

Evangelical Review of Theology

A Global Forum

Volume 43 • Number 4 • October 2019

See back cover for Table of Contents



WORLD EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE

Department of Theological Concerns

Published by



Resistance to Japanese Nationalism: Christian Responses to Proposed Constitutional Amendments in Japan

Surya Harefa

Although constitutional amendments are not uncommon in democratic countries, the present Constitution of Japan (*Nihonkoku Kenpō*) has never been amended since it took effect in 1947.¹ Amendments have been proposed, but they have never gained the consensus required for passage.

Since its establishment in 1955, the current ruling party, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), has propounded the view that the present constitution does not reflect Japanese values, because it was drafted by Americans and imposed on Japan by the Allied occupation government of 1945–1952. They also insist that revisions are necessary to address new challenges facing Japan, especially with regard to the right of having a self-defence force.

However, several other parties

and societal groups see a threat of fascist nationalism behind some of the amendment efforts and have thus strongly opposed them. Notable evangelical Christians have been among these opponents, even though Japanese Christians are frequently described as tending to withdraw from political engagement.²

In this paper, after explaining the LDP's efforts to amend the present constitution, I describe and evaluate the responses of evangelical Christians. I focus specifically on responses to draft amendments that the LDP

¹ For example, since the end of the Second World War, the United States has ratified amendments in 1951, 1961, 1964, 1967, 1971 and 1992; France has amended its constitution twenty-four times.

² M. William Steele, 'Christianity and Politics in Japan', in *Handbook of Christianity in Japan*, ed. Mark R. Mullins (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 360–61, 364; Shinohara Motoaki, 'The Church as God's Missionary Community: Towards an Evangelical Missional Ecclesiology with Implications for the Japanese Church' (PhD diss., Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 2012), 176–77, 249–51; Furuya Yasuo, 'Naze Nihon Ni Kirisutokyo Wa Hironanainoka' (Why Does Christianity Not Prosper in Japan?), *Nihon No Shingaku* (Japan's Theology) 53 (2014): 167–71.

Surya Harefa (MA, Theological University of Kampen) is a PhD student at the Theological University in Kampen, the Netherlands. His research focus is on the ecclesiology of Abraham Kuyper and its potential to equip Japanese Christians for political engagement. Prior to coming to Kampen, he studied at Tokyo Christian Theological Seminary as well as International Reformed Evangelical Seminary in Jakarta, and he also served as pastor at the Indonesian Interdenominational Evangelical Church in Japan.

released in 2012. My analysis encompasses several prominent figures who have disseminated their work through the major evangelical publisher Inochi no Kotobasha.³ I conclude by arguing that the ecclesiology of Abraham Kuyper provides useful direction for Christians in Japan as they pursue continue their engagement with this and other issues related to nationalism.

I. Movements to Amend the Japanese Constitution

In December 2018, Prime Minister Abe Shinzō⁴ declared his determination to see the Japanese constitution amended by 2020. He argued that revising the present constitution would restore Japan to its glory days. This declaration by Abe was not new, as he had made similar statements on several previous occasions. During his 2012 campaign, for example, Abe used the slogan ‘Taking Back Japan’ (Nippon wo Torimodosu) and promoted constitutional revision as an important plank in the LDP platform.

To the LDP, the present constitution is a foreign imposition. After its surrender in 1945, Japan was occupied by the Allied occupation government until 1952. After rejecting a draft constitution written by a Japanese committee of constitutional scholars led

by Matsumoto Jōji in February 1946, General Douglas MacArthur (1880–1964), the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP) in Japan, presented an alternative draft within less than a week. This draft, prepared by two Americans, was implemented with only minor revisions.

Matsumoto’s draft sought to maintain the prescriptions of the 1889 Constitution of the Empire of Great Japan (*Dai-Nippon Teikoku Kenpō*),⁵ which identified the emperor as sovereign and the Japanese people as his subjects. In contrast, MacArthur’s draft established the Japanese people as the sovereign and the emperor only as a symbol of the nation. Thus, from the perspective of supporters of the 1889 Constitution, the American draft and the new constitution were ‘new and bad’ and not based on the ‘old and good’ Japanese values. Moreover, the SCAP’s Civil Censorship Detachment (CCD), which exerted pre-publication censorship over about seventy daily newspapers, all books and magazines, and many other publications, reinforced the sense of coercion.

When Japan regained its sovereignty in 1952, this narrative of coercion soon surfaced. Ever since its formation in 1955, the LDP has always included revising the constitution on its political agenda. For the LDP, amending the present constitution ‘will unshackle the country from the system established during the oc-

3 Since there are numerous evangelical denominations in Japan, selecting thinkers published by Inochi no Kotobasha ensures that the people examined have attained fairly broad recognition in Japanese evangelical circles.

4 I use the Japanese style of writing one’s first name following the family name. However, for English literature written by Japanese, I use the Western style.

5 This document was also known as the Meiji Constitution (*Meiji Kenpō*) or the Old Constitution (*Kyū Kenpō*). Its contents are available at www.ndl.go.jp/constitution/etc/j02.html (Japanese version) or www.ndl.go.jp/constitution/e/etc/c02.html (English version).

cupation and make a truly sovereign state'.⁶

In recent years, the LDP has taken several significant steps towards realizing its amendment agenda. Following the release, in 2005, of a first draft of proposed amendments, in 2007, the party succeeded in gaining approval of an act stipulating procedures to amend the constitution (*Nihonkoku Kenpō no Kaisei Tetsuzuki ni kansuru Hōritsu*) from both houses of the Japanese Diet. The act was legally necessary because hitherto there had been no practical law that indicated how the constitution should be amended. Although the LDP lost to the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) in the 2009 general election, it did not give up this effort; on the contrary, it released a Draft for the Amendment of the Constitution of Japan (*Nihonkoku Kenpō Kaisei Sōan*) on 27 April 2012.

Boasting that its amendment committee had reviewed and revised all articles of the present constitution, this conservative political party claimed that it was presenting 'a draft of a revised constitution appropriate to the times and circumstances of Japan'.⁷ The proposed revisions were substantial. Along with suggested changes in the preamble, the LDP offered eleven new chapters and 110 articles to replace the ten chapters and 103 articles of the present constitution. It prescribed new provisions governing such matters as the national flag and anthem, the right of self-defence, emergency declarations and

making it easier to amend the constitution. The draft also inserted clauses regarding the emperor as the head of state and the familial responsibility for ensuring a healthy economic situation.⁸

These proposed amendments were released a little more than a year after the great triple disaster (earthquake, tsunami and nuclear reactor accident) that Japan sustained in March 2011. During the intervening year, all of Japan had been preoccupied with relief and recovery activities. In view of this fact, the LDP's ongoing work on amendments shows its firm resolve to change the constitution.

In December 2012, the LDP regained a majority in the House of Representatives and became the ruling party again. Following this success, the party also won a majority of seats in the House of Councillors in July 2013. These electoral results have given the LDP a greater probability of winning approval from the Diet for its proposals, thus increasing the likelihood of constitutional amendments.

II. Responses by Japanese Christians

There was no significant response from Christians when the LDP published its 2012 draft amendments. Not only was the country heavily focused on recovering from the great disaster, but also, the LDP was not the ruling party at that time.

In contrast, a sense of crisis emerged as the 2012 general election approached. On one hand, many Japanese realized that the DPJ could not manage the government better than

6 'LDP Announces a New Draft Constitution for Japan', Jimintō (Liberal Democratic Party), 7 May 2012, www.jimin.jp/english/news/117099.html.

7 'LDP Announces a New Draft.'

8 'LDP Announces a New Draft.'

the LDP. On the other hand, they saw that Abe, who had suddenly resigned as Prime Minister in September 2007, seemed to have been reborn as a promising leader since winning the post of LDP president in September 2012.

In this context, some Christians started to raise concerns about the presence of nationalist tendencies in the LDP under Abe's leadership.⁹ For example, the chairperson of the Japan Baptist Convention (Nihon Baputesu-to Renmei) sent a special message reminding Christians to exercise their voting rights and to pray earnestly, as called for in 1 Timothy 2:1, because a movement to change Japan fundamentally was afoot. Three days before the election, the JBC held a voluntary 'Emergency Prayer Meeting Due to Concerns about the Circumstances of Constitutional Amendments' (Kai-ken Jōsei wo Ureu Kinkyū Kitōkai) in Tokyo. After the New Year, the federation held a similar event in the Kyūshū region.

Several events held by Christians or Christian organizations during 2013 further raised the awareness of an impending crisis. The *Christian Yearbook* (*Kirisuto-kyō Nenkan*) reported four events related to this issue.¹⁰

⁹ Neda Shōichi, 'Maegaki' (Foreword), in Asaoka Masaru et al., *Kurisuchan Toshite "Kenpō" wo Kangaeru* (Thinking about the Constitution as Christian), *Kurisuchan Shinbun* (Christian Newspaper) (Tokyo: Inochi no Kotobasha, 2013), 3.

¹⁰ On 27 May 2013, a seminar called 'What Should Christians Do Regarding the Amendments?' at Keisen Baptist Church in Tokyo, held by the JBC, was attended by 60 persons. On 29 May 2013, 50 religious figures from Christian, Buddhist, and Shinto backgrounds released a joint statement on opposing the

The *Christian Newspaper* (*Kurisuchan Shinbun*) also began to highlight the constitutional amendment issue with a series of twenty-five articles, from 14 April to 13 October 2013.¹¹ The Social Committee of the Japan Evangelical Alliance (Nihon Fukuin Dōmei) hosted an emergency prayer meeting. The Christian Student Fellowship (Kirisuto-sha Gakusei-kai) held a prayer meeting titled 'Confessing Hope'. And in August 2013, the Church and State Committee of Japan Alliance Christ Church held a special prayer meeting at Nakano Church, Tokyo with fifty people participating.

Japanese Christians' main concerns were to preserve Article 9, known as Japan's pacifist article, and provisions related to the freedom of religion. Article 9 describes Japan as a peaceful country without any right to wage war, as follows (emphasis added to show differences):

amendment of Articles 96 (on the rules for amending the constitution) and 9. On 23 June 2013, the Wind of Fraternity Peace (Yūai heiwa no kaze) and Aoyama Gakuin University Research Institute co-hosted a dialogue meeting on the form of the nation, attended by 90 persons including both of revisionists and advocates of the present constitution. Finally, the *Christian Newspaper* and the *Christ Newspaper* (*Kirisuto Shinbun*) held an emergency symposium titled 'Where Will This Country Go?' at Meiji Gakuin University, Tokyo. About 150 participants attended this symposium. Since the number in attendance was greater than the meeting room's capacity, it appears that the response to the symposium exceeded the host's expectations. See *Kirisutokyō Nenkan Hensyūbu*, ed., *Kirisutokyō Nenkan 2014* (Christian Yearbook 2014) (Tokyo: Kirisuto Shinbun-sha, 2014), 10–16.

¹¹ Neda, 'Maegaki', 4–5.

Current constitution:

1. Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people *forever* renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes.
2. In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, *will never be* maintained. The right of belligerency of the state *will not be* recognized.

Draft amendment:

1. Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and will not employ the threat and use of force as a means of settling international disputes.
2. The provisions of the preceding paragraph *shall not prevent* the exercise of the right to self-defence.

Under the present constitution, if a dispute occurs, Japan must seek to resolve it by means other than military action. The second clause reinforces this pacifist commitment by rejecting the nation's right to maintain military forces. However, the draft amendment omits 'forever' in the first clause and weakens that clause's meaning by introducing a new sentence concerning the right of self-defence. It also removes the statement abolishing all national forces.

Christians have also paid close at-

tention to the effort to revise Article 20, although the mass media pay less attention to this issue than to Article 9. Following are the current text and the proposed revision (emphasis added to show differences):

Current constitution:

1. Freedom of religion is guaranteed to all. No religious organization shall receive any privileges from the State, *nor exercise any political authority.*
2. No person shall be compelled to take part in any religious act, celebration, rite or practice.
3. The State and its organs shall refrain from religious education or any other religious activity.

Draft amendment:

1. Freedom of religion is guaranteed. The State shall not grant privileges to any religious organization.
2. No person shall be compelled to take part in any religious act, celebration, rite or practice.
3. The State, local governments and other public entities shall refrain from particular religious education and other religious activities. *However, this provision shall not apply to activities that do not exceed the scope of social rituals or customary practices.*

The draft amendment omits the words 'to all' in the first clause. It also weakens the prohibition regarding religious organization by omitting 'nor exercise any political authority' in the first clause, and it weakens the

third clause by excluding religious activities that can be classified as 'social rituals or customary practices'. Based on this wording, it is plausible that the government could treat worship at shrines as merely social rituals instead of religious acts.

Long before the release of the 2012 draft amendments, several Japanese Christians had been involved in initiating movements to preserve Article 9 and protest against alleged violations of this article, as well as to protect freedom of religion and separation between religion and state.¹² For example, they participated in filing a lawsuit when the government used public funds to pay a contribution for rituals at a Shinto shrine and when the prime minister worshipped at a shrine, not as a private individual but in his function as prime minister.

We will now consider how several evangelical figures have engaged with the issue of constitutional amendments and how they have attempted to encourage other Christians to overcome their tendency to withdraw from political involvement.

1. Watanabe Nobuo

Watanabe Nobuo (b. 1923) is a pastor at the Tokyo Confession Church of the Japan Christ Church denomination, which is Presbyterian in orientation. He holds a doctorate in the ecclesiology of John Calvin from Kyoto University. Watanabe has been involved in the movement to defend Article 9 since the 1950s. In his seminars, he

has called on Christians to fight to preserve Article 9.

Watanabe articulates an essential principle for Japanese Christians engaging in the public square. He believes that Article 9 is consistent with biblical principles. However, he emphasizes that his public advocacy is not based on the idea that this article was in accordance with the teachings of the Bible.¹³ Rather, the struggle is justified because this article is true, not only for Christians who believe in the Bible but also for non-Christians. He suggests focusing on the fact that if countries do not give up their right to establish military forces and to wage war, humanity will eventually destroy itself.¹⁴

Watanabe has criticized political leaders as lacking ideologies and beliefs that would equip them to resist war. In Watanabe's view, those leaders also failed to understand the principle of the separation of religion and state. He points out that religion is often used to justify war. For him, behind the attempt to revise Article 20 lies a desire among members of the present government to utilize religion

¹² See Tanaka Nobumasa, *Kenpō kyūjō no sengoshi* (Postwar History of Article 9) (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2005), 118–19, 149. Examples of Christians involved in this way include Ishitani Susumu and Ono Michio.

¹³ Watanabe Nobuo, 'Kenpō Kyū-jō no Seishin-teki Shichū' (Mental Support of Article 9), 31 October 2005, <http://tokyokoku-hakuchurch.world.coocan.jp/kouen/ken-npoukyuuounoseishinntekisityuu.html>.

¹⁴ It is interesting that although most Calvinists support just wars, Watanabe supports pacifism. Drawing on his deeply impactful war experience as an officer in the Japanese imperial navy, he states that Christians should resist war absolutely. Christians must be willing to endure injustice rather than fight with violence. For him, this does not mean a passive attitude because Christians must also work actively to create peace. Overall, it seems that pacifism has unusually strong support among Japanese Christians.

to make mobilization for war easier.

A firm believer in the separation of church and state, Watanabe affirms that the church must not intervene in matters under the jurisdiction of the state. However, the church may ask the state to repent, especially in an emergency situation like this one, where the state is violating the religious sphere for the sake of a political agenda. He also contends that the failure of Japanese churches to resist the government during the imperialist and fascist periods was closely related to their vague understanding of faith.¹⁵ Therefore, he suggests that Christians clarify their understanding so as to have the confidence to stand up for what they believe in their heart.¹⁶

Watanabe states that Christians must understand and identify the real beneficiaries of war. Any war is always detrimental to both the attacker and the attacked, but the arms industry profits. Behind the LDP effort to revise Article 9, he sees people who are trying to take advantage of the opportunity to manufacture and sell high-technology military weapons. Although many believe that those seeking to remove Article 9 are right-wing politicians, Watanabe believes that representatives of the weapons industry (*heiki sangyō*) are using the power of the political right for their

own purposes.¹⁷ Building nuclear and other high-tech weapons, Watanabe argues, endangers not only Japan's enemies but also Japan as the maker and the user of the weapons themselves. Article 9 shows the path towards growth for a country that has begun to be destroyed by this military modernization. For these reasons, he calls on Christians to defend Article 9.

The strong point in Watanabe's argument is his personal experience of war, which caused him to study the ecclesiology of John Calvin. Since most of today's Japanese Christians have no war experience, Watanabe can influence them with his real-life stories about the horror of war. This feature makes his arguments persuasive as well as solidly grounded in Christian thought.

Through his explanations of the right of resistance, Watanabe has contributed significantly to evangelical Christian engagement with the threat of Japanese nationalism. He has also been a source of inspiration for Asaoka Masaru (b. 1968), another Japanese Christian who has engaged actively with this issue.¹⁸ However,

15 Watanabe Nobuo, 'Daiichi no Haisen to Daini no Haisen: 3.11 kara Miete kita Mono' (The First War-Defeat and the Second War-Defeat: Things That Are Seen from 3/11), in *Higashinohon Daishinsai kara Towareru Nihon no Kyōkai* (Questioning the Japanese Church after the Great East Japan Disaster), ed. Shinshū Kaki Senkyō Kōza (Tokyo: Inochi no Kotobasha, 2013), 30, 33.

16 Watanabe, 'Daiichi no Haisen', 17.

17 Watanabe Nobuo, 'Sensō Seikan-sha no Heiwa Kenpō Yōgo-ron' (Advocacy of Peace Constitution by a War Survivor), 12 August 2004, <http://tokyokokuhakuchurch.world.coocan.jp/kouen/kouen29.html>.

18 Asaoka is a pastor of Japan Alliance Christ Church (Nihon Dōmei Kirisuto Kyōdan) in Tokumaru district, Tokyo. He responded to the situation in a unique way. He considers this political development as a 'situation of confessing faith' similar to what German Christians experienced in 1933. On 18 December 2012, he launched a Facebook group called 'We Believe and Confess' as a forum to share information and arguments among Christians who have a similar view of the crisis.

with regard to the proposed amendments, Watanabe's focus has been limited to Articles 9 and 20. The next figure we will examine has attempted to address other articles as well.

2. Nishikawa Shigenori

Nishikawa (b. 1927) is a Christian journalist active in both church ministry and political issues, such as Abe's controversial visit to the Yasukuni Shrine. He served for a long time as an elder at Tokyo Church, in the Reformed Church in Japan, and received the title of 'Honorary Elder'.

Nishikawa adopted a unique approach to the constitutional situation, attending and listening to all the meetings of the National Diet's Constitution Investigation Committee (*Kenpō chōsa-kai*), which lasted for five years from January 2000 to April 2005.¹⁹

Although he is not a law expert, he has held a series of lectures on the constitution and has published a book that explains the meaning of each of its articles.²⁰ He indicates several problems in contemporary Japanese politicians' approach to the amendment issue. Although his engagement is broader, like Watanabe he emphasizes the importance of Articles 9 and 20.

Nishikawa refutes the LDP's narrative regarding the importance of revising the current constitution. For

him, the current constitution is not an imposed constitution. Before its promulgation and coming into effect, the constitution went through several democratic processes such as the elections of House of Representatives and House of Councilors members, which enabled the Japanese people to express their will.²¹ Nishikawa also shows that the content of the current constitution was not necessarily unknown to the Japanese people. In 1880, long before the Allied Occupation period, a group of Japanese civil-rights activists led by Chiba Takusaburō in Itsukaichi, Tokyo had proposed a draft constitution similar in some ways to the constitution proposed by the occupation government.²² Considering these historical facts, Nishikawa urges Christians to study history and recognize how the Japanese government during its Great Japan Imperial period (1864–1945) denied freedom of religion by supporting the emperor system and state Shintoism. The government oppressed Christianity and Buddhism and compelled worship at Shinto shrines, particularly the Yasukuni Shrine.²³ It also infringed on the freedoms of assembly and association, as well as freedom of the press, by glorifying war.

As Nishikawa explains, although

¹⁹ Nishikawa Shigenori, *Watashitachi no Kenpō: Zenbun kara Dai 103-jō made* (Our Constitution: Preamble to Article 103) (Tokyo: Inochi no Kotobasha, 2005), 3.

²⁰ This work was published in 2005 and deals with the draft amendments of 2005, but the arguments are valid for evaluating the draft of 2012 as well.

²¹ Nishikawa, *Watashitachi no Kenpō*, 112–13. General elections for the House of Representatives were held on 10 April 1946 (seven months before the promulgation of the constitution) and 25 April 1947 (one month before the constitution coming into effect); the election for the House of Councillors was held on 20 April 1947.

²² Nishikawa, *Watashitachi no Kenpō*, 50–51.

²³ Nishikawa, *Watashitachi no Kenpō*, 29.

the Meiji Constitution of 1868 guaranteed freedom of religion and expression, the Japanese violated this principle 'for the sake of the emperor and the country'.²⁴ In his view, studying history, and in particular what the Japanese imperial army did to Asian countries, will help Japanese Christians to understand the dangers posed by and the false claims of the Japanese government. This awareness of history will also increase Japanese Christians' involvement in political issues.²⁵

Nishikawa's dedication in attending all the meetings of the National Diet's Constitution Investigation Committee is unique. On one hand, it enables him to offer a lively report on attempts to amend the constitution in the National Diet. It also strengthens his arguments. On the other hand, it is difficult for other Christians to continue his approach.

3. Sasakawa Norikatsu

Sasakawa Norikatsu (b. 1940) is a former law professor at Meiji University. In 2015, Sasakawa published an academic article based on a seminar he delivered on 15 October 2013 for the Nationwide Pastors' Meeting of Japan Christ Church in the Ōmori Church (the same Presbyterian denomination as that of Watanabe Nobuo). Like Watanabe and Nishikawa, Sasakawa also opposes the revision of Article 9.²⁶

As a law professor, however, he goes further, criticizing the 2012 draft amendments as a destruction of the constitutional system. As the ruling party, he observes, the LDP is part of the government. Therefore, the LDP politicians bear a duty to respect and defend the existing constitution, which guarantees individual rights and limits the power of the government. However, the LDP is trying to revise precisely the constitutional sections that limit the government.

Sasakawa also highlights a problem in how the LDP draft addresses the emperor system. The draft amendments do not return to the imperial system as in the Meiji era, which made the emperor the ruler in all fields. Unlike the Meiji Constitution of 1868, the LDP draft restricts the emperor from having a role in the political arena. However, this restriction is not consistently observed. The draft gives the emperor the status of head of state and affirms his involvement in government organizations (*tōchi soshiki*). Here also, there is no specific limitation on the expansion of the emperor's role.²⁷ Rather, these provisions give an opening for the government to exert its power more freely.²⁸

The LDP differs from the 1947 constitution with regard to its understanding of the terms of popular sovereignty. The first sentence of the current preamble clearly denies any power and authority outside the constitutional system:

We, the Japanese people, acting through our duly elected repre-

24 Nishikawa, *Watashitachi no Kenpō*, 30.

25 Nishikawa, *Watashitachi no Kenpō*, 29.

26 Sasakawa Norikatsu, 'Jimintō "Kenpō Kaisei Sōan" no Bunseki: Omoni Ten'nōsei ni Sokushite' (Analysis of LDP's Amendment Draft: Focusing Mainly on the Emperor System), *Hōritsu Ronsō* (Law Journal) 87, no. 6

(March 2015): 57.

27 Sasakawa, 'Jimintō Kenpō Kaisei', 88.

28 Sasakawa, 'Jimintō Kenpō Kaisei', 58, 88.

sentatives in the National Diet, determined that we shall secure for ourselves and our posterity the fruits of peaceful cooperation with all nations and the blessings of liberty throughout this land, and resolved that never again shall we be visited with the horrors of war through the action of government, do proclaim that sovereign power resides with the people and do firmly establish this Constitution.

The proposed new preamble replaces those sentiments with the following:

Japan is a nation with a long history and unique culture, receiving the Emperor as the symbol of the unity of the people, governed based on the separation of the legislative, administrative and judicial powers subject to the sovereignty of the people.

The amendment text, rather than recognizing the Japanese people as sovereign, declares that the nation 'receiv[es] the Emperor' (*Ten'nō wo itadaku*) *regardless of any consent by the people*.²⁹ In this way, the LDP draft undermines the conception that the state belongs to the people.³⁰

Sasakawa also criticizes the tendency of the draft amendments to limit freedom of thought and conscience in its statements on the national flag and anthem, its establishment of an imperial calendar system based on the year of the emperor's reign, and its positing of concerns for 'public benefits and public order' as limits on freedom. He adds that the draft undermines the principle of separation

of state and religion, thus paving the way for the prime minister, cabinet members, and parliament members to perform public worship at Yasukuni temples and Gokoku shrines.³¹

Sasakawa warns that the 2012 draft amendments, if enacted, may severely affect Christians in Japan. Although no articles limit the church's functioning directly, history suggests that the emperor system, with its public worship rituals at the Yasukuni and Gokoku shrines, would have negative consequences. It would reinforce a tendency to consider faith as an internal matter only.³² It would also result in many collisions between government policy and the beliefs of Christians, who regard worshipping at shrines as idolatry.³³

As a law professor, Sasakawa has dedicated his expertise to the issues raised by proposed constitutional revisions. He has dealt bravely and candidly with the sensitive problems of the emperor system and clearly revealed the undertone of nationalism that pervades the amendments. However, like Watanabe and Nishikawa, he has not offered a solution to this deadlock. The fourth and final figure whom we will examine has tried to suggest some solutions.

4. Inagaki Hisakazu

Inagaki Hisakazu (b. 1947) is a member of Japan's Christian Reformed Church and a professor of Christian philosophy at Tokyo Christian University, the country's most prominent evangelical institute of theological

29 Sasakawa, 'Jimintō Kenpō Kaisei', 76.

30 Sasakawa, 'Jimintō Kenpō Kaisei', 95.

31 Sasakawa, 'Jimintō Kenpō Kaisei', 89.

32 Sasakawa, 'Jimintō Kenpō Kaisei', 90.

33 Sasakawa, 'Jimintō Kenpō Kaisei', 91.

education. Similar to Nishikawa and Sasakawa, he views the amendment movement as an attempt to make public worship at the Yasukuni shrine constitutional and to allow the government to oppress those who have different opinions or positions by using the justification of 'public interest and public order'. By reviving the emperor system, he believes, the government is trying to foster nationalism and thus make it easier to mobilize the Japanese people.³⁴

Inagaki goes further than the figures discussed above in his approach. He addresses the indifference of evangelical Christians toward the amendment issue as well as other interconnected matters of nationalism. For him, the reason for this indifference is the lack of a properly conceived, robust Christian worldview, without which Christians do not have a proper interest in social engagement and are not equipped to fight on a complicated terrain such as the question of constitutional amendments. This theme requires an understanding of history, ideology, politics, economy, society and religion.³⁵ Since a particular worldview undergirds any constitution as well as the amendment thereof, with a concept of a Christian worldview one can not only fight at the superficial level but can also go deeper to investigate implicit com-

peting worldviews and evaluate the appropriateness of proposed amendments based on that investigation.

Inagaki seeks not only to preserve the existing constitution but also to apply its provisions thoughtfully.³⁶ He does not settle for indicating the danger of the term 'public interest and public order' in the 2012 LDP draft but also contrasts it with the concept of 'public welfare' in the current Articles 12 and 13 (which prescribe responsibility in using guaranteed freedom) and Article 29 (which authorizes property rights). Here are the relevant passages (emphasis added):

Article 12. The freedoms and rights guaranteed to the people by this Constitution shall be maintained by the constant endeavor of the people, who shall refrain from any abuse of these freedoms and rights and shall always be responsible for utilizing them for the *public welfare*.

Draft amendment:

The freedoms and rights guaranteed to the people by this Constitution shall be maintained by the constant endeavor of the people. The people shall refrain from any abuse of these freedoms and rights, shall be aware of the fact that there are responsibilities and duties that accompany these freedoms and rights, and shall not infringe the *public interest and public order*.

Article 13. All of the people shall be respected as individuals. Their right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness shall, to the extent that it does not interfere with

³⁴ Inagaki Hisakazu, *Kaiken Mondai to Kirisutokyō* (The Problem of Constitutional Amendment and Christianity) (Tokyo: Kyobunkwan, 2014), 51.

³⁵ Inagaki, *Kaiken Mondai*, 8. See also Inagaki Hisakazu, 'Kirisutokyō Sekaikan kara no Nihon Shingaku no Saihensei' (Reorganization of Theology from a Christian Worldview), *Kirisuto to Sekai* (Christ and the World) 24 (March 2014): 140–44.

³⁶ Inagaki, *Kaiken Mondai*, 9, 29–30, 32.

the *public welfare*, be the supreme consideration in legislation and in other governmental affairs.

Draft amendment:

All of the people shall be respected as persons. Their right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness shall, to the extent that it does not interfere with the *public interest and public order*, be the supreme consideration in legislation and in other governmental affairs.

Article 29. (2) Property rights shall be defined by law, in conformity with the *public welfare*.

Draft amendment:

Property rights shall be defined by law, in conformity with the *public interest and public order*. In this case, with regard to intellectual property rights, consideration shall be given for contributing to the improvement of the intellectual creativity of the people.

The draft proposes to change the terms 'public welfare' (*kōkyō no fukushi*) in the above three articles to 'public interest and public order' (*kōeki oyobi kō no chitsujo*). Inagaki warns that the term 'public' (*kō*) in the draft amendment appears to denote the government, whereas the meaning of 'public' (*kōkyō*) in the current constitution is broader, including the whole society.³⁷ Hence, under the proposed amendment, it is the government, not the society, that has the right to define public interest and public order. This understanding of 'public' could lead to an authoritarian government, as happened in the Great Japan Imperial period. Rather than going back to that

situation, Inagaki proposes to make positive use of the concept of public welfare, which is repeated several times in the current constitution. He calls this direction the new publicness (*kōkyōsei*) or citizen's publicness (*shimin no kōkyō*).

After criticizing the weakness of Japanese churches in engaging with this concept of public welfare, Inagaki encourages them to draw on their considerable capacity to lead and to become role models for the wider Japanese society in carrying out public welfare.³⁸ He encourages Christians to cooperate with non-Christians towards this end, drawing on the doctrines of common grace, sphere sovereignty, and the church as an organism as articulated by the Dutch theologian and political leader Abraham Kuyper.

Inagaki believes that creating a civil society in this way can help Japanese people to solve many socio-political problems, including the problem of nationalism.³⁹ His suggestion has attracted support from several scholars in the social welfare arena and several labour unions. This is a very interesting movement because most of the people showing interest in Inagaki's thinking are not Christians.

With this Kuyperian approach, Inagaki attempts to broaden the political engagement of Japanese evangelical Christians. He encourages them not just to protest against threatening

37 Inagaki, *Kaiken Mondai*, 30.

38 Inagaki, *Kaiken Mondai*, 45–47. Inagaki elaborates that the insertion of 'family responsibility' in the 2012 draft was intended to shift the responsibility for welfare from the state to the family. He also emphasizes the importance of freedom of association for creating citizen awareness (pp. 30, 32, 44).

39 Inagaki, *Kaiken Mondai*, 33–34.

actions by the government, but also to be a showcase for the government with regard to creating a better society based on the public welfare concept. Although he calls his own approach public philosophy, Christians in Western contexts may classify it within the realm of public theology or political theology.

III. Evaluation of Japanese Responses

As we have seen, behind the amendment movement there is a nationalistic agenda. The proposed draft amendments of 2012 display similarities to the condition of Japan during its Great Imperial era, when the nation made rapid progress in the technological and military realms. In that time period, Japan could motivate citizens to die for their country and was thus able to achieve major victories in conflicts with other Asian countries and Russia.

However, the current constitution prohibits Japan from having a military force. It also prescribes the principle of freedom of religion as well as separation between religion and the state. These principles make it more difficult for the government to mobilize people by using religious narratives, as it did during its imperialistic period. Therefore, the politically conservative camp is attempting to revise the constitution partly to return Japan to its glory days.

The responses of Japanese evangelical Christians to this return to militaristic nationalism are admirable. Despite their small numbers⁴⁰ and

their usual inclination to withdraw from political engagement, Christians have generated various movements and arguments in response to the amendment issue. The four figures discussed in this paper have applied their differing talents—as pastor, journalist, law professor and philosophy professor—to engage actively with this issue and raise the awareness of many evangelical Christians regarding the potential danger of the nationalism present in the efforts to amend the constitution.

Since the question of what to do with the proposed amendments has remained deadlocked, Inagaki's approach deserves special attention. As we have seen, the LDP has envisioned amending the constitution since 1955. On one hand, the right-wing conservatives firmly hold to their position as revisionists (*kaiken-ha*); on the other hand, their opponents remain guardians (*goken-ha*) of the existing constitution. As Japanese evangelical Christians continue their protests against the amendment movement, they undoubtedly strengthen the guardian camp. However, it is also clear that mere opposition would not produce a way out of the deadlock.

From this point of view, Inagaki's desire to utilize the current constitution (*katsuken*) in a positive way, to help in building Japanese civil society, hints at a third-way solution. At least for the guardian camp, this idea provides another way of engagement besides merely protesting against the revisionist camp. If one considers

⁴⁰ Kirisutokyō Nenkan Hensyūbu, ed., *Kirisutokyō Nenkan 2016* (Christian Year-

book 2016) (Tokyo: Kirisuto Shinbun-sha, 2015), 7. Whereas the whole population in Japan is 126,163,576, the number of Protestants in Japan is given as 416,672, or about 0.33 percent of the total.

protest as a negative action, then developing a civil society based on the concept of public welfare can be seen as a positive action. In fact, as noted above, Inagaki's ideas have won support from the social-welfare and labour communities. If this movement could actually yield visible positive results in Japanese society, it is not inconceivable that the revisionist camp would reconsider its currently articulated intention to change the term 'public welfare' to 'public interest and public order'.

If we compare the attendance at events related to the constitutional amendments with other Christian events, one can see that the passion for this issue among Japanese evangelical Christians remains quite modest.⁴¹ Clearly, a large portion of the evangelical community has not yet become interested in the topic. As Nishikawa has pointed out, this lack of interest may relate to the limited history education that Japanese students receive. The Japanese government does not provide history textbooks that explain honestly what the imperial army did to other Asian countries during the era of the Great Japan Empire. This lack of proper historical

understanding is exacerbated by the lack of Christian worldview thinking as noted by Inagaki. Hence, equipping Japanese evangelical Christians to develop effective forms of Christian engagement is necessary.

For that purpose, implementing the ecclesiological suggestions of Kuyper may contribute significantly. As we have seen, Inagaki proposes the concepts of the Christian worldview, common grace, sphere sovereignty and the church as an organism. All these Kuyperian concepts are interrelated and rooted in his ecclesiology.⁴² Kuyper distinguishes the church into two interrelated aspects, organism and institution.⁴³ Whereas the former refers to the mystical body of Christ that unites all believers from all over the world and all periods of time, the latter denotes a human organization for implementing the preaching of God's Word and administering the sacraments. The institution nurtures believers so that they can bring light out to those outside the institution. These gathering and sending functions should exist together and continuously.⁴⁴ Kuyper's ecclesiological

⁴¹ Cf. Kirisutokyō Nenkan Hensyūbu, *Kirisutokyō Nenkan 2014*, 14–15. For example, there were 280 participants at the commemoration seminar of 450 years of the Heidelberg Catechism on 30 September 2013 and 150 persons at the church hall dedication ceremony of Fujimi Church in Tokyo on 27 October 2013. The contrast is even greater if we compare to the Christmas dinner held by the International VIP Club at Hotel New Otani Tokyo on 26 November 2013, with 300 participants, or the ceremony for the hundredth anniversary of Sophia University on 1 November 2013, which had 4,200 people in attendance.

⁴² John H. Wood, Jr., *Going Dutch in the Modern Age: Abraham Kuyper's Struggle for a Free Church in the Netherlands* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 174; James D. Bratt, *Abraham Kuyper: Modern Calvinist, Christian Democrat* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2013), 172.

⁴³ Abraham Kuyper, 'Rooted and Grounded' (1870), in *On the Church*, ed. John H. Wood, Jr. and Andrew M. McGinnis, trans. Nelson D. Kloosterman et al. (Bellingham: Lexham, 2016), 54–57; Abraham Kuyper, *Lectures on Calvinism* (1931; rpt. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 59–62.

⁴⁴ Ad de Bruijne, "'Colony of Heaven': Abraham Kuyper's Ecclesiology in the Twenty-First Century", *Journal for Markets and Moral-*

understanding could guide evangelical Christians to overcome their tendency to withdraw from political engagement without becoming like the liberal camp, which, from an evangelical perspective, has actively engaged with socio-political issues but at the cost of neglecting matters of faith.

Kuyper also emphasizes the im-

ity 17, no. 2 (2014): 464–65; Ad de Bruijne, 'Not without the Church as Institute: The Relevance of Abraham Kuyper's Ecclesiology for Christian Public and Theological Responsibilities in the Twenty-First Century', in *The Kuyper Center Review*, vol. 5: *Church and Academy*, ed. Gordon Graham (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 77–78; Michael R. Wagenman, 'Abraham Kuyper and the Church: From Calvin to the Neo-Calvinists', in *On Kuyper: A Collection of Readings on the Life, Work and Legacy of Abraham Kuyper*, ed. Steve Bishop and John H. Kok (Sioux Center, IA: Dordt College Press, 2013), 137.

portance of the church remaining free from the state. With the slogan of 'a free church in a free state', he suggests that the institutional church must avoid both intervening in and being influenced by the state. Kuyper believes that the best way for both the church and the state to prosper is to let both detach from and respect each other. This principle might help evangelical churches to keep themselves from the pitfall they experienced during the imperialist period, when they let themselves be unduly influenced by the Japanese state. Moreover, it might be a guide to help other religious organizations in Japan, including Shinto shrines, to pursue their existence as distinct from the state. Hopefully, Kuyper's understanding could even encourage the Japanese state not to abuse any religion but to remain separate from and respect every religion, including Shintoism.