

Christian Missionaries Baffled by Japanese Attitude

By ROBERT CRABBE
 United Press International
 TOKYO (UPI) — "Wareware no ten ni aru chichiyō..."
 The opening words of the Lord's Prayer tumble from the lips of a dozen Japanese seated on the straw mat floor of a Tokyo home. As Sunday service ends, they bow politely to the American Baptist missionary, who is their pastor, and shuffle out the door.
 Sometimes I think we missed our chance," the missionary says sadly. "We should have had a big effort ready the day they surrendered in 1945. That was when they were ready for new ideas."
 A short distance away, a Japanese Roman Catholic priest is saying mass in a handsome church that would be a credit

to any community in America. It was built largely with foreign donations. Only a scattering of people hear the service, and some of these are nuns from America and Europe.
 The Christian missionaries have found Japan a hard nut to crack. Despite a century of intense — and expensive — missionary activity, less than one per cent of the Japanese people are churchgoing Christians. The controversial words "less than one per cent" echo throughout the community of more than 5,000 foreign missionaries stationed here.
 Discount Numbers
 Jesus was never interested in religious statistics," says the Rev. Howard Norman. "The percentage is low but the influence of Japanese Christians can-

not be measured by the number of Christians in the country. It is far greater than the numbers seem to indicate."
 There are 95 million people in Japan, the Japanese Christian yearbook estimates that in 1961, 727,445 were Christian church members, although gains have been claimed since.
 The year - book says that in 1961 there were a little more than 400,000 Japanese Protestants, and about 290,000 Catholics. The rest were divided among other denominations.
 Japanese Christians are served by a corps of about 12,000 Japanese church workers and an estimated 5,000 foreign missionaries.
 Overwhelmingly, the foreign missionaries are dedicated and

self-effacing. They master the complicated Japanese language, and live close to the Japanese people. It is not a job for persons with large egos. The missionary in Japan often must be content with laying the foundations of a structure which he can only hope that others will complete.
 Look Elsewhere
 There is strong evidence that at the moment the Japanese people are looking elsewhere than Christianity for their spiritual values in the post war world.
 The fastest growing religious organization in Japan today is the controversial Soka Gakkai sect, an aggressive new Japanese Buddhism.
 Japanese intellectuals and leftists are shopping in the markets of European philosophy. Many Japanese who never open a Bible can talk about Sartre and Karl Marx.
 Christian workers in Japan entered the post-war era in a hopeful mood. Japan had come out of the conflict with some 700,000 hard core Christians, who had stuck to their faith in

spite of severe government disapproval. The new postwar religious freedom had removed the old restrictions under which the church worked.
 However, recent growth has been slow and costly.
 The post war mood of Japan has been materialistic, not spiritual. Moreover, Christian workers have come to grips with Oriental attitudes strikingly different from those in the West.
 "I'll tell you what the Japanese do when they get converted to Christianity," said the Rev. Carl Blackler, who conducted a Baptist mission in Tokyo until his recent death. "They buy a picture of Jesus and put it on the family altar, beside the statue of Buddha and the image of the Shinto Fox God."
 Baffle Missionaries
 The refusal of Japanese to accept the exclusive claims of any one religion has baffled and irritated many a missionary.
 "The Japanese has an ability to pick out the things he likes in a number of religions," says Dr. William Woodard, direc-

tor of the International Institute for Study of Religions in Tokyo.
 "Christianity is more dogmatic — an all or nothing religion," Woodard adds. "It demands a high degree of personal commitment, and many Japanese find this disagreeable."
 Woodard, whose scholarly institute is assisted by Christians, Buddhists and Shintoists in Japan, is not optimistic about rapid growth of Christianity here.
 Woodard points out that some Japanese have picked up Christian ideals of social service — and then decided that left wing political parties offer the best prospect of putting them into use.
 Jotaro Kawakami, chairman of the powerful Socialist party, is a Christian, but he leads a party more attuned to Moscow than to the non-Communist West.
 The Christian preoccupation with sin also is foreign to the Japanese mind.
 Former Governor David Lawrence of Pennsylvania found this out last year when he tour-

ed Japan with a party of American governors. At a religious seminar in Kyoto, Lawrence asked a Buddhist monk whether Buddhism prohibited rape and robbery.
 Separated from Sin
 The abbot looked bewildered: "We don't concern ourselves with those things, my dear sir. The criminal code takes care of all that."
 To the Christian mind, Buddhism's separation of religion from sin seems fantastic. Basically it springs from the Buddhist's confidence that everything will be paid for in full. They feel the wicked are punished and the good rewarded — in some other life if not in this one.
 Buddhism has been in Japan for 1,500 years. Culturally, its effects on the country have been more powerful than those of any other religion. About one-third of the Japanese people still are thought to be practicing Buddhists, and it is estimated that as many as 90 per cent still maintain at least nominal ties.
 Dwelling side by side with Buddhism in Japan is Shinto, a

form of sun and spirit worship that goes back to Japanese prehistory. Millions of Japanese follow both religions with no sense of conflict.
 Christianity in Japan is largely a city people's religion. For the most part it attracts people in the middle and upper-middle classes.
 Rural Japan is little touched by Christianity, and the majority of the missionary effort goes on in the cities.
 Early Day Culture
 In the early days of Christian work in the Far East, the churches were the bringers of western culture. They built the first universities, and also brought the Orient the blessings of western medicine.
 Christian universities are influential still. But, in fields like science and engineering, the Japanese government can now build universities and equip them far more elaborately than the Christian colleges can do on limited budgets.
 More and more, Christian workers in Japan are being forced to campaign on purely religious grounds.

In some ways, there are encouraging signs. Japanese churchmen are taking over the leadership of Christian activities to an increasing degree. The majority of Japanese parishes now are led by Japanese and about half are self-supporting although the living standards of the clergy often are pathetically low.
 Yet there is little doubt that the Japanese have been much more attracted by the west's science and technology than they have been by its religious attitudes.



OLDEST STUDENT—Adrian C. Kett, a freshman at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Mich., is a little old to wear a beanie. The school's oldest student, who just turned 86, commutes from his home in Holland, Mich., three times a week for his classes in philosophy. (UPI)

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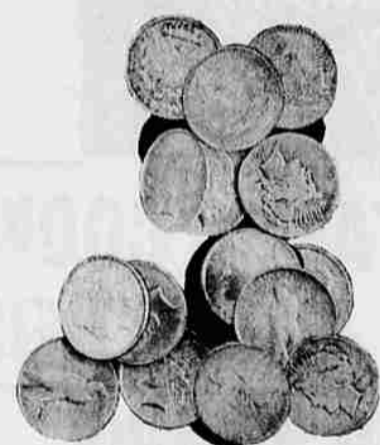
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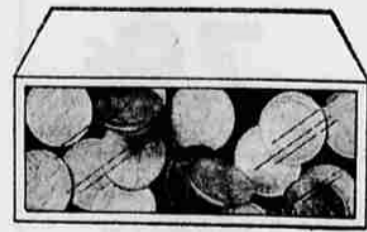


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