

**“Who Did They Say That He Is?
Four Hopeful and Suffering Generations of Japanese-Reformed Christologies”**

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the Christologies of four successive Japanese-Reformed theologians: Uemura Masahisa (1857-1925), Takakura Tokutaru (1885-1934), Kumano Yoshitaka (1899-1981), and Okada Minoru (1902-1992). These theologians understood Jesus Christ within dramatically changing modern Japanese contexts that were full of hope and suffering. Hence the conference themes of hope and suffering interrelate deeply with how these theologians articulated the person and work of Christ. Furthermore, insofar as all these theologians imbibed both Japanese and Western influences, the conference theme of globalizing theology is also addressed. Comparing these theologians with each other, as well as drawing implications for how all Christians formulate Christological understandings, should contribute to the wider conference goal of understanding the significance of Jesus Christ in modern, pluralistic and democratic societies in Asia and the West.

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I. Introduction

Uemura Masahisa (1857-1925), Takakura Tokutaru (1885-1934), Kumano Yoshitaka (1899-1981), and Okada Minoru (1902-1992)¹ were leaders among four successive generations of Jesus' followers in Japan. These four theologians' successive generations lived in dramatically changing modern Japanese contexts that were filled with hope and suffering. How the four men understood the person and work of Jesus was intertwined with their generations' contexts' marks of hope and suffering, our conference themes. Moreover, since all these theologians imbibed both Japanese and Western influences, the conference theme of globalizing theology also comes to the fore. Comparing these theologians with each other, as well as drawing implications for how all Christians formulate Christological understandings, should contribute to the wider conference goal of understanding the significance of Jesus Christ in modern, pluralistic and democratic societies in Asia and the West.

A. Approach and Overall Purpose

Religious studies scholars have theorized voluminously about how human communities formulate their religious beliefs.² Similarly, Christian theologians have theologized extensively about what is involved in the development of Christian theologies, including creeds, confessions, and individual beliefs. When we talk about the development of Christologies, we are dealing with a subset of how religious beliefs in general, as well as of how Christian theologies in particular, are formulated.

In a way that basically repeats but I hope sharpens and simplifies the previous paragraph, here is my fresh set of three, increasingly narrowing questions that emerge from these arenas of religious studies, Christian theology, and Christology: How do we human beings collectively formulate our various religious beliefs, or theologies? More particularly, how do we Christians collectively formulate our Christian beliefs, or Christian theologies? Even more particularly, how do we Christians collectively formulate our understandings of Jesus, or Christologies?

I have articulated and arranged these three questions to enable a crisp articulation of my approach

¹ Throughout, Japanese names will be listed with the surname first.

² Note, for example, Bronislaw Malinowski and functionalism, Claude Levi-Strauss and structuralism, Sigmund Freud and Ludwig Feuerbach and projection, Emile Durkheim and religion's social role, and E. B. Tylor and religion's evolutionary development. Cf. Pat Alexander, org. ed. *Eerdmans' Handbook to the World's Religions*. Rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1994), 10-18.

to the Christologies of the four Japanese Christian theologians presented and examined in this study. The goal of clarifying my approach at the outset is to clarify these theologians' Christologies, so that you and I together might most appropriately understand and examine what, how, and why these particular forefathers said about our King Jesus.

How do these three questions help to clarify the approach taken here? I will elaborate on a constructive answer shortly (in section "F. Christological Development and Recognition"). For now, we can note that genuinely asking these questions effectively eliminates, or at least cautions us against, two unhelpful approaches to understanding Christological development. One such approach assumes a single, true, orthodox, and normative Christology (expressed in the Ecumenical Creeds, or more particularly in the Nicene and Chalcedonian Creeds) that somehow stands outside of contextual realities. The process of formulating Christology, then, becomes one of repeating in each particular language that same, single, true, orthodox, normative, and a-contextual Christology. The fallacious objectivism of this approach is only one of several problems. Two more involve the lack of acknowledgement of the interconnectedness between all theological formulations and contextual realities, as well as of the fluctuating nature of those contextual realities. If we were to take such an objectivist and a-contextual approach, our Christological question would be more along the lines of, "How do we Christians collectively articulate in our various languages the orthodox Christology?" We would also most likely not think to ask the first question (of the three I listed above) related to religious studies in general.

A second unhelpful and related approach sees theological development as that of gradually creating an unchangeable superstructure; necessary additions of detail (e.g., in Reformation confessions) are permitted, but subtractions or redesigns are out of bounds and inevitably tied to heresy. While the objectivist underpinnings of this approach may be less obvious than those of the first, and while the recognition of changing circumstances (particularly, as it would turn out, the abuses of medieval Roman Catholicism) is evident, there is little if any room for the ongoing significance of theologians' interconnectedness with different contexts. Hence our Christological question according to this second approach would stress conformity to a singular, previously-constructed orthodoxy: "How do we Christians collectively articulate a Christology that both affirms and is consistent with what orthodox theologians in the past have declared to be true?" Note again that the first, religious studies question probably would never arise.

Again, I will elaborate further on a more constructive connection between my three-question set and this study's approach. Suffice it to say at this point that we are going to take our theologians' (and our own) fluctuating contexts very seriously. Therefore by way of further introduction, next we will briefly consider some of the contextual factors behind the selection, presentation, and reception (by you and me) of the necessarily abbreviated English translations of our four Japanese theologians.

B. Translations

As with other translations, it could be argued that whatever approach or framework is employed here is irrelevant to how these theologians' Christologies are presented and understood. In support

of that train of thought, my interest in providing English translations of these theologians³ has always been to give interested English readers (who cannot read Japanese) as direct access as possible to these Japanese Christian leaders' theologies. My accompanying, dual hope has always been that the English readers would have their worlds stretched at least a little bit beyond the frustratingly debilitating confines of Western theology, and that the richness of Japanese theology would break out a bit further beyond the confines of Japanese linguistic circles. All of that suggests that my or any other translators' role is to be that of an unseen facilitator, and the more minimal and unnoticed that role, and the approach to playing it, the better.

Even so, a facilitator-translator's role inevitably affects the presentation of the material. First, there is the matter of producing the translations themselves. Concerns about faithfulness to the original Japanese meaning are mixed with those about appropriate communication and relevance to the English readers.⁴ "Accurate" understanding of the written Japanese is thus only part of the process: choices about English terms and phraseology are not always clear, and the arenas of style and nuance also come into play. While on occasion I consulted others to check my translations,⁵ I am responsible for what is presented here, including any unintended misrepresentations.

Second, in the case of this paper I have played the role of selecting what has been translated and included. The selections were not that difficult in all four cases, since all four theologians wrote representative pieces intentionally devoted to Christology (although the substantial length of some of those pieces necessitated abbreviated presentations here). A fully nuanced presentation would have required trawling through written sermons, lectures, and other articles. Even so, in my judgment readers can rest assured that what is presented here, necessarily brief and abbreviated, represents the best of what Uemura, Takakura, Kumano, and Okada all wrote about Christology.

C. Intergenerational

Why have I selected these four theologians in particular? One important reason is that they represent four successive generations of theological expression in Japan. Takakura and Kumano were both pupils of Uemura and thus contemporaries in one sense. However, Takakura was 14 years older, he died relatively young, and after his untimely death Kumano continued to develop theologically in interaction with ongoing currents, especially including German dialectical theology. Hence the theological path that goes through Uemura, Takakura, Kumano, and Okada represents an intergenerational journey of development. How their respective generational settings shaped their thought can thus be seen, at least to a certain degree, by comparing the four theologians in succession.

³ Space limitations here prevent lengthy presentations of translations of the theologians' writings. I remain hopeful of producing more extensive translations in the near future.

⁴ These three categories about communicating God's Word – faithful, appropriate, and relevant – come from R. Daniel Shaw and Charles E. Van Engen. *Communicating God's Word in a Complex World: God's Truth or Hocus Pocus?* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2003).

⁵ I especially appreciate the often spontaneous help of my friends Aoyagi Seima and Kabeya Tomoko.

D. Reformed

Along with representing successive generations of Japanese life and of Christian theology, these four theologians were leading Reformed thinkers for their respective generations. We will see and examine below how they each imbibed and articulated their slices of the overall Reformed heritage. But the fact that they all swam in a common Reformed stream will aid us (by reducing other variables of difference that would have been present had they belonged to differing traditions) in highlighting the generational and contextual traits inherent in their thought.

It is also more than coincidental that I belong to a Reformed tradition, which should provide at least a measure of familiarity with some of the contours of these important leaders' thinking.

E. Intercultural

There are at least three sets of intercultural dynamics at work in this study. One is closely tied to the intergenerational relationships between our four theologians. Insofar as "cultures" are "shared ways of living,"⁶ the generations that Uemura, Takakura, Kumano, and Okada represented were particular cultures that interrelated within the ongoing stream of Japanese history. We should quickly add that the four men under consideration represented even more particular sub-cultures within their generations: note Uemura's samurai heritage in comparison to Takakura's family business background, for example.⁷ Hence the first set of intercultural dynamics involves comparisons between the (sub-) cultural contexts that helped to shape Uemura, Takakura, Kumano, and Okada.

A second set of dynamics is what takes place between the theologians and those of us considering them here in the early twenty-first century. During the decades between their lives and ours, much has taken place in general history and within Christian theology. Those intervening developments are filters through which these four men's lives and theologies necessarily must pass in reaching our context-related understandings today.

Third, the intercultural dynamics among our conference group need to be acknowledged as well. Due to a common historical and linguistic heritage, Japanese participants will have degrees of familiarity with our four theologians not possessed by most of the non-Japanese participants. How our group processes the Christologies of Uemura, Takakura, Kumano, and Okada should be a fascinating intercultural event in and of itself.

F. Christological Development and Recognition

To finish setting the stage for the English translations of our four Japanese theologians, I want to give a constructive description of my understanding of, and approach to, how we who are Jesus' followers formulate our understandings of him. Earlier I listed three questions which progressively narrow to Christological development: How do human beings formulate religious beliefs? How do

⁶ This is the simple working definition of "cultures" that I use with my students in seminary teaching.

⁷ J. Nelson Jennings, *Theology in Japan: Takakura Tokutaro (1885-1934)* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, Inc., 2005), pp. 3-4, 27-28, 269, 302.

Christians formulate Christian beliefs? How do Christians formulate beliefs about Jesus? I noted that two inadequate approaches fail to include the first of these three questions. That first question actually points to a crucial component, I believe, of how various Christologies take shape.

What is happening when Jesus' followers articulate who he is? As already noted, Christians are not simply repeating an abstract statement, nor are they simply articulating in indigenous languages statements of belief that are evaluated primarily by their consistency with previous Christian statements. Rather, there is something more holistic, multifaceted, and interpersonal going on.

Christians are people who, in the skewed and enslaved state of their sin and under the deceiving power of the evil one, previously have sought in one way or another to know and please their Creator. As people remade in Christ, Christians nevertheless are the same people they always have been. That personal continuity that has been made new in Christ means that, at least in part, Christians' pre-Christian sensibilities about their Creator, most of which will have been inherited from previous generations, will not be totally jettisoned. Human beings formulate their religious beliefs in the midst of sin's enslavement, satanic deception, and creaturely seeking for the Creator who made them and continues to hold them responsible for how they live. That sin-satanic-seeking three-legged stool is a vitally important framework for understanding how people formulate their religious beliefs.⁸

Christians thus formulate their distinctively Christian beliefs as the same people they have always been, albeit as people being remade and having been transferred to a new kingdom. The old-new interplay in theological articulation is an ongoing dynamic, perhaps most obviously in the use of language. The translatability of the Christian faith means that Christians use their native tongues in confessing their beliefs to God, to each other, and to others around them. There is newness insofar as the Bible, God's specially revealed good news, is translated into Christians' mother tongues. Because of that newness, decisions about which mother-tongue terms and expressions are to be used, both in translating the Bible and in expressing Bible-based beliefs, are not predetermined, mechanical matters. As God the Creator-Redeemer guides by his word and Spirit, Jesus' followers decide what best expresses what is true, biblical belief. How fellow believers have articulated their same belief in different contexts is a helpful set of references as well. After all, the wider Christian Church is unified under one Head, Jesus himself and the entire Trinity: "There is one body and one Spirit ... one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all..." (Eph. 4:4-6). Those other expressions are not, however, a-contextual norms to which all subsequent faith confessions must primarily seek to conform.

With specific reference to Christology, Jesus' active intervention into people's settings is worth special note. The triune Creator has always been present among the world's peoples, and peoples accordingly have articulated (within a sin-satanic-searching mode) their beliefs in reaction to his inescapable presence. But Jesus, as the crucified-risen-reigning Creator-Redeemer, intrudes into

⁸ See my brief discussion of this topic – including acknowledgement of my indebtedness to Harold Netland – in J. Nelson Jennings, "God's Zeal for His World," in Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson, eds., *Faith Comes By Hearing: A Response to Inclusivism*. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), p. 237. Cf. Harold A. Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism: The Challenge to Christian Faith and Mission* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), pp. 308-10.

peoples' settings as he brings his gospel-declaring messengers.⁹ Like he did with Lydia through Paul's message, *Kurios* Jesus opens hearers' hearts "to pay attention to" the proclaimed gospel.¹⁰ Put differently, Jesus shoulders his way into people's lives together with the gospel's announcement.¹¹ Jesus' newly reclaimed followers then need to express, in the reshaped categories of their own mother tongues, who this Jesus is. Christians recognize and attempt to describe, as part of the freshly proclaimed gospel, Jesus' presence, active intervention, and work.

This is not the occasion to discuss extensively the nature of "contextualization." However, it is worth noting the implications of the understanding of conversion-confession process just described for a contextualization model, particularly regarding who the main agents are. A common evangelical notion of contextualization emphasizes the role of expatriate missionaries (particularly modern Caucasians), who "contextualize the gospel for" their hearers. By contrast, the operative understanding here is that the triune God and the gospel recipients are the primary agents involved in contextualizing the gospel. Expatriates play more of a catalyzing role.¹²)

Hence with Uemura Masahisa, Takakura Tokutaro, Kumano Yoshitaka, and Okada Minoru, we see representatives of Jesus' reclaimed followers in the ongoing and fluctuating Japanese stream of world history. As such these four disciples of Jesus wrestled with understanding and expressing in words, and in Japanese words, no less, who Jesus is and what Jesus had done. How these four Christian leaders recognized and described the Jesus who had intruded into their individual lives and cultural settings, at least representative samples of the English translations of those recognitions and descriptions, is what we are now going to engage.

After reading carefully through some of what these men said about who Jesus is, we will then analyze the dynamic processes involved in the formulations of their distinctive Christologies.

II. Translations (with Biographical Sketches)

A. Uemura Masahisa¹³

Uemura was born in 1857; he was the oldest of three sons. His father was in the honor guard of the Tokugawa Shogunate, a privileged position in the family for generations. With the coming of the Meiji Restoration in 1868, however, the Uemuras lost their samurai status and were forced into a rootless and poverty-stricken life. When he was 15 and (in his own words) "Fired with ambition to

⁹ Christ's messengers are human missionaries and, with particular regard to Muslim-Born-Believers' testimonies, angels in dreams in visions.

¹⁰ Acts 16:14.

¹¹ Cf.

¹² For a more detailed discussion of what this all means for understanding contextualization, see my "The Tapestry of Contextualization," in Mission to the World, comp. and ed., *Looking Forward: Voices from Church Leaders on Our Global Mission* (Enumclaw, WA: Winpress Publishing, 2003), 24-30. Also available online in the August, 2006 issue of Mission to the World's InVision Newsletter at http://www2.mtw.org/home/site/templates/mtw_splash.asp?_resolutionfile=templatespath%7Cmtw_splash.asp&area_2=public%2FResources%2FInvision%2F2006%2F08%2FTapestryContext%2Edat&NC=6043X.

¹³ The single most extensive English-language study of Uemura remains Addison P. Soltau, "Uemura Masahisa (1857-1925): First Generation Pastor, Christian Leader and Instinctive Proponent of Indigenized Christianity in Japan" (Th.D. diss., Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, 1982).

restore the family fortunes,” Uemura enrolled in the Dutch Reformed, American missionary James Ballagh’s English school in Yokohama.¹⁴ He soon confessed Christ and in March, 1873 was baptized into the first organized Protestant congregation in Japan.¹⁵ Uemura went on to become one of the most prominent first-generation church leaders in Japan, founding such prominent institutions as the Fujimicho Church in Tokyo, the journal *Fukuin Shinpo* (*Weekly Gospel*), and the Tokyo Shingakusha Shingakko (seminary).

The following are excerpts from a series of 14 articles that Uemura published in his *Fukuin Shinpo* from January through July, 1902, collectively entitled “Kirisuto to Sono Jigyo” (“Christ and His Work”).¹⁶ It is important to note that the series overlapped with Uemura’s public, journal-to-journal “debate” with another prominent Congregational Church leader, Ebina Danjo.¹⁷ Ebina is generally considered to have been “liberal” in his theological orientation, and his challenges to traditional Christian doctrines helped to frame the open discussion with Uemura.

“Who is Jesus Christ? This is humanity’s unavoidable problem. People who reject Christianity or want to accept only one part of its doctrine can never rest their hearts in assuming that Jesus Christ’s words and person will not intervene in their lives as a presentation of an eternal protest against their attitude and of endless counterevidence against the unjust position they are taking. It would be the same as not being able to sleep peacefully with a major enemy set right in front of you. Therefore the one who rejects Christianity suppresses his own Creator and the Creator all people, as well as buries deeply into darkness what has passed the test of historical reality. As might be expected, the one who believes and tries Christianity, and accepts just a little of its doctrine and a portion of its ethics, is half-awake in a half-believing attitude. Those who add to Christ’s statements and forcibly try to weaken his person can never stop reconciling these things with their own opinions. For such reasons they have an aversion for theology and, in spite of publicly declaring their contempt for doctrine, it is no wonder that they self-proclaim destructive theological theories.

Those as well who believes in Christ, normally in the midst of enemies realizing they can never neglect the commandments, feeling they must hold together the eternal distinction between their faith and reason, and already having decided that Jesus in essence is God, accordingly it is normal that they desire to explain this experience, examine its basis, and understand the reasons for it. It is a natural order of development from the Synoptic Gospels to the epistles and Paul’s theology.

In Japan as well Christology has come up in a big way. Representatives of German radical liberal theology and American Unitarianism have swiftly arrived in Japan. They endlessly advocate their own Christologies. Within these two groups there are more than a few who hold any number of opinions. According to a writer in a new weekly magazine, the Congregational Churches already are being attacked by Christological misunderstandings. That many of the beliefs of these prominent people are far from the main aim of Christianity is a fact that cannot be hidden....

¹⁴ Saba Wataru, ed., *Uemura Masahisa to Sono Jidai (The Life and Times of Uemura Masahisa)*. Vol 1, Reproduced ed. (Tokyo: Kyobunkan, 1966), 672-673.

¹⁵ Cf. J. Nelson Jennings, *Theology in Japan: Takakura Tokutaro (1885-1934)* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2005), 93-94.

¹⁶ The articles have been reproduced in Saba, ed., Vol. 5, 1966, 348-421.

¹⁷ Cf. Soltau, 1982, 199-209.

Here is what we believe: If we are not first certain in our thought concerning the divinity of Christ, we will neither understand the purpose of his coming nor know the meaning of his works here on earth, his current position, or his future glory. Christianity is Christ. The main gist about Christ is his divinity and incarnation. Doubting this and throwing it behind one's back, then wanting to see if Christianity has power, is no different from entering a dark hole and wanting to investigate the heat of the sun by digging up the dirt. However, this is where the tide of thought among today's Christians in Japan is directing its attention.

As Browning says, God became man and offered himself as a sacrifice....

Christianity is the absolute, unique true religion. But we believe that if Christ is a man he is a superior being and in the future he will surely appear. Whatever the case this is an absolute religion.

We believe it impossible to believe in God whom Christ points, be moved with tears for his salvation, and rejoice over his hope, while denying his divinity.

Modern Christians' Beliefs

....

Through Christ's divinity and his incarnation into this world, we can know God, know man, and understand the meaning of all of creation.

The First-Generation Christians' Faith

....

What did Paul Believe about Christ?

....

From that day when on the way to Damascus he asked, "Lord, who are you?", Paul because of Christ had his overall purpose. He said, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." He dedicated his whole body and spirit to Jesus of Nazareth, whom he had formerly persecuted....

God-Man Explanation

....

Why doesn't Paul Directly call Christ God?

It is not often in his letters that Paul calls Christ simply as Jesus (his human name). You do not see one example in Colossians. There is only one instance each in Galatians, Philippians, and I Corinthians. It occurs two times in I Thessalonians, three times in Romans, two times in II Corinthians. But it is unanimously agreed that the name Lord Jesus Christ is used by Paul's hand in his letters 73 times. He is called the Lord Jesus over 12 times, there are 130 examples of being names Lord, and simply named Christ is used 180 times. He explains his as the divine Christ. The glory of the resurrected and ascended Christ is where Paul is always fixated. The *Kurios* (Lord)

used in the Old Testament of the so-called Septuagint is actually not much different from God and comes to be used for the name Jehovah, but Paul's customary usage for this is Christ. We only need to know how he viewed Christ.

What did Paul believe about Christ, and how did he worship him? We believe we have already made this clear. That Christ creates heaven and earth, and he providentially rules over all things. His life and death have infinite meaning and value. He is worshipped. Also, he receives prayer. He acts as God, he speaks as God, and he is worshipped as God. Having come to this point, it is entirely appropriate to call him God. While Paul does not directly call Jesus Christ God, undoubtedly that is his faith....

Was not Paul's Christ Someone Inferior to God?

It says, "You are Christ's, and Christ is God's" (I Corinthians 3:23). Christ followed the Father's will and was the mediator of salvation according to the Father's purpose. As it says in I Corinthians 11:3, "I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head woman is man, and the head of Christ is God." According to a certain meaning, does the Son of God appear to be an inferior being in relation to God? Especially in I Corinthians 11, a woman's status is used metaphorically for Christ. What sort of reasoning is this? Being the same and essentially equal human beings does not preclude having essentially a different, subordinate relationship. It is the same with Christ and God. Even though he has God's actual character and is one with the Father, as the Son he must be subordinate to the Father. In obeying God the Father, as an act of filial piety God the Son receives, enacts, follows, and works out his path. If one believes in Christianity, filial piety is not just a human path but a heaven path. The path of filial piety exists in God.....

The Christ of the Book of Hebrews

....

What about John?

....

The Author of the Fourth Gospel

....

Philo's and John's View of the Logos

In interpreting Philo's arrival at the belief that Christ is God based on the origin of his view of the Logos being the several verses at the beginning of John's Gospel, coming out of the influence of Alexandrian Philosophy, arguing the result of every era, by this completely explain the faith of the early Christians, they announced mainly to receive the triumphant result on behalf of the view that Christ is not God. He says, "Christians accept the supreme goodness of union with God. What type of person is such a one that joins together God and man? This was this place that they had to discuss thoroughly, and it was a natural order for them who recognized that the Logos was the power that had already joined God and heaven-and-earth to suppose the one who had joined God and man was the Logos." However, those like Ebina Danjo argue as follows: In interpreting the religious consciousness of the Christians that have accepted that union with God, the course of the

philosophical thought of that time, whatever the case based on Jesus was none other than the manifestation and decision of the Logos. If that Logos were a creature, Christians could not say that it was still joined with the eternal God. Hence at that point they used the Logos and had to decide that it was God himself. This is nothing other than outside of the faith the recognized the divinity of Christ that decided the origin of that time's view of the Logos. The point of emphasis of those Japanese scholars who advocate a so-called new consciousness of religion must not become a topic examined by general theologians. For example, Oscar Holtzmann makes the senseless talk Philo gave essentially new ideas to Christianity as the author of the fourth gospel. Is this really necessary?

What was Philo's actual Entryway?

One group of scholar summarizes this and repeatedly emphasizes the point that, starting with the author of the fourth gospel, and similarly with Paul and others of similar faith, they all constructed none other than the entryway of the Alexandrian philosopher Philo....

Summarizing the Apostles' Belief

As explained to this point, the conviction cannot be doubted that, beginning with Paul, John, as well as Peter and others, the Apostles acknowledged Christ as God....

Christ's divinity is the essential faith of Christianity. For what reason were the Apostles won over and arrive at this surprising faith? Where are all of those reasons for their faith today? Let us give a brief explanation of this.

The Character of Jesus Christ

The events of Christ's life are recorded in the fourth Gospel....

Was Jesus Actually Sinless?

Our Lord Jesus himself declared, "I am not of this world. Truly I say to you...."

Christ's Character was Supernatural

Jesus of Nazareth had a perfect character....

The Disciples were Impressed by Jesus' Character

Christ in his actions and spirit. ...

The Lord is Really Risen

....

B. Takakura Tokutaro (1885-1934)¹⁸

Takakura was Uemura's designated successor. Having recently moved to Tokyo after being raised in the Kyoto area, the 21-year-old law student was converted to Christ under Uemura's preaching, switched to Uemura's seminary, and was under Uemura's watchful tutelage through his early years as a pastor. Takakura's two-and-one-half years studying in Britain shortly after World War I enabled a broadening and deepening of his theological outlook. However, he was different enough from Uemura such that his mentor's beloved Fujimicho Church was divided over whether Takakura should be their pastor following Uemura's death in 1925. As it turned out, while Takakura did assume the seminary presidency, he and several members of the Fujimicho Church began a new church several miles away, the Shinanomachi Church. Takakura's writing career culminated in his 1927 *Fukuinteki Kirisutokyo* (*Evangelical Christianity*), used as a seminary theology textbook well after World War II.

Takakura's most focused writing on Christology was the second chapter, entitled *Kirisutokan* ("View of Christ"), of that influential five-chapter book.

I

Pascal said, "Not only can we know God through none other than Jesus Christ; we can know ourselves through none other than Jesus Christ. Only through Jesus Christ do we know life and death. Apart from Jesus Christ we do not know our life, our death, God or ourselves." Actually to the Christian Jesus Christ is everything. He is the beginning and the end; only through him do we truly know God, oneself and humanity's sin; through him can we know eternal life, death and destruction. There is no place above or below heaven other than in him where we can find salvation. To receive him is to receive all things, and to lose him is to lose everything. Paul therefore thought, "I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord," and for his sake he could again say, "I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish." Actually one can say that Christianity is Christ. As the beginning Revelation 5 says, the one who was able to open the seals of the scroll in the right hand of God, "Who sat on the throne," is none other than the Lamb of God who eternally is, the Savior Christ. The Lord Christ indeed is the unique and incomparable resolution whom God, the Lord of heaven and earth, gave to us, the human race, in order to solve the basic problem of the universe and human life.

That Jesus Christ in this way is the central fact of Christianity is something we can infer as well from Jesus' attitude, during his lifetime, with respect to his disciples. According to the Synoptic Gospels the main object of Jesus' education of the disciples was to deepen their understanding and trust with respect to his own person. I think that Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi best explains this. One can say that obtaining the proper answer to the question "Who do people say that I am?" was the main object of the Lord Jesus' education of his disciples. In his teaching of the disciples he in no sense laid major stress on putting into practice one by one his moral instructions. This is a major point of difference between Jesus' relationship with his disciples and that of other religious leaders, such as Gautama and Confucius.... In short, Jesus urged upon his disciples more

¹⁸ The most extensive work in English on Takakura is my previously-cited published Ph.D. dissertation, Jennings, 2005.

than anything else the problem of his own person. Here as well is a reason that Jesus Christ is the central fact of Christianity.

How we view the person of Jesus, then, will control the fundamental meaning of the Christianity that we believe....

In speaking of and examining our view of Christ, it is convenient to divide the matter into three parts. First is the Christology in the New Testament, next is the Christology in the Christian Church of the past, and last is, based on the above two areas, the kind of Christology that we today should construct.

II

Upon thinking about the Christology in the New Testament, we should stop and consider the following: ... that the God of the Bible is the God who works in history. Within the faith of the Old Testament prophets there is a kind of historico-philosophical thought. In contrast to this, however, in Greco-Roman thought there actually is something static, something that neither increases nor decreases, wherein growth and evolution are no more than appearances, and this life and world are no more than eternal cycles. That thought is in both Plato's thought and Stoic philosophy. As we know Buddhism becomes a thoroughgoing fatalism through the thought of transmigration. To the Hebrew prophets, however, reality is something dynamic, a holy will. The history of humanity is the stage upon which God's will and administration is accomplished. God's mighty acts are realized in the various events of history....God's salvific will worked in the midst of history, and through the Messiah necessarily that purpose had to be realized. The above type of view of history was in the faith of Israel's prophets. The truth of the Incarnation, whereby God's Son became a man in Jesus of Nazareth, was realized upon the backdrop of the above kind of faith. Through thinking in that way, we must understand that the birth of the Savior Jesus Christ from within the people of Israel is the marvelous providence of God.

It is appropriate to think of New Testament Christology in the following order. First, what about the Jesus of the Synoptic Gospels? There is the image of Jesus' person in the "days of his flesh," as well as the image that he had of himself, namely the problem of his self-understanding. Next is the early church's view of Christ in the Acts of the Apostles immediately after the Lord Jesus had risen, the view of Christ appearing for example in Peter's sermon. Finally there are the other Christologies of the early church, for example of Paul, John and the book of Hebrews.

We will begin with the personal image of Jesus in the "days of his flesh" found in the Synoptic Gospels. We research Christologies, but we must not from the beginning take a dogmatic attitude and fall into a formal, dogmatic Christology that decidedly asserts that Jesus is Lord and God....We must first begin from below, for Jesus the human being, then later we must climb above and reach Christ, God's only Son, the Savior and Lord. Actually at the beginning, Jesus appeared to the disciples and others as well as a rabbi and one of the prophets. However finally, being moved by the strength of Jesus' personality, the disciples came to have faith in Jesus like that of Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi.

First, Jesus' personality on earth was truly natural and human....His personality was truly musical. He was gentle as a dove and strong as a lion. He was a joyful and yet deeply grieving person, an unceasingly prayerful person and yet most active, and while possessing the greatest idealist side he also was the keenest realist. One can perhaps know how authentic of a life he experienced by looking at his parables. He was righteous and loving, he did not sacrifice at all truth for the sake of love, and he was able to pour out holy love in attaining human authenticity. There

was not one bit of this world's rubbish in his character, while there was not a monastic or ascetic trace in him. He did not imitate the things of this world, but he made use of this world more than anyone. When you think about it, how fresh and creative his personality was! As imaginative as Shakespeare and Goethe were, the never could have created Jesus' character.

III

However, Jesus' character does not end with just a natural, human aspect that somehow charms people. We must not stop at subjectively constructing a humanistic, dogmatic view of Jesus that overly looks only at his gentle traits. Jesus' character on the other hand simply possessed something that made it difficult for sinful ones to approach him....Only God the Father can forgive sins. Yet Jesus exercised this authority to pardon sin.

Next is Jesus' so-called sinlessness....We can see in him the authority to forgive sin, and when we think of that sinlessness, without a doubt in his character, to borrow the words of Anderson Scott, there was "much more than a person." We should say that Jesus' character was of divine value.

IV

Next, what was Jesus' self-consciousness, the one who as just noted had a sinless character and was self-aware of the authority to forgive sins? Knowing his self-consciousness will involve unraveling the secret of his character. To know his self-consciousness, it will be useful to follow the Synoptic Gospels and research the titles that he himself and that others use for him. First, simply "Son" or "Son of God" are used as a special name (Mark 3:11,15:39, Matthew 26:63, 27:40)....Because there was in Jesus this incomparable self-awareness of the divine Son, he had immense authority with regards to his disciples and he became the object of their faith. If we inquire more deeply, we should trace back to Jesus' incomparable self-awareness of the divine Son God's overall administration of human salvation in history. God's work of atoning for sin is based on this self-awareness of Jesus. We cannot know when this self-awareness of the divine Son of Jesus began, but we can at least think that it was from before his Messiah consciousness....I think that perhaps better than saying when this consciousness of his began is to say that it is a supertemporal, metaphysical self-awareness.

Next comes Jesus' Messiah consciousness....Because he was the Messiah, he had to build the kingdom of God even to the point of hanging on the Cross. Moreover, with regard to what the relationship was between Jesus' divine Son self-awareness, of which we spoke earlier, and his Messiah self-awareness, I think that first there was in him the divine Son self-awareness, then he was conscious of having to suffer as the Messiah for the salvation of the world and the establishment of the kingdom of God, because he was God's unique Son. It is good to think that the divine Son consciousness became the foundation of the Messiah consciousness and calling consciousness.

V

Next let's think simply about the Christology of the early church, that is in the book of Acts....Now we cannot know precisely what kind of *form* Jesus' resurrection took, but we must acknowledge his resurrection as an objective fact. If we deny the resurrection, early Christianity

loses that central point. The Christian Church began on the foundation on the fact of the Lord Jesus' resurrection. So then, what kind of influence did Jesus' resurrection and the descent of the Holy Spirit give to the early church's view of Christ? First, it enabled the disciples to move from recollecting the earthly Jesus of history to looking up to the eternal Christ seated at God's right hand. Next, as writers of the Christian fellowship and Christian church the disciples came to recognize the risen Christ. They were able to believe that being conscious that the risen Christ was near, that they were together with God, and that the fellowship of the believers' mutual faith through believing in this Christ were made possible. Also, again through the resurrection of Jesus, the ethical relationship between the Jesus of the days of his flesh and the disciples clearly progressed to a religious relationship. ... The first disciples were seized by the power received from the risen Christ, and they could do no other than call him "Lord." And it should be said that the confession "Jesus is Lord" (Romans 10:9, I Corinthians 12:3) was the Christian Church's most primitive confession of faith. And through making this confession the Christian Church made a sharp distinction between itself and Judaism as another religious group. Worshiping Jesus as Lord actually is none other than acknowledging his divinity. ...

VI

From here I'd like to touch on Paul's Christology. Tormented by the contradiction between spirit and flesh, his life was seized by the resurrected Christ on his way to Damascus and fundamentally turned around.... Paul faced the resurrected Lord, experienced forgiveness of sin, and was given a new life. Even upon seeing that in his letters he uses the phrase "in Christ" more than 160 times, we understand that the Damascus Road experience was the decisive power of his faith. We must first think how Paul's Christology was based his atonement-for-sin experience.... We must never forget that his Christology is built on the experience of having been redeemed by the Cross of Christ. A Christology that we simply invent in our heads will carry no authority for us. That would not give the close relationship between faith and theology as was the case with Paul.... As Machen says, in Paul there was a deep, organic relationship between faith and theology.

The first characteristic of Paul's Christology is the placing of a close relationship between Christ and the Holy Spirit.... Next, together with the other first-generation disciples Paul acknowledges Jesus as "Lord." To him, Jesus who had been exalted to God's right hand was the Lord of glory (Phil 2:10,11). Also, Paul acknowledged Jesus Christ as the "Son of God" (Rom 8:32, Gal 1:16, I Cor 1:9). This means that Jesus Christ in his eternal nature is in essence God's Son. Additionally, Paul recognizes that Christ exists since before the beginning of the world (Gal4:4, I Cor 10:4, II Cor 8:9). Here, he says in Philippians 2:6-7 that Christ was born in this world, threw away the form of God that he possessed earlier, took the form of a servant and became like a man. Here is the origin of the word *kenosis* (empty oneself) doctrine that became famous in later days. Paul also recognizes Christ as the author and head of the Christian Church. Christ is the head of the Church, and the Church is Christ's body (I Cor 12:12ff., Eph 4:1-16). That means that the Church is unified through Christ, is given its life from Christ, and is the organ that realizes the will of Christ. Furthermore, Paul recognizes Christ's cosmic meaning. To him Christ is the agent of the cosmos' creation and the goal of its advancement (I Cor 11:3, Col 1:19). This is indeed a grand thought.

... For him, there was not a living Christ separate from the historical Christ. The Christ who was with him in faith was namely the historical person. We must not forget that in Paul the historical Christ and the spiritual Christ were necessarily bound together.

Next we will enter the Christology of John's Gospel. The purpose for which the Gospel of John was written was "that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:31). In this book, because of that Jesus is often acknowledged to be God's "Son" (John 1:14,18, 3:16). That means that Jesus is in the "bosom" of God the Father and has perfect fellowship with God, and it says that he perfectly reveals God's glory in his nature..... A particularly significant characteristic of the Christology of John's Gospel is the Logos doctrine in the prologue: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Christ is the Logos who was with God since before the world's beginning, and through this Logos God created everything in the universe. Also, in Jesus this Logos, the light and the life, became man and saved the world's sin. This is in fact a profound and grand thought. To summarize the meaning of Logos in John's Gospel, the Logos:

- (a) is a supertemporal eternal reality;
- (b) has a perfect personality and has fellowship with God the Father from the beginning;
- (c) that is spiritual energy that gives eternal life;
- (d) this Logos became a man in Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

The motivation for the Logos' incarnation is everywhere redemptive. "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). The Christology of John's Gospel reached its culmination in this passage. ...

Here is one word at the conclusion of the New Testament's Christology. Even though the New Testament authors perceived the person of Jesus Christ from his own unique stance, unexpectedly there is one place of agreement between them. To them it was not as though Jesus was some intermediate reality that was neither God nor man, but he was everywhere a human being that possessed flesh and blood. Furthermore, they recognized in this man Christ a superhuman consciousness and life. Next, the Christology of the New Testament writers all touched the power of the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ and were established in the light of an atoning experience given through him. Lastly, the first disciples worshipped Jesus Christ as "my Lord and my God" and took a religious attitude towards him. The Lord Christ was the object of their worship and faith. In no sense did they believe God like Jesus did, as is the case with modern liberal Christianity. To them, believing Christ was namely believing God in Christ, and Christ being with them was God the Father of Christ being with them in Christ. Thus we should write for the record that the Christianity living in the New Testament was something fundamentally different from modern Unitarian, liberal Christianity.

VII

Next, we have come to speaking of the Christology of the Christian Church of the past, but here we cannot thoroughly give a detailed explanation. We will only give a word about what was expressed in the form of confessions and dogma recognized as orthodox Christology through various church councils. At the foundation of the Christology acknowledged through the Church is the truth surmised. That is, that God's extreme revelation was given in the historic Christ, and in him superhistorical reality entered into history in order to save humanity from sin, in other words the faith on the incarnation was surmised. Hence the Church's Christology was in reality the attitude, theologically expressed, of standing on a religious relationship regarding the Lord Christ, worshipping and believing him. So the Church's doctrines and confessions should never be considered from a theoretical side. We must be careful that dogma is established from cultural

elements that should change with time and eternally living religious elements. Simply grasping dogma theoretically without insight into its religious motive and discussion theology together is inadequate. The Christian Church of the past was self-aware that immeasurable miraculous facts lie across the center of Christianity. Eternal reality enters into relative history, and the holy God dwells in the midst of sinful people. This truly is a mystery beyond understanding, an incomparable gracious fact. Christianity at its core stands on this miraculous fact....

Now I would like to omit other Christologies and briefly speak about the Christological controversy of the Nicean Council (325 A.D.), which in the history of the ancient Christian Church was a major crisis for the Christian faith and its truth. At the Nicean Council the thought of Arius, elder of Alexandria, was known as a heresy and was as follows: Arius touched on the problem of the Incarnation for a philosophical, speculative meaning more than from a religious one. The god he discerned was an eternally unchanging, transcendent reality that did not have direct interaction with limited, imperfect creatures. ...

Athanasius, who did not move and firmly took an orthodox position with respect to Arius, was a person who had what was like a burning faith and passion towards the crucified, dead and resurrected Lord Christ. He stressed Christology from a deep religious motive....If we follow Athanasius, no one except God could ever perfectly save sinners, but because Jesus Christ is God he is able perfectly to save sinners. We should know that his Christology, like New Testament Christology, was formed from a deep atoning motive.

Actually the Nicean Council met one of major crises of faith (I won't call it merely theology) in the history of the Christian Church. The Christian Church stood at the crossroad of whether it would become a kind of speculative organization and Christianity would become simply a cultural religion, or whether or not Christianity would be enlivened as a living religion based on the Bible....We should be particularly careful here about the fact that the conviction to stress Christianity as an absolute religion, a religion of grace, and a religion of atonement lies strongly across the foundation of the emphases of Athanasius' Christology. Athanasius' Christianity was not simply theology, but an earnest faith and a stress of truth through theology. ...

VIII

From here let us speak about how we today should think about Christ. To be on the mark in establishing our Christology, of course the New Testament's Christology must always be the foundation, and we must sufficiently give concern to the Christologies which the Church of the past correctly recognized. If we neglect these sources, likely our effort will end in a different sort of subjective, shallow Christology.

...

Here is the risk of faith. Together with believing that God is the Creator of heaven and earth, we Christians believe that he is the Lord of history. The living God rules over history and intends to save it. That this suprahistorical God works within history and became a man is something that faith-consciousness of course acknowledges. We are not simply and only historians; having faith we should be able to face Christ. When we stand on faith-consciousness and directly face the historical Christ, we gain the fact that he stands at the center of God's salvation history and that, within history, he is the reality that most transcends history.... The strength of Christianity's truth is attached to the historical Christ. Religious truth that has not become actualized history is

something empty without reality. Christianity's incomparable special characteristic with respect to other religions lies in its truth and ideals becoming reality in the historical Christ.

....

IX

Next we will think about Christ as the object of faith-consciousness. Modern rational liberal Christianity, which has received the influence of eighteenth-century Enlightenment philosophical thought, rejects the so-called "gospel of Christ" and emphasizes the "religion of Jesus." The "gospel of Christ" makes Christ an object of faith and worship, which is the Christianity that resulted in the main through Pauline influence. Liberal Christianity thus emphasizes that we should leave the Christianity distorted by Paul and return to the Christianity set forth in the Synoptic Gospels, namely the religion of Jesus....

Making Christ the object of faith like the early disciples and having a religious relationship with him, put differently, is none other than through faith-consciousness ascribing divinity to Christ. Seeing Christ as the object of faith necessarily approves the absoluteness of his person. That is, it is in actuality acknowledging Christ's divinity....

Christ the object of our faith-consciousness is not the Ritschlian historic Jesus. Calling to mind the Jesus who dies cannot make such a historic Jesus the object of faith. No, the crucified, dead, and risen Christ directly becomes the object of our faith. The Christ who now presses in on us sinners as the awesome reality of the spiritual world is the object of our faith. Here, then, is the meaning for our faith of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Especially because he rose from the dead and was lifted to God's right hand, he is experienced not simply as a historical character but as a currently existing person. Furthermore, the risen and ascended Christ must never be thought of separately from the historic Christ. If this relationship is forgotten, the so-called living Christ will become a vague content and will become a Christ wrapped up in easily shaken religious feelings. The living Christ who is faith's object is not separate from the historic Christ, but is the living Christ experienced based on the Christ in the Bible.... We experience the living Christ through the Bible, the go-between to God's word the historic Christ. This Christ is at the same time the purpose and author of our faith.

As we said earlier, making Christ the object of faith soon in fact acknowledges the absoluteness and divinity of his person. Of course, the divinity of Christ in the end looks to faith-consciousness, and the *certainty* of Christ's divinity will never be given to the one lacking the risk of faith.... Acknowledging the divinity of Christ means that God lived in him to an incomparable degree.

....

X

Let's think about the relationship between human nature and divine nature in Christ. The essence of this problem as well should be solved through the consciousness of justification. It is impossible exhaustively to explain the relationship of both human and divine natures in Christ theologically and metaphysically.... In the famous Creed of Chalcedon is "Perfect in divinity, perfect in humanity, very God and very man." Jesus Christ is true God and true man. This is the Christology of orthodoxy. But in what kind of relationship do divinity and humanity stand in Jesus Christ? Thinking of them separately, with the two focus points of divinity and humanity in the

person of Jesus, where he sometimes lives as God's unique Son and at other times works as a human, namely there are two, divine and human consciousnesses in Jesus, is something we absolutely cannot do....

“The word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.” Within all the human words that have yet to be uttered, are there any as profound and grand as these? The Incarnation is Christianity's central truth. Christianity stands or falls by this. The conviction of Christianity as an absolute and gracious religion is deeply and strongly enfolded within this truth of the Incarnation. The religious meaning of the Incarnation is like the following. In the Incarnation the fact of Jesus Christ guarantees the *certainty* of God the Father's reality, and continuing it makes clear that God the Father always one taking the initiative to seek sinners, and finally it convinces us of the God who sacrifices himself on behalf of sinners. May glory be to this truth of the immeasurable grace of the Incarnation.

C. Kumano Yoshitaka¹⁹

Like Takakura, Kumano was converted to Christianity under Uemura Masahisa while a college student. Also like Takakura, Kumano left his university to join Uemura's seminary and enter the pastoral ministry. But unlike his 14-year-older predecessor, Kumano never studied outside Japan. Moreover, Kumano ended up having a much longer writing and teaching career than did Takakura. Indeed his important publications extend over four decades, from the early 1930s into the 1970s.

The selections below are from one of Kumano's earliest works, *Kirisutoron no Konpon Mondai* (*The Basic Questions [Problems] of Christology*), published in 1934.²⁰

....The Church speaking of the Lord Jesus Christ, by which we are given faith and are promised the eventuality of our life of faith, depends not just on my trust in Jesus of Nazareth nor on individual, mysterious experience, but it should confess the characteristics of the fundamental meaning of the word *katholisch*.... Historical Christology, while wrapped in periodic and speculative additions, is ever the historical ecclesiological logic, and must be thought of as formed both through our faith and fundamentally through a *christological* structure....

Chapter 1: The Composition of Christology

1.

....

When considering the matter from humanity's historical or cultural position, the term *gospel* includes a self-contradiction. As is commonly known, the original word for gospel, *euangelion*, meant the praise of a messenger carrying a good announcement, but it is said that later it changed and came to point to the “good news” itself. It was thought that in modern terms that this change was because of mistaking the word for a story about God (god-story), but the cause of this mistake

¹⁹ This biographical sketch relies in the main on Robert Benedetto, Darrell L. Guder, and Donald K. McKim, *Historical Dictionary of Reformed Churches. Historical Dictionaries of Religions, Philosophies, and Movements*, No. 24 (Lanham, Maryland: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1999), 163.

²⁰ I have referenced *Kumano Yoshitaka Zenshu* (*The Complete Works of Kumano Yoshitaka*), Vol. 5: Shumatsuron, *Kirisutoron*, *Kyoukairon* (Eschatology, Christology, Ecclesiology) (Tokyo: Shinkyou Shuppansha, 1979), 203ff.

appears to be the mistranslation of the “god,” the old spelling of “good,” in “god-spell” as God. Therefore, to speak based on the word’s meaning, perhaps Luther’s *gute Zeitung* is appropriate. To continue, in this way this gospel means good news concerning a historical fact. Moreover, the historical fact as it is closely connected to faith. This is just as was explained earlier. In order for the historical Jesus to become the foundation of Christian faith, it is insufficient only that his personal influence alone be eternal. The gospel is not an old story of what happened in the past. Truly like St. Paul’s words, “The gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek (and therefore then and now throughout the East and West).” The gospel is God’s “verdict of salvation” (Heilsbotschaft) for humanity. Given the above, this historical fact must be precisely *historical* and at the same time *suprahistorical*.... That the gospel is historical and at the same time suprahistorical carries the meaning that it cannot be explained solely by historical or psychological methods. Hence a special theory is sought. Christology (*Christologie*) therefore necessarily must be like a specially molded field of study. Jesus Christ is not only to be described as one historical figure, but he has come to be narrated within this world history seeking us has come to be narrated a higher place. Making this fact clear is the subject of Christology.... Eschatology, Christology, soteriology, and pneumatology all stand in strict relationship with each other, and it is impossible to speak abstractly about only one of them. Also, a firmly decided attitude toward one necessarily by fate influences how one treats the problem of another....

Thus when considering how to make clear the place of Christology in Christian theology and its connections to other areas, in order for us to defend and enhance the truth of the gospel in contemporary society, more than debating and explaining a Christology of such things as Christ’s divinity and person, focusing on a soteriology dealing with the character of his work would carry more meaning and interest. It is not impossible that that would make a deep impression. In fact, an old style “Christology” that easily settled as well on a philosophical ornamentation came to be seen as well like a conceptual problem of leisure. Even so, it is decidedly necessary to inquire into the person of Christ, make clear his divinity, and explain the incarnation of the word of God in order to grasp the essence of Christ’s salvation....

2.

There has perhaps been more effort and evaluation rendered over the last two centuries than in any other century concerning the person and work of Jesus Christ....

....In order to be “together with” the historical Jesus, it is impossible only to make past memories contemporary. The fact of making contemporary the object of a personal connection with the historical Jesus is not simply the task of historical studies and religious psychology, but truly of something that demands a characteristically theological attitude, and Christology appears as that which fulfills this demand. Put differently, the field of study with which we are concerned is established as the subject matter of “contradiction and the supernatural in history.”....

.... A theological Christology first clears the way through the medium of our self-awareness as historical actual awareness and a truly personal self-grasping.

3.

....Christology first must have the foundation of eschatology. Second, this must simultaneously seek proof of the necessity of revelation....Third, as a result of pushing Christ outside and disregarding the sphere called religion, Christianity itself has been narrowed and marginalized. Hence Christology’s positive side must be set forth....

Chapter 2: Historical Elements of Christology

1.

One can say that the history of Christology is basically the history of the Christian faith. A theological Christology according to the meaning discussed in the previous chapter itself already shows the activities of the Christian faith, hence it can be thought that the history of the church is a so-called continuous Christology. However, the history of Christology so conceived fundamentally is not the same as general historical studies. If one divides general historical studies into the history of the arts and the history of logic, the history of engineering, medicine, and the like belong to the former, whereas the latter includes the history of ethical studies, education studies, and the history of logic. The history of philosophy can be counted as representative of the latter. In this case, the reason that separates the two can be seen in the point that, whereas the former only chronicles the progress of scientific knowledge, the latter creates the essence of the categories in which the chronicles themselves belong. While the history of engineering is not engineering and the history of medicine is not medicine itself, both the histories of ethical studies and of education studies can themselves carry ethical and educational meaning, and in a certain way these can be thought of as their callings. If we note the special characteristic of the former as objective knowledge, it is not impossible to name the latter's as subjective knowledge. So strictly speaking, it can also be thought that something that approaches the formation of a certain subjective knowledge is just philosophy alone....

...Christology has decisive power only for the spirit and consciousness of each era....

2.

...“Christology of the New Testament”...First, the view of Christ in the Synoptic Gospels, next the faith in Christ that appeared in the Acts of the Apostles, then Paul's Christology, the Christology of Hebrews, the Christology in Revelation and the Johannine Literature....

...If we hold to how we are looking at things,... rather than a “development” of Christology perhaps it is more appropriate to say “elements.”....

...Christology reveals the eschatological character of this world and of history. An eschatological world likes across the basis of Christology....

3.

...The essence of Christology is not the problem of asking how one historical figure came to possess divinity, nor is it a type of philosophical defense that investigates each element of God's existence, but in all respects it is a theory born out of God's word negotiated in human words and cultural thinking. Therefore the composition of Christology cannot commence separate from an understanding of revelation...Originally Christology was not religious philosophy, but undoubtedly it was battle of logic peculiar to the gospel. Thus Christ's pre-existence and God's “eternal, unique Son” were matters concerning which the Church became particularly self-aware and powerfully explained their meanings....

Chapter 3: The Revelatory Meaning of Jesus Christ

....

3.

.... We do not try and know things about God through Jesus Christ as a means, but we seek to decide our connection with God in him, no, rather this decision is pressed on us.... The divinity of Jesus Christ must be verified, more than anything else, through the personal connection between the historical him and “me”....

.... (I Cor15:12ff.). This fact of the Resurrection lies across the foundation of Christology. Therefore it is only from the eschatological standpoint that Christ’s person and work is demonstrated....

.... Ordinarily Christ’s words possess historical and social concrete places. The incarnation of God’s Word in the historical Jesus also necessitated the historical Church. Hence Christ’s revelatory meaning must be sought through the entire history of the Christian Church, the continuation of the historical Jesus. This is the meaning of it being said that the Church is his body....

Chapter 4: The Incarnation (*Assumptio Carnis*)

1.

The revelatory meaning of Jesus Christ is understood as the “incarnation” of the eternal “Son of God.... Our religion stands on the fact of the incarnation. Here the Word of God becomes a subject of human history. Outside of this fact we cannot speak of revelation, and we cannot find the true meaning of religion. Also, we who have received an understanding of revelation of course must continue [295] to the problem of the incarnation. However, in order to discuss a problem like the incarnation, we need, in the purest and noblest meaning, specialized knowledge. Fundamentally the incarnation is not an object or matter of general knowledge, so it is natural that in the process of becoming doctrinal it becomes a principal subject particularly of theology. It is insufficient simply to demonstrate the truthfulness of this fact only by the experience of faith. We are prepared to recognize the importance of so-called “lay thoughts.” At the same time, common sense can never perfectly overcome the realm of subjective experience. It is impossible to confine a mystery like the incarnation of the Son of God to this sphere. “How did God become man?” must become in a fundamental sense a theological problem. Moreover, the meaning of the incarnation of the Son of God must be caught in its redemptive motive....

D. Okada Minoru²¹

Born in central Japan (Mie Ken), Okada was baptized at age 18. He graduated from the Kobe Reformed Seminary in 1929. A few years of pastoring was followed by going to Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia, USA, in 1934. Upon returning to Japan, Okada and others resisted state-supporting trends within the government-formed *Kyodan* (United Church) to the point of his congregation declaring its independence in 1943. The next year, Okada and other like-minded

²¹ The only biographical source I could locate is an electronic one, available at <http://ja.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E5%B2%A1%E7%94%B0%E7%A8%94> (last accessed June 14, 2010).

pastors were expelled from the *Kyodan*, and for three months several were forced to work in coal mines. During that time, Okada and three others refused to bow to the god of the mountain along with several hundred workers who did.

After the war, the Reformed Church of Japan was reconstituted and re-opened its seminary in Kobe. Okada became the central teaching figure at the seminary and authored several works. What follows comes from Okada's "Doctrine of the Mediator,"²² comprised of three chapters covering "The Person of Christ," "Christ's Humiliation," and "Christ's Work." First, here is the outline of the three chapters:

Chapter 2: The Person of Christ

1. The Central Problem of Christology
2. The Theory of Two Natures in One Person
3. Christ's Human Nature and Sinless Nature

Chapter 3: Christ's Humiliation

1. The Lutheran View of Christ
2. Special Characteristics of a Reformed Christology
 - (1) The Personal Union of Two Natures
 - (2) The Mutual Relationship between the Divine and Human Natures
 - (3) Christ's Human Nature and Our Human Nature
 - (4) The Problem of *ekiginansio* and *okkartasio*
3. The Significance of the Theory of States

Chapter 4: The Work of Christ

1. The Covenant of Grace and the Three Offices of Christ
2. The Point of Emphasis of the Reformed Atonement Theory

Next are some extended passages from within this outline:

Chapter 2: The Person of Christ

He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' And Simon Peter answered and said, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God (Mat 16:15-16).

The Son of God, the second Person in the Trinity, being very and eternal God, of one substance, and equal with the Father, did, when the fullness of time was come, take upon him man's nature, with all the essential properties and common infirmities thereof; yet without sin: being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the Virgin Mary, of her substance. So that two whole, perfect, and distinct natures, the Godhead and the manhood, were inseparably joined together in one person, without conversion, composition, or confusion. Which person is very God and very man, yet one Christ, the only Mediator between God and man. (Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 8.2)

²² Please contact the author about bibliographic details.

1. The Central Problem of Christology

There can be no doubt that Matthew 16:16 has a central place in all of the gospels. Misgiving and denial of this fact necessarily brings a direct connection to a desertion of the Christianity of the New Testament....

The Church has already fought....The Church's fight includes the battle of denouncing heresy....In essence this was a struggle between the Church and the wisdom of this world....In ancient times it was fought as a central matter concerned with the Church's life and death....The so-called ecumenical creeds were produced as the result of great debates between incomparable scholars and heroes of the faith. These creeds of the universal Church established the doctrine of the Trinity in the creeds of Niceae and Constantinople, as well as the two natures in one person Christology in the Chalcedonian Creed.

Because the doctrine of the Trinity establishes at its core the doctrine of Christ's two natures in one person, the creeds of Niceae and Chalcedon together constitute the frame of orthodox Christian faith. Today, however, certain theologians, even though they accept the Nicene Creed as an extension of the Apostles' Creed, reject the Chalcedonian Creed as a deviation of biblical doctrine. That is, they can agree with the theory of the Trinity but cannot bear the theory of two natures in one person. It is a way of thinking whereby the theory of the Trinity is the broadest limit of Christian doctrine, but anything beyond that cannot be tolerated.

...

In the Nicene Creed there is "I believe one Lord Jesus Christ, Who is of one substance with the Father." This is that famous phrase created from the rejection of the "iota" (the "I" of the Greek alphabet) when Athanasius risked his life and won in battling Arius. If the "I" were in the "same" (*homousios*) of this phrase, thus making it "similar type" (*homoiousios*), likely Christianity would not have been a direct extension of the line from Matthew 16:16 based on the New Testament, but at 325 A.D. there would be a sudden curve away leading into a line that goes off to the side and disappears.

...

The above-mentioned Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 8.2, logically expresses this historic orthodox Christology. The main points emphasized by the Chalcedonian Creed can be summarized in the following four:

1. Jesus Christ perfectly possesses both divine and human natures but is only one person.
2. The problem of Jesus Christ's divine nature and God is taught in the doctrine of the Trinity, in the theory of the same substance as God.
3. The problem of Jesus Christ's human nature and we [human beings] is dealt with in the theory of the same substance as we, with the main themes being the problem of the weakness of Jesus' human nature and the problem of his sinlessness.
4. When thinking of points 2 and 3 together, the problem arises of the personal union of two natures.

I think that the fundamental issue of Christology is in points 3 and 4. ...

2. The Theory of Two Natures in One Person

....Jesus Christ at times appears totally human, and at times He appears perfectly transcendent....

How in the world are these two forms joined together? The creeds express it as “personal union.” In Japanese (*jinkakuteki ketugo*) one hears something like the depth and beauty of a relationship between two fellow human beings, but this is not the case of a union of two different, mutual persons. It is not as if two separate persons, Jesus who was human and Christ Who is God, are united as one person. His person was from the beginning one person. Even if the human aspect and divine aspect appear as two aspects, that was in no way a work of two separate persons but completely one person. Well then, why the existence of the two different human and divine aspects?...

The creeds state that they appeared as two different aspects because they were two completely substantial things, that is two separate substances, not because they were both no more than apparent phenomena. Thus they call these two substances “natures,” divine nature and human nature. The divine nature is of course the nature of the Creator Lord, the human nature is a kind of creature. Because Christ is the eternal God the divine nature in Christ is His nature from eternity, but the human nature which is a kind of creaturely nature could not have been His from the beginning but because His nature somewhere along the way. As to when, it was the time of the Incarnation, in the womb of Mary. Because personhood must be something that belongs unchangeably to that person, it is unthinkable either that Christ’s person is anything other than the second person of the Trinity, the Logos, the Son of God, or that His person underwent a change at the Incarnation. That is because thinking as such must entail that a change was produced in the person of the triune God.

Hence the most simple understanding is that the Person of God the Son possesses in and of Himself the nature of God, or the divine nature, but in the Incarnation also made human nature His own nature, and since that time Christ has possessed as His own the two, divine and human natures. However, it could be thought that there is no room for this kind of change, since His Person is the eternally unchanging Logos (see Phil 2:6ff.).

How then shall the matter of the relationship or so-called personal union between the Person of Jesus Christ and Christ’s own Person, that is His divine nature, be explained? There is one large difficulty here. The Westminster Shorter Catechism and various Reformed churches of Europe are very familiar with this point. It is examined in detail in a document called *Admonitio Christiana*, written in cooperation with others by the main author of the Heidelberg Catechism, Urjinus. I would like to introduce a summary of it here:

God’s eternal holy decree made it necessary for the Son to be a mediator for the salvation of sinners, as well as to take on from Mary human nature within the unity of the person of the eternal Son of God in order to make an atoning sacrifice. This human nature, because it was completely without rupture, was sanctified in the womb of Mary by the great power of the Holy Spirit. That union was not only firm to the extent of never again being divisible: by a mysterious unloosable tie (*vinculum*) it is joined together such that presently He is true God and true human, as well as one and the same Jesus Christ.

Through this union the divine nature in Christ is different both from the providential immanence in general creatures and from the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in saints and the like. It is unified with His human nature by an inexplicably (even by a special type of explanation) strong relationship (*nexus*), such that they are more deeply united than the living union of soul and body in the case of human beings. Therefore the two elements of Christ's human nature, His human soul and body, temporarily separated when he died on the Cross, but the union within the personal unity of the divine and human natures in Christ did not in the least bit break apart. Simultaneously this unity results in the maintenance of the distinction between the divine and human natures, while unified in unity without producing change, merger or confusion.

In that way a dual substance, nature and essence exist within one person. One is the nature of Creator, the other is creature. Hence there are as well a dual heart and mind, an omnipotent heart and a finite heart, and a dual will, an omnipotent will and a finite will. Moreover, in all attributes there are on the one hand attributes belonging to the divine nature, and on the other hand attributes belonging to human nature. However, all are of the nature of this unique Person and are His attributes.

Within that Christology the Lutheran way of thinking is completely different from the Reformed. Seen from the eye of a Lutheran theologian, a Reformed Christology feels somehow like two logs firmly trussed up by a string of personhood. Their caricature, however, clearly omits something at an important place. In the Reformed view, there is no such thought of the Person of the Son of God and divine nature as something like a relationship between logs and a string. They do not only think of the something having a human person of a human life itself united with the Logos in the Incarnation.

In order to clarify their position, Reformed theologians express the matter as Jesus' human nature being non-personal but not impersonal, or that instead of a human person He possessed His human nature within His divine Person. Of course, at that point the relationship between nature and person becomes problematic, and one must face the difficulty of whether or not there can be such a thing as a nature that does not have personhood. The Logos was not simply a human body but was also perfectly endowed with a rational soul, after all He took on one human being, and so must not one human person of course be included?

I think that we need to consider two points in order to struggle through this difficulty. (In no sense are these two points the author's own ideas, but they were pointed out by Mastricht and Schneckenberger.)

The first point is this: Is it not the case that, speaking precisely, we do not call as person each individual person in human nature? If each of us human beings by a precise meaning possesses one person, what happens to the relationship between this person and human beings in general humanity? God is Trinity, but human beings, even as male and female, go no further than bi-unity. Furthermore, in the case of billions of humans being thought of as one humanity, an individual will only have the meaning of one part of the whole.

Essentially, person as a precise term according to its biblical meaning is a divisible spirit. While being that kind of tri-positional, personal three, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is the one and only God. The Person of the Logos is not according to that meaning a part of the divine nature, but the divine nature in its entirety.

However, in thinking about us humans one understands that this matter is quite different. An individual is not the perfect whole of a human being but always contains one part of it. In Jesus Christ we fully meet for the first time a human being that is truly itself. In other words, we can say that what we normally call person bears the meaning of one part of this whole human being. From this meaning we thus must not call as person the human nature taken on by Jesus. That human nature was not somehow a more imperfect human nature than normal human natures, but instead just the opposite, a complete and perfect human nature.

Next it is necessary to think together with this matter the second point, namely that which was pointed out by Schneckenberger. Because all of Adam's descendants bore a sin nature, at the core of their awareness there ought to be the consciousness that "I am a sinner." If by that meaning Jesus was one human being, Jesus' sinless nature would not stand. Therefore, as the personal consciousness in Jesus standing before God, it is not as something outside the divine person within the trinitarian relationship between Father and Son, but this consciousness proceeds of its own accord as mediator and atoning sacrifice, standing as a substitute for us humans under the curse of the law, and is a consciousness of obedience of the messianic office. (I will take up this point later in chapter four, entitled "The Work of Christ.")

In his *The Humiliation of Christ*, A. B. Bruce, after introducing an outline of the statement of the exemplary *Admonitio Christiana*, offers the following four points in comparing the special characteristics of Reformed and Lutheran Christologies:

1. As we have discussed thus far, the problem of the union of two natures in the divine person;
2. The *communicatio* problem (the interactive relationship of attributes);
3. The problem of *ekiginatio* and *okkartasio* (condescension and concealment; I intend to take up points 2 and 3 in the next chapter).
4. The problem of the sameness of Christ's and our human natures and the sinless nature.

We must briefly address here this last point.

3. Christ's Human Nature and Sinless Nature

Bruce discusses this point in the following manner:

The final, striking special characteristic of Reformed Christology is a strong emphasis on the total sameness of Christ's human nature--excepting sin--with our human nature. One can say that the zeal for this truth certainly is a Reformed concern. By emphasizing--not simply from scientific-rational reasons for also based on religious practice--that the Savior was the Son of Man and that He was both our Brother and Head, Reformed Christianity decisively shows a strong shade of anti-illusionary realism. This is strikingly and thoroughly apparent in this last point as well, just as in the three points discussed previously. That is, this motif of realism already exists in, for example, the analogy of Christ's nature as representative (representative in the covenant of grace) and as the predestined object, obedience to the plan of salvation, and incarnation and new life; and, the analogy between the union of Christ's two natures and the mysterious union of the believer and Christ (completed together as the work of the Holy Spirit).

However, this doctrine of the sameness of Christ's and our natures was completed in the seventeenth century; it had not yet taken shape in the sixteenth century. During the Reformation period certain Reformed theologians were as yet only half aware of what the Reformed distinctives were.

...

Just now we have followed a mountain path of theology. Did we not set out with the intention of just taking a stroll? At some point we clearly realize that no matter which way we proceed we are facing danger....We thus want prayerfully to overcome this difficult barrier:

1. Christ is God and human.
2. If Christ as human is not the same as we are, then He could not fulfill the meaning of being our Savior. It is also the case that if he were a sinner like us, He could not accomplish that task.

Reformed theologians have expressed this second point as Christ's sinlessness and infirmity. The problem is simplified if one sees this sinlessness as divine nature and the infirmity as human nature, but one will lose the key to the solution. The two-nature theory has now become a problem of two elements that at first glance are two in the theory of human nature, and thus are difficult to stand together.

...

Basically the idea of *imitatio christi* (imitating Christ) is the fundamentally important element of this Catholic Christology, and they thus make this emphasis by following that line. As you know modern liberal Christians' view of Jesus, which sees Jesus as "one member of the ranks," also takes that same original meaning. This latter Christology is very similar to that which previously was emphasized by an ancient Judaistic sect called the Ebionites, the heretical nature of which the Church Fathers pointed out and rejected. It denies as a whole Jesus' divine nature and recognizes Jesus as possessing only slight divine capabilities within certain limits. In comparison to that, if one looks at the heresies of the ancient Church, perhaps one will discover that this Catholic Christology resembles a stream of Docetism (the theory that Christ was not actually real). One can say that the relationship between the bread and Christ's body in the Mass can also be seen Christ's Logos-nature and his human nature.

Whichever solution it is to the problem of harmonizing the divine and human natures, one can find an undervaluation of one or the other. Therefore, it cannot be faithful to the principle of the Chalcedonian Creed. We are compelled to believe that only in the Reformed theologians, who earnestly pursued the theory of Chalcedon, can we find the correct direction for solving this problem.

...

The Reformed theologians were convinced that only in the unique way of defending this wonder of firmly holding to the four Chalcedonian principles of "unmixed, unchanging, indivisible and inseparable" could one find the personal union of the divine and human natures. They furthermore thought that the riddle of the problem was hidden within the fact of the perfectly non-intermingled co-existence of the sinless nature and infirmity within the real substance of this human nature.

....

“Christ our brother” actually is essentially the Logos who wedged into our ranks from an outside rank in order to accomplish the messianic task, a work the office of which no one from within our ranks could achieve. Thus Jesus’ earthly life in its entirety was an ideal human life, and it was an example that we should emulate. However, the fundamental matter is that He accomplished His work as our substitute, hence we must realize that it was a totally unique life and not something we should repeat. In order to fulfill these two points, Jesus’ human nature had to combine a sinless nature on the one hand and infirmity on the other.

Chapter 3: Christ’s Humiliation

Christ, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men (Phil 2:6-7).

Christ, in the work of mediation, acts according to both natures, by each nature doing that which is proper to itself; yet, by reason of the unity of the person, that which is proper to one nature is sometimes in scripture attributed to the person denominated by the other nature (Westminster Confession of Faith, VIII.7).

1. The Lutheran View of Christ

In this chapter we will proceed to discuss the problem of Christ’s two states. The fundamental issues for Christology are the problem of two natures and one person and the problem of the three offices (Prophet, Priest and King), but in Reformed theology together with these two problems that of the two states (humiliation and exaltation) is also seen as extremely important. On this matter the points of commonality and difference with the Lutherans were the major points of debate. In the order of discussion I’d like first to address in a simple way the debate that arose among the Protestant churches.

Just a few years after arising in opposition to the Roman Catholic Church, a major debate quickly began within the Protestant fold. This famous debate over the Lord’s Supper between Luther and Zwingli soon divided the German Protestant Church into the Lutheran and the Reformed camps. For the sake of earnestly and strongly stressing the faith that the Lord’s body is present in the observance of the Lord’s Supper, Luther refused to accept Zwingli as a brother. The matter began in this way as a debate over the Lord’s Supper, but Christology lay hidden at the basis of the problem.

If Christ’s body is present when the Lord’s Supper is being conducted, Christ’s body must possess the attribute of omnipresence....

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that the bread of Communion is not bread but that it changes into the body of Christ, i.e., transubstantiation. Luther rejected this teaching of transubstance as superstition, and he asserts that Christ’s body is present together with, within and under the bread. In both the Roman Catholic teaching and Luther’s assertion, the bread is only what we saints can see and besides the bread anything else that the body of Christ becomes is unseen. However, the Roman Catholic Church teaches that the bread has already changed into Christ’s body which is thus there (and hence is not bread), and Luther asserts that “The bread as bread is there, but simultaneously Christ’s body is present.”

By this meaning one must of course think of Christ's body as something not physical but invisible (spiritual), and hence the spatial existence of Christ's body must be denied and its universal existence affirmed. From here the debate diverged from the problem of the Lord's supper and targeted on the more fundamental problem of whether or not Christ's body in essence possessed the attribute of ubiquity.

Those who as advocates of Luther's friend Johannes Brenz (1499-1570), theologian of Württemberg, argued for this "ubiquity of Christ's body" completed the task of constructing a Lutheran Christology primarily in opposition in opposition to Reformed theology, which developed into the formation of the Formula of Concord. During this period their theological motif was in the giving of a Christological foundation for a Lutheran position on the Lord's Supper, through thinking of what kind of result the unified person of two natures caused in Christ's human nature.

...

At first only ubiquity was a problem, but later all the attributes of the divine nature were understood to be communicated. At this point I'd like to stop and point out an important matter in Brenz' explanation concerning two points.

First is the stress on the equality of ability and majesty of the human and divine natures in Christ, in agreement with the stress in the Nicene Creed on the "same substance of Christ's divine nature and God the Father."

Second, with respect to when the communication of attributes began, based on "Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name" in Philippians 2:9, not satisfied that the ubiquity of Christ's body began at the Resurrection and Ascension, there is the stress it began from the time of the Incarnation.

...

2. Special Characteristics of a Reformed Christology

While considering in contrast to the emphasis of this kind of Lutheran Christology, a Reformed Christology notices that that way of thinking is extremely different. While borrowing the analysis of Bruce cited in the preceding chapter, I'd like to gather up these characteristics into four areas and add some explanatory comments.

(1) The Personal Union of Two Natures

It is often said that the Lutheran understanding of the gospel is human-centered, and that tendency is striking with respect as well to the problem of the union in one person of the divine and human natures in Christ....

The stress on the absolute distinction between the creature and the Creator denies, from the side of the finite, the possibility of containing the infinite (God), but the Incarnation was in no sense either Mary or the man Jesus containing the Logos. It would appear, however, that with the Lutherans, in order to think of the Incarnation while presupposing the man Jesus, they first presuppose a single person, the man Jesus, as one portion of Mary's body and as a bodyless spirit, and view the Incarnation as this Jesus dwelling in the Logos. This way of thinking comes out the most in the interpretation of Philippians 2:6ff:

He [Christ], although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

In this representative passage concerned with Christology--which is a matter of exactly what the referent is of the subject "He (Christ)"--the Lutherans stress that "He (Christ)" is the Christ of *logos en sarx* (God's Word in the flesh). When, then, does "He, although He existed in the form of God" come to mean? They explain it in the following manner:

Jesus unites with the Logos, and that human nature is thus given attributes of the divine nature; moreover, the attributes of the divine nature extend to each faculty of the human nature, and Jesus is thus equal with God in majesty and authority. However, He 'emptied Himself,' that is He did not display this majesty and authority, taking the 'form of a bond-servant' and acted as one with a normal human nature.

This is the beginning of the mistake of taking *logos en sarx* as "the infinite contained within the finite."

Interpreting this passage in a Reformed manner leads to the following: It goes without saying that "He" (Christ) is *logos a sarx* (God's Word before the Incarnation, that is the Second Person of the Trinity). God's Son as the Second Person was in essence "the form of God," that is the true God having the complete divine nature (the same substance as God the Father), but in obedience to the command of God the Father (that is, based on the eternal plan of salvation) He did not remain above the law without becoming incarnate, but exhausted the limits of humility ("emptied Himself" does not mean that He abandoned His own attributes, but a humble attitude according to an ethical heart): "taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men." It is this that was the Incarnation, that is becoming incarnate was the concrete manifestation of that humble heart attitude. The Incarnation was not the Logos entering within Jesus, but it was the adding on of human nature from Mary to God the Logos. When thinking of God entering within humanity, God entirely entering is thought to be untenable and the thought of "emptied Himself" (*kenosis*) meaning the divine nature that will not enter being cut off is born. Of course this was not thought directly among the Lutherans, but while already recognizing that the divine attributes were entirely communicated within humanity, they did not take the meaning that those divine attributes were exposed but that they were limited.

Thus here the fourth point, the problem of *ekijnahosio* and *okkartasio* [?] (self-abandonment and self-concealment), arises. However, before that among the Lutherans they suppose the single person Jesus the human being, and in order to take on the divine nature on top of his own human nature, and in order to think that that human nature was not simply an ordinary human nature but became a special nature that possessed as well divine attributes, they were carried along by the necessity of the *kenosis* problem, the limitations of these divine attributes so conceived.

Among the Reformed, from the start they were thinking that there was the Logos, the second Person of the Trinity, and because this Person became incarnate, that is took on human nature, He possessed two natures in one Person. Therefore the human nature taken on by the Logos was not itself a human person. If it were, then the existence of two persons, Christ Who is God and Jesus

the man, would be thought. But there were not two persons, but two natures in one Person. That Person is the divine Person, unchanging from eternity to eternity, that is none other than the Logos. The human nature from Mary from was the beginning the human nature taken on by this Logos, being neither Mary's human nature nor a later human nature with which the Logos united. Nor is it thought for an instant [?] that the human nature was that of the simple human being Jesus.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, as seen by the Lutherans the Reformed idea of two natures in one person has the feeling of two logs tied together by one string. However, the way of thinking that the string (person) and logs (natures) are totally different things clearly is mistaken. Yet the Lutherans were right in thinking that the string was in essence a human string, and the Reformed have stressed that one must not think of anything other than the divine string.

(2) The Mutual Relationship Between the Divine and Human Natures

At this point the Lutherans make *communicatio idiomatum* (communication of attributes) the watchword. This thought was the tradition of the Eastern churches and resembles what the theologian John of Damascus taught. Bruce and others say that regarding this point the Reformed theologians are inheritors, through the explanation of Thomas, of the thought of *analogia* and *karisma*.

At any rate, I too wrote in Volume II, Chapter 1 concerning distinguishing within God's attributes between "noncommunicable attributes and communicable attributes." As in the voice of Jesus that Paul heard on the way to Damascus, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" (Acts 9:4), that Jesus Christ the Son of God was able to stand in the position of those persecuted is, on the one hand, ethically speaking the dual fact of the divine nature being the prototype of human nature and human nature being the image of God, and, on the other hand, the problem solved by the possibility of fellowship between God and man through the intervention of the Holy Spirit. I would request the reader read well this point made in the earlier quotation of the Westminster Confession of Faith VIII.7.

Reformed theologians see the thought of the communication of attributes as anti-Chalcedonian. However, they in no sense deny that ethical attributes in essence are communicable attributes. Moreover, from a position that strongly emphasizes the work of the Holy Spirit, they do not necessarily oppose the Thomistic term *communicatio karismata* (communication of gifts). They rather emphasize the work of the Holy Spirit with respect to both the problem of the personal union in Christ and the sinless human nature in Christ.

The Lutherans appear to think that, in the case of the human nature being sinless, in order to think that it is practically of the same essence as the divine nature, there is practically no difference between the meanings of sanctification and the deification of the human nature. Taking the phrase in 2 Peter 1:4, "in order that you ... might become partakers of the divine nature," in relation to Leviticus 19:2, "You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy," they view "holy nature" as the same as "divine nature" and hence proceed to view sanctification as the same as deification. The Reformed principle of the "absolute distinction between God and man" will not permit this way of thinking. In order for the holy nature in God to be the absolute prototype, and holiness in man to be the creaturely antitype, our sanctification is not only incomplete on this earth, but even with it becoming perfect at the resurrection it cannot be of the same essence as God's holy nature.

This must be said as well about the relationship between Christ's two natures. Even with [??] the result of the personal union, the human nature from Mary in Christ does not become deified, but just as it is written in John 3:34, "God gives the Spirit without measure," nothing more than the

communication of the gift through the mediation of the Holy Spirit need be recognized. One cannot affirm that the Christian's making Jesus Christ the object of worship is necessarily idol worship, that is worshipping the human nature in Jesus or something created. What we are worshipping is the Person of Jesus Christ, not His natures, attributes and the like. If instead one presupposes a Lutheran human person of Jesus, there could be a type of Christ-worship as hero-worship, as well as the danger of not worshipping the triune God alone but of worshipping the human Jesus that united with the second Person of the Trinity in a way that becomes idol worship.

Together with Thomas we see the resurrected Jesus as "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28), but this is in no sense worshipping the resurrected body. The body is simply one aspect of human nature. However, since now this body is that of the Logos we are doing none other than worshipping Christ who took on this body (*logos en sarx*. Here I am not speaking of *sarx* and the body as the same. Just as I wrote earlier in the section on anthropology, *sarx* is the general term for both and soul.)

If one does not sufficiently consider the meaning of the Holy Spirit's work in the fellowship of man and God, one will inevitably fall into a heretical mysticism or pantheistic way of thinking. When fellowshiping with God not only as a creature but as a sinner, this work of the Holy Spirit must be seen as doubly important.

(3) Christ's Human Nature and Our Human Nature

From this point, the emphasis and the sameness of Christ's human nature and our human nature, which we already discussed in the previous chapter, here becomes our topic. It goes without saying that what Brenz stressed in answer to the question, "Where do Jesus and Peter differ?", namely "The body communicating the divine attributes in Jesus' human nature", was in order to give a Christological foundation to Luther's doctrine of the Holy Spirit. It is the logical conclusion coming from the claim that the body of Christ that physically exists everywhere naturally must be something possessing ubiquity. Hence it also becomes that case that "Therefore Jesus' human nature and Peter's human nature are not the same."

Of course any Christian answers that by common sense. However, if one persists in asking about the cause of that difference, and if the difference is something qualitative and/or something logical, fellow Christians' answers just will not be the same. As noted earlier Lutherans simply divide this point. However, among the Reformed camp the difference lies only in the point of a sinless human nature on the one hand and a human nature residing within sin on the other: they both are true human nature, in other words no different in being creatures. We therefore want to hold dear the Chalcedonian Creed's confession, "like our human nature in all respects, sin only excepted." This is because if one affirms the communication of attributes, this naturally will mean a change in natures. We must stress that the Holy Spirit's work of sanctification is not to make human nature divine, but to bring about the purification of sin.

(4) The Problem of *ekiginanisio* and *okkartasio*

Finally, I'd like to speak to what should be termed the biggest point of distinction between Lutheran and Reformed Christologies, namely humiliation.

With the Lutherans, when the human being Jesus merged with the logos and *logos en sarx*, that is the Incarnation, was accomplished, the human nature of the human being Jesus came to possess the divine attributes. He thus possessed the same majesty and omnipotence as God. This Incarnate

one did not fully display his own authority and majesty but instead relinquished them. They thus think of the necessity to set up the distinction between the forms of “the full logos transcending Jesus” and “the full logos residing in Jesus.” This self-limitation and self-abandonment of Jesus’ majesty and authority is *ekiginanisisio* and *okkartasio*. The former term is best translated as humiliation and self-abandonment, and the latter should be translated by the terms self-suppression or self-concealment. The closely resemble Kierkegaard’s “Impossibility of Differentiation” (traveling incognito).

This self-concealment is the concealment of divine majesty. For example, as stated in Matthew 28:5,6 (“Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified. He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said. Come, see the place where He was lying.”), one must say of the resurrected Jesus--while even in the body the ubiquitous one through the communication of divine attributes--“He is not here.” The reason is that, while the ubiquitous Jesus’ body actually is everywhere, it is hidden by Jesus’ self-limitation. There is the question as to whether this “self-suppression” is like the phenomenon as seen from the earth whereby the sun simply is hidden by the clouds, or whether it is like the sun itself not emitting light. Regarding this way of understanding, within the Lutherans as well there appears to be no single settled view.

With respect to the general Reformed idea concerning the logos itself, namely that of distinguishing between pre- and post-Incarnation as well as the states of humiliation and exaltation, a characteristic way of thinking among Lutherans is the point of thinking--concerning Jesus’ human nature--simultaneously of two types of being, namely his non-spatial (ubiquitous) human nature and his spatial human nature.

If one seeks to diagram Brenz’ explanation, as diagram #1 shows the Incarnation brought about the ubiquitousization of human nature, but due to Jesus’ self-limitation the state of humiliation was evident because of *ekiginanisisio* and *okkartasio*. However, it is explained that during this period two states (forms) existed together simultaneously.

I would like you to compare this with the explanation of the Westminster Confessional Standards (see diagram #2). A state is spoken out of the relationship with God’s law, and the state of humiliation (the form of a servant) points to being born under the law (Galatians 4:4). The fact that “Consequently the sons are free,” as in the story in Matthew 17:24-27, was fully true of Jesus’ earthly life as well, but even so the Son of God who was above the law of his own accord proceeded to descend below the law and follow it. Was this law simply a moral law that was completely free from natural law and physical laws? Certainly Jesus who quieted and walked on the waves was the Creator Lord who is over natural law. Nevertheless, excepting this kind of special case the Lord Jesus’ thirty-plus-year earthly life was a life lived under natural laws in the same general way as regular human beings.

Following the third period of the Lutherans’ theological controversies, the difficult struggle to reconcile the distinctively Lutheran faith in the ubiquitous Jesus (the faith in the presence of Christ’s physical body in the Lord’s Supper) and the gospel’s recorded testimony concerning Jesus’ earthly life was in fact nothing other than a confession of being unable to deal with these historical facts. Brenz evaluates of Lutheran Christology as an inverted pyramid, with the supporting point of faith being none other than of “physical presence,” with the point supporting this faith being in fact none other than literal interpretation of the verse “This is my body.” His claim is wise that if it were certain that this one verse should not be interpreted literally then everything would fall over.

3. The Significance of the Theory of States

Coming to this point in our thinking, the reliability of the structure of Reformed Christology all the more keenly becomes convincing.

Extending logic in order to support a limited point--no matter how important it might be--will never produce healthy doctrine. The importance of a systematic understanding of the whole of scripture in fact lies here.

....

“Person and work” must be grasped not as a dualistic problem of existence and action, but as an active, monistic matter of the deep connection of “Incarnation, Cross and Resurrection.” Therefore Athanasius’ *Incarnation* and Anselm’s *Cur deus homo* must be researched as two major classics that, while mutually grasping the other problem, in the end were discussing the same subject. However, so that the theory of the Incarnation does not simply overlap with the theory of Christ’s Person, and so that *Cur deus homo* does not simply overlap with the theory of the Atonement--in other words, if one considers the problem of the Incarnation in the light of the cross, and the cross together with the truth of the Incarnation--here the new field of the theory of the two states of humiliation and the exaltation extends into both spheres, as well as comes clearly into view as a third field that ties together both spheres. One of the Lutherans’ fundamental errors is that they dissolve this theory of the two states either within the theory of the two natures or of the three offices, which becomes the mistaken understanding of namely simultaneous parallel humiliation and exaltation.

In Cullman’s *Christ and Time*, critical of Barth’s eschatology, what he calls the straight-line Judaic idea of time also is connected to this point. I have already referred to how the *communicatio* thought essentially bears a deep connection with the mysticism of the Eastern Church, but there is no doubt that there are problems in this Greek, heaven-earth simultaneous parallel way of thinking, and in the thought in which eternity and time are thought of as parallel lines, one running above the other.

Because I intend to turn the focus of our inquiry and say a bit more on this point in the chapters on eschatology and the Holy Spirit, I will for now lay down my pen on this particular matter. What still draws my attention is that, upon recalling how earlier Uemura Masahisa affirmed only an orthodox Christology as the fundamental confession of evangelicalism but did not go beyond the historic Church’s liberal interpretation of the atonement, and upon thinking of the thought of Christ’s historical body in Kumano’s theology, and again upon looking at Kitamori’s theology, within the tradition of Japanese theology there is a richness of a thorough Lutheranism. It seems to me that, in order to receive the Reformed tradition, we must not be afraid of pointing out and criticizing our forefather’s errors.

Chapter 4: The Work of Christ

But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption (Heb 9:11,12).

This office the Lord Jesus did most willingly undertake; which that He might discharge, He was made under the law, and did perfectly fulfill it, endured most

grievous torments immediately in His soul, and most painful sufferings in His body; was crucified, and died; was buried, and remained under the power of death. (Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 8.4a)

The Lord Jesus, by His perfect obedience, and sacrifice of Himself, which He, through the eternal Spirit, once offered up unto God, hath fully satisfied the justice of His Father; and purchased, not only reconciliation, but an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven, for all those whom the Father hath given unto Him (WCF, Ch. 8:5).

1. *The Covenant of Grace and the Three Offices of Christ*

Reformed theologians, when enunciating the work of Christ, first presuppose the covenant of grace (including the covenant of atonement) and speak of Christ executing, as the work of covenant mediator, the offices of prophet, priest and king. This is the doctrine of the so-called three offices of Christ, and it is recognized as the Reformed doctrine propagated especially by Calvin. There followed significant development whereby differences of opinion arose concerning detailed points, hence there are problems we must address in order to speak of the theory of the atonement.

However, because there would be no possibility of speaking thoroughly to the entire matter even if I were to make it concise in the extreme, please refer to such writings as Berkhof's *Systematic Theology* and the Westminster Standards...

I think it is common knowledge that the meaning of the term Christ is "the one anointed with oil," that in the Old Testament men were installed into the three sacred offices of prophet, priest and kings through this ceremony, that oil is the symbol of the Holy Spirit, that the primary meaning of the Hebrew (Aramaic) messiah, which is the original term for the Greek *kristos*, is "king anointed with oil," etc.

The center of the theory of Christ's work is the theory of the atonement....

For myself, I would like to speak briefly of the fundamental point of emphasis in the Reformed theory of atonement.

1. The Point of Emphasis of the Reformed Atonement Theory

a. First it is God-centered....

b. Next, it is objective. ...

Objectivism on the one hand emphasizes that without making the foundation atonement on God's side then the forgiveness of sin is not established, and on the other emphasizes that this atonement in fact was realized only once through the one historical event, namely the cross of Calvary.

c. Moreover, there is the emphasis of vicarious substitution. ...

As discussed in the previous chapter, atonement is not established only by the Incarnation's personal union in Christ of the divine and human natures. Also, if Christ were only God this point of vicarious substitution would not stand. Furthermore, if Christ's human nature were sinful it likewise would not be established. While a descendant of Adam, only as Christ being the second Adam outside the covenant of works--that is only as the God-man having a sinless human nature--was this able to be established.

d. I would like to speak in some detail about active obedience, again thought to be of utmost importance....

What we will say from here was a matter made clear in the older Arminian debate, and because it is a point won that has been forgotten in modern discussions I am asking that we arouse our particular attention.

...

Just as Machen said on his deathbed, "I thank Christ's active obedience," this confession contrasts with Arminian faith and bears a very important meaning. On the basis of passages such as Ephesians 1:7—"We have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses"—if the result of the atonement is limited only to the side of simple forgiveness of sin, the reception of eternal life becomes a new topic for the justified believer, together with sanctification the kingdom of God changes into simply a problem of hope as it was before, "good deeds based on faith" comes to be thought of as a means of perfect salvation, and neo-nomism appears. By the phrase evangelical obedience Semi- Pelagianism, the idea of divine-human cooperation, is introduced, and a gospel of works once again enters. In order to avoid this kind of Arminian danger at the deep doctrinal foundation, we must confirm that this satisfaction of God was first perfected with the obedience of both the passive and active sides. [?]

Also, this passive obedience and active obedience were not marked off by time periods. The Lord Jesus, while living as a completely righteous man, lived and died receiving directly in his soul and body the punishment and curse of Adam's sin, the cross was active obedience in the sense of perfect consecration to God and service to others, and for the Lord Jesus daily life was passive obedience in the sense receiving the suffering of the curse that Adam should have received.

e. Finally, there is the claim of the restriction of application of the effectiveness of the atonement. I think that the first clause of "limited atonement," in the midst of the clarification of Calvinism's representative five points in the Dordt Confession, a direct product of the Arminian controversy, is common knowledge....It can be said that it is easy to buy the criticism that, as one distinctive emphasis of Reformed atonement theory, the claim of limiting, in relation to the chosen people of faith, the scope of the application of the efficacy of the atonement only to those predetermined to life, in comparison to the sufficient valuation of God's love in the theory of redemption of all people, is the most unevangelical dogma that undervalues the grace of the gospel--or the borrow the words of Professor Kumano, is truly a troublesome doctrine.

Certainly the doctrine of limited atonement, on this point, is the doctrine that most directly expresses the claim of predestination, but we must consider this in logical and spiritual unity with the entire five points. Calvinism is not primarily concerned with how many sinners *cannot be saved*.

...

In 1947 Van Til published a short 95-page work entitled *Common Grace*. Compared to the same author's *New Modernism* this was truly a small book, but speaking from its contents it is perhaps his book of most importance. As a result, this book stirred up a typhoon within the Reformed camp during only a seven-year period. Not only did long articles appear in any number of journals criticizing this book, but separate volumes have been published that are direct criticisms of this book, giving it the appearance to the point of being a much more major work than it is.

The contents of the book are extremely deep and large, so it is difficult to convey a thorough summary by any particular approach. The most important point to be seen is in Van Til's criticism of the usual contrast of special grace with the essence of common grace by Kuyper, Bavinck and others, whereby they think of a similar grace between the elect and reprobate people.

...

III. Analysis

Having encountered our four theologians' Christologies, how might we analyze how Jesus the God-Man shouldered his way into the lives and contexts of Uemura, Takakura, Kumano, and Okada? That is, based on these four brothers' and forefathers' articulated recognitions of the same Jesus who has exhibited his same gracious reign in myriad other Christians' lives (including our own), how do we go about describing the manner of Jesus' intrusions into Uemura's, Takakura's, Kumano's, and Okada's respective settings?

Answering that question could take us in all sorts of directions. To focus our discussion in ways appropriate to our conference theme, we will proceed through the following stages introduced at the outset of this paper:

- A. What characterized the dramatically changing modern Japanese contexts, all of which were full of hope and suffering, within which these theologians understood Jesus Christ?
- B. How did our four theologians imbibe both Japanese and Western influences, and thus exhibit traits of a globalizing theology?
- C. How might we compare these theologians with each other, then in turn draw implications for how all Christians formulate Christological understandings?

Considering these questions should contribute to the wider conference goal of understanding the significance of Jesus Christ in modern, pluralistic and democratic societies in Asia and the West.

A. Modern Japan

During the latter half of the nineteenth century, Japan transformed itself from a forcibly-ruled conglomerate of feudalistic regions into a modern, socio-economic-military national power. The Tokugawa Shogunate's remarkable 268-year rule ended with the 1868 Meiji Restoration. Following a domestic struggle over, in large part at least, how to respond to the irresistible Western powers wanting to trade (and further their interests in China), the victorious new oligarchy moved the capital city eastward from Kyoto (「京都」 - "capital-capital") to Edo, which they renamed "Tokyo" (「東京」 - "east capital"). This fresh start of the 1868-1912 Meiji Era launched Japan on a course of modernization that involved the importing of all things Western: education systems, engineering advancements (from lighthouses to railroads), finance and banking, governing structures, philosophical trends, language-learning, medicine, industry, military, literature, music, dress, sports, and Christianity. The decision to modernize was a sensible choice, since the

alternative would have been to become a western colony like other areas of Asia (and Africa), either formally or de facto.

Japan's rapid transformation over a mere two decades culminated in an inevitable consolidation of things Japanese, both newly domesticated and traditional: the emperor promulgated the Prussia-emulating Meiji Constitution in 1889; and, a similar imperial decree in 1890 (the Rescript on Education) wedded Japan's modern, national educational system with traditional Confucian values. Japan's modernized military soon flexed its muscles by defeating China in an 1894-1895 war and then by outlasting Russia in their 1904-1905 conflict, a victory that arguably changed the historical course of inexorable Western expansion. Late-nineteenth-to-early-twentieth-century Japan was also fourth-to-fifth-decade Meiji Nippon, a uniquely Japanese hybrid of modern and traditional societal elements.

1. Uemura

Uemura Masahisa's life bridged his Tokugawa-supporting samurai heritage into a Meiji Japan that distanced itself from many of the long-standing loyalties that had characterized Uemura's ancestry. For Uemura's elders, their *bushido*²³-type allegiance was directed toward their unquestioned superiors or 「主」 (*nushi* or *shu*, normally translated into English as "lord" or "master"). With the passing away of that societal structure, Uemura and other displaced samurai types, who across the board comprised the first-generation leaders of the various Protestant groups in early Meiji Japan, experienced a vacuum of suitable superiors to whom they could be loyally devoted. Enter the new intruding 主 or master, 耶蘇基督 (*Yaso Kirisuto*).

Quite naturally, then, Uemura's Christology focuses on Christ's deity more than on his work.²⁴ The Jesus who had come to him and other former samurai was their new master who had ultimate authority and to whom ultimate loyalty was due. Uemura's new Lord was the central hope for a renewed, Christian Japan, a nation that would restore the noble virtues of a bygone era in a "baptized Bushido" form. That 主 is who Uemura recognized and who he said Jesus is.

2. Takakura

Takakura saw Jesus in a slightly different light. Time-wise, Takakura was raised in the newly modernized Japan that was consolidating its unique identity and position within the world of imperial, colony-possessing states. The feudalistic Tokugawa Era was over. The loyalty of the citizenry, with all school-age children now being educated in a nationally unified school system, was to the nation and its representative, the Emperor, instead of to a network of superiors.

²³ "way of the samurai"

²⁴ While some Japanese analysts also note Uemura's emphasis on the Cross, Soltau pointedly notes the stress in Uemura's Christology on Jesus' deity at the expense of his redemptive work: "Reading these statements and others, the impression begins to form that Uemura's first and primary purpose is to build and strengthen belief in the deity of Jesus Christ. References are made to the cross and redemption, and most of these are vague and not well-defined. It appears that Uemura is more concerned to establish the fact of Jesus' deity than he is to explain in detail how it was that Jesus accomplished salvation for men." Soltau, 1982, 208.

As noted earlier, Takakura's sense of loyalty was also cultivated outside the sub-cultural hothouse of *bushido* values. While most any Japanese citizen would have developed strong family ties, the merchant background of Takakura's paternal heritage lacked the ultimate loyalty to superiors that Uemura's childhood environment passed along. Raised as well in a setting of heightened national identity and displacement associated with urbanization, Takakura and others of his generation thus experienced the beginnings of individualistic trajectories largely unknown to their predecessors.

Jesus thus came to Takakura as a fascinating, perfect human being, the Savior from one's personal sin, and the head of his people, the Church. The first two emphases helped Takakura deal with his (and other contemporaries') stated "problem of the self"²⁵; the latter focus counteracted modernity's inevitable stimuli toward individualism and the corresponding experience of loneliness. Takakura's moves away from home would have compounded such experiences for him personally.

The lack for Takakura of a national Lord-Savior recognized by Uemura is also noteworthy (and will be explored further below). Perhaps the socio-political stabilization of late Meiji and transition into the relatively calm Taisho Era (1912-1926) helped Takakura and others²⁶ relate to Jesus in a more quietist manner with regard to societal concerns.

All of that is not to oversimplify Takakura's (or anyone else's) Christological sensibilities by drawing direct lines of influence from contextual realities. Rather, we are simply noting how Takakura understood Jesus the God-Man in a way that was appropriate and relevant to the societal situation in which he lived and into which Jesus had intruded.

3. Kumano

Kumano Yoshitaka's life spanned the last decade-plus (1899-1912) of Meiji, the full decade-and-a-half (1912-1926) of Taisho, and almost all (1926-1981) of the turbulent and fluctuating Showa Era. How did these various contexts affect Kumano's particular recognitions of Jesus' person and work?

We must again caution ourselves against oversimplicity and neatness here. Even so, we should note the Taisho-Era timing of Kumano's 1917 conversion and subsequent switch from university to seminary student. The 1920s influx of German dialectical theology into Japanese theological circles accelerated in the 1930s (a phenomenon to be examined in the next section). The 1930s also saw an ominous increase in Japan's international tensions and militarism. Surely it is more than mere coincidence that Kumano's dialectical-eschatological framework for his theology, including his Christology, developed (and pointed the way for many others) during the militaristic and war years of the 1930s and 1940s. The timing of what was happening theologically in Germany between the so-called two world wars is of course a correlating contextual reality.

²⁵ Takakura himself noted this was the central reason he converted to Christ, and his analysts have followed suit in identifying this "problem of the self" as crucial in Takakura's thinking and development. Cf. Jennings, 2005, 327-330.

²⁶ With notable exceptions, including Kagawa Toyohiko (1888-1960).

I concur with the gist of other conservative evangelicals' criticisms of dialectical or "crisis" theology, particularly with regard to views of Scripture. At the same time, I can also accept Jesus' intruding into Kumano's (and others') societal "crisis" in a manner appropriate and understandable to him and to his developing theological framework.

4. Okada

Okada Minoru's life stretched across a similar span as did Kumano's, plus an additional decade into the beginning few years (1989-1992) of Heisei Japan. The progression of Okada's baptism, theological studies, ordination, and teaching career followed a similarly overlapping sequence. Even so, Kumano's associations were different from Kumano's, both with missionaries (in Okada's case with U.S. Southern Presbyterians) and with fellow Japanese churchmen. These associations, including with like-minded church leaders who chose to withdraw from the wartime-produced *Kyodan* (United Church) and, after the war ended, to form the Reformed Church of Japan, played a pivotal role in how Okada's Christology continued to steer clear of any Japanese leanings. We will examine Okada's obvious connections with Western theologians in the next section.

The particular role that wartime Japanese imperial ideology (*Tennosei*) played in Okada's life and theological development was of central importance. The U.S. Southern Presbyterian seminary in Kobe, from which Okada had graduated in 1929, was closed down, its property eventually taken over by the *Kyodan* (in 1942). Toward the end of the war, Okada was among those forced into labor camps, all the while refusing to participate in Shinto worship. Surely such difficult experiences strengthened his resolve not to fall into any possible amalgamation or perceived syncretism. That resolve included how Okada understood Jesus, the God-Man who had come to him tightly intertwined with Western intellectual categories.

B. Japanese and Western Influences

The four theologians whose Christologies we are considering were Japanese Christian leaders who lived, thought, wrote, and taught in Japan together with other Japanese people. They were also men who interacted, in various ways and to varying degrees, with Western thinkers and Western Christian leaders. Having looked all too briefly at the men's life contexts in Japan, how these men recognized Jesus in connection with both the Japanese and the Western influences that came their way is the subject of this section.

1. Uemura

Jesus the God-Man first intruded into Uemura Masahisa's life at a preparatory school in Tokyo run by James Ballagh, the dynamic American Dutch-Reformed missionary who had come to Japan in 1859. The impressionable 16-year-old Uemura was baptized by Ballagh into Christ's church in 1873. Uemura was soon learning theology at the United Seminary run by Reformed missionaries, leading to his ordination in 1880 and his long and distinguished career in church leadership.

Uemura's relationship with missionaries was not always smooth, however. The first of two particularly rough spots came in the late 1880s, after union talks between the Presbyterians and

Congregationalists had broken down and the Presbyterians decided to reconstitute themselves by name and confessional commitment. Uemura and other Japanese pastors felt overburdened by the several Reformed confessions to which the church, formed in 1877 out of a union brokered by various Reformed missionaries, had adhered.²⁷ The Uemura-led Japanese leaders thus pushed for a simpler confessional stance consisting of the Apostles' Creed and an affixed concise evangelical preamble.²⁸ Ballagh and other missionaries were aghast, seeing the devil's hand in what to them was an obvious rejection of the truth. In the end the Japanese had the votes, so the confessional standards were indeed streamlined per Uemura's recommendation, and despite many of the missionaries' vehement opposition.

Over a decade later, there was a second struggle with missionaries, this time over Uemura's seminary teaching. The precipitating event was the U.S. Southern Presbyterian missionaries' objection to Uemura's use of a theology textbook which they considered liberal.²⁹ Uemura's response was to begin a new seminary, the Nihon Shingakusha.³⁰ This school became extremely influential not only in the Tokyo area but throughout Japan, particularly in Presbyterian and Reformed circles. Uemura thus exhibited a consistent tendency to operate independently of expatriate support and control. The Southern Presbyterian missionaries relocated their theological training focus to a new seminary in Kobe. That will be important background information for Okada Minoru's theological development.

Uemura thus appreciated Western missionary service in Japan, having met Jesus Christ through them as well as receiving their biblical and theological instruction. However, Uemura never went abroad for theological study, and he always labored in Japan on behalf of the Japanese church and society. 主 (Shu; "Lord") *Yaso Kirisuto* was the new ruler for Uemura and the new Christian Japan that he envisioned. Jesus was quite capable of finding a home in Uemura's samurai heritage.

2. Takakura

Having studied as a teenager on a legal studies track within Japan's national educational system, Takakura was well versed in German by the time he moved to Tokyo in 1906 and began attending Uemura's Fujimicho Church. When he soon was baptized and left his law studies in favor of studying at Uemura's new seminary, Takakura was primed to study the increasingly influential German theology that Uemura and others were unable to read. That led to Takakura becoming closely familiar with the German theological currents of his day, many of which were flowing freely into Japan. Takakura stayed abreast of developments in German theology throughout the rest of his career, so much so that he is credited by some as preparing the Japanese theological world for the influx of dialectical theology in the 1930s.³¹

²⁷ The confessional standards were the Heidelberg Catechism, Westminster Standards, and Canons of Dordt. Cf. Jennings 2005, 98.

²⁸ Cf. Jennings, 2005, 99.

²⁹ William Newton Clarke's *An Outline of Christian Theology*. See Soltau's helpful description of the conflict in Soltau, 1982, 95-97.

³⁰ This modest school eventually evolved into the Tokyo United Seminary.

³¹ Cf. Toshio Sato, "The Second Generation," Chapter 2 in Yasua Furuya, ed. and trans., *A History of Japanese Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 50.

Since Uemura found German theology dangerous and American theology superfluous, he helped direct Takakura to go to Edinburgh in 1919 for further studies. Takakura's year there helped him grow in his English capabilities, as well as introduced him into the British theological world. His next year in Oxford was mainly spent reading, particularly Ernst Troeltsch, Friedrich Von Hugel, and Takakura's theological kinsman P. T. Forsyth. A school term in Cambridge exposed Takakura to John Oman, especially his studies of the Old Testament prophets. With his return to Japan in January, 1924, after two-and-one-half years of study in Britain, Takakura was equipped to convey the richest insights he could gain from contemporary English and Scottish theologians.

With such insights intermingled with his longer-standing familiarity with German theology, Takakura became a leading authority in the Japanese Christian world on the latest biblical-theological studies taking place in the Protestant West. That familiarity led the earliest and most widely influential English-language analysis of Takakura's theology to claim that it had developed "by way of Schleiermacher, Ritschl, Herrmann, Von Hugel, Troeltsch, Forsyth, and, finally, the crisis-theology stirrings in Europe, as reflected particularly in Brunner."³² Per such an analysis, then, the Jesus that Takakura knew and preached came to him in German and British garb, all the while in biblically defined categories that were appropriate to a second-generation Japanese Christian leader.

Where such a Western-framework analysis falls short, however, is in its neglect of Takakura's tenacious and multifaceted Japanese heritage and background. It must always be remembered that Takakura, even as a reader of German and of English, thought, ministered, and lived primarily in Japanese. Uemura Masahisa's vitally important role in conveying to Takakura the type of Japanese churchmanship and theologizing he had adapted from missionary mentors was crucial. Moreover, the fundamental role that Takakura's Mahayana, Shin Buddhist heritage played in shaping the deepest instincts and contours of his thinking must not be overlooked.³³ "Because of who Takakura was ..., both Mahayana harmonizing and finding relief from his sinful self had to enter into Takakura's Christological teachings."³⁴ In ways that sometimes moved below the surface even of Takakura's own theological self-awareness, as well as in ways that led to a unique, hybrid, and original formulation of *Fukuinteki Kirisitukyo* ("Evangelical Christianity"), Takakura's theological formulations were identifiably Japanese.

In short, Takakura Tokutaro was a Japanese Christian thinker who appreciated and selectively utilized German- and English-language theology toward concerns that he had within his particular Japanese-Christian world. Jesus Christ proved himself fully capable of coming to Takakura through those multiple avenues.

3. Kumano

Like his older contemporary Takakura, Kumano came to faith in Jesus Christ while a university student through the preaching ministry of Uemura Masahisa. Also like Takakura, Kumano soon

³² Charles H. Germany, *Protestant Theologies in Modern Japan: A History of Dominant Theological Currents from 1920-1960* (Tokyo: IISR Press, 1965), 93-94.

³³ This important yet elsewhere neglected point is analyzed extensively in Jennings 2005.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 327.

entered Takakura's seminary and thus cut his biblical-theological teeth on material supplied by their common teacher. Also similarly, Kumano soon became familiar with the latest German theological trends. It is those German trends that are clearly discernible in the shape of Kumano's theological framework.

Kumano never traveled outside Japan for theological study. His life, study, teaching, and writing all took place in Japan, in Japanese, and for Japanese Christians. We can thus assume that Kumano's thought bore abiding Japanese characteristics in multifaceted ways.³⁵ Surely such sensibilities as those about time, history, sin, and corporate humanity had to be colored in one way or another by engrained Japanese instincts that Kumano carried into his Christian life.

Even so, the central themes of, for example, the eschatological character of theology and of Christology resemble similar themes of German dialectical theology too closely to be ignored. It is not as though Kumano simply reiterated what Barth and Brunner said in equivalent Japanese phrases: such an overly simplistic view of one-way influence would commit the same fallacy as that which was criticized in the section above on Takakura. Japanese and Western analysts alike have noted that "Kumano, although he depends heavily on Western sources,... always adds something significant of his own."³⁶ Particularly because Kumano's theological development so closely coincided with the advance and developments of German dialectical theology, we can safely assumed that those inputs into Kumano's theology were of central importance.

4. Okada

If Kumano's theology evidences strong German lines of input, Okada Minoru's theology most emphatically demonstrates a steady stream of American Reformed theological influence. After learning theology from U.S. Southern Presbyterian missionaries in Kobe, Okada studied further at a newly formed bastion of conservative American Presbyterian and Reformed theological teaching, Westminster Seminary. Okada's clear goal in his Christological discussions was to explain and defend conservative Reformed theology in comparison to other alternatives, including Lutheran understandings. It is remarkable how Okada seemed preoccupied with Reformed Christological distinctives that took shape in relation to Lutheran distinctives in the days of the European Protestant Reformation.

Also telling is Okada's insistence on holding fast to what has already been decided upon as true in the history of Christian theology. What is contextually appropriate not only is not important but in fact to be avoided, particularly if what has been determined to be true is at all threatened. Okada's firm acceptance of the theological style conveyed to him by his conservative Reformed American mentors is clear.

With respect to Okada Minoru, then, Jesus the God-Man came in much the same way as he did to many of the Greek and Latin Church fathers, and then in turn as he came to certain sectors of the European Reformation leaders and their American successors.

³⁵ My lack of familiarity with Kumano's background – including religiously – is a hindrance to exploring this area of the continuing role of Kumano's religious heritage in his theological development.

³⁶ Carl Michalson, *Japanese Contributions to Christian Theology* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), 63.

C. Christological Comparisons and Implications

The method of comparison that we employ of our four theologians' Christologies is of great importance. For instance, one possibility would be simply to compare all of the Christologies with the orthodox, Chalcedonian formulation, and evaluate their values accordingly. This would match in principle Okada's preferred method, plus it would take into account what the rest of the Church has confessed. However, that method would not be in accord with the stated approach explained in this paper's introduction.

Another candidate would be to compare the Christologies' places on a scale running from expatriate influence and traits to Japanese, indigenous characteristics. For the additional step of evaluation, those Christologies landing on the more indigenous end of the scale would, presumably, be evaluated more favorably. This method would appear to more in line (than the first possibility) with this study's central attention to contextual factors for analyzing our theologians' recognitions of Jesus.

However, contextual factors are only part of the guiding scenario here. What the universal Church's "one faith" has to say in an authoritative and even normative sense is another crucial factor. How God speaks in the Bible within particular mother tongues is another foundational element. The comparative method we should employ is not a simple, clear-cut matter.

Our operative framework is that of Jesus intruding into individuals' and societies' lives, with Christians recognizing Jesus in corresponding fashion. How Jesus comes to people, as well as how they recognize him, are going to relate to the factors just mentioned: contextual realities, the Church's universal confession (insofar as such a confession exists or is discernible), and the Bible's teaching within particular vernacular settings. We will use this framework as we compare the Christologies presented and analyzed so far. Evaluations will follow.

1. Jesus' Intrusions and the Theologians' Recognitions

In short, our four theologians described their recognitions of Jesus' intrusions into their worlds as follows:

- To Uemura Masahisa, Jesus was the new Sovereign to whom ultimate loyalty was due. Jesus' deity meant that he was the ultimate being and person, as well as sinless and supernatural.
- For Takakura Tokutaro, Jesus the man had a "musical personality." More than the mere ethical teacher of liberal Christianity, Jesus is "the only Son of God, the Lord and the Savior."
- Kumano Yoshitaka recognized Jesus as the one revealing in his incarnation the eternal Word, the Son of God. He is "historical and at the same time suprahistorical."
- Jesus came to Okada Minoru as the God-Man confessed at Nicaea and Chalcedon, the personal union of divine and human natures.

Moving forward chronologically from Uemura to Okada, we can see a progression toward more exclusively Christian and inherited theological categories. We will explain that progression (in reverse order) in the immediately following section.

2. Context, Confession, Canon

Upon further examination, however, we could say that what appears “exclusively Christian” in Okada’s language could also be described as “post-Nicene Greco-Latin” and “European-Reformation,” i.e., earlier eras in which Christian leaders collectively confessed the Jesus they recognized and which subsequent generations of Christians continued to confess in the name of the universality of true Christian confession. Having had Jesus come to him through those settled categories conveyed by U.S. Southern Presbyterian missionaries, Okada thus transposed his contextual location to one that was familiar to his trusted Christian mentors.

In Kumano’s case, the “exclusively Christian and inherited theological categories” were those employed in contemporary (and recent) Germany, which had a long heritage of intertwined theological-philosophical language. Kumano’s focus on the eschatological character of theology in general, and of Christology in particular, can thus be seen as an absorption and employment of what, again, was familiar to trusted Christian thinkers.

Takakura, too, confessed the Jesus he recognized in such Western thinkers as P. T. Forsyth. At the same time, the twin fact that he met Jesus through Uemura and that he came directly from a Shin Buddhist heritage anchored Takakura in Japanese intellectual territory. That Jesus came to Takakura in that setting produced a recognition on Takakura’s part that did not match exactly with any particular creed external to Japan, although the universality of Takakura’s confession was evident in the shared impulses with Forsyth and others.

Uemura most clearly appears to have been a Christian leader who recognized Jesus in close to connection to his historical context. At the same time, we must be careful to broaden our analysis of Uemura and the others with respect to the specifically theological character of their recognitions of Jesus. To recall the first of our three questions about how people theologize, Uemura and others theologized before ever hearing the Christian gospel, i.e., before Jesus intruded into their settings. Upon hearing of Christ through the expatriate emissaries that God brought to him, Uemura had to recognize Jesus in connection with both the new revelation that had come to him and the former sensibilities he had about his Creator. The long-and-short of the matter is that Christians’ language does not have to be theologically familiar (in relation to other Christians’ theologies) in order for it to be theological per se.

How the canon of Scripture comparatively held sway over our four theologians’ thought, put differently, to what comparative extent our four theologians’ recognitions of Jesus were informed by the Bible, may also not be as clear as some might want. From an inerrantist point of view, Okada’s formal view and use of Scripture was right and the others’ were lacking. Operatively, however, all four theologians were deeply informed by the Bible. The risen Jesus of Nazareth most assuredly came to each man using the language(s) of Scripture (original and translated). Judging which men were the most “biblical” in terms of faithfulness to the Scriptures’ original meaning(s) is a matter that must also take into account appropriateness and relevance of the theologians’

understandings with respect to the Bible within their contexts, as well as with respect to the wider confession of the Christian Church.

3. Evaluations

We have already entered this area in our analyses above. Whose Christologies were best, most accurate, most biblical, as well as to be preferred and used by Christians today? First of all, I want to affirm that Jesus Christ claimed, instructed, and reshaped all of the men we have considered. Each of them clearly understood himself to be a follower of Jesus, and each of them most sincerely articulated the Jesus he recognized in the Bible. Second, as noted immediately above the men's formal views of Scripture are not the only factor that should be used in evaluating their overall theologies and Christologies.

a. Instructive for Evaluation

Regarding our evaluations of these men, we need first to take to heart the lesson that evaluating any Christology must take into account a constellation of elements that collectively shape Christians' views of who Jesus is, and shapes how Jesus intrudes into particular peoples' lives and situations. The Bible's original presentation(s) of Jesus, the wider Christian Church's various confessions of Jesus, and the multifaceted contextual realities that help determine the appropriateness and relevance of Christologies all interrelate. That was certainly true for Uemura, Takakura, Kumano, and Okada. Did our four theologians rightly confess Jesus as "Lord"? Well, not exactly, especially since they confessed him as 「主」. Are both of those terms "biblical"? Seemingly so, but the appropriateness and relevance of each translation of biblical originals must never be exempt from re-examination.³⁷ Such questions about linguistic context must mix with other questions about the Bible's original meaning, the wider Church's confessions, and other contextual factors in our evaluations.

As we hold together various aspects of the four men's teachings about Jesus, we can say that each theologian recognized Jesus Christ in ways that are instructive in particular ways, both positively and negatively, about Christological formation. All four men's understandings of Jesus reflected their wider contexts: Uemura in the post-Tokugawa Meiji Era; Takakura in a rapidly modernized nation-state; Kumano in a crisis-embroiled Japan; Okada in an oppressive and religiously hostile Japan. Those contextual realities affected as well how each man used Western theological inputs in coming to grips with who Jesus is. Of course, the particularity of the Western inputs, German or conservative American, for example, had a great deal to do with how our theologians articulated their Christologies. All Christians, ourselves included, are similarly connected to our wider contexts and lines of input in our understandings of Jesus' person and work.

b. Were Their Christologies "Properly Reformed"?

Examining our theologians from a Reformed point of view involves looking for Reformed preferences. For starters, all four appreciated Calvin. Takakura, for example, is known for

³⁷ With respect to the "biblical" appropriateness and especially relevance of confessing Jesus as "Lord" in an early-twenty-first-century U.S. setting, see Jennings, 2007, 46-49.

introducing Calvin into Japanese theological circles.³⁸ Takakura and Okada (the latter especially) drew on the worldview emphases of Abraham Kuyper of the Netherlands. Certainly all of these leaders appreciated a Reformed emphasis on God's kingship over all things: Uemura was seeking a new Japan, whereas Kumano and Okada hoped for God's reign over a militaristic imperial ideology that brought suffering upon them and many of their fellows. All stressed salvation by God's grace alone.

At the same, sensitivity to the contextual nuances of what "Reformed" looked like for each man is necessary. Such sensitivity helps in seeing how they utilized and stressed different aspects of the wide range of "Reformed" elements. Kumano drew on German dialectical theology, whereas Okada's stance was aligned with a conservative American Reformed view³⁹ that saw Barth and others like him as neo-orthodox and ultimately anti-Christian. Uemura led the late-1880s movement to throw off the shackles of Reformed confessions, while Okada expounded the Westminster Standards as biblical truth. Given the men's relationships (including with Western missionaries) and socio-political settings, what it meant for each of them to be "Reformed" in modernizing Japan was not a straightforward identity.

Takakura's and especially Kumano's emphasis on Christianity's "eschatological" character, and what that meant for Christology, is a striking feature to consider within a Reformed framework. Within classical Calvinism including Dutch and Anglo Reformed circles of the last two centuries, eschatological understandings often have favored a particular view of the millennium (pre-millennialism, a-millennialism, or post-millennialism), in all cases within a linear view of history as created, providentially guided, and culminated by God in the first and second comings of Jesus Christ. Takakura and especially Kumano, however, stressed a different meaning of eschatology. As one analyst has put it, "Eschatology in Kumano's position refers not to the so-called last things but to the foundation of temporal existence."⁴⁰ Hence predestination, for example, is eschatological for Kumano because it "is not known through world history. It is known only through the revelation of the being, the act, and the promise of God in Jesus Christ." As with Barth, for Kumano "the object of predestination is one man only, Jesus Christ..., who is the eternal Word of God under conditions of human history."⁴¹ Christ, then, is the eschatological figure for Kumano, the disclosure in history of God's eternal love and grace.

Is that Reformed teaching? Not in the classical Calvinistic, Dutch and Anglo sense. It is Reformed in its sympathies with Calvin's theocentric vision of the world and God's dealings with it? Likely. Is it appropriately Reformed and Japanese, particularly considering Japan's intertwined non-linear views of time and history?⁴² Depending on how one weights contextual considerations as well as various Western Reformed streams, answers would differ on that question.

c. Were Their Christologies Biblical and Evangelical?

³⁸ Sato, 1992, 49.

³⁹ Especially including Machen and Van Til.

⁴⁰ Michalson, 1960, 47.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 66.

⁴² One could point to both Buddhist and imperial influences here.

While the previous question might have interested only a few of us at the conference, this question should be meaningful to everyone. Answering the question will resemble our method just exercised. That is, we can affirm that Jesus came to these men in their various hopeful and suffering settings as the Divine Savior presented in the Bible. At the same time, which aspects of Jesus' person and work they emphasized, and how they described him in their own categories of thought matched up with biblical categories, requires careful consideration of their contextual particularizes in tandem with the wider Church's confession of who Jesus is.

For post-World War II Evangelicals in Japan, largely connected to Anglo evangelicals and committed to biblical inerrancy, Okada was most clearly biblical and evangelical. The others preached Jesus as divine, but the Jesus they preached had certain traits slightly different from what we post-World War II Evangelicals confess. That is, Uemura's emphasis on Christ's salvific work on the Cross has been called into question; and, in tandem with their lack of commitment to biblical inerrancy, Takakura and especially Kumano had notions of eternity's interface with history that do not match similar notions familiar to us here. That dissonance forces us to ask the question afresh of what is biblical and evangelical vis-à-vis Christology and notions of eternity and history. There is not space here to pursue that question, but at least we have begun to frame it in a manner appropriate to contextual considerations.

d. Hope and Suffering

Uemura, Takakura, Kumano, and Okada all had certain hopes for their personal lives, for Japan, and for the greater kingdom of God. Each of the four men knew suffering as well. All of their hopes and experiences of suffering were contextually particular. Uemura's family situation changed dramatically with the advent of the Meiji Era. Takakura and others of his generation wrestled deeply with the "problem of the self" in mid-Meiji. Kumano and Okada suffered through the dark war years of the 1940s.

In the midst of their suffering, Jesus became the ultimate hope for all four men. The "Lord" (「主」) Jesus was Uemura's hope for a new Japan. Takakura found Jesus to be the solution to his wrestlings with identity. Jesus, God's eschatological disclosure of grace, was the theological key for Kumano's "lifework[, which] was the problem of faith and history."⁴³ Jesus gave Okada and his colleagues a sure and everlasting hope through the travails of an estranged and sometimes hostile Japanese environment.

Jesus is the hope of the world. He proved himself afresh to the four men we have considered, especially in the midst of their suffering and challenges.

IV. Conclusion

Through considering samples of the English translations of the articulated Christologies of four successive Japanese-Reformed theologians, we have seen how Jesus Christ intruded into rapidly changing modern Japanese contexts that were full of hope and suffering. We have noted how our theologians' absorption of both Japanese and Western influences exemplified the globalizing

⁴³ Sato, 1997, 73.

theology of our day. Through comparing these theologians with each other, we have taken small but important steps in understanding the significance of Jesus Christ in modern, pluralistic and democratic societies in Asia and the West.

No setting is off limits to King Jesus. He is willing and even eager to shoulder his way into all settings. He will not be sequestered off by previous and foreign confessions. Those confessions, rather, should serve to accent his universality and therefore his relevance to all situations. Jesus is both universal and particular in his relations with all peoples. May his presence in Asia, the West, and those settings that involved intermingling between the two be more and more evident as the day of Jesus' reappearing draws ever nearer.