

Article

Just War and Anti-War: Two Stances of the Japanese Methodist Church toward the Russo-Japanese War

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Abstract: If the Christian Church prioritizes its existence and expansion, it will turn to the entity that approves of it and protects it. When the Modern Japanese emperor's state approached the church as his grace, the Japanese Christian Church showed its gratitude and pledged its allegiance to the emperor. In the Sino-Japanese War, which assisted modern Japan in becoming an imperialist country, the Japanese Christian community was in favor of a war under the pretext of a "righteous war" to maintain a lasting peace in the East. However, during the Russo-Japanese War, when most of the Christians were actively in favor of the war, there were a few anti-war voices among small groups of Christians that had not been heard during the Sino-Japanese War. There was a tension that could not be easily resolved in the Japanese Christian Church. In particular, *Gokyō*, a Christian journal published by the Japanese Methodist Church, one of the major Protestant denominations, simultaneously presented two interesting and conflicting stances regarding the Russo-Japanese War (just war vs. anti-war). In this paper, we examine the diverging perspectives presented in *Gokyō* and explore various patterns of religion-war relations. Through this, we can see an example of two opposing arguments of just war and anti-war that coexisted and competed on the grounds of Christianity.

Keywords: just war; anti-war; Japanese Methodist Church; Shiraishi Kinoshige; *Gokyō*; Russo-Japanese War



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1. Introduction

Throughout the Meiji Restoration (明治維新 *Meiji Ishin*) in 1868, Japan began to develop a strong centralized state arranged around the emperor. During this process, the Meiji government established a unique political system in which support for the emperor was considered a state religion. This was achieved by proclaiming the unity of religions and having an emperor-god (現人神 *Arahitogami*), who appeared in the form of a person from the unbroken imperial line (万世一系 *Banseyiyikkei*), run the state (Ebisawa 1980, p. 156). The Meiji government simultaneously and proactively introduced the West's capitalist civilization under the banners of "civilization and enlightenment", and "nation wealth and military power." The Meiji government believed that to be recognized as a member of the international society, the independence and wealth of sovereign nations should be realized through total westernization (Yamamuro 2005, p. 7).

Contrastingly, the ruling class was greatly threatened by Christianity, as it was the spiritual foundation of the Western powers; therefore, they continued to employ the "Anti-Kirishitan Surveillance" policy (宗門改制度 *Shūmonaratameseido*) that had been sustained since the Edo period (江戸時代 *Edo Jidai*) (Park 2002, p. 131). This policy, however, became a pretext in the process of negotiating the revisions of unequal treaties with Western countries. However, these revisions were ultimately rejected. Therefore, the Meiji government abolished the anti-Christian policy in February 1873 and Christianity was tolerated. In other words, the repeal of the Anti-Christianity policy was only a tacit acceptance of Christianity

for foreign policy reasons, not because the deep-rooted antipathy underlying the Christian ban had been eliminated (Abe 1978, p. 132).

Christianity, as a foreign religion that was introduced under such circumstances, had the important goal of dispelling the prejudice and distorted image of Christianity as a “deviant religion” (邪教 *Jakyō*). Therefore, Christian groups actively self-promoted Christianity as the courier and liaison of the civilized European and American cultures. Indeed, it is well known that Christians had a great influence on morality, ideology, culture, and society through education and social work (Ōhama 1979, p. 1). This tendency to place value only on the “effectiveness” of Christianity is a unique attribute of the Japanese Christian Church. If the imperial state approved of their existence, Christians in Japan sacrificed the idea of thinking beyond the framework of the state, thereby making it a religion and institution that served the state (Park 2013, p. 166–67). It is well known that wars provide an opportunity to unite people; and the Japanese Christian Church demonstrated its loyalty to the country through active cooperation in war. This propelled the process of the modern reformation of the emperor-centered national system in Japan.

In the Sino-Japanese War, which assisted modern Japan in becoming an imperialist country, the Japanese Christian community was in favor of a war under the pretext of a “righteous war (義戦 *Gisen*)” to maintain a lasting peace in the East. By cooperating with the war, the Christian community sought to gain Japanese citizenship. They asserted that Christianity was not an anti-national religion but rather beneficial and useful to the state and country (Park 2014, p. 251). In particular, the theory of social evolution was quickly accepted in modern Japan. It promoted a political principle that prioritized power or violence over morality. Those influenced by this theory did not expect any moral or ethical responsibility from a powerful nation that dominated or destroyed a weaker nation. They also did not make moral appeals to the nation or the people based on a love for humankind. They believed that an expansion for victory was the only advantage for the nation or people. This was due to their belief that a nation and its people are a passive entity that must obey the law of natural selection (Chang 2006, p. 95).

The Japanese Christian Church actively resonated with this logic and strongly responded to the movement of Japanese expansionism. The sense of pride as a “chosen people” cultivated by the emperor’s state played a major role in the participation in the forcible transformation of inferior Asian countries into the emperor’s own. This was based on the Meiji state’s “expansionism”, which justified the colonization of “inferior Asia” into becoming a part of “civilized Japan.” The attitude and cooperation of many of the Japanese Christian ministers and lay members toward the Russo-Japanese War were not so different from those of the Sino-Japanese War. Soon after the outbreak of war, a group of religious leaders—which included Ebina Danjō (海老名弾正), Kozaki Hiromichi (小崎弘道), Ibuka Kajinosuke (井深梶之助), and Honda Yōitsu (本多庸一)—issued a formal declaration pledging their common commitment to advancing humanitarian principles and justice (Anderson 2014, p. 70). Japanese Christian leaders could preach Christianity and loyalty to the nation in the same breath (Davidaan 1998, p. 108). They declared that the Russo-Japanese War was not a religious or racial conflict, but a war for peace and civilization. In 1905, the leadership of Japanese Christianity participated in the “World Student Christian Youth League Congress” and the “World Congress of the Universal Christian Youth Federation” held in France, the Netherlands, and other countries, making the rounds while defending the legitimacy of the Russo-Japanese War. Christian leaders of the time not only approached the war with a defensive attitude, but also actively recognized the significance of the war and advocated it (Dohi 1980, pp. 212–13). Japanese Christians had worked hard to integrate Christianity into national identity and to infuse Christianity with Japan’s cultural uniqueness (Davidaan 1998, p. 128).¹

However, during the Russo-Japanese War, when most of the Christians were actively in favor of the war, there were a few anti-war voices among a small group of Christians that had not been heard during the Sino-Japanese War. For example, during the Sino-Japanese War, Uchimura Kanzō (内村鑑三), the prominent Christian intellectual, wrote

“JUSTIFICATION FOR THE KOREAN WAR” and claimed that this was a righteous war to defend Korea (Uchimura 1894, pp. 38–48). But when the cost of that war had become clear and some began to question Japan’s Korean policy and the misery of the people, attitudes toward warfare underwent a perceptible shift. He actively advocated an anti-war theory (Uchimura 1903, pp. 296–97). The anti-war advocates used the Bible to propagate the abolition of a war. They asserted that a Christian’s mission is to believe in God’s providence and to proclaim peace through the gospel, as true peace is realized by God’s power. This produced a tension that could not be easily resolved in the Japanese Christian Church: the conflict between a just war argument (主戦論 *Shusenron*) and an anti-war argument (非戦論 *Hisenron*). In particular, *Gokyō* (護教, Apologetics), a Christian journal published by the Japanese Methodist Church (日本メソジスト教会 *Nihon Mesojisuto kyōkai*), one of the major Protestant denominations, simultaneously presented two interesting and conflicting stances regarding the Russo-Japanese War (just war vs. anti-war).

It can be said that the research on Japanese Christianity and war so far has been conducted separately in the opposition structure of the war cooperation of the mainstream of the Japanese Christian church and the arguments of a few anti-war advocates. In this study, we focus on the part *Gokyō* played when it dared to present two stances at the same time, despite the fact that the denomination’s stance was that the war was just. We reflect on the conflict between the specificity and the universality of this religion in modern Japan through this.

2. *Gokyō* and Arguments Regarding Waging a War

When the Russo-Japanese War commenced in February 1904, most of the Japanese Christians had already shared a just war argument and were progressing in a more cooperative way than during the Sino-Japanese War. This affirmed the logic of self-defense and emphasized that waging a war was not contradictory to Christianity (Yamaguchi 1988, p. 115). On 13 February 1904, *Gokyō* (No. 655), which was the official journal of the Japanese Methodist Church, published an article announcing the beginning of the Russo-Japanese War under the title “The Beginning of War”:

Although peace is what we naturally desire, it does not necessarily mean the absence of any occurrences. To bring a true peace, some wars are unavoidable . . . In the process of progressing civilization, war is indeed the fate of heaven. (Nameless 1904a, p. 1)

They also argued that indiscriminately condemning war is a sign of confusing a means with an end; and considering the Christian mission to bring peace to the land, it is nothing but an impracticable theory. This is the same as the logic of the Western Empires that justified the war for “civilization and enlightenment”. Not only that, as early as 1894, a repeated argument was used to perpetrate and affirm the Sino-Japanese War by stating that Japan had a calling (天職 *Tenshoku*) to awaken an ignorant and barbaric nation called China (Ogawara 2010, pp. 115–17). The same argument was used for the Russo-Japanese War:

Russia is the enemy of peace and civilization. The culture of the land has not blossomed; the customs are not appropriate; the people are imbecilic and comparable to dogs and horses; and the officials are cunning and not different from a pack of wolves. (Nameless 1904a, p. 1)

Therefore, they stated that they must fight with the spirit of their fingers to the bone because this war is a battle between civilization and barbarism, and benevolence and tyranny; further, it was inevitable for future world peace and civilization. Honda Yōitsu, who was a prominent leader of the Methodist Church, wrote in *Seiroron* (征露論, Argument on conquering Russia) that fighting Russia is actually a way to save it. He also visited many places in Korea, emphasizing that it was a “righteous war” that ensured Japan’s independence and the neighboring countries’ safety and development. In addition, all victory prayer meetings were held in churches throughout the Japan, and offerings were made (Ogawara 2010, pp. 177–78).

Two months later, on 9 April 1904, the article “My Anti-war Argument” by Shiraishi Kinoshige (白石喜之助) in the editorial column of *Gokyō* (No. 663) stood out. As mentioned earlier, the mainstream Christian community’s official position supported the waging of the war, except for a few anti-war advocates at the time. Thus, it is unclear as to how we should understand this article published by the mainstream denomination, the Methodist Church. Particularly noteworthy is the placement of this article. The editor of *Gokyō* published Shiraishi’s article between the two essays that criticized the anti-war argument, titled “Beware of the people who advocate anti-war argument” on the previous page, and “A message from a soldier to his children at home” on the following page. “Beware of the people who advocate anti-war argument” was probably written by Takagi Mizutarō (高木 壬太郎), who was the publisher and editor of *Gokyō*. The article began as follows:

In the editorial section of this journal, there is an article called “My Anti-war Argument” by Mr. Shiraishi Kinoshige. We are not narrow-minded people, who refuse to publish the article simply because we have different views. We should consider differing opinions as lessons from others. Honestly, I recommend that our readers take a look at the editorial. (Nameless 1904b, p. 2)

Even though it seems that he is demonstrating a fair stance, the key of this writing is to present a defense of his own position against those who advocate the anti-war argument. Takagi further wrote:

In reference to those who do not chant a slogan against waging a war along with them, they (anti-war advocates; by the excerptor) label them as a group of instigators in favor of a war. I don’t know if it’s because of our limited knowledge, but I haven’t yet heard that there is even one of our Christian brothers or sisters in favor of the war or instigating the war. Even the Diplomacy Book published by the Minister of Foreign Affairs clearly shows that our government and our people have always valued peace from the beginning, and that the initiation of this war was in fact inevitable. Why in the world would the pioneers of the Christian Church recklessly approve of and start a war? (Nameless 1904b, p. 2)

Nevertheless, the just war advocates claimed to be deeply lamenting this misfortune by saying “a prayer hoping that God will turn the demise into a blessing” (Nameless 1904b, p. 2) in a situation where war was unavoidable due to the failure of a diplomatic negotiation. In doing so, they argued that they differed from the anti-war advocates who disapproved of war under any circumstance. However, they indicated that they reluctantly approved of the war for ultimate peace. Takagi argued:

Still, they indiscriminately regard us as people who support and initiate a war. Furthermore, they even label us as pro-war advocates. This is an absurd conspiracy. Moreover, they criticize anyone who concedes to this war as person who appeases the world, and they even mock them by calling them flattering religionists. . . . That’s a great discourtesy. (Nameless 1904b, p. 2)

As they vented about the anti-war advocates, who were only a minority at the time, it appeared as though they were defending the legitimate pro-war argument that had been in great jeopardy. They also criticized the anti-war advocates’ argument as follows:

The basis of the anti-war argument that they have proposed is very weak. Besides, no one has the authority to condemn the full-scale warfare in the East. They say that waging a war is a crime; Christianity is a religion that loves even the enemy; and we must follow the way of absolute non-resistance that the saints and martyrs in the past adopted. If such a simple argument can deal with real world problems, there will be no use for diplomacy. Neither morality nor religion will be necessary . . . Ideally, we desire peace. However, peace cannot be established by peace alone. If anyone tries to disturb the peace, we must dislodge the person for the sake of peace. (Nameless 1904b, p. 2)

Takagi argued that even Jesus Christ himself, who is regarded as the exclusive model of absolute non-resistance by the anti-war advocates, had rebuked hypocritical scribes and Pharisees and driven out merchants from the temple. Using this as an example, he justified righteous anger. Takagi as the publisher and editor of *Gokyō* must have been conscious of the attitude of the mainstream Christian group at the time; however, his manner of presenting the just war argument was to view the biblical attitude toward the use of violence as relative and situational. He also claimed, “The law of nature given by God endorses war, and everything evolves and develops only through war.” Citing the American Revolutionary War, which brought about independence, and the Civil War, which led to the abolition of slavery, he emphasized, “The human history reveals that war often produced good outcomes, helping the progress of mankind, and leading the civilization of the world” (Nameless 1904b, p. 3). Based on this reasoning, he asserted that it is inevitable to wage war against Russia for civilization and benevolence as Russia threatened world peace by violating justice and benevolence. He even retorted that the anti-war argument, based on a simple idealism, was a sign of a misunderstanding of the spirit of the Bible. Finally, he concluded that mainstream Christians would not participate in this vain discussion. Takagi provided the following argument:

Even if we take a step back and agree that war is an absolute crime, how can we prevent the Russo-Japanese War we are facing today? Do you believe that this war can be easily prevented by anti-war arguments supported with such a simple and weak basis? If our people listen to them and try to stop the war, what will the Russian savages do? They already invaded the Qing Dynasty and Korea with violence, and now trying to take Japan. Should we still adopt absolute non-resistance and hand over this land and these people to that barbarian Russia? . . . Alas, now is not the time for a vain discussion. Nonetheless, they are fruitlessly shouting anti-war slogans and not lifting a finger to save the country from this national crisis. Thus, it is hard for us to agree with them. We advise that they set aside their useless discussion and share their smallest effort to minimize the misery of this war for the sake of the mankind and the country. (Nameless 1904b, p. 3)

It is speculated that the above article may have been written after the “My Anti-war Argument” was written. By placing this article before “My Anti-war Argument” in the journal, the editor of *Gokyō* attempted to unite the people’s opinions within the Methodist Church. He also attempted to use this as an opportunity to declare their official stance of a “just war argument” for their cooperation in the war.

3. “My Anti-War Argument”

Hereafter, we will review Shiraishi’s “My Anti-war Argument”, which caused controversy. His article began with the following sentence:

Do not resist an evil person (Matthew 5:38) . . . All those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword (Mathew 26:53) . . . Does Christ condone war, or does he not? Does Christianity endorse war, or does it not? (Shiraishi 1904a, p. 4)

Shiraishi first quoted two verses from the Bible (Matthew 5:38 and Mathew 26:53) and asked whether Christianity should endorse war. Thereafter, he answered his own question:

I believe that war is a crime, and that it is the gravest sin of all sins. Soldiers on both sides become enemies, wielding weapons at each other to slaughter, and harm each other with guns. It is like wild dogs and wolves showing hostility, growling, and mauling each other. Who says war is not a crime? Isn’t Christianity the religion of compassion? Isn’t it a religion that teaches how to love the enemy? Remember Christ, the head of the Christian Church, who traveled everywhere, constantly realizing the ideal of revering God and loving neighbors (敬天愛人). Despite having been betrayed many times by others, he cried out of compassion for the sins of all people and earnestly prayed to the point that it was painful. If you understand that the Lamb without blemish, who was “scorned”, “spat on”,

“stripped naked”, and “crucified”, still said, “Father, forgive them, they do not know what they are doing” (Matthew 27, Luke 23); then, there was no room for war in the heart of Christ. (Shiraishi 1904a, pp. 4–5)

Shiraishi firmly concluded that war is a crime and the gravest sin of all sins before God. He also promulgated that it is incompatible with Christ’s teaching of fearing God and loving others. Christ prayed for those who crucified him even as he was being crucified to death—this is the unwavering spirit of peace. Christ is great for this very reason, and this is also the reason why he has been winning the veneration of followers across time and space for the past 2000 years. Shiraishi praised those who had lived up to this spirit and died as martyrs. He stated that the true path to holiness is through disarming the body and the mind, which is the mystery of Christianity.

The article now reviews how Shiraishi perceived the pro-war advocates. He interpreted the following two passages from the Bible that pro-war advocates used to defend their stance:

The critics argue, “Did Christ not say, ‘Sell your cloak and buy a sword’ (Luke 22:36), as he faced the anguish of Gethsemane? If this is not proof that he acknowledges the unending nature of warfare, what else could it mean?” However, according to recent scholarly discoveries, this particular verse was inserted by Luke to acknowledge Peter’s action—cutting off the ear of a servant of the high priest (Luke 22:50)—and it is not what Christ actually said. Isn’t this why the other three Gospels did not record anything even similar to this? (Shiraishi 1904a, p. 5)

He highlighted that Christ, rather, sternly warned, “Put your sword back in its place, for all who draw the sword will die by the sword (Mathew 26:52).” Regarding the other Bible reference, he argued as follows:

Do not assume that I have come to bring peace on earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. A man’s enemies will be the members of his own household (Mathew 10: 34–36; Luke 12: 49–51) ². What do these verses teach us? This passage merely reveals the fact that Christ’s pacifism is persecuted by secular militantism. (Shiraishi 1904a, p. 5)

According to Shiraishi, this passage does not mean that Christians would like to create a controversy itself. Instead, this passage is prophesying that Christian pacifism would not be accepted in this bloodthirsty world, which is like a ferocious beast; rather, it will be sacrificed by people with cruel hearts. Therefore, to the just war advocates, who were Christians and yet distorted the meaning of the Bible based on self-centered interpretation, Shiraishi advised that “those who read the Bible must understand the spirit of Christ and make a sincere effort to understand the essence of the doctrine” (Shiraishi 1904a, p. 5). Shiraishi admonished them to read the Bible and make an effort to understand the context and the essence of the doctrine.” He also sincerely wished that they would apply their understanding to all the Bible’s chapters to avoid any misunderstanding.

Incidentally, the part that is noteworthy is where Shiraishi presents the “ideal” from a Christian perspective to the Christians who were pro-war and critical of the anti-war argument.

There are some Christians who call themselves pro-war advocates. They shout out the just war argument, saying “anti-war advocates confuse the ideal with the reality.” They also babble on saying that “war is inevitable” and that the “anti-war argument is ideally true, but in practice it is a foolish opinion that does not match reality.” (However—inserted by the excerpter) The ideal differs from the reality. The ideal is not the reality, and the reality is not the ideal. Isn’t this the reason why we should try not to go against our ideals even under a scary and frightening situation? Yes, indeed. As the gap between the reality and the ideal grows, we need to be more faithful to the ideal. (Shiraishi 1904a, p. 6)

Regarding the claim that “anti-war advocates confuse the ideal with the reality”, Shiraishi argued that the ideal and the reality are undoubtedly different; and that the further away the current circumstance is from the ideal, the more effort we should ascribe to being faithful to the ideal. Therefore, it is enquired as to what “the ideal” means to Shiraishi:

Come to think of it, isn't the Lord's prayer—asking for “God's kingdom to come, and His will to be done on earth as it is in heaven”—what Christians pray to Heavenly Father day and night? If anyone regards this as the ideal and endorses hatred and conflict in real life, who can consider this person as a follower of Christ? (Shiraishi 1904a, p. 6)

In Shiraishi's mind, the ideal was a sacred will to be realized by God that had not yet been realized on earth as it had been realized in heaven. In other words, Christians can reach the ideal by doing what is right as a member of their religion. Subsequently, he was asking a rhetorical question of whether it is justifiable to have the attitude of succumbing to the reality by separating the ideal from the reality, just as the pro-war advocates do in life.

We cannot avoid the force of the occurrence of a war when a fight breaks out at a time like this, when the standard of morality around the globe is extremely low. Even if we cannot avoid it, whom can we blame for war if we believe it is an evil crime? Shouldn't we strongly protest the war and do our best to stop it as we already know that it is a crime? If there are people who support and initiate a war justifying that it is inevitable, even though they know that a war is a crime, we cannot help but to say that the Christian ideal has fallen below the horizon. (Shiraishi 1904a, p. 6)

Shiraishi harshly criticized the pro-war advocates who had separated Christianity from the real-world problems and demanded from them an attitude that embraced the ideal and reality from a religious perspective.

4. Calling in Christianity

As is widely known, absolute pacifism was the basic attitude of Christians since the beginning of Christianity until the period of Roman prosecution. Thus, prior to the Edict of Milan (313), Christians rarely went to war or became professional soldiers. The plausible reasons for this include several facts. First, Christians were under the strong influence of the belief that the end-time was imminent. Christians also refused to join the Roman army because of its association with worshiping the emperor. Moreover, and more directly, there was a common understanding that a direct involvement in the war was against Jesus' teachings (Kohara 2002, p. 17). Therefore, the principles of action, such as absolute peace and anti-war, were based on the teachings of Jesus on love in the Bible. However, the challenge was that the just war argument advocates also used the Bible as the basis for their logic. In this sense, it is certain that the Bible does not provide the logic to reach a unified conclusion when determining a stance toward a war.

In the last section of “My Anti-war Argument”, Shiraishi was more direct and harsher than ever regarding his criticism of mainstream Christian claims of war cooperation:

Do not say that war is a means of bringing about lasting peace. The end does not acquit the means. Behold, a person who steals for charity is not exempt from the legal ramification. War is evil. Is this not the reason God called it good to save people through the foolishness of evangelism, instead of using any militant means in performing the great works of world salvation? Brothers and sisters in the church, why don't you think twice? It appears to me that the imminent clouds of war in the Far East are driving people insane, evoking hostility, and submerging them in an anthem of manslaughter. Their throats are like sinking tombs, and their feet are eager to shed blood. This will be the crisis of morality that we should fear as people of this nation. In this vein, the Christian calling is to speak of brotherhood, dispel hostility, appeal to compassion, and minimize

any poisonous cruelty. Nevertheless, the leaders of the Church are so deceived and secularized that they praise war and lead this moral crisis into further peril. I am yet to hear of anyone advocating to reprimand them. Who will join me in cleansing the haughty muddy stream of that church? (Shiraishi 1904a, p. 6)

As mentioned in the article “The Beginning of War” in *Gokyō* (No. 655), it is indicated that mainstream Christians supported the just war argument based on the “progress through war.” On the premise of a firm stance against the war as above, however, Shiraishi argued that war is not a means for humankind to progress but that it generates more wars and destroys humanity by inciting “competitionism.” He also argued that the only way for humankind to truly progress and develop is found in Christ’s spirit of love for other people (愛人 *Aijin*, 愛他 *Aita*). Shiraishi’s articles published in other magazines during this time also show that he was pleading with people to focus on problems stemming from competition, such as the socially underprivileged people. Thereafter, he urged people to cultivate the unique qualities of humanity, such as love, gentleness, and compassion. This is opposed to promoting the survivalist society full of dissension and competition.

Human progress must be anchored on cooperative altruism. Nevertheless, many people in the world mistakenly think that competition is a pre-requisite for human progress. Then, I ought to expound the consequences of competitionism and argue that it is wrong. No one can refute that the deep-seated nature of competition is lust and greed. Due to its greedy nature, competition brought about condemnable oppression and tyranny in the modern world . . . It is also competitionism that destroys what religion and ethics are trying to build. Competitionism truly violates the principle of love and renounces humanity for material wealth; inducing servility, hatred, trickery, and violence. It produces all sorts of unkindness and injustice among human beings and brings about evils; such as cruelty, persecution, drunkenness, and extortion. (Shiraishi 1904b, p. 34)

During this period, “the theory social evolution”, which inculcates the concept of competition, was prevalent in Japan. This competitiveness had a great influence on the fundamentals of the just war argument discussed above. In response to this, Shiraishi saw the essence of competition as greed and obstinacy and defined it as something that produces increased harm among people by destroying what religion and ethics seek to build. Therefore, he attempted to refute the logic of the main argument that war, as the ultimate evil peak of such competitionism, leads to the progress of mankind.

Shiraishi concluded “My Anti-war Argument” as follows:

Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Lord, let us all reach the Christ’s love for others (愛人主義 *Aijinshugi*)—Christianity- and contemplate the outcome. Then, you will find no room for war. (Shiraishi 1904a, p. 6)

This must have been a painful confession for Shiraishi, a Christian, as he was confronted with the reality that many Christians, who should have been advocating against the evils of war by practicing love for others through Christ, were rather engaged in war-affirming propaganda.

5. Conclusions

Many of the Japanese Christians interpreted their moral obligation to serve the country as a divine mission from a biblical perspective. They actively participated in justifying the nation’s warfare. In this sense, the Christian churches of Japan had to prepare a logic that affirmed aggression and supported war. When we examined the two arguments published in *Gokyō* by the Japanese Methodist Church, the Japanese Church had two opposing stances based on the Bible: just war and anti-war. Therefore, mainstream Christians applied the logic that a country’s warfare does not contradict the Christian faith under the pretext of a “righteous war.” However, the anti-war argument was presented on the logic of realizing the universal ideal of Christianity under a certain and special circumstance from the perspective of expanding God’s kingdom as the ultimate form of pacifism.

If the Christian Church prioritizes its existence and expansion, it will turn to the entity that approves of it and protects it. When the emperor's state approached the church as the beneficiary of his grace, the Japanese Christian Church showed its gratitude and pledged its allegiance to the emperor. As a result, Christianity in Japan had been thoroughly "Japanized", although Japan had not been "Christianized" (Davidaan 1998, p. 161). As Paul Tillich stated, however, protestant principles imply a holiness and personal protest that resists absolute claims made in a relative reality. This applies if the claim was made by the Protestant Church (Tillich 1957, pp. v–xvi). From such an attitude, we can obtain a critical perspective that no country or organization can become as absolute as God.

In this sense, while the mainstream of the Japanese Christian church was promoting the just war argument through cooperation and assimilation with the state, the arguments of a few anti-war advocates were relativizing the authority of the state and advocating the essence of Christian peace, which included human freedom, equality, and the elimination of oppression and exploitation. Today, we can see religions worldwide serving the state and obeying authorities to maintain and expand their religious organizations, regardless of size. We should pay attention to the argument that the largest scale of violence and non-violence can come from religion (Kang 2003, pp. 74–78). In the case of *Gokyoō*, by posting these two discussions in one space, it showed an interesting strategy in that it induced the reader to make a voluntary choice. This can be said to be a good example of the limitations of Meiji Japanese Christianity, which insisted on choosing the national justice when the national justice and the Christian justice did not match.³

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Notes

- ¹ On the other hand, Henning's study, which focused on the role played by Japanese Christianity in the process of accepting Western civilization in Japan, which was neither a Christian nor a white country, can also be referred to. However, it cannot but be pointed out that the civilization accepted by Japan did not necessarily include only positive elements; rather, negative elements such as imperialism and competition were also actively accepted as elements of a modern civilization. This study can be said to be a case study on the aspect of Japanese Christians who were accepting Christianity as the incarnation of Western civilization or more actively transforming it (Henning 2000).
- ² Mathew 10: 34–36: Don't think that I came to bring peace to the earth! I came to bring trouble, not peace. I came to turn sons against their fathers, daughters against their mothers, and daughters-in-law against their mothers-in-law. Your worst enemies will be in your own family (CEV). Luke 12: 49–51: I came to set fire to the earth, and I wish it were already on fire! I am going to be put to a hard test. And I will have to suffer a lot of pain until it is over. Do you think that I came to bring peace to earth? No indeed! I came to make people choose sides (CEV).
- ³ Meanwhile, related to the issue of religious violence, Mikael Adolphson's article is also interesting, examining a case of religious violence through incidents involving Buddhist temples in the premodern Japanese context (Adolphson 2018, p. 149).

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