

Advent of a Meiji Prophet and Carlylean Man of Letters: Uchimura Kanzō, 1885-1896

Hiroko Willcock

The last two decades of the nineteenth century was a pivotal phase of Japan's cultural revolution, the transition from a decentralized Confucian and Buddhist society with a highly restricted interest in the outside world to a centralized, polity absorbing outside values and the imperialism of the West. It was the most vital and significant period of both the life and the thought development of Uchimura Kanzō (1861-1930), the founder of the Mukyōkai movement, a social critic, essayist, anti-war activist, environmentalist and an eminent vanguard of cultural acculturation in modern Japan. He was one of a new breed of Meiji intellectuals who, away from the bureaucratic ladder of success and security, the concern expected of the former samurai class, found writing as a means of earning a living, one that allowed them to express freely their liberal philosophy and to take on the role of political commentator. To pursue the new trade of an independent man of letters, Uchimura followed in the footsteps of Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881), one of the most influential intellectuals of the nineteenth century. Carlyle, the sage of Chelsea, became his mentor as the greatest preacher of righteousness, and as a modern prophet.

Carlyle's influence in England alone was immense. It spread across a vast spectrum of people from committed Christians to emergent Communists in addition to such notables as Mills, Dickens, Kingsley, Ruskin and Engels. In Japan Carlyle had a profound influence on intellectual and religious leaders such as Nitobe Inazō and Uemura Masahisa, Arishima Takeo, and Miyake Set'chō, as well as on the educated Meiji Japanese youth. ¹⁾ Uchimura was arguably the most famous Japanese follower of Carlyle in the Meiji period. He shared such similarities with Carlyle that Uchimura came to be labelled variously as a 'little Carlyle,' 'the Carlyle of Japan,' *yogenka* (prophet) and later in his mature life 'the Sage of Kashiragi.' Carlyle had the most profound influence on the development of Uchimura's thought during this key period and the Carlylean moral and spiritual philosophy became instrumental in crystallizing the foundation of Uchimura's Christian moral thought.

The paper will explore the affinities and disparities between the thoughts of Uchimura Kanzō and Thomas Carlyle, with a focus on a comparative analysis of Uchimura's envisioned great men of Japan revealed in his work *Daihyōteki nihonjin* (*Representative Men of Japan*) and Carlylean heroes advocated in such works as *On Heroes and Hero Worship*. Reflecting the substantial influence Uchimura wielded in Japan as one of the most influential Japanese Protestant leaders both during and after his life, there has been a profusion of works on him. Since the Second World War his life and numerous writings have been under scrutiny by scholars and critics in approaches from biographical to a wide spectrum of disciplines: sciences, philosophy, socio-political, literary and cultural studies, as well as Christology. Nevertheless, the need for vigorous research into the

depth of Uchimura's thought has yet to be met. The current paper will provide a deeper insight into the development of his thought. It will also provide a greater understanding of the diverse and dynamic movement of the pattern of thought acculturation in the period of modernization in which the Japanese consciously sought analogous elements of the existing Japanese and the Western traditions at the initial stage of their fusion.

A Carlylean Man of Letters ²⁾

Uchimura's productive career as a man of letters and moral conscience of the nation began in the midst of his despair, uncertainty, insecurity, poverty, all of which were brought on largely by his insistence on the unity of principles and their practice. His inability to find a fellow Japanese of "power and influence" ³⁾ and of similar principles and discipline who could join him in realizing his ideal drew him to embrace Carlyle as "my master of the trade in which I am now only an apprentice." ⁴⁾ The pattern of his career as a writer and a social and political commentator indeed followed that of his master. Uchimura would have felt some sort of kindred spirit in the plight of Carlyle's struggle against poverty, insomnia and isolation, as well as the struggle to find his own faith independent of any denomination, and free from formal, institutionalized, Christianity. So would he have found a great strength and comfort in Carlyle's struggle in pursuing the unity of thought and action. Empiricism was a quintessential element of Carlyle's thought. Thought for Carlyle was the "life-fountain and motive-soul of action" ⁵⁾ and "Thought and actions should be in one flesh as soul and body against the danger of dividing the world by separating them through the rampage of hypocrisy and atheism." ⁶⁾ Emphasising the primacy of actions, Carlyle dismisses the mere existence and necessity of a philosophy as evil, for man is meant for action, as "in the perfect state, all Thought were but the picture and inspiring symbol of Action" ⁷⁾ and "the end of man is an Action, and not a Thought." ⁸⁾ Throughout his life he fought to practise this belief through his powerful pen and persistence in maintaining his independence.

Uchimura's earnest embrace of Carlyle's emphasis on the primacy of empiricism was also indicated by the great appeal Uchimura found in Carlyle's portrayal of Cromwell in *Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches*. Carlyle focused on Cromwell's emphasis on action rather than theories and speculation, as well as on his emphasis on the virtues of man based on deep family affection, tenderness towards sufferers and the religion of the Bible. Uchimura found some features of Cromwell's ideas interpreted by Carlyle akin to principal elements of values he himself embraced: Cromwell's disregard for doctrines and narrow and oppressive formalism, and his emphasis on practicality and freedom of conscience for all forms of worship subject to the faith according to the Bible. ⁹⁾

Uchimura was also drawn to Carlyle for his very power of expression; his acuteness, creative imagination and descriptive power, which had no parallel in the English literary tradition. Like many in mid nineteenth century England and America and the Western educated Japanese youth of the 1890s, Uchimura was captivated by Carlyle. The sage's imaginative canvas, unfolded in such works as *Sartor Resartus*, *The French Revolution* and *Past and Present*, reproduced more the synthesis of discursive and recurrent symbols than reasoned discourses, in a complex and cumulative style redolent of bards and prophets of the Old Testament. Like many others, Uchimura at times attempted to follow Carlyle's style, as is evident in his correspondence and essays of the 1890s. He

also learned from Carlyle the mode of the short moral aphorism in which he came to excel, and Carlyle was an inspiration for their style.¹⁰⁾ Uchimura's closeness with Carlyle went beyond the superficiality of the outward physical likeness, a feeling of kindred spirit, or his very power of expression. Under closer scrutiny, his affinities with Carlyle's thought and religious attitude were profound.

The Affinity and Disparity of Religious Thought and the World View

One immediately discernible affinity in their religious attitude was their rejection of the existence of 'secular' churches as an essential prerequisite for faith. Both Carlyle and Uchimura rejected church doctrines and creeds as a hindrance to individual's search for religious truth. They both believed churches stifled man's interaction with God with their rituals and dogma. Having lost his faith in orthodox Christianity and in the truth of the Bible, Carlyle considered God's existence not as a fact dependent for its certainty on church authority, but the main fact and reality realized by the individual man. Uchimura, perhaps with more zeal than Carlyle, fought against the institutionalized church, which he saw as potentially the most powerful element in the fossilization of faith. Uchimura found an accord between his concept of *mukyōkai* and Carlyle's natural supernaturalism in so far as their religious thought was underpinned by the link between the Universe created by the supreme indubitable and the divine nature juxtaposed with the tenet of independence and self-cultivation. In his gospel of natural supernaturalism Carlyle replaces phenomenal nature with the divine revelation of nature, and the church with the illimitable temple of the Universe, as the focus of divine existence. Similarly, in his tenet of *mukyōkai* Uchimura offered to his fellow Mukyōkai Christians their church in the God-created Universe with "the blue sky as the ceiling, the green fields as the floor, flowers as the mattress, branches of pine trees as musical instruments, birds as choir, the mountain tops as the pulpit and God himself as the minister giving the sermon."¹¹⁾ He shared with Carlyle the view that the unity of mankind could be achieved only by the individual achieving his own independence, and by independent individuals forming a strong unified entity.¹²⁾

A most distinct affinity in their religious thought was found in their religious reformist pattern, manifest in their offer of a new Book of Revelation. The nineteenth century carried a legacy of the eighteenth century dominance of scepticism and materialism which diminished the divine to the level of the natural. This resulted in the nineteenth century phenomenon of the alienation from religion as the locus of divinity. Acutely conscious of the negative outcome of the phenomenon, Carlyle offered the alternative, a new gospel of natural supernaturalism in his work *Sartor Resartus* in which he elevated man and Nature into the domain of divine that replaced in their primacy the Calvinist God, the Bible, church and saints. For his offer of the hope of remaking the world, Carlyle formulated the conflux of three volumes of the divine Book of Revelation; the first volume, the Scripture, the second volume, Nature as the "Living Garment of God,"¹³⁾ and the "Time-vesture of God"¹⁴⁾ and the third volume, History as the "essence of innumerable Biographies"¹⁵⁾ and also narratives of recorded events of men, particularly of great men.

There is a striking resemblance between Carlyle's natural supernaturalism of the divine Book of Revelation and Uchimura's tripod of faith: Nature, Man and the Bible,

the principal tenet of his religious thought. When Uchimura first clearly emerged with his idea of the tripod of faith around 1885, he was preoccupied with a rational justification of the Bible and the synthesis of the three elements as the embodiment of God's immutable truth. By the turn of the twentieth century, Uchimura formulated into his theology the tripod of faith, the unity of man, Nature and the Scripture, as the embodiment of the existence of the Bible. The basis of his belief was balanced on the concept of the Bible consisting of elements, or texts given to mankind as God's revelation: Scripture, Nature and History. Nature is the creation of God that encompasses all creations of the world while history is the divine course for man to experiment God's will. Scripture sustains the mystery and wonder of God while Nature is the place of practicality and facts. There is a perfect, unified harmony and a balance of mutual dependency between the three elements. With scientific facts of Nature, superstition is eradicated from the Scripture. With the infinite mysteries of the Scripture, any reliance upon scientific omnipotence, or dogmatism is checked, and with secular knowledge and practice accumulated from the past to the present and on to the future, the balance of the interrelationship of the three entities is secured and maintained.¹⁶⁾ Unlike the romantic, transcendental, nature of Carlyle's *Book of Revelation*, Uchimura's tenet of the tripod was more concerned with the present and empirical truth, although he was to focus increasingly on the teleological scope of his religious faith.

As in Carlyle's formulation, Uchimura's three entities were the essential elements given to mankind for God's revelations. His gospel of faith links Heaven, earth and all creation with man's ephemeral doings, and they in turn nurture and strengthen the faith by their harmonious interconnection. However, Uchimura's tenet stressed more emphatically the synthesis and the harmonious balance of the interrelationship than Carlyle's conflux of the three entities. Moreover, the romantic and divine elevation of Nature and history found in Carlyle's new gospel were much subdued in Uchimura's tenet. In one sense, Uchimura's synthetic spectrum of history was also akin to the thought of the liberal Anglicans in their attempt to combine empirical science and moral discipline, the didactic nature of their concern for the present and a predilection to view history according to an inclusive, synthetic Christian morality, as well as in their belief in the providential course of history.¹⁷⁾ In Carlyle's premise, the three elements merged in the divine world of the universe. For Uchimura the three elements were immutable instruments to verify God's existence without elevating man and history into the realm of divinity. They were the tangible evidence of the revelation of God viewed by the individual firmly rooted in the present linked directly to the divine righteousness. Carlyle exalted his third volume, *History*, as the chief focus of his divine *Book of Revelation*. Sharing some similarities with the view of Victorian Anglican scholars, Carlyle was strongly attached to the Judaic type of historical understanding where a teleological scheme of time described in the Biblical narratives determined history, not as process, but as purpose. His concept of history remained much in the all-embracing synthesis of concerns of the world such as metaphysics, theology and ethics.¹⁸⁾ History for Carlyle was an innumerable series of biographies and the highest gospel, for "Great men are the inspired (speaking and acting) Texts of that divine BOOK OF REVELATIONS, whereof a Chapter is completed from epoch to epoch."¹⁹⁾ With the sacredness of History in which the records of great men were inspired texts, the

human was elevated to the level of the divine as the “Life of every good man is still an indubitable Gospel”.²⁰⁾ Paradoxically, while he treated history as the matter of facts, he at the same time regarded history as the true poetry, and properly interpreted, all History as sacred.²¹⁾

While Uchimura too considered History reality and genuine poetry, in his tenet of the tripod of faith History was treated pre-eminently as the continuity of matters of facts and man’s domain of experience and his experiments to realize the divine will revealed in the Bible without the elevation of mankind to divinity. Similarly, though he exalted great men as the focus of the biographical approach to history, they were never given the accolade of divinity. On the contrary, there was a clear separation between the illimitable God and man. Carlyle’s natural supernaturalism reveals the divinity equally validly through his three volumes. In contrast, man in Uchimura’s tripod of faith is clearly subordinate to the divine will. Realization of the transcending to the divine way is reached only by self-cultivation to attain the moral principle. Self-cultivation in the process assures the attainment to the higher degree of the superior moral man. In this sense, Uchimura’s tripod of faith resembles Nakae Tōju’s concept of Shang Huangti (the Supreme Ultimate), the anthropomorphized divine ruler of Heaven to whom man was linked by the attainment of moral righteousness through self-cultivation. The disparity between them was in part due to the difference in the intellectual and socio-political climates they faced. Uchimura’s pressing need to grapple with his attempts to reconcile evolutionary theories, empirical science and the divine with his religious thought and, thus, his trinity of faith was the consequence of his probe into mysterious passages in Genesis and Revelation. In part, the disparity between them was due to Uchimura’s undeniable, strong attachment to the Japanese moral and spiritual tradition.

The counterpart to Carlyle’s divine Book of Revelation on Nature and History was Uchimura’s examination of a close link between history, geography and civilizations in his works, *Chijinron (The Earth and Man)* and *Kōkoku shidan (A History of Rise of Nations)*. The works were the elaboration and expansion, and an epistemological attempt to verify his theory, of the tripod of the divine revelation. In both *Chijinron* and *Kōkoku shidan* he set out to verify the formation of physical and human geographies being not by accident, but by God’s design and his belief in the revelation of the immutable principles of man manifest in the historical development of nature. His espousal of theistic evolution was found in the convergence of Darwinian evolution and a divine plan of purpose, history, man and geography manifested in the divine Providence, interconnecting with the moral principles and liberal thought and practice, and remaining in constant and unchanging state across time and place and beyond the demarcation of environmental boundary. Therefore, as all physical existence had purposes and allotted functions, so did man have their allotted functions in order to attain the ultimate and the progress of man was merely a projection of the immutable and perpetual.

While *Chijinron* and *Kōkoku shidan* were Uchimura’s works on the verification of divine revelation, his *Daihyōteki nihonjin (Representative Men of Japan)* was the corroboration of history as the recorded events of great men, that would accord with the third volume of Carlyle’s divine Book of Revelation. Following Carlyle, who pioneered the biographical approach to history, Carlylean heroes in *On Heroes and Hero Worship* found their

Japanese counterparts in prominent men in the history of Japan in *Daihyōteki nihonjin*.

Representative Men of Japan and Carlylean Heroes of Sincerity

In 1894 Uchimura published *Japan and the Japanese* in which he focused on five prominent men in the history of Japan and the legacies they had left. It was a result of Uchimura's attempt, on the one hand, to illuminate the greatness of the Japanese people, and on the other, to delineate universal moral elements common to both Japan and the West. The work was in part a natural outcome of his concern for the country, a sentiment already apparent before it was intensified in his struggle with the correlation of self to the externality and the discovery of Jeremiah the Prophet as a source for his principal tenet, 'Japan and Christ,' during his sojourn in America in 1885-1888.²²⁾ As were most educated Japanese of the time, Uchimura was saddened by the misconception by the West of Japan as inferior and uncivilized. By introducing to the West great Japanese men of the past, he hoped that the world would show more respect and consideration in their dealings with Japan. While Carlyle's six types of great men in *On Heroes and Hero Worship* are chosen from widely distant countries and epochs to "make manifest the meanings of Heroism" and "the divine relation which in all times unites a Great Man to other men,"²³⁾ Uchimura's representative men were focused on the didactic mission to provide the readers with the awareness of the Japanese moral tradition, equal to the West in its quality.²⁴⁾

Confucian moral tradition and civic nationalist sentiment constituted two essential elements in the undercurrent of Uchimura's religious thought during this period and they were apparent in his theory of great men. His representative men of Japan were men of independence and pioneers who, overcoming hardship and obstacles, dedicated themselves to the service of the people. They remained faithful to their own belief and relied on their conviction which inevitably often brought them into conflict with the status quo. Uchimura focused on the practice and fulfillment of moral principles as the foremost concern for the kind of greatness found in man. His representative men possessed greatness as they shared uniformly the features apparent in the virtuous men who practised *Shidō* (the Way of Samurai) to their utmost to fulfil their mission.²⁵⁾ The essential elements of Confucian moral values such as righteousness, benevolence, filial piety, loyalty and sincerity were emphasized in the *Shidō* tradition which samurai, as their social rank demanded, had to strive to practise. Echoing the Satō Issai line of *Shidō* teaching, Uchimura's great men placed the pursuit of moral principles above the execution of the political and administrative system of the state, as moral principles were absolute while the state was transient.²⁶⁾ The fulfillment of service to the people, which was their mission, was attainable only through the individual practice and attainment of the moral principles. The practice of moral values for Uchimura meant sincerity of thought and originality of mind in action. They were essential elements underpinning the source of greatness in man.

Of the moral elements his representative men sought to attain, Uchimura emphasised sincerity as the quintessential element in the formation of virtue and greatness in men. Indeed, the tenet of sincerity is the principal element in understanding Uchimura's manner and attitude. In his formation of thought, sincerity was the faithful realization of one's belief, akin to the idea of Wang Yangming's *zhi liangzhi* (fulfilling innate

knowledge), combined with the practice of *zhixing heyi* (the unity of thought and action).

His strong emphasis on the concept of sincerity echoed his unfailing criticism of the Meiji society. Not only did he attack the Meiji modern education system for the lack of sincerity that permeated it, but he went further to attribute Japan's socio-political ills, Japan's bullying of China, people's preference for ephemeral literature and their inertia in the face of political constraint against the diffusion of liberal values, to the same want of sincerity.²⁷⁾

Uchimura's representative men and heroes all loathed the false, or the superficial, had an insight to distinguish the truth from the false and a courage and conviction to practise sincerity of mind and heart.²⁸⁾ Uchimura's concept of sincerity in the unity of thought and action was possible only by the empirical pursuit of the attainment of moral principles. What Uchimura meant by sincerity, therefore, was the unity of moral knowledge and action. He criticized Nichiren, arguably the most strikingly radical Buddhist reformer, for his neglect of moral teaching. Uchimura observed that Nichiren's knowledge of the law remained in his role as a bibliolater and, thus, there was a lack of unity of knowledge of the law and action according to the sincerity of mind and heart.²⁹⁾

Uchimura's heroes were also marked by their emphasis on practicality and the present as facts of reality that were integral parts of moral principles. With their sincerity of heart and mind and benevolence, the essential ingredient to lead the people, Uchimura's representative men were uniformly great leaders as they dedicated themselves to their concern for the people with an unflinching conviction in their own faith. Thus, their greatness was recognized by Uchimura in the moral values he emphasised and they practised. While the moral values that largely shaped Uchimura's great men of Japan were much in the mode of Japanized Confucian thought and *Shidō*, they were also much in accord with those of the heroes Carlyle glorified in his *On Heroes and Hero Worship*. Indeed, Uchimura's theory of great men illustrated in his *Japan and the Japanese* had affinities with the Carlylean hero theory. The distinct affinities were found in the moral values Uchimura and Carlyle emphasised in forming their theories of heroes and the manner in which they identified men as great heroes.

Like his Japanese apprentice of the trade, the essential quality Carlyle sought in a great hero was sincerity and virtue. It was his utmost concern that the man "stood bare, not cased in euphemistic coat-of-mail: grappled like a giant, face to face, heart to heart, with the naked truth of things."³⁰⁾

In the role and function of men of letters Carlyle, and Uchimura, were in parallel with Wang Yangming's concept of *zhixing heyi* that extended the premise of action to include learning, investigation, thinking and discussion in order to achieve the oneness of knowledge and action which was the practice of sincerity. Distinguished from the primary meaning of the concept of action as a call specifically for political action, or the Hegelean notion of action as being detachment of self from external reality, Carlyle's concept of action remained primarily in the domain of self attainment of the spiritual and moral principles. For both Carlyle and Uchimura the stage of their action in their unity of thought was set for their roles of writers and social and political critics. Furthermore, Carlyle's sincerity as speaking in some sort from the heart of nature meant that the principle of sincerity required for being a hero as man of letters extended to

encompass the parts of priests, poets, and prophets all in one hero because they were all believers in “the divine truth of things; seers, seeing through the shows of things, and worshippers of the divine truth of things.”³¹⁾ The great man of letters as priest, poet and prophet was not capable of being insincere as he was open to the divine significance of life and nature. Nor could he live on unrealities as he was either aware of the awful realities of things, or could not live but by facts. Like Luther and Knox, he possessed the greatness of the hero for his ability to recognize an as yet unrealized truth and to articulate its arrival by interpreting and revealing a voice from the unseen Heaven. Sparked by the demands of the times and the environment he was rendered a prophet, who, “burning with mild equable radiance”, was an enlightener of daily life.³²⁾ As with Carlyle’s Johnson who preached as prophet the gospel “clear your mind of cant,”³³⁾ when their time is bad, men of letters as priests and prophets, and as sons of nature and original men in the artificial world could not but act to make it better. Such elements that determined Carlyle’s ideal hero would inevitably render him a revolutionary, or a radical reformer revered for his indomitable spirit of resistance and defiance.

The similarities between Uchimura’s representative men and Carlylean heroes indicate that his work was inspired by Carlyle. There are distinct traces of Carlyle in *Japan and the Japanese*. Uchimura indeed adopted some Carlylean phrases such as “Religion is man’s chiefest concern” and “the sincerest Manworship.”³⁴⁾ And when Uchimura admonished the contemporary Japanese for being afraid of the non-scientific, insincere and cowardly, and basing their actions entirely on the “seeable” rather than “foreseeable,” or, when comparing Commodore Perry and Ninomiya Sontoku, he saw their differences only in their outward garments of destiny woven by the “World - Spirit,”³⁵⁾ Uchimura’s mode of thinking certainly had a distinct touch of Carlyle. Furthermore, Uchimura was probably inspired by Carlyle’s pioneering device of biographical history to introduce the great Japanese of the past and explore the essence of Japaneseness. However, Uchimura’s purpose and the objects of his primary concerns in *Japan and the Japanese* were distinctly apart from those of Carlyle. In search of a way to improve society and bring about a moral and spiritual rejuvenation to serve the nation and the world, Carlyle was driven by the feeling of urgency and desperation for the emergence of one outstanding hero. In contrast, Uchimura was driven by his expectation of ordinary people becoming morally superior men for the service of the nation and the world.

The Carlylean hero is Godlike, or God- inspired, and maintains the divine relation that unites him to other men. The ontological explanation of a great man was given as the essence of our being “a breath of Heaven” in which God revealed himself in a great man and the hero’s body became the holiest form of “the temple in the Universe.”³⁶⁾ A great man was worshipped as the noblest godlike form of man and like a “Sacred Pillar of Fire”³⁷⁾ through admiration, submission, veneration and fervour shown by others. However, faithful to the type of heroes he preferred, most of Carlyle’s outstanding heroes are men of letters such as Dante, Johnson, Rousseau and Burns, or revolutionary religious leaders such as Cromwell and Luther, heroes worshipped not for their exercise of authority, but for their defiance and resistance. As Rosenberg argues, Carlyle was in desperate search for the emergence of a great man, and driven to resort to *On Heroes and Hero Worship* to revive the spirit of hero worship as the hope of remaking the kind

of the world envisioned in *Sartor Resartus* faded and his fear of the possible spread of an anarchist trend in Europe deepened.³⁸⁾ He felt that the world needed a hero to whom others would “loyally surrender themselves and [who would] tell them for the day and hours” what they were to do, so that they could “find their own welfare in doing so.”³⁹⁾ Carlyle’s heroes such as Luther and Knox were outstanding heroes not so much because they were great priests, but because they were reformers, the chivalrous, interminably battling kind, leading the people not to a quiet faith, but into a mire of perilous and precarious conflicts. Likewise, Uchimura emphasised an indomitable spirit of defiance and resistance in the pursuit of righteous causes displayed by his representative men such as Saigō, Sontoku, Nakae and Nichiren. Nevertheless, the purpose of Carlyle in promoting hero worship was born out of fear and desperation. In contrast, Uchimura was motivated by his earnest nationalist sentiment, anxious to provide a better understanding of the Japanese moral tradition to the Westerners and he hoped, at the same time, to articulate universal values by delineating elements of the Japanese moral tradition found also in the West.

While *On Heroes and Hero Worship* manifestly shows that Carlyle heavily relied on the great man to lead the society, Uchimura’s concerns were more focused on the moral education of the nation in the reality of the present and moral values that could be effected collectively by the ordinary individual readers, generating a force to bring about the flourishing of the state. Whereas Uchimura’s treatment of his representative men focuses mainly on a positive optimism regarding the past that continued to exist in the reality of the present, Carlyle’s desperation in his unsuccessful search for a great hero, magnified the frustration and discontent with society he displays in *On Heroes and Hero Worship*. The difference in what motivated them to select their prominent men, naturally, added to the difference in their treatment of the great men: Carlyle’s godlike heroes to be worshipped and elevated, contrasting with Uchimura’s very human characters endowed with the national spirit to act as models; and Carlyle’s fine heroes, predominantly revolutionary religious leaders and men of letters, as opposed to the diversity of Uchimura’s great men with roles that symbolized firmly the importance of their professions for the building of a modern nation. The disparities in the purpose and the object of interest found between *Japan and the Japanese* and *On Heroes and Hero Worship* were magnified by Uchimura’s primary concern for his exploration of a worldview in the confluence of the nationalist with the universal, an identification of a pattern of Japanese acculturation and syncretism that shaped his approach to the development of his thought.⁴⁰⁾

Furthermore, the contrast between Carlylean heroes and Uchimura’s great men of Japan, manifested, for example, in the difference between the concepts of *agape* and *ren*, is reflected in the difference between Carlyle’s desire to elevate his heroes to be endowed with divine qualities and Uchimura’s focus on moral quality. Carlyle attempted to glorify humanistic elements of the theistic tradition by extending a Christian notion that humans and nature were capable of reflecting perfect, divine, qualities while Uchimura attempted to synthesise the theistic tradition with both theistic and humanistic elements of the moral tradition by emphasising the Neo-Confucian notion that every man was potentially perfectible and responsible for his own salvation. In *Japan and the Japanese* Uchimura highlights the Japanese espousal of Wang Yangming’s idea, which went

beyond the metaphysical limits of Zhu Xi, that Heaven and earth and the myriad things were one body and, therefore, the world was one family and the country was one person in the practice of *ren*. This concept was reflected in Ninomiya's understanding of Heaven. It was also manifest in Saigō Takamori's idea of Heaven.

Uchimura found in Carlylean thought the affinity and the unity of the Christian and the Japanese tradition through the principle of sincerity. If one were to apply Carlyle's often used words, one would declare that removed from the garment of theological and ethical terms, or creationist and moral contexts, both would stand 'naked' in the same principle and attainment.

While we have focused on *Japan and the Japanese* for the understanding of Uchimura's syncretism which he himself identified as characteristic of Japanese acculturation, the impact of *On Hero and Hero Worship* as a source of reference was undeniable. In defiance of his own warning to his readers that *On Heroes and Hero Worship* was capable of exerting great harm upon earnest, impressionable readers who might become convinced of the emergence of a divine, human hero, he himself strove to seek guidance from Carlyle, "the greatest preacher of righteousness the nineteenth century had – the nearest approach to Jeremiah or Ezekiel that this materialistic century can ever make."⁴¹ For Carlyle, a man of letters was what an older generation might have termed 'Prophet, Priest, Divinity,' "our most important modern person, the age-of-print hero."⁴² The path to become a great man as men of letters, as defined by Carlyle and developed and trodden by Burns, Johnson and Carlyle himself, was the path with which Uchimura found much in accord. The tenet of sincerity was the axiom of thought and all actions as a great man of letters. It was the foundation of Uchimura's thought.

Carlyle's appeal for the emergence of such men of sincerity determined the means by which Uchimura pursued his mission. In the last decade of the rapid socio-political changes of nineteenth century Japan Uchimura apprenticed himself not only as a man of letters, but also as a priest and reformer, to dedicate himself in "perpetual Priesthood, from age to age, teaching all men that a God is still present in their life."⁴³ It was the kind of role in which one might dare to engage in "faithful valorous conflict"⁴⁴ and in the manner of Carlyle's hero as priest, who, by nature, was the best true reformer as he appealed to Heaven's sole divine truth and transcendental justice against material interests. His unity of thought and action was now focused on his attempts to reform the society and save the people through his pen in a manner much akin to Carlyle's. Carlyle's fierce condemnation through his pen of the Age of Enlightenment, when he believed scepticism, insincerity and mechanical atheism were rampant, was embraced by Uchimura in the 1890s to rid Japan of maladies of the nineteenth century. Following his mentor, Uchimura was to be engaged in articulating the socio-political, as well as the moral and spiritual, state of the contemporary society and its effects.

His work 'Jisei no kansatsu'(An Observation of Times), published in *Kokumin no tomo* in 1896, signalled the emergence of Uchimura Kanzō as a Christian advocate of social and political reforms. In contrast to the attacks he anticipated from every quarter prior to the publication, the essay met with an explosive success. It was inspired by Holy Writ and Carlyle, in that it was the melding of Jeremiah and Carlyle's *Signs of the Times*. As Carlyle's essay was concerned with the maladies of England of the time and the suffering of the unprivileged, Uchimura's 'Jisei no kansatsu' attempted to articulate a negative

prognosis of prophecies and their effects on society by diagnosing socio-political ills of the corrupt Meiji society. Indeed, it was a sign of the time.

While the public success of 'Jisei no kansatsu' was a catalyst in providing him with a base of action as a prominent man of letters, it also established his reputation as a leading Christian thinker and reformer, a moral and spiritual teacher and conscientious critic of socio-political ills, turning totally away from the path to the power and privilege of government and the material world of mammon. As Carlyle's work marked the advent of a modern prophet in the style of Jeremiah, Uchimura's marked the advent of a prophet of Japan as a man of letters, priest, and reformer at the end of the nineteenth century in a society with social problems growing in parallel with an increasing euphoria over the nation's emergence as a power.

The period between 1885 and 1896 was the height of the vigorous development of Uchimura Kanzō's thought. He shaped his Christianity through his confrontation with an intense examination of self to the external world in the context of the exclusive concern for the present and his relationship with God, and while attempting to reestablish moral principles that transcended concerns for the nation-state and the Japanese cultural tradition. The examination and reassessment of features common to the territory, history and cultural traits that formed the land and the people were essential for the formulation of his thought. Not only did the affinity of quintessential moral and religious values he found in Jeremiah and Carlyle with the existing Japanese thought tradition affirm the principal tenets of his Christian thought, but it also strengthened his supranationalist approach to his worldview. He transcended an increasing obsession of his contemporaries with the identification of the essence of Japaneseness in order to establish the ideological foundation of the new state. For him the articulation of the Japanese thought tradition and its traits was but a means to formulate neo-moral religious principles that certainly embraced Japanese moral traits, but were, essentially, universal. In the midst of the emergence of modern nationalism in the late nineteenth century, with ethnic and linguistic traits as dominant criteria and concerned exclusively with 'nation-building', his nationalist Christian thought extended beyond the concept of nationhood to a global nationalism in which he saw the world as one nation and Japan as a part of the whole. His nationalist Japanese Christianity was thus primarily universal, transcending the concerns of Japan and the Japanese as the focal premise of nationhood.

At the beginning of a new millenium, and a century after Uchimura formulated his Christianity, the twenty first century witnesses the increasing decline of the concept of the nation-state as a politically, economically, culturally and even linguistically operational entity. A nationalist position in the context of historical and cultural, as well as ethnic and linguistic, commonality has been eroded by new supranational restructuring of the globe. In this context, his Christian moral thought that recognized the impermanence of parochial national values when at their strongest, must appear a discernment of the immutable. Uchimura Kanzō was indeed a modern prophet for the twentieth century and in all probability a precursor of modern supranationalism.

Notes

- 1) A notable example of this impact was on some Sapporo Agricultural College students who had been

- deeply drawn to Carlyle's moral philosophy and established the Sartor Resartus Reading Society in the early twentieth century.
- 2) The term men of letters refers here to the notion of the types of prominent thinkers, writers and social critics commonly applied in the topography of early and mid-Victorian intellectual life.
 - 3) Uchimura's letter to Bell, 25/6/1893, *Uchimura Kanzō Zenshū*, vol.20, 1932-33, p.254.
 - 4) Uchimura's letter to Bell, 29/3/1893, *ibid.*, p.242.
 - 5) Carlyle, Thomas. *Latter-Day Pamphlets*, no.viii, Chapman and Hall, 1888, p.251.
 - 6) *Ibid.*
 - 7) Carlyle, *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays*, vol.4, Chapman and Hall, 1890, p.22.
 - 8) Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, p.109.
 - 9) Uchimura, considering Cromwell a great religious reformer, was much preoccupied around this period of time with Carlyle's vivid account of Cromwellian reformism.
 - 10) See, for instance, Uchimura's copy of *Oliver Cromwell*, written by Frederic Harrison and published in 1892. Extensive underlining and brief marginal notes clearly indicate that Uchimura also found solace from Harrison's work. His copy is held in the Uchimura Kanzō Library of Hokkaidō University.
 - 11) 'Mukyōkairon,' in *Mukyō kai*, vol.1, March 1901, pp.230-231.
 - 12) Uchimura. 'Kyōkai shomondai,' *Seisho no kenkyū*, vol.357, April 1930, p.245.
 - 13) Carlyle, *On Heroes and Hero Worship*, Chapman and Hall, 1891, p.142.
 - 14) *Ibid.*, p.198.
 - 15) *Ibid.*
 - 16) Uchimura Kanzō. 'Shinkō no teisoku,' *Uchimura Kanzō shokanshū*, edited by Suzuki Toshio, Iwanami shoten, 1978 (5th reprint), p.76.
 - 17) Heyck, T.W. *The Transformation of Intellectual Life in Victorian England*, London, Croom Helm, 1982, p.129.
 - 18) Rosenberg, Philip. *The Seventh Hero: Thomas Carlyle and the Theory of Radical Activism*, Harvard University Press, 1974, pp.12-13.
 - 19) Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus and Hero Worship*, p.134.
 - 20) Carlyle, *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays*, vol.4, p.91.
 - 21) *Ibid.*, p.82.
 - 22) His civic nationalist sentiment, demonstrated by the identification of superior traits and moral values of the Japanese thought tradition and practice, had been evident in the 1880s as evidenced in his article, 'Moral Traits of the "Yamato-Damashii"' published in *The Methodist Review* in 1886 in a bid to educate Americans with knowledge of the spirit of Yamato.
 - 23) Carlyle, *On Heroes and Hero Worship*, p.2.
 - 24) Occupations of Uchimura's great men: an educator, men of political and military affairs, an agriculturist and a priest, symbolized a social demography that controlled the progress of Meiji society and the professions that were essential for the building of the modern nation.
 - 25) The term Shidō is used here to refer to the Way of Samurai which dominated the Tokugawa concept of bushi thought and practice, although the use of Bushidō to refer to the samurai way in general became predominant after the Meiji period.
 - 26) Satō Issai, 'Genshiroku,' *Nihon shiō taikai*, vol. 46, Iwanami shoten, 1980, p.24.
 - 27) Uchimura Kanzō, 'Zeze hihi,' *Uchimura Kanzō zenshū*, vol.5, Tokyo, Iwanami shoten, 1981, p.302. Henceforward, *Uchimura Kanzō zenshū* will be abbreviated as *UKZ*.
 - 28) The heroes were: Saigō Takamori, a nineteenth century Restorationist, Meiji statesman and rebel, a hero as a righteous man, Uesugi Yōzan, an eighteenth century feudal lord of Yonezawa, a hero as a great reformer, Ninomiya Sontoku, an early eighteenth century agriculturalist, a hero as a benevolent man, Nakae Tōju, a seventeenth century Confucian scholar, a hero as a sage, and Nichiren, a thirteenth century radical Buddhist preacher, a hero as a prophet.
 - 29) Uchimura Kanzō, 'Nichiren shōnin wo ronzu,' in *UKZ* vol.3, 1981, p.138.
 - 30) Carlyle, *On Heroes and Hero Worship*, p.193.
 - 31) *Ibid.*, p.108.
 - 32) *Ibid.*, p.107.
 - 33) *Ibid.*, p.168.

- 34) See, for instance, *Japan and the Japanese*, (*The Complete Works of Kanzō Uchimura* vol.4, Kyōbunkan, 1973), p.268 and *On Heroes and Hero Worship*, p.2. Uchimura describes the phrase, ‘the sincerest Manworship’, as denoting the concept of loyalty practised by the Japanese, one deeper than that of the people of other nations. (*Japan and the Japanese*, p.182.)
- 35) Uchimura Kanzō, *Representative Men of Japan*, translated by Suzuki Toshio, Iwanami shoten, 1979, p.13.
- 36) Carlyle, *On Heroes and Hero Worship*, p.10.
- 37) *Ibid.*, p.146.
- 38) Rosenberg, John. *Carlyle and the Burden of History*, Clarendon Press, 1985, p.116.
- 39) Carlyle, *On Heroes and Hero Worship*, p.181.
- 40) Christian *agape* is divine love given in a descent from God to the Christian believers and only as a result of its fulfilment can the harmonious relationship of human to human bring about meaningful functions. In contrast to the concept of a descent of God’s will downward to humans, essential for the understanding of Christianity, Confucian *ren* focuses on a horizontal interaction between humans, and between humans and nature. Furthermore, the attainment of transcendence in *ren* does not signify a departure from humanity, and thus the attainment of transcendence in *ren* emphasizes more the idea of ascent from humans to the ultimate moral principles without divine direction.
- 41) In 1896 Uchimura felt impelled to assure Bell, a long-time supporter and correspondent, that he was not obsessed with Carlyle’s philosophy. (4/9/1896, *UKZ* vol. 20, 1932-33, p.329.)
- 42) Carlyle, *On Hero and Hero Worship*, p.181.
- 43) *Ibid.*, p.146.
- 44) *Ibid.*, p.108.