THE EARLY SWISS AND GERMAN MISSION IN JAPAN

The Early Swiss and German Mission in Japan

Paradoxes of Liberal Theology

ESBEN PETERSEN

CHISOKUDŌ

Cover photograph: Thies Matzen

Copyright © 2021, Chisokudō Publications

ISBN: 979-8541073171

Nagoya, Japan
http://ChisokudoPublications.com

Contents

Introduction 1

PART I HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

1. Universal Religion from the Swiss Highlands: Ernst Buss and the Liberal Christian Mission 25

2. The Emergence of Liberal Christianity in Japan: The Rise and Fall of the AEPM 49

PART II PARADOXES OF THE MISSION IN JAPAN

3. Internal Conflicts and External Challenges The Failure of Missionary Educational Projects in Meiji Japan 81

4. A Class Dispute: Japanese Students and the Discordant Nature of Religious Conversion 113

5. Christian Magazines and the Identification of Religion in Meiji Japan 141

6. Buddhist Exposures to Liberal Christianity 187

7. Educating Youth at Home: Swiss and German Youth Missionary Literature 218

Conclusion 241

Notes 245

Acknowledgments 287

Bibliography 289

General Index 321

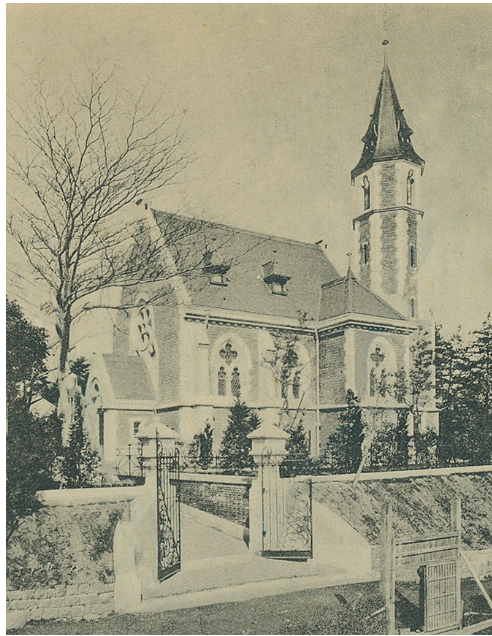
Introduction

Two hundred meters east of Tokyo University in a rather unremarkable corner of the city, crowded with residential homes and newly built parking lots exists the ruins of what once was a picturesque little stone church. It stands today forgotten, hidden by the wild flowers, which especially during the long summer months fully covers the remaining ruins of the once so quaint church. In spite of its current dolorous state, the church conceals a remarkable history, one that represent the dynamic convergence of human and historical trajectories behind the seemingly presumptuous and foolhardy attempt by Christian missionaries in the late nineteenth century to transform Japan into a Christian nation.

Just like the church, its owners, the German-speaking mission society of the *Allgemeinen Evangelisch Protestantischen Missionsvereins* (henceforth AEPM),[1] seems today to have become a forgotten part of Japan's modern religious history. Yet, in this book, I argue, the Swiss and German missionaries belonging to the AEPM introduced a new type of Christianity, i.e., Liberal Christianity, which became prevalent in Japanese Christianity during the period between the late nineteenth century and through the early twentieth century. The prominence of Liberal Christianity spanned Japan's modern periods and manifested in a wide-ranging variety of contexts even outside of theological circles.[2] Some examples of the AEPM's influence from the Meiji period can be found within the theology of Ebina Danjō 海老名弾正 (1856–1937); the establishment of Kyoto University's Center for Christian Studies under Hatano Seiichi 波多野精一 (1877–1950); and the influence of modern Buddhist scholars such as Murakami Senshō 村上専精 (1851–

1929). During the Meiji (1868–1912) and Taishō (1912–1926) periods, popular intellectual magazines, such as the *Meirokū zasshi* 明六雑誌 and *Shinri* 眞理 was inspired by Liberal Christianity or *jiyūshūgi shingaku* 自由主義神学 as it is called in Japan. As these examples show, the influence of Liberal Christianity in Japanese society appeared in different contexts and often were not linked to one another. Moreover, the concept of Liberal Christianity itself carried different meaning over time. Yet, starting in the late nineteenth century, the arrival of the Swiss and German missionaries as agents of Liberal Christianity in Japan constituted a recurring and pervasive pattern in Japan's modern religious society that is worth studying.

This book focuses on the aspect of the reception and appropriation of Liberal Christianity in modern Japan. In more concrete terms, it presents the history of the first Liberal Christian mission movement in Japan, the AEPM, during the Meiji and Taishō periods. It explores the dynamic networks—both religious and academic that developed around it and asks how Liberal Christian ideas emerging from the fold of the Swiss and German missionaries' work in Japan were contested, disputed, and ultimately changed through its encounter with the Japanese people. Although the theme of the AEPM occupies a central place in the historiography of nineteenth century mission movement to Japan, no more than a handful of studies, perhaps most noteworthy of these being that by Suzuki Norihase (1979) and Heyo Hamer (2002), has focused on this particular mission movement.[3] This is partly because, little trace of the many educational and social projects initiated by the AEPM remains today.[4] This book is a modest attempt to understand the consequences of the first Swiss and German mission's presence in Japan; its aim is to see whether this particular episode in Japan's history can yield any new insights to the intellectual and religious processes that took place in Japan around the turn of the century. To this end, this study utilizes a variety of documents that are explicitly related to the missionaries, such as missionary records, mission publications, personal letters, diaries, and memoirs.[5]



The German Evangelical Church in Tokyo, ca. 1890. Photo: Zentralarchiv der Ev. Kirche der Pfalz.

Furthermore, I argue, that the work of the AEPM missionaries in Japan highlights several paradoxes within the Liberal Christian mission itself. These paradoxes will be the center of the investigation, as several micro-historical case studies will demonstrate, how the ambiguous ideas of a "Liberal Christian mission" were imported by the missionaries with their own cultural and ethnocentric agendas, and how these ideas which emerged from the fold of Christianity was assimilated and reformulated in the Japanese context. This approach begs the question of whether the ideas of a "Liberal Christianity" introduced by the Swiss and German missionaries, in fact were as "liberal" or "*allgemein*" as they claimed, and many missionaries still claim. Or, on the contrary, if they were culturally determined. Without anticipating the solution to these questions raised in the following chapters and in spite of claims made by missionaries and followers of the belief, we may already recognize like Michel Mohr reminds us, "that as soon as

the word "universality" is uttered in a particular language, it inevitably loses its universal aspect and falls into the relative realm of differentiations."[6]

This book examines the contradictions of Liberal Christianity from the outset of the history of the AEPM. It attempts to move beyond the explicit line of division often drawn between mission studies and religious studies while taking seriously the historical development of the concept of Liberal Christianity throughout the last half of the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth century. Through this analysis, it will try to explain why the initially, so promising Liberal Christian mission of the AEPM in Japan ended up becoming nothing more than a forgotten church among Tokyo's many skyscrapers.

What is liberal christianity?

The expression *Liberal Christianity* consists of two basic elements. The word *liberal* can mean free, tolerant, progressive, humanistic, enlightened, or rational, among other possibilities. The noun Christianity is much plainer and simpler, it can mean the faith, the doctrine, or belief in Christ. Of course, Christianity is not simple, like liberal, it covers a lot of subjects. The combination of these two components produces a number of possible meanings and connotations which has made a definition hard to pin down, leading scholars to use such definitions as: "Critically Theology,""modern Theology," "Free Theology," "Culture Protestantism" and "Liberal Theology."[7] In this book, I will adopt the usage *Liberal Christianity*, the most common rendition, and refer to the AEPM as a "Liberal Christian mission" as the basic translation of this religious movement.

Many associate the expression "Liberal Christianity" with the nineteenth century in particular, but it has a longer history, dating back to at least the late eighteenth century and the first publication of Schleiermacher's Speeches (*Reden*) in 1799. In fact, the expression *theologia liberalis* finds mention in several texts connected to the

Rationalists movement of Immanuel Kant.[8] Although it is difficult to grasp the precise definition of "Liberal Christianity" from these eighteen-century texts—Schleiermacher for example never called himself "liberal" or "free theologian'—these early representatives of Liberal Christianity functioned in two ways: (1) as a movement that fought for doctrinal freedom from the church; and (2) sought to replace the faith in original sin and predestination with a rational faith in God and the moral autonomy of the individual.

Although in many ways different to late nineteenth century Liberal Christianity, these early references reveal that the concept of Liberal Christianity conveyed a sense of a new beginning and a desire to change the situation of the church for the better (or to free it from a dangerous condition). In Schleiermacher's writings, however, the language of Liberal Christianity did not yet function as a framework through which to interpret concrete social events, like the argumentation for a world mission. This changed in the last half of the nineteenth century. Coeval with the appearance of a philological and historical critical understanding of the Bible was the practice led on by David Friedrich Strauss of interpreting "Liberal Christianity" as the transformation of the old obsolete Christianity into a new rational religion of humanity or faith in the divinity of the human being.[9] Accordingly, Liberal Christianity became a universal instrument which appeared in diverse circumstances, from political protests, democratic nationalism, and in the formation of an imperial church. The prominence of Liberal Christianity continued throughout the nineteenth century and early twentieth century. Despite the rapid social and demographic changes, theologians continued to utilize the language of Liberal Christianity for interpretive purposes and upheld it for its universal values.

Before further discussing the history of Liberal Christianity's grounding in its proposed universalism, it is necessary to delineate the ways in which scholars of Church History and Religious Studies have approached the study of Liberal Christianity in their own technical and analytical ways. Scholars typically use the term Liberal Chris-

tianity as a historiographical category through which they refer to a variety of nineteenth and twentieth century movements or characters, such as the Tübingen School and its establishment of "the Protestant Union"(*Deutscher Protestantverein*) in 1863, or Albrecht Ritschl and the "History of Religions School"(*Religionsgeschichtliche Schule*). Driven largely by political critical methods, scholars have paid particular attention to the last half of the nineteenth century, during Germany's transition from small city states to a modern empire, and have attempted to find the source of tolerance exhibited by the theological liberals there.[10] Based on the fact that only a few contemporaneous church circles employed the language of tolerance, dialogue, and openness in theology, scholars have designated a number of nineteenth century movements that fulfill the criteria as Liberal Christians. Scholars such as Johannes Zachuber, Otto Gerhard Oexle, Matthias Wolfes, Hans-Joachim Birkner and Friedrich Wilhelm Graf, for example, have utilized the category of Liberal Christianity to refer to the following "classical" characteristics:

1. "scientific theology," in the sense that it increasingly adopted a critical approach to the study of history and not just the Bible;
2. anti-dogmatic, in the sense that it refused dogma and instead argued for the rational inquiry of human actions;
3. non-denominational, in the sense that they accepted religious pluralism within their churches;
4. and focuses on individual religious experience as the basis for the definition of all truth. [11]

Scholars have largely qualified these broad definitions, but suggested the need to also emphasize the explicitly anti-liberal nature of the liberal Christian movement.[12] Jennifer Jenkins (2003), based on her social-historic research on the Protestant and liberal cultural projects in Imperial Germany, for example, argues that the liberal Christian movement in Imperial Germany was an authoritarian project who

thought to construct a "moral community of citizens."[13] I nonetheless prefer the above mentioned "core" characterizations of Liberal Christianity as the main definition with an emphasis on the new historical approach to the Bible and the significance of the personal religious experience, both of which are crucial elements for the understanding of the historic developments which happened around the Swiss and German missionaries belonging to the AEPM in Japan.

Furthermore, scholars with a more direct interest in theology and philosophy, such as Richard Crouter, developed the lens of systematic theology to describe the universal validity of Liberal Christianity.[14] From the 1970s, we find numerous books and articles worldwide on German Cultural Protestantism and German Liberal Christianity. For example, there exist countless publications about Schleiermacher and his theology.[15] In Japan alone, the number of recent Schleiermacher publications is overwhelming.[16] There are also works and translations of key figures such as Ferdinand Christian Baur, Albrecht Ritschl, Wilhelm Hermann, Adolf von Harnack and in particular Ernst Troeltsch and Tillich, both of whom not only have had a significant influence on the theological developments of Japanese Christianity in the twentieth century at the Kyoto School of Christian Studies but throughout the whole world.[17]

The use of Liberal Christianity as a universal category, while sometimes serving meaningful analytical purposes, has led to problematic consequences. First, despite the prevalence of scholarship that references the term Liberal Christianity, surprisingly little has been done to examine the actual claim of its "universality" when put outside its Western-speaking context. Liberal Christianity was initially a local category based loosely on a few instances in which historical actors themselves employed the expression to express concrete theological circumstances in eighteenth and nineteenth century Germany.[18] However, the term Liberal Christianity gradually took a life of its own and has come to function as a blanket term that includes numerous movements and writers who had very little in common except the belief that

theology should be open to modernity, that Protestantism is the more modern religions, and that other religion (in most cases Catholics) are morally worse.[19] In other words, some scholars have uncritically designated a number of local social phenomena and movements based on criteria such as tolerance and faith and ascribed to them a universal validity, but in doing so they have not examined in any systematic way the history of the concept Liberal Christianity when put out of its local environment.

This book touches on the question of Liberal Christianity in its practical framework. In other words, what are the consequences of Liberal Christianity when it is transplanted into another (non-Christian) culture? To the best of my knowledge, this question has not yet been examined. To put it another way: what is understood as Liberal Christianity in this book is not a Liberal Christianity as understood in the works of Schleiermacher, Harnack or Troeltsch, which can be critically examined by theologians, but rather a Liberal Christianity as it was understood by the missionaries and who brought it to Japan and mixing it with ideas from the other academic disciplines, local philosophies, and current intellectual movements of the time. This book, to put it more precisely, does not ask: what specific form of Liberal Christianity did Swiss and German missionaries bring to Japan?[20] Rather, it examines the historical cases and the acts of transferring these liberal Christian ideas to Japan itself.

That being said, this book does not oppose the idea of universalism suggested in the works of Schleiermacher, Troeltsch, and so on. Such studies are necessary in order to highlight the salient patters of the state of mind of people at the time, and I use a number of these categories in this book myself. Furthermore, frameworks such as liberal and tolerant have helped me illuminate the agency of the Swiss and German missionaries. The newly proposed approach is necessary in order to highlight the development of Liberal Christianity in cultures different from the European, and at the same time, account for the prevalence of Liberal Christianity in the Japanese society from the

late 1800s to the early 1900s from a broader analytical standpoint. The examination of the history of the liberal Christian missionaries of the AEPM will serve as an effective way to accomplish this.

The AEPM: The First Liberal Christian Mission in Japan

It was in the mid–1880s that the first liberal Christian missionaries began to enter Japan. The introduction of this new group of missionaries in the Japanese Christian landscape constituted a significant change in which the discourse of religion permeated Japanese society from the time. When referring to *liberal Christian missions* in Japan, I refer specifically to the actions and institutions as expressed by the historical actors related to the Swiss and German AEPM, unless otherwise noted. In this study, I will take into consideration closely related variations of the liberal Christian missions in Japan, such as the two American missions, the Universalists and the Unitarians,[21] but will analyse the framework of liberal Christian mission in Japan from the perspective of the AEPM. An examination of the rise (and fall) of Liberal Christianity related to the AEPM will highlight the significance Liberal Christianity played within the various religious and intellectual movements in Japan between 1885–1929. Rather than presume the applicability of the universal approach to Liberal Christianity, this study's approach offers a unique analytical angle by looking into the integration of a liberal Christian discourse in Japanese society.

In this book, I analyse the reception and appreciation of liberal Christianity in modern Japan through a series of case studies that focus on the outset of the mission work of the AEPM. Based on these case studies, I argue, it is possible to outline here some general characteristics of the liberal Christian mission in Japan. During the Meiji and Taishō periods, the Swiss and German missionaries of the AEPM, in essence, served as agents of Liberal Christianity. Through the AEPM mission and its networks, the first missionary Wilfried Spinner was

responsible for the establishment of the Fukyū Fukuin Kyōkai 普及福音教会, a Japanese Christian community, in 1886, which developed into a place for lectures and discussions on Liberal Christianity in Japan. Spinner also founded, in 1888 the Shinkyō Shingakkō 新教神学校 or Theological Seminary, a center for liberal theological studies and training of local Japanese pastors. However, in the course of the 1890s the mission increasingly lost native Japanese support. In its early days it depended on the encouragement and support of Aoki Shūzō 青木周藏 (1844–1914)[22] and others, such as the Christian profile Hiromachi Kozaki 小崎弘道 (1856–1938).[23] The drawback of the mission in Japan, however, was an outcome of the specific anti-western intellectual context that developed following the promulgation of the Imperial Rescript on Education (*Kyōiku chokugo* 教育勅語) in 1890.

The AEPM in the late Meiji and Taishō years did not, in their mission work, aim to bring a radical and dogmatic transformation of the Japanese religious society with them. Instead, they focused on solving, what they deemed to be, specific moral and social problems in the Japanese society by suggesting solutions found in the ideas of Liberal Christianity. The missionaries of the AEPM were not dismissing the learnings of the Japanese religions such as Shinto and Buddhism, but instead aimed on building their own Christian teaching on the Japanese religious traditions by pointing on their elements of truth. In some cases, the missionaries, primarily through their literary publications, did serve as vehicles through which social critique was expressed and specific adverse conditions from which different communities suffered were highlighted, but they never directly challenged the prevailing world order of State Shinto and the Emperor rule. In the numbers of Japanese members, the mission was also not making any radical notion of itself. In the year 1907, the mission numbered 234 Japanese members making it insignificant compared to the overall Christian landscape of 60.000 Japanese Christians at the time.[24] One can ask oneself, was the mission of the AEPM unsuccessful? Here it is necessary to clearly separate the quantitively low numbers of members

from the discourses on Liberal Christianity that developed around the scholarly work of the missionaries and influenced the establishment of Japanese Christianity.

What the AEPM achieved up until the late 1920s is better understood as a form of "Cultural Transfer," a process in which Liberal Christian ideas and concepts were introduced into a new cultural setting. Here they were followed by a process of negotiations, before eventually being transformed and adopted into its new cultural settings of Japan. The theory of *Kulturtransfer* or Cultural Transfer, proposed by the historians Michel Espange, Micheal Werner and Wolfgang Schmale, explains how new ideas and knowledge eventually lead to perceptible and sustainable changes to a society's collective values.[25] The scope of Liberal Christianity in Japan initially did not extend beyond the immediate mission community of AEPM, but was gradually introduced to the Japanese intellectual society through the missionary's publications. In this, we see a link to the theory of Cultural Transfer from the beginning of the work of the AEPM in Japan, allowing this book to go beyond the limits of a plain history of the mission in Japan and into an exploration of how Liberal Christian ideas themselves influenced a far broader range of Meiji-era religionists. First, with the emergence of Liberal Christianity, we see how Michitomo Kanamori 金森通倫 (1857–1945)[26] and Ebina Danjō, both highly significant actors in contemporary Japanese Christianity, were influenced by the ideas "historical theology" introduced to Japan by the AEPM.[27] The idea of historical theology, for example, would later become one of the tenets of Ebina Danjō's theology of *Religious Essence* (*Shūkyō no honshitsu* 宗教の本質), one of the most momentous ideas of Japanese theology in early twentieth century.[28] Second, the impact of AEPM away from Christianity, and into the wider intellectual and educational circles through missionary Carl Munzinger's introduction of the discipline of Religious Studies (*shūkyōgaku* 宗教学) in Meiji Japan with his article "On the Necessity of Religious Studies" (*Shūkyōgaku no hitsuyo o ronzu* 宗教学の必要を論ず, 1890). Finally, Liberal Christianity, also found itself in

the writings of some of the leading figures of Modern Buddhism which benefited from Liberal Christian ideas in developing its response in its doctrinal fight against State Shinto (*kōkka shintō* 国家神道) in the late nineteenth century. These observations become possible by tracing the history of the missionaries of the AEPM from their arrival in Japan to this process of reception and appropriation of Liberal Christianity into larger spheres of the Japanese society.

Field of Research

Scholars have long valued the significance of Christianity in the modern history of Japan. The historian Mikio Sumiya, has for example, pointed to the role that Christianity played during the last decades of the nineteenth century in the fields of literature and politics.[29] Other Japanese historians, such as Maruyama Masao, have identified the early Christian movement's important role—particular as a social critic—in Japan's transition from a traditional to industrial society.[30]

As is clear from this short list alone, Christianity and the Western missionaries in Japan has been a fairly consistent theme in Japanese's modern religious history. However, many scholars look to the nineteenth century as a time in which the indigenous movement of Japanese Christians became especially prominent in the Japanese society and thus often neglect the foreign mission movement in their research. Examples often raised in support of this claim include the emergence of indigenous attempts to combine Christianity with the indigenous traditions such as Confucianism that came about in the late nineteenth century. "Japanese Christianity" writes Kyoto University scholar Ashina Sadamichi, "became an effort to preserve Christian values while giving them a concrete form in relation to the situation in Japan."[31] Scholars, in other words, typically contextualized these developments within the socioeconomic and political upheavals of the nineteenth century as a story largely in terms of the Japanese people's own acceptance of Christianity. They have been unable to pay sufficient attention

to the Western missionaries who communicated the new ideas, or even to examine accurately the ideas themselves.

While I generally that the importance of the indigenous Christian movement of the nineteenth century played an important role in the modern history of religious thought in Japan, I maintain that much can still be learned about the modern history of Christianity in Japan by taking a closer look at missionary sources. Within the last decades there has been a shift in the approach to missionary studies. Post-colonial studies, for example, have revealed the importance of missionary sources in attaining the insight into the encounter between the expanding European culture and the countries which were forced to accept the "white man."[32]

Recently, this academic direction has led to several publications that attempt to give the modern idea of religion a historical basis from different perspectiives. Many scholars have begun to examine the idea that Western or Christian influence either was "transplanted" (Isomae), "invented" (Josephson), or "percolated into the non-Occidental cultural worlds" (Osterhammel).[33] This scholarly application, however, should not obfuscate the fact that missionaries ideas and discourses was just one of many religious discourses that emerged in nineteenth-century Japan and that, as the history of the AEPM will suggest, the discourse changed over time, developing into several versions of Christianity in twentieth century.[34] Being aware of this allows us to better appreciate the situation of the nineteenth century Japan as a place of competition where a diversity of ideas and discourses, which historic actors—the AEPM being one of them—utilized to articulate their own religious agendas, rather than simply to lump them all together under simple categories of "Western missionaries" or "Japanese Christianity."

If one moves further into the field of study and looks at the literature specifically in relation to the history of the AEPM, the picture becomes different from the research highlighted above. Where there exist a wealth of research on Christianity in Japan, there has so far been very little in-depth research done on the topic of the AEPM in Japan

aside from the missionaries' own accounts.[35] In fact, the sole book, to date, devoted to the history of the AEPM is the work *Mission und Politik* (2002), written by the German church historian Heyo Hamer.[36] Hamer's book offers an in-depth study of Swiss missionary Wilfried Spinner's personal diary and provides a great analysis of the tension between the mission enterprise and German colonial politics. But it is limited in its temporal range as it only covers the years of the mission from 1885 to 1892. Aside from this work, only a few other publications mention the work of the AEPM in Japan: Otto Marbach's *50 Jahre Ostasien-mission, ihr Werden und Wachsen* (1934) focuses mainly on the founder of the AEPM, Ernst Buss, and pays almost no attention to the subject of Japan; Theodore Devaranne's *50 Jahre Evangelische Arbeit im Fernen Osten* (1934) offers some bibliographical sketches of some of the first missionaries and the most important Japanese converts, but does not incorporate any Japanese material. This is also the case for Johannes Bielfeldt's *75 Jahre Ostasienmission* (1962) and Ferdinand Hahn's *Spuren*: *Festschrift zum hundertjährigen Bestehen der Ostasien-Mission* (1984). All these historiographical studies have in common that they are either works paid by the mission or written by authors connected to the mission society. Thus, they sometimes tend to ignore the less successful events in their depiction of the history of the AEPM in Japan.[37]

Otherwise, there exist only a few critical or even descriptive studies in German that report the work of the AEPM in the Japanese mission field, and fewer still in English.[38] This is best signified by the Handbook of Christianity in Japan (2003) entirely leaving out the subject of the AEPM.[39] Only a few English language books about the Protestant missionary movement in Japan mentions the mission work of the AEPM. The earliest book is *A History of Protestant Missions in Japan*, (1898) written by the German theologian Karl Heinrich Ritter. This was originally published in German in 1890 under the title *Dreißig Jahre protestantische Mission in Japan* and translated eight years later into English.[40] A more recent publication is Yasuo Furaya's A *History*

of Japanese Theology from 1997, which shortly discusses the influence of the AEPM and German Theology on Japanese Theology.[41] These two books, however, are exceptions. Most studies in the English language on Christianity in Meiji Japan—if they make a reference to the Swiss and German missionaries' enterprise at all—swiftly summarize what they seem to regard mostly as an unimportant historical endeavour.

Notto Thelle's important study of *Buddhism and Christianity in Japan: From Conflict to Dialogue, 1852–1899* (1987), for example, looks at the contact of Buddhism and Christianity through the study of periodicals from the period. Yet he only mentions the work of the AEPM in a few pages under the subheading: "Liberal Theology." The topic is summarized with the hurried conclusion that while "Liberal Theology was certainly a significant factor for establishing a positive relationship to other religions.... It facilitated compromise with reactionary forces, introducing an active support of nationalism and of burgeoning Japanese imperialism."[42]

Another book, *Protestant Beginnings in Japan*, written by Winburn T. Thomas, entirely passes over the subject of the AEPM.[43] In a similar manner the monographs of Charles W. Iglehart (1959), Otis Cary(1982), Aasulv Lande (1989) and Richard H. Drummond (1971), all authors of more recent and broader histories of Christianity in Japan, only mention the AEPM in connection with the church of American Unitarians and Universalists under the subtitles "liberal denominations" without much further comment.[44]

Japanese publications, in contrast to the English and German publications, do offer more abundant sources for research with several books referring to the work of the AEPM. Harada Tamao's edited *Nihon ni okeru jiyū kirisitokyō to sono senkusha* 日本に於ける自由基督教と其先駆者 (*The Free Christianity and its Pioneers*), published in 1935, is a transcript of the memoir of Minami Hajime 三並 良 (1869–1940),[45] a student of the first missionary Wilfried Spinner, and a significant member of the Japanese church Fukyū Fukuin Kyōkai. Minami worked as an editor of the Christian propaganda journal *Shinri* 眞

理 and his memoir provides valuable samples of the correspondences between the missionaries and the Japanese members of the Church, making it an important source for this study.

Another important contribution is Saba Wataru's chapter "*Nihon ni okeru Doitsu shingaku no eikyō*" 日本におけるドイツ神学の影響 (Influence on German Theology in Japan).[46] It sensitively describes the relationship that the missionaries had with the Japanese in Europe. Saba draws heavily on Japanese language sources (including that of Harada), and investigates the first introductory contacts of several Japanese individuals with the German missionaries. A third source written in Japanese that touches the history of the AEPM in Japan is the influential *Meiji shūkyō shichō no kenkyū: Shūkyōgaku kotohajime* 明治宗教思潮の研究：宗教学事始 (Studies on the Religious Trends of the Meiji Period: The Beginning of Religious Studies) from 1979, by Suzuki Norihase.[47] In his semantic study on the various religious trends surrounding the early formation of religious studies in Japan, three chapters are devoted solely to the work and influence of the AEPM. Although Suzuki draws mainly on Japanese language sources, his work stands out as the only effort so far to look at the history of the AEPM beyond a purely Christian frame of reference. Instead, he embeds and relates the AEPM to the larger context of the religious discussion occurring at the time in Japan. Suzuki's work therefore offers a great inspiration to this study. Yet the specific interactions of the liberal missionaries with their Japanese church members, and the struggles that emerged in the process, do not draw his attention. Still, because one of this book's major interests is the missionaries' contribution to the study of Japanese religions, all interactions between the AEPM and Japanese religious traditions are of interest; emphasizing these interactions will be on of this study's contribution to the overall field.

Lastly, the historical work of the AEPM's publication written in the Japanese language needs mentioning here. One of the central figures here is Mizutani Makoto, in the book *Nihon ni okeru Doitsu: Doitsu senkyōshi hyaku nijūgo nen* 日本におけるドイツ：ドイツ宣教史百二十

五年 (*Germany in Japan: 125 Years of the German Mission*) Mizutani writes about the historical relationship between Japanese Protestantism and German Evangelism, both before and after the Second World War. In his research he devotes most of his attention to the Japanese church member Minami Hajime and his work for Japanese language Christian journals.[48] Although it is important to recognize the editorial work of Minami in spreading liberal Christian ideas in Japan, Mizutani totally omit his personal relationship to the missionaries and the influence they sanctioned over Minami during his time as an editor and church member of the AEPM. As this book's case studies on the relationship between the Swiss and German missionaries and their Japanese students will show, the missionaries acted as involving agents actively contributing and engaging in the work of their Japanese students.

Overview

The following case studies highlight the paradoxes in the practical reality of the early Swiss and German missionaries attempt to transfer Liberal Christianity to the Japanese society between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As stressed earlier, the network of missionaries allowed for Liberal Christianity to appear in a variety of social contexts. As a result, this study collates and examines independent historical cases, not usually discussed alongside one another. Furthermore, although the first chapter of the analysis begins in the 1880s and the last chapter ends in the late 1920s, the chapters do not follow a chronological order. Instead, the structure of these chapters is thematically defined, and each chapter revolves around a special historical incident. This avoids asking identical questions in relation to each examined period. The reasoning behind this structure is grounded in the following rationale: (1) there is no suggestion that any analytical benefit could be derived from asking identical questions in relation to each period of investigation throughout the book. (2)

in particular circumstances and settings some questions and issues are considered to be more relevant than in others. And (3), by not being reliant on a set number of questions, this study is able to cover developments that otherwise might have been overlooked. Furthermore, this structure is founded on the premise that cultural logic often extends from one social situation to another, and that it may be transformed, changed, or even forgotten over time. The thematic structure of the book, in summary, reflects an analytical desire to examine changes and transformations beyond spatial, social, and temporal boundaries.

The book is divided into two parts. Part 1 (Chapters 1 and 2) supplies the necessary context and is of an introductory character. It offers a historical perspective on the development of the AEPM and their operations in Japan. Chapter 1 focuses on the founder of the AEPM, Swiss pastor Ernst Buss (1843–1928) and his attempt to combine the theology of Liberal Christianity with the mission idea. By examining the work of Buss, this chapter analyses the ways in which the universal claim of Liberal Christianity was interpreted in the 1870s and early 1880s and how they came to be adopted in a missionary context. To the best of my knowledge, Buss's writings represent the first successful attempt at combining Liberal Christianity and missionology. It thus marks an important turning point in German mission history. The examination of Buss's writings also set a basic pattern for the emergence of the missionaries' practical approach to Liberal Christianity in Japanese society.

Chapter 2 expands the story, with a description of the first years of the AEPM in Japan. It tells a familiar story of an ultimately failed Christian mission whose basic outline will be recognizable to other historians of mission history in Japan: an initial period of excitement and growth, ambitious projects and institution building alongside a few setbacks, the emergence of indigenous sympathizers and converts, but then increasing tensions between these indigenous converts and the foreign leadership that, combined with a shift in national sentiment, let to an eventual split and an end to the official mission.

The details of this case—which in a sense provide the manifest of a narrative of the Swiss and German mission in a competitive religious environment in Meiji and Taishō Japan will be scrutinized further in Part II. By navigating the missionary journals and personal diaries, each of the following chapters (3 to 7) encompasses its own separate subject, theme, or narrative, yet remains inextricably intertwined with the others. All of them represent reveal particular examples of the paradoxes that entangled the Swiss and German mission work in Japan.

Chapter 3 focuses on the direct trans-cultural exchange of the mission society with the local Japanese. Here the challenges and struggles faced by the missionaries in the founding and running of schools for Japanese children and students are the central themes. These difficulties prevailed right from the start of their mission enterprise in the mid–1880s and persisted all the way to the first decade of the twentieth century. For example, the missionaries often blamed the collapse of their educational projects on the lack of finances yet conveniently abstained from recognizing the role of their own internal conflicts as being part of the problem. The changeability of their short-lived schools can be seen as an indication of the disputed nature of their authority in Japan, as well as of the generally low level of local interest in what these schools had to offer. The chapter thus reveals the highly insecure nature of their control and power, and of the influence the missionaries actually retained. Even more so, it demonstrates the discrepancy between the Swiss and German mission discourse apparent in their publications compared with the reality on the ground.

Chapter 4 examines the missionaries' interactions with its Japanese students and analyses the missionary perception of the Japanese people by looking at the norms and practices by which Christians and non-Christians were governed in the first years of the AEPM mission enterprise in Japan. The chapter challenges the characterization often given in scholarship of mission societies being a coherent organization founded on a clear goal by demonstrating the missionaries' ambiguous relationship to their Japanese students. On the one hand the mission-

aries invested much of themselves in order to convert and educate their Japanese students, yet, at the same time, they had profound doubts as to whether the Japanese students could ever become truly independent Christians. Even Japanese who had been converted were considered "insufficient" Christians. Based on this observation, I argue that that the missionaries, through these kinds of practices, created a social disparity that supported a discourse of cultural superiority that on one side legitimized their own existence in Japan, but on the other pushed the Japanese Church members away from the missionaries who had educated them.

Chapter 5 examines the mission journal *Zeitschrift für Missionskunde und Religionswissenschaft*. Historians have claimed that Protestant Missions generally were hostile toward Japanese religions during the last decades of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. However, by attempting a close reading of the German-language journal, I make the claim that this was not much the case. In fact, inter-religious relations were continuously being redefined by transnational factors from the 1880s to the 1920s. Taking a "tolerant" position, many writers claimed that "all religions were all different expressions of the same truth" encouraging some of the earliest religious studies of Japanese religions. On the same time, however, the articles also took a "inclusivist" position, as writers also would claim that only Christianity embodied all the truths. By demonstrating these contradictions between "tolerance" and "inclusivism," I show, how the ambiguous nature of the liberal Christian Mission infused the literal mission of the AEPM.

Chapter 6 uses the mission materials as a stepping-off point from which it tries to contextualize the contested debate amongst the missionaries and Buddhist intellectuals, especially related to the attitudes and statements of two key persons involved. The chapter highlights the continuing relevance of the discourse of religious truth in the Meiji and Taishō periods and analyses how the Buddhist intellectuals connected the language of Liberal Christianity with their own religious agendas. This chapter also problematizes the agency of the Swiss and

German missionaries in this historical event and shows that the intellectual discussions surrounding "religious truth" was a complex event involving actors with differing motives and, at times, contradictory visions of the world.

Finally, Chapter 7 takes up the case of the Swiss and German missionaries' youth literature and examines the message the missionaries conveyed to the youth in Switzerland and Germany. The chapter postulates that the missionaries became highly influential as educators, not so much in Japan but rather at home in Switzerland and Germany where the youth literature nursed a feeling of sympathy in their young readers for Japanese children of the same age in a way that was concurrent with a modern, cultivated Protestant Christian identity.

As can be seen, the following chapters will be exploring the nature of the early Swiss and German mission activities in Japan from a myriad of angles. It will, however, begin its story in Switzerland, looking further into the circumstances that initially led Liberal Christianity to Japan.