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## **Kanzo Uchimura, a Japanese Kierkegaard**

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### **Introduction**

Kanzo Uchimura (1861–1930) is famous as the founder of the non-church movement (Mukyokai Undo) in Japan, and he was one of the most influential leaders of a spiritual movement in Japan after the Meiji Restoration (1868), the beginning of modern Japan. He was born as the son of a low-ranking samurai on March 23, 1861, under the Tokugawa feudal system at the end of the Edo Period. He became a Christian as a student at the Sapporo No Gakko (Sapporo Agricultural College in Hokkaido, now Hokkaido University) in 1878. William Smith Clark (1826–1886), who established Massachusetts Agricultural College (now University of Massachusetts, Amherst) and became its first President, was asked to become the first Vice President of Sapporo No Gakko and visited Sapporo in 1876. All of the students in the inaugural class became Christians because of him. Kanzo Uchimura, who entered Sapporo No Gakko after Clark's departure from Sapporo, was influenced by them and converted to Christianity.

After graduating, Uchimura worked as a government clerk in Hokkaido, and in 1884, he visited the United States to deepen his belief [2]. In 1886, while experiencing hard times in the US, he had a decisive conversion, due to the president of Amherst College, Julius Hawley Seelye (1824–1895) [3].

Uchimura graduated from Amherst College in July 1886 and entered Hartford Seminary, but he was disappointed at the theological education and the reality of Christian churches in the US [4], so he returned to Japan in May 1888 with a great ambition to establish a church that was for the Japanese by the Japanese.

Two years later, in September 1890, he was hired at Tokyo Daiichi Koto Chugakko (the First Higher Middle School, later called Tokyo Daiichi High School, and, after World War II, the College of General Education of the University of Tokyo), but he voluntarily resigned on February 3 the following year because he had committed lese-majesty against the Meiji

Emperor. This trouble did not end at his resignation, as his wife, Kazuko, died less than three months later, as a result of her fatigue after caring for him.

In May 1895, he published *How I became a Christian*, first in Japan, and later, in November of that year, in the US, with the title, *The Diary of A Japanese Convert*. As I will explain below, this book did not draw any public attention at that time, but the German version, released in 1904, the year of the Russo-Japanese war, became very popular and was translated into many European languages.

In January 1897, Uchimura moved to Tokyo to begin service as the senior editor of the *Yorozu Choho*, a popular newspaper. He wrote articles in English, in which he advocated the position of the poor and suppressed people of various nations. He quit the *Yorozu Choho* in May 1898.

In July 1900, he launched the monthly magazine, *Biblical Studies*. This continued for 30 years until his death. The last edition was #357. *Biblical Studies*, in some ways, showed "How I Worked a Christian." [5].

In 1926, he started to edit and publish the *Japan Intelligencer*, but it ceased its publication in 1928.

Uchimura died on March 28, 1930.

### **I. The time *How I became a Christian* was published**

*How I Became a Christian* was completed in December 1893 and published in May 1895. In May 1888, Uchimura returned to Japan from the US, and he married Kazuko Yokohama on July 1, 1889. In February of that year, the Constitution of the Empire of Japan had been promulgated. In October the following year, the Imperial Rescript on Education was put into law. One month before this promulgation, Uchimura got a job at Daiichi Koto Chugakku. As mentioned above, on January 9, 1891, he refused to bow before the Rescript, and, as a result, voluntarily resigned from the school.

He explained what happened on that day in a letter he wrote to his American friend, Bell, on March 6, 1891.

Since I wrote you last, my life has been a very eventful one. On the 9th of Jan., there was in the High Middle School where I taught, a ceremony to acknowledge the Imperial Precept on Education. After the address of the President and reading of the said Precept, the professors and students were asked to go up to the platform one by one, and bow to the Imperial signature affixed to the Precept, *in the manner as we used to bow before our ancestral relics as prescribed in Buddhist and Shinto ceremonies*. I was not at all prepared to meet such a strange ceremony, for the thing was the new invention of the president of the school. As I was third in turn to go up and bow, I had scarcely time to think upon the matter. So, hesitating in doubt, I took safer course for my Christian conscience, and in the presence of sixty professors (all non-Christians, the two other Xtian prof.'s beside myself having absented themselves) and over one thousands students, I took my stand and did *not* bow! It was an awful moment for me, for I instantly apprehended the result of my conduct. The anti-Christian sentiment which was and still is strong in the school, and which it was a very delicate affair

to soothe down by meekness and kindness on our part, found a just cause (as they suppose) for bringing forth against me accusations of insult against the nation and its Head, and through me against the Christian in general. First, some turbulent students, and then prof.'s took up stones against me. The nation's Head was insulted, the school was desecrated, and if such a rogue and traitor as Kanzo Uchimura is to be kept in the school, better destroy the whole school. The matter went abroad, and then presses took up the echo.—Meanwhile, a severe form of influenza took hold of me. Within a week, it changed to a dangerous form of pneumonia. My poor wife and mother stood by my bed night and day, while the merciless world raged outside [1, v. 36, pp. 331-332].

This situation caused him tremendous financial and spiritual hardship. This affair was harder, in a sense, than Kierkegaard's Corsair affair.

The night before the ceremony he informed his bosom friend, Miyabe, in a letter that he wished to resign from the Sapporo independent church, apparently because he feared some act of his might implicate others by association [1, v. 36, pp.329-330], [6]. This show of Uchimura's thoughtful attitude should remind us of Kierkegaard before his attack upon Christendom in *The Moment*.

Uchimura was condemned as "a vicious teacher" and "a disloyal subject to the Emperor." One of his harshest critics was Prof. Tetsujiro Inoue, the Professor of Philosophy at Tokyo Imperial University, who was reputed to be the greatest philosopher of the East. His criticism of Christianity triggered a nationwide controversy known as the "Collision between Education and Religion."

I would like to cite another letter from Uchimura to Bell, written in Kyoto on March 29, 1893:

He [Inoue] in his three long articles in an Educational magazine said all evil things about Christianity, making many personal remarks about myself, especially about my refusal to bow to the Imperial signature. He is a very proud man, and believes himself to be the most enlightened man in Japan. I accepted his challenge, and ventilated myself of all the accumulated feelings of the past three years. I believe never have used more forcible language, but I was compelled to do so. Then other papers gave extracts from my article, and spoke altogether in my favor. [1, v. 36, p. 372 cf. *Uchimura Kanzo, His Autobiographical Epistles to Bell*, translated and notes by Yasujiro Yamamoto, Shinkyō Shuppansha, 1949, pp. 98-101].

Uchimura wrote about his situation and sense of isolation from the community at large in his *How I Became a Christian*:

...for ten years, though the hand of Providence hath dealt quite bitterly with us, and we have been made to pass through many a deeper water; and though the faith we owned has made us repulsive in the eyes of the world, and much of the comfort of life were to be given up for His name's sake, I believe, we are still second to no other family in the land in our love and loyalty to our Heavenly Master. Four years ago, another member was added to our family. She came to us as a "heathen," but within a year, no woman was more faithful to her Lord and Savior than she. The good Lord

hath removed her away from us after she remained with us only a year and half; but her coming to us was her opportunity of finding the Savior of her soul. [1, v. 3, p. 53].

Under these poignant conditions, he wrote many books and essays. They are listed in the table below. He also wrote other essays, which are not mentioned in the table.

### 1893 (33)

February	<i>The Consolations of a Christian Christopher Columbus</i>
March	Wrote an Open Letter to Dr. Tetsujiro Inoue
April	Moved to Kumamoto from Osaka.
August	Moved to Kyoto <i>Search after Peace</i>
December	Completed the manuscript of <i>How I Became a Christian</i> <i>The book of Ruth</i>

### 1894 (34)

February	<i>The True Spirit of the Christian Ministry</i>
May	<i>The Earth and Man</i>
July	Lecture on The Best Memento to Posterity (published July 1897)
August	Japan clashed with China over the control of Korea (The Sino-Japanese War) (-April 1895). "Justification of the Korean War" "A Record of an Exile" (-April 1895)
September	Japanese translation of "Justification of the Korean War"
November	<i>Japan and Japanese (Representative Men of Japan)</i>

### 1895 (35)

May *How I became a Christian* published in Japan. American version, *The Diary of A Japanese Convert* was published in November

### 1896 (36)

September Moved to Nagoya

### 1897 (37)

January Moved to Tokyo because of his work as the senior editor of the *Yorozu Choho*, a popular newspaper  
July *The Best Memento to Posterity*

He moved many times to find jobs at schools, but eventually decided to earn a living by writing. The productiveness of Uchimura's writing is another similarity between him and Kierkegaard.

## **II. The Impression of How I became a Christian in European Countries**

In December 1893, Uchimura completed *How I became a Christian* in English. It was first published in Japan in May 1895, and was published in the US in November that year with the title *The Diary of a Japanese Convert*.

This book did not draw any public attention, but was found by Wilhelm

Gundert (1880–1971) [7], translated into German by his friend, and published by his father’s publisher in Germany in 1904 during the Russo-Japanese War. This book received considerable feedback in Germany and Switzerland [8], and was later translated into many European languages[9].

Some of the readers of this book wrote letters to Uchimura, calling him a Japanese Kierkegaard. Here are some examples of these letters:

The Danish translator, Maria Wolff, wrote in the preface of her translation (1906): “...his thought is very similar to Søren Kierkegaard’s...”

In 1911, C. A. Skovgaard-Petersen, a Danish Pastor, visited Japan and met Uchimura. He wrote about his impression of Uchimura in “Fra Nutidens Japan” (1911). [10].

Naturally, Kanzo Uchimura was one of the people I visited when I was in Tokyo. I was very pleased to meet the man who had given a beautiful and vivid description of the development of his own faith in his book, *How I became a Christian*. His description in Danish is well known: he keeps neither to a certain denomination nor to a single parish; he is, as it were, a Japanese Søren Kierkegaard. We can also find him using extracts from Kierkegaard in the journal that he edits. But he has no profound acquaintance with Kierkegaard, seeming rather to know him essentially second hand from a German friend.

On November 8, 1912, W. Rudin (1833–1921), a famous Kierkegaard scholar in Sweden, sent his book, *Sören Kierkegaards Person och Författarskap* (1880) to Uchimura, with a letter in which he wrote “somebody says that you are rather isolated and don’t belong to any sects and make a regrettable separation from Christians in Japan. And I have heard that you have some knowledge of Søren Kierkegaard in Denmark. He is very representative of ‘individual Christianity.’ He should be known as a prophet in his country.”

In 1919, Leonhard Ragaz (1868–1945) sent a letter to his friend Jakob Hunziker in Japan, in which he wrote; “Uchimura might just come closer to truth with his ‘apocalyptic’ faith than all ‘evolutionists.’ Could you send greetings to him from me, as from a person who counts his book, *How I became a Christian*, as a great experience and thinks a lot of him, and talks about him as one of true ‘Vicars of Christ’ on earth.” [1, v. 25, p. 212], [11].

### **III. Why did European readers see Kierkegaard in How I Became a Christian?**

At the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, many German readers were interested in Kierkegaard.

Uchimura’s book was translated into German in 1904, five years before the first German edition of *Søren Kierkegaard’s Complete Works*, by Gottsched and Schrempf, was published. The first German translation of Kierkegaard was *The Moment* in 1861, and the next year *For Self-Examination, Recommended to the Present Age* appeared. The German translations of Kierkegaard’s books that were published between 1862 and 1904 were: *Practice in Christianity* (1878), *The Sickness unto Death* (1881),

*Either/Or* (1885), *Stages on Life's Way, Twelve Discourses* (1886), *Works of Love, Philosophical Fragments and The Concept of Anxiety* (1890), a second translation of *The Moment* (1896), and *The Seducer's Diary* (1903).

The main German interest in Kierkegaard at that time lay in his attack on Christendom. German readers gained their perspective on Kierkegaard from two Danish thinkers: G. Brandes and H. Høffding. The German translation of G. Brandes' book on Kierkegaard (*Sören Kierkegaard. Ein literarisches Charakterbild*) was published in 1879, and Høffding's *Sören Kierkegaard als Philosoph* was published in 1896. Kierkegaard was attracting increasing attention in Germany, and this was the background of Gundert's discovery of Uchimura.

#### **IV. What did Europeans see in *How I became a Christian*?**

Why did *How I became a Christian* lead Gundert to visit Japan and stay with Uchimura? And why did some Europeans compare Uchimura to Kierkegaard? They saw him as an honest young figure, who had encountered Christian teachings, had suffered because of the gospel in order to identify himself with Christian truth, and had a decisive conversion. They thought that Uchimura's *How I Became a Christian* duplicated Kierkegaard's thoughts on Christianity.

#### **V. Where did European readers find Kierkegaard in *How I Became a Christian*?**

##### 1. The title and Uchimura's use of a pseudonym

The title of Uchimura's *How I became a Christian* reminds us directly of Kierkegaard's religious task: "How to become a Christian." When Uchimura first published this book in Japan, he used a pseudonym, Jonathan X, [12] in the preface. In his letter to Bell from January 3, 1894, he said: "I like to send it out anonymously, without any introduction by a favored author or dedication to any of my friends, but solely upon its own merits" [1, v. 36, p. 391]. This phrase, "solely upon its own merits" was also a request that Kierkegaard asked of his readers when they read his book. This pseudonym was, however, only used in the Japanese edition. In the American edition, with the title, *The Diary of a Japanese Convert*, Uchimura used his own name as the author. Even though European readers were given the name Uchimura, I think that even the author's true name formed a sort of pseudonym for them, as they had no information about him at the time. So they did read this book "solely upon its own merits."

##### 2. Uchimura's attack upon "churches," the established Christendom and priests in the US; becoming the founder of the "Non-Church movement" in Japan

Here I will introduce W. S. Clark's covenant, which the students at Sapporo No Gakko, including Uchimura, signed.

##### *Covenant of Believers in Jesus*

The undersigned members of S. A. [Sapporo Agricultural] College, desiring to confess Christ according to his command, and to perform with

true fidelity every Christian duty in order to show our love and gratitude to that blessed Savior who has made atonement for our sins by his death on the cross; and earnestly wishing to advance his Kingdom among men for promotion of his glory and the salvation of those for whom he died, do solemnly covenant with God and with each other from this time forth to be his faithful disciples, and to live in strict compliance with the letter and the spirit of his teachings; and whenever a suitable opportunity offers we promise to present ourselves for examination, baptism and admission to some evangelical church.

We believe the Bible to be the only direct revelation in languages from God to man, and the only perfect and infallible guide to a glorious future life.

We believe in one everlasting God who is our Merciful Father, our just and sovereign Ruler, and who is to be our final Judge.

We believe that all who sincerely repent and by faith in the Son of God obtain the forgiveness of their sins, will be graciously guided through this life by the Holy Spirit and protected by the watchful providence of the Heavenly Father, and so at length prepared for the enjoyment and pursuit of the redeemed and holy ones.... [1, v. 3, pp. 15-16].

After stating these beliefs, they promised to follow the Christian Commandments from the Ten Commandments.

This covenant was very liberal and detached from denominationalism or a particular sect within the Christian church, and reflected the puritanical spirit in New England.

After the introduction of this covenant, Uchimura said, "The practical advantage of the new faith was evident to me at once. I had felt it even while I was engaging all my powers to repel it from me" [1, v. 3. P. 17]. He went on to say, "The Christian monotheism laid its axe at the root of all my superstitions. All the vows I had made, and the manifold forms of worship with which I had been attempting to appease my angry gods, could now be dispensed with by owning this one God; and my reason and conscience responded 'yea!' " [1, v. 3, p. 17].

Clark taught Christian ethics as based on the Bible. His students were very influenced by his character. He wanted only for them to become "Christian gentlemen," and did not teach any other strict rules. The gentleman represents the characteristics of honesty, truthfulness, love of truth, justice and fairness, benevolence, independence, and faithfulness to God. These virtues resonated with and affected Uchimura, so he said that his reason and conscience responded "yea!"

On June 2, 1878, Uchimura "RECEIVED BAPTISM from him [13], together with his six brethren" [1, v. 3, p. 20]. He adopted the Christian name Jonathan [14], because he "was a strong advocate of the virtue of friendship, and Jonathan's love for David pleased" him. After their baptism, they formed their small "church" in their private room. Then the seven students joined the Methodist Episcopal Church through Mr. Harris on December 1. Uchimura described this situation as follows: "The Rev. Mr. H., our beloved Missionary, was again in the town, and we joined his church without scrutinizing *pro* and *con* of his or any other denomination. We only knew he was a good man, and thought that his church must be

good, too" [1, v. 3, p. 27-28].

Uchimura explained how the little church was organized. "The little church was entirely democratic, and every one of us stood on the same ecclesiastical footing as the rest of the members. This we found to be thoroughly Biblical and Apostolic" [1, v. 3, p. 24].

The seven brethren began to plan to have a real church, instead of a toy church, after their graduation. One thing occurred that concerned them, however: the possibility of two churches—both Episcopalian and Methodist—in the same small place. One was an Episcopalian church and the other was a Methodist church. He "felt for the first time in" his "Christian experience the *evils of denominationalism*" [1, v. 3, p. 40].

When they planned to build a new church, the Methodist Episcopal Church of America helped them with 400 dollars. They decided to borrow the money, rather than to be given it. They wanted their church to be independent, and explained their idea to the Missionary, who sent them a letter briefly stating that he could not give his consent to their plan to build an independent church, and asking them to pay back the money to him. Uchimura said:

If the Methodist Episcopal Mission lent us money that we might start its denominational church in our place, we should never have asked its aid. Our independence was not intended as a revolt against Methodism, but as an expression of our real attachment to our heavenly Master, and of the highest sentiment of our love to our nation [1, v. 3, p. 59].

Therefore, they paid back the money and gained their independence in 1882. The church was called the Sapporo Independent Church. They wrote its constitution, and their "creed was the Apostle's Creed." The church discipline was based upon the "Covenant of Believers in Jesus," drawn up by their "New England professor five years ago" [1, v. 3, p. 56]. The Sapporo Independent Church was successful.

"*The evils of denominationalism*," for Uchimura, could be seen clearly in the US. He said, "America is a land of sects, where each tries to augment its numbers at the expense of others. Already such strange isms as Unitarianism, Swedenborgianism, Quakerism, etc., to say nothing of the others with which I was already familiar, were tried upon me" [1, v. 3, p. 102]. Those "isms" led him to a state of "much doubting" [1, v. 3, p. 103]. He was at a loss regarding which to make his own; therefore, he "made up his mind to accept none of them" [1, v. 3, pp. 102-103]. He confessed that "Men's opinions are various, but God's Truth must be one. *Unless taught by God Himself, the true knowledge cannot be obtained*" [1, v. 3, p. 103]. These experiences led him to establish the "non-Church," and rely only on the Bible.

Uchimura's first impressions of Christendom (in the US) were impressively described in Chapter 6 of *How I Became a Christian*. His original idea of Christian America was that it "was lofty, religious, Puritanic" [1, v. 3, p. 79]. His image of America was that of the "Holy Land," because he learned "all that was noble, useful, and uplifting through the vehicle of the English language" [1, v. 3, p. 79]. But he gradually unlearned this childish notion. What most stirred up his feeling of indignation was

the racial distinctions he saw in the US. "In no other respect, however, did Christendom appear to me to be more like heathendom than in a strong race prejudice still existing among its people" [1, v. 3, p. 83].

He was especially astonished at the strength of American feeling against the Chinese. He stated as follows:

But strong and unchristian as their feeling is against the Indians and the Africans, the prejudice, the aversion, the repugnance, which they entertain against the children of Sina was something which we in heathendom have never seen the like. The land which sends over missionaries to China, to convert her sons and daughters to Christianity from the nonsense of Confucius and the superstitions of Buddha—the very same land abhors even the shadow of a Chinaman cast upon its soil [1, v. 3, p. 84].

Uchimura said that time did not allow him to "speak of other unchristian features of Christendom," but he did provide some examples: "What about legalized lottery which can depend for its stability upon its millions in gold and silver, right in face of simple morality clear even to the understanding of a child [1, v. 3, p. 89]," and so on. He even stated as follows:

If it was Christianity that made the so-called Christendom of today, let Heaven's eternal curse rest upon it! [1, v. 3, p. 89]

One thing I shall never do in future: I shall never defend Christianity upon its being the religion of Europe and America. An "external evidence" of this nature is not only weak, but actually vicious in its general effects [1, v. 3, p. 90].

These impressions compelled him to establish a Christianity that was for the Japanese by the Japanese. He thought himself fortunate to have been born in a heathen country.

Uchimura had been born into a military samurai family. The samurai placed a high value on practice, rectitude, and especially on an honest attitude towards money. He characterized these traits as "vivere est militare" [1, v. 3, p. 8]. He saw priests as most impractical and he hated professional clergyman from the bottom of his heart. However, after his conversion at Amherst College, he began to think of theology as "Theology"—the science of God. He explained his changing perception of theology as follows:

The daily increasing sense of reality of spiritual experiences helped me to dispel all the notions of hollowness and non-utility which I had once attached to Theology. Indeed I saw the reason of my hatred of Theology. If spirit is real, as rice and potatoes are real, why despise Theology and praise Agriculture? If it is noble to grow corn, and feed myself and my hungry fellowmen with the fruits of God's Earth, why ignoble to learn of His Laws to appropriate His Spirit to our hungry souls, and be made nobler and manlier thereby? [1, v. 3, p. 133], [15].

He decided to enter Hartford Seminary to study Theology. But he said in his heart:

Lord, I shall study Theology if Thou compelest me not to be Reverend.

Should I succeed to take in all the theologies of Christendom, I shall not add to my name that ponderous title designated by double D's. From that Thou must release me for this final sacrifice of mine." He said Yea, and upon this agreement I entered a Theological Seminary [1, v. 3, p. 134].

But the seminary was not the place for him. He was disappointed at the atmosphere of the students and the teaching contents of the theologians there. He wrote in his diary at this time:

Oct. 12. Spiritless Theology is the driest and most worthless of all studies. To see students laughing and jesting while discussing serious subjects is almost shocking. No wonder they cannot get at the bottom of the Truth. It requires the utmost zeal and earnestness to draw life from the Rock of Ages.

Nov. 3. I am seeking for a higher type of morality than "must." I am hungering after the morality that cometh from God's grace. But such a morality is denied not only by the majority of mankind, but very little seems to be believed in by the students and professors of theological seminaries. I do not hear anything new and different within these sacred walls from those which I hear outside. Confucius and Buddha can teach me the largest part of what these theologues are presuming to teach to the heathen.

Nov. 7. O my Soul, away from isms, be they Methodism or Congregationalism, or any other high-sounding isms. Seek the Truth, quit thyself like a man, cease from men, and look above thee [1, v. 3, p. 135-136].

What made his fear of license even bigger was the fact that "sermons have market-values, as pork and tomatoes and pumpkins have." His notion of religion was that "religion is not usually convertible into cash. Indeed, more religion, less cash" [1, v. 3, p. 139].

Is it easy to see from these quotations how Uchimura's thought can be compared to Kierkegaard's opinions in *The Concept of Anxiety*.

That science, just as much as poetry and art, presupposes a mood in the creator as well as in the observer, and that an error in the modulation is just as disturbing as an error in the development of thought, have been entirely forgotten in our time, when inwardness has been completely forgotten, and also the category of appropriation, because of the joy over all the glory men thought they possessed [16].

Uchimura's emphases also remind us of Kierkegaard's explanation of earnestness: "the mood that corresponds to sin is earnestness" [16, p. 15]. We could also say that the "higher type of morality than 'must,'" which Uchimura was seeking for, was the second (new) ethics of Kierkegaard [16, p. 20-23].

Uchimura returned to Japan with the following conviction:

In forming any right estimate of Christendom, it is essential for us first of all to make a rigid distinction between Christianity pure and simple, and Christianity garnished and dogmatized by its professors [1, v. I, p. 145].

3. Other expressions from Uchimura that are associated with Kierkegaard's thought in *How I Became a Christian*

*Truth and Idea*

We say Christianity is Truth. But that is defining an undefinable by another undefinable. "What is Truth?" is asked by the Roman Pilate and other untruthful men. Truth like Life is hardest, yea impossible, to be defined;—*The true knowledge of Life comes only by living it.*—So, Truth. We come to know it only by keeping it.

So, I came to see that the indefinability of Christianity is not an evidence of its non-existence, much less of its humbugness. The very fact that it grows more to me the more I conform myself to its teaching, shows its close relationship with the Infinite Truth itself [1, v. I, p. 146].

*Salvation and Faith*

Unless the Spirit of God touches my heart directly, there cannot be any conversion. What a consoling thought!—salvation is of God, and no man or thing or circumstance can take it from me. It is surer than a mountain itself [1, v. I, p. 120].

O Lord, acknowledging my total incapacity and depravity, I come unto Thee to be filled with Thy life. I am unclean; I pray *Thee* to cleanse me. I have no faith; give Thou me faith [1, v. I, p. 128].

*Lack of ambition and too much ambition*

In every man's life there is a sort of paradigm divinely appointed beforehand. His success consists in conforming himself to this paradigm, neither coming short of it, nor exceeding it. In it alone is perfect peace. His body and mind can be used to the best possible advantage when he walks in it. Lack of ambition often keeps him short of it, and he goes away from this world without accomplishing his work to the utmost of his capacity. On the other hand, too much ambition causes him to overleap it; hence a shattered system and premature death. Man's selective power (free-will) lies in conforming himself to this paradigm [1, v. I, p. 136].

*Fear and Trembling*

His grace fills up all the vacancies left by the sad experiences of life. I know my life hath been guided by Him, and though I go with much fear and trembling to my home-land, I fear no evil, for He will still manifest more of Himself upon me [1, v. I, p. 162].

## **VI. What connects Uchimura and Kierkegaard?**

### ***The spirit of Bushido and Pietism***

Uchimura was 16 years old when he encountered Christianity and was urged to sign the covenant written by Clark. I think that the most important part of the covenant for young Uchimura was "to perform with true fidelity every Christian duty in order to show our love and gratitude to that blessed Savior who has made atonement for our sins by his death on the cross" and "do solemnly covenant with God and with each other from this time forth to be his faithful disciples, and to live in strict compliance with the letter and the spirit of his teachings." He wrote that, after this,

“The Rubicon was thus crossed forever. We vowed our allegiance to our new Master, and the sign of the Cross was made upon our brows. Let us serve Him with the loyalty we have been taught to show toward our earthly lord and master, and go on conquering kingdom after kingdom” [1, v. I, pp. 20-21]. It is important to note that the words from these above citations, “fidelity,” “faithful,” “love and gratitude,” “to live in strict compliance with the letter and the spirit of teaching,” and “loyalty,” are the key concepts of Japanese Bushido, the *noblesse oblige* of the warrior class in Japan, which is fundamentally based on Confucian ethics.

*In How I Became a Christian*, Uchimura wrote as follows:

My father was a good Confucian scholar, who could repeat from memory almost every passage in the writings and sayings of the sage. So naturally my early education was in that line; and though I could not understand the ethico-political precepts of the Chinese sages, I was imbued with the general sentiments of their teachings. Loyalty to my feudal lords, and fidelity and respects to my parents and teachers, were the central themes of the Chinese ethics. Filial piety was taught to be the source of all virtues, akin to the Solomonic precept of “Fear of God is the beginning of wisdom.”—Loyalty to feudal lords, especially in time of war, took more romantic shapes in the ethical conceptions of the youth of my land. He was to consider his life as light as dust when called to serve his lord in exigency;—No less weightier was to be the youth’s consideration for his master (his intellectual and moral preceptor), who was to him no mere school-teacher or college professor on *quid pro quo* principle, but a veritable didaskalos, in whom he could and must completely confide the care of his body and soul. The Lord, the Father and the Master, constituted his Trinity [1, v. I, pp. 9-10].

Between leaving his work at a psychiatric hospital in Elwyn in July and his entrance into Amherst College in September 1885, Uchimura wrote an article titled, “Moral Traits of Yamato-Damashii (‘Spirit of Japan’)” [1, v. I, p. 113 ff], [17]. He explained very similar ideas about the Spirit of Japan in this article as those mentioned above. He discussed three distinct traits of the primitive nature of the Japanese: “1. Filial piety; 2. Loyalty to higher authorities; 3. Love for inferiors” [1, v. I, p. 114]. He tried to “show the Western readers how far the ‘Yamato-heart’ is essentially Christian *in spirit*” [1, v. I, p.114]. In this article, he said, “while in Japanese eyes, filial love is the foundation-stone of all virtues, loyalty to masters is the crown of them all” [1, v. I, pp. 120-121]. He continued, “To no other Christians does the word “Master,” applied to Christ, come with a deeper meaning than to the Japanese disciples of the “martyr of Nazareth” [1, v. I, p. 121-122]. Regarding love for inferiors, he expressed his ideas as follows:

The stories of sacrifices made by inferiors for those above them in authority have a pathos of their own; but when superiors deny themselves ease and comfort, and in some instances lay down their lives for their dependents, the action holds a deeper meaning to Christians, who have so lately learned that “the Highest” has offered the supreme sacrifice of himself, not because we “loved him,” but that he “loved us” [1, v. I, p. 129].

There are many stories that illustrate “that spirit in Japan, which moves

the greater to suffer for the less, the superior for the weaker inferior” [1, v. I, pp. 133-134]. Uchimura named Takamori Saigo (1828–1877) as an example of this spirit: he had a most important role in the Meiji Restoration and was one of the greatest heroes in Japanese history. I will quote Saigo through Uchimura’s bosom friend, Inazo Nitobe, in his famous *Bushido*.

The Way is the way of heaven and earth; man’s place is to follow it; therefore make it the object of thy life to reverence heaven. Heaven loves me and others with equal love; therefore, with the love wherewith thou lovest thyself, love others. Make not man thy partner but heaven, and making heaven thy partner do the best. Never condemn others; but see to it that thou comest not short of thine own mark [18, pp. 82-83].

Nitobe said, “benevolence, feeling of distress,” that is, “love, magnanimity, affection for others, sympathy and pity, were ever recognized to be supreme virtues, the highest of all the attributes of the human soul” [18, p. 56].

Three different groups played key roles in the mission and development of Christianity in Japan: (1) Kumamoto Band, (2) Yokohama Band, (3) Sapporo Band. These three bands were founded by American puritanical missionaries. The missionaries “grafted” Christianity upon the spirit of the young generation derived from samurai families at the beginning of the Meiji Era. Uchimura said, “Christianity grafted upon Bushido will be the finest product of the world” [19].

American Puritanism had one of its roots in Pietism, founded by Philipp Jakob Spener (1635–1705) [20] in Frankfurt, August Hermann Franke (1663–1727), at the University of Halle, a center of European Pietism, and, in particular, Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf, (1700–1760), the father of the Herrnhut Brethren (Moravian Church). At ten years old, “Zinzendorf attended the Royal Paedagogium at Halle University for six years, and there was influenced by Professor Francke” [21, p. 5]. In 1705, the University of Halle made a partnership with King Ferdinand IV of Denmark, and the next year he sent two Pietist missionaries to Tranquebar in India. They were the first Protestant missionaries in India. Zinzendorf gained a great influence from this movement. He made a small group with his young friends, named “the Order of the Grain of Mustard Seed,” which was a foreshadowing of his missionary activities. In 1731, Zinzendorf visited Copenhagen to attend the coronation of King Christian VI of Denmark. In 1741, he resigned from his responsibilities as a bishop of the Moravian church in order to be free to serve the church in America. A year later, he renounced the title of “Count” and the privilege of nobility in order to be more effective in his ministry in the colonies. Instead, he was known as “brother.” Then in 1744, he told Spangenberg to call the movement in America the Evangelical Brethren rather than Moravian or Lutheran in an endeavor to be nondescript to discourage people from other denominations from joining them. His passion was to work towards an interdenominational fellowship that God would use to bring renewal and unity to churches, and to take the message about Christ to those who had never heard” [21, p. 18].

I have quoted from a short biography of Zinzendorf by an American

scholar, but it is also based on an article written by W. Gundert, "The Biography of Count Zinzendorf." Gundert, who was born in a family of Herrnhut Brethren, was asked by Uchimura to discuss Zinzendorf's life in the article that was published in *Biblical Studies*, vol. 9, no. 11, 12, and vol. 10, no. 1-4 in 1906-1907. Julius Hawley Seelye, Uchimura's teacher in his faith, had studied Philosophy and Theology at the University of Halle from 1852 to 1853. I do not know for certain whether he had a background in the Herrnhut Brethren, although he was born in Bethel, Connecticut, which lies near Bethlehem and Nazareth in Philadelphia, where Zinzendorf embedded the spirit of the Moravian Church. In any case, after Gundert's article of Zinzendorf had been published, Uchimura wrote:

The person who showed Christ to me most clearly was Seelye Sensei, the President of Amherst College. Some people will probably think that this means my faith was derived from Americans, but this is not true. In retrospect, it was Seelye Sensei's non-American faith that embedded Christ so deeply in my mind. He appropriated his faith during his studies in Germany: his faith was like that of the German pietists, and was unanimously recognized by those who know both Seelye and Pietism [Uchimura proposed the Japanese translation of the word as "Keiken"]. His faith was similar to that of Zinzendorf, whose bibliography was published in *Biblical Studies* [1, v. 15, p. 375].

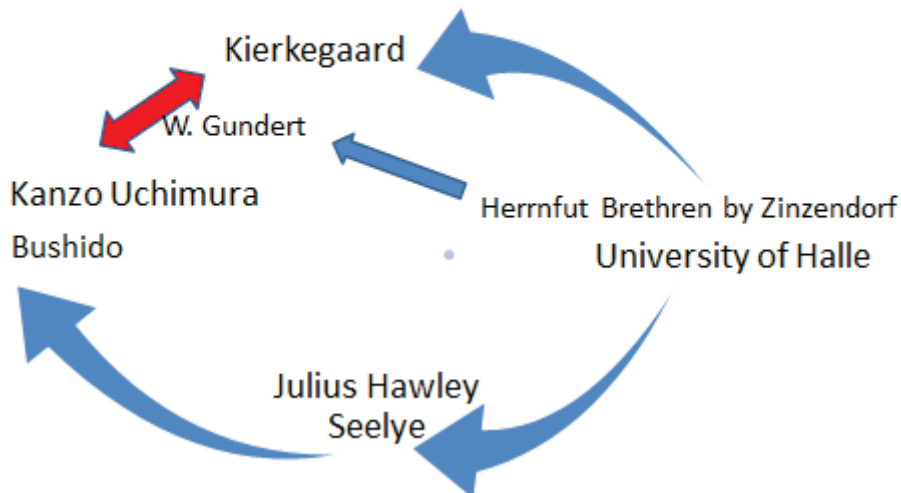
Uchimura also promised to write an introduction of Kierkegaard by Gundert [1, v. 14, p. 491] never fulfilled this.

As for the relationship between Kierkegaard and pietism, his father, Michael P. Kierkegaard, was a member of the Herrnhut Brethren (Brødrersamfundet) in Copenhagen. Joakim Garff states; "Similarly distant from the Christianity represented by Mynster was the Moravian Congregation of Brethren, whose meetinghouse was on Stormgade, where the Kierkegaard family regularly gathered on Sunday. The religious group had been founded in 1739, inspired by the Herrnhut colony on his estate Berthelsdorf in Saxony. During the first decades of the nineteenth century, the Copenhagen Moravian Congregation experienced such an increase in attendance that it had been necessary to rebuild the meeting hall to accommodate no fewer than six hundred souls. Michael Kierkegaard was charged with a leading role in accomplishing this task, and in so doing, he was able to erect a quite tangible memorial to his lifelong relationship with Moravian. Saxtrop, who had been Michael Kierkegaard's pastor until 1795, was closely connected to the Moravian Congregation, and his sermon's preoccupation with Jesus' blood and wounds was more or less the epitome of Moravianism: somber images of this sort from the Moravian Congregation seized hold of the sensitive child's imagination quite early and set their stamp on his view of life" [22, pp. 11-12].

At the moment, I will not enter into a detailed explanation of the connection between Kierkegaard's thought and pietism. But if we investigate further into the relationship between Kierkegaard and Uchimura through pietism, then we may find an interpretation of Kierkegaard's idea of "the single individual" that is different from the popular one that was proposed by Martin Buber.

If my presentation has helped you to understand any of the reasons why Japanese people love to read Kierkegaard and Japan has long history in studying Kierkegaard, I will be very happy.

### Diffusion of Pietism



### References and links

1. Uchimura, Kanzo Zenshu. *How I Became A Christian. The Complete Works of Uchimura Kanzo*. Iwanami Publishing Company, 1980–1984.
2. On April 12, 1883, he wrote in his diary, “Depression; no spirit.” [1, v. 3, p. 68]. “I descried in myself an empty space which neither activity in religious works, nor success in scientific experiments, could fill. What the exact nature of that emptiness was, I was not able to discern. May be, my health was getting poor, and I yearned after repose and easier tasks. Or, as I was rapidly growing into my manhood, that irresistible call of nature for companionship might have made me feel so haggard and empty. At all events, a vacuum there was, and it must be filled somehow with something” [1, v.3, p. 67]. On March 28, 1884, he married Take Asada, but the marriage ended in divorce seven months later. The vacuum in his soul “was not to be obliterated” [1, v.3, p. 76] by any events. “Failing to find the desired satisfaction in my own land,” he decided to extend his research to Christendom to find “Peace and Joy...easily by any sincere seeker after the Truth” [1, v. 3, p. 76].
3. “I believe I was really converted, that is turned back, there, some ten years after I was baptized in my homeland. The Lord revealed Himself to me there, especially through that one man—the eagle-eyed, lion-faced, lamb-hearted president of my college” [1, v. 3, p. 129]. Seelye studied theology at the University of Halle from 1852–1853.

4. "Spiritless Theology is the driest and most worthless of all studies. To see students laughing and jesting while discussing serious subjects is almost shocking. No wonder they cannot get at the bottom of the Truth. It requires the utmost zeal and earnestness to draw life from the Rock of Ages" [1, v.3, p. 175].

5. He wrote this sentence at the end of *How I Became a Christian*. "But here this book must close. I have been told you how I became a Christian. Should my life prove eventful enough, and my readers are not tired of my ways of telling, they shall have another book like this upon *How I Worked a Christian*." [1, v.3, p. 164].

6. See John F. Howes, *Japan's Modern Prophet, Uchimura Kanzo, 1861–1930*, 2005, p. 72, and editor's note of vol. 36 of *Kanzo Uchimura, Complete Works* [1, v.36, pp. 571–572].

7. In 1906, Gundert visited Uchimura and lived in Japan. He founded *Japanese Studies, (Japanology)* in Germany.

8. Uchimura sent a letter to his friend Bell on July 31, 1904, in which he wrote, "My book in Germany has been a great success. I hear the first edition of 3000 copies was exhausted at once, and the second edition is now out. Many high authorities reviewed it carefully, and gave me their 'glad assent.' I have also had the honour of receiving 300 marks of German money as my share in the stake of the first edition. ...And the best of all, it will be instrumental in sending out one missionary [Wilhelm Gundert] to Japan, its sale paying of his traveling expense to this country." [1, v. 37, p. 26].

9. Finnish and Swedish translation, 1905. Danish translation, 1906. French translation, 1913. For your information, the Japanese translation appeared in 1935.

10. The German translation is "Aus Japan, wie es heute ist—Persönliche Eindrücke." übersetzt von H. Gottsched (1912, Basel). It is very interesting for me that H. Gottsched translated the article, because he also translated Kierkegaard's works. Goju Nakayawa translated the "Redector Kanzo Uchimura" section of this essay into Japanese in 1956.

11. Cf. The translator's explanation in the Japanese edition of *How I became a Christian*, Iwanami Bunko, pp. 281–282.

12. "Jonathan X., the Author."

13. Merriman Colbert Harris (1846–1921), a Methodist missionary from America.

14. Jonathan is the given name of the author of *How I became a Christian*. (cf. note 13).

15. I would like to note his phrase "to learn of His Laws to appropriate His Spirit to our hungering souls" in order to remind us of Kierkegaard's term, *Tilegnelse*: appropriation.

16. Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety*, edited and translated with Introduction and Notes by Reidar Thomte, Princeton University Press, 1980, p. 14, note.