

# THE BEGINNINGS OF HOLINESS TEACHINGS IN JAPAN

*Esther Maxton*

Holiness teachings in Japan came in the late 19th century with the arrival of a Church Missionary Society (CMS) missionary Barclay Buxton from the United Kingdom. Christianity had arrived at the shores of Japan three centuries earlier, in the mid 16th century, with a Jesuit missionary Francis Xavier. Soon Christianity flourished, however, in the early 17th century, the Tokugawa government forbid Christianity fearing foreign interference in Japanese politics through Japanese Christians.

The government severed ties with all foreign governments except China and the Netherlands. They expelled all foreign priests and forced all Japanese Christians to recant their faith. All those who defied the edict were prosecuted. As a result, Christianity went underground, and resurfaced in the mid 19th century when Commodore Matthew Perry of the United States navy forced Japan to open doors to the rest of the world. Even though the government had permitted contact with foreigners at certain ports, people were still forbidden to preach and practice Christianity. The change in the government in 1868 did not improve the situation. Pressure from foreign governments eventually persuaded the new Meiji government to stop persecuting Japanese Christians.

However, the government still prohibited missionaries from entering the country, and restricted propagation of Christianity and foreigners' movement in Japan. Missionaries took advantage of the government's call for teachers and entered the country as educators. They opened educational institutions and used education in the English language as evangelistic tool. In 1890 the Meiji government enacted a new constitution that granted all residing in Japan freedom of religion, permitted missionaries to enter Japan, and lifted restrictions on foreigners travel within Japan. The same year CMS placed a team of British missionaries in Matsue, west Japan, under the leadership of Barclay Fowell Buxton (1860-1946) who brought holiness teaching to Japan.

## **BARCLAY FOWELL BUXTON (1860-1946)**

Barclay Fowell Buxton, known as the 'father of Sanctification movement in Japan' was a grandson of a prominent businessman and philanthropist, Thomas Fowell Buxton (1786-1845), known as an anti-slavery campaigner who took the role of principal opponent to slavery after William Wilberforce's retirement from the British House of Commons. Buxton studied at Cambridge (1879-1882) where he actively participated in the Cambridge Inter-Collegiate Christian Union (CICCU) and studied with the young men from

evangelical families known as the 'Cambridge Seven' who, upon graduation, went on overseas missions. Buxton, however, decided to enter ordained ministry. Since he had studied mathematics for an undergraduate degree, he decided to stay another year at Cambridge to study under the theologian Brooke Wescott (1825-1901). In 1883, Buxton went to work as a layman at St. Paul's, Onslow Square, London, with Prebendary H. W. Webb-Peploe (1837-1923) to gain ministry experience. Webb-Peploe was a leading evangelist of his time and a regular speaker at the Keswick Convention. Under his guidance Buxton was encouraged to learn the holiness teaching.

In the autumn of 1883, Buxton returned to Cambridge to hear D. L. Moody speak. Although Buxton grew up in a mission-oriented religious environment, at Moody's convention, for the first time, he came to a new understanding of Christ and experienced 'rebirth'. He understood Christ was a gift of God and through receiving this gift a person is 'born again' and becomes a child of God. It brought a change in his understanding of the Christian faith and set him on a path of rediscovering his relationship with Christ. Such an experience changed his perspective on life and ministry.

His experience of sanctification came later through his own preaching after he returned to work with Webb-Peploe. Buxton felt his heart was not clean so he searched the Bible and began preaching what he learned. One day, while he was preaching in the mission hall from Hebrews 10:19-22, he received the assurance of the cleansing of the Holy Spirit. This strong conviction led him to believe and teach that a Christian needed a second experience of receiving the Holy Spirit as it brought sanctification. Holiness could not be attained gradually as a Christian grew in faith but a Christian was made holy by the baptism of the Holy Spirit and then continued to live the sanctified life. He realized a close fellowship of the Holy Spirit brought joy and a desire for prayer, which resulted in sin losing the power to dominate a Christian.

After such experience, a Christian lived a sanctified life and was obedient to Christ. The signs of sanctified living were a compassionate heart, kindness, meekness, forbearance and forgiving one another. These signs were evident first at home in relationships among family members and then in relationships within the community. The receiving of the Holy Spirit also gave a Christian compassion for non-Christians and a passion for preaching the gospel.

## THE BUXTONS AND THE CHURCH MISSIONARY SOCIETY

The Buxton family was closely associated with the CMS. The family first became familiar with the CMS through one of the founders, William Wilberforce (1759-1833), who was an associate of Barclay Buxton's grandfather. Thomas Buxton, Barclay Buxton's father, served as one of the vice presidents of the Society in 1886. He presented papers at CMS conferences and financially supported their missionaries. The family's long association with the CMS benefited Barclay Buxton.

The CMS responded enthusiastically when Buxton approached the CMS with a proposal to join the Society and take a multid denominational team of evangelists financed by the Buxton family. Even though the CMS preferred to work with the Anglican Church and commissioned ordained Anglican men to overseas missions, they agreed to Buxton's request. They enthusiastically reported:

Another new Missionary Band of special interest is about to go forth in connection with the society. The Rev. Barclay F. Buxton, son of Mr. T.F. Buxton, of Easney (who is one of our Vice-Presidents), and late curate of St. Paul's, Onslow Square (Mr. Webb Peploe's), has offered to go to Japan with a small party of missionaries, undertaking both the direction and the entire charge himself. We will not apply to this proposal adjectives like "munificent" and "noble," for Mr. Buxton only desires to consecrate to the Lord what the Lord has given him, and he does no more in proportion than many a poor widow with her mite. But we do thank God for the example He has enabled His servant to set, and pray that others to whom ample means have been given may be led to follow it.

Inspired by apostle Paul and Hudson Taylor's mission methods, Barclay Buxton took a team of missionaries that consisted of Anglicans and a Baptist to Japan. After six months of language training in Kobe, the team arrived in Matsue on 21 May 1891.

### BUXTON'S TEAM

The team of missionaries that arrived in Japan consisted of Buxton, his wife Margaret, their toddler son Murray, M. Sanders, Sarah Thompson, a couple called Parrot, Mr. Wynd and Miss Head. However, between 1890 and 1902, the team varied in number. Several missionaries joined the team for short periods and left because of ill health, CMS objections to non-Anglicans on the team, or because of an inability to adjust to the team.

In 1892, Buxton's sister Effie joined the Band for a year. The following year, Sara Thompson, who came with Buxton, returned to England after two years of ministry because of ill health. The same year, in 1893, Parrot and his wife decided to move to Tokushima

prefecture on Shikoku Island. Buxton in his letter to the CMS did not state the reason for their move or who the Parrots worked with. It is possible they chose to join another mission organization, which was quite common practice in Japanese missions. In April 1893, Amy Carmichael (1867-1951) reached Japan to work with Buxton as the first missionary supported by the Keswick Convention, but returned to the UK the following year because of ill health. Buxton's team was constantly changing as well as constantly on the move. Some missionaries struggled to adjust to Buxton's style of leadership. In 1895, while Buxton was on furlough, the CMS appointed Reginald Consterdine as leader of the team. On Buxton's return, Consterdine requested a transfer from Matsue citing difficulty adjusting to Buxton's team. In 1897, the last missionary to join Buxton's team was Alpheus Paget Wilkes (1871-1934). He was sent by Buxton's father. Wilkes soon became a trusted ministry partner and worked with Buxton until Wilkes death in 1934.

Buxton's team also consisted of a large number of Japanese Christians who were impressed with his teachings. Most were local Christians of the Anglican Church in Matsue and surrounding areas. Some came from other parts of the country to be trained by him and later contributed greatly to the Japanese church. Prominent among those were Shunzo Takeda, Teikichi Kawabe, Juji Nakada, Tesusaburo Sasao, Bunichi Horiuchi, and Tanekichi Mitani.

Shunzo Takeda (1873-1950) was born in Wakayama prefecture. While studying in Osaka, he became a Christian and was baptized in Kawaguchi Church in Osaka in 1889. He later went to study at Doshisha College in 1895 where he met Buxton. Impressed by Buxton's teachings, Takeda joined his team in 1897, the same year Wilkes came to Japan. Teikichi Kawabe (1864-1953) became a Christian in the USA. On his return to Japan, he worked with the Methodist Church. After meeting Buxton, he decided to join his team. Another prominent Japanese to join the team was Juji Nakada (1870-1939).

He was exposed to Christianity at the age of four when his father died and his mother turned to Methodist missionaries for support. Nakada studied at the Moody Institute and became a Methodist evangelist in Japan. In 1898, he met Buxton and joined his team. Tesusaburo Sasao (1868-1914) was baptized in the US in 1890. On his return to Japan, he worked with Kawabe in the Methodist church and later joined Buxton's team. Bunichi Horiuchi (1875-1940) met Buxton while he was studying at Doshisha College in 1896. The following year he joined Buxton in Matsue and studied at his informal Bible school.

Tanekichi Mitani (1868-1945) was born in Kobe. He was baptized in 1884. He was the head of the music department at an orphanage in Okayama. Mitani went to study with Buxton in Matsue in 1897. He translated many hymns into Japanese.

Similar to Hudson Taylor, Buxton advised missionaries to wear local dress, Japanese yukata, kimono or hakama, on their preaching trips, and adopt Japanese mannerism such as bowing to thank and greet people, and sit on the floor. Buxton developed his own mission methods different from those advocated by Henry Venn and Rufus Anderson who suggested missionaries stay in charge until they were confident that the nationals were capable of leadership.

Often a transfer of power took a considerable length of time before missionaries were convinced that their protégées were capable of making ministry decisions. In contrast, Buxton trained Japanese Christians and immediately treated them as equal partners in ministry. Japanese presence in the team enabled the missionaries to get a better understanding of the culture and how to develop more effective ministry. Buxton's decision to consider the Japanese equal partners in ministry solved language difficulties for missionaries.

The CMS six-month language training was not enough for missionaries to be able to preach in Japanese. Partnering missionaries with English-speaking Japanese evangelists enabled missionaries to preach through translation and the Japanese evangelists to be trained in ministry. Buxton's team consisting of foreign missionaries and Japanese Christians has come to be known as 'Matsue Band'. Mission historians recognize the pioneering work of his team, 'The Matsue Band', as equal to that of the Yokohama, Kumamoto, and Sapporo Bands.

#### **MATSUE BAND MINISTRY 1891-1902**

The Matsue Band ministry under Buxton's leadership had four main features: rural evangelism, reaching the outcast, interdenominational ministry, and Holiness conventions.

Inspired by Hudson Taylor's ministry in the remotest parts of China, Buxton gathered a team of missionaries and Japanese Christians who travelled for a week or fortnight to villages and islands near Matsue. Extended trips to areas where people had never met any Christians gave the villagers an opportunity to observe the lives of team members, to gain a clear understanding of Christian faith, and thus help to dispel almost three centuries of indoctrination against Christianity. They also preached the gospel in villages of tanners and butchers who were considered outcasts. Reporting about their work among the outcasts, Sanders, a member of the Matsue Band, wrote:

Within the last two months, work has opened in two near villages, i.e. a Kojiki Mura (Beggar's Village) and an Eta Mura. The Etas are the lowest and the most despised class of the people; others will not mix with them, they are compelled to live separately. When we first proposed work among them, the Christians seemed to shrink

from the thought, saying it was hopeless – their hearts were different from other people's, hard and bad; moreover, they said they could remember nothing, forgetting even their own names, and the number of their own children; and that it would be impossible to teach them of the true God and of His love. However, after a few months among them, they find that the Gospel has the wonderful power of reaching even the Eta heart, and those hearts are very much alike everywhere.

Ministry in the villages of those rejected by the society and living in abject poverty, helped Japanese Christians break free from their centuries old misconceptions of outcasts and to practise the spirit of Galatians 3:28. The Matsue Band helped local Christians to receive a deeper understanding of the power of the Holy Spirit that broke all cultural prejudices.

Buxton's arrival in Japan coincided with the enactment of the Meiji constitution granting freedom of religion and travel. This enabled Buxton to cooperate in ministry with neighboring evangelical churches and mission organizations. Buxton's vision was to preach the gospel in unreached areas so he did not want doctrinal differences to be an obstacle to preaching the gospel. Many of the Japanese in his team had a Methodist background.

In addition to bringing a Baptist missionary with him from England, Buxton and the Matsue Band worked with another CMS station in Hamada 125 kilometers west of Matsue. They also worked with a Congregational mission station in Tottori about 128 kilometers east of Matsue, and with the Bible Society. A worker from each station, together with S. S. Snyder of the Bible Society, travelled and preached at evangelistic meetings. The Band also closely worked with the local churches and depended on them to arrange meetings and to nurture the converts after the team left.

Around the time Buxton arrived in the country, interdenominational ministry was not being encouraged by most Protestant missionaries as they were establishing denominational work. Newly established Anglican Church in Japan, the Nippon Sei Ko Kai (NSKK) was teaching Japanese catechists the difference between the Nippon Sei Ko Kai and other denominations. Buxton's multid denominational team of Baptists, Methodists and Congregationalists made the Bishop Edward Bikersteth task difficult. While Buxton ministered with the Keswick Convention motto 'One body in Christ' in every aspect of ministry, Bishop Edward Bikersteth preferred limited cooperation among churches of various denominations.

In a letter to Wigram he wrote, Buxton 'did not seem to have in any way appreciated the difference between occasional cooperation of churchmen and nonconformist in strictly evangelistic work'.

Buxton's conviction that special anointing of the Holy Spirit was essential for Christian ministry led him to organize holiness conventions following the Keswick pattern in the regions around Matsue, Tokyo, Osaka and Kobe. With the help of local churches and Japanese on his team, Buxton organized holiness conventions in churches of different denominations and promoted holiness teachings. On the changes in the lives of the band members, after attending prayer meetings and conventions, Buxton wrote:

The best news I have to give you is the way that God and the Holy Ghost has been working amongst our evangelists and Christians during the latter part of the year. Without exception they are very much changed. Some have been cleansed, and truly died to self and sin with Christ; and some few have received the Pentecostal baptism of the Holy Ghost. You can imagine how this has put a new song in our mouths, even praise unto God. Our work has changed in every consequence. All goes smoothly and all are knit together in love. We have a daily morning prayer-meeting in Matsuye, and their sins and short comings are confessed to God and to each other, and speedily put right, and we pray for the work of the day. Our evangelists' meetings, which were the heaviest part and most anxious part, of my work, are no longer so, as the men now come in spirit of prayer and longing for more.

Buxton was equally concerned for the spiritual growth of both the missionaries, and the Japanese Christians. Every summer, missionaries from various denominations gathered in the small town of Karuizawa about 200 kilometres from Tokyo, to escape the summer heat. Buxton took advantage of this time and held holiness conventions for the missionaries. In the autumn of 1893, Buxton invited Hudson Taylor to speak at one such convention. Missionaries from various denominations attended the meetings for spiritual nourishment and encouragement. His initiative in starting holiness conventions in Japan, and his influence on the lives of Japanese Christians and missionaries has earned Buxton a significant place in Japanese church history, and has come to be regarded as the 'father of the Sanctification movement in Japan'.

#### **WOMEN IN MATSUE BAND**

Buxton also followed the China Inland Mission policy of equal ministry opportunities for married and single female missionaries. Japanese Bible women were paired with female missionaries. Buxton gave women an equal opportunity to speak at public meetings. Often male Japanese workers accompanied them on preaching trips and translated for the female missionaries. In the late nineteenth century, contact with western Protestant missionaries, and

Protestant institutions for women's education had highly influenced gender relationships in Meiji Japan. Since Christianity was a 'foreign' religion that taught equality of race and gender, Japanese Christians accepted women taking up leadership roles. The women went to Bible schools to train as Bible women and joined Christian ministry. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, women in the UK still did not have leadership positions in the church. Even though women were going abroad as missionaries and leading social reform in the UK and in the mission field, most men in church were uncomfortable with women preachers as they believed the Bible taught teaching and preaching as male responsibilities.

In 1891, Bishop Bickersteth of the Nippon Sei Ko Kai (NSKK,) objected to Buxton permitting 'women taking part in public services which men attended'. Buxton believed in the priesthood of all saints and the equality of all believers, including gender and race, as stated in 1 Peter 2:9 and Galatians 3:28. Certain of his belief, Buxton did not bow to the wishes of the CMS and the NSKK to prohibit women from preaching. Instead, he informed them that women in leadership did not offend the Japanese. Japan was different from other Asian nations. Japanese churches welcomed women's leadership. Bishop Bickersteth and the CMS were mistaken in asking him to change. He was not the person who needed to change, and it was time the missionaries abandoned their prejudice against women. Buxton believed he was right and he would rather follow God than other Christians.

#### **MATSUE BAND AFTER BUXTON'S RETURN TO ENGLAND**

In 1902 Buxton returned to England so his sons could receive education. With Buxton's return, the Buxton family withdrew financial support. His decision to leave Japan forced him to consider the future of the ministry of the missionaries and Japanese evangelists without his financial support. Following American Presbyterian missionary John Nevius' work in China, Buxton gradually withdrew financial support from local churches and encouraged them to financially support their evangelists.

Some missionaries from the Matsue Band joined the CMS and were placed at stations outside Matsue, while others left Matsue. Alpheus Paget Wilkes, an English missionary in the Band desired to stay but as he was not a CMS missionary, he was not permitted to stay at the Matsue CMS mission station. The CMS preferred not to invite Wilkes to work with the society as they observed he was closer to the Methodists than to the Anglicans. Convinced that Buxton's mission methods were the only way to evangelize Japan, and the Matsue Band ministry must not stop, Wilkes returned to Japan in 1903 to establish Japan Evangelistic Band (JEB). His Matsue Band ministry partner Shunzo Takeda helped Wilkes to lay foundations of the JEB. Tanekichi Mitani and

Bunichi Horiuchi initially worked to establish the Free Methodist Church but later joined the JEB. As JEB ministry expanded, the Japanese in the Mission formed the churches established by the JEB into a denomination, the Nihon Iesu Kirisuto Kyokai. Teikichi Kawabe, another member of the Matsue Band, was instrumental in establishing the Free Methodist Church in Japan. On hearing Buxton's plan to leave Japan, Juji Nakada, in 1901 joined Lettie and Charles Cowman of the Oriental Missionary Society (OMS). Later Nakada co-founded the Holiness Church and became the Church's first bishop. Yet another member of the Band, Tesusaburo Sasao became a holiness preacher. He worked with Nakada and taught at the Bible Training Institute in Tokyo established by the OMS.

## CONCLUSION

Buxton's spiritual convictions and mission methods laid foundations for the spread of holiness teachings in Japan. His long family association and financial independence from the CMS gave him freedom to pursue his mission methods and propagate holiness teachings. Although the Matsue Band existed for 11 short years, and missionaries on the team were constantly changing, the Band left a lasting legacy in Japanese church history. The people Buxton influenced stood firm in faith. The people he trained and ministered within the Matsue Band, especially the Japanese, went on to establish various denominations. Following Buxton's mission methods they went on

preaching trips and held holiness conventions. In the early twentieth century, when propagation of Christianity became difficult as Japan prepared to enter the Second World War, churches influenced by Buxton's teachings and led by his disciples grew in number. They stood up for their faith against the sanctions imposed by the government. Many Japanese churches in the present day trace their roots to either Buxton, one of his disciples, or someone from the Matsue Band.



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