

General Summary

著者	KASAHARA Yoshimitsu
journal or publication title	JAPANESE STUDIES AROUND THE WORLD
volume	2002
page range	407-409
year	2009-09-30
その他の言語のタイトル	総括討議
特集号タイトル	Korea under Japanese Rule : Past and Current Research Results and Issues for Future Research 日本統治下の朝鮮 : 研究の現状と課題
URL	http://doi.org/10.15055/00007518

KASAHARA Yoshimitsu

My field of study is the history of religious thought, and I retired after working at Kyoto Seika University for many years. As Professor Kim already mentioned, I was asked here because, about thirty years ago, I wrote a paper called “‘Nihon-teki kirisutokyō’ hihan” [A Criticism of “Japanese Christianity”], which was published in *Kirisutokyō shakai mondai kenkyū* [Research Issues in Christian Society], vol. 22 by the School of Graduate Studies in Humanities of Doshisha University. Professor Kim read that paper, and since the subject matter is related to his own field of study, he asked me to speak today.

Firstly, what is meant by “Japanese” Christianity? It can be defined in general terms as thought which attempts to introduce traditional Japanese spirit, thought and religion into Christianity. There is both a broad interpretation and a narrow interpretation. Yanaihara Tadao and Uchimura Kanzō called it Christianity with an awareness of Japan. But Uchimura added in an essay entitled “Nihon-teki Kirisutokyō” [Japanese Christianity] written in 1920 that it is “Christianity directly given by God without using a foreign interpreter.” Moreover, Yanaihara referred to it in an essay, “Kirisutokyō-teki Nippon” [Christian Japan] in 1934, as “Christianity studied and preached freely and independently without the control or interference of foreign missionaries.” This is the broad interpretation of Japanese Christianity.

The narrow interpretation of Japanese Christianity is problematic. It is a Christian way of thinking to attempt to completely integrate or combine traditional Japanese thought with Christianity. Ebina Danjō is well-known for this way of thinking. In his 1897 essay “Nihon shūkyō no sūsei” [Trends in Japanese Religion], he wrote that the respective gods of Shinto, Confucianism, Buddhism and Christianity are the same entity, but referred to by different names. Furthermore, his student, Watase Tsunekichi, noted in his 1934 book *Nihon shingaku no teishō* [Advocacy of the Study of Japanese Gods], that in Shinto, the highest god is *Ameno-minaka-nushi*, and there are two other high-ranking gods, *Takami-musubi* and *Kanmi-musubi*. These three, along with *Amaterasu-ōmikami*, are equivalent to the Holy Trinity in Christian doctrine. This can be referred to as the narrow interpretation of “Japanese” Christianity.

It can be said that this narrow interpretation of “Japanese” Christianity is one ideology in a war of aggression, so in this respect, it is appropriate today to criticize “Japanese” Christianity in the particularly narrow sense. It can be called “Japanese” Christianity, but is there any version that is not “such-and-such” Christianity? For example, the Christianity of Korea can be called “Korean” Christianity.

Incidentally, after the War a Bible scholar called Rudolf Bultmann wrote a book in 1949 called *Early Christianity*, of which there is also a translation. In his book, he describes the phenomenon by which Christianity was synthesized from Judaism, Grecian philosophy, and Oriental mysticism. Extrapolating from this, in the Christian doctrine of Atonement and Resurrection, Jesus was put to death on the Cross to atone for the sins of the World, and after death rose again. This can be seen as mythology, or perhaps Eschatology, or an ideology of a Chōsen People, or dualism, since Jesus is Christ, the Messiah, and is both human and divine at the same time, or it can be seen as the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. Moreover, there are many examples of philosophies from other religions and cultures that have been introduced into Christianity, for example, ceremonies such as baptism and the Eucharist, or the institution of the Catholic Church with the Pope at the apex of the hierarchical system. That is the nature of Christianity. A reading of Frazer’s *The Golden Bough* shows that many of the above existed in Greco-Roman or Oriental thought. So is there really such a thing as pure Christianity?

I believe that Christianity is an authoritarian religion. It should be said that Paul never met Jesus in person, and became an Apostle only after Jesus’ death, yet Paul is responsible for making Christianity what it is. Jesus did not create Christianity. Jesus himself was an anti-authoritarian thinker, yet Paul said in his Epistle to the Romans, chapter 13, “Let every person be subordinate to the higher authorities.” He states that the authorities established by God, starting with the Roman Pope, should be obeyed. So this kind of thought was present at the beginning of Christianity. Christianity was developed in Israel in the first century A.D., but thenceforth, through the proselytizing of Paul and others, it spread to Rome, where finally Rome had to officially recognize it. From there, it spread throughout Europe, conquering the indigenous religions, or integrating with them.

In Europe, research into the pre-Christian Celtic and Germanic cultures, or the animistic religion, Druidism, has recently been proceeding at a great pace. Those cultures and religions were destroyed or absorbed by Christianity as it spread across Europe, resulting in "European" Christianity. It became "French" Christianity, "German" Christianity and so on. Later, it spread to the United States, where it became "American" Christianity, then to Asia and Africa, where it became "such-and-such" Christianity.

So what exactly are these Christianities? It is not only Japan, but there are many states that have perpetrated wars of aggression in the history of Christianity. Wars of aggression in the name of Christian ideology have been carried out by Britain, France or in South America. This problem must be given fundamental reconsideration.

Finally, I want to point out that Jesus is not the initiator of Christianity. He is seen as the founder, but this is a misapprehension. Jesus did not see himself, or refer to himself as the Saviour, or as a religious authority. Moreover, the results of recent research in Bible studies show that, although Jesus himself was baptized, he did not baptize others. Thus, Jesus was a man of principled religiosity, who saved people based on a spirit of anti-authoritarian freedom. It is necessary to reclaim this spirit of Jesus in order to fundamentally reform Christianity. I believe that it is useless to return to Paul and the early Church. "Japanese" Christianity and other Christianities can be renewed by returning to Jesus. His philosophy is not a religion in the strict sense. Jesus was a religious revolutionary who believed that institutions, dogma and ceremonies were completely unnecessary.