

Yahweh: If so, his accommodation failed, for the people were delighted to worship the calf. Despite his intention, what he did destroyed for them the uniqueness of the Creator God and brought his anger on them.

On Mt. Carmel it was the boastful bluff of Baal's prophets that Elijah challenged after the three years of famine due to the terrible apostasy at Samaria, and he was very careful to differentiate his worship from theirs. Not only did he refuse to use their altar for his sacrifice, as a symbol of his goal to rebuild the work of God, he rebuilt an old altar of Yahweh's to receive the pending demonstration of Yahweh's mighty reality. As in Ahab's day, government officials in Japan required as an act of loyalty that which essentially was an act of pagan practice. When this happened, as the officials tried to make that act more palatable for believers by declaring it to be an act of patriotic loyalty only, a very difficult situation arose. This became a very real problem in Japan early in the history of Protestant Christianity there.

Accommodation Efforts In Japan

In order to unite the people around the Emperor and to hold them to the traditional manner of thought at the time Christianity was making its greatest impact, the Government in 1890 introduced into the schools the Imperial Rescript and portrait. On certain special occasions when a school assembly was held, the Rescript was read as a message from the God-Emperor, and the students were ordered to bow in worship before his unveiled portrait. These ceremonies at first caused a great stir in Christian circles with real opposition being offered, but the Government was adamant. To make it easier for Christians, the religious bureau released a statement that these ceremonies were not religious but only patriotic. That they were of a polytheistic nature, and therefore religious in the Christian meaning of the word, several considerations show. The Rescript statement opened with a reference to the "Ancestors", but the Chinese ideographs used were for the mythological deities of Shintoism. The next set of ideographs used referred to the human ancestors of the emperors. Further, it spoke of "the Imperial Throne coeval with heaven and earth", and the "way here set forth is . . . infallible in all ages and true in all places." To a Christian these can be nothing but the religious concepts of a primitive polytheism. A Government news release could not change their religious nature.

But still further, was it not unlawful compromise for a Christian to bow in worship before the portrait of the Emperor, even though the student might have no worshipful feeling in his heart?

The answer lies in the second commandment where it is declared, 'Thou shalt not make unto thee any . . . likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them.' The Hebrew word translated here as 'bow down' in the English, and as *ogamu* (worship) in the Japanese, is שָׁחָה (*shachah*). *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, in a learned article on the word 'worship,' makes it clear