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Kanzo Uchimura's "Insistence on Purity"

Kei SASAKI

Abstract: A representative Christian thinker mainly in the Meiji (明治, 1868–1912) and Taisho (大正, 1912–1926) eras of Japan, Kanzo Uchimura (内村鑑三, 1861–1930) wrote so many articles and essays that his Complete Works consist of 40 volumes, through which we can know his religious or Christian thought.

He didn't write much about "purity" itself thematically. But in my theory, in the foundation of his thought, what I call his "insistence on purity" does exist. Throughout the main part of my essay, I will demonstrate that this "insistence on purity" is pervasive, or even to say, ubiquitous in his entire works, by citing his writings which were originally written in English and also by introducing his other writings with my own translations.

In my demonstration, we find, in Uchimura's huge body of writings, not only that the word "purity" itself and related words are frequent, but also that his particular way of thinking about some of the topics on his mind has a very close connection with "purity." At the same time we recognize that a few Japanese characters, namely, "清," "潔," and "聖," have much importance for him. These three characters have slightly different meanings, all of which are related to the concept "purity" and have the same Japanese sound "Kiyo-." This last linguistic fact, I think, is the most interesting to consider in the development of Uchimura's thought.

Uchimura's "insistence on purity," which will be confirmed in my essay, also gives us a starting place to analyze the very unique aspects of his Christian thought. In my opinion, he asserted fiercely that Christianity should be "pure" in a sense. But his Christianity, at least for me, still looks like an amalgamation influenced by traditional Japanese religious, Confucian and even Shintoist, thought. The most essential question is whether Uchimura's Christianity itself is really "pure."

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Introduction

Kanzo Uchimura (内村鑑三, 1861–1930), a representative Christian thinker, mainly in the Meiji (明治, 1868–1912) and Taisho (大正, 1912–1926) eras of Japan, didn't write much about "purity" itself thematically. This means that we cannot find so many articles nor papers of his, having the word "purity" in the titles or as part of them.¹ But I think that, in the fundamentals

of his thought, what I call his “insistence on purity” does exist. In this essay, I want to demonstrate the existence of this “insistence on purity” in many of his writings which argue various topics, even ones which don’t have any direct literal connections with the word “purity.”

The quantity of his writings is enormous,² so I could be open to criticism that my way of choosing the articles and papers is arbitrary. But I could also be as daring as to say that, in every writing of his, we can find this “insistence on purity” just because it is so prevailing, which I would like to show to a persuasive degree in this paper.

Of course I am fully aware of some changes or developments in his thinking.³ So, in the following main part of this essay, I will take up some of Uchimura’s articles and papers, in a roughly chronological order, in which we see the word “purity” itself and other related words, for example “pure,” “holy,” and “holiness.” Then in connection with those I will mention some of his biographical events.

At the same time, I will discuss, not only the word “purity” itself written directly by Uchimura, but also his fundamental concepts on some important topics for him, for example, the Christian church and Christ himself as redeemer. This will show that even in many other writings, where he doesn’t use the word “pure/purity” itself, we can detect what I call his “insistence on purity.” And I will confirm that we can find many of his descriptions about “purity” in all periods of his life as a writer and that his idea of “purity” is consistent regardless of the changes or developments mentioned above.

After that I will show that my thesis is sound, which will assert, not only that his “insistence on purity” is actually prevailing, but if you forgive me for using a popular word, ubiquitous in his writings, but also that its ubiquitous nature suggests his very unique Christian thought.

1. “Purity” in Kanzo Uchimura’s Younger Age⁴

First, I would like to look at Uchimura’s first book, *How I Became a Christian*,⁵ which was originally written in English and so made him famous not only in Japan but also in some Western countries at that time.⁶ The book is a kind of autobiography, which depicts his adolescence, especially his encounter with Christianity, his real conversion to it, and his experiences in the United States where he went, as it were, in order to deepen his Christian faith. In some parts of the book he uses the word “purity.”

In Chapter 10, which is his conclusion titled “The Net Impression of Christendom. — Return Home” and gives his unreserved opinion about Western Christian societies to their own people, he writes:

“In forming any right estimate of Christendom, it is essential for us first of all to make a rigid distinction between Christianity *pure and simple*, and Christianity garnished and dogmatized by its professors.”⁷

It is evident that he tries to put some distinctions between “pure” and “im-pure” Christendom. Shortly after this sentence in the same chapter, he also writes the following:

"We say Christianity is Truth. . . . We come to know it (Truth) only by keeping it. Logic-chopping, hair-splitting, and wire-drawing only make it less true. Truth is there unmistakable, majestic; and we have but to go there from ourselves, and not call it to us."⁸

Approximately 10 years after writing this book, very interestingly, he wrote the following sentence in an essay titled "The Special Character of Truth," which appeared in his famous self-published journal *Seisyo no Kenkyu*.⁹

"Truth is what stands bare, but is *pure* ("清い = Kiyoi") and also deep, which everyone could see if they had *pure* ("清き = Kiyoki") hearts."¹⁰

We, therefore, can understand that, for Uchimura, Christianity is Truth as far as it is pure, that is to say, it has "purity." The book, *How I Became a Christian*, was written in the style that the author, Uchimura himself, adds some comments and sentences using his own diary, which he wrote when he stayed in the United States during his youth.¹¹ So between his diary excerpts and the other added comments, or even between chapters,¹² we can feel a little different mood and tone of the author. But even in the part of his diary, which was cited in the very attractive chapter describing a kind of his deeper conversion, we can find some of his references to "purity":

"(1886) March 8. — Very important day in my life. . . . Christ paying all my debts, can bring me back to the *purity and innocence* of the first man before the Fall."¹³

"(1887) Feb. 5. — Clear, cold. — There are cold days in spiritual world too. . . . With all effort on our part, we are yet miserable sinners. There must come a Help supernatural to make us *pure and holy*."¹⁴

"(1887) April 15. — Morning Prayer: . . . Obedience, faithfulness, *purity* come only from Thee, and I cannot produce them by the most strenuous efforts of mine. . . . I am unclean; I pray *Thee* to *cleanse* me. . . . Behold my foulness, and *cleanse* Thou me from my guiltiness. Amen."¹⁵

So we can conclude that there is no doubt that the word "purity" (and some related words like pure, innocence, clean(se), etc.) had already become a very important part of Uchimura's vocabulary even from his very early days.

Uchimura took several educational posts when he came back to Japan after staying in the States for three and a half years, but at each post, he made some trouble, one time with foreign missionaries and another time with the Japanese government. Especially with the latter problem, which is called the "Hukei Jiken" (lése majeste)¹⁶ in 1889, Uchimura's social status was so seriously damaged that he had to change the course of his life at a basic level. He should have been an official in the "Meiji Seihu (Japanese national government at that time)" but, in reality, this incident forced him live by his pen only. During this period, he wrote some important books including *How I Became a Christian*. In those books some sentences about "purity" are found here and there. For example, the book, *Kyuanroku*,¹⁷ written in 1893, which describes how

Uchimura sought to be free from sin and how that is possible only with faith that Christ is the redeemer, begins with this sentence:

“Men should not commit a sin but cannot avoid it, he has the duty and power to be *pure* (“清浄=Seijo”) but cannot be, . . .”¹⁸

So I guess that his thinking about “purity” still lies at the base of the discourses in the books of this period.

And in the other his representative work originally written in English during the same period, *Japan and the Japanese*, Uchimura writes:

“Intense devotion of man to man, — that is what joined us (Japanese) together thus far, till Benthamism and other Western isms has introduced a principle of dissolution among us. Hence that idea of Loyalty among us, which is something very much more than what it means among other peoples. It is really *the sincerest Manworship*, — a phenomenon not very common in other countries.”¹⁹

In these sentences we can see that Uchimura had already felt some indignation over the Western “isms” and the contemporary Japanese people who were being contaminated by them at that time. But we have to pay much attention to the word “Loyalty,” which is probably his translation of the Japanese character “忠=Chu,”²⁰ because, from the very beginning of his writings, he had emphasized this word “Loyalty=忠” as one of the fundamental Japanese virtues from its very early times. In the article, “Moral Traits of the Yamato-Damashii (“Spirit of Japan”),” which was originally written in English during his stay in the States (1886, when he was only 26 years old) and, in the huge volumes of his entire writings, is one of his earliest ideological writings, he enumerated these three: “Filial piety (孝=Ko);” “Loyalty to higher authority (忠=Chu);” “Love for inferiors (慈愛=Jiai)” as such virtues.²¹ Uchimura asserts, however, that, beyond these, the very most fundamental Japanese mentality exists. It is “purity.” He began this article by introducing a very famous traditional Japanese poem (Waka=和歌)²² and his translation of it:

“Shiki-shima no, Yamato kokoro wo

Hito towaba

Asahi ni niwō-o Yamazakura ka na.’

Thus runs a national ode of my far-eastern country — Japan; roughly rendered into English, the line read:

“Would’st know the heart of Yamato?

Its type is the Sakura blossom,

That scatters its odorous sweetness

Beneath the sun of the morning.”

The poem itself is so simple as to be almost meaningless, for the “odorous sweetness” which it attributes to the “spirit of Yamato” is a certain *negative purity* — “want of any thing

within," as the Japanese people term it, and in some cases it becomes mere emptiness of heart. We turn to its primitive religion, and how simple it is! "Witness and *purity*" form the essence of its teachings; . . . the Japanese are a sincere, straight-forward people, as regard their native characteristics."²³

We will be able to find his insistence on the word and the concept of "purity," and in the slightly complicated expression, "*negative purity*," in various aspects of his writings and activities in his whole life after that.

2. "Purity" in Kanzo Uchimura's Middle Age

Although his economical situation was not so good, he gradually established his fame as a writer and continued to wield a powerful pen, mainly, first in the newspaper, *Yorozuchoho*,²⁴ as the chief of the English column and at last, in his self-published *Seisyo no Kenkyu* already mentioned above. The articles and essays that appeared in this journal occupy over half of his 40-volume collection.

Even in the former, a secular newspaper, which Uchimura wrote many columns discussing domestic and international social conditions, the word "purity" (the Japanese characters "清" or "潔") is the favorite word in his vocabulary and we can find it in many of his articles.²⁵

But in my essay, I would like to focus on Uchimura's writings in the latter, religious or Christian journal. He repeated later that it was the first Biblical journal in Japan. Despite that fact, its every issue sold over a few thousands copies and as many as four thousand later in his life.²⁶ This publishing enterprise was the decisive step to realize his long sought-after dream of carrying out Christian mission work directly. So, from his articles studying the verses of the Bible and from the other religious essays in this journal, we can understand the essence of his fundamental and very unique Christian thought in the history of Japanese Christianity and possibly world Christianity. And also we can easily find his "insistence on purity" in them.

His Christian thought is very unique in some points, the most indigenous, but also world-famous,²⁷ of which is his kind of ecclesiology. But if we call it "ecclesiology," it could be an oxymoron. Because with his ecclesiology the true church should not have any institutions, associations, even nor buildings, which American and European churches have had for centuries. In the first volume of the other of his Christian journals, *Mukyokai*,²⁸ which was only published for one and a half years maybe in order to concentrate upon *Seisyo no Kenkyu*, which after that would be published twice a month,²⁹ he wrote the inaugural message.

"One might think that "non church" means a kind of destructivism like "anarchy" or "nihilist." Completely not! "Non church" is the church for people not having any churches, like a house for people with no home. Namely, it is like a kind of child-rearing institution or an orphanage. We should read the Japanese letter "non=無(Mu)" of "non church=無教会(Mu-kyokai)" as "ない(Nai)" which means "*not to have*" and never means "annihilate=無にする(Mu-nisuru)" nor "neglect=無視する(Mu-shisuru)." *People not having any money, people not having any parents, and people not having any houses, aren't all*

of them lovely (which can be also translated into “pure”; by Sasaki). And I think that there are many sheep without any churches nor pastors, so I decided to publish this tiny journal (*Mukyokai*).”³⁰

Can’t we immediately remember his curious expression, “*negative purity*” and its explanation in his essential theory on the character of the Japanese cited above?

In one essay titled “My Ideal Christianity” in *Seisyo no Kenkyu*, Vol. 9, he wrote “*Evangelical Christianity independent from any foreign missionaries* has been my ideal.”³¹ He defends himself arguing that “I don’t want to say foreign missionaries are bad people. Rather I know that many of them are very good persons.”³² “But I have to insist on maintaining for Christianity itself and Japanese Christianity that *it should be independent. Christianity is universal religion and so must be independent.*”³³ He continues:

“The missionaries of the powerful countries not only carry out their spiritual mission work, but also spread their own national characters, customs, and biased habits. People who accepted the English missionary learned also the English character, customs, and even biased habits. This might not be necessarily bad. However *Christianity is Christianity and not English Religion*. There are many bad things in England. Its aristocracy and the Episcopal Church, which is very similar to the Roman Catholic Church, are less desirable than *the simplest teaching of Jesus Christ*. What we desire is Christianity itself, not the Episcopal Church. Our spirits and bodies are to be ruled by Our Lord Jesus Christ who died once and was resurrected, not by the bishops nor deacons of England. I think that we Japan should hesitate to become a member of such a church especially because the Episcopal Church has a deep relationship with the government of England.”³⁴

It is easy to feel here Uchimura’s kind of nationalistic mentality. Rather I would like to say that his theory of independence about Japanese Christianity, that is to say, “non church = 無教会” movement, suggests to us his inveterate inclination to “purity,” namely “insistence on purity.”

And in the last of Uchimura’s series of essays, “My Lord Jesus Christ,”³⁵ which appeared in Vol. 15-23 of the same journal, *Seisyo no Kenkyu*, he prays:

“. . . . Oh! *Holy* (“聖き = Kiyoki”) Lord! I wish Thou not be too stern in punishing us. We are children of sin. Please forgive us by Thy mercy. Please *cleanse/purify* (“潔めよ = Kiyomeyo”) us with Thy blood. . . . Our *impurity* (“汚穢 = Owai”) makes us violate Thy *holy* (“聖き = Kiyoki”) commandments. So we desire for Thy redemption from the bottom of our hearts. We wish that Thou *cleanse/purify* (“潔めよ = Kiyomeyo”) our whole nature. . . . that Thou accept our repentance.”³⁶

Admittedly this is a prayer of repentance for our sins, but we might be attracted to the repetition of the words having a similar meaning to “purity.” “*Holy* (聖き = Kiyoki)” and “clean/se (潔い/潔める = Kiyoi/Kiyomeru),” the latter of which can be also translated into “*pure/ify* (清い/清める = Kiyoi/Kiyomeru),” have slightly different meanings from each other,

not only in English, but also in Japanese. But all three Japanese characters have the same sound, "Kiyō-." Uchimura's repetitive use of these homophonous characters might suggest his "insistence on purity (清/潔/聖さ = Kiyō-sa)."³⁷

By the way, in the Japanese history of ideas, Uchimura is very famous for his absolute pacifist thought, although almost all of Japanese are so nationalistic that they were for the wars against China and Russia in those periods. First he supported the governmental policy about the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895), which he grasped as justified. But he turned his thought around to the complete opposite side because he could not tolerate the selfish attitude of the Japanese government to China after the war. So during the time that Japan was starting the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905), Uchimura was an active leader of the pacifist movement, which was only a minority at that time in Japan and so forced him to quit his post as a writer of the newspaper, *Yorozuchoho*. In his essay, titled "The Gospel of Peace (Absolute Pacifism)," he asserts:

"Armed Christian countries? Such kind of monster can never exist in the world. Armed countries are not Christian. The armed is the robber. . . . From the view point of the Bible, England, the States, Russia and France are not Christian countries. They are hypocrite countries plated with gold."³⁸

He denied not only the Japanese war against Russia, but also all wars of all countries. We might say that his extreme idealistic pacifist thought like this has something to do with his "insistence on purity."

But in 1912, Uchimura was so badly devastated by his 19-year-old daughter's death from disease and so it seems that it changed his thought to a different direction, which, if possible, we could call another conversion. Although I cannot describe the different tones of his writing minutely here, it can be observed that, in this period, he wrote many essays which had "death," "resurrection," "eternal life," and "heaven," as their topics. Even in those essays, we recognize that his "insistence on purity" is still consistent. In the essay written just after her death, titled "Death Be Blessed," he wrote:

"For Christians, death is the road to Glory and the chance to manifest it. So we cry over death, but we don't grieve over it like people of this world. We know the true value of death, we know that it is the chance to *purify/cleanse* ("潔むる = Kiyō-muru") ourselves, the power to redeem our sins in this world, and the preparation to enter the everlasting life. Be Blessed, Death! Thank you, Death!"³⁹

Also a few years after this, Uchimura wrote in another essay, titled "Consolation of Death":

". . . . He (God) resurrects the dead on the Last day and so manifests his great mercy. Life is happiest when it has the outer world suitable to the inner. When, with the *holy* ("聖

き = Kiyō-ki”) indestructible bodies, the spirits justified, *made holy* (“聖められ = Kiyō-merare”) and redeemed in Jesus, are reborn in the recreated heaven and earth, we will enjoy the true happiness.”⁴⁰

As argued above (and also below), the character “*holy*” (聖 = Kiyō-) has a close relationship with the other Japanese homophonous characters which Uchimura uses, namely, “清 = Kiyō-” and “潔 = Kiyō-.”

3. “Purity” in Kanzo Uchimura’s Later Age

It is very interesting that, despite the fact that Uchimura regards himself as a rationalist,⁴¹ in his later years, he not only approached, but also led the “Sairin Undo (再臨運動)” or the Second Coming Movement, hoping for the imminent Parousia in Japanese Christianity from 1918–1919. Unfortunately I don’t have much space to analyze the details of his participation in the movement. Of course, he also wrote a lot on the subject, as well as gave many lectures during this period. Naturally we can find easily his “insistence on purity” even in those essays, which have very eschatological tones.

For example, in one of his essays written while he was leading this movement, titled “Redemption and the Second Coming (贖罪と再臨),” also he exaggerated these two dogmas of Christianity, saying “There is an intimate connection between redemption and the Second Coming. I can say the latter is the fruit of the former. . . . Yes! Redemption and the Second Coming as the fruit of redemption. It is these two great dogmas that I should expound.”⁴² But Uchimura also connects redemption with “purity” very closely:

“The Lord comes again in order to complete the salvation of the redeemed people by himself. But the believers expect his Second Coming in order to realize the fruit of redemption by the Lord in their bodies. ‘If man is not *holy* (‘潔 = Kiyō-’), he cannot meet the Lord’ (Hebrews 12:14). This is perfectly true. But how can we be *holy*? It is only through Christ’s redemption. We can become *holy* because he overthrew our sins in our stead.”⁴³

As I have already mentioned,⁴⁴ the Japanese character “潔” and “清” have the same sound, “Kiyō-,” and also both can be translated to “pure/purity.” But, in the Japanese modern version of this verse of Hebrews, we find that another character “聖” is used in the place of “潔” in Uchimura’s version. Also as mentioned above, in many of Uchimura’s sentences, the former character, “聖,” is pronounced the same as “潔,” namely, “Kiyō-,” but, in the Japanese modern version, we have to pronounce “聖” as “Sei-” differently from “潔 [Kiyō-].” Uchimura himself seems to consider these two words “聖” and “潔” as almost identical, which express the same concept and this can be seen in the following sentence that is just after my citation from the above essay: “our justice, *holiness* ‘聖(潔),’ and redemption is in Him.”⁴⁵ So we observe that, in Uchimura’s mind, these three Japanese characters “聖,” “潔,” and “清” have a very subtle connection since they are read with the same sound “Kiyō-.”⁴⁶

In this period, when Uchimura was active as a leader of the Second Coming Movement, there

are many other phrases, in which he writes about "purity" similar to the example above.

In another essay of those days, he reminded himself of a memory from his younger days and wrote that "I was taught by him (President Seelye at Amherst College) for the first time that Man is justified not through his acts but his faith. 'You are not justified by your endeavors. However you try to make yourself *holy* (= to purify?; Sasaki), you cannot be *holy* (= purified?; Sasaki)."⁴⁷ He concluded:

"But our faith develops greatly when we can be sure of our hope. The fact that we are justified is truly great Gospel. But, when the wholly justified people are given the great hope that they will be resurrected bodily and glorified, their spirits will be made perfectly *holy* (or perfectly purified?; Sasaki), and they will be able to look up to God's glory in the recreated universe, and then their lives must be raised to a higher level. I cannot be too thankful for this Grace today after forty years since beginning of my life in the faith."⁴⁸

Still more, he likes a few biblical phrases describing the Second Coming, like Jude 14 and Matthew 25:31. In the Japanese translations of those verses of the Bible, which Uchimura used at that time; "Behold! The Lord comes with ten thousand *holy* ("聖き = Kiyoki") armies and judges all of the people. . . ." (Jude 14) or "When the Son of Man comes in his glory with all the *holy* angels ("聖徒 = Kiyoki-Tsukai"), then he will sit on his glorious throne. . .,"⁴⁸ the Japanese character, "聖," which has close connection with "purity" as mentioned above, was emphasized. But in the contemporary Japanese versions of the Bible, the former phrase used the character "聖" but it is not pronounced "Kiyoki-" and the latter phrase doesn't have the character "聖" itself any more.⁵⁰ Thus I can confirm that Uchimura was very sensitive to some Japanese characters related to "Kiyoki-," namely "pure/purity," here, too.

Anyway we cannot overlook that, even in his thought on Christ's Second Coming in this period, his "insistence on purity" is pervasive.

In this last period of his life, some of his most important essays on the Bible were written. Among them, "Studies on Romans"⁵¹ is the far most important for us to know his ultimate understanding of Christianity. It appeared in his journal *Seisyo no Kenkyu* monthly for almost a year from February 1921 until November of the next year, and is a longer exposition of Paul's Letter to the Romans. Of course, in his most famous essays on the Bible like this work, we can clearly recognize his "insistence on purity." As early as in the "First Lecture" of "Studies on *Romans*," he mentioned "聖め = Kiyome," that is to say, "purity":

"These three, namely, being justified, *made holy* ("聖められ = Kiyomerare"), and glorified, all are given, not by our own endeavors, but only by looking up to (Christ) with Faith. If I explain this in detail, *of being justified by looking up to Christ on the Cross, made holy* ("聖められ = Kiyomerare") *by looking up to the Resurrected Christ, and glorified by looking up to the Coming Christ*, not even one of them can be achieved by our own credits, works, good deeds, nor endeavors. Only by our Faith in Him, His credit which He achieved, and exclusively only by believing in and accepting Him, relying on Him, and

looking up to Him, we are justified, *made holy* (“聖められ=Kiyomerare”), and glorified. To teach this is the main purpose of Romans, along with giving an account of the salvation of human beings and Christian practical morals.”⁵²

Unfortunately I don't have any more space here to analyze Uchimura's excellent interpretation of Romans, especially from the point of view of the modern Biblical Studies. But it is obvious that he emphasized “holiness” exceedingly. Five lectures, discussing “holiness” in Romans 6:1-7:25, have the same title, “On Being Made Holy (or Purified) (潔めらるゝこと=Kiyomeruru-koto).”⁵³ It is interesting enough that he used two different Japanese characters, “聖” and “潔” almost synonymously, and sometimes both at the same time like “聖潔 (Kiyoki)”⁵⁴ in his contexts. Paul's original Greek is “ἀγιασμός” (only Romans 6:19, 22) and “ἅγιος” (7:12 [twice] and 18 other times in Romans).⁵⁵

And a little astonishingly, Uchimura himself put these two Japanese characters, “聖” and “潔,” parallel with the other one, “清” in this essay:

“Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount: ‘Blessed are the *pure* (“清い=Kiyoi”) (or holy; Sasaki) in heart, for they shall see God’ (Matthew, 5:8). Paul taught in 1 Thessalonians: ‘. . . so that He may establish your hearts unblamable in *holiness* (“潔く=Kiyoku”) before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all His *holy* ones (“聖徒=Kiyoki-tsukai?”) (3:12-13). And we find in Hebrews: ‘Strive for peace with all men, and for the *holiness* without which no one will see the Lord’ (12:14). The life of the Faith is constantly the struggle with Satan. The constant series of efforts to reject Satan, conquer sin, and complete the *holiness/purity* (“聖潔=kiyoki”), is the whole life of the Faith. “Struggle against sin, conquer it, achieve the *holiness/purity* (“聖潔=Kiyoki”) ! God helps your efforts fully with his Holy Ghost.” This is the essence of Chapter 6 and 7 of Romans.”⁵⁶

At last and at this point, Uchimura's way of using three Japanese characters, “清,” “潔,” and “聖,” is a little bit confusing. For example, in Matthew 5:8, the original Greek of “清” is “καθαρός,” but the other related original Greek words have completely different stems, “ἅγιος” (or “ἀγιωσύνη” in 1 Thessalonians) and “ἀγιασμός.”⁵⁷

But from all of these citations, we can suppose that Uchimura used these three characters, “清,” “潔,” and “聖,” not so differently, or we could say that he used them in a fused sense. I suspect that he should have treated these three differently, especially between Matthew's verse and the others, which have the different Greek words in the original text. However, the reason why he didn't do so, is, I believe, that he was so attracted by the same Japanese sound among these three Japanese characters, “清=pure/purity,” “潔=pure/purity or holy/holiness,” and “聖=holy/holiness,” namely “Kiyoi-” despite them having different meanings to some degree.

Conclusion

As I argued in the main part of this essay, Kanzo Uchimura's "insistence on purity," which is pronounced "Kiyō-sa" in Japanese, is prevailing or ubiquitous in almost all of his writings through his life. There is not enough space to scrutinize the developments or changes of it in more detail. But, as I was writing my essay, I could feel a slight difference between his "insistence on purity" in his very young age, which can be found in *How I Became a Christian* and that of his later days in "Studies on Romans."

However my thesis is so sound that I can recognize the really important and fairly complicated way of using the characters, "清," "潔," and "聖," which have, in all cases, some relation with the concept of "purity."

At last but not least is the question of whether this Uchimura's "insistence on purity" is PURE Christian or genuine Christian thought. With his pervasive thinking of "purity" in Christianity, we could be led to think that Uchimura's Christianity itself is very "pure." In fact, he asserted that "Our Christianity should be thoroughly evangelical. Confucian Christianity or Buddhist Christianity is never the Christianity of Jesus. Christianity is the absolute religion. It is never established with contamination by other religions."⁵⁸

But what is real Christian "purity" or "holiness"? For example, many people might remind themselves of Jesus' words in Matthew 19:14: "Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven." This is also a kind of Christian "purity" or innocence, which Jesus taught⁵⁹ but that Uchimura didn't discuss so much.⁶⁰

It is only my opinion now, but I would like to postulate that Uchimura's "insistence on purity" might derive from a very moralistic or Confucianist based, and I might even be able to say, Shintoist based mentality.⁶¹ Anyway how can we be PURE Christians? I have to investigate this but I think that it will take many more papers to cover the subject adequately.

Notes

- 1 cf. "The Index" in K. Uchimura, *Uchimura Kanzo Zensyu* (The Complete Works of Kanzo Uchimura), Vol. 40.
- 2 His Complete Works has 40 volumes. See Bibliography.
- 3 For example, Norihisa Suzuki reports that Uchimura himself pointed out three turning points in his own life: 1. his baptism at 札幌農学校 (Sapporo No Gakko or Sapporo Agricultural College) in 1878; 2. his conversion at Amherst College in 1886; 3. his belief in the Second Coming in 1918-1919 (cf. N. Suzuki, *Uchimura Kanzo*, pp. 178f.). In my essay, roughly, part 1 covers the first two of Uchimura's divisions and part 3, the last.
- 4 The division of Uchimura's life into several parts is expediently adopted in my essay. About Uchimura's own view on the division of his life, see the above note.
- 5 "How I Became a Christian: Out of my Diary," in K. Uchimura, *Uchimura Kanzo Zensyu*, Vol. 3, pp. 1-167. This original English version had already been completed in 1893 but was first published from Fleming H. Revell Company in Chicago in 1895, titled *Diary of a Japanese Convert*. Its Japanese translation by Toshiro Suzuki, 『余は如何にして基督信徒となりし乎』(*Yowa ikanishite kirisuto shintoto narishika*), was published in 1938 from 岩波書店 (Iwanami Syoten). Also see the Bibliography.
- 6 This book was also translated into German (in 1904), Finnish (in 1905), Swedish (in 1905), Danish (in 1906), and French (from Geneva and Basel in 1913). cf. The explanation by the translator of its Japanese version (see Bibliography).

- 7 K. Uchimura, *Uchimura Kanzo Zensyu*, Vol. 3, p. 145, italicized by Sasaki.
- 8 *ibid.*, p. 146. The word in round brackets is supplemented by Sasaki.
- 9 Translated and italicized by Sasaki. This most important journal for himself and scholars, 『聖書の研究』 (*Seisyo no Kenkyu*) (*The Biblical Study*) was literally his life work and continued to be published from 1900 until 1930. All his articles and essays in this journal are now contained in *Uchimura Kanzo Zensyu* (see Bibliography).
- 10 K. Uchimura, *Uchimura Kanzo Zensyu*, Vol. 9, p. 499, italicized by Sasaki.
- 11 The time lag between the Uchimura who wrote his diary and the author who wrote the book is about 7 years (of course this is also Uchimura himself).
- 12 For example, it is obvious that some excerpts from his diary in Chapter 8 (K. Uchimura, *Uchimura Kanzo Zensyu*, Vol. 3, pp. 90-110), which describe his experience of conversion, have, so to speak, psychologically different moods and tones from other parts of the book. So it would probably be very interesting to scrutinize such writings of his from the viewpoint of William James.
- 13 K. Uchimura, “How I Became a Christian” in *Uchimura Kanzo Zensyu*, Vol. 3, p. 117, italicized by Sasaki. In the Japanese version of this book, the translator, Toshiro Suzuki translated “purity” into “清浄 (Seijo)” and “innocence” into “潔白 (Keppaku).” Read my discussion in the later part of the essay.
- 14 *ibid.*, p. 127, italicized by Sasaki. In the Japanese version of this book, the translator, Toshiro Suzuki translated “pure” into “純 (Jun)” and “holy” into “潔 (Ketsu).” So there is a possibility that Uchimura has some concepts related to “pure/purity” in mind when he uses the character “純,” which also appears very frequently in his writings. But in this essay I didn’t inquire into the problem of relationship between “pure/purity” and the Japanese character “純.”
- 15 *ibid.*, p. 128, italicized by Sasaki. In the Japanese version of this book, the translator, Toshiro Suzuki translated “purity” into “純潔 (Junketsu)” and “cleanse” into “潔める (Kiyo-meru).” In these three citations of notes 12-14, Uchimura’s description of his inward journey has the eminently passive character specific to many religious narratives, such as “All is from God. . . .” This is very different from the autonomous “purity” of Confucianism or Shintoism. In my opinion, Uchimura’s diary is rich in deep emotional and religious mood, namely the report of a very deeply religio-emotional conversion. So the entries in his diary are special even for Uchimura himself and, in my theory, it is slightly different from his “ordinal” religious or Christian thinking. Also see my essay “How We Japanese Become Christians” in the Bibliography.
- 16 “不敬事件 (Hukei Jiken)” is the incident in which Uchimura was accused of not making a profound enough bow to the Imperial Rescript on Education, “教育勅語 (Kyoiku Chokugo)” at that time. The Imperial Rescript on Education was regarded as the most highly respected, almost religiously sacred document, because the emperor had pressed his imperial seal on it and gave it to the students. Consequently Uchimura was forced to quit his job as a teacher of the First National High School, “第一高等中学校 (Daiichi Koto Chu Gakko)”. Some people accused him that his disrespect to the Rescript derived from his Christian belief, which teaches that we cannot worship two gods. But the details of the incident have some subtleties. cf. N. Suzuki, *Uchimura Kanzo* and T. Suzuki, *Uchimura Kanzo Den*.
- 17 『求安録』 (Kyuanroku) means “Memoirs of Seeking Comfort,” which is now included *Uchimura Kanzo Zensyu*, Vol. 2, pp. 134-249.
- 18 K. Uchimura, *Uchimura Kanzo Zensyu*, Vol. 2, p. 137. This is my translation and italicization, but the whole sentence is emphasized with dots by Uchimura himself.
- 19 K. Uchimura, “Japan and Japanese,” *Uchimura Kanzo Zensyu*, Vol. 3, p. 182 (in the English part), italicized by Uchimura himself, but the word is supplemented with brackets by Sasaki. This essay was originally written in English and published in 1894.
- 20 This is T. Suzuki’s translation, which we can find in his book, *Uchimura Kanzo Den*, p. 637ff.
- 21 These translations are also T. Suzuki’s but the third might have been “仁 (Jin)” in Uchimura’s mind. About the relationships between Uchimura’s Christian thought and some Confucian concepts, see also my “How We Japanese Become Christians.”
- 22 This poem was written by Norinaga Motoori (本居宣長, 1730-1801), who was a very important Shintoist or we can call him a kind of Shintoist Reformer in the Edo era (江戸時代, 1603-1867), when the “武士 (Bushi),” namely, the warriors, had control of the government, just before the Meiji era.
- 23 K. Uchimura, *Uchimura Kanzo Zensyu*, Vol. 1, pp. 113f. But we have to pay a little attention to the fact that this writing of Uchimura’s had been written before his conversion in the States. About his conversion, see also

my discussion, citation from his writings, and notes in part I of my essay..

- 24 「万朝報」(Yorozuchoho) was a daily newspaper founded by Ruiko Kuroiwa (黒岩涙香, 1862–1020) in 1892, who invited Uchimura to be the editor of the English column. Afterward, as is written in this essay (p. 45), Uchimura quit the post because he had a contrary opinion on the Russo-Japanese War against the paper, which was in advocacy of the war.
- 25 Unfortunately, I don't have enough space to mention them one by one. I heard recently a digital file of his complete works is appearing. So it will be interesting to search these characters in it to confirm my thesis. Anyway, foreign journalists staying in Japan at that time kept their eyes on Uchimura's English columns. cf. N. Suzuki, *Uchimura Kanzo*, pp. 86f.
- 26 N. Suzuki, *Uchimura Kanzo*, pp. 113–114.
- 27 For example, see Mullins' note. *Christianity Made in Japan* but Japanese translation, 『メイド・イン・ジャパンのキリスト教』, pp. 296f., n. (4), that the Swiss theologian, Emil Brunner, positively introduced the Movement, which he called "Nicht-Kirche Bewegung," namely "Non-Church Movement."
- 28 「無教会」(Mukyokai) is also Uchimura's self-published journal, which was founded in 1901 but consists of only 18 volumes as he discontinued publication the following year.
- 29 See the explanation by the editor in K. Uchimura, *Uchimura Kanzo Zensyu*, Vol., 9, pp. 527–529.
- 30 K. Uchimura, *Uchimura Kanzo Zensyu*, Vol. 9, p. 71. My translation and emphasis with italics.
- 31 *ibid.*, p. 174. My translation but Uchimura's emphasis with italics.
- 32 *ibid.* My translation.
- 33 *ibid.* My translation but Uchimura's emphasis with italics.
- 34 *ibid.*, p. 178. My translation and emphasis with italics.
- 35 When this series of Uchimura's essays appeared, Christology was being fiercely argued in the Japanese Protestant church. cf. the explanations by the editor in K. Uchimura, *Uchimura Kanzo Zensyu*, Vol. 9, p. 547.
- 36 K. Uchimura, *Uchimura Kanzo Zensyu*, Vol. 9, p. 449. My translation and emphasis with italics.
- 37 In modern Japanese, we can say “清” and “潔” are almost synonymous, but “聖” has a little different meaning from them. The former two can both be translated as “pure/purity/purify” or “clean/cleanliness/cleanse,” but the latter is “holy/holiness/” or “sacred/sacredness.” But Uchimura's use of these three words show a more confusing situation. See the discussion in my essay after this citation.
- 38 K. Uchimura, *Uchimura Kanzo Zensyu*, Vol. 11, p. 408.
- 39 *ibid.*, Vol. 19, pp. 84f. My translation and emphasis with italics.
- 40 *ibid.*, Vol. 20, p. 323. My translation and emphasis with italics.
- 41 For example, see his essay titled “合理的リバイバル (Goriteki Ribaibaru=Rationalistic Revival),” *ibid.*, Vol. 1, pp. 297–299.
- 42 *ibid.*, Vol. 24, p. 116.
- 43 *ibid.* My translation and emphasis with italics.
- 44 See pp. 44–45. in this essay.
- 45 K. Uchimura, *Uchimura Kanzo Zensyu*, Vol. 24, p. 116. My translation but an addition (潔) with round brackets by Uchimura himself. So we find that Uchimura thought that these two characters, “聖” and “潔,” have almost completely the same sense.
- 46 The Greek original verse of Hebrews 12:14 is: . . . τὸν ἀγιασμόν, οὗ χωρὶς οὐδεὶς ὄψεται τὸν κύριον. So Uchimura translates a Greek word “ἀγιασμόν” into the Japanese character “聖(潔).”
- 47 K. Uchimura, *Uchimura Kanzo Zensyu*, Vol. 24, p. 140. My translation and emphasis with italics.
- 48 K. Uchimura, *ibid.*, p. 142. My translation and emphasis with italics.
- 49 I translated these Bible verses directly from Uchimura's Japanese. And I emphasized the word with italics.
- 50 These verses are translated into English as: “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne” and “Behold, the Lord came with his holy myriads.” (*Revised Standard Version*) And in the Greek original: “Ὅταν δὲ ἔλθῃ ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐν τῇ δόξῃ αὐτοῦ, καὶ πάντες οἱ (ἄγιοι; varia lectio) ἄγγελοι μετ' αὐτοῦ, τότε καθίσει ἐπὶ θρόνου δόξης αὐτοῦ” (Matthew 25:31) and “ἰδοὺ ἦλθεν κύριος ἐν ἀγίαις μυριάσιν αὐτοῦ” (Jude 14). These two verses have the Greek word “ἄγιος,” which can be translated into the Japanese character “聖.” So, in a sense, Uchimura's translations are correct. On this point, we have to scrutinize the relationships between the version(s) of the Bible which he used and his thought more minutely. But we know he could read the Greek.

- 51 「羅馬書の研究」(Romasyo no Kenkyu) in K. Uchimura, *Uchimura Kanzo Zensyu*, Vol. 26, pp. 16-443.
- 52 K. Uchimura, *Uchimura Kanzo Zensyu*, Vol. 26, p. 26. My translation. The word “made holy” is italicized by me but the phrase was emphasized by Uchimura himself.
- 53 *ibid.*, pp. 239-288.
- 54 For example, Uchimura used these two characters “聖潔 (Kiyō-ki)” at the same time to translate the original Greek, only “ἀγιασμός” (Romans 6:19).
- 55 Two Greek words, “ἀγιασμός” and “ἅγιος” have slightly different meanings from each other. The former means “making holy” (“Heiligung” in German), the latter only “holy” (“Heilig/Heiligkeit” in German). See G. Kittel, *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, Bd. 1, S. 87-116. Uchimura might have used these two characters “聖潔 (Kiyō-ki)” at the same time to translate the original Greek “ἀγιασμός” (Romans 6:19).
- 56 K. Uchimura, *Uchimura Kanzo Zensyu*, Vol. 26, p. 245.
- 57 Two Greek words, “καθαρός” and “ἅγιος” (and also “ἀγιασμός”) have different stems in their formal construction, but arguments, which theologically combine both (and also “ἀγιασμός”), are possible. cf. G. Kittel, *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, Bd. 1, S. 87-116, especially, S. 109 u. 117. But, in some modern commentaries on Romans (see Bibliography), it doesn’t seem that both concepts, namely, “καθαρός” and “ἅγιος” are argued in connection with each other. And also it doesn’t seem to me that Uchimura discusses the connection between these two words, “清” and “聖,” linguistically or theologically in detail. Rather his discussion seems to presuppose the connection based on their homophonous character.
- 58 K. Uchimura, *Uchimura Kanzo Zensyu*, Vol. 9, p. 180.
- 59 Many scholars regard these words of Christ to be authentic. cf. R. W. Funk et al., *The Five Gospels: What Did Jesus Really Say?*, p. 221.
- 60 For example, Uchimura cites this verse in K. Uchimura, *Uchimura Kanzo Zensyu*, Vol. 24, p. 116 etc., but his argument about it is inadequate.
- 61 See my citation from Uchimura’s writing including a traditional Japanese poem on p. 42 and my notes 22 and 23. Or I could say that his “insistence on purity” might be his very abstract and mental mindset.

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