

Immersion, Transliteration, and Authority: Competing Renderings of Baptism in Meiji Japan

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Abstract

This article examines how competing translations of “baptism” in nineteenth-century Japan reveal the institutional and theological stakes of Bible translation during the Meiji period. Focusing on the baptism controversy surrounding Nathan Brown and the Yokohama translation committee, the study compares Brown’s hiragana New Testament, which renders baptism through semantic choices such as *shizume* (“to immerse”) and *nadzuke* (“to name”), with the Meiji committee’s adoption of the katakana transliteration *baputesuma*. Through close comparative analysis of Matthew 28:19–20, Acts 2:38, and 1 Peter 3:21 across the Greek New Testament (in romanization), the King James Version, and nineteenth-century Japanese translations, the article shows how lexical and verbal framing encode distinct understandings of ritual practice and ecclesial authority. Brown’s translations embed Baptist theology directly into the vernacular text, while the Meiji version suspends semantic specification, shifting interpretive responsibility to preaching, instruction, and institutional mediation. Rather than treating transliteration as a provisional or neutral solution, this study argues that it functioned as a deliberate strategy for managing doctrinal plurality within an interdenominational translation project. In doing so, it reframes Meiji Bible translation as a site where religious authority, linguistic innovation, and Protestant cooperation were actively negotiated in modern Japan.

Keywords

Bible translation, baptism, Meiji Japan, transliteration, missionary linguistics, Nathan Brown, Protestant Christianity

Author Note

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Introduction: Translation, Controversy, and the “Term Question”

The translation of the Christian Bible into Japanese during the Meiji period (1868–1912) was not simply a linguistic undertaking, but a complex process of cultural and institutional negotiation (Cohen 1-5). As Protestant missionaries and Japanese collaborators worked to render Christian scripture intelligible to a new readership, they faced the problem of how to express theological concepts for which no stable equivalents yet existed in Japanese. These efforts coincided with broader transformations in language, education, and religion, situating Bible translation at the intersection of doctrinal authority, linguistic modernization, and the formation of early Christian communities in Japan. Within this context, translation choices were shaped not only by philological concerns, but also by denominational priorities, institutional constraints, and questions of religious legitimacy.

One of the most prominent arenas in which these tensions surfaced was the so-called “term question” (用語問題), the ongoing debate over how key Christian concepts should be rendered into Japanese (Cohen 41-55). Among the terms under dispute, the translation of the Greek verb *baptizō* became especially contentious. During the 1870s, missionaries associated with the Yokohama translation committee debated whether baptism should be expressed through a semantic translation—such as *shinrei* 浸礼 (“immersion rite”) or *senrei* 洗礼 (“washing rite”)—or whether the term should be transliterated as *baputesuma* バプテスマ (Cohen 56-70). These options were not interchangeable. Each carried distinct theological implications, particularly with regard to denominational understandings of ritual practice, and each raised concerns about how Christian doctrine would be taught and received in a Japanese linguistic and cultural environment.

The dispute reached a breaking point with the resignation of Baptist missionary Nathan Brown from the interdenominational translation committee after his preferred term, *shinrei*, was rejected. Brown’s departure is often treated as the decisive moment in the baptism controversy; however, the resolution of the debate did not result in the adoption of an

alternative semantic translation such as *senrei* (Cohen 85-95). Instead, the final Meiji Bible translation adopted the transliterated form *baputesuma* (Cohen 95-105). This outcome is significant, not because it represents a neutral compromise, but because it signals a refusal to resolve doctrinal disagreement at the level of lexical meaning. By choosing transliteration, the committee effectively deferred theological specification while allowing the translation project to proceed under conditions of denominational plurality.

This article argues that the decision to transliterate rather than translate “baptism” reveals how Bible translation in Meiji Japan functioned as a form of institutional rewriting shaped by competing theological commitments and practical constraints. Rather than seeking semantic equivalence or doctrinal precision, the translation committee adopted a strategy that managed disagreement by suspending interpretive closure. Transliteration preserved institutional cohesion while shifting the burden of doctrinal explanation away from the text itself toward preaching, instruction, and ritual practice within local church contexts. In this sense, translation operated not merely as linguistic transfer, but as a mechanism through which religious authority and meaning were organized and stabilized.

To develop this argument, the article examines how *baputesuma* appears in several key New Testament passages—Matthew 28:19–20, Acts 2:38, and 1 Peter 3:21—through a comparative reading of Greek, English, and nineteenth-century Japanese versions. By situating these textual choices within the historical debates of the Meiji translation committees and drawing on translation-theoretical approaches that emphasize rewriting, patronage, and norms, the study highlights how transliteration functioned as a strategic response to institutional and theological pressures. In doing so, it contributes to a more nuanced understanding of how early Japanese Bible translation negotiated doctrinal conflict, linguistic innovation, and the formation of Christian discourse in modern Japan.

Bible Translation, Terminology, and Institutional Mediation

Scholarship on the translation of the Bible into Japanese during the Meiji period has consistently emphasized that translation was shaped by institutional conditions rather than linguistic concerns alone. Studies of early Protestant translation projects describe how missionary organizations structured the work of translation committees and determined the terms under which doctrinal disagreement could be managed. Within this literature,

debates over terminology have been treated as moments where linguistic choice intersected with questions of authority and legitimacy (Cohen 1-12).

Among English-language studies, Doron B. Cohen's *The Japanese Translations of the Hebrew Bible* remains the most comprehensive account of the institutional history of Japanese Bible translation. Cohen documents disputes over terminology and traces how translation committees responded to denominational conflict over time. His analysis situates controversies such as the baptism debate within broader efforts to sustain interdenominational cooperation, rather than treating them as isolated lexical disagreements (Cohen 41-70).

Other scholars have approached Meiji Bible translation from the perspective of religious history. These works highlight the close relationship between Bible translation, education, and conversion. Studies of Protestant institutions show that translated scripture was not only read but taught, explained, and performed within schools and churches. Translation, therefore, played a central role in shaping how Christianity was understood and practiced in early Japanese Protestant communities (Patessio 45-60).

Research in the study of religion has also drawn attention to the particular difficulty of transmitting Christian ritual concepts in Japan. Baptism posed a challenge because it combined doctrinal meaning with embodied practice. Disagreements over how to translate baptismal terminology reflected concerns about instruction and reception, especially among audiences unfamiliar with sacramental frameworks. These debates extended beyond vocabulary and into questions of pedagogy and religious authority (Wilson 112-130).

Although existing scholarship has provided a detailed account of these historical circumstances, less attention has been paid to how specific translation strategies functioned at the institutional level. In particular, the decision to adopt transliteration in cases of theological disagreement has often been described as a practical solution. Its broader implications for authority, interpretation, and doctrinal management have received comparatively little sustained analysis (Cohen 85-105).

Translation studies offers a useful framework for addressing this gap. Scholars such as Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere have argued that translation is shaped by institutional pressures and norms of acceptability. From this perspective, translation choices reflect

negotiations among competing interests rather than neutral transfers of meaning (Bassnett 13-18; Lefevere 9-15).

By bringing this theoretical approach into dialogue with the historical record of Meiji Bible translation, this study reframes the adoption of *baputesuma* as an institutional strategy rather than a provisional linguistic fix. Doing so shifts attention away from the content of the doctrinal disagreement toward the role translation played in organizing religious authority and stabilizing Christian discourse.

Translation, Rewriting, and Institutional Constraint

Debates over baptism terminology in Meiji Japan cannot be fully explained through questions of semantic accuracy or lexical equivalence alone. As the historical record shows, translation decisions were made under conditions of doctrinal disagreement and institutional pressure. To account for how such decisions function within interdenominational translation projects, this study adopts a framework that treats translation as a socially and institutionally mediated practice shaped by institutional norms rather than as a neutral transfer of meaning (Toury 53-69).

Translation studies has long challenged the view of translation as a neutral transfer of meaning from one language to another. Scholars such as Bassnett have emphasized that translation is embedded within cultural systems and shaped by the expectations of institutions and audiences. From this perspective, translation choices reflect not only linguistic considerations but also the norms that govern what counts as acceptable or authoritative within a given context (Bassnett 13-18).

Building on this view, Lefevere has described translation as a form of rewriting influenced by systems of patronage and control. Translations are shaped by the institutions that sponsor and regulate them, including churches, missionary organizations, and translation committees. In religious contexts, these pressures are especially pronounced, since translated texts are expected to carry doctrinal authority (Lefevere 9-15).

Within such a framework, transliteration can be understood as a strategic response to institutional constraint. When semantic translation threatens to privilege one doctrinal position over another, transliteration allows a shared text to circulate without fixing

theological meaning at the lexical level. Interpretation is instead displaced to preaching, instruction, and ritual practice. This strategy makes it possible to sustain interdenominational cooperation while deferring theological resolution (Lefevere 14-15).

Treating translation as an institutional strategy does not imply that translators were indifferent to meaning or unaware of doctrinal differences. Rather, it highlights how translation functioned as a practical mechanism for managing disagreement within the limits imposed by collaborative translation work. This perspective makes it possible to analyze transliteration not as a failure of translation, but as an active choice shaped by the social conditions of translation. As studies of Bible translation in Meiji Japan have shown, such strategies were closely tied to the practical demands of interdenominational cooperation (Cohen 95-105).

By applying this framework to the case of *baputesuma*, the following sections examine how transliteration operates within specific New Testament passages to organize religious meaning without resolving doctrinal differences.

The Yokohama Translation Committee and the Baptism Debate

The debate over the translation of baptism, often referred to as the “term question” (*yōgo mondai*), exemplifies the broader challenges faced by Bible translators in Meiji Japan. As Protestant missionaries and Japanese collaborators worked to produce a shared vernacular scripture, they encountered theological concepts for which no stable Japanese equivalents yet existed. Among these, the rendering of the Greek verb *baptizō* became one of the most contentious points of disagreement within the Yokohama translation committee during the 1870s (Murayama 182-190).

Junko Nakai Murayama provides the most detailed account of these disputes, particularly with regard to the role of Nathan Brown, a Baptist missionary who joined the committee in 1873. Brown brought with him prior experience in Bible translation in Assam and entered the Japanese project with firm convictions about both the semantic range of *baptizō* and its doctrinal implications. From the outset, he advocated for *shinrei* 浸礼 (“immersion rite”), arguing that it most faithfully reflected the Greek verb’s core meaning and aligned with Baptist understandings of baptismal practice (Murayama 182-190).

Other members of the committee, most notably James Hepburn and Presbyterian missionaries affiliated with the American Board, resisted Brown's proposal. They favored *senrei* 洗礼, a term already present in Japanese usage to denote purification or washing rites, including those associated with Buddhist practice. From their perspective, *senrei* offered greater intelligibility for Japanese readers unfamiliar with Christian ritual terminology. Brown objected strongly to this option, arguing that its everyday connotations reduced baptism to a mundane act of washing and obscured its theological significance (Hepburn 482; Murayama 186-187).

The committee ultimately rejected both *shinrei* and *senrei*, opting instead for the katakana transliteration *baputesuma* バプテスマ. This decision reflected an institutional desire to avoid privileging any single denominational interpretation within an interdenominational project: by selecting a form that carried no established Japanese semantic field, the committee avoided resolving the doctrinal dispute at the lexical level while allowing the translation work to continue (Murayama 189).

This choice was not without precedent. When the New Testament was translated into English in the early modern period, the translators of the King James Bible similarly chose to transliterate *baptizō* as “baptize” rather than render it as “immerse” or “wash.” As David C. Steinmetz has observed, this decision was shaped by ecclesiastical politics and the need to accommodate competing interpretations of baptismal practice within Protestant England (Steinmetz 36-38). In both the English and Japanese cases, transliteration functioned as a means of preserving theological ambiguity within a shared scriptural text.

Brown, dissatisfied with the committee's decision, resigned in 1876 and produced his own hiragana New Testament, in which he consistently rendered *baptizō* using immersion-based terminology. His independent translation underscores the extent to which lexical choice was bound up with denominational identity and institutional authority (Brown; Murayama 187-190). At the same time, the committee's adoption of *baputesuma* reveals the practical constraints under which collective translation projects operated, particularly in contexts where maintaining cooperation was a central concern.

Seen against this background, the Japanese “term question” over baptism was not merely a dispute over linguistic equivalence. It was a negotiation over how Christianity itself would be textualized in a new linguistic and cultural environment, whether through semantically

transparent terms tied to specific ritual practices or through a foreignized vocabulary that deferred doctrinal specification. The historical resolution of this debate sets the stage for the close textual analysis that follows, in which the consequences of transliteration can be traced within the biblical text itself (Cohen 85-95).

Baptism Across Key New Testament Passages

This section examines how baptism is rendered in three New Testament passages central to Christian doctrine: Matthew 28:19–20, Acts 2:38, and 1 Peter 3:21. Rather than isolating lexical choices in the abstract, each subsection presents a focused comparison of the verse across four textual witnesses: the Greek New Testament in romanization, the King James Version (1666), Nathan Brown’s hiragana New Testament, and the Meiji committee’s published translation. This comparative approach follows a descriptive orientation toward translation, treating the Meiji Bible not as a deficient rendering of an abstract original, but as a historically situated product shaped by the norms and constraints governing its production (Touy 53-69). For each passage, a comparative table presents the relevant verse material, followed by an analysis that examines how transliteration and verb choice shape theological interpretation and patterns of ecclesial authority.

Matthew 28:19–20 – Baptism and the Making of Disciples¹

Matthew 28:19–20 establishes baptism as a constitutive element of discipleship. In the Greek text, the imperative *mathēteusate* (“make disciples”) is supported by the participles *baptizontes* (“baptizing”) and *didaskontes* (“teaching”), indicating that baptism functions as an integral action within the process of forming disciples. The King James Version preserves this structure and, following earlier English practice, renders the term through transliteration as “baptizing.”

1 Romanization follows modified Hepburn and reflects historical kana usage in the Meiji-period texts.

Version	Verse Text	Rendering of <i>baptizontes</i>	Verb framing
Greek NT (romanized)	<i>porēuthentes oin mathēteusate panta ta ethnē, baptizontes autous... didaskontes autous...</i>	<i>baptizontes</i>	participle, action of disciple-making
KJV (1666)	“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them... teaching them...”	baptizing	ritual action (mode unspecified)
Brown (Hiragana NT)	ばんこくのひとびとを でしとなし…かれら をしづめ bankoku no hitobito wo deshi to nashi ... karera wo shizume	しづめ (<i>shizume</i>)	bodily immersion
Meiji Committee Bible	萬國の民に バプテスマを施し 之を…弟子とし bankoku no tami ni baputesuma wo hodokoshi kore wo ... deshi to shi	バプテスマ + 施す (<i>hodokosu</i>)	administered ecclesial rite

Brown’s translation renders *baptizontes* as *shizume* (“immerse”), foregrounding the physical act of immersion and aligning the passage with Baptist theology, in which immersion is constitutive of the rite itself. Discipleship is thus linguistically framed as emerging through bodily immersion. The Meiji committee’s translation, by contrast, retains the transliterated noun *baputesuma* and pairs it with the verb *hodokosu* (“to administer”). This formulation shifts emphasis away from bodily action toward an institutional procedure carried out by ecclesial authority. Transliteration, in combination with administrative verb choice, leaves the mode of baptism unspecified while preserving a shared textual framework across denominations.

Acts 2:38 – Repentance, Baptism, and Forgiveness

Acts 2:38 situates baptism within a sequence that links repentance, forgiveness of sins, and reception of the Holy Spirit. The Greek text employs the aorist passive imperative

baptisthēō, emphasizing baptism as an action received by each individual. The King James Version mirrors this structure and again relies on transliteration.

Version	Verse Text	Rendering of <i>baptizontes</i>	Verb framing
Greek NT (romanized)	<i>metanoēsate... kai baptisthēō hekastos hymōn...</i>	<i>baptisthēō</i>	passive imperative
KJV (1666)	“Repent, and be baptized every one of you...”	be baptized	passive reception
Brown (Hiragana NT)	くひあらためて… なづけをうけよ kui-aratamete ... nadzuke wo uke yo	なづけ (<i>nadzuke</i>)	naming, identity reception
Meiji Committee Bible	悔改めて… バプテスマを受けよ kui-aratamete ... baputesuma wo uke yo	バプテスマ + 受ける (<i>ukeru</i>)	received ecclesial rite

Brown replaces immersion language with *nadzuke* (“naming”), shifting the emphasis of baptism from bodily action to covenantal identity under Christ’s name. This choice encodes a specific theological interpretation focused on identity formation rather than ritual mode. The Meiji committee again adopts transliteration, rendering baptism as something to be “received” (*ukeru*). By maintaining lexical opacity and passivity, the translation reinforces baptism as an administered rite whose meaning is shaped through instruction and ecclesial practice rather than specified in the text itself.

1 Peter 3:21 – Baptism, Symbol, and Salvation

First Peter 3:21 offers one of the New Testament’s most explicit theological qualifications of baptism, defining it not as bodily cleansing but as an appeal of conscience grounded in

Christ's resurrection. The noun *baptisma* appears here in a context that actively restricts interpretive overreach.

Version	Verse Text	Rendering of <i>baptizantes</i>	Verb framing
Greek NT (romanized)	<i>ho kai hymas antitypon nyn sōzei baptisma...</i>	<i>baptisma</i>	qualified, symbolic
KJV (1666)	“The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us...”	baptism	symbolic, conscience-appeal
Brown (Hiragana NT)	しづめ… なんぢら を すくふ shizume ... nanjira wo sukufu	しづめ (<i>shizume</i>)	immersion linked to salvation
Meiji Committee Bible	バプテスマ… 今我儕 をも救ふ baputesuma ... ima warerai wo mo sukufu	バプテスマ	symbolic, defined by context

Brown's rendering again foregrounds immersion by translating *baptisma* as *shizume*, placing bodily action at the forefront even as the epistle seeks to delimit baptism's meaning. The Meiji committee's transliteration allows the surrounding explanatory clauses to define the rite, preserving the epistle's theological balance. Here, transliteration functions as a protective strategy that prevents baptism from being reduced to a single ritual mode.

Synthesis: Transliteration as Institutional Strategy

Across these three passages, a consistent pattern emerges. Brown's translations seek to resolve theological ambiguity by encoding doctrinal meaning directly into the lexical choice, whether through immersion or naming. The Meiji committee's translations, by contrast, repeatedly adopt transliteration in combination with administrative or passive

verb structures. This strategy suspends semantic specification at the lexical level and shifts interpretive responsibility to ecclesial teaching, ritual practice, and institutional authority.

Viewed in this way, transliteration does not represent a failure to translate. Rather, it operates as a deliberate mechanism for managing doctrinal plurality within an interdenominational translation project. By allowing *baputesuma* to function as a shared but theologically open signifier, the Meiji committee stabilized Protestant cooperation while preserving interpretive flexibility in early Japanese Christian discourse.

Transliteration, Norms, and Institutional Mediation

The textual analyses presented in Section 5 illuminate not only divergent translation choices but also the broader institutional and doctrinal stakes surrounding Bible translation in nineteenth-century Japan. As translation studies has long emphasized, translation is not a neutral act of linguistic transfer but a culturally situated practice shaped by authority, norms, and institutional constraint (Bassnett 13-18). The competing renderings of “baptism” in Nathan Brown’s vernacular translations and in the Meiji committee’s published Bible exemplify how translation decisions functioned as mechanisms for managing theological difference within a shared scriptural project.

Across the passages examined, a consistent contrast emerges. Brown’s translations seek to resolve theological ambiguity by embedding interpretation directly into the Japanese lexicon. Whether through *shizume* (“immerse”) or *nadzuke* (“naming”), baptism is rendered in semantically transparent terms that align closely with Baptist doctrinal commitments. In Brown’s translations, ritual practice and theological meaning are made inseparable at the level of the text itself. The Japanese reader encounters baptism not as an open signifier but as a clearly specified act whose meaning is stabilized through lexical choice.

The Meiji committee’s translations adopt a markedly different strategy. By retaining the transliterated form *baputesuma* and pairing it with administrative or passive verb constructions, the committee repeatedly avoids specifying baptismal mode or theological interpretation within the text. Rather than resolving doctrinal disagreement, transliteration suspends it. Meaning is deferred from the lexical surface of the Bible to ecclesiastical teaching, preaching, and ritual practice. This approach reflects what André Lefevere has

described as translation shaped by institutional patronage and constraint, in which textual decisions prioritize collective stability over semantic precision (Lefevere 11-25).

Seen from a descriptive perspective, these translation choices can be understood as norm-governed outcomes rather than deviations from an abstract ideal of equivalence. As Gideon Toury has argued, translations are produced within systems governed by prevailing norms that regulate what is considered acceptable or functional in a given historical context (Toury 53-69). In the case of the Meiji Bible, the dominant norm favored interdenominational cooperation within a missionary environment marked by theological diversity. Transliteration emerged not as a linguistic failure but as a normatively appropriate solution within those constraints.

This pattern also aligns with broader observations in the history of missionary translation. Lamin Sanneh has shown that missionary translators often faced a tension between semantic transparency and doctrinal control, particularly when introducing Christianity into new linguistic and cultural environments (Sanneh 51-75). In some contexts, vernacularization served to embed Christian concepts within local semantic fields; in others, transliteration functioned as a means of preserving theological flexibility and guarding against premature assimilation. The Meiji committee's handling of baptism clearly reflects the latter impulse.

From this perspective, the contrast between Brown and the Meiji committee is not simply a matter of personal theology or individual preference. It reflects two distinct models of translation authority. Brown's work exemplifies a translator-centered model, in which doctrinal commitment justifies decisive lexical intervention. The Meiji Bible represents an institutional model, in which authority is distributed across committees, denominations, and ecclesiastical structures, and where translation decisions are shaped by the need to sustain collective legitimacy.

The case of baptism thus complicates familiar binaries in translation theory, such as domestication versus foreignization. Brown's translations domesticate baptism semantically, but only within a specific denominational framework. The Meiji committee's transliteration foreignizes the term linguistically while simultaneously domesticating it institutionally, embedding it within a Protestant system of teaching and practice. Neither strategy is neutral; both represent historically situated responses to the problem of doctrinal plurality.

Taken together, these findings underscore that Bible translation in Meiji Japan functioned as a site of negotiation where linguistic choice, institutional authority, and theological difference intersected. Transliteration allowed the Meiji committee to stabilize a shared biblical text without foreclosing interpretive diversity, shaping the conditions under which Protestant Christianity could take root in Japan. In this sense, translation did not merely transmit doctrine but actively structured the forms of Christian discourse that emerged in the modern Japanese context.

Conclusion: Transliteration and the Management of Doctrinal Plurality

The Meiji-era debate over the translation of baptism reveals that Bible translation in modern Japan cannot be understood solely as a linguistic or philological enterprise. As this study has shown, the decision to transliterate *baptisma* as *baputesuma* was not a neutral compromise nor a failure to find an adequate Japanese equivalent. Rather, it functioned as a strategic response to doctrinal disagreement within an interdenominational translation project, allowing the work of translation to proceed without resolving contested theological positions at the lexical level (Cohen 85-105).

By comparing Matthew 28:19–20, Acts 2:38, and 1 Peter 3:21 across Greek, English, and Japanese versions, this article has demonstrated how different translation strategies encode distinct theological assumptions. Nathan Brown’s hiragana translations seek to stabilize meaning by embedding doctrinal interpretation directly into the Japanese text, whether through immersion (*shizume*) or naming (*nadzuke*). The Meiji committee’s translations, by contrast, repeatedly adopt transliteration in combination with administrative or passive verb structures, shifting interpretive responsibility away from the lexical surface of the text and toward ecclesial teaching, ritual practice, and institutional authority (Murayama 89-102).

Seen in this light, transliteration operates as a form of institutional mediation. By suspending semantic specification at the level of vocabulary, the Meiji Bible preserved a shared textual foundation that could accommodate multiple Protestant traditions within a rapidly changing religious and linguistic environment. While transliteration might appear, at first glance, to resemble what Lawrence Venuti has described as a “foreignizing” strategy, its function in the Meiji Bible differs significantly. Rather than serving as a form of resistance or translator visibility, transliteration here operated as an institutional mechanism for deferring doctrinal

specification within an interdenominational context (Venuti 19-25). This strategy reflects broader patterns in nineteenth-century missionary translation, in which the management of doctrinal plurality often took precedence over strict semantic equivalence (Lefevere 11-25). The opacity of *baputesuma* did not eliminate theological difference, but it prevented any single denominational interpretation from being canonized in the biblical text itself.

This case study suggests that early Japanese Bible translation played an active role in shaping the contours of Protestant Christianity in Japan, not only by introducing new religious concepts but by structuring how disagreement could be negotiated within the bounds of a shared scripture. Transliteration, far from being a provisional or secondary solution, functioned as a key mechanism through which authority, unity, and interpretive flexibility were balanced in the formation of modern Japanese Christian discourse (Bassnett 13-18). Similar patterns of transliteration and semantic deferral have been observed in other missionary translation contexts, where institutional cohesion often took precedence over lexical transparency (Sanneh 51-75). Future research on other contested terms—such as God, sin, or salvation—may further illuminate how translation choices mediated between doctrine, language reform, and institutional power in the Meiji period.

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