

Shiro Kano

Faithfulness at Any Price

by

Alice Spangenberg

Edited by

Merritt Nielson

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Faithfulness at Any Price

by Alice Spangenberg

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To remain true to the context within which the original manuscript was written, yet to provide a more contemporary wording, we have elected to use The New King James Version in this edition.

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Introduction

This true story with the facts fully authenticated is “stranger than fiction.” It has been my privilege to know both the “Oriental Pilgrim” and the author. The story is accurately and beautifully written by one who combines genius with intimate knowledge of the subject of the book. Anyone with appreciation for classical style of writing will read and admire this story in its telling. The youth with noble aspiration and spiritual longing will be inspired. The mature person cannot but be called to a life of deeper devotion to Christ and His cause.

This biography clearly delineates the virtues of one who possessed a true Christian character. With the handicap of doing his college course in an unfamiliar language Shiro Kano [SHEE-roh KAH-noh] did five years' work in four and was salutatorian of his class. In his first year his financial support was cut off by war, yet by careful industry and frugality he earned his own way. Confronted by many obstacles that seemed insurmountable, he was always optimistic, cheerful, and smiling. Though he was extremely popular, he kept himself under strict discipline and never once did he embarrass either himself or others. Pressed by many duties, he did not allow his spiritual fervor to lag. In the face of danger his courage never failed. He would

defy his emperor's order to bow before Shinto's shrine¹ and he would ask repatriation rather than discount in any degree his chance to preach the Christian message in Japan. To the end, he was devoted to his "heavenly vision" to tell his people the gospel story because there were so many who did not know.

As I knew him, Shiro was a lovable loyal Christian gentleman. He was a true trophy of missionary service, a miracle of redeeming grace, a thieving sinner changed into a shining saint of God.

By this story Shiro Kano lives among men even though his body occupies an unknown grave. Who knows but by its telling his lifework may be accomplished. "By it, he being dead yet speaketh."

With all who will read this message, I am in debt to the author, "his English teacher."

"His college president,"
G. B. Williamson (1948)

1 Shinto was the state religion of Japan until 1945. It dates back to the 8th century, and is marked by the worship of ancestors and nature spirits.

Foreword

A class room full of literature majors awaited their professor. A new semester, and a bevy of new books to ponder, and truth to assimilate. She entered, diminutive in stature, wearing rimless glasses, books and lecture folders supported in her arms. A brief smile, a welcome, and right down to business. We had all had “Prof. Span” for writing classes and American Lit. We knew her style. Demanding. Comprehensive. No one escaped her probing critique. She expected rigorous scholars, prepared thoroughly for graduate studies. She would permit no slouching intellects.

This particular course focused on the novel as a literary genre. Alice Spangenberg was her full name, one of several strong academic influences on the campus of Eastern Nazarene College at its mid-century mark, along with major professor Bertha Munro, Dr. Louise Dygoski, professor of speech, and Dr. Ruth Cameron, English literature. There was no conflict between demanding scholarship and a complementing rigor of Christian faith and practice. Thoroughly honest exploration of the great ideas of human intellect and imagination coupled with a raw exposure to fear and despair, failure and success, love and alienation, choice and fate in some of the world’s great novels: Coleridge, Austen, Scott, Dickens, Eliot, Twain, Hardy. Their names were casually

known to us, but under the scrutiny of Christian faith they proposed great ideas to help illuminate the human condition, speaking to our hopes and sorrows. We were taught to read critically and learned Prof. Span's unique prose style, characterized by both complete, thoughtfully composed sentences and more direct, staccato-formed phrases.

Within these classroom contexts, during impromptu excursions from Alice Spangenberg's prepared lecture notes, we often heard first-hand snippets of the very real non-fiction story of Shiro Kano. She shared the drama of Shiro's life-altering decision to embrace Christ in his native Japan and how it prompted a quest for further education in the United States even as war clouds gathered in a thickening storm over Europe and the Far East. He had arrived at Eastern Nazarene College² in the late 1930's to study for the ministry, a young man from another culture, language, and religious background. Then, suddenly, as a new Christian, he was forced to make heart-wrenching choices that would force a poignant destiny. She was his mentoring personal tutor as well as professor; he, her devoted student and respectful friend. Theirs was a unique relationship to be shattered forever by war's cruel realities.

His story was worthy of preservation and a life to be honored. Thus, "Prof. Span" authored his biography published under the title *Oriental Pilgrim*.³ A second revised edition

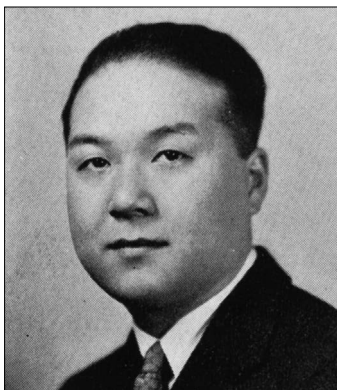
² Eastern Nazarene College is a private, Christian, coeducational college of the liberal arts and sciences in Quincy, Massachusetts, United States.

³ *Oriental Pilgrim* was the original title of this book when released in 1948 and again in 1990.

appeared several decades later, edited and condensed by Helen Temple for a new generation of readers. Though written nearly three decades ago, Ms. Temple's discerning words confirm the timelessness of this unique story for today.

This volume is the third incarnation of Shiro Kano's amazing, yet compelling account of family and faith, humor and sadness, transformation and tragedy. It has been revised and refreshed in this edition by one of Alice Spangenberg's later students to conserve Shiro's story for yet a new generation. I owe much to "Prof. Span's" stimulating class room lectures, her challenge to improve my critical writing skills until I finally received a coveted "A" for my paper on Jane Eyre. Nonetheless, her enduring legacy, it seems to me, was her eagerness to preserve this unimaginable life-story for posterity.

Yet, my first exposure to the Shiro Kano story was not in "Prof. Span's" classroom setting. It came during my growing-up years when his name would come up occasionally in conversations among acquaintances of my father who happened to be one of Shiro's Eastern Nazarene College classmates. I have known the story indirectly for many years, and now directly after reliving and reworking this original account of Shiro Kano's God-directed journey



Shiro Kano in the Nautilus (Eastern Nazarene College's Yearbook)

from Kyoto, Japan to Quincy, Massachusetts and back to Kyoto again.

You will discover themes in this biography that transcend the typical missionary reading-book genre. They come to us fresh in our own time as we survey our contemporary world and seek the Christian response to things like family honor, courage to resist when conscience is at stake, loyalty to country, the legitimacy of war, barbed-wire internment camps for illegals, FBI searches, and severed relationships. Yet above and beyond all these themes rises the glory of humanity's surpassing Savior, who can take the life of a thieving con-artist and transform him into a powerful witness to the gospel.

I invite you to read Alice Spangenberg's original Preface to *Oriental Pilgrim*, and then the Afterword based on the Epilogue from the second edition written by the inimitable Helen Temple, whose annually produced books on missions inspired generations of Nazarenes. This most recent adaptation of Shiro Kano's story hopefully captures the poignancy and power of the original.

Thus, let me offer you the opportunity to meet Shiro Kano, Christian gentleman and scholar, and rejoice in God's power not only to transform a life, but to keep one, in every circumstance and under all conditions, whom He has redeemed (Helen Temple).

Merritt J. Nielson
Lenexa, Kansas 2018

Original Preface

This is the true story of one of my former students, Rev. Shiro Kano of Kyoto, Japan.

Dr. Allen E. Woodall, who declared in a composition class at Boston University in the summer of 1946, “The story of Shiro Kano must be told in full!” has undoubtedly given the final impetus to the writing of this biography. Yet, my association with Shiro Kano for nearly five years as his private tutor, instructor, and adviser placed me in a position to know that his life story should not die. This conviction has only been confirmed by a careful reading of his letters, diaries, and other important data that he left in my possession.

More than 60 of Kano’s friends have assisted by confirming impressions and supplying facts. To each of them, I owe a personal debt. Though lack of space prohibits listing all their names, special recognition is due Kano’s college president, Dr. G. B. Williamson; his American missionary, Dr. William A. Eckel [EK-uhl]; his professors Dr. S. S. White and Dr. Ralph Earle [UHRL]; his former classmates, Rev. Franklyn Wise, Rev. Roland Stanford, Rev. George Rice, and Rev. Stephen Bennett; his Michigan friend, Mrs. Miriam DeHaan [de-HAHN], of Kalamazoo [ka-luh-muh-ZOO]; and his fellow ministers in Japan, Rev. Nobumi Isayama [noh-BOO-mee ee-sah-YAH-mah]

and Rev. Zenichi Murakami [ZE-nee-chee moo-rah-KAH-mee]. For invaluable help in translating the diaries, my sincere thanks go to Rev. Hiroshi Izumi [hee-ROH-shee ee-ZOO-mee]. For their constructive criticism of the contents, my appreciation is due Dr. Samuel Young and Dr. Leonard Spangenberg.

Should any little part of Shiro Kano's faith and indomitable spirit, his absolute consecration to God and sacrificial passion for the Christianizing of his own countrymen be conveyed to the reader, the writing of his life story shall not have been in vain.

Alice Spangenberg
Wollaston [WAH-luh-stuhn], Massachusetts

Chapter 1

"Typhoon Boy"

Ryu Kano [REE-YUU KAH-noh] clung to the arm of her 15-year-old son, Shiro, as they made their way down a busy street in Kyoto, Japan, one October night in 1926. Unlike everyone else, the pair were walking in the middle of the street. With difficulty, the mother held on to the sturdy young teen who quivered with more life and spirit than she had strength to control. The wild colt in him wanted to break loose.

"Mother, why dodge carts and jinrikishas [jin-RIK-shah]?" Shiro asked. "Let's walk on the sidewalk like everyone else."

Ryu only clung to his arm. She could never let him loose within reach of the articles in the sidewalk bazaars. Too often his nimble fingers had slipped pencils, books, trinkets, even cucumbers into the receptive folds of his clothing. His thievery had brought shame upon the whole Kano family.

But there was another reason for clinging to the arm of her rascally son. That very day, for the first time in his 15 years, he had asked to attend *Otera* [oh-TER-ah] (Buddhist temple) to seek the good life of the honorable Buddha

[BOO-dah]. Ryu had all but worn her life away as she went from temple to temple, morning and evening, hoping to catch the ear of the great Buddha on behalf of her erring son. She sought solace in the splendor and glory of Higashi Hongangi [hi-GAH-shee hon-GAH-gee] (East Temple)—its priestly procession, the incense ascending between golden lotus flowers on the altar to the massive, tranquil Buddha. Like a spirit, she had hovered around Ginkakuji [GIN-kah-koo-jee] Temple with its silver-plastered walls, had answered Chionin's [chee-OHN-in] massive bell⁴ calling to prayer, and climbed many steps up the cliff of Otowayama [oh-toh-wah-YAH-mah] to Kyomidzudera [kee-YOH-mee-zoo-de-rah] Temple. With other pilgrims, she would chant her brown rosary, repeating again and again, "Eternal Buddha, save."

Typhoon Boy

Many times she asked herself what had gone wrong with this rambunctious child, so unlike her other four. The gods seemed to smile upon her oldest son, skillful in business, wise and true; her next son, calm and strong; her third, gracious and kind; her only girl, flowerlike and gentle. Then, 13 years after the birth of her fourth child, she had brought into their peaceful garden this child of fire, earthquake, and typhoon.

From the beginning, he had been different from the rest. His little feet flew in pursuit of more mischief than she ever dreamed a child could think up. His voice, loud and clear,

⁴ Interesting fact: "Chionin's **temple bell** (cast in 1633) is the heaviest in Japan, at 74 tons. It takes 17 monks to ring it at the New Year ceremony." www.sacred-destinations.com/japan/kyoto-chionin

sometimes vibrated with mockery and scorn. Sometimes his whole body rocked in spasms of mirth. His sharp eyes went everywhere, searching, analyzing, missing nothing. Her “Typhoon Boy” would grow up to be either a very good boy or a very bad one. He never did anything halfway.

As Ryu guided her youngest toward the temple, she may well have recalled that it was not only his father and herself who had failed their problem child. They

had counted heavily upon school teachers to reform him. The ideals of conduct for students as set forth in *the Imperial Rescript*⁵ on Education were quite clear:

Bear yourself in modesty and moderation, extend your benevolence to all; pursue learning . . . develop intellectual faculties and perfect moral powers; furthermore, advance the public good and observe the laws.

Yet the great rescript could no more control the tempestuous waywardness of Ryu’s typhoon boy than could a cloud of pink cherry blossoms block the path of a tornado about to swoop down upon the island of Nippon [ni-POHN].⁶

In despair, one of the teachers finally appealed to his parents: “If only you would discipline your son Shiro! Can you do nothing with your child? Somehow, he gets his lessons.

⁵ A *rescript* is an official decree of edit.

⁶ Nippon/Nihon, literally “the origin of the sun,” are the names for the country known as “Japan” in English.

**“Typhoon Boy”
would grow up to
be either a very
good boy or a
very bad one.
He never did
anything halfway.**

If only he studied the way he plays baseball, we might have a genius.”

Family Crisis

During Shiro's first year at the Third Kyoto Prefectural Middle School, the principal called at the Kano home. As he faced the distraught parents, his words were few, and he reached his climax with a stunning indictment: “We can no longer have your son Shiro in our school. We regret this action, but it is a necessity.”

The public schools had cast him out. What now? At last, the Kanos turned to an old friend, Mr. Nagasaki [nah-gah-SAH-kee], a groceryman, who took Shiro into his home and hired him as an entry-level clerk.

Yet the Kyoto grocer eventually had to face the Kano family in frustration. “I can do no more with him,” he declared. “I have tried so often, but after two years I give up. I hoped to reform him. But complaints from shopkeepers and the books stacked in every corner of his room make me guess that the old habit still has control of him. Books! More books than his wages and your allowance could purchase.”

Shiro's former employer turned on his heel and fled.

Immediately Katsuzo [kah-TSOO-zoh?], the oldest son, took over. He burst into the house. “Shiro! Where is that young rogue? He has disgraced us. What have we done, to be punished by the gods like this?” He grabbed Shiro's shoulder and looked straight at him. “I want you to make a list of *every* store where you took even one book without paying. Please, for the family honor and the favor of the

gods, tell me everything. Tomorrow you and I are going to visit each store and pay back what is owed. Tell me about all the other articles, too, and where they came from.”

You don't say “no” to people like Katsuzo Kano, who was managing director of the department store, The Watanabe Shoten [wah-tah-NAH-be SHOH-ten], Ltd., of Kyoto, Japan. Shiro could not face up to the ordeal of being marched by his oldest brother from store to store to make things right with all the merchants he had wronged. And how could he possibly remember all the things he had brought home in five years?

The family had apparently failed with their youngest son. The Japanese *Imperial Rescript on Education* and the training of the schools had left Shiro cold. The family friend, Nagasaki, had cast him out in complete frustration. The crisis had come, not only for the family, but for the young delinquent as well.

Quest After God

Twelve years later Shiro Kano shared the quest of his soul after the true God:

When I was 15 years old, I was a problem child in my community. One evening I was sitting on the porch of my home thinking over my future. I suddenly realized how bad my conduct was and I was ashamed of it. In the schools, I was taught what a Japanese should be like, but I had no power to do what I should do and to be what I should be. Through books and papers and over the radio I began to learn

about different religious experiences, and I wanted to understand spiritual things. Of course, I was too young to find out for myself, so I went to my mother.

“Mother, I know in your eyes I am not good, but I want to be good. Are you going to Otera tonight?”

“Shiro, what do you mean?” She was pleasantly surprised. “Yes, I am going tonight. What do you want to know?”

“Mother, I want to go to Otera with you.” I began to cry and continued, “I want to be good. Will Hotoke-sama [hoh-TOH-ke-SAH-mah] (Buddha) save me?”

My mother said nothing, but only nodded.



Ryu Kano, Shiro's mother, with daughter of her oldest son, Katsuzo

The Great Hotoke-sama

“That night I went to *Otera* with my mother. It was the first time in my life to step inside a religious building. Of course, I was a stranger, so I followed my mother, doing everything she did. At seven o'clock the people gathered before the great image of Hotoke-sama (Buddha). In front of him were many large lighted candles and countless or-

naments and decorations. Incense was burning, and the smoke drifted upward and away slowly. The atmosphere was perfect for putting a person in a religious mood. I felt that the image of Hotoke-sama might be a living one, and I worshiped him.

“Soon a priest appeared, dressed in a purple robe and a golden scarf, followed by three assistants wearing red robes. He sat against the image holding a fan. At first, they bowed their heads solemnly before the image and worshiped it, and then they began to read the prayer book.

I want to be good.
Will Hotoke-sama
(Buddha) save me?

Some of the Buddhist worshippers who knew the chant joined them. Others shut their eyes and listened. It was all very strange to me, and I could not understand what the priest was saying about salvation through Hotoke-sama.”

Hotoke-sama, Not So Great

“Frankly, I said to my mother, ‘I do not know what the priest is saying before the image of Hotoke-sama. The stories are impossible to believe. If what he said is true, the world was much better thousands of years ago than now,’ I cried.”

“Shiro, you do not need to worry and think like that. You shall understand soon what he preaches,’ she said. ‘Let us attend *Otera* every night until you understand.’ I knew her health was very poor, and to go to *Otera* every night to help secure her son’s salvation was a very great effort for her.

“From that night on, I began a pilgrimage with my gracious mother and went every night for three months.

Gradually I understood what the priest emphasized. He believed that people existed before this present life. Suffering in this life is caused by the way they had lived in their former lives. If they were suffering in this present life, they had not been very good in their former lives. So, I concluded that according to this doctrine, a disobedient and thieving boy like me would have been a Public Enemy Number One in my former life.

“This teaching is pessimistic,’ I thought. I want to be good, but this religion doesn’t teach me how. It offers nothing for the present life. So, I quit.”

Evidently, Shiro’s worship of the great Buddha could not help him overcome the little impulses that made his fingers go astray. At least he lifted more than one bronze god from the altar in the temple. And more than one pilgrim walked home shoeless because Shiro could not resist stealing some of the shoes left outside the temple entrance by unsuspecting worshippers of the great Buddha.

His heart still unsatisfied, the questing teen sought to purge his soul at the altar of Shinto [SHIN-toh]. “One morning I got up early and went to *Jinja* [JIN-jah], the Shinto shrine. It was clean, undecorated and surrounded by forests. Everyone could feel the purity of such a spiritual environment. According to the custom, I knelt and worshiped the souls of Japanese ancestors and the soul of the universe. That was it.

“But neither Buddhism nor Shintoism, the two main religions of Japan, could give me what I was seeking. I went back on religion altogether and returned to the old life.”

In deepening despair, Shiro approached his mother again.

“How can the gods answer, Mother? They have no eyes to see, no ears to hear. I bring some of them home from the temples. They are no different than a game or a book. You can't play with them or read them. Why go to the temple? What is there? Worship Hotoke-sama, the priest says and go to paradise. Where is paradise? Where is Tokyo? I know that better.”

Chapter 2

“Wonderful Words of Life”

Once again Ryu Kano had persuaded her youngest son to accompany her to the shrine. As they were nearing the temple, the deep-throated bell intoned the words engraved on its rim: *Being born, you must die, and being born, are dead; and being dead, are glad to be at rest.*

Then a thousand bells took up the refrain.

Suddenly a trumpet blast cut through the chime of temple bells. The sound, loud and clear, pulled Shiro like a magnet. He broke free from his mother.

The Difference: Life

On a street corner, a group of Christians were singing “Wonderful Words of Life.” The temple bells were booming, “And being dead, are glad.”

“Shiro!” His mother took hold of his solid arm. “Come! It is time to go to the temple.”

Shiro only shook his head.

“Come!” she repeated with gentle insistence.

“There is nothing there. I will stay here.”

You don’t reform typhoons. You ask the gods to control them. In despair, she continued on alone to the temple.

As the music stopped, a man stepped forward to pray. There was no bronze Buddha, yet he seemed to be talking to Someone that he knew very well. After another song, a young man not much older than Shiro stepped into the circle. He said, "In the temples, the priests say, 'The greatest evil is life.' But in my heart, I have Jesus, the only One who ever dared say, 'I am the Life.'"

The schools had disowned him; his employer had cast him out; his entire family, all but his mother, had turned against him. If he should attend the house of a foreign god, would the temples, too, cast him out? Yet, something about this group made him reluctant to leave them. He followed them from street corner to street corner. At least he could see where they went.

Kamigo Church of the Nazarene

It was a modest little building. No temple bell or holy font outside. No statues of the sacred fox nor devil gods as at the shrine gates. He paused. No, he could not go inside the house of a foreign god, or so he had thought.

Yet the following Sunday the same magnet pulled him to the Kamigo [KAH-mee-goh] Church of the Nazarene, across from the Imperial Palace of Kyoto. He opened the door and went inside. Instead of the red lacquer and gold of the temple, there was simple pine; instead of the dreary voices of chanting priests and responding worshipers, lively trumpet tones and songs of happy Christians.

One of the men arose to pray before a plain altar, bare of any lanterns illuminating rows of bronze gods. No placid

Buddha looked down. Instead, on the walls were these words he had never seen: *“For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life”* (John 3:16).

Finally, someone arose to speak. Instead of the mask-like faces of Buddhist priests, his was happy and kind. He opened a black Book. “Matthew 7:13 and 14,” he said: *“Enter by the narrow gate: for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.”*

Shiro listened as he never had in the temples. He wanted to be one of those few who find the way to life. He wanted to discover how.

To the young Japanese teen, the minister’s sermon was “fierce and powerful.” Scenes from Shiro’s past life plagued him. The shirts and socks he had stolen from the Sogo [SOH-goh] Department Store; the trinkets, toys, pencils, and other things he had taken from the street bazaars; the books— he had never told Katsuzo about them, nor about the gods and worshipers’ shoes he had stolen outside the temples. Heavy guilt lay like a great weight on his heart.

“I had lost all hope in religion. Even Christianity, I thought, was probably the same as Buddhism and Shintoism. When an invitation was given to become a Christian, I went forward. Certainly, the Holy Spirit had spoken to me.

Mister, who is Jesus that the preacher mentioned?

I asked a man who prayed for me, “Mister, who is Jesus that the preacher mentioned?” He opened the Bible and told me about Him with passion. He prayed for me, and as he did, I felt something I had never felt in the other religions. Something was pressing me to believe in Jesus. At last, I said I would.

A man led my prayer. I confessed all my sins and accepted Christ as my Savior. It was a miracle. Every night for three months I had gone to *Otera*, but could find nothing to conquer my evil desires. I got up early to go to *Jinja*, but just felt the purity of the early morning atmosphere. When I went to the Church of the Nazarene only once, I went forward, knelt at an altar, and became a new creation in Christ Jesus.

The Family Reacts

I came back home, elated. My mother was waiting for me. “Why are you so late?” she asked.

I said, “Mother, Jesus, a God of the Christian church, saved me.”

“What’s the matter with you, Son? Have you been at the Christian church tonight?”

I cried, “Yes, mother, and I have become a Christian.”

When my mother heard my confession, she said quietly with tears in her eyes, “Shiro, I am so sorry to hear that. I cannot understand why you had to choose a religion of a foreign country instead of taking your own native religion.”

Yet, Ryu Kano knew that something had happened to her young typhoon. She needed only to look into his face. But how long would the transformation last? Could it be that prayers to the great Hotoke-sama had been answered in the house of the foreign God?

“I had definite confidence that the Lord had changed my life when I accepted Him. Soon my parents and family began to realize that I was truly changed by this Jesus whom the church was preaching.”

Shiro began to make things right. When he entered the Sogo Department Store to confess his thefts and pay his bills, he was recognized and ordered out by the manager. Then he requested his pastor to take the money to the store. Kano's transformation so impressed the store manager that he returned Kano's money and he himself contributed to the Christian church in Kyoto. As he lectured to his employees one morning, he related the incident and pointed out how powerful Christianity is to make a man upright and good.

Days passed, then months, and still, the wonder and meaning of his conversion grew. He attended every service at the church and was soon giving talks on his new-found faith.

“What are we to do?” his father asked. “We are Buddhists. Our youngest son has forsaken the faith of his fathers. Yet how can we wish his present condition to be changed? He is a new person. What does it matter that the miracle happened in a Christian church?”

“Leave things as they are,” warned his oldest son. “Rather, the Christian observances than the thieving fingers that shamed us.”

His mother was as ardent in her encouragement of Shiro's Christian faith as she had been tireless in praying for her son in the temples. Whenever he asked her to attend a Christian service, she went with him gladly. Out of gratitude she contributed money toward gifts for Sunday School pupils at Christmas, and purchased a radio set for the pastor.

To the Work

Even the master of the Nakadachi [nah-kah-DAH-chee] Elementary School, who as an ardent Buddhist looked down on Christianity, heard of his conversion. He and the school had been so disgraced by Shiro's behavior. Yet this problem child's transformation led the school principal to congratulate his former pupil. He even presented him with a leather-bound copy of the New Testament. The following year he invited the pastor of the Church of the Nazarene to speak at the graduation exercises and encouraged all the children to attend the Christian Sunday School.

About this time, an American missionary opened a mission hall in the district of Nishijin [ni-shi-JIN], famous for its silk textile industries. For three nights, young people from the Kyoto church, Shiro included, led services and gave their testimonies. Because of the Spirit's anointing on their singing and witnessing, in three nights 75 people accepted Christ.

Looking back on those early days, one of these converts, John Kawamura [kah-wah-MOO-rah], recalled, "I could not pray at all, but Shiro prayed for me. After a few days, I

was thoroughly convinced about Jesus.” But more of John Kawamura later. The lives of these two young Japanese Christians were to be rather closely knit in the days to come.



Shiro Kano with his Sunday School class, Tokyo, 1936

Chapter 3

His Emperor's Call

Shiro Kano's conversion to the Christian faith meant more than a miraculous transformation of his own life, peace of mind for his family, and greater profits for booksellers in Kyoto. It also marked the beginning of an active Christian ministry. Kano was becoming steadfastly convinced that in a very personal way God was calling him for full-time service, "I must preach," he would say. "So many of my people do not know."

He began to study Greek and English at the YMCA English School in Tokyo. "A minister must read the New Testament in the original language," he said, "and so many good theological books written in English are not translated into Japanese. So, I must learn English too."

But there was another call, leading in a different direction.

On April 30, in his 21st year, he gathered with 300 other young men of the District of Kyoto to answer his emperor's call for two years of compulsory military training. In remembering this experience, he wrote:

**I must preach.
So many of
my people
do not know.**

“I prayed to God fiercely every day that I might not pass the tests because many of the Christians I had known were persecuted and left their faith while in the army. And so I prayed. When I heard that I had passed all the tests and was in the first class, I grew dizzy with fear.”

Burning Fiery Furnace

“I joined the army with stoic determination and received assurance from God that He would be with me. Yet, I discovered that this military life was full of troubles beyond my expectation. Every day we were trained strictly for six hours. Also, we had all-night practice twice a week; sometimes two days and two nights without any food.



Shiro Kano during his enforced military service, 1932

“But for me, the troubles of the army life were not only physical but mental. I had to endure torture for maintaining my faith. Often, I prayed to God about the ridicule I was experiencing because of my Christian faith. I wondered specifically about the doctrines of God’s omnipresence and omnipotence, because as a Christian my army life was so miserable.

“Then, the senior officer commanded us to worship before the Shinto shrine. But as a worshiper of the true God, I could not bow, even though it was the emperor’s command.

“After three days of long and intense praying for the Lord’s help, he gave me His word. I presented myself to the captain and said, ‘I am a Christian. I believe the Creator of heaven and earth is the only true God. I cannot worship anyone as God above our Savior, Jesus Christ. You have commanded us to worship before the shrine. I cannot do that as a Christian.’

“The captain kept silent. An officer beside the captain heard my petition and very angrily threatened me. But I would not give in.”

Three Hebrew Children

“The next day all of the army gathered before the shrine. Of course, I was among them, awaiting the time, praying to the Lord. At that very moment, I remembered the story of the three Hebrew children in the Book of Daniel.

“‘Their God is my God. God helped them, and He will help me today,’ I said.

“Soon, the bugle blew. All the soldiers bowed themselves before the shrine.

“Satan whispered to me eagerly, ‘Bow your head a little. No one will see you.’

“I said, ‘Get away, Satan!’

“I stood up straight. The captain saw my action, but said nothing.

“From that day on we had to worship before the shrine frequently. At last, the captain said I did not have to worship

**Their God is my God.
God helped them,
and He will
help me today.**

before the shrine with them, and instead encouraged my Christian faith. Many people admired me, but I must say it was not by my power, but by God's grace."

The question as to his obligation as a Japanese versus his duty as a Christian would never leave him. "I must preach," he said often. "So many of my people do not know."

He even went to work on a priest of Buddha. "I had many chances to have discussions with him. At first, he re-

jected our Christianity strongly, but I compared the teachings of both Buddha and Jesus. After six months, he asked to borrow

a book about the Sermon on the Mount. He recognized how Jesus' positive moral law far surpassed the negative moral law of Buddhism. He read my book eagerly again and again."

**She was heading
toward the
whirlwinds of war.**

Just before Shiro's hitch in the army was ended, he was one of 40,000 men to be reviewed by his emperor.⁷ "I shall never forget the solemn impression at that time. As I marched, I thought that when God's army is reviewed by God himself, the scene will be far more solemn and impressive.

On April 20, 1933, he took off his army boots, discarded his uniform, and unstrapped his sword. For how long? He was becoming aware of a gathering storm. He perceived the direction in which his nation was moving. She was heading toward the whirlwinds of war. Only a miracle could save her now.

⁷ To be *reviewed* by the emperor was to be inspected for readiness, to receive congratulations on achievements, and to inspire the troops.

Chapter 4

New Trails

Kano returned again to his life with his Christian friends and co-workers. In the city or country, under an open sky, in tents, homes, halls, churches, he played his trombone, sang, testified, and preached to the glory of God.

Missionary Dollars at Work

Meanwhile, Kano's missionary mentor, Rev. William A. Eckel, while on furlough in the United States told churches of Shiro's loyalty to Christ during his army training and of his zeal for the Lord's work. A church in Kalamazoo, Michigan, voted to contribute monthly to his support. "We have known him since he was in his teens," the missionary wrote of Kano to the church secretary. "He is like a son to us. We can always trust him. Kano is going to be a great man in the work of the Lord; a leader of others, strong in conviction and forceful in speech."

After the checks from Kalamazoo began to arrive for Kano in Japan, a lively correspondence between him and his unseen friends in the U.S.A. began.

“We have only two churches in Tokyo, only two in a teeming city of 6 million,” he wrote in one letter. “What opportunities lie before us! How great the need of our present-day Japan for the gospel of Christ! My great ambition is to go out and blaze new trails for our Lord.” A couple of years later, “Our two Nazarene churches in Tokyo have increased to seven. Our work in Tokyo has a bright and promising future.”

Go or Stay?

It was during this time that the American missionary, who recognized in Kano more than ordinary talents and powers, suggested that he be sent to the States to be educated in a Christian college. At the same time, the pioneer spirit in Kano and the restless drive to be about his Father’s business impelled him to make plans to organize a new mission in an unreached section of Tokyo. When approached about furthering his education in America, Kano exclaimed, “I could never have imagined such a thing!”

Yet, all would work out to God’s glory, Kano was sure, because of the close relationship between the Father in heaven and his earthly child. As the days passed and plans for the future had to be made, the direction in which Kano was to move became unmistakably clear. He must go to America to study.

Katsuzo Again

What about finances for his big venture? There was, of course, his oldest brother, Katsuzo. He could not be quite sure of Katsuzo, but he was very sure of prayer. Before he

left for the Japanese army, Shiro had spent three days in earnest prayer that he would have the grace to take his stand as a Christian. He prayed twice as long that Katsuzo, a prosperous merchant, and devout Buddhist, might finance his way in America as a Christian ministerial student. Perhaps the miracle of his conversion had helped to tip the scales in his favor.

His diary for January 9, 1937: "My eldest brother encouraged me about financing my study." January 11: "I made up my mind to go to America to study and asked the missionary what procedure is necessary for entering school." January 15: "Worked hard at English lessons."

In the spring of 1937, Katsuzo Kano left his pressing duties with The Watanabe Shoten Ltd., to journey 300 miles to Tokyo on behalf of his youngest brother. There he made financial arrangements and other plans for his youngest brother's proposed voyage to study in America, a journey of 10,000 miles to become a Christian minister.

The Other Master?

Obtaining financial support was only the first of many hurdles before he set sail for America. His diary for July 7, 1937: "News of the outbreak of war between the Chinese army and our army in North China." For July 16: "Orders for the mobilization of the First Reserve Army are issued. I am a member of it. I received the army's permission to leave the country one week before reporting for duty. I have, however, one month before the day of my departure." For July 28: "My friends are gradually being called out. Everyone

tells me I, too, should be ready for the call.” Through all the uncertainty and apprehension, a promise God had given him was shining bright and clear: “*The Lord, your God, has carried you, as a man carries his son*” (Deuteronomy 1:31).

It was Sunday, August 1, 1937, in Kyoto. The fine, bright day represented two great opposing forces that were bidding so strongly for Shiro’s allegiance and his life. That morning, in the church where he had first become a Christian, he delivered his farewell sermon before leaving for America. His topic was: “What Would Jesus Do?”

“In the afternoon,” he wrote in his diary, “I went to the railroad station to see my friends go on active service. I also saw the crowds who came to see the soldiers leave for the front.”

**Two calls sounded
in his ears: the voice
of his country and
his Master’s call.**

Two calls sounded in his ears: the voice of his country and his Master’s call. An army officer told him: “Your number is in Book Number 22. If the war minister commands the calling out of Number 22, you must go. Since you already have permission to leave, you may. But if you get a call first, you must receive it joyfully.”

Again, from his diary: “August 17. Fine day. I set sail from Yokohama [yoh-koh-HAH-mah] for America ... I can’t describe my condition of fearfulness and uneasiness until finally, I felt the gangplank of the *Katsuragi Maru* [kat-soo-RAH-gee MAH-roo] that was to bring me to Eastern Nazarene College firm beneath my feet.”

Chapter 5

Arrival

Katsuzo Kano's youngest brother was coming to America free of financial worries. There was no frugality, either, as to Shiro's clothing and equipment: handmade tapestries, hand-painted prints, fans, silk scarves and tablecloths, sandals, purses of gold cloth, and other pieces of Japanese art, packed in with bay rum,⁸ books, soap, canned foods, stationery, and almost enough clothing to start a modest haberdashery.

The trip to America was profitable in more ways than one. He later used his impressions en route as material for an essay in a freshman English composition contest. Shiro wrote of his arrival in New York, the city lights dominating the sky: "In the dark sky, the Statue of Liberty stood up clearly, shining by illumination. What a wonderful sight. She is the symbol of Americanism. I looked at this statue and prayed in my heart that I would spend my life joyfully in America without any trouble."

⁸ **bay rum** is a fragrant cosmetic and medicinal liquid distilled from the leaves of a West Indian bay tree (*Pimenta racemosa*) of the myrtle family or usually prepared from essential oils, alcohol, and water. (Merriam-Webster Dictionary)

“The next day I started for Boston, the city of art, education, and religion. What, I asked myself, will I get from this city?”

Homesick

Early during his freshman year, he wrote this impression in an essay he titled, “Homesickness.”

“The train for Boston had started from Grand Central Station. My heart came gradually to darkness and loneliness. I shut my eyes. Soon my imagination flew to my country. Everything was clear in my memory. I had received a good letter from the college where I was going, but I had great unrest on the train in this strange land. I thought if this train was headed for Japan, I would be very glad.”

First Days

He arrived at Eastern Nazarene College on September 17. Students on campus, as curious as they were hospitable, greeted the young Japanese student. A round of introductions followed, accompanied by his smiles, deep bows, and the oft-repeated “Thank you.”

As he entered his dormitory room, he remembered there was no need to take his shoes off, as everyone did in his country. No sitting with his knees crossed. No sleeping on the floor with his head on a block of wood. And those high perches that Americans call beds—weren’t they too far from the floor for safety?

The following night he wrote in his diary: “Visited the college president and the pastor and they welcomed me

warmly. In the afternoon, I wrote letters and played tennis. I got homesick and was embarrassed by it.”

Soon everyone on campus was aware of the new student from Japan. The first day he attended classes wearing a tan slipover sweater, looking all scrubbed and clean after a carefree summer. Apparently, neither the rigors of pioneer missionary work nor the grueling discipline of military training had left any trace of care or strain on his benign, serene, unwrinkled face. His gaze went everywhere, seeing, questioning, appraising, analyzing, and comprehending. He quickly adjusted to different customs. Not only were the language, food, houses, and beds different. Americans called the front cover of a book what Japanese would call the back cover.

Dead Broke

From the very first, one of his daily habits was to make tracks for the library and get hands on the morning paper. News from his own country, particularly, absorbed him. Often, he appeared apprehensive and uneasy, as if he feared things to come.

The course his country had taken militarily was to concern him more vitally. Only a few weeks after he had landed

in the U.S.A., Kano found himself practically penniless in a strange land. Without warning his government had

“I must get out and work with my hands, like most of my college friends.”
In Kyoto, he had never even had to shine his own shoes.

stopped the flow of gold from Japan to the United States. Katsuzo Kano's support had been completely cut off. But apparently, no thought of turning back occurred to him. Instead, he thought, "I must get out and work with my hands, like most of my college friends." In Kyoto, he had never even had to shine his own shoes.

He wrote in his diary: "I wish to master English quickly. At the same time, I am worried over my school expenses. I shall pray for them," he wrote in his diary. "I was deeply impressed by the words: *'Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and thou shall glorify Me'*" (Psalm 50:15).

The course that his country had taken was to affect him in even more tragic ways. He was constantly moved by the plight of his fellow ministers in Japan who were called to fight in China. A few months later Kano learned that one of six Nazarene pastors fighting in China was killed in action. Kano described him as "a faithful, strong preacher, and a pastor of the scholarly type." His best friend wrote from the front line: "You are lucky to be where you are. If your departure for America had been one week later, you would be here with us."

"I must confess," Kano wrote, "that now I have some struggle in my mind. Of course, it is not of faith, but of morality, I face as a Japanese. Pastor Shimizu [shi-MEE-zoo] left a wife and two children. Of course, the government shall take care of them, but their home shall not be happy. My heart is sorrowful and tearful. I have no wife nor children. I am a free man, with no family responsibilities. Should not I be killed on behalf of a husband or father? A person with no

obligations is enjoying life in another country, and a person having so much responsibility for his family is working hard under the war situation in China. When I think over this situation, I confess I cannot contain my emotion.”

Chapter 6

New World

After Shiro had been in America 17 days, he gave his first talk in a nearby church on Christian missions in his home country. It was the first of many such engagements, some of which took him as far west as Michigan. The first time he spoke publicly in English, he wore a kimono of heavy black silk and was more immaculately combed and scrubbed than ever. Had he never responded to the gospel, he would undoubtedly still have been thieving in the stores and streets of Kyoto.

“I am one of the products of your missionary budget,” he began. Aided by notes, he spoke with certain fluency, even though his pronunciation was not always clear. He spoke of the great beauty of his native land with emotion but more particularly of its need for the gospel of Christ.

His Message

How much his congregation actually caught of what he was trying to say is unknown. His Christian zeal and the anointing of God, nonetheless, spoke an international

language. His spirit of selfless love and burning concern that his country would hear the good news it so desperately needed was unmistakable. Out of his treasures from the Orient he had brought along tapestries, silk scarves, lacquerware, silk kimonos, fans, and other samples of Japanese art for the congregation to see. He wrote scripture verses Japanese style, with a fude [FOO-de],⁹ and distributed them.

At last, throwing off the fetters of a foreign tongue, he broke forth into a prayer in his native language. Only those who heard him pray could realize the intensity of his burden as he petitioned the Almighty on behalf of his own people. They were, he knew, headed for destruction, but for the grace of God. His sharp, all-searching eyes were not blind to the fate that awaited his countrymen, and probably the world, should Japan's guiding star continue to lead them toward war.

Besides the immediate impact of his first public address in America, two developments resulted. First, from all over New England came calls for the newly arrived Japanese student to tell his story to churches and other organizations. Second, no other choice remained for his English teacher, Professor Alice Spangenberg, but to tutor him daily. The message that cried for expression had to have release. He must get it out, or die.

Mastery of the English language, written and spoken, was not enough. Whatever it was that Americans would be likely to do in a given circumstance, he wanted to know

⁹ A fude is a writing brush.

what the custom was, and why it was, and how they would think and feel about it.

He also gave his American friends insight into some significant customs and concepts of his home country. For one thing, his beautiful sense of gratitude. At the close of one of his many battles with the English language, he offered Professor Spangenberg a silk

scarf. “Could you use this? Not a very great gift for all your kindness about my English, but an example of my country’s best design, dyeing, and silk.” A Japanese print for Dr. G. B. Williamson, his college president, who was tireless in his efforts on behalf of the emerging Japanese preacher; a Chinese mandarin coat for his theology

He also gave his American friends insight into some significant customs and concepts of his home country. For one thing, his beautiful sense of gratitude.

professor, Dr. Ralph Earle. Each of these gifts helped to express his way of saying “Thank you.” And when one of his student friends who had taken him under his wing had no shaving lotion, because the Depression of the 1930’s was on, Shiro presented him with two bottles of Japanese bay rum.

“Wait a Hundred Years”

He was a true citizen of the Far East in that he had the gift of perspective that Westerners rarely possess in like degree. “Wait ten years,” he used to say. “Wait 100 years.”

And he put duty and his promise before personal preference or advantage. A friend had asked Kano to spend the

Christmas holidays with him in Pittsburgh, but Kano had already promised to speak to a small mission group during the vacation. Despite the fact that the dining hall was closed and the friend offered to bring him back early, he refused the invitation. When urged to change the date of his speaking engagement he said, "I have made a promise. We never break our word for a private reason."

Material for Shiro's practice in oral English most often centered around his own country. New Year's celebrations, the tea-drinking ceremony, flower arrangement, Buddhist and Shinto temples, jujitsu [joo-JIT-soo], Mount Fuji [FOO-jee], silk making, all received careful explanation. He even produced a book of Japanese comics having as the hero the Japanese counterpart of the American Mickey Mouse.

One day he brought his two photograph albums: the one picturing his military training, the other his activities with his many Christian friends. He retold his trial by fire when, before the captain of his regiment, he reaffirmed his allegiance to the true and living God.

"I could not bow before the shrine of Shinto, though it was the emperor's command."

He came alive when he opened his album of church pictures. Pointing from one person to another he would say, "Very diligent worker," or, "Very sacrificial," or, "He works so hard for so little money," or, "Filled with zeal for Sunday School work," or, "Clever, brilliant minister." Sometimes with a sigh, "This minister and his family are so poor," or, "This mother has tuberculosis." Then, after a moment of

silence, “So often I wish to fly to my home. I want to help them. So many of my people do not know.”

The Family Again

A mood of deep quietness came over him as he turned to the last page. There a framed picture of a Japanese woman looked out from ancestral tablets and other articles on the altar. “My mother,” he said with profound reverence. “Our family altar for her. She died two years ago. So noble, kind. She stayed by me, her bad child, when everyone else had no hope. Bad, noisy, terrible boy. ‘Typhoon Boy,’ she said. So long she prayed for me. She went with me to my Christian church. Encouraged me in my faith.”

“When my mother passed away, she held my hand and whispered to me, ‘Shiro, you have chosen a hard way of life.’ She meant that I would be a preacher of the gospel. ‘But,’ she said, encouraging me, ‘do not give up your faith until your death.’”

Shiro’s sister wrote to Professor Spangenberg: “We are waiting for his coming back. I hope that he is trained by you and your school, and comes back to my home as a good man.”

Shiro Kano’s family had remained Buddhist, but they were still depending on Christianity and a Christian college

“ His diary for December 31, 1937: “On looking back over this year I remember how I prayed and was given the word: ‘The Lord has carried you, as a father carries his son.’”

to lead their youngest son and brother so that he might return to them “a good man.”

His diary for December 31, 1937: “On looking back over this year I remember how I prayed and was given the word: ‘The Lord has carried you, as a father carries his son.’”

The next day, New Year’s Day, 1938: “I am filled with hope, but I do not expect that my way will be easy. I shall meet unbearable hardships because I am a foreigner. Yet, even with

**I do not expect
that my way
will be easy.**

the mounting tension of a war, I have passed the time peacefully in the love of the Lord. I feel much improved in knowledge, and I am glad to have gained confidence in the study of the doctrine of entire sanctification. I wish I could declare my faith boldly like Paul: *‘I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things, I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need’*” (Philippians 4:12-13). In all these things, I am conqueror through Christ.

Chapter 7

Sweat of His Brow

When the Japanese government announced late in 1937 that it had cut off the flow of gold to the United States, Kano realized his financial predicament. Upon hearing the news, he went immediately to the business manager of the college. “I want to stay here, please,” he said. “I could eat less.” When he requested a job, and the business manager asked him what kind of work he could do, he ignored the question but replied, “I can learn anything.”

Crew Brothers

He joined the campus crew. One blustery day when the crew was digging out paths at the tail end of a New England snowstorm, Shiro’s companions noticed that the new recruit was stomping his feet vigorously as he turned over each shovelful. His canvas tennis shoes were soaking wet. Yet, he insisted on staying out as long as the rest. An old-fashioned spell of the flu hit him hard. When he returned to work, the crew presented him with woolen socks and heavy boots. “God is so good to me,” he whispered. “And He helps my friends do good to me, too.”

As early as five on a winter morning, Kano would be out to make clear paths for his fellow students and teachers. The scrape of his shovel on snowy mornings became the alarm clock for a neighbor as he would dig out his driveway for the daily trip to Boston.

When Professor Spangenberg happened to mention that she had semester grades to average, he brought his abacus, those wooden beads strung on a wire frame. As grades were called out, his fingers would manipulate, find the total sum, then divide for the final average. He stayed until the task was finished.

When she suggested remuneration, he became all gratitude but said with courteous insistence, "In Japan, we think it a great honor to help the teacher. We never accept pay." Money, he surely needed. Yet he held to his code of honor. His instructor made a little trip to the business office, however, and had him accredited with a fair sum.

Cherry Blossoms, Sukiyaki, and John

The spring of his first year in America he took to writing about the plum and cherry blossoms of his native land. Already he had formed an emotional attachment to the Japanese maple and the two ginkgo trees he soon discovered on campus. One spring day his Greek professor and student friends whisked him off to the Arnold Arboretum, less than 10 miles away, to behold cherry trees in full bloom. Japan was not so far away.

Japan seemed much nearer, too, because his friend John Kawamura, on whose shoulder he had placed an encouraging

hand to find the true God, registered at Pasadena College in California. A brisk weekly correspondence followed. Along with the obvious topics that occupy young Japanese in America, they also had quite a debate on paper concerning California and New England. "You are not in America but in California. New England, New York, and Chicago have a history, but California is so brand-new that it has no past," Kano would write. And John would answer, "We don't want old stuff like Europe and the East," Then Kano would reply, "You are not in America but somewhere between Japan and the United States." And they wrote more seriously as they pondered the problems of evil, the existence of God, and the meaning of the call of God.

Summer Job

The coming of summer meant that Shiro needed to find another job. A fastidious woman wanted a Japanese butler, but her pay was as small as her fastidiousness was great. A summer camp needed a cook, but why use a camp of hungry boys on whom to practice the art of Japanese-American cuisine?

For several weeks he sought for employment, but in vain. One evening when he was trying to explain to a friend the trial of his faith, he bowed his head and in his native tongue poured forth a fervent petition to God. After a silent moment, he whispered, "This summer I will have a job." In a few days, he learned that his college would take him on as a painter. He had never used a paintbrush, but one could always learn.

His diary: “June 9, 1938. Opening day of my job at 7 a.m. It was the hardest job I ever had, painting in the hot sun. However, I am glad to work to pay for my school expenses. I worked 11 1/2 hours today.”

After Twelve Hours

The necessity of storing up credit to pay for future college expenses kept him at it early and late. One evening after he had worked 12 hours, his ladder began to slip. He was too weary to jump. As he fell, he hit his face hard against the hook of the ladder and was unconscious for half an hour. His face was badly swollen—“large like a hippopotamus’ face”—and was bleeding very hard, and he sustained other injuries.

Shiro wrote in his diary, “Of course God was with me and talked to me. Even though I could not see nor eat and had a hard headache, my heart and faith were very quiet, and I listened to God’s voice.”

One of his dormitory neighbors who also stayed on campus the year-round observed: “During the summer Shiro existed on a mere fraction of what our meals cost. During the New England winters, he worked on, sometimes without sufficient clothing. His shut-mouth policy on his own troubles was probably one of his biggest handicaps while in college. I am sure there were dozens of students who would have contributed from their own incomes to help him, had they known.”

Once near the end of his first year in America he held up his right hand and rubbed his left hand over the callouses.


His face broke into a broad grin. There was pride in it, but there was much more: the priceless quality of acceptance.

Chapter 8

His Father's Business

A slip of paper tucked inside Kano's English Bible gives evidence that prayer and praise in a foreign tongue checked the free expression of his mind and heart. On one side of the paper, he had written a testimony, on the other a prayer, both in painstaking English.

"I went to church last night, and a testimony meeting was held," one page read. "I arose and said, 'Although my English is broken, I should like to give my testimony. In place of a god of wood or stone which has no feeling or understanding, I have found in Christ a Redeemer and Savior. When my school days are



When my school days are over, I aim to return to my country where I shall preach the gospel by God's help until Jesus comes.

over, I aim to return to my country where I shall preach the gospel by God's help until Jesus comes. Please pray for me."

In the summer of 1939, he had a series of speaking engagements in Michigan and several other states. He stayed longest with the church friends in Kalamazoo who had helped support him in Japan. There he spoke on two

Sunday mornings to large congregations. Kano talked about his country's war with China and said, "If you hear many things about Japan and the war, remember that somewhere there will be a Japanese young man who will be preaching the gospel." Many in the congregation were in tears. Kano himself spoke with deep emotion. His speaking especially moved the young people.

Upon his return to ENC, he wrote to the Kalamazoo church: "My dream of five years has been realized. I can find no words to express my deep appreciation for your kindness,

**Between Christians,
there can be no
barrier of race.**

your friendship, and fellowship in him. God showed me many truths on this trip, and it shall undoubtedly be one of the great events in my life. I saw with my eyes what Christian fellowship is, and how Christian friendship should be expressed. Through this trip, I learned what Christianity in Japan needs. Between Christians, there can be no barrier of race."

Throughout his stay in America, he constantly remembered his homeland and God's work there. He sent back religious magazines, books, and Sunday School literature; wrote articles regularly for one church monthly and occasionally for other periodicals; arranged an exchange of correspondence between his own Sunday School students in Japan and those of similar age in the States, translating Japanese letters into English, and English into Japanese.

Chapter 9

Salutatorian

The crowning achievement of his first year, and of every year in college, was having his college president pin the gold insignia of the Honor Society on his lapel. More than a photographic memory or a craze for grade-snatching accounted for his academic success. He had his own credo of what should constitute an education. "Choose some person," he said, "who is worthy to be loved and communicated with your whole life long as a teacher and friend—a great man, a hero, a philosopher, a poet, a musician, or a scientist, and then study about them as your lifelong hobby. After you have chosen one, at first read authorized books about the person, then extend your study gradually. Whether a philosopher, theologian, or poet, read and reread those books until you almost memorize them. Study them at least 30 or 40 years. Perhaps you may say, 'I am too busy.' Don't mind. You must recognize the marginal utility of time. Try to use your 5 or 10 minutes a day as you would handle a diamond, with great care.

"You might have some anxiety of becoming a narrow person, but don't be afraid. Your study of this person shall

spread in many directions, and you shall become enlarged in mind and spirit. Try it, then after ten years you shall be not only an educated person, but shall become more composed, refined, and noble.”

As Others Saw Him

Shiro always led the class in Greek, even though he had to translate from Greek to English while thinking in Japanese. His alert mind was always pursuing problems relentlessly. He wanted passionately to know the truth.

The head of the Department of Theology recalls that “Kano had as brilliant a mind as any person I ever had in my classes. It was unusual in several respects, but especially because it was both scientific and philosophic; that is, it was synoptic or could see things whole, and at the same time grasp details. He had a special ability both in rote and logical memory.”

A fellow student observed: “While the prof would be expounding the truth of the lesson, Kano would be consuming the material for another course out of the textbook. In an instant, he could leave his book and join the class discussion. I suppose it was necessary for him to double up like this because he never felt quite satisfied until he was carrying a load of from 18 to 24 hours instead of the customary 15. I never remember hearing him complain of being too busy. Neither do I recall seeing anything lower than a B+ on his grade card. It was his intense love of knowledge and the urgency of his people’s needs that provided the driving force for him through his college years.”

Raised Eyebrows

Sometimes in theology or biblical literature class, he would cause fellow students to raise their eyebrows. A few of them wondered about some of the so-called unorthodox questions he would bring up in class. Indirectly he was led into a discussion that produced an explanation. In essence, it was something like this: “When I return to my people, I must expect any and all types of questions about philosophy and religion, and I must try to answer them all, too. My people have the background of several other Asian religions. They have problems that never occur to you Americans. I must be ready for them. My people are convinced only when they can see proof in black and white. I cannot tell them that the Scriptures imply the truth. I must be able to



Shiro Kano sawing wood at Eastern Nazarene College

point to the Scriptures as truth. The Japanese mind must see for itself.” No one wondered about Kano’s faith after that.

He not only accumulated knowledge and assimilated it, but also built his own personal library. Odd jobs off campus brought in cash, a few dollars of which he eked out

**I will pray for
world peace.**

to purchase books. He located the secondhand bookstores in Boston, soon learned those that specialized in philosophical and theological books. He noted in his diary, “I cannot waste precious time from study while my people are working hard in my country. I will pray for world peace.”

Salutatory

Kano’s endowment with a keen mind, his dedication and drive, and his motivation inspired by a personal call from God to serve his people, all combined to make him a more than an average student. The climax of his college career occurred when he delivered the salutatorian’s address for the Eastern Nazarene College class of 1941. He was Ryu Kano’s Typhoon Child who, but for the grace of God, would probably be fighting in China, instead of facing an audience in America as he was about to deliver his commencement oration in a Christian college.

In part, he said: “I have found many qualities in American youth that command my respect and admiration, but I say frankly that there are things about them that make me fear for their welfare.” Especially the problems of youth in an age of sensualism and indulgence, of lowered morals and

lack of restraint, concerned him. “When I comprehend the aim and mission of the Christian campus, I believe that it is indeed the hope of American youth and the next generation of this country.

“At ENC we have been brought up under the ideals and atmosphere of the holiness college. Someone may think that graduation is a deliverance from this intensive training and discipline, but I say no. I believe that graduation is to us a new appointment to be the propagators and the performers for establishing the ideals and the standards of ENC as she uplifts Christ. The diploma and the degree shall not be the only evidence of our work at ENC during the past four years, but our lives after today shall decide what we have learned here, and what she has done for us.

“We, the class of ’41, want to emphasize our allegiance to the principles of Christian faith, purpose, integrity, and progress. We have found that the Christian way is our way.”

During the months that were to follow, Shiro Kano was to test to the full the “all things” of his ideal—the apostle Paul: “*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me*” (Philippians 4:13).

The summer of 1941 followed the pattern of his other summers in America: work, and plenty of it. August 28: “My collection of pennies has finally reached \$300 today. Indeed, this is an unbelievable story, but it is a fact, that through God’s great help, I am ready to register at the Graduate School of Boston University.”¹⁰

¹⁰ Now, Boston University School of Theology in Massachusetts.

The Mother Country Moves

On August 2, a letter to Kano from General Secretary Matsumoto [maht-soo-MOH-toh] of the Japanese Student Christian Association in America invaded his peaceful world. The secretary advised all Japanese students to leave the U.S. "My impression after visiting the mother country is definite," he wrote. "Japan is marching with decision. Nothing and none are allowed to interfere."

Kano's reaction was this: "If my present condition is his will, I shall accept it with pleasure. If his will is otherwise, I want to find it out. I have learned faith through my life here. What more is the Lord intending to instruct me? I am anxious to know, and I will do my best to be His good child."

Chapter 10

The University

Mid-September meant for Kano exchanging most of his summer earnings for the privilege of 15 hours of graduate work in his beloved field of theology and philosophy at Boston University Graduate School. He still lived in his old college dormitory, a few miles from Boston, still arose early to boil his ration of rice for the day. A few dollars can go far for food if you manage right and are not too fussy about quality, variety, and amount.

After his fellow students at Boston University learned of his proficiency with the Greek language, they bought him ice cream for translating their knotty passages. There is more than one way to save on a food bill.

December 7, 1941

His route to the university led past several second-hand bookstores, which he could not resist. “I must take home books on theology to my country,” he would remark. So, he earned money any way he could to buy more books. His method of acquiring volumes had indeed changed, but not the inherent love for them.

On the afternoon of December 7, 1941, he was sitting quietly in his dormitory room, looking through some of his recently purchased books and listening to his half-whispering radio. Then suddenly over the airwaves came devastating news of the attack on Pearl Harbor,¹¹ the consequences of which were to shake the world.

Kano sat, stupefied. Dormitory friends tapped on his door and entered. When words finally came, he seemed in a state of shock, body and soul. All he could say was, “Maybe good strategy, but dirty trick.”

The fellows did not stay very long. They were all under a cloud, each one not realizing, but trying to comprehend, the implication for himself of the score or so of words spoken so swiftly by the voice over the radio.

Kano, who suddenly through no action of his own, had become a member of an enemy race, knelt quietly before the Lord.

Alone again in his room, Kano, who suddenly through no action of his own, had become a member of an enemy race, knelt quietly before the Lord. He knew the one source of sustenance and strength, the true God to whom he had turned again and again since first he had

¹¹ A surprise military attack on the United States naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, USA, by the Imperial Japanese Navy Air Service occurred on 7 December 1941. A total of 2,335 American soldiers died, 1,143 were wounded, and 18 ships were sunk or run aground. Sixty-four Japanese were killed in the attack, and one was captured, and 29 planes were lost during the battle, with another 74 damaged by antiaircraft fire. This ushered in the USA's participation in World War II.

found Him, the Light of Life piercing through the engulfing blackness of pagan religion. After a while, the bell from the campus chapel summoned to evening worship. He arose and went.

Goodwill Ambassadors

That evening his friends rallied to his support. Friends filled his room. As proof of goodwill, they brought along ice cream. Then in walked his college president, Dr. G. B. Williamson, and his college pastor, Dr. Samuel Young. After a few words, they all dropped to their knees as the president prayed fervently that God would in some way use Kano to heal the breach that war would make between the two nations. Though they belonged to earthly kingdoms plunged suddenly into war, they were conscious of a higher kinship in the spiritual kingdom of the Prince of Peace.

Upon the advice of his college president, Kano stayed away from Boston for one whole day, more to safeguard his own safety than for any other reason. The eminent philosopher, Dr. Edgar S. Brightman, one of Kano's professors at the university, had already invited him to his home on Christmas. Kano received a friendly note from Mrs. Brightman, postmarked December 7, 1941, at 11 p.m.: "Mr. Brightman has already spoken to you about Christmas dinner. Now I want to add my invitation to his. We would love to have you come to our home on Christmas." Kano carried the note around for the rest of the day, showed it to several of his friends.

Greek and Strawberry Ice Cream

Waiting around in his room, doing nothing, wore him down. He could not bear inactivity. So back to the university he went. What about his reception? Even people on the train and in the streets would recognize his nationality. Well, he was willing to take the risk.

As he took his seat in the large lecture hall, he felt uncertain. Then he walked Dr. Brightman. His gaze fell in Shiro's direction, to someone who had now suddenly become an enemy alien.

"Gentlemen," he said to his class of over 100, "we are happy to have Mr. Kano back with us today."

A round of spontaneous applause greeted the announcement. After the lecture, some of his cronies gathered around him as usual for casual conversation and more help with the ever troublesome Greek. Things were not as bad as he had feared. He collected his customary pay, a generous plate of strawberry ice cream.

Yet, ever so gradually tension and distrust were mounting. Kano was not unaffected by the change. One evening shortly after Pearl Harbor when he was riding on a train, a passenger insulted him. He said nothing. Then a couple of others joined in the verbal onslaught. It looked a little doubtful for Kano until another passenger spoke up. Taking Shiro by the arm, he accompanied him on through the train. Outwardly calm, Kano continued to make his daily trips into the university where his studies forced him to wrestle with philosophical issues such as realism, pragmatism, and the nature of evil.

“In Case ...”

One March day of 1942, Kano handed Professor Spangenberg a note. “In case anything should happen to me,” he said very quietly, “please inform these people, and take care of my things as I have indicated on the paper.”

There was very little to say. Very little that one dared to say.

“Thank you. Thank you so much.” He bowed slightly, then left.

The impulse for his tutor to run after him, ply him with questions like “What *can* they do to you?” or “Who are *they*, anyway?” had to be crushed. Like Shiro, Professor Spangenberg had to sit down and await the working out of things yet to come.

“I don’t expect to be around much longer,” he told one friend.

The following day he called another friend into his room to give him his baseball glove. “I want you to use this. I guess I won’t be using it this spring.”

Life, time, destiny might do their worst. Events beyond his power to influence or control might try to test him beyond the limit of what most people are called to endure. But the innate drive, the very purpose that motivated his waking hours had not, by the merest fraction of an inch, swerved him from his main course.

He was not unaware of the extensive investigations of his conduct and affairs, and the intensive questioning of

He was not unaware of the extensive investigations of his conduct and affairs, and the intensive questioning of his friends by the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

his friends by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. To clarify his own position, he was ordered by the FBI to prepare a statement:

Because I am a Christian minister, I shall give my reasons for wishing to continue in the ministry.

Since being converted to Christianity from Buddhism, I have been anxious to tell my story to my people. Soon I felt God's definite call to be a Christian minister. After finishing the required training, I entered the ministry nine years ago in Japan. I now have a responsibility to my people, and that fact impels me to concentrate all my ability upon fulfilling God's call.

I know well that the life of a Christian minister in Japan is a sacrificial one. I owe something to my country and my community. I believe, for repayment of this debt, entering the ministry and leading my people to the Lord Jesus Christ is the most effective way for me. Some may say I am too fanatic and idealistic, but I still believe that the Christian ministry is the ideal life for me.

In closing, I praise His unspeakable grace and ask for wisdom with all my heart.

Chapter 11

"Whose Mother?"

"Which country do you like better, the United States or Japan?" a naive college friend once asked Kano.

"Foolish question! Whose mother is better, yours or mine?"

Though Kano's loyalty to his native land and his deep love for it were typical of Japanese citizens, he was realistic. "My country has been thinking in the direction of war for a long time," he said. The very thought of his fellow ministers and Christian laypersons having to fight and die in China never ceased to trouble him.

"I know that many of our men were killed by fighting," he said more than once. "I think about the families they left behind. We must avoid fighting between nations, even though we may pay with sacrifices and many of them."

A typical entry in his diary read: "I am thinking of my fellow countrymen and friends in Christ who are facing hardships at this time. May God bless them all. My country's great need is Christianity. She must have it, or I cannot imagine the outcome. I must work and study harder for the honor of my country. I cannot waste my study time while

my people are living under such harsh circumstances. I must pray for my country that she may be led in God's way."

As firm as his decision had been not to bow before the shrine of Shinto during the days of his military training, just as firm was his refusal to return to his country and then to fight China. He received a letter from his missionary with respect to his ordination and return to Japan. "I want to be ordained," he said, "but I don't want to return until the war between China and Japan is over."

He would be ordained as an elder in the Church of the Nazarene by Dr. J. B. Chapman in Malden, Massachusetts, on April 28, 1940. "Someday, I must leave America and return to Japan," he said. "My country and my people need me. I cannot disappoint them or God. I must pray for peace."

"Prison?"

His diary reveals that both his college and university classrooms provided havens of refuge and understanding as the tensions against his country began to mount. Yet, he was practicing no illusions. "I do not expect that my way shall be an easy one. I shall meet unbearable hardships as a Japanese alien."

**Yes, in prison
in America ...
I must, too, be free.**

In late March of 1942, as Kano was returning from the university, he burst into Professor Spangenberg's classroom. He was radically changed. Back and forth he paced across the room in a way quite unlike his usual manner. All the while he mumbled a sort of soliloquy.

"How shall I do it?" he blurted out. "I could never stay in prison for four or five years, maybe more, through a long war."

"Prison?"

"Yes, in prison in America. I could never stay in there and endure the inactivity and mental torture. I must work, accomplish. I must, too, be free." He seemed an eagle, about to be caged.

Thirty-third Annual Assembly of the New England District

VI. GENERAL INFORMATION

1. The following were elected to Elder's Orders and ordained:
Earl S. Hammond, O'Leary, P. E. I.
Arthur M. Fallon, 8 Pierpont St., Peabody, Mass.
Shiro Kano, E. N. C., Wollaston, Mass.
Donald H. Strong, 11 Bishop St., St. Albans, Vt.
2. The following were granted Minister's License for the first time:
Lothrop S. Boardman, Montgomery, Vt.
Eugene E. Coleman, Johnson, Vt.
Alma Field, Raymond, Maine.
Paul Hetrick, E. N. C., Wollaston, Mass.
Robert Rundlett, Waltham, Mass.

Sunday Afternoon, April 28, 1940

The song of consecration, "I'll Go Where You Want Me to Go," appropriately opened the ordination service. Prayer was offered by Rev. John Gould.

Rev. Samuel Young read the pastoral arrangements for the coming year, after which Rev. H. I. S. Blanev presented the class for ordination. Dr. G. B. Williamson and Dr. S. S. White both read fitting scriptures and Rev. Samuel Young read a portion from the Manual. Dr. J. B. Chapman, in administering the charge to the candidates, emphasized the need of unction on the preacher. After prayer Doctor Chapman presented the parchments to the candidates, and E. S. Hammond, Arthur M. Fallon, Shiro Kano and Donald H. Strong were vested with elder's orders in the Church of the Nazarene. All joined in singing "A Charge to Keep I Have," after which Rev. Martha Curry offered the dismissal prayer.

Chapter 12

Valley of Decision

On the morning of Good Friday, April 3, 1942, Kano was listening to a reading of *Pilgrim's Progress* in the college chapel.

“You must go through many tribulations to enter into the kingdom of heaven. You will be beset with enemies, who will strain hard and they will kill you. But be faithful unto death, and the King will give you a crown of life.”

His Good Friday

In less than two hours, he called for his college pastor and his English teacher. His time had come. He was sitting quietly with two agents from the FBI. His face was unresponsive, dead. A couple of theology books open on his table, his tennis racket on the shelf, his paint-spattered overalls on his closet door—all testament to the life that had been, but was to be no more.

Kano threw a few articles into a suitcase, put on his coat, for the last time looked at his old, familiar room, his home in America for the past four and a half years, and made his way down the stairs. On Good Friday at noon, past the chapel, library, classrooms, the red Japanese maple and ginkgo

trees, there filed past a strange company: the diminutive Shiro, two FBI agents, the college pastor, Dr. Samuel Young, and Kano's tutor, Professor Spangenberg.

"Tears were in Kano's eyes," the pastor said as Kano was driven off in the red automobile. "After all, he is one of us. He is an ordained minister in our church."

Kano's arrest as an enemy alien was inevitable. His being accosted on the Boston train might have been only the beginning of a series of incidents. Furthermore, the safety of his college and friends had to be considered. At least the waiting was over. Or had it only begun?

"Tomorrow is Easter, and I shall miss it," he wrote from the Immigration Station in East Boston. "It will be my first experience of missing a service on the morning of Resurrection Day, every Easter since I became a Christian 15 years ago. I shall miss it."

"My Books!"

During the turbulent days of 1942, the East Boston Immigration Station seemed surprisingly inadequate to house the intense human dramas that began unfolding. After the inevitable questionings and presenting of credentials to obtain a pass, after being handled by guards whose rattling keys clicked open several gates, at last, the narrow hole-in-the-wall used as a reception room for prisoners was reached. A venerable, fatherly guard appeared at the outset to be the essence of human kindness.

"My books!" were Shiro's first words to his visitors after greetings were exchanged. "Please get my four boxes of

books and take them to your home. Then they will be safe.” Yes, the food was all right and he was well treated.

“Boston University will soon let me know about finishing my work in here, but I am optimistic.” He requested several textbooks. There had been so many forces and circumstances trying to divert him from his primary pursuit. What was one more obstacle?

“In a Cage”

Many visited him—his college and university professors, classmates, his neighbors on the edge of campus, some fellow ministers, and two students to whom he was teaching Japanese. The president of his college graduating class wrote him from Officers’ Candidate School in Virginia: “I very much admire and respect you for the stand you have taken. It was the only honest and honorable course, and you could take no other. It’s going to be up to men like you to straighten out the mess when this is over.”

Dr. C. Warren Jones, then secretary of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Church of the Nazarene (now Global Missions), wrote Kano that the church would assume his expenses for his Ph.D. degree. “They are depending upon me to be one of the future leaders in our church in Japan. They do not know I am now in a cage.”

Dr. J. B. Chapman, general superintendent of the Church of the Nazarene, offered him his summer home in Michigan. “He is so kind!” Kano exclaimed. “But I am in this cage and can’t go.”

Yet, his joy was unbounded when he received the consent of Boston University to finish his thesis and other studies for his Master of Arts degree, even though he was “in a cage.”

Trial

More than studies concerned him. The problem of repatriation tormented him like the plague. Kano could have been released had he accepted the chance to go to Washington to translate for the U.S. Government. “If I should accept and the news should reach my people, they would

**If I should accept
and the news
should reach my
people, they would
never listen to me
preach the gospel.**

never listen to me preach the gospel,” he declared. He seemed a man without a country, arrested in an adopted land most of whose political and religious philosophy he could accept, while a native of a country whose creed and conduct he could not support. His every action must be such that his countrymen would be willing to hear the story of redemption from his own lips.

“It has been nearly three weeks since I have come here,” he wrote on the morning of his hearing, April 22, 1942. “This morning I shall have another new, strange experience. I have never stood before a judge, and I will taste the mental bitterness of being handcuffed. I wish to be conscientious in my witness before the Lord, not just before the authority or the state. I have come to the U.S. for better preparation for the ministry. If the present process which now I am going through is part of it, I will take it gratefully.”

Allegiances

Kano's college president attended his hearing and reported, "Shiro conducted himself in a most admirable fashion. When asked if he was willing to renounce his country and offer his allegiance to the United States, he said that he was not, because such action would disqualify him for taking the gospel to his own people. Therefore, he would not renounce his allegiance to Japan. When asked if he would obey the emperor regardless of what he would require of him, Shiro said candidly that he would not do anything against the United States because of his American friends and because of the gratitude that he had in his heart for the treatment he had received at their hands."

The college president continued: "One of the men of the Board asked me if I would be willing to have him paroled to me in the event that they should decide to release him. I told him that I believed in Kano's integrity and I should be glad to have him paroled to me personally. This kindness seemed to move Shiro very deeply. After his hearing was over, he thanked me in his characteristic way, which made me feel that he was very grateful indeed."

The college president continued, "He was to be convicted to the extent that he was to be interned if he remained in the United States. I do not believe that the authorities actually felt that he was a malicious character, but I think they felt that, with the war on, it would be dangerous both to him and to the peace of the people among whom he lived to let him go free."

“Still My Country”

The kindly old guard told Kano's tutor and mentor, “He is a good Christian young man and should receive all the help he can to get the right advice about repatriation.” Once the guard told a visitor, “I investigated his case and find that the only thing the United States Government has against him is his military training in Japan. If only he makes the right decision.”

For the first few weeks of April, he was deep in the valley of decision. Imprisonment in America? And for how many years? Or freedom in his own land, back with his own people whom he must serve?

To the vice president of his college, who was visiting him, he expressed his feeling for his native land: “My country is wrong, my country is sick, but she is still my country.”

Chapter 13

The Great Decision

“Yesterday I signed the petition for repatriation, which is the request of the State Department and the Department of Justice,” Kano wrote on April 27, 1942. “I heard over the radio the singing of the Lord’s Prayer. Indeed, this is the essence of all prayers, as the Lord says, yet this is the first time I could grasp and realize its meaning. ‘Thy will be done,’ is my prayer.”

To Dr. Edgar S. Brightman, who during his months in Japan had learned to understand the Japanese mind, Kano wrote for advice.

“You ask me a very difficult question when you seek advice about returning to Japan,” Dr. Brightman wrote on May 1. “I have been told that the leave of absence of which you told me, under which you were allowed by Japan to be in this country for several years, was cancelled along with all leaves of absence, by the Japanese government at the time of Pearl Harbor. Your problem is a very hard one. If you remain in this country, whether as a prisoner or not, under the circumstances, it would appear that you would have no future in Japan, provided that you refuse to return now.

“On the other hand, if you do return now, it is almost certain that you would be expected to fight against America and your Christian friends. If you choose to remain in prison in this country rather than return to Japan, you would doubtless be perfectly safe for the duration of the war; but I cannot imagine what your future would be after the war is over.

“Whether you go or stay, from the point of view of earthly affairs it is a very hard fate for you. As a Christian,

**“Thy will be done,”
as you say, is the
great need. Your
courage and faith
are an inspiration
to me.**

you have the comfort of knowing that God is with you wherever you are, and you will have great need of your faith to sustain you. I truly feel that I cannot take the responsibility of saying which I’d do under the present circumstances if

I were you. I pray that you may come to a wise and right decision. ‘Thy will be done,’ as you say, is the great need. Your courage and faith are an inspiration to me.”

En Route Again

Friday, May 8, 1942, Kano left behind him forever the grim little building where for more than a month he had ground away at university requirements and fought through the blackness of indecision to the feeble light of his choice to be repatriated.

His farewell visit to South Station, Boston, under the watchful guard of the FBI, was quite the reverse of his arrival

there in September 1937. Then he felt alone, ignored until he was rescued by a single welcoming student. Now he had plenty of company. His name was well known to those in whose presence he was traveling, and his every action was anything but disregarded. At least his spirit was good. “I am glad to take this with a smile.”

The skyline of New York City loomed on the horizon once again. From Ellis Island, he could see the Statue of Liberty. His first reaction to the lady holding the torch had been: “She is the symbol of Americanism. I looked at this statue, and I prayed in my heart that I would spend my school life in America without any trouble.” Whatever his later reaction, it was impossible to detect any trace of resentment or antagonism toward the Americans and the America that he knew.

The Greater Freedom

Though in one sense restricted, Kano was not deprived of the greater freedom of witnessing for his Lord. At Fort Meade [MEED], he sat up at least one night with his fellow prisoners until midnight discussing Christianity. He had told his Christian friends in Michigan nearly three years before: “If you hear many things about Japan and the war, remember that somewhere there will be a Japanese young man who will be preaching the gospel.” Often his audience was but one—a grumpy, disgruntled college student from Japan, or a fun-loving German. Often he spoke at regular prayer services.

Monday, May 25, was another one of his great days. “This is the day I am to receive my M.A. degree. I worked hard for it, and when I had not much more than a month before completion, I was taken by the FBI. It was a great disappointment. Through the kindness of the university and the professors I was able to continue my studies at the detention stations.”

June 15 in the evening when Kano and other prisoners were having a game of baseball, one by one, members of the team were called out to be interviewed by the army captain. Kano’s conversation with the captain is also recorded in English.

“Are you Shiro Kano?”

“Yes, sir.”

“We have received a list of repatriates from the State Department and your name is on it. Do you still desire to be repatriated?”

“Yes, sir, I desire to be repatriated.”

Kano returned to his ball game.

Chapter 14

America, Farewell

Fort Meade on the hot Monday of June 8, 1942, seemed one huge area of tents pitched in sandy dirt, huge clouds of dust stirring up wherever there was activity. In one section a large reservation fenced in by barbed-wire entanglements kept the several hundred prisoners of the U.S. within bounds.

Past outer and inner gates, strategically hidden in barbed wire, past sentinels and machine guns trained on the camp at several angles, a guard led Professor Spangenberg to a large, barnlike hall with crude benches.

Kano came in. The young man she had known had become tired, worn, old. A great heaviness seemed to weigh upon his spirit.

He seemed reluctant to speak, and when he did, his speech was halting. In essence, he said: "My Christian faith will hold me. I must go back to my people. I have the right to choose between safety in America or danger in my country. If I stay here, I will be confined and cannot help my people. If I refuse to go to my people when I can, I am afraid they will never listen to me. No matter what may come, I hope I never

Boston University
School of Theology Library

1942
Boston University

Sixty-First Annual Commencement

Commencement Exercises



The Arena

Boston, Massachusetts

AT TENTH-THIRTY O'CLOCK
MONDAY MORNING, MAY TWENTY-FIFTH
NINETEEN HUNDRED AND FORTY-TWO

GRADUATE SCHOOL

MASTER OF ARTS (A.M.)

Robert Parsons Axtens, S.B.
Donald Blackwell, Avar, A.B.
Eugene Moss Bardolet, A.B.
Ernest Eli Barstow, A.B.
Gloria Joylla Barstow, B.S.S.
Barbara Childs Balabanian, B.S. in Ed.
Gladys Catherine Burgess, A.B.
John George Scott Calabro, B.S.
Carter Bisco Calks, A.B. in Ed., S.B.
Mary Alice Cassem, B.S. in Ed.
Jean Robertson Clawson, S.B.
Virginia Coe, B.S.S., A.B.
Reynold Martin Corva, B.S. in S.S.
Ella Wren Cutlins, A.B.
Doris Jane De Linn, B.S. in Ed.
Alice Zettler Farnham, A.B.
Benjamin Temple Fords, A.B.
Victor Fernando Garabito, Ph.B.
Wayne Benjamin Grindel, A.B.
Robert Joseph Grindel, A.B.
Helen Frances Hassel Gouder, A.B.
Lawrence Kildoren Grady, A.B.
Mary Barbara Gooday, A.B.
Walter Gilbert Hayes, A.B.
Joseph Warren Hayes, S.B.
Alfred Lerona Jensen, A.B.
Shiro Kano, A.B. (Th.B.)
Dorothea Kay, A.B.
Joseph James Keaton, A.B.
Nancy Frances Kent, A.B.
Hylan Kodun, A.B.
Anne Wickem Kuns, A.B.
Ruth Ingeborg Larson, B.S. in Ed.
Aimee Teresa Laughlin, B.S. in Ed.
William Pencil Lester, A.B.
Leon Carolee Le Van, A.B.
Dorothy Aores Lombard, A.B.
William Joseph Mahoney, A.B.
Richard Lee Mahoney, A.B.
Louise Elizabeth McAlvay, B.S. in Ed.
Richard Marion Mullard, Jr., A.B.
Aimee Kinney Muldrew, A.B.
Florence Wilton Newson, S.B.
Catherine Elizabeth Nolan, A.B.
Catharine May Notmavaglia, A.B.
John Bernard O'Hara, M.A., B.B.A.
Emma Poland, B.S. in Ed.
Loretta Robert Porter, Jr., A.B.
Theodore Irving Ricci, Jr., S.B.
Florence Mildred Roman, A.B.
Elizabeth Ann Sargent, S.B.
Ann Veronica Sargent, A.B.
Katherine Frances Shafer, B.S. in P.A.L.
Joseph Solomon Slavin, S.B.
Elizabeth Margaret Smith, S.B.
Phyllis Elizabeth Conroy Smith, A.B.
Paul Edward Sutton, A.B., S.T.B.
Gertrude Cary Taitty, S.B.
Patricia Marion Taylor, A.B.
Mildred Catherine Thelen, B.S. in P.A.L.
Joseph Anthony Tencino, A.B.
Lillian Winifred Tupper, A.B.
Katherine Winifred Vander Wye, B.S. in P.A.L., Ph.C.
Henry Weinberg, S.B.
Hazel Peters Yonkos, B.S. in P.A.L.

Twenty-five

have to take up arms against the United States. My return will mean poverty and suffering, maybe death. But I must go. Before God, I believe I have made the right decision.”

With the pauses that inevitably accompany moments when words drag and stumble, the hourglass of time—of 25 minutes wrested from eternity—was quickly running out.

“I brought your diploma and your program with your name in it from the Boston University commencement,” Professor Spangenberg said.

There was silence. Then, “Now perhaps I may never get my Ph.D. Remember me to all the faculty and students who were so kind, and don’t forget the neighbors. I would so much like to stay in America. Let the national issue separate us physically, but never spiritually.”

The guard, who had been listening to the entire conversation, arose to go. Kano put out his hand to say farewell to his professor and mentor, and walked her to the door. A “God bless you,” and “God bless you, too, and keep you,” terminated the visit. The guard led Professor Spangenberg out past the machine guns and barbed wire. Within the enclosure Kano climbed the hill, his head erect and the old smile resurrected for the moment. He waved until his beloved professor disappeared in the curve of the winding road.

“My English teacher came to see me this morning,” he wrote. “She came from a great distance for only a 25-minute

“My return will mean poverty and suffering, maybe death. But I must go. Before God, I believe I have made the right decision.”

interview. It was her desire that I always keep my faith and have loyalty to my calling to preach to my people.”

Sad, Sweet Story

The following day his college president, Dr. G. B. Williamson, also passed through the barbed-wire entanglements for another 25 minutes. “I could see that the experiences he was passing through were having their effect on him, and yet I detected no spirit of resentment whatsoever,” was Dr. Williamson’s reaction. “Everything he said was in the presence of a guard, but he showed great discretion and indicated no antipathy whatsoever for our country. I felt certain that he was convinced he was doing the right thing to ask for repatriation.

“When I was ready to leave, I shook hands with him after a prayer in which I committed his life to our all-wise Heavenly Father. A great sense of loneliness and heaviness came over me, for I had a feeling that in all probability I would never see him again. He followed me as far as he could go on the inside of the barbed-wire fence. Then, as I turned and went my way, I saw him turn his back and walk up across the field evidently with a leaden heart, but with indomitable courage. My memory of Shiro Kano is an inspiration to me. It will always be a sad, sweet story.”

Books Again

The following day, June 10, a procession of 86 repatriates left Fort Meade for Japan. “I was quite desperate when all my books were confiscated at New York,” he wrote. “I

tried to save my old Bible which I had used for the last 15 years, but finally failed. All the Scripture that I have memorized is standing by me now. You know how much I loved books.”

Seventeen days later: “As you know, all my books were confiscated at New York, but now I have forgotten about it, and have great hope and ambition for my future study.”

He never knew of the scrupulous care that the U.S. government took of all his precious volumes, nor was he ever informed that some of them are now on the library shelves of his college. The rest were used by his ministerial friends or schools in his native land.

**All the Scripture
that I have
memorized is
standing by
me now.**

Chapter 15

Triumph

Shiro Kano returned to his own people very quietly in September of 1942. His call had brought him back to his countrymen so that he could minister to them, not only in the middle of the cataclysm into which his nation had thrown itself, but especially on into the future, after peace should once again come to the world. Deliberately he made his return as unobtrusive as possible.

Three-headed Hydra¹²

His problem had complicated. Before, it had been, on the one hand, following the dictates of a nation he considered “wrong,” “sick,” yet “still my country,” while on the other hand, following the gentle, wise precepts of the world’s Redeemer. Now a third obligation concerned him—keeping trust with the country that had educated him, given him new opportunities, and expanded his horizon. While at Fort

¹² In Greek mythology, the *Hydra* was a many-headed snake. It proved difficult to kill, because its heads would grow back every time one was cut off. This allusion refers to the difficulty of finding a solution to the many issues facing Shiro Kano. To resolve one issue was to see others rise to take its place.

Meade he had written: "Thought all day of my American friends, the obligation and responsibility I owe to them."

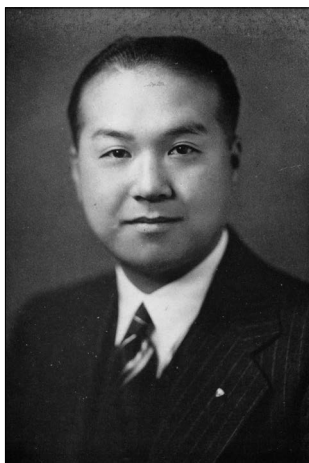
Back once again in the haunts of his youth, Kyoto, ancient City of Peace, he returned to the home of his father. All he asked was that he be let alone so that he could teach and preach the gospel of peace while his nation was still at war. He was able to locate two trusted friends. Rev. Zenichi Murakami, his close ally in Sunday School work among the children. The other friend, Kano's spiritual father, Rev. Nobumi Isayama, with whom he served as assistant pastor, wrote: "Not only did Kano return highly educated, but we saw a greatly refined character. After returning to Japan the greater part of his activities was devoted to teaching. During those war days, Christianity was bound hand and foot. He was discouraged about the condition of all the churches in Japan. They were under the heavy pressure of the government and were not doing very much for the Lord. Followers of Christ were being watched constantly as the war progressed. Some were actually arrested. One of the ironies was that Kano had come home to fulfill his call to preach. Yet, to keep his identity concealed, he preached only a few times. He was not as glad to be repatriated as he had thought he would be. At least he thought he came back too soon."

The Military Again

At last, realizing that evasion was no longer possible, fearing that the call would come for combat service, Kano again faced a difficult decision. One year after his return he joined the Japanese navy as an interpreter and set out for

the South Seas. But his ship was bombed, and he remained afloat for eight hours. God alone knows his thoughts during that time. After being rescued, he returned to Japan, only to set sail again.

“If you hear many things about Japan and the war,” he had told his Michigan friends, “remember that somewhere there will be a Japanese young man preaching the gospel.” Down in the South Seas, he was at it again, even while battles raged over his island outpost. Once again, he had extended conversations with a priest of Buddha, and compared the salvation of Buddha with the salvation of the world’s Redeemer.



Shiro Kano, faithful to the end

Interestingly, upon his return home, the priest hunted up some of Kano’s friends, so impressed was he by his life and ministry. “Unless that fine fellow Kano can get away from those islands quickly,” he warned, “he will be like the other men—caught in the flame of war, to die.”

“All Things”

Kano had tested Paul’s “all things” (Philippians 4:13) to the full. He had experienced poverty, hunger, shipwreck, bombings, imprisonment, renunciation, scrutiny by

investigators of two enemy nations, testings of faith beyond the power of most to endure. Not one inch of his loyalties, ideals, nor faith would he surrender, though the cost be death. What was one more enemy, the most rewarding and the last?

“Sometimes it seems to me,” he wrote home, “that the planes fall like the leaves of a tree swept by the wind.” A natural process—leaves of a tree, returning to the bosom of earth that nurtured them; of the soul, returning to the bosom of God, who gave it life and clothed it with immortality.

Early in the morning of January 19, 1944, in the Solomon Islands, Shiro Kano was hit by shrapnel from an air battle. He had kept faith with his Buddhist mother, who, in her own last hour, had said: “You have chosen a hard life as a preacher of the gospel. But do not give up your faith until your death.”

It is not length of mortal years that the Lord requires of a man; only the return to God of his immortal soul, clothed in the spotless robes of His righteousness. And so for Shiro Kano, his head unbowed in compromise or retreat, the hour of his death became the hour of his triumph. We can only imagine that he might have thought of these words again as life flowed from his body: “The Lord, your God, has carried you, as a man carries his son” (Deuteronomy 1:31).

Epilogue

Today, on the former site of the old church in Kyoto where Shiro Kano found the true God, stands the Shiro Kano Memorial Church, dedicated in June of 1958. The cross on its four-storied tower shines peacefully on the green of the woods surrounding the Imperial Palace of Kyoto.

A trumpet note piercing through the chimes of a Buddhist temple summoned Shiro Kano to his first encounter with the true God. Kano's hand on the back of a fearful, bewildered young Japanese, John Kawamura, sent him searching for the Word of Life. Had a trumpet not blown in the Kyoto streets, had not an encouraging hand been placed on a shoulder, and this Shiro Kano Memorial Church might not be in existence today as a thriving Christian church.

Unkept Rendezvous

Both Shiro Kano and John Kawamura served in the armed forces of their country during World War II. John, who was not available at the first writing of Kano's life story, tells of an attempted meeting of Kano and himself in the South Seas. Kano, who longed to see his old friend, discovered that he was stationed at Rabaul [ruh-BOUL] on New Britain Island and went there to see him. In vain Kano

searched the airfield for his old friend. “But in the warehouse for the dead people’s remains,” John recalls, “Kano found all my baggage. He burst into tears and knelt down to pray that God, by all means, would protect Kawamura. Bitterly discouraged, he returned to his base in the Solomon Islands. I knew about this incident because he wrote about it to Rev. Nobumi Isayama.” It is doubtful that Kano knew the other side of the story. The day before Kano had landed in Rabaul, John had left on a special mission to New Guinea.

A Debt Repaid

For a long time, Kawamura had no idea where Shiro was. “When I heard of his death,” he said, “I could not lift my head. I said to myself, ‘Why didn’t you pray harder for Kano?’ But it must have been an unavoidable accident because I thought many times that I would have died during the war if God had not helped me.”

For Kano, life after his conversion to Christianity was a series of radical decisions that had to be made, and he faced them realistically with his eyes wide open. In 1927, the Japanese concept of the family was still that of a tightly knit unit. Shintoism and Buddhism prevailed as the traditional religions of each household. Kano broke the family pattern by embracing the Christian faith and, what is more, became a dedicated propagator of this gospel.

In the army, he refused to pay allegiance to the national religion of Shintoism. In his day, when America seemed as far away from Japan as the moon from the earth, he left his family to study in a small holiness college in a suburb of

Boston and enlisted the financial support of his Buddhist brother to make it happen. He chose to work with his hands and thus further his education in America, rather than to go fight China. He risked repatriation and possible death so that he might suffer with his people and communicate honorably with them after the war. He did not disparage the family, nationalistic, and religious traditions of his country; instead, he followed the call of Jesus and went cross-current to those customs.

All anyone can do is the very best he or she knows and is able to do, in the light of existing circumstances and the evidence available at any given moment. The rest one must leave with God.

Fanning Ripples

A thought or a deed rarely dies with the thinking or doing. A pebble tossed into a pool sends ripples fanning out to the edge. The story of Shiro Kano has gone around the world. He still speaks to Japanese of all ages. In hospitals, his story has been passed from patient to patient. Mis-

sionaries in South America, India, Africa, the Middle East, and other countries have told young nationals of one who shared—and solved—their problems of choosing a religion and a way of life foreign to the religion and accepted ways of their culture. Sluggish, unmotivated young American

All anyone can do is the very best he or she knows and is able to do ... at any given moment. The rest one must leave with God.

students have read his story and become ashamed. Japanese Americans and native Japanese have attended Shiro Kano's alma mater, Eastern Nazarene College, because of his life and influence.

Safety and security do not necessarily mean the approval of God on one's life. Any person is less than a person who does not have a conviction or two that he would be willing to die for. Sometimes the Almighty takes a person like Kano at his word.

Any person is less than a person who does not have a conviction or two that he would be willing to die for.

Wait a year—wait ten years—a hundred years, he would say. Wait for the judgment of history, the verdict of the passing years. Shiro Kano was living for more than the here and now. Only God and eternity will disclose just how far the ripples of Shiro Kano's life have gone. At least one ripple reached all the way to you. You've just experienced his story.

Afterword

To those whose memory of World War II is confined to a few paragraphs in a school history book, we offer these lines as perspective for the years in which Shiro Kano lived.

World War II was more than decisive battles in distant countries where fathers and brothers and sometimes daughters fought and died. The war cut sharply into the hearts of us all. Rationing, air raid drills, round-the-clock shifts in war material factories, censored APO¹³ letters, the eternal knitting of sweaters and socks in army khaki, the anxious turning of radio dials for the latest word from the battlefield, and all too often, the shattering telegrams—these became the daily kaleidoscope of American lives.

In the paranoid frenzy following the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Americans did some cruel things that we look back on now with shame. Surely there could have been a better way to manage the dangers—real or imagined—of a large Japanese-American population on our west coast, than torn-up lives and barbed-wire detention camps. But in the hysteria of those war years, every German and Japanese was viewed with hostility. Even Eastern Nazarene College on Quincy Bay was enmeshed in neighborhood suspicions

¹³ Army Post Office

as a few people correlated “Nazarene” with “Nazi” and knew “there was something queer about those people.” This was the atmosphere in which Shiro Kano lived as he endeavored to complete his preparation for the ministry at ENC.

Alice Spangenberg, the author of *Oriental Pilgrim*, was one of those caught in the same web of community questioning. “Enemy sympathizer” was an easy accusation to fling at the faculty of ENC who “harbored an enemy alien

To their everlasting credit, the president and faculty and students at ENC and many of the local community stood by Shiro Kano to the last day.

in their midst.” The occasional graffiti of local children on college walls reflected the thinking of adults caught in war’s frenzy and looking for someone to hate.

To their everlasting credit, the president and faculty and students at ENC and many of the local community stood by Shiro Kano to the last day, endeavoring to save him from detention, and when they could not, visiting him behind the barbed wire; following him with their tears and prayers when he chose repatriation in the hope of keeping the door open to the evangelization of his people when peace came again.

Alice Spangenberg was undoubtedly the last person who should have been accused of disloyalty to her country. She began writing to every ENC student who went into the U.S. armed services. The count soon grew beyond 100, but her letters faithfully followed them, carrying news of home, of the college, of friends they knew. So precious were these

letters to lonely servicemen that many of them, coming home on brief leaves, stopped first to see “Prof. Span” before going to their families.

Yet beyond her tireless efforts of student mentoring and GI letter writing, Alice Spangenberg’s great legacy was introducing us to Shiro Kano, Christian gentleman and scholar. We rejoice in God’s power not only to transform, but to keep in all circumstances, one whom He has redeemed.

Helen Temple
Kansas City, Missouri

A RETROSPECTIVE: ACT ON IT!

Every generation needs a Shiro Kano, a story of enduring faith and hope in the midst of human trials and tragedy like you have just completed reading. What makes it compelling is its cultural and religious realism. Nothing manufactured here, just an authentic life transformed by an encounter with Christ.

Likewise, every generation of students deserves to sit under the tutelage of a professor like Alice Spangenberg, committed, rigorous and demanding, yet living out a compassion that fuels a life purpose and gives authentic substance to faith. She possessed a trustworthy Christian experience that insisted she inconvenience herself to travel to the Japanese internment camp at

Fort Meade in Maryland to meet with Shiro one more time before his return to Japan.

In the years immediately following World War II, with emotional nerves still raw and passions yet enflamed, the motifs of the Shiro Kano story encouraged reconciliation and redemption. The story intrigued its audiences because it offered something other than suspicion and fear.

“ Shiro’s story remains fresh and forces the reader to dismantle national prejudices in order to embrace the larger vision of the gospel and God’s righteous kingdom.”

Today, with similar themes being discussed in the public square, Shiro's story remains fresh and forces the reader to dismantle national prejudices in order to embrace the larger vision of the gospel and God's righteous kingdom. Here there is power not only to forgive sin, but to purify intentions and transform a life.

The country that gave him birth, his native Japan, and the country that adopted him, the United States, have had an enduring Nazarene connection for 114 years. Today, Japan's Nazarene congregations continue to witness to the gospel that invited the searching Shiro Kano to embrace Christ and begin the amazing adventure that would inspire Professor Spangenberg to chronicle his life for future generations.

Pray for the Church of the Nazarene in Japan, for its pastors and laity, that in these days of continuing spiritual challenge, something of the spirit of Shiro Kano will keep us—Japanese, North American, and all Nazarenes worldwide—connected and committed to a timely message of the timeless gospel.

ACT ON IT

1. “Every generation needs a Shiro Kano.” What incidents in Shiro’s story suggest positive qualities we all need to emulate? For instance, when he refuses to bow to honor the emperor what does that say about his Christian character?
2. In the years immediately following World War II, emotions were raw and people remained distrustful of former enemies. How does this story encourage reconciliation and redemption?
3. Were you surprised to learn that the United States had internment camps during World War II, protected by barbed-wire fences and machine-gun turrets? How does the life of Shiro Kano prompt the reader to dismantle national prejudices and embrace the larger vision of Christ’s kingdom?
4. What are some similar themes from Shiro’s story that are being played out today in our society?
5. How did Eastern Nazarene College contribute to the development of Shiro Kano’s Christian faith and spiritual development?

6. The country that gave Shiro birth, Japan, and the country that adopted him, the United States, has had an enduring Nazarene connection for many years. Pray for Japan's Nazarene congregations as they continue to witness to the gospel that invited Shiro to embrace the Christian message of salvation in Jesus Christ.
7. Pray that something of the spirit of Shiro Kano will keep us—the global Nazarene family connected and committed to a timely message of the timeless gospel.

