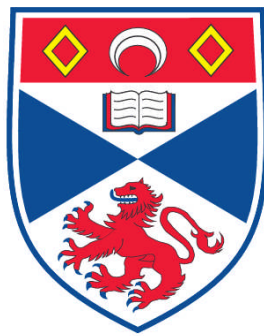


THE BIBLE IN IMPERIAL JAPAN, 1850-1950

Yumi Murayama-Cain

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
University of St. Andrews**



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THE BIBLE IN IMPERIAL JAPAN

1850–1950

Yumi Murayama-Cain

Ph.D. thesis

12th March 2010

Declarations



I, Yumi Murayama-Cain, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 78,000 words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

I was admitted as a research student in September 2005 and as a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in September 2006; the higher study for which this is a record was carried out in the University of St Andrews between 2005 and 2010.

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Abstract

要 目

This thesis undertakes to apply some of the insights from postcolonial criticism to understand the history of Christianity in Japan, focusing on key Christian thinkers in the period since Japan's national isolation ended in the mid 19th century.

It studies these theologians' interaction with the Bible as a "canonical" text in the Western civilisation, arguing for a two-way connection between Japan's reception of Christianity and reaction to the West. In particular, it considers the process through which Christianity was employed to support or criticise Japan's colonial discourse against neighbouring Asian countries. In this process, I argue that interpretation of the Bible was a political act, informed not simply by the text itself, but also by the interpreter's positionality in the society.

The thesis starts by reviewing the history of Christianity in Japan. The core of the thesis consists of three chapters, each of which considers the thought of two contemporaries. Ebina Danjo (1866–1937) and Uchimura Kanzo (1861–1930) were two first-generation Christians who converted to Christianity through missionaries from the United States, and responded to Japan's westernisation and military expansion from opposite perspectives. Kagawa Toyohiko (1888–1960) and Yanaihara Tadao (1893–1961) spoke about the country's situation in the years preceding the Asia-Pacific War (1941–1945), and again reached two different conclusions. Nagai Takashi (1908–1951) and Kitamori Kazo (1916–1998) were Christian voices immediately after the war, and both dealt with the issue of suffering. Each chapter explores how the formation of their thoughts was driven by their particular historical, economic, and social backgrounds. The concluding chapter outlines Christian thought in Japan today and deals with the major issue facing Japanese theology: cultural essentialism.

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Preface: A Letter to Friends



One of my regular correspondences with my friends who live in the United States, written in June 2009.

Dear Ryan and Marina,

Hello. It's nice to wake up to an interesting email! I was much intrigued by your description of the Orthodox service you began to attend. Though I have been always attending church services wherever: Japan, the United States, Scotland, and Portugal, your description of the Orthodox church in Detroit sounds very different from any of my experience. You are right: the Catholic mass I attend is about 40 minutes long, at the most. It is almost exactly the same as the Episcopal liturgy I know from the Scottish Episcopal Church. The confession, the Gloria, and the creed are identical. There are minor differences: for example during the Eucharist liturgy, they have a song they sing while holding hands. The same song every week, but I think that may be unique to this particular church. The first time I went to the church I gasped when the priest drank all the blood of Jesus, because I was not used to it. The mass is said very fast, and the homily is short. I would not like the long Protestant homily ever again, but the Catholic service does feel a bit rushed. It was good last time though because the church was completely full, and I was standing, with the wrong kind of shoes and my back was hurting towards the end of the service. In any case, that we, who met in a evangelical protestant seminary in the States are now attending Catholic and Orthodox services, I think, says something about the state of Christianity in the world today.

I agree about the danger of idealising the primitive church, and I am reluctant to criticise the Orthodox church's relation with the state because it's in the distant past... a past that does influence me, unlike 19th century imperialism and today's neo-colonialism and their ties with Protestantism. But even then, I would be very cautious using the concept of providence, exactly because I am afraid of the same concept and logic being used to justify the racism, massacre, and exploitation that

the Protestant churches were a part of in the past two centuries. Pointing out the Church's sins does not make the Church sinless, and neither does modernising or redesigning the Church. But I insist that German Protestantism's repentance about their support of Nazism was necessary, and the Japanese churches' confession of sins over their support of militarism during the Asia-Pacific war and further investigation of what happened during the time were vital for the life of the Church. I also think that Christians in the United States should AT LEAST confess the sin of the Church over the atomic bombing of Nagasaki, which was a Christian city. It's Catholic, so maybe it was not good enough. Most of the churches and Christians in the States still think that the bombing was "good" because it ended the war, the logic to which everything Christian in me is strongly opposed. What makes me angry is not the fact itself, but the way they justify it. There may have been no other choice from their perspective, but I am appalled with the way they wash their hands of the issue without any reflection or contemplation. Likewise, the Protestant Churches in the world were complacent about how they served, or ended up serving, neo-colonialism. I should not generalise too much, but many converts today convert to the American style of living and aspiration, not to the Christian way. I think I was one such example. This strong current was certainly in the background of my conversion and coming to the States, where I met you. Often the history of the Church and her context are inseparable, and this is the case for modern Protestantism as well. Unlike the mission by the Jesuits in the 16th century, the Protestant missionaries from Europe or the US propagated Christianity as a prerequisite for the greater civilisation that was considered to be superior to that of the non-Christian non-Western people. In their minds, spreading Christianity and Western civilisation was "the white man's burden," and this way of thinking is still alive in the missionaries from the States I saw in my country. I have a friend who is a missionary in Japan, and she wrote in her blog that it drives her to tears when she sees a Japanese woman bowing to a Buddhist statue on the road. How presumptuous! How arrogant! For me, this pious woman is far better than the racist fundamentalist Christians in the missionary's country. Anyway, through all that, Christianity has been metamorphosed into something that has little resemblance to the way of Jesus and the ancient Church.

Today, I often hear that Christianity is now the religion of Asia, Africa, and Latin America, more so than of Europe and the United States. But I wonder if that is really the case. I have not seen the Christianity in those areas, but is it not an export from Europe and especially the United States? People are ready to accept this American-style spirituality because, I think, the US is the richest and strongest country and its religious movements also represent the most powerful ideology in the world. But think of the analogy of McDonald's. If the only restaurant cheap enough for me to go to in my village is McDonald's, of course I would go and eat there even though it's bad for me and makes me addicted to their food. Even then, there is no ethical basis for anyone to tell me not to go to McDonald's if I am perfectly happy about it. Or perhaps all of this is baseless prejudice of mine, and there may be some successful case of a creative blend of the vernacular and the cosmopolitan.

But I am determined now that, in spite of all, I will remain within the Christian tradition. It is a little bit like not divorcing my husband just because he is a white European, even though I am opposed to the white supremacism and the history of slavery for example, . It is difficult though because the Christian faith is often presented as all or nothing: if one does not agree with the "majority view" or one questions a norm, one is considered a heretic or apostate. It's just like you said, "If I absolutely condemn the Christians of ages past, I fear that I may simultaneously be sentencing myself and my whole generation to condemnation as well." In other words, if I follow the reasoning, I have to quit being a human being because the human race is sinful. Yet, all the same, I insist that the Church and each individual Christian should engage in self-reflection and repentance just as we do in our own lives: we do not cease self-examination and trying to improve our characters, instead of blaming the *causa extra* for our shortcomings.

Yours sincerely,

Yumi.

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謝
辞

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Note to the reader



- In the main text, Japanese names are given in Japanese style: surname followed by given name. Citations are always surname, first name.
- All quotations from Japanese-language texts are translated by the author.
- All English-language biblical quotations are taken from the New Revised Standard Version unless otherwise specified.

Introduction: Colonialism, Postcolonialism, and Christianity in Japan



As postcolonialism is fundamentally concerned with European colonial practices and the responses on the part of the colonised people, studying the history of Japan from this perspective presents a unique difficulty and opportunity, for Japan avoided direct colonisation by the Western powers, and later emulated them in attempting to establish its own empire in East Asia. Only after the ending of this imperial vision was Japan subject to occupation. These experiences make the clear-cut categorisation of Japan difficult in terms of postcolonial discourse. Perceiving Japan solely as “coloniser” or solely as “colonised” is thus inadequate, and could lead a scholar to erroneous conclusions.

Nevertheless, used with appropriate care, postcolonial theory can be a useful tool to provide insights for understanding Japan’s imperial period. This thesis seeks to apply postcolonial theory to understand the history of Christianity in Japan, focusing on key theologians in the period since Japan’s national isolation ended with opening the border to the Western nations in the mid 19th century. In particular, it emphasises the theologians’ interaction with the canonical text, the Bible, which is the canon of the particular religion as well as a “canonical” text in the Western civilisation. It is not concerned, thus, to apply postcolonial to particular interpretations or to attempt a “postcolonial reading of the Bible”. It argues for a two-way connection between the reception of Christianity and reading and using the Bible in Japan and Japan’s reaction to the Western colonial powers. In one direction, Japan’s interaction with the West was the context in which Christianity and the Bible were received and interpreted in Japan. In the other direction, the writings of theologians from history form an important source for further understanding of Japan’s relationship with the outside world.

Christian History in Japan is the history of how Christianity, as an imperial discourse of the West, was defeated by Japanese nationalism. When one hears the claim that Christian expansion in Asia and Africa are changing the demographics of the Church, it inevitably excludes Japan: only one in a hundred Japanese people has any affiliation to the Christian denomination transplanted from the West. From the perspective of Western missionaries or the assumption of colonial discourse, this is a case of failure. Indeed, it is a failure: a failure of a religion of “centre”, “the West”, and “the Empire”. Japan accepted almost everything that it could possibly absorb from the Western powers ever since the 19th century: capitalism, political system, social system, industrial development, and it is now one of the major consumers of Western popular culture. Yet Christianity did not make its way into Japan so easily. As if laughing at the missionaries’ effort to bring “the light” in the darkness, this nation instead imported and fully adopted the capitalist economy and became brighter than Western capitals: at nighttime by neon, and in daytime by the natural light from the sun it has been enjoying since its birth.

This thesis does not treat this defeat of Christianity in Japan negatively. It is negative from the perspective of the Western centre from which the missionaries were sent. From a postcolonial perspective, however, it presents a case that deserves closer analysis.

Ever since Christianity emerged from Judaism as an independent and trans-ethnic religion, it has contained elements that bound it to empires throughout history. The universal character of Christianity made it possible to connect with the central power, which was not a later development, but present in primitive Christianity. To take some examples, the Japanese New Testament scholar Tagawa Kenzo pointed out that Paul’s interpretation of Christianity as universal religion as he said, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28) granted Christianity the potential to become a religion of the empire.¹ Musa Dube identified the Johannine Jesus, who is exalted above all nations by his unearthly origin, as a colonising ideology.² R.S. Sugirthara-

¹ Tagawa, ‘Genshi Kirisutokyou to Afurika’.

² Dube, ‘Savior of the World but Not This World’, pp. 118–35.

jah also points out Luke-Acts' "selective and partial" account of the expansion of the church communities, which looks only westward towards Rome, and altogether ignores the evangelistic movement toward the East.³

Colonialism or empire were out of the scope of theological discourse in the West, and largely absent during the era of imperial expansion and most of the 20th century. Even when these topics were treated, for example in Max Warran's *Caesar the Beloved Enemy* (1955) or Reinhold Niebuhr's *The Structure of Nations and Empires* (1959), imperialism was seen as morally neutral, though it could be misused, and could be useful, especially in its relation to the propagation of Christianity.⁴ According to Sugirtharajah, Warran takes imperialism, which for him is "minted in hell" and "organised vice", and rehabilitates it as a "Beloved Enemy" by creating a concept of imperialism that is "native-friendly". For Niebuhr, colonialism was an inevitable historical stage of civilisation, in which the stronger nations relate to the weaker. However, the reality of imperialism and its presupposed racial hierarchy were never acknowledged in their work, namely, "Empires are basically about technically and militarily advantaged superior 'races' ruling over inferior and backward peoples. When imperial powers invade, the conquered are not permitted to be equal to the invaders. This was true of all empires, Roman to British and American."⁵

As a religion originating from a colonised people, Christianity could in principle provide the language and concept of liberation. Yet historically, in its development in Europe and over the course of becoming one of the "world religions", Christianity showed a tendency to become a servant of imperialism and advocate of the power and status quo. This political stance often arose from the purpose of survival: namely, Christianity would not have been an influential religion had it not allied itself with the secular power. Just as often, though, Christianity wielded excommunication, religious inquisition, Crusades, and the distinction between the chosen and heathen, through which it itself became an earthly power and marginalised or even persecuted Jews, women, "heretics", and pagans. In the modern era, alongside the development of the capitalist economy, Christianity, especially its

³ Sugirtharajah, 'A Postcolonial Exploration of Collusion and Construction in Biblical Interpretation', p. 104.

⁴ Sugirtharajah, 'Complacencies and Cul-de-sacs: Christian Theologies and Colonialism', pp. 23-7.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

Protestant branch, came to assert itself as a religion of power and success. During the time of the expansion of European imperialism in the 19th and 20th centuries, Christianity was often seen as a “gift” from the Euro-American missionaries to the people of colour in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, while in reality, the secular imperialist foreign policies gave the Church opportunities and resources to cooperate with the secular power for the extension of its own power. Robert Young spoke about feminism saying, “Feminism is not intrinsically anti-imperialist,” and this same sentence structure can be used for Christianity: “Christianity is not intrinsically anti-imperialist” even with its liberationist spin.⁶ During the time of political expansionism and the effort of modernisation of the “civilising mission”, Christian churches through missionaries took a leading role in the areas of education or medicine. To reach out to the female population, Christian missions sent female missionaries for the salvation and education of “heathen women”, who were nonetheless not allowed to become equal with the white women.⁷ In some cases, the Western Christian intervention left the status of native women lower by limiting women’s leadership based on the Victorian assumption of female virtue and fear of female sexuality.⁸ Above all, one of the most treacherous effects of colonial Christianity is that it claimed the one almighty creator God as the “benefactor and patron of the white people”.⁹

However, when one considers the reception of Christianity outside of Christian Europe, it is not enough to point out the obvious power relation between developed Europe and the rest. The conquering Christ of the missionary enterprise also become an inspiration for liberation.¹⁰ The Christian faith was one of the sources of hope and strength for Korean Christians during the Japanese imperial oppression. Among the peoples to whom Europe transmitted Christianity, there existed a complicated power struggle and many different motives in their own political situations. Who were willing to accept Christianity? What were their motives? What was their practice once they accepted it? How were their thoughts changed? This thesis will ex-

6 Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*, p. 369.

7 Pui-lan, *Postcolonial Imagination & Feminist Theology*, pp. 17–8.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 154.

9 *Ibid.*, p. 131.

10 *Ibid.*, pp. 156–7.

amine these questions, taking Japan as an example case. Therefore, this is not yet another celebrated record of Christian expansion or its reception. It neither idealises a Christian community nor presumes God's providence or intention behind events.

*The Bible as the
Book of the
Empire*

THE BIBLE AS THE BOOK OF THE EMPIRE

For the Japanese and people in Asia and Africa, the Bible was transmitted by the missionary from the West. Although the Bible "originated in West Asia, [was] rooted in Mediterranean cultural values, clothed in the everyday imagery of Semitic and Hellenistic peoples," by the time it arrived in Japan with the Protestant missionaries in the 19th century, it was the canonical book of the English and the Americans, and would be "distributed throughout the world as an icon containing civilising properties."¹¹ Thus, this "book of the civilisation" was integrated into the colonial discourse, used to justify the political and territorial aggression, as well as becoming a tool to educate the heathens. In England, by the production of the King James Version and through endowing it with canonical status, "The English Bible eventually became the Bible of the British empire so that quoting the Psalms, it was said that 'its sound has gone forth into all lands, and its words unto the ends of the world',"¹² In India, for example, the Bible was introduced as literature as a part of colonial education for the sake of the "moral improvement of the natives", calling the Bible an essential part of the education of the civilised.¹³ As a result, the Bible was used as a literary as well as a religious text, placed among other texts, which could reinforce English morality and values and the appreciation of the authority of British rule.

"With this view in mind, English writings which were suffused with biblical and Christian references were introduced into the Indian university curriculum. Shakespeare, Locke and Bacon were seen as texts which could supply and uphold Christian faith and inculcate morality and civility."¹⁴

Although Japan was not under any colonial rule, during its modernisation period the Bible was read among other European philosophical, scientific, historical, or

¹¹ Sugirtharajah, 'Biblical studies after the Empire', p. 13.

¹² Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Criticism and Biblical Interpretation*, p. 130.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 146.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 147.

literary texts. It was also studied in meetings held by missionaries, who were also teachers. Many of the first generation Christians were sons of the privileged class, who studied in schools where missionaries were hired as teachers of liberal arts and English, and those teachers were the ones who undertook the project of translating the entire Bible into Japanese for the first time.

Christian history in Japan is often divided into two separate periods, which are the Catholic mission from 1550s to 1650s and the period after the Protestants, Orthodox, and Catholics were allowed to enter the country in 1860s. During the former period, there were several literary witnesses, mainly the epistles of the Jesuits to Rome, that suggest that those missionaries were working on the translation of the Bible into Japanese, especially for the liturgical reading according to the lectionary, though their priority was translation of the catechism, doctrinal texts, and prayer book.¹⁵ These translation projects were carried out with the collaboration of the Japanese converts, and the initial attempt encountered difficulty and misunderstanding because of the frequent use of Buddhist terminology for words such as God, Law, Priests, or Heaven (translated as *Dainichi* [大日]: Vairocana, Mahaavairocana, *Minori* [御法]: (Buddhist) teaching, *Sou* [僧]: Buddhist priests, respectively). Because of the employment of Buddhist vocabulary, their teaching was misunderstood as a branch of Buddhism. Moreover, *Dainichi*, which is Buddha, who is the embodiment of the universe, was also an indecent slang word, which caused embarrassment on the part of the missionaries.¹⁶ From this experience, the Catholic missionaries then used the Portuguese words for important doctrinal concepts. However, severe persecution by the Japanese authorities in the following century forced the Christian community underground, and because of the turmoil, manuscripts of the Japanese Bible were lost.

Thus when the Protestant missionaries aspired to translate the Bible into Japanese in the middle of the 19th century, their only reference was the Chinese translation done in the beginning of the century by Robert Morrison (1782–1834) and William Milne (1785–1822) of the London Missionary Society.¹⁷ The very first Japanese

¹⁵ For the evidence for existence of the Japanese Bible translated by the Jesuits, see Ebisawa, *Nihon no Seisho*, pp. 34–8, 58–66.

¹⁶ Ebisawa & Ouchi, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 34.

¹⁷ Their translation was based on a manuscript of a part of the New Testament, from the Gospels to the Epistle to the Hebrews translated by Jean Bassett of Société des Missions-Etrangères de Paris in

translation that remains today is The Gospel of John by Karl Guetzlaff (1803–1851) of the London Missionary Society, published ca. 1837 from American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions in Singapore.¹⁸ Guetzlaff met three Japanese who were victims of a shipwreck in Macao, and learnt Japanese from them while translating the Gospel of John with their help. Much of this Gospel of John does not make sense due to Guetzlaff's lack of knowledge of the Japanese language, yet his effort inspired those who followed him.¹⁹

In 1872, the Board of Foreign Mission of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America (PN), the Reformed Church in America (RCA), and the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Mission (ABCFM) held a conference in Yokohama and resolved to cooperate to produce a Japanese translation of the New Testament. These mission boards invited other missionary organisations to participate, and established the translation committee. The main commissioners were, James C. Hepburn, PN (1815–1891), Samuel R. Brown, RCA (1810–1880), Daniel C. Greene, ABCFM (1843–1913), and four people from Protestant mission organisations. Hepburn and Brown had been working on the translation before Japan's borders were opened. They were assisted by several Japanese converts, but the Japanese were not commissioned, since this task itself was for Foreign missions.²⁰ The commissioners and the assistants would gather four days per week and work about three hours a day, with Greek and English Bibles open in front of the missionaries and the Chinese translation in front of the Japanese, since most educated Japanese people could read Chinese. The English Bible was the King James Version, on which the Japanese translation was based.²¹ Although the Portuguese and Spanish Catholic missionaries used transliterated Portuguese words for most of the theologically important

the early 18th century in China. It started when Morrison happened to come across the manuscript kept in the British Museum. See Ebisawa, *Nihon no Seisho*, pp. 98–105.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 105–10.

¹⁹ After Guetzlaff's Gospel of John, Samuel Williams (1812–1884) of American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, who met Guetzlaff in Macao, translated the Gospel of Mark sometime between 1835–1850, and the existing manuscript dates to 1850. Bernard Bettelheim (1811–1870), sponsored by Loochoo Naval Mission organised by an English naval officer H.J. Clifford, worked on the translation into the Ryukyu language while in stationed in Ryukyu (now Okinawa). He later revised the translation of John, Luke and Acts, and they were published by The British & Foreign Bible Society in 1873, though he himself never went to Japan. See *ibid.*, pp. 119–38.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 212.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 216–20.

concepts, such as God, the Spirit, doctrine, martyr, and so forth, the translation of the Protestant missionaries resorted to creating new words with the Chinese Bible as a reference, except the word “Baptism” [バプテスマ], which caused a heated discussion between the missionaries over whether it should take the Chinese character that means “cleanse” or “submerge”.²² The New Testament translation was completed in December 1879. In 1878, the mission conference chose a new committee consisting of twelve missionaries. Most of the old members stayed on and the membership was expanded to more denominations to continue the translation work of the Old Testament. This committee, “The Permanent Committee on the Translation, Revision, Publication and Preservation of the Text of the Holy Scriptures”, revised the New Testament translation and published again in 1880, and began its work on the Old Testament in the same year. In 1883, some Japanese Church leaders petitioned for membership in the Permanent Committee, with the slogan, “the Japanese Bible by the Japanese”, and were accepted by the committee. However the Japanese Churches could not support the Japanese translators financially, unlike the missionaries who had support from the American Bible Society and the National Bible Society of Scotland and later also British and Foreign Bible Society.²³ Also, many of the Japanese members were busy with their pastoral work. Eventually, the Japanese members withdrew their membership two years later, trusting all the work to “the foreign commissioners”.²⁴ The Old Testament translation was completed in 1888.

Besides the Permanent Committee version, other missionaries and Japanese Christians attempted to translate the Bible individually, while theological texts also began to be translated. Catholic and Orthodox missionaries also attempted their own version, yet the Permanent Committee version was the most complete Bible version existing at the time. As the Permanent Committee included “revision” of the Bible in its objectives, and with the increasing desire of the Japanese church leaders for the participation of the Japanese Christians in the Bible translation, in 1909 a revision committee was formed of four missionaries and four Japanese Christians.²⁵

²² Ebisawa, *Nihon no Seisho*, pp. 287–8.

²³ For the activities and characteristics of the British Foreign Bible Society and its relation to the Scriptural imperialism, see Sugirtharajah, *The Bible and the Third World*, pp. 45–73.

²⁴ Ebisawa, *Nihon no Seisho*, pp. 273–5.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 386–7.

With the support of the three Bible publishers, the revised version of the Gospel of Mark was completed in 1911, the New Testament was published in 1917. The Japanese grammar and syntax of this version was much improved, and was a pioneer work for the later versions undertaken by Japanese Christians, in both individual and committee work published from Japanese publishers.

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Thus the Bible was put into the hands of the Japanese people. Outside of the small Catholic community in the Kyushu area, such as in Nagasaki, the Bible became the sole theological tool for Japanese Christians, who did not have a long history of Christian tradition. It was according to the Bible that they argued their cases for the Church polity, in contemporary political affairs, and even against the missionary organisation and its control, which we will see in the following chapters.

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This question would necessarily apply to a small number of people, especially since it limits the scope of time to about 100 years between 1850s to 1940s. The Bible was widely read not only by those who were converted, but also by writers and novelists ever since it was introduced to Japan. It was read both by men and women. Yet there were not many who could “afford” the time to write about it, let alone to become professional theologians. During this time, Japan had many pressing tasks and people also faced a fast-changing society and a trial to survive, in which it was a luxury to become a commentator of a minority religion that had continuing difficulties in gaining public acceptance. For example, there were a few female Japanese Christians who worked publicly to introduce Christianity to the society and work among other Christians, yet they did not choose to be called “theologians” and did not spend their time writing about the Bible or even Christianity itself. For example, Kawai Michi (1877–1953) was a Christian educator, who was one of the founders of the Young Women’s Christian Association in Japan and also the founder of a girls’ high school, wrote two autobiographies, but no commentary on the Bible. Yamada Waka (1879–1957) was a Christian social activist who was also a prolific writer on the issues of prostitution, labour unions, free love, abortion, women’s suffrage and

other social issues surrounding women.²⁶ Having been once a prostitute herself, she became a pioneering figure in the emerging women's movements in Japan. However, her interest was more in the area of practical theology, and she did not spare time in trying to figure out the meaning of the Bible or its significance in Japanese society. Other Christian women read the Bible as well, attending Bible studies, publishing their thoughts, and even teaching each other, yet to find their writings today is difficult. I am aware of the painstaking effort of historical reconstruction of Christianity in other parts of Asia, for example Christianity in China by Kwok Pui-lan. She writes in critique of historical work in the area before her: "They have, however, focused exclusively on the lives and thoughts of male Christians, as if women were not an integral part of the encounter between China and Christianity. To write a history of Christianity in China as if women matter requires a different historical imagination and what Foucault has termed the 'insurrection of subjugated knowledge.'"²⁷ Her critique is correct and precise. She herself "painstakingly reconstructed Chinese women as actors, writers, and social reformers in the unfolding drama of the Christian movement at the turn of the twentieth century."²⁸ Though this thesis is not dedicated simply to illustrate the "unfolding drama of the Christian movement at the turn of the twentieth century", one way to extend this research would be to consider female voices precisely because it is a mistake to assume that "female" is a subcategory, which is not a part of colonial discourse or decolonising movement. Critical analysis of Christian theology and discourse in Japan necessarily requires listening to those who were marginalised in the social structure and suppressed by the colonial discourse; this is left for further research and study.

Among those who read the Bible and wrote about what they read, the people appearing in the following chapters are ones who professed their faith in the Christian God. These six Japanese Christians were all converts to Christianity in their late teenage years or later. Looking at these six people does not provide a comprehensive survey of Christianity in Japan (if such a survey is possible) ; rather, they were chosen to be studied here because they are distinct from the majority of Chris-

26 England et al., *Asian Christian Theologies: A Research Guide to Authors, Movements, Sources*, p. 349.

27 Pui-lan, *Postcolonial Imagination & Feminist Theology*, p. 32.

28 *Ibid.*, p. 33.

tian scholars of their time. The majority of theological works were done in a mood similar to what Sugirtharajah describes as the anglicist phase in the history of Christianity in India. That is, the Christian texts produced in Japan during the time with which we are concerned tend to be full of appropriation and assimilation of western biblical and theological methodologies, and many Christian scholars vigorously reproduced what they perceived as Western scholarship.²⁹ The western methodology of the study of Christianity and the Bible was understood to be universal, and thus the norm for anyone who undertakes the subject, and that the only way to enter the scholarly conversation was to read and write as if they were westerners. In reality however, any theological methodologies or theories are products of their contexts, and this is true for the theological production in Europe or the United States. The six theologians who appear in this thesis were aware of their own social location and own needs, and while deeply influenced by the supposedly “universal” Western norms, took their own positionalities seriously, which enabled their work to be especially reflective of their historical, cultural, and social situations. Therefore, through paying attention to their work, one could see a glimpse of the complicated power relations during the time of Western, and Japanese, imperialism.

To observe different theological responses to a historical situation in Japan, I have chosen to study two Japanese Christian thinkers and writers in each chapter. They are some of the most well known Japanese Christians both inside and outside Japan, and some researchers have introduced their theology elsewhere, yet not enough work has been done regarding the relationship between their works and their positionalities and concurrent historical events.

My thesis is that a biblical interpretation is a political act influenced by the positionality of the interpreter within the society. Reading of the Bible in Japan shows this. In this introductory chapter, I have pointed out the relationship between Christianity and colonialism, and briefly surveyed how the Bible, as a canon of the West, came into the hands of the Japanese people.

Chapter 2 will be devoted to describing the history of Christianity in Japan, from 1540s until the twentieth century to give a background for the following chapters, in which individual theologians’ writings are considered.

29 Sugirtharajah, *Asian Biblical Hermeneutics and Postcolonialism*, pp. 8–12.

In chapter 3, two first-generation Protestant Christians, Ebina Danjo (1866–1937) and Uchimura Kanzo (1861–1930), will be studied, focusing on their political and theological positions, and how they expressed their views through their readings of the Bible. Ebina and Uchimura experienced the revolution that ended 350 years of the history of the government based on the feudal system. Coming from warrior families and upper-class society, yet failing to acquire administrative positions in the new government, their motivation was to learn from the Western civilisation, whose spiritual foundation, they believed, was Christianity. Thus they encountered Christianity and became believers. Ebina then became an ordained pastor, theologically influenced by German liberalism. Uchimura, though theologically remaining evangelical, came to deny the very institution of Christianity, the Church. He remained a layman, since he rejected the idea of clergy. During Japan's modernisation period and subsequent expansionism, both of them relied on the Bible to support their political opinions, which differed greatly: Ebina was an imperialist and Uchimura a pacifist.

Chapter 4 studies Kagawa Toyohiko (1888–1960) and Yanaihara Tadao (1893–1961), who belong to a different generation from the previous two. Kagawa's low-Christology can be compared to the theology of Ebina, whom Kagawa admired,³⁰ and Yanaihara was a student of Uchimura, yet these two faced a different set of questions and challenges from those of their predecessors. Japan's colonial ambitions and military expansion toward China caused international objections which isolated Japan. The military began to act independently of the civil government, and the country entered into the war with China, and later with the United States and its Allies. Kagawa Toyohiko was an internationally known political activist and evangelist, whose actions and thoughts were expressed through images and words of the Bible. Yanaihara, who was a professor of colonial policy, also expressed his criticisms on Japan's oppression, lies, and greed through the reading of the Prophets. As Christians and intellectuals of the time of Japan's modernisation, both of them were influenced by the Western colonial discourse, and both hoped to improve their nation, and regarded the Bible as an effective tool to change society. Yet by 1941, Kagawa was reciting government propaganda while Yanaihara was exiled

³⁰ Kagawa, *Ten no Kokoro Chi no Kokoro*, pp. 474–9.

from the Tokyo Imperial University for his severe criticism of the Japanese government and people in general.

Chapter 5 will study the thought of Nagai Takashi (1908–1951) and Kitamori Kazo (1916–1998). The works of those two scholars were published after the end of the Asia-Pacific War, and in their theological reflections they dealt with the meaning of “suffering”. Nagai was a Catholic and a scientist, who was also a victim of the atomic bombing in Nagasaki. His books were published under the United States occupation authorities’ censorship; though the voices of victims were heard through his work, its message is that Japan atoned for its guilt by being the victim of the massacre; yet from this discourse, the real victims of Japanese wartime aggression were absent and silenced. Kitamori Kazo was well known as a Japanese theologian from his *Theology of the Pain of God* (1966). His work is often evaluated as a Japanese theologian’s unique and original contribution to the international Christian academia. His work also deals with the problem of suffering, but this “suffering” is a generalised concept. Nagai and Kitamori are two of the most famous Christian thinkers of the time, yet both of them failed to critique the pain caused by Japan and its aggression.

Chapter 6 is the concluding chapter of the thesis, in which I examine the direction of Christian thought in Japan today and deal with the major issue facing Japanese theology: cultural essentialism. In this final chapter, I will draw the implications of the conclusions of the previous chapters for Christianity in modern-day Japan. I will first of all briefly survey the postwar development of Japanese theology, especially in its relationship to western scholarship. In particular, some scholars have sought a distinct Japanese Christian identity working within a neo-colonial discourse, using the literary genre of *Nihonjinron*, which purports to be an anthropological study of Japaneseness, but which is actually a modern manifestation of nationalism and a product of auto-Orientalism provoked by neo-colonialism. I will survey the development and some criticisms of *Nihonjinron* and its relationship to Christianity in Japan, which cautioning against the tendency of Christianity to align itself with the temporal power.

Scholars who seek Japanese Christian identity using *Nihonjinron* are in fact still working within the colonial discourse. Furuya and Ohki’s *Theology of Japan* (1989)

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is a careful study of Japan as an object of theologizing, yet is not free from over-generalization of Japan and the psyche of the Japanese. Furuya surveys the history of Christianity in Japan, focusing on its relationship with the Japanese government, and Ohki pursues the methodology of the theology of Japan, yet both of them presuppose that there is an essence shared, throughout history, by Japanese people.³¹ By this uncritical attitude to auto-Orientalism, especially in its form of cultural essentialism, Furuya and Ohki are also uncritical towards neo-colonialism. To realise this point would give the theology of Japan a helpful perspective to understand the emperor system and where the Japanese Church stands. At the moment, it stands between the Western-centred neo-colonial discourse, in which Christianity has been a useful tool, and nationalism, which is discernible in a discourse such as *Nihonjinron*.

My thesis — that interpretation is a political act informed by the interpreter's positionality — indicates the risk of legitimising one's own political views by ascribing them to the sacrosanct text, and the concomitant dangers of a lack of self-criticism. I argue that, while Japanese Christianity must confront the issues of the Western dominance of academia and surge of nationalism in Japan, it must also be self-critical.

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³¹ Furuya & Ohki, *Nihon no Shingaku*, pp.48–60, 237ff.

Japanese Church History: Historical Background and the Issue of Identity



In this chapter I shall outline the history of the reception of Christianity in Japan. To understand how Christianity was accepted, or rather rejected, in Japan, it is indispensable to consider two things: international and domestic politics of Japan. Its history must be told, therefore, in relation to the political situation of the country. Christianity in Japan has about 450 years of history, since the introduction of Catholicism in the middle of the sixteenth century. Unlike Buddhism and Confucianism, which came from overseas a millennium ago and eventually became indigenized, Christianity was never adopted or used by the governing power whether that was an emperor and the nobles or a feudal ruler (shogun). Throughout its history, Christianity was generally considered as a “foreign” religion: a religion of “Southern Barbarians” or “the West”.¹ The road Christianity took in Japan was thorny and daunting, often being brought into conflict with and persecuted by the political authorities. Today, Christians in Japan make up less than 1% of the whole population,² and each existing church is small in number. Many Japanese people consider themselves non-practising “Buddhists” or “Shintoists.” For many of them, religion is a set of social conventions: they go to a Shinto shrine on New Year’s Day, get married in a Christian chapel, and have a Buddhist funeral. While many people believe in some spiritual existence, the Judeo-Christian notion of one creator God has never become prominent. This chapter will survey the history of Christianity in Japan, paying particular attention to the relationship between the church and the state, placed in a larger context of Japan’s relationship to the outside world, especially with the Western powers.

¹ Since Portugal and Spain had colonies to the south-east of Japan, these countries were called by this name around the time when Christianity was brought to Japan. Later, when Protestantism was brought to Japan, it was understood to be the religion of the West.

² This figure is based on church membership.

During the age of discovery and subsequent conquest, Spain and Portugal, the two major sea-powers, aggressively sought to extend their influence over new lands. In 1494, through the mediation of Pope Alexander VI, the two countries agreed the Treaty of Tordesillas, which divided the world along a meridian 370 leagues west of the Cape Verde Islands. All newly discovered lands in the eastern hemisphere were allocated to Portugal; all those in the western hemisphere to Spain. The Portuguese travelled from Lisbon, via the African west coast and Cape of Good Hope, to Goa in India, which was their base. From Goa, they reached Japan via Malacca and Macao in China.³

In 1543, three Portuguese were on board a Chinese junk that was driven off course by a storm and made landfall in Japan. At that time Japan was divided by feudal lords, who engaged in continuous civil strife with each other, and the Portuguese found an ideal market for their firearms.⁴ The Jesuit missionary Francisco de Xavier (1506-1552) heard about Japan when he was in Malacca en route to Goa at the end of December 1547.⁵ He was then introduced to a Japanese man called Yajiro, who already spoke a little Portuguese. Having heard about this newly discovered rich and populous country with a cultivated society, Xavier was ready to seize this great opportunity to proclaim the Gospel.

Xavier and his company had been sent east by Pope Paul III at the request of King John III of Portugal, who was dissatisfied with the work of the Franciscans in India.⁶ When Xavier left Lisbon in 1541, it was only a year after he and Ignacio de Loyola with five others had founded the Society of Jesus (*Societas Iesu*).⁷ Xavier and his companions, Father Cosmo de Torres, Brother Juan Fernandez, and three

³ Miyazaki, 'Roman Catholic Mission in Pre-Modern Japan', pp. 3-4.

⁴ Boxer, *The Christian Century in Japan 1549-1650*, pp. 24-8.

⁵ For information on Xavier's life and work, see Schurhammer, *Francis Xavier: His Life, His Times*. Also Bartoli, *The Life of St. Francis Xavier, Apostle of India and Japan*; Coleridge, *The Life and Letters of St. Francis Xavier*. For a more recent study, see Ross, *A Vision Betrayed: the Jesuits in Japan and China, 1542-1742*.

⁶ Gonoï, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 30.

⁷ Ebisawa & Ouchi, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*. On the Jesuits, see, for example, Steinmetz, *History of the Jesuits*; Nicolini, *History of the Jesuits: Their Origin, Progress, Doctrines and Designs*; László, *Bibliography of the History of the Society of Jesus*; Wright, *The Jesuits: Missions, Myths and Histories*.

Japanese converts including Yajiro, who had been received into the Catholic faith, arrived in Kagoshima, a southern part of Japan in August 1549. In his letters to a colleague in Goa dated November 5, 1549, Xavier wrote that Japanese people were good-natured, courteous, and valued the concept of honour. By this time, Xavier had encountered people of different classes, farmers and feudal lords, as well as the Buddhist priests, whom he engaged in doctrinal debates. He also showed his eagerness to learn the Japanese language, and reported that Yajiro, now called by his baptismal name, Paulo de Santa Fé, was helping him translate “everything which is necessary for the salvation of souls”.⁸ He concluded his letter by saying that Japan was a suitable land in which to propagate Christianity.

The sixteenth century was a time of war and turmoil as local leaders fought each other. The majority of early converts were poor peasants or fishermen, who were burdened by high feudal land taxes.⁹ During the two years of Xavier’s stay, 700 people converted.¹⁰ During the period after the Great Discoveries by Spain and Portugal, and as the countries in Middle and South America, Southeast Asia, and Africa were colonised, the native religions were to be eliminated, often by the “sword”, to impose Christianity. In East Asia, such as in Japan and China, however, the Jesuits esteemed the native culture highly and did not impose Christianity by force.

After Xavier left to continue his mission in India and China, Cosmo de Torres remained and continued their work. Torres and his companions followed Xavier’s approach in trying to understand Japanese customs, politics, and religions, and to adjust themselves to the ways of Japanese society. The Jesuit missionaries became vegetarians like the local people, wore silk clothes in accordance with the custom among the religious figures, and studied Buddhism to be ready for the debates with monks.¹¹ Since the Japanese people placed great import on cleanliness, examples of which are scrupulous cleanliness in dress and housing and the custom of bathing

8 ‘Extracts from a Letter Written by Francis Xavier, S.J., to the Jesuits at Goa dated Kagoshima, November 5, 1549’ in Boxer, *The Christian Century in Japan 1549–1650*, pp. 401–5.

9 Ebisawa & Ouchi, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 55.

10 Gono, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 44.

11 Ebisawa & Ouchi, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 41. Luis Frois, who joined the Jesuits’ mission in Japan in 1563, wrote of his experiences in Japan. Frois, *Historia de Japan*. This work was translated into Japanese; Matsuda & Kawasaki, *Frois Nihonshi*. In *Historia*, Frois mentions that he and another missionary, Organtino Gnechi-Soldo, learnt from a Buddhist monk two hours every day for a year. Frois, *Historia de Japan*, Part 1, ch. 102; Gono, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*.

every day, the missionaries were also expected to meet these standards.¹² At the same time, Torres made use of Portuguese merchant ships for their advantage in negotiating with local rulers. The Jesuits gradually became an indispensable part of the trade between the Portuguese and the Japanese: as translators, as brokers, and also as investors, with the intent of meeting the expenses of their growing communities.¹³ While the feudal lords protected the missionaries for their own political interest—namely, to be in a good relationship with Portugal and to promote the trade between two countries—Catholicism in Japan grew exponentially in the first fifty years, and one of the reasons why the Jesuits' work was not interrupted during this time was their involvement with the Portugal–Japan trade.¹⁴ The period of 100 years from 1549 is often called the “Christian century” of Japan. The converts were called *Kirishitan* [吉利支丹, later 切支丹¹⁵], which comes from Portuguese *Christão*.¹⁶ According to Luís de Cerqueira (1552–1614), who served as bishop of Japan from 1598 to 1614, the *Kirishitan* population in Japan was about 350,000 in 1603.¹⁷

Initially, the Jesuits found a niche among the poor and needy by providing medical treatment and thus were known as “healers”.¹⁸ Later, however, the focus of their propagation shifted to the feudal lords and the privileged samurai class, in spite of many of the converts being farmers or peasants.¹⁹

12 Boxer, *The Christian Century in Japan 1549–1650*, p. 214.

13 *Ibid.*, pp. 112–21.

14 Some feudal lords were baptised and protected the missionaries in the hope of trade advantages. In the Kyushu area, Ōmura Sumitada was baptised in 1563, Ōtomo Sōrin in 1578, Arima Harunobu in 1580. See Miyazaki, ‘*Roman Catholic Mission in Pre-Modern Japan*’, p. 7. Yet it should be noted that some feudal lords who did not have access to the port towns also converted and promoted the religion in their lands. One of the most influential and famous Christian lords was Ukon Takayama (1552–1615). See Ebisawa, *Takayama Ukon*.

15 The characters changed because one of the later Shoguns had the letter 吉 in his name, and did not wish to have any association with *Kirishitans*.

16 Miyazaki, ‘*Roman Catholic Mission in Pre-Modern Japan*’, p. 5.

17 Gonoï, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 190. Miyazaki comments on the statistics of 1630: “after eighty years of missionary work, the number of converts in the early 1630s totalled 760,000. The total population of Japan at that time is estimated to have been 12,000,000, so that figure is equivalent to approximately ten times the percentage of Catholics in present-day Japan.” This figure, however, includes those who were baptised as infants, and is thus debated among scholars. Miyazaki, ‘*Roman Catholic Mission in Pre-Modern Japan*’, p. 7. See also Gonoï, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 129; Whelan, *The Beginning of Heaven and Earth: The Sacred Book of Japan's Hidden Christians*, p. 77.

18 Boxer, *The Christian Century in Japan 1549–1650*, pp. 202–3.

19 *Ibid.*, pp. 227–8.

Before 1603, which was the year Tokugawa Shogunate (*Bakufu* [幕府]) was established and the country unified under a Shogun, there were relatively few persecutions of Jesuits and Kirishitans. For example, Oda Nobunaga (1534–1582), the first unifier of Japan in the *Sengoku* (civil war) period before the Shogunate, favoured the Kirishitan religion largely because he did not have support from the Buddhist monks and priests, and thus adopted an anti-Buddhist policy in the power struggles.²⁰ Buddhist temples and clergy therein were respected by the populace in general, and also had political power and fought as soldiers against feudal lords if necessary. Some of the Jesuits' views on these Buddhist sects can be known from their correspondence. Gasper Vilela (1525–1572), for example, reported in his letter to compatriots in the Benedictine convent of Aviz, on October 6, 1571 that bonzes (Buddhist clergy) used to say “matins, tierce, vespers and complines for the Devil wished them to imitate the things of our Lord in everything.”²¹ He also concluded that their cleanliness and the beauty of the temples and the gardens were due to their disbelief in a future life, thus attempting to create paradise in their present life, and eventually dismissed them as pederastic hypocrites.²² Vilela continuously reports that the monks were addicted to “sodomy”.²³ Luis Frois (1532–1597) also reports his disappointment over the death of a Christian lord, and expressed delight when he heard the news of Nobunaga's massacre of an enemy force, including Tendai temple on Hieizan mount where the all the villagers on the mount were hunted down and killed regardless of their age or gender.²⁴ This negative view of Buddhist priests was not necessarily shared by all the Jesuits working in Japan, and Alexander Valignano (1539–1606), the vicar-general and Visitor of East Asia for the Jesuits since 1582, found out how the Buddhist priests were distinguished and respected by the people for their dignity and gravity, and thus held them as models for the Jesuits

20 Sawa, *Nihon Kidisuto Kyōshi*, p. 64.

21 Boxer, *The Christian Century in Japan 1549–1650*, p. 66.

22 *Ibid.*, p. 66.

23 *Ibid.*, pp. 66, 69. Kwok Pui-lan points out the concept of “homosexuality” played a role in colonial discourse, and the biblical association of homosexuality with other religions, and in later Christian traditions. See Pui-lan, *Postcolonial Imagination & Feminist Theology*, pp. 138–41.

24 Boxer, *The Christian Century in Japan 1549–1650*, pp. 69–71.

missionaries to follow.²⁵

Alexander Valignano first arrived in Japan in 1579, tasked with policy-making and inspection of the ongoing missionary work. While his predecessor Francisco Cabral (1528–1609), who despised Asiatic races and opposed both treating the Japanese as equals of Europeans and ordaining them as priests, Valignano strongly advocated for a native clergy, saying that the Japanese should be taught everything the Jesuits could teach, especially because the language skills of the European Jesuits were so limited.²⁶ It was Valignano's position that was taken for the mission in Japan, and Cabral was replaced by Gaspar Coelho (ca.1531–1590).²⁷ However, even though the Japanese could enter the Society, the singular difficulty for them to be ordained as priests was that the Japanese novices experienced great difficulty learning Latin, and the required standard of proficiency of Latin had to be lowered for the Japanese brothers.²⁸

In 1582, Valignano took four young boys, about the age of thirteen, from the Jesuits institutions for primary education to present them to the Pope. His purpose was to collect donations, and also to educate the youths by showing them Christianity in Europe. His mission was successful, and the youths received a warm welcome and made a visit to the Pope. By the time they returned to Nagasaki in 1590, however, the situation in their homeland had changed significantly.

After Nobunaga was assassinated, Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536–1598) became the dominant ruler.²⁹ At first, he continued Nobunaga's policy on the missionaries due to his interest in international trade, especially in acquiring warships from Portugal.³⁰ However, in 1587, he suddenly issued a decree to expel all the missionaries within twenty days [伴天連追放令]. There have been several reasons suggested as to why Hideyoshi changed his mind. One of the main factors may have been that

*Hideyoshi
Toyotomi and his
Policy on
Kirishitans*

25 Boxer, *The Christian Century in Japan 1549–1650*, p. 83.

26 *Ibid.*, pp. 85–9.

27 The admission of Japanese to the society was limited to those of gentle birth, sons of nobility or samurai. See *ibid.*, pp. 220, 223.

28 *Ibid.*, pp. 206, 219.

29 During the time of Nobunaga and Hideyoshi, P. Alessandro Valignano, the Visitor of India, was the most prominent figure in the Jesuits' mission. One of the best biographies of Valignano is Shütte, *Valignanos Mission Principle for Japan*. See also Moran, *The Japanese and the Jesuits: Alessandro Valignanos in Sixteenth Century Japan*.

30 Gonoï, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, pp. 143–4.

Takayama Ukon, who was a prominent Kirishitan protector, did not renounce his faith when Hideyoshi demanded. Hideyoshi was displeased with the fact that he could not manipulate Takayama to control the Kirishitans in the country.³¹ It was also suggested that Gaspar Coelho, the Vice-Provincial, could not keep his word to Hideyoshi about assisting him to acquire two Portuguese warships. The failure to secure the ships caused Hideyoshi to distrust Coelho. Coelho asked Hideyoshi for six months until a ship would arrive from Portugal, and planned a military movement to protect the land they had been granted in Nagasaki. He asked for help from Kirishitan feudal lords and the Superior in Macao, yet none of them approved Coelho's plan. Even Valignano opposed the armaments. Valignano came to Japan in 1590, but Coelho had passed away before his arrival. As a result of Valignano's intervention, not as a missionary but as the ambassador of the viceroy of India, Hideyoshi's wrath subsided, and the law gradually fell into disuse.³²

THE SAN FELIPE INCIDENT AND THE TWENTY-SIX MARTYRS

When Hideyoshi threatened to invade the Spanish colony in the Philippines, the Spanish King, Felipe II (Felipe I of Portugal) sent a Dominican (1592), and a Franciscan (1593) as his envoys, even though Pope Gregory XIII had issued a decree to entrust mission work in Japan exclusively to the Jesuits.³³ From this basis, the Spanish Franciscans and the Dominicans sailed to Japan from the Philippines with the help of Spanish merchants who coveted the trade relationship between Portugal and Japan, and started their ministry, which caused confusion in the mission field, especially since the Franciscans did not follow the culturally and politically sensitive stance of the Jesuits. A Jesuit, Organtino Gneccchi-Soldo, who had been engaged in urban ministry in Kyoto, warned the Franciscans to be circumspect in their actions and to take account of possible reaction by the authorities. The Franciscans did not heed his warning.³⁴

It was against this background that the *San Felipe* incident occurred. In 1596,

³¹ Gonoï, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 147.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 147–67; Ebisawa & Ouchi, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, pp. 78–82.

³³ Miyazaki, 'Roman Catholic Mission in Pre-Modern Japan', p. 10.

³⁴ Gonoï, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, pp. 178–9.

a Spanish ship, the *San Felipe*, was cast ashore. A crewmember, on questioning by Hideyoshi's diplomat, bragged about Spain's glory and how it conquered and colonised so many lands. When the diplomat asked whether Spain sent missionaries before the conquest, it is said that the man answered, "Yes."³⁵ Hideyoshi was angry and harshly criticised the Franciscans. The incident led to the martyrdom of twenty-six Christians — six Franciscan missionaries and seventeen converts by Franciscans, and three Japanese Jesuit lay brothers, who were included by mistake. They were taken from Kyoto, marched to Nagasaki and crucified there on 5th February 1597.³⁶

TOKUGAWA BAKUFU AND KIRISITANS

After the death of Hideyoshi in 1598, Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543–1616) completed the unification of the country and established the Shogunate [*Bakufu*]. Real anti-Kirishitan measures began around the time of this unification. In the beginning, Ieyasu, though a practising Buddhist, took a tolerant attitude to the Jesuits, just as his predecessors did, precisely because the Jesuits were essential intermediaries for the trade with the Portuguese. However, the situation gradually changed as the Jesuits lost their monopoly as trade translators. The appearance of rivals, Dutch and English, for the Japan trade reduced the importance of the trade with the Portuguese, which also affected the value of missionaries from the *Bakufu*'s perspective.³⁷ The *Bakufu* also became alarmed about the possibility of Kirishitans, or worse the Christian countries such as Spain, allying with the clans or clan-less warriors who were anti-Shogunate.³⁸ With a ban in 1614, many of the missionaries were expelled from the country.³⁹ The propitiatory decree stated that Japan was a country based on Buddhism and Shintoism, and Kirishitans were believing a false religion that not

³⁵ Gonoï, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 182.

³⁶ Boxer, *The Christian Century in Japan 1549–1650*, pp. 164–6; Gonoï, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, pp. 182–3; Ebisawa & Ouchi, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, pp. 85–6; Sawa, *Nihon Kidisuto Kyōshi*, pp. 43–4. See also Pagés, *Nihon Nijyuroku Seijin Jyunkyouki*. In 1861, Pope Pius IV declared the 23 Franciscans saints, and the three Jesuits also became saints the following next year. See Gonoï, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 183.

³⁷ Boxer, *The Christian Century in Japan 1549–1650*, pp. 308–9.

³⁸ Gonoï, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 205.

³⁹ What triggered this veto originally was a bribery case between two Catholic feudal lords. One forged a letter from Ieyasu. When this came to light in 1612, he was burnt at the stake, and the other was sent into exile. *Ibid.*, p. 200.

only confused and defiled the traditional Japanese gods but also confused society.⁴⁰ When Ieyasu died in 1616, his son, Hidetada issued another ban against Kirishitans. From that time on, priests and anyone who sheltered them were killed. This time, the persecution was persistent. People who did not renounce their faith were tortured and killed. The massacre and torture was so horrendous that Nagasaki, where most of the inhabitants were Kirishitans, was almost depopulated.⁴¹ Ironically, members of the non-samurai warrior class such as farmers and peasants, the people whom the Franciscans and Dominicans targeted for propagation, were the ones who remained most faithful unto death.⁴²

The anti-Kirishitan policy of the *Bakufu* was even accelerated on the succession of Hidetada's son, Iemitsu. In 1637, there was a peasant uprising in Shimabara, Nagasaki. The revolt was due to oppressive taxation, but because they were Kirishitans, their faith nurtured in the community was their common foundation. The following year, the allied forces of the *Bakufu* launched an attack against the peasants who had barricaded themselves in a fort. Approximately 25,000 people, including women and children, were killed, and about 8,000 died on the side of the allied force.⁴³ In 1639, the *Bakufu* banned merchant ships from Portugal all together.

Consequently, by the early 1640s, there were no missionaries in Japan, and Kirishitans were forced to go underground.⁴⁴ In the meantime, the *Bakufu*'s national isolation policy was completed by 1641.⁴⁵

THE END OF NATIONAL ISOLATION

The isolationist policy was maintained until the nineteenth century with a very few exceptions: Korea was the only country that kept diplomatic relations with Japan,

40 Gono, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, pp. 203–4.

41 The magistrate's office in Nagasaki adopted a torture using boiling water and high temperature steam in a natural hot-spring region. Many people were scalded to death. *Ibid.*, p. 215. For the torture of Christians, see Tsuyama, *Kirishitan Goumonshi*.

42 Boxer, *The Christian Century in Japan 1549–1650*, p. 339.

43 Gono, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, pp. 221–3.

44 Sawa, *Nihon Kidisuto Kyōshi*, p. 50.

45 The Portuguese, whether merchants or missionaries, were excluded in 1639 and only the Dutch were permitted to enter Dejima (an artificial island) in Nagasaki. Japanese were forbidden to travel abroad under penalty of death, and foreigners were not allowed to enter the land. Hall, *The Cambridge History of Japan*, p. 300.

and this was implemented only through the clan of Tsushima, not through the central government. Some private Chinese traders and the Dutch East India Company were still permitted to operate in Nagasaki. After the Opium Wars (1839–1842) resulted in China being forced to open its ports to international trade, Western countries expected Japan to follow a similar route. The news of the Opium Wars spread rapidly among Japanese political leaders and intellectuals, and affirmed the superiority of Western military technology. Especially for the United States, Japan's national isolation laws caused resentment as it prevented the American ships from calling at Japanese ports for water and supplies, and also because shipwrecked American sailors were ill-treated in Japan. Moreover, the establishment of formal authority in California and Oregon in 1848 accelerated the United States' interest in opening Japanese ports, as Japan was on a direct line from San Francisco to Shanghai.⁴⁶ With a letter from President Millard Fillmore to the emperor of Japan requesting friendly relations, Commodore Matthew C. Perry arrived in Edo Bay with his squadron. Perry demanded the opening of Japan's ports and courtesy towards American ships as "a right" and to be expected from one civilised nation to another. Overwhelmed by Perry's *Kurofune*, or "black ships", a term first used for the Portuguese carracks in 1500s, Japanese officials became convinced that acceding to the demand that Japan's ports be opened was the only means of survival. In 1854, the two countries signed an agreement that opened the two ports of Shimoda and Hakodate for American ships to obtain coal and other necessary supplies.⁴⁷ This was not a treaty for trade.

However, with persistent pressure from not only the United States, but also Britain, the Netherlands, Russia, and France, Japan recognised that the opening of trade was not a matter of choice. In 1857, the American Consul-General Townsend Harris came to negotiate details of a trade treaty. *The Treaty of Peace and Commerce* was signed between the United States and Japan in 1858. Japan also signed equivalent treaties with the other four Western countries.⁴⁸ It was an unequal treaty, especially in two respects: foreigners in Japan were to be judged according to the laws of their own countries, not by Japanese law; and the Japanese government

⁴⁶ Jansen, *The Cambridge of History of Japan*, pp. 268–9.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 269.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 271–84.

could not control import and export duties without negotiating with the foreign countries. The effect on the Japanese domestic economy was disastrous. The Harris trade treaty said “Americans may freely buy from Japanese and sell to them any articles that either may have for sale, without the intervention of any Japanese officers in such purchase or sale, or in making or receiving payment for the same...” (Article 3).⁴⁹ Accordingly, the trade relationship started. Yet there were problems. Harris insisted that the Japanese and American coins should be exchanged weight for weight, but Japanese silver coins contained a higher percentage of silver than dollar coins. Also in Japan the ratio of the value of silver to gold was 1 to 5, instead of the world ratio of 1 to 15. Consequently, Japan lost a significant amount of gold in two years. In 1860, the government issued a new gold coin, worth one-third of an old gold coin. This increased the amount of money in circulation by almost 150%, which resulted in severe inflation. Moreover, the demand for silk and tea pushed up the prices of these products. (The British government later apologised for this.) About 30% to 50% of silk was exported, and farmers gave up growing rice and other crops to grow more tea. The fear of the future and discontentment toward the *Bakufu* stirred up strong resentment over the government’s signing of the treaty. Under the slogan, “Honour the emperor, expel the barbarian,” there were attacks on individual foreigners in Yokohama and Edo (the new capital). This social turmoil eventually led to the end of the *Bakufu*, and its replacement by the new social and political structure of the Meiji Restoration (1866-1869).

THE RETURN OF MISSIONARIES

In the Harris trade treaty, there was an article on the freedom of religion for Americans who lived in Japan.⁵⁰ Townsend Harris was a practising Christian, and criticised Japan’s policy on Christianity as the Christians were persecuted and almost exterminated during the Tokugawa Shogunate. Based on the treaty, missionaries came to Japan, at first for the ostensible reason of ministering to their fellow countrymen.⁵¹ Following the United States, France signed a trade treaty. Over two centuries after

49 Jansen, *The Cambridge of History of Japan*, p. 280.

50 Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 10; Gono, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 247.

51 Sawa, *Nihon Kidisuto Kyōshi*, p. 73.

their expulsion, Catholic missionaries came back to Japan in 1862 alongside Protestant missionaries.⁵²

In 1865, French missionaries built a chapel in Oura, Nagasaki. The western-style building attracted much attention from the inhabitants and tourists, and it was called, “*Furansu Dera*” [French Temple].⁵³ Hearing the rumour about the chapel, many underground Catholics heard about the chapel and visited the priest. When the Catholic missionaries came back, not all of the underground Christians reconnected to the Catholic Church. During the persecution, the underground Christians pretended to be Buddhists on the surface and maintained their Catholic faith. They denied Christianity in public, registered as Buddhists, and participated in Shinto ceremonies. Under the pretence of having Buddhist gatherings, they held Christian meetings. When a Christian died, the law required them to bury the person with a Buddhist style, so they had a small and private Christian ceremony before sending for a Buddhist monk. They had sustained their faith through the years of national isolation. After 250 years of being hidden and disguised, the underground Christians’ faith became syncretistic with Buddhism, Shintoism, or other indigenous religions. In 1892, there were approximately 50,000 underground Christians, half of whom reconnected to the Catholic Church; the other half became sectarians and maintained their rituals. Even today, there are some groups descended from underground Christians in parts of Nagasaki.⁵⁴ The new government initially persecuted the Kirishitans who emerged from underground. In June 1868, more than 3,000 Catholics were arrested, imprisoned, and tortured to coerce them into apostasy, but many of them stood firm in their faith.⁵⁵ Western public opinion was against the persecution of Christians by the Japanese government, which led the government to release the Catholics in 1870 and eventually to abolish the law against Christianity in 1873.⁵⁶ Although the law itself was repealed, the Japanese government did not make an official announcement to the people, who continued to understand

The Return of Missionaries

⁵² Greek Orthodox priests also came with the Russian consul in 1859. Gonoï, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 250.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 248–9.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 243–5; Sawa, *Nihon Kidisuto Kyōshi*, pp. 51–4.

⁵⁵ Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 37; Ebisawa & Ouchi, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 159.

⁵⁶ Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, pp. 263–7; Ebisawa & Ouchi, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 159.

that Christianity was banned.⁵⁷ Legal permission for Christianity had to wait until 1889, when the Meiji Constitution was established.

Among the Protestant missionaries who came to Japan in the late nineteenth century, Americans were the majority.⁵⁸ The Protestant missionaries emphasised that they were distinguished from Catholic missionaries by criticising the Catholic religion so that the Japanese people would not confuse the Protestants with the Kirishitans whose religion had been prohibited during the time of the Shogunate.⁵⁹ Meanwhile, missionaries, alongside other foreign professionals took part in educational, medical, and social work and contributed to Japan's improvement in each area. In this contact of the West and Japan, the colonial discourse, the concept developed from Foucault's use of the word "discourse" by Edward Said, was evident.⁶⁰ The missionaries and those who considered themselves as representatives of the western civilisation employed a system of statements that asserted the superiority of their civilisation over that of Japan, to create, for themselves and the Japanese, a reality that told that Japan was inferior to the West in its culture, social order, language, political structure, and that therefore Japan and the Japanese needed to "rise up" to the standard of the West in every sense to be considered as an equal, or simply as something more than frivolous.⁶¹ The missionaries' presupposition was that European scientific, industrial, and military prowess was inseparable from its religion. To accept this religion was a fundamental step that Japan must take if it would join the civilised nations of the world. Thus, overseas activities of American missionaries especially were often inspired by the sense of being "elect" as the people who carried out God's plan in "uncivilised" lands.⁶² The approach of missionaries in the context of late 19th century imperialism was thus different

57 Sawa, *Nihon Kidisuto Kyōshi*, pp.22, 24.

58 In 1882, among 226 missionaries, 75% were American. According to Sawa, the American missionaries attracted Japanese people with their message and attitude of freedom, equality, philanthropy, democracy, and respect for the individual. They were also perceived as light-hearted and positive. On the issue of the amendment of the unequal treaties, the American missionaries supported the Japanese government, which helped to defuse the notion that the missionaries were the political instruments of the Western countries. *Ibid.*, p. 74.

59 Gono, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 270.

60 Said, *Orientalism*, p. 3; Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, pp. 36–8, 62–4.

61 *Ibid.*, p. 37.

62 Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, pp. 31–3.

from the approach of the Jesuits in the sixteenth century, who learnt Japanese customs and attempted to adjust to the ways of Japanese society. Consequently, those who became interested in Protestant Christianity were initially attracted to Western civilisation by its power and wealth. Christianity, as presented by the missionaries of the nineteenth century, was the religion of the wealthy Western countries and the religion of the sophisticated and educated. This understanding of Christianity is in striking contrast to the Catholicism spread by the Jesuits among the poor and the common people in the society.⁶³

The missionaries can be categorised into three groups in terms of their understanding of Christianity.⁶⁴ One group was the Evangelical Christians who were influenced by Methodism and the Great Awakening in the United States. They emphasised the joy of salvation and subjective aspect of faith, and challenged Deism by stressing the importance of a pious lifestyle. The second group was the theological liberals. The most prominent mission organisation was the German mission, *Der Allgemeine Evangelische-Protestantische Missionsverein*, whose background was the *Altliberalismus* of the Tübingen school, which started its activities in 1888. Another group of theological liberals was the Americans Unitarian Association. Even non-Christian intellectuals welcomed Unitarians.⁶⁵ In Japan, this type of liberal theology was called the “New Theology.” The last group was a group called fundamentalists or revivalists.⁶⁶ Geographically, Yokohama, Kumamoto, and Sapporo were the three areas where the Protestant missions were successful. Missionaries founded schools and many future Christian leaders were educated at and graduated from these schools.⁶⁷

63 The anti-Christian policy of the old government was especially pervasive in rural areas. One of the characteristics of nineteenth century Protestantism in Japan was that conversions were almost always of individuals, rather than groups. In small villages, the bonds of the people were so strong that conversion of an individual was difficult. Gono, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 270; Sawa, *Nihon Kidisuto Kyōshi*, p. 80.

64 *Ibid.*, pp. 18–24.

65 Ebisawa & Ouchi, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, pp. 317–9.

66 Their denominational backgrounds varied from low church in Britain to ones who were inspired by Dwight L. Moody in the United States. Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 24.

67 There were prominent missionaries in each area: Leroy L. Janes (1838–1909, Kumamoto), William S. Clark (1826–1886, Sapporo), James C. Hepburn, a medical doctor and educator (1815–1911, Yokohama), James H. Ballagh (1832–1920, Yokohama), Samuel R. Brown (1810–1880, Yokohama). As will be mentioned later, Uemura Masahisa was from Yokohama, Ebina Danjo, from Kumamoro, and Uchimura Kanzo and Nitobe Inazo, from Sapporo.

The Japanese government took the colonial discourse to its heart. Modern Europe, enjoying scientific, medical, and industrial development, held a sense that the present is superior to any time in the past. Ashcroft et al. pointed out how this sense of superiority was projected into the relationship between the European powers and the rest, “the other”.

“As European power expanded, this sense of the superiority of the present over the past became translated into a sense of superiority over those pre-modern societies and cultures that were ‘locked’ in the past – primitive and uncivilised peoples whose subjugation and ‘introduction’ into modernity became the right and obligation of European powers.”⁶⁸

One of the pressing tasks of the new government was to reform Japan so it could rise up to a standard equal to the Western countries. It understood that to amend the unequal treaties, it was important to establish a modern country that was acknowledged as such by other Western nations.⁶⁹

The Meiji Restoration in a narrow sense was the shifting of the authority from Tokugawa *Bakufu* to a new group of leaders who held up the emperor as their political leader, though in fact, the emperor’s function was no more than symbolic. To replace the declining Shogunate, a new framework was needed to wield political authority. Japanese tradition and the recent political climate suggested that the only alternative that could become a powerful enough political symbol was the emperor. The emperor was originally the head of one of the strongest and oldest noble families in Japan. During the feudal period, the position of emperor existed, but held little effective power. In the new system, however, the emperor replaced the top of the feudal hierarchy. The leaders of the Restoration brought the boy emperor Matsuhito, who was 15, from Kyoto to Edo, where the Shogun had resided for 250 years. The city was renamed “Tokyo”, meaning ‘the palace of the east’, because of the position of Tokyo relative to Kyoto. This shift of authority from Shogun to the

68 Ashcroft, Griffins & Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, p. 131.

69 To this end, the government acquiesced in or even encouraged the growth of Christianity in 1880s. Sawa, *Nihon Kidisuto Kyōshi*, p. 81; Ebisawa & Ouchi, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, pp. 162–6.

emperor, symbolised by the act of bringing the emperor to Japan's political centre, is the hallmark of the Meiji Restoration. It was not that the *Bakufu* had not begun any administrative reform after the treaty; in fact, the *Bakufu* was making changes on the advice of a French Minister. The civil war, or coup, and the subsequent establishment of the new government had more to do with a power struggle among the warrior class than any lack of reforms on the *Bakufu*'s part.⁷⁰

In a broader sense, the Meiji Restoration was a long evolutionary process of making Japan a "modern state", which was defined in European terms as a centralised political system under which popular participation is structured through the parliamentary institutions of a constitutional order. This notion of a modern state is a thoroughly Western idea in its origin, history, and nature.⁷¹ Japan eagerly imported Western ideas and technologies: the military technologies, as well as philosophy, political theories, social structure, clothes, hairstyles, and so forth. For example, 48 people from the new government leaders sailed from Yokohama to America, Britain, and other Western countries for 18 months to learn Western politics and economics. At the end of the journey, they concluded that Japan was only thirty to forty years behind those countries, where there had been no railways or modern weapons in the beginning of the century.⁷² Japan thus needed many substantial changes to become like a western country: namely, creation of a central government, training of bureaucrats to run the state, institution of a conscript army and navy, organisation of a legal system, fostering of a capitalist economy, abolition of feudal privilege and the class system, consolidation of a system of education, and finally, import of European customs.⁷³

A nationwide effort was made to import Western civilisation to make Japan the equal of a Western power. Okubo Takeki describes the *zeitgeist*: "It is not 'culture' if it is not Western."⁷⁴ Souseki Natsume (1867–1916), a novelist and thinker, observed with dismay the modernisation and westernisation of Japan. He did not oppose the idea of modernisation per se, but lamented the fact that the process was

⁷⁰ Jansen, *The Cambridge of History of Japan*, p. 352.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 432.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 26.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 352.

⁷⁴ Okubo, *Nihon Bunkaron no Keifu*, p. 3.

too hasty as a result of being provoked by an outside force rather than being a spontaneous development from within.⁷⁵ The government hired scholars and engineers from the West to help in building a society modelled after the West. The anthropologist Harumi Befu described this process as “auto-Orientalism” or “do-it-to-yourself Orientalism,” and calls it a “psychologically masochistic process.”⁷⁶ What they did was, in fact, self-colonisation: that is, Japan took the colonial discourse and fully applied it to itself. This process can also be described in postcolonial terms as “appropriation” of the imperial culture by Japan to avoid direct political control by the West.⁷⁷ It was perceived to be the only way for Japan to survive as an independent country.

This “turning to the West” had two dimensions. One is to import modern ideas and technologies, and the other was to adapt and even emphasise Japanese indigenous or traditional cultural elements. To accelerate the process of the former and to make sure of the latter, the emperor was again utilised. Namely, all the national effort to become equal to the West was done in the name of the emperor, who was the embodiment of Japan itself with all its history and tradition. The reason for this is obvious. If the government were only imitating the West, it would inevitably experience a backlash from the people. Any new political institutions needed to incorporate a traditional Japanese element. The government put forward new policies to unify the nation based on this “emperor system,” in which the emperor is the ultimate authority of all – he is the sovereign, and the benevolent and respected father of all. This political system was ideologically supported by the national Shinto religion, which especially emphasises the legitimacy of the imperial lineage and exalts the emperor as the source of Japanese value, custom, and identity. This “national” symbol helped the former feudal country to be unified rapidly, and also to establish a sense of “national identity”, which is a crucial aspect of a “modern nation-state”.⁷⁸ In 1880s, also as a reaction to rapid Westernisation, conservatism took shape.

The national Shinto religion provided a myth to support this system and the idea of the superiority of the Japanese race. Shinto was originally an animistic reli-

⁷⁵ Aoki, *Nihon Bunkaron no Hen'yo*, p. 9.

⁷⁶ Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity*, p. 127.

⁷⁷ Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, pp. 15–7.

⁷⁸ For a discussion of this point in post-colonial nations, see Collier, *Wars Guns & Votes*, pp. 66–73.

gion that was indigenous to Japan. The religion evolved around a myth (whose text was collected and edited in 712 CE), that explains the birth of Japan as a creation of the gods. The highest god is the sun goddess, Amaterasu Omikami, from whom the emperors were descended (The first legendary emperor was a grandchild of Amaterasu.). However, the government was also aware that the nationalisation of Shinto did not sit well with the idea of separation of religion and state that was considered as one of the marks of a modern nation by the West. Thus the government adopted the policy of using State Shinto as the ideology without officially legislating it.⁷⁹ The government argued that national Shinto was not a religion such as Buddhism or Christianity.⁸⁰ This rhetoric eventually led to special treatment for national Shinto as the government tried to regulate the other religions.

SOCIAL BACKGROUND OF THE JAPANESE CHRISTIANS IN THE 19TH CENTURY

Protestant Christianity from the United States was also considered a part of Western civilisation. While many Japanese were still indifferent or even hostile to Christianity, there were some who accepted it.⁸¹ Many of those who accepted Christianity came from the warrior class of the feudal society, especially the ones who later became influential leaders in the Japanese Church.

Those new Christians were in privileged places in the social hierarchy, yet because their feudal clans supported the Shogunate, they could not obtain prominent positions in the new government.⁸² However, with the surge of patriotism in Japanese society based on the emperor system, even when they lost an opportunity to be involved with ongoing politics as politicians, they maintained the sense that it was they who would contribute to the advance of the nation. Accordingly, they were very much interested in gaining Western knowledge and accepting the values and philosophies of Western civilisation. They learnt from missionaries who were invited to public schools or who opened private schools.⁸³ Through learning

⁷⁹ Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 38.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 133.

⁸¹ Ebisawa & Ouchi, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, pp. 171–5.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 168.

⁸³ For example, Uchimura Kanzo (1861–1930) learnt in the Sapporo Agricultural School, Ebina Danjo (1856–1937) in Kumamoto Western School taught by Leroy L. Janes, and Uemura Masahisa

English and other subjects, they came to know the missionaries, and many became Christians through their personal interactions with them.⁸⁴

Also, those Japanese Christians were well educated in Confucianism, which taught them to live according to chivalry — the Bushido, the unwritten code of moral principles.⁸⁵ In a sense, the loyalty and filial piety of Confucianism became a foundation when they accepted Christianity. Many of them were impressed with the high sense of morality of the missionaries, who had Puritanism as their background.⁸⁶

Coming from this background, many Japanese Christian leaders in the Protestant Church initially came to know Christianity as a part of the Western knowledge that would make it possible for them to overcome their present difficulties and give them better prospects for the future. Christianity was presented to them as the foundation of the modern nations. To become a powerful and wealthy nation like the Western countries, the new Japanese Christians concluded, Japan needed to import the foundation of Western civilisation as well as its technology and customs. They chose Christianity because their sense of nationalism and the Japanese moral code fitted with the kind of Christianity that was presented to them.⁸⁷ For them,

(1858–1925) taught by James H. Ballagh, a missionary from the Dutch Reformed Church in America.

⁸⁴ Ebisawa & Ouchi, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, pp. 167–8.

⁸⁵ Nitobe Inazo (1862–1933), who was a Christian and a classmate of Uchimura Kanzo in Sapporo Agricultural School in Hokkaido found by William S. Clark, wrote a book on this Japanese moral principle. The book is entitled *Bushido: The Soul of Japan*, was written originally in English and published in 1905. Because of the attention given to Japan in the world after Japan's victory in the First Sino-Japanese War, the book became a bestseller. Nitobe explains *Bushido* as "the code of moral principle which the knights were required or instructed to observe." The fighting knights (Bushido) were a privileged class in feudal Japan. With privilege, they soon realised, came great responsibilities. This sense of being one of the elite led the warriors to hold a common standard to carry out their responsibilities and to act honourably towards each other. The sources of Bushido, according to Nitobe, are Buddhism, Shintoism, and the teachings of Confucius and Mencius (one of the prominent interpreters of Confucianism). Nitobe, *Bushido: The Soul of Japan*.

⁸⁶ Gono, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 268. Gono suggests that one of the reasons why Christianity did not succeed in modern Japan was precisely because of its rigid sense of morality. In one denomination (Japan Church of Christ), for example, from 1891 to 1899, 7,770 were baptised. However, the number of the people who were excommunicated was 3,795, which, according to Gono, indicates a rigid moral standard. *Ibid.*, p. 278. Also, based on the teachings of Confucianism, women were not encouraged to attend meetings. Sawa, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 80.

⁸⁷ Akio Dohi rightly points out that the wealth of the Western countries was not only the result of Christianity as a cultural base, but the result of slavery, colonialism, or exploitation of the lower classes, which was overlooked by the Japanese Christians. Dohi, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 57.

Christianity was one of the philosophies of the elite and the ruling class. The logic behind Protestant Christianity from the United States was clear-cut eurocentrism, which assumed the superiority of the Western civilisation and personal character, of which Christianity was the foundation. This rhetoric seemed to work well, both in the late 19th century and in the middle of the 20th century when Japan was defeated in the Second World War: outside these periods, however, the elite either considered themselves already equal to the West or disillusioned with it.

*Emergence of the
Japanese
Protestant
Theologians*

EMERGENCE OF THE JAPANESE PROTESTANT THEOLOGIANs

Although Catholic missionaries re-opened their theological schools in 1870, “unlike the newly arrived Protestant missionaries from America, French Catholic missionaries could not attract young people, especially students and intellectuals.”⁸⁸ Among the first generation of Protestant theologians were three noteworthy Japanese Christian leaders: Ebina Danjo (1856–1937), Uemura Masahisa (1858–1925), and Uchimura Kanzo (1861–1930). We will study Ebina and Uchimura in greater depth in the next chapter.

Ebina Danjo

Ebina Danjo was born in Northern Kyushu as a son of a warrior, and as such was educated in Confucianism. When his feudal clan was abolished under the new government, he began to seek a new lord to serve.⁸⁹ He was enrolled to Kumamoto Western School, a school originally founded by Kumamoto Clan in 1871.⁹⁰ Under the influence of Leroy L. Janes, who was invited to teach there, Ebina became a Christian.⁹¹ In 1877, however, the Kumamoto Western School was closed down,

88 Furuya, *A History of Japanese Theology*, p. 7; Ebisawa & Ouchi, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, pp. 123–5.

89 Furuya, *A History of Japanese Theology*, p. 13.

90 Sawa, *Nihon Kidisuto Kyōshi*, p. 78.

91 In Ebina’s theology, his two major religious experiences play an important role. First was when Janes taught Ebina that prayer is a duty of creatures to the creator. Then, he realised that the relationship between God and a human was just like the relationship between the lord and his vassal. Later, he came to another realisation from his struggle to be obedient to God. He desired to serve God, but realised that he always leaned towards fame. In this struggle, Ebina found a refuge in the fact that God is his father and he was God’s son. In this sense, Ebina recounted, his ego was crucified with Christ and the sinful self died where he himself became one with Christ. Dohi, *Nihon*

and Ebina went to Doshisha University. They contributed to the foundation of the Congregational Church in Japan [日本組合基督教会].⁹²

Ebina came to the conclusion that the 'heaven' of Confucianism and the God of Christianity were identical.⁹³ Just as Confucianism provided a moral structure for the Japanese to be loyal to their nation, for Ebina, Christianity provided the sense of justice and fairness for being a faithful citizen of Japan. Ebina explained his relationship to God by using the idea of a "father-son relationship" in Confucianism. The relationship of father and son is one of the five essential relationships in Confucianism, and based on this idea, Ebina understood Christianity analogous to Confucianism. For Ebina, the Christian's relationship to God as *Fushi Ushin*, father and son relationship, was the most essential: "Man can overcome all his desires if he becomes united with God."⁹⁴ The father-son relation is at the centre of his Christology.⁹⁵ In Confucianism, a son is to be obedient to his father who is his higher authority. Accordingly, for Ebina, Christ is not God, but a human who lived with strong religious consciousness. Christ is only divine in the sense that every person is divine.⁹⁶ Later, Ebina attempted to bring Christianity into line with Shintoism. He believed that "if Shintoism were purified, it would become Christianity."⁹⁷ Ebina's approach to Christianity was one of harmonisation, especially with Confucianism.⁹⁸ He was also one of the first theologians who adopted German higher biblical criticisms and liberal theology.

Ebina's work may be considered as an example of vernacular hermeneutics as he tried to understand Christianity from his local resources, and to translate it into

Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi, pp. 173–4.

92 Sawa, *Nihon Kidisuto Kyōshi*, p. 78. A literal translation of the name of the Congregational Church in Japan is "Japan Associations of Christ Church." The reason why "Congregational" was avoided was to emphasise the Church's independence from the Congregational mission in the United States. Ebisawa & Ouchi, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 253.

93 Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 173.

94 Furuya, *A History of Japanese Theology*, p. 14.

95 Ebina, *Kirisutokyou no Hongi*, p. 95. Regarding filial piety, see Kim, 'The Fulfillment of Filial Piety: The Development of Korean Protestantism and the Shape of a Theology of Filial Piety'.

96 The sense that one is a child of God, according to Ebina, is the basic and universal religious conscience of human beings. Thus, God is immanent in the conscience of individuals. Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 174.

97 Furuya, *A History of Japanese Theology*, p. 14.

98 Ebina considered Christianity superior to Confucianism where Christians are able to call God as the Father. He argued that the truth of Christianity is inherent in Confucianism.

a form that would be accessible to other Japanese people. However, his nativist approach was criticised by those who accepted and tried to maintain Protestantism as it was presented by the West. One of the critics of this type of theology was Uemura Masahisa.

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Uemura Masahisa

Uemura's importance as a theologian lies in his strong influence on later generations. Uemura was born a direct feudal vassal of the Tokugawa Shogunate. Later he entered the private school founded by missionaries from the Dutch Reformed Church in America.⁹⁹ After graduating from the school, he became a pastor and educator.¹⁰⁰ When liberal theology was introduced to Japan, Uemura criticised theologians such as Ebina who adopted it earnestly.¹⁰¹ Uemura did adopt the historical criticism of German theology of the time, yet maintained his view of Scripture as the life of Christianity throughout history.¹⁰² Uemura criticised liberal theology as an attempt to know the truth of spirit and soul solely by reason without any sense of piety. Uemura's argument against Ebina was that Ebina did not understand the concept of sin and sinfulness, and thus did not understand the significance of redemption. Ebina argued against Uemura, saying that he did understand the concept of sin: in fact, that is what led him to his religious experience. He understood sin as egoism, which needs to be transformed into the theo-centric self.¹⁰³

Uemura's philosophy of nation is worth mentioning. He understood that a nation exists to secure individual freedom, by which each person fulfils their human nature by contributing to the progress of the world. If each person is improved and obtains a sense of justice, the nation will be reformed. In that sense, he argued, Christianity has much to offer to the country.¹⁰⁴ However, Uemura's theology does not

99 Furuya, *A History of Japanese Theology*, p. 16.

100 Uemura became a leading theologian of the Church of Christ in Japan [日本基督教会], which used to be called Japan Christ Union Church [日本基督一致教会], and which was founded by American Presbyterian mission, Reformed mission, and Scotland Presbyterian mission in 1877.

101 The debate between Ebina and Uemura is now known as the Uemura–Ebina controversy. Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, pp. 181–3.

102 Furuya, *A History of Japanese Theology*, p. 14.

103 Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 183.

104 Sugirtharajah, *Asian Biblical Hermeneutics and Postcolonialism*, p. 185.

suppose the possibility of governmental infringement on a person's freedom. The concept of "freedom" in a political context is itself an idea imported from the western nations where this type of freedom was already established. In the same way as in his theology, Uemura continued to join in the theological discourse of the West. Because of his westernised theological position, however, Uemura was able to advocate for women in the Church and for their concerns in public life, which was not accepted in Japan of his time.¹⁰⁵

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Uchimura Kanzo

Uchimura Kanzo, one of the most well-known Japanese theologians, is unique in his theological standing because of his ecclesiology. Like the theologians already discussed, he was the son of a warrior. He is known by his love for two J's: Jesus and Japan.¹⁰⁶ He believed the love of Jesus cleanses the love of Japan, and the love of Japan make the love of Jesus clear. In 1884, he went to the United States and attended Amherst College and Hartford Theological Seminary.

Uchimura is the founder of the Non-Church. He held a meeting every Sunday in his house, where he gave lectures. The meeting was reminiscent of the Pietistic movements in Germany or northern Europe.¹⁰⁷ The difference is perhaps that "Non-Church" was determined neither to belong to nor to create an established church denomination.¹⁰⁸ His ecclesiology is closely linked to his hermeneutics of Scripture. For Uchimura, the Bible was the infallible word of God. One should interpret the Bible with one's knowledge about history, humanity, and science to be consistent, yet one should not need the doctrines of the Church or teachings to interpret the Bible. Uchimura believed that the more one focuses on forms and organisations, the more one tends to ignore the spiritual life. There should be "no" institution,

¹⁰⁵ England et al., *Asian Christian Theologies: A Research Guide to Authors, Movements, Sources*, p. 322.

¹⁰⁶ Uchimura literally used this phrase, which is engraved in his tombstone. Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 114.

¹⁰⁷ Very similar phenomena could be seen for example in Swedish Lutheran Church. See Olsson, *By One Spirit*.

¹⁰⁸ Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, pp. 118–9. Uchimura and his colleagues, who were baptised by a Methodist missionary, nurtured a strong sense of independence when their numbers grew. Eventually they established an independent church in Sapporo, and cut ties with the Methodist denomination. *Ibid.*, pp. 66, 67.

thus, his meetings were called, “Non-Church.”¹⁰⁹

Uchimura argued that Japanese people have a strong sense of independence and their own rich tradition. From his personal experiences of living in the United States, he also concluded that Christianity in the West had deviated from the truth of the gospel. Uchimura believed that Western Christianity never agrees with the Japanese temperament, and that the Japanese Church should be independent of any foreign missions or their ways.¹¹⁰

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Although the influence of Ebina and Uchimura and their unique contributions to Japanese church history are immense, it was Uemura who nurtured emerging theologians. He founded a seminary, where he encouraged young scholars to study British or German theology rather than American theology. As observed above, Uemura was the most westernised of the three, and therefore, it is not surprising that his followers’ theological works adopted the European issues and methodologies and were less concerned with the Japanese context.

All three first-generation theologians were from the warrior class and maintained a strong sense of patriotism. Today, efforts to harmonise Christianity with traditional thought such as Confucianism is often criticised, especially among evangelical churches in Japan. There are two main reasons. First, the effort of synchronisation is perceived as making an “impure” version of Christianity. Second, because of the history of Japan, it appears as though some theologians were in agreement with the imperial policy of Japan because they tried to contextualise Christianity in Japan by affirming some aspects of Japanese tradition. The first argument inevitably leads to the conclusion that there should be as little change in theological methodology and dialogue as possible after Christianity was transmitted by the missionaries, because their version is “purer”. All the historical context during the development of the Protestant Christianity in the West is either ignored or entirely affirmed by the all-embracing concept of “God’s providence”. In this argument, therefore, there is no ground to critique the eurocentrism embedded in the Christian theology of the West, but simply to succumb to it. Thus, theologians and adherents of the religion remain “the elite” of the society, who have access to education such as obtaining

¹⁰⁹ Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 188.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 189.

language skills (e.g., English or German) and the resources to connect to the result of research done in the West. The second argument is *post hoc ergo propter hoc*, the fallacy of false cause. Those who supported or acquiesced in Japanese imperialism did so because their theology was a consequence of their social positionality. When theologians were distant from the government and thus had limited access to power, they became critical of the government's policy without entirely embracing theological eurocentrism. Examples are Uchimura Kanzo and his disciple Yanaihara Tadao, who will be discussed later in this thesis.

THE CONSTITUTION, THE EMPEROR SYSTEM, AND CHRISTIANITY

In the late 1880s, the unequal treaties had not yet been revised although the Japanese government had been making efforts to be recognised as an equal of the West. One task the government needed to accomplish was establishing a national constitution. In 1883, Ito Hirobumi, later Japan's first Prime Minister and the chief composer of the constitution, was assigned to go to Europe to study various national constitutions. The existing political leaders disliked the British style of government, in which power would depend on the rivalry of political parties, and instead preferred the Prussian constitution. Ito and his delegates visited the German jurist Rudolf von Gneist in Berlin, but Gneist's advice was not very encouraging. He essentially told Ito that a nation that is not culturally advanced would not be able to create a meaningful constitution. In spite of this humiliating experience, the drafting of the constitution was started in 1885 by a team composed of Ito, three other Japanese, and two German legal advisers. The constitution needed to be of a fairly western style, yet maintain traditional Japanese sentiment. Ito observed that in Europe, history and religion form the backbone of constitutionalism. Without some equivalent foundation, he thought, Japanese constitutionalism would not only fail, but society would be disturbed by the opposing factions. Since there was no religion strong enough to provide this foundation in Japan, Ito concluded that only the imperial institution supported by Shinto ideology could serve.¹¹¹ Ito wrote, "All the different legislative as well as executive powers of State, by means of which he reigns over

¹¹¹ Ito, 'Constitution...', p. 663.

the country and governs the people, are united in this most exalted personage, who thus holds in his hands, as it were, all the ramifying threads of the political life of the country.”¹¹²

The Meiji government promulgated a new constitution in February 1889. In this constitution, the emperor was stated to be “sacred and inviolable” (Chapter 1, Article 3), and “The Empire of Japan shall be reigned over and governed by a line of Emperors unbroken for ages eternal” (Article 1).¹¹³ The emperor exercises “the legislative power with the consent of the Imperial Diet” (Article 5), yet “has the supreme command of the Army and Navy” (Article 11).¹¹⁴ The constitution proclaims the separation of legal, administrative, and judicial powers, yet each was granted its authority by the emperor.¹¹⁵ The imperial institution, however, was not based on the emperor’s responsibility to the government or people, but on his “eternal lineage,” which was purposefully ambiguous and mystical. Despite all the power thus ascribed to the emperor, there was no constitutional procedure through which the emperor could influence political decisions: however, he could do so through informal contact with politicians. The cabinet was not responsible to the Diet, and free from its intervention. This was also the case in terms of finance, where if the annual budget proposal were rejected, the previous year’s budget would apply.

Japanese Christians’ primary interest was whether the new constitution would support the freedom of religion. Christians joyfully accepted, therefore, Article 28 of Chapter 2, “Japanese subjects shall, within limits not prejudicial to peace and order, and not antagonistic to their duties as subjects, enjoy freedom of religious belief.” However, this freedom of religion was not based on an understanding of human rights. This freedom was a freedom granted by the emperor.¹¹⁶ Moreover, “within limits not prejudicial to peace and order, and not antagonistic to their duties as subjects” allowed a range of interpretations. Two years before the promulgation

¹¹² Ito, ‘Constitution...’, p. 664.

¹¹³ An English translation of the Meiji Constitution is available through Hanover Historical Texts Project from <http://history.hanover.edu/texts/1889con.html>

¹¹⁴ The military did not require the consent of the Diet, which eventually led the military to act independently.

¹¹⁵ The Diet was a support apparatus for the emperor (Chapter 1 Article 5; Chapter 3 Article 49), while the respective Ministers of State gave advice to the emperor (Chapter 5 Article 55).

¹¹⁶ As a result, some Christian leaders understood freedom of religion to be a result of the emperor’s mercy. Dohi cites Masahisa Uemura. Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 112.

of the constitution, the government had passed the Peace Preservation Law (1887), through which the police were given the power to remove from the capital any person suspected of planning a disturbance.

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UCHIMURA KANZO'S LESE-MAJESTY INCIDENT

After adopting many ideas and institutions of western origin, the Meiji government promoted strong conservatism to secure its power and the social order. The Imperial Rescript on Education [*Kyoiku-chokugo*, 教育勅語] was a product of this conservatism and the creation of a rigid national orthodoxy. The Imperial Rescript on Education was an ordinance issued in the name of the Meiji Emperor in 1890. "The final document, issued shortly before the opening of the Diet (parliament) on October 30, 1890, was the product of drafts by many in the government."¹¹⁷ This ordinance concerned the moral conduct of Japanese people based on Confucianism, which had been a tradition influential in Japan alongside Buddhism. The ordinance was distributed to all the schools in Japan. By the time of Showa Emperor, however, the Rescript was considered not just a moral exaltation, but sacred along with the picture of the emperor [*Go-Shin-ei*, 御真影].

The incident that made clear the tension between the government's policy and Christian religion happened soon after the promulgation of the constitution and the Rescript on Education. In 1891, Uchimura Kanzo, who was teaching at one of the Imperial High Schools, did not bow deeply enough to the Imperial Rescript of Education during the ceremony for its dedication at the First High School of Tokyo. Both teachers and students were expected to bow to show their respect to the Rescript that carried the emperor's sacred signature. Uchimura, on the other hand, was not sure if a bow is a gesture to show respect to the emperor or a religious action of venerating the deified emperor.¹¹⁸ Because he was uncertain, he slightly bowed, which was yet severely criticised by his colleagues, students, and the public. Uchimura was told by the school principal that the bow is not a religious act but an expression of respect, and if he would not bow, the situation would become out of control.

¹¹⁷ Jansen, *The Cambridge of History of Japan*, p. 684.

¹¹⁸ In his letter to David Bell in March 6, 1891. See Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 113.

Hearing what the principal said, Uchimura “with a clear conscience,” agreed to bow to the Rescript.¹¹⁹

However, the damage had been done. The criticism was so strong that Uchimura became physically ill with pneumonia, and in the same year, his wife died from hardships she went through both from criticisms from the society and taking care of Uchimura in his sickbed.¹²⁰ He also lost his position in the high school. Uchimura was a very patriotic man, and being accused of committing an act of treason was devastating to him.¹²¹

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Christian leaders' opinion to this incident varied. Some stated that the bow to emperor's picture or to the ancestors was not a religious act but non-religious ritual, thus it should not conflict with Christian faith. Uemura Masahisa did not affirm that the bow to the picture of emperor or to the ordinance was idolatry. However, he also stated that Christians do not even worship the image of Christ, let alone a written document such as the imperial ordinance. To venerate such a thing is childish and confuses the meaning of respect for the emperor. Therefore, this type of wrong concept of respecting the emperor should be criticised by the civilised educators and the people of Japan.¹²²

Uchimura's Imperial Rescript incident provoked criticism from the outside of the Church. Inoue Tetsujiro (1855–1944) was a Confucian philosopher whose interpretation of the Imperial Rescript on Education became considered normative. He publicly criticised Christianity, and a huge controversy arose between Inoue and the Christians. Inoue argued that Christianity teaches equality, which disregards the loyalty and filial piety of Confucianism. Also, the teaching of love for all conflicts with Japanese idea of loyalty to the emperor and love of the country. Thus, Christianity is anti-patriotic, which is against what the Imperial Rescript promotes.¹²³

Against Inoue's arguments, there were basically four different responses from Christians:¹²⁴

¹¹⁹ Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 113. In the same letter.

¹²⁰ Ebisawa & Ouchi, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 380. Uchimura remarried the following year to Okada Sizuko.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 380.

¹²² Uemura, 'Hukeizai to Kirisuto Kyo'; Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 115; Ebisawa & Ouchi, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 285.

¹²³ Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 116.

¹²⁴ The government prohibited the sale of any articles or writings against Inoue by Christians. Gonoï,

1. Christianity is not an anti-patriotic religion. In fact, Christianity can support the loyalty to the emperor and love for the country. If there is any conflict, Christianity should be altered to be able to harmonise with Japanese values.¹²⁵
2. Christianity does not conflict with the Japanese values, but fulfils them: Christian values make the true Japanese morality possible. This was the position of Uchimura Kanzo or Uemura Masahisa.¹²⁶
3. Hajime Onishi (1864–1900), who was a Kantian scholar, argued against Inoue that the foundation of morality is the conscience of individuals. The Rescript is addressed to the Japanese people, yet it should not be the universal norm of ethics. Loyalty and filial piety cannot be considered as the highest moral principle among others. To think about religions or ethics, free discussion is crucial, and academic freedom is indispensable.¹²⁷
4. Kinoshita Naoe (1869–1937), who was a journalist and became Christian in 1893, accepted Inoue's argument: Christianity is indeed against nationalism and the government's education policy. The emperor system is opposed by the Christian view on humanity, especially the equality of human beings and the love for all.¹²⁸

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Among the four positions, the first was the most widely supported. When the First Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895) broke out, the churches publicly supported the national interests in the war by publication, public speaking, or visiting the soldiers on the battlefield. This reflects the Christians' wish to be accepted by the society and the government.¹²⁹ Uemura Masahisa stated that this war was between an uncivilised country (China) and a civilised country (Japan) in Asia. The foundation of civilisation and progress is Christianity, thus Christianity should not support the

Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi, p. 282.

¹²⁵ This argument was adopted by Tokio Yokoi (Congregational Church in Japan) or Yoichi Honda (Methodist Church in Japan). Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 116.

¹²⁶ Kashiwagi Gien, who was a teacher at a Christian school, argued that even though the emperor is supreme and sacred, he is not the authority on religion, morality, or education. Therefore, even the emperor cannot infringe on the people's freedom of thought, belief, and conscience. *Ibid.*, p. 117.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 119.

¹²⁹ Chi, 'Korea and the Japanese Church: 1892–1920', pp. 67–9; Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, pp. 124–5, 213.

uncivilised. In his article in *Fukuin Shinpo* published on 10th August 1894, he says, “It was Japan’s ‘special calling’ to pay ‘close attention to the reformation of neighbouring Korea,’ and in this context the Japanese Christians were ‘called to pioneer in developing the spirituality of the nations of the East’.” The Russo-Japanese war was, for Uemura, a war between a country of autocracy (Russia) and a country of constitutionalism (Japan). Uchimura Kanzo also supported the Sino-Japanese war, which he understood as the punishment of China for exploiting Korea. Later, however, he saw Japan’s policy against China and regretted his support for the war, and became a pacifist.¹³⁰

In 1899, the government passed a law prohibiting religious education or any other religious activities in schools.¹³¹

LIBERAL THEOLOGY, KARL BARTH, AND THE CHURCHES IN JAPAN

The growth of the Protestant churches was stagnant from the late 1880s to 1900. Besides the oppression from the government, another reason was the introduction of liberal theology. As was mentioned above, what was called “New Theology” by the Japanese was promoted by the German mission and American Unitarians. The German mission introduced the historical-critical method of biblical interpretation and questioned supernatural elements in the Christian doctrines such as the virgin birth or resurrection.¹³²

The New Theology confused the evangelical churches in their growth process. The Japanese churches had never experienced the Enlightenment or the Scientific Revolution themselves, and thus had a difficult time adopting the liberalism that had existed in Europe during those periods. However, those who adopted the New Theology believed that it would allow them to become independent of the missionaries and their teachings and would prepare Japanese Christians to be more sophisticated than the missionaries.¹³³ Because of the many arguments between the liberals and the evangelicals, many intellectuals and members of the educated class left the

¹³⁰ Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, pp. 124–5, 213.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 127–30.

¹³² Ebisawa & Ouchi, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, pp. 324–6.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 324.

Church. There were some Christians who simply thought that the New Theology revealed that what Christianity taught them was wrong, and left the Church.¹³⁴ The difference in understandings of the basic doctrines also caused divisions among the churches.¹³⁵

At the dawn of the 20th century, theological researches and teaching in Japan began to be undertaken by the Japanese themselves. However, theological methodologies and tendencies from this period are dominated by German scholarship. Most of the theologians were students of Tokyo Imperial University (now called Tokyo University). Hatano Seiichi, a Christian scholar from this time, wrote in his book, *The Origin of Christianity* (1908), "If you want to study the history of Christianity today, you have to study in the German academic world."¹³⁶ The introduction of German scholarship was explained by the new educational policy of the government, which decided around 1887 to follow the German model. The German language became the second language in the state universities, and those who graduated from the universities went to Germany to continue their higher education. Some went to the United States to study theology, yet they too had to learn German later to be active in academia in Japan.¹³⁷

When the dialectic theology and the theology of the Swiss theologian Karl Barth (1886–1968) were introduced around 1930, Japanese theologians accepted them with open arms.¹³⁸ The dialectic theology itself was imported in the latter half of the 1920s, and treatment of the theology of Karl Barth began to be published in the late 1930s.¹³⁹ One possible reason for the wide reception of Karl Barth in Japan is Barth's critique of the modern liberal theology. The young Japanese churches and theologians were deeply disturbed by the New Theology, and now found a good compromise in the theological ground of Barth. It is noteworthy that Barth had already been accepted widely among Japanese theologians before his opposition to the German mainline church and to Hitler's regime became clear. The Barth introduced to Japanese theologians in 1930s onward was not necessarily the Barth of the "Confess-

¹³⁴ Ebisawa & Ouchi, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 322.

¹³⁵ Gono, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, pp. 284–6.

¹³⁶ Hatano, *Kirisutokyo no Kigen*. The phrase is quoted in Furuya, *A History of Japanese Theology*, p. 44.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 46–7.

¹³⁸ Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, pp. 384–91.

¹³⁹ For example, Katsumi, *Karl Barth Kenkyū*.

ing Church”, who fought against Nazi policy. For the Japanese theologians of this time, reading Barth was about learning a theological method to adapt themselves into the theological discourse in Europe.¹⁴⁰ As was already mentioned, Christianity was received by high class or intellectual people, yet the assumption of society at large was always that Buddhism and Confucianism provide deeper thoughts than Christianity. When Japanese scholars encountered Barth, they found it intellectually fulfilling. Consequently, Barthian logic was often used to refute Christian socialists, and the influence of Barth did not guide the Japanese Church to follow the path of the Confessing Church in the face of the aggressive imperialism of their own country. Instead, the Japanese churches were unified under the control of the government and compelled to cooperate with the cause of the state. Theological justification of the invasion of other Asian countries was even attempted.¹⁴¹

JAPANESE THEOLOGIANS AND THE ANNEXATION OF KOREA

The Sino-Japanese war strengthened the centralised government and contributed to industrialisation. In 1894, the effort of westernisation finally persuaded Britain, and then the other countries, to implement the treaty revision. On the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War in 1904, the Christian Churches in Japan actively supported the war as an opportunity for them to show their loyalty to the country. There were a few Christians such as Uchimura Kanzo, Kashiwagi Gien, and some Christian socialists, opposed to the war.¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰ For the reception of Barth in India, Cf. Sugirtharajah, *Asian Biblical Hermeneutics and Postcolonialism*, p. 10.

¹⁴¹ Furuya, *A History of Japanese Theology*, pp. 56–8.

¹⁴² When capitalism developed rapidly in Japan and the proportion of manual workers increased, labour problems also became an issue. While mainline churches were indifferent to the problem, Christian socialists, many of whom were Unitarians, were interested in social issues and became actively involved. The socialist movement in Japan itself was largely influenced by the Christian Socialist movement of the United States. Katayama Sen, for example, studied theology in the United States, and engaged in a socialist movement after returning to Japan. In 1902, Katayama and others, many of whom were Christians, founded a social-democratic political party. Katayama later abandoned his religious faith. Gono, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, pp. 288–90; Sawa, *Nihon Kidisuto Kyōshi*, pp. 90–8. Uchimura, Uemura, and Ebina initially supported the Christian socialist movement, yet they defined their responsibility as evangelisation, not social movement. However, the working class was never the target of their evangelisation. Gien Kashiwagi, on the other hand, engaged in the socialist movement. He believed that Christianity and Socialism could coexist. Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 208. The Government tried to silence the socialists. Once the government started to suppress the movement, the churches purposely disassociated themselves

In 1910, Japan's occupation of Korea was completed with Japan-Korea Annexation Treaty.¹⁴³ The Congregational Church in Japan started missionary activities in Korea in 1910. The mission was mostly run by Watase Tunekichi (1867–1944). He believed that the Japanese people should be the spiritual leaders of the Koreans, and thus were obliged to educate them. The education needed to be done by the Church. Some Japanese government officials donated money to the “mission.” Kashiwagi Gien severely criticised Watase, saying that assisting an imperialist invasion is not evangelism at all. Kashiwagi also pointed out, “Did Jesus evangelise Jews, sponsored by Romans?”¹⁴⁴

Watase's missionary movement was also criticised by Christians from outside of the Congregational Church. Uemura Masahisa and the Church of Christ in Japan were critical about the mission. Sato Shigehiko (1887–1935), a pastor of the Church of Christ and Uemura's contemporary accused the mission's secretary Murakami Todayoshi of spying for the Japanese government. Sato criticised Murakami's organisation, saying that the secretary Murakami “ferreted out the headquarters of the Korean independence cabal and brought various documents with him.” Sato says that such a thing occurred because the Japanese missionaries loved neither the Koreans nor their country. He writes, “I myself had many contacts with the Korean people, who are the objects of those evangelistic programs, and they suspect that the Congregational evangelists unconsciously look down on Koreans and lack any human feeling toward them — just the attitude one expects of government officials.”¹⁴⁵

In 1912, Buddhist, Shinto, and Christian leaders were invited by a government minister to a dinner to discuss Japan's morality and its future. The Christian leaders were proud of the fact that they were acknowledged as a religious group that was equal to Buddhism and Shintoism, and publicly announced that the Christian churches were loyal to the emperor. This acknowledgement by the government,

from the socialist movement. Under the influence of Barth, the Japanese theologians condemned the socialist movement as liberal humanitarianism, and focused simply on the word of God, which for them meant the Scripture. Sawa, *Nihon Kidisuto Kyōshi*, p. 96.

¹⁴³ Uchimura Kanzo did not oppose military service: rather, encouraged those who were conscripted to go to war and die to show how in vain a war could be. Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, pp. 393–8.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 312.

¹⁴⁵ Chi, ‘Korea and the Japanese Church: 1892–1920’, p. 75.

however, was presented as the acknowledgement by the emperor and an act based on his mercy.¹⁴⁶ In 1925, the Peace Preservation Law was issued throughout the Japanese Empire.¹⁴⁷ This law was a legal embodiment of the power of the government to suppress anyone who conspired or rebelled against the government and the social structure of which the emperor was the centre. Under this law, socialists and communists were imprisoned and punished. In the same year, the Ministry of Education and the army agreed to assign each school a military officer in order to discipline students and cultivate the “corporate spirit.”¹⁴⁸

For Korea, the peril of colonialism did not come from the West, but from its neighbour Japan, so the sense of association between Christianity and the colonial power is weak.¹⁴⁹ Patriotism and Christianity were not seen as alternatives for Koreans whereas in Japan Christianity was often seen as the enemy of patriotism, and thus an opponent of the state. Mark Mullins makes a strong case for this being a fundamental reason for the comparative success of Christianity in Korea. He argues that the acceptance of a foreign religion depends on the relationship between the group that propagates and the group that receives the religion. For Japan, Christianity came from “the source of Japan’s greatest enemy” while Koreans perceived Christianity as a source for resistance against Japanese imperialism.¹⁵⁰

After eliminating Chinese and Russian influence in the peninsula, Japan colonised Korea with consent of the United States and the United Kingdom. Japanese theologians expressed their views on the annexation in their theological journals and bulletins. Ebina had supported annexation even before the Russo-Japanese War. Ebina understood the annexation as the liberation of Koreans from Russia and China, and a great opportunity for them to join Japan. To become Japanese would be an evolutionary step for Koreans, and Christianity should support the unification of Japan and Korea. From this perspective, Ebina criticised Korean people’s desire for independence as “enmity” or “political ambition.”¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁶ The leaders from Shinto did not represent *state* Shinto, which would not have been considered as a religious group according to the government. Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, pp. 135–6.

¹⁴⁷ Japan occupied Taiwan as a result of the First Sino-Japanese War, and Sakhalin after the Russo-Japanese War.

¹⁴⁸ Gono, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 295.

¹⁴⁹ Adams, ‘Church Growth in Korea’.

¹⁵⁰ Mullins, ‘Christianity Transplanted: Toward a Sociology of Success and Failure’, pp. 72–3.

¹⁵¹ Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 304.

Uemura first understood this annexation as the opportunity given to Japan by God. He initially thought the annexation was Japan's task as an advanced nation, and that it simply acted as a parent to Korea.¹⁵² However, his "just war theory" changed over the years of Japan's colonisation of Korea. Uemura himself visited Korea for the purpose of evangelism around the time of annexation, though the evangelism to Korean people by Japanese Christians bore little fruit. On his trip, Uemura made contact with the Korean churches.¹⁵³ On 1st September 1910, Uemura expressed his anxiety in the essay, "Korea as part of Great Japan." He asked a question, "Will Japanese power mean freedom for or discrimination against the weak?" While Uemura never argued against Japan's social and political system, he nonetheless expressed some concern about how the Korean churches would be treated after annexation.¹⁵⁴ Uemura came to admire Korean Christians' faith and spirit of independence.¹⁵⁵

Uchimura Kanzo is known as one of the very few Christians who expressed grief over the annexation while showing admiration to the churches in Korea for their strong faith.¹⁵⁶ Acknowledging the fact that the 1907 revival of Christianity in Korea was partially because of Japan's invasion, Uchimura wrote in his essay, "The Fortunate Korea" (Oct. 1907), that Korea had lost its political freedom and independence, yet gained spiritual freedom and independence. God granted Korea not military power but the Holy Spirit, and he expected Korea to be a leading nation to proclaim the gospel of Christ.¹⁵⁷

MARCH FIRST INDEPENDENCE MOVEMENT

It was plain that the annexation was unacceptable to the Korean people. Observing the political climate, the Japanese government was sensitive about any possibility of a Korean movement against Japanese rule. The Japanese government perceived that the Church might be an organisation that would oppose Imperial rule, and tried

¹⁵² Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 305.

¹⁵³ Chi, 'Korea and the Japanese Church: 1892–1920', p. 74.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 77. Myong Kwan Chi quotes 'Christianity in Korea'.

¹⁵⁶ Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, pp. 306–7.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 306.

to eliminate the risk using persecution and by favouring Buddhism.¹⁵⁸

Despite American Protestant missionaries to Korea stressing personal salvation and a pious lifestyle over renewal of the social structure, many Korean Christians discovered that Christianity also provided political grounds to resist Japanese Imperialism.¹⁵⁹ “The Christian community... was established in all parts of the nation and among all classes. Thus as a group, it constituted the one organised social bloc that could oppose the Japanese imperialists on social, intellectual, and spiritual grounds.”¹⁶⁰

*March First
Independence
Movement*

The non-violent character of the March First Independence Movement was a result of the majority of people who were involved being Christians. The Christian churches were used as the established link to “filter down information about the planned peaceful demonstration against Japanese rule.”¹⁶¹ Thousands of Koreans marched at Pagoda Park in Seoul crying for independence from Japanese rule on March 1st, 1919, on the day of the funeral of the last emperor of Korea, Kojong. Grayson cites a statistic that shows that approximately ten percent of the population participated in the demonstrations, including the ones that took place on the 1st of March.¹⁶² In response, Japan used its military to suppress the movement.¹⁶³ “Japanese government statistics alone record that the police killed more than 7,500 persons. More than twice that number were wounded, and forty-six thousand people were sentenced to prison...Forty-seven churches are known to have been burned down.”¹⁶⁴

When this news came to Japanese churches, many were distressed. Uemura Masahisa criticised the government for the violence.¹⁶⁵ Uchimura Kanzo expressed his remorse in a letter to his American friend, yet he only insisted on the hope of

¹⁵⁸ Grayson, ‘Religion, Nationalism, and State Policy: the Conflict Between Christianity and State Shinto in Colonial Korea, 1910–1945’, p. 115.

¹⁵⁹ Mullins, ‘Christianity Transplanted: Toward a Sociology of Success and Failure’, p. 73.

¹⁶⁰ Grayson, ‘Religion, Nationalism, and State Policy: the Conflict Between Christianity and State Shinto in Colonial Korea, 1910–1945’, p. 115.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 116.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 116.

¹⁶³ Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, pp. 317–32; Ebisawa & Ouchi, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, pp. 554–6.

¹⁶⁴ Grayson, ‘Religion, Nationalism, and State Policy: the Conflict Between Christianity and State Shinto in Colonial Korea, 1910–1945’, p. 116.

¹⁶⁵ Chi, ‘Korea and the Japanese Church: 1892–1920’, p. 78.

the Second Coming.¹⁶⁶ There was some attempt to collect donations for the aftermath, but the criticisms remained on the individual level and there was no public condemnation of government policy by the churches.

THE CHURCHES IN THE TIME OF WAR

Around the time of the Manchurian Incident in 1931, veneration of the emperor was strongly enforced by the government and became an accepted idea. With that “corporate spirit” as a background, the incident of Sophia University students’ refusal to pay their respects at Yasukuni Shrine occurred in 1932.¹⁶⁷ When the students of the university were taken to the Yasukuni Shrine by a school military officer, they consulted the principal, a Catholic missionary, about whether they should bow to the Shrine. Since the missionary did not give a positive answer, students refrained from bowing to the Shrine. Like Uchimura’s Imperial Rescript incident, the students’ action caused a social disturbance. The Catholic universities in general were severely criticised in papers and on national radio. The Ministry of Education claimed that the shrines were not religious organisations, and the visitation to shrines should be done for educational reason, and a bow is a sign of patriotism and loyalty. Sophia University defended itself by asserting that the university was not a religious organisation. After this incident, the military authorities labelled the Catholic missionaries as spies and destroyed churches’ and monasteries’ properties.¹⁶⁸ The Catholic missionaries, consequently, withdrew altogether from Japan in 1934.¹⁶⁹

In 1939, the government passed a law to tighten its control over religious organ-

¹⁶⁶ Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, pp. 230, 318–20.

¹⁶⁷ Sophia University was founded by the returned Jesuits missionaries in 1908. Gonoï, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 292. The Japanese government promoted Shinto worship in Korea, where there were about 500,000 Christians. A Japanese pastor, Mitsuru Fukuda, who was sent by the government, visited Pyongyang as the chairman of the Church of Christ in Japan, and gathered more than 120 Korean Christians to encourage them to adopt the Shinto worship. *Ibid.*, p. 299; Kim, ‘The Shinto Shrine Issue in Korean Christianity under Japanese Colonialism’, pp. 503–21.

¹⁶⁸ Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 214. The Catholic students of Sophia University later participated in another ritual in front of the imperial palace. In a meantime, Jean-Baptiste-Alexis Chambon, Archbishop of Tokyo, appealed to Catholic schools in Japan to participate in visiting the Yasukuni and Meiji Shrines. Gonoï, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 296.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 296. The Vatican made a donation to the Japanese government for national defence asking for the protection of the Catholics in Manchuria, China, and Korea in 1937. When, in 1937, Italy joined the Anti-Comintern Pact, which was signed by Germany and Japan in the previous year, Pius XI made an anti-Communist and pro-Japan statement. *Ibid.*, p. 298.

isations. The Religious Bodies Law, officially named “The Law of Control of Religious Institutions and Propagators,” was applied to every religious group except the State Shinto.¹⁷⁰ It declared support for religious organisations as long as they were loyal to Imperialism and served the purpose of the government’s policy. To be acknowledged as a religious organisation, each group needed approval from the government on their organisational structure and doctrines. If a group or a leader “disturbed the Imperial ideal,” they would be punished under this law, and each religious body would be under the government’s close surveillance.¹⁷¹ Article 16 of the law condemned any teaching, which “disturbs peace and order, or proves contrary to the duties of national subjects,” or anyone who “commits an act prejudicial to public interest.” Article 26 “In case a teacher (person) or missionary has contravened the restriction, prohibition or suspension of work provided for in Article 16... he shall be punished with penal servitude or imprisonment...” The duties of national subjects include Shinto worship and bowing towards the Imperial palace. Also due to the passing of this law and the demand from the government, thirty-four Protestant denominations joined and became the United Church of Christ in Japan [*Kyodan*, 日本基督教団].¹⁷²

As the nation became involved in the Asia-Pacific War, the intervention of the government in the churches became more frequent. The churches were forced to omit the phrases “Maker of heaven and earth” and “from whence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead” when reciting the Apostle’s Creed because these phrases conflict with the idea of emperor’s divine descent. The sermon topics were prescribed by the government, and the first five minutes of each Sunday service was dedicated to the ceremony of bowing to the portrait of the emperor or toward his palace, which was a requirement for the licensed churches. The churches also prayed for the war heroes, and the superintendent Tomida Mitsuru (1883–1961)

¹⁷⁰ Gono, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 300.

¹⁷¹ Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 349; Lee, *The Christian Confrontation with Shinto Nationalism*, p. 145.

¹⁷² One third of the churches in the Anglican Episcopal Communion in Japan joined two years later because of the persistent pressure from the government. Still, two thirds of the churches refuse to merge, and six bishops formed a council. The government considered this council as a secret society, and the representatives were imprisoned. Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 301; *ibid.*, p. 355.

urged the churches to support fully the nation.¹⁷³ The Education Ministry required the representatives of the United Church of Christ in Japan to be trained in an intensive course at the Meiji shrine for a month.¹⁷⁴

SHINTO SHRINE WORSHIP IN KOREA

Some time after the March First Independent Movement, the major leaders of Japanese churches passed away and the churches experienced a change of leadership.¹⁷⁵ Japan was experiencing a depression after the wave of prosperity during the First World War. With the economic decline, the current of democracy and freedom faded away and was replaced by militarism and totalitarianism.

The military gradually took control of the Japanese government, which led to the rise of nationalism based on the State Shinto. Shinto worship became compulsory in 1937 in Korea, where there were about 500,000 Christians. It was a part of the state's policy to facilitate the Japanisation of Koreans, followed by giving them Japanese names in 1939.¹⁷⁶ By that time, the Japanese Churches had agreed with the argument that Shinto worship is not a religious act but an expression of patriotism and thus a duty of the subjects.¹⁷⁷

A Japanese pastor, Tomida Mitsuru, who was sent by the government, visited Pyongyang as the chairman of the Church of Christ in Japan, and gathered more than 120 Korean Christians to encourage them to adopt the Shinto worship.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷³ Lee, *The Christian Confrontation with Shinto Nationalism*, pp. 146–8.

¹⁷⁴ Breen, 'Shinto and Christianity', p. 266.

¹⁷⁵ Ebisawa & Ouchi, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 542. Uemura Masahisa died in 1925, Uchimura Kanzo in 1930, and Ebina Danjo in 1937.

¹⁷⁶ Kim, 'The Shinto Shrine Issue in Korean Christianity under Japanese Colonialism', p. 503.

¹⁷⁷ Lee, *The Christian Confrontation with Shinto Nationalism*, pp. 136–7. According to Kun Sam Lee, "The last attempt of the Japanese Church against the Shinto worship was the memorandum presented to the Association for Investigation of the Shinto System in the names of 55 churches and organisations on May 28, 1930. The memorandum is asking the government to answer whether the Shinto worship at shrine was a religious act. If it was not a religious act, all the religious elements should be taken away, and the worship should not be forced upon the people, based on the constitution that stated the freedom of religion and conscience."

¹⁷⁸ Gono, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 299; Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 323; Ebisawa & Ouchi, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 559.

The resistance by the Japanese Church to the Japanese government during the Imperial rule was minor compared to the resistance shown by the Korean Christians.¹⁷⁹ The Korean resistance was an expression of their nationalism and patriotism, but both the March First Independence Movement and the Non-Shrine Worship Movement (a movement resisting any Shinto ritual or emperor worship) were led by Christians based on their Christian beliefs.¹⁸⁰

By the time of the annexation, the churches in Korea “became the place of refuge for the patriots and the intellectuals of the nation.”¹⁸¹ When the pressure from the Japanese government to bow before the emperor’s portrait or attend a Shinto worship, many Korean Christians resisted because worshipping any creature, whether the emperor or a man-made god, is idolatry, which is prohibited in the Bible.¹⁸² “It was an offence both nationally and theologically.”¹⁸³

When the government discovered their resistance, it applied pressure to the Presbyterian General Assembly to accept the interpretation of Shinto worship as a “non-religious duty of citizens.” At the Assembly, there were more than one hundred policemen present. The motion submitted read, “Resolved that obeisance at Shrines is not a religious act and is not in conflict with Christian teaching. It should be performed as a matter of first importance thus maintaining the patriotic zeal of the Imperial subjects...” The affirmative vote only was called, and the motion was accepted. Sunday worship was allowed to take place only in places registered with the government.¹⁸⁴ After this Assembly, the Japanese police ruthlessly forced

¹⁷⁹ Sawa, *Nihon Kidisuto Kyōshi*, pp. 126–32.

¹⁸⁰ This is supported by the fact that Buddhism, Confucianism, and Shamanism received protection from the colonial authorities. See Kim, ‘[The Shinto Shrine Issue in Korean Christianity under Japanese Colonialism](#)’, p. 504. Also, it is interesting to note that Christian leaders who were involved with the March First Movement were theologically liberal while many Christians who were involved with Non-Shrine worship movement were theologically conservative. See Grayson, ‘[Religion, Nationalism, and State Policy: the Conflict Between Christianity and State Shinto in Colonial Korea, 1910–1945](#)’, p. 118.

¹⁸¹ Lee, *The Christian Confrontation with Shinto Nationalism*, p. 166.

¹⁸² Theologically conservative churches (Presbyterians in Korea) showed more resistance than Methodists and Catholics. See Kim, ‘[The Shinto Shrine Issue in Korean Christianity under Japanese Colonialism](#)’.

¹⁸³ Grayson, ‘[Religion, Nationalism, and State Policy: the Conflict Between Christianity and State Shinto in Colonial Korea, 1910–1945](#)’, p. 118.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 120.

Christians to participate in Shinto worship, and if anyone refused, the police arrested them and asked the church to expel them because they “did not obey the Assembly’s resolution.”¹⁸⁵

Even though the Assembly was forced to pass the motion, individual churches met in private homes and maintained their resistance against the Shinto worship. Pyongyang was one of the places where the resistance movement was most active. A meeting took place during superintendent Tomida’s visit to persuade Korean Christians to cooperate on Shrine worship, after his speech, a Korean pastor Choo Kochul stood up and said, “We admire your excellent and rich knowledge. Nevertheless, we cannot accept shrine worship, according to God’s Word written in the Bible.” He was arrested three times and died in prison on April 21, 1944.¹⁸⁶

The resistance continued at the local church level, and a number of Korean Christians were imprisoned, tortured, and killed. Since the Presbyterian General Assembly “compromised,” those who were in the Non-Shrine Worship Movement in the province of Kyungsang-south abandoned the Assembly and tried to create a new and non-conformist Assembly.¹⁸⁷ In doing so, however, there was little sense among them that they were making a political statement. The protest was understood to be an exclusively religious one. Those Christians were religiously motivated, based on their belief that they will be with God in heaven even if their physical body perishes.¹⁸⁸

In Japan, while the United Church of Christ in Japan supported Japanese Imperialism, the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society in Japan (the Jehovah’s Witnesses) refused to join any rituals at the shrines or to bow to the picture of the emperor, or to join the military. Two hundred and fifty members were arrested and imprisoned under the Peace Preservation Law, and four of them died in jail.¹⁸⁹ The Japan Holiness Church experienced persecutions because of their doctrinal beliefs and refusal of Shinto worship. They believed that Christ was above the emperor, and that the

185 Grayson, ‘Religion, Nationalism, and State Policy: the Conflict Between Christianity and State Shinto in Colonial Korea, 1910–1945’, pp. 167–70; see also Adams, ‘Ancestors, Folk Religion, and Korean Christianity’, pp. 98–9.

186 Lee, *The Christian Confrontation with Shinto Nationalism*, p. 172.

187 *Ibid.*, p. 178; Adams, ‘Ancestors, Folk Religion, and Korean Christianity’, pp. 98–9.

188 Grayson, ‘Religion, Nationalism, and State Policy: the Conflict Between Christianity and State Shinto in Colonial Korea, 1910–1945’, p. 121.

189 Sawa, *Nihon Kidisuto Kyōshi*, p. 131.

emperor will be judged when Christ comes again.¹⁹⁰ By the end of the war, eight of their members had died in prison.¹⁹¹ The Non-Church inherited Uchimura's pacifism.¹⁹²

After the War

AFTER THE WAR

On 15th August 1945, for the very first time, the Emperor spoke directly to his people by radio. Though the common people were unable to understand the Emperor's formal language, the point was clear: the war was over. Japan had lost. Japan surrendered to the Allies and was subsequently occupied. The Potsdam Proclamation asserted that fundamental human rights should be acknowledged by Japan.¹⁹³ The occupying powers annulled the Peace Preservation Law, State Shinto, and the Religious Organisation Law. A new Constitution of Japan was written under the guidance of Allied commander, Douglas MacArthur. Freedom of religion was guaranteed in Chapter 3, Article 20.¹⁹⁴ The Allies recognised the practical use of the emperor, so the Emperor was not judged in the war-crimes tribunal, and the "constitutional monarchy" remained. A picture of General MacArthur and Emperor Hirohito standing together caused a sensation when it was published in a Japanese press, as the Emperor seemed small next to MacArthur. The impact of the photo established the authority of MacArthur among the people and the fact that he would

190 The Japan Holiness Church was a Wesleyan-Methodist denomination founded by Japanese Christians and missionaries who were not sent by any foreign denominations or missions. It was already a part of the United Church of Christ in Japan. More than 100 ministers of the Church were arrested in 1942, and 41 people were sentenced to imprisonment of up to four years. Sawa, *Nihon Kidisuto Kyōshi*, pp. 126–7; Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, pp. 159–62.

191 Sawa, *Nihon Kidisuto Kyōshi*, p. 131.

192 *Ibid.*, pp. 128–30.

193 Article 10 reads, "We do not intend that the Japanese shall be enslaved as a race or destroyed as a nation, but stern justice shall be meted out to all war criminals, including those who have visited cruelties upon our prisoners. The Japanese Government shall remove all obstacles to the revival and strengthening of democratic tendencies among the Japanese people. Freedom of speech, of religion, and of thought, as well as respect for the fundamental human rights shall be established."

194 "Freedom of religion is guaranteed to all. No religious organisation shall receive any privileges from the State, nor exercise any political authority. 2) No person shall be compelled to take part in any religious acts, celebration, rite or practice. 3) The State and its organs shall refrain from religious education or any other religious activity." The Constitution of Japan, Chapter 3, Article 20, translated by the Japan Institute of Constitutional Law, available from http://www.jicl.jp/kenpou_all/kenpou_english.html.

“stand next to” the Emperor.¹⁹⁵ The emperor was stripped of his former position as the commander of military, and became a symbol of peace and democracy. The “Rescript to Promote the National Destiny” printed in newspapers nationwide on New Years Day 1946 is known as the Emperor’s “declaration of humanity.” In this rescript, the Emperor “renounced his divinity.” Its language, however, was again esoteric, and the renunciation was not even the central part of the speech. The Rescript did not directly deny the significance of the old myth: it simply mentioned that it was mistaken to think that the Emperor was a “god in human form.” The Rescript was accepted positively in the United States, however, and interpreted as the Emperor’s repudiation of the pretence to divine descent.¹⁹⁶ The American people’s interest in this issue was formed by their Christian presuppositions, and for them, the idea of “emperor worship” was blasphemous because it seemed that the Emperor usurped Christ’s position. For the Japanese people, the Rescript had little impact.

Because the Allies supported Christian missions, their propagation of Christianity was successful from 1945 until 1947, when the growth stopped. As anti-American sentiment increased among the intellectuals and academics, the churches ceased to attract those people.¹⁹⁷

THE CHURCH AND WAR GUILT

In 1967, the United Church of Christ in Japan (*Kyodan*) adopted a Confession on War Responsibility during the World War. In the confession, it states;

“It was indeed on this very occasion that we freshly realized yet again the mistakes we committed in the name of the *Kyodan* at the time of our formation and during the following war years. We therefore seek the mercy of our Lord and the forgiveness of our neighbors...Indeed, even as our country committed sin, so we too, as a church, fell into the same sin. We neglected to perform our mission as a “watchman.” Now, with deep pain in our hearts, we confess our sin and ask the Lord for forgiveness. We also

195 Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, p. 294.

196 *Ibid.*, pp. 308–12.

197 Gonoï, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 307.

seek the forgiveness of the peoples of all nations, particularly in Asia, and of the churches therein and of our brothers and sisters in Christ throughout the world; as well as the forgiveness of the people in our own country.”¹⁹⁸

The confession, however, does not specify what kind of mistakes the Church made and why they were mistakes. This ambiguity is because of the anxiety that specific language in the document might cause divisions among the churches in the Kyodan.

Japanese theologians’ obsession with Karl Barth did not lead the Church on the path of the Confessing Church in Germany. Japanese Barthians, on the contrary, locked themselves inside of the Church and focused on the “word of God.” Barth’s Theology, in Japanese context, made churches inwardly focused and exclusive in their logic. Barth was interpreted to mean that the mission of the church is primarily to be obedient to the word of God which is expressed in the Scriptures. Unfortunately, this notion of “being obedient to the word of God” did not lead Japanese theologians and church leaders to actively engage with the world to realise justice, but instead, they became very sceptical about any engagement with the society.¹⁹⁹ Because the Church did not develop the skills to connect with the world outside, it ended up being uncritical towards the state and its imperialism and colonialism. Barthian theology is often blamed for the result by later generations.²⁰⁰ Wartime Japanese Theologians’ reading of Barth lacked practical implications, and many of them did “only theology as though nothing had happened.”²⁰¹ Also, after the war, Barth’s theology of reconciliation did not help the Japanese Church to reconcile with the churches in Asia. Barth’s assertion that God in Christ completes reconciliation fails to point out the fact that reconciliation between human beings takes human effort. Many Barthian scholars fell into the dualism of religion and politics, and neglected the Church’s role as the salt of the earth. Kitamori Kazo (1916–1998) pointed out that Barth’s negative attitude towards indiginisation of Christian theology hindered the political awareness of Japanese Christians.²⁰²

198 United Church of Christ in Japan, *Confession of War Responsibility during the World War*.

199 Steele, ‘Christianity and Politics in Japan’, p. 361.

200 Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, pp. 384–9; Sawa, *Nihon Kidisuto Kyōshi*, p. 148.

201 Wilmer, ‘Karl Barth’, p. 124. A phrase which is often quoted to accuse Barth.

202 Inoue, *Sengo Kyōkaishi to Tomoni*, p. 129.

The assessment of Japanese imperialism and imperial institution during the former part of the 20th century is a controversial issue in Japan and people's opinions vary. National symbols, such as the flag and anthem have been considered negatively since the war, especially in areas where people suffered intensely, such as Okinawa, Hiroshima, or Nagasaki. The flag indicates the rising sun, which suggests the superiority of the Japanese race and reminds one of invasions done under the ideology. The anthem, Kimigayo, literally means "the emperor's nation" and sings of its eternity. The flag and anthem were not officially national symbols until 1999 when a special law was passed to declare them "national." Even then, some schoolteachers resisted joining in singing the anthem and some students burned the flag from the negative understanding of the colonial period and wars. In 1999, a high school principal in Hiroshima hanged himself on the eve of the graduation day, when singing of Kimigayo was mandated. He had been caught between the Prefectural Board of Education, representing the Ministry of Education of the central government, which had been pressuring him to display the flag and sing the Kimigayo anthem at the graduation, on one hand, and members of teachers' unions opposing the government position."²⁰³

Japanese churches after the war in most denominations became pacifist, are against the revision of the pacifistic constitution, and also, from concern for the separation of state and religion, oppose Prime Ministerial visits to Yasukuni Shrine, where dead Japanese soldiers, including some convicted war criminals, are enshrined.

Today, because of their history and the tension with the government throughout their existence, the churches in Japan are detached from the state; rather they tend to be critical of the government and its policy. The churches view their past negatively — especially what happened during the Second World War — and many denominations published confessions of sin and repentance over the war responsibility as organisations. It is perhaps commendable that Christianity in Japan is no longer an uncritical servant of the state. Having learnt from the past, the churches tend to critically assess the government's policies. The churches have not become a

²⁰³ Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity*, p. 97.

tool for the ruling class. However, because the Christians are a minority and theology in Japan has been mostly characterised as a direct import of western theology, the churches have not recognised their own context, and thus are theologically naïve in their political stance. Their theological naïveté may lead the churches to be uncritical about the fact that their understanding of Christianity may serve their own bourgeois class interests and ignore social injustice, which is condemned by Moltmann, Metz, and liberation theologians such as Gutierrez.

Another issue is that European- or American-born political theologies are often not applicable in the context of the Japanese churches. For example, the claim of so called “public theology” to interpret social or political issues from “Christian” perspectives and promote “Christian” values instead of “modern anomie,” or “sinful ways,” could not take a very significant role where Christians are such a minority. Moreover, the recent emerging tradition of “postliberalism” is also problematic in this context, as its supporters are quick to condemn any group but “the Church.” In the case of Japanese Christianity, mutual understanding and cooperation with non-Christians or people who practice other religions is crucial.

CONCLUSION

From the very beginning, Christianity in Japan faced tension with the government. The state, whether the *Bakufu*, the Meiji government, or the military government, tried to control religion. The authorities in every age never found the value of Christianity, but only permitted it when there were pressures from the Western countries. The Kirishitans did not have power to fight through persecution by the government, and soon their religion was driven underground. Protestants in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, on the other hand, chose, consciously or unconsciously, to compromise with the state.

Protestant Christianity was accepted as a Western religion, which would be superior to any Japanese religion, by the warrior class, and later by the middle classes, who were increasing in numbers with the growth of capitalism. As the government’s policy became more nationalistic and public opinion followed, the churches became apologetic. While theology, undertaken by those who were educated in the

West, remained essentially “Western,” the effort of the churches in Japan was made to claim how Christianity and their patriotism were in fact complementary, not contradictory. The dissenting voice was suppressed in the heyday of Japanese militarism. At the end of Japan’s imperial ambition in 1945, with the persecution and oppression by the government ended, the churches ceased to be drawn to Japanese nationalism and instead absorbed yet further the current of theological thought of the West.

This phenomenon is further exacerbated by the fact that Christian theological academia was born and formed in the West according to the issues and concerns of the people thereof, and to be accepted to such a society, the only possible way for the Japanese Christian scholars was to join the discourses of the West.

With this survey of the history as a background, I will now proceed, in the next three chapters, to examine the Japanese interpreters. From this examination, it will be clear that each of their acts of interpretation is inseparable from their political and social standings. I will begin by considering two Christian thinkers from the first generation after the ending of Japan’s national isolation: Ebina Danjo and Uchimura Kanzo.

The Samurai Christians: The First-Generation Protestants



Alongside the black warships, political thought, and industrial technology, the Bible came to the hands of Japanese people. They received the Bible from the foreign missionaries, learnt how to read it from the missionaries, and, within one generation, began to use the Bible to support their own political positions: they used it to reject the views of the missionaries, criticise the foreign policies of Western countries, or to support Japan's own ambition towards mainland Asia. This chapter will introduce such readings of the Bible.

In 1862, about 250 years after the Jesuits were expelled from Japan, the door was again open for Catholic missionaries, who came back alongside the Protestant missionaries sent from some of the countries that concluded the peace and amity treaty and, later, the trade treaty with Japan. Because the trade treaty was signed with France, as well as the United States, Holland, Russia, and Britain, the reopening of the Catholic mission was undertaken solely by a French mission organisation, *Société des Missions-Etrangères de Paris*, until the end of Meiji period (1868–1912). The Société's close ties with the French government, however, meant that its missionary work was affected by the relationship between Japan and France. The French government had the closest ties to the old regime of *Bakufu*, and as the new Japanese government eagerly learnt from the British and Americans, the relationship with the French government became estranged.¹ This had a negative effect on the French Catholic mission in Japan, and although theological schools were opened in 1870s, they could not attract students.²

In contrast, the Protestant missionaries, mainly from the United States and Ger-

¹ Ebisawa & Ouchi, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 123. Ebisawa thinks that the passivity of Catholic laymen and their inactivity in propagation was another reason for the unsuccessful Catholic mission.

² Furuya, *A History of Japanese Theology*, p. 7. In the late 1880s, there was an intellectual movement based on Catholicism, which established a provisional publishing company. The French Catholic mission, however, suppressed this movement as it did not ask permission from the Catholic Church. See Ebisawa & Ouchi, *Nihon Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 124.

many, managed to attract young Japanese intellectuals who were keen to learn from the Western civilisation. These intellectuals tended to be from a privileged background, the erstwhile warrior class of the Tokugawa Shogunate. They were educated in Confucianism, which was commonly taught to the sons of *samurai* in Japan during the feudal era. Within the scope of this education, loyalty and filial piety were primary virtues, and these samurai were especially taught to lead a dignified life and to serve their feudal lords unto death. The samurai Christians found Christian teachings about morality, sincerity, and self-sacrifice resonated with their Confucian education. Also most of them were, at least initially, attracted to Christianity because their patriotism compelled them to learn from the West to make a greater contribution to Japan.

The two theologians introduced in this chapter fit this description. They were eager to acquire Western knowledge, which led them to the acceptance of the religion of the West, Christianity, which they believed to be the basis of a great civilisation. The theological and methodological development of each theologian was very distinctive. As the first generation of Protestant Christians in the country, their theological works greatly influenced later Christian thinkers in Japan.

One of the common characteristics among the theologians from this era is their concern and interest in domestic and international politics. When the Western countries appeared with the black ships and brought turmoil to the country after 250 years of isolation, the people, especially those of the warrior class, were anxious about the future of the nation and hoped to make a contribution to the development of the society under the new order. They felt a strong sense of patriotism and of responsibility to their country, evoked by the presence of the powerful and threatening Western nations. This sense of patriotism is also a manifestation of the concept of “loyalty” in Confucianism: instead of serving the local lords, now they serve the head of the nation, the emperor. Therefore, one must understand their theological framework in terms of their desire to find ways to aid their country by adopting a Western religion.

The two theologians introduced in this chapter are Ebina Danjo (1866–1937) and Uchimura Kanzo (1861–1930). Both came from *samurai* families, which were on the side of the old regime, and did not belong to the clans that took the leading positions

in the new government. Both of them had higher education in the schools run by American intellectuals, and were familiar with the English language and its literature, as well as Western philosophy and theology. Regarding biblical interpretation, both of them studied the Bible with the historical-critical method. In spite of these commonalities, however, their theological frameworks came to be quite dissimilar. Ebina was a pastor of a church and theologian who was open to liberal Protestantism and supportive of the expansion of the Japanese Empire. Uchimura, on the other hand, did not belong to any denomination, was a layman without a ministerial license, and was critical of Japanese Imperialism, and later became an outspoken pacifist. Today, among scholars of church history in Japan, Uchimura is generally held in higher regard as a theologian than Ebina because of his attitude to the Japanese government and its policies as the nation was preoccupied with expanding itself to overseas. Many scholars attribute this evaluation to the fact that Ebina was not theologically conservative, while Uchimura was, and the former's attempt to indigenise Christianity led him to the uncritical support of Japan's colonialism.³ To put it simply, Ebina's heterodoxy allowed him to harmonise his theology with the national policy. However, this statement reveals more about the theological position of the scholars who have studied Ebina than the position of Ebina himself. The theologically conservative scholars are quick to blame Ebina's theology as corrupt and heretical, which contributed to the Japanese Church's eager participation in Japanese imperialism. It is true that Uchimura interpreted the Scripture more literally than Ebina, though Uchimura was by no means a fundamentalist biblical literalist. Yet, in fact, Uchimura held a much more unusual position regarding ecclesiology and church tradition. Moreover, it was not Ebina, but Uchimura, whose theological works were critical of the Western types of Christianity and founded an indigenous movement called "Non-Church".

The position argued for here is that the difference in their attitudes to Japan's colonial policy is rooted in the differences in their experiences and their positions

³ No previous work has compared these two theologians who lived in the same period. However, Ebina's theology is often compared to that of Uemura Masahisa. Uemura was a theologian, educator, and pastor who was a pro-western theological conservative, and he is now regarded much more highly than Ebina. Also, Uemura's selected works and Uchimura's complete works have been published, while even though he was an influential theologian of the time, Ebina's collected works were never published. As an example of this type of critique of Ebina's theology, see Kim, *Kindai Nihon Kirisutokyo to Chōsen*.

within the Japanese society and church. Theological orthodoxy or heterodoxy did not play a primary role in their positions to the national policy. These differences were reflected in their theology and interpretation of the Bible, yet it is not simply their theological positions and beliefs that led to their different conclusions about colonialism.

Ebina Danjo
(1859–1937)

EBINA DANJO (1859–1937)

Ebina Danjo was born in Northern Kyushu as the son of a *samurai* in 1859, which was two years after the arrival of Commodore Perry and the American ships. Ebina later recalled his early days and identified his mother as the greatest influence on his personal formation. She died when Ebina was ten, an event in which his life “was divided into two: the earlier happy and innocent days without sorrow or pain, and the later days tainted with grief.”⁴ One of his most vivid memories of his mother was of when he, eight or nine years old, was sitting in front of a brazier to warm himself. Outside in the cold, a barefoot man was selling fish. Ebina’s mother asked him, “You are now warm in front of the brazier and he is selling fish in cold. Do you know the reason?” Ebina found he could not answer. The mother continued, “The man does not receive wages from our (feudal) lord, thus he has to work to support his family. Yet, in time of war, he can flee anywhere he wants. You, on the other hand, who are now warm inside, owe it to the lord and the ancestors, thus have to die for the lord in time of war.” This dialogue taught Ebina the samurai spirit of self-sacrifice, and left a great impression on Ebina’s mind.⁵

As a young man, he saw the feudal government decline and the new government take over. His clan was abolished, the castle was burnt down, and the prince of the clan, a year younger than Ebina, died. This was devastating to Ebina, who had been determined to serve this prince throughout his life.⁶ Ebina left home to pursue further education at the age of sixteen. He was enrolled at Kumamoto Western School, a school originally founded by the Kumamoto Clan in 1871.⁷ The American

⁴ Ebina, ‘*Waga Shinkō no Jinsei 2*’, p. 47.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 47–8.

⁶ Wataze, *Ebina Danjo Sensei*, p. 39.

⁷ Sawa, *Nihon Kidisuto Kyōshi*, p. 78.

Leroy L. Janes was invited to teach at the school, and Ebina learnt natural science and history from him. An invited Confucian scholar also taught Confucianism on Sundays. Ebina took a deep interest in the history of England and the United States, particularly in Oliver Cromwell and the English civil war or the independence of the United States, and he was taught that there was Christian faith behind these achievements.⁸ Through attending Janes's Bible study, Ebina professed his Christian faith and was baptised by Janes in 1876, four years after he entered the Kumamoto Western School. Janes taught Ebina that prayer is not asking God to grant what one desires, but a duty of creatures to the creator. This led him to realise that the relationship between God and a human was just like the relationship between the lord and his vassal.⁹ In 1876, thirty students who converted to Christianity took an oath that they would proclaim Christianity and dedicate themselves to the enlightenment and progress of their nation. In 1877, however, the Kumamoto Western School was closed down because these Christian students' evangelising was considered to be causing disturbance, and Ebina transferred to Doshisha University with his Christian fellow-students, Kozaki Hiromichi (1856–1928) and Kanamori Tsurin (1857–1945). These three became the founders of the Congregational Church in Japan [日本組合基督教会].¹⁰ Doshisha University was founded in 1875 by Nijima Jo, a Christian who came back from studying in the United States, who was a missionary of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Mission himself. In the beginning, the university was considered to be a seminary especially by missionaries who collaborated with Nijima, but it gradually developed into a general university with departments of medicine, science, as well as humanities. For Nijima, westernisation, modernisation, and Christianisation aimed towards a single goal: without Christian morality, alongside the spirit of liberty and the development of science, it is impossible to achieve modern civilisation.¹¹ In the same way, for Ebina, adopting Christian morality was ultimately a way to serve for the nation's progress. However, Ebina and his colleagues were not content with the education they received at the university, and they were especially dissatisfied with the Bible and

⁸ Ebina, 'Waga Shinkō no Jinsei 4', p. 31.

⁹ Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, pp. 173–4.

¹⁰ Sawa, *Nihon Kidisuto Kyōshi*, p. 78.

¹¹ Hirakawa, 'Japan's Turn to the West', p. 455.

theology course taught by Jerome D. Davis, ABCFM (1838–1910). When the students asked questions about the miracles, and consequently about credibility of the biblical accounts. Davis reacted to this with authoritarian posture with the concept of biblical inerrancy, and accused the students of impiety.¹² Davis' didactics had the opposite effect from that intended, and Ebina, along with his colleagues, became one of the first to accept the Christian liberalism and the higher criticisms of the Bible.

Ebina Danjo
(1859–1937)

For Ebina, as well as his colleagues, acceptance of Christianity did not mean acceptance of biblical literalism or merely to repeat the creed. While he was a student at the Kumamoto Western School, Ebina came to the conclusion that the 'heaven' of Confucianism and the God of Christianity were identical. The trend of Confucianism taught at the School affirmed a personal god, who reigns over heaven and earth.¹³ Just as Confucianism provided a moral structure for the Japanese to be patriotic and loyal to their nation, for Ebina, Christianity provided the sense of justice and fairness to be a faithful citizen of Japan. Ebina explained his relationship to God by using the idea of a "father-son relationship" in Confucianism. The relationship of father and son is one of the five essential relationships in Confucianism, and based on this idea, Ebina understood Christianity as analogous to Confucianism. For Ebina, the Christian's relationship to God as *Fushi Ushin*, the father and son relationship, was the most essential: "Man can overcome all his desires if he becomes united with God."¹⁴

After completing the university education, Ebina became a minister of the Congregational Church in Japan. In 1897, after working in several churches, he was commissioned to the Hongo Church in Tokyo, which he himself had founded in 1886, and stayed there for 23 years. This period was Ebina's most productive and prosperous stage of his life: the church published monthly magazines, *Shinjin* (New Person) and *Shinjokai* (New Woman's World), more than 500 people gathered for Sunday worship, and many prominent scholars and politicians emerged from the congregation. The publication of *Shinjin* ran from 1900 to 1926 and covered a wide range of positions and interests, including politics, history, literature, and religion.

12 Ouchi, *Kindai Nihon no Seisho Sisou*, p. 24.

13 Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 173; Takeda, 'Ebina Danjo Den', p. 121.

14 Furuya, *A History of Japanese Theology*, p. 14.

Ebina had never restricted his theology to Christian orthodoxy, and ever since he encountered Christianity, he did not consider the Trinity, the bodily resurrection of Christ, or any of the miracles described in the Bible as literal and factual. In 1880s, theologically liberal Protestantism was introduced to Japan from Europe through the missionary society *Evangelisch Protestantischer Missionsverein*, founded by the Church leaders influenced by the *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule* in Germany and Switzerland. The missionaries from the American Unitarian Association also arrived in Japan. The name “New Theology” [新神学] encompasses these types of Christian “heterodoxy” in the Japanese context. Ebina naturally and efficiently adapted the New Theology to his theological study, and using its discourse to promote the independence from the missionaries not only financially and politically, but also doctrinally.¹⁵ His openness to the liberal theology was criticised from the fundamental and evangelical sides of the churches, and one of his fiercest challengers was Uemura Masahisa, another influential *samurai* leader of the Japanese Church.

The debate between these two theologians, later known as the Uemura–Ebina controversy, took place over five months during 1901–02.¹⁶ Theological differences between Ebina and Uemura became obvious in the context of the mass evangelism of the Japan Evangelical Alliance, an interdenominational organisation. The meetings were successful culminated in a revival and mass conversion brought about in Tokyo. However, the participants began to express their confusion as the preachers in these meetings revealed very different theological presuppositions. Uemura Masahisa therefore proposed that if the Alliance planned to hold meetings for evangelism, basic agreement on theological teaching among the preachers was necessary. He then criticised Ebina by name in his article.¹⁷

Uemura criticised liberal theology as an attempt to know the truth of spirit and soul by reason alone without any sense of piety, and argued that Ebina did not understand the concept of sin and sinfulness, and thus did not understand the significance of the redemption. Ebina answered Uemura’s call and thus the public debate started. The centre of the argument was, however, Christ’s two natures in one person, namely, it has to do with the doctrine of Trinity. In Confucianism,

15 Ebina, ‘*Kirisuto Kyōkai Dokuritu Shugi*’, pp. 6–9.

16 Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, pp. 181–3; Furuya, *A History of Japanese Theology*, pp. 25–30.

17 Uemura, ‘*Fukuin Dōmei to Taikyo Dendō*’.

a son is to be obedient to his father who is his higher authority. Accordingly, for Ebina, Christ is not God, but a human who lived with strong religious consciousness. Christ is only divine in the sense that every person is divine.¹⁸ If Christ was God, how could he be a human? Was there any reason one could not love Christ unless Christ was God? Ebina asked Uemura, “What do you think it means that God became human?”¹⁹ then he dismissed Uemura’s answer as “dogmatism” uncritical to historical creeds, and called Uemura a judge who positioned himself in the place of Pilate or the Pope.²⁰ Ebina argued that one could discern God only through a “person”. The “bread of life” is not the Bible or creeds, but is in Christ himself, that is, the Christ-consciousness, which should be realised in each person.²¹

“God and human became a father and a son in Jesus of Nazareth. The human race, cursed from its origin, received infinite mercy in Jesus Christ, in whom we saw the beginning of the New Person. In Jesus, human beings saw the way to eternity for the first time.”²²

This Christ-consciousness contains the Bible, yet the Bible is not able to contain the Christ-consciousness. Therefore, a religion within the Bible or a religion subject to the Bible is dismissed as narrow-minded dogmatism.

Ebina’s follower, Wataze Tsuneyoshi suggests that there was competitiveness, envy and pride on Uemura’s side, yet Wataze, as a disciple of Ebina, was not neutral.²³ Ebina was expelled from the Japan Evangelical Alliance, and the debate came to an end. Uemura continued to teach at his seminary and his followers grew in numbers, and Ebina kept on preaching and his church attendance grew as well. Uemura and Ebina remained leaders of the Japanese Church, were never antagonistic towards each other personally, and showed respect to one another publicly in their writings. This controversy was, after all, a debate between a liberal theologian and an evangelical theologian, which was simply a copy of debates in Europe and

18 The sense that one is a child of God, according to Ebina, is the basic and universal religious conscience of human beings. Thus, God is immanent in the conscience of individuals. See Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 174.

19 Ebina, ‘Fukuin Shinpō Kisha ni Atauru no Sho’.

20 Ebina, ‘Uemura shi no Tōsho wo Yomu’, p. 3.

21 Ebina, ‘Makoto no Pan’, p. 21.

22 Ebina, ‘Shōhihyō wo Yomnde Futatabi Yoga Kirisutokyōkan wo Akirakanisu’, p. 1.

23 Wataze, *Ebina Danjo Sensei*.

the United States, but in the Japanese language. Ebina was an admirer of Schleiermacher, while Uemura's source books were Calvin and the reformed theologians.

For Ebina, it is not the Bible that is important, but the Logos, which is the immanent God, conceived in the creation, in the Bible, and most prominently in the person of Christ. This Logos is also present in nature, history, and literature of the Japanese as well as anywhere in the world. When this Logos became actualised among the people of Japan, a new bible or a scripture should emerge from them. In Western society, not only is the Bible now deeply rooted there, but there are other bibles beside the Christian Scriptures. Ebina argues that even if the Bible disappears, something similar to it will emerge in Western society: because the Logos or the living spirit of God cannot be limited within one book. Ebina writes:

"Therefore, we must expect the emergence of something superior to the Bible. In reading of the Bible, I do not value the whole Bible equally. We have to select from the Scriptures what seems to be given by God to us today. We should fill the spirit in the world of literature to produce a new bible through the urge of the heavenly inspiration."²⁴

Uchimura Kanzo
(1861–1930)

UCHIMURA KANZO (1861–1930)

Uchimura Kanzo, one of the most well known Japanese theologians, is unique in his theological standing, especially because of his ecclesiology, namely the denouncement of the organised Church and his "Non-Church" [*MuKyokai*] movement. He looked back and spoke of his life in his later days:

"I hoped to become a geologist. I hoped so when I entered Sapporo Agricultural School.

I hoped to become a fishery science scholar. I hoped so when I graduated from the school.

I hoped to become a philanthropist. I hoped so when I went to the United States.

I hoped to become an educator. I hoped so when I came back from the United States.

²⁴ Ebina, '*Sachiwau Kotodama*', p. 6.

I hoped to become a social reformer. I hoped so when I joined *Cho-ho-sha* [a newspaper].

I hoped to become a biblical scholar. I hoped so until I lost Rutsuko [his daughter].

Now I do not hope to become anything. I do not hope to achieve anything.

Simply hope to believe in the only Son sent from God. What I hope to do today is what Jesus showed me to do for others.”²⁵

Uchimura Kanzo
(1861–1930)

Like the theologians already discussed, he was a son of a samurai. He grew up in Edo, later renamed Tokyo, and encountered Christianity when he entered Sapporo Agricultural School in 1877. The school was found by the government to educate those who would work for the government project to exploit Hokkaido, the island to the north of the mainland where Japanese sovereignty was not yet established at the time of the Meiji Restoration.

William S. Clark was the headmaster of this school, who returned to the United States before Uchimura entered the school. Yet a document called, “Covenant of Believers in Christ,” which Clark drafted, had been handed down to some Christian students who converted under Clark’s influence, and they made Uchimura sign this document almost involuntarily. A year later, he was baptised by a missionary of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States, Merriman C. Harris (1846–1921).²⁶

The simple fact that Uchimura could enrol in the school shows his elite upbringing. His background and education up to then clearly shows his high social status. He worked in the civil service for colonial policy in Hokkaido until he left for the United States. During this time, Uchimura founded a church with his former classmates with a fund of 700 dollars from the Methodist Episcopal Church. Soon afterwards, they decided to merge with another small congregation, and expressed their will to become independent from the mission. The plan of independence was presented to the mission along with the repayment of 300 dollars, but the mission demanded the repayment of the remaining 400 dollars upfront if they wished to become independent. Uchimura and others single-mindedly devoted themselves

²⁵ Uchimura, ‘*Mokuteki no Shinpo*’.

²⁶ Tomioka, *Uchimura Kanzo*, p. 25.

to gathering the 400 dollars. Thus was founded the Sapporo Independent Church, which did not belong to any denomination, creed, or a pre-existing church polity.²⁷ It was around this time that Uchimura's father converted to Christianity.²⁸

Uchimura Kanzo
(1861–1930)

In 1884, great changes occurred in Uchimura's life. He married Asada Take in spite of his parents' objection, but their marriage ended within 6 months. The emotional turmoil eventually led him to resign his government job, and he left for the United States. He then managed to find a job as a nurse at the Pennsylvania Training School for Feeble Minded Children through a personal connection. There, the ex-Japanese official, who was willing to become a philanthropist, was called a "Jap" by the children, and had to do anything necessary, from serving food to helping with personal hygiene. After seven months, Uchimura left the Training School and went to Amherst College as a part time student, and upon obtaining a Bachelor of Science degree, he entered Hartford Theological Seminary in Boston. The president of Amherst College, Julius Hawley Sheelye, who allowed Uchimura to transfer into the third year, became his spiritual mentor, through whom Uchimura embraced the evangelical faith. Subsequently, Uchimura was never sympathetic to liberal theology. His article, "The Statement of My Faith" [我が信仰の表白] shows his orthodox Christian faith in his early days.²⁹ When he went to Hartford, however, Uchimura did not find the study of theology there stimulating, and with the decline of his health, had no option but to return to Japan.³⁰

While he was away in the United States, his daughter was born, but she is hardly mentioned in his writings or biographies. Her mother's brother eventually adopted her.³¹ Uchimura returned to Japan in December 1888 and married Yokohama Kasuko the next year.

After his Imperial Rescript incident in 1891, discussed in Chapter 2 of this thesis, Uchimura lost his job and his place in the Christian Church. It was one of the most traumatic experiences in his life, which shaped his personality and theology. In the preface to *The Consolation of a Christian*, published in 1893, Uchimura proclaimed

²⁷ Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, pp. 62–4.

²⁸ Tomioka, *Uchimura Kanzo*, p. 291.

²⁹ Uchimura, 'Waga Shinkou no Hyōhaku'. It is a counter-argument against Yokoi Tokio's statement embracing Liberal Theology, and forms a clear contrast.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

³¹ Tomioka, *Uchimura Kanzo*, pp. 292–3.

that the book is not his autobiography, yet this writing is in a very obvious way a product of his hardship at the time. The book speaks of the Christian's comfort in difficult situations: in the time of loss of a loved one; forsaken by the compatriots; abandoned by the Church; in failure of business; in poverty; in fatal illness. One could easily perceive therein Uchimura's struggle with the feeling of abandonment both from the society and church after the Rescript incident. He was misunderstood, slandered, and the worst of all, called "traitor." For Uchimura, patriotism is "most natural and inevitable" just as "one loves one's parents," and felt greatly frustrated with the slander.³²

"I was just like a faithful wife, who remained chaste, praised her husband whom she trusted, yet was misunderstood because of a trivial issue and divorced. I had no home to protect myself under the sky, and no where to hide my face from anyone, and was overcome with loneliness."³³

In the same way, he was also criticised within the Church, towards which his resentment was so strong that he "almost committed spiritual suicide," namely, renounced his faith.³⁴ His later writing on the Book of Job reveals a reflection of this experience.

"Let Job be a Christian today. He was perfect in his faith and deeds, admired as a model Christian among the other members of the church, and he was also quite wealthy. The church members considered his fortune as a result of his strong faith. However, Job lost everything over night, became like a beggar, and his body was diseased. None of the church members understood what happened, and all the church meetings were diverted by gossips and criticisms about Job. Some said it was the evidence that God does not exist since such a man of faith was now experiencing such misfortunes. Others said that God may exist yet may not be the God of love. However, the majority agreed with the old pastor who said that it was because Job sinned in darkness that the misfortunes were given to him by God. Now the congregation decided that representatives from the church

³² Uchimura, 'Kirisuto Shinto no Nagusame', p. 21.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

should visit Job to make him confess his sin while consoling his pain so that he could come back to the grace of God. The representatives are the old pastor Eliphaz, a theologian in the prime of his life, Bildad, and a youth of his abilities, Zophar.”³⁵

Uchimura Kanzo
(1861–1930)

In the middle of disappointment and anger, however, he found “God” and “the Bible”. This is crucial to understand Uchimura and his theology: he encountered God in his hardship through reading the Bible *alone, apart from* the Church and theologians.

“Yet, God, my saviour, you saved me from this peril. When the opponents lay blame on me using the Bible, the armour to protect me was the Bible. The Church and theologians rejected me; yet the very fact that I did not discard the Bible was the assurance that you did not forsake me.”³⁶

Thus, the Bible is “the shield of the lonely, fortress of the weak, the resting place of the misunderstood. With the Bible, I shall be able to stand against the Pope, Archbishop, or Doctors of Theology.”³⁷ Just as the early Protestants rediscovered the Scripture when they stood against the Pope and the Church, now Uchimura clings to the Bible as his authority and the way to God. A difference between Uchimura and early Protestants was that Uchimura remained a loner. No matter how many disciples followed him, he did not attempt to create an alternative institution. In fact, he was against the very idea of an “institution” as a way to God. In Uchimura’s theology, one encounters God in solitary when all others betray, leave, or mock one: just as Jesus was betrayed by Judas, forsaken by his beloved disciples, and mocked by the mob. This idea of the Bible as one’s only companion is the foundation of Uchimura’s theology. From this conviction, he founded the periodical *The Bible Study* [聖書之研究], and the non-Church movement he developed in later years.

In 1884, the tension between China and Japan over Korea intensified when the pro-Japanese faction’s coup d’état was suppressed by the Korean government with the Chinese army’s assistance. Japan subsequently continued its economic advance into Korea, while the Korean government began to seek a closer relationship to

³⁵ Uchimura, ‘Yobuki no Kenkyū’, pp. 674–5.

³⁶ Uchimura, ‘Kirisuto Shinto no Nagusame’, p. 33.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

China. In 1894, when the Korean government asked the Chinese government for help to quell a revolt, Japan also sent its army to Korea. The revolt was resolved, yet the tension between Japan and China was exacerbated and war broke out in August 1894. Observing this situation, Uchimura argued that this war was a contest between a small country, representing the new civilisation (Japan), and a big country, representing the older civilisation (China). Thus, “the victory of Japan is inevitably guaranteed by history, human progress, and God’s providence.”³⁸ “For the salvation of fifty million people in the neighbouring country, for the spread of the new civilisation, I wish for us to participate in this just war. Our aim shall not be the freedom of Korea alone.”³⁹ Around the same time, he wrote an article entitled, “Justification for the Korean War” [日清戦争の義を論ず], in which he argued that the war is for Japan, a “Just War”. The original article, which was written in English for a periodical, *The Japan Weekly Mail*, was also published in a newspaper, *Kokumin no Tomo* (Friend of Citizens). The editor of *Kokumin no Tomo* sent the article to several prominent newspapers and publishers overseas, and received favourable responses.⁴⁰ Uchimura’s basic argument was that China was not promoting the adaptation of the “new” civilisation (namely, the Western civilisation), and hindering Korea’s progress. Uchimura understood Japan’s “calling” to become the “mediator” between the East and the West, the “Warrior of Progress in the East”.⁴¹ This article, however, later became a source of regret for Uchimura.

The study of the Bible and its publication had been Uchimura’s aspiration ever since he returned from the United States. He especially took the Old Testament to heart from reading its Prophets in his time of hardship in the foreign country. In 1895, the year when the First Sino-Japanese War ended, Uchimura wrote a commentary on the Book of Amos in *Kokumin no Tomo*. The book is attributed to a prophet called Amos, who was a farmer who lived in the Southern Kingdom, Judah, around 760–750 BCE.⁴² Uchimura wrote that Amos was “neither a politician, nor a

³⁸ Uchimura, ‘*Sekai Rekisi ni Sirusite Nissi no Kankei wo Ronzu*’, p. 227.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 227–8.

⁴⁰ Suzuki et al.,

⁴¹ Uchimura, ‘*Nihonkoku no Tenshoku*’, pp. 170–3; Uchimura, ‘*Nisshin Senso no Gi wo Ronzu*’, pp. 213–221.

⁴² Based on the description in Amos 1:1.

cleric, but a farmer,” who may be compared with Uchimura himself.⁴³ In chapters 1 and 2, Amos speaks against the region around Israel and Judah, namely Damascus, Philistia, Tyra, Edom, Ammon, and Moab, before he addresses the two kingdoms. Uchimura compares these countries with China and Korea accusing them of cruelties, “especially when in the 19th century Korea, political opponents are punished by amputation of limbs, and the captives are ill-treated and brutally murdered in China regardless of any treaty.”⁴⁴ However, the main theme of Amos is the prophecy against Israel, which Uchimura obviously compared to Japan.⁴⁵ It is the Japanese, who “have rejected the law of the Lord (2:4)”, “sell the righteous for silver (2:6)”, “father and son go in to the same girl (2:7)”, and “commanded the prophets not to prophesy (2:12).” The poor and the weak are even more oppressed (2:6-7; 4:1), yet the rich becomes richer. This is exactly the description of Japan, Uchimura exclaimed, where virtue and justice are neglected, the rich oppress the poor, sexual immorality prevails, and the righteous are denounced as “traitors” or “threats to law and order”. He pleaded with the righteous people to speak up, and to “seek the Lord”, which is not to say that one should become a Christian, but that one should heed one’s conscience. He ended the article saying sarcastically, “This prophecy of Amos was written in the 9th century BCE in Western Asia, and we have no idea how this relates to the situation in the 19th century Eastern Asia.”⁴⁶

This short contemplation on Amos was the beginning of Uchimura’s critical reflection on Japan and its government. In 1897, Uchimura joined a newspaper company, “Cho Ho Sha,” and wrote columns in English. In one of the early columns, he wrote:

“Japan is the eldest brother in the noble brotherhood of the nations of the Far East. If any one of them is ever to lead them out of its stagnating conservatism of the past thirty centuries or more, Japan must be the one who takes this responsible task upon herself. This we believe to be an infinitely higher task for her to take up than to increase her armament so as to appear

⁴³ Uchimura, ‘*Noufu Amosu no Kotoba*’, p. 246.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 248.

⁴⁵ Uchimura calls Israel “Judah,” yet this is probably a simple confusion of two kingdoms.

⁴⁶ Uchimura, ‘*Noufu Amosu no Kotoba*’, pp. 246–54.

great in the sight of the world.”⁴⁷

In this article, he still held the view that Japan was the “eldest brother” of Asian nations, which more or less persisted throughout his life. This idea, Asianism, argues that Japan should bear the “responsibility” of “salvation” of Asian countries. Japan should go into these countries to “civilise” and to eliminate weak and backward regimes.⁴⁸ In short, Asianism is another word for Japan’s imperialism and its colonial discourse, which is the adaptation of the colonial discourse of the Western powers. He was also a faithful subject of the Japanese emperor, whom he called the “true father of his people”.⁴⁹ Yet his confidence in the government’s policy towards Korea and the justification of the Sino-Japanese War was shattered when he observed how the war came about to simply reveal Japan’s greed and arrogance.

In 1900, he published the first issue of *The Bible Study*, which became his life work. This monthly journal devoted most of the space to commentaries or lectures on the Bible or other issues of faith, but often included Uchimura’s view on public and political issues. The main columnist was Uchimura himself, but some people who agreed with Uchimura’s objective also submitted articles. In the first issue (September 1900) of this journal, Uchimura presented his view on the Bible:

“I have spoken about the Bible in general several times in the past: it is the one and only book in the world, the only authority to save the peoples, with beauty as literature, with value as a philosophy of life. They are so obvious that I do not need to mention here. A civilised person who is not familiar with the Bible is just like a Chinese person who is ignorant of the Analects of Confucius, or a Japanese person who has not memorised the Imperial Rescript on Education. If one does not know the Bible, how could one possibly appreciate the world’s literature?”⁵⁰

This echoes the view often held during the time of colonialism by the West, especially since Uchimura presupposes the supremacy of the Western civilisation, to which the Bible belongs. In fact, “the world” for Uchimura here is nothing but West-

47 Uchimura, ‘Miscellaneous Notes’, p. 97.

48 Iriye, ‘Japan’s Drive to Great-Power Status’, p. 756.

49 Uchimura, ‘Long Live the Emperor!’, pp. 127–8.

50 Uchimura, ‘Seisho no Hanashi’, p. 26.

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(1861–1930)

ern civilisation. Therefore, when he says that the Bible is the only book, he does not mean that the Bible is the only source of knowledge of God. The Bible has its value because it belongs to the greater civilisation. In the same column he says:

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“It is called ‘the Holy Bible’ because the message of God is written in it. It is not to say, however, that God’s message cannot be seen in anywhere else: in fact, the whole universe is revealing God’s will. Thus, any books that contain accurate descriptions of nature reveal God’s will.”⁵¹

In this sense, for Uchimura, Darwin’s *The Origin of Species*, Confucius’ *Analects*, the poetry of Wordsworth, Carlyle’s *The French Revolution* are all gospels, in which one could discern God’s will. Interestingly, there is no Japanese author in this list. This was not because Uchimura despised his country, but because he believed that Japan should adopt Christianity, the spirit of Western civilisation. For example, in his commentary on Genesis 2:24, Uchimura argues that it is “natural” that the love between husband and wife is stronger than one’s filial piety, and that the Chinese Confucian house code is unnatural in its too strong an emphasis on filial piety, and he promotes the “Christian” way of nurturing the relationship between husband and wife.⁵²

When he wrote commentaries he used up-to-date commentaries written in English. Footnotes and bibliographies are largely lacking, partially because Uchimura thought of lengthy bibliographies as “showing off one’s credibility to the readers.”⁵³ Still, it is obvious that he owed much information on biblical studies to British or American scholars: in his commentary on Romans, for example, he gave names such as F. H. Scrivener, John D. Davis, Barnes, Hodge, and Lightfoot.⁵⁴ However, *The Bible Study* was not merely a copy or synopsis of Western biblical scholars’ commentaries. It was devoted to explain the Bible to the Japanese people and to discuss the current affairs of the country; Uchimura did not have any intention to participate in the academia of the Western biblical scholars. Some of the readers and subscribers of this journal belonged to different faith communities yet they came

⁵¹ Uchimura, ‘*Seisho no Hanashi*’, p. 27.

⁵² Uchimura, ‘*Souseiki 1 sho – 8 sho*’, pp. 72–3.

⁵³ Uchimura, ‘*Pauro no Kirisutokan*’, p. 31.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

to respect Uchimura's faith and personality and those readers all over the country became united under the auspices of *The Bible Study*. The Non-Church movement is a Bible study movement, whose centre was this periodical. Through this publication, Uchimura strongly believed that the Japanese would come to know the true Christianity founded on the Bible, which would change the individuals and society. Thus, he audaciously proclaimed that introducing Christianity to the Japanese is "my work of social reform."⁵⁵

RUSO-JAPANESE WAR (1904–1905)

For Japan, which had secured its position in Korea after the Sino-Japanese War, the next obstacle was Russia, which had occupied Manchuria in 1901. Within the Japanese government, some argued that Japan should recognise Russian sovereignty over Manchuria in exchange for Russian recognition of Japanese sovereignty over Korea, since Japan did not have the financial resources to wage another war. Public opinion, however, was largely optimistic and eager for war against Russia, and in 1904 the government finally declared war.⁵⁶

About six months before the declaration, Uchimura wrote an article, "Abrogation of War" [戦争廃止論] in the *Cho-ho-sha* newspaper. This is Uchimura's first essay argued strongly against war based its argument on pacifism. He stated that war is killing people, and killing people is a great sin. Then, he referred to his previous essay, "Justification for the Korean War" as mistaken and arrant nonsense. From this time on, almost every time Uchimura argued against war, he mentioned his older essay and denounced his earlier view.

What changed Uchimura's perspective on war? In "Abrogation of War", he stated that after the Sino-Japanese war, the independence of Korea was weakened, China was in crisis and was being divided up by the Western powers, financial burdens came upon the Japanese people, moral decay permeated Japanese society, and the whole of East Asia was in trouble.⁵⁷ Uchimura later revealed the pacifist influence on him from a journal called *The Springfield Republican*, published in Spring-

⁵⁵ Uchimura, 'Yono Jyūjitsutsuaru Shakai Kairyō Jigyō', p. 114.

⁵⁶ Iriye, 'Japan's Drive to Great-Power Status', p. 776.

⁵⁷ Uchimura, 'Sensō Haisi Ron', pp. 296–7.

field, Massachusetts. Uchimura had subscribed to this journal for twenty years and finally came to agree with its views.⁵⁸ His Asianism, however, was still strong: he argued for spending money on Korea's infrastructure to enlarge the Japanese community there instead of spending money on the war.⁵⁹ It was Japan's duty to civilise the whole of Asia.⁶⁰ However, he denounced any kind of war to achieve this aim. In *The Bible Study*, he rejected the possibility of using the Old Testament to justify a war. The Bible is God's progressive self-revelation, which does not reveal God's absolute will transcending time and space. God did not allow the heroes in the Old Testament to wage war because God approves of a war; it was "because of the hardness of their heart" God overlooked until they learnt it was sin. Matthew 5:38–42 states that with the advent of Christ, retaliation and war are absolutely rejected. One could learn from Joshua or Gideon about faith and obedience, not about war. Christians, by virtue of knowing Christ, stand above Abraham or David in view of war as absolute evil.⁶¹

Ebina, however, disapproved of Uchimura's pacifism as timid submission to Christ, and encouraged Christians to "fight with Christ to build the kingdom of God, by shedding one's blood, breaking one's body, and experiencing all the hardship."⁶² Responding to Uchimura's article, Ebina wrote an article entitled "Biblical Perspective on War" [聖書の戦争主義]. He emphasised the fact that Torah and the most of the Old Testament is the history of war, and nowhere in the Bible, not even in the New Testament, is war prohibited.⁶³ One could read the New Testament and be led towards Pacifism, yet even John the Baptist or Jesus did not tell the Roman soldiers to abandon their profession. In Acts 10, a soldier, Cornelius, was baptised. These observations could be made by any interpreter of the Bible, yet Ebina's genius is his ability to study critically the development of the Scriptures. Ebina argues that a war is inevitable when a nation thrives. Until the kingdom was established, Israel waged war not only for the sake of defence, but also invaded neighbouring peoples in Palestine. When the two kingdoms were sacked, the Jews clung to their religious

⁵⁸ Uchimura, 'Yoga Hisenronsha ni Narishi Riyu', pp. 423–6.

⁵⁹ Uchimura, 'Heiwa no Jitueki', pp. 381–2.

⁶⁰ Uchimura, 'Foreign Policy of Japan Historically Considered', pp. 92–5.

⁶¹ Uchimura, 'Heiwa no Fukuin', pp. 404–9.

⁶² Ebina, 'Kami no Kuni no Hatten', p. 13.

⁶³ Ebina, 'Seisho no Sensou Shugi'.

values and teachings. Thus they said, “Some take pride in chariots, and some in horses, but our pride is in the name of the LORD our God” (Psalms 20:7) Israel lost their homeland this way, and when they returned from Babylon, they did not have national independence, but kept their identity as a religious group. When Jesus was born, there was no hope of independence, and that was not his purpose; his movement was to establish a spiritual, not political, community, and he attempted to achieve this in a non-violent way. However, in the Roman Empire, there was no reason for a soldier to renounce their arms since the empire was thriving, thus Jesus did not commend them to do so. Then Ebina concludes, “If one should oppose war because it is brutal, what about Jesus’ cross? Even the spiritual battle for love was not nice and neat: he went on even his blood was shed and the body was broken.”⁶⁴ The way of Christ was a rigorous and ruthless: Christ even said, “Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword” (Matthew 10:35). What one should see in time of war is the people’s self-sacrifice – the spirit of martyrdom – among soldiers and their families, which could hardly be seen in time of peace.

In the same month when Ebina published his view on war, Uchimura wrote another article entitled “The Words of Christ Cited by Warmongers” [主戦論者に由て引用せらるる基督の言葉], in which he denounced the use of Ebina’s favourite Bible verses, Matthew 10:35ff, as proof text for support of war. Ebina, who many times quoted this passage presumably because this is one of his favourite sayings, did not use this passage simply to say, “Christians can take swords,” but often cited this verse to say that the way of Christ is not for the weak: Ebina’s samurai Christian spirit is summed up in this saying of Jesus. If Uchimura understood that Ebina was justifying a war based on this biblical text, Uchimura misunderstood Ebina. Another Bible verse Uchimura deals with in his article is Luke 22:51–53, where Jesus says: “The one who has no sword must sell his cloak and buy one.” Uchimura says that it is absurd that an international war is promoted based on two statements uttered by Jesus two thousand years ago. He argues that the sword in Matthew passage is the sword of persecution, held by enemies of Christians, not by Christians themselves. In the case of the passage in Luke, Jesus heals the slave of the high priest

⁶⁴ Ebina, ‘*Seisho no Sensou Shugi*’, p. 10.

stricken by his disciple later in the same chapter, which means that Jesus had not meant that his disciples should have literally obtained swords. Moreover, Uchimura continues, if the disciples needed actual swords, only two for twelve disciples were hardly “enough”. Thus Uchimura concludes, “One could not read the Bible with fidelity and piety and justify a war based on these sayings of Jesus.”⁶⁵

Ebina, then, wrote another article, “The Beauty of War” [戦争の美]. According to Ebina, there is “beauty” in human suffering. One could discern it in the Book of Job, as one hears Job’s cry from his soul. There is foremost beauty in the cross of Christ. In the same way, there is beauty in war:

“If we see the Russo-Japanese War from this perspective, we could discern some nobility and beauty. Of course it is unbearable to see human bodies exploding, bloodshed, bones broken, and men and horses collapsing with screams. The battlefield filled with numerous corpses abandoned is a horrifying scene. A war is worse than anything when one encounters these horrors. Nonetheless, my friends, there is something greater than flesh, namely spirit. Where the spirit is vigorous with utmost faithfulness, it is beautiful beyond description. When the soldiers sacrifice their lives, having left families behind, dart into the rain of bullets, crawling over corpses, and fighting with sword against the enemy; at that moment, the spirit’s vigour is nothing less than amazing... This is where the beauty of life evolves.”⁶⁶

The most horrifying scene becomes the utmost beauty in Ebina. This is a rhetorical technique Ebina frequently employed: he deconstructs a common meaning of word or concept, and reconstructs the meaning that fits his purpose. For example, “meekness” in the sermon on the mount (Matthew 5:5), for Ebina, means “meekness to God”. Now, to be meek to God, one has to be healthy, wise, knowledgeable, generous, and strong-willed. In such a way, Ebina re-interpreted Jesus’ saying, “blessed are the meek: for they will inherit the earth,” into “blessed are the healthy, wise, knowledgeable, generous, and strong-willed: they will inherit the earth”!⁶⁷

Throughout the Russo-Japanese War, Ebina and Uchimura held firm to their

65 Uchimura, ‘Shusenronsha ni yotte Inyou seraruru Kirisuto no Kotoba’, pp. 140–9.

66 Ebina, ‘Sensou no Bi’, p. 20.

67 Ebina, ‘Chi wo Uketsugu no Nyūwa’, pp. 12–4.

positions. History, in the short term, seemed to be on the side of Ebina. Even though Japan accrued huge debts from this war, patriotism, militarism, and imperialism were re-affirmed.

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EBINA AND UCHIMURA ON JAPAN AND JAPANESE IMPERIALISM

Ebina and Uchimura were both proud samurai of the modern Japan, and so were deeply patriotic. Both held the Japanese emperor to be their “father” to whom their absolute loyalty was due. Both used Romans 13 to affirm the basic function of the Japanese government.⁶⁸ They admired the “patriotism of the Jewish people,” which they saw and cherished in Psalm 137.⁶⁹ However, their patriotism took two different expressions, and their interpretation of Christianity also developed into very different forms after the Russo-Japanese War.

The Bible for Uchimura gradually became a tool with which he critiqued Japan and its policy. For Uchimura, there were Two J’s to which he was willing to devote his life: Japan and Jesus.⁷⁰ Believing and propagating Christianity was, Uchimura was convinced, the way to save the nation. Japan was full of corruption among politicians, educators, and religious leaders, swindling, bribery, fornication, theft, robbery, murder, syphilis, discord, deception, betrayal. Uchimura saw Isaiah 1:4–6 as the description of Japan:⁷¹

“Ah, sinful nation, people laden with iniquity,
offspring who do evil, children who deal corruptly,
who have forsaken the Lord, who have despised the Holy One of
Israel,
who are utterly estranged!
Why do you seek further beatings? Why do you continue to rebel?
The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint.
From the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness in it,
but bruises and sores and bleeding wounds;

68 Ebina, ‘Romansho’, p. 32; Uchimura, ‘Yudayajin no Aikokuka’, p. 145.

69 Ebina, ‘Marukoden’, p. 55.

70 Uchimura, ‘Sitsubo to Kibou’, p. 228.

71 *Ibid.*, p. 232.

they have not been drained, or bound up, or softened with oil.”

Uchimura called Jeremiah his favourite prophet and a close friend because Jeremiah was just like Uchimura himself: namely, a layperson without any supporters as he prophesied against kings, politicians, military men, religious leaders, and his own people.⁷² At the time of the Russo-Japanese War, Uchimura still argued from the perspective of Asianism — Japan as the leader of Asian countries — yet this notion gradually disappeared from his later writings. In 1909, a year before Japan annexed Korea, he received a report from an American missionary in Korea about how the Korean people were welcoming Christianity. The letter said that Korea would become a Christian country before Japan. Uchimura’s response to this report mixed jealousy and admiration.

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“First, I was happy for Korea about this. They practically lost their land, their government, and independence. In this distressing situation, it is very plausible that merciful God rewarded them with spiritual treasure for their earthly loss... Next, I was sad for Japan. Japan gained much on the earth in past decades: Taiwan, Sakhalin, Manchuria, and practically Korea; yet while gaining them, it lost much spiritually. Morale is declining, morality is decaying, and society is falling apart.”⁷³

Uchimura still hoped to evangelise Japan “by its own people”, unlike Korea, which he said was evangelised by American missionaries.

Another obvious change in Uchimura’s theology was his growing emphasis on Christ’s second coming. This was not a repeat of the millennialism debate, but came from Uchimura’s personal experience of losing his daughter. He was also disillusioned with the Western “Christian” nations that fought with each other in the First World War. Uchimura wrote several essays and articles arguing that the real peace is unattainable in this life but only possible by God through Christ’s second coming. He argued this point by citing Isaiah 2:4:

“He shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples;
they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into prun-

⁷² Uchimura, ‘*Eremiyaki Kansou*’, pp. 493–4.

⁷³ Uchimura, ‘*Chosenkoku to Nihonkoku*’, pp. 414–5.

ing hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.”

According to Uchimura, only when “He”, that is, the Lord, will “judge between the nations and shall arbitrate for many people,” the peace will be established.⁷⁴ Christianity for Uchimura is not the religion of the West any longer; Britain, Germany, France, Russia, and the United States were none of them “Christian” in Uchimura’s eyes. Europe’s warmongering is compared to the deluge in the Old Testament. It is a flood of obsession for war that is covering the entire world. “If the Western civilisation is what witnesses Christianity, Christianity is an evil teaching that generates wars, and not the gospel of the prince of peace.”⁷⁵ To be saved by Christ, in this context, means to hold firm to the principle of non-violence. “I, with Jesus, am free from the poison of war: I do not hate the enemy; I do not support a war; I shall make every effort to restore peace.”⁷⁶ Thus, the war in Europe was God’s punishment to those who immerse themselves in the materialism in pursuit of one’s pleasure of life, following one’s desire of flesh.⁷⁷

Uchimura’s scepticism toward the Western “Christian” countries became unalterable when the United States Congress passed the so-called Asian Exclusion Act in 1924, which restricted Japanese immigration to the United States. Many Japanese went to California as immigrants especially after the Russo-Japanese War, and the United States saw this as Japan’s expansionism, claiming that those Japanese immigrants were not interested in naturalisation. Britain, Japan’s ally, sided with the United States.⁷⁸ Uchimura became enraged upon hearing about this, and he accused the United States for this “insult” against Japan. The May to October 1924 issues of *The Bible Study* were full of columns criticising the United States and its missionaries. Uchimura came to the conclusion that the racist Western countries and civilisation had nothing to do with the “true” Christianity. He denounced the Church, missionaries, and the Western nations, and stood on his own with the Bible.

⁷⁴ Uchimura, ‘*Sekai no Heiwa wa Ikanishite Kurukya*’, pp. 418–24; Uchimura, ‘*Senso no Yamutoki*’, pp. 457–62.

⁷⁵ Uchimura, ‘*Noa no Kouzui wo Omou*’, p. 475.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 476.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 478.

⁷⁸ Iriye, ‘*Japan’s Drive to Great-Power Status*’, p. 779.

He sought Christ alone and found hope in Job 19:25–27.

“For I know that my Redeemer lives, and that at the last he will stand upon
the earth;
and after my skin has been thus destroyed, then in my flesh I shall see God,
whom I shall see on my side,
and my eyes shall behold, and not another.
My heart faints within me!”

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Uchimura was Job, who discovered the hope of redemption, in absolute solitude.⁷⁹

It is often argued that Ebina developed a nationalistic Christianity, or a Shinto-Christianity,⁸⁰ but this is an oversimplification of Ebina’s thought. Ebina never undertook a project of “making a Japanese version of Christianity” for the purpose of propagation. Rather, when he attempted to relate Christianity to Shinto, he did not interpret Christianity from a perspective of Shintoism or Confucianism; on the contrary, he interpreted Shinto and Confucianism from a viewpoint of 19th century-liberal Protestantism and analysed them according to the theory of the History of Religion school (*Religionsgeschichteschule*). What this means is that Ebina’s motivation was neither to promote Christianity as the truth nor to create a Japanese indigenous version of Christianity based on nationalism or tribalism; rather, he embraced the 19th century European colonial discourse, and applied it to Japan’s advancement. His aspiration was to see Japan being “civilised” and become absolute equal to the Western nations in both social structure and territorial expansion, which he understood to be historical inevitability and the only way for the nation’s survival. Therefore for Ebina, Christianity, as well as his interpretation of Shinto and Confucianism, was a tool to achieve this goal.

In 1910, when Japan annexed Korea, Ebina published *Discipline of the New Citizens* [新国民の修養], in which he considered ways of assimilation of the “new citizens” — namely the Korean people — to the Japanese. According to Ebina, Japan originally consisted of several different tribes including the Ainu, the Malay, the Koreans, and the Chinese. To unite all these peoples, the rulers contextualised Buddhism, Confucianism, and Shinto in the Japanese soil to create a tribal myth.

79 Tomioka, *Uchimura Kanzo*, pp. 152–3.

80 Mungil Kim takes this position. See also Furuya, *A History of Japanese Theology*, p. 14.

Ebina wrote, “The Japanese people enslaved Buddhism or Confucianism to form a unified national identity.”⁸¹ However, he held that it was no longer reasonable to force the traditional Japanese identity onto the Korean people. To assimilate them to the Japanese, they should be treated equally as brothers and sisters, who share equal rights and happiness. To achieve this purpose, Christianity should become the tool to evoke the *Weltgeist* to unite them in Japan as one nation. It is Christianity that can possibly serve this cause since Confucianism and Shinto are too narrowly tribal, and Buddhism, though in its original form a world-religion, became indiginized in Japan and lost its universal spirit.⁸²

It is important to clarify that here Ebina is not encouraging the entire population of Japan and Korea to be converted to Christianity through baptism. What he is promoting is the spirit of tolerance, human rights, and individual conscience. Ebina argues that Christianity is a spiritual imperialism. Christ often taught about the Kingdom of God. Christianity is an exclusive and invasive authority submissive to Christ’s religious consciousness. This does not mean, however, that Christianity destroys other religions and enslaves the people of other faiths because every religion, whether it is from heaven or from humanity, contains a grain of truth. When it encounters Christianity, the religion obtains its fulfilment, and the process is the voluntary subjection to the truth, not enslavement. Therefore, the imperialism of Christianity is not destructive, but constructive. It is the Kingdom where the sovereign, “came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28).⁸³

For this purpose, the Japanese people need to realise the honourable character in themselves. Ebina called this character the “new person” [新人], by which he meant the strong sense of conscience and will to obey it.⁸⁴ In 1912, Ebina wrote a book for the Japanese people, *National Morality and Christianity* [国民道德と基督教]. In this book Ebina argues that to be a truly civilised nation, Japan must adapt Christianity, which had been nourishing the Western people. If the National Shinto is not a religion but a way to show respect to the emperor, the ancestors, and the Japan-

⁸¹ Ebina, *Shin Kokumin no Shuyo*, p. 4.

⁸² *Ibid.*, pp. 1–15.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp. 79–83.

⁸⁴ Ebina, ‘*Shin Dotoku no Kiso*’, pp. 8–12.

ese tradition, it should be able to co-exist with Christianity. Shinto is originally an animistic religion, yet the modern Japanese people cannot possibly subject themselves to primitive superstitions such as animism, totemism, or fetishism. As the Korean people welcome Christianity, the Japanese government must change its critical view of Christianity and promote it for the assimilation purpose. Especially the teaching "Love your enemy" will encourage the Korean people not to hold a grudge against the Japanese and to cooperate for the greater cause.⁸⁵

To construct his argument, Ebina approached the Bible selectively. Commenting on Romans 13, he says,

"Christianity affirms that the Great Japanese Empire with its history of two thousands years has its foundation in God's providence and protection. The establishment of the nation is God's will. Therefore, to revere its quality and serve for its prosperity is a duty for those Japanese who honour God. Hence to neglect this duty is insolence to God."⁸⁶

However, he completely rejected the view of the Book of Revelation:

"Some Protestant Christians believe in Jesus of Nazareth not as Christ but as if he was an earthly ruler. The New Testament in fact praises him as a prince on earth. Such Christ inevitably clashes with the emperor. Christ in Revelation was in conflict with the emperor of Rome, and the Messiah in Daniel with the King of Assyria. A Christianity like this cannot avoid a conflict with the fundamental character of Japan. Therefore Christians in the Japanese Empire must reject the political Christ and adopt the Logos Christology."⁸⁷

For Ebina, the Bible is not the greatest revelation of God, but God reveals himself to humans through their conscience.⁸⁸ Thus for Ebina, Christianity is a religion of conscience, and the Bible is always secondary to human experience.

85 Ebina, *Kokumin Dotoku to Kirisutokyo*, p. 146.

86 Ebina, 'Romansho', p. 33.

87 Ebina, *Kokumin Dotoku to Kirisutokyo*, p. 70.

88 Ebina, 'Religion of Conscience', p. 17.

As we have seen so far, Ebina and Uchimura, Christian converts who came from *samurai* families, reached very different conclusions about Japan and its imperialism. *Bushido*, the way of the *samurai*, was originally an art of fighting and killing. When Japan was unified and the society became stabilised, *bushido* became more of a philosophy of life for warriors, yet the interpretations varied since there were no specific sources to define exactly what this philosophy was. Ebina and Uchimura agreed that Christianity and *bushido* were compatible. However, for Uchimura, a *samurai* was a person who abides by justice: he is honest, genuine, and sincere. A *samurai* Christian, for Uchimura, endures any hardship for the sake of justice, standing firm in his principle without being swayed by the opinions of others. Thus, Uchimura persisted in the principle of non-violence, which was for him the way of justice and truth.⁸⁹ For Ebina, a *samurai* is anyone, regardless of their gender and social status, who is of strong will, ready to fight, and willing to undertake self-sacrifice for a larger cause. The most crucial element in *bushido* for Ebina was loyalty, that is the loyalty to the nation, which is patriotism. Christian patriotism, then, is the love for one's compatriots.⁹⁰ Even though their interpretations of *bushido* were diverse, for both of them, the model of the true *samurai* was Jesus Christ.

Coming from this social background, the ruling class of feudal Japan, they took personal interest in the politics and future of the country. For this reason, much of their writings concerned politics, and they applied their Christian faith to understand and improve the current situation of the nation. Their Christianity, therefore, is often marked with an elitist attitude, and attracted many of their own kind. For example, Uchimura was critical of universal suffrage. He compares this democratic movement away from a centralisation of power with the great statue of Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Daniel chapter 2, and he concludes that the movement will bring Japan to the stage of being "partly of clay and partly of iron."⁹¹ The Christianity of these first generation Japanese Christians was a religion of the Western civilisation, and a religion of the elite.

89 Uchimura, 'Bushido to Kirisutokyo', pp. 292–7.

90 Ebina, 'Shin Bushido', pp. 10–4.

91 Uchimura, p. 608.

In post-Second World War academia, Uchimura is the one who is studied and admired, not Ebina. Non-Christian Japanese people know the name of Uchimura, but not Ebina. Historians of Christianity in Japan condemn Ebina's nationalistic Christianity as supporting imperialism and militarism, and thus bearing war guilt, while praising Uchimura's pacifism. This is partly because Japanese imperialism led itself to complete destruction in the Asia-Pacific War, but also because of the dominant role of the theology of Karl Barth in post-war theology in Japan. Ebina's liberal theological framework became a target of criticisms, and especially his "harmonisation" of Christianity with Shinto and Confucianism was condemned by those scholars who call themselves followers of Karl Barth. However, what Ebina attempted was not "harmonisation"; rather, it was an analysis of Confucianism and Shinto from the perspective of the History of Religion school. Ebina discovered the concept of one primal god in seemingly godless Confucianism and seemingly polytheistic Shinto. His argument however, was not simply to say that Christianity and these Japanese traditional religions were compatible, but to argue that Confucianism and Shinto must evolve into their monotheistic phase by leaving the primitive polytheism behind, which is Ebina's conclusion from the perspective of History of Religion. It is not because Ebina was sympathetic to the religious traditions in Japan that he became supportive of Japanese imperialism. Rather, he learnt from and embraced the Western colonial discourse, and the role, which Christianity and the Bible played. He then appropriated the discourse for Japan to colonise the countries in Asia. The way he argued that Christianity should be the tool for Japan's oversea expansion and ruling policy is reminiscent of the colonial West: it was articulated as clearly if not more so. It is also fair to say that 19th century liberal theology, which flourished in Germany and influenced Ebina, was a byproduct of the eurocentrism of modern European thought, and guilty of not containing a critical discourse against the authority of the state and its colonial expansion.

Today, religious conservatism in Europe and the United States in particular can be seen as politically right-wing, intolerant of cultures and religions other than their own. Yet in the case of Uchimura and Ebina, it was the theologically liberal Ebina who became an advocate of Japan's imperialism, while the theologically more conservative Uchimura became a critic. I argue that it is more helpful to seek the reasons

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behind their positions in their experiences and social positionality than in their beliefs. Uchimura experienced a “Western” society at first hand when he studied in the United States. He was rejected by (or he himself rejected) Japanese society and the church in the Imperial Rescript incident. His concept of Non-Church met severe criticisms from the foreign missionaries. All these experiences led him to grow critical of Western society and the Church, and the fact that he did not belong to either a powerful social group or the institutional Church allowed him to maintain his opinions. Ebina, on the other hand, was an authoritative figure in a church denomination, and cooperated with foreign mission societies. His church was a gathering place of the elite, and he held a high opinion of Western civilisation until the end. In both cases, the Bible became a tool to support their political opinions and the stances these two and other leaders took.

The Japanese government did not take up Ebina’s proposal to use Christianity to control both the colonies and homeland, yet it did fully apply the colonial discourse, an appropriation of that of the West. Uchimura, who died in 1930, did not see his nation join another World War like those Western nations he criticised during the First World War. Ebina, who died in 1937, also did not see the full implications of Japan’s imperialist policy, which he strongly supported during his life. For this, we must turn to Christians from the next generation: Kagawa Toyohiko and Yanaihara Tadao, two figures whose names are known both overseas and inside of Japan.

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The historical period I shall discuss in this chapter is one of the most controversial times, which tore apart Japan: namely, Japanese Imperialism and the Asia-Pacific War (1941–1945). I will examine two Christian thinkers' reactions, through their readings of the Bible, to this time of crisis. In particular I shall show how, although they were responding to the same world events from the same country, their readings varied, and they supported the opposite positions: Kagawa Toyohiko supported Japan's war against the United States while Yanaihara Tadao predicted the ruin of the country.

The Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905) turned out to be an unexpected success for Japan, which brought military victories, international prestige, and strengthening of national identity among the populace; it also left Japan with international debts.¹ During World War I, Japan was on the side of the Allies and participated in a few battles in the German concessions in China, but damage from these battles was minor. The impact of the war on Japan was mainly in the form of increased demand for munitions from Japan by the Allies, which provided a boost to Japanese industry and an economic upswing. Workers migrated from rural villages to cities, and a rise in wages was accompanied by a jump in commodity prices. However, when the war ended in 1918 the country was struck by depression. Factories were closed down, and workers were laid off. The Great Kanto Earthquake in Tokyo area in 1923 and the Great Depression in the 1930s aggravated the situation.

While the country thrived from 1900s to 1920s, Japanese churches also experienced stability and peace. The capitalist economy gave birth to the bourgeoisie and the intelligentsia, who were influenced by the discourse on democracy in Europe after World War I and challenged the government based on the foreign theories.

¹ Iriye, 'Japan's Drive to Great-Power Status', pp. 776–7. Iriye writes, "Japan was so poor financially that it had to borrow over 100 million yen in London and New York, an amount that accounted for more than one-third of the total cost of the war..."

They advocated parliamentary government and multi-party politics. Promoting humanism and the respect for individual rights, they campaigned for suffrage for all “men” regardless of their wage or property. Popular movements in the working class also became active. This time of relative freedom and greater political pluralism is called “Taisho Democracy” after the name of the imperial era. Around the same time among Protestants worldwide the ecumenical movements sprung up, culminating in the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910. In this atmosphere, different denominations in Japan cooperated for nationwide evangelism or fellowships. It was also a time when churches were involved in social activism, tackling such issues as poverty and moral decline. This is rather ironic when one realises that during this time the churches in Korea were under surveillance and subject to oppression by Japan, especially after the peninsula was annexed in 1910. There was no official statement from Japanese churches about the violent suppression of the March First Independent Movement in 1919.² The Taisho Democracy only flourished in the shadow of Japanese imperialism.

Many of the second-generation Japanese Protestant theologians were students — or rather “disciples” — of the first-generation theologians such as Ebina Danjo, Uchimura Kanzo, and Uemura Masahisa. By 1910, Japanese professional theologians had appeared and had started to publish academic works. Even though some private universities were founded by missionaries and Japanese Christians in the Meiji period, the most prestigious universities at this time were the state universities. Many of the second-generation Christian scholars attended state universities, which did not have theology departments, and studied Christianity in private, unless they were fortunate enough to go abroad to attend foreign universities or theological schools.³

Another characteristic of the second-generation theologians was their interest in German scholarship. The first-generation Christians were more influenced by American missionaries, though liberal theology was introduced from Germany. Since the Japanese modern education system followed the German model, the Ger-

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² See the discussion in Chapter 2, p.49ff.

³ One of the examples is Hatano Seiichi, who studied at Tokyo Imperial University and went to Germany to further learn about Christianity. He never attended a seminary nor was ordained. See Furuya, *A History of Japanese Theology*, p. 44.

man language was also adopted as the second language in state universities. Naturally, students who went through the state universities extended their education in German academia, whether going to Germany or staying in Japan, and introduced German scholarship to Japan. Christian schools and seminaries chose English to be their second language, and still sent students to the United States to be educated in theological schools.

Uemura Masahisa's seminary, Tokyo Theological Seminary, was an exception to the above tendency. Uemura influenced some students from state universities who were attending his church, as well as the students in his seminary. Uemura encouraged them to learn the German language and British and German theology. Hatano Seiichi (1877–1950) studied philosophy at Tokyo Imperial University and was baptised by Uemura. After two years of study in Germany, where he attended lectures of Adolf von Harnack, Wilhelm Windelband, Johannes Weiss, Ernst Toeltsch, and Adolf Deissmann, to name a few, Hatano came back to Japan and published *The Origin of Christianity* [基督教の起源] in 1908. This work was a result of his studies in Germany, and served as an introduction to German theology for Japanese scholars. He later became a professor at Kyoto Imperial University and taught philosophy of religion while researching and writing. In the area of biblical studies, Watanabe Zenda (1885–1978), who studied in the United States and later in Germany, contributed to the area of Old Testament studies. His interest extended to hermeneutics and the doctrines of the Bible; he thus went to Germany to study with Husserl. Watanabe found canonical and theological reading of the Bible helpful, without completely rejecting historical critical methods. Yamaya Seigo (1889–1982) was a New Testament scholar who was also influenced by Uemura and also by Hatano. Yamaya contributed to the development of New Testament studies in Japan, especially the study of the Pauline theology.⁴

These scholars represent the “main line”, of the study of Christianity in Japan. Their works, which were mainly adaptations of German or Anglo-American theology, were influential in theological studies in Japan. There were, however, other types of Christian scholars and educators, who did not belong to the theological academy of the day, but had greater influences on society. A pioneer of the Young

⁴ Furuya, *A History of Japanese Theology*, pp. 43–82; Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, pp. 266–73.

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Women's Christian Association in Japan, also a founder of Keisen Jo Gakuin (Fountain of Grace Girls' School), and an active speaker in international Christian meetings all over the world, was Kawai Michi (1877–1953). She was one of the most active and influential Christian women of this time. Kawai was a graduate of Bryn Mawr College in Pennsylvania, was also educated at a YWCA leadership training school and at the Union Theological Seminary, both in New York. During the Manchurian incident, which will be discussed in this chapter, she published a book entitled *Japanese Women Speak* (1934) from The Central Committee on the United Study of Foreign Missions in Boston. In the book she addressed Christian women in the United States, explaining the situation of the Japanese Church, while introducing the prominent activists and leaders among Japanese Christian women, who desired peace and promised to pray and do everything they could to promote world peace, particularly peace between Japan and the United States.⁵ Kawai was described in the preface to *Japanese Women Speak* by The Central Committee as "Japan's most international woman," a claim which is substantiated by Kawai's twenty year service as General Secretary of the YWCA in Japan and subsequent speaking tours of the United States, Canada, Siberia, and Manchuria. The book included a vast amount of information on Christian women in Japan and their work, which is now valuable for the historical study of Christianity in Japan. It is obvious from *Japanese Women Speak* that many Christian women were taking leadership positions in Christian education, international Christian organisations, small study groups, or social work such as opening a settlement for women in poverty. Their theology and interaction with Scripture, however, was not published or circulated as text. It is possible to see that they were "practical theologians" in a real sense, and were taking on at least as important a task as the Japanese male theologians who left published works. Two of these, whom I will study in this chapter, were Kagawa Toyohiko and Yanaihara Tadao.

⁵ Kawai & Kubushiro, *Japanese Women Speak*.

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KAGAWA TOYOHICO (1888–1960)

Kagawa Toyohiko is one of the most widely known Japanese Christians. It may not be an exaggeration to say that he is more famous and praised outside of Japan than inside. He was a political activist who lived in a slum, a leader of the labour movement, a novelist, a poet, an entrepreneur, and an evangelist.

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Kagawa's mother was his father's mistress, not his wife. He lost both of his parents when he was four. He then was adopted into his father's house, under the care of the legal wife of his father, yet his life was not easy as he endured a sense of shame towards his father's wife and jealousy on her part.⁶ The family also became bankrupt when Kagawa was still young. During the struggle of his early life, he met the Southern Presbyterian missionaries C.A. Logan (1874–1955) and H.W. Myers (1874–1945), and was baptised by Myers when he was fifteen.⁷ The next year, he matriculated at a high school in Tokyo, but then transferred to a seminary newly opened by Southern Presbyterians in Kobe, where Logan and Myers taught. However, while he was in the seminary, he developed tuberculosis. When he recovered from the illness, Kagawa decided to devote the rest of his life to proclaiming the gospel among the poor, and in 1909 he moved into a slum near the seminary.⁸ Within a few years, he collected a company of people dedicated to the same vision of evangelisation of the poor, and he named this group the "Salvation of Soul Rescue Party" [救霊団]. Shiba Haru, who later married Kagawa, was one of these volunteers. The primary endeavour of Kagawa and the volunteers was the propagation of Christianity among the poor, yet Kagawa also took into his home the sick people who had no-one else to care for them, took care of abandoned babies, and did anything he thought necessary to evangelise the residents in the shantytown.

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What Kagawa did and saw in the slum can be known through his writings, *A Psychological Study of the Poor* [貧民心理の研究] (1915) and *Spiritual movement and Social*

6 Amemiya, *Mazushii Hitobito to Kagawa Toyohiko*, pp. 78–9.

7 Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 286.

8 Amemiya, *Mazushii Hitobito to Kagawa Toyohiko*, pp. 13–7.

movement [精神運動と社会運動] (1919). *A Psychological Study of the Poor*, however, was a strange work, if not outrageous. This book was later severely criticised by activists and people from the *Buraku* as full of prejudice and pejorative against the *Burakumin*.

The *Burakumin* — literally meaning “hamlet people” — are, on the other hand, linguistically and racially no different from the majority of Japanese, yet are politically oppressed. In the past, the *Burakumin* worked as tanners, butchers, or cleaners of latrines, dealing with dead animals, the deceased, or anything “unclean.”⁹

When the Meiji government abolished class distinctions, the *Burakumin* were given a new name, “new commoners” [*Shin Heimin*] rather than “commoners” [*Heimin*], which ensured that the stigma stayed with them. The distinction was visible in each *Burakumin*’s household registration record (*Koseki*) and so could be discovered by anyone. By that time, many *Burakumin* had different occupations that had no connection to the idea of pollution, yet discrimination against the group persisted. The social movements such as, “*Suiheisha*” in the 1920s or the *Burakumin* Liberation League in the 1960s were successful in encouraging the *Burakumin* to resist the prejudice expressed against them.¹⁰

If one starts reading the book having an image of a “saint” Kagawa of the slum,¹¹ the image inevitably collapses by the time one finishes reading it. The book gives an impression that the author is a cold observer, who describes the people in the slum with condescension. On the other hand, it was a fact that Kagawa gave away even his own food and clothing to the needy, earning his living from cleaning the chimneys of a missionary’s house as well as collecting donations for abandoned babies and the sick from Christians in the United States.¹² It is not too much to say, therefore, that one’s understanding of this book determines one’s view on Kagawa’s slum era.

Kagawa had finished writing this book before he left for the United States in August 1914. He tried to publish it before leaving, but succeeded only in 1915, when

9 Roth, ‘Political and Cultural Perspectives on “Insider” Minorities’, p. 75. The purity–pollution model is often used to explain the *Burakumin*.

10 *ibid.*, p. 65; Joy Hendry, *Understanding Japanese Society*, p. 108.

11 This image can be found for example in Germany, *Protestant Theologies in Modern Japan*, p. 34.

12 Amemiya, *Mazushii Hitobito to Kagawa Toyohiko*, p. 103.

he was in Princeton. Kagawa divided the book into three sections: A study on the human beings who are in poverty; the influence of poverty on the human mind; and a study on the human mind in poverty. In the earlier section on the history of poverty, a reader realises the prejudiced nature of the book when the hunter-gatherers of the Americas and Africa are categorised on a same level as great apes. They are called “barbarians,” who are content with poverty as their lifestyle and are not interested in improving it.¹³ The reader would also be taken aback by the following section about “poverty in the life of animals.” Natural science was Kagawa’s lifetime interest, in which he educated himself, and his fragmentary knowledge is used to support the evolutionary view on human society. It is rather difficult to understand his intention when the book is full of derogatory language. He calls those who have intellectual disabilities or mental illness a “lower race” or “malignant race”, whom he believes should be segregated and prohibited from marrying.¹⁴ Yet what was later considered most problematic of this book was the fact that Kagawa regarded the origin of the *Burakumin* as a “racially different group” distinct from the rest of the people in Japan.¹⁵ Kagawa says that some of the *Burakumin* (he uses the derogatory word for them, “Eta”) retain a Chinese accent or use some Korean words while others have “white skin” like Caucasians.¹⁶ He calls the Chinese and Koreans a “different race” from the Japanese. His disclaimer, “I do not say this condescendingly,” does not carry much weight as he insists that “many of them (the *Burakumin*) are overweight, generally taller than *the standard Japanese*, and *don’t they have different emotions from the Japanese?* Passionate, regardless, cooperative, solidarity, and jealous – do these emotions only originate from their circumstances? Are they not something tribal?”¹⁷ Further more, he calls the *Burakumin* “the criminal race in the Japanese Empire,” who are a “degenerate or slavish kind of Japanese, an archaic and primitive people.”¹⁸

Many Japanese Christian historians today have struggled to reconcile the view of Japan’s most prominent Christian activist and the derogatory language and pre-

¹³ Kagawa, *Hinmin Shinri no Kenkyū*, pp. 7–8.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 25–6.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 44. Italics added.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

judice permeating *A Psychological Study of the Poor*. Although some scholars admit that Kagawa's descriptions of the *Burakumin* were scientifically wrong (i.e., his understanding of the *Burakumin* as a different race) and warn the reader of Kagawa's prejudice, most of them try to "save" Kagawa by ignoring much of the content of the book,¹⁹ or by saying that Kagawa's motivation to live in the slum is still admirable.²⁰ There are, on the other hand, those who reduce Kagawa to a person of harmful prejudice and disregard his other activities.²¹

One reason for his prejudiced views is the attitude of the society of the time toward those who have less power to express themselves: people whose voices were hardly heard. This is not the problem just in Japan, but discernible in the writings from the other parts of the world. For example, in a book published in 1912, *The Religion and Ethics of Tolstoy*, Alexander H. Craufurd states, "One must, I think, also concede to writers like Nietzsche that it is not desirable to encourage the physically and mentally unfit to produce offspring, though of course it is impossible in many cases to prevent them from doing so." In another place he says, "The wise have a right to treat the ignorant as children to a great extent, but they ought to endeavour to educate them gradually, and not merely to suppress or trample upon them, as Nietzsche would do."²² The statement in this book is worth our attention since Tolstoy was one of Kagawa's favourite thinkers. Kagawa's mistake and indeed, "guilt" is the fact he embedded his discrimination in the discourse of social and cultural evolution, which was often employed by the colonial powers to justify

19 See Sumiya, *Kagawa Toyohiko*.

20 See Muto, 'Kaisetsu' and Amemiya, *Mazushii Hitobito to Kagawa Toyohiko*, p. 118. Amemiya attempts to defend Kagawa, who, Amemiya claims, was among the poor, and wrote the book while praying for them. He also claims that Kagawa kept looking at the issue from "the perspective of the people in the bottom," which, it seems to me, was not the case at all.

21 The Kirisuto Shinbun sha, which published *Kagawa Toyohiko Zenshū* [The Complete Works of Kagawa Toyohiko], later published *Kagawa Toyohiko Zenshū to Buraku Sabetsu* as a supplement to vol. 8, which includes *Hinmin Shinri no Kenkyū* [A Psychological Study of the Poor]. After the publication of *Zenshū*, the publisher, Kirisuto Shinbun sha received criticism from those who work for the liberation of the *Burakumin* about the publication of *Hinmin Shinri no Kenkyū*. There were several meetings between the publisher and *Buraku* activist groups, which led the publisher and editors of the book to admit that the *Hinmin Shinri no Kenkyū* was "prejudiced literature." This supplement consists of a selection of Kagawa's chapters in *Hinmin Shinri*, a list of Kagawa's "derogatory" remarks in his books, the record of correspondence between the publisher and the activist groups who criticised the publication of the vol. 8, and the discussion articles. The contributors to this book tend to focus on the negative aspect of Kagawa's words and attitudes, partially due to the scope of the publication.

22 Craufurd, *The Religion and Ethics of Tolstoy*, pp. 25–6.

their invasion and exploitation of pre-industrial societies.

Without having to await the criticism of historians, Kagawa was confronted by *Burakumin* among his contemporaries. *Suiheisha* was an organisation newly formed by the *Burakumin* themselves for their own liberation, and Kagawa knew the leaders of this group well. They had an amicable relationship in the beginning, yet later *Suiheisha* criticised Kagawa over *A Psychological Study of the Poor*, and Kagawa apologised to them. This incident is recorded in one of Kagawa's novels, *Setting Up the Stone Headrest* [石の枕をたてて], in which Kagawa wrote that he intended to leave *A Psychological Study* out of print. On the other hand, Kagawa criticised *Suiheisha*'s approach as "the gospel of hatred against the oppressor." In Kagawa's theology and activism, there was no room for defiance; just as he himself was a pacifist and submitted to any kind of violence against him, he hoped the people of *Buraku* would be a group of love, service, and pacifism. Yet, Kagawa was not *Burakumin* himself, and had no right to tell those people who they were and what they ought to do. Kagawa and *Suiheisha* parted company, and Kagawa was never again involved with the movement.²³

Kagawa in the
Slum

Yet another possible reason for the prejudiced description of the poor may have come from Kagawa's sense of desperation hoping and working for the improvement of the situation in the slum. Kagawa was well aware that poverty is not simply a result of the poor being "lazy," but there are multiple reasons for poverty including social, political, and historical factors. Yet, living with the poor, he also had to face the reality of some of them being heartless, shameless, and even cruel just as the people anywhere could be, yet some cases were worsened by the lack of financial security of the people involved. One of the most difficult situations Kagawa faced in the slum was killing of adopted babies. In one case he saw in a newspaper, a couple without children who were trying to obtain a kitten, were given a baby-girl instead, being told, "A human baby is much cuter than a kitten." The person who gave the baby disappeared, leaving the reluctant couple and the baby. They did not take good care of her, whom they never wanted in the first place, and the police found the baby in a terrible condition.²⁴

²³ Kagawa Toyohiko *Zenshū to Buraku Sabetsu*, pp.18, 71.

²⁴ Kagawa, *Hinmin Shinri no Kenkyū*, p. 66.

No matter how much Kagawa hoped to improve the situation, he could not take care of all the babies from the slum. Yet, these heartless incidents occur because of poverty, which puts the poor in an inescapable web of contingency that keeps them poor. He also writes that if he had been born as a girl in a slum, he would doubtlessly have become a prostitute because not only is the life of a prostitute better than trying to earn a living in a slum, but also a fair-looking girl in a slum would almost inevitably become a victim of rape.²⁵ There was incest,²⁶ violence,²⁷ fighting,²⁸ children were abused and sold,²⁹ and bedbugs were biting all year around, especially in summer when Kagawa spoke of killing “40 to 50 bedbugs around my pillow.”³⁰ Gang member also often harassed him, demanding money in the knowledge that Kagawa held a position of absolute non-violence.³¹ In the midst of all these things, Kagawa believed that Christianity would change the characters of the poor, which would help to fight against the poverty. He was by no means evangelising the poor for them to enter into “heaven” after life; his chief concern was the improvement of the socio-economic situation of the poor, and he exclaims at the end of the first section, “Is there any way out of this socially locked-up state of poverty? Yes, there is! That is, the improvement of the characters of the poor — education and religion, as well as eugenics.”³² Kagawa’s effort, however, seemed to bear little fruit.³³ Discouraged, Kagawa puts heavier emphasis on eugenics towards the end of the book, in which he discloses his belief that some people are “hereditarily” or even “racially” problematic and inferior.³⁴ His “prejudice” may be explained — though certainly not justified — by the fact he was “burned-out.” In fact, it may have been Kagawa who needed a “psychological analysis.”

One last aspect of Kagawa’s thought that needs to be mentioned in relation

25 Kagawa, *Hinmin Shinri no Kenkyū*, p. 192.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 93.

27 *Ibid.*, p. 165.

28 *Ibid.*, pp. 185–92.

29 *Ibid.*, pp. 128, 192.

30 *Ibid.*, p. 93.

31 Amemiya, *Mazushii Hitobito to Kagawa Toyohiko*, p. 102.

32 Kagawa, *Hinmin Shinri no Kenkyū*, p. 66.

33 Amemiya, *Mazushii Hitobito to Kagawa Toyohiko*, pp. 103, 108. Amemiya cites testimonies of the people who worked with Kagawa.

34 Kagawa, *Hinmin Shinri no Kenkyū*, pp. 258–60.

to his attitude to the poor in the slum is his Christology. Jesus Christ, especially as the person of Jesus of Nazareth, was the most important aspect of Kagawa's Christian faith. He studied and wrote much on Jesus: *A History of the Study of Christ* [キリスト論争史] (1913), *The Religion of Jesus and its Truth* [イエスの宗教とその真理] (1921), *Jesus and Philanthropy* [イエスと人類愛の内容] (1923), *Jesus in the Gospels* [福音書にあらわれたるイエスの姿] (1923), *Jesus' Inner-life* [イエスの内部生活] (1924), *Christ's Sermon on the Mount* [キリストの山上の垂訓] (1927), *Meditation on the Cross* [十字架についての瞑想] (1931), *Meditation on Christ* [キリストについての瞑想] (1932), and *Christ: a Novel* [小説:キリスト] (1938). Most of these writings were published in 1920s and early 30s, yet Kagawa's interest — almost an obsession — in Jesus as a person unfurled earlier. Throughout these writings, he did not have much to say on Jesus' resurrection or ascension; his focus was on the life and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth. Kagawa's Jesus was a human, yet the most beautiful and dignified human being that ever lived on earth.

The History of Study on Christ is mostly Kagawa's interpretation of Albert Schweitzer's *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* and other works of some British New Testament scholars. He did not write this, however, to understand the trend of the New Testament studies of his time. Since this "study" is the first of his books on Jesus, it is natural to understand that he tried to understand "Jesus", not the current of European New Testament studies. This book is the first and last time when Kagawa relied on Western biblical scholars in his writings. In *Jesus and Philanthropy*, Kagawa already distanced himself from the Western Christian tradition and the Christianity of the Church by rejecting a High Christology.

"Was God in Jesus' teaching an abstraction, which has nothing to do with our daily life? If that's God, then God really has nothing to do with the world of relentless battles... It is the sin of the Church who misunderstood Jesus' teachings. Jesus taught the God who has much to do with today's social movements."³⁵

"How is the Christian Church today? Indeed, they criticise a petty sin such as stepping on someone's foot, yet they do not criticise a more great and terrible one — the great sin of capitalism! — they are utterly silent about

³⁵ Kagawa, *Iesu to Jinruiai no Naiyou*, p. 240.

it.”³⁶

“If Jesus was made to be a God to whom one can hardly approach, people cannot find him warm. If one conceives Jesus as on the same level as us, namely as a human, and look at his wisdom, compassion, and will, Jesus will approach toward us with the warmest feeling.”³⁷

*Kagawa in the
Slum*

Before *Jesus and Philanthropy*, Kagawa had already begun to form his view of Jesus, which was revealed in *The Religion of Jesus and its Truth*.

“The religion of Jesus has an expertise: Jesus limited his religious vocation to the sick, the weak, the poor, the lost, and the sinners.”³⁸

“There is a great mystery in the universe. I discovered a religion in the act of giving up my life for the weak and poor. The spirit of the Cross! What is most urgent is to understand and live for this. That is to say, Jesus was not merely a challenger to the evil in the universe, yet he identified his vocation as a personal caretaker, who bandages the suffering and heals the wounded.”³⁹

For Kagawa, Jesus’ cross is an “elder brother’s agony for the redemption of the younger brothers.”⁴⁰ Kagawa understood the redemption is Christ’s apology to the Heavenly Father on behalf of humanity as a whole. If that is the case, then, what should be the response of the “younger brothers”? That is to be formed into an entirely new person according to the model of Jesus Christ, the elder brother. Kagawa’s motivation to live in the slum or to do anything he does in the rest of his life ultimately came from this earnest desire to conceive the image of Christ within him and become just how Jesus was to the world. In the preface to *Jesus in the Gospels*, Kagawa exclaims this ultimate purpose of his life:

“Neither stern nor quiescent; but courageous and loving; strong and a friend of the weak; the model for humanity; the teacher of the teachers, eternally young and eternally shining — Jesus Christ! I adore his image born in

³⁶ Kagawa, *Iesu to Jinruiai no Naiyou*, p. 292.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 318.

³⁸ Kagawa, *Iesu no Shukyo to Sono Shinri*, p. 154.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 192.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 196.

my heart... Even if I would not be able to become God, I wish to become a victor in the spiritual world, like Jesus. Nay, I want to be someone who would give for the weak to be a victor like Him... Deposit in me the image of Jesus! ... Read me the Gospels yet one more time!"⁴¹

*Kagawa in the
Slum*

In other words, his understanding of the Christian faith is to be formed and re-formed into the likeness of the redeemer, Jesus Christ. Kagawa firmly believed that, by taking on Christ's character, each person should and could become a saviour to the others. His relentless effort and devotion to the social movements throughout his life undoubtedly came from this conviction. Yet, the flip side of the coin is that he put himself on a pedestal as a "saviour," whom he often described as "a person who would wipe off a brother's bottom," and saw a group of the poor as those who ought to be saved. Here, he was among the poor, yet there opened a yawning gap between the "saviour" and "the saved."

Kagawa did not consider himself a "Japanese St Francis of Assisi," which is clear as he mentions the Franciscan order in the section dealing with the causes of poverty. Kagawa argues that often a religion becomes a cause of poverty, when it encourages one to become a beggar. Kagawa says that it is not only Christian monastic traditions that are guilty of perpetuating poverty but also other religions such as Islam and Judaism, and he criticises the charity work of monastic orders in mediæval Europe.⁴² In *A Psychological Study of the Poor*, Kagawa neither celebrates nor, at least at this point, romanticises poverty. His only aim is to eradicate it: that is, to improve health conditions for the poor, secure their jobs, provide bank loans. For those who are vagrant and will not work, Kagawa argues that there should be a law to compel them to work.⁴³ Kagawa also promotes religious teachings: having rejected the monastic tradition of poverty, what he means here must be Protestant Christianity, which has a strong work ethic, just as Max Weber pointed out the regulated and disciplined lifestyle inherent in Protestantism. Even though he lived among them, Kagawa always refers to the poor in the slum as "they" and never uses the first person pronoun "we." Kagawa was neither one of them nor belonged to the slum. He considered himself always distinguished from, and even "higher than" the others

⁴¹ Kagawa, *Fukuinsho ni Arawaretaru Iesu no Sugata*, pp. 407–8.

⁴² Kagawa, *Hinmin Shinri no Kenkyū*, p. 18.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

in the slum. By homogenising the group and making them the object of his study, Kagawa, whether he was aware of it or not, was engaged in a process of othering — making the *Burakumin* “the Other” in contrast with “normal” Japanese such as himself. Moreover, by indicating that the *Burakumin* origin was the Koreans and the Chinese, Kagawa managed to assert the superiority of “normal” Japanese over the other Asian nationals, thus making the Asian neighbours the Other according to the imperial discourse of Japan.

*Labour
Movement and
Christian
Socialism*

LABOUR MOVEMENT AND CHRISTIAN SOCIALISM

In 1914, Kagawa went to the United States, and studied at Princeton University. One of the major reasons for this move may have had come from the fact his evangelism in the slum had reached a dead end. He received a Bachelor of Divinity degree in May 1916, but financial difficulty delayed his return to Japan, and he worked as a waiter to earn enough money for the trip.⁴⁴ In August, Kagawa was in New York, where he encountered a crowd of labourers demonstrating on the street. Kagawa had already come to see the limitations of charity work in tackling the problem of poverty: thus the demonstration impressed and inspired him.⁴⁵ Later that year, he moved to Ogden, Utah, to work for a group of Japanese immigrants, and in April 1917, he led a successful strike of this group of Japanese workers and a group of Mormons.⁴⁶ When he returned to Japan in May, Kagawa returned to the slum, but his focus shifted from evangelism to the labour movement.

Kagawa later recalled the shift in *Brotherhood Economics*:

“After nearly five years in the slums I came to America and studied at Princeton. When I returned to Japan after two years of study I changed my tactics. I began to organise labour unions. Unless there was a change in economic systems, I thought, it was completely hopeless to combat the slums.”⁴⁷

The year he returned to Japan, 1917, was the year the Soviet Union was formed as the

44 Amemiya, *Mazushii Hitobito to Kagawa Toyohiko*, p. 126.

45 Sumiya, *Kagawa Toyohiko*, pp. 50–1.

46 Amemiya, *Mazushii Hitobito to Kagawa Toyohiko*, p. 126.

47 Kagawa, *Brotherhood Economics*, p. 12, cited by Germany, *Protestant Theologies in Modern Japan*, p. 46.

first government of the labourers and farmers. Four months after his return, Kagawa was invited by *Yūaikai* [友愛会] to give a lecture on his experiences in the United States in relation to the labour movement. *Yūaikai* (Japan Labour Union *Yūaikai* [大日本労働総同盟友愛会]) was a labour mutual-benefit society, and Kagawa was appointed as a leading member of *Yūaikai*'s Western Japan Labour League as the headquarters of *Yūaikai* was in Tokyo (Eastern Japan). In 1919, he published a collection of essays, *The Veneration of Labourers* [労働者崇拜論], which begins with the sentence, "Labourers know their dignity. They have enough reason to be venerated."⁴⁸ In this book, Kagawa's view of labourers and poor people was much more romanticised than the time of *A Psychological Study of the Poor*. In the earlier book, he introduces a man called, "Yasu," who was always ready to help anyone until he spent all he had, at which point he came to Kagawa to borrow money to help more people. Kagawa calls him, a "degenerate altruist" [変質の他愛病].⁴⁹ In the later book, however, he described the same person in a much more positive way: "Yasu took care of about seventeen homeless people in a year even when he went hungry himself...his showed unconditional love to all: he poured his love onto a sick hen, and a dog that lost a leg after being run over by a train found friendship with him. A labourer by nature obtains the virtue of altruism."⁵⁰ Also in the earlier work, Kagawa was frustrated with, and almost despised, the lack of education among the poor. However, In *The Veneration of Labourers*, he writes:

"They say that the labourers are no use because they lack education. Yet think about this: the science that produces cannons, the study that robs colonies, the philosophy and arts that are the capitalists' toy — what use do they have? [What kind of use does it have to study biology that teaches killing and economics that teaches survival of the fittest? I am proud of my lack of education! Set fire on all the science of the past. What is the use of the science, which judges, condemns, forgets to save the sinners, and teaches hate instead of love in the name of law and politics? The labourers cannot be muddled by the useless and pointless evil culture.] He is unlearned. He is not knowledgeable — not knowledgeable of the science of all the de-

48 Kagawa, *Rōdōsha Sūhiron*, p. 3.

49 Kagawa, *Hinmin Shinri no Kenkyū*, p. 151.

50 Kagawa, *Rōdōsha Sūhiron*, p. 35.

struction and corruption. The labourers know one way: that is, the way of creation and production.”⁵¹

Here, the working class is Kagawa’s idealised group of people. He also writes:

“The instinct of those who produce is in creation. Creators love peace. The labourers do not desire the war; the military cliques do. The labourers despise all the conflicts: they despise the strike turning into chaos, sabotage, and boycott. The producers love peace. Creators desire to create peace, and desire to make happiness to all humankind.”⁵²

Kagawa argued that in the growing capitalism, a worker cannot live as a person, but becomes mere material or less, thrown around by the desire of the capitalists. To liberate the workers, the economical system needs to be constructed around the life of people, not around profit. He encouraged the workers’ political confrontation with the capitalists, yet did not support violent revolution. Kagawa rejected the growing Communism that argues for the dictatorship of the proletariat and use of violence, which Kagawa thought ignored human freedom and dignity. He writes, “I believe in intellectual revolution alone; other revolutions are all fake, and they lead humanity into the state of animals. Violent resistance is the only fruit, and pilage the flower. I laugh at all the -isms and policies of this kind as solutions to social problems.”⁵³ A society born of violence is a society of domination: there is no freedom in such a society. What Kagawa aspired to was the restoration of the dignity and rights of the workers through the labour union, and the first step for it was for the labourers to live the life imprinted with love—love not only for each other, but even for the capitalists.⁵⁴

In 1920 Kagawa published an autobiographical novel about his life in the shantytown, *Crossing the Deadline* [死線を越えて], which became a bestseller and made Kagawa’s name widely known. He subsequently published several novels and used most of the royalties in support of the labour movement. However, Kagawa’s in-

⁵¹ Kagawa, *Rōdōsha Sūhiron*, p. 4. The sentences in brackets were censored at the time of publication in 1919.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 10–1.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 16–8.

involvement in the labour unions soon faced a difficulty. There was a law restricting the right to form associations or to strike, and the labour unions were never acknowledged by the capitalists or by the government. To change this situation and reflect the workers' voice in politics, Kagawa and the leaders of the unions demanded government acknowledgement of the unions and the workers' right to vote. The government, however, suppressed this movement, and some union leaders began to hold a more radical view of revolution, and criticised the impracticability of Kagawa's theory. As a result, Kagawa lost his footing in the unions, and left the movement. For the education of the labourers and the farmers, he continued the Labour Farmer Gospel School Movement, which he had started with Sugiyama Motojiro (1885–1964) and established in Osaka Labour School in 1922 and the Kobe Labour School in 1924.⁵⁵ By 1932, there were seventy-three schools across the country.⁵⁶ He also organised All-Japan Peasants Union with Sugiyama in 1922.⁵⁷ The Farmers' Evangelical Schools, founded by Kagawa and Sugiyama with the cooperation of the National Christian Council of Japan (NCC) functioned as nurseries during the busy farming season, and schools for the farmers in winter.⁵⁸ In 1923, he moved to Tokyo to participate in a rescue team in the aftermath of the Great Kanto Earthquake.

What drove Kagawa to this life of action and compassion? In the early part of his life, one could point to Tolstoy's writings as the most influential on Kagawa's thinking. Tolstoy is certainly the root of Kagawa's pacifism, asceticism, devotion to the poor, and emphasis on the life of Christ. What was lacking in Tolstoy and present in Kagawa was the redemption through the life and death of Christ.⁵⁹ Kagawa is not interested in the theological definition; his emphasis is on its consequence. For Kagawa, Jesus himself was the incarnated redemptive love, and the fact that Jesus took the blame of the world upon himself is so powerful and moving that a person who encounters this fact cannot but become a follower of Jesus. In following Jesus,

55 At that time of Kagawa's involvement with the work among the farmers, Kawai Michi wrote, "Nearly one-half of the population of Japan works on farms. Here is the largest unreached field (by Christianity)." See Kawai & Kubushiro, *Japanese Women Speak*, p. 49.

56 Germany, *Protestant Theologies in Modern Japan*, p. 47.

57 *Ibid.*, p. 46.

58 Kawai & Kubushiro, *Japanese Women Speak*, pp. 50–1.

59 Amemiya, *Mazushii Hitobito to Kagawa Toyohiko*, pp. 230–5.

this person would come to bear the same task as Jesus undertook for the continuous redemption of the world. The knowledge of this love grows when one participates in loving action, which involves suffering. For Kagawa, the participation in redemptive love was a social action instead of individual virtue or personal growth. In this lifestyle, theology in a cognitive sense becomes secondary to organised social action for the poor and oppressed.

The Great Kanto Earthquake and the Kingdom of God Movement

THE GREAT KANTO EARTHQUAKE AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD MOVEMENT

The earthquake that struck the Tokyo area on 1st September 1923 caused the deaths of more than 100,000 people and, together with the subsequent fire, destroyed over 200,000 buildings and houses.⁶⁰ On hearing the news the next day, Kagawa organised the young people who were working with him into a rescue team.⁶¹ He arrived in Tokyo on the 4th, returned to Kobe, where he lived, reported the damage and began visiting the churches for donations.⁶² Sending relief and people to Tokyo, Kagawa decided to move to Tokyo himself to found a settlement in the most damaged area, Honjo. On 18th October, Kagawa and his family arrived in Tokyo. His motivation then was very similar to when he moved to the shantytown in Kobe, yet now he was the Kagawa of *Crossing the Deadline*, the Kagawa of the labourers' and farmers' movement, and the famous evangelist Kagawa. There were a group of people who gathered to support him and worked for the same cause in the settlement.⁶³ He stayed in the settlement, speaking in churches and meetings, until trachoma threatened his sight and nephritis afflicted him, which eventually forced him to move to a house near the settlement.⁶⁴

Kagawa was often critical of the established church and churchgoers, who had little interest in social issues. In 1923, however, the Protestant churches and or-

⁶⁰ In the aftermath of the earthquake, there was mob violence against the Korean people living in Tokyo, and more than 6,000 Koreans were killed.

⁶¹ Amemiya, *Mazushii Hitobito to Kagawa Toyohiko*, p. 265.

⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 266–7.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, pp. 267–72. "Settlement" is a movement to live in a area to promote and aid education and health for the better quality of life. Kagawa learnt of and was inspired by the London movement of Toynbee Hall, where some students from Oxford and Cambridge Universities came to live for the improvement of labourers' lives in the area.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 269–74.

ganisations set up the National Christian Council of Japan (NCC) [日本キリスト教協議会]. Under this inter-denominational organisation, social issues finally came to be considered by the established churches. Having graduated from the Kobe Theological Seminary, Kagawa was an ordained minister of the Church of Christ in Japan [日本基督教会], but his work had been carried out by Kagawa himself and volunteers, free from any influence of the church denomination. With the establishment of the NCC, this relationship between Kagawa and the churches changed. In 1929, the NCC meeting was held on the occasion of the visit to Japan of John Raleigh Mott (1865–1955), the chairperson of the International Missionary Council and later recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize (1946). At this meeting, in which about 4000 Christians gathered,⁶⁵ it was decided that the churches in Japan should cooperate inter-denominationally for the purpose of evangelism. This was the beginning of the Kingdom of God Movement [神の国運動], and Kagawa was appointed one of its leading figures. The Kingdom of God Movement was a nationwide evangelistic campaign whose slogan was “Bring a million souls for Christ.” Before 1929, Kagawa was already openly speaking about the vision of mass evangelism, but he only gained solid support when Mott found out about Kagawa and showed his interest and support for Kagawa’s vision.⁶⁶ The first period of the movement ended in 1932, and during these three years, Kagawa went to churches all over Japan to preach and lecture. As mentioned before, by this time he was a well-known novelist, and people gather to hear Kagawa everywhere he went. When Kagawa came to work with the churches, however, the focus on the poor and labourers had to be compromised as the movement targeted the masses in general. Nonetheless, NCC also supported Kagawa’s Farmers Evangelical Schools during the Kingdom of God movement, and the movement itself drew a total audience of 230,000.⁶⁷ After the success of the first year, the movement was extended for another two years.

65 Amemiya, *Kurai Tanimi no Kagawa Toyohiko*, p. 113.

66 *Ibid.*, pp. 124–5.

67 Kawai & Kubushiro, *Japanese Women Speak*, p. 29.

Because of Kagawa's special interest in the poor and his close relationship with them, one may suppose that he was a "liberation theologian" before liberation theology gained attention in Latin America. However, this view is anachronistic, and does not do justice either to Kagawa or to liberation theology. It is true that Kagawa was concerned with the issue of poverty and fought against the tyranny of rising capitalism in Japan. Another similarity between Kagawa and liberation theology is that both held that the praxis is the first act, though in Kagawa's case, he did not theorise in this way but acted out what liberation theologians described about this cycle of praxis-contemplation-praxis. Kagawa was a man of action, and his theological concerns always came from his experience in the particular context, whether that may be the shanty town or the labour movement.⁶⁸ He was also aware that "sin" is not merely personal, but often manifests itself through systems and organisations in a society.⁶⁹ From Kagawa's theology, however, "the preferential option for the poor" is not prominent, which may be the reason why he could shift his focus from the poor and working class to the populace in general, though he might say that the poor and the labourers would benefit if society in general could be improved. Behind his actions and theology, there was another extreme influential figure: Leo Tolstoy.⁷⁰ Tolstoy was one of the most quoted and mentioned authors in Kagawa's writings. It was Tolstoy's asceticism that influenced Kagawa in his move to live among the poor. His emphasis on the Gospels and the life of Christ is also akin to that of the Russian author.

Tolstoy regarded the Sermon on the Mount highly and thought it should be applied literally.⁷¹ Kagawa also writes in his commentary to the Sermon on the Mount (1927), "[The Sermon on the Mount is] the supreme standard of human actions and the best model for human arts. All religions find the quintessence in it, and all charitable movements find the beginning and the end there. ... I and my work do not go

68 Kagawa, *Jyūjika ni Tsuite no Meisou*, p. 169. Kagawa wrote, "Doctrines are valuable only as to explain the praxis. It is easy to stay in a study alone; yet, it is difficult to live among the poor and walk alongside of the farmers and labourers."

69 E.g., see Kagawa, *Jinrui eno Sengen*, pp. 267–73.

70 I owe Eiichi Amemiya on this point. See Amemiya, *Seishun no Kagawa Toyohiko*.

71 Craufurd, *The Religion and Ethics of Tolstoy*, p. xi.

beyond Jesus' Sermon on the Mount."⁷² "When I listen to it repeatedly, I feel that I can see the whole world revive. It is the best fertiliser for a soul as well as the best art for a conscience."⁷³ He understands that in the Beatitudes, poverty, mourning, meekness, and hunger (Matthew 5:3–6) are passive virtues, whereas mercy, purity, peace, and suffering persecution (5:7–10) are active. The conclusion and culmination of these virtues is to stand up for Christ's sake in spite of persecution (5:11–12). Each virtue in the passive group and active group alternatively leads one to higher virtue up to the cross: poverty in spirit leads one to mercy, mercy to mourning, mourning to purity in heart, purity to meekness, meekness to peace, peace to justice, and finally, the cross.⁷⁴ Therefore, poverty and mercy are lesser virtues to peace and justice. Matthew 5:38–42, "turn the other cheek and go the second mile" has practical significance. If one goes the second mile when told to go a mile, the person is teaching the one who ordered what it means to love the neighbour and to serve in society. Secondly, if one goes another mile, the person is serving in the society, which is an organic system, thus the benefit comes back to the person in some way. It is also the way to morally perfect oneself.⁷⁵ The teaching, "Love your enemies" also has a practical benefit to the society, in which the existence of enemies contributes to the synthesis and progress, since Christ's love for enemies came from a sense of altruism, which makes a healthy society.⁷⁶ Matthew 6:19–34 is teaching the eighth commandment and tenth commandment of the Decalogue, which are communal rules, and practising them would promote a just and loving society.⁷⁷

Kagawa, however, was not complacent with thoughts of Tolstoy. He writes, "Tolstoy believed that the Sermon on the Mount is what makes Jesus 'Christ', yet the Sermon itself has much in common with the teachings of Mozi in China."⁷⁸ What Kagawa found that Tolstoy did not emphasise is the "redemptive love" of Christ, the notion which permeates Kagawa's writings. Kagawa continues, "The difference

⁷² Kagawa, *Kirisuto no Sanjo no Suikun*, p. 438.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 439.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 440.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 462–4.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 467.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 479–80.

⁷⁸ Kagawa, *Jyūjika ni Tsuite no Meisou*, p. 176. Mozi (c.470–c.391 BCE) was a Chinese philosopher who preached universal love and criticised Confucianism's emphasis on the relationships within one's family.

between Christ's teaching and Mozi's is that Christ loved his enemies and prayed for them when he was being killed on the cross. If one is only interested in ethical theories, one does not need to go to Christ." Christ's life teaches much more than a theory, and it is unique in that "he accomplished the noblest work, which paid off the sin and guilt of humanity, recreated the new model, and enabled us to grow to the future."⁷⁹ This "redemptive love" demonstrated by Christ is to take the blame for others' mistakes and apologise with self-sacrifice. For Kagawa, a religion is a God-consciousness, which leads one to sacrifice oneself for others and a society in general. Here, Kagawa's God-consciousness is different from Ebina Danjo's "Christ-consciousness" where the latter was simply focused on Christ's personal integrity. Christ has shown the supreme example of God-consciousness when he died on the cross, yet his redemptive love is a model for all humanity to follow. It is not only Christ who saves humanity; the salvation of humanity also depends on each person who follows in Christ's footsteps. "Christ manifested God's will on earth to try to save us. We also are called beneath the cross of Jesus to repent and save others."⁸⁰ If one overcomes one's difficulties and comes to Christ, the person would be saved through Christ's merit. For Kagawa, this is the salvation from sin. "The seed of God that came through the grand character into the human race makes it possible for us to be saved."⁸¹ What does it mean to "save" others? It is to take the blame for others' shortcomings and to cover others' faults with redemptive love.⁸² God is immanent through Christ, and also through each person, with redemptive love.⁸³ An example in the New Testament is Paul's relationship with Onesimus in the letter to Philemon, in which Paul chose brotherly love, instead of revolution, in facing the problem of slavery.⁸⁴

Kagawa regarded the Bible so highly that he wrote in his sentimental way, "I may be able to give up my wife. If the situation is vital, I may be able to give up my children. Yet, whatever happens, I cannot discard the Bible. Even if a tyrant like the Emperor Nero appeared and threatened me to abandon the Bible, I would

⁷⁹ Kagawa, *Jyūjika ni Tsuite no Meisou*, p. 176.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 106.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 182.

⁸² Kagawa, *Jinrui eno Sengen*, p. 180.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp. 207–8.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 267–73.

rather choose death over obeying him. I live and die for the Bible. The Bible is my everything.”⁸⁵ It is unclear what he meant by “giving up” his wife and children, but his intention is clear: the Bible is important for him, and he even has a personal attachment to it. His attitude towards the Scripture was perhaps cultivated during his time in the reformed seminary. In any case, his reverence and attachment to the Bible is personal and his theology is not based on anything else such as the authority of the church or its tradition. This may mislead one to place Kagawa not simply amongst Protestants, but with biblical fundamentalists. However, this is a mistake. Kagawa was by no means a biblical literalist. He wrote:

“Today, people in some denominations esteem the Bible so highly that they regard every single letter of the Bible as God’s revelation and think that God’s light shines in every corner of the printed letters. This is not the proper way to read the Bible; we have to grasp the true meaning in the depth of the Bible, not sticking at trifles of the prints.”⁸⁶

Instead, Kagawa’s ideal way of reading the Bible is the way in which Christ read the Old Testament. According to Kagawa, Jesus grasped the essence of the entire Old Testament from a synthetic understanding of the Hebrew Bible, instead of a formal and partial reading. Kagawa continues to say, “Jesus protected himself from the poisonous arrows of temptation by the shield of the Old Testament. He otherwise could not have become the prototype of Christ.”⁸⁷ Thus for Kagawa, literal and factual discrepancies in the text and the issues of authorship and authenticity are futile to understand the Bible as God’s revelation in the form in which it is presented today. This does not mean that Kagawa did not apply critical thinking to it. Such insight can be discerned in his attempt to explain the different views of Christ among the four evangelists:

“Jesus that Luke described is distinct from the one whom other Gospels depicted. This is due to the author’s individualities, and the differences in the authors’ characters are reflected in the ways in which they portrayed Jesus. It is the same way when we encounter Jesus. If a reader is a friend

⁸⁵ Kagawa, *Seisho no Hanashi*, p. 25.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

of the poor, Jesus appears as such to the reader. If a reader is a person of prayer, Jesus would be as such to that reader. We must envisage Jesus who is with sympathy and deep emotion, who has a virtuous habit of prayer, and who is universal, just the Jesus whom Luke observed. For this, first we must obtain these characteristics ourselves.”⁸⁸

In addition to this proto-“reader response” reading of the Gospels, Kagawa, while maintaining a positive attitude to the Bible, displays critical interpretations of miracles and supernatural phenomena. For example, he appreciates the Jesus in Mark as more human than that of John: he speaks Aramaic, is a carpenter, without any splendid genealogies. “Jesus healed as he was requested, but it was probably something close to conventional hypnotherapy.”⁸⁹ In the same way, as to the second coming or parousia of Christ, Kagawa does not explicitly deny its possibility, yet spends a few pages explaining that the idea of parousia is a result of persecution and the wishes of those who hoped that the righteous would be rewarded and the evil punished.⁹⁰ In other words, Kagawa tried to explain why and how the early Christians conceived the idea of parousia, without stating whether the second coming will happen in future.

So far, we have seen the evidence of Kagawa’s Low-Christology, yet, as an ordained minister of a rather conservative Protestant denomination, Kagawa did not, and indeed could not, reject the divinity of Christ. He maintained belief in both divinity and humanity of Christ, who, according to Kagawa, maintained both natures to become a perfect mediator between God and humanity.⁹¹ The reason why Kagawa emphasised the humanity of Christ was to encourage Christians to follow Christ’s examples. In Kagawa’s theology, there is only persistent effort to become like Christ without any shadow of doubt and despair of lack of one’s ability to be so. Thus, for Kagawa, even the essential message of the Book of Job is in line with this positive attitude: that is, just as Job, prepared by misery and suffering, managed to become a mediator for his friends,⁹² one should become a mediator for

⁸⁸ Kagawa, *Fukuinsho ni Arawaretaru Iesu no Sugata*, p. 428.

⁸⁹ Kagawa, *Jinrui eno Sengen*, p. 187.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 223–6.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 361.

⁹² Job 42:8: God spoke to Job’s friend, “Now therefore take seven bulls and seven rams, and go to my

the world by overcoming and being trained through the struggles of life.⁹³ “To keep one’s countenance in the midst of the suffering and overcome any evil!” — this is the message of the Book of Job according to Kagawa. Naturally, Kagawa ignores the epilogue of the Book altogether.⁹⁴

Yanaihara Tadao
(1893–1961)

YANAIHARA TADAO (1893–1961)

Victory in the Russo-Japanese war turned the world’s attention to Japan, which had escaped Western colonisation and had now emerged as a modern imperial power. The peace conference in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, granted Japan the southern half of Sakhalin and most of the rights Russia claimed in southern Manchuria, which was, however, less than what the Japanese public expected. The war strengthened national and patriotic feelings in Japan.⁹⁵ As to the future of Japanese development, there were a number of intellectuals and journalists who argued a vision of “little Japan,” which implied that Japan should be satisfied with the limited success the country had acquired so far and remain a middle-size nation. These people argued that if Japan must advance, the strategy should be southern advancement: namely, taking a defensive position in North and pursue economic advances in Southeast Asia. A small group of journalists opposed to any advance, north or south, calling for a “lesser Japan,” with an efficient welfare state, by developing commerce and industry. Public opinion, however, strongly supported a “greater Japan,” which advocated northern expansion from Korea through Manchuria to China, utilising the army instead of the navy, and this strategy was eventually chosen by the government.⁹⁶

The new cabinet in 1927 adopted a “tougher” foreign policy toward the continent, abandoning completely the former cabinet’s policy to China. By supporting Chang Tuo-lin’s current regime as a puppet government, Japan aimed to ex-

servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and my servant Job shall pray for you, for I will accept his prayer not to deal with you according to your folly; for you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has done.”

⁹³ Kagawa, *Kunan ni Taisuru Taido*, p. 152.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

⁹⁵ Iriye, ‘Japan’s Drive to Great-Power Status’, p. 777.

⁹⁶ Hata, ‘Continental Expansion, 1905–1941’, pp. 271–4.

pand its influence in Manchuria. When Chang became too influential and difficult to manipulate, assassination was attempted in 1928 by an explosive set by the Japanese Kwantsung Army under his personal train as it was heading towards Mukden, Manchuria. Chang survived the initial blast but died from his injuries. The Army, which carried out the assassination on its own initiative, hoped that Tokyo would order them to occupy Mukden, but the order never came. After the failure of the occupation plan, the Kwantsung Army blamed Chinese Northern expeditionary Forces for responsibility over Chang's death. However, the rumour of the Kwantsung Army's plot reached quickly the homeland and abroad. Prime Minister Tanaka Giich (1863–1929) was initially going to punish the responsible army officers and promised as much to the Showa Emperor, Hirohito, who had succeeded to the throne in 1926. Yet due to strong army opposition, he imposed only light administrative punishment on them for having "committed a mistake in guarding the railroad."⁹⁷ The Emperor reproached Tanaka, causing the disbanding of his cabinet, and Tanaka died several months later. Chang Hsueh-liang succeeded his father and merged his territory with the new government in Nanking. The relationship between Japan and China began to deteriorate, as did Japan's ties with Britain and the United States, who immediately made concessions to the Nanking government. Under Chang Hsueh-liang, the Chinese began to build a parallel railway to the Japanese-owned Southern Manchuria railway.

Manchuria was thought of as Japan's lifeline for its resource and population problems, which is now held to be unrealistic imagination on Japan's part to justify its invasion.⁹⁸ By 1931, the government's policies at home and abroad seemed to have reached an impasse, which allowed the army and the right wing establishment to justify their plan to use military force to control Manchuria. On September 18th, 1931, the Second Battalion of the Railroad Garrison set explosives on Southern Manchuria Railway tracks in the suburbs of Manchuria. The initial plot was to derail the Dairen Express, but the explosion happened before the train reached the point. Blaming the Chinese people for the explosion, the Army occupied Manchuria. This army-initiative invasion is now known as the "Manchurian incident." After the in-

⁹⁷ Hata, 'Continental Expansion, 1905–1941', pp. 288–9.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 290–5.

cident, the Kwantsung Army completely ignored central military authorities and the cabinet's non-expansion policy and the fighting spread to Shanghai by January 1932. International disapproval against Japan's actions in Manchuria peaked with the establishment of the "new" puppet state, Manchukuo.⁹⁹

Yanaihara Tadao was a Non-Church Christian who criticised the Japanese government and its militarism over the Manchurian incident. As a scholar of colonial policy, he simply did not believe that it was the Chinese army that set explosives on the rail track and the Japanese army was only retaliating, which was how it was reported in Japan. In 1931, Yanaihara went on a tour of inspection of Manchuria.¹⁰⁰ Based on the facts he collected, he delivered the Uchimura Kanzo memorial lecture in 1933. In this lecture, Yanaihara unwaveringly criticised the Japanese army, pointing out that they lied, and called for a complete change of policy toward China. Japan was isolated in the League of Nations, rightly accused of deceit. Japan said that the Chinese blew up the track; China denied this. The Lytton Commission, sent by the League of Nations, inspected the situation and concluded that the Japanese army had not, as they claimed, acted defensively. Yanaihara insisted that the truth is the only truth. The government was proclaiming that it was a time of national crisis, yet the most unbearable "crisis" that Yanaihara perceived was moral degeneracy, dulled conscience, and the committing of crime after crime.

NON-CHURCH, COLONIAL STUDIES, AND JAPAN'S EXPANSIONISM

Yanaihara became involved with the Non-Church movement through Uchimura's Bible study group. After graduating from Tokyo Imperial University in 1917, Yanaihara worked in a private company but returned to the University in 1920, at age 27, to take a position of assistant professorship of colonial policy. He was promoted to a professorship on return from studying in England and Germany in 1923.¹⁰¹ He then began to publish on colonial policies. In 1926, Yanaihara wrote an introduction to colonial policies, *Colony and Colonial Policies* [植民および植民政策], to be a textbook

⁹⁹ Hata, 'Continental Expansion, 1905–1941', p. 297.

¹⁰⁰ During this trip, Yanaihara had a near-death experience, being assaulted by a Chinese guerrilla. See Dohi, *Nihon Protesutanto Kirisuto Kyōshi*, p. 393.

¹⁰¹ Watanabe et al., *Kirisutosha no Jidai Seisin: Sono Kyo to Jitsu*, p. 111.

of his course in the Imperial University. In this book, he identified basic factors of formation of colonies, citing contemporary scholars in Europe and the United States. In Yanaihara, colonialism and a nation's adoption of colonial policy is caused by population growth within the nation, increasing the need of securing food, and the demand of capitalist economy. On this last point, he argued for a connection between capitalism and imperialism, saying that capitalism drives nations to compete with each other: that is competition between national economies, and imperialism is an expression of unlimited desire for political expansion, which would serve the economic expansion urged by the national economy. Here, Yanaihara by no means condemns the existence of colonialism itself, yet his attempt is to present a historical survey of colonialism. Nor does he support the exploitation of colonised nations. "The colonisers will not remain so forever, and neither will the colonised. It is not impossible for the natives to become independent, by ending colonial rule. One never knows that the day may come for India to obtain complete independence and Africa to be restored by its people and see the emergence of bright nations of the blacks."¹⁰² Furthermore, his critical analysis of Japanese policies towards Korea is already present in this work. Referring to the policy of Japanising Korea, he says,

"Education that ignores national history and characteristics brings social hazard rather than knowledge. Education based on assimilationism, thus, does not bear much fruit, not to mention the effect of education, but in the view of expediency of colonial rule. ... I could not help weeping in my heart when I visited a class in a school in Korea and saw a Korea teacher teaching a history of Japan in Japanese to the Korean pupils."¹⁰³

However, here Yanaihara is not opposing colonialism but simply arguing against the assimilation policy. So what kind of method should be used to "unite" the people under the Japanese government? It is here the propagation of a religion comes into play, especially Christianity, with its message of loving one's neighbour regardless of distinctions of race or between coloniser and colonised, and bonds those who call upon the one God to be united into one. This is a typical role of Christianity in the context of colonialism, for example, in the case of the Portuguese

¹⁰² Tadao Yanaihara, *Shokumin Oyobi Shokumin Seisaku*, pp. 122–3.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 325.

and Spanish colonisation of Latin America and the British Raj in India. Although Yanaihara only advocates the propagation of both Christianity and Buddhism by the missionaries, without arguing for the government's support, and subsequently condemns the Japanese government's use of Shinto religion in Formosa and Korea, he describes the propagation as "reaching out the loving hand" and thus stood alongside the colonisers of the west on this point.¹⁰⁴ Yanaihara's vision, expressed in the last chapter of the book, was to see a free autonomous nations' voluntary union, which is the only way that meets justice's demands and brings peace. What he described is more like today's European Union and no longer equivalent to a "colony" in the historical sense of late 19th to early 20th century. Now, he asks, is it possible? His tentative answer is, "There is no guarantee, neither scientifically nor historically." There, he concludes with a statement, "Hope! Then, faith! I believe. The guarantee of peace presides in the enduring love of the mighty Son of God."¹⁰⁵

Against Yanaihara's "faith", the reality was that each nation was competing with each other whether in war or "peace".

Peace, non-peace, peace again, or non-peace, and peace, yet non-peace. In short, they are simply different manifestations of the power-struggle of states. The essence is the same struggle by the monopolistic capitalist states. The capitalist developed countries compete with each other in obtaining colonies, into which immigrants, goods and capital flow and from which they secure raw materials and food. As a result, the producing power of each state increased. Due to this rivalry, each state imposed enclosures around its own colonies, and prevented others from accessing food supply and raw materials by the customs and immigration laws, which only hinders the mobility of population and goods in the end.¹⁰⁶

Japan was no exception. In 1926, Yanaihara also published two articles, "On the Plan to Increase Rice Production in Korea" (1926) and "Policy of Governance in Korea" (1926). The former is about the Japan's policy on Korea, in which he warned against exploiting the colony to make profits for financiers in Japan. He argued especially

¹⁰⁴ Tadao Yanaihara, *Shokumin Oyobi Shokumin Seisaku*, pp. 327–8. See Althaus-Reid, 'Colonization', pp. 56–7.

¹⁰⁵ Tadao Yanaihara, *Shokumin Oyobi Shokumin Seisaku*, pp. 482–3.

¹⁰⁶ Tadao Yanaihara, *Shokumin Seisaku no Shinkichō*, p. 521.

against the government's new plan to increase rice production in Korea, for this policy was never intended for the benefit of the Korean people, but simply to exploit the Korean economy for the provisioning of Japan.¹⁰⁷ In the latter, Yanaihara's critical analysis of Japan's policy over Korea is broader. In this article, he openly criticised the police for suppressing mourning of the death of the last emperor of Korea in 1926, as well as the violence towards the protesters of the March First Independent Movement in 1919.¹⁰⁸ He also points out that the Korean people do not have the franchise, and there is no representative from Korea in the Japanese parliament to influence its policies over their own land. He argues that there should be Korean members of parliament, or else a separate Korean parliament. He also criticises Japan's assimilation policy, comparing it to the breakdown of the French assimilation policy over Algeria.

"Why did the assimilation policy fail? It is because the indigenous people are not willing to obey. Why are they not willing? For them, the forceful assimilation is nothing but oppression. It is to force others to become like us. This is an insult to human dignity and a restriction of freedom."¹⁰⁹

Yanaihara is not asserting the independence of Korea, which for Japan would be a loss, but arguing that if the oppressive assimilation policy continues, resistance is inevitable. And he continues, "Supposing Korea will be independent from Japan: is this in fact an unhappy possibility for Japan? If the colonial relationship ends amicably, a friendly relationship could be maintained and it does not necessarily mean that Korea would become Japan's enemy."¹¹⁰

107 Yanaihara, *Chōsen Sanbei Zoushoku Keikaku ni tsuite*, pp. 723–4.

108 See Chapter 2, p. 49ff.

109 Yanaihara, *Chōsen Touchi no Houshin*, p. 732.

110 Yanaihara later develops what he indicated in these two articles in *Nichi-futsu Shokumin Seisaku Hikaku no Ichiron* [Essay on a Comparison of France and Japan's Colonial Policy] (1937) and *Chosen Touchijō no Nisan no Mondai* [A Couple of Issues of Governance in Korea] (1938). In the former, he explored further similarities between French policies with those of Japan, yet clarified a major difference: he argues that while French assimilationism is based on the universal view on humanity, Japanese colonial policy is a product of nationalism and a sense of superiority among Asian countries, which would much more easily tie with militarism. The latter was a detailed study of Korea since annexation, in which he points out that the policy of increased rice production in Korea failed, since it led Korea to compete with domestic Japanese production. See Yanaihara, *Yanaihara Tadao Zenshū*, pp. 276–325.

Yanaihara's works on international relations and colonial policy were comprehensive and critical, and he was harsh on the failed policies and social injustice of the Japanese government in Korea, China, Formosa, and of other countries both in the East and the West. He was one of the first Japanese intellectuals to pass a critical judgement on Japan's actions in Manchuria. After the Manchurian incident discussed above, Japan recognised Manchuria as an independent state. The unanimous decision of the League of Nations was that China should exercise legitimate authority over Manchuria. Japan ignored international opinion and the refusal of China to recognise Manchukuo's independence, and established Manchukuo as a puppet of Japan. In particular, Japan declared a co-dependency between Japan and Manchukuo on military defence, thus legitimising the stationing of the Japanese army there. Yanaihara published in the Imperial University Newspaper a short essay entitled "Recognition of Manchuria" [満州国承認] (1932), in which he indicated how Japan's action was illegitimate from a point of international law and asked the citizens to awaken to this and reflect on what is happening in their nation.¹¹¹ Yanaihara was convinced that the Japanese government's explanation of the Manchurian incident did not stand in the light of the truth. It started from the militarists' despotism and was carried to the worst extreme by the government. In April 1933, Yanaihara gave a talk in the occasion of Uchimura Kanzo Memorial Lecture, whose title was "A Man of Sorrow". A man of sorrow is a person who knows and tells the truth in the midst of uncertainty. The "sorrow" comes from the message he carries. It was the same way for Jesus in his time, when there was much social and political turmoil, and he walked as "a man of sorrow" because he knew and spoke that the source of problem was sin. Jeremiah was a man of sorrow and so was Uchimura Kanzo. Amongst these three, no one was respected during their lives; they were being mocked for their ideas and "crucified". After the turmoil and confusion caused by the Japanese army in the Asian continent, the one who knows the truth is a man of sorrow. The issue is not the result of sanction by the international community; the most crucial issue is that Japan did not tell the truth. Needless to say, the man of sorrow of whom he speaks is Yanaihara himself. He urges the crowd to join him to be the light of the world and the salt of the earth to die for the sins of the country

¹¹¹ Yanaihara, 'Manshūkoku Shounin', pp. 83-7.

and thus redeem it. "Die," he urges, because that is the due consequence for anyone who reveals the sins of the people. "True love for your nation is not to feel affirmation that 'My country is right', but to call out for repentance and to make the effort to establish the country on the justice and morals of God is the true patriotism. No matter how fully armed and enriched, a nation that stands on falsehood and crime will certainly fall."¹¹² His investigation in Manchuria in 1931 resulted in two lectures, which were published as *The Manchurian Problem* [満州問題] (1934). From the preface, in which he mentions the tightening of censorship by the government, the intellectual environment in Japan of the time is appreciated. In this work, he identifies Japan's policy from 1914 until 1931 as the ultimate phase of Japan's imperialism, whose sole objective was to secure overseas profit for itself, and revealed the hypocrisy of Japan's claim that Manchukuo was established by the people of Manchuria as a independent nation and Japan was simply supporting this spontaneous political move.¹¹³ This book, together with *Taiwan under Imperialism* [帝国主義下の台湾] (1929), was banned by the government in 1938.

From February to April 1933, Yanaihara published a free translation of Isaiah 1:40, 50–51, and 52:13–53:12 in his self-published journal, *Tsūshin* [Letter]. Each section is entitled, "Advocacy of God", "Consolation", "Alone", "Victorious Man of Sorrow". In translating chapter 1 of Isaiah, Yanaihara identified the word of God through Isaiah to be spoken to Japan of his time. For Yanaihara, Japan was a "sinful nation, people laden with iniquity, offspring who do evil" (1:4). "A horse remembers the stable of his lord, yet this people do not understand. They do not know the true God." (1:2). "Your land is desolate, your cities burnt with fire, your farms are plundered by foreigners. Yes, I almost see it happening." (1:7). "I have had enough of oblations, mountain products, marine products, temple coins and offerings." (1:11–12). And he added few lines at the end of chapter 1: "Fear, my people, the judgment of God; Fear, and act upon the justice of God; Hope and believe the help from God."¹¹⁴

¹¹² Yanaihara, *Sisou Zendou to Iukoto*, p. 536.

¹¹³ Yanaihara, *Manshū Mondai*, pp. 481–684.

¹¹⁴ Yanaihara, *Izayasho ni yoru Si Yonhen*, pp. 667–70.

Yanaihara's teacher and predecessor Uchimura Kanzo was a pacifist who rejected the idea of retaliation and war based on Matthew 5:38–42, “Do not resist any evil-doer, but if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also.” “Do not resist an evildoer.” Yanaihara had to re-interpret this verse as he was facing the “evildoing” of his own country. In 1936, while he was writing on Japan's problematic international policy, he wrote a short commentary on this saying of Jesus in *Tsūshin*. What causes someone to be hit? Because the person resisted evil in the first place: “if one is afraid of the power of the evildoer and does not say or do anything, following the crowd, and compromises and flatters, the person would not be hurt in this manner. ... One would be hit because one acknowledges justice and disapproves of injustice. Namely, one does get hit because the person resisted the evil and hatred of the evildoer. Non-resistance does not take away our courage.”¹¹⁵ Here, it becomes clear that Yanaihara had in mind the evildoing of the Japanese government and military as he also comments on Jesus' saying, “Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's” (Matthew 22:21). “Jesus did not collude with any group: neither the Roman officers, military men, tax-collectors, Pharisees, scribes, teachers of the Law, Jewish leaders, nor the crowd who hoped for political and social liberation from Rome. He took side with no one. He neither used them nor was used by them. Being independent, he walked straight on his way without turning right or left.” “This word does not simply acknowledge the people's duty of paying tax. This saying contains the strong assertion that Caesar and God are different. ... It is a stern criticism of the deification of Caesar.”¹¹⁶ Yanaihara concludes that the message here teaches that when a Christian encounters an evil-doer, he or she should not care about personal gain or security. It is unfair to condemn Yanaihara for not criticising the system represented by the emperor, for this interpretation of Matthew 22 is one of the most critical assessments of the Japanese government and the emperor's status among the Japanese Christians before the end of the Second World War, and is especially strong since it appeared at a time when the government's censorship and surveil-

¹¹⁵ Yanaihara, *Iesu no Muteikou Shugi*, pp. 61–2.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

lance were being tightened.

In 1936, Yanaihara published a collection of his essays, *Nationality and Peace* [民族と平和]. The essays were “critiques of the politics at ‘the time of emergency’ from the religious and scientific perspective.”¹¹⁷ In this book, Yanaihara argued that it is illegitimate, at least for Christians, to justify war based on the profit it may bring to the country, just as one cannot justify theft. “The issue of Manchuria for Christians at least is not the matter of profit; it should be contended from the point of justice.”¹¹⁸ He also appeals to Christians to follow God’s justice over the profit of the country and thus fight against the “false patriots”. He belonged to and was a leader of the Non-Church of Uchimura, who made an effort to sow Christianity in the Japanese soil. Yet, Yanaihara warns, “Even Japanese Christianity is no less Christianity, and it cannot be substituted with something else. The truth of Christianity is universal.” “Japanese Christianity signifies the Japanese people’s conversion to Christianity, and not Christianity converted to the Japanese spirit. ... The test for Japanese Christianity is the Shinto Shrine worship, the issue of national spirit, or nationalism. It is necessary not to make a wrong decision on these issues for the Japanese Church to move forward.”¹¹⁹ True Christianity, according to Yanaihara, cannot compromise with exclusive and selfish nationalism. The line from the Lord’s Prayer “Your Kingdom come” is the basis of the ability to critique the society and nation.¹²⁰ The government banned this book about a year after its publication.

“Let the Prophet
Stand in Japan”

In December 1936, Yanaihara self-published a more comprehensive, though still incomplete, translation of the Book of Isaiah with a short commentary.¹²¹ The mes-

¹¹⁷ Yanaihara, *Minzoku to Heiwa*, p. 4.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 196–7.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 222.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 223–4.

¹²¹ Yanaihara, *Izaya sho*, pp. 1–270. He lists the commentaries with which he consulted for this publication: four books that are consulted the most were:

Gray, G.B., *The Book of Isaiah* (1912)

Guthe, D., *Das Buch Jesaia* (1922)

Prochsch, O., *Jesaia I* (1930)

Skinner, J., *The Book of the Prophet Isaiah* (1915).

Others were:

Delitzsch, Franz, *The Prophecies of Isaiah* (1889)

Duhm, B. von, *Das Buch Jesaia* (4th ed.) (1922)

Kuenig, E., *Das Buch Jesaia* (1926)

Moffatt, J., *The Holy Bible, A New Translation* (1922)

Oesterley, W.O.W. and Robinson, T.H., *An Introduction to the Books of the Old Testament* (1934)

sage Yanaihara took from Isaiah was straightforward: peace and justice. Isaiah's message is to take care of the poor, give relief to widows and orphans, and rebuke the rich and powerful for their despotism. Yanaihara argued that Isaiah was opposed to the policies of war and militarism; instead, he appealed to faith in God as the basis of national security. People everywhere believe their nation is God's chosen. The Japanese think that they are the chosen people and at the centre of the history. It is not absolutely wrong to think that way, yet one must know that the chosen people will also be punished by God since God cares about them. It is clear in the Bible that the “chosen people” did not escape God's judgement when they ceased to fear God, oppressed the poor, and acted belligerently. Yet there are people in each nation who return to God, and they are “the remnant”: the people who maintain their faith in God whether they are Americans, Chinese or Japanese.¹²² In the same year, he also serialised in *Tsushin* a commentary on the Book of Jeremiah. Jeremiah was a man of sorrow, Yanaihara wrote, alongside with Isaiah and Job. His social life, family life, and personal life were full of sorrow. It is not because Jeremiah was a hyper-critical sociopath; what made his life miserable was his faith in God, which was different from what other people called “faith”. Jeremiah spoke the word of God against the priests, scholars, and politicians that turned away from God and “the prophets prophesied by Baal, and went after things that do not profit” (Isaiah 2:8). Yet the people said, “I am not defiled, I have not gone after the Baals” (2:23). This gap of understanding of faith caused Jeremiah such misery. “The people of Israel did not stop worshipping Yahweh and go astray. They maintained the formal structure of the system, the liturgy and the temple, and did not occur to them that they had stopped worshipping Yahweh. Therefore, some of them argued that the idol worship was in fact merely a different form and expression of worship of Yahweh. Baal literally means, ‘lord’: therefore, the Lord, Yahweh must also be a Baal, nay, Yahweh himself is the Baal.”¹²³ For Yanaihara, this is “ambidextrous sophistry”: “It is impiety, nay, hypocrisy that is worse than impiety and audacious to believe oneself and prove to others that they believe in Yahweh, yet not to be-

Smith, George Adam, *The Book of Isaiah* (1927)

Wade, G.W., *The Book of the Prophet Isaiah* (1929)

¹²² Yanaihara, *Izaya sho*, pp. 58–9.

¹²³ Yanaihara, *Eremiya sho no Kenkyū*, p. 421.

lieve Yahweh and Yahweh alone. They do not repent but turn away from the road to God because they vainly believe that they belong to God.”¹²⁴ It is not too hard to discern that Yanaihara is here in fact talking about Japanese Christians’ uncritical and indifferent attitude to the policies of the government as well as their compromise with the veneration of the emperor and with blind nationalism. Jeremiah was appointed as God’s prophet, and was not allowed to hide in a study to read the Bible. He had to be among the impious as a man of sorrow. Except his disciple, everyone was against Jeremiah and mocked him. Yet, because Jeremiah said, “No” to injustice even though he was alone, the truth of God was preserved in this world. Yanaihara says that he wrote this commentary imagining of the sorrowful figure of Jeremiah after the “2.26 incident” trying neither to be cynical nor to be compromising.¹²⁵ He appealed the readers for “the faith that is to die for life.” Also during his talk at a Non-Church conference in December 1936, Yanaihara cited Jeremiah 25:2–9, in which the Lord grew angry against the people of Judah and said, “Because you have not obeyed my words, I am going to send for all the tribes of the north, says the Lord, even for King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, my servant, and I will bring them against this land and its inhabitants, and against all these nations around; I will utterly destroy them, and make them an object of horror and of hissing, and an everlasting disgrace” (Jeremiah 25:8–9). Yanaihara commented on this, “These are fearsome words. We hope that our beloved country, this Judah and this Jerusalem, Japan and Tokyo, will not become an everlasting disgrace not only politically and economically, but also spiritually.”¹²⁶ In an essay, *Ideals of the Nation* [国家の理想] (1937) he spoke metaphorically about Japan using verses from the Book of Isaiah, and criticised deceitful propaganda (Isaiah 5:18), lack of value judgement (5:20), and suppression of dissent (30:10), and asserted that the duty of citizens is not to obey their country blindly, but to critique rightly the government and the state. It is not the government who understands the ideal of a nation but rather an individual or a small group of people, just as in the case of Isaiah. Lack of information cannot be

¹²⁴ Yanaihara, *Eremiya sho no Kenkyū*, p. 423.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 454. The 2.26 incident was an attempted military coup on February 26th in 1936. It was led by a faction of young ultranationalists in the army. The prime minister Keisuke Okada declared a state of emergency and the unrest was suppressed by the army. After this incident, its power and voice increased in policy-making.

¹²⁶ Yanaihara, *Sisou Zendou to Iukoto*, p. 579.

an excuse because those who know the ideal should be able to discern whether the nation is following the vision.¹²⁷

In the end, what cost Yanaihara his position at Tokyo Imperial University was a talk entitled “The Kingdom of God” [神の国], delivered in a public meeting of Non-Church in October 1937. Here, Yanaihara criticised two attitudes of Japanese Christians. Some Christians believed that politics has nothing to do with Christianity and thus it is the politicians’ task and not theirs. Yanaihara said that these Christians ignore or do not understand the command of Jesus to be the salt of the earth. Other Christians say that Japan is God’s hand to judge China. Against this opinion, Yanaihara’s anger bursts out: “Frankly I ask you, what is wrong with them when such interpretations of the Bible are being spoken in the Church that stands in God’s name by its believers?” And if one speaks of that, “Judah was under God’s judgement, yet the sin of Assyria and its arrogance to strike Judah was much greater. Do you understand!? The sin of Assyria is greater.”¹²⁸ The Assyria of which he speaks is clearly compared to Japan. In the rest of the speech, he urged China to stop fighting just as Jeremiah prophesied against Judah relying on Egypt as an ally against Babylon in Jeremiah 42, because he believed that “then China will stand by the word of God and the power of God.” For Japan, he urges stopping the war immediately. Yanaihara concludes his speech with a plea, “This is the funeral of the ideal of our beloved country, nay, the funeral of the country which lost its ideal. Please bury my country.”¹²⁹ After this talk, his lectureship at Tokyo Imperial University was withdrawn in December 1937. As he was leaving the university, Yanaihara gave another speech, in which he spoke that he was not afraid of those who could only destroy the body, not the soul, and despised those who are physically fat but spiritually scrawny.¹³⁰

*“Let the Prophet
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¹²⁷ Yanaihara, *Sisou Zendou to Iukoto*, pp. 621-45.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 650.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 654.

¹³⁰ Monthly bulletin in Yanaihara, *Yanaihara Tadao Zenshū*.

Yanaihara had been attending the Bible study of Non-Church members and had his own study group for university students, but after leaving the university, he began to concentrate even more on writing and lecturing about the Bible. The shift from writing in the area of his profession to the study of the Bible resembles that of Uchimura Kanzo, and Yanaihara followed Uchimura's view on the Bible as the most efficient medium to save a country as well as individuals. For this purpose, Yanaihara shared Uchimura's aspiration of introducing the Bible to the Japanese people and making it their own. Throughout his life, he maintained the conservative view of the Bible as the word of God that testifies to the divinity, redemption, resurrection and parousia of Christ. Uchimura Kanzo's Non-Church was a movement that denied the institutional Church and was an attempt to understand Christianity based on the Bible for the Japanese people. Yanaihara was a disciple of Uchimura, and understood the Japanese Christianity of Non-Church as follows:

“Japanese Christianity here means the Christianity without the influence of the West. Unlike some of those who copy the institutions of the West and, what is worse, imitate the silly accent of westerners' Japanese and think that is Christianity, it is to understand Christianity through a Japanese frame of mind and proclaim in normal Japanese language. It is to study and evangelise Christianity independently and freely with money from the Japanese without finance from Western missionaries.”¹³¹

Christianity influenced the Western countries and people and its development is unique. If the Western nations were the representatives of true Christian religion, there would not have been a World War.¹³² Another case for Christianity not being equal to Western thinking is the individualism of the West, as opposed to the Bible's commandment, “Honour your father and mother.” Even Christ was obedient to the Father, according to the Bible. Yanaihara also considers the Western view of women, which, he argues, is not supported by the Bible. The Bible is rather closer to the Japanese perspective on women: the examples are Colossians 3:18, Ephesians

¹³¹ Yanaihara, *Kirisutokyō teki Nihon*, p. 48.

¹³² Here Yanaihara means the First World War.

5:22–23, I Peter 3:3, Proverbs 31:10, I Corinthians 14: 34, so forth. In fact, what Bible commends is even greater for it also contains commandments, which are addressed to seniors and superiors. What the Bible represent is not a rulers' handbook, but it also governs the conduct of the rulers and the powerful. "Loyalty demands one to hold the prince higher than the family. The Way demands one not to obey blindly to the parents. Christ is the Prince and the Way."¹³³

Yet Yanaihara strictly distinguished the Christianity he discusses from the simple expression of nationalism. Whilst advocating Japanese Christianity, Yanaihara did not fall into an uncritical affirmation of Japan and its people. Rather, he read the Bible in the midst of the political turmoil of Japan and found in it the medium of critique, especially in the book of Prophets. He also utilised the commentaries published in Europe and the United States, which indicates that his view of "Japanese Christianity" does not necessarily exclude the fruits of the Western scholarship, but simply says that they should be used critically.

Yanaihara's first thorough study of a biblical book after his dismissal was on the Gospel of Mark. He started publishing another self-published journal, *Kashin* [Good News] in 1938, and "Discourse of Jesus — based on the Gospel of Mark" was serialised. His bible study is expository with careful exegesis with explanation of historical background and word study. In this sense, it does not go beyond a critical summary of the commentaries. Compared to his works on international politics, his bible study is ordinary and reminds one of Isaac Newton wasting time on the study of the Bible instead of concentrating on his scientific work. Yanaihara's ingenuity is present, however, in his use of biblical narratives and situations to criticise Japan's political and social situation. From April to June 1938, he lectured on Galatians. He started this lecture series with a few words: "Someone spoke to me, "Why don't you speak more about current affairs?" I had spoken. I was speaking about it way back at the time of the Manchurian incident. I spoke; yet no one listened."¹³⁴ This is why he came to speak on the Bible instead of speaking on "current affairs": because he felt helpless in the political situation of Japan. Thus now he speaks on Galatians, yet he indicates, "Giving this lecture at this time is a parable. Do you understand?"

¹³³ Yanaihara, *Kirisutosha no Shinkou*, p. 34.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 425–6.

What he meant becomes clear in his interpretation and application of the message of the Galatians.

“In the case of Galatians, circumcision was not simply a religious practice, but also meant that one had to be Jewish socially. Some people argued then that it is necessary to be Jewish in spirit for one’s salvation. Today, the argument of “some people” is that Christianity is fine, but it is incomplete without the spirit of your nation. If Paul heard about this, he would write the Epistle to the Galatians to the churches in Germany or Japan to maintain the purity of the gospel. If he was in Japan and heard about what is happening among the churches in Korea, he would send the Galatians to them and argue that nothing extra is needed for salvation. Faith does not require “plus X”. Salvation is achieved by Jesus Christ crucified. Anathema for those who deceive you to turn away from the perfect gospel.”¹³⁵

“Background and career, ethnicity and nationality, ceremonial and institutional law, and moral law: each of them is just like a piece of clothing. Background and career is relating to the ethnic and national pride, national pride is inseparable from institutional law, and the law would be closely tied with people’s moral ... Yet, when one stands in front of the cross of Christ, each garment is taken away one by one. None of them is sufficient for the justification of a person in front of God. Then when we are questioned who we are, the only answer given to us is “I am the foremost of the sinners.”¹³⁶

What makes a person of integrity is neither liberalism nor totalitarianism, but faith in the cross of Jesus Christ.¹³⁷ Based on this conviction, Yanaihara found the assimilation policy in Korea and the Japanese Church’s indifference thereto erroneous and unacceptable. In a lecture on Second Isaiah in 1939, which he later published in *Kashin*, Yanaihara spoke that anyone who reads properly would gain an insight into the current situation. Therefore, lack of knowledge or factual data cannot be an excuse. Yanaihara again rebuked the Japanese government and military, whose

¹³⁵ Yanaihara, *Kirisutosha no Shinkou*, p. 442.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 457.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 467.

expectations of their policies in China had proven wrong.

“Who saw this and spoke two years ago? And who suppressed the one who spoke? If they see that their estimate was wrong and the disturbance after the incident cannot be cleared as easily as they thought, why don’t they become humble? ... There will be no voice to cry out, “Comfort” for a while.”¹³⁸

In 1940, he travelled to Korea as a Non-Church Christian, and gave a series of five lectures on the Epistle to the Romans. The audience was about 150: two-thirds Korean, the rest Japanese.¹³⁹ He was already under surveillance, but a friend of his who was a government official in Korea helped through his stay.¹⁴⁰ Yanaihara again started his lecture saying, what he was going to speak should be understood as a “parable”, which means that he was going to address to the contemporary situation through a reading of Romans. Based on these lectures and other talks on Romans, his book *Romans* [ロマ書] was published in 1949, but it is difficult to discern which parts were spoken in Korea or Japan, and which part was written after the end of the Second World War. Also, despite his assertion of “parable”, the contents of this Bible study is thoroughly expository. In relation to politics, the most relevant part is his treatment of Romans 13. Yanaihara follows Paul’s argument that it is God from whom the power of each state comes, and to be subject to the state is a duty and an expression of faith. Thus Christians should respect the authority of the state not from fear but from the good conscience before God. Submission to the state authority is a duty before God whether the authority is good or bad because the authority is essentially granted by God. After making this assertion, however, Yanaihara slightly modified the course of the argument:

“However, it is also said, “Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good” (Romans 12:9), which should also be applied to one’s obedience. In other words, let obedience be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good. ... With this principle, on the one hand, we could become prophets, who accuse the state for its corruption, on the other hand could

¹³⁸ Yanaihara, *Daini Izaya Kougi*, p. 529.

¹³⁹ Yanaihara, *Yanaihara Tadao Zenshū*, p. 352.

¹⁴⁰ Yanaihara, *Roma Sho*, p. 4.

we obey the authority with good conscience. Nay, it is because we know that the authority comes from God and respect it, a prophet cannot be silenced when the authority is abused.”

Yanaihara published studies on many more books in the Bible, but the basis of his reading remained his experience during the war and his identification of his faith with one of the prophets.

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Yanaihara during
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KAGAWA AND YANAIHARA DURING AND AFTER THE ASIA-PACIFIC WAR

In the middle of the war with China, on December 7th in 1941, Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, and subsequently entered the war against the United States, Great Britain, and the Netherlands. As an outspoken pacifist, Kagawa had established the National League of Pacifists in 1928. Yanaihara, who was also against Japan's war, continued speaking and publishing his bible studies until censorship and the government's suppression made his work impossible. Yanaihara was summoned by the police to be questioned about his beliefs and his views on the government's policies at least once in February 1938.¹⁴¹ Because Kagawa was a much more public figure, the government's surveillance was stricter on him. In 1930s, in the preface to the Chinese translation of one of Kagawa's books, *The Science of Love*, he confessed the sin of Japan over China and asked for forgiveness from the people in China, stating that he was deeply ashamed of the atrocities committed by the Japanese army in China and he deplored his powerlessness.¹⁴² He had been publishing a bulletin to his supporters in the United States, in which he also apologised for Japan's great sin to the Chinese people, but this time, the military police noticed this bulletin.¹⁴³ According to the chronology of Kagawa's life in *Kagawa Toyohiko Zenshu*, he was imprisoned twice: in August 1940 in Tokyo and in May 1943 in Kobe. He was also summoned to an office of the military police in November 1943 because of his anti-war thought. Up to this point, Kagawa and Yanaihara seemed to stand on similar ground, but the differences in their positions became more apparent during the war.

¹⁴¹ Yanaihara, *Yanaihara Tadao Zenshū*, pp. 242–3.

¹⁴² Kawashima, *Kagawa Toyohiko to Taiheiyō Sensou*, pp. 12–3.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 14. Amemiya, *Kurai Tanimu no Kagawa Toyohiko*.

As already mentioned, Kagawa was seen as an outspoken and pacifist activist. However, because of his reputation as a novelist and a public speaker, he was acquainted with some high officials of the government. In 1934, Kagawa was appointed by the cabinet to be a member of a committee under the government employment bureau, and also in 1935 to be a member of the social insurance investigation committee.¹⁴⁴ Since the Kingdom of God movement, Kagawa was a prominent figure also among the Protestant churches in Japan. In April 1941, Kagawa was chosen as one of the nine members of the Christian peace delegation to the United States, which also included Kawai Michi, sent from the United Church of Christ in Japan, the unified Protestant denomination. He travelled coast to coast until he returned to Japan in August of the same year.¹⁴⁵ After this trip, however, Kagawa toned down his speeches and pleas for peace, and his collaboration with the government propaganda became observable. For example, Kagawa promoted emigration to Manchuria and supported a vision of establishing a “Christian Pioneer Village,” an idea that came from a meeting with a government official in Manchuria.¹⁴⁶ He wrote a poster to promote emigration, calling those who go to Manchuria “descendants of Abraham”.¹⁴⁷ In the *Chronology*, it is mentioned that he sent a group of emigrants in April 1944, and became a member of the emigration committee.¹⁴⁸ The emigration to Manchuria, however, required a great amount of work without any guarantee for the Japanese immigrants, and involved depriving indigenous people of their lands. In other words, emigration was a policy to deal with population increase and was promoted from a perspective of military defence, which Yanaihara pointed out and criticised as early as in 1934 in his book, *The Manchurian Problem*. During the Asia-Pacific War, Kagawa became a war-supporter. In October 1944, Kagawa wrote a poem for a Christian newspaper. In this poem, which was entitled, “A Prophecy of the Fall of the United States”, he called the United States a “whitewashed tomb” that advocates freedom yet seeks only its own profit. Kagawa seemed especially

¹⁴⁴ *Nempyo*, pp. 604–5.

¹⁴⁵ There have been some suggestions that this idea of a peace delegation to the United States was first made by a government office to the United Church of Christ in Japan. See Amemiya, *Kurai Tanima no Kagawa Toyohiko*, pp. 216–7.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 228–63.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 230.

¹⁴⁸ *Nempyo*, p. 612.

furious about some American soldiers making “skull trophies”, which was to take a dead Japanese soldier’s head, boil it to remove flesh, and to treat the skull as a souvenir.¹⁴⁹ President Roosevelt was also presented with a paper knife made from a bone of a Japanese soldier, and Kagawa heard about this practice.¹⁵⁰ After the war, he returned to pacifism and continued to be active in writing and speaking as before, while working as a consultant for the Japanese government.

Yanaihara’s main work during the war was his lectures and writings in Kashin on the Book of Revelation from January 1941 to June 1943, but he had to stop the project when the suppression by the government became too strong. After the war, he resumed the series and finished in March 1948.¹⁵¹ In this bible study, he detailed how Rome interfered with people’s social and religious life, how the worship of emperor was enforced, and how those who did not worship the emperor were persecuted. He wrote:

“Who is Babylon? It is those who persecute our faith. They take away the means of evangelism from us, accuse us by unintelligible reason, and say that we do not love our country... We shall not hate those minor officials. They do not understand what they are doing. Our Babylon is the force of the evil. We shall fight against it. And according to Revelation, they fight against the lamb, yet the lamb will have the victory. Those who are with the lamb, the chosen, will gain the victory. Therefore we must fight.”¹⁵²

When Japan was defeated, Yanaihara saw the fall of Babylon, not by the seven trumpets, but by the sirens of air raids: through the sword, famine, and pest; through the “hail and fire mixed with blood” (Revelation 8:7); and a “great mountain, burning with fire” (8:10); “a great star fell from heaven, blazing like a torch” (8:10); and darkness (8:12).¹⁵³ And a period of peace has come. Yet, Yanaihara says this peace is not everlasting. The only ultimate solution to human condition, he wrote, is the *par-*

¹⁴⁹ For this practice, see Harrison, ‘Skull Trophies of the Pacific War: Transgressive Objects of Remembrance’ and Weingartner, ‘U.S. Troops and the Mutilation of Japanese War Dead, 1941–1945’.

¹⁵⁰ Kagawa, *Beikoku Metsubou no Yogen*, pp. 412–3. See also Amemiya, *Kurai Tanimi no Kagawa Toyohiko*, pp. 314–7.

¹⁵¹ Yanaihara, *Mookusiroku*, p. 698.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 534–5.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 462.

ousia of Christ.¹⁵⁴ Here, Yanaihara followed Uchimura's faith in the second coming of Christ. Yanaihara was reappointed as a professor of international politics (since the colonial policy position was abolished) at the Tokyo University (formerly Tokyo Imperial University) after the war.

Both Kagawa and Yanaihara were deeply influenced by the Western colonial discourse, which was applied by the Japanese government against its neighbours, and they took it for granted. Even Yanaihara envisioned Christianity as a political tool in colonial policy, just as Ebina Danjo, unquestionably a nationalistic Christian, did. His bible study was expository and did not employ any innovative method of interpretation. He took the biblical view on women literally and there was no place for any sign of modern feminism in his understanding of the Bible. His reading of Romans 13 was ambiguous, and he did not see and failed to point out the limitations these verses present to reality. Yet, even then, Yanaihara fought against the tyranny of Japanese Imperialism through his reading of the Bible. The obvious purpose of his area of study, colonial policy, is to serve the government, yet his scholarship respected the factual evidence, and his uncompromising faith and integrity overrode the expectations of the government and the aspirations of the populace. Kagawa on the other hand became absorbed into the government, abandoned his pacifism, and supported at least the Asia-Pacific War. Kagawa's pacifism was so determined that he never refused any violence personally inflicted on him, yet he did not maintain his position in terms of his country's foreign policy. His Christian faith did not challenge his prejudiced view on social outcasts and foreigners, which may have led him to his fluctuating attitude to Japan's colonial policy in Manchuria. However, his apparent hostility against the United States may have a different reason. If he had an evolutionary view on society, and held racist views against Chinese and Koreans, it is possible that he understood the Japanese as less than the people from Europe or the United States. In this discourse, the lesser group always remains as less, yet Kagawa found himself in rejection of this racial hierarchy. For Kagawa, fighting against the United States may have signified his desire to refuse the United States as Japan's superior.

Since Japan's colonialism ended in 1945 with the country's defeat, Japan did not

¹⁵⁴ Yanaihara, *Mookusiroku*, pp. 550–1; 597–8.

experience decolonisation in the same way as France, Britain, Holland, Portugal, or the United States did with their colonies in Asia and Africa. As a result, neither scholars nor Christians reflected on the issue of Japan's colonialism towards Korea, China, or Taiwan. With its defeat, those who were oppressed and exploited, such as people whose land was invaded or the comfort women, were forgotten in the increasing tension between the United States and Soviet Union. This is one of the major problems when Japan's postwar history is considered: namely, it did not go through the process of redemption and reconciliation with Asian neighbours. The focus of the populace after the war was on their own lives as victims: victims of American air raids on civilians as well as victims of poverty.

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In this chapter, I have examined the lives of two Japanese Christian thinkers and the formation of their thought through different stages of their lives. Just as in the cases of Ebina and Uchimura, here again, Kagawa and Yanaihara use the Bible to evaluate or criticise their own political situations. What determined their different positions regarding Japan's military aggression was, amongst other things, their positions and power within the society. The next chapter discusses how the problem of suffering was dealt with theologically by two theologians: Nagai Takashi and Kitamori Kazo, who spoke out from the devastation of the aftermath of the lost war.

*In Ruins of Fire:
Kitamori Kazo and Nagai Takashi*



My thesis, interpretation as a political act, cannot be demonstrated more clearly than by the theologians treated in this chapter, Nagai Takashi and Kitamori Kazo. While Nagai and Kitamori, unlike those who were introduced in previous chapters, did not mean primarily to make political points through their use of Christian symbolism and concepts, the political implications were immense. In Nagai's case, his allusion to atonement in the devastation of atomic bomb caused a controversy over whether the allusion inevitably gave excuses to the Japanese authorities, including the emperor, for the continuation of the war and to Americans for the mass killing of civilians. In Kitamori's case, his treatment of "suffering" not only failed to address the specific suffering Japan caused to the people of Asia, but could also justify this suffering.

15th August 1945 is remembered with different meanings to different people in Asia. For Japanese, the day is called *Shusen Kinen Bi* — the anniversary of the end of the war. When I used this expression in conversation with a Korean scholar, I was gently corrected: it was the "Liberation Day." From the perspective of the Christians in Korea, the defeat of Japan and subsequent independence from Japan was God's answer to their prayers. It meant the end of Japanese imperial aggression towards the other peoples of Asia.

Five months before Japan's unconditional surrender to the Allies, March 10 in 1945, Tokyo was turned into ashes overnight, with 100,000 people being killed, by "carpet bombing".¹ It was only the first of the bombings of 66 major Japanese cit-

¹ General Bonner F. Fellers, MacArthur's military secretary and the chief of his psychological-warfare operations, gave a report on his psychology study on Japan called, "Answer to Japan," in which he mentions, "There are those among us who advocate slaughter of all Japanese, a virtual extermination of the race. The Asiatic War has brought so much suffering and taken so many lives that no fate seems too awful for the Japanese. However, once Japan's armed forces are destroyed, the military clique wiped out and the people thoroughly acquainted with the horror of war, it will be safe to stop the slaughter. The more civilians who are killed needlessly, the more bitter and lasting will be the feeling of those who survive. It would dislocate the mental equilibrium of our

ies, the destruction that culminated in the use of the newly-invented atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Forty percent of the urban areas were destroyed, and 30 percent of the whole population were left homeless alongside with the several million service men and civilians who died.²

The invasion of neighbouring Asian countries, war with the United States and its allies, and the defeat and subsequent occupation were all devastating and traumatic episodes in the history of the modern Japan. The defeat shattered the lives and spirits of the people, from whom the news of lost battles had been withheld. The civilians in the mainland were told to fight with spiritual strength, disregarding the self to protect the land and support the soldiers. Soldiers were fighting for their families and the *Kokutai* — the soul of the nation whose centre was the emperor, sacred and inviolable. For them, Japan was the greatest nation with a divine mission: she was destined to throw off Western colonialism and establish the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. It turned out, however, not just that many soldiers and civilians died for the “lost war,” but that the war crimes trials held by the Allies revealed atrocities such as the Nanking Massacre or the Rape of Manila, which were not publicly known of in Japan until the tribunal. When these atrocities were reported, the common response of many Japanese people was genuine horror.³ The murder of civilians, torture and ill treatment of the POW, rape, arson, looting, and exploitation of women — the open trial publicly exposed these violent acts committed by the Japanese armies in Asia.

The State Shinto was abolished on December 15, 1945.⁴ All the metanarratives, which had been held so dearly by the Japanese people, collapsed; but there was one part of the old narrative that, with a little alteration, remained unblemished by war guilt: the imperial throne.

Confronted by the emerging power of Communism, General MacArthur’s Supreme Command for the Allied Powers (SCAP) chose to utilise the emperor to reconstruct a democratised Japan. Based on opinions and reports from anthropolo-

youth who performed the slaughter. It would belie our Christianity.” Bonner F. Fellers, “Answer to Japan”: a paper held in the Hoover Institution of War and Peace at Stanford University cited by Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, p. 283.

² *Ibid.*, p. 45.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 503.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

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gists and analysts of the U.S. Office of War Information, SCAP came to the conclusion that the emperor, who was the supreme authority in Japan, was actually an empty vessel, which could be usefully turned into a symbol of peace and democracy.⁵ Following this policy, SCAP secretly discouraged the emperor Hirohito's abdication when the emperor's entourage brought it up, at the same time exalting him as the leader of new democratic Japan. To achieve this, the emperor had to be completely cleared of war responsibility. While his subjects were judged in the International Military Tribunal for the Far East (the Tokyo Trial) and subsequently executed for the war fought in his name, Hirohito himself was rehabilitated as a leader of democracy. While Tojo Hideki, a Class A criminal, was facing execution for "crimes against peace," which had never been an international crime before the war, the emperor was having lunch with Joseph Keenan, the Chief Prosecutor at the Tokyo Trial.⁶ The new account was that the emperor and whole country was led to the war by a military clique, and that the deaths of the people were sacrifices for peace and the democracy that came only with the Allies' occupation.⁷ Throughout the process, the Asian people, the real victims of Japan's aggression, were absent. There were only three Asians, representing China, the Philippines, and India, among eleven judges of the Tokyo Trial.⁸ They had no serious role or presence in Japan during the Allies' occupation. China's suffering was especially downplayed as the country was "going Communist."⁹

From the beginning until the end of the occupation, it was the United States who conceived and executed the basic policies of the occupation. In the view of MacArthur, the Allied Powers were engaged in a "Christian Mission" in an Oriental pagan land. MacArthur, just like the emperor, was inaccessible to the common Japanese. He rarely sought information from the Japanese themselves. Dower reports MacArthur's "messianic zeal" for Japan's demilitarisation and democratisation by recalling an episode in which MacArthur suggested that his only guides

⁵ Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, pp. 217–20.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 460.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 480.

⁸ One judge represented each nation, yet the prosecution staff was dominated by Americans. *Ibid.*, pp. 443–84.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 511.

were Washington, Lincoln, and Jesus Christ.¹⁰

What was the Japanese theological reaction to this coming of “Christ” and endowment of freedom and democracy? What was the outcome of the suffering they experienced and that they inflicted on their Asian neighbours? In a short answer, there was little immediate theological reflection on the war and the subsequent occupation. *The Confession of War Responsibility* by the United Church of Christ in Japan (*Nihon Kirisuto Kyodan*) had to wait until 1967. Yet theologians did not stop working during and immediately after the war. There was Ebina’s nationalistic Christianity. The “Japanese Christianity,” which was an expression of Japanese ultranationalism using Christian jargon also appeared and quickly disappeared after the war. Other kinds of theologians also certainly existed; they were doing “only theology as though nothing had happened.”¹¹

Nagai Takashi
(1908–1951)

The two figures introduced in this chapter belong to a small minority of Japanese Christian thinkers. Nagai Takashi was a medical doctor and scientist with Catholic faith, who was also a victim of the atomic bombing of Nagasaki. His first book, *The Bells of Nagasaki*, finished in 1946, was a product of his Catholic faith and the experience of survival from the bomb. Until he died from leukaemia in 1951, Nagai wrote about 10 books from his sickbed. The other is Kitamori Kazo, whose first and internationally renowned book *The Theology of Pain of God* was published in 1946. Unlike Nagai, who never considered himself as a “theologian,” Kitamori was a theologically trained scholar. What distinguishes him from the majority of theologians of the day was that he was not an adherent of Barth and consciously used Japanese indigenous concepts as a tool for his theological endeavour.

NAGAI TAKASHI (1908–1951)

Having read Nagai’s *Opera Omnia* and learnt about his life and personality, I could say with some confidence that he would object to anyone who categorised him as a “theologian.” He was a writer, educator, father, husband, and above all, scientist. He is often known from photographs in which he is lying on his sickbed and his two

¹⁰ Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, pp. 203–4, 223.

¹¹ Wilmer, ‘Karl Barth’, p. 124. This phrase is often quoted to accuse Barth and Barthians of being indifferent to the issue of social justice.

children are beside him, yet Nagai was anything but a feeble soul. Nagai was a man of resolve. He gave his very best to his given task, had high expectations of himself as a scholar, and quite strict to others such as his children, his students and interns at the hospital where he worked. Even after he became sick in bed, Nagai devoted himself to writing, which continued until when he could not move his right arm from internal bleeding of the scapular region, which occurred six days before his death.

When he matriculated in Nagasaki Medical College, he was a materialist, who believed every phenomenon in the world could be explained by science, and only by science. However, he began to question this view of life when his mother died when he was still in college. As he rushed to her deathbed, she calmly looked in his eyes and passed away. “The look turned my thought around completely. The silent look of the mother who bore, raised, and loved me, undeniably spoke, “I will be with you forever” as she was departing.”¹² His first encounter with Christian thought was Pascal’s *Pensées*, which appealed to Nagai as an expression of Christian faith of a successful scientist. His belief did not then follow Pascal’s proto-existential Jansenist faith, but was nurtured in the environment of one of the oldest Catholic communities in Japan, Urakami village in Nagasaki, in which his university was located.

Urakami, a small village in Nagasaki, was a community that had preserved the Catholic faith underground for over 250 years, during the period of national isolation. The village became known as a place of persecutions and martyrs. The last large-scale persecution was in 1868 by the Meiji government, who arrested the Christians, divided them into small groups, and exiled them to different parts of Japan, where the believers were interrogated and tortured if they refused to abandon their Christian faith. The persecution was severely criticised by the western powers, and the surviving villagers returned to Urakami in 1870. They rebuilt the village and erected a new cathedral, *Urakami Tenshudo* (the Urakami Catholic Church).¹³ The cathedral was the largest Catholic building in Asia before 1945, and Nagai often observed this prominent building from a window of the medical college.

¹² Nagai, *Rozario no Kusari*, p. 164.

¹³ A Catholic church or cathedral was called *Tenshudo*, meaning “dorm of the Heavenly Lord”, instead of *Kyokai*, which means “church” and was used to indicate Protestant churches.

Nagai's coming to the confession of the Catholic faith was largely influenced by the people of Urakami, especially his host family, with whom he stayed during his college days. The family was a line of the Catholic Christians from 16th century, and was praying for Nagai's conversion. When the Manchurian Incident occurred in 1933, a year after Nagai graduated from the college, he was enlisted in the Hiroshima Infantry Regiment and went to Manchuria as a short-term medical officer for one year.¹⁴ During this time, Nagai often read the *Outline of Catholic Doctrine*, which he had been given by Moriyama Midori, one of the daughters of his host family. When he returned to his work in Nagasaki, Nagai was baptised, and two months later, he married Midori. After three years, he was drafted again to China as a chief of the medical team, and served for another three years.¹⁵

Nagai's leukaemia was not a result of his exposure to the radiation from the atomic bomb. He had been plagued by the illness long before, and had been officially diagnosed in June 1945, two months before the nuclear attack. His area of study was radiology, which was a developing area in the field of medicine, and he contributed to establishing an independent radiology department at the college. After becoming head of the department, Nagai devoted himself to research and to mass examination of the area for tuberculosis, which was endemic in early 20th century Japan and was called the "Nation-Ruining Illness" (*Bou Koku Byou*). As a result, he was exposed to an excess of radioactivity, which began to affect his health.¹⁶

On August 6th in 1945, the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. The rumour of the newly invented bomb slowly spread, but the government's comment was that the damage was minimal.¹⁷ The Allied bombers dropped leaflets on the Kyushu area including Nagasaki to proclaim that there would be a great "air raid" in a couple of days. Receiving the news, Nagai's children, Kayano and Makoto, were sent to a cabin on a forest away from the residential area. Nagai and his wife Midori, and most of the people of Urakami stayed so that they would be able to act

¹⁴ Kataoka, *Nagai Takashi no Shogai*, p. 62.

¹⁵ The author could not obtain the information regards to where Nagai was when the Nanking massacre took place. Because of the fact Nagai belonged to a rescue crew, it is plausible to think that he was not involved with the atrocity himself, yet there is no enough evidence here to present it as a fact.

¹⁶ Kataoka, *Nagai Takashi no Shogai*, pp. 62–4.

¹⁷ Nagai, *Horobinu Monowo*, p. 490.

immediately after the air raid to extinguish fire and help the wounded as a part of responsibility as villagers.¹⁸

On the night of August 8th, there was an air raid until the morning of August 9th. People came out from their shelters relieved and started a new day. Nagai went to work to the university hospital, Midori, began cooking treats for the children to take them to the cabin later, and others left for their own work. Two minutes past eleven o'clock, the atomic bomb was exploded in the air over Nagasaki. Urakami was the epicentre. Those who were working outside were burned to death. Thirty thousand people died instantly, and one hundred thousand were injured. Being inside of the concrete building of the hospital, Nagai survived, yet a piece of glass from the window cut the carotid artery on the right side of his head. He began the relief operation with other nurses and doctors who had survived the blast, yet the situation was totally unlike that of a usual air raid. Numerous grey naked bodies came crawling towards them. Their clothes and skin were burnt away, and they were covered by ashes and dusts. Nagai and the relief party carried as many patients and casualties as possible to the hill behind the university where the fire would not reach. The survivors, including Nagai, were now terrified of the possible second atomic blast.¹⁹ When the survivors were informed that it was an atomic bomb, no one more understood what it meant more than the radiologist Nagai. He later described how his heart was filled both with the despair of the inevitable loss of the war and the feeling of some kind of rapture as a scientist to observe such a scientific achievement.²⁰

Nagai expected Midori to appear at the hospital if she was alive. She did not come, and all that remained of her was a small pile of blackened bones, and the chain of her rosary, in the ruin of their house.²¹ Some weeks later, the survivors, who did not have any serious injuries, began to develop the symptoms of radiation sickness. Nagai himself fell into critical condition with high fever and diarrhoea, and narrowly escaped death.

The war ended with Japan's unconditional surrender to the Allies on the 15th

¹⁸ Nagai, *Watashitachi ha Nagasakini Ita*, pp. 674–5.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 658, 753.

²⁰ Nagai, *Nagasaki no Kane*, p. 41.

²¹ Nagai, *Rozario no Kusari*, p. 162.

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of August, the day that is celebrated by Catholics as “the Assumption of the Virgin.” When the villagers finally came back to the “atomic field,”²² there were some murmurs that the atomic bomb was a punishment from God onto the dead, and the survivors were spared because they were “good” people. Losing his wife and many colleagues, Nagai insisted that it was not so. According to Nagai, the atomic bomb in Nagasaki was “God’s providence,” which was the grace of God the Urakami villagers should take with thanksgiving. The deceased in this largest Catholic city in Japan were the unblemished lamb sacrificed as a burned offering for the sin of the humanity who started the war. Only when the city was sacrificed, God heard the cry of people and let the war come to an end. In the eulogy for the victims, Nagai wrote:

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“The only unblemished lamb was our Urakami Church, who was offered onto the God’s altar. The Urakami Church – who preserved her faith during the 400 years of persecution, did not cease to pray for eternal peace in mornings and evenings even during the war in Japan, the infidel country. The sacrifice saved thousands and millions of lives of people who would have been killed in this calamity of the war.

On the 9th of August, when the darkness of war banished and the light of peace struck through, you were offered in the fire in front of this Cathedral, O, the great offering! In the extremity of grief, we looked up to this offering so beautiful, so innocent, so venerable. The 8,000 people including the priest, who ascended into heaven as pure fume! Everyone was such a good person!”²³

Why did the survivors survive? It was because they were not worthy to be the sacrifice on God’s altar. They were the sinful ones and were left on earth to atone their sins.

“The road now the Japanese have to tread is the road of the defeated nation, full of suffering and misery. The reparations that the Potsdam Declaration demands must be a great burden. This very road, on which we walk

²² The name Nagai gave to the ruin of atomic bomb.

²³ Nagai, *Nagasaki no Kane*, p. 79.

bearing this burden, is the way of hope that gives us sinners the chance of atonement. Blessed are those who mourn. They shall be comforted. We must walk on the road of reparation honestly without cheating. When we are mocked, scorned, flogged, yet walk in spite of sweating, bloodstained, hungry and thirsty, Christ who bore the cross and climbed onto Calvary will grant us courage.

The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. We give thanks that Urakami was chosen and sacrificed as the offering. We give thanks that because of the precious offering the peace was granted to the world and the freedom of religion was permitted in Japan. May the souls of the deceased rest in peace in the mercy of the Lord. Amen."²⁴

THE VICTIMS AND SURVIVORS

Nagai's comment on the atomic bomb as God's providence and the victims being the sacrifice for peace provoked much controversy. The criticism was mainly around Nagai's use of "providence."²⁵ If the atomic bomb was God's providence, the responsibility of the Japanese government and the Emperor was blurred even though they started the war and prolonged it until it caused such damage. Likewise, it will also obscure without accusation the moral responsibility of the Allies who used such a weapon against civilians. More fundamentally, if the bomb was God's providence, does it mean that God willed the inflicting of such pain onto people who were in fact believers? Does God require such cruelty and bloodshed, that so many who bear God's name should die in an inhuman way, to grant peace on earth?

To think about these questions, one needs to turn to Nagai's other writings as well as his background to understand his comment in a larger context. In *The Bells of Nagasaki* (1949), his eulogy for the community funeral at the Urakami Church is introduced in the context of Nagai presenting it to one of his neighbours. This

²⁴ Nagai, *Nagasaki no Kane*, pp. 79–80.

²⁵ See, for example Takahashi, 'Nagasaki Gembaku no Shisoka wo Megutte — Nagai Takashi to Urakami Hansai Setsu'.

neighbour had just returned from a battlefield overseas, only to find that his wife and five children had been killed in atomic bombing. He pressed the question to Nagai saying, "Anyone I meet says this: the atomic bomb was the Nemesis. Those who were killed were bad people, and those who were spared were granted a special mercy from God. Does it mean, then, my wife and children were 'bad people'?" Nagai answers to him that he has completely the opposite idea. Then, he showed this neighbour the script of the eulogy. Nagai argues that the victims were God's chosen unspotted lamb. The left ones were "the flunked students for the entrance examination to heaven."²⁶

It was not just his neighbour who struggled with the question "Why?". Nagasaki, as mentioned above, was the largest Catholic city in Japan, and Urakami had been historically a Catholic village for over 400 years. Among the 10,000 Christians of the Urakami Church, which was close to the epicentre of the atomic blast, 8,000 died. The voices from the outside and also from within said that they deserved it: it was either because they were bad people or Christianity was an evil religion. As believers, Nagai and the people of Urakami had to tackle this question theologically. They believed that God is loving and powerful, and they also embraced the precious and beautiful memories of the deceased. The pupils and nuns at the Catholic schools died while singing hymns. About 200 meters away from one of the schools at a bank of a river, the Latin hymns were heard all night after the blast. The next day, the nuns were found dead. Looking at this scene, Nagai says, "Those of us who survived were convinced that the bomb was not a Nemesis, yet a providence that is conceived with a profound plan."²⁷

The problem of pain itself was not new to Urakami, the birthplace of numerous martyrs. The devastation of the atomic bomb was at least the third time the village had been destroyed. The first time was during the severe persecution in the beginning of 17th century, when the Christians were executed by crucifixion or by being scalded to death by the hot steam from a geyser. The second time was the Meiji government's persecutions. From these experiences of extreme pain and suffering in the past, the people of Urakami developed the faith in which they continued to

²⁶ Nagai, *Nagasaki no Kane*, pp. 77, 80.

²⁷ Nagai, *Konoko wo Nokoshite*, p. 23.

pray and praise God neither to receive special reward nor to go to heaven instead of hell, but to love God.²⁸ Nagai even asserts that the people of Urakami are blessed to have the experience of pain as he observes the villagers help each other to restore their life together, believing the promise, "Blessed are those who are poor in Spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven; blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted."²⁹ Without compromising faith or reason, the conclusion Nagai reached was that the pain experienced on earth would help one to be purified through it and to be granted the chance of repentance before death.

After the atomic bomb was dropped, many people were found to be bones in ruins of fire. No one knows how the person came to an end of the life, and the villagers often muttered, "Did they express contrition?" These bones were of those who were in houses, which caught fire. Some of them died instantly or lost consciousness when the houses fell on them, in which case they did not have time for contrition. Those who were still conscious pressed between pillars or whose limbs were caught were slowly burnt from one side, choking with smoke and suffering as if it was hell fire. It was, however, not at all hell or purgatory, but a precious experience, which purified one's soul lest the soul goes to the hell or purgatory. It was the grace of God. Those who hated the experience, scorned, detested, and grumbled against God were not saved. Those who willingly accepted the pain, gave thanks for the opportunity of repentance and contrition, and praised the merciful God were cleansed by the fire and taken to the paradise.³⁰

He does not say this to justify the war and suffering caused by it. Throughout his writings, the main theme is "peace" and they are full of messages against war. He confesses, "I was born in a line of Samurai, who was taught by my mother how to behave as one from my childhood. I was also drafted to an infantry regiment, went into the actual battle, and was rather warlike. Yet, even I now detest any war since I witnessed the reality of the atomic war. I was brought to my senses."³¹

Thus, Nagai answers to the question, namely whether God willingly inflicts pain onto Christians, saying that the pain is not the end in itself for Christians but

²⁸ Nagai, *Hanasaku Oka*, p. 216.

²⁹ Nagai, *Rozario no Kusari*, pp. 141–3.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 279.

the very assurance of eternal bliss. Did God require the sacrifice for the peace of earth? For Nagai, who was a devout Catholic, the answer was yes. It was also the way for him and the people who lost their family to make the deaths of their loved ones meaningful.

There is, however, one more question left to answer. Did Nagai's use of the concept of "sacrifice" obscure the ethical responsibility of the emperor, the Japanese government, or the Allied powers? His writings, at least, did not "accuse" these authorities. This may not have been his intention, yet even if he had wished to do so, the issue could not have been expressed during his lifetime: the Allied occupation authority strictly censored anything criticising the authority or its policies, including the policy of remaking the emperor as the symbol of peace and democracy.

Nagai's first essay, *The Bells of Nagasaki*, although it was completed in August of 1946, was suppressed by GHQ censorial authority, and was only permitted to be published in 1949 "after a protracted give-and-take with SCAP censors."³² His first book published was a collection of essays about his life with two children, *Konoko wo Nokoshite* [*Leaving These Children*] in 1948, even though *The Bells of Nagasaki* was completed before. SCAP pursued the policy of prohibiting any report of the effects of the atomic bomb. Accordingly the Japanese press and publishers learnt to practice self-censorship regarding such "taboo" issues. This censorship and self-censorship made it difficult for the survivors to talk about their experiences and communicate with each other for consolation.³³ In these circumstances, the publication of Nagai's *Leaving These Children* and *The Bells of Nagasaki*, both of which became bestsellers, was exceptional. The publication of *The Bells of Nagasaki* was especially extraordinary at the time, since it included Nagai's extensive scientific observations of the effects of the bomb. One of the conditions that the occupation authority insisted was that it had to be published with an appendix about the 1945 sack of Manila, which was written and prepared by the Americans.³⁴ For the occupation authority, the

³² Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, pp. 196–7.

³³ *ibid.*, p. 414. Dower also cites numerous sources that point to the fact that the censorship was extended to scientific writings. Dower says, "For over six years, Japanese scientists and doctors — and even some American scientists in Hiroshima and Nagasaki who were conducting research on radiation effects — were denied access to data that might have assisted them in communicating to and helping atomic-bomb victims."

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 415.

atomic bombings and the other bombing of the cities were the due consequences of what Japan has done to the United States, and the Asian countries. This juxtaposition, however, could have been read as suggesting that Japan had paid the price for the atrocities committed in Asia by suffering the atomic bombings. From the Asian countries' perspective, this was not the case at all.

Nagai's writings were first and foremost to publicise the facts of the atomic bomb, so as to argue for peace and against any future war. It was also Nagai's testimony of faith. Yet, his notion of the atomic bomb being "providence" did have political implications and an unintended, rather unfortunate, effect. In the discussions of the war and atomic bombings that followed in Nagai's footsteps, it is often the abstract concept of a "war" that is blamed, not the people who were actually responsible. If the perpetrator is a "war," then the Japanese who suffered from it also became victims instead of oppressors.

NAGAI AND THE BIBLE

Nagai's six-year career as an author was so prolific that some even doubted his authorship of the books, saying he was using ghost writers.³⁵ Many of his essays were about his life as a member of Urakami, and as a father of two children who had lost their mother by the atomic bomb and would become orphans on Nagai's inevitable death in a few years. When Nagai explains Christian tradition or belief, he does so to allow non-Christian Japanese people to understand with what the people of Urakami are familiar. After *The Bells of Nagasaki* was published in 1949, he became a well known author, and many in Japan read his books. (*The Bells of Nagasaki* was also adapted as a motion picture during Nagai's lifetime, and its theme song won a prize.) Unlike the Protestant thinkers introduced in this thesis, Nagai never took on the task of "explaining" the Bible book by book. Nagai's Bible is supplementary to the traditions of the Catholic Church and his experiences as a Catholic believer. When Nagai speaks of Christian faith, he asserts rather bluntly and faithfully the teachings of the Catholic Church. "The only train to get to heaven is the Catholic Church, whose conductor is the Pope," he writes.³⁶ He also spends more pages on

³⁵ Kataoka, *Nagai Takashi no Shogai*, pp. 261–3.

³⁶ Nagai, *Rozario no Kusari*, p. 258.

Mary the Mother of God than on Jesus.

Many of his books are collections of essays. The common theme is certainly a plea for peace on earth and spiritual peace of individuals, yet there are several other themes such as an address to his children, about the personal and social implications of being an orphan, the lives of Japanese martyrs, contemplation on Japan's reconstruction, and above all, the Christian faith in the context of Urakami and the atomic ruin. Unlike the other famous Catholic writer Endo Shusaku, author of the novel *Silence*, Nagai does not analyse his faith over what it means to be a Christian and a Japanese. Nagai was a convert who chose to become Catholic, unlike Endo who was baptised as a child according to the will of his mother. The history of Urakami, where Nagai lived and died, is also distinct. The area was distinguished by Christianity's 400-year survival there; thus Christianity was indiginized in Urakami and there was a certain history of Christianity there, whereas as in other parts of Japan, Christianity remained foreign. In the Urakami of Nagai's time, there was no clash of Christianity and Japanese culture among the Catholics there. Christianity was integrated with the life of villagers, who would kneel at where they were and prayed when the church's bell rang three times a day.³⁷

"Blessed are those who mourn" (Matthew 5:4); "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1:21); "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away" (Matthew 24:35);³⁸ "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself" (Luke 10:26).³⁹ All these words of the Scripture were taken literally by Nagai who was now in the atomic ruin with his two children. Thinking of the children who will be left without parents, he repeats the promises of God. "Together the love poured from the above and the love offered from the below, the flows of love between God and an orphan connect. Then for the first time, the orphan is not 'parentless'. He now has the Father in Heaven."⁴⁰ "I will not leave you orphaned" (John 14:18). We are now reminded of this firm word of promise. This is the state in which an orphan is saved. The

³⁷ Nagai, *Nagasaki no Hana*, p. 310.

³⁸ Nagai, *Horobinu Monowu*, p. 502.

³⁹ Nagai, *Konoko wo Nokoshite*, p. 44.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

blue bird of happiness is exactly this 'love of God' and there is nothing else."⁴¹ God is however, not physical, and cannot be heard or seen. How can God be the comforter other than in a spiritual sense? In response, Nagai strongly affirms the word of Christ, "Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?" (Matthew 6:26).⁴² On the other hand, he cautions social workers and volunteers who work for orphans not to romanticise it as "giving up one's life for the poor orphans!" since this is actually a condescending attitude. It takes spirit to serve God, as Christ spoke, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me" (Matthew 25:40).⁴³

Thus when Nagai engages with the Bible, the passages are understood in the context of Urakami. When the biblical stories are retold, it is done in the context of the Catholic tradition in Urakami. Jesus' last week on earth is told to explain the background of the traditions around the Holy Week, which was deeply rooted in the life of the faith community. For example, he begins with the story of the Palm Sunday, mentioning the tradition in Nagasaki, a Christian would hold a leaf of Cycadophyta [*Sotetsu*] instead of palm fronds. A story of chrysanthemum, in which a biblical imagery is woven into a petty anecdote, may remind one of Jesus' parables on wheat and weed (Matthew 13:24–30). Nagai found some "chrysanthemums" in his back yard, and asked his son to plant them neatly in the garden. He was looking forward to seeing them bloom, but soon afterwards a carpenter in the neighbourhood commented on them, "Why do you keep such weeds?" Only then, he realised that those plants, which he thought chrysanthemums, were worse than useless weeds. He told his son to pull them up and burn them. That was the story, which anyone may appreciate as a parable of some message, such as deceiving nature of appearance, the well-meaning carpenter, silly Nagai who mistook mere weeds for something valuable, even if that person has never read the Bible. If one does know the biblical parable, however, the story strikes a familiar note.⁴⁴

However, it is fair to say that Nagai's writings neither "teach" the Bible, nor

⁴¹ Nagai, *Konoko wo Nokoshite*, p. 45.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 48.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 67–8.

⁴⁴ Nagai, *Nyokodo Zuihitsu*, p. 117; also in Nagai, *Nagasaki no Hana*, pp. 325–6.

treat it as the Word of God: that phrase never appears in his writings. Old Testament phrases or imageries are largely absent except for the words of Job, "The Lord gives and the Lord takes." One could call him a theologian in a broad sense, yet he does not demonstrate any "interpretation" skills *per se*. His Bible, primarily the New Testament, is juxtaposed with his catechism, and they are read together.⁴⁵

NAGAI'S LEGACY

Nagai does not accuse the military cliques, the emperor or even the United States for the terror of the atomic bomb and its aftermath. This is partially because of SCAP censorship, yet could be also because of his Christian faith that teaches one to love one's enemy and not to retaliate. Nagai was later criticised on this point. His contributions were, rather, keen observation of the effects of the atomic bomb, storytelling of the Christian history in Urakami, and the communication of the Catholic faith to the ordinary non-Christian people in Japan. What he stressed was, however, the cruelty of the weapon, not just the physical damage, which is detrimental, but the damage to the "conscience." Nagai writes, "In a conventional air raid, the area of the raid was limited and the buildings did not catch fire all at once. You could escape the fire even if the fire got near you, and still be able to help others to escape" and thus keep the commandment, "Love your neighbour as yourself."⁴⁶ In the devastation of the atomic bomb, a vast area becomes a sea of fire in a split second, even if one could survive the blast, it is impossible to worry about anything else but one's own security. There is also danger of contamination from radiation that gradually, but continually, destroys a person. "Those who tried to keep the teaching faithfully were all killed."⁴⁷

Nagai's last five years until his death was spent in a small cottage in Urakami, which he named, "Nyo-ko-do": the Chinese characters symbolises "Just as yourself," with the hope of the world not turning into a place for the selfish, but for those who love their neighbours as themselves. Before his death, the Pope Pius XII

⁴⁵ Nagai, *Itoshiko Yo*, pp. 57–8.

⁴⁶ Nagai, *Nyokodo Zuihitsu*, pp. 118–9; Nagai, *Gensiya Rokuon*, pp. 560–2; Nagai, *Watashitachi ha Nagasaki ni Ita*, pp. 743–755.

⁴⁷ Nagai, *Nyokodo Zuihitsu*, pp. 118–9.

acknowledged Nagai and sent a cardinal and bishop to console him. Helen Keller was also one of his visitors, and even the Emperor paid him homage. Nagai was a person of constant self-reflection. He asks himself, "The Bible in my right hand, my children in my left — am I the one who skilfully manipulates these to beg for tears of people to make profits out of it?"⁴⁸ No matter how renowned he became, however, Nagai refused to leave Urakami, and his Nyokodo. His royalties were mostly spent for the restoration of his town.⁴⁹

Nagai's work certainly provokes a question: Is it theologians' responsibility to consider the later political implications of their statements?⁵⁰ Nagai was writing from his own context; yet the criticism of Nagai's concept of providence obscuring the political accountability of Japanese and American governments should be taken seriously even if it was not Nagai's intention. This is an example of how theological statements, as long as theology is a product in history, are always "political." In this view, if it was the case that Nagai could not address the responsibility of the authorities because of political pressure from those very authorities, the fact itself should be pointed out and the theological discourse should continue with Nagai's thought as a reference.

Notwithstanding the criticism, Nagai's contribution was not small. He is one of the few Christian writers who wrote from the atomic epicentre. The renowned British biblical scholar Richard Bauckham considers the issue of nuclear proliferation side by side with his interpretation of the story of Deluge in Genesis, yet he does not refer even once to the perspective of victims or the fact that one of the two cities that actually experienced the nuclear holocaust was a "Christian" city.⁵¹ The present author witnessed an interpretation of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki as "the punishment of God" being strongly put forward by a Korean scholar at an international conference on Peace and Reconciliation on the Korean Peninsula.⁵² There is an obvious lacuna in the theological discourse on the nuclear

⁴⁸ Nagai, *Nyokodo Zuihitsu*, p. 103.

⁴⁹ Kataoka, *Nagai Takashi no Shogai*, p. 217.

⁵⁰ Here, I use the term "theological" in a broader sense than the academically accepted statements. When one refers to God, the concept, which cannot be empirically tested, it is a theological statement.

⁵¹ Bauckham, *The Bible in Politics*.

⁵² International conference on Peace and Reconciliation on the Korean Peninsula at York St John University on 15–18 August 2006.

holocaust from the victims' point of view, and Nagai's writings should be reevaluated in the continuing dialogue.

Kitamori Kazo
(1916–1998)

KITAMORI KAZO (1916–1998)

Kitamori Kazo became widely known for his *The Theology of the Pain of God*, published in 1946 (with an English translation in 1965), a year after Japan's surrender to the Allies. This book was introduced to the West by Carl Michalson in his *Japanese Contributions to Christian Theology* (Westminster Press, 1959) and came to be known as one of the few original contributions to international theological studies by a Japanese scholar.⁵³ Kitamori's work was considered "unique" because he first of all critiqued Barth when Japanese theologians' fascination with Barth was at its peak. Karl Barth himself wrote, in the preface to the Japanese Translation of *Einführung in die Evangelische Theologie* (1962), which was published in Japan in the year of its original German publication, that he had read Michalson's *Japanese Contributions*, and that he poses *ernstliches Fragezeichen* (serious questions) to Kitamori's *Theology of the Pain of God*, saying that Kitamori's work represents a theology that possesses uniquely Japanese qualities, yet is not simply "Japanese" but also "evangelical", rooted in the Bible, and located in the context of the universal Church.⁵⁴ What Barth implied here was that Kitamori's work was still of some worth since it related itself to the needs of Western Christian scholarship in spite of its "Japanese" traits. Since the first translation of the *Pain of God*, which was into English, was in 1965, Barth had not read Kitamori's work itself at this point, and he passed away in 1968 without seeing its German translation in 1972.

Kitamori's early life is known from his *Theological Autobiography* [神学の自伝]. He grew up in a Buddhist family, and just as children from Christian homes go to Sunday school, he, from the age of six or seven, went to a temple of Pure Land Buddhism to listen to a monk preach. Even as a boy, he could understand the thoughtful teachings of Pure Land Buddhism, yet he wondered whether the pro-

⁵³ In a preface to the Kodansha Publishing Company's version of *The Theology of the Pain of God*, Kitamori himself sent a word of gratitude to Michalson, who had died in an accident, saying that Michalson's book introduced Kitamori's work to a wider audience, which made *The Theology of the Pain of God* widely known before it was translated into other Western languages in the 1960s.

⁵⁴ Barth, *Hukuinshugi Singaku Nyumon*, p. 3.

found doctrines are actually practised among the followers. Japanese Buddhism had a great philosophical heritage, yet often the believers cherished only its liturgy, not the content: at least, this was what appeared to be the case in the eye of the boy Kitamori, and questions about the relationship between Buddhist teaching and practice remained even in his later life.⁵⁵ He knew some Christians at middle-school, yet to him, they only appeared “strange” just as a Western building would be ill-fitting among traditional Japanese architecture.⁵⁶ It was after he entered high-school that Kitamori encountered the Bible as he was struggling a question, “Does one’s life consist of a mere series of ‘chances’?” What caught his eyes was Jesus’ prayer in the garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:39). “Here, I was presented with the one with ‘will’, who is constantly watching over me. If this is ‘God’, then, this is exactly what I was searching for. If this ‘will’ is called ‘providence’, this very idea of ‘providence’ would give me the solution.”⁵⁷ “Not what I want but what you want.” — This became Kitamori’s religion.

This “religion,” however, was doomed to collapse: Kitamori came to realise that a human is too weak to achieve the will of God, who is the absolute good. This realisation led him to study Luther, and he then saw how the cross of Jesus Christ is theologically inevitable. Around this time, Kitamori began to attend church services. “Seeking God for one’s preservation is not faith but sin”: Luther’s words hit him hard: is it possible to seek God selflessly? He was baptised in 1934.⁵⁸

Kitamori was a bright student and successful scholar even when he was young. Naturally, he was expected to go to one of the prestigious state universities, and it was an attractive option for Kitamori himself. However, young Kitamori decided to go to a small Lutheran seminary in Tokyo to study under Sato Shigehiko (1887–1935), who was a scholar on Martin Luther. After coming to the seminary, however, Kitamori found that the professor died from illness on the matriculation day. Kitamori stayed on in the seminary and graduated, but this incident taught him “not to think anything absolute except Christ.”⁵⁹ It was in these years of seminary when Kitamori

⁵⁵ Kitamori, *Shingaku teki Jiden*, p. 8.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 13–4.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

began to contemplate the “Pain of God.”

The formation of the thought was gradual. Kitamori asked, “How could a sinner as I am be included in the love of God?” He does believe that a sinner is included, which is what the gospel is about: inclusion of those who should be outside. But how? “Through the death of Jesus Christ on the cross,” as anyone who passed a confirmation class would say. Kitamori did not stop here. He went on to ask, what does it mean that God includes sinners through the cross of Christ? It means that the love of God is now extended to those who are not lovable. How can a holy and just God love those who only deserve his wrath? Kitamori answers, “Through pain.”

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(1916–1998)

He comes across this “pain” in Jeremiah 31:20, which the first Japanese translation rendered, “I have pain in my bowels.”⁶⁰ The strong imagery of the verse gripped him. This “pain” does not point to the pain of Christ on the cross. He came to see this imagery as more than a literary device; the words speak who God is. If God is merely the God of wrath or God of love, the resolution is easy and there is no place for pain in God; however because the wrath and love clash within God when God loves the unlovable, the pain becomes the word to describe the very essence of God. God is in essence perpetually the God with pain.

Therefore, when the gospel says that the sinners are saved through Christ, it also means that the sinners are saved through God whose essence is pain. Because God is the God of pain, the impossible inclusion of sinners is possible. The sinners are saved (or rather, included) not because of their own merit, not even because of “faith,” but solely because the God is God who eternally bears pain. In this understanding, according to Kitamori, one could be able to take Jesus’ sermon on the mount literally and yet without trepidation. Kitamori rejects Luther’s interpretation of “your good works” (Matthew 5:16) as “having faith in God.” Other verses on “works” in the sermon of the mount should be also taken literally. A human being can hear these difficult words only in the context of “the love of God grounded in the pain of God.”⁶¹

60 A later Japanese translation changed it to “my heart yearns.” In New Revised Standard Version translates, “I am deeply moved for him.”

61 Kitamori, *Shingaku teki Jiden*, pp. 40–2. Matthew 5:8, 5:16, 5:19, 6:14, 7:21, 7:24. He also cites Luke 10:28 and Matthew 13:44. Kitamori distinguishes “the wrath of God,” “the love of God,” and “the love of God, grounded in the pain of God.” The first two clash in God, and the only the third gives the solution to it.

After graduating from the Japan Lutheran Seminary, Kitamori went on to study in Kyoto Imperial University where he studied philosophy and graduated in 1941. These years in the seminary and the university coincided with the years of Japan's war with China. Kitamori later wrote, "Observing the country's Asura-like reality, it was inevitable for me to run to a certain 'religiosity', that affirms and comprehends reality as it is to love the homeland and show solidarity."⁶² For Kitamori, it was a Buddhist ultranationalist, Kurata Momozo (1891–1943), who presented the "religiosity." This extreme version of Mahayana Buddhism rejected any commandments or regulations for the way for salvation, which almost resounded with the famous cry of Luther, "Sin boldly." However, Luther was by no means a libertine. In Luther's theology of *sola fide*, there is certainly a place for the law. In Kurata's view, the existence of law itself threatens the preservation of humans, who cannot observe these laws. Kitamori eventually followed Luther: he came to the conclusion that the law does not threaten the life of believers because of the love of God grounded in the pain of God. Once he came to this conclusion, ultranationalism was identified as "heresy," which demands one to "worship the beast" (Rev. 13:8). Before the beast's overwhelming power, the only hope and power is the "Lamb that was slaughtered." In the reality of human sinfulness, it is the Lamb, who would save the humans from condemnation and to make it possible to change the situation.⁶³ Kitamori's conclusion, however, did not lead him to radical criticism or disobedience of the Japanese government.⁶⁴ He continued his studies in the university until he became an assistant professor in the Tokyo Union Theological Seminary in 1943.

THE THEOLOGY OF THE PAIN OF GOD (1946)

The previous section studied how Kitamori developed his theology of the pain of God through several years before it was finally published in 1946. It should be noted that the process was not prompted primarily by specific suffering and pain around Kitamori. The empirical pain of human beings in particular contexts does not have a place in Kitamori's theology. Since the publication of the book almost coincided

⁶² Kitamori, *Shingaku teki Jiden*, p. 48. In Hindu mythology, Asura is a evil god who likes to fight.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

⁶⁴ Kitamori was not conscripted, much to his relief. *Ibid.*, pp. 192–3.

with Japan's defeat in the Asia-Pacific War, many speculated that the devastation of Japan's cities inspired Kitamori to contemplate the pain of God, but that was quite wrong: as we saw, the formation of this theology began before 1941. Any formation of thought occurs in its historical context, and in this sense, the war must have influenced Kitamori's theological activities, but the foundation of the *Theology of the Pain of God* was Kitamori's dialogue with Luther, Barth, and modern liberal theologians from the German-speaking part of the world. Kitamori's contribution was to critique both Barth and the liberal theologians, and achieved his theology as the extension of neither. Kitamori points out that the "faith" in the theology of Barth is to acknowledge and to love God, who is absolutely transcendent, an absolute "whole", unbroken and without pain. What is the "gospel" in this theology? Kitamori argues that even when the gospel is defined in Barth, what determines the content of the gospel is the Law, namely the first commandment, "You shall have no other Gods before me." Thus the theology itself becomes legalistic. On the other hand, Albrecht Ritschl, Adolf von Harnack, and Friedrich Schleiermacher all emphasised God's love as the ultimate solution of any problem in this world. Both Barth and liberal Protestants, however, neglected the significance of the cross.⁶⁵

The pain of God is the result of the fact that God's love has overcome God's wrath. Thus, the cross of Jesus Christ as a historical event becomes crucial. The God of Trinity is not only God who begets the Son, but also God who let the Son die, in which God pains. In this, Kitamori insists that his idea is not Patripassianism, which would assert that God suffered on the cross as Christ. "Pain," according to Kitamori, is not a "nature" of God, but a concept of relationship between the love and wrath of God. The synthesis of love and wrath is God's pain, and it does not mean God suffers with the suffering; human suffering is an analogy, a symbol of the pain of God who went outside of Godself upon deciding to love sinners.

To further explain the pain of God, Kitamori argues that God's pain is expressed with astonishing accuracy in the concept of Japanese word, *Tsurasa*, which means "tragedy" or "agony." The word is often found in Japanese classical plays. The concept thus represents a sentiment familiar to any Japanese regardless of class or educational level, because, unlike some genteel "high" literature or vulgar pop-

⁶⁵ Kitamori, *Kami no Itami no Shingaku*, p. 31.

literature, the play as a literary genre appeals to anyone. If a Japanese person does not understand the concept, “the person is not Japanese-like.”⁶⁶ *Tsurasa* is the kind of pain experienced when one voluntarily denies oneself, suffers, or even dies for the benefit of those whom one loves. According to Kitamori, *Tsurasa* is “the heart of the Japanese.” The difference between the pain of God and *Tsurasa* would be that *Tsurasa* is experienced due to the love for a person precious and beloved by the sufferer of *Tsurasa*, while God loves those who are not lovable. Notwithstanding this difference, Kitamori asserts that the Japanese people would become a carrier of the crucial concept of the gospel to the rest of the world.⁶⁷ Here Kitamori defines himself as an insider of the group specifically equipped to disseminate the gospel through their special ability to understand the pain of God, which by his own reasoning is the cornerstone to the Bible and Christianity. He may not have been conscious of this construction of an insider group, but the concept certainly excludes those who suffered Japanese aggression as the outsider.

What then does it mean that God is the God of pain for us in this world? It means for the believers to serve God they should “take up their cross and follow” (Mark 8:34). Indeed, “suffering” is the very concept that relates God, Christ, and people. Why did God command Abraham to sacrifice his son, which is in hindsight a seemingly meaningless order? Precisely because God required Abraham of his service, which is to closely relate himself with God in the suffering.⁶⁸ Just as God willingly offered his Son, when human beings bear pain it bears symbolic witness to the pain of God. If one is a believer, the person knows that his pain is the symbol of God’s pain, that is, the pain one would experience is witness to God’s pain.⁶⁹ If one is not a believer, one’s pain is also witness to God’s pain, yet one does not know it: thus the pain only leads one to curse and separate from God as in Revelation 16:10–11: “The fifth angel poured his bowl on the throne of the beast, and its kingdom was plunged into darkness; people gnawed their tongues in agony, and cursed the God of heaven because of their pains and sores, and they did not repent of their deeds.” In this situation, knowing that the pain of this world is embraced by the pain of

⁶⁶ Kitamori, *Kami no Itami no Shingaku*, p. 230.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 234.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

God, believers should now love their neighbours by identifying others' pain as their own. In this identification is the supplication of believers for non-believers, as in the commandment, "love your neighbour as yourself." Therefore, in the theology of the pain of God, non-believers stand in the same light as the believers.⁷⁰ If anything would become an obstacle to one's salvation, it is not that one failed to conform to a certain faith confession, but that one failed to identify oneself with the other's pain. This idea leads Kitamori to Matthew 25:31ff. Here, to throw and offer oneself to "the reality of pain" is what it means to love God.⁷¹ "God will not be loved as himself, but will hide himself behind the reality, and be loved through our love to the real people," and this is the only way to love God.⁷² Some people neither experience any pain nor serve in the painful reality of the world: they live happily and die in peace. Yet, they have then nothing to do with God but absolute severance. Only when one is caught by God's wrath realised in the world and experiences pain can one relate to God closely: thus, "Blessed are those who mourn."⁷³ Jesus' parable of the rich man and Lazarus also speaks the same message: the rich man was separated from God because he did not know pain, while Lazarus was a man of pain, which led him to be closer to God. In this parable, there is no mention of faith or good deeds on Lazarus' part. The rich man experiences the pain later, which, Kitamori speculates, may bring him to the place where Lazarus is.⁷⁴ The pain of the world in reality points to the eschatological consummation, which is "already and not yet." It will be completed when the whole world is healed through the pain of God.

Amongst all the biblical passages Kitamori refers to in *The Theology of the Pain of God*, the two major references are to the two Old Testament books, Isaiah and Jeremiah. In the first broadly accepted Japanese translation, *Bun-go Yaku*, which uses archaic formal Japanese, Jeremiah 31:20 is rendered, "I have pain in my bowels." The Hebrew word for "pain" in this verse is *Hamah*, which according to Kitamori primarily means "pain" not "yearning" or "being moved." The same word is used in Isaiah 63:15, which the same Japanese translation uses a phrase close to "ardent

⁷⁰ Kitamori, *Kami no Itami no Shingaku*, p. 152.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 170.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 101–2.

loving-mercy" in English.⁷⁵ These words appear with a noun, "bowel," "light," or "inner organ," which are often used together to describe the psychological state of human beings. In these two occurrences in Jeremiah and Isaiah, *Hamah* is used to describe the psychological state of God. Kitamori distinguished this from the "analogy of being (*analogia entis*)" in Aquinas' sense, but understood that God chose to reveal what is occurring in Godself in a term familiar to human beings. Thus, he continues, Jeremiah chose this word, "pain" to show God's unfathomable love, while the pain is not a synonym of love. A sinner could resist God's love, yet it is impossible to resist God's pain. For Kitamori, the expression "pain in the bowels" is the most suitable to illuminate the character of the "truth of the cross."⁷⁶

Kitamori does not use these two verses as "proof-reading"; he did not derive his conclusion, the pain of God, from these verses. What he is *not* doing by citing these bible verses is to perform historical critical exegesis on these verses. The "original meaning of the author" is not Kitamori's concern here. Difference in situation, author, and time of compositions does not matter to grasp the theological theme in these two verses of Isaiah and Jeremiah. Rather, exegetical work comes later to show his conclusion is a plausible one. Accordingly, detailed syntactical analysis is not employed either.⁷⁷ Whether the lexical meaning of *Hamah* is "pain" could also be debated, but the close analysis of the word is not Kitamori's concern. What he does is to employ the phrases (that is, the combination of "inner organ" and "to have pain") as theological terms based on the fact that they appear in the Scripture (even if it was only in a certain Japanese translation) and used to describe God. Then, he goes on to assert that Luther, Calvin, and other commentators saw in the Jeremiah passage the picture of God experiencing excruciating pain in the relationship with Israel.⁷⁸ The Isaiah passage, on the other hand, shows that the same phrase in Jeremiah is now to signify not only pain, but also the love of God. These two, love and pain, are thus two sides of the same coin, Kitamori argues. These two

⁷⁵ In NRSV, "The yearning of your heart."

⁷⁶ Kitamori, *Kami no Itami no Shingaku*, p. 96.

⁷⁷ The words in question here are *הָמוֹן מַעֵי* (in Jeremiah) and *הָמוֹן מַעֵיךְ* (in Isaiah). The word *מַעֵה* is a noun, plural in both cases and used with suffix, "my" and "your" respectively. The word *הָמוֹן* in Jeremiah 31 is a verb, Qal perfect (the subject is *מַעֵי*), while *הָמוֹן* is a noun in construct, which Kitamori mistook as a verb. See *ibid.*, p. 259.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 263–8.

are “different while identical, and identical while different.”⁷⁹ The love and pain of God are in the “structure of grace,” which also includes two different yet inevitably related concepts such as Christ’s death and resurrection, or justification and sanctification.⁸⁰

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How could Kitamori read this much from (or into) the text? Again, Kitamori’s disclaimer is that he is using the phrase, “theologically.” If the gospel is what summarises the Scripture as a whole, the pain of God, that is the core of the gospel according to Kitamori, must also be the essential concept in the both Testaments. As long as the phrase, “pain in the bowels” remains only in the contexts of these two verses in Jeremiah and Isaiah, however, it could not serve as a key word for the gospel and thus for the entire Scripture. Only once the phrase is moved from the realm of exegesis to the realm of dogmatics could the word function as a theological term, which is a “symbol” to connote what is transcendent while invalidating the humanly accustomed sense. Why is it possible both to chose the term and transfer it into “theological” and to identify the term as “symbol,” which points to the divine? Here, Kitamori becomes rather mystical: the central theme of the gospel, that is “the love of God that is grounded in the pain of God” is all-encompassing. Therefore, now under “the love of God that is grounded in the pain of God,” nothing can separate one from the love of God. The disobedient cannot remain in the love of God. If one could still remain in the love of God (because of the pain of God) one is no longer disobedient, but now obedient. Thus, even theologians who are sinful can remain in the love of God because of the pain of God, which saves them from being disobedient. Even in the attempt of appointing theological terms and find symbolic meaning in them, they are saved from being rebelling against God.⁸¹ This very naïveté and boldness is trust in grace.⁸²

So far, Kitamori’s justification for the symbolic (he calls it “theological”) use of Jeremiah and Isaiah, notwithstanding his apologetics, seems rather arbitrary. That would be the case, if the *Theology of the Pain of God* were “biblical theology” as a form of the preoccupation of biblical scholars. Kitamori’s conclusion, however, was not

⁷⁹ Kitamori, *Kami no Itami no Shingaku*, p. 277.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 278.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 283.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 288.

simply drawn from historical critical exegesis of biblical text; it is a product of his dialogues with Luther and other Protestant theologians, and the Bible functions as one of the sources, not the source, for his theological contemplation. This, however, does not mean that Kitamori himself regarded the Bible as being at the same level as the theologians. For Kitamori, a good child of Lutheran tradition, the Bible is the major source for theology. For Kitamori, “Christians teachings” or “doctrine” is the same thing as “the message of the Bible.” For this reason, he wrote number of books on “Bible study.”

KITAMORI AND THE BIBLE

Kitamori cared deeply about the issue of the reception of the Bible in Japan. “In our country,” he wrote, “the Bible is read in a rather odd way.” What he meant is that the Bible, both the Old and the New Testaments, sold very well in Japan: at the time he was writing, the sales of the Bible in Japan were the second highest in the world. Yet, confessing Christians made up only one percent of the population. It means, Kitamori calculates, that about 20 million people bought the Bible in the past ten years; yet, only 500,000 belong to the church a hundred years after the Japanese government was forced to re-open the country to Christian missionaries. For Kitamori, who was an ordained minister of a Protestant denomination, it is problematic. The Bible tells of the one and true God in the loudest of all the testimonies, yet those who possess the book do not come to belong to the Body of Christ, the Church. He concludes, “It means the Bible is difficult to understand for those people,” in which he recognises the need to “interpret and explain the message of the Bible to be understood and believed.”⁸³

Kitamori’s interpretation and explanation is not absorbed in the investigation of the historical background and authorial intention of the text, but in the theological context of Christian teachings. The locus of his originality is where the biblical texts deal with the issue of suffering. In the *Theology of the Pain of God*, he defined the significance of human suffering as that which witnesses the suffering of God. He also argued that human suffering is “healed” through the process in which one realises

83 Kitamori, *Seisho Hyakuwa*, p. 230.

that the pain is not meaningless, yet something that relates the person to God. These premises manifest themselves in his interpretations. In his short notes on I Peter 4:1, entitled “The Mystery of Suffering,” Kitamori points to where the King James Version translates, “for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin.” Verses 1 and 2 in New Revised Standard Version are, “Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same intention (for whoever has suffered in the flesh has finished with sin), so as to live for the rest of your earthly life no longer by human desires but by the will of God.” Here, Kitamori points out that the issue of suffering is presented as related to the question of ethics. In these words of I Peter, it is through suffering that human beings experience union with Christ. That through suffering one becomes “done with” sin is a “mystery.”⁸⁴ What is clear in the text is suffering is considered something “meaningful” rather than “meaningless.” Human suffering is most painful when it seems utterly meaningless. The biblical word presented here, according to Kitamori, proclaims that suffering is not meaningless simply because it relates one to God even though the process of it is a mystery.⁸⁵ Why is Matthew 2:16–18, the massacre of the innocent, a part of the Christmas story? Because Christmas is the birth of Jesus who is going to be crucified. The wailing and lamentation of Ramah and Bethlehem are pointing to the one thing: that is, God’s grief over the Son who is going to die. One could ask why God allowed Herod to commit such atrocities. Why did not God send a messenger to the mothers in Bethlehem to flee from Herod? Even Jesus’ call to “Take up their cross and follow me” sounds cruel in this light: why did not he say, “Just follow me without a cross”? What Jesus meant for Kitamori was that his cross would heal the cross of each of us. Human suffering is healed when it is acknowledged as the testimony of God’s pain. In this sense, the slaughter of the innocent is also pointing to the pain of God, and in that, the event becomes significant and meaningful. The ultimate consolation for the suffering is that God knows the very suffering because God, Godself, experienced it. It is through the pain of God that our wound would be healed.⁸⁶

84 Kitamori understood ὁ παθὼν σαρξὶ here as “one who experiences bodily (physical) suffering, yet the text could indicate “one who suffers in this (physical) world”, depending on the translation of σαρξί.

85 Kitamori, *Seisho Hyakuwa*, pp. 214–5.

86 Kitamori, *Zetsumyo no Shinri*, pp. 22–30.

It is appropriate to mention here that in Kitamori's commentary on the Book of Job is, the theology of the pain of God is adequately applied in the reading of text. He takes the position that the climax of the Book of Job is chapters 16 to 19, and the narrative in the beginning and the end are simply giving the framework and anti-climax. What happens in these chapters is that Job perceives, in Luther's phrase, "God against God": while Job curses his own birth and speaks of God, who "has torn me in his wrath, and hated me; he has gnashed his teeth at me," he also cries out, "Even now, in fact, my witness is in heaven, and he that vouches for me is on high," which then leads to the speech in chapter 19, "For I know that my Redeemer lives, and that at the last he will stand upon the earth; and after my skin has been thus destroyed, then in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see on my side, and my eyes shall behold, and not another" (vv. 25–27). For Job, God is who is against him; yet, the very one to whom Job asks for as his vindicator is God. God as enemy and God as redeemer — yet, they are the same God. Here the structure of the pain of God is textually evident: namely, the conflict between the judging God and the forgiving God, which generates the pain of God.⁸⁷

KITAMORI'S LEGACY

The last book by Kitamori that was published during his lifetime was entitled *The Japanese and the Bible*. In it, Kitamori attempts an "intercultural (that is, between the Japanese culture and the culture of the Bible) reading," of which one earlier example was the concept of *Tsurasa* he introduced in the *Theology of the Pain of God*. In this book, however, the problem of essentialism is evident. He encounters the same problems and makes the same mistakes as the authors of *Nihonjinron*, a Japanese literary genre which will be discussed in the next chapter. One commendable aspect, however, is Kitamori's attempt to unfold what he meant by introducing the concept of *Tsurasa* in his earlier work by actually referring to the stories of Japanese classical plays. This cannot be called, however, an inter-textual reading of the Bible, since although he uses the actual story of the Japanese play, he does so not to explain the biblical text, but to explain Christian doctrine. In this sense, he remains a theologian,

⁸⁷ Kitamori, *Yobuki Kourwa*.

not a textual interpreter.⁸⁸

As was mentioned earlier, Kitamori's work attracted much attention from overseas as one of the few contributions by a Japanese theologian to world theology. Jürgen Moltmann referred to Kitamori in *The Crucified God*.⁸⁹

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Kitamori, however, did not develop his theology of the pain of God to apply to any actual human situations. Even when he referred to human suffering, it was suffering in general and not any particular reality. In this sense, his theological reflection remains a "metaphysic of suffering."⁹⁰ In the *Theology of the Pain of God*, he mentions a suffering wounded soldier of Japanese army, yet he does not make any reference to those who suffered greatly from Japanese aggression.⁹¹ In the theological context of Japan of his time, Kitamori was one who spoke of the relationship between theology and secular authority, peace, or politics, which should be seen as far more advanced than the Barthian Japanese theologians who were distant from political issues. Kitamori pointed out that Barth's negative attitude towards the indiginisation of Christian theology hindered the political awareness of Japanese Christians.⁹² Kitamori himself attempted a dialogue with Japanese Buddhism and tried to address contemporary issues in Japan such as education, Christian schools, crimes, or use of military power.⁹³

NAGAI AND KITAMORI ON THE ISSUE OF PAIN

One prominent commonality between these two "theologians" of very different styles is that both of them dealt with the issue of pain and suffering. To achieve this task, neither of them started their theological discourse with the Scripture. Nagai's starting point was the traditional teachings of the Catholic Church and his own experience, while Kitamori's theology came from his dialogues with the Western Protestant theologians. Their conclusions are innovative because of Nagai's peculiar context and Kitamori's radical conclusion of rejecting both Barth and Liberal

88 Kitamori, *Nihonjin to Seisho*.

89 Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, p. 43.

90 England et al., *Asian Christian Theologies: A Research Guide to Authors, Movements, Sources*, p. 397.

91 Kitamori, *Kami no Itami no Shingaku*, p. 253.

92 Inoue, *Sengo Kyokaishi to Tomoni*, p. 129.

93 Kitamori, *Gendaijin to Kirisutokyo*.

Protestant theology. Yet these sources and methods are neither particularly new nor particularly original: they are products of the theological tradition of Europe and Americas, and neither Nagai nor Kitamori attempted anything contradicting their imported traditions. Their contributions are that in their theologies, suffering became “meaningful.” Behind suffering lies not the God of anger who punishes human beings; rather, in Nagai’s case, the God of deeper knowledge and understanding, and in Kitamori’s, the God of pain. However, several hard questions remain: Nagai’s traditional Catholic God is the one who imposes “suffering” that is far beyond the most evil human being’s imagination even though it will lead one to a better place (that is, “heaven” or the “Kingdom of God”). Kitamori’s God of pain encourages human participation in God’s pain, and the God does not seem satisfied with pain so far experienced by human beings and Godself. Devoted believers in the traditions of the Christian Church such as Nagai and Kitamori may be content with this image of God, yet if one is outside of the church tradition, one may ask what makes a person venerate such a “sado-masochistic” God. Nagai and Kitamori tried to reconcile the difficult reality with traditional Christian teaching, yet the God they perceived is hardly a stereotypical “God” and again could be seen as bloodthirsty. Kitamori is convinced that a person’s pain is healed through relating it to the pain of God, but is this really the case? Without knowing the process or reason is it enough to say, “God heals you through God’s own pain”? Is this really the reason why many people of faith feel “healed”?

Another issue that needs to be addressed is the lack of the “suffering of the other” in their theological scope. Both Nagai and Kitamori were too young to write during the war, and Nagai did not live long enough to develop his “theology” after the occupation. Yet it is a fact that neither of them deeply contemplated the crimes committed by their country against other Asian peoples. In other words, they did not consider the suffering of “the other.” In Kitamori’s case especially, as he tries to draw a Japanese “traditional” concept from the classical play literature, he defines what is worthy to be called “Japanese”, including himself as an insider, in which the minority or outsiders are ignored. To hear the voice of Christian “outsiders” in the Japanese society, theological discourse had to await the next generation.

In this chapter, I have outlined the lives and thoughts of two Christian thinkers

from immediately after the Asia-Pacific War to point out how a theological claim has a political implication even when it is unintended. In the final chapter, I shall outline the issues the theologians in Japan face today, and draw upon the insights gained in the preceding chapters to argue for the self awareness of theologians regarding “interpretation and power”.⁹⁴

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⁹⁴ The phrase used in Sugirtharajah, *The Bible and the Third World*, p. 73.

Minority Christianity in the Majority Culture: Post-Barthian to Postcolonial?



In the previous chapters, I have looked at Japanese Christian thinkers and their theological works. Though this thesis is not a comprehensive history of Christian writers in Japan, choosing two thinkers from each generation does outline an overall picture of their issues based on the historical contexts. Uchimura and Ebina, the first generation of Protestant Christians, tackled the issue of nationalism and Christianity: namely, how to be both patriotic as a Japanese and a Christian. In this, they both attempted to present apologetics of Christian religion in a society where Christianity was strange and insignificant. Ebina did so as a clergyman, adopting liberal theology and the eurocentric colonial discourse therein to support Japan's expansionism and political ambitions over Korea. Uchimura, as a layman, was more conservative in his Christian beliefs, rejected the institutionalised Church and criticised the Japanese government and its foreign policies, through which he explored the "authentic" Christianity for the Japanese people without influence from the foreign missionaries.

By the 1920s, Japan's self-colonisation — namely, the westernisation process — was under way, and the country had experienced the special procurement boom from providing munitions for the First World War. The sudden economic boost and the following depression brought to light the troubles of the poor labourers, against which Kagawa Toyohiko fought as a Christian activist throughout his life. In the meantime, having colonised Korea, Japan's ambitions targeted Manchuria in China, and it erupted as Manchurian incident, which was unanimously condemned by the League of Nations. Yanaihara Tadao, a Non-Church Christian, stood up to reveal the lies of the military and the government, expressing his criticism through the words of the Prophets in the Hebrew Bible.

Nagai Takashi and Kitamori Kazo, on the other hand, faced a different political situation after the devastating Asia-Pacific War, and each reflected theologically on

the meaning of “pain” though their starting points were different: the experience of the atomic attack for Nagai, and theological metaphysics for Kitamori. When Japan was occupied by the Allies and was absorbed into the Cold-War structure under the United States, Japan’s colonial past, especially its war guilt against the Asian people, was swept under the carpet. The sentiment of “victimhood” spread among the Japanese people themselves, and neither Nagai nor Kitamori satisfactorily addressed the issue of Japan’s aggression against the neighbouring countries.

However, besides these Christian thinkers who were aware of the political situations they faced and spoke from their own place, there was a current of theology that adapted itself to the European theological academia and thus participated in European theological discussion. The period from the 1910s to the 1960s is often described as the “German Captivity” of theology in Japan. This is intended to convey the fact that the methodology of the study of Christianity in Japan took the form of dialogues with Barth, Bultmann, and Tillich.¹ Effort was made to understand these and other European and American theologians, to critique their thought, and to advocate or oppose their theologies. The locus of theological studies became limited to the inside of universities and the increasingly complicated theological discussions became less in touch with the local churches, while seminaries were established following the pattern of those in the United States.

The theology of Karl Barth was the most influential, and it was almost a requisite for anyone who studied theology to engage in a dialogue with Barth (or, in the case of biblical studies, with Bultmann). Emil Brunner visited Japan in 1949, and taught at the International Christian University in Tokyo from 1953 to 1955. He took an interest in the Non-Church movement, and wrote several articles about Uchimura Kanzo and the Non-Church after he went back to Switzerland.² Although he was respected in Japan, the theology of Brunner, who disagreed with Barth on natural theology, did not become as popular as Barth’s. The popularity of Barth was intense and almost inexplicable. Karl Barth himself responded to this phenomenon in theological studies in Japan in the preface to the Japanese translation of *Einführung in die Evangelische Theologie* (1962). Barth praised the efforts of some

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¹ Furuya, *A History of Japanese Theology*, p. 113.

² *Ibid.*, p. 36.

theologians, such as Kitamori Kazo, to “stand on their own feet” as Japanese theologians, and to take a firm step towards “Entkolonisierung” (decolonisation). He then warned Japanese theologians against theology’s submission to Japanese culture, and concluded his preface, stating his hope that his work would not be taken as a “dictated order”, but just one resource among many to help Japanese theologians to walk on their own feet to serve the word of God.³

Around the 1970s, however, different theological trends began to appear. Some call this period the “Post-Barthian Age.”⁴ One of these new currents was that theology developed dialogues with Buddhism around the question of God’s “non-existence”. Both Barth and Tillich critiqued the scientific methodology of modern theology, and pointed out the problem of “knowledge” as the object of the subject-object relation. It was a popular trend in the field of theology in Japan after the 1970s to clarify what it means to say that God does not exist as a reality as Barth or Tillich asserted. The broader background of this challenge is what postmodern thinkers have addressed since Heidegger. In this context, Oriental thought became a subject of theological interest and scrutiny, especially the concept of *Mu* [Nothing] in Buddhist tradition. Through the Japanese Zen philosopher, Nishida Kitaro (1870–1945), Japanese theologians entered into a dialogue with Zen Buddhism.⁵ The philosopher Takizawa Katsumi (1909–1984) and the theologian Yagi Seiichi (1932–) made contributions to the Buddhism–Christianity dialogue.

Takizawa was a philosopher who was strongly influenced by Nishida Kitaro. Following Nishida’s advice, he went to Bonn to study with Karl Barth. In his book, *Buddhism and Christianity* (1964), Takizawa proposed primary and secondary contacts with God. The primary contact of God is, in Takizawa’s Barthian language, the fact of Immanuel (God with us). This is the fundamental way of being for any

3 Barth, *Hukuinshugi Singaku Nyumon*, pp. 1–4.

4 Furuya, *A History of Japanese Theology*, pp. 113–4.

5 Nishida Kitaro (1870–1945): Founder of the Kyoto School. In his book, *An Inquiry into the Good*, published in 1911, Nishida “began to articulate a system of thought based on the Zen Buddhist experience in terms borrowed from French, German, and Anglo-American philosophy, psychology, and natural science. Drawing on William James and Henri Bergson, Nishida developed a philosophy based on ‘pure experience’ as that which underlies the subject-object relation. A thinker of great erudition and learning, he developed and refined his system over several decades to encompass the social and historical worlds as well as the world of religion. Central to Nishida’s thinking are the idea of the ‘topos of nothingness’ and the world as the ‘self-identity of absolute contradictions’.” From “Nishida Kitaro” in Honderich, *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*.

person. The secondary contact of God is the awareness on the part of the human being. The God who is acknowledged by humans, therefore, is not God himself, since God is *totaliter aliter*. God is beyond epistemology — this idea is detectable also in Nishida's Zen philosophy. Christianity and Buddhism articulate different experiences of the primary contact with God. Takizawa disagreed with Barth, who argued that the primary contact came into reality with the person of Jesus Christ. Takizawa argued instead that Jesus is the person who was awakened to the primary contact with God, thus actualised the primary contact in his secondary contact with God. This is not to say, however, that Jesus was the only person who actualised the primary contact: Gautama Buddha was also one who was awakened, thus actualised the primary contact of God. Yagi also saw the relativity of Christianity, and concluded that the basis of Christianity is not the doctrine of the cross and resurrection, but the Logos that actualises religious experience. In *The Formation of New Testament Thought*, Yagi rejected divine intervention for the formation of the New Testament, and proposed that the New Testament should be read through "pure intuition," the mutual penetration of subject and object, I and Thou. Both Takizawa and Yagi came to see God as the Buddhist idea of *Mu*.⁶

In the field of biblical studies, there had been already several scholars in Japan, and many of them obtained doctorates in Europe, especially in Germany. Among the most prolific biblical scholars were Mayeda Goro (1915–1980) in New Testament studies and Sekine Masao (1912–) in Old Testament studies, both of whom were from the Non-Church tradition, studied in Germany, and taught in state universities. Mayeda was a professor of the New Testament in Tokyo University (formerly Tokyo Imperial University), and among his students were Yagi, Arai Sasagu (1930–), Tagawa Kenzo (1935–), and other post-World War II New Testament scholars who also studied in Europe after graduating from the university. Arai's study of Gnosticism in the Gospel of Thomas was recognised both in Japan and overseas. After postgraduate work with Mayeda Goro in Tokyo University, Arai went to Erlangen for his doctoral studies with Ethelbert Stauffer (1903–1979). He then returned to Japan with a Th.D. from the University of Erlangen in 1962, taught in the faculty of letters in Aoyama Gakuin University until 1969, when he was transferred to

6 Furuya, *A History of Japanese Theology*, pp. 93–101, 117–24.

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Tokyo University during the students' movement. His published works on Gnosticism include his doctoral thesis, *Christologie des Evangeliums Veritatis: eine religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (1964) and his prize-winning book *Primitive Christianity and Gnosticism* (1971).⁷ Another contribution by Arai was in the area of social-scientific criticism, the outcome of which was *Jesus and His Time* (1974).⁸

While Arai's works remained within the institutional Church, Tagawa employed a critical method to critique religion, which then led to a critique of society itself, following the methodology of Karl Marx in his criticism of religion, politics, and society, and Simone Weil's rejection of institutional religion.⁹ In the postscript of a collection of his essays, *Hihanteki Shitai no Keisei* [Formation of the Critical Subject], he speaks of his objective to continue the movement from the critique of religion to the critique of contemporary society, all the while remaining within the religion.¹⁰ Tagawa went to Strasbourg to study with Etienne Trocmé (1924-2002), and the result of Tagawa's study in France was published as *Miracles et Évangélisme* in 1966. After returning to Japan, he wrote *Genshi Kirisutokyoshi no Ichidanmen* [A Phase of the History of Primitive Christianity] (1966), in which he applied redaction criticism to the Gospel of Mark. In this study, Tagawa argued for Mark's Galilean origin, which was written in opposition to the Christ-*kerygma* of Jerusalem. The Jerusalem-based *kerygma* teaches Christ as the Son of God, who has died, risen, and will come again, which correlates with the teaching of Paul. The Gospel of Mark, on the other hand, focuses more on Jesus of Nazareth, whose appearance itself was the *evangelium*, the Good News (Mark 1:1). Unlike the Synoptic Gospels, Mark does not render any Christological titles to Jesus; rather, it simply narrates his life.¹¹

Tagawa lost his full-time lectureship at the International Christian University in Tokyo because he sided with the students against the university administration during the students' movement in the 1960s.¹² He taught at the theology department

⁷ He was awarded the Japan Academy prize for this book.

⁸ Furuya, *A History of Japanese Theology*, p. 107: Yagi Seiichi comments that Arai's development of his method was "simultaneously with but independent of" Gerd Theissen.

⁹ England et al., *Asian Christian Theologies: A Research Guide to Authors, Movements, Sources*, p. 420.

¹⁰ Tagawa, *Hihanteki Shitai no Keisei*, p. 221.

¹¹ Furuya, *A History of Japanese Theology*, pp. 105-6; England et al., *Asian Christian Theologies: A Research Guide to Authors, Movements, Sources*, p. 420.

¹² From 1969 to 1972, student movements, often violent, swept through the universities in Japan, as result of which the courses in Christianity in Aoyama Gakuin University were cancelled and the

of the University of Göttingen from 1972 to 1974, and at a university in Zaïre (now the Democratic Republic of Congo) from 1974 to 1976, and returned to Japan. During his stay in Africa, he observed neo-colonialism in action, which he compared to Christianity under the Roman Empire. Searching for the reasons for Christianity's expansion in post-colonial Africa, he came to the conclusion that, from the beginning, Christianity has been by nature an imperialist religion, even though it was not created by Rome or any other imperial power. If Christianity were a Greek religion in the Greek language, its expansion would not have been as successful. Christianity arose from a Jewish source, and insisted that Christ was not Greek or Roman, while simultaneously denying its Jewish character: thus Christianity managed to claim universality, which allowed it to be absorbed into the imperial ideology.

"Ever since Christianity established itself as a world religion, it was typically a religion of imperialism in its nature. Its nature is imperialist like no other. Human history gave birth to such an outrageous thing. Those who ought to discern and realize their situation and should stand against it, are now, because of Christianity, seeking at least to have the spiritual peace."¹³

His *Maruko Fukuinsho Chukaisho* [Commentary on Mark] (1972) and *Iesu toiu Otoko* [A Man Called Jesus] (1980) depict Jesus, who stood beside the oppressed, suffering under the double yoke of Roman and Jewish authorities.

Even in the Post-Barthian age, however, theology and biblical studies in Japan are undertaken by those who study abroad and who then join the theological discourse of the West as if they were westerners. In other words, their methodologies were what they learned from the western institutions, and their theologies and biblical interpretations are also derivative of things done in Europe and the United States. Moreover, these works ignore their Japanese context or at best treat it as an addendum.

A theologian who considers the Japanese context is Furuya Yasuo (1926–), whose theology of religions is another attempt to answer the questions in the age of pluralism, having dialogues with other religions, not maintaining the absolute claims of Christianity. Furuya co-authored a book with Ohki Hideo (1928–), *Ni-*

Theology Department at Kanto Gakuin University was closed down.

¹³ Tagawa, 'Genshi Kirisutokyou to Afurika', pp. 49–50.

hon no Shingaku [Theology of Japan], published in 1989. This is a noteworthy work which takes “Japan” as a subject of theological analysis and reflection. After the long history of acceptance of Euro-centric theology, Furuya’s work is both valuable and overdue. However, considering the importance of the locus of theology, the question is whether “Japan” is specific enough to be considered as a theological context. If so, what is “Japan”? Who decides what Japan is? Can anyone who was born and raised in Japan speak on behalf of their compatriots? Is Japan defined by history, economics, customs, traditions, skin-color, or eye-shapes? What is Japan and who are the Japanese? These questions are in fact repeatedly posed not only by theologians but the Japanese people in general. This relentless desire for identity spawned a genre of literature called *Nihonjinron*, which discussed and gave tangible answers to the question of “Who are the Japanese”? Books and articles of this kind are read widely and many books became best sellers. However, this project of *Nihonjinron* was based on false presuppositions, which led to erroneous conclusions on Japanese society. This final chapter will critique *Nihonjinron* in order to understand the challenges that theology in Japan faces today.

“Japan” as a
Category of
Social
Anthropology

“JAPAN” AS A CATEGORY OF SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY

In postcolonial studies, anthropology and its products, ethnographies, were criticized because the origin of anthropology as a field of study is undeniably rooted in, and coincides with, the emergence of the colonial powers. It was employed to describe the colonial subject to the colonizer, and to reinforce colonial discourse to and interpellate the observed subjects, who were constructed as “the Other” to the observer from the metropolis. Since the two activities to produce ethnography, fieldwork and writing, are bound by the observer-writer’s value system, it is not only misleading to draw a conclusion on any society, but could play down to the colonial discourse.¹⁴ Another problem is the issue of cultural essentialism, which presupposes that individuals in a certain group or society inevitably share several describable characteristics in their personalities, thoughts, or actions. In postcolo-

¹⁴ See “Ethnography” in Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, pp. 79–83. Cf. Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 77–92.

nial theory, the fallacious nature of essentialism has already been pointed out.¹⁵ Mario Aguilar warns us against using the concept of "culture" for simplistic pigeonholing in spite of the diversity and complexity of each society: "In saying that somebody belongs to a British or American culture we are basically impeding the exploration of the possibility of complex social realities operated by complex individuals."¹⁶ The essentialism would be more prominent especially when the ethnography claims to cover a large group such as entire people in one nation-state. It is undeniable that there are many different customs and great linguistic differences within Japan. Those diversities depend on region, gender, class, occupation, and other elements, which intertwine to create a complex identity for each person in the society.

Today, sociology and anthropology operate on a similar basis, and many sociologists and anthropologists are aware of the danger of 'Orientalism.' The goal of ethnography is not merely to demonstrate a society's uniqueness but to find principles that are observable in other human societies and to relate them to one another.¹⁷ It is also an accepted norm that an anthropologist studies a society to which he or she is, in one way or another, "foreign."¹⁸ However, Japanese intellectuals, social anthropologists or otherwise, have written works describing their own 'culture' and emphasising its uniqueness. These works formed the genre of *Nihonjinron* or *Nihon Bunkaron*, which literally means "propositions about Japanese people".¹⁹ *Nihonjinron* articles have been published in popular as well as academic journals, and numerous books have been written in the genre.²⁰ Looking at this genre of literature

15 Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, p. 73.

16 Aguilar & Lawrence, *Anthropology and Biblical Studies*, p. 307.

17 Hendry, 'Introduction: The Contribution of Social Anthropology to Japanese Studies', p. 8.

18 *Ibid.*, p. 4. Hendry makes comments on this issue: "It might be commented that a native Japanese is in a better position to elucidate concepts such as time and space in their own language, but this leads to a second characteristic feature of social anthropology. We tend to look at societies other than our own, even in the countries where we have been brought up. This is the crux of the matter, for the values and categories we are taught as children become natural to us, unquestioned unless we move away. In looking at our own societies, we run the risk of taking for granted things which are in fact culturally relative."

19 *Nihon* means "Japan," *jin*, "people," and *ron*, "proposition" or "theory." As Harumi Befu points out, the term *Nihon Bunkaron* (Propositions about Japanese Culture) is more accepted term among the Japanese, *Nihonjinron* is the most frequently used among anthropologists who write in English. Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity*, p. 2.

20 *Ibid.*, p. 7. Befu cites a partially annotated bibliography compiled in 1978 on *Nihonjinron* literature. According to the bibliography, which covers the period 1946 to 1978, 698 titles were published.

is helpful to understand how Japanese people describe themselves and why they do so, rather than assuming that those works give accurate and objective descriptions of the society. In other words, I shall examine *Nihonjinron* not as descriptive of Japanese society, but as a phenomenon that reflects the presuppositions of that society. Since the *Nihonjinron* genre is widely read in Japan, one can conclude that the ideas that are presented in the *Nihonjinron* literature reflect a popular cultural identity, a cultural-nationalistic view of Japanese society.

One of the characteristics of *Nihonjinron* literature is its assertion that Japanese society is homogeneous. Marcus Banks presents two perspectives on ethnicity: primordialist and instrumentalist. The former sees ethnicity as an intrinsic element of human identity; the latter views it as an artefact for common purposes. Goodman, who quotes Banks, suggests that the *Nihonjinron* literature, especially after World War II, tends towards primordialism rather than instrumentalism.²¹ The authors of *Nihonjinron* presupposed that there is a continuity between Japanese society today and the “traditional Japanese” society. Many books employed a broad approach and attempted to reduce “Japaneseness” to one or two concepts. They pay attention neither to the insider minority groups in Japan, such as *Burakumin*, Ainu, Okinawans, those who have been discriminated against — such as people with disabilities or atomic bomb victims — nor to the immigrant ethnic minorities living in Japan.

Another noteworthy characteristic of *Nihonjinron* is that the writings in this genre compare Japanese society with the monolithic “West,” and by doing so, the authors assert how different Japan is from the West.²² This dichotomy existed as early as the nineteenth century. The idea of “Japan versus the West” developed as a consequence of national consciousness ever since Japan encountered the modern technology and ideology of the Western countries. To summarize, *Nihonjinron* literature, which describes Japanese society as a monolithic culture, is an artefact emerging from the primordialist view of society, and it also functions to reinforce

Befu says, “If a similar compilation since 1978 were added to the list, the total would no doubt far exceed a thousand. If articles from periodicals were added, the number would easily multiply by a factor of two or three.” See *Nihonjinron*.

²¹ Banks, *Ethnicity: Anthropological Constructions*, p. 36. Quoted by Roger Goodman, ‘Making Major Culture’, p. 59.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 69.

this unified view of Japaneseness.

THE ROOTS OF NIHONJINRON

The Roots of Nihonjinron

Around the time when Japan's first constitution was promulgated in 1889, and the construction of a new social order for "modern Japan" under the Meiji government was under way, a reactionary movement for a revival of Japanese mores arose. It eventually led the country to ultra-nationalism, and militarism. Japan rapidly equipped itself for the colonisation of East Asia, which eventually led the nation into the Asia-Pacific War. In the defeat of 1945, Japan had an experience similar to its encounter with the West in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Following Japan's unconditional surrender and subsequent occupation, the Allies drafted a new democratic pacifist constitution for Japan. Japan again became a nation that followed the example of "the West," especially to become like the former enemy and most powerful member of the Allies, the United States.

Once again Japan faced the issue of identity in the aftermath of a radical change brought about by the West. In this time of national crisis, an American anthropologist wrote what became one of the most famous ethnographical studies of the Japanese. Ruth Benedict's book, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (1946) set an example for the works that became known collectively as *Nihonjinron*.

The Chrysanthemum and the Sword was published in Japan during the time of national self-examination after the defeat in the Asia-Pacific War. Benedict was assigned to the study of Japan in June 1944, when the victory of the Allies was becoming plausible. Benedict wrote, "I was asked to use all the techniques I could as a cultural anthropologist to spell out what the Japanese were like."²³ After its original publication in 1946, the book was translated into Japanese in 1948 and became a bestseller in Japan.

Benedict began her book saying, "The Japanese were the most alien enemy the United States had ever fought in an all-out struggle," because Japan was outside of the Western cultural tradition and thus did not have the same conventions about the conduct of war as the United States.²⁴ In the dawn of victory, the United States and

²³ Benedict, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, p. 3.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

the Allies “had to know what their government could count on from the people. [They] had to try to understand Japanese habits of thought and emotion and the patterns into which these habits fell. [They] had to know the sanctions behind these actions and opinions.”²⁵ She said her project “is about what makes Japan a nation of Japanese.”²⁶ In other words, Ruth Benedict’s ethnography of Japan was a typical example of anthropology functioning as a servant, or brother, of colonial power: the study equips the colonizer with the knowledge of occupants or colonized using an essentialist view of the society of object.

Because the war was not over when she was assigned for this study, Benedict could not come to Japan for fieldwork. She was not proficient in the Japanese language either. Thus, Benedict resorted to gather as many sources as she could: movies, novels, radio programs, and interviews with Japanese prisoners of war. From those sources, Benedict tried to explain how the Japanese themselves understood certain behaviour, putting aside what she calls “Occidental assumptions.” After warning against American cultural nationalism,²⁷ she explained the Japanese system, which makes people behave differently from Americans.

Benedict observed that the emperor functions as the symbol of the Japanese people, and so is inseparable from Japan. “A Japan without the Emperor is not Japan.”²⁸ The emperor occupied the top of the hierarchy, yet was spared the criticisms that people directed against their government. While for many Americans freedom was the foremost value, Benedict argued, for Japanese people, taking “one’s proper hierarchical station” was the basis of moral conduct. This was the most important idea in understanding how Japanese people behave in their society as well as understanding Japan’s actions internationally. Japan did not see its place as being within the spheres of influence of foreign nations. Rather, Japan determined that its “proper station” was above the countries of Asia and elsewhere in the world.

Therefore, according to Benedict, morality for the Japanese is relational. Right-

²⁵ Benedict, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, p. 4.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 15–6. Benedict commented: “The study of comparative cultures too cannot flourish when men are so defensive about their own way of life that it appears to them to be by definition the sole solution in the world. Such men will never know the added love of their own culture which comes from a knowledge of other ways of life.”

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

eousness should be accompanied with the recognition of one's place in the great network of mutual indebtedness. In this context, the notions of *On* [indebtedness], *Chu* [loyalty to the superior], and *Ko* [filial piety] are interconnected. The emperor is beyond any reach of mundane controversies, yet is the supreme object of *Chu*, to which the repayment of *On* is limitless. One's highest duty is not the love of one's country. It is the "repayment of the emperor in person," and obedience to the law becomes repayment of one's highest indebtedness.²⁹ Because moral conduct does not depend on the categorical imperative, desirable behaviour changes according to what one's *Chu* demands in a particular situation. While the nation was at war in the name of the emperor, the people fought. Once the emperor announced the surrender, the people accepted the defeat without making any further argument. "In [Japan's] own eyes this enormous payment nevertheless bought something she supremely valued: the right to say that it was the emperor who had given the order even if that order was capitulation. Even in defeat the highest law was still *Chu*."³⁰

In spite of her disclaiming of Occidentalism, Benedict's "us and them" language is clearly a sign of Occidental superiority. However, she tried to persuade her readers to recognise that the "strangeness of the Japanese" could be "normal" in its own right, while American understanding of what is natural could become relative and potentially strange from other societies' perspectives.³¹ For example, she compares State Shinto in Japan with American expression of nationalism. "Since it was concerned with proper respect to national symbols, as saluting the flag is in the United States, State Shinto was, they said, 'no religion.' Japan therefore could require it of all citizens without violating the Occidental dogma of religious freedom any more than the United States violates it in requiring a salute to the Stars and Stripes."³² In any case, her study was clearly much valued by the Allied authorities during the occupation of Japan, especially in their policy regarding the emperor.

Many anthropologists today criticise *The Chrysanthemum* as homogenizing and ahistorical. It is compared with John Embree's *Suye Mura, A Japanese Village* (1939), as the latter is an ethnography of a Japanese village based on the author's field-

²⁹ Benedict, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, p. 129.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 132.

³¹ Geertz, *Works and Lives: The Anthropologists as Author*.

³² Benedict, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, p. 87.

work.³³ However, as a study commissioned by the Allies at the end of the Second World War, Benedict's ethnography of Japan accomplished its purpose: her study gave enough knowledge and justification for the occupation army's policies during the eight years of occupation. Benedict does make a comment to suggest that the system she observed "was singular. It was not Buddhism and it was not Confucianism. It was Japanese — the strength and the weakness of Japan."³⁴ With such a conclusion, she managed to make "Japan", which consisted of many different personalities and layers of society, into a tangible whole, understandable in the context of the occupation.

After its publication, the book became an unexpected best-seller in Japan. Sixty years after it was written, in Japan the book is still widely read and considered a classic. It was the Japanese people who appreciated the ethnography that was written at the request of the United States government. The two concepts of "shame culture" and "hierarchical groupism" were emphasised by Japanese readers as distinctively Japanese notions in contrast with the "Western" guilt culture and individualism, much more so than the author herself, who never used the term "groupism". In the ten years following the book's publication, these two "Japanese characteristics" were interpreted as reasons for the Japanese failure to modernize.³⁵ Ironically, *The Chrysanthemum*'s depiction of "Japan" and "Japaneseness" provided the Japanese identity for the growing ethnic nationalism of the Japanese people.³⁶ Benedict's work, at least as understood in Japan, became a prototype for the *Nihonjinron* literature.

NIHONJINRON

From 1960s until the late 1980s,³⁷ Japan achieved remarkable economic growth, which wiped out the image of a "defeated nation." Goodman calls attention to an

33 Benedict, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, pp. 3–16. Robertson commends Embree's work for a "more historicized description of Japan instead of pursuing the timeless Japaneseness" of *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*. Cf. Aoki, *Nihon Bunkaron no Hen'yo*, pp. 34–6.

34 Benedict, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, p. 19.

35 Aoki, *Nihon Bunkaron no Hen'yo*, p. 62.

36 Robertson, 'Introduction: Putting and Keeping Japan in Anthropology', p. 7.

37 Numerous works were produced on this topic before 1960 as well, but the two books by Nakane and Doi will be dealt with in this chapter as examples.

interesting fact:

“As the Japanese economy expanded and looked set to become the largest in the world by the end of the century, the government, under the direction of then prime minister, Nakasone Yasuhiro, established and generously funded the International Research Center for Japanese Studies (known as *Nichibunken*) in Kyoto to look at the origins and development of what constituted Japanese culture. The publication of works about what constituted the key characteristics of Japanese society and culture flourished and, rather than being categorized by disciplinary background, were increasingly shelved in bookshops under the generic heading of *Nihonjinron*”³⁸

Nihonjinron

Following in Benedict’s footsteps, most of the *Nihonjinron* literature from this period also tried to describe “Japaneseness” in contrast with “the West”. The authors also attempted to summarise Japanese society with a few key concepts. A difference is that while distinctively Japanese characteristics identified in *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* or in the *Nihonjinron* of the 1940s and 1950s are understood by the Japanese readers to be negative and reasons for failure, *Nihonjinron* from 1960s through 1980s presented what is uniquely “Japanese” as the basis of Japan’s economic success. The “Japanese system” was re-evaluated in a positive light, and “Japan’s role in the world” was asserted. This type of *Nihonjinron* became “a mass consumer product.”³⁹

Two major works that are categorised as *Nihonjinron* and became bestsellers, being reprinted many times, are Nakane Chie’s (1926–) *Tateshakai no Ningen Kankei* (*Relationships in a Vertical Society*, which was later translated into English and published as *Japanese Society*)⁴⁰ in 1967 and Doi Takeo’s (1920–2009) *Amae no Kouzou* (translated into English as *Anatomy of Dependence*) in 1971. These two books are particularly well known in Japan, and succeeded in popularising certain ideas about Japanese society. In the early 1970s, the Foreign Ministry had Japanese embassies and consulates give away free copies of Nakane’s *Japanese Society* to foreigners in-

³⁸ Roger Goodman, ‘Making Major Culture’, p. 59.

³⁹ Aoki, *Nihon Bunkaron no Hen’yo*, pp. 87–8.

⁴⁰ Hata and Smith point out that the English version is different in significant details from the Japanese original. See Hata & Smith, ‘Nakane’s “Japanese Society” as Utopian Thought’, pp. 361–88.

terested in Japan.⁴¹

NAKANE CHIE, JAPANESE SOCIETY AND DOI TAKEO, THE ANATOMY OF DEPENDENCE

*Nakane Chie,
Japanese Society
and Doi Takeo,
The Anatomy of
Dependence*

Nakane's *Japanese Society* is based on her thesis submitted in 1964, where she compared the groupism of Japanese society with Indian society. Nakane concluded that Japanese groupism is based on *ba* — “place,” or “frame” — while Indian society is based on “attributes” or qualification. Examples of attributes are class, educational background, status, gender, or age, whereas *ba* includes one's hometown, organisation or company. According to Nakane, for a Japanese person, where one belongs and where one stands in the group is more important for one's identity. It is more important for them to know that one belongs to company A or school B, than to say that one is an engineer or a professor.⁴² Inside the group (*Uchi*) is distinguished from the outside (*Soto*),⁴³ and the group operates much like a family or household, “*Ie*”.⁴⁴

She argues that this principle of the household structure is a characteristic also seen among Japanese social groups. In Japan, a company functions like a household where the relationship between an employer and employees is compared to a father and sons. The group also includes an employee's family, thus “it ‘engages’ him ‘totally’.”⁴⁵ She contrasts this group structure with “the Western” company which is based on contract and one's qualifications. Nakane concludes her book with the idea that Japanese interpersonal relationships tend to be tangible and local, and that

41 Roger Goodman, ‘[Making Major Culture](#)’, p. 61.

42 Nakane, *Tateshakai no Ningen Kankei*, p. 30; Nakane, *Japanese Society*, p. 3.

43 *Uchi* and *Soto* are categories that explain the Japanese people's attitude toward inside and outside. While inside is clean and safe, outside is unclean and dangerous. A Japanese child first learns this distinction by associating inside and outside of the house with being clean and dirty, respectively. However, these categories also apply to explain attitudes toward insiders and outsiders. See Joy Hendry, *Understanding Japanese Society*, pp. 47–9.

44 Nakane, *Japanese Society*, p. 4. *Ie* is a technical term to describe the Japanese household, which was a legal unit before the Second World War. Nakane defines *Ie*: “[T]he *ie* is a corporate residential group and, in the case of agriculture or other similar enterprises, *ie* is a managing body. The *ie* comprises household members, who thus make up the units of a distinguishable social group. In other words, the *ie* is a social group constructed on the basis of an established frame of residence and often management organisation.

45 *Ibid.*, p. 8.

this creates a society that is different from Western society, which is based on contracts. People's identities depend on their relationships instead of their beliefs or convictions, which resonates with Ruth Benedict's observation.

Nakane argues that Japanese society is "a homogeneous society built on a vertical organizational principle," and points out that the one factor dominating Japanese way of thinking is "relativism."⁴⁶ The Japanese readers of Nakane understood her thesis as explaining the uniqueness of Japanese society and thus its industrial and economic success.⁴⁷

Five years after the *Tateshakai*, Doi Takeo's *Amae no Kouzou* was published and also immediately became a bestseller. Roger Goodman describes this book as "psychological glue, which holds together Nakane's sociological model."⁴⁸ During his year of study in the United States, the author, a psychologist and doctor, thought that there were certain differences between the Japanese and Western mindsets (technically, the Japanese and American mindsets). He then concluded that the Japanese have a unique psychological element that cannot be explained by Western psychology. Doi calls this element "*Amae*," which is translated as "dependency."

According to Doi, *Amae* is originally a child's dependence on its mother, which the Japanese still maintain even when they become adults. This childlike dependence expects that the others will be accepting, protective, and will read one's thoughts. One can find *Amae* in the Western culture as well, but not so prominently as in Japan.⁴⁹ Doi believes that the distinctive concepts of the Japanese that Benedict described such as *Giri* (indebtedness), *Gimu* (duty), *Haji* (shame) can be explained by this one psychological concept of dependence. He also suggests that Nakane's notion of vertical relationships is also based on *Amae*: the members of an organisation seek indulgence from their superiors.⁵⁰ In a society in which *Amae* is dominant, an individual is in a web of dependent relationships, which excludes the idea of autonomy that prevails in the West. Therefore, for the Japanese, to lose one's community or group to which one belongs is to lose one's identity whereas a Westerner

*Nakane Chie,
Japanese Society
and Doi Takeo,
The Anatomy of
Dependence*

⁴⁶ Nakane, *Japanese Society*, pp. 154–5.

⁴⁷ Aoki, *Nihon Bunkaron no Hen'yo*, pp. 95–6.

⁴⁸ Roger Goodman, 'Making Major Culture', p. 62.

⁴⁹ Doi, *Amae no Kouzou*, p. 224; Doi, *Anatomy of Dependence*, p. 142. Doi makes a comment that "*Amae*" is recognisable in the youth of other countries.

⁵⁰ Doi, *Amae no Kouzou*, p. 33; Doi, *Anatomy of Dependence*, p. 28.

would consider that one's intrinsic identity remains even when one is cut off from one's community.⁵¹ Doi is not always uncritical of Japanese society, yet his attempt to explain the society by using one concept, *Amae*, leads to the conclusion that the Japanese society operates in a very different way from other societies do, and that is rooted in psychological uniqueness of the Japanese people. Doi's conclusion is only one step behind Tsunoda Tadanobu — also a doctor — who proposed that there are differences in the functioning of the brains of native speakers of Japanese and of those who speak Western languages.⁵²

In the 1980s, when Japan was criticised, particularly by the United States, over economic and political issues such as not opening Japanese market to foreign investment or not importing foreign-made products, the *Nihonjinron*, the Japanese view on themselves, also began to receive criticisms from outside of Japan. Australian sociologist Peter N. Dale criticised *Nihonjinron* for insisting the homogenous racial identity of the Japanese, which leads to "cultural fascism".⁵³ Dale's criticism against *Nihonjinron* can be seen as much ethnocentric as *Nihonjinron* itself as he tears down the *Nihonjinron* from his "Western" perspectives, and can easily be accused of "Orientalism."⁵⁴ However, *Nihonjinron* also received critiques from other sociologists and anthropologists such as Harumi Befu, Sugimoto Yoshio, and Ross Mouer.⁵⁵ Those critics found *Nihonjinron* problematic for several reasons.

A CRITIQUE OF NIHONJINRON: ESSENTIALIST AND AHISTORICAL

Goodman explains essentialist view of society:

51 Doi, *Amae no Kouzou*, pp. 202–16; Doi, *Anatomy of Dependence*, pp. 132–41.

52 Tsunoda, *The Japanese Brain: Uniqueness and Universality*; Tsunoda, *Nihonjin no Nou*. Befu comments on Tsunoda's work: "Tsunoda's view has received wide publicity, as one would imagine, and for some it has given a stamp of scientific validation for the so far fuzzy, social-science and humanistic — that is, 'impressionistic' — *Nihonjinron* arguments. Tsunoda's view, however, is not entirely accepted by the medical community because of the smallness of the sample and the substandard scientific procedure employed in the study." See Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity*, p. 36.

53 Dale, *The Myth of Japanese Uniqueness*.

54 Aoki, *Nihon Bunkaron no Hen'yo*, pp. 173–4. Aoki points out that some of Dale's criticisms of Japanese society are based on the very point he criticises: namely, the monolithic dichotomy of "the West" and Japan.

55 Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity*; Mouer & Sugimoto, *Images of Japanese Society: A Study in the Social Structure of Reality*.

“Essentialism is the charge that the analyst works on the assumption that certain cultural features have always been present in any society and his or her job is simply to find and record these essentialist features and to document how they have continued virtually unchanged over centuries.”⁵⁶

A characteristic common to both Nakane and Doi is this essentialist assumption, and they see those cultural features encourage or restrict an individual's action and mindset within the society. There is also little consideration for the historical background that brings changes in a society, although any cultural symbols and systems are historically contextual. However, it is also possible to say that the state of a society is a result of conflicts between different groups that assert that their view of the society is the norm. In other words, one could argue, “Culture is only something that different interest groups draw on to legitimise their position.”⁵⁷ Harumi Befu's criticism of *Nihonjinron* is based on the latter presupposition: he suggests that *Nihonjinron* is a replacement for national symbols, such as the flag, anthem, or imperial institutions, that have been tainted by Japan's history in the first half of the twentieth century, and thus it is a “cultural manifestation of nationalism.”⁵⁸ National symbols, Befu argues, are created by the nation-state to remind its citizens of the importance of their nation, which both protects them and ask for sacrifices from them. Since other national symbols in Japan are politically divisive, *Nihonjinron* became a new, untainted, form of patriotic symbol.⁵⁹

When the essentialists' view of culture is predominant in a society, it easily becomes a tool to manipulate the society by those in power, since the view could be used to affirm the *status quo*. For example, Goodman suggests that there is considerable historical evidence to show that the Japanese company-as-a-family model was deliberately developed for economic reasons.⁶⁰ He draws attention to the fact that Japan has one of the highest literacy rates in the world, which means that if a publication of ethnography of Japan becomes a bestseller, the idea presented in the

56 Roger Goodman, 'Making Major Culture', p. 65.

57 Goodman, 'Dismantling the East-West Dichotomy', p. 29.

58 Befu, 'Symbols of Nationalism and Nihonjinron', p. 26; Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity*, pp. 86–104.

59 *Ibid.*, pp. 26–7.

60 Roger Goodman, 'Making Major Culture', p. 66.

ethnography could thus create or reinforce itself in the society.⁶¹ In other words, what Said described about Orientalism is relevant here:

“A Text purporting to contain knowledge about something actual, and arising out of circumstances similar to the ones I have just described, is not easily dismissed. Expertise is attributed to it. The authority of academics, institutions, and governments can accrue to it, surrounding it with still greater prestige than its practical successes warrant. Most important, such texts can *create* not only knowledge but also the very reality they appear to describe. In time such knowledge and reality produce a tradition, or what Michel Foucault calls a discourse, whose material presence or weight, not the originality or a given author, is really responsible for the texts produced out of it.”⁶²

*A Critique of
Nihonjinron:
Essentialist and
Ahistorical*

Anthropologists on fieldwork often encounter Japanese informants who give them a brief summary of Nakane’s work as the explanation of Japanese society.⁶³ The works of Nakane or of Doi themselves do not seem to promote nationalism or patriotism in a direct sense; however, the notion of the uniqueness and homogeneity of the Japanese is an idea that is central to Shinto myth, which in turn is the foundation of the claim for the unique and unbroken Imperial line. This view of Japan being drastically different from other nations in East Asia — culturally, historically, and even biologically — is still strongly supported by some Japanese, who believe that the ancestors of the Japanese came to the archipelago in the remote past, instead of the scientifically more plausible theory that they came from the Korean peninsula around 400 BCE with knowledge of agriculture and displaced the indigenous hunter-gatherers.⁶⁴ Perhaps from the fear of the archaeological evidence supporting the latter view, the excavation of Japan’s most important archaeological sites, *Kofun* — large, hill-like tombs constructed between 300 and 686 CE — is forbidden

61 Hata and Smith criticises Nakane’s Japanese Society for reinforcing and legitimising a certain view of Japan on behalf of the state and for the benefit of large companies. See Hata & Smith, ‘Nakane’s “Japanese Society” as Utopian Thought’, pp. 361–88. Joy Hendry, on the other hand, evaluates Nakane positively. See Hendry, ‘Introduction: The Contribution of Social Anthropology to Japanese Studies’, pp. 8–9. See also Joy Hendry, *Understanding Japanese Society*, pp. 102–23.

62 Said, *Orientalism*, p. 94.

63 Goodman, ‘Introduction’, p. 5.

64 Diamond, ‘Who are the Japanese?’, pp. 425–47.

by the Imperial Household Agency. They are thought to contain the remains of the ancestors of the imperial family, and thus it is said to be “desecration” to investigate them.⁶⁵

*A Critique of
Nihonjinron:
Japan as a
Homogeneous
Nation*

A CRITIQUE OF NIHONJINRON: JAPAN AS A HOMOGENEOUS NATION

One of the strongest criticisms of *Nihonjinron* is against the claim that Japan is a homogeneous nation while there actually exists significant ethnic, social, occupational, health, and age diversity. *Nihonjinron* and other generalised views on Japan ignore the groups of people who do not have the same sense of “Japaneseness.” The idea that Japan is uniquely homogeneous provides an excuse for the government’s policy of restricting immigration and services for foreigners. The argument runs as follows: since Japanese culture is so idiosyncratic, a multicultural community is not something Japanese people are ready for: Japanese people are not yet equipped to live with foreigners in a single society.⁶⁶ Emphasis on homogeneity constructs a “majority culture,” which downplays “minority culture,” and those to do not conform to the norm may experience prejudice, while their very “existence” is downplayed under the idea of homogeneous Japan.⁶⁷ In the past, group of peoples such as *Burakumin* became targets of stigmatisation, and were discriminated against. Other groups such as the Ainu (the indigenous inhabitants of Japan), foreigners living in Japan, or other people with hybrid identities could become targets of discrimination even today.

Sonia Ryang, in her article about Koreans in Japan, warns that a study of a minority group could further marginalize the group by thoughtless labelling and carelessness about what the study brings to the group.⁶⁸ This is because, in a society such as Japan where homogeneity is loudly proclaimed, being labelled as an outsider and not being categorised as inside the main group itself can provoke further social stigma. Hendry comments that: “if people who are discriminated against take political action, and gain benefits, they draw attention to themselves and may

65 Diamond, ‘Who are the Japanese?’, p. 428.

66 Aoki, *Nihon Bunkaron no Hen’yo*, pp. 154–5.

67 Roger Goodman, ‘Making Major Culture’, p. 69.

68 Ryang, ‘Japan’s Ethnic Minority: Koreans’, p. 96.

spark further discrimination.”⁶⁹ In other words, the society is controlled in such a way that asserting one’s rights and pointing out injustice are discouraged by means of sanction.

*A Critique of
Nihonjinron:
East and West
Dichotomy*

A CRITIQUE OF NIHONJINRON: EAST AND WEST DICHOTOMY

Another strong criticism of *Nihonjinron* is its comparison of Japan with the idea of the monolithic and homogenous “West.” Comparisons between Japan and the United States are very popular in the literature due to the history of the two countries. It is usually argued in *Nihonjinron* that Japan operates in a way exactly opposite to the West. By doing so, *Nihonjinron* claims that some Japanese ideas are untranslatable to foreigners, and only Japanese people can understand Japanese culture, which can easily promote cultural bigotry. Also, this line of argument ignores other countries in East Asia, with which, culturally speaking, Japan has much in common: instead, the only dialogue partner is the “West,” which implicitly suggests Japan’s prejudice against its Asian neighbours.⁷⁰ This idea of taking Japan out of Asia, so-called Asianism, is a colonial mentality from before the Second World War, when Japan decided to become like one of the “West” by colonising its neighbours.⁷¹

This hypothetical “West” can be compared to the one in Samuel Huntington’s book *The Clash of Civilizations*.⁷² Drawing an East-West dichotomy, using the term “culture,” Huntington argued that the Islamic and Confucian cultures would become a threat to Western values, an idea that undoubtedly influenced the United States’ foreign policy after the September 11th terrorist attack.⁷³

69 Joy Hendry, *Understanding Japanese Society*, p. 107.

70 Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity*, p. 75. Befu believes that there is a racial hierarchy the Japanese perceive: he says that they felt lower than Westerners, and felt superior toward the peoples of Southeast Asia and Africa, whose technological level is below Japan’s and who are not white. The fact that most *Nihonjinron* authors ignore Asian and African countries may support his proposition. However it should be noted that this type of unofficial hierarchy is observable in any society, though the order of hierarchy may differ.

71 Roger Goodman, ‘Making Major Culture’, p. 69.

72 Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*.

73 Nakano, ‘Writing for Common Ground: Rethinking Audience and Purpose in Japan Anthropology’, pp. 189–95.

As mentioned above, *Nihonjinron* is at best mistaken, and is in fact devious. However, the reason why it became so popular in Japan is rather obvious. Ever since its encounter with the Western civilisation, Japan has been pursuing its unique identity, which sets it apart from the West while westernising itself. The idea of a homogeneous Japan has been politically helpful to unite the country. The homogeneity myth is still strongly supported among Japanese people while the formalism of customs and language keeps the society controlled.

As remarked previously, Befu proposes that *Nihonjinron* is a national symbol in post-war Japan. The flag and anthem were not officially national symbols until 1999 when a special law was passed to declare them “national.” Befu goes on to say that *Nihonjinron* took the place of State Shinto, which was the Japanese civil religion. He says, “If *Nihonjinron* is Japan’s civil religion, it is reasonable to regard it also as a manifestation of Japan’s cultural nationalism. After all, nationalism is religion.”⁷⁴ He then compares the *Nihonjinron*-as-civil-religion and “Protestant civic piety,” the American civil religion. “Just as there was legitimising of Protestant values in America and integration of Protestant citizens as American, one can find in Japan legitimising of Shinto values and integration of Japanese subjects through Shinto.”⁷⁵ The stronghold of the civil religion is no longer Shinto, but *Nihonjinron*.

Nihonjinron as a “scripture” of Japanese civil religion is an interesting hypothesis, yet Befu is reading too much of the American situation into the Japanese context. Even if there is Japanese cultural nationalism, it differs greatly from the American civil religion and the nationalism it promotes. *Nihonjinron* and its popularity is perhaps a result of the people’s search for their own cultural and national identity, but for most people, Japanese nationalism does not possess the fervour of American nationalism. The Japanese society is far more secularised than the American society. Religions, syncretistically co-existing in the society, are means to an end. Even if there is an ideology that promotes the purity and unity of Japaneseness, it does not unite Japanese society today like the American civil religion unites theirs. In spite of the Japanese government’s recent effort to promote patriotism, Japanese

⁷⁴ Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity*, p. 112.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 112.

society is marked by apathy, and many people are inert and apolitical. I would argue instead that *Nihonjinron* is a product of the reaction of Japan to its international political situation and to the impact of globalisation. When “auto-Orientalism” was the only way to survive as a nation, the people naturally sought to construct their own identity. In this process of construction, Christianity, especially the Protestantism that came in the 19th century, was of no help to the Japanese people. Unlike the Latin American countries, which were colonised in the 16th century and became quickly Catholic, the Christian religion did not offer reasons for the Japanese people to convert: it remained the religion of the ultimate Other, the West. When the Japanese finally constructed their identity, their religion, and their society in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and finally became “like the West” in their imitation of Western colonialism, the country gave itself to totalitarianism, which eventually brought destruction in the Second World War — to Japan itself, and with much damage to surrounding Asian countries. One of the major Christian cities, Nagasaki, was destroyed by the atomic bomb, and the emperor was demythologised. Even then, Christianity had no place in the Japanese society, unlike the African nations, which became independent in 1960s, and where Christianity proliferated since. It remained as a religion of the country that dropped the bombs on their fellow believers. While the political system, social structure, capitalism, even pop-culture, and many other western neo-colonial discourses were employed to make “modern Japan”, through this process of self-Orientalism, Christianity was never used as a tool for appropriation.⁷⁶ It was rejected because its place had been already filled: it was filled by the emperor system and myth, which survived after 1945 by transforming itself into the discourse of *Nihonjinron*. The claim of Christianity to be a representation of the “universal value” to promote modernisation was, on the whole, flatly rejected in the history of Japan. Japan did not need Christianity to become what it is today.

Today in Japan, very few people are outspoken nationalists, and patriotism is much more subdued than that of the United States or even of European countries. However, *Nihonjinron* as a national symbol has strong influence in the society. The data is rather old, but according to Befu, a survey in 1987 showed that 82 percent of

76 Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, p. 15.

Japanese people said that they were interested in the search for the Japanese identity while 13 percent indicated lack of interest and 5 percent did not answer.⁷⁷ Another survey in 1998 on the tenets of *Nihonjinron* showed that 38 percent of the sample agreed that the Japanese are a homogeneous people, 23 percent disagreed, and 39 percent were undecided. Also, 49 percent agreed that Japan was a unique culture while 42 percent did not answer. Less than 50 percent agreed about the importance of “Japanese blood” in defining Japanese culture.⁷⁸ Even though the proportion of people who support the major tenets of *Nihonjinron* is less than 50 percent, the idea of the Japanese being homogeneous is strongly supported by politicians, and is often used to legitimise a social or international policy. *Nihonjinron* is not a straightforward expression of nationalism, but it is the foundation on which the radical nationalists stand. The idea of the unique and homogeneous Japan is presupposed by the supporters of the emperor system and the political right, as well as by those who are not interested in politics.

Gayatri Spivak, who argued against the discourse of essentialism, admitted later the strategic use of an essentialist view of a society to fight against colonial and neo-colonial oppression.⁷⁹ However, in the case of Japan, this essentialist discourse, which at least partly rejected European colonial discourse, was the basis for Japan’s own political and territorial colonialism of neighbouring Asia before 1945. The essentialist discourse later expressed in *Nihonjinron* was a product of the western colonial discourse, yet used as a backbone of Japan’s own colonialism. Here, the danger and uselessness of the strategic essentialism is obvious.

In this context, Christianity in Japan could be one of two types: that is, Christianity for nationalism and Christianity against it. For the former, I briefly mentioned the attempt by some Japanese theologians to develop a “Japanese Christianity” in the 1930s to 1940s. This was, however, a minor movement even then, and evaporated at the end of the Asia-Pacific War. Today, this type of Christianity is present among the new religions (newly emerged syncretistic religious institutions), or “new” new religions (post-1970s new religion), in which some elements

⁷⁷ Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity*, p. 76.

⁷⁸ Befu & Manbe, ‘An Empirical Investigation of Nihonjinron Propositions and the Function These Propositions Serve’, pp. 35–62.

⁷⁹ Spivak, ‘Criticism, Feminism and the Institution’, pp. 175–87.

of Christianity are placed alongside Japanese myths or animism.⁸⁰ The latter type — Christianity against nationalism — is prevalent among the “traditional” denominations of Christianity. Within this group, there are also two sub-types: those who side with the minority groups in the society, and those who critique the government’s nationalistic policies through political activism. The examples of the former are a Japanese feminist theologian, Kinukawa Hisako, and a theologian from the *Burakumin*, Kuribayashi Teruo. In their theological endeavour, the Bible is read from their place, the margins of the Japanese society, and they present readings that are distinctly different from the conclusions of the mainline churches, as both of them employ the critical view against the Bible itself and the church tradition.⁸¹ In his book *Asian Biblical Hermeneutics and Postcolonialism* (1999), R.S. Sugirtharajah evaluates these two biblical scholars in their use of the historical-critical method.

“For instance, recent exegetical examples of minority discourse worked out by Ahn Byung Mu, Kuribayashi Teruo, Hisako Kinukawa and James Massey may appear to be original Korean, Indian, or Japanese products, yet in a subtle manner they are based on and rework historical-critical principles. It is worth noting that most of these authors are transplanted or uprooted professionals who return to their caste, community, or tribe or re-present themselves as articulate members of various subaltern groups after learning their craft and Western theories of oppression at cosmopolitan centers. Since they are denied entry into the local mainstream interpretative arena, they adopt a negative attitude to their local traditions and share an antagonistic relationship to the dominant culture; hence they are attracted to these foreign theories.”⁸²

Sugirtharajah overlooked, however, the fact that in the context of Japan, what Kuribayashi and Kinukawa are fighting against is the colonial discourse, though his point about their use of historical-critical method is accurate. Thus their “antagonistic relationship to the dominant culture” is not necessarily and simply evidence

80 For this, see Mullins, *Christianity Made in Japan: A Study of Indigenous Movements*.

81 See for example, Kinukawa, *Women and Jesus in Mark: A Japanese Feminist Perspective*; Kuribayashi, *Keikan no Shingaku: Hisabetsu buraku kaiho to Kirisutokyo*; Kuribayashi, ‘Recovering Jesus for Outcasts in Japan: From a Theology of the Crown of Thorns’, pp. 19–32. See also Japan Catholic Buraku Mondai Committee, *Seisho to Sabetsu*.

82 Sugirtharajah, *Asian Biblical Hermeneutics and Postcolonialism*, p. 129.

of their eager acceptance of the “foreign theories.” In fact, Kuribayashi published a book entitled, *Nihon Minwa no Shingaku* [The Theology of Japanese Folktales] in 1997, which is an attempt to understand the Bible and Christianity using the Japanese historical and cultural resources, without being simply “nativist” yet working through the resources available including those of the West.⁸³

Christian political activists are present both among the mainline Protestants and evangelical denominations, and they often work together. This movement includes the effort of reconciliation with Korean Christians over the war guilt of Japan. However, if the Christianity they use to argue against nationalism is in fact one of the imported goods of neo-colonialism, it is as if you “chase away the bandits in your country with the help of a foreign army” as Tagawa Kenzo put it in the essay he wrote during his stay in Africa.⁸⁴ The colonial nature of Western methodology in Christian study has been pointed out: it is colonial “because they would have us believe that they have universal validity and significance although they emerged as a contextual response to the specific needs of Western academics.”⁸⁵ In the relationship with the cosmopolitan centre, how theological discussion of non-Western Christianity finds the contact zone, and transforms itself through hybridity, is a common issue among the scholars whose contexts are outside of the centre.

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I have traced how the Bible was received in Japan and how it was used to respond to their historical situations. In the process, I have argued that interpretation, such as of the Bible, is a political act, informed either consciously or unconsciously by the interpreter’s political, social, and economic situation. By presenting the use of the Bible in Christian thinkers from the mid nineteenth century to the twentieth century, I have pointed out how the theological activity in Japan was under the sway of the thought and methodologies of Europe and the United States. In the meantime, the most apparent issue for the Christian thinkers was the issue of nationalism, in other words, the problem of the Church and the state in Japanese

83 Kuribayashi, *Nihon Minwa no Shingaku*.

84 Tagawa, *Rekishiteki Ruihi no Shiso*, p. 50.

85 Sugirtharajah, *Asian Biblical Hermeneutics and Postcolonialism*, p. 128.

context. Today, even though Japan's international situation is different from that of the mid-nineteenth century, these issues, which Christianity in Japan faces, is essentially the same: that is, neocolonialism and nationalism. Christian scholars are expected to conform to the norm of the Western academics, and scholarly success is determined by how a scholar adapted oneself to the Western academic norm, system, and their interests. Theological education follows the curriculum created in the West, according to which, for example, the study of the New Testament includes the quest for the historical Jesus, Old Testament study begins with the documentary hypothesis, and all the courses are dominated by foreign names. I am not arguing that learning about these things is problematic by itself; instead, I am arguing that if one takes the approach set by the West, those who do not belong to the power of influence could never be equal to those in the centre, and necessarily remain "colonised". Another issue is nationalism. As I have shown in this chapter, Japanese nationalism is thriving taking different forms in different points of history. Behind this discourse, there is power, which demands conformity. As is pointed out in this thesis, Uchimura Kanzo was aware of the Western power over Christianity, while Yanaihara fought against the issue of Japan's expansionism. In fact, there are two different sources of power, needed to be considered in the relation to each other.

From the conclusions I have drawn in previous chapters, it is also clear that the interpretation does not solely depend on the text, or the authorial intention. The meaning drawn from the text varies as each readers' view of the text and positionality varies. The danger lies in the fact that some texts are considered to be "sacred" and by that credo, the interpreters are also in danger of automatic legitimisation of their readings and views, namely, claiming their interpretations as sacred and inviolable.

The Christianity that critiques the society can only be fair and reasonable if it is at the same time the Christianity which critiques Christianity. That requires Christianity in Japan to come to terms with Japan's past colonialism and war guilt, as well as with the colonial nature of the Christian institutions and religion itself. To this end, postcolonialism, amongst other critical theories, may provide a tool for self-examination. The postcolonial criticisms, though may not offer straightforward system of thought, it can offer the means and attitude of inquiry, analysis,

and critique toward a established set of knowledge, which would be a helpful tool to discern the issue of power in interpretation. Yet, even then, if postcolonial theories are treated as an import from abroad, and if scholars in Japan simply repeat other thinkers' conclusions, then a substantive contribution would not emerge from Japan.⁸⁶ Whether it is religious thought or political thought, only what is rooted in its own soil bears fruit, and only those who fight their own battle can understand and develop a sense of solidarity with others who fight elsewhere.

Conclusion

86 Nishihara, 'Said, Orientalism and Japan', pp. 243–53.

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