

# JAPANESE TRANSFORMATION OF AMERICAN RELIGIOUS DISCOURSE: Uoki Tadakazu's Political Theology

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this study is to examine the formation process of Japanese theologian Uoki Tadakazu's nationalistic (and imperial) theology. Unlike previous studies that have narrowly analyzed Uoki's 'Japan-style Christianity' in the context of domestic cultural politics, this paper examines Uoki's political theology in the context of transnational entanglement. It deals with how one context discussed in relation to social engagement at Union Theological Seminary (UTS) was imported and modified by a Japanese theologian who studied at UTS in the early and mid-1920s. While Uoki studied under Arthur McGiffert at Union, McGiffert's approach to early church history prompted Uoki to consider Christianity's role in society. After returning to Japan, he created 'Japan-style Christianity' through his efforts to incorporate various theological streams in the United States into Japanese society. This article provides an opportunity to seriously consider the relationship between religion and peace through Uoki's political theology, which advocated the imperial war.

**Keywords:** Arthur McGiffert, Uoki Tadakazu, Political Theology, Japanese Christianity, Social Engagement Discourse.

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## 1. Introduction

Seeking peace amid the advent of the new Cold War era is an important task suggested by the UN SDG Preamble: “We are determined to foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies which are free from fear and violence” (UN 2015). Religion can be a very powerful means of promoting peace or playing an abusive role in justifying war and violence. Regarding the latter, Johan Galtung discussed ‘cultural violence’, which serves to justify direct violence based on religion, ideas, language and art. He identified religion and ideology’ as key carriers of cultural violence (Galtung 6). By reviewing the historical cases that functioned as ‘cultural violence’ legitimizing war, we can indirectly ponder in depth what role religion should play in peace-building.

This paper aims to examine Ueki’s political theology, which reconstructed a religious nationalism that led to the tragic consequences of advocating wars committed by the Japanese Empire. More specifically, this article traces the historical case in which Ueki uniquely transformed the American religious knowledge discourse he acquired at Union Theological Seminary (UTS) in the early 20th century and developed the political theology advocating imperial war. While Religious Discourse at UTS provided a template for understanding Ueki’s academic work, his theology underwent a unique transformation, deeply related to Japanese Christianity’s historical characteristics. This article shows one aspect of Japanese political theology that produced ‘cultural violence’ discourse while intertwined with religious discourse in the United States.

## 2. The Social Gospel Movement and the Aftermath of War

After the Civil War, the United States pushed for rapid industrialization, and the unprecedented number of immigrants to America played a role in providing cheap labour costs. By the end of the 19th century, the United States had become an advanced industrialized nation. However, the side effects of rapid industrialization were formidable. Social contradictions had deepened, including the spread of inequality in wealth and the abuse of workers in factories. Mark Twain and Charles Dudley

Warner's novel, *The Gilded Age: A Tale of Today*, offered a glimpse of this era while satirizing the seemingly shiny but internally corrupt American society.

In this context, social theology was called for to encompass social relations to improve the miserable conditions of workers (through, for instance, the abolition of child labour). It was a call to prophetic religion comparable to the progressive reformers' vision during the American Progressive Movement. Progressive reformers sought policy proposals beyond laissez-faire liberalism to control economic power. They also wanted to implement the social welfare system with national policies beyond individual issues. The moral and spiritual aspects of the time were considered important alongside the political and economic reforms. During this time, the Social Gospel Movement (SGM) and the Progressive Movement strongly influenced each other.

The SGM was deeply and broadly influential, affecting not only Protestant denominations but also general American society as well. Meanwhile, Union Theological Seminary (UTS) also had active supporters in the SGM. UTS was not simply one of many seminaries but an indispensable organization in the American progressive movement. It had been involved in the major events and movements in American religious history; for example, it actively participated in the anti-slavery movement prior to the Civil War. The Union was a leading institution dealing with emerging political, social, and theological issues. The same was true for the movement for social change beyond the individualistic gospel (Handy 25-68).<sup>1</sup>

The influence of the social reform theologians led to a social awakening and the institutionalization of the programs that were based on it. The advocates of the movement were optimistic to think that the kingdom of God would be realized on earth even within the scope of human possibilities. The SGM had diminished

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<sup>1</sup> The Union also played an important role in the Asian transformation of the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century discourse on religious knowledge. For a study on Chinese graduates from the Union who influenced the formation of Chinese Christianity or Sinicizing Christianity, see Sneller 2017.

since the outbreak of the World Wars, but the flow of the movement continued and profoundly impacted the civil rights movement in the latter half of the 20th century.

The religious discourses of social change began to develop in unexpected directions as World War I broke out. Some SGM advocates that had blamed the ravages of predatory capitalism began to be criticized as Bolsheviks when the war broke out. In addition, the various internationalist movements spawned by religious and political idealism that flourished from the late 19th century to the early 20th century seemed to be stranded. Some regarded excessive criticism as wartime hysteria. Conservative and militaristic patriotism swept across the country.

Theological claims that individuals should actively participate in and not flee from society were controversial in conjunction with war service. This was not simply a theoretical problem in an ivory tower. For the soldiers on the battlefield, the relationship between their duties and their Christian faith was an existential question that needed to be urgently explained (Ebel 10-13). It was a question of what the Christian faith could mean in the rapidly changing political context. On the one hand, there was an atmosphere of religious nationalism that thought the institutional churches should actively participate in war. On the other hand, that part of the Church, which belonged to the nonviolent pacifist tradition, raised the question of whether war was acceptable social participation within Christianity. The attitudes of various denominations toward war were not simply fixed or set in a uniform manner. However, it was difficult to deny that American patriotism was sweeping through the American Christian communities during this period. It was not uncommon to find an American flag inside a church during the war. The pros and cons of participation in the war were not simply a conflict between the denominations. The aftermath of the war had a profound impact on even the pacifist denomination and caused an internal dispute over their positions on war (Heath 87-128).

Social theologies for encouraging active participation in society have varied over time. Researchers investigating the relationship between politics and religion have distinguished two

types of civil theology that are actively involved in politics. The first can be called a 'prophetic theology,' which exposes the illegality of the existing political order and serves to embody a new political imagination within the community in such a way as to crack the dominant culture (Brueggemann 6-9).

The second can be called a 'court theology,' which functions to justify an existing governing order to unite society and to justify a state-centred ruling system. The theological trend of blind support for national policy and seeking justification for the state can be understood in some ways as a variation of a 'court theology' despite the change in modern social relations.

In modern times the relations between religion and politics are indeed much more complex, and semantic networks are captured differently even when using the same usages or concepts. Above all, an approach that bisects various phenomena could not grasp the subtleties of reality and may not allow a closer look at the limitations or performance of the movement that is presented in a particular historical context. For example, if we regard the SGM that developed during the progressive movement at a global level, we will see the limits of Americanism and social relations in the late 19th century. In short, the distinction between the two types of religion and civic character does not fully explain the reality.

Nevertheless, the distinction between the two forms is still valid, as will be further elucidated later, and an important point in our discussion is that the axis of theological debate over social participation during war seemed very nationalistic. Although there were various opinions concerning the details, the critical stance on national policy diminished in the wave of patriotism since the outbreak of World War I. In short, the civic theology of this period took the form of 'court theology.' It is important to recognize this because in the early 1920s when Ueki went to study in the Union, this trend remained.

### **3. McGiffert as an Advocate of American National Policy**

During this period, Arthur Cushman McGiffert, president of the Union, had a unique perspective on the role of Christianity through early historical church studies. First, he expressed a

critical position on the individualistic view of salvation that he regarded as prominent within evangelical Protestantism after the Reformation. He pointed out that evangelicals did not wrestle with social issues such as slavery, capitalism, or war but instead passively insisted on the salvation of the soul in the afterlife and emphasized individual sin. Moreover, he pointed out that the evangelicals had serious deficiencies in the teaching of social-ethical guidelines, with an emphasis on converting during the war (Clack 90-93).

The Church hotly contested the proper attitude to war in the Church's tradition during that time. One year after the war broke out, McGiffert authored a paper entitled "Christianity and War: A Historical Sketch." In retrospect to the history of the Church, it was hard to find the claim that all wars were un-Christian. In referring to his German teacher, Adolf von Harnack, McGiffert pointed out that even if the early Church did not clearly define its attitudes toward war, a review of the New Testament's perspectives would reveal that Christian faith and military service did not necessarily conflict with each other.<sup>2</sup> McGiffert traced the attitudes toward war from the early Church Fathers to the practice of medieval Catholicism and the views of Protestant theologians after the Reformation. What he wanted to present was clear. To be faithful to the Christian tradition, it was not indispensable to adhere to a pacifist position (McGiffert, "Christianity," 345).

Shortly after the United States entered World War I, McGiffert asserted that the Union graduates should be alert. By using the analogous spiritual war in the New Testament, he urged that it was not their duty to be aloof in the national crisis, even if the seminary training was not for "flesh and blood" (Clack 57). As a professor of church history, he critically presented examples of the theo-political practices of early Christianity. He lamented that

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<sup>2</sup>Harnack, a former teacher of McGiffert, personally was involved in the creation of a pacifist association before the World War, but in a classic 'Militia Christi', dealing with this issue, he stated that the relationship between early Christian practice and military duty was not entirely negative. See Harnack 1981.

when Christianity was recognized as the official religion of the Roman Empire in the 4th century, Christians, who had not wanted to be secularized, left the world and went into the desert to live virtuous lives. He criticized the desert fathers on the basis that faith that escapes from the world rather than saves it was not right. Shortly after the war, when giving a speech on the lessons of the war, he rebuked those who had preached as if there had been no war (Clack 59).

McGiffert told the students that the reason for participating in the war was to reactivate human ideals so that "strife and war may find no place in the new civilization that shall come" (Clack 57). He used the logic of H. G. Wells' book, *The War That Will End War*, which stated that the only way to end the war was to defeat German militarism. His perception of reality was not much different from President Woodrow Wilson. McGiffert expressed his support for Wilson's policy from the beginning of the war and justified it to the Union students by using religious terminology. When asking Congress to declare war on Germany, Wilson said in his famous speech, "The world must be made safe for democracy" (United States). In relocating the term, McGiffert emphasized that democracy must be made safe for the world, not just the world for democracy. In short, McGiffert agreed with the overall US national policy up to the war and supported the League of Nations.

McGiffert defended the democratic order in the United States, which Woodrow Wilson had advocated. Moreover, he argued that it was difficult to fully embrace the ideals of democracy with traditional doctrines, especially when traditional religion focuses on individualistic salvation and is oriented toward the afterlife. A deeper reason why democracy could not be harmonized with traditional religion was that he regarded democracy as a religion. In "Democracy and Religion," he did not see the ideals of democracy as conforming to strict scientific principles. Instead, he pointed out that modern democratic ideals are romantic theories in some ways and that the Declaration of Independence, which suggests a self-evident truth that all men are equal, is comparable to a religious argument. This does not mean that democracy has a

traditional form of religion. Instead, it is regarded as faith in the people; it is based on trust in everyone. According to McGiffert, for democracy to work properly, trust should be transferred to human capability rather than to the traditional belief in God, in which the belief in supernatural miracles plays an important role.

McGiffert developed a theological methodology that could solve the issues surrounding traditional doctrines that conflicted with the ideals of democracy. It was related to the teachings that degraded the confidence in humanity and advocated supernatural external authority. McGiffert raised serious questions about the traditional, authoritatively accepted teachings. It is noteworthy from his discussion that he sought freedom from a transcendental point of view. In his article "Humanizing History," he pointed out that the humanization of history is to be freed from the powers that transcend human beings, the external principles such as natural law, and the laws left behind by modern reverberation. It was also associated with an evolutionary viewpoint, which claims that humanity is an ever-changing entity rather than a finished product (Clack 97-98).

When McGiffert became president of the UTS, his inaugural address declared that the revolution of the concept of religious authority in his generation was the most profound since the second century (Clack 36).<sup>3</sup> His theological claims on religious authority were related to his position on modernity. Regarding the birth of modernity and the formation of Christianity, he examined the Reformation, Enlightenment, Pietism, modern science, and historical criticisms of the Bible (Clack 82-84).

About the Reformation, McGiffert evaluated Luther's Reformation as an unfinished task that failed to pay attention to the evils of the day. McGiffert then admired that the foundation of democracy was established through the Enlightenment and the natural right could be defended. His position was distinguished from the theological conservatives in that the marginalization of

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<sup>3</sup>His predecessor, Philip Sharp, already had the same perception of time, and in a letter to McGiffert, he said: "we are in the midst of a theological revolution" (Clack 1).



sinfulness due to human fall greatly reduced the need for supernatural salvation. Concerning Pietism, he noted that the emphasis shifted "from dogma to life" (McGiffert, "Rise," 7). The emphasis on deeper spirituality over the orthodox system made breakthroughs. This transition laid the foundation that goes beyond traditional dogmatism, while it left undecided the issue of how to harmonize rationalism with Pietism's emphasis on emotion. McGiffert insisted on a new reconstruction of theology based on the naturalistic discourse that emerged as both modern evolutionary science and historical criticism of the Bible evolved. He insisted that "the older super-naturalism has been outgrown in many quarters, and in the place of it has arisen a naturalism which has transformed our theological thinking." (McGiffert, "Progress," 322)

He argued that the historical study of Christianity was not to see how it fits with the creeds of the past or to trace the past itself, as Orthodoxy pointed out. It was done for a holistic understanding of the present, not the past itself, and done to respond deeply to the needs of the day (Clack 84). At the root of this argument is McGiffert's historical understanding of Christianity. He pointed out that through historical research, Christianity is not one but diverse, and its variations sometimes collide with one another. He regarded his task as formulating a particular version of Christianity in response to the requests of his time rather than trying to build an ultra-historical universal Christianity.

Uoki, a student of McGiffert, was able to experience the theology of conservative and militaristic patriotism shortly after World War I when he was studying in the United States. In addition, he learned from McGiffert's theological methodology, which allowed him to encounter the modern world flexibly. While McGiffert had presented the political theology of democracy, Uoki developed the political theology that supported the emperor. At first glance, their relationship appears quite distant, as their conflicting political positions in the exploration of political and religious relations suggest. Uoki reconstructed various theological claims he had found while studying in the US

in a selective way. Before exploring the Japanese Christianity that Uoki developed, we must first consider Christianity's historical development in Japan.

#### **4. Historical Characteristics of Japanese Christianity**

The Meiji government established a new government in 1868 within the Meiji Restoration and began to build a modern centralized state 'From above.' On the one hand, the Meiji government declared the imperial unity that made the emperor *Kokutai* (national entity) of Japan as *Arahitogami* (the living god) of the world and established a unique political system called *Tennosei* (emperor system) that became a national religion. On the other hand, under the banner of 'Civilization and Enlightenment' and 'National Prosperity and Military Power,' they actively embraced the capitalist civilization of the West and were committed to building an independent country away from the crisis of colonization by Western powers (Ebisawa and Ouchi 156).

In this modernization process, Christianity faced the prejudice that had been prevalent in Japanese society for more than 200 years that Christianity was an evil religion. And it was not until this point of view was dispelled that Christian expansion would be possible. With this situation in mind, the Christian community actively asserted that it could contribute to the formation of the modern nation-state in Japan, serving as a messenger of Western culture and a leader in promoting Civilization and Enlightenment. That means, to early Christian believers, Christianity was understood to be linked to the "Service of gratitude to their own country" (Park, "Yokoi," 309-330). The idea that Christianity is indispensable in making Japan a modern country can be said to have been a bridge to modern nationalism, and in turn, nationalism played a mediating role in the acceptance of Christianity.

This tendency to value the utility of Christianity is a unique feature of Japanese Christianity. The Christian Church was guaranteed "religious freedom" through the Constitution of the Empire of Japan in 1889. However, religious freedom was limited to the private realm or the 'inner world'. In the public sphere, the

Church was willing to give up ideas beyond the framework of the state and to be trapped within it. It has been transformed into an institution that serves the nation (Park, "A Study" 166-167). Cooperation in the Imperial War was an opportunity to demonstrate that Christianity was not hostile to the nation concretely. The Christian community resolved to become loyal to the nation as subjects in the sacred war of the emperor for the glory of the empire (Tohi 124-125, 212-213).

In particular, during the so-called Fifteen Years War, the military authorities strengthened their overwhelming dominance based on the emperor's extreme deification. They controlled society with the logic of supporting the invasion of the state by making the irrational national view that only unconditional loyalty to the emperor could defend Japan.<sup>4</sup>

Central to the establishment of the emperor's fascism was the active infiltration of the people with the idea that the Japanese spirit was *Kokutai*. In 1937, the government published *Kokutai no Hongi* (Cardinal Principles of the National Entity) and *Shinmin no Michi* (Way of Subjects) in 1941 as the basic guidelines for ideological education. The state called for a thorough *Shinto* practice in which the subjects would serve the nation in all aspects of their lives centred on the emperor. State Shinto was established as the basis for the legitimacy of the invasion of the outside world, and the 'Holy war' under the name of the emperor revealed Japan's mission in world history. The discourse for *Shinkoku* (Country of God) in Japan is distinct from other countries as it dominates the spirit of the people (Miyata 374-375).

Moreover, the news of the start of the war against the United States and Britain in 1941 greatly raised the theory of "Overcoming the Modern" among the people who were in a state of mental ruin due to the continued war. The people felt a great liberation from the direct confrontation of Western imperialism, and the logic of the war that Asia should be liberated from Western modernity resonated greatly in Japanese society. This

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<sup>4</sup>Tohi Akio, a prominent church historian, once called it an "insane period of the emperor" (Tohi and Tanaka 24).

meant that Japan began to resist Western modernity, which had been pursued as a goal since the Meiji Restoration. It was a chance to drive the regression. As a result, many intellectuals who had pursued Western knowledge until then began to realize the 'incompatibility' between the West and Japan and return to Japanese nationalism. Therefore, this period was a dark age of thought that could not be allowed to deviate from state control and emperor-centred historiography (Hara 26). Japanese Christianity also failed to develop a theology against the state's control. Rather, it endeavoured to take part in the war and vowed to cooperate with the state and have absolute loyalty to the emperor (Ebisawa and Ouchi 568).

From this trend, the so-called 'Japanese Christianity (*Nihonteki kirisutokyo*)' was proposed. The concept of 'Japanese Christianity' is hardly seen as a clearly defined concept, and its logical basis is also diverse and cannot be summed up in one word. The term was already used among several Christian leaders with the uplift of Meiji nationalism. However, it is commonly used in academia to refer to biased Christianity pandering to nationalism and militarism under Shinto Ultrnationalism from the 1930s to 1945 when the Pacific War ended, which was often reviewed from a critical perspective. As Kasaihara Yoshimitsu (115) pointed out, it can be regarded as a general term of thought that seeks to connect the Japanese traditional spirit, ideology, religion, and Christianity. 'Japanese Christianity' helps us understand how Christianity wanted to take root as a foreign religion in Japanese politics, culture, and society. It provides a valid perspective on understanding how to disseminate, integrate, or transform religious discourse.

### **5. Uoki's 'Japan-style Christianity'**

Uoki Tadakazu (1892-1954) attended the Union, where he was taught by McGiffert, who provided thesis guidance. After returning to Japan, he worked as a professor in the Department of Theology at Doshisha University and mainly worked on the research of Christian Spiritual History. By the time Uoki returned from studying abroad after more than five years, the end of *Taishō*

Democracy and the internal and external crises had created a sense of crisis in the Christian community. In short, the Japanese liberal theology, which had been revered in private Christianity under the influence of Taishō liberalism, was forced to seek a new path amid extreme social unrest that could hardly be resolved by personal culture and piety (Kumano 127-128). As mentioned above, Uoki witnessed the situation in the US in the early 20th century when religious discourse for social engagement was rampant, and the Union was at its centre. Moreover, in the course of the Christian social engagement and discussions based on a nationalist perspective, McGiffert's development of the logic of the theological justification of the state-led war would have had a significant impact on Uoki.

Uoki insisted on using 'Japan-style Christianity (*Nihon kirisutokyo*)' instead of 'Japanese Christianity,' which was commonly used at that time.

When it is discussed as Japanese Christianity, it may seem that Christianity has been combined and assimilated to be Japanese, but it does not fully imply that it has grown up in our country. I use Japan-style Christianity in the sense that Christianity has grown in Japan and had a clear sense of Japanese consciousness. Although Confucianism took place in China, it developed as a Japan-style Confucianism in our country, and Buddhism, born in India, matured as a Japan-style Buddhist religion with a peculiar character in our country. In almost the same sense as this, can we say the establishment of Japan-style Christianity? (Uoki, *The Characteristics*, 4-5).

For Uoki, 'Japan-style Christianity' did not mean simply the religion painted in a social and cultural atmosphere, but Christianity based on the Japanese spirit. In short, Uoki saw the expression 'Japan-style Christianity' as more appropriate for indicating a Christianity with clear Japanese consciousness.

Uoki defines Christianity as *Seishinteki Shukyo* (spiritual religion). While Confucianism is a courtesy religion, Buddhism is a philosophical and doctrinal religion, and Christianity is centred on the experience *pneuma* (spirit). This spiritual religion makes it the first condition to be acquired by *Shokuhatsu* (contact

inspiration), which is to be enlightened by something such as the teacher's doctrine, actions, or sacred books, which in turn inspires the investigator's religious spirit. It is not limited to being transmitted by imitation, doctrine, or institutional acquisition (Uoki, *The Spiritual*, 3-4). 'Japan-style Christianity' refers to the historical phenomenon and spirits created by the Japanese people's religious spirit, influenced by the contact with Christian spirituality, and can be called the "Japanese type" of Christianity (Uoki, *The Spiritual*, 6, 25).

Thus, contact inspiration must be clearly distinguished from the mere religious *shūgō* (syncretism). Uoki stated that mixing something Japanese with Christianity and simply regarding it as 'Japan-style Christianity' is not healthy development of these ideas. He also asserted that 'Japan-style Christianity' never intended to be the creation of a new syncretized religion, nor has it admitted to the syncretized religion itself (Uoki, *The Spiritual*, 6-7). It can be understood as an attempt to create a chemical reaction by combining Japanese spiritual traditions and Christianity through the combination of his own methodologies, 'contact inspiration' and 'type' concepts.

This presupposes that Christianity has existed in historical society in many different ways (Uoki, *The Spiritual*, 10-11). Uoki emphasized the Christian spiritual history over the history of dogma and provided the following definition: Christian spiritual history is about the development and transformation of understanding revelations and experiencing the gospel in the Church, encompassing all generations from primitive churches to modern times. Many types and characteristics can be created as this method is not aiming at doctrines or theology but at understanding revelations and the gospel experience (Uoki, *The Spiritual*, 15). Thus, in Christian spiritual history, in addition to the difference in the type of thought and the characteristics of the national spirit, multiple forms occur according to various and complex influences such as politics, society, history, and culture.

On the premise that more than one ethnic group has formed a Christian type with independent characteristics over a long period of time, Uoki also took it for granted that 'Japan-style

Christianity' established by contact inspiration was also a unique type of Christianity and became the 'Japanese type' of Christianity. This is in line with McGiffert's open attitude that discussed the need for the various forms of Christianity to live up to the times, breaking away from fixed Christian understanding based on historical explorations (Clack 94-96). Accordingly, Uoki was able to claim six typologies by adding the Japanese type to the existing five (Greek, Latin, Germanic, Roman, and Anglo-Saxon) types by referring to the 'Type' theory of Reinhold Seeberg (Uoki, *The Spiritual*, 19-24). Uoki did not hide his "Expectation for the Japanese style" (Uoki, *The Spiritual*, 22), by calling for the mission of leadership to be entrusted to the Japan Christian Church as a hegemonic power within Asia.

Now it is necessary to examine Uoki's rationale for developing a Japanese type of Christianity. The characteristics of the Japanese type lay in the abundance of religious content before Christianity was passed on. This religious content refers to the maturity of the religious spirit of the Japanese people, cultivated from traditional times through religions such as Confucianism, Buddhism, and Shinto (Uoki, *The Spiritual*, 35-36).

Given that Christianity is significant in the spiritual tradition, it should not be dealt with as an object of dogma, but rather, 'contact inspiration' of the people should be considered important. And it can be said that it is an attitude to grasp the essence of the gospel through the 'type' formed by 'contact inspiration' (Uoki, *The Spiritual*, 39). Thus, 'Japan-style Christianity', which was established by synthesizing various religions in Japan, could be superior to the existing five types in the depths of the religious understanding of the gospel (Uoki, *The Spiritual*, 224). Let us consider some examples of the unique spiritual tradition and contact inspirations of 'Japan-style Christianity' that Uoki refers to.

According to Uoki, Christians in the early Meiji period were willing to use the term *Jotei* (Supreme Deity) because Christianity was contacted by Confucian spiritualism. While *Kirishitan* (Japanese Catholic Christian) were earlier influenced by Buddhism, they could never find the Japanese equivalent of *Deus*. Therefore the Meiji Christians were able to use 'Supreme Deity'

from the beginning because they advanced from Buddhism and made progress in their understanding through Confucianism. In short, Christians have acquired or experienced the 'Supreme Deity' of Confucianism at a high-level based on the Japanese spiritual tradition, not simply from convenience or imitation (Uoki, *The Spiritual*, 148-152). In the sense that the Confucian political ideal was being elevated to religious ideals, Christianity was not to abolish Confucianism but to complete it, and this conviction is an important basis in explaining the Japanese style (Uoki, *The Spiritual*, 158-159).

Uoki also pointed out that it was possible to think deeply and religiously about the Creator through having national consciousness as cultivated in Shinto. He referred to the story of the beginning of the world that is clearly conscious in *Kojiki* (Records of Ancient Matters) and *Nihon Shoki* (The Chronicles of Japan) and explained that this enabled the Japanese people to gain a concrete and realistic understanding of the Creator (Uoki, *The Spiritual*, 122-127). However, Uoki noted that the Japanese Christian Creation faith had been combined with the myths of the Yamato people, which were incomparably and more clearly unified than others, and stood on the basis of the people's consciousness as formed through Shinto. He also mentioned that this was the most important characteristic of the Japanese type and was the basic condition that can be called the Japanese type (Uoki, *The Spiritual*, 178). It is possible here to guess the intentions of his 'Japan-style Christianity' theory that was under the influence of a strong national identity at the time.

Uoki's 'Japan-style Christianity' can be characterized by the direct contact of the people's religious consciousness and is based on the richness of religious attainment and extensive synthesis within Japan's unique spiritual tradition (Uoki, *The Spiritual*, 195-196). Uoki evaluated that it is unparalleled within Christian history that a combination of Shinto, Confucianism, and Buddhism, which have such different characteristics, could be harvested within a Christian experience. He concluded that the mission of 'Japan-style Christianity' lies in the contribution of Japan's religious efforts to build the Greater East Asia Territory



through the synthesis of the East and the West (Uoki, *The Spiritual*, 226). Therefore, Uoki's method of Christian spiritual history created the Japanese style of Christianity. At the same time, it could be said that his consciousness of nationalism beyond academic boundaries was deeply ingrained. Uoki further clarified the role of 'Japan-style Christianity' in his 1943 book *The Characteristics of Japanese Christianity* during the Pacific War:

We must think of our country as we strive to build up Greater East Asia. What Japan intends is not just the interests of a nation, but the co-prosperity of the whole of Greater East Asia. The Greater East Asia Construction ... it is a sacred work aimed at the construction of a world of morality. The calling of Japan-style Christianity, or the road to service of gratitude to our country, lies in supporting and helping the sacred task of building a world of morality ... it is clear that our calling is unique and that the calling passed down in the past has intensified. It is the pride of the Japanese Christian to serve the nation with such awareness (30).

For Uoki, the mission of 'Japan-style Christianity' was to contribute to the development of the Japanese Empire, and it justified the emperor's ruling order and focused on the justification of the war carried out by the empire, which in turn corresponds to the 'court theology.' It is recognized that McGiffert, who had subversive ideas about religious authority, was behind Uoki's suggestion of 'Japan-style Christianity.' It can be said that Uoki's academic work was influenced by McGiffert's methodology in that he tried to create a Christian discourse that could live up to the times and cooperate with the contemporary ruling order through cultural biblical interpretation.

## 6. Conclusion

The Japanese metamorphosis of the Western religious knowledge discourse through Uoki Tadakazu's 'Japan-style Christianity' uniquely adapted McGiffert's ideas. Until now, studies of 'Japanese Christianity' have been commonly identified only by the internal issues of Japanese Christianity based on the strong national consciousness, namely through domestic influences.

Uoki's experiences of the Union and McGiffert's methodology were deeply related to his interest in the nation, society, and people through the Church's social participation and stance on the war. Uoki could translate the American religious knowledge discourse into the context of Japan and envision a 'Japan-style Christianity'.

Influenced by McGiffert's discussion on the need for Christianity to live up to the times, Uoki formed the Japanese type of Christianity and sought to present a strong independent view of 'Japan-style Christianity'. Yet just as Japanese Christianity chose to enter and settle within the state system, the ultimate achievement of Uoki's 'Japan-style Christianity' was providing a political religion that was combined with nationalism, a feature and limitation of the Japanese Christian theology whose most difficult task was distancing itself from the emperor system. Thus, 'Japanese Christianity,' as having been advocated under nationalism since the 1930s, may be said to have lost the aspect of Japan's 'Christianization' while the 'Japanization' of Christianity was being pushed to the extreme.<sup>5</sup> We should take Uoki's political theology as a historical lesson and consider the issue of religion and indigenization as well as the issue of exclusive nationalism and global peace more seriously.

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<sup>5</sup>Mikio Sumiya pointed out that this characteristic of Japanese Christianity was subordinate to the nationalist theory of sovereignty and was embraced by the Emperor system, losing sharp and vivid criticism(Sumiya, 137-138).

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