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To the Faculty of Washington State University:

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“DIVINE” INTERVENTION: JAPANESE AND AMERICAN CHRISTIAN
NARRATIVES OF THE PACIFIC WAR, THE ATOMIC BOMBINGS,
AND THE AMERICAN OCCUPATION

Abstract

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In 1995, American public opinion rallied around the sacrosanct “Good War” and its atomic culmination above Hiroshima and Nagasaki. When the Smithsonian’s National Air and Space Museum contemplated an inclusion of the Japanese victims of atomic warfare in an exhibit planned for the fiftieth anniversary of the Pacific War’s end, the intense public furor against the purportedly revisionist undermining of the “American Century’s” greatest triumph extirpated the Enola Gay from any consideration of the bomb’s enduring civilian toll. In short, fifty years after the dual incinerations of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, it seemed that the same American consensus supporting the righteousness of the atomic bombs still existed, as it had since 1945.

This dissertation seeks a re-examination of American and Japanese memories of atomic warfare, grounded in the dissent that appeared as early as August 1945. By returning to the years of Japan’s Occupation, from 1945-1952, we can trace the counter-narratives of atomic tragedy that emerged from Japanese and American Christians,
questioning not only national celebrations of the just nature of Hiroshima and Nagasaki’s destruction, but also national adherence to the long-held identity as an exceptional Christian democracy. Immediate opposition to the use of the atomic bomb to end war in the Pacific, particularly from vocal Christian activists, revealed the lack of any national consensus that shadowed nuclear war from its birth and that complicated the memory of World War II as the “Good War” in America’s past.

Confirmed by the victory of war, the United States embarked on a new Christianizing mission in Occupied Japan that extended the boundaries of American democracy, in the Cold War’s fight against communism, across the globe. As General Douglas MacArthur fostered democracy in recently militaristic Japan, he called on Christian missionaries to assist the American transformation of its former enemy. Among the Christians to respond to MacArthur’s call were those, such as many of the founders of International Christian University, who based their active commitment to improving Japan on their desire to apologize for Hiroshima and Nagasaki; this dissent disappeared from American collective memory as the Cold War bolstered support for nuclear arsenals.
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Dedication

For JD
INTRODUCTION

We have had the bomb on our minds since 1945. It was our first weaponry and then our diplomacy, and now it’s our economy. How can we suppose that something so monstrously powerful would not, after forty years, compose our identity? The great golem we have made against our enemies is our culture, our bomb culture—its logic, its faith, its vision.

E. L. Doctorow

Notions of exceptionalism have long informed definitions of American identity. In the seventeenth century, over one hundred years before the United States of America emerged as a fledgling nation, John Winthrop framed a Puritan utopia in the newly-founded Massachusetts Bay Colony that established its inhabitants as members of a “city on a hill,” a beacon of religious harmony that would shine back to England and force her church to reform itself. Although Winthrop’s utopia failed in its goal to purify the Anglican Church, this Biblical allusion to a “city on a hill” became fundamental to American conceptions of its nation’s exceptionalism. Indeed, founding fathers such as James Madison and Thomas Jefferson frequently elucidated the myriad ways in which the United States provided a refuge—politically, religiously, individually—for its citizens that stood in notable relief to the liberty available in European nations. The rally crying present in Thomas Paine’s Common Sense—“We have it in our power to begin the world over again”—became part of the American psyche as it vocalized the unique opportunities emanating from the United States to the world at large. Portrayals of

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American exceptionalism took various forms throughout the nation’s subsequent decades. “We dreamed,” H. W. Brands narrates, “we would save our souls and save the world.”

This emphasis on American exceptionalism, emerging so early in the nation’s history, found itself reworked over the next two centuries as American righteousness, often tied to divine will, survived numerous threats from territorial expansion, slavery, imperialism, and war. In many ways, Thomas Jefferson embodied the principles of exceptionalism through his promotion of what he termed the “Empire of Liberty;” in Jefferson’s conception, the “Empire of Liberty” guaranteed individual and national freedom on the American continent by promoting expansionism and agrarian virtues as its core tenets, an irony oft-noted by Jefferson scholars, who point to his strict constructionalist interpretation of the Constitution, a document that said nothing of territorial expansion, and his plantation, Monticello, as evidence of his “elusive” life of “paradox.” Yet, the statesman and two-term president “thought of America the way we like to think of ourselves, and saw its significance, as we still tend to do, in terms larger than itself . . . [H]is most characteristic utterance was the contrast he drew between the high moral purpose that animated our own national life and action, and the low motives of power and expedience that drove others.”

As Robert W. Tucker and David C. Hendrickson posit, Jefferson remains relevant today not only because of our enduring fascination with his character and contributions to the American past, but also because of

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his formulation of American identity and destiny. This refrain of national righteousness—indeed, of a nation uniquely blessed and led by God—permeated American perceptions of national power and responsibility throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as illustrated by renewed iterations of Manifest Destiny, commitments to democracy on an increasingly international stage, and returns to Winthrop’s imagery of a “City on a Hill.”

In significant ways, the Manifest Destiny that justified the United States’ War with Mexico, from 1846 to 1848, and subsequently defended American actions at home and abroad for the next century and a half, rooted itself in the perhaps imagined legacies of the American Revolution, as Beverley Southgate explores in his analysis of what Jonathan Clark labeled “the American myth.” Southgate elucidates the responsibilities assumed by Americans “once liberated” from British rule following the Revolution, “which was, in the context of a Christian society, bound to be won by the forces of good in a triumph over evil.” Southgate continues:

And once liberated, the emancipated citizens of a democratic polity provided a model for universal emulation: there was no good reason why the rest of the world could not come to enjoy the American experience. Indeed, it was the ‘manifest destiny’ of Americans to lead and show the way.

There was, then, again a sense of inevitability, not only about the past but also about the future. No alternative account seemed possible in relation to what had happened in the past: any questioning of the established version of history was (perhaps is) tantamount to a deficiency of patriotism, and any consideration of the ‘counterfactuals’—of what might have been—is disallowed. For the claimed inevitability of history underpins a certainty about form and role of the American nation, and that in turn inspires its citizens with confidence—confidence in their own identities at home, and confidence in the rightness of their proselytizing policies abroad.

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6 Beverley Southgate, *What is History For?* (London: Routledge, 2005), 44.

7 Southgate, *What is History For?*, 45
Few moments in the twentieth century provide American citizens—during the era and afterward—with more certainty and confidence in their nation’s unique contributions to world-wide democracy than did the sound victory over Nazi Germany and the Empire of Japan that finally ended four years of sacrifice, on individual and national levels, for the “Good War.” Once again, the Christian nation had led the world successfully, and its citizens expected to continue to do so as the international sphere geared down for peace. In short, “[n]ever were America’s dreams more potent and beguiling than at the end of World War II.” Indeed, the atomic bombs that ended the war confirmed, for many Americans, the triumph of their nation’s scientific ingenuity. The American-led Occupation of Japan provided a new testing ground for the high moral purpose of American exceptionalism; presented with what General Douglas MacArthur promptly labeled a spiritual and political “vacuum,” the Occupation forces—with the approval of President Harry S. Truman and the public at large—worked vigorously to bless their recent enemies with the freedoms of the American way of life. Into the formerly militaristic flowed the dual tenets of the United States’ national identity: democracy and Christianity. In the oft-employed rhetoric of the era, this transformation of Japan by the goodwill of the United States did indeed seem inevitable, and its success validated the just nature of American war and peace.

Post-war prosperity convinced Americans of the United States’ sanctified role on a world stage, and the communal sacrifice of the war years forged a powerful collective identity for the “Greatest Generation” that has not facilitated re-examinations of the potential breaches in the United States’ commitment to democracy that might have

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occurred in the name of triumph. Though the dreams of the era—which “began to waver and lose focus almost at once”—only briefly curtailed the international specter of atomic warfare and the subsequent Cold War, Americans remembered them; a national audience stayed true to the foundational narrative of a righteous end to the “Good War,” one that celebrated nearly two centuries of a unique blend of politics and religion that elevated their nation to the role of nothing less than the leader of the free world. In their edited volume Perilous Memories: The Asia-Pacific War(s), T. Fujitani, Geoffrey M. White, and Lisa Yoneyama describe the sway collective—and often contentious—memory has over a nation’s historical interpretations: “As the past become valorized as a locus for imagining and feeling national identity, history is often transmuted into tradition, a set of apparently timeless symbols and ritual acts that function as markers of shared (national) identity. As the past becomes an object of veneration, to be reawakened in moments of memorialization, it more easily takes on the properties of shared essence, to be guarded and reproduced as sacred memory.”

This dissertation explores this convergence of history, memory, and national identity revealed by American and Japanese Christians who dissented from the positioning of Hiroshima and Nagasaki within the traditional narrative of the United States’ holy war and sanctified peace in the Pacific.

Historian Kendrick Oliver surveys the long-ranging effects of American exceptionalism on national and collective memories of the past in The My Lai Massacre in American History and Memory. Not only, argues Oliver, did modern Manifest Destiny mold foreign policy, but by the twentieth century “the conversion of national economic

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9 Brands, American Dreams, ix.

power into international predominance also refracted back to further confirm the validity of assumptions about the uniquely righteous character of American civilization: that the United States had come to stand at the commanding heights of the international system was evidence of the blessings bestowed upon a worthy people by an approving God.”\textsuperscript{11} The enduring faith in these lauded ideals has provided one of the greatest challenges for historians interested in re-examining the nation’s past, particularly those seeking to destabilize adherence to past moments of national righteousness, as witnessed by the discomfort generated by various portrayals of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The last events of a “Good War” remain contentious as they expose a break between American identity defined in rhetoric and in action. Historians engaged in such critiques find themselves dismissed by a segment of the American public as “revisionists,” with the implication that such radicals hope to undermine both the nation’s past and its present. Yet, a careful examination of the memory of Hiroshima and Nagasaki—on both sides of the Pacific—in the early years after 1945 indicates that the culture wars of the 1990s were not truly as jarring as self-proclaimed protectors of the American legacy might have realized. Indeed, neither national nor academic consensus regarding World War II’s shattering—or sacred—end has existed.

“The detonation of the first atomic bomb against the Japanese in August 1945 was greeted with great enthusiasm by most journalists and by the populace at large,” opined Edward Shils in 1948. But only three years after “Little Boy” and “Fat Man”—the code names for the bombs—dropped from American B-29s into the skies above Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Shils documented the United States’ growing political anxiety over atomic

\textsuperscript{11} Kendrick Oliver, \textit{The My Lai Massacre in American History and Memory} (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 138.
warfare. His depiction proved telling for the future of a national war memory that omitted Japanese victims from the zenith of victory. As Shils foretold, “The facts rather seem to be that even the power which possesses the bomb is so distracted by its numerous concerns and so oppressed by the monster which it has created that it allows itself to carry out a motley set of policies almost as if the bomb does not exist.”

Frank as Shils assessment of the fear bred from nuclear war was, it demonstrated the national forgetting that rapidly overtook the post-war world. The atomic bombs flattened 4.4 square miles of Hiroshima’s city center and killed between 130,000 and 140,000 of its citizens by December 1945; Nagasaki’s physical damage extended for 1.8 miles and its human toll reached 75,000 by the year’s end. Rarely did either event permeate the American consciousness as an emblem of wartime atrocity. Rather, imagined nuclear holocausts from the United States’ own “monster” viscerally towered above an entire generation of citizens during the Cold War, not from a haunted understanding of the past suffering at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but instead from the potential of a future nuclear attack that might victimize America itself. The civilians of Hiroshima and Nagasaki disappeared from past and, therefore, present renderings of history for myriad reasons, but their absence indicated the profound depths of the United States’ identity as a Christian democracy blessed and led by God. Their story of radiation sickness, cancer, and death did not fit into the familiar plot of national triumph; their victimhood undermined—indeed, belied—apparent national consensus regarding the “Good War’s” righteous

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12 Edward Shils, *The Atomic Bomb in World Politics* (London: National Peace Council, 1948), 63, 68. Shils wrote this pamphlet while working as an “Reader in Sociology” for the London School of Economics. He had also been associated with the United States’ Federation of Atomic Scientists and had worked as “an Advisory Editor of the *Bulletin* of the Atomic Scientists” according to the pamphlet’s front cover. Shils’ work is part of the collection in Tokyo’s National Diet Library.

denouement; and the apocalyptic nature in which their cities and their lives disappeared under the blast and burn of two American mushroom clouds caused numerous Christians to reconsider not only their nation’s prosecution of the war effort, but also the foundational tenets of its identity and claims to righteousness.

In 1999, Richard B. Frank closed his book *Downfall: The End of the Imperial Japanese Empire* with a validation of President Truman’s use of atomic weapons against Japan. After surveying various alternatives that might have forced the militarists to surrender, Frank surmised that other options, such as a blockade of the home islands, “carried no guarantee” of either a small cost “of human death and suffering” or of Japan’s capitulation. “[T]he deaths actually incurred in ending the war were not gratuitous,” Frank argued. “American goals were not simply victory but peace. Had American leaders in 1945 been assured that Japan and the United States would pass two generations in tranquility and still look forward with no prospect of future conflict, they would have believed their hard choices had been vindicated—and so should we.”

Though apologetic in tone, Frank’s text nonetheless advanced another iteration of the American victory narrative by reminding its audience of the loftier foreign policy goal informing Truman’s decision: peace. In the summer of 1945, the hope for peace after the grinding realities of war certainly mobilized many American observers to accept the toll of Hiroshima and Nagasaki as part of a just war. But, as this dissertation explores, many others did not accept their government’s justification of the atomic incineration of thousands of non-combatants; indeed, Christian activists devoted their lives, during that same promised peace, to oppose what they viewed as the “gratuitous” slaughter of

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innocents by the United States’ newest scientific achievement. For these activists, peace had been purchased at far too expensive of a moral price for a nation that grounded its “Good War” in the exceptionalism of its Christian democracy. Nor were civilians the only ones discomforted by the moral implications of atomic warfare, as the personal conflict of none other than Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson indicated. As the war in Europe drew to a close in early 1945, Stimson complained to the military about bombing campaigns against civilians. Dresden, said the Secretary of War in February 1945, was “terrible and probably unnecessary.” Stimson worried, writes historian Sean L. Malloy, “that deliberately targeting civilians for mass killing not only was immoral but also undermined American leadership in the war effort and the postwar world.” Many observers in both international and national audiences concurred with Stimson’s fears by war’s end, as we shall examine, but his entreaties to other members of the government “had no effect” on policy in the European theater. The Pacific, however, provided Stimson with a different moral quandary, and one that he had more control over: the atomic bomb. In meetings with his personal assistant Harvey Bundy in March 1945, the Secretary of War voiced his personal fears about the atomic bomb and its “enormous implications,” for he worried that “as a result of the emotions stirred up by the war we could have never been in a worse condition to handle the impact of this discovery.” Stimson debated using Christianity to soothe the wounds of atomic warfare that had not yet transpired. Hopeful that a religious authority might speak to “the souls of mankind and bring about a spiritual revival of Christian principles,” Stimson considered selecting a minister to fulfill just such a mission for the United States.15

15 Sean L. Malloy, Atomic Tragedy: Henry L. Stimson and the Decision to Use the Bomb Against
The question remains: why then, if so many civilians, government officials, and even scientists who created the atomic bomb doubted its legitimacy as a weapon of war, worried about the moral implications of its use, and believed that its potential to inflict massive devastation on city centers and civilians imperiled America’s international standing and identity as a Christian nation, does the collective memory of the United States continue to insist that Hiroshima and Nagasaki were righteous extensions of a “Good War”? Using notions of Christian identity as a backdrop for our study, we will return to the end of war in the Pacific and the Occupation, from 1945-1952, to elucidate answers. Chapter One surveys the debates surrounding memory, war, and national identity that raged in academic and popular audiences in the United States and Japan, most notably in the 1990s, and that provide a barometer to chart the continuity and change of narratives of war in the Pacific. Chapter Two examines the religious rhetoric of righteous war that permeated reactions to the atomic bombings, but that also found itself under attack from those who interpreted Hiroshima and Nagasaki as evidence of an American atrocity. Chapter Three turns to Japanese portrayals of the Christian nature of American identity that appeared in August 1945 and to the Occupation’s attempts to control—in fact, to censor—these responses to the atomic bomb. As Chapter Four indicates, American Christians were not the only audience to interpret apocalyptic war through a religious lens; Christian atomic bomb victims such as Takashi Nagai added their own voices to the critiques of nuclear war and indicated Japanese agency, even during the Occupation. Finally, Chapter Five traces the atomic bomb’s presence and

*Japan* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), 63-64. John Dower does not agree with Malloy’s more sympathetic portrayal of the Secretary of War and uses Stimson as “an excellent example of this peculiar exercise in evasive ratiocination” that led to the “rhetorical gymnastics” of denying the United States had “deliberately targeted civilians” even as it bombed city centers (See Dower’s *Cultures of War*, 209-210).
absence in the Occupation’s Christianizing mission as both the American government and Christian activists worked toward a democratic Japan; in many ways, the events of this era explained the disappearance of vocal opposition to nuclear warfare from mainstream American Christianity and the silencing of the counter-narratives that had greeted claims of the “Good War’s” righteous end. As John Dower contends, “Faith in one’s own and one’s nation’s righteous cause, and to some degree personal sanity itself, required closing of any genuinely unblinking and sustained imagination of what modern warfare had come to.”¹⁶ By 1995, the majority of Americans certainly seemed to agree as collective memory re-imagined the war’s last acts as, at least within the boundaries of the United States, uncontested moments of triumph that again celebrated the exceptionalism of Christian democracy. From 1945 to 1952, as we shall see, memory of the “Good War’s” termination and its implications for national identity proved porous indeed.

¹⁶ Dower, Cultures of War, 211.
Chapter One

“Only the Color of the Sea Remained Unchanged”: Popular and Academic Narratives of the Atomic Bomb

For Americans, the story generally goes like this: Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, and Japan was preparing for all-out war on the Japanese archipelago. Were it not for the bombs, many lives would have been lost. It was also the quickest way to end the war. For many living in those Asia countries that were formerly occupied by Japan, the story goes like this: The use of the bombs put an end to the aggression and colonialism waged against Japan’s neighbors. It was the quickest way to free Asia. And for many in Japan, the story goes like this: America dropped the bombs to gain control over postwar negotiations and for absolute dominance in the cold war era. As Japanese, we must pledge never to repeat this act of inhumanity elsewhere in the world.

Toyonaga Keisaburo, “Colonialism and Atom Bombs”

INTRODUCTION

In 1995, a political and cultural brouhaha erupted against the National Air and Space Museum’s exhibit “The Last Act: The Atomic Bomb and the End of World War II.” Planned since 1988, the display paired the infamous Enola Gay, the B-29 Superfortress that dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, with a historical discussion of the “Good War” and the myriad events that contributed to its cataclysmic end. For Americans alive in the second half of the twentieth century, their

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1 “Only the color of the sea remained unchanged” is the first line from Hashioka Takeshi’s memoir, “Hachigatsu nijusannichi no koto,” as quoted in John Whittier Treat’s Writing Ground Zero: Japanese Literature and the Atomic Bomb (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 6. This is Hashioka’s description of the breadth of destruction that resulted from the atomic bombing of Hiroshima on August 6, 1945.


3 David Thelen, “History after the Enola Gay Controversy: An Introduction,” The Journal of American History 82.3 (December 1995): 1029. In 1984, Studs Terkel’s Pulitzer-prize winning oral history of World War II, “The Good War,” opened with a note explaining the terminology’s significance: “The title of this book was suggested by Herbert Mitgang, who experienced World War Two as an army correspondent. It is a phrase that has been frequently voiced by men of his and my generation, to distinguish that war from other wars, declared and undeclared. Quotation marks have been added, not as a
nation’s involvement in World War II depicted an enduring and sacrosanct narrative of triumph. As “the most sacred icon of twentieth-century U.S. culture,” World War II’s symbolism of “national virtue” withstood even the turbulence, self-doubt, and prevailing anti-war sentiment of the Vietnam Era. The “Good War’s” plot was both simple and widely recognized: attacked despite its best attempts to prevent war with Japan’s militarists, the United States engaged enemies across two oceans and, with its ideals ebulliently victorious, defeated both and solidified the righteousness of its democracy. Adherence to the narrative of the “Good War” became the patriotic barometer for the nation’s culture wars by 1995. As New York politician Mario Cuomo lamented, the United States had found little “big to believe in” in the decades that followed and certainly “[n]othing to wrap your arms around” in an era devoid of any other national triumph.

Included in the Smithsonian’s planned consideration of American sacrifice and victory were Japanese perspectives of the war, most notably photographs and items, such as a schoolgirl’s scorched lunchbox, from the suffering endured by the civilians at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The photographs of Hiroshima’s charred victims provided a none-too-subtle contradiction of the long-held narrative of America’s “Good War,” waged against a brutal and often ‘bestial’ enemy determined to quash democratic ideals.

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5 Ibid., 203.

6 Ibid., 204.
The portrayal of Japan’s memory of the world’s introduction to atomic weapons ignited conservative backlash spearheaded by veterans, particularly those who served in the United States Air Force, and carried to fruition by politicians. World War II veterans and their contemporaries proved vocal lobbyists against the proposed treatment of the *Enola Gay* and its inclusion of Japanese suffering and humanity. Even research trips to Hiroshima and Nagasaki taken by the museum’s staff, which resulted in each city loaning artifacts from the bombings to National Air and Space Museum (NASM) curators, fell under scrutiny; critics viewed “contact with the former enemy” as “treacherous” and “un-American.”

This struggle against historians and supposed guardians of national memory—such as museum curators—exemplified the split between public and academic portrayals of Hiroshima and its aftermath. Many veterans resented the academic intrusion into their past, insisting that American veterans alone, as witnesses to the past, held the right to teach the public about the significance of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Air Force Association spokesman Jack Giese stated, “All we want is for the museum to tell history the way it happened,” minus commentary by curators regarding how they “thought it should have happened. We’re vets, we’ve actually been in the Cold War—they haven’t.”

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As the display’s script, a collaborative effort created by numerous respected historians, underwent various edits to purge its problematic elements, the controversy spread from a discussion among museum curators, historians, and military officials to become a public debate waged by politicians, newspaper columnists, and veterans. Among other factors, Congressional pressures threatened to squelch the museum’s federal funding, which compromised 72 percent of its operating budget and 77 percent of its construction funds. Once museum curators bowed to public pressure and potential budget crises, the resulting exhibit became a far cry from original plans. When the display finally opened, the Enola Gay’s fuselage stood virtually alone as, once again, the pervasive American victory narrative endured, liberated from the onus of historical context.

Major anniversaries associated with the Second World War—along with the commemorations that accompany these national rememberings—have frequently catalyzed national controversies as the public, politicians, academics, and survivors of the war grapple with interpretations of meaning and memory, often charged with tensions generated by present political and national considerations. As this chapter investigates, the various commemorations and museum exhibits in Japan and the United States that marked the war’s end provide a crucial backdrop to compare and contrast historiographical trends in both nations’ absorption of collective war memory within national identity. Stated simply, the ways in which each nation chose to remember war proved to be the product of contested terrain that dated back to August 1945, not revisionism that appeared in the upheaval of Vietnam. In Japan, Hiroshima and Nagasaki

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marked the beginnings of a memory of victimhood at the hands of Japanese militarists and American aggressors; in the United States, those same two events crafted a celebratory memory of the culmination of military superiority, scientific ingenuity, and the triumph of democracy that drove the newly minted superpower into an era of peacetime prosperity. Yet, many Japanese themselves participated in a collective forgetting that, despite omitting their nation’s atrocities in Korea, China, and the Philippines, brought the victimization of citizens bombed throughout Japan into stark relief. In the United States, the collective war narrative found itself under attack, according to its adherents, for the first time during the national turmoil of the Vietnam era. This reexamination appeared again in 1995 and highlighted myriad memory gaps in the American victory narrative. As we shall see, however, this questioning of the dual incineration of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was not born out of the radical contention and unease of the 1960s, but instead emerged in the days following the high tide of the “Good War’s” culmination.

Responses to such controversies allow scholars to question the veracity of purported “consensus” on any one interpretation of the past. Such questioning allows academic and popular audiences to re-examine the atomic bombings through new, critical lenses—such as Christian responses to the bombings that started in August 1945—that reveal a far more nuanced narrative of the war’s end. A thorough study of American and Japanese Christian unease with the decimation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in the decade after the bombings facilitates a reckoning with both American adherence to one stock victory narrative of the “Good War” and to the continued acceptance of the “Manifest Destiny” that drives American nationhood at home and abroad. Christian dissention
challenged America’s claim of righteousness in its prosecution of the war’s end as early as 1945; as Christians on both sides of the Pacific doubted the assertion that the United States had followed a God-given directive to defeat militarist Japan, they simultaneously questioned a major tenet of America’s national identity and the subsequent collective memory that shored it up over the next six decades. Uncertainty about the United States’ true identity as a Christian democracy thus provides an important backdrop for considering the contested nature of the “Good War” and its narrative, as seen in the recent collective memory battles. Before exploring Christian unease with the war’s end, we must first turn to a historiographical examination of memories of World War II and their enduring legacies in Japan and in the United States.

**MEMORY, GUILT, AND THE POLITICS OF PLACE: JAPAN’S RECKONING WITH THE WAR IN ASIA**

In order to contextualize this re-examination we must first explore recent historiographical trends that reveal major gaps between public and academic narratives of August 1945 and its aftermath. Along with the discomfort of the Vietnam era in the 1960s, scholars and activists in both the United States and Japan returned to the Pacific War and questioned national recollections—and national forgettings—of human degradation such as the Nanjing Massacre, the Japanese Army’s forced enslavement of Korean “comfort women,” and the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.10 The American Occupation of Japan from 1945-1952 had earlier witnessed a shift in Japanese

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10 For a detailed consideration of Japan’s national and political conflicts over its participation in World War II, see Franziska Serpahim’s *War Memory and Social Politics in Japan, 1945-2005* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2006).
interpretations of the recently terminated war as the public debated war responsibility and activists worked toward, as expressed in a Tokyo rally in December 1946, “an explicit rejection of the recent Japanese past” and “democratic reform, individual autonomy, and political activism.” Paired with Japanese activists’ calls for reform, Japanese intellectuals, according to Masao Maruyama, searched for a “community of contrition” due to “remorse for having failed to resist fascism, accompanied by a need to make sense of the war and defeat.” In *War Memory and Social Politics in Japan, 1945-2005*, historian Franziska Seraphim frames the ways in which an American Cold War conflict in Southeast Asia prompted the Japanese to analyze not only the United States’s Pacific War legacy, but also their own country’s actions. As Seraphim details:

> The daily news of American military conduct against Vietnamese civilians substantiated both left-wing and right-wing critiques of American hypocrisy as self-proclaimed champions of “peace and democracy.” But it also confronted many Japanese with memories of their own wartime behavior. It marked the culmination of lively citizen activism on a variety of political issues and resulted in a more critical consideration of war victimization, including questions of the Japanese people’s complicity in and perpetration of war crimes.

Japan’s tension between confronting and retreating from its own wartime responsibilities continues today, witnessed in controversies over textbook portrayals of Japan’s expansionism and war in Asia and recent prime ministers’ visits to Yasukuni Shrine, but Seraphim grounds this contemporary battle over public memory in decades of reworking the war’s meaning(s). In fact, starting in the late 1950s and continuing into the 1960s, Japan experienced a “history boom” that generated an outpouring of war memoirs along

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12 Ibid., 2.

13 Ibid., 23.
with new films, a pairing for popular consumption indicating “that the entertainment value of war history” had outpaced the public’s desire to garner only “political ‘lessons’” from the 1930s and 1940s. “These personal histories reached popular audiences searching for positive identities,” Seraphim writes, “not serious inquiries into war history and responsibility.”

This search for a positive identity, crafted by the public rather than by practitioners of history, would reverberate in the United States during the culture wars of the 1990s, as would the divergent purposes that memory served for different generations. Within this public sphere of war memory, various generations used Japan’s depiction of the past for disparate means, a trend Seraphim suggests was not unique to Japan alone, but also included the U.S. and Western Europe as well in the 1950s and 1960s.

While the “older generation of civic leaders” remained committed to the “‘correct’ transmission of (their own) war memory in an effort to maximize their continued public presence,” younger Japanese, like their counterparts in movement culture in places like Berkeley, employed “war memory as a language of protest.”

No two wartime events in the Pacific embodied the connection between memory and protest more than the nuclear devastation that left thousands of survivors, known in Japanese as the *hibakusha*, to grapple with the physical and mental wounds of war.

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14 Ibid., 166.

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid., 167.

17 John Dower defines *hibakusha* in terms of both collective identity and legal language in “Three Narratives of Our Humanity” in *History Wars: The Enola Gay and Other Battles for the American Past*, eds. Edward T. Linenthal and Tom Engelhardt (New York: Henry Holt & Company, 1996), 66. The literal translation from Japanese—“receive-explosion person (or people)”—also references radiation “exposure.” In legal terms, *hibakusha* includes “all Japanese who were within two kilometers of the epicenters of the bombs at the time they were dropped or during the days immediately following—regardless of their degree of exposure to radiation, or the severity of their atomic bomb-related injuries or illnesses” (66).
*Hibakusha* in Hiroshima and Nagasaki responded to their personal suffering by developing a collective, and intensely political, victims’ consciousness through their public personification of the meaning of nuclear war. While American censorship during the Occupation stalled the widespread publication of diaries, memoirs, and other anti-bomb expressions until 1952, Hiroshima and Nagasaki nevertheless created distinctive “never again” memories to protest the continued development of nuclear weapons. The peace museums and memorials of both cities represent these narratives of victimization and the significance of the moral act of witnessing the past. While Hiroshima’s Peace Memorial Museum uses its identity as the world’s first site of atomic death to implore its visitors to “never again” allow such wanton destruction of civilian life, Nagasaki’s memorial and museum evokes the desire, as the last city leveled by an atomic blast, to truly be the final victims of such horror; activist mayors in both locations continue to advance the cause of peace—and the way in which their city’s unique identity unveils the long-ranging tragedy of nuclear war. Every August, each city’s formal commemorations, including the paper lanterns floating along Hiroshima’s Ota River, mark the power of place in collective recollections of the past.

Religious studies scholar Edward T. Linenthal’s comparison between the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C. and Oklahoma City’s Memorial Center, at the site of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building, provides analysis of the “pedagogical purpose” of both memorials that shares notable parallels with Hiroshima and Nagasaki’s peace memorial parks and museum complexes. Visitors at the Memorial Center and the Holocaust Museum, posits Linenthal, “do not come merely to consume them as cultural commodities but to enter them as civic pilgrims, to be transformed by the lessons that
emerge from imaginative narrative engagement.” The physical structure of each museum in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, along with the bombing artifacts on display, such as Hiroshima’s use of a dead child’s tricycle to evoke personal tragedy and Nagasaki’s inclusion of singed work uniforms and melted glass bottles, attests to each city’s desire to not only show the bomb’s physical power and human toll, but also to persuade its visitors to adopt and publicize this narrative of international anti-nuclear protest. In this sense, then, museum visitors at these two locations in Japan share a similar experience to the visitors of the sites in Oklahoma City and Washington, D.C. described by Linenthal: “Both institutions offer the civic equivalent of being ‘born again’—the movement from passive unaware inhabitant of the nation state to active vigilant citizen empowered with the agency of a coherent moral public narrative.”  Many museum visitors in Hiroshima and Nagasaki interact with this shift toward vigilant citizenry not as residents of Japan, however, but as citizens of the nation that dropped both bombs. This international audience further solidifies the power of moral witnessing held by each city’s hibakusha, many of whom volunteer as guides at the museums and parks, for their own past now works to undermine the sway of national memory held by American visitors.

Scholars Jay Winter, John Dower, and James Orr have explored this convergence between memory—national or collective—and history in war victims’ consciousness and activism. In Remembering War: The Great War Between Memory and History in the Twentieth Century, historian Jay Winter’s consideration of what he labels “the second generation of memory”—the 1970s and the 1980s—and its source, the remembering of

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the Second World War, focuses primarily on victims of the Holocaust.\textsuperscript{19} Grounded in the memory of Nazi atrocities in Europe, Winter’s depictions of the act of witnessing have profound implications for the memories of Hiroshima and Nagasaki’s \textit{hibakusha}. The war crimes trials held against Nazi perpetrators in Europe at Nuremburg in 1946, and then during numerous post-war decades, revealed that the second memory boom had a “gaze . . . increasingly turned to the victim” as such trials necessarily relied upon victims’ memories of atrocity. This shift, in its emphasis on justice for the past, generated “a new form of collective remembrance” that pushed the witness to the forefront of memory. As Winter explains, “The witness was a survivor, a truth-teller, sworn under oath to tell the whole truth, but he was also a visitor from another planet . . . These people spoke of things we could see only through a glass, darkly, but through their voices we might be able to reach out to those who did not return from the camps.”\textsuperscript{20} Like Holocaust survivors, in the act of surviving the chaos of an atomic bombing and the foreign terrain it left behind, the \textit{hibakusha} spoke as residents “from another planet.” This positioning as a truth-teller added to the profundity of rememberances such as Hashioka Takeshi’s statement regarding Hiroshima’s devastation: “Only the color of the sea remained

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\textsuperscript{19} Jay Winter, \textit{Remembering War: The Great War Between Memory and History in the Twentieth Century} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 26. Winter identifies the “first memory boom” as the result of the Great War’s influence over the memories of a generation, though the war itself “did not create the first memory boom of the twentieth century” (20). Rather, as Winter argues, “there is a cohort of men and women born approximately between the 1860s and 1880s who came into academic, literary, professional, or public prominence in the period of 1890 to 1920 through their writings on or about memory” (20). Prominent among these were sociologist Maurice Halbwachs and Siegfried Sassoon, whose poetry evoked the despair of the Great War (21).

\textsuperscript{20} Winter, \textit{Remembering War}, 30.
unchanged.”21 Often, their memories documented the guilt connected to surviving and the desire to speak truth for the dead. Though the United States only found itself on trial for Hiroshima and Nagasaki in the international court of public opinion, the collective voice of the hibakusha demonstrated the power of the witness. Winter’s assessment of the “semisacred role” of Holocaust survivors again shares crucial parallels with the victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. “Their words, their acts of remembrance, gave them a quasi-religious tone,” suggests Winter, “and listening to survivors appeared to be a kind of laying on of hands, an acceptance of the witness in the early Christian sense of the term, as a person who testifies to her faith, even while in danger of dying for it.”22 For Japan’s hibakusha, personal testimonials frequently took the form of international denunciations of war.

Hibakusha in Hiroshima and Nagasaki served as “moral witnesses” through their remembering of August 1945 and the decades of mental and physical challenges that followed it. Winter defines such observers as “individuals with a terrible tale to tell, people whose very lives are defined by that story. What sets aside the narrative moral witnesses have to tell is that it is based on the individual’s direct and personal experience of what Kant called ‘radical evil.’”23 While hibakusha certainly agreed on the evils of nuclear war, their expression of such memory directly confronted two events widely accepted as justifiable by the victor nation, the United States. Even when survivors of


22 Winter, Remembering War, 30.

Hiroshima and Nagasaki blamed their government as well for its own prosecution of war in the Pacific, popular American recollections of August 1945 remained resistant to this “revisionism.” Despite American claims of righteousness, the voices raised by the hibakusha signified a greater trend to result from the upheaval of a global conflagration, for their witnessing of the past revealed “the democratization of suffering” that Winter concludes “changes the face of remembrance.” This democratization supplants the soldier “at the center of the narrative” with the victims who, as individuals or members of a collective, have guaranteed “that their stories and their lives were not erased by their persecutors.”

Historian John Dower’s consideration of the hibakusha and their role in remembering the atomic bomb as part of World War II reveals the democratization of memory and the claims to unique victimhood held by survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The narratives of the hibakusha as moral witnesses not only overshadowed stories by Japanese soldiers, but also frequently blamed the military for the nation’s pain and for their own trauma. This victimization resulted from violence perpetrated on Japanese civilians from two sources: their own government’s militarism and the airpower of the United States. Unlike other “civilian deaths” and “battlefield casualties,” survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki confirmed that their defeated nation had endured a “uniquely terrible victimization.” As Dower argues, “The atomic bombs became the symbol of a special sort of suffering—much like the Holocaust for the Jews. . . . Many Japanese still see themselves as being chosen, almost in a religious sense, to bear witness to the apocalyptic vision of a world-destroying future that must not be allowed to

\[24\] Ibid., 281-282.
happen.”

This identity as survivors of a unique atrocity, set against the backdrop of millions of others suffering from the World War II’s aftermath, overtly condemned American claims to national righteousness, just as it undermined the United States’s adherence to a triumphal end of war that touted the earth-shattering physical power of the new atomic bomb, but not the human beings left to perish underneath the mushroom cloud. Thus, while many in Japan emphasized the victimization of civilians at home rather than fully examining their nation’s wartime aggression and its victims, American audiences preferred to buffer themselves from the bomb’s human toll by looking instead at its seemingly natural power. In his 1995 foreword to Michihiko Hachiya’s *Hiroshima Diary*, Dower elucidates this Western, and especially American, tendency to endow this natural force with “lavish, even loving, attention” and to ignore its human toll, for “commentary about the human consequences of the bombs . . . undermines the heroic narrative and raises troubling questions about ‘the good war.’”

The dogged nature of this “averted gaze” and its reappearance in the Smithsonian’s 1995 elimination of the *Enola Gay*’s victims is what makes witnessing by hibakusha like Hachiya so crucial to reexaminations of the war. Dower places victims’ memory in the overarching narrative of war: “[Hachiya’s] simple account tells us, as no one but the Japanese who experienced the bombs can, about the human consequences of nuclear weapons. It reminds us of the

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27 Ibid., vi.
larger tragic narrative of World War II, in which heroism coexisted with moral ambiguity, and the same act could seem simultaneously merciful and merciless.”

Other Japanese narratives of the Pacific War contain tropes familiar to American audiences, often magnified through the retelling of the war’s apocalyptic last events. Just as many Americans perceived the atomic bombings as more of a natural disaster than an act of war perpetuated by human beings, a perspective augmented by the mushroom-cloud imagery of a Hiroshima apparently devoid of humanity, Morio Watanabe cautions, “One pathological aspect of the collective memory of the Asia-Pacific War in Japan is to look back on the war as a natural disaster, perhaps because it allows a psychological absolution of accountability.” In her evaluation of the Showa Era (1926-1989), historian Carol Gluck comments on the tendency of Japan’s textbooks to depict the war, including events such as Pearl Harbor, the “China Incident,” and the atomic bombings, as part and parcel of a “natural catastrophe” without “human agency,” a perspective compounded by what she calls “history in the passive voice.” Thus, both former belligerents distanced themselves from their wartime culpability by discussing World War II as a natural phenomenon instead of one of atrocities executed by human will.

Survivors as well distanced themselves from certain aspects of war. James J. Orr, a historian specializing in East Asia, presents this trend in The Victim as Hero: Ideologies of Peace and National Identity in Postwar Japan. The victim had preempted

28 Ibid., vii.


the victimizer in Japan’s collective memory “by the 1960s,” states Orr. Japan’s own behavior in “victimizing others” was “not always forgotten,” but collective memory focused instead on “personal Japanese war experiences” such as the victims of the Allied targeting of cities in the home islands. In such retellings, civilians held “the high ground of victimhood,” as responsibility for the war and “the role of victimizer” fell away from the collective Japanese people and instead to either “the military, to the militarist state, or to the vaguely defined entity called simply ‘the system.’” Though Orr does not include it in this list of victimizers, the United States certainly appeared as such for those subjected to its various iterations of bombing campaigns.

As American media focused on the National Air and Space Museum’s Enola Gay memory war, Japan’s Yokohama Museum of Art opened Photography in the 1940s, the only exhibit in the Tokyo region to portray the war’s conclusion in 1995. The exhibit included a series of more than eighty photographs taken in Japan, the United States, and Europe that were part of the museum’s permanent holdings. In her analysis of the messages conveyed by the selection of photographs, historian Julia A. Thomas concludes that the museum created two renderings of the war’s history: “In the first narrative, the West was made to indict itself.” Notably, the exhibit’s entrance served as preamble to this narrative, as the two photographs on display echoed “scenes of moral failure from France and the United States” by displaying, in one, French collaborators, and in the


33 Ibid., 1480.
other, iconic American photographer Ansel Adams’s view of an internment camp at Manzanar, California, an aspect of the U.S. home front oft-overlooked by Americans ill-at-ease with the “Good War’s” dissonance. The second rendering “made Japan the central figure,” but it was “a Japan divorced not only from ‘the West’ but also from ‘the East’ outside its home islands.” In many ways, the photographs’ absences, which excluded depictions of either a defined ‘enemy’ or Japan’s own enlisted men, paralleled the cleansing of the Enola Gay exhibit in its narrow definition of wartime memory. While Yokohama Museum of Art’s Photography in the 1940s emphasized the war as a “civilian undertaking” and overlooked Asian victims of Japanese aggression, the censorship of the Smithsonian’s Enola Gay exhibit omitted atomic bomb victims—the majority of whom were civilians—in an effort to soothe American protest by conforming to the expected victory narrative. Each consideration of the war and its end purged the presented narrative of a shared national past that might discomfit current collective memory and identity. As Thomas suggests, “Photography in the 1940s remembered, but it remembered with deliberate selectivity” for “the images presented at Yokohama created a double story of Western aggression and Japanese innocence, Western shame and Japanese recovery, and the abiding beauty of Western (primarily American) landscapes and the immemorial loveliness of Japanese traditions.”

34 Ibid., 1478.
36 Ibid., 1483, 1485. Thomas notes that “airman [who] stands proudly in his clean uniform before a Douglas DC-4 in Yagi Osamu’s 1941 portrait ‘Fighter of the Air.’ The staged photograph of the unnamed hero presents him and his aircraft against a blank sky without any context” (1483).
37 Ibid., 1486, 1485.
Photography in the 1940s echoed Japan’s tendency to focus on the victimization of its civilians—as documented by Dower and Orr—rather than contend with the absent legacy of its own wartime militarism against other nations.

Photography in the 1940s illustrated the obstacles presented by academic deconstructions of the formation of national memory as it raised questions regarding how historians determine who remembers and in what ways, particularly when political pressure obfuscates the past. Thomas posits that what may have been most significant about the Yokohama Museum of Art’s exhibition in 1995 was the relative silence of the public’s response, a juxtaposition to the furor occurring across the Pacific at the same time. “Although curator Kuraishi Shino may have set out to convey the ‘serious political confusion’ of the period,” writes Thomas, “confusion seemed little in evidence in the expurgation of all images of Japanese militarism, colonialism, and occupation.” Yet, preconditioned by fifty years of purposeful forgetting by family members, the government, and “whitewashed textbooks read by children,” no Japanese voiced criticism of the exhibit’s significant omissions.38 Thomas concludes that “[f]or many Japanese people, the past remains simply past and irrelevant to their current lives,” a stance that quieted public objection toward the museum.39 Less visible, especially for a Western observer of the exhibit, were Japan’s ultranationalists—estimated at 120,000 members—who frequently protest revisions to war memory or critiques of the “emperor system (tennosei)” and who, through their “indistinct but potent” connections with government officials, wield considerable clout in the Japanese art community, where artists employ

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38 Ibid., 1486.
39 Ibid.
“protective self-censorship” rather than running afoul of ultranationalist ire that has shut down other displays.\(^4\)

Facets of postmodern analysis prove inherent to many commentaries on narrative, memory, and the global conflagration of war, as postmodernism destabilizes conventional styles of narrative; these influences appear in academic considerations of Japan’s adherence to national memory. In their assessment of Japan’s “dominant narrative” of the Asia-Pacific War, T. Fujitani, Geoffrey M. White, and Lisa Yoneyama note that the Japanese traditionally depict the war as a “historical aberration” preceding the post-war era’s “successful modernization,”\(^4\) a stance that echoes historiographical debates regarding whether the American Occupation set post-war Japanese society, culture, and politics along a path of continuity or discontinuity from pre-war trends. Gluck labels this national memory of discontinuity between pre- and post-1945 as the “tale of two Showas” and the “two Hirohitos,” an era and an emperor separated by the seminal date of Japan’s surrender to the Allies on August 15, 1945. As depicted in a series of television specials aired in Japan following the death of the Showa Emperor, Hirohito, in 1989, “the image of prewar Showa” was one of “war and darkness,” a stark contrast to the postwar era that witnessed a flourishing of “democracy and prosperity, peace and world economic power” and, at least for seven years, occupation by the United States.\(^4\) Despite the presence of a “dominant narrative,” Morio Watanabe, citing an August 16, 1995 Yomiuri

\(^{40}\) Ibid., 1489, 1490.


Shinbun article, points to the lack of “a proper name” for the Pacific War as “testimony to the ambivalent public consciousness in Japan,” an indication that perhaps national rememberings of the past, though powerful indicators of collective identity, are not sufficient to generate consensus.43

The very use of the signifier “Pacific War” proves problematic in any discussion of Japan’s war memory. Part of the confusion over the war’s proper name remains rooted in American Occupation policy and the pervasive censorship of the public sphere conducted by General Douglas MacArthur’s Supreme Command of the Allied Powers (SCAP). In December 1945, SCAP announced that Japan’s citizens could no longer refer to the “Greater East Asia War” but instead had to use the name bestowed by SCAP: the Pacific War. Historian John Dower suggests this transformation “of nomenclature” generated nothing less than a sea change in Japan’s national memory unintended by the occupiers. While SCAP assumed this new verbiage would eschew “religious and nationalist indoctrination,” the long-ranging effect was to underscore Japan’s war with America and to abandon its memory of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere’s brutal expansion throughout Asia.44 This omission carried many ramifications. Over subsequent decades, “the weight of national memory” that “falls heavily on the Pacific War” clashed with historians in Japan who instead researched “the Fifteen-Year War” that focused on Japanese imperialism in China and filled in an uncomfortable memory


gap.\textsuperscript{45} Often symbolized by the crucible of Yasukuni Shrine and the international fallout that haunted prime ministers’ honoring of Japan’s war dead, this struggle over the realities of the war continues into the present. As occurred in the United States, monolithic national memory obscured the nuances of the past actually lived by the Japanese and their pseudo-colonial subjects. In his postmodern and postcolonial essay on “the multiplicity of the experiences of the war,” historian Arif Dirlik purposefully employs “content” and “form to convey the disjointedness of memories of World War II against narrative coherence that inevitably ends up with narrative closure on how the war is to be remembered.”\textsuperscript{46} In 1995, governments in Japan and the United States were closely invested in particular definitions of victim and victimizer and in how their citizens commemorated the events of the 1940s; indeed, the narrative closure Dirlik articulates and the right to tell the historical past ‘as it was’ became hotly contested ground.

\textit{“THE BOMB EXPLOSION THAT SO JARRED THE CHRISTIAN CONSCIENCE”: AMERICANS REVISIT HIROSHIMA}

Just as the Vietnam War constituted a reckoning with interpretations of World War II for the Japanese, it precipitated a similar crisis of confidence for American citizens and scholars in their own adherence to American ideals, the “Good War” as lasting myth, or both. In response to the 1968 My Lai massacre, Reinhold Niebuhr


concluded, “This is a moment of truth when we realize that we are not a virtuous nation.”

This apparent destabilization of faith in American righteousness had profound implications for historians and others, for if the U.S. had lost sight of the “ethical standards” it had long espoused, as brutally illustrated by My Lai, how might Americans have erred in previous conflicts?

As historian Marilyn B. Young argues, American involvement in the Vietnam War prompted a reexamination of nothing less than “the founding premise of U.S. history itself.” Once portrayed as the most virtuous of wars, World War II itself, along with its jarring end, now experienced a reconsidering in the U.S. that, as in Japan, was not without controversy. Yet, even as scholars, starting in the 1960s, revisited the American experience in World War II, the American public itself—including those committed to the anti-war movements of the era that so plagued the Johnson and Nixon administrations—“never questioned the goodness of their country in the Second World War.”

At the root of the fallout surrounding the Enola Gay exhibit, scheduled to debut during the 50th anniversary of World War II’s end, were arguments surrounding memory and narrative. For five decades, most Americans perceived the events of August 6 and 9,

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47 Quoted by Kendrick Oliver in *The My Lai Massacre in American History and Memory* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 2-3. As Oliver argues, however, despite Niebuhr’s predictions, the atrocities at My Lai (4) have largely vanished from American memory as “[w]hat was once an image of incandescent horror has become at most a vague recollection of something unpleasant that happened during the Vietnam War” (Oliver 3).

48 Kendrick Oliver, *The My Lai Massacre in American History and Memory* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 139. As Seraphim adds in *War Memory and Social Politics in Japan*, “Few Japanese were convinced that the United States was fighting a ‘righteous’ war against Communism in Vietnam” (207).

49 Young, “Dangerous History: Vietnam and the ‘Good War,’” 201.

50 Ibid., 203.
1945 in the light of triumph—the seemingly abrupt end of a bloody war justified the incineration of more than 200,000 noncombatants by preserving the lives of American soldiers awaiting orders to invade Japan. As one G.I. remembered, “We’re sitting on the pier in Seattle, sharpening our bayonets, when Harry dropped that beautiful bomb. The greatest thing ever happened.” Many also believed that the bombs were “benevolent” saviors for the Japanese, for the dual mushroom clouds not only ended the war, but prevented more Japanese from dying in an extended combat during the planned invasion of Japan. The bombs also brought a rebuilt Japan, occupied by the United States, under the protection of America’s nuclear umbrella during the Cold War. Indeed, a 1995 Gallup Poll noted that 59 percent of the nation still supported President Harry Truman’s decision, with 35 percent disagreeing, an indication that although a significant number willingly questioned past leadership, an even greater number remained convinced of American righteousness. “As the rationales for the atomic attacks have come under detailed historical scrutiny and the foundations underpinning much of the original justification have begun to erode,” write scholars Lawrence Lifschultz and Kai Bird, “adherence to the legend of Hiroshima has intensified among those who believe the United States acted correctly, even morally.”


the death at Hiroshima and Nagasaki was the requirement to rewrite what historian M. Susan Lindee calls the “technological evil” of the atomic bomb created by the United States. Beyond justifying the incineration of two civilian targets, the newly destructive power of atomic energy had to be “turned into the vehicle of a promising future. It was necessary, somehow, to redeem the bomb.” The future of the bomb, along with its past, was now equally righteous as it promised to not only end war and act as a “guarantor of peace,” but also to provide clean energy and postwar prosperity. In extending this interpretation from the specific aftermath of Hiroshima and Nagasaki to more abstract nuclear energy, Americans confirmed their adherence to a narrative that celebrated, through the overtly religious language of “righteousness” and “redemption,” their God-given victory in World War II. Americans reasserted this belief in varied venues, such as Harper’s, throughout the Cold War; as Lewis H. Lapham opined in 1979, “In 1945, the United States inherited the earth . . . The continental United States had escaped the plague of war, and so it was easy enough for the heirs to believe that they had been anointed by God.” It was this very interpretation of divine intervention that made the 1995 Enola Gay conflagration so contentious, for it threatened five decades of nationally accepted identity as a Christian democracy that had triumphed over evil in Europe and Asia.

The American public’s reactions to Hiroshima held fast to what Jonathan Clark labels “the American myth.” J. Samuel Walker credits this mythology, in part, for academics’ enduring fascination with August 1945. Walker’s 1996 “The Decision to Use


the Bomb,” published in Michael J. Hogan’s *Hiroshima in History and Memory*, contends first that the “central theme” of the “consensus” of “mid-1970s” scholarship on the atomic bomb still existed in the 1990s. Identifying this theme as American advisers’ acceptance that, once the “device” became available, they would use it without question, Walker nonetheless delineates why historians and the public alike rehash various interpretations of the bombings. “The events that led to Hiroshima are so innately interesting,” proposes Walker, “so vital to understanding subsequent developments, so politically and morally ambiguous, and so much a part of popular mythology that it seems certain that they will perpetually occupy the attention of and stir discord among scholars of World War II and the nuclear age.”57

Contextualizing the roots of American memory and identity in *What is History For?* Beverly Southgate writes in 2005,

> Like all good myths of national identity, the American version gains persuasiveness and power (and thence longevity) by telling people what they want to hear—providing stable roots, confirming national unity and a natural sense of superiority, and establishing a progressive trajectory through time. Such myths, of course, themselves represent a deliberate re-writing of the past, and the imposition of a coherence otherwise lacking.58

National memory of Hiroshima and Nagasaki represents this very process, as many witnessed the culmination of American science and ingenuity in the ubiquitous mushroom cloud. For historian Ronald Takaki, a key facet of American identity—and thus the impetus for maintaining the American myth, although he does not use the specific term—was personified by Harry Truman when he “refused to question his action” and its aftermath at Hiroshima. “The unwillingness to reflect on decisions once

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they had been made is often seen as an American characteristic,” explains Takaki. “We tend to think of ourselves as constantly reinventing ourselves, breaking from Europe as well as our own past, always moving forward.”

In perpetuating this national myth and resisting reexaminations of the past, Americans engaged in the production of cultural memory that carries significance for national identity. Described by Jan and Aleida Assmann as “a set of codes” that organizes, according to Jay Winter, “personal recollections of the past in a literary, aesthetic, and philosophical framework,” cultural memory’s codes and their national scope find “deep resonances in the literary and religious life of a people.” This, in turn, renders cultural memory rife with political implications.

American reckonings with Hiroshima and Nagasaki uncovered the perils inherent in a prevailing cultural memory in both political and religious spectrums; the politics tied to purported revisionism threatened the careers of academics and politicians alike, while the righteousness of America’s Christian democracy appeared precarious in the light of nuclear war.

Historians who undermined American legend by telling U.S. citizens what they do not want to hear—Barton Bernstein and John Dower, for example—found themselves “disinvited” from White House ceremonies and public meetings. The widespread American backlash against ‘revisionists’ and their presumed disrespect for a sacred past was an ironic occurrence, for journalists in particular “seemed oblivious to the fact that critics of the legend were posing precisely the same questions that had been raised in


60 Winter, Remembering War, 104.

1945 by a number of American diplomats, military officers, Manhattan project scientists, and ordinary citizens.” No less a World War II icon than Dwight David Eisenhower voiced “a feeling of depression” regarding the potential for nuclear attacks on Japan in a July 1945 conversation with Secretary of War Henry Stimson; the conversation pre-dated Hiroshima and Nagasaki.  

The August 1, 2005 issue of *Time* magazine hints at a notable change in popular perceptions of the atomic bomb during the last decade. The cover shows Kinuyo Watanabe, the sole survivor in her family of Hiroshima, holding a small photograph of the iconic mushroom cloud that for so long obscured the human suffering underneath it. Although the special edition contains the expected interviews with the *Enola Gay’s* crew, the very inclusion of a pictorial essay of Hiroshima’s living victims indicates that, in the last ten years, the intense hostilities connected to the Smithsonian controversy may have eased, allowing space for considerations of Japan’s memories of World War II and for alternative explanations of the United States’s decision to drop two atomic bombs. Stanford historian David M. Kennedy’s contribution to *Time’s* anniversary issue illustrates one of the many shifts in recent interpretations of Harry S. Truman’s decision to use nuclear weapons to end the Pacific War. Kennedy writes:

> The atom bombs thus undoubtedly sped the conclusion of the war against Japan. They also ignited a moral controversy that has endured to this day. That controversy concerns an issue much larger than the bombs themselves, one whose origins date from well before the war….The weapons that incinerated those two unfortunate cities represented a technological innovation with fearsome consequences for the future of humanity. But the U.S. had already crossed a terrifying moral threshold when it accepted the targeting of civilians as a legitimate instrument of warfare. That was a deliberate decision, indeed, and it's where the moral argument should rightly focus.  

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62 Ibid., xliv, xxxiii.

Kennedy’s argument destabilizes tenacious portrayals of the “Good War” as free from Allied atrocities by clearly articulating problematic aspects of American wartime tactics, such as the calculated transformation of cities into battlefields that resulted in the death of at least 900,000 Japanese citizens. Moreover, Kennedy’s essay highlights a wider trend in the historiography of the atomic bombings that diverges from—and at times vociferously returns to—traditional interpretations of the roles that August 6 and 9, 1945 played in bringing World War II to its denouement.

The *Enola Gay* controversy, *Time’s* August 1, 2005 edition, and David M. Kennedy’s essay all provide striking examples of the gulfs between popular and academic, as well as objective and subjective, recollections of history. As *Time* illustrated in its coverage of Hiroshima, opportunities for bridging academic and popular perceptions of the atomic bombings may now exist. Nonetheless, contention has long shadowed encounters between collective memory and practitioners of history. An evaluation of the historiography that molded the *Enola Gay* controversy, paired with an explanation of how its own ‘fallout’ has influenced national and academic considerations of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in the past decade, indicates that simplistic divisions between traditionalism and revisionism—indeed between novice and professional perspectives on our past—obscure the enduring complexities of the field.

Although historians, among others, have oft debated the legitimacy of Truman’s actions, just as many have condemned the binary that paired the absence of the atomic bombings with a continued war and potentially one million American casualties, such
explanations failed to counter the pervasive mythological identity of the “Good War.”

In his examination of the conflict between “the core of myths and traditions constructed over time by privileged Americans to ennoble their history” and scholarly history—rendered “profane” in comparison—Geoffrey S. Smith traces the roots of American identity. “The Republic’s national creed,” narrates Smith in “Beware, the Historian!” “imparted in civics classes, popular magazines like Time and Life, government proclamations, televised holiday spectacles, movies, and other cultural outlets, possesses its own vaunted public values (freedom, liberty, and individual responsibility)” along with “myths,” “hymns,” and “holidays.” American memory of World War II and its termination encapsulated these values, with men such as President Truman and Enola Gay pilot Paul Tibbets standing tall as representatives of “individual responsibility.” Moreover, if one accepts Smith’s definition of our “national creed’s” genesis, Time does indeed act as a barometer for changing trends in our collective memory.

In Writing Ground Zero: Japanese Literature and the Atomic Bomb, John Whittier Treat admits that the subject of the atomic bombings challenges scholars and

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64 Casualty estimates for the invasion of Japan—scheduled for November 1945 as “Operation Olympic”—remain a major point of contention between various historians and between academics and the public at large. Barton Bernstein has virtually made a career proving that no record exists from Truman’s administration that proves the US would have “lost” one million men; when this number enters debates, many treat it as though it predicted deaths, when in fact it hypothetically includes injuries and deaths. The role of this essentially fictitious number in American memory, however, seems virtually impossible to separate from justifications for the atomic bombs. As Michael Hogan writes in “The Enola Gay Controversy,” when the Smithsonian’s script suggested that US planners predicted 46,000 casualties in 1945, and not one million, veterans became irate, insisting as one man did that the bomb “saved hundreds of thousands of my compatriots from death or injury.” Michael J. Hogan, “The Enola Gay Controversy,” in Hiroshima in History and Memory, ed. Michael J. Hogan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 207. Michael S. Sherry suggests that arguments over casualty estimates were “the final breach between the [Air and Space] museum and its critics” that ultimately censored the Enola Gay exhibit. See Michael S. Sherry, “Patriotic Orthodoxy,” in History Wars, eds. Edward T. Linenthal and Tom Engelhardt (New York: Henry Holt & Co, 1996), 106.

popular audiences in both Japan and the United States. Though Treat’s focus is literary, he contextualizes the intricacies of the past that complicate the present:

I raise the issue here of just how far any of us can proceed with a study of atomic-bomb literature before the unresolved and even unspoken issues of history overwhelm how we will choose to interpret and thus commit to a specific historical understanding. At what point . . . does our own point of view, be it that of a postwar Japanese or American, preclude the possibility of our reading not so much intelligently as honestly; without foreclosing all the historical and ethical implications of the genre?”

These “unresolved and even unspoken” issues continue to incite debate among scholars, just as they generate unease for the everyday Americans accustomed to a victory narrative that leaves unexamined the morality—even the necessity—of the atomic bombs. Treat’s work, published in 1995, consciously expresses the voice of an academic and an American, particularly in his preface, but this does not mean that Treat fully spans the memory gap between popular culture and the ivory tower. First, Treat acknowledges that he “writes cautiously and uncomfortably as an American, as a citizen of the first and to date only nation to execute what an international science enabled: nuclear war.”

Treat’s unease is admirable, for it indicates respect for the virtually incomprehensible loss of life—both in the past and potentially in the future—inherently tied to nuclear weapons. But Treat engages in a form of self-indulgence that few historians of the atomic bomb, hopeful of retaining and maybe even influencing a thoughtful audience, could conscientiously replicate. Treat declares, “I do mean this project to be anything but objective: it is from the start a simultaneous study of a historical subject and a personal subjectivity, the latter of which I am sure most of my readers will have to explore


67 Ibid., xi.
themselves before what I say will make its most radical sense.” In this sense, Treat delves into the subjectivity of memory, rather than the objectivity of history, as he examines the literature created by atomic bomb survivors.

Analysis, interpretation, and understanding of the events at Hiroshima and Nagasaki have long presented observers—scholars and non-academics alike—with countless obstacles. In many ways, irony pervades reactions to nuclear warfare on the American side of the Pacific, visible in the continued horror that a new atomic cataclysm might occur. This “potent rhetorical theme” began to ebb from the American imagination in 1941 when President Franklin Delano Roosevelt declared “freedom from fear” as one of the Four Freedoms for which America stood,” but a “a new and terrible fear of unfathomable magnitude” returned to haunt American memory after Hiroshima. As Treat explains in Writing Ground Zero, “In a sense Hiroshima and Nagasaki were a grotesque performance—a ‘dramatic finale,’ in the words of one historian—put on for the benefit of audiences in Tokyo and Moscow, as postmodern in its meaning as Nazi camps were terrifyingly modern. Hiroshima and Nagasaki were the initiation of a new phase of human history that we are still only beginning to inhabit, much less comprehend.” Other authors view Hiroshima through a postmodern lens as well, using it as a form of metonymy, or a signifier for an event, such as “Hiroshima introduced the atomic age.”

68 Ibid.


70 Treat, Writing Ground Zero, 15.

Thus, atomic bomb historiography remains pervasively charged with a contentious past that often divides scholars and citizens into starkly disparate understandings of the national narrative.

Atomic bomb historiography underwent a seminal transformation when, in the 1970s and 1980s, Michel Foucault’s theories on state power—the Panopticon—and its ties to “related corporate institutions and political and religious entities in delineating key historical traditions” catalyzed new cultural history. In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Foucault delineates the literal and figurative definitions of the Panopticon. Jeremy Bentham’s tangible form of a Panopticon is an architectural structure that, through the use of a tower in an “annular building,” renders every cell’s inmate visible to a central observer, thus ensuring discipline. Foucault summarizes the literal and figurative application for this architecture: “the panoptic mechanism arranges spatial unities that make it possible to see constantly and recognize immediately.” He then applies the Panopticon to knowledge and power:

The Panopticon functions as a kind of laboratory of power. Thanks to its mechanisms of observation, it gains in efficiency and in the ability to penetrate into men’s behaviour; knowledge follows the advances of power, discovering new objects of knowledge over all the surfaces on which power is exercised....The Panopticon... must be understood as a generalizable model of functioning; a way of defining power relations in terms of the everyday life of men.... But the Panopticon must not be understood as a dream building: it is the diagram of a mechanism of power reduced to its ideal form; its functioning, abstracted from any obstacle, resistance or friction, must be represented as a pure architectural and optical system: it is in fact a figure of political technology that may and must be detached from any specific use.

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72 Smith, “Beware, the Historian!,” 122.


74 Ibid., 204-205.
For Foucault, the symbolism of the Panopticon united knowledge and power, and fell under the control and manipulation of what Anna Green and Kathleen Troup label the “official or dominant knowledges.” Troup and Green suggest, following Foucault’s reasoning, that “history writing can be a form of power: we use our knowledge to control and domesticate the past, although it is only one past. Since all history must be present-centered, we create the way in which people think about the present through our creative fictions (for they can be no other) concerning the past.”

In *Hiroshima in History and Memory*, Michael J. Hogan contends that Foucault’s methodology, part of postmodernism’s deconstructionalism, questioned traditional narratives—the way we think about our past and our present—that promoted the atomic bomb as a merciful and legitimate weapon, and undeniably the impetus behind Japan’s unconditional surrender, and instead prompted historians to publish considerably less patriotic analyses of Truman’s motivations; this postmodern shift questioned nothing less than the United States’s national creative fictions. Noting that Foucault argued that “historical memories are constantly refashioned to suit present purposes,” Hogan adds Pierre Nora’s theories to his own discourse on the “fundamental state of tension” between memory and history. Synthesizing Nora’s 1989 essay “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memorie,” Hogan hints at the split between popular and historical interpretations of Hiroshima as present claims on American righteousness threaten to whitewash national


behavior in earlier wars. “Whereas history is objective,” writes Hogan, “memory is subjective, selective, and present minded.”

J. Samuel Walker, chief historian for the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, concisely traces current schools of interpretation in “The Decision to Use the Bomb: A Historiographical Update,” in “History, Collective Memory, and the Decision to Use the Bomb”—both published in 1996—and in “Recent Literature on Truman’s Atomic Bomb Decision: A Search for Middle Ground,” written in 2005. Like other academics in the field, particularly following what Geoffrey Smith calls “the shootout at the Smithsonian corral,” Walker opens his 1996 work with an acknowledgement of the “wide gap between popular and scholarly views” of Hiroshima before delving into the legacy of moral, military, and political perspectives on the bombing. Admittedly, explains Walker, historians have more clearly defined “the influences on collective memory” than they have articulated the “content of collective memory;” nonetheless, Walker does believe that American collective memory of Hiroshima and Nagasaki accepts “Truman’s action as a sound decision that ended the war without requiring an invasion of Japan and thus saved large numbers of American lives.”

Applying the work of John Bodnar’s 1992 *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* to August 1945, Walker notes that Bodnar’s assertion that the federal government is the “primary agent” in crafting collective memories of our past is apropos.

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77 Ibid, 4.


for the atomic bomb, even if Walker judges Bodnar’s overall conclusions on the government’s influence over our historical consciousness as overstated. For Walker and other historians, the root of dueling perspectives grows from arguments regarding whether Truman did indeed use the bomb to conclusively and immediately end war with Japan, or if the weapon instead advanced post-war political considerations. Even within these disputes, Walker and others assumed in 1996 that a “broad scholarly consensus” existed, and its facets included acceptance that Truman did not view the bomb as a means to protect the lives of American servicemen, but rather hoped the bomb would force Japan’s immediate surrender. Scholars also agreed that Truman and his advisors misjudged Japan’s will to wage war, for with or without the atomic bomb, Japan was on the brink of capitulation, and thus an Allied invasion was “an unlikely possibility.”

Starting in 1965 with Atomic Diplomacy, historian Gar Alperovitz had vociferously contended that Truman eyed the Soviet Union as a potential nemesis once war-time collaboration ended, and thus used the atomic bomb as a harbinger of the new power now harnessed by the United States. Though other scholars had suggested similar scenarios, Alperovitz ignited debate “in part because he drew from recently opened sources to reconstruct events in unprecedented detail, in part because of growing uneasiness about the conduct of American foreign policy in Vietnam, and in part because of the emerging scholarly debate over the origins of the Cold War.” Alperovitz’s

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80 Ibid., 188.
81 Ibid., 190.
82 Ibid., 13.
83 Ibid.
argumentation made him a key revisionist in the field, for he maintained that the atomic bomb was primarily used as a diplomatic agent that not only demonstrated American might, but also prevented the Soviets from carving up any territorial gains in Manchuria had war extended beyond August 1945. Furthermore, Alperovitz assumed that American control of “atomic technology brought about policy shifts by the United States that played an important role in causing the Cold War.”

Numerous scholars took issue with Alperovitz’s conclusions, including Thomas H. Hammond, who labeled his assertions “implausible, exaggerated, or unsupported by the evidence,” and Robert James Maddox, who said the monograph was the product of “creative writing.” Nonetheless, Alperovitz remains a voice worthy of consideration within the field, as he provides observers with a framework to mark both continuity and change. During the Enola Gay controversy in 1995, critics used academic unease with the Vietnam War, in some ways the aegis for Alperovitz’s reworking of Truman’s reasons for the bombing, to condemn revisionism wholeheartedly. In a Washington Post editorial, journalist Ken Ringle portrayed recent skeptics of Truman’s decision as people “whose political sensibilities remain anchored in the anti-government, anti-war sentiments of the Vietnam era.”

Alperovitz’s The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb opens with a response to the thirty years of controversy generated by Atomic Diplomacy. Suggesting that the political and cultural atmosphere of the Vietnam era dulled his “fine distinctions and careful

84 Ibid., 14.
85 Ibid.
caveats,” Alperovitz summarizes his own contribution to the field: “[T]he once-controversial idea that diplomatic considerations related to the Soviet Union played a significant part in the Hiroshima decision is now commonplace among serious scholars.”\textsuperscript{87} One wonders who exactly Alperovitz classifies as serious, for many scholars disagreed with his conclusion that diplomatic concerns trumped all other objectives; when \textit{Atomic Diplomacy} appeared in 1995, revisionist scholars agreed only on what Walker calls the “general proposition” that Japan’s surrender was imminent, with or without the atomic bomb, in the summer of 1945.\textsuperscript{88} Many saw disparate motivations for Truman’s decision, including Robert Jay Lifton and Greg Mitchell’s psychological interpretation, which tied Truman’s lack of confidence to a need to display his determination as president by deploying the most powerful weapon yet created, and Ronald Takaki’s assertion that racist attitudes toward the Japanese prompted Truman to “prove his masculinity.”\textsuperscript{89} Takaki acknowledges the historical contributions of Martin Sherwin and Gar Alperovitz, noting in his 1995 book \textit{Hiroshima: Why America Dropped the Atomic Bomb} that both “have amply documented, [that] the decision was also related to postwar concerns—the reality of Soviet expansion in Eastern Europe as well as in Asia and, more important, the fearful prospect of an atomic arms race.”\textsuperscript{90}

Indeed, Martin J. Sherwin’s seminal \textit{A World Destroyed: Hiroshima and the Origins of the Arms Race}, first published in 1975 and then updated in 1987 as the Cold


\textsuperscript{88} J. Samuel Walker, “Recent Literature on Truman’s Atomic Bomb Decision: A Search for Middle Ground,” \textit{Diplomatic History} 29.2 (April 2005), 313.

\textsuperscript{89} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{90} Takaki, \textit{Hiroshima}, 6.
War moved toward its conclusion, surveys the diplomatic considerations connected to the atomic bomb; Sherwin persuasively argues that President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and then his successor Harry S. Truman, viewed the advent of nuclear warfare as benefiting the United States in war and in peace. Even as the atomic bomb would force Japan’s surrender, it would also render Joseph Stalin’s Soviet Union compliant with the United States’s postwar goals. Disagreeing with traditional portrayals of Truman’s decision as “between a conventional invasion or a nuclear war,” Sherwin instead contends that Truman actually confronted “a choice between various forms of diplomacy and warfare. While the decision that Truman made is understandable, it was not inevitable. It was even avoidable. In the end, that is the most important legacy of Hiroshima for the nuclear age.”91 Sherwin, like others before him, views Hiroshima as both a signifier and as the start of a “new phase of human history;” for Sherwin, Hiroshima marks the start of the Cold War, as it opened the rift between former wartime allies.

Ostensibly a diplomatic monograph on nuclear warfare, Sherwin’s work nonetheless elucidates the resulting moral quagmires of Hiroshima, and his balanced and accessible style holds the potential to bridge the gap between popular and academic portrayals of August 1945. Ultimately, suggests Sherwin, the atomic bomb failed to mold the postwar world to the favorable extent the United States hoped for. Keeping the weapon’s existence hidden from Stalin made “cooperation with the Soviet Union more rather than less difficult to achieve;” and the major paradox of the atomic bomb diplomacy waged by Roosevelt and Truman was the Cold War’s bipolar nuclear arms race, the very military buildup the United States wanted to avoid through its

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demonstration of cataclysmic power over Hiroshima.\textsuperscript{92} Yet, as Sherwin admits, considerations of the atomic bomb include more than just military history, for “[t]here are questions of morality, national character, and this nation’s responsibility for the shape of the postwar world. Hiroshima not only introduced the nuclear age, it also served as the symbolic coronation of America’s global power.”\textsuperscript{93} These questions of morality haunted both advocates and opponents of the bomb, and it is in this perspective that Sherwin provides a valuable approach to crossing the divide between academia and popular memory, for he hints at commonalities between two sides frequently seen as diametrically opposed. As Sherwin writes,

Many who advocated [ending the war with the atomic bomb] hoped it would contribute to a postwar settlement that would banish those weapons—others hoped it would establish their value. But whatever they believed, those who felt called upon to defend the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki came to recognize more clearly in retrospect what a few had warned in prospect: that nuclear war was beyond the reach of conventional moral categories.\textsuperscript{94}

Thus, even advocates of nuclear warfare found themselves forced to confront the questions of morality that Americans in following decades attempted to eliminate from their own memories of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, most notably at the 1995 \textit{Enola Gay} exhibit.\textsuperscript{95}

\textsuperscript{92} Ibid., 131.

\textsuperscript{93} Ibid., xvi.

\textsuperscript{94} Ibid., xxiii.

\textsuperscript{95} Sherwin’s nuanced argumentation notwithstanding, Takaki proposes that his own work presents expanded analysis that considers the “immense complexity” of the decision, for “the military need to end the war, the political confrontation with Russia, and the cultural passions of rage crisscrossed dynamically” under the leadership and personality of Truman, a president “driven by an inferiority complex, notions of race, a need to be resolute and masculine, and feelings of ambivalence, as well as remorse” (Takaki, \textit{Hiroshima}, 8, 10).
While academics viewed Hiroshima and Nagasaki through various lenses—political, military, scientific, or diplomatic—popular audiences consumed altogether different approaches to the American past. A notable counterpoint to Gar Alperovitz’s *The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb*, according to J. Samuel Walker, appeared in David McCullough’s 1992 *Truman*. Much like Stephen Ambrose, McCullough secured a lucrative career through his popular appeal and accessible writing style, as witnessed in his publications *John Adams* and *1776*, among others. Moreover, McCullough’s personable presentation of history, through the ground-breaking Ken Burns’s documentary *The Civil War* and through his narration of *Seabiscuit*, make his name, his face, and his voice familiar and trustworthy for a wide-spread audience. Arguing that McCullough’s portrayal of the atomic bombings represents the “most prominent dissent” to the consensus that started in the 1970s, Walker explains that McCullough “restated the traditional interpretation by arguing that Truman faced a stark choice between dropping the bomb and ordering an invasion.” By advancing the notion that the atomic bomb proved to be the salvation of up to one million American servicemen, McCullough overlooked contemporary scholarship that took issue with inflated casualty estimates for the potential Allied invasion of Japan. As Walker concludes, McCullough’s “best-selling book was not only a strong reassertion of the rationale advanced by former policymakers, but also, in terms of reinforcing popular views of their decision, almost certainly the most influential of recent studies.”

McCullough’s work represented a divergence from the issues debated by other academics, just as it restated traditional interpretations of the past that resonated with an audience outside the parameters of academe. Indeed,

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96 Walker, “The Decision to Use the Bomb,” 32-33.
McCullough’s consideration of Truman’s reasons for utilizing atomic warfare specifically—albeit briefly—addresses those like Alperovitz who dissented from nationally scripted interpretations of July and August 1945. “It would be the thesis of some historians that the atomic bomb figured importantly at Potsdam as Truman’s way of putting pressure on the Russians,” opines McCullough. “But except for his private show of bolstered confidence after hearing Groves’s report, Truman neither said nor did anything of consequence to support this theory and the whole idea would be vigorously denied by those who were present and witness to such events.” McCullough also includes Truman’s oft-repeated response to news of Hiroshima’s August 6 leveling: “This is the greatest thing in history.” For Truman’s popular audience, those who were present at the event likely represented the legitimate voice of World War II memory and truth, rather than historians who later sought to ‘revise’ America’s nuclear age.

Truman was not the first work with a nation-wide readership to confront the memory of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Richard Rhodes’ The Making of the Atomic Bomb, published six years before Truman, also won a Pulitzer Prize. As a journalist, Rhodes understands the elements of compelling narrative, and his skills immediately appear in The Making of the Atomic Bomb. But as Walker cautions, Rhodes focuses his work on the science that facilitated Hiroshima and Nagasaki and mentions “the decision to drop the bomb only briefly.” Walker adds that Rhodes obviously “regretted the use of the bomb” but did not include the “issues debated by historians” in his work. What Walker

98 Ibid., 454.
99 Ibid., 20.
does not consider, however, is the narrative included in Rhodes’ last chapter, “Tongues of Fire.” While Rhodes may not explicitly condemn Truman’s decision, his inclusion of numerous first-person accounts from survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, particularly young children, gives voice to the horrors long absent from American considerations of the atomic bombings, with the exception of John Hersey’s *Hiroshima*, first published in the *New Yorker* in 1946. It is in this sense, then, that Rhodes allows his readers to develop their own conclusions on the validity of atomic warfare based on their engagement with atomic warfare’s moral witnesses. For a nation that had long chosen to forget those who suffered below the mushroom cloud, this is no small accomplishment.100

Much of the contention surrounding perspectives on Hiroshima and Nagasaki has funneled into two general schools of thought—revisionism and traditionalism—and though revisionism tends to describe popular perceptions of all academic approaches to the events, traditionalism appears to dominate national memories of the “Good War.” Writing in 1996, Walker assumed that the consensus maintained since the 1970s—“that U.S. officials always assumed that the bomb would be used and saw no reason not to use it once it became available”—necessarily ended any “discrete or discernible schools of interpretation” and hence “resolved” tension between “traditionalist” and “revisionist” academic disputes.101 In other words, at the cusp of the “shootout at the Smithsonian corral” that conflated national memory with the field of history, Walker believed that consensus allowed space for scholarly dissention within its boundaries, although he

101 Walker, “The Decision to Use the Bomb,” 32.
admitted that certain works, such as those by McCullough and Alperovitz, existed outside this realm.

But as Walker reveals in his 2005 article “Recent Literature on Truman’s Atomic Bomb Decision,” his earlier conclusion remains inadequate on several levels. Most notably, Walker indicates that the 1995 Enola Gay debacle illustrated the angst that still permeated discussions of the atomic bomb in the United States, just as it highlighted the absence of any true consensus regarding Truman’s decision. Contextualizing the genesis of academic divisions, Walker suggests that the major question that results in traditional or revisionist perspectives is whether the United States had to use the atomic bomb to defeat Japan and ensure “satisfactory” terms of surrender. Traditionalists accept the atomic bomb as the means to assure no Allied invasion of Japan, while revisionists, who became prominent in the 1960s, posit that Japan would have surrendered with or without the weapon’s introduction. Engaging in a third-person self-critique, Walker traces the changes that followed 1995 as what he calls the “middle ground” emerged as an approach: “Walker found in 1990 a historiographical consensus that ‘largely resolved’ the issues that had divided traditionalist and revisionist scholarship. In light of the bitterness of the controversy that soon erupted around the fiftieth anniversary of the end of World War II, this conclusion failed rather spectacularly to stand the test of time.”

For Walker, a major trend emerged following the Enola Gay conflagration and the 50th anniversary of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in a new body of scholarship that comprised the “middle ground” between the loaded labels of revisionism and traditionalism. Simply

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102 Walker, “Recent Literature on Truman’s Atomic Bomb Decision,” 311.

103 Ibid., 333.
defined, historians generated a “middle ground” when they rejected the extremes of either the traditionalists or the revisionists. As with earlier examples of purported consensus, however, “middle grounders” produced works that “covered a wide spectrum of opinion” and allowed for varied and contradictory conclusions. These historians include Herbert Bix, Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, Alonzo L. Hamby, and Arnold A. Offner along with, as Walker generalizes, “government historians, independent historians, and even nonhistorians.” While the middle ground remains “ill-defined” and “precarious,” Walker argues that a consensus does exist, for these scholars agree with traditionalism’s insistence that Truman’s decision saved lives and hastened Japan’s surrender, but they do not accept that Truman decided only between the bomb and an invasion. Walker does not intend for the “middle ground” to imply that contention no longer permeates national or historical perspectives of Hiroshima and Nagasaki; rather, as he concludes, “by demonstrating serious deficiencies in both the traditionalist and revisionist positions, [the middle ground] provided new perspectives and much-needed correctives to the oversimplified and uncompromising formulas that framed much of the scholarly and popular debate during and after the mid-1990s.” Ultimately, Walker hopes that balance may now characterize academic interpretations of Truman’s actions in August 1945, but as we shall see, others warn that a renewed era of forgetting may take root in the American consciousness.

While *Time’s* 2005 commemoration of Hiroshima and Nagasaki does indicate a potentially significant transformation in American audiences’ willingness to consider
memories that contradict the mythology of the “Good War,” recent scholarship confirms Walker’s assertion that the bombings will long remain contested ground. Indeed, as Owen Griffiths posits in “What We Forget When We Remember the Pacific War,” Hiroshima and Nagasaki “are prime examples of how history is a reciprocal process of remembering and forgetting. They can remind us, particularly historians and educators, to pay special attention to what is not there and, most importantly, why. If for no other reason, this silence from history profoundly affects our relationship to the past, our understanding of ourselves in the present, and above all, our identities.” Preeminent historian John Dower reflects a similar theme regarding the dangers connected to historical silences when he delineates the effects of recent events in the United States over our recollection of the past. Pointing to the destruction of the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001, Dower draws parallels between “the crime against humanity [September 11] and the two Ground Zeroes of sixty years ago.” Dower concedes that most American citizens would not agree that the events share any similarities, but he nonetheless maintains that the issues of morality and the legitimacy of the purposeful targeting of civilians connect August 1945 to September 2001. As he states, “You can’t talk about such matters without addressing Hiroshima and Nagasaki.” But Dower adds a crucial caveat to his assessment of current scholarship and popular memory of the atomic bomb. “Ground Zero” prompts memories of September 11 and now, as Dower cautions, signifies the World Trade Center site and American victimization…. This erasure of history and memory is really quite stunning. If you go back to the immediate aftermath of 9/11, for example, the media, everyone, was ranting about who these people were who could kill innocent civilians. Pundits were churning out pieces about how they came out

106 Owen Griffiths, “What We Forget When We Remember the Pacific War,” Education About Asia 2.1 (Spring 2006), 7.
of barbaric cultures that don’t respect individual life and had no compunctions about killing women and children.\footnote{107}

Thus, even as academics may be, at least according to Walker’s evaluation of the field, more willing to inhabit a middle ground in their considerations of the atomic bomb, national memory continues to engage in the complex process of both forgetting and remembering as past history fuels present mythology; even as the “Good War” has represented an unambiguously triumphant American victory for over six decades, the victimization of Americans at September 11’s ‘Ground Zero’ now overshadows the death of civilians under the mushroom clouds of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

**CONCLUSION**

As we have seen, although national narratives of the Second World War—particularly its dénouement—present their adherents with a ‘consensus’ regarding the major points of the story’s plot, points intimately connected to national identity past and present, no such cohesion exists in actuality. Academics, activists, and other dissenters continue to bend the parameters of national memories of the war. Often denounced by their critics as products of revisionism, divergent interpretations of events such as Hiroshima and Nagasaki are in fact grounded in sixty years of opposition, from various realms, to the United States’ use and defense of atomic warfare. The resounding dissonance between the death of civilians under an American-made mushroom cloud and attempts to adhere to the “Good War’s” narrative alarmed observers even in August 1945. “Although uneasiness about the Enola Gay and its mission would often be called a

\footnote{107} Lynn Parisi, “EAA Interview with John Dower,” *Education About Asia* 2.1 (Spring 2006), 17, 19.
product of a disaffected Vietnam generation, left-wing historians, or the politically
correct, its roots are half a century old,” writes Edward T. Linenthal. “There was vigorous
disagreement among Manhattan Project scientists who made the atomic bomb about the
wisdom of the decision to use it, and after the war’s end, there was strong criticism of its
use from many prominent Protestant and Catholic spokespeople.” Indeed, “[i]nfluential
conservative voices also lamented the decision. In 1948, Henry Luce, the founder of
Time, wrote, ‘If instead of our doctrine of “unconditional surrender,” we had all along
made our conditions clear, I have little doubt that the war with Japan would have ended
no later than it did—without the bomb explosion that so jarred the Christian
conscience.’”108 As the national and international responses to recent war
commemorations in the United States and shrine visits in Japan have indicated, we must
revisit past dissention itself in order to fully contextualize collective memory in the
present. As early voices of protest that have continued to run against the grain of
America’s victory narrative in the “Good War,” Christians on both sides of the Pacific
who abhorred the atomic bombings provide us with a unique opportunity to fully explore
the breadth of opposition to Truman’s decision that existed well before the turmoil of
Vietnam prompted academics to expose what earlier war-time atrocities indicated about
national identity.

While Truman’s rhetoric resonated with standard portrayals of national identity, a
public familiar with the hand of God in its country’s destiny did not wholeheartedly
consume the president’s righteous justification of nuclear war. In fact, American and
Japanese observers began to question the United States’ claim that its pairing of

and Other Battles for the American Past, eds. Edward T. Linenthal and Tom Engelhardt (New York: Henry
Christianity and democracy provided it with national—and divine—legitimacy. Few voices highlighted the gap between academic and popular renderings of the end-of-war events more than the numerous Christian voices of displeasure raised in the weeks after the dual incinerations of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. In the United States and Japan, these condemnations shook the foundations of what later became stories of national victory and national defeat. The tangible lack of any unified portrayal of the “righteous” or “God-given” atomic bombings, even in 1945, underscored the futility of any continued projection of a nationally sanctified narrative of atomic warfare’s birth. This questioning represented nothing less than a reckoning with the tenets of national identity and, for the United States, with the legitimacy of Manifest Destiny’s merger of democracy, Christianity, expansionism, and technology on a global scale. The religious debates over Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and the perpetuation of war memory provide new, crucial lens to examine the backdrop in which the “Good War’s” high-tide ebbed and the apocalyptic paranoia of the Cold War began. It is in this sphere where politics, national identity, and personal faith intersect in an honest reckoning with a national past.
Chapter Two

“Divine” Intervention: American Religious Narratives of the Atomic Bombings and the End of the Pacific War

Hiroshima and Nagasaki are likely for the foreseeable future to remain the Banquo’s ghost of World War II, perennially challenging comfortable generalizations about the conflict and underscoring the disparity between the mythic past inscribed in popular memory and the past that is the raw material of historical scholarship.¹

INTRODUCTION

For many Americans, the history of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki remains the reserved territory of the United States, the nation whose aerial bombing campaigns finally defeated the Japanese in August 1945. As we have just seen, challenges to this narrow interpretation endangered academic reputations even as late as 1995, for they threatened to undermine, at least according to their critics, America’s desire to fuse Christianity and democracy within its identity as World War II’s righteous victor. In reality, a thoughtful examination of the myriad reactions to the news of first Hiroshima, and then Nagasaki, indicates no stock narrative of the “Good War’s” “final act” emerged in 1945, as citizens responded to atomic warfare’s advent along a gamut that ran from laudatory to derogatory. The use of Christian imagery and traditions, from national days of prayer to Biblical protests of Truman’s decision to bring nuclear annihilation to two civilian targets, reveals a nuanced reaction to the war’s end that continued to belie political and nationalistic desires for an acceptably “good” victory.

narrative. Indeed, the reactions of American citizens, diverse as they were in 1945, evoked the conflicts inherent in a new iteration of Manifest Destiny that blended Christianity, democracy, and technology in the soon-to-be-occupied Japan. Most importantly, American voices that dissented from President Harry S. Truman’s various Christian justifications for the bombings destabilized the United States’s continued assertion that recent attempts at reexamining the bombings were simply ‘revisionist’ for, even in the triumphant late summer of 1945, Americans did not adhere to one interpretation of the bombings’ legitimacy; this re-visitation of the recent past provides observers with the “raw material of historical scholarship” identified by historian Paul Boyer that undermines—uncomfortably, for some—the United States’s “mythic past.”

Margot A. Henriksen, a scholar of the atomic age, contextualizes the significance of dissent and its battle against American conformity in Dr. Strangelove’s America: Society and Culture in the Atomic Age. “Throughout its history,” Henriksen writes, “America has always been resistant to admitting an end to that fresh innocence first proclaimed in the Puritan version of a shining city upon a hill.” Americans unnerved by the atomic deaths of Hiroshima and Nagasaki discovered the powerful silencing their nation’s mythical identity held over considerations of the abject horror of nuclear war and its termination of national innocence. To dissent “through expressions of guilt and remorse about the atomic bomb” risked, for most Americans, a sense of betrayal to the “Good War” and the ideals that had won it.

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3 Margot A. Henriksen, Dr. Strangelove’s America: Society and Culture in the Atomic Age (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 9.

4 Ibid., 39.
While aboard the U.S.S. *Augusta*, President Harry S. Truman received a message from Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson at noon on August 6, 1945. The message read: “Results clear-cut successful in all respects. Visible effects greater than in any test.”

The cryptic language announced nuclear warfare’s birth in the skies above Hiroshima and the death of more than 80,000 of the city’s residents. On his way home from the Potsdam Conference, scheduled by the “Big Three” to create blueprints for peace in both postwar Europe and Asia, Truman anticipated Stimson’s cable. When informed earlier in July of the successful test of the atomic bomb in Alamogordo, New Mexico, Truman recorded his reaction in his diary. Steeped in the language of his religious upbringing, Truman viewed the “device” as “the fire destruction prophesied in the Euphrates Valley Era, after Noah and his fabulous Ark.”

During his second week at Potsdam, Truman, now cognizant of Alamogordo, wrote to Bess on July 22: “I’m going to mass at 11:30 . . . I’ve already been to a Protestant service so I guess I should stand in good with the Almighty for the coming week—and my how I’ll need it.” By July 24, Truman and his staff, along with England’s Prime Minister Winston Churchill and his military advisers, decided that the atomic bomb would indeed be used over Japan within a few weeks.

Shortly after midnight on August 6, Chaplain William Downey prayed for the *Enola Gay*’s crew, who waited in the South Pacific to take off from Tinian Island and fly to their mission over Hiroshima, asking God “to be with those who brave the heights of Thy heaven and who

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7 McCullough, *Truman*, 436.

8 Ibid., 436, 442.
carry the battle to our enemies.”9 Within hours, President Truman placed the Almighty squarely in the midst of the American narrative of Hiroshima’s death. The language the president used to convey his apprehension both in his diary and to his wife, Bess, hinted at what would become the national discourse of a Christian and democratic nation as it reacted in paradoxical ways to the purposeful targeting of civilians, women, and children.

When Truman announced the atomic incineration of Hiroshima to a shocked—and in most instances, elated—American public, the hand of Providence loomed omnisciently behind the mushroom cloud, and it decidedly favored the American cause. As President Truman emphasized: “We may be grateful to Providence that the Germans got the V1’s and the V2’s [early rocket prototypes] late and in limited quantities and even more grateful that they did not get the atomic bomb at all.”10 Truman then credited the Lord’s guidance for the bomb’s success, saying, “We thank God that [the awful responsibility of the bomb] has come to us, instead of to our enemies; and we pray that He may guide us to use it in His ways and for His purposes.”11 God, therefore, stood on the American side and endowed the death of Japanese civilians with the legitimacy of His “will,” as voiced by Harry Truman in a brutal echo of the “Manifest Destiny” tradition that had long merged expansionism, technology, civilization, and divine will in the United States’s remembering of its past and present.

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“REMEMBER PEARL HARBOR—KEEP ’EM DYING”: THE ATOMIC BOMB AS RETRIBUTION

Truman’s religious justification of the atomic bombings did not remain unchallenged, although the pervasive nature of American approval for the weapon rooted itself in discourse about the bombings that withstood fifty years of international criticism. On August 11, 1945 Truman wrote a letter to a Protestant church official who had questioned the president’s use of a weapon “indiscriminate” in its carnage. Truman replied, “When you have to deal with a beast you have to treat him as a beast. It is most regrettable but nevertheless true.”

Truman’s response was the result of four years of brutal warfare in the Pacific that stripped both sides of humanity and rendered them barbaric. Embedded within the validation of the United States’ use of what Emperor Hirohito called a “new and most cruel weapon” was the portrait of a less-than-human enemy, crafted through propaganda and utilized to distance the very real human suffering at Hiroshima and Nagasaki from American consciousness.

Historian John W. Dower has contextualized the confluence of religious language and dehumanizing propaganda: “[T]he heroic narrative [of the atomic bombings] is much richer than a humble thank-you to God for deliverance. The bombs were not merely necessary. They also were just, in the biblical sense of righteous retribution against a savage enemy.” This language permeated the end of the war in the Pacific, the discussion—both for and against—the atomic bombs, and the American Occupation of

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13 Ibid., 72.
Japan. Truman’s own radio address on the day of Japan’s formal surrender, a speech that marked September 2, 1945 as V-J day, reflected this uniquely American marriage of Christianity and democracy. Even as he thanked God for the Allied victory and the peace that accompanied it, Truman commented on the future of the United States’ memory of September 2: “But it is a day which we Americans shall always remember as a day of retribution—as we remember that other day, the day of infamy.”

Interpretations of the atomic bomb in the U.S. solidified the uniquely American assumption that divine intervention—in the past and the present—warranted its position as leader of the free world and that the Japanese had, quite literally, reaped at the end of war what they had sowed throughout the Pacific, starting at Pearl Harbor. Such ideology formulated policies that employed religion as a means for political gain and international status, particularly during General Douglas MacArthur’s occupation of Japan. Eventually, Truman’s religious sanctification of the bombings joined the national narrative of the end of the “Good War,” publicly endowing his decision with a virtually indelible morality. Such a seemingly unified portrayal of the ‘blessed’ atomic bomb did not exist in the days, weeks, or years after August 1945. Nevertheless, the morality first asserted by Truman on August 6 continues to mold the American memory of the bombings, silencing those uncomfortable with Truman’s rigid classification of divine intervention.

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RELIGION AND THE “ENEMY”: SUB-HUMANS ON BOTH SIDES OF THE PACIFIC

The roots of religious animosity in the revived imperialism of the 1940s stretched back for centuries between Japan and the West, surfacing once again with the onset of war in the Pacific. In the hypocrisy so often apparent during wartime, both Japan and the United States portrayed their struggle against the enemy as a holy war; for the victor—America—such rhetoric formed the backdrop for a burgeoning Cold War and for policies upheld by MacArthur, even when “unofficial,” during the American Occupation of Japan. The Allies categorized World War II as a “struggle to save Christian civilization,” and the Japanese cast their mission to defeat Western imperialism in the light of a “holy war for the establishment of eternal world peace.”

Symbols of the Allied Christian tradition appeared in Japanese propaganda cartoons to remind observers of the vast difference between Japan’s objectives of world peace and an Asia, unified under the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, freed from Western colonial encroachment and the contradicting past and present behavior by Christian nations. In one cartoon, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, wearing clothing sewn from dollars, wielded a crucifix as a dagger, while another depicted Roosevelt himself crucified. Japanese propagandists transformed the cross, explains Dower, into a symbol of death and blood associated with the Allied powers.


16 Ibid., 193, 196, 258.
The Japanese based their mandate to rule the Pacific under the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere on their divine descent, an assertion that granted their mission the moral upper hand that the United States also sought on its home front. Tracing Emperor Hirohito’s heritage back to Emperor Jimmu, who ruled in 660 B.C. and who descended from the Sun Goddess Amaterasu, Japanese officials in the 1940s laid claim to a moral and racial superiority that they believed was uncontestable. Led by a divinely descended emperor, the Japanese waged a modern war cloaked in the rhetoric of a holy past. As political leader Nakajima Chikuhei contended in 1940, “There are superior and inferior races in the world, and it is the sacred duty of the leading race to lead and enlighten the inferior ones.”17 The strong claims of morality and divine leadership on both sides of the Pacific led to an impasse in cultural, political, and military negotiations throughout the duration of the war. Japan’s reliance on its divine heritage directly conflicted with America’s notion, as voiced by Truman, that divine intervention ended the Pacific War when the Almighty handed the U.S. the atomic bomb. The United States’ melding of Christianity and democracy, moreover, represented the national identity associated with missionary zeal that Japan had long resented.

In fact, Japanese distrust of Christianity and its frequently overt ties to white, Western nationalism first boiled over in the port city of Nagasaki during the Tokugawa Shogunate and its violent purges of Japanese Christian converts. It then appeared again during the era of Emperor Meiji’s rule (1868-1912). Though popular in the 1870s and 1880s with Japan’s upper-class “both as a personal faith and a religion of ‘civilization,’” by the 1890s, Japan’s government read Christianity not merely as a threat to native

17 Ibid., 217.
Shintoism, but as a means of undermining the newly formed state and Japanese identity itself.\textsuperscript{18} The tension of the late nineteenth century thus formed a basis for Pacific War animosities over religion and national character, for by the 1890s Japan deemed Christianity “injurious to the kokutai,” the “mystical national polity” used to formulate ideology in the last decades of the Meiji era.\textsuperscript{19} As the two houses of Japan’s government debated amendments to and interpretations of the 1889 Constitution, Christianity and patriotism appeared mutually exclusive. Despite the Constitution’s Article 28 and its protection of the free practice of religion “within limits not prejudicial to peace and order, and not antagonistic to their duties as subjects,” the 1890s witnessed the outlawing of religious education in schools, for Christianity ran counter to the “loyalty” required of Japan’s state subjects.\textsuperscript{20} The cornerstone of Japan’s emerging nationalism was the Imperial Rescript on Education and its emphasis on morality, on loyalty to the emperor and to the state, and on the connection between education and nationalism.\textsuperscript{21} Skeptics in Japan doubted whether Christians within their nation could rightly claim to possess dual loyalties to the state and to their faith. Tetsujiro Inoue bluntly asserted in 1892: “Christianity lacks a nationalistic spirit” that left it “incompatible with the nationalism of the Rescript” because “Christians value the kingdom of Heaven while the Rescript is concerned with the nation here on earth.”\textsuperscript{22} Historian Carol Gluck explains Inoue’s basis


\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 134, 15.

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 57.

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 120.

\textsuperscript{22} As quoted by Gluck in \textit{Japan’s Modern Myths}, 133.
for questioning the viability of a Christian’s legitimate membership in Japan’s polity: “Inoue averred that Christ spoke seldom of loyalty and filiality and stressed instead undifferentiated universal love.”

Japanese Christians such as Kanzo Uchimura, whose work Occupation authorities would later censor, dissented from Inoue’s judgment to assert their own patriotism. Uchimura described the “two J’s”—“Jesus and Japan”—and their role as “the twin centers of his faith.”

Notwithstanding the angst over the place of faith within loyalty to the state that erupted in the 1890s, by the 1910s Inoue, faced with the new threat of socialism, accepted Christians as loyal subjects in the kokutai; notably, Inoue considered Christianity as a “Japanized” religion. No longer was it a foreign threat from the West.

Dower delineates the American belief that victory constituted the defeat of “barbarism” in the Pacific, for “this way of looking at the conflict dates back to the wartime propaganda, which highlighted the innate treachery and inhumanity of the Japanese far more than their undemocratic political system or colonial oppression. Portraying Japanese as vicious and even subhuman is subsidiary (but indispensable) to this scenario, which emphasized the virtues of American culture.”

If the Japanese were treacherous heathens, then Americans emerged as straightforward, genuine Christian defenders of the American dream; if the Japanese were subhuman, then the Americans

23 Ibid., 133.
24 Ibid., 133.
25 Ibid., 135.
26 Laura Hein and Mark Selden, “Commemoration and Silence: Fifty Years of Remembering the Bomb in America and Japan,” in Living with the Bomb: American and Japanese Cultural Conflicts in the Nuclear Age, eds. Laura Hein and Mark Selden (New York: East Gate Books, 1997), 11.
creating anti-Japanese propaganda inched dangerously close to the rhetoric of extermination brandished by Hitler’s minions. The binary dividing citizens of the United States and from those in Japan implied that good epithets used for Americans matched exactly the opposite characteristic in the Japanese. Advertisements by U.S. weapons manufacturers merged anti-Japanese sentiment with their slogan “It’s blasting big red holes in little yellow men,” while a shipbuilder reminded customers, “[A] pagan and treacherous enemy spilled out of his homeland and overwhelmed the rich and peaceful islands of the South Seas.”

All countries fighting in World War II utilized propaganda to catalyze national support for the war and to dehumanize the other side, thus solidifying support for the war and hatred of the enemy. While American propaganda painted an ugly picture of Nazi Germany and its soldiers, the United States built its propaganda against Japan on a vastly different premise that characterized the disparity in battle attitudes, as a U.S. military saying from the era illustrated: “Remember Pearl Harbor—Keep ’em Dying.” Famous World War II journalist Ernie Pyle noted this contradiction when he traveled to the Pacific theater after touring Europe. He recalled, “In Europe we felt our enemies, horrible and deadly as they were, were still people. But out here I gathered that the Japanese were looked upon as something subhuman and repulsive; the way some people feel about cockroaches or mice.” Pyle’s description of the Japanese as “vermin” was

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27 Dower, War Without Mercy, 162.


indicative of an attitude cultivated through American propaganda that permeated society at home and all levels of the U.S. military operating abroad. Later historians supported Pyle’s observations. David M. Kennedy writes:

The Pacific war was a war of distances, distances measured culturally as well as geographically. Each combatant, Japan and the United States alike, saw its adversary through a distorting lens laminated from historically accumulated layers of ignorance, arrogance, prejudice, and loathing. To a degree that had no equivalent in the western European theater, that for the ferocity it spawned compared only with the savage encounter between “Aryans” and Slavs on Hitler’s eastern front, the Japanese-American war was a race war, and just for that reason, in the historian John Dower’s phrase, a “war without mercy.”

Four years of mutual hatred, denigration, and slaughter culminated on the mornings of August 6 and 9, 1945, when the U.S. unleashed atomic power over the city centers of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

As Japanese citizens quite literally struggled to survive in the first months of peace, the effects of pervasive dehumanizing propaganda were readily visible in average Americans’ reactions to the instantaneous death of over 200,000 civilians. Many saw no reason to mourn—or even to express regret—for the mass killing of an enemy they viewed as worthy only of extermination. In the aftermath of these bombings, religious rhetoric in the United States both sanctified and condemned Truman’s decision. Ultimately, however, the justification for nuclear warfare overshadowed those who protested its birth. Entwined in the nation’s complacency with Hiroshima’s annihilation was a misplaced faith in science and a confused understanding of the roots of democracy.

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COLLECTIVE SIN: THE “GOOD WAR’S” CATAclySMIC END

The fear that has gripped men’s hearts, since the blasting of Hiroshima, is not primarily due to anticipation that our cities will eventually meet the same fate, logical though such outcome would be. Our fear is much more akin to that which still accompanies the sense of personal and collective sin. Expectation of retribution is only a part of the fear which springs from the consciousness of sin. The sense of shame and degradation is only a part of this fear. Most important in this unease is the loss of individual dignity and spiritual peace—the consciousness of being hopelessly adrift; of having lost contact with those standards by which men really live.\(^{31}\)

Felix Morley

On July 17, 1945—three weeks before Hiroshima and Nagasaki disappeared under mushroom clouds and one day after the world’s first nuclear explosion at Alamogordo—one hundred and fifty-five scientists associated with the Manhattan Project sent a letter to Truman warning of the moral consequences such a strike against Japan held for the United States. The scientists urged Truman to consider “all other moral responsibilities which are involved” and to realize that “[t]he added material strength which this lead [in the arms race] gives to the United States brings with it the obligation of restraint and if we were to violate this obligation our moral position would be weakened in the eyes of the world and in our own eyes.”\(^{32}\) Such a cautionary epistle, composed by the men and women who gave life to the nascent weapon, belied later

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claims by officials such as Congressman Sam Johnson that Hiroshima was “one of the most morally unambiguous events of the 20th century.”

Many in America believed that a divine power selected their country for a special purpose. Following the leadership of their president, they witnessed God’s will—which stood firmly behind the American cause—in the creation and use of the atomic bombs. While observers on each side of the Pacific saw a similar tenet of the hand of God expressed by Japanese Christians like Takashi Nagai, those in the United States rarely viewed Hiroshima or Nagasaki as unblemished cities, but rather as perpetrators of war and evil. Radio news commentator H. V. Kaltenborn lauded the decidedly American achievement when he announced the atomic bombing of Hiroshima on NBC, although he added a cautionary clause to his broadcast: “Anglo-Saxon science had developed a new explosive 2,000 times as destructive as any known before . . . For all we know, we have created a Frankenstein!” Most Americans seemed willing to chance a rejuvenated Frankenstein in exchange for the resounding defeat of Japan and the end of World War II. As the *Omaha Morning World Herald* succinctly stated, “No tears of sympathy will be shed in America for the Japanese people.”

New York Times foreign correspondent William L. Laurence observed both the Trinity test and Nagasaki’s bombing. Later awarded the Pulitzer Prize for his reporting on “The Atomic Age”—a phrase he coined—and simultaneously employed by the War Department and the New York Times, Laurence utilized “his own sense of divine mission” and “biblical allegories” in his writing. Trinity

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became “Genesis . . . as though one were present at the moment of creation when God said: ‘Let there be light.’” Nagasaki’s blast and burn was “a thing of beauty to behold.” Of the 140,000 people who perished at Hiroshima by the end of 1945, 95 percent were civilians. Consumed with vengeance, the U.S. remained unwilling to admit that the ‘enemy’ might have included innocent women and children who merited mercy and that, by discounting their presence, the government trespassed against its own long-held Christian morals. Even country music was not immune to the pervasive hatred of the Japanese that culminated in praise for the atomic bomb. Released in December 1945, the song “When the Atomic Bomb Fell,” written by Karl Davis and Harry Taylor, relied on religious imagery to condone the leveling of a city and its inhabitants:

Smoke and fire it did flow,
Through the land of Tokyo.
There was brimstone and dust everywhere.
When it all cleared away,
There the cruel Jap did lay,
The answer to our fighting boy’s prayer.

American religious intellectuals, including Reinhold Niebuhr, joined in the defense of Truman’s decision, weaving a much more complex justification of nuclear warfare than that found in popular music. Niebuhr, once a leftist pastor, became a “primary intellectual apologist for the Cold War” by the mid-1940s. In “Our Relations

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37 Boyer, By the Bomb’s Early Light, 13.

to Japan,” published in *Christianity & Crisis* on September 17, 1945, Niebuhr condemned the Allied racism obvious in the Pacific War and warned against the arrogance of victory. Such admonitions did not preclude Niebuhr’s conviction that the war’s end complimented the just mission of the divinely inspired American cause. “All this does not mean that our cause against either Germany or Japan was not ‘just,’” rationalized Niebuhr. “We were indeed the executors of God’s judgment yesterday. But we might remember the prophetic warnings to the nations of old, that nations which become proud because they were divine instruments must in turn stand under the divine judgment and be destroyed.”39 As the Cold War escalated, Niebuhr viewed nuclear warheads as evidence of “eternal human sin,” although he paradoxically argued that a truly evil opponent merited a nuclear response—part of the “Just War” doctrine—from the United States40. In a presumably unintentional echo of the lyrics from “When the Atomic Bomb Fell,” Niebuhr implied that Japan’s past cruelty negated the aftermath of American brimstone.

Others saw an entirely different interpretation of modern-day brimstone, and returned to Biblical stories to support their critique of the contemporary orders that laid waste to two cities. *Christian Century* magazine published a Chicago Theological Seminary professor’s comparison of past and present atrocity: “King Herod’s slaughter of the innocents—an atrocity committed in the name of defense—destroyed no more than

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39 Reinhold Niebuhr, “Our Relations to Japan,” *Christianity and Crisis* (September 17, 1945) in *Hiroshima’s Shadow: Writings on the Denial of History and the Smithsonian Controversy*, eds. Kai Bird and Lawrence Lifschultz (Stony Creek, Connecticut: The Pamphleteer’s Press, 1998), 277. It is somewhat unclear what “yesterday” was in Niebuhr’s article, although it seems likely that it is a reference to Japan’s official surrender on September 2, 1945.

a few hundred children. Today, a single atomic bomb slaughters tens of thousands of children and their mothers and fathers. Newspapers and radio acclaim it a great victory. Victory for what?" One woman proposed that the United States erred by refusing to warn Hiroshima’s citizens of their impeding doom and should instead have imitated “the way the Lord conducted things at Sodom and Gomorrah” by providing “ample notice to the civilians of Hiroshima.” These admonitions no doubt rankled Truman and his advisers who had mulled over the possibility of inviting the Japanese to witness a test of the nuclear device over the human-free waters of the Pacific, but eliminated the option in favor of deploying the bomb over a city to maximize shock and ensure surrender.

On September 17, 1945 the *New York Times* published “Sermons Ask Curb on Atomic Power,” a missive that probed national identity and Christian duty by returning to none other than the Puritan tradition of Jonathan Edwards. Edwards’ seminal “Sinners in the Hands of An Angry God,” however, received a twentieth-century post-bomb twist for, as one pastor warned, “We have the power of God in the hands of angry sinners.” Despite the pastor’s obvious skepticism regarding the veracity of nuclear weapons, the article nonetheless sounded a familiar refrain: the atomic bomb meant that God had given America a “greater “responsibility” to use “these resources” for His purposes.

For those fighting in the Pacific—or those waiting for loved ones to return from that violent theater of war—the atomic bombs seemed to bring a sudden end the carnage

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the American public associated with the Pacific battles. Iwo Jima and Okinawa made significant inroads in the American psyche. Their death tolls not only stood at the forefront for military advisers as they deployed the bombs, but also dictated how many reacted to the newest weapons in the United States’ arsenal. A “thank God for the atomic bomb” attitude developed as those on the home front and on ships in the Pacific realized that Allied troops would never launch a military invasion of mainland Japan. Great Britain’s Winston Churchill mirrored this rhetoric when he called the bombs a “deliverance.” Believing that God had indeed given their nation the “blessed bomb” according to a “divine plan,” many in the U.S. felt absolved from any moral or ethical dilemmas that might condemn the wholesale slaughter of enemy civilians. Such an attitude paralleled the anti-Japanese sentiment that burgeoned throughout the Pacific war and, as Dower contends, “since it immediately brings God in on the American side, [it reminds] us pari passu that the Japanese are pagans.” The absence of the Japanese victims of war in the United States’ victory narrative mirrored Manifest Destiny’s civilizing mission, when the divine right to expand and conquer obscured those present in imagined landscapes. Accepting the bombs as a providential gift, many Christians failed to see the paradoxes inherent in the weapon they assumed forced the reticent and heathen Japanese to surrender. Others lauded science but lamented the humans now charged with controlling it. Reverend Robert I. Gannon, asserting the atomic bomb was a “triumph of research,” added a caveat to his acclamation, cautioning, “our savage generation cannot


45 Boyer, By the Bomb’s Early Light, 211.

be trusted with it. Such power of destruction would have been a social hazard even in the civilized thirteenth century.”

The United States had mobilized troops abroad and patriotic supporters at home by depicting the Allied fight to end the machinations of Nazi Germany as a “Good War” to preserve democracy in a world threatened by an evil poised to annihilate civilization. Indeed, Nazi Germany’s collapse confirmed the powerful righteousness of America’s mission for its citizens, who had long associated their nation “as the manifestation of Truth, Justice and Freedom placed on earth by a God whose purpose was to make of it an instrument for extending his spiritual and material blessings to the rest of humanity.”

The atomic bomb’s indiscriminate incineration of civilians, however, created a strained denouement for the “Good War.” Parallels between an apparent American atrocity and the notorious terrors of Nazi death camps soon entered the debate about the morality of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Some, such as journalist, editor, and college president Felix Morley, suggested, “at Nazi concentration camps, we have paraded horrified German civilians before the piled bodies of tortured Nazi victims . . . It would be equally salutary to send groups of representative Americans to blasted Hiroshima. There, as at Buchenwald, are many unburied dead.”

Strict censorship of the details of life and death in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, conducted at the bequest of the victors, prevented any similar consideration of nuclear holocaust, though John Hersey’s 1946 *Hiroshima* would soon

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49 Morley, “The Return to Nothingness,” 273. Morley’s Quaker background was undoubtedly influential in his critique of nuclear warfare and wartime atrocities.
capture an American audience. Theologian and pacifist A. J. Muste was even more direct: “If Dachau was a crime, Hiroshima is a crime.” The revelations of the nature of Hiroshima unnerved those who firmly believed that the United States waged a “Good War” devoid of atrocity and had emerged victorious because its lofty ideals—blessed by God—triumphed over perpetrators of unimaginable evils. Minister John Haynes Holmes gave voice to this unease in yet another comparison to Nazi Germany: “The ghastly thing about this bomb is that it was released not by Hitler in some mad mania of lust, but by sane and good men who knew what it could do.”

Though many looked to the internationally condemned Nazi crimes to question the bomb’s legitimacy, Helen Mears instead turned to the Pacific War and the execution of “the tiger of Malay,” General Tomoyuki Yamashita, for the “crimes against humanity” he had perpetrated against the Filipinos. Mears, who served on the Occupation’s Labor Advisory Committee from February to July 1946, voiced dissent in her 1948 *Mirror for Americans: Japan*. “When the war began, an American was able to feel a justified righteous indignation against the Japanese war machine that had bombed civilians in China as part of a terroristic policy,” reasoned Mears. “By the time of the war’s end and Yamashita’s trial, however, Americans had lost this moral advantage.” Noting that Yamashita’s “mass murder of an entire village population of two thousand Filipinos” was a “terrible crime” that occurred “in the heat and terror of combat,” Mears nonetheless rhetorically asked: “But is it more terrible than the act of a powerful people, not fighting

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50 Boyer, *By the Bomb’s Early Light*, 219.

51 Ibid., 230.

a last-ditch fight, but after the war had already been won, in fact if not in name, in
unleashing a new weapon that killed or injured over one hundred and twenty thousand
civilians in a split second.” In sum, many immediately recognized that neither
Hiroshima nor Nagasaki fit within the widely accepted historical rendering of an America
dedicated to progress, civilization, and its divinely selected purpose throughout its
existence as a nation. Such questionings presented a tainted victory narrative, one that
compared the United States’ behavior to the barbaric acts that had resulted in the trials—
and executions—of Nazi and Japanese war criminals.

Just as many American observers accepted that the hand of God guided the
United States as it bombarded Hiroshima and Nagasaki, others, including the president, also
witnessed a divine presence in Japan’s surrender and America’s role in its recent enemy’s
rebirth, as became obvious in both celebratory and somber commemorations of the war’s
conclusion. Grounded in two centuries of political and cultural tradition, such
interpretations reflected the convergence of Christianity and democracy within the
American identity. Published in 1955 and dedicated “to the people of all nations,” Harry
S. Truman’s Memoirs: Volume One, Year of Decisions detailed the president’s role in the
last months of the Pacific War, along with his responses to the atomic bomb and to
Japan’s capitulation. After reasserting his oft-quoted public stance that the atomic bomb
was “a military weapon” used against a “military target” and that he “never had any
doubt that it should be used,” Truman, identified by John Dower as “one of the stalwarts
of the triumphal narrative,” outlined his intention to use “atomic power” as “a powerful

53 Helen Mears, Mirror for Americans: Japan (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1948), 18,
21, 22.
and forceful influence towards the maintenance of world peace.”\(^{54}\) Notably, Truman’s consideration of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, though briefly focused on the success of the bombings, excluded any references to those killed in each city; as would be repeated in accepted American memory of the mushroom cloud as part of the “Good War,” the *hibakusha*—atomic bomb victims—remained disembodied military targets. Following Japan’s decision to surrender on August 14, Truman surmised in his memoirs, “No nation with the military power of the United States of America had been so generous to its enemies and so helpful to its friends. Maybe the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount could be put into effect.”\(^{55}\) Truman’s evocation of the Sermon the Mount yet again echoed the traditions of John Winthrop’s forecast for Massachusetts Bay as a utopian, transformative society and the hopes attached to American belief in Manifest Destiny’s divinely civilizing and democratizing tenets. It is in this sermon that Christ admonished his listeners, “You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.”\(^{56}\) And it is this ‘city on a hill’ mentality that became formative for the American identity, as generations of Americans believed that the United States provided its citizens with opportunities for liberty unavailable in any other nation. These freedoms were not to be kept at home alone, but to be shared throughout the world, a burden reflected in Truman’s assessment of August 1945 and in U.S. policy throughout the duration of Japan’s Occupation.


\(^{56}\) See Matthew 5:14.
On August 16, Truman released a presidential proclamation setting aside Sunday, August 19 as a day of prayer. “[N]ot unmindful of the divine Providence that had enabled us to prevail,” Truman’s decree blended the United States’ dual commitment to Christianity and democracy. Predicting that “[t]his day is a new beginning in the history of freedom on the earth,” Truman credited “the courage and stamina and spirit of free men and women united in determination to fight” for the Allied victory before adding that the war’s end “has come with the help of God, Who was with us in the early days of adversity and disaster, and Who has now brought us to this glorious day of triumph.”

Truman’s public pronouncements on the role of God in the Allied defeat of Nazi Germany and militaristic Japan extended to his radio address following the formal September 2 surrender ceremonies held onboard the U.S.S. Missouri at anchor in Tokyo Bay. Speaking to his fellow citizens on the evening of September 1, immediately after the broadcast covering the surrender finished, Truman invoked the Almighty “who now has seen us overcome the forces of tyranny that sought to destroy His civilization.”

Truman’s speech then turned to a commemoration of American service personnel—men and women—who had lost their lives throughout the course of war and, in an overt parallel of Abraham Lincoln’s dedication of the Union cemetery at Gettysburg in November 1863, Truman reminded his listeners of their own duty in light of such sacrifice: “It is our responsibility—ours, the living—to see to it that the victory shall be a monument worthy of the dead who died to win it.”

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57 Truman, Memoirs: Volume One, 452.
58 Ibid., 461. The surrender ceremonies took place on September 2 Tokyo time and on the evening of September 1 for the U.S.’s east coast residents.
59 Ibid.
confluence of democracy and Christianity in the American “way of life,” the president asked his audience to “set aside V-J Day as one of renewed consecration to the principles which have made us the strongest nation on earth and which, in this war, we have striven so mightily to preserve.” He reminded his audience of both the virtual and literal power of those principles which had so recently generated the “Good War’s” victory narrative: “A free people with free Allies, who can develop an atomic bomb, can use the same skill and energy and determination to overcome all the difficulties ahead.” In this sense, Truman embodied what Dower labels the “triumphal” narrative of the atomic bombings, for the president not only celebrated the creation of nuclear warfare, but he also used it as evidence that the United States would continue to triumph over recent enemies in a time of peace. One that long obscured the human tragedy of the war’s end, this victory “meta-narrative” obliterated the presence of Japanese victims from wide-spread American considerations of Hiroshima and Nagasaki just as both atomic bombs had quite literally obliterated thousands of Japanese civilians. In reality, tragedy haunted American triumph, as some observers admitted even in 1945.61

Scientists and politicians stood equally divided as the aftermath of the bombings—“all the difficulties ahead”—unfurled. A meeting between General Leslie Groves, director of the Manhattan Project, Truman, physicist Vannevar Bush, and military advisers in the days after Japan’s surrender hinted at the internal conflicts in the

60 Ibid., 462.

politics of war. As one of the scientists prepared to brief the group on the future use of nuclear weapons, he said, “I’m sorry it [the atomic bomb] worked.” A military official responded, “Amen.” The “Good War” now held a disturbingly tainted legacy. Truman’s portrayal of a divine hand in American history grew muddled as prominent Christians and intellectuals refused to elevate his decision to uncontestable moral high ground.

As noted, not all Americans were willing to passively allow Truman to speak for God and tacitly endow the atomic bomb with nation-wide approval born of supernatural intervention. Such discomfort with foreign policy as applied to Japan, voiced by a minority of Christians in America, had actually emerged twenty years before the atomic bombings when Congress passed new immigration legislation that discriminated against the Japanese. At the 1925 Foreign Missions Convention of the United States and Canada lamented Congress’s legislation, Robert A. Dean had warned, “practicing Christianity at home is more essential than preaching it abroad.” For Dean, the failure of American churches to respond to Japan’s 1923 earthquake with any aid jeopardized Christianizing missions abroad, particularly in Asia. Dean unwittingly foreshadowed the religious tensions of the Pacific War: “No delusions about so-called Christian countries any longer exist among the peoples of the East. All religions, including Christianity, are under scrutiny.”

By the war’s culmination, numerous American citizens participated in the scrutiny of their own nation’s ideals. The August 17, 1945 issue of *U.S. News & World*

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Report included an article by its founder, David Lawrence, that unabashedly took President Truman’s announcement of the bombing to task. “God did not provide this new weapon of terror,” insisted Lawrence in a pointed rebuttal of Truman’s reasoning, “Man made it himself with the God-given brains and skill of the scientist.” Lawrence removed the aura of fate and divine guidance from the United States’ decision to deploy such an unimaginably ghastly weapon and returned the blame to those who built and dropped the bomb: “It is man and not God who must assume responsibility for this devilish weapon. Perhaps He is reminding all of us that manmade weapons can, if their use is unrestrained, destroy civilization, and that man still has the chance to choose between the destructive and constructive use of the findings of science.” After returning human agency to the United States’ wartime behavior, Lawrence added, “Peoples must exercise the power that belongs inherently to them and must reason with each other through free governments and God-controlled statesmen.”

Truman’s own frequent references to the presence of divine will in his foreign policy decisions certainly cast him as a “God-controlled” statesman, yet Lawrence’s reasoning might also read as something of a condemnation of presidential rhetoric that had distanced the purposeful production of uranium and plutonium by crediting God with the project’s ultimate success.

For each voice that condemned Truman, however, another rose to glorify his leadership and to celebrate the ingenuity of American science. Poet Edgar Guest’s stanza attempted to redeem Truman and venerate his advisers even as critics such as Lawrence

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had undermined the President’s misguided—not to mention oversimplified—defense of nuclear holocaust:

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\begin{align*}
\text{The power to blow all things to dust} \\
\text{Was kept for people God could trust,} \\
\text{And granted unto them alone,} \\
\text{That evil might be overthrown.}^{65}
\end{align*}
\]

Some Americans even volunteered to sacrifice their own lives in order to benefit their nation’s newly minted nuclear responsibilities. In 1946, as the United States prepared for the first in a series of atomic tests scheduled for the South Pacific, “[t]hirty persons including a parachute jumper, a self-professed alcholic [sic], several war veterans and a woman have volunteered to serve as human ‘guinea pigs’ in the atomic bomb tests” at Bikini Atoll. Though their backgrounds and ages were quite varied—ranging from a 72-year-old man who regretted that his age had limited his participation in World War II to “sit[ting] tight and pay[ing] taxes and buy[ing] war bonds” to an 18-year-old who had spent time in “serious consideration” before contacting the government to offer his participation—they nonetheless voiced a certain devotion, if not outright patriotic fervor, to America’s post-war efforts. As a newspaper article about the thirty volunteers noted, “Only two of them thought they (meaning next of kin) should be paid. One estimated that $50,000 would be ‘about right.’” One volunteer explained, somewhat optimistically, “Fifty per cent of our population are alcoholics and as an alcoholic I offer myself as a guinea pig. P.S. I bet you a thousand dollars I live through it,” while another who had made the offer with a friend wrote, “We felt it our duty, not only to science but to the

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65 Boyer, By the Bomb’s Early Light, 211.
In this sense, the volunteer guinea pigs celebrated both the genius of American-led science and the duty to sacrifice for the purported good of humanity, a duty driven home by the “Good War” ideology that had called on citizens to quite tangibly sacrifice their lives to end the dual threat of the expanding Nazi and Japanese empires. The ‘guinea pigs’ thus commemorated yet another iteration of a story of national triumph and prosperity, even if the government did not embrace their proffered sacrifice. The volunteers marked the distance between the horrors lived and died at Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the United States’ understanding of what had actually occurred in both cities. After thanking the potential ‘guinea pigs’ for their “courageous offer,” the government turned down their requests, irradiating only “goats, sheep, pigs and white rats” at the Bikini Atoll test and reassuring international observers “that no human beings will be intentionally submitted to the explosive tests.”

Others saw evil aplenty in the appropriation of Christian principles to defend a decidedly amoral act. In an article entitled “The Return to Nothingness,” published in Human Events on August 29, 1945, Morley echoed the July warning of Manhattan scientists as he forecasted the far-reaching after-effects Hiroshima held for America’s reputation at home and abroad. Noting the civilian death toll at the city’s center, Morley then traced the enduring cost of Truman’s decision. “Because perpetuated by a nation that calls itself Christian,” wrote Morley, “on a people with less lofty spiritual pretensions, eventual judgment may call our action ethically the more shameful, morally

66 “30 Offer To Be Human Guinea Pigs In A-Bomb Test; Get Courteous ‘No,’” The Mainichi, March 29, 1946, 2. Article from the United Press.

67 “30 Offer To Be Human Guinea Pigs In A-Bomb Test; Get Courteous ‘No,’” The Mainichi, March 29, 1946, 2; “Indian Offers Himself as ‘Human Guinea Pig,” The Mainichi, July 1, 1946, 1. Article from the United Press.
the more degrading, of the two [Pearl Harbor versus Hiroshima]. Unless we find some way of expiation, future missionaries to Japan will have difficulties in rationalizing the atomic bomb."

Little did Morley suspect that the next wave of American missionaries to Japan would arrive at the behest of none other than General Douglas MacArthur, charged with the American Occupation of Japan and inspired by his own ideals of democracy’s foundations.

CONCLUSION

[The atomic bomb’s] destructive power had also reached beyond Japan to the American imagination. There, it threatened to undermine the war story in its moment of glory by joining an American act to another atrocity revealed in 1945—the Holocaust. From them on, American triumphalism was forced to coexist with something that looked, even to Americans, like an embarrassing slaughter of ungraspable dimensions.

President Truman’s claim of religious righteousness in the cataclysmic end of World War II did not resonate thoroughly with his American audience. Admittedly, Christian responses to the death of women and children at the birth of the nuclear age were often as varied as the nation-wide reactions to the secretive Manhattan Project’s earth-shattering debut. However, many religious leaders, among others, criticized Truman’s use of the Almighty’s will to validate purposeful attacks on Japan’s civilian women and children. These reprimands did not sufficiently undermine the soon to be immutable defense of nuclear war. Truman’s public justification of the bombings found permanent voice in the American acceptance of the incineration of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, as the 1995 “showdown” over the National Air and Space Museum’s Enola


Gay exhibit reconfirmed. Laura Hein and Mark Selden trace the enduring American assumption of its moral upper-hand in the “Good War:” “The insistence on American moral purity in official commemoration of the bombings and the end of the war has had enormous domestic as well as international implications. Every American president from Harry Truman to Bill Clinton has publicly rejected the idea that there could be any moral ambiguity regarding the killing of the civilian populations in the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, still less an obligation to apologize for that act.” 70

Truman’s public bravado and rather flippant declaration that sub-humans merited no mercy—he had insisted “When you have to deal with a beast you have to treat him as a beast. It is most regrettable but nevertheless true” 71—did not match his own private agony concerning the bombings. As leader of the first and only nation to instigate nuclear warfare, Truman turned to God to endow his decision with the moral legitimacy it so obviously lacked for numerous Americans. Privately, however, when separated from his role as commander and chief, Truman struggled with the enormity of the weapon and the moral ramifications of his decision. 72 It is Truman’s hidden contemplation of nuclear warfare’s aftermath that resoundingly negates the long-lived belief that the irradiation of hundreds of thousands of Japanese civilians never compromised the ‘Good War’s’ moral underpinnings. On August 10, 1945, the day after

70 Laura Hein and Mark Selden, “Commemoration and Silence: Fifty Years of Remembering the Bomb in American and Japan,” in Living with the Bomb: American and Japanese Cultural Conflicts in the Nuclear Age, eds. Laura Hein and Mark Selden (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1997), 13-14.


72 Boyer, Fallout, 33.
Nagasaki, Truman lamented the death of “all those kids.”\textsuperscript{73} When enmeshed in the brewing Berlin crisis in 1948, Truman confided to his advisers, as they debated the chain of command for atomic war declarations in the United States, “I don’t think we should use this thing unless we absolutely have to. It is a terrible thing to order the use of something that is so terribly destructive . . . You have got to understand that this isn’t a military weapon. It is used to wipe out women and children and unarmed people, and not for military uses.”\textsuperscript{74}

Perhaps Truman’s marking of \textit{Hamlet}, quoted in one of the books about the atomic bombing in the president’s personal collection, is most telling of a public figure’s private concerns. Horatio narrates:

\begin{quote}
. . . let me speak to the yet unknowing world
How these things came about: So shall you hear
Of carnal, bloody, and unnatural acts,
Of accidental judgments, casual slaughters,
Of deaths put on by cunning and forced cause,
And, in this upshot, purposes mistook
Fall’n on the inventors’ heads . . . .
But let this same be presently perform’d
Even while men’s minds are wild; lest more mischance,
On plots and errors, happen.\textsuperscript{75}
\end{quote}

Given the unease, albeit private, of the president who ordered the deaths of over 200,000 Japanese civilians in the apocalyptic conclusion of the Pacific War, it remains disingenuous to present the American narrative of Hiroshima and Nagasaki as a sanctified end to a ghastly war. Many of Truman’s contemporaries took exception to a ‘God-given’ defense of atomic warfare’s birth, yet moral overtones remained entwined in

\textsuperscript{73} John Dower, “Triumphal and Tragic Narratives of the War in Asia,” in \textit{Living with the Bomb: American and Japanese Cultural Conflicts in the Nuclear Age}, eds. Laura Hein and Mark Selden (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1997), 47.

\textsuperscript{74} McCullough, \textit{Truman}, 650.

\textsuperscript{75} Dower, “Triumphal and Tragic Narratives of the War in Asia,” 47-48; \textit{Hamlet}, Act V, Scene 2.
narrow understandings of the bombing and its contentious aftermath. In reality, the bomb lost its ‘blessed’ aura as everyday Americans, theologians, and Manhattan Project scientists, among others, decried its use immediately after August 6 and 9, 1945. *Atomic Warfare and the Christian Faith*, published in 1946, voiced dissention with governmental validations of nuclear warfare: “We would begin with an act of contrition,” wrote the clergy contributing to the Federal Council of Churches report. “As American Christians, we are deeply penitent for the irresponsible use already made of the atomic bomb. We are agreed that, whatever be one’s judgment of the ethics of war in principle, the surprise bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki are morally indefensible. . . . [W]e have sinned grievously against the laws of God and against the people of Japan.”76 This sin has yet to take root in the popular American narrative of the atomic bombings, which even when distanced from its original religious overtones, continues to justify the bombings as inherently moral.

This desire for visible acts of contrition did serve, however, as motivation for numerous Christian activists, in both Japan and the United States, to present a vociferous counter-current to the American victory narrative. Indeed, Japanese responses to the atomic bombings in the late summer and fall of 1945 often relied upon American claims of moral, religious, and political superiority—on a resurgence of American renderings of Manifest Destiny—to highlight the contradictions present in the victor’s national identity. These reactions foreshadowed elements of what would later become a peace narrative.

within communities of *hibakusha* in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, just as they also intertwined with Christian critiques of atomic warfare.
Chapter Three

Manifest Destiny in Censored Print: Japan Examines the Atomic Bomb

Holy wars permit scant space for reflecting on a common humanity, whether the commonality lie in bravery and idealism, or obedience and helplessness, or arrogance, oppression, and atrocity.

John Dower, War Without Mercy

INTRODUCTION

By the time the first “Mission of Peace” flew thirty American B-29 Superfortresses over former targets now occupied by U.S. service personnel—Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and Tokyo among others—to celebrate Army Air Force Day on August 1, 1946, the United States had created the foundations of an atomic narrative that remained in place for the next six decades. Commemorations held by General MacArthur’s Occupation, such as July 4 and Army Air Force Day, provided obvious manifestations of the American victory story. These spectacles on the ground and in the air visibly reminded defeated Japan of the power that still backed their former enemy. Billed as an opportunity to “give the Japanese people a chance to view without fear the great bombers which once meant death and destruction” by flying the B-29s at 3000 feet, the “Mission of Peace” contained a less-than-subtle message of American might. Fourth of July celebrations, held over Japan until at least July 1949, escalated the scale of the “Mission

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2 “B-29’s In Mission Of Peace Will Fly Over Major Japan Cities on Aug. 1,” The Mainichi, July 24, 1946, 1; “Formation Of 30 B-29 Superforts To Fly Over 11 Former War Targets Marking Army Air Forces [sic] Day Today,” The Mainichi, August 1, 1946, 1. The July 24, 1947 article speaks to the presence of Occupation censorship in stories referencing Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Rather surprisingly, the article does include destruction statistics, by percentage of area destroyed, for American raids over Tokyo, Osaka, and Kobe, though without human casualty estimates; however, the article does not include similar estimates for either Hiroshima or Nagasaki.
of Peace” to include 350 planes and festivities such as “a grand parade of ground troops” which ended with MacArthur’s review at the Imperial Palace.\(^3\) It is hard not to speculate about how citizens of Tokyo, Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and other former targets reacted to this revived U.S. air presence, but such commemorations certainly contained the requisite elements of Manifest Destiny in their emphasis of democracy—via the purely American July 4 celebration of independence from tyranny—and technology, industry, and a civilizing mission, as symbolized by the war-winning B-29. This claim of progress held notable sway over American observers, as revealed by those who volunteered to be atomic guinea pigs and by those who persistently believed that new forms of nuclear technology would continue to improve daily life for the United States. This narrative, along with its synthesis of Christianity and democracy, was not without its dissenters. As Americans purposefully focused on the earth-shattering power of their newly minted weapon, captured by the iconography of the mushroom clouds and by the ubiquitous B-29 bomber, Japanese *hibakusha* (atomic bomb victims) lived a far different reality, one that brought into stark relief the long-ranging human cost of war. Out of this post-war environment emerged numerous attempts to give meaning to the bombings and, as we shall see, Japanese Christians and the press generated a memory of the war that, obscured as it was in the United States, ran counter to triumphant assertions of God’s divine selection of America as the bomb’s benefactor.

Familiar with their own memories of World War II and its achievements, among which the atomic bomb looms large, Americans often found Japanese portrayals of these same events as an unchartered and potentially hostile terrain. For the victims’ voices to

be heard, the United States would have to confront its own celebration of August 6 and 9, 1945, one that had occurred through a nascent fascination with the destruction and the potential for improvement brought by the same weapon. As the following survey of Japanese English-language newspapers indicates, the Japanese media used the advent of atomic warfare to challenge Christian tenets of the American identity, often reminding the United States, portrayed as the aggressor before the arrival of General MacArthur’s troops and subsequent censorship of the printed word, of the vast gulf between its claims to righteousness and its actual behavior. Such critiques were not reserved only for the United States—many Japanese readily admitted the fallacy of their own nation’s wartime conduct even as the Pacific War moved toward its conclusion.

“YOU ARE THE OPPOSITE OF WHAT YOU SAY YOU ARE AND THE OPPOSITE OF US”: PROPAGANDA AND THE WAR’S END

Two English-language newspapers published in Japan, the Nippon Times and The Mainichi, provided substantial coverage of Hiroshima and Nagasaki following the bombings. Any clear evaluation of the information presented in these newspapers requires first an understanding of the Japanese militarists’ control over freedom of the press during the war, for it simultaneously informed and curtailed the reports predating official surrender ceremonies on September 2, 1945. Second, a contextualization of the ways in which the American Occupation supplanted these regulations during peace

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4 Dower, War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), 30. In this quote, Dower summarizes the two basic types of stereotypes that appeared in propaganda on both sides of the Pacific. It reads in full: “[Y]ou are the opposite of what you say you are and the opposite of us, not peaceful but warlike, not good but bad. . . . In the second form of stereotyping, the formula ran more like this: you are what you say you are, but that itself is reprehensible.”
facilitates readings of newspaper articles published under the watchful eye of General MacArthur’s Headquarters.

Much as MacArthur’s Occupation would later hope to foster at least the appearance of nation-wide “consensus” within Japan’s fledgling democracy through strict censorship codes, the Japanese government had itself utilized censorship as a tool during the Pacific War.\(^5\) For a government waging a war with mounting defeats at the hands of the Allies, either at home via nightly bombings runs or in the Pacific’s bloody island-hopping campaigns, newspapers provided a means to encourage national sacrifice and support for Japan’s Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.\(^6\) Increasingly, thanks to censorship and the use of propaganda, Japan’s government plied its citizenry with what amounted to fictional accounts of wartime successes. By 1943, massive food shortages at home and military conscription’s extension to include “increasing numbers of young and old men” indicated to the Japanese that the war effort did not in fact match what tightly monitored news agencies printed.\(^7\) Building upon a long tradition of censorship that pre-dated the 1937 outbreak of war with China, the Japanese government used first the Cabinet Information Office, soon called the Cabinet Information Bureau, and its six hundred employees to formulate the news consumed by the public.\(^8\) All news had to be approved by the correct branch of the government before entering circulation in print.


\(^{7}\) Ibid., 14-15, 26-28.

\(^{8}\) Ibid., 17.
Numerous agencies therefore worked to facilitate wartime consensus: “the press sections of the army and navy cleared any news stories dealing with military affairs; the Foreign Ministry and Ministry of Greater East Asia handled international stories; and the Censorship Department of the Home Ministry’s Police Bureau vetted everything else.”

In a pattern that pre-dated the Occupation, the Japanese press, faced with stringent pre-publication censorship, appears to have engaged in self-censorship to prevent any apparent challenge to Japan’s government. The following provides evidence of self-censorship’s sway: throughout the course of the Pacific War, Japan’s government did not prosecute or arrest any “editor of a major daily newspaper,” nor did it close any of the “major newspaper[s]” as a result of any violations of national policy. Rarely did the government even need to warn or subsequently reprimand a news agency for publishing something deemed out of step with unity on the home front. Historian Samuel Hideo Yamashita suggests that although the majority of journalists adhered to their nation’s suppression of Japan’s actual fate in the war and were thus “willing collaborators,” others “worked hard to tell the truth, or as much of the truth as they could slip by their censors,” risking job loss, censure, or worse.

Overt censorship was not the only means employed by Japan’s government to craft a façade of national oneness behind the war effort. Government consolidation of various independent newspapers resulted in, among others, the 1943 merger of the Osaka mainichi with the Tokyo mainichi that created the new Mainichi shinbun. Professional

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9 Ibid., 17-18.

10 Ibid., 18.

11 Ibid.
networks facilitated both governmental and organizational forms of censorship. The Japanese Newspaper League, established in May 1941 and rechristened the Japan Newspaper Association in July 1942, used voluntary membership to attract newspapers, whose editors then “kept their writers in line.”12 By December 1942, the Cabinet Information Bureau had envisioned the Patriotic Publicists Association as a conduit of “the empire’s internal and external ideological warfare.”13

In her evaluation of Japan’s colonization of Manchuria, historian Louise Young posits that self-censorship and state censorship were not the only two factors that explained the press’s backing of the imperialism that sparked war with China and then the United States. While the 1920s had witnessed a press corps devoted to “pacifism and international cooperation,” the 1930s marked a sea change as the media instead advocated for the nation’s militarists.14 Noting that censorship did indeed increase throughout the 1930s, Young nonetheless views politics as the impetus for this shift. In sum, Japan’s press “wrote articles in support of the Manchurian Incident because they believed army policy was justified.” Beyond politics stood the power of consumerism. Printing their papers for consumption, editors recognized the power of market trends and sold their audience what it wanted to read. As Young writes of the 1930s, “mass-culture producers were equally capable of responding to popular interest in democracy, social

12 Ibid.


14 Louise Young, Japan’s Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 78-79.
justice, or consumerism, as they were to an enthusiasm for military imperialism.” Thus censorship, political preferences, and the desire to sell newspapers combined in the 1930s to create the slanted newspaper coverage familiar to Japanese readers throughout the war.

While self-censorship again emerged as the means to navigate various depths of control over freedom of the press, the level of accuracy achieved by Japanese news reporters varied by location. Throughout the war, newspaper audiences in Japan could trust the veracity and the timeliness of stories regarding war in Europe and even those discussing Allied bombing campaigns over Japan. As Yamashita narrates of Japan’s “[h]ome-front news,” “the reports of bomb damage were so accurate that commuters could use them to plot their route to work each day. One commuter listened to the latest damage reports every morning before she left for work, choosing a particular train or trolley on the basis of what she heard.” For newspaper reports on Japan’s defense of its Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, fiction overrode fact after the devastation inflicted upon Japan’s navy at Midway in June 1942. As the tide of war turned against Japan’s army and navy abroad, newspapers at home crafted a vague narrative of events that included purposeful “misinformation.” Nor were readers unaware of the subterfuge, though the lack of other news sources and the desire to know their nation’s fate prompted them to continue to read newspapers for a hint of what the censors did not want them to know. Functioning since 1936 and operating alongside the Cabinet Information Bureau to monitor reporting on the war, the Domei News Service served as the “only official”

15 Ibid., 79.

16 Yamashita, Leaves from an Autumn of Emergencies, 19.
agency for news for both international and “out-of-town” stories.\(^\text{17}\) Even on August 11, 1945—two days after Nagasaki’s atomic bombing—*The Mainichi* reflected this entrenched pattern of propaganda blended with news from the war. By this point, what had been war reporting from afar was now war at home, and the once-reliable accounts of damaged withstood by targeted cities faded. In its three succinct bullet points, *The Mainichi’s* “360 Raiders To Kyushu” highlighted this merger of fact and fiction. An August 8 Allied bombing run over Nagasaki and Fukuoka prefectures appeared in *The Mainichi* with no description of the damages inflicted by the enemy’s planes. The bravery of Japan’s response did garner a mention, along with the prediction that, as evidenced by the “12 enemy planes shot down and 12 others damaged,” Japan’s “war results are expected to increase further.”\(^\text{18}\) Emperor Hirohito would announce his nation’s surrender only four days later. Much as readers during the war years, historians today must “carefully [read] between the lines” of propaganda, omissions, and outright inventions to plumb the revelations of the past contained in the pre-Occupation newspaper accounts of Japan’s wartime enemy and the atomic bomb.\(^\text{19}\)

Eight days after the formal surrender ceremony on the deck of the *U.S.S. Missouri*, American Occupation authorities passed censorship laws that went into effect on September 10, 1945 and sharply curtailed what might have been the press’s newfound freedom by forbidding printed or radio reports on “Allied troop movements which had

\(^{17}\) Ibid., 17.

\(^{18}\) “360 Raiders to Kyushu,” *The Mainichi*, August 11, 1945, 2.

\(^{19}\) Yamashita, *Leaves from an Autumn of Emergencies*, 19.
not been officially released, false or deceptive criticism of Allied powers, and rumors.”

According to political scientist Eiji Takemae, MacArthur’s General Headquarters (GHQ), at work within the recently defeated nation, had only to step into the propaganda and censorship apparatus Japan’s government had long fostered. Despite the myriad constrictions to freedom of the press, newspapers nonetheless remain significant for their representation of various wartime voices, for the stories they still published, and for their early reactions to Hiroshima and Nagasaki that pre-dated Occupation censorship. Such accounts often reflected the “distorting lens” referenced by David M. Kennedy that had so long distanced the two nations. Such articles, particularly in the *Nippon Times*, frequently condemned U.S. wartime policy that facilitated the targeting of civilians and the creation of nuclear weapons by reminding Americans of their self-purported Christian duty. For a Western audience, the war depicted by Japan’s English language dailies presents a seminal point of departure for comparison and contrast between two belligerents’ national conceptions of divine providence and national destiny in war and peace.

Documented by historians and war veterans alike, the mutual antipathy between Japan and the United States during the Pacific War permeated even religious conceptualizations of the decades leading to Japan’s invasion of Manchuria in 1931 and attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941. As an ardently Christian nation, the United States had a plethora of political and private voices that debated its successes and failures—in spiritual terms—as war with Japan finally drew to a close. Japan, however, based its

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cultural and national identity on its devotion to a divine emperor, the figurehead of State Shinto for whom the nation’s soldiers and citizens waged war. With the vast majority of its citizenry adhering to Buddhist and Shinto traditions, only a small percentage of Japan’s population interpreted the war through a Christian lens that matched their own personal faith. Certainly, Japanese who were not practicing Christians still used the faith of their antagonist to condemn the gulf between claims of national consensus on proper Christian behavior and actual practice, as revealed in various venues. Yet, the occasional dispatch written by a Christian author indicated the ways in which war turned both sides of the Pacific toward religion to justify or condemn, as the case dictated, the aggressions of war.

In the first weeks of August 1945, the reports printed in two of Japan’s English newspapers read more as propaganda than as news generated by a free press. As the Superintendent of the Church of Christ in Japan, Reverend Mitsuru Tomita utilized a radio broadcast to deliver a Christian explanation of Japan’s right to pursue the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. Deemed “a Foreign ministry mouthpiece,” the Nippon Times published Tomita’s address one day after Nagasaki’s incineration.22 The article’s appearance in an English newspaper raises numerous questions regarding the motivations behind Tomita’s authorship, including whether he wrote the text himself, and its intended audience. Perhaps he wrote the speech under duress as the member of a minority religion during a time of war; perhaps he fully supported Japan’s national mission in East Asia, as he claims repeatedly. In the end, however, the potential discrepancies between Tomita’s personal regard for the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere and the use of his public

22 Ibid., 385.
position as the Superintendent of the Church of Christ in Japan to crystallize support for the waning war are less significant than what the article reveals about Japan itself during August 1945. Historian John Dower’s study of the extreme animosity between Japan and the United States, *War Without Mercy*, postulates that examinations of the wartime propaganda created by the two belligerents unveil not the intended target of the propaganda, but the creator-nation’s “mind-set.” Significantly, as Dower illuminates, the audience that consumed each nation’s propaganda “generally took these statements seriously, and there is much to be learned here in retrospect about language, stereotyping, and the making of modern myths.”23 The *Nippon Times*’ reprint of Tomita’s radio address therefore allows us to focus on the confluence of Japan’s perception of American identity, wartime hatred, and its own rhetoric of holy war.

The timing and content of Tomita’s speech were nothing less than ironic, as two American atomic bombs and the Soviet Union’s August 8 declaration of war against Japan had just sounded the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere’s final death knell. Yet, Tomita explained to his audience that the Allies’ continued malfeasance, especially in their practice of Christianity, had forced him to confront the West’s errant ways. These ranged from “distorting the real aims of Japan” to “deliberately giving a false presentation of Christianity itself.”24 After blaming American and British “machinations” for inciting war with Japan, Tomita surveyed the Christian ideals embodied by the five principles of the Joint Declaration of Greater East Asia. Tomita suggested that his nation’s expansionism matched divine plans, for tenets of Greater East Asia such as


mutual cooperation between countries, independence, respect for the traditions of others, economic stability, and a desire to end racism among nations all paired with Christian values. Indeed, as rendered by Tomita, Greater East Asia facilitated the desires of the divine: “It is God’s will that humans closely unite and share with one another,” Tomita concluded.25 Greater East Asia’s economic policies and expansion throughout Asia and the South Pacific undoubtedly brought Japanese citizenry and foreign policy into close contact with other nations. Tomita’s speech overlooked bitter resistance to Japanese imperialism in China, Korea, and other nations, just as Japan itself had often omitted its subjugation of its “blood brothers.”26 The rhetoric employed by Tomita illuminated Japan’s purposeful forgetting of its own imperialism in its desire to liberate Asia from Western, white encroachment. Instead, Japanese propagandists focused on America’s expansionistic empire and, through this necessarily narrow historical sleight-of-hand, blamed the West for war in the Pacific.27

Where Greater East Asia succeeded in Tomita’s assessment, the West and American Manifest Destiny failed. Tomita echoed decades of Japanese national discomfort—and outright rage—with its treatment by the United States and England and expressed doubt that the United States had any legitimate right to insist that God had selected it for a special purpose, despite national pride in a renewed Manifest Destiny that had just liberated Europe. As evidence of the failure of Manifest Destiny as a national agenda, Tomita presented America’s “virtual colonies” of the “Orient,” including the

25 Ibid.

26 Dower, War Without Mercy, 30.

27 Ibid.
Philippines. Tomita took aim at adherence to the civilizing and democraticizing mission of Manifest Destiny by pointing to its refusal to include the racial equality clause advocated by Japan at the 1919 Paris Peace talks. Citing the apostle Paul’s stance “that Christianity decreed the abolition of racial discrimination,” Tomita argued that Japan’s racial equality clause “agreed perfectly with the fundamentals of Christianity.” Thus, the United States stood again separated from the values it so publically claimed and in fact jeopardized the more legitimately Christian behavior of other equal states. Drawing his credibility from the fact that, as he spoke to his audience he had “the Joint Declaration of Greater East Asia before me and the Holy Bible open in my hands,” Tomita chastised the “self-appointed Christian nations,” noting, “Japan looks forward to the day when England and America will manifest the spirit of Christianity which they have either forgotten or, indeed, repudiated.” Neither Hiroshima nor Nagasaki appeared in Tomita’s radio address, despite their recent bombings; his distrust of the Allies’ Christian national identities rested its rhetoric solely upon these nations’ attempts to halt Japan’s euphemistically sketched Greater East Asia, their past oppression of Asia’s nations, and the “self-appointed” nature of their claim to divine selection.28

Tomita’s deconstruction of the Allies’ claims to national righteousness adhered to depictions of the enemy disseminated as propaganda throughout wartime Japan. In this instance, as a practitioner of the same religion that purportedly defined American identity, Tomita’s address emphasized the ways in which the United States undermined its own values even as Japan’s expansionism supposedly reflected them. Dower chronicles the means through which propaganda in both Japan and the United States

formed an essentialized, less-than-human ‘other’ to legitimize the enemy’s slaughter. In his analysis of *The Way of The Subject*, a pamphlet condemning the West’s history released by Japan’s Ministry of Education in August 1941, Dower contextualizes the environment from which Tomita spoke. As Dower contends, “The Japanese thus read Western history in much the same way that Westerners were reading the history of Japan: as a chronicle of destructive values, exploitative practices, and brutal wars.”

Tomita’s work clearly built upon this animosity, even as Japan hovered on the brink of defeat after the atomic bombings, in his condemnation of the West’s corruption of Christianity’s core practices. In this sense, “A Christian Interpretation” bridged what Dower identifies as the one of the stereotypes generated by Japanese and American forms of propaganda.

Tomita’s blunt assessment that non-Christian Japan practiced Christianity by pursuing the lofty Greater East Asia, while the United States refuted its faith through its own imperialism, smacked of “you are the opposite of what you say you are and the opposite of us, not peaceful but warlike, not good but bad.” The following analysis of Japan’s altruistic expansionism and the United States’ aggressive imperialism underscored Tomita’s rhetoric: “We, who do not claim to be a Christian nation, are more Christian than you.” His reference to American intransigence at the end of World War I—one that frequented Japanese propagandists’ considerations of its enemy’s history—along with his dislike of American propaganda, or the “wicked spirits at work in high places carried by radios,” reverberated the refrain that the United States was “not good but bad.”

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30 Ibid., 30.
In an article rife with war-time propaganda, the August 9, 1945 edition of the *Nippon Times* reminded its audience of Japan’s commitment to the “construction of Greater East Asia” in order to contrast the enemy’s “inhuman acts”—such as repeated fire-bombing raids by American B-29s—that, in their indiscriminate annihilation of women and children, hospitals and schools, threatened “to wipe out the Japanese race with its glorious history of over 3,000 years.” After enumerating the recent bombings of Kobe, Osaka, Tokyo, Yokohama, and Nagoya, along with the deaths of “general civilians,” women, children, and the elderly, “U.S. Raiders Destroying Non-Military Objects” turned the United States’ own war practice against a major tenet of the “Good War” identity: “This is not all the enemy has done in violation of the Christian principle of humanity that he professes whenever he parts his lips.” Ultimately, the article contained evidence of shared sentiment between the two enemy nations as both claimed that the divine disapproved of the other: “There is no doubt the enemy will be punished by Heaven for his duplicity, which is involved in talking of humanity and justice and acting in utter disregard of them.” Japan’s propagandists had again returned to the refrain: “you are the opposite of what you say you are.” Though the *Nippon Times* article never directly referenced Hiroshima itself, its condemnation of the Christian America’s purposeful killing of civilians, including the brutal subtitle “More Kiddies Killed,” was one soon held on an international stage as news of the atomic bombings emerged.\(^\text{31}\) Indeed, the *Nippon Times* spoke of this international angst in its August 12 “Cruel Havoc Wrought by New-Type Bomb Told,” noting that following news of the “gross

fiendishness of the enemy’s new type bomb, Europe has been swept by a wave of terror.”  

Like the *Nippon Times*, the English-language daily *The Mainichi* also printed a series of articles on the Allied bombing campaigns over Japan that August. The first page of the August 8, 1945 edition questioned “Enemy Raiders Using Bombs Of New Type?” before announcing “[f]airly great damage was caused in Hiroshima City when it was attacked by a small number of enemy B-29s on August 6.”  

By August 10, without any reference to Nagasaki, *The Mainichi* attempted to soothe its audience’s nerves by detailing ways its readers might protect themselves against the “new-type bomb:” evacuating to underground shelters and wearing “padded hoods, ‘teko,’ and gaiters” along with “air defense apparel” could prevent burns from the heat and blast ascribed to the weapon. Even while advocating such defensive measures, the newspaper suggested in its opening line that “[t]he new-type bombs dropped by enemy planes on Hiroshima on August 6 are, after all, not so powerful as to cause great anxiety.”

In a theme soon replicated by *The Mainichi* in the early weeks of September 1945, the *Nippon Times* did not overlook international discomfort with what had happened to Japan’s cities, particularly Hiroshima and Nagasaki. As with other articles published that August, the *Nippon Times* relied upon a less subtle undercurrent of hostility as it depicted its enemy and soon-to-be occupier’s devaluation of Japanese civilian life. Citing “a Reuter newscast received in Stockholm” on August 9, the *Nippon

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32 “Cruel Havoc Wrought By New-Type Bomb Told,” *Nippon Times*, August 12, 1945, 1.


Times informed its readers that Truman’s atomic bomb “was bitterly criticized by the Vatican spokesman, who said that the news created a “painful impression.”35 Though Pope Pius XII later deemed this comment “unauthorized,”36 the Nippon Times nevertheless leveraged the international distaste for American foreign policy to contend, “It seems that the enemy is now intent on killing and wounding as many innocent people as possible due to his urgent desire to end the war speedily.”37 Subsequent articles revisited this theme of unjust war, noting that the “atrocious action of the enemy” had disfigured Hiroshima’s schoolchildren.38

Four days before Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers (SCAP) General Douglas MacArthur arrived with U.S. troops to begin Japan’s occupation, the Nippon Times published “Atomic Bomb.” An editorial by nom-de-plume Japonicus, it again questioned the pairing of America’s Christian democracy with the nuclear incineration of entire cities. In the juxtaposition of the United States’ professed value system with its actual behavior, the anonymous author presented an appraisal that would soon become familiar in the Japanese press. Japonicus used the voices of American dissenters to reveal that even the United States’ own Christian citizens did not accept the inherent evil of Hiroshima or their government’s justification for it. As Japonicus editorialized:

Religionists in America are reported to have condemned the measure at least in so far as it was employed against a populous city. The Americans, they say, should have tried it

35 “New-Type Bombs Used In Raid on Hiroshima,” Nippon Times, August 9, 1945, 1.
36 “Force Of Atomic Bomb Great: All Possible Steps Taken To Assure Workers’ Safety; People Voice Fear Of Discovery In ‘Hour of Victory,’” The Mainichi, September 13, 1945, 2.
37 “New-Type Bombs Used In Raid on Hiroshima,” Nippon Times, August 9, 1945, 1.
38 “Eyewitness Depicts Effects of New Bomb Used by the Enemy in Raiding Hiroshima,” Nippon Times, August 11, 1945, 3.
on a smaller Japanese town. The pronouncement is based on considerations of inhumanity, though not basically objecting to the employment of the bomb, a stand, we are afraid, rather ill-becoming persons preaching the Christian faith.

Japonicus then took America’s ally, Great Britain’s Winston Churchill, to task for his claim that, by forcing an abrupt end to the war in the Pacific and by circumventing a full-scale invasion of Japan, the atomic bomb had actually saved lives. First, Japonicus drew parallels between Allied justifications for strategic bomber offensives that legitimatized the death of civilians in the name of a speedy end to war and the arguments Kaiser Wilhelm II had once presented in a letter to Austria’s Franz Joseph: “My soul is torn but everything must be put to fire and sword: men, women, and children and old men must be slaughtered” for the Great War to end in “two months.” Japonicus then reminded 

*Nippon Times* readers of the Kaiser’s fate. The Treaty of Versailles’ Article 27 had indicted Germany’s World War I leader for his “supreme offense against international morality.” Using this segue, Japonicus revealed what he perceived as the ironic timing of the Nuremburg Trials. Prominent Nazis would face their own war crimes and violations of international law on the heels of Hiroshima’s death, an act he described as one “with malice aforethought and without any previous notice to destroy a large and populous town in defiance of international treaties and international morality.” For Japonicus, this was evidence sufficient to “impress the world at large that there is one law for the conqueror and another law for the vanquished.”

*The Mainichi’s* August 11 edition reflected the layers of censorship—imposed by state and by self—and propaganda present in Japan’s press throughout its fifteen years of war in Asia along with the end-game erosion of the militarists’ sway over the press. In

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columns placed side-by-side, *The Mainichi* presented its readership with “Editorial: Go Ahead Of Enemy Methods” and “On Nagasaki City.” The latter, briefly discussing Nagasaki’s incineration at the hands of the second “new-type bomb,” closed with the following: “Although details are under investigation, damaged suffered on our side is surmised to be extremely slight.” Such analysis appeared in keeping with several years of purposeful obfuscation of the country’s true position in the war. Yet, after reminding its audience that Japan had inflicted “unexpectedly great losses” on the United States at Okinawa, the anonymous editorial running next to “On Nagasaki City” reviewed General Henry H. Arnold’s claim that his Army Air Force had the capability to “defeat Nippon” with “planes alone.” The Army Air Force would garner defeat by pummeling the home islands in a period of weeks with “three times as many bombs as those dropped on Germany during one year.” Where one might expect a laundry list of Imperial Japan’s military strengths in response to the enemy’s arrogance instead appeared a concession of sorts: “[T]o ignore it would be too much underestimating the enemy strength. Instead we should pay close attention to detecting early the enemy plan in such a grandiose statement. To belittle the enemy would be just as wrong as to fear him.” Traditional elements of propaganda certainly surfaced in the editorial’s rhetoric; the enemy was still, after all, the “grandiose” enemy, but now unworthy of both fear and dismissal. The editorial then took an even more surprising twist as it turned its examining lens toward Japan itself. “We should not be afraid of the enemy’s words but it is too late to challenge them with words,” wrote the author. “What is most important in politics is to go ahead of the enemy words and techniques whatever they may be and let the nation have positive

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power to face calmly ‘the rigid truth about the war.’”\textsuperscript{41} The editorial’s prescience indicated the gap between what the home front knew to be true and what the infrastructure of propaganda, censorship, and militarism had long obscured; the final stages of war, now quite literally occurring above Japan, no longer facilitated the remote tales of ‘victory’ on other islands in the Pacific. Though these two articles conflicted in purpose, for the early coverage of Nagasaki reverted to earlier tropes that insisted a spiritually superior Japan could endure the United States’ onslaught, both indicated that Japan hovered on the brink of defeat.

By August 22, 1945 the visual record presented in \textit{The Mainichi} matched the printed word. In the week after Hirohito’s radio address announcing his country’s capitulation, a somber tone overtook the newspaper when two photographs of Nagasaki ran on page two juxtaposed next to the editorial “A New Mentality.” Though again not front page news, Nagasaki’s remains appeared in grainy photographs, this time portrayed as “Scorched Earth in A Moment” and described in the stark title “Houses 16 Kilometers Away Destroyed By Heat Of Bomb.”\textsuperscript{42} Citing Hirohito’s surrender broadcast, “A New Mentality” explained the new duty of the Emperor’s loyal subjects: “Bracing up our spirit amidst all sorrows, we should forge ahead for the construction of a new Japan.”\textsuperscript{43}

In a tone considerably more neutral than that voiced by Japonicus, \textit{The Mainichi} published a three-part series, “Force of the Atomic Bomb Great,” starting the week after Japan’s formal September surrender onboard the \textit{U.S.S. Missouri}. While large portions

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\begin{enumerate}
\item “Hit by Atom Bomb,” \textit{The Mainichi}, August 22, 1945, 2.
\item “Editorial: A New Mentality,” \textit{The Mainichi}, August 22, 1945, 2.
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\end{footnotesize}
of each day’s installation covered historical aspects of the physics that led to the production of uranium and plutonium, to the Manhattan Project, and ultimately to the splitting of the atom, the final article concluded with international and American reactions to Hiroshima. Printed on September 13 in Japan, next to a photograph of Allied surgeons examining and treating one of Hiroshima’s hibakusha, “Force of Atomic Bomb Great” cited a recently published edition of the New York Times and its inclusion of secular and religious responses to atomic warfare. One anonymous American wrote, “It is a stain upon our national life,” and another suggested, “man is too frail to be entrusted with such power.” The article provided listed select church organizations and their reactions to August 6 and 9. As representatives for the Federal Council of Churches opined, in rhetoric that soon permeated the United States as citizens imagined their own imminent destruction rather than the death already occurring in Japan, “If we, a professedly Christian nation, feel morally free to use atomic energy in that way, men elsewhere will accept that verdict—the stage will be set for the sudden and final destruction of mankind.” Not all of those included echoed Cecil Hinshaw, president of the Quaker institution William Penn College, and his assessment that the “atomic bombing was a barbaric, inhuman type of warfare—its use unjustified.” Yet, even those who focused on the benefits of nuclear energy, such as G.F. Fisher, the Archbishop of Canterbury, warned that the increased leisure time that would surely accompany new atomic inventions required “an increase in man’s own spiritual resources. Men must become better men. That is the moral of it.” In what reads as an abrupt, and politically charged, conclusion, The Mainichi turned to none other than Nazi Hermann Goering “nervously awaiting trial as a war criminal.” The once high-ranking Nazi general and
head of the Luftwaffe had “heard the news [of the atomic bomb] in awe and wonderment” and then surmised: “Mighty accomplishment. I don’t want anything to do with it. I am leaving this world.” A compliment on the ingenuity of American-led science by one of the architects of Nazi extermination policies appeared somewhat unmistakably as a denunciation of the United States’ newest achievement.

DEMENSTRATING “A RIGHT TO A PLACE AMONG CIVILIZED NATIONS”: AMERICA’S BOMB IN OCCUPIED JAPAN’S PRINT

By September 15, 1945, SCAP headquarters had announced that Occupation censors would impose “100 per cent censorship of Japanese news” as, according to chief of censorship Colonel Donald Hoover, “Marshal MacArthur wants it understood that the Allied powers do not regard Japan as an equal in any way.” Rather, “Japan is a defeated enemy which has not yet demonstrated a right to a place among civilized nations.”

Under these new regulations, incendiary oratory such as that earlier levied against the United States by Japonicus disappeared from Japanese English-language newspapers.

In reality, the United States had been planning its approach toward defeated Japan’s newspapers since 1944 and the creation of the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee. Committee members never realized their goal of completely shutting down Japan’s mass media during the Occupation’s beginning stages, with circulation resumed gradually and under the military’s observation until the former enemy proved itself ready.

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44 “Force Of Atomic Bomb Great: All Possible Steps Taken to Assure Workers’ Safety; People Voice Fear of Discovery In ‘Hour of Victory,’” The Mainichi, September 13, 1945, 2.

45 “100 Per Cent Censorship Of News Of Japanese Origin To Be Effected,” The Mainichi, September 18, 1945, 1.
for this new freedom. Instead, SCAP utilized most of the surviving media to facilitate compliance with its vision of a democratic Japan. This shift in policy from an era of hypothetical defeat to the time of actual victory caused William de Lange to label Japan’s media as “one of the Japanese institutions that would survive the war practically unscathed.”

SCAP’s treatment of certain members of Japan’s print media during the Occupation’s early days leaned toward an element of retribution for their recently published articles and for their general tone throughout the war. Some 350 men found themselves forbidden from employment in Japan’s media; only 75 of these still worked for media outlets, and even this purge represented “an exceedingly small number” when compared to the sway the institution had held its readership during the war. Both the Domei News Service and the Nippon Times felt the sting of national defeat by mid-September. Employees of the Civil Censorship Detachment (CCD), relying on ‘Magic’ intercepts of messages relayed between Japan’s Foreign Minister Shigemitsu Mamoru and “Japanese legations in Berne, Stockholm, and Lisbon” discovered the close interactions between Domei and Japanese foreign policy. The decoded messages indicated the government’s plans to use Domei to “make every effort to exploit the atomic bomb question in our propaganda.” This revelation resulted in Domei’s censure by the CCD on September 14, 1945 and perhaps explains the brusque tone of the Mainichi’s September 15 quote from Colonel Donald Hoover. As punishment for

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47 Ibid., 168.

“disseminating untruthful news” and using news of Hiroshima and Nagasaki to “[disturb] the public tranquility,” an offense specifically forbidden by new press codes, Domei not only found itself confined to “pre-publication censorship” but also, per CCD requirements, lost one full day of publicizing the news. 49 SCAP authorities interrupted the Nippon Time’s publication schedule for not properly turning over “a sensitive article” to Counter-Intelligence Chief Elliott R. Thorpe. In perhaps what serves as the best example of the Occupation’s ability to simply step into the shoes left vacant by the defeated militarists’ highly bureaucratized control of the populace’s loyalty to the state, MacArthur, following his advisors’ suggestion, did not dismantle the Domei News Agency. Instead, the Supreme Commander used it to disseminate American propaganda. As Thorpe later recalled of this decision, “This would have been a very serious step indeed, for we were using Domei as the only effective means of communicating the Commander-in-Chief’s will to the nearly 60 million people in the Empire.” 50

SCAP censorship, under the purvey of the Civil Intelligence Section and its Civil Censorship Detachment, permeated quite literally “every aspect of public expression,” suggests Dower, and rapidly prompted the familiar trope of “self-censorship” by Japan’s media. 51 SCAP enforced censorship parameters from September 1945 until September 1949, employing 6000 Japanese who spoke English as part of its effort to craft the postwar peace by monitoring seventy newspapers with “prepublication censorship.” 52

49 Ibid.


51 Dower, Embracing Defeat, 405.

52 Ibid., 407.
Under the September 1945 Press Code, editors first had to submit proofs for clearance to SCAP censors and then remove any suspect portions before getting permission for publication. Even with this new state apparatus in place, some members of the Japanese press managed to circumnavigate censorship in the Occupation’s early stages by relying on nuanced subterfuge. For example, the phrase “blue eyed national,” translated in Japanese, allowed editors to run stories on violence, such as rapes, perpetuated by American soldiers that otherwise would not have escaped censorship. SCAP guidelines shifted over time, often confounding Japanese attempts to identify the nuanced line between fit to print and incendiary. At times, censorship bordered on the ridiculous. The CCD restricted satire of General MacArthur and then turned its gaze on works already published. Kanzo Uchimura, a Christian in the early 1900s who was no longer alive during the Occupation nevertheless had his autobiography purged for its benign assertion that “there were more murders and alcoholics in New York than in Tokyo.”

Already accustomed to their own nation’s strict censorship codes, Japanese media on the one hand admitted that SCAP restrictions were more moderate than those of “the militarists, when a transgression might even imperil one’s life.” On the other hand, SCAP’s refusal to allow any evidence or mention of censorship, such as including the offending blacked-out passage or notice of a deletion, chaffed in comparison to 1930s censorship, where even the “militarists and ultranationalists” had “allowed excised

54 Ibid.
56 Ibid., 409.
portions of text to be marked in publications with Xs and Os.” This calculated visual absence of the Occupation’s tight control over Japan’s news led to one reporter’s lament “that at least the Japanese censors had served tea.”

Print media such as newspapers fell victim to the vagaries of SCAP censorship codes and eventually to the 1947 “Reverse Course” itself, when the Cold War rather than the “Good War” consumed the United States’ vision for defeated Japan’s place in the world. Notably, the GHQ hoped to remove not only potential criticism of the Occupation itself, but also to exterminate the ideas that the Allies believed had sparked war and might continue to oppose Japan’s new democracy. Suggesting that this proved “an unachievable task,” Takemae contextualizes the impetus for such cultural reforms: “The Occupation sought to transform . . . the attitudes, values, and beliefs the militarists had distorted to inculcate, in the idiom of American policy-makers, ‘an extreme nationalism and a glorification of war.’” In order to eliminate this trend from postwar Japanese society, SCAP censors restricted complimentary portrayals of the fusion between State Shinto and militarism and broadly restricted “Defense of War Propaganda,” including “any propaganda which directly or indirectly defends Japan’s conduct of and in the War,” just as they reminded their audience of its own war guilt. Under the aegis of its Press and Publications Branch, the Civil Information and Education Section used Japanese newspapers to disseminate installations in a “history of the war” that, facilitated by

57 Ibid., 410.
58 Ibid.
59 Takemae, The Allied Occupation of Japan, 347.
60 Dower, Embracing Defeat, 411.
considerations of “the Rape of Nanjing and the Sack of Manila,” cultivated the readers’
sense of national culpability. Newspapers were not the only vehicle used to spread
notions of Japan’s own war guilt; “[m]agazines, documentary films, newsreels, and
books” surveyed wartime atrocities as well. 61 SCAP officials never informed the
Japanese what constituted “unacceptable expression,” leaving them to rely on two
elements for guidance in their publications. First were the “very general press, radio, and
film ‘codes’” from the Occupation’s start in 1945 that broadly restricted news that might,
for example, “disturb the public tranquility” or present “false or destructive criticism of
the Allied Powers.” 62 The September 1945 Press Code restricted the presence of
“editorial opinion” within newspapers in an effort to extricate propaganda—or at least
that slanted toward Japan’s recent past—from daily circulation. 63 Second was what
Dower calls “imagination shaped by experience,” essentially an attempt by the Japanese
at divination regarding what would or would not be flagged for removal by SCAP
censors. Classified and generated month-by-month, censorship guidelines for SCAP’s
CCD, such as one from June 1946, covered topics as wide ranging as criticism of any of
the Allies as specified by country and by “general criticism,” “Third World War
Comments,” “Overplaying Starvation,” “Criticism of the United States,” “Criticism of
SCAP Writing the Constitution [including any reference whatsoever to SCAP’s role],”

61 Takemae, The Allied Occupation of Japan, 396.

62 Dower, Embracing Defeat, 410.

and “Untrue Statements.” Absent from this list was any specific reference to the atomic bomb.\(^{64}\)

Indeed, the atomic bomb and references to it illustrated the power of self-censorship and the effective control SCAP maintained over Japanese publications by refusing to release specific guidelines enumerating acceptable and problematic topics to the nation it occupied. While “[w]riting about the atomic-bomb was not explicitly proscribed”— authors from Hiroshima generated literature on the bombing published throughout the year after August 1945—the CCD refused to release John Hersey’s *Hiroshima* in translation until 1949, three years after its American debut. MacArthur turned to the press itself to defend accusations presented by the Authors’ League of America that his headquarters had prevented Hersey’s work, along with that of Edgar Snow, from circulating in Japan. In a pointed reply to the president of the Author’s League, Oscar Hammerstein II, MacArthur insisted that such accusations were part of a “maliciously false propaganda campaign” when, according to SCAP, “American literature, even though critical of the Occupation, is subjected to no censorship control whatsoever.”\(^{65}\) Despite MacArthur’s rebuttal appearing in the column directly above, *The Mainichi* nonetheless ran the United Press reprint “Protests GHQ Ban” as a counterpoint to the GHQ’s assertion that accusations of censorship amounted to little more than anti-Occupation propaganda. “Protests GHQ Ban” referenced Hersey’s hopes that Kiyoshi Tanimoto—featured himself in *Hiroshima*—would provide the text’s translation, “[b]ut,”

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\(^{64}\) Dower, *Embracing Defeat*, 411.

as the article closed, “publication was banned without explanation.” Censors either edited or “suppressed” altogether other works, Takashi Nagai’s included. Literature related to the atomic bombings was subject to pre-publication censorship by SCAP authorities, leery of depictions of radiation and human suffering, before being printed. The requirements to publish depictions of the bombings proved rigorous enough that, coupled with conflicts between various Occupation agencies over a piece’s suitability, only a few works made it into circulation before 1949. One noteworthy book by Toyofumi Ogura, published first as Zetsugo no kiroku in 1948 and later in English as Letters from the End of the World: A Firsthand Account of the Bombing of Hiroshima, billed itself as “the first eyewitness account of an atomic bombing ever to appear;” its membership among a minority of SCAP-approved depictions of Hiroshima resulted in Ogura estimating that his popular book “went through six or seven printings in just six months” as the Japanese at home and in locales as varied as the U.S., Latin America, and Hawaii rapidly purchased one of the few Occupation-era portrayals of postwar life as a hibakusha.

The form and content of Letters from the End of the World set it apart from other memoirs, diaries, and recollections of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, just as both explained why SCAP allowed its publication—with what Ogura recalled in 1982 as “modifications”

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66 “Protests GHQ Ban,” The Mainichi, April 10, 1948, 1. UP.

67 Dower, Embracing Defeat, 414.


by GHQ censors of a “minor” nature, including “Printed in occupied Japan” on the back cover—and subsequent dissemination to an international readership.\(^70\) First, as its title indicated, Ogura framed his description of Hiroshima’s destruction in a series of letters to his wife Fumiyo, who fell victim to the bomb’s radiation soon after August 6, 1945. Ogura’s grief poured out in these letters to his deceased wife because, as he indicated, “During that first year in particular, I had been seized with the desire to inform her of the events leading up to and following her death.”\(^71\) Second, Ogura’s narrative blamed Japan, not the United States, for Hiroshima’s victimization, a stance Ogura contextualized in the preface to the book’s 1982 edition, and one that surfaced repeatedly throughout his work. By the time Ogura prepared his 1982 preface, thirty years had passed since the Occupation’s end, sufficient time to revise the anti-militarist sentiment of previous editions of the book. Had Ogura desired, he might have retrospectively shifted focus from the Occupied edition’s condemnation of Japan’s own government to a questioning of America’s adherence to the righteous nature of the war’s last acts. Instead, Ogura directly addressed the specter of censorship: “I do not offer any criticism of the American government . . . This is not because of any deletions required by censors; in fact, I made no such criticism. I’ve always believed that this weapon was brought upon the country by the wartime leaders of imperial Japan, particularly the militarists who manipulated the emperor like a puppet and exploited the people for their own selfish ends.”\(^72\) Ogura’s letters from four decades earlier further voiced this exasperation, as

\(^{70}\) Ibid., 10.

\(^{71}\) Ibid., 9.

\(^{72}\) Ibid., 10-11.
various passages noted that he “was hopeful” by August 8, 1945 that “the war would now end.” Nor did Ogura spare the sacred Imperial household from his discontent. His description of the news reporting on the response of the “imperial headquarters” to Hiroshima’s “new type of bomb” summarized the language as “in that institution’s inimitable prose style—at first seeming comprehensible, but on closer inspection, quite unintelligible.” Ogura’s reaction to the imperial headquarters also indicated that Japan’s citizens were well aware of the militarists’ strict censorship of the press, for Ogura cited obfuscations such as “details are being investigated” and “considerable damage” as “hackneyed expressions” that had frequented the news and now appeared in reports on Hiroshima. A firsthand witness to the devastation, Ogura interpreted this language as further proof of the war’s soon culmination. Beyond the unabashed contempt Ogura aimed at Japan’s militarists and the imperial household, an aspect of his narrative he admitted probably prompted GHQ censors to only ask for “very minor modifications” within the text, his brief treatment of President Truman lacked the ire of later memoirs. In fact, Ogura used the militarists’ censorship of Truman’s August 6 radio address, which the Japanese public did not hear until the August 15 airing of Hirohito’s surrender speech, as further evidence of his nation’s missteps. Pondering how he might have responded to Truman’s announcement had he heard it on August 6, Ogura simply stated: “I probably would have been angry as well as cynical.” He then included

73 Ibid., 103.
74 Ibid., 107.
75 Ibid.
76 Ibid., 11.
an excerpt of the speech in that day’s letter to his wife, dated April 13, 1946, absent of any other editorializing regarding Truman’s decision to bomb Ogura’s Hiroshima—a decision that had killed the very woman to whom he frequently wrote.77

It is little wonder, then, that SCAP’s censors not only allowed Ogura’s book to enter circulation in Japan and abroad, but also cleared it complete with incendiary statistics on the tolls of the dead, wounded, and missing residents and the massive damage inflicted on homes throughout the city.78 In another context, such estimates ran the risk of censorship for “disturbing the peace” through their numerical portrayal of American aggression. Ogura’s work, however, advanced the American cause promoted by SCAP and General MacArthur, for his remembering depicted the United States as the savior of the Japanese civilians once held hostage by a divine emperor and the militarists who controlled him. Indeed, Ogura recalled how “[m]ore than a few people in Hiroshima” celebrated the appearance of American troops in their bombed-out city.79 Ogura concluded his analysis of the imperial headquarters’ “bullheadedness” during the chaos of August 1945 with a sentence SCAP itself might have written: “The derision I had begun to feel for the people there seems to have been well grounded.”80 For Ogura, his own government carried the burden of Hiroshima’s suffering, not the United States.

The nebulous treatment afforded literature that referenced the horrors endured in Hiroshima and Nagasaki did not extend to the spectrum of imagery, where both footage

77 Ibid., 108.

78 Ibid., 157-160.

79 Ibid., 151.

80 Ibid., 111.
and stills of the American weapon’s human toll remained out of the Japanese public eye until 1950. First, the art world recorded, through drawings and paintings, the suffering of the hibakusha; then, in August 1952, photographs commemorated the seventh anniversary of Hiroshima and Nagasaki after the Occupation’s end.\textsuperscript{81} Beyond preventing hibakusha from fully expressing what it meant to survive atomic warfare, from talking to other survivors about their own experiences, and from accessing or publicizing classified medical data on radiation exposure, the censors’ vigilant presence limited the very human desire “to grieve publicly, to mourn and speak well of the dead.”\textsuperscript{82}

The dangers posed by SCAP regulations over print media were often economic, particularly if a work fell victim to the censor’s blue pen after publication or if the time required to clear the censors prevented a paper from publishing an article when it was still news.\textsuperscript{83} Both instances confirmed, through their financial impact, the futility of any attempt to transcend the omniscient policing power of the American Occupation. By the time that CCD shifted from prepublication to post-publication censorship for “[a]ll major newspapers and news services” in July 1948, self-censorship had firmly rooted itself in Occupied Japan. Rather than fostering freedom of the press by allowing articles to go to press without any vetting, this change in policy facilitated even more “caution and self-censorship.” Publishers now risked being forced by SCAP to rescind an edition of their newspaper if it in anyway violated the classified lists of taboo subjects. SCAP’s use of economics as a means of controlling the press extended to its distribution of the scant

\textsuperscript{81} Dower, \textit{Embracing Defeat}, 414-415.

\textsuperscript{82} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{83} Ibid., 410, 429.
post-war paper supply; newspapers currently in favor received more of the paper ration than those that had raised the ire of Occupation authorities.\textsuperscript{84}

Even within the newly imposed, albeit ambiguous and metamorphosing, boundaries on freedom of the press, these newspapers frequently ran articles discussing victims of the atomic holocaust, death tolls, and destruction estimates. Such articles were often either based on, or re-printed from, American news conglomerates such as the United Press and the Associated Press, not in an effort to circumvent heavy-handed SCAP censorship, but rather at the behest of MacArthur’s infrastructure itself. Also present in Occupied Japan’s press were reprints from \textit{Newsweek}, \textit{Reader’s Digest}, \textit{Time} and \textit{Life}; altogether, “over 100 middle-range US magazines” witnessed their work republished by their former enemy. This transmittal of American magazines to Japan did not occur without purpose. Rather, SCAP’s Civil Information and Education Section (CI&E) utilized its Information Division to encourage the dissemination of American culture by plying Japan’s print media with articles from the United States. Nor was the presence of the victor’s culture limited to a small scale. The Information Division not only provided Japan’s news agencies with dispatches generated by the former Allies, SCAP itself, or the UN, but it also supplied them with between “350 to 400 such items every month.” The sheer volume of this one-way exchange prompted Eiji Takemae to argue that “[t]he regular appearance of so many foreign articles and news items in the mainstream media of a single country was an unprecedented event.”\textsuperscript{85}

\textsuperscript{84} Ibid., 432-433.

\textsuperscript{85} Takemae, \textit{The Allied Occupation of Japan}, 396. As Takemae explains, the Information Division did not stop simply with providing the Japanese with access to “American culture and values” in the daily newspapers. In fact, the Information Division’s CI&E Information Centers, built throughout Japan, hired “friendly American librarians” to catalogue “between 5,000 and 10,000 volumes and some 400
SCAP nonetheless closely monitored the very entities it used to spread the conqueror’s culture amongst the conquered. Before going into circulation in Japan’s home islands, some AP and UP articles first had to pass the censors’ scrutiny. In October 1946, General Charles Willoughby, the chief of the Civil Intelligence Section, concluded that a *Nippon Times* article reminding the Japanese that MacArthur, despite his democratizing mission, was not a god to be worshipped should be removed from circulation because it violated “good taste.” Willoughby’s decision came after the paper received pre-publication clearance from MacArthur’s headquarters.\(^{86}\) His actions illustrated yet again the difficulties newspaper editors and reporters faced as they attempted to cover daily events at home and abroad while existing within the fluid boundaries of Occupation censorship.

Two days after the first censorship laws went into effect, and three days before the Occupation garnered complete control over news published or aired in Japan, the *Nippon Times*, in its coverage of “American Experts See Atomic Bomb Victims,” inserted a quote from Brigadier General T. F. Farrell. In an interview following his day-long visit to Hiroshima arranged by MacArthur’s General Headquarters, Farrell stated, “personally I have realized that the damage is beyond expression. I presume that such a cruel war arm should not be used in the future.”\(^{87}\) The Japanese press’s transparent use of the United States’ own military representatives to contradict Truman’s decision—and


\(^{87}\) “American Experts See Atomic Bomb Victims,” *Nippon Times*, September 12, 1945. The shift in tone and article content between August and September 1945 in the *Nippon Times* is readily tangible for its readers.
then dogged adherence to it—to crush Japan’s will to pursue the Greater East Asia Co-
Prosperity Sphere vis-à-vis the atomic bomb disappeared in the months after SCAP’s
increasingly vigilant control of the news consumed by the Japanese. No longer as
pointedly obvious as the news printed in August and early September, English-language
newspapers still frequently referenced the myriad physical and structural agonies endured
in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Such references demonstrated the shifting nature of
censorship regulations. Though notably focused on the slow regeneration of Hiroshima’s
infrastructure, the *Nippon Time’s* “Hiroshima Recovering From A-Bomb Ravages”
managed to detail population statistics from pre- and post-August 1945 that belied
American fascination with the bomb’s sheer physical prowess. Even with its optimistic
pronouncement that the “population which dwindled to 88,000 has witnessed a steady
increase to some 149,000 as of March 20,” the article nonetheless continued, “Hiroshima
city in prewar days boasted a population of some 400,000,” leaving its readers to ponder
the fate of those now absent from the city along with those who, still residing there,
lacked reliable access to food seven months after “Little Boy’s” blast and burn.88

Often, depictions of current conditions in the bombed-out cities relied on the aegis
of the American press in a reflection of MacArthur’s desire to disseminate American
culture within occupied territory. These articles carried with them the American can-do
attitude, emphasized in the rebuilding of Japan, which soon molded the U.S.’s memory of
the post-war world and of the atomic flattening of two cities populated by non-
combatants. United Press correspondent Glenn Babb’s “Nagasaki Is Center of World-
Wide Search for Knowledge to Cope with Atom Bomb” appeared in the *Nippon Times* in

December 1945 and labeled the city as “one of the world’s two great laboratories holding the mysteries of the atomic bomb.” Admitting that “Fat Boy” fell off-target when the B-29 Bockscar released it just after 11 am on August 9, Babb omitted any consideration of the Urakami Cathedral district under Nagasaki’s “Ground Zero.” The city’s three Mitsubishi war plants did appear, as did casualty estimates: “30,000 to 40,000 persons perished almost instantaneously when the bomb loosed the sun’s own energy.” The “subsequent six weeks” witnessed “an equal number” of deaths and “[a] few are still dying—three or four weekly.”

As the language employed by Babb suggested, Americans often fixated on the bomb’s power to obliterate the enemy’s infrastructure with scientific advancements; in the years after the bombing, the United States’ victims complained that they had indeed been guinea pigs at the behest of American science.

Other journalists visiting Hiroshima in the early weeks after the city’s near death had provided descriptions similar to Babb’s, with some comparing the city’s abject devastation to familiar sights in war-torn Europe. An unnamed “British scribe,” said a Nippon Times reprint of a Domei News release, just days before MacArthur’s virtual gutting of the conglomerate, concluded that “few people in Britain, even those in the most badly bombed areas, could imagine the destruction caused by a single bomb” and warned that even “a month after the bomb was dropped, the stench of the dead is terrible, worse than those of the battlefields of Normandy.”

In an article printed two days later, Nippon Times staff cited the reactions of American reporters who, after a September 4,

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1945 visit to Hiroshima, stated that the city’s remains were “far more severe than anything they had seen in any European city.” Such comparisons between European and Japanese suffering highlighted the unfathomable destruction endured by Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This emphasis on the unprecedented appeared again in discussions of the post-war identity of both cities and their survivors. Given the timeline in which these accounts appeared in Japan’s English-language newspapers, they also highlighted the diminishing coverage of atomic casualties allowed by SCAP in the following weeks—and the shift toward more upbeat coverage, such that logged by Babb in December 1945, and its undercurrent of Manifest Destiny that emphasized the forward march of technology, democracy, and civilization.

Admittedly, some articles published by Japan’s English-language dailies simply reflected the United States’ fascination with the power of atomic weaponry, often visible in fears that such a weapon might be deployed above American cities or in the hope that atomic energy would improve the world—even in the very cities it had reduced to ash. These articles illustrated MacArthur’s plans to disseminate, for better or worse, American culture within Occupied Japan. James McGliney, for example, referenced such a scenario of fear in his September 12, 1945 article from Hiroshima. McGliney stated of the city’s death, “It is indescribable and nobody in America can ever know what it is like unless he has seen it or—God forbid—unless it some day falls on America.”

Conversely, as a Nippon Times dispatch somewhat cautiously indicated in January 1946, even within the bomb’s power to damage life appeared its limited ability to improve life


92 McGliney, “‘1 Bomb Did All This,’ Only Thought Of Correspondent Visiting Hiroshima,” The Mainichi, September 12, 1945, 3.
as well. As the article narrated, summarizing a recent *Asahi* report, Hiroshima “still lies in devastation” from the “historic atomic bomb attack,” but some signs of revitalization had started to emerge, from one hen starting to lay eggs after a six month hiatus taken by “chickens in that town” to “[a]t least five of many atomic-affected female patients . . . ‘return[ing] to normalcy physiologically.’” Even the abnormal held a modicum of hope, as “some women are now grateful to ‘Mr. Atomic Bomb’ because they who had thought themselves sterile have become pregnant after the atomic bomb explosion.” In measured language, “Hiroshima Hens Begin to Lay Eggs Again; Sterile, Aged Woman Grateful to A-Bomb” cautioned that such women—carefully deemed “these ‘beneficiaries’” in the text—had not been near the hypocenter of the bombing. Nonetheless, the Hiroshima Red Cross Hospital’s investigation showed that “the atom explosion can have some favorable effect too, when its radioactivity is not so strong.”93

Even under the vigilant watch of American Occupation censors, English language newspapers in Japan referenced American unease with Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Though restricted from pointed critiques of the nuclear obliteration of both cities, newspapers nonetheless provided covert commentaries on the United States’ behavior. In December 1945, the *Mainichi* cited a poll conducted in the United States by the Opinion Research Center that “revealed that 54 per cent of the people in the United States believe manufacture of atomic bombs should be declared an international crime.”94 Absent of the visible editorializing forbidden by the Occupation’s Press Code, the article still implied

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94 “Poll on Atom Bombs,” *The Mainichi*, December 7, 1945, 1. United Press. The next sentence of the two-sentence blurb adds, “Thirty-one per cent of the people polled said they favored a World Police equipped with the bomb.”
that something deemed an “international crime” in December 1945 had been equally problematic four months earlier. In a more sensationalist turn the next fall, the Mainichi published a United Press story of a “New Yorker” who, according to the article’s title, was “In [an] Awful Hurry to Avoid A-Bomb” and therefore moved his family to Montana “where they will be safe from World War III if it comes.” As the New Yorker, William Kennan, told the UP, “Someone has got to get the movement going;” Kennan had “been rushing to get his private affairs in order since the atom bombing in Hiroshima.” In citing American unease—indeed, outright fear—with atomic warfare, both articles suggested, without directly condemning the United States and raising the ire of Occupation censors, that the atomic bomb’s legacy was not one of victory, celebration, or even pride, but rather one of discomfort. Ironically, such a conclusion directly conflicted with MacArthur’s purposeful circulation of American news stories such as this to formulate American culture in Japan.

CONCLUSION

Japan’s journalists and editors were not the only members of its citizenry to deal with the war’s aftermath, just as they were not alone in their questioning, constrained as it might be, of the American victory narrative. Though subjected to the push and pull of first their own nation’s watchful eye and overt propaganda and then Occupation censorship regulations, newspapers printed in the months that marked the end of war and the start of peace illuminated attempts to subvert Manifest Destiny’s Christianity and

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democracy and American claims of divine blessing as symbolized by the atomic bomb. The transformation of perspective and tone evident in *The Nippon Times* and *The Mainichi* embodied the public interplay between the victors and the vanquished regarding narratives of the war’s end and national righteousness. While Americans held on to their sanctified version—indeed, disseminated it widely throughout Japan’s Occupied press—the Japanese themselves exhibited agency in the daily news as well, and it did not necessarily match SCAP’s own vision of the recent past. As we shall see, individual Japanese citizens soon joined the collective press generating memory—approved and otherwise—of the war’s dénouement.
Chapter Four

Lambs for the Slaughter: Japan’s Christians Interpret the Atomic Bomb

How was it then that no mutiny, no revolution, no bloodshed followed the report of defeat and surrender? A strange quietness prevailed everywhere. Was it utter despair or calm before a storm? Strange it may sound, and yet I cannot help but saying that this war with America had not been the will of the nation. Perhaps that is why there was a mingled feeling of sadness and relief when the war was ended after four long years of sacrifice and suffering. Added to this feeling was the voice of the Emperor:

“Endure the unendurable,
Suffer what is not sufferable.”

As this sank into our very soul, the dross of false patriotism was consumed and the gold of true loyalty was refined.

Michi Kawai, *Sliding Doors*¹

**INTRODUCTION**

In the unlikely venue of *The Scientific Monthly*, physicist Arthur H. Compton publically debated the partnership of faith and science in December 1946. Compton, Chancellor of Washington University, waded through charged territory to eventually conclude that “in their essence there can be no conflict between science and religion. Science is a reliable method of finding truth. Religion is the search for a satisfying basis for life.”² While Compton’s argumentation itself proves an interesting read, it is his melding of a discussion of the supernatural and its definition, Christianity, and national war-time identity that proves most fascinating for a retrospective analysis of religious reactions to the atomic bomb. Following his suggestion that Christianity defines love as

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something “which shows itself in deeds that help one’s fellows,” the physicist turned somewhat abruptly to World War II. As he elucidated,

> It remains only to point out that the God of the ‘highest good’ is indeed effective in our lives. As during the recent war we saw the value of freedom, our nation became inspired to the great achievement that brought us victory. Freedom was the great good, the aspect of God, that we sought. I saw one group, determined to stop the Nazi threat against the world’s freedom, catch the vision of the new weapon of atomic energy. With faith in that vision and driven by devotion to freedom, they performed the miracle of the atomic bomb. I have seen my friends, worshiping the God of love, catch the vision of a richer life for all mankind and by heroic self-sacrifice bring new hope to people whose lives had held little meaning.³

Though the Japanese themselves were absent from this rendering of World War II, wherein physicists designed the atomic bomb to defeat Nazi machinations but inexplicably leveled two Japanese cities, Compton’s rhetoric unwittingly paralleled similar soul-searching playing out across the Pacific, where Japanese citizens tested the boundaries of American democracy. Even as the Japanese English-language dailies depicted the atomic bombings in the very public, national sphere available to the press, private Japanese citizens struggled to find more personal meaning in the defeat of war. Both of these groups grappled with the role of the divine in personal and national identities. Though Compton’s *Scientific Monthly* essay served as a public statement that was a scientific, academic, and even defensive interpretation of religion and faith, his portrayal of the United States’ call to wartime duty paralleled Catholic Nagasaki physician Takashi Nagai’s belief that the Divine had selected his city for a special purpose. Notably, while Compton saw the atomic bomb as a miracle that generated victory, Nagai saw it as a miracle serving a different kind of divine love, one that in its conclusion of over a decade of wartime brutalities would do nothing less than save the world.

As Christian civilians such as Michi Kawai, Takashi Nagai, and others presented Christian interpretations of the trajectories of war and occupation, the United States, embodied by General Douglas MacArthur’s SCAP, solidified its goals for the Occupation’s reforms. Christian democracy loomed large above this post-war transformation of Japanese culture and society. To this end, SCAP utilized a blend of censorship, claims to freedom of the press, and direct dissemination of American culture via reprints of articles from the United States to emphasize both the crucial need for a Christianized Japanese democracy and the nation’s own desire to adopt the victor’s ideology. Japan’s news media certainly retained agency—even when faced by SCAP interference in its news coverage—in selecting many of the articles sent to press.

Discussions of Emperor Hirohito’s potential conversion to Christianity, of the selection of an American Quaker to serve as Crown Prince Akihito’s tutor, and of Father Flanagan’s sixty-day visit to Japan that took place in the newspapers’ public sphere revealed Japan’s interaction with the Occupation’s seemingly inseparable pairing of Christianity and democracy. In the face of this national discourse regarding Japan’s post-war political and religious conversion, Japanese Christians dealt with the legacies of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in ways that presented noteworthy implications for American claims regarding the moral legitimacy of its Christian democracy. Taken together, these personal narratives of wartime suffering and post-war fascination with the United States’ Christianizing mission reveal the struggle over memory and national identity that colored the Occupation. Even as Americans hoped for Japan’s national and personal conversion, Japanese and American Christians objected to the military and cultural hegemony of the United States. It was in this environment, a contested terrain of varied interpretations of
the war’s end and the Occupation’s ultimate legacy, where individual and national definitions of Christianity—and its recent successes and failures—diverged.

**FAITH AND THE BOMBED: RELIGION AND NATIONAL IDENTITY AT THE WAR’S END**

For a nation already accustomed to the destruction inflicted on infrastructure, the death and injury endured by civilians, and the upheaval facing those fleeing from the ruins left by mass bombing campaigns, the shock of the power released by just one atomic bomb nonetheless generated altogether uncharted reactions from the Japanese. The atomic bomb represented the military superiority of the United States that defeated imperial Japan, but citizens frequently separated the bomb itself from any human agency. Hiroshi Minami addressed this perspective in his 1954 essay, “The Postwar Social Psychology of the Japanese People.” Condemning the “political trickery practiced . . . by the then Japanese Government” that emphasized Hirohito’s capitulation to save what remained of his state in August 1945, Minami surveyed Japanese “fatalism” before and after the war and the tendency for the Japanese to remember “the end of the war” instead of “the defeat in the war.” As Minami explained,

> If one considers the defeat an unexpected result of the atomic bomb and of the subsequently issued Imperial rescript, rather than a political inevitability, he may come to the conclusion that the defeat was a kind of predestined “natural” phenomenon beyond the control of the Japanese people themselves. In fact, the destructiveness of the atomic bomb, virtually beyond human imagination, was regarded by a large number of the Japanese as something resembling an act of God, a superhuman or supernatural accomplishment, a view which implanted in the Japanese mind an idea that the defeat was an overwhelming predestination or Heaven’s judgment, over which the people could exercise no control.⁴

Minami’s analysis indicated that the cataclysmic nature of atomic warfare confounded assessments of its power and led many to interpret it through a natural or a spiritual lens. As the apparent impossibility of an individual to prevent the future use of such immense weapons became especially distressing for the Japanese, Minami contended a few years into the national posturing of the Cold War, “in view of the recent international situation, following a brief breathing spell, propelled as they are into an atmosphere pointing to a dark future.”

Minami did not differentiate between secular and religious audiences when he sketched this response to nuclear warfare; his work, however, identified a crucial starting point for any analysis of Japanese Christian responses to the atomic bomb. At its base, Japanese society seemed to agree that the war’s termination resulted from events far beyond their control, and perhaps well outside the realm of human actors. The level of involvement from other outside forces depended, as we shall see, on the observer.

Some Japanese Christians privately witnessed divine intervention in the war’s end, a perspective that yet again narrowed the perceived spiritual distances between victor and vanquished. This interpretation threatened the United States’ prolonged insistence that the “fanatical” Japanese would have fought to the death to defend their nation without intercession from the atomic bombs. A Christian who had spent time in California, Aiko Takahashi lived in Tokyo during the war. She used her diary to record her frustration with what the ultranationalists had done to her country and with the nearly incessant air raids and fire-bombings that endangered her family and friends throughout the late winter and spring of 1945. In a pointed rebuke of Christian America, Takahashi wrote, “It seems that even in Christian countries, there is no Sunday during a war. An

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5 Ibid., 109.
air-raid warning was issued at about 9:30 in the evening . . . the enemy comes repeatedly to reduce the city to ashes, one ward after another. . . . We have absolutely nowhere to go.”

Like many of her American counterparts, Takahashi too found evidence of God in the early weeks of August 1945. In an August 9 entry, after noting the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Takahashi again criticized her own government: “I feel as though we have no choice but to die or go crazy. I can’t help but hate those responsible for placing human beings in this situation and continuing the war;” the next day, following the visit of a friend, Nobuo, who told her that Japan would indeed capitulate to Allied demands within days, Takahashi recorded, “Today Nobuo delivered the message of a gracious God.”

Her desire for the war to end contradicted Allied portrayals of Japanese so brainwashed by their militaristic political leaders that they would fight to the death to preserve the Emperor, just as her faith in God called into question the presumed ‘barbarism’ and ‘otherness,’ according to American propaganda, of the Japanese. By labeling the militarists as the true enemy of Japan’s civilians, Takahashi hinted at the victim/victimizer paradox that would later influence her nation’s war memory.

Dr. Goichi Sashida’s secular *A Memoir of the Atomic Bombing*, first published in 1969 and recently republished by International Christian University, recorded his work as a physician in the rubble of Hiroshima. Like Aiko Takahashi, Sashida saw Japan and the United States as culpable for the course of the war. Sashida reflected the dual tenets of the victim narrative: actions by the militarists at home and the enemy abroad had resulted in extreme harm to Japan’s citizens, most notably for survivors such as Sashida,

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7 Ibid., 187, 188.
Hiroshima’s hibakusha. An army captain stationed in China and later at Hiroshima’s Army Hospital, Sashida’s personal loss tangibly affected the language of his memoir. Over the course of the war, Sashida’s two brothers perished fighting in Japan’s war effort; two sisters “never returned from Manchuria;” another sister died “when Uto Station was bombed;” a third remained unaccounted for after evacuation from Kichijoji, Tokyo; and his mother, erroneously believing Sashida himself had been killed by Hiroshima’s incineration, died on August 25, 1945 “from the shock.” Added to this horrific loss of his birth family, Sashida’s wife succumbed to atomic bomb disease, leaving Sashida guilt-ridden about her death: “It was my fault that I left her too busy to receive a thorough medical examination.”

In the weeks after the bombing, Sashida treated 4800 hibakusha and his frustration over the war’s incalculable toll led him to condemn the Pacific War’s belligerents. Hiroshima itself provided the backdrop for Sashida’s dislike of Japan’s wartime leadership, “[t]hose disgustingly brazenfaced leaders” whose “vanity and ignorance” pushed “the people down a deep abyss.” Sashida’s targeting of the militarists as the crucible of Japan’s war guilt focused on the absence of political power for ordinary citizens; had the nation existed based on the “free will” of its people, concluded Sashida, “the tragedy of the atom bombing of Hiroshima would not have happened. And the three and a half million casualties! They would not have died in the Pacific War.”

Nor was the nation’s figurehead exempt from Sashida’s anger, though the physician equivocated somewhat in his measurement of the full extent

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9 Ibid., 84.

10 Ibid., 38.
of Hirohito’s responsibility. On the one hand, Hirohito had “betrayed all Japanese citizens” in his prosecution of war; yet, on the other, “it was proven that he had been used like a puppet, robot, and beanbag by his chancellors.” Distance from the war’s termination did little to blunt Sashida’s assessment of his former enemy. Just as he blamed his own government for the devastation inflicted on Japan’s civilians and for abusing the Emperor’s power, Sashida portrayed the United States and its wartime leader as equally culpable. “Whoever dropped the atom bomb and caused such consequences is a criminal with the heart of a devil,” wrote Sashida. “While he may have won the war, that American called Truman is no hero.” As a memoir, Sashida’s text lacked the immediacy and the detail of Takahashi’s diary. Yet, the two indicated Japanese frustrations with their own government during the war and in the decades after its culmination, just as they revealed the varied reactions to American triumph.

A complete examination of Japanese Christian reactions to the war’s termination and to the arrival of Occupation forces requires an evaluation of the interactions between the churches and the Japanese militarists throughout the Pacific War’s duration. In 1952, Dr. Charles Iglehart, one of the driving forces behind the foundation of International Christian University in Mitaka, Tokyo, presented his analysis of the fate of Japan’s churches in “The Church and War Time Pressures.” Iglehart felt it necessary to address questions of wartime discrimination against Japan’s Christians perpetuated by the militarists in order to develop “a more fruitful analysis of our modern religion-and-state

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11 Ibid., 96.

12 Ibid., 72.
relationship than one most contemporaneous students seem to hold.” In an era that witnessed the Occupation’s forceful separation of Shinto from the state, Iglehart’s work presented crucial questions regarding the breadth of rumored hostilities between Christians and the Japanese state. More significantly, Iglehart’s answers provided a means to ground analysis of the Occupation’s effect on the Japanese Christian experience in the exigencies of the war, just as they allow access today to contemporary dissenting views of the international climate surrounding the Occupation’s end. For readers expecting Iglehart to detail the militarists’ persecution of Japanese Christians, the essay proves startling. Arguing that the nation’s Christian population did suffer specifically for their identity during the course of war, Iglehart insisted that despite “arrests, imprisonments, and some deaths in prison,” the government did not target those it arrested simply because of their religious practice. While between three and four hundred Christians found themselves subjected to arrest or worse—events which “spelled disaster and tragedy in certain areas of the Christian movement”—Iglehart maintained that these instances did not constitute “deliberate measures of discrimination of a hostile government.” In fact, Japan’s Christian churches “did not resist the war,” either as organized church bodies or as pacifist individuals; Iglehart conceded that church members “varied in their degree of war sentiment,” but he nonetheless maintained that “in all observable areas Christians were not behind their neighbors in supporting the

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14 Ibid., 34.

15 Ibid.
war.”

Given the tightly monitored nature of Japan’s homefront and the use of censorship, propaganda, and education to inculcate patriotism and devotion to the emperor, Iglehart’s conclusion that Christians and non-Christians alike equally supported the war effort is not as significant as his explanation for why some believers found themselves punished by the state. When belief contradicted a subject’s perceived national loyalty, either because faith in Christ’s second coming preempted fealty to the emperor or as a result of a church’s threatening ties to “foreign enemy countries,” authorities used the law to prosecute the breach in citizenship. This punishment resulted, said Iglehart, not from Christian identity, “oppos[ition] to the war,” or church membership, but rather from the sense “that persons with such convictions would be centers of possible danger if left at large during the war.”

Thus, Christians subjected to imprisonment in Japan during the course of World War II, at least according to Iglehart, ran this risk not as advocates for pacifism or as dissenters from the war effort on the whole, but rather as threats to the boundaries of loyal citizenship during a time of crisis.

Iglehart presented an indictment not merely of the citizenry’s compliance with the war effort in Japan, but also a condemnation of the “modern power-nation-states during the past two decades,” including fascist Italy, Nazi Germany, and communist Russia, all of which witnessed a “domesticated” church “surviv[ing]” the “government wartime

\[\text{\textsuperscript{16}}\] Ibid., 35.

\[\text{\textsuperscript{17}}\] Ibid. GHQ’s undated *History of Non-Military Activities of the Occupation of Japan, 1945-1951* documents the Kyodan, or Church of Christ in Japan, which resulted from the ultranationalists’ “forced” merger of Protestant congregations in Japan (45-46). It adds notable details to Iglehart’s more generalized overview of what prompted the government to punish certain Christians. Japan’s Seventh-day Adventists found themselves the target of governmental disapproval for the type of opposition that questioned their loyalty to the nation, as suggested by Iglehart. Seventy-day Adventists would not join the Kyodan and “were ordered dissolved and their leaders were imprisoned on charges of lese-majesty because of their belief that all persons, including the Emperor, were subject to a last judgment” (46).
controls” in the “role of obedient subordination.” Lest Western Christians become too comfortable with this deconstruction of wartime compliance within former enemy states, Iglehart brought contemporary conditions in the West into focus, asking, “what interactions and adjustments is Christianity making to the nation in crisis in the home countries of most of us, namely, Great Britain and particularly the United States?”

Iglehart’s answer questioned the paranoia and self-censorship of the Cold War that maintained notions of national identity. Though he admitted that the “national traditions” of the United States “cherish[ed] these rights”—such as “freedom, much individual initiative, and a widely diversified Christian movement ranging over a wide spectrum of faith and life”—and protected them through the court system, Iglehart insisted that “domestication” threatened American churches as well. These institutions, added Iglehart, exhibited a “curious unawareness” of their current ambivalence. Iglehart pointed to nothing less than widespread acceptance of nuclear armament as evidence for this domestication of American Christianity. Only a few years into the Cold War, Americans had already lived through the tensions of the 1948 Berlin airlift and the United Nations’ war in Korea, both of which augmented the international dangers of Communism’s global march. At home, where “56% of the population” identified as Christian, Iglehart saw little resistance to the political climate from his country’s faithful. “The American nation goes on its winding course of crisis, moving with ever swifter tempo toward war, and nowhere,” wrote Iglehart, “as far as we can discover (with the notable exception of the Society of Friends), is there any appreciable or effective

18 Ibid., 40.

19 Ibid.
movement of dissent coming from the organized Christian churches . . . Step by step they recede from former positions, such as denunciation of obliteration bombing, and the use of the atom bomb.” 20 An essay that began as an evaluation of the Japanese government’s treatment of its Christian citizens transformed into an evaluation of Christian compliance, on both sides of the Pacific, with their government’s bellicose nationalism. For an America recently gripped by the anti-Communist fear-mongering of Senator Joseph McCarthy, who graced the covers of Newsweek and Time, and who crystallized the anxieties already tangible from 1949’s dual blows from the Soviet Union’s atomic bomb test and the “loss” of China to Mao Tse-tung, Iglehart’s condemnation of Christian compliance with national trends, including nuclear proliferation, verged on the radical, even when published in Japan. 21 Iglehart’s conclusion proffered a solution for the nationalistic domestication of religion. Rather than following public opinion, as citizens of any state, that insisted “the national welfare is of paramount concern,” Iglehart instead asked if, though “costly as the Cross” it might be, “a better way, a more Christian, reconciling, redemptive way” existed. Though he did not use the word pacifism, Iglehart essentially called on his audience to embrace a more pacifist approach to international disputes and a willingness to stand for Christian ideals even if they contradicted national sentiment. Iglehart ended with a reminder “to exercise generous judgment towards our fellow-Christians of other lands.” 22

20 Ibid., 41.


22 Iglehart, “The Church and War Time Pressures,” 42.
“The Church and War Time Pressures” voiced dismay with the retreat from American Christian opposition to the atomic bomb that Iglehart observed in the early years of the Cold War; it left its audience with a generalized overview of the Japanese Christian experience during World War II and with glimpses into how church membership informed nationalism, but with little indication of how individuals reacted to the war and its apocalyptic end. Activists such as Michi Kawai and Takashi Nagai used their personal faith to find meaning in the death and rebirth of their cities. More personal in tone and experience than Iglehart’s, their writings problematized the relationship between the state, its citizens, and Western religion during war and occupation.

Educator and founder of the Keisen school in Tama, Tokyo, member of the SCAP-created Committee of Japanese Educators, and an activist for Christian education, Michi Kawai recorded her memories of the war in *Sliding Doors*, published in Tokyo in 1950. Kawai herself had lived in the United States for six years, from 1898 until 1904, and had returned on various visits. Her knowledge of American society and culture facilitated her work preparing Japanese women in places such as Hiroshima for emigration to the United States until the 1924 Exclusion Act, which banned Japanese immigration to the United States, terminated such opportunities. As Kawai recalled in her 1939 publication *My Lantern*, “A large proportion of the emigrants going to America came from Hiroshima Province,” a trend that prompted her own visit to the region to teach residents about life in America and to meet with the Hiroshima Emigration

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Bureau. A follow-up to My Lantern, Kawai’s Sliding Doors drew its title from the imagery of the shoji doors prominent in Japanese homes, a metaphor that reflected the Cold War tensions buffeting her nation only five years after the Pacific War’s culmination. “My country wants no Iron Curtain,” Kawai insisted. “On the contrary, she stands by her easy-sliding doors that open at the touch of any who care to open them and look in.” This reminder of the open nature of Japanese society led Kawai to the effects of earlier international tensions upon Japan’s Christian population. Recalling her unease with Japan’s brutal takeover of Nanking, Kawai wrote, “These were gloomy, lifeless days for Japanese Christians . . . It was during this period that Christian churches and Mission schools were forced to sever their connection with foreign mission boards and become independent or close their doors.” Kawai provided the individualized voiced that Iglehart’s more general analysis of Christianity in Japan during the Pacific War lacked. Indeed, her experience indicated the means through which the government contravened citizens whose loyalty to their faith, by linking them to the threat of foreign influence, precluded devotion to the state and the war effort. In response to wartime concerns, the government forced its Protestant citizens “to be united by forming ‘The Church of Christ in Japan.’”

Sliding Doors detailed daily life for the Japanese at home and in places like China during the long years of the Pacific War. Kawai described the toll placed on her school,

25 Ibid., 142.
27 Ibid., 8.
28 Ibid.
Keisen, and its students by the government’s use of schoolchildren to prepare the homefront for war. Girls attending Keisen found themselves mobilized by the government to work in places such as the Army Fuel Department. After a brief mention of the atomic bombings and the surrender, Kawai transitioned to the Occupation and the need for Christian revival in Japan’s rebirth. Noting that “Christian leaders” worked “behind the scenes” in Japan’s new government, Kawai herself publically modeled participation in the nation’s reformation. Kawai’s activism included public speaking engagements, such as an August 1949 speech that she delivered in her mother’s hometown of Makido, “Everyone’s Share in the Cooperation of Building a New Japan on the Foundation of Christian Democracy,” and her vociferous defense of Christian education’s role in fostering an improved nation-state. As we shall see, the title for Kawai’s speech meshed well with General MacArthur’s own goals for the Occupation and its transformative Christian democracy. For Kawai, Christian mores guaranteed myriad benefits for the post-war nation. “The problem of social intercourse in co-educational institutions and in the present confused state of Japanese society in general,” she opined, “can be solved adequately only by the Christian standard of love and respect for individuals.” Kawai’s admiration of the Occupation echoed American assessments of their nation’s triumph—first over, and then within—their former enemy. As

29 Ibid., 42. At times, Kawai’s language confounds her audience, such her reference to a Christian army doctor stationed in China and then Manila, where he cared for “hired Korean laborers.” Perhaps this simply indicates the prevailing legacy of government censorship during the war that whitewashed the realities of war, for today’s reader is immediately discomfited by the portrayal of forced labor as “hired.”

30 Ibid., 82.

31 Ibid., 156-157, 166.

32 Ibid., 166.
MacArthur’s SCAP fought to solidify democracy and fend off communism in a once militarist society, Kawai presented her complimentary overview of recent events: “If America had not occupied Japan, this country would have been brought under the hammer of communism. Japan had no need to go seeking democracy; for democracy has been brought to us, a gift. Call it a blessing in disguise to us.”  

Kawai’s expression of gratitude resonated, in a much larger sphere, with American memories of the Occupation as not only a break from Japan’s past, but also as a transformation of the present greeted with enthusiasm by the occupied. It was, perhaps ironically, a softer evaluation of American behavior than the one expressed by Iglehart two years later.

Kawai did not devote considerable attention to the aftermath of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, yet her inclusion of another war-torn city led her to contemplate the varied legacies of devastation. Her optimistic reading of Hiroshima’s meaning on an international stage began with a lamentation before focusing on peace activism: “Poor Yamada City, without any outlook for the future! So entirely different from the atomic bomb-stricken Hiroshima with its peace bell pealing out a bright hope, and its ardent spirit calling the attention of the world to the rebuilding of a better city for the cause of peace and progress.”  

Written only five years after Hiroshima, *Sliding Doors* captured the prevalent memory of the atomic-charred cities as centers for peace, as sites of memory charged with nothing less than ending war forever. Takashi Nagai’s work added profound dimensions to Kawai’s depiction of the meaning of peace in an atomic world.

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33 Ibid., 188.

34 Ibid., 152.
LAMBS FOR THE SLAUGHTER: MORAL WITNESSING AT NAGASAKI

The legacy of Nagasaki’s Urakami Cathedral and the community surrounding it evokes the horrors of nuclear war and indicates the myriad ways in which collective memory and collective identity of atomic victimhood generated a forceful narrative. In this sense, the burden of history calls on hibakusha to actively resist war and to facilitate peace, a pacifist identity claimed by the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and reflected in the history of Urakami Cathedral itself. Catholics in Nagasaki were accustomed to persecution long before “Fat Man’s”—the code name for the plutonium bomb—blast and burn took the lives of 8500 of Urakami’s 12,000 parishioners; Catholicism had first arrived in Nagasaki four hundred years earlier, and by 1873, 613 Catholic converts from Urakami had been killed for violating Japanese laws prohibiting Christianity. The destruction—both tangible in the loss of the church building and thousands of Catholics and spiritual as described by Takashi Nagai—inflicted against Nagasaki on August 9 lasted throughout subsequent decades and formulated a new identity for Urakami’s Catholics. By the late 1940s, Archbishop Aijiro Yamaguchi, knowing that parishioners still impoverished by the bombing could little afford funding a new church building themselves, instead traveled to the United States, where he spent six months asking for donations for the project. Even with Yamaguchi’s devotion to Urakami’s rebirth, the cathedral was not “restored to its condition before the tragedy of the atomic holocaust”


36 Ibid., 17.
until October 4, 1980. Out of Urakami’s decades-long push toward restoration emerged a consciousness that called on victims, as moral witnesses, to not only symbolize the lasting horrors of war, but also to transform the present, an identity that has destabilized the American narrative of the war’s sanctified end. “Here in Urakami . . . one can hear the silent voice of those who indomitably arose from the ashes of the Atomic bomb, appealing powerfully for peace,” write the editors of The Restoration of Urakami Cathedral. “These voices [combined with those of earlier martyrs from Urakami] have spoken to the people who live here and in all places telling quietly yet strongly of a vibrant movement that cannot be neglected.”

When “Fat Man” fell on Nagasaki, it detonated near Urakami Cathedral, the main center of worship for the Catholics in a city that had long held the greatest number of parishioners in all of Japan. The most expansive cathedral in East Asia, Urakami had the capacity to hold 6000 parishioners. By the time the community had physically healed sufficiently to hold a memorial service, the more than eight thousand crosses commemorating those who perished in the bombing outnumbered the Catholics who now lived in ruins. The very existence of Christians in Nagasaki, not to mention their subsequent slaughter by a vocally Christian nation, negated the wartime denial, on both sides of the Pacific, of any spiritual commonalities between enemies. Although later censorship forbade the circulation of similar photographs, Life magazine released a picture by Bernard Hoffman that captured the cathedral’s rubble, including the head from

37 Ibid., 60.
38 Ibid., 63.
a ruined statue of Christ. The caption questioned “whether even the urgencies of war
should permit such violation of individual life as the atomic bomb had committed.”

The discrepancies in Truman’s emphasis on God’s guiding hand in history remained obscured
for American observers for many years; some of the most highly censored photographs
from Nagasaki’s nuclear destruction showed the Catholic cathedral destroyed in the blast.
Photographs of charred human bodies in the midst of the cities’ rubble never cleared
SCAP censors, afraid of inciting unrest in Japan, and no doubt aware of unease at home.
Though the New York Times’ Virginia Lee Warren did not directly condemn the United
States’ decimation of fellow Christians in an August 26, 1945 article, Warren did present
the challenges that faced Catholic missionary work as the Occupation began. Attempts to
spread Catholicism within a defeated Japan hinged on the behavior of American forces.
The “thousands of unwanted Occidentals” could either “prejudice the Japanese against
the Roman Catholic Church” or, conversely, “if the Japanese learn to admire the
Americans the cause of Christianity might be furthered.” After a brief sketch of
Nagasaki’s Catholic history, Warren referenced the Vatican’s concerns for the safety of
the Bishop of Nagasaki, still unconfirmed in late August, and for “the fate of the 60,000
Catholics in Nagasaki” of whom “there has been no definite word.” Even without a
tangible condemnation of the bombing, Warren certainly prompted an examination of the
war’s last events. By reminding her audience of the importance of American behavior in
Occupied Japan, Warren referenced the decision by the United States in the recent past
that had precipitated the death of so many Japanese Catholics. As Warren continued, “if

the majority of [Nagasaki’s Catholics] perished it will be a serious blow to the church, since there were only about 130,000 Catholics in the Japanese home islands. “41 Such photographs and commentary presented the American government and its citizens with a rather obvious contradiction, for they undermined the notion of the Japanese as pagans far removed from American religion and, for alert observers, criticized the notion that Providence might give one nation a weapon to use against fellow believers in a foreign nation. Indeed, George Roeder, Jr. argues, censors worked consciously to eliminate material that “reduced the cultural distance between Americans and Japanese.” 42

Although some individuals, such as those working at Life magazine, appeared willing to question the validation of civilian suffering, the nation as a whole accepted Truman and his advisors’ well-crafted version of the war’s culmination over a “sub-human” land. Censorship undoubtedly fostered this national narrative. In the wake of war, the nation “blessed” by God with the atomic bomb remained leery of any challenges to its victory narrative that restored humanity—let alone spirituality—to its former enemy.

The true breadth of Nagasaki’s moral ambiguity remained mostly buried under American Occupation censorship codes until long after the initial condemnation or validation, depending on the observer, of American science and wartime decision-making. Even Truman seemed aware of his critics’ displeasure with Nagasaki’s annihilation a mere three days after Hiroshima, as evidenced by his memoirs, though his indication that weather, rather than human agency, dictated the United States’ decision to bomb another target could not have satisfied all of his readers: “We gave the Japanese


three days in which to make up their minds to surrender, and the bombing would have been held off another two days had weather permitted. During those three days we indicated that we meant business.\textsuperscript{43}

American discomfort with condemnations of Nagasaki or depictions of Urakami’s Christian identity did not, however, proscribe Japanese portrayals of the suffering brought them by atomic decimation. A survivor of the attack, physician Takashi Nagai voiced a Christian explanation for Nagasaki’s obliteration. In a disquieting parallel to American national perceptions, he believed God had selected his homeland for a special purpose. A radiologist, Nagai became intimately aware of the horrors of nuclear warfare when his wife died from the bombing. Nagai’s own death from radiation poisoning followed in 1951, although Nagai had actually become ill with leukemia before Nagasaki’s atomic devastation in August 1945.\textsuperscript{44} Renowned for his two books, \textit{Leaving These Children} and \textit{The Bells of Nagasaki}, which only cleared American censors once it detailed intelligence information on Japanese-inflicted carnage in Manila, Nagai grappled with the meaning of nuclear warfare. In Nagai’s evaluation, God’s hand was present in the bombings, but certainly not in the way Americans had proposed.\textsuperscript{45} Nagai posited the following rhetorical question: “Was not Nagasaki the chosen victim, the lamb without

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\textsuperscript{43} Harry S. Truman, \textit{Memoirs: Volume One, Year of Decisions} (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1955), 426. The primary target chosen for Bockscar, the B-29 with “Fat Man” on board, had originally been Kokura. Obscured by clouds on the morning of August 9, 1945, Kokura found itself saved from atomic incineration as Bockscar diverted to its secondary target: Nagasaki.

\textsuperscript{44} Takashi Nagai, \textit{We of Nagasaki}, 94. Nagai’s own fragile health had worried his wife Midori Nagai on the morning of Nagasaki’s bombing, as the physician had been working long hours to take care of injuries inflicted by American air-raids on other Japanese cities (95). Midori died on August 9, 1945.

blemish, slain as a whole burnt offering on an altar of sacrifice, for the sins of all nations during World War II.” 46 Such reasoning conflicted with American insistence that it had selected legitimate military targets for the atomic bombings, for Nagai’s portrayal of a Nagasaki free of sin implied that civilian innocents had perished to end the war; it was little wonder, then, that SCAP denied the book publication until it referenced the non sequitur of military atrocity in the Philippines. As Nagai reasoned during the November 23, 1945 mass to commemorate those who perished in Urakami, the death of Nagasaki’s citizens had ended war in the Pacific and “through this sacrifice, the world saw peace, which brought religious freedom to Japan;” Nagai therefore believed that Urakami’s faithful should, according to Yuki Miyamoto, “thank God for the atomic bombing.” 47 Memorialized as the “saint of Nagasaki,” visited by Emperor Hirohito and Helen Keller, and honored by the Pope, Nagai gained the respect of his fellow citizens based not on his faith, but on his attempts to find meaning in destruction.

Nagai’s Christian struggle for purpose amid horror expressed a noteworthy contradiction to American concepts of providential intervention. While Truman imagined the bomb as divinely inspired retribution for Japan’s transgressions, Nagai interpreted Nagasaki as an innocent sacrifice to cleanse the brutality inflicted by belligerent nations during war. Nagai’s We of Nagasaki: The Story of Survivors in an Atomic Wasteland sought a convincing portrayal of the “spiritual wreckage” that resulted

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46 John W. Dower, Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1999), 199.

from atomic warfare, as told through the recollections of the eight Catholic hibakusha profiled in his book.\(^{48}\) For atomic bomb survivors like Nagai, “spiritual wreckage” encompassed psychological strains such as survivor’s guilt and other traumas tied to living in an incinerated city that generated “cracks and fissures in the mutual esteem of fellow citizens and in their friendship for one another,” a theme repeated by the book’s other contributors.\(^{49}\) As Nagai’s own son Makoto, who was ten years old in 1945, recalled of post-bomb Nagasaki, “There were lots of things we did that broke the rules we had learned in church and at school.”\(^{50}\) Nagai intended We of Nagasaki—billed by its translators as “one of the few discussions of the moral after-effects of the bombings written by any Japanese since the war”—to convey the “people in an atomic war, as people,” rather than presenting the narrative of the bomb’s power to destroy infrastructure and genetic codes already so familiar to international observers, and so devoid of actual human suffering.\(^{51}\) We of Nagasaki closed by warning the city’s international visitors not to underestimate the full scale of the violence, death, and suffering experienced by the city’s residents. By the time of the book’s publication in

\(^{48}\) Takashi Nagai, We of Nagasaki: The Story of Survivors in an Atomic Wasteland, translated by Ichiro Shirato and Herbert B. L. Silverman (London: Victor Gollancz, LTD, 1951), 10. We of Nagasaki, as explained by its translators, was never published in full in Japan, although some sections did appear. Its original title was Genshi Senjo Shiri, or Psychology of People on an Atomic Battlefield. Hibakusha are victims of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

\(^{49}\) Ibid., 184. Nagai himself shared his personal sense of guilt with his readers, for following the bomb’s detonation on August 9, he worked for two days at the hospital before returning home to find his wife Midori’s body (199).

\(^{50}\) Ibid., 42. Makoto Nagai remembered increasing tensions in Nagasaki, particularly in regards to strangers, after “[o]ne order came out that we were not to get friendly with strangers because, on account of the new weapon, spies had landed along the beach and saboteurs had dropped by parachute into the hills” (42).

\(^{51}\) Ibid., 7, 19.
1951, a rebuilt Nagasaki wrongly convinced some that the bomb and its aftereffects had not been that devastating.\footnote{Ibid., 188-189.}

Nagai was not the only one of Nagasaki’s hibakusha to turn to religion as a means to interpret the jarring cataclysm of atomic war. In fact, Nagasaki’s residents seemed united in one assumption regarding the force behind their city’s decimation: either native Japanese deities, the kami, or the Christian God had instigated the bombing as “punishment.”\footnote{Miyamoto, “Rebirth in the Pure Land or God’s Sacrificial Lambs? Religious Interpretations of the Atomic Bombings in Hiroshima and Nagasaki,” Japanese Journal of Religious Studies 31.2 (2005): 137.} The reasons that prompted this need for punishment varied markedly. As Yuki Miyamoto delineates, Shintoists blamed the religious ‘other’ for the city’s fate, assuming the presence of a “foreign” Catholic God had upset the kami. Nagai’s friend Ichitaro Yamada explained this interpretation.\footnote{Ibid.} After Yamada’s entire family died at Nagasaki, he asked Nagai if, as the Shintoists claimed, the bombing was “punishment from Heaven” killing “evil people who failed to worship Shinto gods” and segregating his loved ones among the “evil.” Nagai responded to the contrary: “The atomic bomb falling on Nagasaki was a great act of divine providence. It was an act of grace from God.”\footnote{Ibid., 138. In this passage, Miyamoto relies on page 106 of Nagai’s The Bells of Nagasaki, translated by William Johnston (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1984). Nagai’s conversation with Ichitaro predates his November 1945 address at the Catholic Mass for Urakami’s dead.} Other Catholics, meanwhile, had expressed personal and political guilt for abandoning the earlier identity of Urakami’s Christian converts—one of extreme, deadly persecution for their faith—and instead capitulating to Japan’s ultranationalist drive to
war. These survivors believed that this spiritual lapse had caused the bombing.\textsuperscript{56} It was this interpretation that Nagai worked against, for his belief in Divine Providence contradicted notions of divine punishment for past misdeeds. He instead postulated, as Miyamoto narrates, that those who perished—such as Yamada’s family and Nagai’s own wife Midori—“were not evil, but were, on the contrary, holy enough to be chosen as a sacrifice” rather than being left alive to endure post-war Japan.\textsuperscript{57}

Ultimately, Nagai’s Christian interpretations provided a stark juxtaposition to those espoused by the United States, as many Americans believed that atomic bomb provided evidence of God’s displeasure with their wartime enemy. For Nagasaki’s Catholics who had long cherished their community’s heritage and existence despite centuries the upheaval of religious and political peril, Nagai articulated a reading of the bombing that “the Urakami Catholics embraced, relieved to know that their loved ones were chosen, not punished.”\textsuperscript{58} Nagai’s belief that divine power selected Japan for special victimhood and “world-redemptive suffering clearly struck a resonant chord in the Japanese psyche” and in the growing secular pacifist movement.\textsuperscript{59} Survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki desperately hoped that an end to war might redeem the nuclear

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., 137.

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., 138.

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., 139.

nightmare they lived daily, and anti-nuclear activists such as Hiroshima’s mayor Shinzo Hamai worked toward this goal in the years following the blasts.\footnote{Lawrence S. Wittner, \textit{One World or None: A History of the World Nuclear Disarmament Through 1953} (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 49.}

Nagai’s work certainly spoke to his fellow \textit{hibakusha}, but its significance as a religious text in Occupied Japan remained harder to quantify, at least according to the 1951 findings of “A Survey of Evangelistic Policies of the National Christian Council.” In 1948, the publication of Nagai’s \textit{Leaving These Children} marked the release of “one of the first books” depicting atomic warfare allowed by SCAP’s censors; in Dower’s words, Nagai “mesmerized the country with his reflections on nuclear destruction and future redemption.”\footnote{Dower, \textit{Embracing Defeat}, 197.} Of the 663 Christian students who responded to the “Survey of Evangelistic Policies,” however, only one marked “T. Nagai” in a category of “Religious books which gave the deepest impression.” Nagai was in good company—Dante, D.L. Moody, J. Calvin, and J. Wesley only received one vote each as well, while Kanzo Uchimura garnered forty-seven.\footnote{Tsunegoro Nara, “The Religious Life of University Students,” \textit{The Japanese Christian Quarterly} 18, no. 1 (Winter 1952): 19.} When asked, “In what points of Christianity do you feel a favorable impression?” twenty-six percent, or 251 of the 959 non-Christian students polled, selected “‘humanistic’ (philanthropic and pacifist),” though only 0.3 percent chose pacifism in its own category; seventy-three percent, or 709 of the non-Christians, agreed that Christianity was “‘beneficial’ or necessary for a society.” These results led Tsunegoro Nara, author of “The Religious Life of University Students,” to
surmise that “[g]eneral feeling toward Christianity is remarkably favorable compared with that in the pre-war days.”

Physician and Hiroshima hibakusha Goichi Sashida used his memoir to record his reaction to Nagasaki’s atomic attack and to express his own identity as an activist. His admonition, though not grounded in Christianity like Nagai’s, matched the refrain of other hibakusha. First came Sashida’s anger at the American enemy: “On August 9th at eleven in the morning, while the fires were still ravaging Hiroshima, the second atomic bomb had been dropped! An indescribable hatred arises in me when I think of their sheer brutality and wickedness. Murder by the atomic bomb is the most inhuman and cruel act in the history of mankind.” Despite Sashida’s passive voice and its failure to identify who had perpetuated the bombing, at least in this passage, his anger against the unnamed United States was nonetheless as tangible as his desire that no one forget the evils of atomic warfare. In fact, the palpable hatred in Sashida’s memoir set his work apart from that of Nagai, Kawai and Ogura, a difference explained by variations in the years of publication. Sashida’s account finally went to press in 1969, nearly two decades after Nagai, Ogura, and Kawai labored under the treat of SCAP censorship. The temporal distances afforded Sashida’s recollections opened space for anger against not only the militarist, but the United States as well. As a hibakusha himself, Sashida elucidated the burden of memory for the living victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Remembering the bodies he witnessed throughout his city, Sashida imagined the last moments of life represented by the “corpses that were burned black” and lamented the loss of any

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63 Ibid., 20.

64 Sashida, A Memoir of the Atomic Bombing, 74.
“records” of their “painful deaths.” In doing so, he concluded that one group did have the continued duty of remembering: “But no, all survivors of the painful experience, even those who experienced relatively less pain and those who lived just slightly longer than the others have an obligation to keep the records alive.”

Sashida’s universal identification of hibakusha as the atomic ‘everyman’ certainly matched the hopes of other survivors that their own suffering might result in an international ‘never again’ stance against nuclear war. Takashi Nagai and the Catholic survivors of Nagasaki’s Urakami Cathedral district presented memories of their own victimhood through the uniquely narrowed scope of Christian interpretation, a lens that searched for meaning on earth and in the hereafter.

*ATOMIC LEGACIES IN CENSORED PRINT: NEWSPAPERS AND THE MEANING OF NUCLEAR WAR*

Just as English-language newspapers devoted considerable print to the new Christian influence exerted in Occupied territory, they also conveyed both optimistic and guarded interpretations of the two bombed-out cities’ legacy. While optimism certainly meshed with American predictions for Japan’s future, more cautious perspectives pondered the true breadth of atomic terror and its influence over emerging peace identities. Articles intended for a national—and even international—audience mirrored tenets of the individual experiences voiced by the hibakusha. Though SCAP censorship encouraged the publication of accounts that either confirmed passive Japanese acceptance of their own suffering from the ‘natural disasters’ of Hiroshima and Nagasaki or blamed

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65 Ibid., 81.
the ultranationalists for the nation’s fate, these narratives still hinted at the Japanese agency informing post-war identities.

Newspaper articles highlighted the early emergence of a peace identity in the weeks after August 6 and 9. Published the day before General Douglas MacArthur, American personnel, and potential press censorship arrived to occupy Japan, *The Mainichi*’s “Terrific Power Of Atom Bomb” recorded the civilian deaths, the loss of hospitals and schools, the “sort of derangement (sic)” that “occurs in the bodies of those walking around,” and the death of even “worms and moles in the earth;” within its scientifically-detailed exposure of how victims suffered and died, based on their exact location inside or outside of shelter and their distance from the bomb’s hypocenter, the reporting embodied what later became part of the peacetime identities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, identities that frequently conflicted with American recollections of the bombings. *The Mainichi* voiced the opinion that the “ruined cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki be left as they are as war monuments for ever [sic] so that the terrible nature of the atom bomb may be made known to all the races of the world.” Nor did the newspaper shy away from reminding its readers who to hold responsible for both acts. Noting that “radio announcements from the United States” had “revealed much of the horrible nature of the atom bomb,” the article pointed to what would become the driving force behind peace memorials created in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in the decades to come: “Thus it is keenly felt that its inhumanity should be condemned in the name of all
mankind.” Such editorializing, not to mention outright condemnation of the bombings, disappeared as the Occupation, along with its press censorship, took root.

The same edition of The Mainichi that predicted a peace identity for Hiroshima and Nagasaki included a pointed critique of Japan’s own government not unlike the complaints soon to be leveled at the militarists by Toyofumi Ogura. In the August 29, 1945 editorial “Reconstruction Of Destroyed Cities,” an unidentified essayist cited an “official report” of the nation’s wartime damage. Among the figures listed were the 9.2 million Japanese who “had lost their dwellings” “either by burning or by bombing,” the 260,000 civilians killed—an estimate “feared to grow as investigation progresses”—and the 420,000 injured in those attacks. After noting that these figures excluded military personnel and referred only to “damage caused to civilians,” the author continued: “The pity of it all is that the war has been lost despite this appalling cost and the nation must bear it together with the further burdens to be imposed upon it by the victors.” After this overview of the damage sustained throughout Japan, “Reconstruction Of Destroyed Cities” turned to the physical, material, and even psychological needs of the war’s victims. Beyond the food shortages, loss of homes, suffering citizens living in bombed-out cities, and other tragedies that necessitated immediate attention from Japan’s government, the anonymous author pinpointed physical ruins as symbolic of the nation’s psyche: “The nation is now fed up with its unfortunate war experiences and is eager to be relieved of ruins that stir its bruised heart. The elimination of these eye-sores should be the starting point for a national renaissance as well as for relief of war victims.” In calling on Japan’s own government to begin this rebuilding, the editorial echoed what

66 “Terrific Power Of Atom Bomb: Hiroshima, Nagasaki Virtually Blown Off Face Of Earth; No Living Things Able To Exist In Areas For 70 Years,” The Mainichi, August 29, 1945, 2.
soon became the peacetime identities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Even as the author argued against maintaining the sort of ruins that later became central to peace monuments in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the reasoning in the editorial matched struggles in each city to move on with life, to have an identity more complex than simple victimhood mired in the horror of atomic death, and to call the world’s attention to the long-lasting devastation of war. As the anonymous contributor concluded, “The problem is how to adjust the need for immediate accommodation for the victims and the fulfillment of national requirements as permanent centers of culture and progress. Japan is beaten, but let us hope that there is still energy to rebuild her destroyed capital and other cities.”  

At times, the daily news of Japan’s major English papers reflected the press’s use of news generated by American media outlets to cover Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This American coverage did not, on the one hand, risk disruptive censorship. It also presented an entirely American-centric take on atomic warfare that enabled SCAP’s dissemination of the victor’s cultural optimism. Russell Brines, writing for the Associated Press in the breezily titled “New Hiroshima City To Be Best in Orient,” explained in 1946—after SCAP implemented press regulations for Japanese media and began utilizing articles from American press syndicates to hold sway over Japanese culture—that Hiroshima’s city officials had planned a five-year-long rebuilding schedule. Financed by both the city and the national government, it would terminate with “a new city dedicated to ‘international amity.’” As part of this international status, the city planned to preserve the “skeletal dome of the former Museum of Industrial Art;” labeled by Brines a “ghostly monument to the explosion,” the dome remains the focal point of Hiroshima’s Peace

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Memorial Museum and Peace Park today. Brines’ analysis of Hiroshima’s rebirth marked a notable departure in tone, with an emphasis on recovery, from newspaper reports in the first months after the bombing, just as it reflected the United States’ insistence that a new and better Japan would emerge from American-led peace. Brines compared atomic-bombed Hiroshima and its resurgent green grass with the fire-bombed capitol, Tokyo, and posited that the former was “neater, more alert and better fed than Tokyo.” Though hopeful of symbolizing “international amity,” Hiroshima’s Mayor Kihara had, according to Brines, abandoned his earlier request that Americans donate funds to the city’s rebuilding.\footnote{Russell Brines, “New Hiroshima City To Be Best in Orient,” \textit{Nippon Times}, May 28, 1946, 2. Associated Press.} As depicted through the Occupier’s lens, Hiroshima, formerly obliterated by the United States’ atomic bomb, now appeared more advanced than Tokyo, once the heart of Imperial Japan and now scorched by traditional mass bombing.

Some articles sent to press in Japanese newspapers that originated from American sources read as less-than-subtle responses to earlier condemnations of President Truman and his advisors. Printed directly to the left of a front-page article lauding the “Historic Bikini Test” of July 1, 1946, an ironic juxtaposition at best, “Japanese Not Angered By Atom Bomb Attack, Catholic Priest Avers” cited German Catholic Father John A. Siemes’ first-person experience in the bombed-out Hiroshima after the “historic blast” nearly a year earlier. Credited to the INS news agency and issued from Washington, the paragraph-long news column summarized the findings of a U.S. Army’s Manhattan Engineer District report. Working for Tokyo Catholic University as a philosophy professor by 1946, Siemes spoke to, as the article editorialized, “the attitude of the
populace when thousands of dead lay strewn in heaping wreckage and thousands more cried for help amid ruined buildings.” As Siemes narrated, “None of us in those days heard a single outburst against the Americans on the part of the Japanese nor was there any evidence of a vengeful spirit. The Japanese suffered this terrible blow as part of the fortunes of war—something to be borne without complaint.”69 Seimes’ abstract invocation of the “fortunes of war” as the cause of the atomic disaster, rather than the omnipotent hand of the United States, paralleled American depictions of the bombing as a natural disaster. In citing the hibakushas’ lack of complaint or ire against the United States, Seimes confirmed the militarists’ culpability for the war’s end and removed any guilt associated with Truman’s decision to flatten a civilian target. The article’s appearance in the Nippon Times is thus unsurprising, for it solidified a version of Hiroshima acceptable to SCAP authorities. Siemes’ memories served as an example of the United States’ use of religion’s authority to interpret the meanings of atomic warfare and its desire to emphasize Japanese compliance with and acceptance of the Occupation.

Earlier news coverage confirmed and refuted this depiction of Hiroshima’s suffering, depending upon the source interviewed. Writing on September 4, 1945, an unnamed NBC correspondent had detailed his trip to Hiroshima, a “scene which was gaunt, black and cruel,” but one where the people were “not unfriendly;” NBC’s anonymous reporter met elderly men who explained in English that they had once lived in California and “even smiled when we said we were Americans.”70 Four days later, an

69 “Japanese Not Angered By Atom Bomb Attack, Catholic Priest Avers,” Nippon Times, July 2, 1946, 1. INS.

70 “Grim Tragedy of Atomic Bomb Vividly Told By NBC Scribe Who Visited Hiroshima,” Nippon Times, September 8, 1945, 3. The article includes injury and death statistics for Hiroshima, estimating that 220,000 of the city’s 350,000 residents had been hurt in the bombings and stating that
article by UP war correspondent James McGlincy ran in *The Mainichi*. Entitled “‘1 Bomb Did All This,’ Only Thought Of Correspondent Visiting Hiroshima,” the dispatch reflected a conclusion that diverged from that of the NBC correspondent. Noting that Hiroshima “once was a prosperous modern city where Japanese who returned from America liked to settle,” McGlincy documented the smell of death that permeated the area and the toll of radiation sickness on the human body, as explained by Japanese physicians. Assisted by a translator born in Sacramento, California, McGlincy could back his assertion that “[i]n this city you can see in the eyes of the few Japanese picking through the ruins all the hate it is possible for [a] human to muster” with his guide’s own confirmation. When McGlincy asked, standing in rubble birthed by the United States, “How do people here feel about us? Do they hate us or do they think it is the fortune of war?,” his guide replied, “They hate you.”

Such encounters between the foreign press corps and residents of Hiroshima who spoke English and had lived in the United States, reflected the area’s pre-war emigration trends. In fact, the number of emigrants leaving Japan from Hiroshima Prefecture was nearly double that of “any other prefecture” before 1922; it was this nation-wide emigration policy that later facilitated Japan’s occupation of its colony Manchukuo. By the 1940s, Japan’s prefectures encouraged their young women to serve their nation by marrying Manchukuo’s Youth Brigade members. One of three such prefectures to do so,

68,000 had been confirmed dead as of September 1, 1945. As the anonymous author concluded, “I for one am glad to leave this awful scene of destruction” (3).

71 James McGlincy, “‘1 Bomb Did All This,’ Only Thought Of Correspondent Visiting Hiroshima,” *The Mainichi*, September 12, 1945, 3.

72 Louise Young, *Japan’s Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 332.
Hiroshima created a Continental Bride Training Center that “boasted 316 graduates for 1942 and 1943.” Ultimately, the United States’ English-speaking victims in Hiroshima vividly illustrated the failure of Imperial Japan’s expansionistic bent as a once-international war came home and brought former residents of America into contact with Occupation forces.

Toyofumi Ogura’s *Letters from the End of the World* referenced the link between the United States and Hiroshima that demographics and encounters between the foreign press corps and residents of Hiroshima had revealed. The warm welcome given American personnel by “[m]ore than few people in Hiroshima” resulted from their desire to hear the first news in “four or five years” from friends and loved ones living in the United States. In yet another letter to his deceased wife Fumiyo, Ogura reminded her: “As you know, people in Hiroshima have more relatives and friends living in American than do people from any other area of the country.” No word had yet reached Hiroshima of Fumiyo’s uncle, family members, or friends who had moved to America and then remained silent during the disruption of war. Ogura reassured his wife, however, that Japanese-American servicemen now stationed in Hiroshima “all report that Japanese people in America are as happy and prosperous as they were before the war. So I think you can rest assured that your uncle and his family are doing fine over there.” For Ogura, a tangible symbol of peace brought to the post-war world was the sight of “Japanese-American servicemen walking cheerfully side by side with local people.”

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73 Ibid., 396.


75 Ibid., 152. The Japanese-American internment did not appear in Ogura’s rather picturesque depiction of life in the U.S. for former residents of Hiroshima, an omission that again reminds his audience
Nagasaki appeared to greet American personnel generously as well despite the destruction inflicted on the city by the United States. Citizens offered foreigners gifts when they first arrived and participated in a “Miss Atomic Bomb” pageant planned by Occupation forces. Americans were not the only visitors welcomed to the atomic-bombed city centers. Recently stripped of his divinity by order of the Occupation, Emperor Hirohito embarked on a campaign to visit his subjects across Japan that lasted until 1954 and included stops in Hiroshima and Nagasaki; intended to introduce the emperor’s humanity to his subjects, Hirohito’s tours devoted 165 days to interacting with Japan’s citizens as they went about their daily lives. Hirohito traveled 33,000 kilometers to do so. The emperor even wore, quite literally, new clothing, having abandoned his ceremonial military garb and his formal language for “a soft felt hat and a Western coat and tie” and informal conversations with his subjects. On December 8, 1947, Hirohito arrived in Hiroshima, timing described by Dower as not coincidental; by spending Pearl Harbor Day in Hiroshima and “presumably offsetting one act with the other in a little game of binary symbolism,” Hirohito confirmed American insistence that Japan’s surprise attack on Hawaii planted the seeds of war reaped at Hiroshima. The Emperor’s stay in Nagasaki included meeting Takashi Nagai. Without intending to, Hirohito embodied the wartime victimhood of his subjects throughout his tours of the home islands; unfamiliar with a new role that required him to interact with citizens in ways that

why SCAP allowed publication of his work on Hiroshima in an era where similar literature ran the risk of threatening the peace.

76 Dower, Embracing Defeat, 241.

77 Ibid., 330.

78 Ibid.
he never had before, Hirohito endured these visits with “such stolid, uncomplaining discomfort” that, rather than admiring their emperor, the Japanese were more likely to pity him.79

“CHRISTIANITY IS GREATER HERE NOW THAN EVER”: FAITH AND POLITICAL CONVERSION IN POSTWAR JAPAN

As Japanese Christians publically and privately struggled to interpret their postwar environs, the burgeoning Cold War’s hostilities caused many Americans to fixate on the necessity of Japan’s national conversion to its Occupier’s religion. Newspaper articles circulated by Japan’s censored English-language press during the Occupation’s early years underscored a fascination with American Christianity, along with speculation regarding which major governmental figures might indeed convert to this Western religion. While the next chapter will explore this combination of Christianity and democracy under MacArthur’s tutelage in detail, a discussion of the press’s dissemination of American culture—at SCAP’s request—through its coverage of the Imperial Household’s daily duties, Crown Prince Akihito’s Quaker tutor, and Father Flanagan’s tour of Japan frames a noteworthy comparison and contrast between the actual personal faith of Japanese citizens, such as Takashi Nagai, and the political and religious conversions hoped for by the United States.

Coverage of the Imperial Household in English-language newspapers such as The Mainichi and the Nippon Times reflected the United States’ growing emphasis on Christianity as a means to rehabilitate Japan, both spiritually and politically. A

79 Ibid., 330-331.
November 1945 audience between Emperor Hirohito and four “Christian leaders” received front-page status in the *Nippon Times*. Presented with a letter from President Truman that emphasized the “restoration of the Christian fellowship between the United States and Japan,” Hirohito had, according to the newspaper’s assessment, “expressed hope that Christians the world over would cooperate in the efforts to restore peace and goodwill among the peoples.”

While certainly not indicative of the closeted Imperial Household’s personal faith, articles such as this appeared in the press frequently enough to showcase the true breadth of MacArthur’s hopes to spread American culture to the defeated by reminding Japanese audiences of the benefits linked to the United States’ unique merger of Christianity and democracy. Japanese and American Christians appeared to share the burden of this mission, as an April 1946 article suggested. Before leaving Japan for the United States, Presbyterian Pastor Mrs. Tamaki Uemura first visited Hirohito’s wife, identified by the *Nippon Times* only as the Empress. The Empress herself remained silent in the news report, which vaguely recorded her “gracious words of encouragement” for Uemura, the “first Japanese national” to visit the United States “since the war.” Uemura herself was far from silent; as the *Nippon Times* paraphrased, Uemura believed that “Japan must be purged of her past sins” “and seek Divine grace by means of sacraments. Christians must be ready to shoulder the sufferings and sins committed by their fellow countrymen and pray to God for His mercy through Jesus

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80 “His Majesty Meets 4 Christian Leaders,” *Nippon Times*, November 10, 1945, 1. Luman Shafer, later involved in the drive to create International Christian University, was one of the four Christians to meet Emperor Hirohito in November 1945.
Uemura called on her fellow Japanese Christians to actively participate in bettering the new Japan, which included grappling with the recent legacy of war.

In reporting unlikely at best before the war’s end, when Hirohito’s subjects still believed in the divinity of their Emperor, The Mainichi used its front page for more pointed conjecture regarding Hirohito’s personal faith: “Emperor Sends Pope Autographed Picture; To Become Christian?” Admitting that even according to his own Imperial Household, Hirohito “considers himself a ‘man without religion,’” the United Press reprint noted the reemergence of rumors regarding the emperor’s potential conversion to Christianity that followed Hirohito’s 1947 donation of land to St. Joseph’s colony, funded by Catholics to assist Japanese returning home from Korea and Manchuria, and his June 1948 decidedly un-divine gift to Pope Pius XII. Conceding that “rumors in the past” about Hirohito’s impending conversion had proved untrue, coverage turned to Japan’s other emperor, General Douglas MacArthur. Again Japan’s news media became an instrument of its Occupier, for as the foreign UP concluded in a Japanese newspaper, “Observers believe that the influence of Christianity is greater here now than ever—possibly because of General Douglas MacArthur who frequently mentions Christianity and Christian ideals in his public statements.”

Others speculated that the Empress Dowager viewed Christianity as a conduit to strengthening Japan’s state.

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82 “Emperor Sends Pope Autographed Picture; To Become Christian?,” The Mainichi, June 9, 1948, 1.

83 Takemae, The Allied Occupation of Japan, 379.
The press’s apparent interest in Christianity, either in the form of religion practiced by foreign visitors or in the potential for major changes in faith and subsequently politics, reflected MacArthur’s personal Christianizing mission and his desire to use formerly hostile media outlets to popularize American culture. Newspaper coverage of the nation’s daily news also indicated the myriad ways in which the Occupiers attempted to remake Japan in their own image. Even before the 1948 rumor mill pondered the likelihood of Hirohito’s conversion to Christianity, his son Crown Prince Akihito received his “only American tutor,” Quaker Elizabeth Gray Vining. The emperor himself apparently planned for his son Akihito to benefit from an American educator. While *The Mainichi’s* reprint of a United Press release on Vining’s departure from the United States was notably free of any reference to the Crown Prince’s own religious faith—or Vining’s plans to change it—the article did hint at the presence of national policy behind the selection of Akihito’s tutor. The State Department provided Vining with guidelines before she left for Japan. Vining’s description of how she viewed her role as tutor to Japan’s future emperor revealed undercurrents of post-war politicking: “I’ve decided all my teaching will be along lines leading toward a world in which nations cooperate instead of fight.” In her 1970 memoir *Quiet Pilgrimage*, Vining clarified her objectives for the Crown Prince’s education. The former tutor contradicted claims circulated by the press that she had been sent to Japan to “‘mold’ [the Crown Prince],” and insisted instead, “What I wanted above all to do was to set him free to be himself.” Vining admitted that, confined by imperial household traditions that provided Akihito

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84 Ibid.

with chamberlains who “told him what to do at every turn,” her personal hopes for Akihito’s education had faced obstacles.\textsuperscript{86}

As a Quaker, Vining’s emphasis on pacifism was not surprising, nor was her approach to the Crown Prince’s education. An accomplished author of children’s books, Vining hoped “to introduce the Crown Prince to the best of American literature and ideals,” including “Jefferson, Lincoln, Mark Twain, Thoreau, and all the best American folk stories all children should know.”\textsuperscript{87} In a press conference held in Yokohama on December 16, 1946, Vining revealed that the main impetus for her tenure as Akihito’s tutor was peace, as declared in Japan’s recently created Constitution that had, said Vining, “renounced war as an instrument of national policy.” Throughout the course of World War II, Vining had served as a Christian activist at home through the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC). Her work included crafting a letter, along with other AFSC members, to President Truman protesting the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, a “day of shock comparable to Pearl Harbor” in Vining’s memory. “The utterly sick feeling that smote me like an actual blow in the stomach is with me still,” Vining wrote in 1970, twenty-five years after she saw the first headlines describing atomic warfare’s “trail of ruin.” Though the news of the weapon’s existence did not surprise Vining—she knew as early as May 1940 of the potential to split an atom of uranium, thanks to a \textit{New York Times} article by William Lawrence—she thought Nazi Germany alone capable of such an act. America’s use of an atomic bomb profoundly disquieted Vining. “And now the United States, my own country, which I loved,” Vining mourned, “had dropped this


appalling destruction without warning on a crowded Japanese city.” For Vining, the Occupation seemed to offer the redemption absent from the war’s termination. To this end, she wrote yet another letter on behalf of Clarence Pickett and the AFSC to General MacArthur and President Truman, this one in open form intended for circulation by print media. The letter invoked the national identity of the America that Vining “loved” and asked that the United States conduct Japan’s Occupation “in a spirit of reconciliation rather than revenge.” “We are a Christian nation,” Vining reminded her readers. The dual responsibility inherent as “the victors” and “a Christian nation” meant that “[t]hough Japan stands today at the bar of judgment, in a deeper sense it is America that is on trial.” An international audience waited to pass judgment regarding how the United States adhered to the ideals, including the Four Freedoms, it had espoused during years of warfare. The potential for defeat in the realm of international opinion necessitated, thought Vining, “a careful selection of emotionally mature and self-disciplined men to carry out the occupation.” When Vining penned this call on the United States to abide by its own lofty Christian idealism—“justice, humanity, and respect for the individual”—she had no idea that she would serve among those men charged with bringing democracy to Japan. She never discovered if MacArthur or Truman read her letter, which appeared in “only three” newspapers and credited Clarence Pickett as the author. Nor did Vining’s letter generate many responses from the readership, minus one sent to Pickett that opened with the salvo “You skunk, you.” Yet, Vining’s missive grants access today to the sentiments of an anti-war activist who, before even participating in the Occupation

88 Vining, *Quiet Pilgrimage*, 184.

89 Ibid., 185-186.
herself, opposed America’s betrayal of its own Christian values and recognized the weighty signification of the Occupation’s future for a global audience.

Vining’s selection as Akihito’s tutor, coupled with her personal views on the singular importance of peace in a postwar world, seemed to indicate the totality of the American commitment to reforming militaristic Japan. By overseeing at least part of the Crown Prince’s education, the Occupying nation fortified itself against any resurgence of the wartime sentiments that held sway during fifteen years of Hirohito’s rule. Moreover, the presence of a Christian pacifist with access to the tightly monitored Imperial Household might influence the Crown Prince’s political and religious ideals. Vining herself made no such claim to the Occupation’s religious undertones in the press. Rather, as she generalized, “I believed that out of her suffering and defeat, Japan will draw a new vision and a new strength to lead the world in the ways of peace.”90 A United Press article published in The Mainichi on June 9, 1948 was less reticent in its depiction of Vining’s role in the Imperial Household, despite its predictions that Hirohito might become Catholic, not Quaker: “the Quaker influence is considered to be strong within the Palace because of the presence of Mrs. Elizabeth Gray Vining,” it reported.91

From mid-April until late December 1947, something akin to “Father Flanagan fever” swept through The Mainichi. The English-language daily published no less than twenty articles reporting on the two-month-long stay of Father Edward J. Flanagan in Occupied Japan. Well known for his work founding Nebraska’s Boys’ Town, Flanagan


arrived in Japan at MacArthur’s behest to assist SCAP and the Japanese Government with “the problem of Japan’s many orphaned and war destitute children.”

By the end of May, the popularity of his work with the nation’s children reached as far as Japan’s Professional Baseball League, which declared May 24 “Father Flanagan Day,” a celebration intended to occur every year to “promote juvenile welfare.” Flanagan’s activism on behalf of children took him to numerous cities throughout Japan, including Hiroshima and Nagasaki, to the Imperial Palace to meet with Emperor Hirohito, and, after he returned to the United States, to the White House to discuss conditions in Japan with President Truman. A vocal proponent for Christian education and Christian democracy, Flanagan utilized his various speaking engagements to sketch his vision for Japan’s future. His portrayal of the inexorable links between democracy, education, and Christianity suggested why SCAP had recruited him to participate, albeit briefly, in the Occupation’s reforms.

Flanagan specifically addressed how he hoped Japan could reform its treatment of homeless children in his self-penned May 20, 1947 Mainichi article “Father Flanagan’s Impressions: Japanese are Hard-Working People; Homeless Aid is Local Responsibility.” By opening up more vocational training, Japan could employ education to improve the daily lives of its citizens, particularly those left orphaned by war. Beyond the children’s physical needs, however, Flanagan witnessed the need for nation-wide

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92 “Father Flanagan Expected Here Today,” The Mainichi, April 16, 1947, 1; “Father Flanagan Comes To Japan; Greeted At Airfield By Children,” The Mainichi, April 25, 1947, 1.


spiritual revival. To this end, Flanagan explained “I recommend that in every home the children be given the opportunity of religious teachings and the opportunity of attending their churches every Sunday.” Flanagan viewed religion as not only a means to augment education and better the lives of homeless children, but also as an imperative of true democracy, and therefore a requisite ideology for all Japanese. Nothing less than the country’s future success hanged in the balance, or so his rhetoric implied: “The fate of Japan rests upon the people’s accepting faith in almighty God, and his Divine Son, Jesus Christ who liberated man from the chaff of the slavery of sin and dictatorship of satan [sic]. Democracy springs from Christianity. Your acceptance of Christian democracy is essential for the salvation of your country.” The undertones of Flanagan’s statement hinted at a major fissure between Japan’s militaristic—and presumably heathen—past and its future as a Christian democracy, solidified by the Constitution’s recent promulgation. Flanagan repeated this rhetorical theme of the wartime past versus the Christian future in a speech delivered at Tokyo’s St. Sophia University. “More than anything else Japan needs faith and enlightenment to dispel the darkness to see clearly and think clearly,” Flanagan posited in June 1947. “Japan has a great future, but the greatness is going to be measured by the ratio of sacrifice Japan is going to make in following the example of Him who sacrificed Himself on the cross.” Flanagan’s personal devotion to American ideals, positioned as it was in the early years of the Cold


96 Ibid., 2.

War, tied a prominent Catholic to the Protestant Christianity so long associated with the United States’ birth and national identity. Like other advocates of the Occupation, Flanagan implied that national prestige resided in adherence to a democratic and Christian identity; the United States served as the standard bearer for this partnership of ideals, despite its own wartime behavior.

*The Mainichi* devoted two articles to Flanagan’s time and influence in Nagasaki; the first surveyed Flanagan’s response to the city’s conditions, while the second updated the changes brought to the “ex-juvenile waifs and incorrigible boys” who, despite “lecturing and spanking,” had refused to reform their behavior in Nagasaki’s ruins. Though the second article, published in June 1947, never referenced the atomic bomb in its overview of the daily existence of Nagasaki’s “bad boys,” *The Mainichi’s* May 1947 report on Nagasaki highlighted Flanagan’s visit to Urakami’s ruins. Flanagan “celebrated special mass at the Oura cathedral” before witnessing Urakami’s devastation for himself. As a Catholic observer of the destruction leveled against Urakami’s parishioners, Flanagan must have been moved by what he saw, but the response recorded by *The Mainichi* appeared tempered and then optimistic. “It’s difficult to describe it,” Flanagan admitted. “Its destructive power is surprising, but the fact that gardens are grown here was different from what we understood.” Nagasaki’s residents, Flanagan predicted, “will make a comeback in this area in a short period of time.” Unwittingly, Flanagan expressed the very tendency that Takashi Nagai had warned international visitors against, for in observing the city’s new vegetation, growing despite predictions that irradiated soil

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would remain barren for seventy-five years, Flanagan and other observers overlooked the loss of human life that could not be regenerated.

**CONCLUSION**

“Americans Discard Wartime Bitterness Toward Japanese People” read a *Mainichi* front-page headline on April 6, 1949. Less than five years after Japan’s surrender, *The Mainichi’s* foreign news editor Ichitaro Takata presented the results of his six-month-long tour of Europe and the United States at a lecture in Hibiya, Tokyo. Well-versed in the former enemy’s culture after living in New York as a correspondent for *The Mainichi* until the outbreak of war, Takata told his audience about visiting with President Truman, whom he portrayed as “a man of humility.” Takata had learned, said the *Mainichi’s* coverage, that a surprising “trend of warm friendship toward Japan” existed in the United States, evidenced by Americans such as Pearl Buck, Robert Oppenheimer, and Albert Einstein who were, among others, “exerting their lives for the benefit of Japan.”

Takata’s description of the current American attitude was simply one of many assessments pointing toward the sea change that marked the gulf between war and peace; perhaps nothing indicated this jarring shift more than the inclusion of Oppenheimer, father of the atomic bomb, as part and parcel of the burgeoning “warm friendship” between the United States and her occupied territory.¹⁰⁰

As we have just witnessed, however, the lines between friend and foe, victor and vanquished, were rarely drawn as definitively as national rhetoric might indicate. The

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hibakusha at Hiroshima and Nagasaki appeared, at least in the popular press of a censored democracy, overwhelmingly willing to welcome the same conqueror whose atomic bombs had reduced their lives, livelihoods, and families to ruin. Activist Christians in Japan and the United States remained advocates of friendship and opponents of nuclear warfare. Yet, despite the individual perspectives presented by hibakusha, Japanese Christians, and American dissenters such as Vining and Iglehart that questioned recent elements of the United States’ national identity that justified nuclear war, adherence to its dual tenets of democracy and Christianity became the rhetorical norm of the Occupation. In an era that monitored the expansive spread of godless Communism, America measured political conversion by Christianity’s march forward.

As the Occupation neared its end, the gap between victor and vanquished narrowed, and the living Japanese regained humanity in the eyes of the conqueror. As had the Americans portrayed by Takata, the Japanese discarded bitterness as well. Reverend Kiyoshi Tanimoto, a peace activist and survivor of Hiroshima, toured the United States in 1951 to collect funds for the Hiroshima Peace Center. On February 5, as a guest of the United States Senate, Tanimoto gave a prayer to start the Senate’s afternoon session. “We thank Thee, God,” said the minister, “that Japan has been permitted to be one of the fortunate recipients of American generosity. We thank Thee that our people have been given the gift of freedom, enabling them to rise from the ashes of ruin and be reborn.” Senator A. Willis Robertson responded that he was “dumbfounded yet inspired” that someone “whom we tried to kill with an atomic bomb came to the Senate floor and, offering up thanks to the same God we worship, thanked Him for America’s great spiritual heritage, and then asked God to bless every member of
This acknowledgement of faith in a shared God, paired with the deaths of 8000 Catholics in Nagasaki alone, compounded the unmerciful behavior by belligerents on both sides of the Pacific, for it disproved portrayals of “bestial” enemies through only one example of their commonalities. Those who perished at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, however, had yet to be granted a similar restoration of humanity in the overwhelming American narrative of Japan’s surrender that depicted their sacrifice as undeniably legitimate and unequivocally moral.

Tanimoto’s startlingly grateful prayer embodied religious interpretations used to give meaning to a bloody war and its aftermath. Tanimoto was a Christian long before MacArthur’s arrival in Japan, yet his acknowledgement of the United States’ mission in its occupied territory indicated the prevalence of Truman’s assumption that his country was “a shining city on a Hill,” a beacon for democratic nations in the burgeoning Cold War. MacArthur’s own brand of religious imperialism, as we shall see, relied on similar notions of exceptional American democracy—grounded in the principles of Christianity—that accepted the atomic bomb as simply another blessing from a God that not only favored the United States above “heathen” nations, but also expected its citizens to stand as examples for the world. Although MacArthur ostensibly failed to Christianize Japan, its stature as a newly liberated nation further solidified America’s belief in its exceptionalism and its right to lead the world in the Cold War’s ideological stalemate. Thus, the religious narrative that justified the atomic bombings, combined with

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MacArthur’s crusade in Japan, now formed the Cold War’s basis as “one of history’s great religious wars.”\textsuperscript{103} Such a foundation was far from flawless.

\textsuperscript{103} Kirby, “Divinely Sanctioned,” 389.
Chapter Five

Occupying the “Vacuum”: Conflicting Memories of Christian Democracy in Post-War Japan

Hereafter, Christianity, for instance, while being cultivated in this country, also will have a mission to fulfil [sic] in the adjustment of international relations . . . In short, it is the method which counts. Suppose, for instance, that missionaries were to come in with such crude conceptions as to say that this is the time to straighten out the ‘bellicose’ character of Japan, or to save the Japanese ‘barbarians’—that would merely cause unnecessary ill-feeling and stir up needless trouble. And it would only serve to reverse the role of religion as a factor in adjusting international relations.

All the Japanese alike now are hurt. They all have to suffer. They all are poor. If a person with a Bible in hand were to scold them and shout at them, they probably would not even listen. But they could not but be deeply moved by warm ‘deeds’ and profound sympathy.

Tamon Maeda, September 2, 1945

INTRODUCTION

For Americans, forgetting the civilians underneath Hiroshima and Nagasaki’s mushroom clouds began with the opening of the Occupation. Victory, censorship, and the lofty rhetoric of the American mission—be it political or spiritual—combined to virtually silence critiques of nuclear war as the United States transitioned from a holy war to a holy peace. The mounting fear that the Soviets might possess an atomic bomb cultivated an American fixation with its own eminent victimhood, leaving little space to consider the experiences of earlier victims of American war. Concerns about being labeled unpatriotic or even communist further narrowed any dissent from the victory narrative, one that warmed the United States throughout the Cold War. Amidst the cacophony of opinions regarding how to successfully instill peace in a defeated nation, a

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1 “Religion In New Japan To play Important Role,” Nippon Times, September 5, 1945, 3. The newly appointed Minister of Education, Maeda provided this statement to the Asahi on September 2, 1945—the same day of Japan’s formal surrender ceremonies.
A growing crescendo of voices in the United States and even Japan favored a Christianizing mission as the best means to transform a once-militaristic government into a democracy made in the image of America. In the years that followed, this emphasis on the political and religious superiority of American democracy appeared in many venues on both sides of the Pacific; it allowed the United States to, through the Occupation’s success, focus on the triumphs of the American way of life; it facilitated a celebration of Christian missionary work in a formerly closed—even heathen—society; and it omitted perspectives, such as those surrounding the atomic bombings, that belied national claims to righteousness. It is in the silences of the Occupation, those same rhetorical moments that praised Christian democracy, where we find the national forgetting of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. If we listen carefully, we also discover the activism of a vocal minority of Christians willing to challenge this omission by presenting a counter-narrative of atomic and wartime atrocity.

The righteousness of the Occupation and Japan’s own acceptance and celebration of the American victors, and at least parts of their culture, confirmed the “Good War’s” legitimacy. This enduring memory of war and an occupation that demonstrated the United States’ commitment to rebuilding a former enemy captured the American imagination. The myth of American Christian democracy, unscathed by war and solidified in peace, resisted re-examination even decades after the apocalyptic August of 1945. Bradford Perkins contextualized the growth of America’s moral exceptionalism: “During World War II the Americans developed a sense of power, righteous power. On the whole . . . they considered it their right, their duty, and their opportunity to lead the
world.”

For many Americans, emboldened by their nation’s recent victory, the triumph of the atomic bombs confirmed the righteousness of the United States’ actions, past and present. “[V]ictory, when it came,” Tom Engelhardt explained, “was guaranteed to bathe all preceding American acts in a purifying glow.” As one historian contended, with the exception of “a small minority of Protestant ministers” and “some Catholic just-war believers,” American Christians “had little difficulty endorsing the atomic bombings of Japan in 1945.”

In this climate of celebrated triumph and beneficent Occupation, the activism surrounding the establishment of International Christian University (ICU) in Mitaka, a ward of Tokyo, served as a microcosm of the era’s broader culture wars. In profound ways, ICU’s foundation tested Christian responses to atomic warfare, notions of national reconciliation, adherence to the American Christianizing mission defined by MacArthur, and the position of anti-communism in the Occupation’s reforms. An examination of the debates surrounding ICU’s purpose in Occupied Japan charts the trajectory of war memory from the purposeful opposition to Hiroshima and Nagasaki voiced by activist Christians to compliance with the national atomic narrative as Cold War paranoia swept politics and religion. Participants in ICU’s creation frequently countered American nationalism and MacArthur’s goals for his occupation, as we shall see, by advocating for

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faith in Christianity rather than faith in America. The memory of war’s atrocity—Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and beyond—first drove this activism; the hope for international peace maintained it. To contextualize ICU’s place in the Occupation’s story, we must first turn to the prevailing ideologies of war memory guiding Christian depictions of national postwar responsibilities and then to other projects, such as the Occupation’s Bible campaigns, that indicate the conflicts between SCAP goals and activist Christian reforms and the forgotten memories of war and forgiveness.

A PEOPLE OF FAITH: CONFLICTING WAR MEMORY IN POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS DISCOURSE

President Harry S. Truman charged General Douglas MacArthur, lionized for his “return” to the Philippines, with the task of embedding democracy in Japan’s postwar politics and culture. MacArthur’s September 2, 1945 speech aboard the Missouri foreshadowed the general’s goals for the Occupation, indicating the role religion would play as the United States guided Japan away from militarism and toward democracy. “The entire world is quietly at peace,” intoned MacArthur. “The holy mission has been completed. . . . I thank a merciful God that he has given us the faith, the courage and the power from which to mould victory.”5 This depiction of the Allied victory echoed Truman’s August 16, 1945 presidential proclamation, which had credited American triumph to “divine Providence.” Truman’s own speech moments after the radio broadcast of Japan’s capitulation paralleled the general’s desire to proceed along the


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God-given path of peace. Warning that the failure of politics, “military alliances,” and “leagues of nations” in the past might result in a new “Armageddon,” MacArthur tied theology to civilization’s rebirth and to the West’s own triumph:

The problem basically is theological and involves a spiritual recrudescence and improvement of human character that will synchronize with our almost matchless advance in science, art, literature and all material and cultural developments of the past 2,000 years. It must be of the spirit if we are to save the flesh.

The optimism present in MacArthur’s overview of the recently terminated holy war was not devoid of atrocity. In fact, MacArthur sketched a potentially tenuous present as he considered the “new era.” “[B]itterness” permeated MacArthur’s memory of Allied “defeat” in sites of profound personal significance for the general such as “Bataan and Corregidor,” and “the lesson of victory itself brings with it profound concern, both for our future security and the survival of civilization.” Here were the unnamed hibakusha of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, recognized not for their own victimhood, but for their symbolic representation of global Armageddon. Overshadowed by the specific inclusion of Japanese atrocities in the Philippines, the hibakusha found themselves connected, again without reference, to MacArthur’s reading of the culmination of American ingenuity: “The destructiveness of the war potential, through progressive advances in scientific discovery, has in fact now reached a point which revises the traditional concept of war.”

In crafting the post-war peace in a world where the toll of nuclear war potentially rendered the sixty million deaths of World War II obsolete, the United States

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appeared poised to save the very nation it had laid waste to throughout the Pacific War and, finally, with the newly-born atomic bomb.

Set against the backdrop of the Cold War, the Christianizing mission driving Japan’s rebirth as a democracy styled in American form exposed the contradictions of the role of faith in national identity. On the one hand, 95 percent of Americans confronting the hopes and fears of the postwar world claimed to be “religious;” on the other, “only 53 percent could identify even one of the Gospels in the Bible.” The disparity between faith in theory and faith in practice led historian LeRoy Ashby to label this a “secularized faith, concerned less with sectarian doctrine than with the religion of America itself.”

None other an atomic warrior than General Leslie Groves, the military head of the Manhattan Project that had designed the atomic bomb, represented this fusion between faith in God and faith in America. Despite his own upbringing as the child of an army chaplain, Groves participated in religion much as many other Americans did during the era—in name rather than in devotion. Groves, writes historian Barton Bernstein, “was in accord with the dominant religious thought, as well as mainline American secular thought, about the atomic bombing.” Though Groves did not use religious rhetoric himself to justify the righteous nature of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, he remained “very much a part of the dominant American tradition in 1945 and afterward” and fortified that stance “by blocking dissent and by challenging criticism of the atomic bombings.”

Over the course of the Occupation, Truman, MacArthur, and American calls for reform came to embody this nationalized belief in the ideology of the United States and

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its ability to implement worldwide peace. Faith in America’s present required, it seemed, a purposeful forgetting of problematic moments in its recent past. In March 1946, President Truman demonstrated the depth of America’s ability to essentially ignore Hiroshima and Nagasaki even when speaking directly of their aftermath. Addressing the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America at a meeting in Columbus, Ohio, Truman insisted that a “genuine renewal of religious faith” alone could surmount what the United Press paraphrased as “the problems of the atomic age.” Truman continued, “When the sages and scientists, philosophers and statesman have exhausted their studies of atomic energy, only one solution will remain—the substitution of decency and reason and brotherhood for the rule of force in the government of man.” News of Truman’s speech was “broadcast around the world” and appeared in The Mainichi titled “Truman Calls For Renewal of Faith in Atomic Age.” Predictably, particularly in an English-language daily circulated under SCAP’s all-seeing eye, Truman’s discourse alluded to the “gigantic power” of “atomic energy” without referencing its use against two civilian targets. Although the president did not—at least in the UP’s summary of his speech—directly connect “decency and reason and brotherhood” to the United States and its Occupation, the subtext of his rhetoric tied American religion and democracy to a peaceful future for the world. Retaining claim to the “high moral code” needed in a world after Hiroshima and Nagasaki necessitated either a righteous interpretation of the war’s end or an omission of it altogether.10

While Truman, MacArthur, and others considered the political implications of a religious democracy in peacetime, an international audience of Christians turned instead

10 “Truman Calls For Renewal Of Faith In Atomic Age,” The Mainichi, March 9, 1946, 1. United Press. The phrase “high moral ground” is a paraphrase by the United Press, not a direct quote from Truman himself.
to the ramifications of the recent war’s violence for national identity. In doing so, these Christian dissenters drew attention to the horrors of war and to the omissions of national memories of victory. Australian Charles I. McLaren spoke from personal experience in 1946 when he debated the international consequences held for Christianity by Allied triumph. Parsing reconciliation not as a requirement between the world’s Christians, “Japanese and non-Japanese,” nor as a journey between nations, McLaren instead saw the act as a renewed relationship between “sinful men (and nations)” and “the God and Father whose laws have been broken and whose holiness and love have been spurned.”

While McLaren believed that the “Church Universal” alone could actualize this daunting task, it had to be undertaken by an institution “unspotted by the world.” The recent global conflagration did not elevate the Church far above the professed Christian nations. McLaren concluded,

> [T]he record of the Church has not been predominantly, whether during the war or before it, on these highest levels of specifically Christian choice and conduct. . . . The so-called Christian nations of the West have had power and they have very often used it in the interests of military and economic imperialism. They have exploited weak peoples. They have strutted in arrogant assumption of their own innate superiority. They have shut doors of migration and built high walls of tariff selfishness, while imposing their goods on unwilling and helpless peoples . . . They have contemned the divine appointment that ‘the earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof’ and secured five-sixths of the earth’s surface as the preserve of the dominant white races. In this flagrant denial of the Christian way of life by the western nations the Christians within the western world have, all too often, remained at least semi-complacent and have even been content to accept, as in the very order of nature, the immediate and great material gains which have accrued to themselves at the expense of others out of this abnormal situation.

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11 Relatively little information exists on Charles I. McLaren’s background. He appears to have served for some time at the Severance Union Medical College in Seoul, Korea, according to an article he published in *The British Medical Journal* in 1937. In 1942, the Foreign Missions Committee of the Presbyterian Church of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia published his pamphlet “Eleven Weeks in a Japanese Prison Cell.”


13 Ibid., 294.
McLaren’s essay did not mention the atomic bomb by name, but the tone of the above excerpt recorded McLaren’s general displeasure with claims of Christian behavior in a self-serving world. His condemnation of the “semi-complacent” Christian response to the exigencies of war hinted at American Christian acceptance of their nation’s justification of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, even if McLaren’s list of general offenses did not specifically evoke the targeting of civilians beyond his references to the exploitation of “helpless peoples.”

McLaren neither identified his own country of origin nor singled out the United States for specific condemnation. He did, however, redeem Japanese Christian behavior during the war and draw a portrait of what a Christian Occupation might look like. “I am convinced also that the existence and influence of the Christian Church in Japan had a restraining and mitigating effect even on national policies,” wrote McLaren, a stance clarified somewhat by his subsequent explanation. In a statement that raised more questions than it answered, McLaren revealed, “I am sure that some of us, who were in the power of the Japanese authorities after war broke out, owe much of our comparative immunity to the active intervention of Japanese Christians.”¹⁴ Despite his own apparent suffering in a Japanese prison for his own identity, McLaren advocated for nothing less than Japan’s national redemption without the “self-righteous generalization which says only ‘these wicked, dastardly Japanese’” and implied that they alone had sinned during the course of war.¹⁵ On the one hand, McLaren persistently undermined Allied—especially American—claims to wartime righteousness; on the other, however, he

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¹⁴ Ibid., 295.
¹⁵ Ibid., 300.
believed that “even an army of occupation might be turned by the grace of God and the wisdom of the Church to serve the redemptive purposes of the Kingdom of God.”\textsuperscript{16}

Reserving righteousness for the Church alone, McLaren pushed back against the celebratory tides of national memories of war by drawing a distinct line between the role of Christian nations and the Church. The Occupation might be America’s political realm, but only the “grace of God” could bring redemption to the Japanese.

International opinion certainly verified American faith in its national identity vis-à-vis interpretations of the Occupation’s historic standing. For some, such as the Franciscan Father Michel Charette, the Occupation redeemed the wartime suffering he personally endured in Japan. Interviewed in 1946, Charette described his nearly three-year-long internment in Tokyo, his release and return to Utsunomiya to discover his church and parishioners in ruins, and his attempts to provide aid to for the “bombed-out families” who attended his church. According to a \textit{Nippon Times} paraphrase, Charette—despite his own harrowing home-front experience that involved personal victimization by the militarists and his church’s decimation by American-led bombings—“thinks that everything has been for the best.” A Canadian by birth and a resident of Japan for eighteen years, Charette optimistically read the nation’s spiritual changes as the result of two factors. Charette dismissed claims that Japanese interest in Christianity was merely an attempt to mimic their Occupiers. Rather, crushing defeat by the Allies had resulted in a religious sea change: “The Japanese found that their leaders and their gods betrayed them, so they are turning to a more substantial God in Christianity.” The sudden presence of their former enemy in such close proximity to their own daily lives reminded

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 302.
the Japanese of their earlier “admiration” for the United States, leading Charette to posit, “The occupation has done more for Christianity than all the preaching and missionary work in the world.” Charette’s assessment certainly reflected MacArthur’s rhetoric in scope and in style, for both predicted a unique new role for the American Occupier and the American Christian. Nor did Charette’s Canadian nationality preclude his adherence to the “Good War’s” plot; presented in a newspaper censored according to the whims of SCAP employees, Charette’s war memories spoke more of Japanese than of Allied atrocity and pointed to the United States as the savior for the nation’s future. Whereas McLaren called on the Church to redeem the world, Charette positioned the Occupation itself in this role.

Calls for a peaceful world in a time of elevated fear reverberated throughout Truman’s administration, surfacing in his January 1948 “State of the Union” address. “For we are a people with a faith,” said Truman, “The faith of our people has particular meaning at this time in history, because of the unsettled and changing state of the world.” Truman painted the current international climate in the broad strokes expected in such a speech, listing Japan’s Occupation with others in Germany, Austria, and Korea that held “special responsibilities” for the nation. Significantly, however, Truman mentioned the global victims of war “seeking assurance that the tragedy of war will not occur again.” The unnamed victims lived in unidentified nations, but Truman’s description of their future spoke to America’s political and religious hopes for the


Occupied citizens of Japan. “Men of all nations are re-examining the beliefs by which they live,” said Truman. “Great scientific and industrial changes have released new forces which will affect the future course of civilization. On all sides there is heartening evidence of the great energy and of a capacity for economic development, and even more important, a capacity for spiritual growth.” Conceding that the era held equally “great anxieties,” Truman never labeled the source of this fear: nuclear war. Instead, America’s atomic bombs shadowed the president’s words, cloaked instead as the “new forces which will affect the future course of civilization” or as a “great scientific change.” By assuring his international audience of the American commitment to peace, Truman distanced the United States from the last cataclysms of war in the Pacific. Indeed, Truman’s declaration that American foreign policy strove for a “peaceful and prosperous world” responded to the fears held by the war’s victims and confirmed his administration’s desire to better their lives.\(^{19}\) Truman’s language portrayed the international situation through the expected American lens, one that brought into focus a democratizing mission that left no one behind, even victims of the United States’ war effort, and one that advocated the “Good War’s” achievement: long-term peace. This nationalized faith in America optimistically considered the United States’ role on a global stage, just as it overlooked the atomic weapons that now assured its international dominance. In fostering peace, American citizens seemed to forget the recent exigencies of war, at once absent and present in national visions of the future. Ultimately, Truman’s 1948 “State of the Union” speech reminded the United States of what the president implied was a “God-given duty” as the leader of the free world. As Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers

\(^{19}\) Ibid.
(SCAP), MacArthur made use of America’s unique Protestant heritage and right to lead the world, and Truman’s belief in it, as he administered Japan. MacArthur’s support of missionaries and Bible campaigns fostered his political democratizing agenda and emphasized the generosity of the Christian United States to its former aggressor, essentially whitewashing memories of the atomic bombs in much the same way that Occupation censorship distanced Hiroshima and Nagasaki from the “Good War.” Many Christian activists, however, envisioned neither the United States’ atomic bombs nor its post-war Christian responsibilities through the same perspective held by MacArthur. This divergence, as we shall see, surfaced most prominently in the rhetoric of ICU’s faithful supporters.

INHERITING THE EARTH: MISSIONARIES, BIBLES, AND CHRISTIAN DEMOCRACY IN JAPAN

MacArthur adhered to wartime perceptions of Japan’s religious inferiority. Japan’s humiliating loss of the war it had instigated proved its moral instability for MacArthur, and his “private crusade” during the Occupation worked to fill what he viewed as a moral void in Japan’s culture.\(^20\) The same ideology that justified the atomic blasts rooted itself in the reconstruction of Japan. Some American observers viewed the flattening of Japan’s cities during the war as a means for the nation’s redemption afterward. Such sentiments hinted at the imperialistic nature of the Occupation and the “cleansing” fires that preceded it. “It is easy to forget, or not to know,” suggested Paul

Fussell in “Thank God for the Atomic Bomb,” “what Japan was like before it was first destroyed, and then humiliated, tamed, and constitutionalized by the West. ‘Implacable, treacherous, barbaric’—those were Admiral Halsey’s characterizations of the enemy, and at the time few facing the Japanese would deny that they fit to a T.”21 To bring true democracy to the citizens of the “barbaric” home islands, and to effectively rebuild the nation’s ideology, MacArthur turned to Christianity, even as he sought to separate the Shinto religion from state affairs. Official Occupation policy, stated in both SCAP’s goals and the Potsdam Proclamation, supported freedom of religion in Japan, separation of church and state, and an end to Emperor Hirohito’s divinity.22 As SCAP, MacArthur was well aware of his political mission in Japan. His religious mission, however, shadowed the official goals of the Occupation. Describing the vanquished, MacArthur returned to a frequently used metaphor, the vacuum:

It was not merely the overthrow of their military might—it was the collapse of a faith, it was the disintegration of everything they had believed in and lived by and fought for. It left a complete vacuum, morally, mentally, and physically. And into this vacuum flowed the democratic way of life.23

MacArthur insisted that his Christianizing mission in this purported “vacuum” did not constitute revived imperialism. Newspapers at home supported the notion that the Occupation held no facets of imperialism, but was rather an experiment in democracy welcomed by the defeated. In The Christian Science Monitor, editor Erwin D. Canham recalled the “friendly and cooperative” atmosphere in Japan, adding, “These people are


trying to learn the ways of democracy. The conqueror and the conquered are having a zestful time teaching and learning the ways of democracy.”²⁴

When the Pacific War ended, 900 Christian missionaries lived in Japan; by April 1950, two years before the Occupation’s close, 2,248 missionaries worked toward MacArthur’s goal of Christianizing the newly democratic country.²⁵ Catholics and Protestants shouldered the burden of mission work nearly equally, with 1,083 Catholics and 1,165 Protestants answering MacArthur’s call.²⁶ Viewing himself as a soldier of God, MacArthur implemented policies that benefited Christianity, particularly in education. Predicting, “the world will remember that America gave to Japan two major concepts of American civilization—Christianity and democracy,” MacArthur took measures to ensure that the Occupation implanted Western religion in the East.²⁷ In a December 1946 letter to Dr. Louis D. Newton, President of the Southern Baptist Convention, the general explained that “those guiding tenets of our Christian faith”—which he labeled “justice, tolerance, understanding”—directed his Occupation


“policies.”\textsuperscript{28} Always conscious of history and his potential place in it, MacArthur sketched both past and elevated present for Louis:

Due to a vacuum which events have left in the spiritual phase of Japanese life, there now exists an opportunity without counterpart since the birth of Christ for the spread of Christianity among the peoples of the Far East. . . . If this opportunity is fully availed of by the leaders of our Christian faith, a revolution of spirit may be expected to ensue which will more favorably alter the course of civilization than has any economic or political revolution accomplished in the history of the world.\textsuperscript{29}

Part of this revolution, equated with nothing less than the birth of Christ and taking place in the vacuum of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere’s disappearance, included the participation of Western missionaries, evangelists, and educators who, like MacArthur, perceived postwar conditions as a potential boon for increasing the Christian fold.

An impassioned crusader, MacArthur compared Christianity and the “basic principles underlying the Oriental faiths;” surmising that “each [religion] might well be strengthened by a better understanding of the other,” MacArthur recalled in his \textit{Reminiscences} that he “asked for missionaries, and more missionaries.”\textsuperscript{30} In December 1945, in the early days of American rule, the Supreme Commander expedited the arrival of missionaries by changing the guidelines that screened their entrance into occupied territory. Said MacArthur’s GHQ: “It is the policy of this theater to increase greatly the Christian influence and every effort will be made here to absorb missionaries as rapidly as the church can send them into the area.” President Truman and the Joint Chiefs of


\textsuperscript{29} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{30} MacArthur, \textit{Reminiscences}, 310.
Staff supported MacArthur’s overtly religious mission in Japan. When MacArthur sent a memorandum to Washington, D.C. announcing his plans “to increase greatly Christian influence in Japan,” Truman, after reading the memo, wrote in the margin, “I approve.” The weight placed on SCAP’s Christianizing mission to rebuild Japan by MacArthur, Truman, and many other observers obscured the causes underlying the need for regeneration, such as the Allied bombing campaigns that laid waste to more than sixty of the nation’s cities, displacing millions of her citizens and taking the lives of nearly one million others.

Along with American missionaries, MacArthur utilized the distribution of Bibles to encourage Japanese acceptance of Christianity and American democracy. MacArthur himself advocated on behalf of Japan’s residents in his December 1947 letter to the American Bible Society. As reported in The Mainichi, through yet another United Press story, the general deemed Japan’s consumption of the Bibles gifted it by the United States as “insatiable.” The letter requested that the Society continue to provide the Japanese public with more Bibles. Historian Rinjiro Sodei contends that SCAP used military facilities to aid the distribution of the ten million Japanese-translation Bibles MacArthur had personally asked the Pocket Testament League to pass out. English-

31 Moore and Robinson, Partners for Democracy, 45, 44.

32 Finn, Winners in Peace, 62.


34 Rinjiro Sodei, “Hiroshima/Nagasaki as History and Politics,” The Journal of American History 82.3 (December 1995): 1118. The exact numbers of Bibles disseminated in Japan can be somewhat difficult to track; Charles Iglehart, in his article “The Christian Church in Japan,” published in the July 1952 edition of The International Review of Missions, cites 3.5 million as the number of Bible “portions having been distributed during 1951” (285).
language newspapers such as the *Nippon Times* and *The Mainichi* devoted coverage to the various distributions of Bibles that took place over the course of the Occupation. These articles indicated SCAP’s sustained attempts to disseminate American culture in occupied territory vis-à-vis her own press syndicates. On February 25, 1946, *The Mainichi* published a reprint of a United Press article documenting the American Bible Society’s work to print and ship 2.5 million copies of the New Testament, along with 100,000 complete Bibles, to Japan’s citizens. MacArthur himself did not appear in the article, which cited instead “an appeal from Japanese Christian leaders” as the impetus for the American Bible Society’s gift. An earlier United Press dispatch in *The Mainichi* had credited the generosity of the United States’ Japanese Christians in a fund-raising drive for the American Bible Society. When the first 300,000 Bibles arrived in March, the *Nippon Times* discussed how the Japanese Bible Society would utilize the texts to benefit society. After mentioning the Bibles’ early itinerary—they had “arrived here recently by air through the good offices of the Supreme Allied Headquarters”—the *Nippon Times* revealed the multiple purposes for the texts. “The Holy Writs,” narrated the newspaper, “will be first distributed to 455 churches in this country bombed out during the war at the rate of 500 each.” Churches would then reinvest money generated from the sale of Bibles to rebuild their facilities and to publish the texts in Japan proper, a task made difficult by the war’s decimation of “printing facilities, which has been handicapping propagation of Christianity in this country.” The article listed prices for the Bibles, along with the location for purchase in Tokyo: the Ginza. MacArthur was again

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virtually absent from the news; minus the “good offices of the Supreme Allied Headquarters,” the *Nippon Times* credited Japanese Christians as the actors calling for a postwar revival of Western religion.\(^{37}\) Hidden within the article’s text emerged a theme of atonement. Purposeful or not, the American Bible Society’s donation of religious material worked toward rehabilitating the infrastructure damaged by American bombing campaigns. To prepare for the widespread conversions they hoped for, the American and Japanese Bible Societies first had to confront the daily realities of occupied territory. No less a symbol of American identity than the Bible funded this transformation.

English-language newspapers continued to emphasize Japanese agency in the hoped for Christian awakening, as the *Nippon Times*’ April 4, 1946 “Big Demand Is Seen For New Testaments” articulated. Quoting Japan Bible Society’s general secretary Reverend Kiyoshi Hirai, the *Nippon Times* gave credence to MacArthur’s belief that Christianity would indeed envelop the Japan in a reflection of the Occupiers’ political and religious identity. Hirai charted Christianity’s potential growth by directly connecting it to the dwindling supply of texts provided by the American Bible Society in the weeks since their arrival. With “approximately 300,000 Christian Japanese in Japan,” a number Hirai labeled as “increasing substantially,” more Bibles were needed. Crediting newspaper coverage of the distribution of texts with the increased demand, Hirai explained, “People are buying Bibles not only for themselves but as gifts for friends.

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\(^{37}\) “Copies Of Holy Bible Arrive From America,” *Nippon Times*, March 14, 1946, 3. Again, the GHQ’s *History of Non-Military Activities of the Occupation of Japan, 1945-1951* provides statistics regarding the breadth of destruction confronted by religious institutions in the post-war era. Records from October 1945 indicated that “8,761 temples, churches, and chapels” had been “destroyed” by the war, including 4,430 Buddhist, 505 Church of Christ in Japan, 102 Roman Catholic, and 3,701 Shinto (Sectarian) structures. By January 1951, the Church of Christ had rebuilt 187 churches damaged in the war and created 35 altogether new facilities, while the Roman Catholic church added 114 new church and repaired 75 others; the “re-established” Episcopal Church either “built or rebuilt” 78 structures (24-25).
Non-Christians also are desirous of buying Christian books.” Hirai predicted the growth of Japanese Christianity in part due to an audience interested in Bibles, and he perhaps reflected the desire to learn more about the victors’ culture; as the face of the Occupation, MacArthur had repeatedly tied democracy to Christianity. Hirai’s reference to non-Christians purchasing Bibles reflected a cultural and a spiritual curiosity about the Occupiers. Measuring the reasons that led the Japanese to purchase Bibles proved more difficult than simply connecting the sale of religious material to a desire to become Christian. When rumors circulated in 1951 that Japanese recipients of American-sponsored Bibles used the texts not for spiritual enlightenment but instead as a source for cigarette paper, SCAP’s Civil Information and Education Religious Division had to respond to the concerns of the American Bible Society. The Religious Division’s William C. Kerr did not merely assuage these anxieties with generic platitudes. Delving into the economic realities of Occupied Japan, Kerr traced the history and availability of cigarette paper and then compared it to the more costly purchase of a Bible, an expense that made buying the books for their paper supply alone unlikely.

Even as newspaper articles recognized Japanese participation in the collection of religious texts, they also suggested the desire of Americans—acting as either private citizens or as members of the government—to utilize postwar upheaval to advance national and religious goals. By October 1947, the Civil Communications Section of the Occupation had revised regulations applied to the International Postal Service to facilitate the distribution of Bibles. This change meshed with SCAP’s democratizing agenda in its equal treatment of all religions, for in opening the postal service to include the shipment

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of Bibles to Japan, it guaranteed the shipment of “all other sacred writings of all religious
faiths and sects” as well. 39 In this sense, SCAP remained committed to the separation of
church and state it had instilled in the reformed nation. Indeed, even when the
distribution of Bibles threatened the strict division between church and state in Japan, the
campaigns themselves illuminated the generous spirit of American Christians and
simultaneously drew attention to the democratic nature of their national identity. Press
coverage of the seeming partnership between Christians on both sides of the Pacific
documented the myriad changes brought by the victor to the vanquished. In this
emphasis on the good deeds of the present, the causes behind Japan’s supposed “spiritual
vacuum”—including the American war machine and the spiritual devastation wrought by
the atomic bombs—faded into the past.

Church attendance as a barometer of conviction equally defied easy measurement.
Japan’s government had categorized English as a tool of enemy subversion throughout
the Pacific War; citizens who learned it without permission risked participating in “an act
of disloyalty.” The war’s end allowed Japanese to resume practicing English, and soon
conversation booklets and radio programs met the growing demand to learn more about
the victors’ language. It was this fascination with English that led many Japanese to
attend the church services sponsored by Western missionaries. The missionaries’
English, more than their stories about the Gospel and salvation, motivated most Japanese
to attend church. 40 By consuming the language but not necessarily the religion of their

39 “Religious Matters: Post Service Expanded To Include Bible, Others,” The Mainichi, October 8,
1947, 2. Radiopress.

40 Takemae, The Allied Occupation of Japan, 400.
occupiers, citizens demonstrated agency amidst defeat, just as Japanese Christians such as Nagai interpreted the events of war through their own religious iconography.

The occupied publically shared their own insights into how earlier behavior by Christian missionaries had to improve in the newly liberated nation, providing a potential template for American reforming agendas. In a November 1945 article in the *Nippon Times*, Rikkyo University Professor Enkichi Suga surveyed the influences of Buddhism and Christianity in Japan. Cognizant of former attempts to evangelize Japan, Suga warned, “I am rather inclined to think that the attempt to send many foreign missionaries to evangelize the Japanese people would have the effect opposite to what is intended.”

Suga then connected foreign culture to Christianity:

> It is, nevertheless, wrong to utilize religions for the promotion of cultural and social activities, for such a method will have the pernicious effect of vitiating sound cultural and social activities. Because prewar foreign evangelists lacked a clear conception of the distinctive nature of religion and culture, their efforts ended merely in helping the importation of foreign culture into this country, failing to make any real contribution toward inculcating the true Christian faith into the minds of Japanese converts. The result was that the Christians in this country were generally regarded by the Japanese public as capricious worshippers of foreign culture. The day is past when Christian propagandism among the Japanese people should be left in foreign hands.\(^{41}\)

Writing for an English-language daily under the watchful eye of SCAP censors, Suga demonstrated considerable fortitude by advocating his vision of how Christianity should take root in the post-war era. His rhetoric was certainly not incendiary in its opposition to foreign missionary zeal, but it nonetheless spoke against MacArthur’s own agenda for bringing Christianity across the Pacific and linked Western religion to unwanted foreign nationalism. In “What We Expect of the Missionaries,” published in 1951 in *The Japan*

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\(^{41}\) Enkichi Suga, “True Position of Religions in Life of People Is Stated: Scholar Declares Christianity Should Not be Utilized As Medium To Transplant Foreign Culture,” *Nippon Times*, November 13, 1945, 4.
*Christian Quarterly*, Katsumi Matsumura indicated the need for equality in any interactions between foreign missionaries and Japanese Christians. “When we say co-operation, we expect a relationship that is well-balanced,” explained Matsumura. “When one party is very strong, and the other party weak, co-operation is not, as a matter of fact, realized.” Matsumura’s nuanced interpretation served as a reminder that Western missionaries proselytizing in a postwar world needed to consider a complicated past along with the tenuous living conditions that followed surrender. Matsumura admired missionaries who, knowing Japan’s history, nonetheless returned to take part in spreading Christianity during the Occupation. Yet, Matsumura was equally aware of what he labeled the “colonial” identity of the “Japanese church” and he worried that this might curtail the growth of Christianity. He closed with practical advice for the missionaries: “The missionary must be a friend of the Japanese. Any one who cannot regard the Japanese as his friends cannot do Christian work among them.” Those who participated in ICU’s establishment probed the ties between friendship, reconciliation, and spiritual regeneration.

“WARM ‘DEEDS’ AND PROFOUND SYMPATHY”: ICU AS ATOMIC PROTEST OR ANTI-COMMUNIST DEMOCRACY?

For some, Christianity became a means to protest and to resist both American justifications for the atomic bombings and MacArthur’s administration of the

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43 Ibid., 28.
Occupation; as with their condemnations of atomic warfare, activist Christians were unwilling to allow MacArthur and the United States to shape the memory of the post-war world alone. As MacArthur heralded the triumphs of American civilization, called for more missionaries, and circulated Bibles throughout the nation, a vocal minority aired concerns regarding the potential for renewed Western imperialism and lamented past blunders committed under the auspices of religion. Aware of the justifiably cautious views of Western religion within Japan, many Christian activists and evangelists conscientiously worked to achieve reconciliation between former enemies, reminding their audiences that the Japanese were not the lone perpetrators of atrocity during World War II. These activists presented a counter-narrative to what Engelhardt labeled the “purifying glow” of American victory. Cognizant of earlier perceptions of Western religion, foreign reformers seeking widespread spiritual change in the newly defeated nation had to present a revitalized message to the Japanese. In 1952, Charles Iglehart, an avid supporter of International Christian University’s creation and later a faculty member there, elucidated the recent link between foreign religion and disloyal citizenry:

“Christianity made a bad start in Japan in the sixteenth century and has had to live down the general reputation of forming a part of the undesirable western exploitation in Asia and of producing people who are not good citizens.”

Tied again to citizenship and politics by Occupation rhetoric, Christianity might still receive a tepid welcome from the Japanese. Hired in 1944 to produce an evaluation of Japanese culture that could help the United States determine how the nation might respond to defeat and all it entailed, Ruth

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44 McLaren, “The Church and Reconciliation with Japan,” 300.

Benedict, despite never having visited Japan herself, warned of a wary reception to the missionaries’ calls to “self-sacrifice” as part of spiritual conversion. “When we do the things you call self-sacrifice, it is because we wish to give or because it is good to give,” one of Benedict’s Japanese interviewees informed her. “[W]e do not think that this giving elevates us spiritually or that we should be ‘rewarded’ for it.” Missionaries needed to acknowledge that the “moral position of self-sacrifice” held disparate connotations in each nation.\(^{46}\)

Indeed, Christian activists and others familiar with Japan predicted that the memory of past blunders by missionaries might create considerable obstacles for MacArthur’s desired present. C. Burnett Olds critiqued MacArthur’s approach to the two tenets of the Occupation and expressed concern regarding the wave of Western missionaries at work in Japan, though not for the ideological variations mentioned by Benedict. First, Olds objected to MacArthur’s means of relying on foreigners to implement Christianity among the Japanese: “General MacArthur . . . was mistaken if he thought that any lasting good could be accomplished even for those [thousand foreign missionaries] who knew how desperate was their need, except through those who were bone of their bone and flesh of their flesh.” Then, by problematizing the Occupation’s own practice of democracy, Olds positioned Christian activism as a countercurrent to the overwhelming American memory of the Occupation’s accomplishments; MacArthur and

others advocated ideals such as “the right of free speech and free press” as a means for Japan’s salvation, but officials censored any unflattering portrayals of American policy.47

Even members of MacArthur’s Occupation apparatus curtailed their general’s mission. William Bunce headed the Civil Information and Education’s Religion Section. Despite his own support for Christian education, Bunce ensured that missionaries adhered to another formative value of American democracy: the separation of church and state. To do this, the CI & E presented missionaries with the *Handbook on Christian Missions and Missionaries*; it outlined the “laws, regulations, and practices for staying in Japan,” among which was the prohibition against any “use of school buildings by religious organizations.” Bunce’s protection of the demarcation between the spheres of church and state pushed MacArthur and others to look toward a new venue for conversion—Japan’s universities.48 International Christian University officials had to both distance themselves from and connect themselves with the Occupation and the United States’ national objectives. This tightrope revealed itself in General MacArthur’s involvement with the university and in the selection of its president. Once again, MacArthur and the CI & E Religious Section Chief William Bunce, squared off over the separation of church and state. As with earlier conflicts, Bunce personally supported the plans for ICU, but he remained concerned that MacArthur’s own commitments to ICU infringed upon “the principle of freedom of religion” demanded of the Japanese by SCAP, as it implied that the general “had an obvious preference for Christianity.” Bunce also resisted turning fundraising for ICU into “an official Occupation project” due to concerns that it might


drive a wedge between Catholic and Protestant efforts in Japan. Although MacArthur served as the “honorary chairman of the ICU campaign committee,” others associated with ICU’s foundation worked to establish the school as an independent, international entity. Ralph Diffendorfer, for example, wanted the school’s president to come from the Japanese Christian community for two main reasons. First, Diffendorfer pointed to nearly “a century of splendid history” of Christian education in Japan that facilitated finding an appropriate Japanese candidate; second, Diffendorfer “wished to avoid any possible impression being given to the public that this project was officially American or under the directing influence of the Occupation authorities.” During a May 1949 press conference in Tokyo, Diffendorfer addressed the subtext of colonialism, assuring his audience that the American members of ICU’s board would, as The Mainichi paraphrased, “‘preserve’ American interest in the university, but they would not in any way control it.” Thus, Diffendorfer attempted to avoid the charges of imperialism leveled at other aspects of American involvement in postwar Japan.

49 Ibid., 413.


51 Ibid., 78. ICU did at times benefit from the experiences of Occupation officials, such as when, in late 1948 or early 1949, the founders hired Richard Day as a public-relations specialist. Employed as part of “SCAP’s public-relations staff,” Day and his wife helped generate what Iglehart refers to as “information and propaganda material” that was translated and published in “the big dailies and their prefectural editions. By skillful nuances and emphases these conveyed a heightened impression of the magnitude of the enterprise and certainty of its support in America, and served doubly to confirm the already general impression held by the public that the first ten million dollars had been voted by the authoritative bodies overseas and could not fail of performance.” See Iglehart, 57.

An examination of the foundation of International Christian University along with the activism of its founders—including Charles Iglehart, Ralph Diffendorfer, Luman Shafer, and others—illustrates the complex relationship between reconciliation, democracy, and Christianity in post-atomic Japan. Restricted from spreading faith via public education by SCAP’s preservation of the separation of church and state, MacArthur and other advocates of Christian revival in Japan viewed universities as a more appropriate sphere to inculcate faith in American democracy and religion. But ICU’s creation revealed the notable difference between the political ideals promoting a converted Japan and the religious activism that desired a true transformation in the faith of the defeated. Recent memories of the atomic bombing, along with a desire to atone for the atrocity, fueled the latter, even in an era when national memories of war promoted Hiroshima and Nagasaki as righteous acts. Recent memories of war also drove the former, as Americans sought to prevent either revived militarism or communist infiltration by strengthening Japan’s democracy. Unlike the portrayals of war voiced by prominent leaders such as Truman and MacArthur, however, those presented by notable Christians directly confronted the overlooked legacies of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

In countless ways, the various factors motivating support for an institution such as ICU echoed more widespread trends present in the religious and secular debates of the era that crossed national boundaries. In the years following 1945 some American Christians had cited Hiroshima and Nagasaki as the cause for their activism even in projects unrelated to ICU, but *The International Review of Missions* predicted in 1946 that the events might actually hinder reconciliation, as the “concentration of the overwhelming horror of atomic warfare on her territory may well have produced in Japan
an effect that will not predispose her to rapid re-entry into international relations.” Japan was not the lone victim, as recollections of the war indicated. The authors added: “Nor . . . can the memory of wholesale acts of cruelty—some of them too terrible for thought—perpetrated by Japan help her late enemies to meet her with equanimity or love.” True reconciliation between the two guilty nations might take place, suggested the journal’s editors, only through the work of “the Christian Church.” The major goal for Christianity in the post-atomic world, posited Kenneth S. Latourette, was not the search for justice, but rather peace and reconciliation. Christians, admonished Latourette, “must seek to give relief to the sufferers from war and its aftermath, without regard for the side on which they fought in the late struggle. They must endeavour [sic] to obtain equal opportunity for the good things of life both for the victors and for the vanquished.”

Certainly this attitude fostered the work of the American Bible Society, and it surfaced in the discourse connected to ICU’s establishment as well.

In his analysis of the variations between scientific and theological stances toward atomic warfare, Edward Leroy Long, Jr., concluded, “The theologians’ call for contrition aroused interest, but only to net a barrage of arguments trying to apologize for our use of the atomic bomb in such a way as to deny any need for contrition.” These arguments assumed that had Nazi Germany manufactured such a weapon, Hitler certainly would have used it to the Reich’s advantage; yet, this ignored the reality that the United States


bombed Hiroshima and Nagasaki—decidedly Japanese targets—after Germany’s own defeat, and at a time when Japan herself stood at the brink of total disaster. As Long, Jr. asked, “What kind of universe would not call for, and what kind of individual does not feel the need of, contrition and repentance after action like [Hiroshima and Nagasaki], quite apart from the fact that it may have appeared necessary at the time?”56 While Long’s calls for penitence remained philosophical in nature, in an echo of Latourette’s work Ernest Fremont Tittle called for Christian activism to result from contrition. Not only should the church “voice contrition for the policy of obliteration bombings” that led to Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but it should also “provide aid for the survivors of such bombing wherever found.”57 Tittle described conditions under which true reconciliation—what he perceived as Christianity’s “distinctive work”—would not occur between individuals or nations. “There is,” warned Tittle, “no possibility of reconciliation at the level of mutual recrimination, mutual fear and mistrust . . . at the level of announcing that we are ‘the greatest military power on earth’ and must ‘relentlessly preserve superiority on land and sea and in the air.’”58 Both Long and Tittle’s work held major implications for an era in which national security increasingly relied upon the possession of ever-more-deadly nuclear arsenals, particularly as each called on American Christians to apologize for Hiroshima and Nagasaki through activism at the same time that their nation committed more resources to strengthening its nuclear stockpiles.

56 Ibid., 17, 18.


58 Ibid.
Charles Iglehart’s *International Christian University: An Adventure in Christian Higher Education In Japan* delineated the early decades of ICU’s existence, explained the intentions of its supporters in Japan and in the United States, and reflected the counter-narratives of atomic war and reconciliation cited by Latourette, Long, and Tittle. Iglehart possessed decades of first-hand knowledge of Christianity in Japan; before World War II, he spent thirty years in Japan as a Methodist missionary, though he returned to the United States in 1941. In 1946, he accepted an invitation to work for the Occupation as a “liaison between these authorities and leaders of the Christian movement in Japan.”⁵⁹ Noting that Luman Shafer, who had visited Japan in Fall 1945 with three other Western men on behalf of both the Foreign Missions Conference and the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in North America, reported on “Japanese desires for a high-level Christian university,” Iglehart connected the origins for the school to the desire for reconciliation between Japan and the United States.⁶⁰ As Iglehart narrated, a January 1946 Associated Press article reported on Dr. John A. MacLean’s sermon “Love Thy Neighbor;” preaching in Richmond, Virginia, MacLean had “expressed sorrow over Hiroshima and Nagasaki and suggested that Christians make gifts for rebuilding, as a tangible expression of the desire for reconciliation.” Fellow Virginians, connected to the “ministerial association of Richmond,” met with members from the Foreign Missions Conference and the Federal Council of Churches. Ultimately, Iglehart explained, “As a result of full discussion it was concluded that inasmuch as the war damage in Japan was general throughout all the major cities, and since the desire of Japanese Christians placed

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⁵⁹ “Dr. Iglehart, Old-Time Missionary in Japan, En Route Here as Religious Advisor to SCAP,” *Nippon Times*, January 27, 1946, 2.

a new university in a position of high priority, this should be a reconciliation project.”\textsuperscript{61} Support for ICU had expanded from an atomic lament to a greater consideration of the destruction leveled by the United States against Japan. Japanese press coverage of the Methodist Board of Mission’s approval of ICU’s establishment indicated this purpose. In an article published on December 14, 1947, a reporter quoted an unnamed source who described ICU “as a voluntary gift and a gesture of goodwill from the Christian people of America to the people of Japan.”\textsuperscript{62} Since a Christian university would contribute more to Japan than “monuments of stone or bronze,” chairman of ICU’s fundraising committee James L. Fieser predicted that various factors would motivate Americans to provide financial support for the university. “Some may feel this will show our friendship and brotherhood,” wrote Fieser. “Others may feel we need to offset the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings with evidence of our true, kindly, and generous selves.”\textsuperscript{63} As the most visible representative of the victors, MacArthur favored an unapologetic Christianity that promoted democracy and peace within Japan rather than one that apologized for American-led atrocities and sought forgiveness. Calls for reconciliation by ICU’s supporters marked a noteworthy chasm between Occupation rhetoric that emphasized national religion and the Christianizing borne out of personal faith.

Iglehart was no stranger to calls for reconciliation and partnership between Japan and the United States. Iglehart’s “The Challenge of Our Christian Vocation in Japan”

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid., 17.

\textsuperscript{62} “Christian Univ. For Japan Approved By US Methodist Board of Missions,” \textit{The Mainichi}, December 14, 1947, 1.

exposed the ties between Western Christianity and Western nationalism; in Iglehart’s interpretation, Christian missionary endeavors historically—since the “fifteenth century” in his estimation—supported “national policy.” This propensity of Western Christianity to “[go] with the flag” proved especially damaging for Japanese Christians during World War II, when “Japan’s enemy countries were precisely those with which the Christian churches were affiliated.” Moreover, the war’s conclusion prompted American Christians to “g[ive] thanks to God for victory” as they “took its consequences as belonging to their country by right” even as the Japanese existed in “the ruin of fire and sword and bomb . . . [and] the loss of national sovereignty.” Iglehart thus questioned the position of the “Good War” in American memory by defining national triumph as borne from the suffering of others. In a postwar environs that might have fostered antagonism and resentment, the Japanese, with what Iglehart called “a humbleness that is almost beyond our comprehension,” had “accept[ed] the role of tutelage from the west once more,” and that tutelage included Christianity. Labeling the Occupation a “twofold miracle”—both for its “unbelievable benignity” and “its incredible acceptance by the Japanese people”—Iglehart turned to Japan’s “recovery” and the United States’ responsibilities: “We must never take it for granted, nor cease to thank [God] that we have been given an opportunity in a measure to make amends for our common sins against one another, and so give our Christian witness amongst a people who by and large are offering us forgiveness and reconciliation.”

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65 Ibid., 109.

66 Ibid., 110.
Occupation as a venue in which in the United States might seek its own national redemption from the mistakes of war. Iglehart reversed the role of victor and vanquished, overturning Westerners’ past colonial perceptions of Japanese Christians by reminding his audience “how less costly has been our Christian experience than theirs. By all the test of Christian maturity we are the juniors.”

Published during the anti-Communist tenor of the 1950s, Iglehart’s essay did not bend to the nationalistic fervor of the era. Perhaps his own background as a long-time resident of Japan explained Iglehart’s sympathetic view of the Japanese plight during the war and his hope to match their nation’s forgiveness with American penitence.

Genuine reconciliation was not without major obstacles, for both sides had much to forgive. Iglehart and American Christians were not alone in their calls to heal the grievances of war, for many Japanese Christians struggled to contextualize their nation’s militarism with their own religious beliefs. Their varied responses to conflict in the Pacific disclosed the lack of any consensus in the era’s collective war memory. Akira Ebizawa voiced his unease with the Pacific War and hoped that Japanese Christians might apologize to other nations in Asia through renewed evangelism: “We Japanese Christians will never forget our failures of the past. We deeply regret that we could not avert the mistaken national policy of our nation.”

Ebizawa’s lament paralleled the anxieties of American Christians who had called for national contrition after the atomic bombings. Interviews with Japanese members of the Christians’ Peace Society revealed

67 Ibid.

markedly disparate responses to the issue of the wartime role of “the church in Japan” and indicated potential challenges to Christian forgiveness on a national level. 69 Reverend Ryoichi Kato was blunt in his assessment of culpability: “The cause of the Pacific War was that the Japanese race was threatened by the ABCD line, that is to say, the Anglo-Saxon countries acted against the will of God despite their own pride in Christendom.” 70 Even as some pastors spoke of “regret,” or “a deep sense of repentance,” others remembered the mistakes of all the belligerents. “We ought to repent before God for the war,” admitted president of the Japan Bible Society Shinko Imaizumi, “but there is no respect in which we need to feel inferior to England or America. Condemnations are indicated on both sides.” 71

Not all observers interpreted ICU as solely an act of atonement for the atomic bombings, for many viewed the potential university as representative of the Occupation’s purposeful construction of American democracy across the Pacific. Luman Shafer seemed to agree with the Occupation’s historical and political import. During his 1945 visit to Japan, Shafer reminded Japanese Christians of their role in what the Nippon Times paraphrased as “the moral reshaping of the country” and in the “developing of true democracy in Japan.” 72 Writing in 1946, Shafer turned to the familiar symbol of the “most popular man in Japan,” the “American soldier,” whom he viewed as the visible


70 Ibid., 51-52.

71 Ibid., 54.


73 Tittle, “Reconciliation or Atomic Destruction,” 558.
antithesis to Japan’s former militarism. The Japanese, suggested Shafer, “find [the American soldier] an open-hearted, kindly person, possessing few of those unpleasant traits usually associated with a soldier. They credit this to the democratic way of life and, in some measure at least, to Christianity as the religious force underlying democracy.”  

But for Shafer, the presence of the American soldier was not enough to transform Japanese culture. Instead, he preferred education, and advocated new Christian universities for Japan based on Japan’s own desire for such institutions. As we shall see, the campaign to found ICU garnered support through its promise to transform Japan’s future through Christian leadership. Arguing that the Japanese particularly “valued” superb education, Shafer hinted at ICU’s future: “Christianity can never really affect the whole culture of the country until it enter the field of education at the highest level, with sufficient efficiency and skill to challenge the best in the country.”  

He concluded, as had countless others, that Christians might never again have such “a unique opportunity” to “give new life to the whole Christian movement in Japan.” This activism required balance, however, as Shafer warned that Westerners must not, in their enthusiasm for education or evangelism, allow Japanese “church leaders” “to be reduced to a colonial status.”  

The *Nippon Times*, in a 1946 article announcing the early stages of planning ICU, summarized the founders’ goals and marked a split between notions of spiritual

75 Ibid., 128.  
76 Ibid., 129.
reconciliation and of Occupation politicking: “In order to push forward the education of Japan in line with democratic principles and raise the level of university education, educators and Christian workers in both countries are speeding up preparations for the establishment of the university.”

In the public sphere of the English-language dailies, ICU’s more controversial—and uncomfortable for some onlookers—identity as a protest of recent violence disappeared; absorbed into the democratizing narrative of the Occupation, ICU instead appeared as yet another celebration of democracy’s innumerable benefits: education. Keizo Mitsuzumi, a reader of The Mainichi, demonstrated his enthusiasm for ICU’s establishment, along with the pervasiveness of the Occupation’s pairing of Christianity and democracy, by reminding others of the “great contributions to the progress of civilization and culture” brought to Japan by Christian education.

Suggesting that other Japanese citizens contribute financially to the university, Mitsuzumi briefly traced the historical roots of democracy: “It is a fundamental truth and yet a commonly neglected one by our people that Western democracy has the Christian view of life and the world at its very root.”

As secretary for the Methodist Church’s division of foreign missions and president of the Japan Christian University Foundation, Ralph E. Diffendorfer concurred that the Occupation’s goals inexorably tied democracy, Christianity, and education, suggesting that Japan’s “transition” out of militarism and toward democracy remained incomplete without substantial educational democratization as well; for Diffendorfer, the establishment of ICU provided a unique chance to realize

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77 “Christian University Opening Here in 1947,” Nippon Times, November 27, 1946, 3. Setting 1947 as a date for the university’s opening proved to be a bit premature.

these goals, and to blend “public service”—via “a graduate school of citizenship and public affairs, and a graduate school of social work”—with “opportunities for the training of Japanese youth which may well become the turning point in Japan’s future course.”

Remarking that of those who donated 154,000,000 yen to ICU’s campaign drive in Japan, ninety-five percent “were non-Christians,” Diffendorfer returned to a common theme: “This is a telling indication of how closely democracy and Christianity are linked in Japanese post-war thinking.”

By 1948, Diffendorfer publicly supported using religion to curtail Communism’s spread when he announced that missionaries would be sent to Japan, Korea, China, India, the Philippines, and Latin America to stave off the “millions of Communists who in all languages are seeking to batter down the work of Christ.”

Diffendorfer symbolized the global tensions informing the Occupation, ICU’s foundation, and attitudes toward the significance of the nation’s Christianizing mission. Fears of a communist Japan soon overshadowed earlier calls for atomic reconciliation between Japan and the United States in the rhetoric supporting the new university’s birth.

An Occupation that opened with the intent to convert Japan from its militaristic past into a Christian present drew to a close determined to solidify Japan’s stance as a bulwark of democracy against Asian communism. No longer was Japan reformed simply to atone for its aggressive expansion; now America needed it to stand against the march of communism, and Christian democracy provided the means to resist the dominos poised to fall, as they would in China in 1949, across the rest of Asia. As time passed,

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American attitudes toward the defeated Japanese shifted as both nations engaged in what appeared to be a collective forgetting and as the burgeoning Cold War altered the Occupation of Japan. Indeed, as Iglehart contended, by late 1948, the “first postwar shock over the atomic bombs, over Hiroshima and Nagasaki, was no longer an open wound of conscience for multitudes as it had been” and apathy threatened to replace activism and financial support for overseas mission work.\textsuperscript{82} By 1952, Iglehart lamented the dilution of Christian activism, particularly regarding nuclear warfare and “obliteration bombing,” for churches had retreated to “safer and saner” positions that clearly dissatisfied Iglehart. “[W]hen the smoke clears,” he argued, “the churches are found backing the national objectives straight down the line.”\textsuperscript{83} American Christians returned “to the flag” as tensions heightened between democratic and communistic ideologies. Many who believed in the prophecies leading up to the Biblical apocalypse, as historian Paul Boyer discovered, “tended toward passive acquiescence in the nuclear-arms race and Cold War Confrontation” because their faith assured them of salvation after Armageddon.\textsuperscript{84} This same trend that so frustrated Iglehart had emerged as early as “autumn 1945,” when a select group of Americans—“a chorus of preachers, Bible scholars, and paperback writers”—interpreted the atomic bomb as a weapon of Apocalyptic portent, its creation and use predicted by the Bible. ICU’s own identity, as a

\textsuperscript{82} Iglehart, \textit{International Christian University}, 55.

\textsuperscript{83} Charles Iglehart, “The Church and War Time Pressures,” \textit{The Japan Christian Quarterly} 18, no. 1 (Winter 1952), 41.

symbol of Christian forgiveness or Christian democracy, witnessed this change, at least in
the realm of public rhetoric.

Others perceived the spread of purportedly monolithic Communism as a proof of
the need for reinvigorated missionary efforts within occupied Japan. Commending
MacArthur—“that providential person”—for his “miracles in promoting the growth of
Christian democracy in Japan,” Catholic author Everett J. Briggs nonetheless campaigned
for increased Christian vigilance in Japan, a nation he portrayed as the “battleground of
two diametrically opposed ideologies—Christian democracy and atheistic
communism.”

Imprisoned in Japan during World War II, and then evacuated to the
United States, Briggs remained an advocate of the Christian mission in Japan:

As genuine Americans, believing in the fundamental verities and virtues of our Christian
democracy, imperfect though it still may be, we cannot remain indifferent to the inroads
of atheistic communism in Japan. Americans have a stake in Japan’s destiny. Every
country lost to the cause of Christian democracy is another nail in our collective coffin.

Revered Harry J. Hagar, on leave from missionary work in Japan, effectively parsed the
shifting nature of MacArthur’s two-fold goal for the Occupation for the attendees of the
April 1949 Reformed and Presbyterian Churches of America conference. Hagar
connected MacArthur’s call for “10,000 copies of the New Testament,” followed by
“pamphlets advising the Japanese to read the Holy Gospel,” to SCAP’s desire to stop
monolithic Communism’s march across Asia. Anti-Communist sentiment permeated
numerous discussions of Christianity, even appearing in connection to the foundation of

85 Everett J. Briggs, New Dawn in Japan (Toronto: Longmans, Green & Company, 1948), 202,
206. The Catholic Foreign Missionary Society of America held the copyright to Briggs’ work.

86 Ibid., 208.

87 “Gen. MacArthur Hopes to Christianize Japan,” The Mainichi, April 30, 1949, 2. AFP.
ICU. It was in this sense, then, that ICU’s founders dealt not only with the memory of the atomic bomb, but with its legacy as well: the Cold War. Over time, as American foreign policy confronted the Cold War’s expansion into Asia by re-envisioning Japan as its friend in anti-communism, ICU took on a new role as an institution equipped to confer democratic ideology to its students. Overwhelmed by a tenuous international environment, ICU’s more radical position as an apology between victor and vanquished disappeared as American churches calmed their own criticisms of the atomic bomb.

By November 1949, Secretary of State Dean Acheson had voiced his approval of the university’s creation at a press conference, stating, “A university of this character can do a great deal of constructive good in an educational way and for the development of democracy in Japan.”88 While the New York Times’ summary of Acheson’s press conference invoked democracy without directly referencing Communism’s “Red Menace,” a different article published on the same day relied on starker contrasts between the two ideologies. In a speech delivered to a small group of ICU supporters in New York City, Joseph C. Grew, who had worked both as Under-Secretary of State and Ambassador to Japan during his career, delineated the major obstacles facing democracy’s surge in Japan. The “factors . . . aiding communism” included “inflation, a shortage of consumer goods, the lack of appreciable foreign trade, a housing shortage and the destruction of national ideals,” according to Grew.89 The article paraphrased the former ambassador’s remarks: “Japanese youth stands at the crossroads leading in one direction to peace and democracy and on the other hand to communism and


89 “Inflation In Japan Seen As Aid To Reds,” The New York Times, December 1, 1949, 6.
totalitarianism.” Hope existed, however, in the “new university” as it “would become an important stabilizing influence where leaders could be trained to preserve the principles of democracy after the United States forces of occupation have departed.” At the Japan International Christian University Foundation’s luncheon, held one month later, Grew remarked that ICU would not only counter “the siren’s voice of communism,” but would also “help a great deal to bring young people on the true road to democracy.” Speaking at the same luncheon, ICU’s president Dr. Hachiro Yuasa suggested that the campus “will be a living laboratory on universal brotherhood.”

Even without the label of an official Occupation project, ICU’s creation followed the trajectory of SCAP’s own transformation of its goals for Japan’s future. Simply stated, “ICU had been repositioned as an anti-communist front.” This repositioning distanced the institution from its earlier stance as an experiment in American Christian penitence for the atomic bombings as its anti-nuclear roots became absorbed into a narrative of education as a means to achieve Christian democracy, yet the anti-nuclear stance of men such as Iglehart remains crucial to understanding ICU’s contemporary identity as an advocate of international peace and conviviality.

Nor were these activists unaware of the political and religious realities in the era, as Luman Shafer indicated following his six-month tour of Japan in 1950. “The American people have been too optimistic about Christianizing Japan,” Shafer rather bluntly warned in the New York Times. The newspaper paraphrased Shafer’s

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90 “Inflation In Japan Seen As Aid to Reds,” The New York Times, December 1, 1949, 6.


conclusions: “The Japanese are eager to learn of democracy and Christianity but are still politically immature and are so preoccupied with making a livelihood that any possibility of ‘mass conversion’ seems unlikely at this time.” In fact, Shafer recognized that church membership had actually stalled in the “last year,” despite what he claimed was an “80 per cent” growth in attendance “since the war.”¹⁹³ Eleven years after the Occupation’s end and thirteen years after Shafer’s prediction, ICU’s former president Dr. Hachiro Yuasa advanced the hopes of American and Japanese Christians first expressed en masse after August 1945 and embodied by ICU’s birth in 1953. Noting that Japan’s Christians “number[ed] about 800,000 in a population of 95,000,000” in 1963, Yuasa returned to the rhetoric so prominent during the Occupation. “What Japan needs, he said, is ‘dedication to Christ and a real understanding of His teachings.’”¹⁹⁴ Now past its fifth decade as an institution, ICU continues its crucial work in the field of peace studies. This legacy of active reconciliation between Japan and the United States served as a reminder that neither the citizens of Occupied Japan nor activist American Christians were ready to accept all of MacArthur’s claims about Japan’s past or visions for Japan’s future.

CONCLUSION

In the decades after the Occupation’s close, as Cold War hostilities—the Cuban Missile Crisis, the defeat in Vietnam, the new frontier of space exploration, Richard Nixon’s foreign policy successes and domestic failures, among others—buffeted the

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United States at home and abroad, Americans continued to look to the past to define the triumphs and defeats of the present. Writing from the Moody Bible Institute in 1973, S. Dwight Coder considered the aftermath of the Apocalypse in terms of national salvation: “If any nation now on the earth is going to exist in eternity, nations such as America, from which missionaries . . . have gone in large numbers, with the faithful support and prayers of countless Christians, may be expected to be there.”

The Occupation certainly witnessed an era of widespread mission work by America’s Christians, one that on many occasions challenged widely-held conceptions of the wartime Japanese character and the righteousness of the atomic bombings. But in the final analysis, in what ways did MacArthur’s use of America’s national religion—democracy blended with Christianity—and the Christianizing efforts of activist missionaries and educators truly transform postwar Japan?

MacArthur genuinely believed that his recruitment of missionaries and distribution of Bibles made a lasting contribution to Japanese spirituality, that he had indeed intertwined Christianity in Japan’s new democracy. As he recorded in his memoir, “Gradually, a spiritual regeneration in Japan began to grow.”

Japanese enthusiasm for the conquerors undoubtedly fueled MacArthur’s certitude. Lamenting that only 200,000 Protestants lived in Japan by 1951, Zensuke Hinohara connected the role of missionaries to MacArthur’s own popularity among the Japanese, arguing that if American soldiers and the general had convinced Japan “to know and love America,”

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96 MacArthur, Reminiscences, 311.
then missionaries from the same nation might succeed as well.\textsuperscript{97} Letters written to MacArthur validated these positive responses to the Supreme Commander. One such letter from December 13, 1945 read, “I regret my early convictions; I am filled with gratitude now. Especially, when I think of the generous measures Your Excellency has taken instead of exacting vengeance, I am struck with reverent awe as if I were in the presence of God.”\textsuperscript{98} Once a villain in the South Pacific, MacArthur represented a redeemer of sorts for some in Japan. Following an assassination attempt against MacArthur in summer 1946, SCAP headquarters received numerous letters commending the general’s leadership. One concluded, “I have read the words ‘to love the enemy’ and now I feel that I can see it in reality in the policies of His Excellency MacArthur and of America and also in the attitude and conduct of American troops.”\textsuperscript{99} In speeches delivered during the Occupation, MacArthur exuberantly announced, “Christianity is spreading all over Japan. Christians in Japan are now two million.” This number proved an overstatement, and MacArthur’s hopes for both a democratic and a Christian Japan never materialized. When MacArthur asked general headquarters’ Religious Division to tally the number of Christians in Japan, the staff estimated 200,000 Christians lived in Japan before the outbreak of war, with only 20,000 present after the surrender. Colonel Donald R. Nugent, seeing the results of the survey and astutely recognizing what MacArthur’s reaction to the decrease might be, told the Religious Division “that’s not


enough.” An employee, irritated by Nugent’s response, simply tucked extra zeros into the estimate, convincing MacArthur that his religious campaign succeeded in converting over one million Japanese citizens.\textsuperscript{100} In actuality, the Christian movement in Japan, comprised of less than one percent of the population, experienced considerable setbacks until the unified church, Kyodan, collapsed.\textsuperscript{101}

In 1952, the year the Occupation ended, Charles Iglehart provided an estimate of Christianity’s presence in Japan. Printed without commentary at the end of his essay “The Church and Wartime Pressures,” a chart on “Church Statistics” numbered the Christian churches present in Japan’s 245 cities, 1,815 towns, and 8,381 villages. Only 2.3 percent of villages had a church, but this number increased to 27 percent for towns and to 93 percent for Japan’s cities. Though \textit{The Japan Christian Quarterly} did not indicate the source for these numbers, or any estimate on the number of parishioners attending these churches, it did cite a statistic from the Christian Press that suggested “24% of all Christians in Japan live in Tokyo.”\textsuperscript{102} Statistics from 1951 help fill in the questions left by \textit{The Japan Christian Quarterly}’s overview of church numbers alone. Even after the distribution of ten million Bibles—thanks to the efforts of MacArthur, the American Bible Society, and Japanese Christians—“less than 0.5 percent of the Japanese population” had adopted the faith of their occupiers. Estimates placed Japanese Protestants at 233,000 and Catholics at 157,000 in 1951; after six years of political and religious Christianizing, Japan’s faithful comprised “about the same” percentage of the

\textsuperscript{100} Sodei, “Hiroshima/Nagasaki as History and Politics,” 1118.


\textsuperscript{102} Charles Iglehart, “The Church and Wartime Pressures,” 42.
population as they had pre-dating the Occupation.\textsuperscript{103} Their numbers hovered far below MacArthur’s claims of one million converts and indicated, at best, a minimal gain in Christianity’s post-war footing in Asia.

MacArthur’s claim that his Occupation was free from any traces of imperialism convinced neither activists nor historians familiar with Japan; the dissent surrounding the verifiable accomplishments added to Occupation reforms by the missionaries furthers examination of the nuances of memory and narrative, particularly when present in the discourse of Christian activists. The general admitted that President William McKinley’s imperialism, coupled with his own tenure in the Philippines, inspired his rule of Japan. McKinley’s speech justifying American colonization of the Philippines, noted MacArthur, significantly affected him: “Little did I dream . . . that nearly fifty years later it was to guide my conduct in the occupation.”\textsuperscript{104} Confident that true democracy existed only under the auspices of Christianity, MacArthur failed to recognize the great tension of his occupation’s legacy. By turning to religion to enact democracy, MacArthur “ran the risk of causing the Japanese to reject democracy as a front for a foreign religion . . . and a modern form of Western colonialism.”\textsuperscript{105} Even MacArthur’s rhetoric smacked of imperialism. As a “soldier of God,” his promise to free the Japanese from “slavery” that precluded individual thought cast the United States in the role of savior of a backwards


\textsuperscript{104} Moore, “Reflections on the Occupation of Japan,” 724.

\textsuperscript{105} Moore and Robinson, \textit{Partners for Democracy}, 330.
nation, a justification voiced in countless other imperialistic endeavors. A member of SCAP’s Labor Advisory Committee, Helen Mears recognized the duplicity of the Occupation’s democratizing agenda, and the language her critique employed suggested overtones of colonialism. Despite MacArthur’s desire to liberate the enslaved nation, Mears’ condemnation of the Occupation as “very far indeed from being a philanthropic gesture” portrayed postwar Japan as a country populated by “prisoners.” Mears provided her audience with a veritable laundry list of the factors prompting her dissent: “Their entire civilization, including their educational system, their religion, their burial grounds, their marriage customs, their classical plays, and even their notions of politeness and their attitude toward kissing are all subject to American directive.” Mears did not directly label the Occupation as imperialistic, but her claim that if the “criminal co-operates” and views “his jailers as righteous, he will not be mistreated” certainly reflected the structures of power inherent in colonialism.

Although MacArthur’s own hopes to pair Christian evangelism with American democracy ultimately failed to take root, the activism of ICU’s founders, and the university itself, revealed the far more nuanced interplay between political ideology, Christianity, and reconciliation in post-war Japan. Despite MacArthur’s numerous assertions to the contrary, post-war Japan was not a vacuum waiting to be filled by purely American political or religious ideology; rather, as activists long-acquainted with Japan realized, decades of contention regarding religion, imperialism, and war stood between

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victor and vanquished. Diffendorfer, Iglehart, Shafer, and other activists of the era advocated a Christian mission that included Japanese leadership and agency, that sought lasting peace between two former enemies, and that would indeed alter Japan’s future without renewing Western imperialism. As the Occupation stretched on, however, political realities resulted in a delicate balance between personal goals and national objectives, a reality lamented by Iglehart when he noted that American churches had returned to support a new iteration of nationalism during the Cold War.

MacArthur’s holy mission in Japan and its popularity at home did, however, allow a repositioning of American war memory. In the long shadow of the Occupation’s triumphs—a democratic Japan closely aligned with United States foreign policy concerns in Asia, a peace constitution that renounced war, and termination of the emperor’s divinity and the State Shinto that Americans believed prompted the Pacific War—the contentious reception the bombs received from Christian audiences faded from national memory. The peace of the post-war era proved fleeting indeed, as fears of yet another global conflagration ignited, this time grounded in the United States’ newest scientific “miracle”: the atomic bomb. Silenced by triumph and the potential of renewed atomic tragedy, the opposition generated by Japanese and American Christian voices, discomforted by national acceptance and even celebration of Hiroshima and Nagasaki’s civilian toll, remained excluded from national rememberings of the war and the Occupation’s Christianizing mission. By 1995, the righteous narrative of the “Good War” and its justifiable atomic bombs appeared both monolithic and infallible. In reality, however, the dissent that first surfaced in August 1945 endures today, visible in the stories of Christian reckonings with atomic warfare told throughout the Occupation.
across the Pacific. These narratives belie claims of Christian righteousness so long embedded in the United States’ national identity, and they force a renewed remembering of a past not so sacred after all.
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