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## Toward a Modern Belief

### Modernist Protestantism and Problems of National Religion in Meiji Japan

In this article, I discuss the significance of religious liberalism and reformism of Meiji Protestantism at the turn of the twentieth century. The period, I argue, is crucial to understanding Japanese Protestantism as modernist. The survival and expansion of Christianity and its educational institutions were at stake during the strong nationalist and imperialist consensus in the aftermath of the Sino-Japanese war. This essay focuses on the “intellectual” impulses of modernist Protestants, their resonance with liberal theology, and their collaboration with emerging social and cultural sciences, especially comparative studies of religion. As I demonstrate here, the interest in these two realms of knowledge was widely shared among educated elites beyond Protestant circles, contributing to Japanese Protestants’ overall growth and wellbeing in the early twentieth century.

KEYWORDS: Protestantism — Meiji period — liberal theology — modernism — Kanamori Tsūrin — Kishimoto Nobuta

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*Last year [1895], the entire society showed a strong religious tendency.*

Uemura Masahisa

*Jesus and Shakespeare are fragments of the soul,  
and by love I conquer and incorporate them in my own conscious domain.*

Ralph Waldo Emerson

*The beauty of Christianity is that it can sanctify all the peculiar traits that  
God gave to each nation. A blessed and encouraging thought that J— too is  
God's nation.*

Uchimura Kanzō

FOR JAPANESE Protestant churches, the decade of the 1890s is often discussed as a time of “struggle” or “hardship.”<sup>1</sup> This was in sharp contrast to the preceding phase of rapid Westernization (*ōkashugi* 欧化主義), which offered an unprecedented opportunity for the emergence of Protestantism in Meiji Japan. Crucial challenges to Protestantism came from both within and outside the churches. Within the church, the Japanese Protestants’ conflict with Western missionaries intensified over the issues of their ecclesiastical autonomy and liberal theology. Significantly, the Protestant engagement of these theological and ecclesiastical issues developed in conjunction with questions of Japanese morality and religion that were popularly discussed in journalism and academia in the late 1890s. This ideologically charged interest in the nation’s morality and religion became particularly acute in the aftermath of the Sino-Japanese war (1894–1895) amid the public hand-wringing over further development and expansion of an empire.

At the time, many were calling for statism and “national morality” (*kokumin dōtoku* 国民道德) based on the notion of *chūkun aikoku* 忠君愛国 (monarchical loyalty and patriotism), which had been often pitted against Christians before the war. All established religions collaborated with the war effort, including leading Protestants who formed the Association of Christian Comrades concerning the China/Korea Question (Shin-Kan jiken Kirisutokyōto dōshikai 清韓事件基督教徒同志会) in 1894, defended the cause of war, stirred up national morale, and glorified and prayed for the Imperial fortune. Nonetheless, Christianity and its foreign missionaries continued to be looked at with suspicion by state bureaucrats preparing for mixed residence with foreigners. Then after the

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1. See KZ 2: 133, and Sumiya Mikio’s discussion in the round-table talk in HISAYAMA 1956, 205.

war, the government-ordered restrictions on religious education in both public and private schools hit Protestants particularly hard. Positivistic university academics and Darwinian evolutionary theorists alike continued to disparage Christianity in particular and religion in general.

Paradoxically, however, the extraordinary tension and euphoria resulting from the war proved beyond the government's control and stimulated a popular religious mindset. A leading Protestant, Uemura Masahisa 植村正久 (1857–1925), noted in 1895 that the entire Japanese society showed a “strong religious tendency.” Indeed fin-de-siècle Japan witnessed a number of renewed religious movements, many with Shinto origins, such as Tenrikyō and Kurozumikyō, which the government likewise looked on with suspicion, and which Christians and Protestants like Uemura dismissed as primitive chicanery, even welcoming the government's movement to suppress them. Moreover, in the aftermath of war, there was widespread public hand-wringing over the “spiritual enervation” and “moral degeneration” of the nation, and “flippant signs of the world” (*keichō fuhaku naru sesō* 軽佻浮薄なる世相). Under the imperative of “postwar administration” (*sengo keiei* 戦後経営) and further political economic expansion, renewed and ever stronger concerns with moralistic reformism led by university academics and journalists rose in public discourse. As Uemura noted:

As the nation has won the war and become more and more ambitious, there has emerged an ever fiercer call for expansion of the military and development of industry. [At the same time], what is the spiritual nourishment [required] to realize our “national principle of expansion” [*bōchōteki kokuze* 膨張的国是]? And how are we to nurture the will of the people to unite in the face of difficulty and contribute and sacrifice to the country? These are the questions that have captured the attention of intellectuals. (UMSJ 5: 870–72)

The new disciplines of “humanities” imported from the West such as philosophy, art, ethics, history, and comparative religion provided forms of discourse concerning the relation between the contested traditions and the relatively new concept of “national culture.” During this period, *bushidō* 武士道 also began to assume ideological significance as the essence of Japanese “culture” (or custom, *kokuzoku* 国俗) and “nationality” (*kokuminsei* 国民性), and over the next few decades was endlessly discussed by a wide spectrum of ethicists from Protestants such as Uchimura Kanzō 内村鑑三 (1861–1930) and Nitobe Inazō 新渡戸稲造 (1862–1933), to Kantian moralists of Protestant lineage like Ōnishi Hajime 大西祝 (1864–1900), to Imperial University statist academics like Inoue Tetsujirō 井上哲次郎 (1855–1944). As I discuss in the following, many of the new cultural academics were of Protestant origin, and many clerical Protestants were also influenced by the “humanities” when dealing with their own theological problems. Those “modernist” Protestants both debated within their circles and confronted other academics. They also brought the discussion of religion and Christianity

to a new height by claiming to create a new religion and ethics—satisfying both national and universal theoretical criteria—through the reform of Christianity and by comparison with other traditional religions and ethical systems. They thereby made eventually obsolete the longtime assault on Christianity as a religion incompatible with modern science, Japanese culture, or education.<sup>2</sup>

The turn of the twentieth century was truly a moment of ideological significance. The 1897 issues of the *Cosmic Journal* (*Rikugō zasshi*) signified a wide spectrum of moral religious discourses and modernist/traditionalist ideologies. Ōnishi explicated the Kantian notion of “ethical action.” The Protestant minister Ebina Danjō 海老名弾正 (1856–1937), published his innovative studies of the historical evolution of Japanese religions and religious consciousness. Most intellectuals including Protestants, on the other hand, fed on the rise of neo-traditionalist discourses on national morality and culture at the turn of the century.<sup>3</sup> For Protestants like Uchimura and Nitobe, *bushidō* was claimed to be the basis of their personal identity as well as crucial contributor to the Japanese modernization. In opposition to Protestant ideas of universalism and liberalism, one finds the novel discourse of the “family state” based on ancestor worship. Although it became prominent only in the aftermath of the Russo-Japanese war (1904–1905), it indicates the decline of the late Tokugawa reformist samurai (*shi-shi* 志士)-style socio-individual identity.

How did such moral, religious, and intellectual climates in the fin-de-siècle Japan influence Meiji Protestants’ representations of their theological core and religio-social identity? This was a crucial period in molding the modernist religious, cultural, and political outlook of Meiji Protestantism. In fact, the survival and expansion of Christianity and its educational institutions were at stake amid the strong nationalist-imperialist mobilization of the public after the Sino-Japanese war. Religious modernism was thus inseparable from national projects, and the modernizing impulse of religion was driven by the empire-building goals of this period.

This essay examines the “intellectual” impulses and “internal” rather than external strains of modernist Protestants in the late 1890s. I argue that these strains were chiefly marked by their resonance with liberal theology and collaboration with emerging social and cultural sciences, especially comparative studies of religion.<sup>4</sup> As I demonstrate here, the interest in these realms of knowledge

2. One cannot disregard the significance of the establishment of “modernist” cultural and social scientific academic in the world as a universal and contemporaneous phenomenon. Concerning this issue and the use of the term, “modernism,” see Ross 1994.

3. Abe Isoo 安部磯雄 and Katayama Sen 片山潜, who were of Protestant origin, were secularized moralists who were generally unapologetic of the past. They began exploring the novel discourse of “socialism” which emphasized humanistic social egalitarianism. They pushed for practical modernization centered on social legislation and building urban infrastructures.

4. Protestants’ “external” efforts during this period were chiefly directed toward their two institutional preoccupations: the achievement of their churches’ financial and administrative

transcended Protestant circles, and was thus conducive to Japanese Protestants' overall growth and wellbeing in the early twentieth century.

### *The Impact of Liberal Theology*

Liberal theology directly challenged the established churches and orthodox missionaries amid the rising concern with national religion and morality. Liberal Protestantism was principally a distinguishing frame of mind, rather than a set of specific articles of belief, which found itself compatible with the modern Western transformation and new scientific discoveries. Liberal theology could be found in both old and new denominations, and the movement traced its roots to nineteenth-century German theologians like Friedrich D. E. Schleiermacher (1768–1834) and Albrecht Ritschl (1783–1858), and to the somewhat older philological and historiographic scrutiny of the Bible. Liberal theology was also called “the New Theology” and gained most currency in the United States. New Theologians called their analytical method “higher criticism,” stressing rational analysis, by contrast with “lower criticism,” which aimed at the textual purity of the Bible. Liberals unanimously opposed biblical literalism in religious praxis and stressed liberal ethics and social engagement based on the benevolent fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man. Religious reformism developed in intimate connection with other modern intellectual fashions like evolution and comparative religion, which by the early twentieth century were known as “modernism.”<sup>5</sup>

In Japan three groups identified with “liberal Christianity” came from the West at the peak of the *ōkashugi* (radical Westernizing) period of the 1880s. The first was the Universal Evangelic-Protestant Mission-Society (*Allgemeine Evangelisch-Protestantisch Missionsverein*), whose representative Wilfried Spinner (1854–1918) came to Japan from Germany in 1885. He was followed a year later by the American Unitarian Arthur M. Knapp. Then in 1890 the American Universalist George L. Perrin (1854–1921) opened a meeting in Tokyo and preached God as the father of humanity and the salvation of all people.<sup>6</sup>

The coming of Universal Evangelists from Germany was facilitated by the

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independence from Western missionaries or churches in the West; and the expansion of their secular schools in tandem with the development of Japan's imperial educational system. The latter captured most attention in the case of Dōshisha's attempt to develop itself into a full-fledged modern scientific “university” initiated by the school's founder and doyen of the early Protestant movement, Nijjima Jō. These external reforms developed in close connection with their “internal” issues: defining the contents of the faith and the academic or “scientific” explanation of religion. For specific descriptions of these activities and their relations with theological issues and scientific studies of religion, see NIREI 2004, Chapter 3.

5. My identification of liberal Protestants with “modernists” as well as the process of American engagement with the “New Theology” is chiefly informed by HUTCHISON 1992, esp. chs. 1 to 4.

6. Its Japanese designation, *uchū shinkyō* 宇宙真教 (teaching of the truth of the universe) was coined by the early enlightenment sympathizer of Protestantism, Nakamura Masanao 中村正直.

leadership of employees of the state. Wadagaki Kenzō 和田垣謙三 (1860–1919), later a law professor of Tokyo Imperial University, studied in Berlin and was subsequently baptized in Cambridge, England, under the influence of Dwight L. Moody's (1837–1899) evangelic mission there. It was by the enthusiastic call of Wadagaki and Aoki Shūzō 青木周蔵 (1844–1914), then the Ambassador to Germany, that Spinner came to Japan.<sup>7</sup> Through the good offices of Wadagaki and others, he preached among the elite bureaucrats and the ruling class. Wadagaki was a founding member of Kozaki Hiromichi's 小崎弘道 (1856–1939) Bancho Church 番町教会 in Tokyo, which was known at the time as the foremost “celebrity” church and center of Westernization, and where Spinner was also allowed to preach three or four times a month. Spinner was likewise befriended by Uemura and preached in his church as well. Spinner became part of the central intellectual forces of Protestant Christianity in Japan. The coming of these three groups occurred considerably later than that of the missionaries from established churches in the West, but critically in the midst of the growth of Protestantism, and the radical impulse supporting socio-cultural modernization. They therefore had a great impact not only on churches but also on the larger educated public and elite of the day.

The spread of Unitarianism involved secular liberal intellectuals, and for this reason, Unitarians presented a more direct threat and challenge to established (mostly American) Protestant churches as well as leading Japanese spokesmen like Kozaki and Uemura. It was Unitarianism that exhibited the most radical characteristics of liberal Christianity, something which proved in the long run injurious to the very existence of Christianity in Japan.<sup>8</sup> Knapp contended that there is no other religion than Unitarianism for *intellectuals* and opened the Tokyo Liberal Theological Seminary for religious inquiry. Unitarians in general were also sympathetic to Buddhists, and some Buddhists became members of the Unitarian Association. Yano Fumio 矢野文雄 (1850–1931) was a student of Fukuzawa Yukichi's 福沢諭吉 (1835–1901) at Keiō University 慶応義塾, and in 1881 he purchased the influential newspaper *Yubin hōchi* 郵便報知 and became well-known as a liberal journalist and Westernizer. Yano learned of Unitarianism when he took a sabbatical leave and studied in England from 1884 to 1886, and at the height of the *ōkashugi* period returned home and promoted it as a “rational” Protestantism which does not worship Jesus Christ as God but respects him simply as a great saint (MINAMI 1935, 476). Yano claimed that Unitarianism was a “Christianity” that “works for the maintenance of social morals without infringing upon the two realms of intellect and knowledge,” and that it does this by eliminating unbelievable myths from the Bible. Unitarianism was considered suitable because it was reformed, modern, and adapted to the rule of social evolution.

7. See “Omoide” (talk with Okada Tetsuzō 岡田哲蔵) in UMSJ 5: 201–2.

8. For the central significance of Unitarianism within the larger liberal movement, see HUTCHINSON 1992, Chapter 1.

In recognition of the advantage of Unitarianism's progressive characteristics as well as the rising national interest in religion as the source of morality, Yano "urged" the Japanese to adopt Unitarianism as Japan's state religion, but he otherwise harbored suspicion and fear of other Protestant denominations. Yano argued that there was reason to fear "a momentum that Western denominations will prevail in the entire country in not too many years" because they were well funded by their counterparts in their home countries, and because Protestant religions other than Unitarianism would not assist the modernization of Japan would rather turn Japan back into a "Europe of the Middle Ages."

Fukuzawa was also active in introducing Unitarianism; having long since written a diatribe against Christianity (and religion in general), he provided an introduction that helped to capture public attention (KISHIMOTO 1954, 6: 376; GONOI 1990, 284). He said:

Whether or not [Unitarianism] can be called a religion is not my immediate concern. But if [Unitarianism] says that the purpose of its teaching is to uplift the level of humanity, liberate the work of intellectual power, uphold universal brotherhood, and that it can infuse virtue in terms of both individual and family relationships...this is Japan's urgent need today.

From Knapp's arrival to his departure, Fukuzawa and his family socialized with him intimately.<sup>9</sup> Clearly, Fukuzawa's terms with Knapp had much to do with his interest in installing a theology department within Keiō with Unitarianism at its center. In addition to Fukuzawa other former Meirokusha enlightenment intellectuals like Katō Hiroyuki 加藤弘之 (1836–1916) and Nakamura Masanao (1832–1891) showed their approval of the establishment of the religion by contributing to the first issue of its organ.<sup>10</sup> *Seikyōsha* 政教社 intellectuals also welcomed and wrote many friendly articles on Knapp and Unitarianism in general from the early stage of their publication of *Nihonjin* (SUGII 1984, 364–66).

Why did Unitarianism appeal to such a wide spectrum of Japanese intellectuals? As mentioned, elites were searching for a proper moral and religious foundation for their society. In addition to its rationalistic and intellectualist appeal, Knapp (like Yano) stressed Unitarians' special affinity for social progress. In his statement of purpose for coming to Japan, Knapp set the larger social agenda of informing "educated" Japanese of American liberalism and of a Christianity that might accord with both liberalism and Japanese nationality. Knapp attributed the deeply-ingrained hostility to Protestant Christianity to Japan's traditional

9. See SUZUKI 1979, 44–50. As is evident here, my understanding of the Meiji development of "comparative religion" and its connection to the turn-of-the-century activities of various *shūkyōka* 宗教家 ("religionists") was much facilitated by Suzuki's work. Concerning Fukuzawa's connection with the Unitarians in Japan, see TSUCHIYA 2004.

10. See Fukuzawa's essay, "Yunitarian zasshi ni kumisu" ゆにてりあん雑誌に与す, in *Yunitarian* no. 1 (March 1890), 19–21.

social-moral character that was fundamentally tolerant, secular, rational, and humanist, and thus at the same time essentially more amenable to Unitarianism (AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION 1888, 31–36; SUZUKI 1979, 51–52).

To highlight Unitarianism's difference from traditional Protestantism, Knapp stressed its friendliness toward traditional cultures and religions. By Seikyōsha's invitation, Knapp spoke under the title, "The Relations between Civilization and Independent Action." Knapp concurred with Seikyōsha's agenda for "nationalism" and "preservation of nationality/national essence" (*kokusui hozon* 国粹保存). "Even if there might be religions that are several times better than religions indigenous to Japan, when a foreign religion is to be applied to your country," Knapp argued, "it is first necessary for it to be 'devoted' to the traditional religions."<sup>11</sup> In both his articles published in *Nihonjin* and his speech at the Kōjunsha 交詢社, a social club for the business elite close to Fukuzawa and Keiō, Knapp emphasized that Unitarians were neither "missionaries" nor a religious denomination, but rather a "movement." Knapp said that Unitarians would never call other religions or their believers by derogatory and arrogant labels like "heathens."<sup>12</sup> Instead, he stressed, it is important to share with others the merits of one's religion and vice versa, in order to improve "humanity" and its "character" overall. Knapp and Unitarians' pitch was: "We come not to convert but to confer" (SUZUKI 1979, 63). Without calling their institution "church" but instead "association" (*kyōkai* 協会), this movement was crucially motivated by and for the *intellectual*. They encouraged "comparative study of religions," and rather than circumventing (much less destroying) other religions, they professed to "study them and feel empathy toward them."<sup>13</sup> After all, Knapp and Japanese intellectuals like the Seikyōsha allied to mutual advantage amid a "nationalistic" reaction against the Protestant enlightenment during the period of *ōkashugi*. Nonetheless, the endorsement of Unitarianism by Seikyōsha men also signified their interest and seriousness in searching for a morality and religion for the nation as well as their modernistic and universalistic sensibilities; and the development of such an agenda or mode of thought itself was to a large degree a response to the works of those Protestant intellectuals whose prominence preceded them.

### *Reverberations and Defections*

It is perhaps safe to say that Japanese Protestants were generally caught unprepared by this onslaught of religious modernism from the West. Due to Unitarians'

11. Knapp's original speech is not extant, but the translated version was published as "Nappu shi no kokusui ron" ナップ氏の国粹論 in the miscellaneous reports section [雑報] of *Nihonjin*, no. 18–22 (18 December 1888–18 February 1889); see SUGII 1984, 364–45.

12. See Knapp, "Unitarian no kyōgi" ユニテリアンの教義 in *Jiji shinpō*, 13 May 1888; SUZUKI 1979, 50–51.

13. See Knapp, "Unitarian no kyōgi," in *Jiji shinpō* (13 May 1888); also, Knapp, "Yo ga Nihon ni reiki seru shishu wo nobu" 余が日本に来歴せる旨趣を述ぶ, *Nihonjin*, 5 May 1888; SUZUKI 1979, 50–51.



obvious unfriendliness towards the Protestants, and the fact that they were assisted by otherwise rival intellectuals like Fukuzawa and the Seikyōsha, the initial reactions by leading Protestants to Unitarianism were distinctively negative. Yokoi Tokio 横井時雄 (1857–1928) expressed his disapproval of Unitarians' high appreciation of Japanese religions and denial of evangelical Christianity. He argued that Unitarianism did not have a dynamic mission plan, and that its teachings were “cold” like a “rehash of Confucianism.” Nonetheless, Yokoi also expressed dissatisfaction with the orthodox Protestant teachings at Dōshisha 同志社, and concluded that he would study more seriously and “organize [his] own theology.”<sup>14</sup>

Tokutomi Sohō 徳富蘇峰 (1863–1957) in the *Kokumin no tomo* (*Nation's Friend*) commented on the publication of the Unitarian organ in 1890. He extolled Unitarianism's social progressivism but doubted its religious significance and similarly criticized “coldness” and hostility toward Christianity despite its defense of the “unity of God” and “unity of mankind.” Tokutomi warned against even more disruptive effects of Unitarianism on a religiously friendly society like Japan.<sup>15</sup>

Uemura, in the first issue of his social journal *Nihon hyōron* [Japan review], likewise commented on the publication of the Unitarian organ around the same time. Like Tokutomi, Uemura chaffed at Unitarians' hostility toward fellow Christians and questioned their potential to “become a great moral force.” He disagreed with the Unitarian notion of divinity and was obviously bemused by Yano's attack on established Protestantism as “reactionary” or “medievalist.” However, as a leader of the churches, Uemura maintained a posture of cooperation, expressing the wish that Unitarianism be a “positive” force for the Christianization of Japan, and even endorsed Yano's proposition to establish Unitarianism as Japan's state religion.<sup>16</sup>

As Ebina Danjō has noted, theological disputes existed from almost the inception of Japanese Protestantism (see Ebina's recollection in *Shinjin*, no. 15: 7, 99). Converted ex-samurai youth often found missionaries intellectually obscurant, and in his recollection of his Dōshisha days, Kozaki said that it was “ludicrous in the extreme” that a missionary professor treated the Old Testament like a scientific textbook and tried to force his students to believe literally in the stories in Genesis “as if he were teaching children in Sunday school or inhabitants of the South Seas” (“Wagakuni no shūkyō shisō” 我が国の宗教

14. See Yokoi Tokio, “Roberuto erusumīru no chōsha wādo fujin” ロバートエルスミールの著者ワード婦人, *Kokumin no tomo*, no. 80 (23 April 1890); I was introduced to this article by SUGII 1984, 374.

15. See “Yuniterian wagahō ni hairu” ユニテリアン我が邦に入る [jiji column] and “Yuniterian daiichi gō yuiitsusha hakkō” ゆにてりあん第一号唯一者発行 [jihyō 時評 column], in *Kokumin no tomo*, no. 76 (13 March 1890); SUGII 1984, 373–74. Sugii also examines Tokutomi's views on Christianity at the time; see SUGII 1977.

16. See “Zassetsu” 雑説 in *Nihon hyōron*, no. 1 (1890); Uemura, “Yano Fumio, Toyama Masakazu ryōshi no Kirisutokyō saiōron” 矢野文雄、外山正一両氏の基督教採用論, in UMSJ 5: 49–50.

思想, KZ 2: 337). Throughout his life Kozaki remained one of the most loyal and influential members of the Congregational Church, but missionaries still regarded him as the vanguard of the New Theology movement. Kozaki accepted the “higher criticism” or historicity of the Bible, but detested the missionaries’ adamant insistence on the Bible’s infallibility and inherent divinity.<sup>17</sup>

Finding rational explanations for religion and Christianity was the Meiji Protestants’ staple concern. In their earlier enlightenment discourses and attitudes toward propagation, leading figures like Kozaki and Uemura explained the need for Christianity in intellectualist and humanist terms, not to mention its social significance as the discourse of civilization and modern development.<sup>18</sup> Uemura published *Fukuin shūhō* [Gospel weekly; later renamed *Fukuin shinpō* or Gospel news] was published by him as an organ for the exchange of views among Japanese Christians, to “post various ideas of Japanese and foreign scholars, to report on evangelical progress, and to lead unbelievers by making clear dubious meanings and untangling confusion.”<sup>19</sup> As he professed, Uemura’s theology was both nationalistic and “progressive”; the first issue of the journal began with Uemura’s editorial, “Shinkō seitei ni kansuru iken” 信仰制定に関する意見 [Discussion on the determination of creed]. He claimed:

Indulgently getting lost in theology that ancient people established, being constrained by various creeds, remaining conservative in all religious discussions, yearning for the ancient past, detesting to take any progressive road,... I have never thought such an attitude permissible.... It is time for us Japanese Christians to establish the foundation of Japanese theology and its directions. It would be deeply regrettable if we were to thoughtlessly import candies from abroad and keep indulging in them.... It is only thirty years since Japan was opened to the world, but indeed Japan has been determined to adopt the nineteenth century civilization. Japanese Christians are likewise expected to progress along with the ideas and knowledge of the nineteenth century. Despite this contention, if some attempt to hold on to the fossil-like creeds, to create disputes in the future, and to spread the division in this springtime of missionary work, it will be intolerable.... Japanese Christians should keep their

17. KOZAKI 1927, 88–89. Kozaki also notes that his ideas of the significance of the Bible were mainly drawn from the works of leading progressive American theologians such as George T. LADD (1888) and Joseph Henry THAYER (1891).

18. Obviously, this intellectualist and enlightenment position is noticeable in the pioneering works of KOZAKI (1886) and UEMURA (1884); they were also instrumental in the publication of *Rikugō zasshi* in 1881.

19. “*Fukuin shūhō* no hakkan ni tsuki ichigen su” 福音週報の発刊につき一言す。 *Fukuin shūhō*, no. 1 (14 March 1890). Uemura’s *Fukuin shūhō* was founded in principle as his private journal, intended to publish his independent theological and administrative views of church. As a matter of fact, it functioned as the organ of the Christian Church of Japan. The quote is from the first issue of *Fukuin shinpō* to be published after the second ban in 1895, “Futatabi honshi no dai ichigō wo hakkan suru ni tsukite” 再び本誌の第一号を発刊するにつきて, *Fukuin shinpō*, no. 1, 5 July 1895.

creeds as liberal as possible, give as much latitude as possible to future progress, and solidify the basis for our collaboration.

(“*Shasetsu*,” *Fukuin shūhō*, no. 1, 14 March 1890)

Uemura continued to assert the possible unity of scientific inquiry and theology, to deplore the shallowness of religious debates, and to call for the introduction of more sound “intellectual and theoretical inquiries” into theological discussion, even after liberal theology became an issue. But as the above passage shows, Uemura’s theological question at this point was primarily posited in opposition to the overall dominance of Western missionaries. By establishing a “Japanese theology” and by facilitating the collaboration and possibly unification of the works of Japanese missions, Uemura aimed to create an independent national church. It was not until 1901 that a serious theological controversy on liberal theology took place among Japanese Protestants, namely between Uemura and Ebina Danjō.

Buttressed by earlier antagonism against the missionaries, Japanese Protestants were not able to make an effective case against liberal theology, and it quickly spread among the orthodox churches. As early as 1890 Ōnishi Hajime noted its influence and predicted its future prevalence, observing that there was among Japanese a profound “craving for new knowledge” which coincided with “the (rising) spirit to promote the distinct and independent development of the Japanese nation” in those days. Ōnishi, moreover, noted the special significance of the “unorthodoxy within orthodoxy” or “progressive” elements within conservative churches. Two prominent “progressive” groups, that is, German Universal Evangelists and Unitarians, were led by foreign missionaries and already had their own organs. But the “heretics within orthodoxy,” Ōnishi said, were “Japanese” and they still did not have their own journals or associations (Ōnishi Hajime, “Waga kuni no Kirisutokyō ni okeru shin keikō” 我国の基督教に於ける新傾向, in *Rikugō zasshi*, no. 119, 15 November 1887). In September 1890 *Kokumin no tomo* likewise endorsed the rise of the new theology as a trend of times or part of the process of natural selection.<sup>20</sup> Years later, YAMAJI Aizan 山路愛山 (1864–1917) looked back on the phenomena favorably in his celebrated *Gendai Nihon kyōkai shiron* [A historical discussion of contemporary Japanese Christian churches] (YAMAJI 1906). He argued that the problems that Protestant churches had faced did not simply result from inside the churches or from nationalist zeal or conservative cultural reactions, but reflected, first, the economic transformation of the whole of Japanese society, that is, the rise of business interests (*jitsugyō* 実業), the increased national wealth, and the corresponding betterment of individual lives. Second, Yamaji claimed, they also represented the global

20. “Kirisuto kyōto no ichidai tōta,” *Kokumin no tomo*, no. 95, 23 September 1890. After Kanomori Tsurin’s liberal theology debate, *Kokumin no tomo* increasingly took a critical position against the “unproductive activities” of Christians against national progress. See SUGII 1984, 372–80.

and historically unprecedented transformation of the religion itself. Japanese Protestants were unknowingly inundated by conservative thought of the missionaries but finally “narrowed their mental gap” and “stood on a par” with the churches in the West. Thus, Yamaji said, Japanese Protestants would not need to view “pessimistically” their current troubles because those changes would constitute part of Japan’s modern historical and intellectual progress together with the “civilization” of the world and were definitely not aberration from it (YAMAJI 1906, YAS 2: 274–75).

The theological dispute hit most major denominations hard, but the impact on the Congregational Church and the related Dōshisha school were the most dramatic. A popular preacher, Niijima Jō’s 新島 襄 (1843–1890, the founder of Dōshisha) beloved student and the chief collaborator of his movement for the expansion of the school into a modern university, KANAMORI Tsūrin 金森通倫 (1857–1945), published *Nihon genkon no Kirisutokyō narabi ni shōrai no Kirisutokyō* [Contemporary Christianity and Future Christianity in Japan] in 1891 with assistance of Ōnishi Hajime, which was the first book written by a Japanese on liberal Christianity.<sup>21</sup> The next year, Kanamori also translated Otto Pfleiderer’s *Religionsphilosophie* under the Japanese title *Jiyū shingaku* 自由神学 [Liberal theology]. He, then, suddenly resigned from the ministerial position of the Banchō Church, one of the major churches in Tokyo and withdrew from the Congregational Church membership (*Kokumin no tomo*, no. 117, 3 May 1891). Earlier Kanamori was one of the most revered leaders of the missionary work, well-known for his “logical” (*riro seizen* 理路整然) sermons, enthusiastic missionary approach, and his nationalistic will for the spiritual enlightenment of Japan (he called for “the second *ishin* 維新”/“inspirational *ishin*”).<sup>22</sup> Yokoi Tokio, who once passionately worked as a missionary along with Kanamori, followed suit by leaving his ministerial position for the United States, where he wrote *Waga kuni no Kirisutokyō mondai* [The problems of Christianity in our country] (1894), calling for the “destruction of old theologies” (YOKOI 1894; SUZUKI 1984, 120).

After leaving the church, Kanamori barnstormed the whole of Japan to preach industry and frugality, publishing *Chokin no susume* 貯金のすすめ [Encouraging savings] in 1902, discussing the world’s seventeen major countries’ saving conditions. Kanamori’s crusade continued for thirteen years from 1900 to 1913 (from the ages 44 to 57), and he received a commission from the Home Ministry. In an account by one of his disciples, Kanamori, in order to travel relentlessly by bicycle, wore a jacket with a stand-up collar and shorts, and then stood to lecture in the same attire. Once a campaign continued for eight months without a day off;

21. The epigraph of this book had the same quotation from Ralph Waldo Emerson as appears at the beginning of this article, which is suggestive of an intellectual tenor among liberal Christians.

22. See “Meiji no Kirisutosha gunzō: Kanamori Tsūrin o chūshin to shite,” 明治のキリスト者群像—金森通倫を中心として in SUGII 1984, 305–8; see also TAKAHASHI 1965, 321–25.

in town after town, he made two two-hour-long speeches per day to audiences of seven to eight hundred regularly, and sometimes over two thousand. Kanamori also remained a lifelong vegetarian and abstainer from drinking and smoking.<sup>23</sup> With limited sources at hand, it is a matter of speculation how influential then this ideological canvassing for the capitalist ethic was, and it is also difficult to discuss the degree of his personal fulfillment. From “enlightenment teachers” (*kaika kyōshi* 開化教師), let alone popular rights activists, to Sada Kaiseki 佐田介石 (1818–1882) a patriotic Buddhist monk who preached around the country “almost like a madman” for the xenophobic and anti-modernist activities,<sup>24</sup> this type of enthusiasm for public enlightenment was not unusual during the Meiji period. Moreover, Kanamori’s ideas of saving, or his larger vision of capitalistic development, were certainly not unique and could have been dispersed among many publications and activities at this time of national industrialization. What made his action unusual, however, was his strong quasi-religious fervor and individual conviction. Unlike Kanamori, Miyakawa Tsuneteru 宮川経輝 (1857–1936), Kanamori’s contemporary and colleague from Kumamoto, spent his life relatively quietly as the minister of the Osaka Congregational Church, but he confessed in his memoir that he had dreamed of “spreading Christianity wherever the Osaka trading vessels and merchants would go, reforming the public morals” of Japanese and nurturing their “tough and industrious mentality” through Christianity (TAKAHASHI 1965, 318–19). Apart from the apparent differences in their life choices, they shared the same moral and developmental desires.

The problem of faith is as much an intellectual issue as an existential one in a modernizing society. While a minister of the Congregational Church throughout his life, Miyakawa admitted later in his life that he had an “intellectual” and rationalistic tendency, was eager to learn philosophy, and went through secret troubles over issues of faith. Uemura and Kozaki both confessed difficulty in accepting the Trinity, and many ex-samurai converts retained a Neo-Confucian (Chu-hsi) metaphysics, with its rationalistic and naturalistic worldview. Furthermore, from their early religious life, Meiji Protestants were confronted by Tokyo University’s Darwinian evolutionism, and as a post-Restoration generation were also as immersed in the positivist social and historical ideas expounded in the works of Comte, J. S. Mill, Buckle’s history of civilization, and Spencerian sociology, as they were in the Bible. Given such complex avenues of upbringing and learning, one cannot dismiss the larger confluence of social and humanistic writings in their theological outlook, not to mention in their apparent social praxis; even leaders of established denominations like Kozaki and Uemura may

23. TAKAHASHI 1965, 326. This account comes from Takahashi Usaburō 高橋卯三郎 (the author’s father), who followed Kanamori’s teaching and traveled the country together with him.

24. Based on commentary by YOSHINO Sakuzō (1929); UMSJ 5, 70.

well have had a strong liberal inclination.<sup>25</sup> Meiji Protestants, at least in their early enlightenment writings, never demonized the pursuit of modern sciences including Darwinism, philosophers like Kant and Hegel, or art and literature which were often associated with “anticlericalism” in the West. Modern scientific discourses and art were viewed as manifestations of the spirit of the “West,” that is, of Christianity or its tradition. In a virtual apology to the church he had belonged to, Miyakawa rationalized his and many ex-samurai’s mental journey insisting that the “cultivation” of faith take a decade for “intellectual training,” another decade for “moral cultivation,” and finally another decade or two to attain the slightest certitude of faith and divine inspiration (TAKAHASHI 1965, 318).

The discourse on religion—as well as the political circumstances surrounding it—rapidly changed after 1900 from the dominance of rationalism and philosophic and positivistic concerns to the centrality of individual experience, mysticism, and personality.<sup>26</sup> Now it was “reasonable” or even cutting-edge intellectually to be “faithful” and indeed, “religious.” In the context of the renewed popularity of the Protestant churches, with their liberal atmosphere and focus on religious experience, some prominent figures such as Abe Isoo and Kanamori returned to the Congregational Church with the assistance of Ebina.

25. The “liberal” nature of the first generation of Protestant intellectuals such as Kozaki and Uemura in my view seems to resonate with William Hutchison’s view of the “generation of the 1850s” as the watershed of liberal reformism in American Protestantism. The figures belonging to that generation were less radical than their successors who came under the direct influence of Hegelianism and German hermeneutics; nonetheless, they battled inside the American churches for theological reform and were unconventionally perceptive to the larger social and cultural discourses outside of the church (see HUTCHISON 1987, 28–29, *passim*). The question of how Meiji Protestants converted to Christianity captured most attention in previous scholarship; obviously, there were many intellectual troubles in “accepting” orthodox theology (they reacted particularly to the way missionaries inculcated them in dogmatic and authoritarian manners), and Protestants struggled with their (and their families’) traditional grounding in Confucianism. Here I would stress the prolonged theological and intellectual ambiguity of Protestant leaders and indeed the ongoing process of “conversion,” so to speak, into the late Meiji period. The most significant aspect of their theological problem erupted in 1901 in the form of a debate between Ebina and Uemura on Christology or the divinity of Christ. It is also important to note in this context that through the process of their involvement in theological issues as well as in national projects like war and modernization, some leaders like Uemura began to separate the church from the outside world without directly challenging the secular authority of the state or rejecting nationalism. Nonetheless, the later eruption of the issues of faith or defection (as opposed to just departure) from the church over theological doubts should not be seen only as a response to increased pressure from the emerging imperial state. Meiji Protestants’ effort to accommodate the “trends of the times,” Meiji society or the state by promoting religion as more than a means of personal salvation was not so much new as central to their intellectual projects. I argue that one must examine evolving secular intellectual currents together with related theological issues like modernism. On Uemura’s early intellectual discord with the orthodox creed, see UMSJ 1: 681; on Kozaki’s recollection to the first exposure to theology (see KOZAKI 1927, 30–44).

26. For this reference, see, *inter alia*, HUGHES 1958, which discusses an intellectual revolution at the turn of the twentieth century that overcame positivistic worldviews and methodologies.

Apparently, it was said, Kanamori was distressed by the simultaneous deaths of his wife and the Meiji Emperor, and from 1915 to 1928, Kanamori traveled throughout the world and Japan as a missionary of a conservative Christianity (TAKAHASHI 1965, 326–27).

Liberal/modernist reformism had not simply shaken Japanese Protestants' beliefs and ecclesiastical orientation but also "conferred" on them a positive point of view that connected their identity as Christians—something now liberated from traditional creedalism and denominational authority—to their aspiration to enlighten and educate the Japanese. Liberal Christians attempted, to various degrees, to reconcile and incorporate into their religion the humanistic discourses that emerged out of modernist literature, new social theories, and positivist sciences in the nineteenth century. For devout Christians, it represented an attempt to reformulate and reclaim their religion's distinct characteristics, historical value, and irreplaceable significance in modern society. Nonetheless, liberal theology virtually ended the Christian claim of absolute verity and dogmatic authority over knowledge, and admitted religion's inseparable connection to larger social discourses and humanistic sensibilities. Moreover, liberal theology in many instances functioned to weaken faith and thaw the tensions that could exist between a Christian's devotion to the religion and to the state. Nonetheless, as in the case of early socialists who were born out of the Unitarian Association, it also intensified, at the other end of the spectrum, their ardor for modern reformism and commitment to this-worldly social change. It is important to see how this impulse to go culturally and intellectually beyond the limitations of the Christian religion proceeded through the academic pursuits of the modernization of religion and ethics, and its critical links with the desire to explore and found Japan's new national religion.

### *Toward Secular Humanism and National Religiosity*

The rise of liberal Christianity and the development of secular humanistic disciplines and writings were interrelated and both gained force in the general nationalist atmosphere and elevated cultural consciousness of the late 1890s. As discussed at the outset, the late 1890s were a time of renewed concern with moral discourse and interest in culture and humanistic subjects. Many Protestant intellectuals increasingly shed their religious ties and emerged as leading humanistic critics of society and culture. Still more intellectuals became prominent as writers, with perhaps the most eminent in this strain being Ōnishi Hajime and his trumpeting of Kantian ethics.<sup>27</sup> Ōnishi became professor of humanities in the leading new liberal institution Waseda, then still named Tōkyō Senmon Gakkō

27. Apart from Ōnishi, Nakajima Rikizō 中島力蔵 (1858–1918) and Motora Yūjirō 元良勇次郎 (1859–1912) turned to pragmatism. Motora became a chair of Western ethics and a leading proponent of the new discipline of "psychology" in Tokyo Imperial University.

東京専門学校, along with other prominent Christian academic humanists and social thinkers of the time such as Kishimoto Nobuta 岸本能武太 (1865–1928), Ukita Kazutami 浮田和民 (1859–1945), Abe Isoo (1865–1949), all of whom left Dōshisha amid its theological and administrative struggle between Japanese faculty and American missionaries.

Another distinct moralist of Protestant lineage, Matsumura Kaiseki 松村介石 (1859–1939), offered the so-called “Spiritual lectures” (*Seishinteki kōwa* 精神的講話) to the youth on Saturdays at the YMCA Hall in Tokyo. His eloquence, writings on *shūyō* 修養 ethics and universalistic moral discourse were popular among the students of those days. Without fundamentally Christian elements in his teachings, Matsumura was long recognized among “church” leaders and allowed to work at the fringe of the Protestant circles. With his ultimate estrangement from the churches, Matsumura eventually established his own church called “Japan Church” (Nihon Kyōkai 日本教会) and published the organ *Dō* 道 [Way]. The name of the church was subsequently altered to Dōkai 道会 [Association of the Way] whose articles of faith were based on the concepts of piety, virtue, love, and eternity. While upholding reverence for divinity (*kami* 神), *Dō* was fundamentally an ethical discourse stressing self-discipline, personality, and development of character.

On the whole, the question of religion preoccupied intellectuals of the 1890s. But most Meiji intellectuals fundamentally avoided it and often tried to replace it with rationalistic worldviews, philosophy, ethics, or literary humanism.<sup>28</sup>

The dominance of positivist science, rationalist rejection of religion, and interest in alternative secular morality threatened not only Protestants but other religionists. The academic impulse for free inquiry into religion had also deeply influenced Buddhism. 1893 was an important year for religionists both domestically and internationally; at home, the academics and religionists debated continuously on the “Conflict of Education and Religion” occasioned by Uchimura’s Lese Majesty Incident (1891), and the World’s Parliament of Religions that took place that year in conjunction with the World Exposition in Chicago. The event itself certainly reflected the worldwide anxiety of established religionists in the process of facing an emerging modern society and culture. As James KETELAAR (1989, chapter 4) has discussed, this global conference offered Japanese Buddhists a unique opportunity to regain their lost prominence and intellectual vigor. Here what specifically helped Japanese Buddhists was the recognition of Buddhism as a “world religion” as well as appreciation of Buddhism’s historic and intellectual value by the Western academicians. What lay behind such global ecumenicalism was the rise of “comparative religion” led by the activities

28. See MATSUMURA’s autobiographical work *Shinkō gojūnen* (1926); also, MATSUMURA 1934. A most concise reference to Matsumura’s ethical practice can be found in SUZUKI 1979, 130–40.



of scholars such as Max Muller (1823–1900) and their works on non-Western religions, particularly Buddhism, produced in late nineteenth-century Europe.

In the World's Parliament of Religions, Buddhists intended to counter Christianity and its arrogant claim to be the “world's hegemonic religion.” Nonetheless, one of the pragmatic byproducts of such an event was the advent of an atmosphere of cooperation and friendship among established religions. Domestically, for several years following the Uchimura Incident, Buddhists initially took advantage of this opportunity to stir a national-scale assault on Christianity, but the controversy among religions resulted in Japanese religionists' suspicion of the anti-religious and positivistic academic establishment at the Imperial University, which was the first to attack Protestant intelligentsia like Uchimura. In 1899, in response to the World's Parliament of Religions, a similar convention of Japanese religions was held in Tokyo, under the initiative of the Buddhist-related journal *Hansei zasshi* 反省雜誌 (SUZUKI 1979, 233). Although this event was nothing more than an informal gathering with less discursive productivity, it nonetheless clearly signified the harmonious relationship of Buddhism and Christianity.

The religious studies, as well as Buddhist-friendly Unitarians, whose organ changed its name from *Unitarian* to *Shūkyō* 宗教, also stressed the fundamental commonality of all religious forms. The rise of nationalistic confidence and euphoria in the aftermath of the Sino-Japanese war clearly contributed to the formation of such a mood. Nonetheless, the call for harmony of religions was, at the same time, part of their political language for the alliance of traditional forces against encroaching modernity. In the post-Sino-Japanese war atmosphere of nationalism, innovative moral and cultural reformism, both Christians and Buddhists were locked in the same internal struggles pitting modernists against traditionalists (orthodox believers).

In such a context, there was also a vague hope of creating a new universalistic/nationalistic religion, and in this connection, Kishimoto Nobuta's ideas deserve attention. Kishimoto attended both the World's Parliament of Religion in Chicago as a representative of Japanese Protestants and the Gathering of the Religionists in Japan as a representative of the Congregational Church. At Chicago, Kishimoto gave two speeches in English, entitled, “How I Came to Christianity” and “The Future of Religion in Japan.” Kishimoto was a graduate of Dōshisha and was baptized by Niijima together with his longtime friend at Waseda, Abe Isoo. After graduation Kishimoto went home to Okayama and worked as a missionary. One day he was propagating and yet could not explain well the truth of Christianity to ordinary people, so he returned to the Dōshisha to study theology with the hope of studying overseas. Despite the recommendation by a Dōshisha missionary to go to Andover Seminary, Kishimoto pressed to go to Harvard Divinity School (being aware of its Unitarian focus) by expressing his desire to study theology from “philosophical and comparative” perspectives. At Harvard, Kishimoto was surprised that the university was not so much singu-

larly Unitarian as “non-sectarian,” because of the fact that numerous churches of different denominations were located “on campus,” and on Sundays Kishimoto would cruise around all of those churches from the Methodist to the Catholic. Kishimoto enjoyed his study at Harvard “as if Harvard had been established particularly for (him),” and in such a religiously vibrant and liberal atmosphere, Kishimoto recognized that what is called Christianity does not consist of a single creed, and that various denominations should not exist in mutual conflict, or at least not at Harvard. Instead there are central truths running through all of the different Christian dogmas, and religionists must focus on these common structures and ideas by leaving aside their trivial differences.<sup>29</sup>

In his Chicago speech, Kishimoto claimed that his problem with Christianity and religion in general was shared by the majority of Japanese. He came to America in order to find a God of morality, truth, and life for the Japanese, as much as to solve his own existential problem. In “The Future of Religion in Japan,” Kishimoto argued that the current Japan was a battlefield of religious and non-religious secular forces as much as of Christianity and other religions. Many Japanese intellectuals were indifferent or hostile to religion in general, and thus religious forces in Japan should first fight such agnostic, nihilistic, and rationalist, and materialistic intellectuals, influenced by figures like Spencer, Comte, and Schopenhauer. Man would not remain atheistic or agnostic for long and could not but long for the infinite, said Kishimoto. Hence, religion would no doubt survive. Kishimoto declared that despite the present condition of Christianity, Christianity would ultimately become Japan’s leading religion. However, the Christianity Japan was to adopt would be Japan’s Christianity and “Christianity of Jesus Christ” not Protestantism or Catholicism, nor any denominations of foreign origin. Under such a Christianity, Japanese Christians would not have denominational conflicts or bashing of heresies (KISHIMOTO 1893, 2, 1279–83; SUZUKI 1979, 261).

After his return from America in 1894, Kishimoto took the chair in “comparative religion” at Waseda where he benefited to work with his colleagues since the days of Dōshisha, Abe, and Ōnishi. He did not withdraw from the membership of the Congregational Church. Nonetheless, Kishimoto’s activity was mainly as a Unitarian (vice-president of the Unitarian Kōdōkai 弘道会 with Abe Isoo as president) and an academic of comparative religion. At the turn of the century, he published many academic articles regarding religion and Christianity particularly the significance of rituals and symbols in the *Cosmic Journal*.

Kishimoto, then the editor of the Unitarian journal, *Shūkyō*, also took on the chief editorship of the *Cosmic Journal* when the former was subsumed by the latter in 1898. Did Kishimoto abandon Christianity or his own version of

29. SUZUKI 1979, 258–60; moreover, on his observation of Harvard, see Kishimoto’s essay “Mada Unitarian o yamenu ka (zoku)” まだユニテリアンを止めぬか「続」, in *Rikugō zasshi* no. 401, June 1914), 102–5.

Christianity qua Unitarianism? In one of the first books published on the theme of academic studies of religion, Kishimoto argued that comparative religion would treat all religions “equally” and study them “fairly.” As Suzuki Norihisa has pointed out, Kishimoto’s comparative religion asserted that the superiority of any religion over others would be “immediately identifiable” by analyzing the “nature of (the religion’s) principal divinity” (*honzon no seishitsu* 本尊の性質), and specifically whether or not its character is verifiable in modern academic terms, and whether its practical role and significance as an ethical guide are fulfilled. Kishimoto was excited at the possibility and significance of comparative studies of religions in Japan. He said that Japan is an optimal place for comparative religion, and that there would emerge in Japan a “perfect religion” or one that is “the world’s best” for two reasons. First, Japan sits at the intersection of various religions including many branches of Christianity, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, and Shinto, and second the Japanese are thus able to assimilate and incorporate the best characters of any specific religion (SUZUKI 1979, 263).

The pursuits of Unitarianism, liberal theology, and comparative religion were closely intertwined and overall played a crucial role in driving the Protestant impulse for modernism. This was certainly the case in Japan. It is important to note here that Kishimoto did *not* become a secular humanist but remained committed to what it meant to be “religious” as a Unitarian; and as such he was committed, and was deeply confident of the religious power of Unitarianism as well as the rational and modern academic study of religion. Kishimoto’s life seems to illustrate that Unitarianism did not exist in those days simply for its practical social values or as a philosophical construct. To a significant degree, it was considered as a “religion” in and of itself by contemporaries in Japan, but Unitarianism would ultimately become a non-religion, and little more than a meeting place for socialist reformers like the “Study Group of Socialism,” which Kishimoto formed in 1898 together with Katayama Sen (1859–1933), Saji Jitsunen 佐治実然 (1856–1920), Kanda Saichirō 神田佐一郎 (1863–1944), Murai Tomoyoshi 村居知至 (1861–1944), Kōtoku Shūsui 幸徳秋水 (1871–1911), and Abe Isoo. Not only did the relative religious significance of Unitarianism decline, but Kishimoto’s ideas of comparative religion also seemed to be overcome by the ideas of other scholars such as Anezaki Masaharu 姉崎正治 (1873–1949). Indeed, after Anezaki’s return from Europe and his German-trained systematic religious theories were introduced, Kishimoto left his academic position at Waseda and ultimately became a well-known English teacher. And yet he was “still committed” to the Unitarian Association as its vice-president, all the while encouraging and incorporating *zen* 禅 meditation in his program.

Amid the destructive effect of modernism on the landscape of traditional Japanese Protestantism, Kishimoto’s earlier dream to create a distinctly Japanese “Christianity” and a “perfect” religion seems to have been carried on by Ebina Danjō. Belonging to the same generation of Meiji Protestants, Ebina, amid much

criticism, remained within the church and defended liberal thought in a debate with Uemura. Much in resonance with Kishimoto's views, Ebina propounded his Christianity primarily as the "religion of Jesus Christ." As Ōnishi predicted in 1890, Ebina was an "unorthodoxy within orthodoxy" and attempted to manifest "the spirit seeking to promote a distinct and independent development of the Japanese nation" through his incorporation of modernist theology.<sup>30</sup>

Claiming one's life to be "religious" is inherently contentious. The very attempt to separate the "religious" radically from the remainder of one's life had been uniquely a "Western" preoccupation. Historically, such an impulse was articulated in the context of the emerging field of modern religious studies from the nineteenth century to the twentieth century, and with the expansion of Western power over the rest of the world outside its moral and cultural core. Since the early Meiji period, Japanese Protestants' praxis and discourse were scarcely distinguishable from their civilizing mission for the new society, something they inherited from their elite, moral, and cultural backgrounds, whether that be samurai, missionary or simply Western. At the dawn of the twentieth century, with the developing vision of imperialism for Japan as well as for the West, Japanese Protestantism worked to be part of a modern academic national religiosity both intellectually and theologically. The conditions surrounding the Protestant churches were still volatile; there were much hostility and ideological aversion against Christians on the part of the public. Nonetheless, the rising national confidence, further urge for modernization, and the positive resolution of international issues such as the victory in the Sino-Japanese war, the relatively smooth realization of "mixed residence" with foreigners (1898), the formation of the Anglo-Japanese alliance (1902)—all seem to have worked favorably for the recovery of Japanese Protestantism over the next decade. When the tension for war with Russia subsequently increased, the image of Japan as a civilized, modern, and progressive force abiding by international law versus autocratic Russia became prominent; and Protestant leaders as the foremost progressive, liberal, Anglophile voice were actively engaged in this propaganda. For the expansion of Christianity as much as reflecting their social progressivism, they joined and led various ideological efforts for the Meiji state. And modernist theology auspiciously provided the internal support for such secular commitments in the early twentieth century.

30. On Ebina's thought and debate with Uemura, see NIREI 2004, Chapter 4.

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- Kokumin no tomo* 国民之友 (*Nation's Friend*), 1886–1989.
- Nihon hyōron* 日本評論, 1890–1895.
- Nihonjin* 日本人, 1888–1891 & 1893–1906.
- Rikugō zasshi* 六合雜誌 (*Cosmic Journal*), 1880–1921.
- Shinri* 真理, 1889–1900.
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