens, was established in each locality. Those committees controlled the school principals who, in turn, controlled the teachers. They decided to reinstitute the teaching of myths on the origins of Japan as fact, to fly the Hinomaru flag as the national flag, and to sing Kimigayo as the national anthem. Also, through its strict censorship of textbooks, the Ministry of Education suppressed the teaching of accurate national history, particularly regarding Japan's invasion of other Asian countries.

All revisions and upgrading of the school curriculum reflected Japan's attempt to match the educational level of other industrial nations. A system for monitoring new teachers was introduced. Clearly, there were too many pupils in a class, and teach-

ers were overworked. However, did that justify controlling the children as they did? What did the teachers mean when they spoke of democratization? I had many unanswered questions.

After three years in Tokyo, our family relocated to a suburb, and my children transferred to a nearby school. The school playground at their new school was made of dirt. Lunches were cooked in the school and were warm. The lunches at the former school were always cold because deliveries were made to many other schools along the way. In Japan, schools always map out a safe route for students to follow to and from their homes. This school had a route for the children to use, but they did not have to use it. They were very free and came home from school by many different routes. Sometimes they climbed trees and ate fruit, and one time they even came home with their bags full of persimmons. Hearing the children's voices, I went to the door, but they had already gone out to play and only their school bags were left at the entrance. Their cheeks became rosy and healthy.

One day I went to the school to observe the children's school life. I looked on as all the children in my daughter's class listened to the teacher with their hands clasped behind their backs. When a pupil answered the teacher's question correctly, the teacher would say, "Clap!" and the pupils clapped. I watched my daughter carefully, and sensed that she was clapping unwillingly. Later, I asked the teacher why he ordered the children to clap. He stopped the practice the next day. Since he was older than I, I thought that surely he must have been a soldier during the war. He was clearly an experienced teacher and had a reputation as a peacemaker. Still, I had also heard through other parents that he often used corporal punishment. I could not understand why a peacemaker had to resort to such means of control.

My children seemed to enjoy school, but after they graduated, I learned that their school life was not so happy for them. My daughter disliked running races to the sound of a gun at athletic meetings. Students were also required to continue their daily physical training at home during summer vacation. Children who liked sports enjoyed this, but it was torture for others. I wondered why children could not choose for themselves what they wanted to do. Systematic marching, dancing, and gymnastics were evaluated by the principal, visitors, or even by parents. Uniformity seemed to be the only concern. All the teachers seemed to be working very hard, but no one noticed whether the children enjoyed it or not.

When my eldest daughter turned twelve, she entered junior high school. The boys at her school wore black suits with gold buttons, and the girls wore blue suits. This uniform was adopted in 1919, just after the First World War. I felt I could not make my daughter wear that uniform because of its association with militarism. I also felt I should speak up at the school because I was worried about the trend in Japan toward remilitarization, which was contrary to our national peace policy. I also felt that if my daughter did not want to wear the uniform, she should not have to wear it.

We discussed this problem within our family. Finally, five children in a neighboring city, who had also decided against wearing uniforms, advised us. After talking with those students, my daughter decided not to wear the uniform but to wear a similar suit. We bought it at a different store from the one the school recommended. In Japanese schools, it is common for one dressmaker to make all the uniforms for the students of a given school. Once a dressmaker has won a school's uniform contract, he or she is guaranteed a profit almost forever. It is a very strange system. Moreover, contracted uniforms are much more expensive than the

ones in the department stores. I could not understand why we were forced to pay so much for school uniforms. The students were also expected to buy the same school bags. It is strange that the Communists, who were so strongly opposed to the Ministry of Education's new system of compulsory education, said nothing about school uniforms. Most parents bought uniforms that were a little too big because they did not want to buy a second one as their children grew. Also, students wore their uniforms every day, so they became dirty quickly. As they could not be washed very often, the children were not able to play as actively as they had during primary school.

When I went to an introductory meeting for the parents of children entering junior high school, we were given a list of rules, such as "Students must brush their teeth every morning," and "Do not forget to make students go to the toilet." I felt as if my daughter was starting kindergarten again. When my daughter went to school, she was given a paper with over seventy rules written in detail. The long list included: "Do not bring comic books, combs, or mirrors to school"; "Only short, white socks may be worn"; "The length of skirts must be..."; "Hair styles must be...." The students actually never read the list because there were simply too many rules. They learned the rules as teachers warned them not to do this or that. Students who broke the rules were forced to sit on the floor in front of the teachers' room as a warning to others.

As she prepared to go to junior high school, the person my daughter feared most was the *banchō*. Banchōs are student leaders who are known to be abusive if someone does not follow their orders. In particular, they do not like anyone who is different so force these students to change. My daughter heard that there was a banchō in every school, so it was a very difficult decision for her to chose not to wear a uniform to school. Fortunately, all the upper-class girls were very kind to her. The teachers, however, were very rough.

In one case, a boy sitting in the front row had forgotten his textbook and was scolded by a music teacher in abusive language. My daughter said that after she heard this story, the people she feared most were not other students but teachers. When I attended a parents' meeting, I asked the teacher not to use such abusive language, but one woman teacher said, "Oh, every teacher uses that kind of language." That was all that was said about the subject. When graduating students vandalized a piano, that music teacher was forced to resign.

There was some form of corporal punishment in the sports clubs every day. One teacher hit students with a tennis racquet. Near the end of the school year, a teacher hit a girl on the head because she was sitting outside the class and not studying. Then he began to hit all the students in the class. Perhaps he thought they should have taken responsibility for her. The forty or so boys and girls in the class were very angry and refused to go home until the teacher apologized. They sat at their desks until midnight. Parents came and joined the protest, and finally, the teacher apologized. Because teachers never apologize to students in Japan, this was an important incident, and word spread quickly throughout the city. This would have been unthinkable when I was in junior high school. We could not have said anything to people in authority because of the educational system and the feudalistic ethic that pervaded Japanese society. These students were becoming aware of their human rights. I was glad to see them take concrete action against a teacher's abuse.

My second daughter was a very active girl, always making people laugh, but she lost her sparkle when she entered kindergarten. She was continually depressed because she was clearly at odds with the group system. I could not imagine a child's life without

school, so I forced her to attend. When she went to junior high, she was dissatisfied with school and had occasional conflicts with teachers.

In order to get inside the school and have opportunities to exchange ideas with the teachers, I became a member of a committee that published school reports. The biggest problem discussed at our meetings was the sports clubs. Students had to be at school for sports practice by seven o'clock in the morning and did not return home until after dark. They were tired and unable to study. Also, they did not like the corporal punishment used in the clubs and could not enjoy summer vacation because of their training schedule. We wanted to hear the students' complaints directly, so we obtained permission from the teachers and distributed questionnaires. We needed a teacher's permission for everything we wanted to do. We gave the questionnaires to the teachers who handed them out to the students and then collected them. This was the beginning of a serious problem.

A teacher called me to come to the school and ordered me not to make the results of the questionnaires public. When I read the papers, I was really surprised. Most of the students were sharply critical of their teachers, even to the point of using profanity. This school was considered one of the best in the city, and everyone thought the students studied hard, played sports well, and did not have any problems. The teachers also thought this because the students were very quiet, uncomplaining, and obedient. The questionnaires revealed the students' true feelings. They were angry about their teachers' behavior. I finally understood that my daughter had experienced conflict with her teachers because she was honest and could not hide her feelings.

We decided to publish our results without including the complaints against the teachers. When I informed the teachers that we wanted to publish the results for the sake of free speech and in order to make the school a more comfortable place for students, they would not permit it. After six months, the teachers said they would allow us to print our results on the condition that we printed no comments, only graphs. I knew that publishing graphs alone would give a very distorted picture of the truth. I was very discouraged. There was no discussion with other parents about any of this; we were simply made to follow the orders of the teachers' group.

I decided to publish an article about school sports clubs on my own. In the article, I suggested that sports clubs should be enjoyable and should be led by students. This was the heart of what we had wanted to say to the school but could not. Without permission, we published the article and distributed it to the students. The teachers were very angry and asked us to apologize. The members of our group refused to bow to the teachers' demands, which continued for a week after making the article public. Finally, I told a reporter about the situation, and he wrote a long article for the local newspaper. When confronted, I readily admitted my involvement. The teachers said I must apologize for damaging the school's reputation. After a while, one of our committee members suggested we apologize because we had given a bad impression of our school. This would, in turn, have a negative impact on the students who were preparing to take high-school entrance examinations. Unfortunately, many parents were more concerned about their children's future success than about what would contribute to the students' happiness.

After this incident, the teachers asked me to publish a newspaper in order to improve the school's image, but I refused and resigned from the publishing committee. Finally, a few members began to publish the school news written exclusively by teachers. I could not believe that the teachers had succeeded in pressuring the PTA

parents into sacrificing their freedom of expression. This is exactly what they do to students on a day-to-day basis. Japanese law does not seem to apply in school contexts.

My daughter's last day of junior high school was approaching. She brought home a handout from the PTA announcing that the association would present the school with a Hinomaru flag and a tablecloth embroidered with the school emblem. I had opposed the use of this flag at public schools because, in the eyes of many Asian people, it is a symbolic reminder of Japanese invasion and colonization and thus carries the same stigma as the Nazi flag. The Ministry of Education had encouraged the use of this flag, and many public schools had started flying it, but all the schools in our part of Tokyo had resisted up to that point.

I was outraged and approached a woman member of our city assembly, asking her to cooperate with me in opposing this. She quickly called other assembly members and went to the school to ask the principal and the chairman of the PTA not to accept the flag. I also informed the teachers' union, and they called all the schools in the city to petition the principal not to accept it. Another mother and I wrote and printed a paper explaining why we did not want the school to use that flag. We gave this to everyone we met. Finally, the principal called a meeting of the PTA and said he could not accept the flag. Two newspapers also wrote sympathetically about the situation. A few parents opposed us and became abusive.

There was, however, one more unpleasant experience in store for me. There is a national university in my city, and many faculty children attend my daughter's junior high school. The father of one boy is a university professor who had criticized the educational policies of the Ministry of Education. Twice I telephoned him to discuss the fact that the school never taught the real history of the Hinomaru flag but tried to use it in violation of the peace laws. He only said, "That's too bad," and hung up quickly. He must have been worried about the school's recommendations for his son when it came time for him to enter high school. Although political activity is prohibited in Japanese schools, even pro-democracy university professors remain silent to insure their children's future educational success. Interestingly, the teacher who had forced children to clap and a teacher who had criticized the publication of my article on sports clubs were the two most supportive persons.

As my second daughter is a bit of a nonconformist who likes to study by herself, she chose a high school where there are not many sports clubs. When she began her second year, she suddenly announced that she did not want to go to school. She told me in tears that she had dutifully attended school for ten years but could not go anymore and would get sick if I forced her. I had no idea that she had gone to school grudgingly for those ten years. I could not bring myself to tell her she must go.

I went to school with my daughter and told her homeroom teacher about our conversation. He told us that if she did not finish high school, she would not mature. Suddenly, he ordered my daughter to leave the room. As soon as she had gone, he stood up, bowed deeply, and said, "Please, do not let her leave school." I was taken aback and told him that the school did not exist for his sake but for my daughter and the other students. He said that he had never failed before and that his only failure in life would thus be my daughter's fault. I sympathized with my daughter, who had spent her school days with such a teacher, and I began to think it would be better for her not to go to school. Why could he not acknowledge that there are many ways to live and learn? After that he visited our home and asked my daughter to return to school, but

she refused. Finally, my husband told him that she would not change her mind and asked him not to come again.

My daughter needed to withdraw officially from the school as soon as possible because she planned to take college entrance examinations. I called the class teacher and asked him to sign the proper papers for her withdrawal. He in turn told me to take him a medical certificate verifying her mental illness. I was furious, so I called the principal and asked him to sign her release. He told me that he had not heard about my daughter's case, and if she wanted to leave, he naturally had to allow it. Although it was a long process, she was finally able to withdraw officially.

From this experience, I understood that if even one student leaves, the homeroom teacher is considered a failure. My daughter's teacher was only concerned about his reputation in the eyes of the principal and others. His own failure mattered more to him than his students' future. This way of thinking is very common in Japan, especially in the so-called higher level schools.

This mentality is clearly revealed in the following story. Based only on the record of her first three months in that new school, this same teacher had tried to advise my daughter concerning her future plans. Her dream was to study law, but he advised against it, saying that with her unimpressive record, she would not be able to enter the university of her choice. He recommended that she consider another major at a women's college. In spite of the teacher's hasty judgment and poor advice, I am glad to report that she is presently studying law at the university that was her first choice.

Guidance counseling in Japan is based only on the number of students from a particular school who passed the university entrance examinations. The reputation of a high school rests solely on its students' success or failure on university entrance examinations. In this intensely competitive atmosphere, teachers feel that they have to separate those students who are bound for the elite universities from those who will have to settle for second- or third-level schools. However, in order for students to freely pursue their dreams, they must be able to explore a broader range of options than those offered by their test-centered high schools. This is a crucial issue that has resulted from the obsession with entrance examinations and a society that is primarily concerned about the reputation of one's school.

In order for my third daughter to start kindergarten as soon as she turned three years old, I began searching for a place a year early. I soon realized that kindergartens crowded too many children into a small space, and teachers generally controlled the children by shouting at them or using a whistle. Like Japanese schools for older children, there was a set curriculum, and it seemed very difficult for the teachers to make all the children obey. The children did not smile in any of the kindergartens I visited. After my exploration, I clearly understood why my two older daughters had disliked kindergarten.

As a result, I decided to open an outdoor kindergarten with some other young mothers who shared the dream of children living like the children in *Pippi Langstrump* (Longstockings), a book by Astrid Lindgren. My idea was that children should not be forced to conform to any curriculum but should be allowed to play naturally. Fortunately, there was a library and a children's activity center near the large public park where we gathered our children, so whenever the children wanted to look at books, they could go to the library by themselves. Once a week, the leaders of the activity center visited us and taught dancing, outdoor crafts, and songs with guitar accompaniment. But the children most liked playing freely in a natural setting with other children. Even babies and disabled

children played, exploring new and interesting places on their bicycles. We discovered that the children themselves made up rules that included the babies in their play.

Japanese elementary schools highly value a child's ability to respond to a teacher's instructions in a group context, so they frown on children who have not attended kindergarten. Because of this mind-set, most parents send their children to kindergarten. This means that children begin to learn to follow orders at the kindergarten level. It is generally considered an important first step in forming a cooperative attitude. I too was concerned that if my daughter did not go to kindergarten, she would not be able to cooperate with other children. However, as I observed our group of children making up the necessary rules for their daily play by themselves, enjoying their play, and including infants and disabled children, I saw clearly what it means to be part of a group. I also began to believe that we should not begin with established rules if we want to develop children's personalities.

When my daughter entered school, she played very well with others in her class. In fact, her teacher was really surprised to see that she noticed whenever someone was left out. My daughter could read but she could write only her name, so she was a highly motivated learner. Other children, who had already started to learn writing or simple mathematics in kindergarten, were already tired of it.

As a result, my daughter's teacher changed her way of thinking and told parents to make sure that their children played enough after school. She realized that children who have sufficient play time concentrate better on their studies, have better motor skills, and tend to be more flexible and creative. Most of the other children in my daughter's first-grade class had been trained by teachers, and sometimes by parents, to be passive, so they did not know how to play by themselves. My daughter became a class favorite and was sought out by her friends.

As she grew, she began to dislike school, though she continued to attend. She seemed really relaxed only on holidays or during vacation. One day she told me she could no longer believe her teacher. She never told me the reason for that distrust, and to this day, I do not know what happened. In spite of these less-than-ideal conditions at school, she still played well with her friends after school.

During this period, the Education Ministry began to encourage the use of the Hinomaru flag and the Kimigayo anthem more and more strongly in Japanese education. Kimigayo was taught in music class. There were some Jehovah's Witnesses in my daughter's school who refused to sing Kimigayo. During recess, some of the other children tried to force them to sing it. My daughter and another girl, whose parents were communists, saw this and went to the music teacher, saying they thought it was not good to force students to sing Kimigayo. In the next music class, the woman music teacher said that no one had to sing it. From then on, the teasing stopped. With a heavy heart, I remembered the war days when we had been accused of being non-Japanese if we refused to sing Kimigayo and were forced to bow to the emperor's picture.

When my daughter graduated from primary school, my husband was the chairman of the PTA, and he opposed the use of the Hinomaru and the Kimigayo at the closing ceremony. He stayed in close dialogue with the principal on this issue, but the principal insisted on following the directions of the Ministry of Education. At last the day came. My husband told the principal he would not attend the ceremony if Kimigayo was sung, but would enter after the song was finished. Hearing my husband's decision, my daughter wondered what she should do. Since the graduating students were supposed to enter in one line, we told her to go,

but if she did not want to sing Kimigayo, she did not have to sing. We were painfully aware of the fact that Japanese school children were not expected to have their own faith, beliefs, or opinions. This particular song evoked memories of unpleasant times for us. Now the nation is seeking to revive it, even though it casts a dark shadow on the peaceful future of Japanese children. My husband and I still oppose the use of Kimigayo at school.

When it was time for my third daughter to go to a public junior high school, we talked about uniforms as usual. I was concerned that my opinion might be too strong for her to disagree with me. On the other hand, from her sisters' experiences, I knew she was already aware of the problem. I noticed that there was a gap in all my daughters' minds between reason and feeling, and that sometimes it was difficult for them to explain their real feelings. On the one hand, although they understood the issues surrounding the use of uniforms, they still wanted to commemorate their junior high days by wearing the same uniform as their friends.

It seemed counter to her feelings for my daughter to be the only one not to wear a uniform. She thought and thought and finally decided to attend a school that required a uniform but would try to challenge the uniform rule by cooperating with her friends. As it turned out, her friends did not have the courage to refuse to wear the uniform. Although they did not want to, my daughter and her friends went to school each day wearing their uniforms.

At the beginning of the second year, my daughter came home very late one day. She said she had been a member of a student committee during the first year, and she and all the other committee members had continued for a second year because, for a whole year, they had been talking about changing the school's rules. They had insisted on adding the words "improving school rules" to their statement of goals for the second year, but the teachers would not allow it. That evening, they had sat in class and said they would not go home until the teachers permitted the change. Finally, the teachers allowed them to add this line at the end of their goals. However, the teachers continued to prevent them from taking up this subject at meetings, and they did not get around to discussing it until the end of their second year.

At a PTA meeting, I asked about this, and a teacher answered that they were now talking about it. I responded by saying that it seemed as though they would be talking about it for their whole lives without doing anything. Clearly, parents and teachers exert a tremendous influence on students' opinions. In fact, ninety-nine percent of the parents support the uniform requirement because they think that having the same uniform and same haircut fosters better behavior and more cleanliness. They also think it is more economical than having to buy other clothes. They do not recognize that wearing the same clothes day after day is, in fact, not very hygienic. Neither do they consider how restricted uniformed children feel when they want to play freely. Some children prefer heavy clothes while others prefer lighter ones, and some like bright colors while others like darker ones, but parents and teachers completely ignore these individual differences. Most Japanese parents see the school uniform as a symbol of Japan's social and economic equality. But isn't equality related to intentional sharing? How can one speak of equality in the context of coerced conformity?

Let me offer still another example of the oppressive level of conformity in Japanese schools. Although school lunches were provided at her junior high, my daughter wanted to bring a lunch from home. The teachers would not agree to this because they said it was better for all the children to eat the same thing. This is how Japanese teach-

ers define equality. All my daughters referred to the school lunch as a "prisoner's lunch" because they were forced to wear the same uniform, eat the same food, and were prohibited from going outside the school until they had completely finished. I was relieved to learn recently that students at some schools are allowed to bring their lunches or choose from a variety of foods provided by the school lunch program.

One day, a PTA member called to say they were planning to supervise the children at school every day because some were leaving the school grounds during lunch time. I opposed this because children would then be under parental supervision the whole day. Nevertheless, a monitoring schedule was sent home, and I found my name on it. I went to see what was happening but could not find any particular problems, so I did not go again. I later learned that the monitoring was stopped because most mothers refused to go. If this had happened during the war, we would have been forced to participate under an order as binding as one directly from the emperor himself. So it seems to me that in some ways, times have changed. Parents do not voice their opinions openly, but neither do they always cooperate. This paradoxical behavior is typical of the Japanese. However, I still wonder why more people do not notice that over-controlling parents and teachers tend to destroy the possibilities for better relationships between Japanese adults and children.

THE FUTURE OF JAPANESE EDUCATION AND THE ROLE OF CHRISTIANITY

I must admit that our family has been greatly affected by the United States. My grandfather learned theology from American missionaries, as did my father. My father, in particular, learned the importance of individuality and Quaker beliefs about peace through Uchimura Kanzō, who was the person he most respected. After the Second World War, my father also accepted a great deal of help from the United States, both spiritually and materially, for his pastoral work in the countryside. The Agricultural Theological School, where my husband now teaches, is another one of the fruits of those gifts.

After the Second World War, the United States accepted many Japanese students and gave them a chance to study. My husband studied in a U.S. theological school for three years, and I studied for eight months, sponsored by the Japan Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA). I had a very rich experience and learned a great deal about personal dignity and human rights. My husband studied very hard and learned about Christian responsibility through the protest movement against the Vietnam War. I think his experiences in the U.S. laid the foundation for his life today.

It is true that Christianity had some influence within the samurai class because Western culture and Christianity entered Japan during the period when the samurai class suddenly lost its political authority. Then as economic conditions deteriorated and Japan began to turn to militarism, many Japanese youth, especially students, escaped into the world of religion and tried to discover an ideal world there. After the war was over, young people were told by the Japanese government that the emperor, whom they had been forced to serve with their lives, was only a human being.

As a result of Japan's defeat, these students completely lost their purpose in life. A lot of young people came to the church and believed that the God of Christianity is the only truth that lives forever. They naively equated the new U.S.-inspired national laws, which center on human rights and peace, with Christianity. Of course, the reality is not so simple, but most Japanese people thought this way, and Japanese Christians were proud of their association

with a "Christian" country that enjoyed such a good reputation.

In the postwar era, foreign countries meant the United States and Germany. Japanese people did not see the Asian peoples of their former colonies as friends from whom they could learn. We received many things from prosperous Western countries, but in the process, we also lost something precious. That is, the more we pursued riches, the less we understood the meaning of real Christianity.

Subsequently, our eyes have been opened by encounters with those who have been discriminated against in Japan: the Korean, Ainu, and Buraku peoples. Through my encounters with these peoples, I was made aware of how long I had lived in what should be called "sin." I was moved deeply by those who cry out for equality in a system that seeks to deprive them of their God-given humanity. These encounters taught me the need to stand in solidarity with children. I realized that the human rights of Japanese children are ignored because they are completely powerless to insist upon their own rights in the face of their adult oppressors.

Through these experiences, I came to realize that the hope of becoming more human must be linked to the process of being released, through the alternative vision of the church, from the temptation to seek wealth and power. From a Christian perspective, authentic humanity and goodness has to do with living, in relationship with God, a life that increasingly comes to resemble the life of Jesus Christ.

My daughters are going their own ways. The eldest is trying to find new meaning for her life through music; the second is studying law to further the cause of justice and human rights in Japan; and my third daughter is trying to find a new direction for Japan through the study of modern Asian history. They are all involved in cross-cultural encounters with people from other Asian countries. I hope this interest is not simply a fruit of Japan's economic wealth but that, by learning to appreciate the richness of different cultures, they will be able see their own country through the eyes of other Asian people. On the other hand, if they ignore the structures of discrimination in Japan, I fear they may never really understand other Asian countries. I dare say that this process of prophetic self-criticism is the single most significant lesson we can learn from the history of Christianity in Japan.

The Christian universities of Japan are presently faced with the momentous task of including the questions of justice and human rights in their curriculums. These are completely ignored in general education. Moreover, they should provide opportunities for student exchanges with other Asian countries to enable students to think about life and what it means to be human at the close of the twentieth century. The very possibility for such a fresh and exciting educational vision in Japan must be attributed to the influence of Christianity.

On the other hand, as groupism, corporal punishment, and excessive rules continue even in Christian schools, we must continue to fight against these symbols of Japan's former militarism. This conformist trend in Japanese education has been fostered not only by schools and teachers but also by those parents who lend their enthusiastic support.

Undeniably, most Japanese workers experience an analogous level of conformity in their companies. In fact, Japan's economic growth can be credited to such conventional cultural methods, which have been utilized continually for over a hundred years.

Nevertheless, there are clearly some differences from the prewar era. First of all, we women have the right to vote. Second, many people now take their children with them to travel or work overseas. Third, the number of international marriages is on the

rise. In the past, foreign wives had to follow their Japanese husbands just as Japanese wives did, but now they have begun to speak up. I earnestly hope that the social changes brought about by this so-called "borderless era" will challenge Japanese militarism and racism.

In spite of these positive signs, we still fear a dangerous future because of Japan's excessive dependence on nuclear power. Even though we have experienced the devastation of atomic weapons, we presently have about fifty nuclear plants in Japan, and the government is planning to increase that number. The government seems to believe in the infallibility of Japanese technology. At the same time, most Japanese people continue to live under the illusion that our affluent life will continue forever. However, signs such as the environmental pollution of our food, air, and water alert us to the imminent crises facing humankind. Japanese affluence is supported by the continuing exploitation of poorer countries.

In light of these harsh realities, we must confess that we are wandering far from the path toward peace. However, children can only be effectively educated under peaceful circumstances. We Christians, who have been given the role of representing the peace of Christ, have many changes to make in our own lives, particularly in addressing the situation of Japanese children. We must first turn from the pursuit of affluence to a life of cooperation with one another. Without this change in thinking, we will not be able to educate our children. The churches and the Christian schools should clearly proclaim this need for repentance.

In the Japanese church, we also need to learn a greater flexibility in our style of church life. The church that represents peace could be more human—a joyful place for children, adults, and disabled people—if it was released from its present formalism.

CONCLUSION

In this article, I have criticized many of the teachers in Japanese schools. However, I cannot criticize all of them because I know the stress that Japanese culture places on teachers. Nationalism, groupism, the priority given to industry in education, the top-down leadership style, and the emphasis on *wa* (harmony, i.e., no speaking out against leaders), often presents overpowering challenges to Japanese teachers. These cultural values have shaped teachers' identities and created the excessive tendencies toward conformity and control.

Further, those teachers who supported the last war never examined what actually went on in Japanese schools during that war. In many cases, they simply continued to teach at the same schools. Also, after the Ministry of Education appointed a former soldier as its vice minister, avoidance of evaluating wartime militaristic education became one of the basic tenets of Japanese education. Most people simply accepted his revisionism. This was a fundamental mistake because, in spite of our democratic laws, most teachers educated with this skewed view of reality do not recognize the individual's human rights. As a result, Japanese children have been forced to endure more and more difficult situations.

The churches in Japan cannot fulfill their educational mission if they continue to reflect the same authoritarian and formal structures as the schools. The church is a community that includes people of all ages, from babies to adults. It is a place where sharing and exchange among powerless people can become a possibility. Such people need to experience self-respect and self-acceptance. The church should be a bright and open community, not an oppressive one. It should not be an escape from society but a place that empowers people to express themselves with confidence within society. I suspect that we could make a

significant opening in the educational wall of Japan if we could change the church.

NOTES

[1] Though I am critical of the way my parents and grandparents lived as Christians, I am deeply grateful to them for giving me the most valuable gift of faith, and I am proud of my connection to them through that faith. I believe that the best way to express my gratitude to them is to help create a society and an educational system that will never again oppress that faith.

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