

**CHRISTIANITY AS A  
SOCIAL FACTOR  
IN MODERN JAPAN**

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Christianity as a Social Factor in Modern Japan by Allen Klein Faust

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**ALLEN KLEIN FAUST**

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# Christianity as a Social Factor in Modern Japan

BY  
ALLEN KLEIN FAUST

A THESIS  
PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THE  
UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

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## PREFACE

THE two main sources of our knowledge concerning the influence of Christianity in Japan have been the missionary address and the globe-trotter's account. In a certain sense, both of these informants have "axes to grind." The former is expected to lay special emphasis only on that part of the truth which will best serve to loosen the purse-strings of his hearers, while many of the latter class of persons, when they come to a missionary country, engage themselves in seeking some new reasons why they should not contribute towards foreign missions.

That both of these sources of information are unreliable and insufficient, is proved by the remarkable amount of ignorance on this point that is met with among otherwise intelligent American Christians. But I feel certain, also, that the missionary, because of his first-hand knowledge and his sympathetic relation with the Japanese people, is a trustworthy authority on the subject of Christian influence provided he can be caught when he is off his guard.

Any person writing about the life of peoples other than that of his native land, has one immense advantage. It is that he does not feel obliged, either by love or prejudice, to defend the institutions and customs which he is reviewing. But the corresponding disadvantage which meets him at every turn, is the fact that a foreigner cannot fully fathom the nature and feelings of other people and thus truly sympathize with them.

The question becomes doubly difficult when the institution to be studied is Christianity in Japan, a non-Christian country. The American Christian who attempts to review his own religious institutions under foreign conditions, is constantly in danger of interpreting facts with an Americanized vision; and the Japanese

critic is passing judgment on something totally foreign to him though in his own country. But on all phases of the subject, as a possible corrective, I add to my own impressions the statements of Japanese who are prominent in their respective fields. Dogmatic assertions on a question like this must in the nature of the case be utterly discountenanced.

Another difficulty in determining how much Japan has been influenced by Christianity comes from the fact that in the West Christianity has become an organic part of the social life, and this makes it impossible to separate religious influence from that of mere civilization. Moreover, the influence of Christianity in Japan is not limited to those people that have been baptized nor to those of them that may be considered orthodox Christians. Such limitation would surely make out a worse case for Christianity in Japan than the facts warrant.

Only as we remember that the Gospel is a principle and not a fixed dogma, a seed and not a fruit, can we realize the universal applicability of the spirit of Christianity and understand that the outward expression of this spirit is not necessarily identical in all countries and in all ages. Christianity does not only *allow* of development, but its very essence is that of progress and growth. Constant change in its interpretation and constant adjustment to new conditions are necessary to its continued pre-eminence as a spiritual power in human society. Each social group has its peculiar environments and resultant individuality. Hence it is only reasonable to expect that the philosophy and institutions of Japanese Christianity will be different from those of the Western world, though both are inspired by the same spirit of Christian love.

The Christianity of the past also has varied greatly in its practical content. Two hundred years ago the whole Christian Church believed in slavery and vigorously defended it on Scriptural grounds, and almost universally practised it. Intolerance and the right of taking life for heresy were considered very important parts of Christianity. In the time of Galileo and later, the Church thought it impossible for a person to get to heaven



if he believed that the earth was round and that it revolved around the sun. From facts such as these, it becomes very evident that it is both futile and false to endeavor to measure the influence of Christianity in terms of theology. It must be measured in terms of human life, its constant aim being to incorporate the spirit of Jesus vitally and effectively in individual and social life.

It is from this point of view that the following chapters are written. They are neither a theological treatise nor a missionary essay, but an effort to make known a few of the social problems with which Japan is wrestling at present, and to determine what part Christianity is taking in the solution of these problems.

The fact that I have done Christian work in Japan for a number of years, during which time I acquired a fair ability to speak the language and gained some reading knowledge of Japanese literature, has led one of my professors in the University of Pennsylvania to suggest that I write on this subject, and this is the reason for my undertaking to make a sociological study of Christianity in Japan.

A. K. F.

LANSDALE, PA.,  
May 28, 1909.

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