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Abstract

Theology of Culture in A Japanese Context: A Believers' Church Perspective

Atsuyoshi Fujiwara

This thesis explores an appropriate relationship between Christian faith and culture. We investigate the hallmarks of authentic theology in the West, which offer us criteria to evaluate Christianity in Japan. Because Christian faith has been concretely formed and expressed in history, an analysis and evaluation of culture is incumbent on theology. The testing ground for our research is Japan, one of the most unsuccessful Christian mission fields. Thus this is a theology of culture in a Japanese context.

Through a dialogue with H. Richard Niebuhr, John Howard Yoder, and Stanley Hauerwas, we embrace a believers' church perspective as our basic vision. The believers' church critically evaluates culture and seeks to transform it by standing on the boundary between the Kingdom of God and the world, and voluntarily participates in the redemptive suffering of God with the creature. It strives to be faithful to God and to imitate Jesus Christ, instead of seeking to control the world. It trusts in God; for it is He, and not we, who is in charge of history.

Examination of Japanese Christian history is conducted in the light of the criteria above, in order to consider how Japan responded to Christianity. The criteria help us see the problem of nationalism both in superficial Christianity in Japan and in Constantinian Christianity in the West. We discuss three major Japanese theologians: Kazoh Kitamori, Yasuo Furuya, and Hideo Ohki. They help us refine our criteria for suffering, for theological assessment of Japan, and for the nature of believers' church as covenant community. We find in our investigation that although Christianity has always been in a minority in Japan, the church in Japan -- like the church in the West -- inclines to be co-opted by political powers, which is a core problem.

Theology of Culture in A Japanese Context:
A Believers' Church Perspective

Atsuyoshi Fujiwara

Ph.D.

University of Durham

Department of Theology

1999

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24 AUG 1999

Acknowledgements

I have received support from numerous people and organisations in the writing of this thesis.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Alan M. Suggate, for guiding me through this research. The completion of the thesis would have been impossible without his patient, encouraging, and careful supervision. He and his wife, Dr. Jennifer Suggate, continually looked after me and my family, and consequently made our life in Durham exceedingly pleasant. I truly appreciate their generous support.

The Revd. Hiroyuki Akae of Saidaiji Christ Church (Okayama, Japan) led me to the Christian faith when I was seventeen years old with enormous patience and love. He has directly and indirectly encouraged me to investigate the problem of culture and Christian faith. Saidaiji Church, as my mother church, committed themselves to support my family and me throughout my theological education from 1990 until the completion of this thesis with prayer and finances.

Berkland Baptist Church (Oakland, Boston, Los Angeles, New York City, and Seattle, U.S.A.), of which I am on the pastoral staff, has given me the vision of costly grace and of transforming culture with radical obedience to Christ. Amongst many brothers and sisters, I owe particular gratitude to the Revd. Paul Kim, Mrs. Rebekah Kim JDSN, the Revd. Dr. Andy Pak, the Revd. Ed Kang, and the Revd. Daniel Y.B. Im. Their prophetic challenges and concerns about my family and me were most invaluable.

The earlier part of this thesis, where I advocated the believers' church perspective, was written in the seventeenth century Bishop Cosin's Library, which, ironically, epitomises the State Church heritage, being located between Durham Cathedral and Durham Castle. I do acknowledge the value of it. The remainder was written in Kepier Court of the Graduate Society when my wife started working as

Academic Registrar of Teikyo University in Durham and I became a house husband. Keping Court became an ideal research environment when many colleagues from the Department of Theology started living in close proximity. I particularly cherish the friendship with my Mennonite colleague, Jerry D. Truex. Our dialogue covered a wide range of topics, including ecclesiology, communion, and pacifism, and occurred in a variety of situations, including sharing coffee, bringing our daughters to school, and looking after them in a park. This enormously benefited me not only in my theological inquiry but also in my spiritual life.

Professor James D.G. Dunn, Dr. Stephen C. Barton, Dr. Alan Ford, and the Canon Professor David Brown of the Department of Theology gave me helpful suggestions and comments. Professor Hideo Ohki of Tokyo Union Theological Seminary, Professor Yasuo Furuya of the International Christian University, Professor Masao Takenaka of Doshisha University, and Professor Teruo Kuribayashi of Kwansei Gakuin University kindly gave me of their precious time for interviews in Japan. My former teacher, Professor Stanley A. Nelson, continually paid interest to my research and life, even visiting us in Durham during his research leave to Oxford to encourage me. I am grateful to the libraries of Durham University and to the Inter-Library Loan Service, which was indispensable in this research. I am also grateful to the libraries of Oxford University, Doshisha University, Tokyo Union Theological Seminary, and the Graduate Theological Union for assisting me in my research visits. My friends, the Revd. Naoto Yasuda and the Revd. Masaru Asaoka of Kobe Reformed Theological Seminary also helped me obtain Japanese materials.

I am also grateful to the British Government for the Overseas Research Students Award (ORS), to the University of Durham for the Durham Postgraduate Research Award, and to the Department of Theology for the Postgraduate Scholarship in Theology for Overseas Students for their financial support.

Finally, I would like to thank my mother, Misako, and grandmother, Sadae, for supporting my family and me in every way possible.

To my wife

KIYOMI

who has supported me throughout the writing of this thesis, and

to our daughter

ELLIE

who tried to help me in her own way

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Introduction

Christian faith experiences a tension between its transcendent nature and the surrounding culture. On the one hand, Christian faith originates in the revelation of God, which transforms culture itself. On the other hand, the revelation is received and interpreted by humans in concrete situations. As Paul Tillich states, there is no such thing as "pure revelation."¹ Although interpretation of revelation is not merely a human activity, but under God's providence, it does reflect the human dimension. Past interpreted revelation has been further reinterpreted by following generations. Thus Christian faith is inevitably shaped by culture; and it conversely transforms culture. It is no exaggeration to say that two millennia of Church history have demonstrated the struggle between Christian faith and culture. In an effort to address this struggle, this thesis explores relevant issues pertinent to the relationship between faith and culture.

The term 'culture' is used in a broad sense. It includes not only arts such as music, painting, and architecture, but also social systems, customs, thoughts and beliefs. The term 'society' or 'world' is also used where emphasis is laid on the latter aspects.² Although culture often means valued elements of human production, it is suggested in Chapter 1 that it should also include the negative as well.³ Thus culture means the totality of human products.

Christianity is not simply abstract. Christian faith has been concretely formed and expressed in history. The trial ground for our research is Japan. It is known as a desolate swamp for Christian missions, and as such, it provides both a concrete and challenging context to test a theology of culture.

¹Tillich 1955, 5. Tillich says, "Wherever the divine is manifest, it is manifest in 'flesh,' that is, in a concrete, physical, and historical reality, as in the religious receptivity of the biblical writers."

²'World' is also used to indicate elements of creation which are characterised by unbelief and distrust in God.

³See Chapter 1, III-B 'Culture' and III-D-3 'Discernment of Culture.'

Our primary concern is not a socio-anthropological methodology of how to contextualise the Christian message in Japan.⁴ Although Japanese Christians often envy Western nations where Christianity has dominated their cultures, we must be aware of problems in Western Christianity as well.⁵ We are also not interested in artificially forging 'Japanese' Christianity by amalgamating the Christian tradition and Japanese culture. Such an effort is often motivated by ethnocentrism or nationalism, which distorts Christian faith. Japan has already experienced this kind of Christianity, as we shall see in Chapter 4. Rather, we undertake a theological inquiry into what might constitute an authentic and vibrant Christianity for Japan through an analysis of Christian faith and culture.

To achieve this purpose, a dialogue with Western theologians is warranted, if not essential. It is unfortunate that there is a tendency in Asia to ignore Western Christian traditions and to create a so-called 'Asian Christianity,' fusing Oriental traditions and Christianity.⁶ This occurs as a reaction to imperial Western Christianity. However, ignoring the long tradition of Western Christianity is doomed to result in complacency. A dialogue with Japanese theologians is also indispensable. It helps us understand their struggle in the Japanese situation. Moreover some of them have produced critical works about the problem of Christian faith and Japan. Through our dialogues with both Western and Japanese theologians, we seek to establish a theology in order to engage culture, constructively yet critically, specifically the Japanese.

Chapter 1 discusses the theology of H. Richard Niebuhr. His *Christ and Culture* (1951) has probably been the most influential work in this field.⁷ Beyond this work, he has made other substantial contributions.⁸ Recently, *Christ and*

⁴See Fukuda 1993 for a recent attempt at contextualisation in Japan.

⁵For instance, when Japanese Christians asked the Anglican theologian, Alan M. Suggate, if the West has ever redressed the issue of imperialism, "He had to confess that he could not think of any serious movement to this day to deal constructively with Britain's imperial history." Suggate 1996, 250-251.

⁶See Furuya 1984, 219-234; Furuya 1989, 26-29.

⁷Niebuhr 1975.

⁸See Chapter 1, I 'Introduction.'

Culture was squarely challenged by John Howard Yoder's article, "How H. Richard Niebuhr Reasoned: A Critique of *Christ and Culture*" (1996).⁹ This work, to my knowledge, is the most fundamental criticism of the book, although it has yet to receive a serious response.¹⁰ The critical engagement with both Niebuhr and Yoder in Chapter 1 leads us to embrace a believers' church perspective as the basic vision for a viable theology of culture.

Chapter 2 critically examines two major theologians in the believers' church tradition: John Howard Yoder and Stanley Hauerwas. Although there are other theologians who take 'the church confronting culture' approach, such as John Milbank, we focus on Yoder and Hauerwas because they are the leading representatives of this approach within the believers' church tradition.¹¹ Chapters 1 and 2 set forth the basic criteria for illuminating the problem of Christian faith and culture.

Chapters 3, 4, and 5 discuss the history of Christianity in Japan: the sixteenth and seventeenth century Catholic missions, Christianity from 1859 till 1945, and Christianity from 1945 till 1985. These sections selectively discuss historical and theological issues, according to how Japan responded to Christianity in the light of the criteria developed in Chapters 1 and 2. However, the history of Christianity in Japan is not simply evaluated by the criteria. The criteria have been further refined in a dialogue with Japanese Christianity and its theologians. Although they cannot be examined in great detail, we have to explore all three periods since all throw light on our chief concern. Whilst Japanese Protestant theologians and church historians do not pay much attention to the first period, we find significant illumination from the Catholic missions of that period in matters which Protestant missions overlook.

⁹Yoder 1996. This article was originally written in 1958 and circulated whilst remaining unpublished.

¹⁰Professor Glen H. Stassen, a co-author of *Authentic Transformation* with Yoder, kindly forwarded my electric mail question to Yoder, if he had seen any serious response to "How H. Richard Niebuhr Reasoned." Yoder replied: "I HAVE SEEN NO SERIOUS RESPONSE ANYWHERE." Yoder suddenly passed away in his office in the morning of 30 December 1997, shortly after he had answered my inquiry.

¹¹Milbank 1990; Milbank 1997; Le Masters 1992.

Nevertheless, more emphasis is given to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries since our concern is about Japan and Japanese Christianity today. In Chapters 4 and 5 Protestant Christianity receives more attention than Roman Catholicism and Greek Orthodox. This is partially because Protestantism has had more influence on Japan.¹² We have chosen three significant Japanese theologians to achieve depth in discussion: Kazoh Kitamori, Yasuo Furuya, and Hideo Ohki.

I am aware that this thesis is an ambitious undertaking, tackling a huge problem of Christian faith and culture as well as the history of Christianity in Japan. Nonetheless such a comprehensive endeavour is essential if the central issues are really to be grasped.

In referring to Japanese words, including names and places, long vowels are indicated with a circumflex. Exceptions are well-known cities, names, and terms which are widely accepted.¹³ Contrary to Japanese custom, I follow the Western practice of putting the family name second. In quotations, italics are in the original unless noted.

¹²Furuya 1997, 7.

¹³For example, Tokyo instead of Tôkyô, and Kazoh Kitamori instead of Kazô Kitamori.

Chapter 1

H. Richard Niebuhr: Transformation Approach

I. Introduction

H. Richard Niebuhr was always concerned about the relation of Christian faith and culture in history from his early stage of academic life. His doctoral thesis at Yale was on Ernst Troeltsch.¹⁴ Troeltsch, sometimes considered 'the first 21st century theologian,'¹⁵ was concerned about the problem of the absoluteness of Christianity. He was aware of other beliefs, and of the relativity of Christian churches in history.¹⁶ His history of religion approach finally led him to a conclusion of religious pluralism.¹⁷ Humans are historically conditioned and so are the churches. Obviously Troeltsch exerted a significant influence on Niebuhr. Whilst rejecting Troeltsch's pluralism, which gave up the universal uniqueness of God revealed in Christ, Niebuhr valued his critical historical studies and accepted the relativism of human endeavour, so that no historical church can claim absoluteness. Niebuhr intended *Christ and Culture* (henceforth *C&C*) to be a supplement and correction of Troeltsch's *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches* from the viewpoint of "theological and theo-centric relativism."¹⁸

Niebuhr, in his first book, *The Social Sources of Denominationalism* (1929), inquired how religion and culture are related in American Christianity from a religious and socio-economic perspective. It was an analysis of the reason why

¹⁴Niebuhr 1986.

¹⁵Professor Claude Welch sometimes called Troeltsch the first 21st century theologian in his Ph.D. seminar at Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley. Garrett E. Paul also writes in the "Introduction to the English Edition" of Troeltsch's *The Christian Faith*: "The man once thought to be the last theologian of the nineteenth century may yet turn out to be the first theologian of the twentieth -- or even the twenty-first." Troeltsch 1991, xvi.

¹⁶Troeltsch 1972, 92-93. He especially recognises Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Platonism, and Indian philosophy of religion.

¹⁷Welch 1985, 282-289. Welch discusses the development of Troeltsch's thought on the issue of the absoluteness of Christianity.

¹⁸Troeltsch 1931; Niebuhr 1975, xii.

Christianity was shaped into sect, denomination, and church. He realised that the churches were divided because of different economic, educational, ethnic, and class backgrounds rather than theological diversities. He found that a historical, sociological, and ethical approach was more fruitful in revealing differences of Christian denominations than a doctrinal approach.¹⁹ The emphasis of this study was on how Christianity was dependent on culture, and it failed to throw light on how Christian faith, which is essential in Christianity, in turn shaped culture.²⁰ Niebuhr's deep dissatisfaction with this work led him to a further study, *The Kingdom of God in America* (1937). Here he analysed leading forces within the Christian movement which moulded American culture. In this work we can already see his preference for transforming faith, which becomes a core answer to his Christ-and-culture inquiry. In *The Meaning of Revelation* (1941) Niebuhr tackled the problems of "the relations of the relative and the absolute in history."²¹ Whilst acknowledging the unavoidable legitimacy of Troeltsch's historical relativism, Niebuhr sought to combine it with the constructive work of Karl Barth. In this book too he suggests a "conversion" approach.²²

Radical Monotheism and Western Culture (1960) was published after *Christ and Culture* (1951), which is discussed below.²³ Again he analyses Christianity from a historical and socio-religious perspective and presents polytheism, henotheism, and radical monotheism. Niebuhr values radical monotheism for its potential continuously to reform the church and the world. *The Responsible Self* (1963) was published after his sudden death in 1962 by his son Richard R. Niebuhr and James Gustafson. Niebuhr says: "Responsibility affirms: 'God is acting in all actions upon you. So respond to all actions upon you as to respond to his action.'"²⁴ Gustafson tells us that it was "the most memorable theme in his [Niebuhr's] course

¹⁹Niebuhr 1957, vii.

²⁰Niebuhr 1959, ix.

²¹Niebuhr 1960a, vii.

²²Tôbô 1980, 129-134.

²³Niebuhr 1960b.

²⁴Niebuhr 1978, 126.

of lectures on Christian ethics" for most of his students.²⁵ God is acting in history, establishing His kingdom; we are to respond to what God is doing in history with all our being.

Thus, Niebuhr's main concerns lay in the relationship between the Church and the world, the relationship of the relative and the absolute, and a responsible ethic of the whole person to God -- all of these always to be thought out historically. Christian response to the world should be personal response to what the sovereign God is doing in a particular situation; although such human responses in history were relative, the absolute God revealed Himself in Jesus Christ and through Christian communities guided by the Spirit. His understanding of the Christian faith and the world is most explicitly spelled out in *C&C*, on which we now focus.

II. Christ and Culture

The problem of Christian faith and culture has been discussed since the very early stage of Christianity. Niebuhr calls it an "enduring problem" and asserts that the essential problem is not Christianity and culture but Christ and culture. Christianity here is never considered absolute but relative because it "moves between the poles of Christ and culture."²⁶ After defining both Christ and culture, which are discussed below, he then presents five types of Christian response to this problem. We examine each type, and then discuss Niebuhr's significant subjects: theocentric relativism, culture, Christ, and transformation.

²⁵Niebuhr 1978, 25.

²⁶Niebuhr 1975, 11.

A. Two Extremes

1. Christ against Culture: Exclusivist Approach

The first approach emphasises the absolute authority of Christ and uncompromisingly rejects loyalty to culture because culture is fallen. The conflict between Christ and culture is conspicuous in this "either-or" position. It interprets the world dualistically: "Whatever does not belong to the commonwealth of Christ is under the rule of evil."²⁷

Niebuhr values this radical approach for three reasons: it is rightfully drawn from the Lordship of Christ; it is a typical early Christian attitude; and it has a balancing function to all other Christian groups, just as Romans 13 is balanced by I John.²⁸ When one recognises Christ's radical authority, this exclusive answer is inevitable, without which Christianity loses its essential aspect.

Although it is an inevitable Christian answer, Niebuhr asserts that it is also an inadequate response. Firstly, the radical approach, withdrawal from society or rejection of culture, is not directly effective in changing culture.²⁹ Although it prepared a way for reformation in the society and church, such a reformation was not achieved because of this radical spirit. It was rather carried out by other people who embraced a different conviction over the problem of Christ and culture.

Secondly, these radical Christians, whilst rejecting culture, make use of its benefits.³⁰ The writer of I John and Tertullian, in condemning pagan philosophy, used its vocabulary. Tolstoy was in the midst of the Russian cultural movement of his time. Humans are part of culture, and all that they, even radical Christians, can do is to select and modify, under the authority of Christ, what is already there in culture.

²⁷Niebuhr 1975, 50.

²⁸Niebuhr 1975, 45, 65-68.

²⁹Niebuhr 1975, 66-67.

³⁰Niebuhr 1975, 69.

Thirdly, the exclusivists tend to undercut the seriousness of sin.³¹ They try to protect the holy community from the fallen world by separating from it. The assumption is that sin abides in culture and the community is unaffected, or less affected, by sin. Nevertheless such a community and the individuals comprising the community are obviously tainted with sin, too.

Finally, Niebuhr gives two profound theological arguments against this radical position from the doctrine of the Trinity.³² One is that radical Christians' loyalty to Christ tends to result in so-called "Unitarianism of the Son,"³³ ignoring God the Father and Creator and the Holy Spirit the Sustainer of the world and the church. The other is that the radicals' rejection of the fallen world leads them to a suspicion of the Creator of the world. Radical Christians have a tendency toward heretical dualism: an evil material sphere and a spiritual sphere guided by Christ and the Spirit in the believer. Thus they fail to understand the doctrine of the Trinity, slighting the presence and work of God and the Spirit in culture.

2. Christ of Culture: Inclusivist Approach

The second extreme approach relaxes the tension between Christ and culture.³⁴ It is a "both-and" position and harmonises Christ and culture by overlooking conflicting elements in the New Testament and society. The adherents of this harmonious approach are selective in their attitude both to Christ and to culture, and their Christ tends to be rational and abstract rather than historical and concrete. Their Christ is regarded as the greatest human achievement, or one which should be treasured, yet not as Lord of culture.³⁵ However it is to be noted that Niebuhr tells us that they at least recognise something beyond reason and partially acknowledge "a revelation that cannot be completely absorbed into the life of

³¹Niebuhr 1975, 71-76, 78

³²Niebuhr 1975, 79-82.

³³Niebuhr 1983, 152.

³⁴Niebuhr 1975, 83-88.

³⁵Niebuhr 1975, 41.

reason."³⁶ Niebuhr was probably prepared to call them Christians for this reason. We can infer that their Christ is not totally swallowed in culture but contains a meagre tension with culture, although it is significantly less than any of the other four types.

Niebuhr sees two positive aspects in this inclusive position. Firstly it indirectly helps the expansion of the kingdom of God. Evangelism is not their primary intention. However they stimulate other Christians to take the risk of indigenising Christian message, such as translating the gospel into the "vulgar tongue,"³⁷ which can result in fruitful evangelism. They also tend to talk to the leading class of the society in the sophisticated language of their time, and Niebuhr calls them "missionaries to the aristocracy and the middle class, or to the group rising to power in a civilization."³⁸ The conversion of the leadership class, no matter how political it would be, enhanced the Christianisation of the society.

In addition, Christ-of-culture people help others by reminding them of "the universal meaning of the gospel."³⁹ Although Jesus' primary interest was in the Kingdom of God, He did not ignore the world. He regarded some wise men as nearer to the Kingdom of God than others.⁴⁰ The inclusivists are aware of the differences of culture. Unlike Christ-against-culture people, they do not reject culture as a whole because of their high estimation of it.

However, this position has been criticised by both Christians and non-Christians, and Niebuhr also has the lowest assessment of this type.⁴¹ It did not gain disciples for Christ; and its New Testament Jesus is constantly distorted.⁴² Furthermore Niebuhr gives three other shortcomings, which are also applicable to the radical Christians.⁴³ Firstly, sin is treated superficially. Both exclusivists and

³⁶Niebuhr 1975, 111-112.

³⁷Niebuhr 1975, 104.

³⁸Niebuhr 1975, 104.

³⁹Niebuhr 1975, 105.

⁴⁰Mark 12:34.

⁴¹Niebuhr 1975, 109-110.

⁴²Niebuhr 1975, 108-109.

⁴³Niebuhr 1975, 112-115.

inclusivists tend to presuppose an area free from sin: the holy community for the former and higher human spirit for the latter. Secondly, cultural Christians, as much as radical Christians, tend to treat law more seriously than grace. Whilst the radicals emphasise human response more than divine initiative, cultural Christians prefer self-dependent knowledge. Whilst the former is due to Christ's Lordship, the latter shows more independent spirit, which seems at variance with the shape of the New Testament witness. Thirdly, Niebuhr comes to the doctrine of the Trinity. Both radical Christians and accommodationist Christians, he says, dislike the doctrine. The former tend to consider the doctrine as an integration of biblical theology with cultural philosophy; and the latter incline to identify Christ with the divine spirit because of their abstract tendency.

B. Moderate Answers

Niebuhr's other three types remain in between the two extreme types above. They are described as superior answers to the former two, and share four common convictions which distinguish them from those extreme positions.⁴⁴ Firstly Jesus Christ is the Son of God the Creator. Nature, on the basis of which culture is produced, is good. Therefore Christ cannot simply be against culture. Moreover they believe that humans are responsible to God in actual and concrete situations. Being given freedom and ability, developing culture is part of human obedience to God. Furthermore the central positions recognise the serious nature of sin and its universality. Whilst exclusive and inclusive Christians tend to disregard the radical nature of sin, these believe that humans can never attain to holiness. Finally the central Christians agree on the understanding of grace and law. They believe in the supremacy of divine grace and necessity of human obedience. Human culture is possible only by divine grace; and the experience of grace leads one to actualising the law in society.

⁴⁴Niebuhr 1975, 117-119.

1. Christ above Culture: Synthesist Approach

The synthesist approach is a "both-and" response like the harmonious approach. It acknowledges the gap between Christ and culture, and affirms the priority of Christ. Nevertheless the synthesists regard culture as having positive value of its own, although imperfect, and their Christ is the instructor rather than the judge. They think that Christian teaching and good products of culture are different but not always contradictory. We can infer that the synthesists by Niebuhr's definition do not accept any and every aspect of culture, but affirm culture conditionally and selectively.

Niebuhr describes the synthesist position as an attractive choice. The synthesists open the door for the co-operation between Christians and non-Christians. At the same time, they maintain a distinctive Christian message. Moreover, particularly in the medieval period, they preserved and developed Greek and Roman culture for the following generations.⁴⁵

Their shortcomings are spelled out as well. The synthesists tend to consider their approach, in particular Aquinas' theology, equal to the eternal law of God. Any answer is produced in a particular culture and is relative, but the synthesists by Niebuhr's definition do not recognise the cultural limit of their answers; when they realise such a limitation, they are regarded as moving towards Niebuhr's own view, the conversionist.⁴⁶ In addition, synthesist understanding of sin is superficial. Although they do affirm sinfulness of humans and take sin more seriously than cultural Christians, their recognition of it is not sufficient. Human reason for them may be darkened but it is not totally damaged, and this does not seem to be profound enough at all for the radical, paradox, and conversionist Christians.

⁴⁵Niebuhr 1975, 143-145.

⁴⁶Niebuhr 1975, 145-146.

2. Christ and Culture in Paradox: Dualist Approach

The dualist position, like accommodationist and synthesist positions, attempts to give a "both-and" answer to Christ-culture problem. However dualists do so in an extremely sharp tension. Unlike the accommodationists and the synthesists, the dualists, along with the radicals, are sensitive enough to recognise the serious depravity of both the human and culture. They are certain about two things: sectarian withdrawal from society could not help them since both the church and the world are seriously affected by sin; nevertheless God sustains them in culture and they are responsible for the world. Thus they hold the conflicting elements together: loyalty to Christ and responsibility to culture.⁴⁷ Their most explicit paradoxes appear in "law and grace" and "divine wrath and mercy."⁴⁸ Human performance falls short of the law, yet grace overcomes the law without ruining it; the wrath lies upon sinful humans, yet mercy embraces them. The dualists choose to live in the dynamic tensions.

The dualist position brought profound understanding of sin and its redemption by Christ. Its dynamic understanding of the Christ-culture problem was not only more persuasive and realistic but also more inspiring than other static approaches.

Nevertheless, Niebuhr points out three insufficient aspects of the dualist approach. Firstly the dualists open the door to the antinomianism.⁴⁹ No matter how morally humans try to live, they still fall short of the divine law. This can discourage people from living conscientiously. Secondly the predominant spiritual concern leads them to be culturally conservative. Their regard remains mainly in the religious realm, and social matters are principally left untouched. We can say that its distorted examples in modern history would be pro-Hitler "German Christians"⁵⁰

⁴⁷Niebuhr 1975, 152-156.

⁴⁸Niebuhr 1975, 157-159.

⁴⁹Niebuhr 1975, 186-189.

⁵⁰Yoder 1996, 39.

and not a small number of Japanese Christians during the second world war. Both of them were schizophrenic with the loyalty to the nation and to Christ. Thirdly they have a tendency to pay insufficient respect to the positive aspects of God's creation because of their principal preoccupation with Christ's redemption, the radical nature of sin, and spiritual matters. Although it is ultimately temporary, fallen, and needs to be redeemed, it is nonetheless a good creation.

3. Christ the Transformer of Culture: Conversionist Approach

The conversionists recognise a sharp distinction between Christ and human achievement; they are aware of the radical sin in the human and culture. However they have a distinctively positive attitude toward culture. They believe that God reigns over culture and therefore Christians are responsible for cultural duties.

Niebuhr gives three characteristics of the transformation approach related to their involvement in culture.⁵¹ Firstly they value the creation as much as redemption. They see the work of God in Christ not only in the Cross, the Resurrection, and the Second Coming, but also in the Incarnation. Christ who creates the world participates in culture. Secondly the conversionists sharply distinguish the evil human fall from the good creation by God. This corruption is from the created goodness and is exclusively a human act. Although it is evil, it is perverted good. Thirdly their understanding of history is existential. They believe that God interacts with humans in the here and now. They are more concerned with the present divine restoration than events in the past and future.

Augustine was a living example of the transformation of culture.⁵² Following his conversion, he transvalued and reshaped what he had learned as a non-Christian, instead of rejecting it all. Augustine believed that Christ "redirects, reinvigorates, and regenerates" all human activity, which is perverted and corrupted

⁵¹Niebuhr 1975, 191-196.

⁵²Niebuhr 1975, 206-217.

from the essentially good.⁵³ However Augustine did not dream of the total transformation of culture in which all human activities are directed to God in harmony and peace. He rather stayed with the traditional eschatological vision of the Scriptures: eternal separation of the saved and the damned.

Niebuhr wonders why Augustine did not thoroughly carry out the conversionist view, and conjectures that it is to be attributed to his defensiveness and justification of Christian tradition.⁵⁴ Obviously Augustine did not dishonour the Christian tradition, nor did he depart from the Scriptures. Augustine did have a defensive aspect as a church leader. Yet it seems to me rather that Augustine took sin more seriously than Niebuhr, and this did not allow him to entertain the optimistic idea of a thoroughly transformed culture at the end.

F.D. Maurice is the most unmistakable example of the conversionist for Niebuhr. Maurice fully held an affirmative attitude toward culture. He was deeply convinced that Christ, not the devil, is Lord of the world and that nothing can exist without Him. He believed the pervasion of culture seriously enough to distinguish himself from inclusivists and synthesists. In addition, he did not separate Church and culture like dualists or exclusivists. For Maurice, "the Kingdom of Heaven is within us, not through some efforts of ours to believe in it, but because it has always been He [Christ] came that He might make us know where it is" ⁵⁵ The power of evil did not exist apart from forms such as "a spirit of self-seeking, self-willing, and self-glorification," ⁵⁶ which also existed among Christians. Such a separation of the Church and the world appeared to Maurice self-centred, and he insisted on an inclusive transformation: the conversion of the whole of humanity. He believed that all humans are created by God and members of His kingdom, and God can transform them into participation in the kingdom of God in the eschatological present, which was called "transformed culture." ⁵⁷ The

⁵³Niebuhr 1975, 209.

⁵⁴Niebuhr 1975, 216-217.

⁵⁵Maurice 1884b, 576.

⁵⁶Niebuhr 1975, 224.

⁵⁷Niebuhr 1975, 228.

transformation required "humiliation" and "exaltation."⁵⁸ The humiliation allows people to accept that Christ is the head, and not they; the exaltation comes from the understanding that they are to serve the head and all others. Universal salvation was necessary for him, because he could not "believe that He will fail with any at last; . . . ; but His will must surely be done, however long it may be resisted."⁵⁹ This led to controversy and the loss of his chair at King's College, London.

III. Assessment

A. Theocentric Relativism

In order to discuss Niebuhr's theology, first we must deal with his basic conviction, which penetrates his discussion of the Christ-and-culture problem. It is theocentric relativism. Niebuhr rejects both "sceptical historical relativism" and "subjective idealism" and advocates "theocentric relativism."⁶⁰

Sceptical historical relativism emphasises objectivity, and claims the "unreliability of all thought conditioned by historical and social background,"⁶¹ and believes that "we are without an absolute."⁶² It is the understanding that every human action is carried out in history, limited in time and space, and therefore no universality and absoluteness can be claimed. Not only do we live in a temporal and historical world but also we, including our reason, are relative. "Our historical relativism affirms the historicity of the subject even more than that of the object; man, it points out, is not only in time but time is in man."⁶³ This is what we are, and this is what we have in our theological inquiry.

⁵⁸Niebuhr 1975, 226.

⁵⁹Maurice 1884b, 577; Niebuhr 1975, 226.

⁶⁰Niebuhr sometimes uses the term "historical relativism" in a positive sense, in which it is the same as "theocentric relativism." See for example, Stassen 1996, 150-151. However "theocentric relativism" expresses both our relativity and the reality of what we see more appropriately than "historical relativism."

⁶¹Niebuhr 1960a, 16.

⁶²Niebuhr 1975, 238.

⁶³Niebuhr 1960a, 13.

It was Niebuhr's intention in *C&C* to bring Troeltsch's sceptical historical relativism into "the light of theological and theo-centric relativism."⁶⁴ Troeltsch gave up claiming the universal validity of Christianity, although he indicated that it was the absolute truth for the European-American world.⁶⁵ The problem of the relativity of Christianity which Troeltsch raised is so profound that no serious theologian can avoid it. Niebuhr affirms, through Troeltsch's critical eyes, that any form of Christianity is relative between the poles of Christ and culture, and says: "I have found myself unable to avoid the acceptance of historical relativism." However he does "not believe that the agnostic consequence [of the relativism] is necessary."⁶⁶ He believes in Christian faith as the absolute truth revealed to humans from the divine through Jesus Christ, and seeks a way to hold both relativism and the absoluteness of Christianity. "Relativism does not imply subjectivism and scepticism. It is not evident that the man who is forced to confess that his view of things is conditioned by the standpoint he occupies must doubt the reality of what he sees."⁶⁷

Subjectivism seeks "to overcome the limitations which empiricism had brought to light by exalting the subjective as alone real."⁶⁸ Its typical example is existentialism represented by Kierkegaard and Bultmann. It tends to neglect objectivity and to become individualistic.⁶⁹ As Tillich called *The Meaning of Revelation* "the introduction into existential thinking in present American theology," Niebuhr's theology has an existential substance.⁷⁰ However it is not individualistic existentialism but "social existentialism," which emphasises the corporate and

⁶⁴Niebuhr 1975, xii.

⁶⁵Welch 1985, 287-289.

⁶⁶Niebuhr 1960a, vii.

⁶⁷Niebuhr 1960a, 18.

⁶⁸Niebuhr 1960a, 16.

⁶⁹Niebuhr's critical attitude toward subjectivism can be seen as early as 1927. Tôbô 1980, 44-45.

⁷⁰Tillich 1941, 455.

communal aspect.⁷¹ Niebuhr strongly rejects personalising and privatising theology.⁷²

It was Niebuhr's attempt to bridge a gap between Troeltsch and Barth. He states in *The Meaning of Revelation*:

Students of theology will recognize that Ernst Troeltsch and Karl Barth have also been my teachers, though only through their writings. These two leaders in twentieth century religious thought are frequently set in diametrical opposition to each other; I have tried to combine their main interests, for it appears to me that the critical thought of the former and the latter belong together. . . . It is work that needs to be done.⁷³

Thus Niebuhr acknowledges our historical relativity (Troeltsch) as a starting point of his theology, and at the same time claims the reality of our experience of God in confessional and communal forms (Barth).⁷⁴ Although historical relativism means despair to Troeltsch, Niebuhr rather accepts it as a starting point of his theological inquiry.

Niebuhr believes that theology should be *confessional* and *communal*. These are the conditions for theocentric relativism. In *The Meaning of Revelation* Niebuhr divides history into two: the *outer history* and the *inner history*.⁷⁵ "In external history we deal with objects; in internal history our concern is with subjects."⁷⁶ Whilst external history is "I-it" history "as a realm of the pure reason, internal history is "I-Thou" history "as a sphere of the pure practical reason."⁷⁷ Confessional and communal Christian theology belongs to the internal history.⁷⁸

⁷¹Niebuhr 1975, 241.

⁷²Niebuhr 1960a, 21.

⁷³Niebuhr 1960a, x.

⁷⁴Although Niebuhr enthusiastically supports Barth's confessional and communal approach, he does not fully accept Barth's theology. Barth was reacting against human-centred liberalism, and inclines to overemphasise the transcendence of God and to neglect God's interaction with humans in the relativity of history. Niebuhr says: "If an anthropocentric mode of thought tried to define religion within the limits of humanity then this purely theocentric approach tends to present a faith within the limits of deity." Niebuhr 1931, 420-421.

⁷⁵This may be Troeltsch's influence since "Troeltsch makes a methodological distinction between the self-understanding of contemporaries or those involved and a verdict coming from outside." Drescher 1993, 289-290.

⁷⁶Niebuhr 1960a, 64.

⁷⁷Niebuhr 1960a, 65.

⁷⁸H. Richard Niebuhr with this inner history became a forerunner of narrative theology along with Karl Barth. Barth's understanding of the revelation is two-fold: objective and subjective. God once in history revealed Himself in the event of the Incarnation; and the revelation is experienced in the present by the individuals and communities. Barth believed that the objective event in the past could become a

He asserts that our statement about God is to be the statement of faith, and rejects so-called neutral and objective statement about God.⁷⁹ He supports Luther: "At the beginning of the modern era Luther vigorously and repeatedly affirmed that God and faith belonged together so that all statements about God which are made from some other point of view than that of faith in him are not really statements about him at all."⁸⁰ Niebuhr believes that Christian theology must be dependent on God and therefore "every effort to deal with the subject [revelation] must be resolutely confessional."⁸¹ "There seems to be no way of avoiding such static and deistic interpretations of the revelation idea . . . save by the acceptance of the confessional form of theology. . . . A revelation which leaves man without defense before God cannot be dealt with except in confessor's terms."⁸²

Although Niebuhr does not deny apologetic theology, he correctly deems that it should be secondary to kerygmatic or confessional theology: "Such defense may be innocuous when it is strictly subordinated to the main task of living toward our ends, but put into the first place it becomes more destructive of religion, Christianity and the soul than any foe's attack can possibly be."⁸³

Although Niebuhr's relativism is confessional, it is not mere individualistic subjectivism. It has an objective aspect within internal history. Niebuhr believes: "[Christian theology] must ask what revelation means for Christians rather than what it ought to mean for all men, everywhere and at all times."⁸⁴ His relativism stands "with confidence in the independent reality of what is seen, though recognizing that

subjective experience although he did not explain how it could happen. Barth 1956, 203-279, especially 237-240. See also Stroup 1981, 48, 51, 266.

⁷⁹Niebuhr 1960a, 37.

⁸⁰Niebuhr 1960a, 23.

⁸¹Niebuhr 1960a, 40.

⁸²Niebuhr 1960a, 41-42.

⁸³Niebuhr 1960a, 39. Niebuhr chose to focus on Karl Barth, instead of Paul Tillich whose theology he studied first, or Emil Brunner who was accepted widely by American theologians. Furuya insightfully suggests that it is because of Niebuhr's conviction that theology should be non-apologetic and confessional. Furuya 1963, 87-89.

⁸⁴Niebuhr 1960a, 42.

its assertions about that reality are meaningful only to those who look upon it from the same standpoint."⁸⁵ This is an objective aspect.

Rejecting individualistic subjectivism, Niebuhr suggests *communal* theology. He states: "We can proceed only by stating in simple, confessional form what has happened to us in our community, how we came to believe, how we reason about things and what we see from our point of view."⁸⁶ Internal history "can only be confessed by the community."⁸⁷ He summarises his position, emphasising the significance of communal narrative:

Christian theology must begin today with revelation because it knows that men cannot think about God save as historic, communal beings and save as believers. . . . And it can pursue its inquiry only by recalling the story of Christian life and by analyzing what Christians see from their limited point of view in history and faith.⁸⁸

Thus, Niebuhr emphasises the confessional and communal aspect of theology.⁸⁹

In the past, theologies directly appealed to nature, intuition, or the Scriptures. However Niebuhr is convinced that looking at external nature, internal intuition, or even the Scriptures cannot be a basis of theology if they are not interpreted from the perspective of Christian faith.⁹⁰ Rejecting external objectivity and merely internal subjectivity, Niebuhr upholds "the theology of revelation," which is based on what we see in our relativity.⁹¹ In spite of our limit and relativity, God has disclosed Himself to us in history, particularly through Jesus Christ to the full extent; and such a knowledge of the absolute gives us confidence, and guides us to humility or acknowledgement of our limit. "Just because faith knows of an absolute standpoint it can therefore accept the relativity of the believer's situation and knowledge. If we have no faith in the absolute faithfulness of God-in-Christ, it will doubtless be difficult for us to discern the relativity of our faith."⁹² Thus theocentric relativism is an acknowledgement of our relativity because of our faith in the absolute and infinite

⁸⁵Niebuhr 1960a, 22.

⁸⁶Niebuhr 1960a, 41.

⁸⁷Niebuhr 1960a, 73.

⁸⁸Niebuhr 1960a, 42.

⁸⁹See also Niebuhr 1948, 516.

⁹⁰Kliever 1991, 71.

⁹¹Niebuhr 1960a, 37.

⁹²Niebuhr 1975, 239.

God, who reveals Himself to us as reality despite our relativity. This is a significant characteristic of Niebuhr's theology.

It is to be noted that the meaning of being confessional and communal in Niebuhr's theology slightly changes in the later period. As mentioned above, Niebuhr divides internal history and external history in *The Meaning of Revelation* (1941). This is due to the Kantian separation of pure reason and practical reason. Niebuhr treats revelation as a matter of the inner history; confessional and communal theology also belongs to the internal history. Such a modern dualism unhealthily divides the self instead of uniting it. It also leaves the external history untouched by Christian faith. In *The Responsible Self* (1963), however, we see that Niebuhr later tries to overcome this dualism by the concept of the "responsible self" as a whole person responding to God in all aspects of life.⁹³ He says: "In religious language, the soul and God belong together; or otherwise stated, I am one within myself as I encounter the One in all that acts upon me."⁹⁴ He humbly presents this suggestion:

It may be that the general problem which we have tried to solve with the use of these two familiar distinctions [facts and values] can be brought to our attention in a slightly different perspective with this view of ourselves as responsible beings, though it remains doubtful whether the ultimate problem of the unity of the self can be solved by means of this approach entirely more satisfactorily than it has been by means of the older distinctions.⁹⁵

Thus in the later period, Niebuhr does not regard revelation and being confessional and communal as simply matters of internal history. However the confessional and communal aspect continues to occupy a significant role in his theocentric relativism.

John Howard Yoder criticises Niebuhr's relativism in defence of 'radicals' on the ground that the New Testament and most classical theology insist that God's will can be known to us. He says, "God's transcendence is namely the ground of the assurance that our knowledge of God's call . . . is reliable and binding because, even though partial, it comes from God when it encounters us in Christ," whilst for

⁹³Tôbô 1990, 135-136, 157-161. Tôbô discusses Niebuhr's shift from a modern dualism of pure reason and practical reason to postmodern integration of them.

⁹⁴Niebuhr 1978, 122.

⁹⁵Niebuhr 1978, 83.

Niebuhr "the transcendence of God is a code term to reinforce our uncertainty about the normativity of the incarnation."⁹⁶

It is certainly true that orthodox Christian tradition tells us that God's will is fully revealed in Christ, whose life and teaching are the norm for every Christian. However the interpretation of the New Testament and its application do vary according to people; and the interpretation and application are entrusted to the church which is also historical and diverse. God actualises His purpose in spite of human shortcomings and diverse Christian beliefs. Niebuhr's severe criticism of the radicals, to which Yoder belongs, is directed against their arrogant attitude that only they know the truth, denying human diversity and fallibility.

Moreover Niebuhr's relativism does not necessarily affirm that all five types are "equally true" as Yoder assumes.⁹⁷ Some are described as better than others. Niebuhr nevertheless believes that God works also through those who have different convictions from him. We are to *confess* our own conviction with confidence and humility, and not to force it on other people as *the* Christian truth, neglecting our fallibility and diversity. As Niebuhr says, we are not in the position to declare *the* Christian answer. Sheep know the voice of their good Shepherd, and we should trust the providence of God in history. If our purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail; yet if it is from God, no one will be able to stop it.⁹⁸ We should remain in the position of witness but not in the seat of the judge. Niebuhr in his typology takes the pluralistic stance that we need all five types because of his theocentric relativist conviction that humans cannot have the absolute form of Christianity. It is noted in the Acknowledgements, continually repeated in the discussion of types, and again confirmed in the final chapter of the book. In spite of his favourable attitude toward the conversionist type, he is determined not to give the final answer, showing a respect for every type.⁹⁹

⁹⁶Yoder 1996, 81.

⁹⁷Yoder 1996, 80.

⁹⁸John 10:4, 27; Acts 5:38-39.

⁹⁹See Ottati 1988, 324; Yeager 1996, 104-105; Niebuhr 1975, 233. Cf. Yoder 1996, 41.

The theocentric relativism reminds us of the incompleteness of the churches. Although a concrete Christian community should be a locus for Christian theology and actual Christian living, its elevation to the infinite position is a fatal mistake. The better a church is and the more we commit ourselves to a church, the more easily such an elevation occurs. It blinds us to the work of the Spirit in other Christian communities and in the world; and it can be nothing but a hindrance to co-operation between the churches. Theocentric relativism safeguards us from such a mistake.

Niebuhr's theocentric relativism is thus a healthy attitude and a significant contribution to Christian ethics. It affirms human fallibility and diversity, and evades claiming a universal validity of a certain interpretation and application of Christian faith. This prevents us from arrogantly self-righteousness theology. Nevertheless it claims the absoluteness of the revelation in confessional and communal form. This is not a broad way but a delicate path on the boundary of the infinite and the finite. Seeking the will of God despite our relativity requires our seriousness and commitment to our community and to our confession. By contrast the lack of seriousness and commitment leads us only to a sceptical relativism.

B. Culture

Niebuhr defines culture in a loose fashion. Culture is "that total process of human activity and that total result of such activity to which now the name, *culture*, now the name *civilization*, is applied in common speech." He also calls it "the 'artificial, secondary environment' which man superimposes on the natural." It is what the New Testament writers called "the world," to which Christians of every generation are bound.¹⁰⁰ He then gives four characteristics of culture: it is "social," a "human achievement," "a world of values," and a place of "pluralism."¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰Niebuhr 1975, 32.

¹⁰¹Niebuhr 1975, 32-39.

However, Yoder insists that Niebuhr, without noting it, redefines culture as "a given non-Christian civilization to the exclusion of the cultural productivity of Christians," or as a "*majority* position of a given society."¹⁰² Yoder's own Mennonite perspective is the basis for this judgement; for he is sensitive to the Mennonites' contribution to culture and objects to the fact that Niebuhr simply puts them into the 'against culture' category.

Counter-attacking, Yoder argues that Niebuhr presupposes two characteristics of culture without stating or justifying them: it is "monolithic" and "autonomous." Yoder disputes this on the ground that culture is not monolithic or autonomous in relation to Christ.¹⁰³ He continues that when culture is assumed to be monolithic, then given Niebuhr's types, one should either reject culture totally, or accept it all, or keep it all with Christ in paradox, or transform it all. Otherwise one must be considered inconsistent, and this is precisely the accusation Niebuhr levels at theologians.

Yoder is partially correct that Niebuhr assumes that culture is monolithic and autonomous. In the discussion of culture Niebuhr tends to grasp culture comprehensively, which gives a monolithic impression.¹⁰⁴ Niebuhr sets up the problem as a matter of two poles: Christ and culture. Here culture appears to be a solid object 'out there' rather than a complex entity. Niebuhr assumes that radicals always rejected culture and states: "For the radical Christian the whole world outside the sphere where Christ's Lordship is explicitly acknowledged is a realm of equal darkness."¹⁰⁵ Moreover Niebuhr's "dualist joins the radical Christian in pronouncing the whole world of human culture to be godless and sick unto death."¹⁰⁶ Here again he seems to consider culture monolithic. For these two types, culture is foreign to Christ, and therefore it is autonomous of Christ. Thus Yoder's

¹⁰²Yoder 1996, 56. Charles Scriven also mentions Niebuhr's redefinition of culture. Scriven 1988, 46-47.

¹⁰³Yoder 1996, 51, 54-57.

¹⁰⁴Niebuhr 1975, 29-39.

¹⁰⁵Niebuhr 1975, 106.

¹⁰⁶Niebuhr 1975, 156.

observation of Niebuhr's assumption that culture is monolithic and autonomous is to this extent correct.

Just as Niebuhr's comprehension of historical figures is not fully accurate, so his assumption of the monolithic and autonomous nature of culture is not accurate for radical and dualist Christians. Radicals, for example, selectively accept some elements in the given culture. Tertullian uses pagan philosophy to express his thought;¹⁰⁷ and Tolstoy discriminates good art from bad art. Their attitude is constantly selective. They end up, it is true, not accepting many aspects of the majority opinion of the society, but they never reject culture as a whole. There is, says Yoder, nothing reprehensible in this; this "inconsistency" is not "a logical or moral flaw."¹⁰⁸ Niebuhr says that Paul's ethics is not solely derived from the teaching of Christ, but is "based on common notions of what was right and fitting, on the Ten Commandments, on Christian tradition, and on Paul's own common sense."¹⁰⁹ However, Paul does not take his ethics from just any part of culture, but carefully chooses some elements of cultural wisdom which could be used for Christian ethics. He takes a selective attitude. The dualists also have a selective attitude. In reality Christians similarly have taken a selective attitude toward culture in history.

However Yoder is wrong to consider that Niebuhr consistently adhered to the idea of a monolithic and autonomous culture in his survey.¹¹⁰ For we find that Niebuhr says: "Cultural Christians note that there are great differences among the various movements in society; and by observing these they not only find points of contact for the mission of the church, but also are enabled to work for the reformation of the culture."¹¹¹ Cultural Christians select "from his [Christ's] teaching and action as well as from the Christian doctrine about him [Christ] such

¹⁰⁷Yoder 1996, 56-57.

¹⁰⁸Yoder 1996, 54.

¹⁰⁹Niebuhr 1975, 165.

¹¹⁰Yoder 1996, 54, 85. Yoder consistently assumes that Niebuhr's culture is monolithic and autonomous till the end of his essay.

¹¹¹Niebuhr 1975, 106.

points as seem to agree with what is best in civilization," and "harmonize Christ and culture, not without excision, of course, from New Testament and social custom, of stubbornly discordant features."¹¹² This implies that they ought selectively to accept what is to be affirmed in culture.

Whilst cultural Christians select both from culture and Christian perspectives, synthesists see culture more through Christ in their selection and are discriminating in their cultural selection. Clement understands that, as a motivation of economic activities, "stoic detachment and Christian love are not contradictory" although they are distinct.¹¹³ It is obvious that stoicism is chosen out of many philosophical thoughts. "His [Clement's] Christ . . . uses its [culture's] best product as instruments."¹¹⁴ Aquinas likewise selectively accepts Aristotelian philosophy out of countless human thoughts.

The transformationists are ambiguous in their treatment of culture. The fourth gospel, with its exclusive tendency, assumes that transformation is limited to the few. Augustine too does not pursue a theology of thoroughly transforming culture. Therefore they are considered inconsistent by Niebuhr. They selectively choose some elements of culture for transformation. They believe that although salvation is possible for any human, not everyone goes through the narrow gate.

Maurice is a better example of the transformation type for Niebuhr. He takes a somewhat monolithic approach to culture and insists on an inclusive position: the conversion of all humankind. The transformation requires humility to acknowledge Christ as the head and willingness to participate in His kingdom. However he believes that the whole world will be converted at the end because God cannot fail in His work. Although the acknowledgement and participation are conscious acts, which each aspect of culture has to select individually, Maurice does have a strong monolithic flavour of culture in his idea of universal conversion.

¹¹²Niebuhr 1975, 83-84.

¹¹³Niebuhr 1975, 124.

¹¹⁴Niebuhr 1975, 127.

Thus definition of culture changes according to theologians. 'Monolithic' is more applicable to some than others. Niebuhr expects accommodationist, synthesist, and some transformist Christians selectively to accept some elements of culture. Likewise in those three cases, Christ's divine nature as the Creator and the Sustainer of the world is more emphasised than radical and dualist types, and culture is not autonomous of Christ. The degree of such acceptance varies according to the type. Niebuhr's vagueness of definition and his simple two-pole setting of Christ and culture to cover all five types obscure the complexities.

In sum, Yoder is quite right that culture can never be monolithic. Culture is a name given to an extremely complex human product, and there is no such thing as a block of culture 'out there.' Christians throughout history have selectively dealt with different aspects of culture. Although Niebuhr does not always deal with culture as monolithic, and culture actually is never monolithic, he sets up the Christ-culture problem with two poles in such a way that culture appears monolithic and independent of Christ. The sheer breadth of his definition of culture inescapably creates the impression that culture is considered monolithic.

C. Christ

Niebuhr defines Christ in a loose sense just like the case of culture. As culture is described as one pole, Christ appears to be the other pole. Some scholars question this two pole setting. Douglas F. Ottati notes: "It seems equally important to ask not just about the adequacy of the five types, but also about the appropriateness of the theological polarities in terms of which the types are constructed."¹¹⁵ Moreover Yoder sharply criticises the polarity setting.

Jesus has become in sum one of the poles of a dualism. It is we . . . who shall judge to what extent we give our allegiance to him and to what extent we let his critical claims be conditioned by our acceptance of other values, within the culture, which He in principle calls us to turn away from. We also are in charge of defining the other pole of the dualism. .

¹¹⁵Ottati 1988, 325.

. . (According to Niebuhr) we still have the last word; Christ does not. Jesus is very important; Lord he is not, if "Lord" denotes an ultimate claim.¹¹⁶

Yoder claims that Christ must not be simply one pole because such a Christ is a reduction of the Christ in the New Testament. In consideration of this critique, we have to answer two questions: whether Niebuhr's Christ is always just one of two poles; and whether Niebuhr's Christ is a reduction of the Christ of the New Testament, and therefore inadequate.

1. One of Two Poles?

To the first question I would like to suggest that Niebuhr's Christ is not always simply one of the two poles. Although Niebuhr's Christ is described as one pole, the simple two-pole framework appears only in the chapters of the "enduring problem," "Christ against culture," and "Christ and culture in paradox," where culture appears monolithic and autonomous from Christ. However since the theologians covered in his survey had different understandings, the Christ accordingly changes as Niebuhr describes other types of Christianity.

The radicals' Christ was the closest to that of the New Testament among the five types. Their Christ has an absolute authority, which demands His Lordship above all creatures. His exclusive divine aspect has a keen tension over against the fallen world. The Christ of the dualist Christians has an absolute power and authority as divine. He condemns the fallen world, but commands Christians to endure there, pursuing their responsibility for society. The world is too fallen for Christ to transform it completely until the very end of history. In these two cases Christ clearly becomes one pole.

¹¹⁶Yoder 1996, 43. Yoder also asserts: "The tension will not be between . . . 'culture' . . . and 'Christ' . . . , but rather between a group of people defined by a commitment to Christ seeking cultural expression of that commitment (on one hand) and (on the other) a group or groups of other people expressing culturally other values which are independent of or contradictory to such a confession. This latter group is what the New Testament calls 'the world.'" Ibid., 74.

However, in the other three cases Christ is not simply the other side against the world. The Christ of cultural Christians is the furthest from the New Testament and has very little tension with the world.¹¹⁷ Their Christ is a good teacher. He does not condemn sins and has little Lordship or divinity. He is almost a part of culture, and thus there is very little polarity in Him. The Christ of the synthesists has more tension with culture than the Christ of cultural Christians. However He is to affirm the goodness of nature rather than to judge it. The Christ of the transformationists has absolute power and authority. Their Christ has two aspects. On one hand He tells the world what needs to be transformed; on the other hand He is the Creator and the Sustainer of the world. The inclusive divine aspect of their Christ is emphasised more than any other type; the Son participates in creation and the Father participates in the redemptive work of the Son.¹¹⁸ This Christ is not simply one pole but He also supports the other pole.

Thus Christ is not always described as one of the two poles. Christ can be a part of culture (accommodationist); and Christ can be a transcendent Creator and Sustainer of culture (conversionist). Niebuhr does not give a precise definition of Christ, which is probably due to a variety of understandings by theologians.

2. Reduction of New Testament Christ?

Now we have to discuss the other aspect of Yoder's claim that Niebuhr's Christ is a reduction of the Christ of the New Testament and therefore inappropriate. Yoder states, although the "'radical' position is the one which comes closest to what the introductory chapter had told us about the teachings and nature of Jesus" and "to which reference is constantly made in the course of the later discussion," it is most fundamentally challenged and its historical treatment is most unfair.¹¹⁹ "H. Richard

¹¹⁷Niebuhr 1975, 108-109.

¹¹⁸Niebuhr 1975, 192.

¹¹⁹Yoder 1996, 42, 46, 61. It is interesting that McDermott, a Roman Catholic theologian, feels that H. Richard Niebuhr is "against the Catholic synthetic position," and asserts: "Whereas 'Christ and Culture in Paradox' had a biblical

Niebuhr is committed, in addition to his sincere loyalty to the Jesus Christ of the New Testament, to the independent value of certain 'other sources' of moral judgment. They are not autonomous over against God, but they are independent of Jesus."¹²⁰ Yoder further states that since Niebuhr's Christ "points away"¹²¹ from the cultural realm, it needs "the corrective of a 'more balanced' position."¹²² Niebuhr thinks, according to Yoder, that "the New Testament's critical judgment on creaturely rebellion must be redefined so that it need not be taken seriously as an alternative but only as one perspective among several."¹²³ Yoder thus argues from the radical viewpoint that Niebuhr's Christ is not the Christ of the New Testament with radical authority and commands, but merely "a straw man."¹²⁴

Yoder further censures Niebuhr's understanding of the Trinity. He asserts that there is a tension in Niebuhr's Trinitarian thought between Christ (His radical teaching), and the Father (origin of the goodness of nature) and the Spirit (divine providence in history), and gives a sharp critique of it. He says that although the doctrine of the Trinity was meant to "safeguard the unity" of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, Niebuhr rather affirms the distinctions or complementary differentiations between them.¹²⁵ Thus Yoder insists that both Niebuhr's Christ and his Trinity are distorted. Since Yoder assumes that Niebuhr's five types are not descriptive but normative to lead the reader to the transformation type, we should focus on the Christ of the transformationist in this discussion, excluding the Christ of the other four types.¹²⁶

Since we cannot separate Niebuhr's Christ from the doctrine of the Trinity, we assess Niebuhr's Christ and his understanding of the Trinity together.¹²⁷ Stassen

advocate in St. Paul, 'Christ the Transformer of Culture' followed John's gospel, and even 'Christ Against Culture' was based on the *Apocalypse* and *I John*, the Catholic position of 'Christ Above Culture' lacked all biblical support." McDermott, 106-107.

¹²⁰Yoder 1996, 63.

¹²¹Niebuhr 1975, 28.

¹²²Yoder 1996, 60.

¹²³Yoder 1996, 64.

¹²⁴Yoder 1996, 60.

¹²⁵Yoder 1996, 62.

¹²⁶Yoder 1996, 41.

¹²⁷Cf. Kliever 1991, 138.

insightfully asserts that Niebuhr's implicit backbone is his Trinitarian understanding of the sovereignty of God. Stassen traces Niebuhr's life story, and convincingly argues that the sovereignty of God is the predominant subject in Niebuhr's theology, and it contains three essential themes: "(1) the reality of God's rule in and over all, including the bitter and the tragic; (2) the independence of the living God from subjective values and human institutions, which God judges; and (3) the redemptive manifestation of God in Christ, within our real history."¹²⁸ Stassen shows how often and profoundly these three themes appeared in Niebuhr's writings, including *The Kingdom of God in America*, in which Niebuhr sought transforming faith in American history, and *C&C*, in which transformation is a key concept.¹²⁹ There seems no reason to doubt the significance of the three themes in Niebuhr's theology particularly in relation to transformation.

In the discussion of Christ in *C&C*, Niebuhr describes the Son in relation to God; Christ should not stand alone but as Son of the Father.¹³⁰ Although he does not explicitly mention the Spirit in the chapter, the Spirit seems to be implied there and appears in the later chapters. Niebuhr's critique of the radicals and affirmation of the conversionists are based on his Trinitarian approach that the radicals, being Unitarians of the Son, fail to see good nature in culture, whilst conversionists acknowledge it, along with cultural Christians. Stassen is correct to say that this "three-fold or Trinitarian understanding of the sovereignty of God" is Niebuhr's criterion in assessing the five types.¹³¹ "His [Niebuhr's] criteria are the three dimensions of the sovereignty of God he has consistently advocated."¹³²

We cannot help receiving an impression from *C&C* that the radical teaching of Christ in the New Testament is somewhat moderated by the abstractness of the Father and the Spirit. Yoder is right in pointing it out. However the moderation is not because of Niebuhr's commitment to "other sources" independent of Christ as

¹²⁸Stassen 1996, 131.

¹²⁹Stassen 1996, 131-140.

¹³⁰Niebuhr 1975, 11-29.

¹³¹Stassen 1996, 142.

¹³²Stassen 1996, 140.

Yoder asserts. In fact, Niebuhr takes the Christ of the New Testament seriously. He clearly states: "The fact remains that the Christ who exercises authority over Christians or whom Christians accept as authority is the Jesus Christ of the New Testament; and that this is a person with definite teachings, a definite character, and a definite fate." He also says that although the understanding of Jesus Christ may differ according to one's position "there always remain the original portraits with which all later pictures may be compared and by which all caricatures may be corrected."¹³³ For Yoder the moderation appears to be a reduction of the New Testament Christ, a tension within the Trinity, and Niebuhr's commitment to other sources. However it is rather to be regarded as a tension within Christ. Niebuhr uses expressions like "God-in-Christ" and "Christ-in-God,"¹³⁴ in signifying Christ's participation in the Creation and God's participation in the Incarnation, Death, Cross, and the Resurrection;¹³⁵ and he does not sharply distinguish Christ from the Father and the Spirit. Naturally culture is not totally alien to Christ-in-God. Niebuhr's culture is not autonomous from Christ; although he seeks values also outside the New Testament, they are not independent of Christ the Creator.¹³⁶ Instead of a tension within the Trinity, it is a tension between Jesus Christ who revealed Himself in the first century Palestine window and Christ-in-God and Christ-in-Spirit as the second Person of the Trinity. Using Stassen's three themes, we can state that God's concrete disclosure in Christ (the third principle) is weakened by God's absolute rule over the world (the first principle) and God's dynamic transcendency beyond our

¹³³Niebuhr 1975, 12, 13.

¹³⁴For instance, Niebuhr 1975, 192, 249; Niebuhr 1970, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 124, 129, 130.

¹³⁵Niebuhr 1975, 192.

¹³⁶A significant difference between Niebuhr and Yoder's Christology is that whilst Niebuhr emphasises the Christ's Creator aspect as much as the Redeemer aspect, Yoder intensely regards Christ as Messiah and Lord. "These practices [which Yoder suggests as the church's social ethics] are enabled and illuminated by Jesus of Nazareth, who is confessed as Messiah and as Lord. They are part of the order of redemption, not of creation. . . . The standard account of these matters had told us that in order for Christians to be able to speak to others we need to look less to redemption and more to creation, or less to revelation and more to nature and reason. . . . In the practices I am describing (and the thinking underlying them), the apostolic communities did it the other way around." Yoder 1994, 370-371.

comprehension (the second principle). We cannot simply call it a reduction of the New Testament Christ; for the New Testament does testify not only to the humanity of Christ but also to His eternal nature and active participation in the Creation.¹³⁷ Nevertheless it is a problem that Niebuhr does not discuss the relationship or priority between the two; for it can open the door to diluting the radical teaching of Christ not by His transcendent nature but by our own reason, common sense, or even convenience. When we face the radical teaching of Christ, we very often give the final authority not to Him but to ourselves, compromising such teaching.

Niebuhr's three-fold understanding sounds perfectly orthodox. For sure he carefully avoids the pitfall of a Unitarianism of the Son. He warns against overemphasis on Christ in Christian theology, and says that he must reject "the tendency in much postliberal theology to equate theology with Christology and to base on a few passages of the New Testament a new unitarianism of the second person of the Trinity."¹³⁸ Niebuhr rejects the idea that theology "substitute[s] the Lordship of Christ for the Lordship of God" and that "theology is turned into Christology."¹³⁹ He particularly sees the problems of the Unitarianism of the Son in its exclusiveness. Since the Son always sought the will of the Father and glorified Him, we should not focus only on the Son, ignoring the Father.

Nevertheless although Niebuhr intends to hold to the Christ of the New Testament, in reality the concrete and radical teaching of Christ does not at all occupy a significant role in *C&C*. We must therefore seek a way to hold the orthodox Trinitarian understanding of Christ without losing a sharp edge of the teaching of Christ in the New Testament. As a result Niebuhr's theology leaves the final authority, not to Christ, but to us to judge right decisions. Niebuhr was too reluctant to give concrete ethics even in confessional and communal form.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷Logos Christology is a typical example of this kind.

¹³⁸Niebuhr 1960c, 250.

¹³⁹Niebuhr 1960b, 60.

¹⁴⁰According to Kliever, "His [Niebuhr's] early counsels to moral inaction and monastic withdrawal were themselves strategic moves rather than programmatic policies and even these he later saw to be ill-advise and ineffective." Kliever 1991, 150.

Although his theocentric relativism or permanent revolution may dissuade him from being concrete, he still can and should present concrete suggestions in confessional and communal form. Christian ethics should seek the direction of the concrete to be effective as much as possible. Christ's teaching, His life, and other New Testament teaching are concrete. Although our efforts in concrete expression of ethics are relative and incomplete, mere abstract ethics can hardly transform the world.

D. Transformation Revisited

As we have seen, the transformation type is described by Niebuhr as the most attractive position among the five types, and in fact almost every reader claims to be a transformationist.¹⁴¹ Moreover it is impossible to be totally against culture. Scriven correctly states: "Complete separation from the surrounding cultural life is impossible. Some integration is inevitable."¹⁴² The real question is *how* to transform culture.

However that aspect of the transformation type is not fully discussed by Niebuhr.¹⁴³ Characteristics of the transformation approach in *C&C* by Niebuhr are: recognition of the goodness of creation, the distinction between human rebellion and the good creation, and an existential understanding of history. They are legitimate guidelines, but not yet concrete enough to present a direction to transform culture. Here we seek an appropriate understanding of transformation on the bases of Yoder's suggestions and Niebuhr's other writings.

¹⁴¹Yoder 1996, 52-53.

¹⁴²Scriven 1988, 63.

¹⁴³In addition, no negative aspects are identified and discussed in the transformation model except for the allusion to the necessity of valuing other types of Christianity, although the first four types are described as necessary but insufficient, and receive critiques. Although Lonnie D. Kliever regards the "silence" as something "like an artist's signature, [which] tokened Niebuhr's identification with the conversionists," it is simply an unfair handling. Kliever 1991, 58.

1. Radical Monotheism

In "Reformation: Continuing Imperative" (1960) Niebuhr states:

The immediate reformation of the church that I pray for, look for and want to work for in the time that may remain to me is its reformation not now by separation from the world but by a new entrance into it without conformity to it. I believe our separation has gone far enough and that now we must find new ways of doing what we were created to do.¹⁴⁴

This is an important autobiographical article near the end of his life, in which he reflects on the intention and direction of his theological inquiry. Obviously "new entrance into the world without conformity to it" refers to the transformation approach; and he believes that the transformation in his day needs at least "a resymbolization of the message and the life of faith in the One God."¹⁴⁵ The resymbolisation can be understood as reinterpreted traditional terms and Christian deeds in the contemporary world; and it is possible only through the life of renewed faith in the only true God.¹⁴⁶ In conclusion Niebuhr states: "The reform of religion is the fundamental reformation of society."¹⁴⁷ Thus he claims that clear monotheism and the living faith as continual reformation are necessary for the transformation of society. This leads us to the discussion of radical monotheism.

In *Radical Monotheism and Western Civilization* (1960) Niebuhr firstly discusses two aspects of faith: trust and loyalty. Trust is "the passive aspect of the faith relation"; and "loyalty or faithfulness is the active side."¹⁴⁸ For instance in nationalism we trust and rely on our nation as a source of our value; and we value and make a commitment to our nation. Likewise in Christian statement, "in the one sense it means 'I trust in God,' in the other, 'I vow allegiance to Him.'"¹⁴⁹

Niebuhr then describes *radical monotheism* in comparison with *henotheism* (social faith) and *polytheism* (pluralism). He describes *radical monotheism* with its two mottoes: "'I am the Lord thy God; thou shalt have no other gods before me' and

¹⁴⁴Niebuhr 1960c, 250.

¹⁴⁵Niebuhr 1960c, 251.

¹⁴⁶Niebuhr sees successful resymbolisations in the Reformation, the Puritan Movement, the Great Awakening, and the Social Gospel.

¹⁴⁷Niebuhr 1960c, 251.

¹⁴⁸Niebuhr 1960b, 18.

¹⁴⁹Niebuhr 1960b, 18.

'Whatever is, is good.'¹⁵⁰ This is a statement of radical Lordship to the ultimate God and an affirmation of the original goodness of the world as His creation.

Radical monotheism rejects any substitute for the ultimate and infinite God; and by acknowledging Him as the Creator and the Sustainer of the world, "it reverences every relative existent."¹⁵¹ The acknowledgement of the ultimate, which may sound exclusive, results in the most inclusive thought. As Niebuhr repeats, *radical monotheism* exists "more as hope than as datum, more perhaps as a possibility than as an actuality, yet also as an actuality that has modified at certain emergent periods our natural social faith and our polytheism."¹⁵²

Social faith "has one object, which is, however, only one among many"; and pluralism "has many objects of devotion."¹⁵³ *Pluralism*, according to Niebuhr, historically appears following the termination of *social faith*. "When confidence in nation or other closed society is broken, men who must live by faith have recourse to multiple centers of value and scatter their loyalties among many causes."¹⁵⁴ Dissolution of *social faith* often brings forth individualism, such as epicureanism, existentialism, and egoism.

Although *social faith* trusts one object, it substitutes the infinite God with a finite being, such as a nation, an ideology like Communism, civilisation, or even the church. Niebuhr asserts that both Judaism and Christianity as organised religions were "involved in the conflicts of radically monotheistic faith with its rivals."¹⁵⁵ Particularly Niebuhr sees two forms of *henotheism* in Christianity: church-centredness and Christ-centredness.¹⁵⁶ When "the community that pointed to the faithfulness of the One . . . points to itself as his representative," *henotheism*

¹⁵⁰Niebuhr 1960b, 37.

¹⁵¹Niebuhr 1960b, 37.

¹⁵²Niebuhr 1960b, 31.

¹⁵³Niebuhr 1960b, 24.

¹⁵⁴Niebuhr 1960b, 28.

¹⁵⁵Niebuhr 1960b, 63.

¹⁵⁶Niebuhr 1960b, 58.

appears.¹⁵⁷ When Christ's "relation to the One beyond himself is so slurred over that he becomes the center of value and the object of loyalty,"¹⁵⁸ *henotheism* appears.

Niebuhr's *radical monotheism* is a significant contribution to theology of culture. In the light of the One beyond many, it sharply discerns not only false culture but also false religions in (and outside) the church, both of which occupy the throne of the ultimate God.

Niebuhr's keen sensitivity about historical relativism rejects any substitution for the ultimate God. He is correct that the church cannot be a substitute for God, nor can Christ by Himself be independent of the Trinity. Niebuhr rejects Unitarianism of the Son, as much as Unitarianism of the Father and that of the Spirit. Here Yoder sees a tension between the Father and the Son, and Carl Michalson sees: "Niebuhr's strictly monarchian view of God."¹⁵⁹ It is true that Niebuhr's theology does contain such a danger. However Niebuhr's theological agenda is of relativity and absoluteness; and from this viewpoint, *radical monotheism*, which points to the ultimate absolute, is a logical and necessary outcome. Niebuhr's theology does not move from the known to the unknown; it rather holds both concreteness and abstractness at the same time.¹⁶⁰ He sees Christ through God and sees God through Christ.¹⁶¹ Although Christ represents God and says that "whoever has seen me has seen the Father,"¹⁶² He cannot be taken as the replacement of the Trinity. Although the three Persons are one, the Trinity is of three Persons. The life and the teaching of the Son should be understood in relation with the Father and the Spirit.¹⁶³

¹⁵⁷Niebuhr 1960b, 58.

¹⁵⁸Niebuhr 1960b, 59-60.

¹⁵⁹Michalson 1957, 248. Michalson blames Niebuhr in that "Niebuhr tends to regard the ascription of deity to Jesus of Nazareth as a compromise of the unity of God."

¹⁶⁰Hans W. Frei states: "Niebuhr trod a delicate path between image- or story-shaped and universal ethics, and between universal and particular story-shaped theology. Unlike Barth, he refused to make a decision between a narrative and, shall we say, a trans-narrative, universal understanding of God's acts in history." Frei 1991, 19.

¹⁶¹Cf. Stassen 1996, 182.

¹⁶²John 14:9.

¹⁶³Particularly physical aspects of Jesus on Palestine was limited during his earthly life; and although his recorded teachings are the norms for Christian ethics, they by themselves do not necessarily cover all aspects of our life today.

Whilst historical relativism reveals the incompleteness of the church and points to the abstract and metaphysical aspect of the ultimate God, theocentric relativism illuminates the other aspect: His concrete revelation in a finite world. *Henotheism* is not simply to interpret the will of the ultimate God in concrete contexts; it is rather to replace Him with another being. We can say that *radical monotheism* has two sides. On one hand as a passive side it points to the ontological and metaphysical aspect of the ultimate God and rejects any substitutes for Him; on the other hand as an active side it points to His concrete aspect: His incarnation, revelation, and person. Personal encounter with the personal God and faithful response to Him as a whole person is an essential element in Niebuhr's theology. Unlike Tillich whose ontology predominates over personhood of being itself, Niebuhr emphasises God's "personlike integrity" over ontology.¹⁶⁴ He asserts: "God is steadfast self, keeping his word, 'faithful in all his doings and just in all his ways.'"¹⁶⁵

Radical monotheism is not in the first instance a theory about being and then a faith, as though the faith-orientation toward the principle of being as value-center needed to be preceded by an ontology that established the unity of the realm of being and its source in a single power beyond it.¹⁶⁶

However its function of pointing to the infinite One tends to lead our faith in an abstract direction. Moltmann says: "Christianity cannot therefore any longer be represented as a 'monotheistic form of belief' (Schleiermacher). Christian faith is not 'radical monotheism.'"¹⁶⁷ Yoshinobu Tôbô asserts that Moltmann misunderstands Niebuhr's theology by overlooking Niebuhr's God as one who reveals Himself as the first person.¹⁶⁸ Tôbô is correct that Niebuhr's God is not absorbed by ontology. Nevertheless his *radical monotheism* gives us an impression of abstraction despite his emphasis on the personhood of God. This is because of the lack of communal and confessional aspects, which he previously suggested in *The Meaning of*

Interpretations of the teachings are possible because of our trust in the providence of the Father and the guidance of the Spirit.

¹⁶⁴Tillich 1955, 83.

¹⁶⁵Niebuhr 1960b, 47.

¹⁶⁶Niebuhr 1960b, 32.

¹⁶⁷Moltmann 1974, 215.

¹⁶⁸Tôbô 1984, 217.

Revelation. Although Niebuhr does not "see how we can witness to the divine sovereignty without being in the church nor how we can understand what God is doing and declaring to us in our public and private experience without the dictionary of the Scriptures," he protests "against the deification of Scriptures and of the church."¹⁶⁹ His church is not in the position to discern *henotheism* and *polytheism*. It is the *selves* in the church who are to discern them.

Niebuhr's *radical monotheism* needs to be supported by the concrete aspect of theocentric relativism: confessional and communal theology. An abstract aspect of Niebuhr's theology, radical monotheism, needs these concrete complementary elements.

2. Yoder's Approach: Selective Discernment

Yoder claims that the New Testament does not regard non-Christian culture as monolithic, and it has no other examples except for transformation with selective discernment.¹⁷⁰ Thus he rejects Niebuhr's five-type approach. The alternative suggested by Yoder can be summarised as follows.

Firstly, we need to discern each aspect of culture and separately to deal with it, since culture is a complex entity rather than monolithic. Yoder claims:

Some elements of culture the church categorically rejects (pornography, tyranny, cultic idolatry). Other dimensions of culture it accepts within clear limits (economic production, commerce, the graphic arts, paying taxes for peacetime civil government). To still other dimensions of culture Christian faith gives a new motivation and coherence (agriculture, family life, literacy, conflict resolution, empowerment). Still others it strips of their claims to possess autonomous truth and value, and uses them as vehicles of communication (philosophy, language, Old Testament ritual, music). Still other forms of culture are created by the Christian churches (hospitals, service of the poor, generalized education, egalitarianism, abolitionism, feminism). Some have been created with special effectiveness by the Peace Churches (prison reform, war sufferers' relief, international conciliation).¹⁷¹

Since culture is a compound substance, discernment is thus crucial for Yoder. He insists that we need to discriminate each aspect of culture in a given situation.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁹Niebuhr 1960c, 250.

¹⁷⁰Yoder 1996, 87.

¹⁷¹Yoder 1996, 69.

¹⁷²Cf. Dyrness 1988, 11-12.

Secondly Yoder insists on a community approach, rejecting an individualistic approach. For Yoder it is the believer's church, unlike Niebuhr's 'self,' that makes a decision. He says: "It is normally to the Christian fellowship that the command of God comes."¹⁷³ The community, unlike individualistic decision making, can reflect on a variety of opinions as it consists of diverse people. Yoder states: "Normatively and normally, the body of Christ actualizes the plurality of members and charisms, thereby attaining a credibility such as cannot be claimed for the 'established' traditions where a ruler, a professor, or a priest makes decisions for the community by virtue of his office."¹⁷⁴

Thirdly the believing community for Yoder needs distinctiveness from the world. When we try to transform culture, says Yoder, we need "a place to stand" (church) and "a bar and a fulcrum" not of our own making (canonical foundation).¹⁷⁵ He warns of "those who seek to modify society by taking 'more positive' attitudes toward it"; for they "are actually rendered unable to do so, when by 'positive attitude' they mean abandoning an independent standpoint."¹⁷⁶ Accordingly the church, with its distinctiveness, offers an alternative culture to the world. He says: "The Christian church as a sociological unit is distinguishable from the rest of culture and thereby constitutes a new cultural option."¹⁷⁷

Finally Yoder suggests seven cases in the New Testament which reveal norms to deal with culture: John 1:1-14, Heb. 1:1-2:9, Col. 1:1-28, Rev. 4:1-5:4, Phi. 2:5-13, Pauline literature about "principalities and powers,"¹⁷⁸ and Acts 14 and 17.¹⁷⁹ After working on common elements in these cases,¹⁸⁰ Yoder asserts that two

¹⁷³Yoder 1996, 74.

¹⁷⁴Yoder 1996, 76.

¹⁷⁵Yoder 1996, 74, 77.

¹⁷⁶Yoder 1996, 71.

¹⁷⁷Yoder 1996, 75.

¹⁷⁸Perhaps this should include the following passages: Romans 8:38; Eph. 3:10; Col. 1:16, 2:15; and Tit. 3:1.

¹⁷⁹Yoder 1996, 85-87; cf. Yoder 1984, 46-62.

¹⁸⁰Yoder says: "In each of those [first] five cases, the apostle faced the challenge of how to affirm Christ's Lordship in the face of a value structure, or a power structure, or a meaning system, which denied that Lordship." The five texts commonly express: (1) being "quite at home in the new linguistic world, using its language and facing its questions," (2) placing Jesus, not "into the slots the cosmic

kinds of question must be asked for "authentic transformation": *procedural* and *substantial*.¹⁸¹ The former is the question of how believers should proceed with decision making; and the latter (although not fully spelled out) is the question of the content of discussion by believers. He values "the concrete community process of discernment, as that community converses, in the light of the confession 'Christ is Lord,' about particular hard choices."¹⁸²

He notes that believers are "a royal and priestly people" as they "serve God" (as priests) and "rule the world" (as kings). "A community uniting in the celebration of the sovereignty of the slain lamb participate[s] in his sovereignty and thereby in making the world go the right way," "as they stood in the midstream of world events, but refusing to confess any other Lord."¹⁸³ Such a communal identity is an indispensable qualification for a church which is to make distinctively Christian decisions.

3. Discernment of Culture

Yoder's suggestion of selective treatment to different elements of culture is beneficial, and its general direction should be supported. Culture is not monolithic and each aspect should be handled separately. Christians in reality have selectively dealt with different aspects of culture. As we have seen, Yoder gives five ways to treat different elements of culture: categorical rejection, conditional acceptance, giving a new motivation and coherence, acceptance as vehicles of communication by subordinating to Christianity, and creation of new forms of culture by churches. Although these are just examples given by Yoder and his treatment may not be limited to them, they should reflect his basic attitude toward dealing with culture.

vision has ready for it," but above the "cosmology and culture of the world," (3) the suffering of Christ in the cosmos, "which accredits Christ for this lordship," (4) Christians are called to participate the suffering of Christ, (5) Oneness of the Son with the Father, (6) Christ brought victory. Yoder 1996, 85; Yoder 1984 53.

¹⁸¹Yoder 1996, 87-88.

¹⁸²Yoder 1996, 74.

¹⁸³Yoder 1996, 88.

A selective attitude contains two characteristics: to reject the unacceptable and to transform the rest. Yoder is correct that there is something to be categorically rejected. However we have to be very careful both in categorical rejection and conditional acceptance.

When we find reflections of our sins in culture, we must reject both our sins and their cultural reflections. The core of our sin is distrust in God or self-centredness.¹⁸⁴ These are two sides of a same coin, and ultimately deify oneself in an extreme case. Our sins such as idolatry, polytheism, and greed can be attributed to them, and sins are reflected in culture in various forms.

It is to be noticed that Yoder is rejecting not only sins but also other parts of culture, which are perverted by sins yet have a potential to be transformed. They need to be treated carefully. We have to avoid an 'effortless' rejection without a consistently selective attitude; for it neither indicates zeal for redeeming culture, nor reflects the nature of God who seeks sinners to repent.

Although God instructed the Israelites to destroy ungodly people, their towns, and their possessions, particularly in Deuteronomy, it was a special occasion and it does not have to be taken as the norm for an ordinary life.¹⁸⁵ It was when a new generation of Israelites who did not experience the Exodus and receiving the law at the Mt. Sinai was about to enter Canaan, and a purified identity as the people of God was particularly needed. Repeated is the statement: "You must purge the evil from among you."¹⁸⁶ The Israelites were perhaps not ready to discern what was acceptable in the Gentiles' culture without losing their distinctiveness.

In other occasions God is described as the guardian of the world. When God was concerned about Nineveh, His concern was not only with more than a hundred

¹⁸⁴Romans 14:23.

¹⁸⁵Deuteronomy 2:34; 3:6; 7:2, 26; 13:5-17; 20:17-18. See also Exodus 22:20; Leviticus 27:29; Numbers 21:2-3.

¹⁸⁶Deuteronomy 17:7; 19:19; 21:21, 24; 24:7. This theme is also repeated in I Cor. 5:13. The inauguration of the New Testament church was also a beginning of a new era.

and twenty thousand people but also with many cattle.¹⁸⁷ If God is the Creator and the Sustainer of the world, does He not show concern about the culture, which influences people and environment as well as being conversely a human product? When God redeems people, culture is not excluded from the redemption.

In *Radical Monotheism and Western Civilization*, and the supplementary article in the volume, Niebuhr repeatedly affirms the goodness of every creature because of its relation to the Creator.¹⁸⁸ "They [some beings] are enemies to each other as often as friends; but even enemies are entitled to loyalty as fellow citizens of the realm of being."¹⁸⁹ He basically accepts culture as a whole and pays respect to it. Nevertheless, in the deeper discussion of culture in *C&C* Niebuhr includes only the valued part of human production in his "culture,"¹⁹⁰ and therefore there is no attempt to transform negative aspects of culture. Although there is an expression such as "the redemption of the created and corrupted human world and the transformation of mankind in all its cultural activity," in the discussion of Augustine, the "cultural activity" seems to be still limited to only positive aspects of culture.¹⁹¹ Thus Niebuhr does not clearly intend to transform negative aspects of culture.

We should not give up on and cut off negative aspects of culture from a transformational attempt. Culture is a human production after all; and if the most wretched person is called to repent, we should not close the door for redeeming the most despicable aspect of culture created by humans.

Yoder's selective attitude is to be valued. However we have to maintain a careful attitude in selection. An element of culture consists of numerous

¹⁸⁷Jonah 4:11. Many cattle can be interpreted at least as human possession, which affects human life. This passage may even be interpreted as God's concern about animal lives. In either case, it is clear that God's concern is not limited to humans only but includes at least what affects human life.

¹⁸⁸Niebuhr 1960b, 32, 52-53; H. Richard Niebuhr, "Theology in the University," in Niebuhr 1960b, 98. (Originally published under the title "Theology--Not Queen but Servant." Niebuhr 1955.) H. Richard Niebuhr, "Faith in Gods and in God," in Niebuhr 1960b, 126. (Originally published under the title "The Nature and Existence of God," in Niebuhr 1943.)

¹⁸⁹Niebuhr 1960b, 38.

¹⁹⁰Niebuhr 1975, 29-39.

¹⁹¹Niebuhr 1975, 215.

components. Categorical rejection should be limited to core elements of sin. Our attitude should reflect the character of God who seeks sinners to repent. We should seek to redeem culture instead of carelessly rejecting it. There is no element of culture that is totally evil. The whole creation is perverted good, including men and women; and culture is a human production.

4. Three Factors for Transformation

Culture is a human product. In this section, I would like to suggest that Christian transformation of culture can be caused by three factors: personal conversion, corporate conversion, and superficial adoption. Transformation is used as a profoundly positive change. Conversion here means not only conversion of people to Christian faith as a one-time experience but also renewal as a continual experience.

Personal conversion with awareness of social responsibility is a basis for cultural transformation. In a personal conversion process we usually acknowledge and repent our sin, and surrender ourselves to the Lord. In biblical metaphor it is death and resurrection; and it is also called a born-again experience.¹⁹² There is something that we must die to; that is sin.¹⁹³ As the Pelagian Controversy highlighted in the fifth century, sin has two sides: a side of environmental and internal human condition, and a side of human response. The former is a fallen world due to the original sin over which we have no control; and the latter is an aspect of our unwillingness to follow God. Our focus here is on the latter. It is impossible to experience a conversion without denying ourselves.

What is the relationship between persons, society, and culture? A society consists of persons; persons influence a society, and vice versa. Culture is produced by a society; and culture also influences both persons and society. Repentance is

¹⁹²John 3:3, 7; I Peter 1:23.

¹⁹³Romans 6:2.

often used with reference to individuals, whereas culture is a product of a society. One may ask if we can discuss a personal matter and a social matter on the same principles. Obviously a society is not simply a sum of persons' gathering, nevertheless they do share a common element. As much as God calls individuals to repent, He calls a corporate body to repent. In the Hebrew Scriptures the Israelites are called to repentance; and in the New Testament churches are called to repentance as well.¹⁹⁴ The Social Gospel movement was correct in observing the social aspect of sin, overcoming individualistic Christianity in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.¹⁹⁵ A corporate body, which produces culture, is also called for repentance.

H. Richard Niebuhr also holds a view of continuity between individuals and societies. D.M. Yeager discusses Niebuhr's understanding about the two through his own assessment of evangelical theology, of liberal theology, of social gospel movement, and of neo-orthodoxy.¹⁹⁶ She concludes that Niebuhr believes that "the 'self' and the 'world' are built on the same principles" although he never assumes that "the groups are simple sums of the individuals they contain, such that if you have changed the majority of the individual units you have changed the aggregative sum that is the group."¹⁹⁷ Lonnie D. Kliever also asserts that Niebuhr rejects a separation of social and personal ethics, and deems that we should not apply different Christian approaches to individuals and to a society, namely a personal conversion approach to individuals and a middle axiom approach to the society.¹⁹⁸ H. Richard Niebuhr is fully aware that there are super-personal organisations, and huge differences between the morality of selves and the morality of societies. However unlike his brother Reinhold, who believes there is a significant gap between individuals and groups,¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁴For example, Revelation chapters 2 and 3.

¹⁹⁵Niebuhr 1936, 177.

¹⁹⁶Yeager 1996, 96-113.

¹⁹⁷Yeager 1996, 111.

¹⁹⁸Kliever 1991, 152-153. Kliever's discussion is based on Niebuhr's course 'Christian Ethics' (1952).

¹⁹⁹Reinhold Niebuhr 1936.

he sees a continuity between them.²⁰⁰ Although changing society through making a moral impact on individuals is difficult, he believes that "change is possible because social structures are originally the product of individuals."²⁰¹

Niebuhr values both individual and social conversions, and the question is not "social versus individual salvation."²⁰² However he denies the direct involvement of the church in social reform which the Social Gospel advocates: "It [the Social Gospel] has tended to speak of social salvation as something which men could accomplish for themselves if only they adopted the right social ideal, found adequate motivation for achieving it and accepted the correct technical means. . . . God, in this theory, becomes a means to an end."²⁰³ Niebuhr rather deems with neo-orthodoxy that the main concern of the church should be the proclamation of the gospel revealed in Christ. He thinks that "the Social Gospel rests upon a false analysis of the social situation," and states:

A true analysis will see that our social injustice and misery cannot be dealt with unless their sources in a false faith are dealt with. . . . Men will be ready for no radically new life until they have really become aware of the falsity of the faith upon which their old life is based.²⁰⁴

He believes that personal conversion should precede social reform, as otherwise social reform cannot leave a long-term effect. Thus Niebuhr takes religiously direct but socially indirect strategies, which he calls "the social equivalent of the Evangelical strategy."²⁰⁵ He emphasises both responsibility for societies and personal conversion; he believes that social responsibility can be achieved only through personal conversion with awareness of social responsibility.

H. Richard Niebuhr is right to see the continuity between individuals and societies. Although they are different, they are closely related; and we lose theological coherence if we take different approaches to them. He is also right to

²⁰⁰H. Richard Niebuhr claims that society should be understood not only as a physical but also "a spiritual form of human existence," otherwise the Church's care of society becomes confined to "interest in the prosperity and peace of men in their communities." Niebuhr 1970, 127-128.

²⁰¹Kliever 1991, 154.

²⁰²Niebuhr 1936, 181.

²⁰³Niebuhr 1936, 180.

²⁰⁴Niebuhr 1936, 180.

²⁰⁵Niebuhr 1936, 181.

deem that personal conversions are necessary for effective social reform. However we should notice that Niebuhr does not pay attention to the aspect of the corporate conversion. His interest seems to be limited to responsible selves. Corporate conversions can result in the transformation of culture as much as personal conversions.²⁰⁶ We shall discuss the relationship between individuals and corporate body below.²⁰⁷

Culture is a social production. Although a culture is inseparable from a society and persons, its nature is different from that of a society and persons. Can culture repent? Our answer is negative. If a society has communal subjectivity, it may repent as a corporate body.²⁰⁸ However culture as a production of a society does not have a personality to repent with. However in the procedure of personal or corporate repentance, culture rather functions as a mirror to reflect who we are and what we need to repent of and to change.

One may ask whether cultural transformation without personal and corporate conversions is possible. Our answer is positive. The world can accept some Christian influence to improve social situation without accepting the confession that Jesus Christ is Lord. This is what I mean by superficial adoption.²⁰⁹

Japan was given a new Constitution after the World War II by the General Headquarters. It protected human rights far more in comparison with its previous Constitution, and prepared a way for the miraculous reconstruction of the economy. The Constitution certainly improved the social situation. Nevertheless Japan did not experience a conversion. Although it was forced by victorious nations to deny its traditional value system supported by Shinto, it was simply a repentance before the

²⁰⁶Corporate conversion here does not mean institutional mass conversion to Christianity, such as Constantinian Christianity. It presupposes internal conversion (and renewal) experience.

²⁰⁷Chapter 1, IIID6 'Corporate-Personal Model.'

²⁰⁸See Chapter 5, IIID3c 'Congregation' for the discussion of communal subjectivity.

²⁰⁹Yoder's 'pioneering' function of the church is of this kind. See Chapter 2, IVC2 'Pioneering.'

victorious nations which are relative and not before ultimate God. Such a superficial change allowed Japan to remain the same.

Improvement of society does not necessarily require conversion. An improved social situation without conversion can result in proud self-sufficiency and accordingly in turning away from God. Therefore this superficial adoption is social improvement, and is significantly different from personal and corporate conversions.

Thus Christian transformation of culture becomes possible through personal and corporate conversions with awareness of the social responsibility. As Niebuhr deems, social reform without personal (and corporate) conversions cannot leave a long term effect. However it is also supplemented with superficial adoption. Culture is a social production, which also influences people. Improvement of the social situation and positive cultural change are desirable. Culture reflects the character of the society and persons. Therefore it is impossible to transform culture without working on the character of the society and persons.

5. Community Approach

Yoder insists that Niebuhr ignores the local Christian church, and his *C&C* is thoroughly individualistic:

Niebuhr's treatment in *C&C* is striking by the absence of any reference to the place of the Christian community in the process of decision. . . . But (to our surprise) all that Niebuhr says in *C&C* about cultural discernment can be exhaustively understood in terms of the mental process of solitary individuals.²¹⁰

The decision of faith,²¹¹ Niebuhr suggests, entails freedom, social existentialism, and theocentric relativism.²¹² Niebuhr notes that although we have freedom, it is limited and is bound to a given situation. It is not a freedom

²¹⁰Yoder 1996, 74-75.

²¹¹Although Niebuhr first discusses in the context of deciding one's own attitude to the Christ-culture-problem, he later applies it to general decision of faith.

²¹²Niebuhr 1975, 234, 241. Although Niebuhr uses terms such as 'individualism' and 'moment,' they can be summarised as "social existentialism." Although Niebuhr here uses "The Relativism of Faith" as a heading, "theo-centric relativism" (xii) expresses the concept most clearly.

independent of the situation but a freedom dependent on it.²¹³ Our decision must be made existentially, here and now, in which eternity appears. Although our decision must be individual and existential, Niebuhr rejects Kierkegaardian subjectivism because it is ultimately concerned only with individualistic matters, ignoring social responsibility; moreover it overemphasises Christ alone, ignoring His witnesses. For Niebuhr, our responsibility for society and the "companionship of fellow knowers" are important for the individual's decision.²¹⁴ This is his social existentialism. When one makes a decision, says Niebuhr, the self is not "alone here with the responsibility of decision," but the self "is compresent with a historical other and historical companions."²¹⁵ He also writes in *The Meaning of Revelation*: "What is past is not gone; it abides in us as our memory; what is future is not non-existent but present in us as our potentiality. Time here is organic or it is social, so that past and future associate with each other in the present."²¹⁶ He thinks that our decision is not to be a lonely action but to be supported with the memory of those who went through it before us, with the anticipation of those who will face a similar situation, and most of all with God who dwells in the eternal present. Thus Niebuhr values a community aspect highly, and discusses it in *C&C*. Yoder is wrong to consider that a community aspect is lacking in *C&C*.

However as mentioned above, Niebuhr sees henotheism in church-centredness as well as Christ-centredness. Although Niebuhr does not "see how we can witness to the divine sovereignty without being in the church" and believes that theology's "home is the church," he is keenly aware of the historical relativity of the church.²¹⁷ Thus community aspect in Niebuhr's theology is certainly weaker than in Yoder's theology.

Moreover we still have to ask what Niebuhr means by "companionship." He says that it is for "the living dialogue of the self with other selves" so that one does

²¹³Niebuhr 1975, 250-251.

²¹⁴Niebuhr 1975, 245.

²¹⁵Niebuhr 1975, 247-248.

²¹⁶Niebuhr 1960a, 69.

²¹⁷Niebuhr 1960c, 250; Niebuhr 1960a, 21.

not live "in lonely internal debate."²¹⁸ It seems to have a complementary characteristic to the existential decision.

In order to clarify it, we must examine Niebuhr's understanding of Christian community. To Yoder's surprise, the church is very highly valued in Niebuhr's theology. "Being in social history it [a theology Niebuhr intends to pursue] cannot be a personal and private theology nor can it live in some non-churchly sphere of political or cultural history; its home is the church; its language is the language of the church."²¹⁹ In "the Hidden Church and the Churches in Sight," Niebuhr discusses the relationship between the Church and the churches. In a summary statement, he asserts:

First, the Church is an eschatological society, or, as we may better say in our times, it is an emergent reality, hidden yet real; and secondly, the religious institutions called the churches are subject like all the rest of this secular society of ours to a constant process of conversion.²²⁰

The churches obviously mean local churches. Regarding the Church, Niebuhr rejects three wrong understandings. The first is to identify "one's own religious organization with the true Church."²²¹ This is an elevation of the finite to an infinite position, and is represented by the Roman Catholic Church. The second is to assume that the Church "is made up of scattered individuals." He believes that the Church "is not simply a society of saved men but the saved society of men."²²² Here again we see Niebuhr's intention to fight against an individualistic approach. The third mistake is "to assign the being of the Church to the realm of ideality while the churches are regarded as belonging to the realm of sense experience."²²³ The Church is not merely an ideal as an unreachable goal but a reality which appears in daily life. He states: "The Church of faith is more real and dependable than the churches; the latter are trustworthy only insofar as the former appears in them."²²⁴ Although Niebuhr sees the Church not only in the churches but also in other forms,

²¹⁸Niebuhr 1975, 245.

²¹⁹Niebuhr 1960a, 21.

²²⁰Niebuhr 1945-1946, 114.

²²¹Niebuhr 1945-1946, 109-110.

²²²Niebuhr 1945-1946, 113.

²²³Niebuhr 1945-1946, 111.

²²⁴Niebuhr 1945-1946, 112.

"the presence of the Church is so tied up with the activity of the churches that we do not know how to separate them."²²⁵ Thus for Niebuhr, the Church and the churches are inseparably related; the churches become genuine when the Church appears in them; and the Church expresses itself in the churches most explicitly although there are other appearances.

In *C&C*, Niebuhr states:

Faith is a dual bond of loyalty and trust that is woven around the members of such a community [in which one is faithful to all bound to the truth]. It does not issue from a subject simply; it is called forth as trust by acts of loyalty on the part of others; it is infused as loyalty to a cause by others who are loyal to that cause and to me. Faith exists only in a community of selves in the presence of a transcendent cause.²²⁶

Considering Niebuhr's understanding of Christian community, the community here should not simply mean any local churches but (1) present local churches in which the Church appears and (2) the genuine churches in the past and in the future, including those of all five types.

What then is the function, in the decision making, of those who are 'compresent' with the self in memory, anticipation, or actual dialogue? We have to ask the same question which Niebuhr asks in his criticism of identifying revelation with the person of Jesus: "How can we have personal communion with one who exists only in our memory and in the monuments, the books and sentences, which are the body of our memory?"²²⁷ The living faith of the dead as a memory can challenge, encourage, and shape our faith more than the dead faith of the living; and the anticipation of those who shall follow us identifies our role with that of those in our memory. Although they thus can help us, they, in our wishful speculation, can be used to rationalise our individualistic decision making. How about the case of a local church? Although the actual dialogue is more concrete than indirect dialogues with people in the universal Church, its function here is limited to advice, and it does not play an active role in decision making. For Niebuhr decision making is still left to the self as an existential matter after all. Thus Niebuhr's social existentialism is a

²²⁵Niebuhr 1945-1946, 108.

²²⁶Niebuhr 1975, 253.

²²⁷Niebuhr 1960a, 148.

modified individualistic subjectivism, which we call the *personal* approach below, with the awareness of others and social responsibility. To that extent there is some substance in Yoder's criticism.

6. Corporate-Personal Model

We have seen that Niebuhr's approach is not fully corporate. In his theology decision making is after all left to the self as an existential matter. Supporting Yoder's direction toward community involvement in decision making, I would like to discuss further human encounter with God and appropriate community involvement in decision making. Decision making and encounter with God are related because our decision making is a response to the divine in the encounter.

Decision making in the Scriptures is not always by a community; God does speak to a person. For example the calling of prophets often came individually. Jesus' mother, Mary, was called individually. Jesus dealt with persons individually in his ministry to heal them, to challenge them, or to call them to follow Him. Paul was called individually, and did not go up to Jerusalem to see other disciples for three years.²²⁸ These are all existential and individual encounters with God, which the Scriptures value highly. Protestant reformers and their forerunners had to make significant decisions individually against the Medieval Roman Catholic Church. Martin Luther, on doctrine of justification by grace through faith, did not wait for the communal agreement of the Roman Catholic Church or of his monastery. It was his own conviction rediscovered in the Bible.

These people were already in some kind of community. After the existential decision making, they tried to re-form the community into God-centredness or joined a God-centred community. The promise of God to Abram was to become a father of all nations; and he took his wife Sarai and his nephew Lot and his family on his journey. Messages of the prophets were recognised, accepted, and preserved by

²²⁸Galatians 1:17-18.

the Israelites, although sometimes it was after rejecting and persecuting them.²²⁹

Mary stayed with her relative Elizabeth for about three months, who was in a similar situation in pregnancy with John the Baptist. Jesus formed a community of his followers. The pouring out of the Spirit on the Pentecost came upon the community, and it was the community that was renewed by the Spirit and was enlarged in number. Paul was in the company of Ananias soon after the conversion experience, and later with Barnabas, in addition to numerous anonymous Christians. He was at the table of the Jerusalem Conference for the community decision making. Luther stood on the doctrine with Paul, and had a companionship with Philip Melanchthon and other scholars at Wittenberg. Thus after an existential decision making, they re-formed or joined a God-centred community, and community life is a norm for Christians.

It is a post-modern trend, after the breakdown of modern Western individualism, to find a solution in Oriental corporateness. In Christian theology, however, it is rather to be called a rediscovery of community, which has always been a part of Christian tradition. Community decision making is to be valued because of at least following reasons. Firstly in the Hebrew and early Christian tradition God speaks to a people rather than to individuals. Secondly when a community involves a variety of people in decision making, it can reflect the plurality. Thirdly Christian community decision is harmonious when genuinely seeking the will of God with the confession that Jesus Christ is Lord. Community decision has a rich, deep, convincing unity with the support and commitment of the members, which is far beyond individual decisions, just as any gifted solo singer cannot reach the depth, richness, harmony, and volume of a well-trained choir. Fourthly, community decision making is a reflection of our respect for other believers to whom the Spirit is given.

Now let us turn to the quality aspect of community decision making. Community decision should not simply be a sum of individual decisions, which can

²²⁹Cf. Kraus 1993, 44.

be compared to untrained congregational singing. Just as a choir needs practice to sing as a choir, a church needs to learn to be united under the Lordship of Christ for decision making. It requires a sacrifice, a commitment, and a mutual respect.

I would like to suggest distinguishing four kinds of encounter with God and decision making: *totalitarian*, *individualistic*, *personal*, and *corporate-personal*. All of them can be existential.

Totalitarianism is a blind obedience to the decision made by a community. A member is absorbed in a community, and cannot make his or her own decision. Tillich calls this "heteronomy" which "imposes a strange (*heteros*) law (*nomos*)."²³⁰ Those who passively obey the decisions made by the church hardly experience existential encounter or existential decision making. It is typically medieval although it can be observed in our period.

Individualistic experience is independent of a corporate body in spirit. It is essentially modern, and Tillich calls it "autonomous" which as the *nomos* of *autos* (self) "means the obedience of the individual to the law of reason, which he finds in himself as a rational being."²³¹ One does not have to be alone to be *individualistic*; one can be *individualistic* even in a multitude of people in worship and in decision making. As H. Richard Niebuhr points out, this can lead one to meet the Christ of one's own wishful projection since the Christ does not have to be supported by the Scriptures or His witnesses in the past and in the present.²³²

When one experiences God with awareness of the social aspect yet without a concrete believing community, it is *personal*. One has an awareness of his or her social responsibility, of witnesses to Christ in the past, present, and future; and one experiences God and makes decisions in that awareness. In this case a person has a spiritual or universal community, which is not merely a flight of imagination but is based on existential and historical reality. Although the person may belong to a local church, the person does not allow the church to be involved in his or her

²³⁰Tillich 1951, 84.

²³¹Tillich 1951, 84.

²³²Niebuhr 1975, 245.

decision making. The person listens to his or her church along with awareness of Christians in the past and future and of God in the present; nevertheless it is the self who makes a final decision. Niebuhr's "self" is of this kind. Niebuhr does value the Church very highly, and says: "There is no apprehension of the kingdom except in the Church. . . . and, finally, the subject-counterpart of the kingdom is never individual in isolation but one in community, that is, in the Church."²³³ He also clearly states that the Church is indispensable in human relations to the divine reality.²³⁴ On the other hand, however, he says: "The Church is no more the kingdom of God than natural science is nature or written history the course of human event." He also asserts that "negatively, the Church is not the rule or realm of God."²³⁵ Here we see his relativism. His keen awareness of the fallen nature of the Church allows him to trust neither the universal Church nor local churches to play an active role in decision making.²³⁶ This is his inconsistency with his theocentric relativism, which does affirm God's self-disclosure to us in history, and what we see in our relativity. If we seek to be consistent with theocentric relativism, our theology must become communal and confessional in our own local Christian community.

When a person has not only the universal spiritual community but also a concrete believing community involved in decision making, it is *corporate-personal*. There is a corporate existential encounter with God. Our encounter with God is not always *individualistic* or *personal*. We also experience God existentially and corporately. God teaches, leads, and rebukes a community as He does a person. In such a corporate encounter with God, we experience a personal encounter with God. The concrete community does not have to be an organised church. It is a gathering of believers genuinely seeking the will of God under the confession that Jesus Christ is Lord. Yet it needs a strong accountability to one another in order to be mutually

²³³Niebuhr 1977, 19.

²³⁴Niebuhr 1977, 20.

²³⁵Niebuhr 1977, 19.

²³⁶By the term "the Church" Niebuhr means both local and universal in this context. Niebuhr 1977, 24.

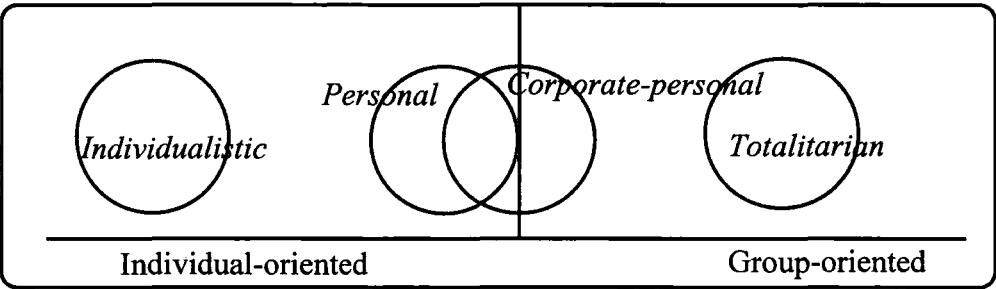
responsible. Otherwise people cannot trust the community in significant decision making. One may experience God in the midst of the community or in a separate place with the awareness of being a part of the community. The decision is made on both corporate matters and personal matters. On the corporate matters, each person seeks what God wishes for the community. In such a community, there should not be fully *individualistic* or totally *personal* decision making even on personal matters such as marriage or a job, since they affect the community and the community cares about the person.

Corporate-personal self is on the boundary of *corporate* and *personal*, and can reform a community. As it is open for community to be involved in decision making, it positively participates in decision making of the community. Occasionally one disagrees with some or the rest of the community, or may even come to a decision to withdraw from the community. It too should not be an *individualistic* decision or a simply *personal* determination; it also should be *corporate-personal* decision. One should stand with those who made a such decision in the past in a godly manner (the universal Church), and should have a group of believers who accept one's view (visible church). One should have a loving heart to the community which one is leaving. In this way, such an unfortunate process can be constructively treated.

When one has a strong sense of belonging to a local community, one tends to regard the finite, incomplete, and relative body as the ultimate church. However one should humbly be aware that both one's faith and that of one's community are relative and supported by believers in the past and present, and therefore cannot proclaim universally valid truth. All that we can and should do is to proclaim, in a confessional form, our truth to which God guides us in our particular situation in our relativity as a community narrative. However it is not simply a subjective matter; it is not an individualistically subjective truth nor a communally subjective truth. It is

based on the revelation of God, which is absolute. The communal and confessional truth is a knowledge of the absolute in our relativity.²³⁷

A community approach is a norm in divine encounter and Christian decision making. However any community has a possibility of making a wrong decision, and a *personal* conviction should not be swallowed by a community. On the other hand, an *individualistic* or a *personal* conviction should not ignore a corporate decision. The *corporate-personal* should be normative in decision making. A local Christian community should be involved in Christian decision making.



7. Christian Community with Distinctiveness

Niebuhr has a keen conviction about the church's social responsibility. In "The Responsibility of the Church for Society," Niebuhr asserts that the church is responsible *to God for society*. Just as he did in *C&C*, he rejects two extreme forms of Christianity as temptations prevalent in history: the worldly church (accommodationist) and the isolated church (exclusivist). "It [the worldly church] thinks of itself as responsible to society for God rather than to God for society";²³⁸ the isolated church "seeks to respond to God but does so only for itself."²³⁹ Isolationism in the Church "disclaims accountability for secular societies."²⁴⁰

²³⁷Hans W. Frei, in his discussion of Niebuhr's understanding of history, explains this human situation: "We can only tell the story of our communities as part of a fragmentary yet not wholly unknown, a hidden but genuinely universal narrative." Frei 1991, 8.

²³⁸Niebuhr 1970, 120.

²³⁹Niebuhr 1970, 124.

²⁴⁰Niebuhr 1970, 125.

Rejecting both "attending to either extreme" and "seeking for a compromise position between them," he declares that the right way is to make clear the Church's responsibility *to God for the neighbour*.²⁴¹

In order to carry out the responsibility *to God for society*, Niebuhr then proposes three functions of the Christian community: the *apostolic* function, the *pastoral* function, and the *pioneering* function.²⁴² The *apostolic* function is to announce the Gospel to all individuals and societies to make them disciples of Christ. Both God's judgement and mercy must be preached. In other words, the *apostolic* function is "to proclaim to the great human societies, with all the persuasiveness and imagination at its disposal, with all the skill it has in becoming all things to all men, that the center and heart of all things, the first and last Being, is utter goodness, complete love."²⁴³ The *pastoral* function is to be concerned with social matters. Although Niebuhr's primary concern is people, such a concern leads him to concern to society in which they live. Niebuhr says: "The Church cannot be responsible to God for men without becoming responsible for their societies If the individual sheep is to be protected the flock must be guarded."²⁴⁴ The responsible church should not only proclaim the gospel but also be actually involved in the reformation of society directly and indirectly. The *pioneering* function of the Church is to provide a godly model to the society, representing the whole society to which it belongs. The Israelites were meant to be pioneers "in understanding the vanity of idol worship and in obeying the law of brother-love. Hence in it all nations were eventually to be blessed."²⁴⁵ Jesus Christ represented and pioneered for all the humans in His obedience to God. Niebuhr says:

In this representational sense the Church is that part of human society, and that element in each particular society, which moves toward God, which as the priest acting for all men worships Him, which believes and trusts in Him on behalf of all, which is first to obey Him when it becomes aware of a new aspect of His will.²⁴⁶

²⁴¹Niebuhr 1970, 126.

²⁴²Niebuhr 1970, 126.

²⁴³Niebuhr 1970, 127.

²⁴⁴Niebuhr 1970, 129.

²⁴⁵Niebuhr 1970, 130.

²⁴⁶Niebuhr 1970, 131.

Thus *pioneering* is actualisation of the apostolic proclamation within the Church, and Niebuhr states: "This [pioneering function] seems to be the highest form of social responsibility in the Church" among the three functions.²⁴⁷

Niebuhr's pioneering church is similar to Yoder's believers' community witness. As I discuss below, Yoder too uses the term, 'pioneering.' Both of them strive to present to the world what God requires of us as the church. However they differ in their emphasis on the relation to the society. Yoder asserts that the church is to offer an alternative culture to the world. Here the church's distinctiveness from the world or its discontinuity with the world is stressed. On the other hand, Niebuhr's pioneering church represents the world, and the continuity between the church and the world is stressed. Here the church is described as a part of the world. He says: "In its relation with God it is the pioneer part of society that responds to God on behalf of the whole society."²⁴⁸ The church not only tells and shows what needs to be done, but also obeys God as the representative the whole world.

Niebuhr's criticism of isolationism is appropriate in that the Church should never disclaim its responsibility for the world. Niebuhr's pioneering church is not a believers' church; it accepts both sheep and goats. How can such a church achieve actualisation of the apostolic proclamation which requires discernment of the will of God and sacrificial obedience? He does not show us a concrete blueprint. On the contrary Yoder's assertion that the believers' church should have a distinctiveness from the world is concrete and convincing. The believers' church by definition consists of believers. Although humans strictly cannot distinguish believers from non-believers, the believers' church is sociologically distinguishable from any other church. We do need a place to stand and to nurture our discernment for transformation, which requires some distinctiveness from the world. Therefore Yoder's suggestion that the church should be an independent standpoint for Christians to transform culture is very persuasive. In order to carry out its

²⁴⁷Niebuhr 1970, 132.

²⁴⁸Niebuhr 1970, 130.

responsibility for the world, the church must be distinctively Christian. The danger of cultural captivity is ever present. For example Liberation theologians point out that we tend to overlook the suffering of the marginal when the church identifies itself with the ruling class. By doing theology from the viewpoint of the socially marginalised, they reveal blind spots of the church.

However as Niebuhr reminds us, the Church and the world cannot be mutually exclusive. The Church can neither be fully independent of the world, nor can the world be apart from the Church. "The world is sometimes enemy, sometimes partner of Church, often antagonist, always one to be befriended; now it is the co-knower, now the one that does not know what Church knows, now the knower of what Church does not know."²⁴⁹ The Church is a part of the world and is in the world; yet it is not fully of the world. Although the distinctiveness of the Church is always relative, it is what is required as a standpoint. If it is totally a part of the world, it cannot transform the world; if it is utterly detached from the world and is totally in a different dimension, it cannot contact the world nor transform the culture. As the divine incarnated in the world of relativity, the church, the body of Christ, must be located in the world. In order to transform culture, we cannot simply adopt culture as our standpoint. We then lose our discernment and motivation to transform it. We are not yet given the ultimate kingdom of God. Even if it was given, it could not have a common ground with the fallen world. It must be on the 'boundary' (Tillich) of the world and the kingdom of God on which we should stand for transformation. The margin of the world is not enough, since the margin is part of the world after all.²⁵⁰ We need a boundary, which is comprised of both divine distinctiveness and fallen world. It is the believers' church.²⁵¹

²⁴⁹Niebuhr 1977, 26. Niebuhr locates the Church six polarities: subjective and objective, community and institution, unity and plurality, locality and universality, protestant and catholic, and church and world. Niebuhr 1977, 19-27.

²⁵⁰For example, Liberation Theology.

²⁵¹In a paper "What is the Church?" (1932) Bonhoeffer similarly discusses the two aspects of the church: human and divine sides. However whereas Bonhoeffer emphasises the duality as a description of what the church *is* and not as the norm of what the church is to be, I claim that the church has to strive to become distinctive from the world whilst most keenly recognising its worldly aspect.

IV. Conclusions

What can we learn from H. Richard Niebuhr and from his critics for our purpose of constructing a theology to deal with culture, particularly that of Japan? The transformation approach should be a norm for a Christian involvement in culture. I have suggested modifying Niebuhr's transformation approach. Firstly the definition of culture should be extended to any part of human product. Both Niebuhr and Yoder assume that culture is a valued part of the human production. However the negative aspect of culture needs to be transformed as much as the positive aspect of culture. We must not uncritically reject the negative aspect of culture from our transforming attempt as Yoder does.

Secondly a community approach should be the norm over an *individualistic* or *personal* approach. Particularly the *corporate-personal* approach is suggested. Although Niebuhr emphasises the Church, his self is *personal* and does not necessarily allow the community to play an active role in decision making.

Thirdly Christian distinctiveness of believers' church is suggested as a ground for discerning and transforming culture. H. Richard Niebuhr disagrees with Reinhold Niebuhr and theologians of the social gospel, who insist on direct involvement of the Church in social problems. H. Richard rather seeks conversion of individuals, which hopefully leads to transforming culture. This is a right path. Nevertheless despite his emphasis on the significance of the Church, his self is *personal*, and his Church is vague, without concrete involvement in the life of the selves. Accordingly his Church seems too weak to support selves' discernment of different elements in culture or to produce an alternative culture for the world. Niebuhr's *responsible self* without corporate support seems unsteady and insufficient for transforming culture.

Although it is "God [who] makes the church what it is" as Bonhoeffer says, God invites the church continuously to participate in His work to make the church be itself. Otherwise it becomes just a part of the world and ceases to be the church. Bonhoeffer 1965, 153-157.

Fourthly Niebuhr's theocentric relativism is an invaluable contribution, particularly in the age of pluralism, especially in the setting of polytheistic nations like Japan. Although his theocentric relativism holds the absoluteness of Christian faith revealed in revelation, it accepts the limit and relativity of Christianity; and such knowledge of the absolute enables us to accept the relativity of our faith. As we shall see, Japanese political leaders, in encounter with Christianity, tried to be worshipped as gods in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; later in modern history Japanese nationalism attempted to elevate its finite *Tennô* [the Emperor of Japan] to the throne of gods. Both of these endeavours were carried out in the framework of *Shinto*, which is still vitally alive in the heart of the Japanese today. This reminds us of Niebuhr's statement: "If we have no faith in the absolute faithfulness of God-in-Christ, it will doubtless be difficult for us to discern the relativity of our faith."²⁵²

It is unfortunate that Niebuhr is too reluctant to suggest Christian ethics in concrete forms and remains abstract. Theocentric relativism leads us to witness to the truth in communal narrative and confessional form. In other words, the local church as committed believers' community should be a locus of theocentric relativism; such local churches should witness the truth in their own setting. Witnessing to truth by the believers' church in a confessional and communal form is a direction in our theology.

Finally Niebuhr's radical monotheism is a significant contribution to our theology to deal with Japan. It reminds us about the danger of polytheism and henotheism both in Japanese society and Christianity in Japan. As Yasuo Furuya, a leading Japanese theologian, points out, "nationalism in Japan or Shinto, which is the spiritual core of Japan and of which the *Tennô* is at the centre, is obviously a form of this henotheism."²⁵³

²⁵²Niebuhr 1975, 239. Cf. n. 92.

²⁵³Furuya 1989, 207.

We need a place to stand and a standard by which to discern Japanese culture for transformation. In our approach, therefore, radical monotheism plays a role in reminding us of the relativity of the church and the danger of the Monotheism of the Son. Although a local Christian community is a locus for theology, it must not be elevated to the infinite position. A local community is also an object of theology, and it and its decision making are continually to be critiqued by the standard of radical monotheism. The teaching of Christ should be understood in the context of the Father and the Spirit with Him. This is where Yoder fails. His strong emphasis on the Christian community and the teaching of the New Testament results in insensitivity to human relativity. Whilst holding distinctive and concrete teaching of the New Testament as a norm, we should be humble enough to take our interpretation of it in our situation as confessional and communal narrative.

Chapter 2

John Howard Yoder and Stanley Hauerwas: Believers' Church Approach

I. Introduction

This section examines John Howard Yoder and Stanley Hauerwas' approach in transforming culture. They represent a theological group, Radical Reformation, which gives a distinct light to the relationship between the church and the state. Although Radical Reformation is a historical movement in the sixteenth century, the term is used in a broader sense.²⁵⁴ Its main character is that of a committed believers' community, which we upheld in Chapter 1. It therefore includes not only the Anabaptist movement, its direct offsprings, and the Free Church movement (such as the Puritan Nonconformists), but also committed believers' community within the more mainstream churches.²⁵⁵

A. Life

John Howard Yoder (1927-1997) is a Mennonite theologian and ethicist. He grew up in a Mennonite congregation in Smithville, Ohio. He was educated at a Mennonite institution, Goshen College. At the University of Basel he pursued doctoral research on the Anabaptist movement in the sixteenth century and received a Th.D. in 1962. There he studied with biblical scholars Oscar Cullmann and Walter

²⁵⁴I basically agree with Arne Rasmusson in his use of the term 'Radical Reformation,' which includes "Anabaptist movements of the sixteenth century, and its direct descendants," "Believers' Church or the Free Church movement, and "a recurring phenomenon throughout all of church history." Rasmusson 1994, 16.

²⁵⁵The best description of the Believers' Church to my knowledge is given by Donald F. Durnbaugh: "the covenanted and disciplined community of those walking in the way of Jesus Christ" after thoroughly discussing it. He insightfully gives seven characteristics of it: "voluntary membership," rejection of a mixed assembly ("separation from the world)," "performance of 'Christian works,'" "loving chastisement" of each other, "mutual aid," "a 'belief and neat order for baptism' and other church practices," and the centrality of the Word. Durnbaugh 1985, 32-33.

Eichrodt; he also received profound influence from Karl Barth although he was not his *Doktorvater*.²⁵⁶ He taught theology and ethics at the Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries, Elkhart, Indiana until 1984. He taught at a Roman Catholic institution in the same state, the University of Notre Dame, until his sudden death on 30 December 1997, a day after his seventieth birthday. His most important work is *The Politics of Jesus* (1972, 1994), in which he discusses the political dimension of Jesus' life and teaching.²⁵⁷ However his fundamental claim that the Jesus of the New Testament -- and nothing else -- is *the* authority for the Christian appears already in a collection of essays, *The Original Revolution* (1971).²⁵⁸ Other collected essays are published as *The Priestly Kingdom* (1984)²⁵⁹ and *The Royal Priesthood* (1994),²⁶⁰ which are also significant for our purpose of discussing transformation of culture. His interpretation of the Jesus of the New Testament led him to numerous works on pacifism, which includes *The Christian and Capital Punishment* (1961),²⁶¹ *The Christian Pacifism of Karl Barth* (1964), *The Christian Witness to the State* (1964),²⁶² *Karl Barth and the Problem of War* (1970),²⁶³ *Nevertheless* (1971),²⁶⁴ *Christian Attitudes to War, Peace, and Revolution* (1983),²⁶⁵ *When War Is Unjust* (1984).²⁶⁶ Yoder's keen interest remains in the Christian witness to the world, which includes biblical scholarship, ecclesiology, and ecumenical perspectives. His arguments are based on a fundamental conviction of the sovereignty of God and inaugurated eschatologically: God is in charge of history and the world and the Kingdom of God has already been inaugurated with Jesus.

Stanley Hauerwas (1940-) was born in Texas, and is a Southern Methodist. After receiving a B.A. from Southwestern University, he completed a B.D. and a

²⁵⁶Nation 1997, 9.

²⁵⁷Yoder 1994a.

²⁵⁸Yoder 1971.

²⁵⁹Yoder 1984a.

²⁶⁰Yoder 1994b.

²⁶¹Yoder 1961.

²⁶²Yoder 1977.

²⁶³Yoder 1970.

²⁶⁴Yoder 1992a.

²⁶⁵Yoder 1983a.

²⁶⁶Yoder 1984b.

Ph.D. at Yale, where he learned the significance of narrative in understanding the Gospel through Hans Frei and that of character and virtues in Christian ethics through James Gustafson. He was professor of theology and Christian ethics at the University of Notre Dame, from 1970 to 1985, where he was "sustained morally and financially by Roman Catholics." There he met Yoder, who left a crucial influence on him. It includes interpreting the life and ethics of Jesus as the norm for Christian ethics and locating the church as an alternative society to the world. He currently teaches at Duke University, a Methodist institution in North Carolina. Hauerwas "believes that the most nearly faithful form of Christian witness is best exemplified by the often unjustly ignored people called anabaptists or Mennonites."²⁶⁷ However he does not limit his theology to anabaptist theology, and admits Catholic and Methodist influences on him. He states: "I do not believe that theology when rightly done is either Catholic or Protestant. . . . No theologian should desire anything less than that his or her theology reflect the catholic character of the church."²⁶⁸

Hauerwas is not keen to systematise his thought. Although he has written several full-scale books, his favourite form of writing is the essay, and these are reproduced in numerous volumes.²⁶⁹

Hauerwas' interests and emphasis have shifted roughly across four fields, although they are closely related. In the first period, up to 1977, he rediscovered and stressed virtue and character, which had been neglected in modern Christian ethics. In the second period, from 1977 to 1983, he concentrated on narrative. From 1983 he indicated his commitment to non-violence and discussed the church's social responsibility. Finally since he moved to Duke Divinity School in 1985, his interest has included the Church's indispensable role in interpreting the Scriptures: the Scriptures are not self-interpreting, but it can be rightly interpreted only by the people of God.²⁷⁰

²⁶⁷Hauerwas 1981, 6. See also Hauerwas 1987, 92.

²⁶⁸Hauerwas 1984, xxvi.

²⁶⁹See Bibliography.

²⁷⁰Hauerwas 1993, 22-28. See also Hays 1997, 254 and Wells 1995, 55.

Yoder and Hauerwas share a basic approach in common, though there are some differences.²⁷¹ Both are postliberal Christian ethicists; both regard biblical narratives, particularly the life and teaching of Jesus, as the norm for Christian ethics; both believe that pacifism is the way of Jesus and therefore the Christian way; both believe that imitating Jesus is not simply a devotional matter but a political choice; both believe that the church as an alternative polity to the world is crucial in transforming culture; both find the most sincere Christian witness in the Anabaptist and Mennonite tradition; and both express their thoughts in the form of essays rather than a systematised form. Here I shall focus on the common substance, rather than differences, and discuss it for our purpose of transforming culture.

B. Basic Theological Claim

What is Christian responsibility for the world? Hauerwas' and Yoder's answer is that Christians should trust in God in the context of the Christian belief that God (and no human) is in charge of history. We should live faithfully to the biblical stories, especially to the story of Jesus. Yoder most sharply advocates this type of approach with his defence of "providence," and Hauerwas learns it from Yoder.²⁷²

²⁷¹The differences between them include following five aspects. (1) Whilst Yoder's interpretation of the Scripture is based on quite updated historical and critical scholarship, Hauerwas, particularly recently, avoids such a critical interpretation and rather interprets the Scriptures through the work of major theologians such as "Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, Barth, and Yoder." (2) Whilst Yoder claims that the Jesus Christ of the New Testament forms and shapes the life of the church, Hauerwas argues that only a truthful and peaceful church can understand the Jesus of the New Testament rightly. (3) Whilst Yoder emphasises that the church is to imitate Jesus, Hauerwas stresses both the imitation and the formation of character and virtues in the church so that by habits it practices the will of God. Hauerwas 1993, 9; Hays 1997, 245, 259-260, 254, 262; Hauerwas 1984, Chapter 5; Hauerwas 1981, 36. (4) Whilst Yoder emphasises the otherness between the church and the world, Hauerwas acknowledges the continuity between them but claims the continuity is not solid enough to build a Christian ethics. (5) Whilst Hauerwas limits his focus on narrative and character, Yoder utilises every available method.

²⁷²Hauerwas 1984, 126.

Yoder asserts that Christians do not need to try to control the world by power; for God is in control of His universe, including human history. Christians should rather live as Christ lived. Social reform was not Christ's primary concern; He rather lived, trusting in God, seeking God's will, and manifesting who God is through his way of living. This is also the way His early followers tried to live. We shall discuss this in the section below IV. 'Christian Community.'

Hauerwas basically accepts this approach. He particularly emphasises forming character rather than decision-making, who we are rather than what we do; for who we are determines what we do. Hauerwas' basic theological claim, trust in God's sovereignty, has threefold implications: emphasis on character, narrative, and community. Although our main interest is Christian responsibility for the world, in discussing Hauerwas' theology we have to examine these major themes since they are inseparably interwoven with Christian responsibility.

II. The Narrative Approach

Each community has its own narrative, which gives it an identity. When people participate in the community, they too share the narrative. Narrative theology here emphasises not only narrative, but also the community which shapes and keeps narrative and the concreteness of history rather than abstract principle.

The narrative approach is significant in Hauerwas' and Yoder's theologies. Yoder claims: "Our identity is a narrative identity, not a deductive identity. Christian ethics is derived from a story, not from principles."²⁷³ He also adheres to the story particularly in *The Politics of Jesus*, and refuses to "leave the story behind."²⁷⁴ However he does not discuss narrative approach as much as Hauerwas. As Paul Nelson says, Hauerwas is perhaps "the most significant and influential

²⁷³Yoder 1979a.

²⁷⁴Yoder 1994a, 13.

exponent of narrative among contemporary Christian ethicists," and "narrative would be identified as the dominant and controlling term" in Hauerwas' theology.²⁷⁵

Narrative for Hauerwas is the form to interpret and to express history coherently. Narrative is universally essential to all human understanding; and narrative is particularly crucial to Christian theology.

A. Why Narrative?

1. Narrative as an Essential Form in Human Understanding

Firstly Hauerwas deems that history can be best understood in narrative. When we talk about an event, we usually describe it in narrative. Hauerwas states: "The telling of the narrative is itself a reinterpretation of the history. We see that because the self is historically formed we require a narrative to speak about it if we are to speak at all."²⁷⁶ We can interpret ourselves, the world, and God only through our own internal history. Narrative appropriately treats the particularity and historicity of the agent, which modern ethics has overlooked.

Secondly narrative helps us see history coherently. It is possible that we randomly pick up historical facts and make a meaningless list. However if we interpret and describe history in a meaningful way, it must become narrative. Only by doing so can we find consistency in history. Hauerwas states: "A story, thus, is a narrative account that binds events and agents together in an intelligible pattern. . . . To tell a story often involves our attempt to make intelligible the muddle of things we have done in order to have a self."²⁷⁷ We are historical beings, and our selfhood is formed through our interpretation of our past. When we talk about ourselves we select certain events in the past which are important to us. Such a selection enables us coherently to comprehend the self in history.

²⁷⁵Nelson 1987, 109, 111.

²⁷⁶Hauerwas 1984, 26.

²⁷⁷Hauerwas 1977, 78.

Thus Hauerwas claims that narrative is generally an essential form throughout humanity. This is his foundationalist aspect.²⁷⁸

2. Narrative as an Essential Form in Christian Theology

Hauerwas believes that narrative is especially crucial in Christian theology: "The narrative mode is neither incidental nor accidental to Christian belief. There is no more fundamental way to talk of God than in a story."²⁷⁹

Firstly Hauerwas claims that narrative precedes other modes of talking about God. To the challenge that we can talk about God through doctrine, he asserts: "Such 'doctrines' are themselves a story, or perhaps better, the outline of the story. . . . Doctrines, therefore, are not the upshot of the stories; they are not the meaning or heart of the stories. Rather they are tools (sometimes even misleading tools), meant to help us tell the story better."²⁸⁰ Thus Hauerwas claims the superiority of narrative to doctrine and any other forms in speaking of God.

Secondly Israelites and Christians experienced God in history and deliberately chose narrative literary form as a dominant mode in expressing their faith. "To know our creator, therefore, we are required to learn through God's particular dealings with Israel and Jesus, and through God's continuing faithfulness to the Jews and the ingathering of a people to the church."²⁸¹ Although there are factual aspects in Christian convictions, "those 'facts' are part of a story that helps locate what kind of 'facts' you have at all."²⁸² Thus Hauerwas believes that narrative is essential in understanding Christian belief.

²⁷⁸Frei, as a nonfoundational narrative theologian, asserts: "I am not proposing or arguing a general anthropology. I am precisely *not* claiming that narrative sequence is the built-in constitution of human being phenomenologically uncovered. That may or may not be the case. Rather, I am suggesting that it is narrative specificity through which we describe an intentional-agential world and ourselves in it." Frei 1993, 112.

²⁷⁹Hauerwas 1984, 25.

²⁸⁰Hauerwas 1984, 25-26.

²⁸¹Hauerwas 1984, 28.

²⁸²Hauerwas 1977, 73.

In these cases above Hauerwas seems to mean narrative as a literary genre. For example, Hauerwas claims: "Narrative formally displays our existence and that of the world as creatures -- as *contingent* beings."²⁸³ However we have to note that there are other ways to convey the concept of creatures' contingency. Often doctrines, poems, and paintings play such a role. Doctrines can articulate a detailed statement in a logical and precise manner; poems can express feeling. Psalms express people's awe and emotion better than narrative. Although narrative as a literary form is a good vehicle to convey interpreted history, it is to be complemented with other forms. Although the 'outline' of the narrative (and other forms) may not be superior to narrative, narrative cannot claim exclusive supremacy, either. They are complementary to each other. Narrative has unfairly been a long-neglected field. However it must not be overemphasised as a reaction, since it has its own limits just as any other approaches.

By the term narrative, however, Hauerwas seems to mean both literary form and human understanding. He uses the expression such as 'locating our stories within God's story' and uses the term 'narrative' both as literary genre and as the understanding of the event.²⁸⁴ He also states: "Stories are not just a literary genre, therefore, but a form of understanding that is indispensable."²⁸⁵ He mixes the two in his discussion of narrative. This confuses the reader and needs further clarification, which I offer below.²⁸⁶

B. Christian Story: The True Story

Traditionally Christianity has claimed that the truth was revealed from God through Jesus. However we are aware that there are other religions and other stories in human history. Theologians have struggled with this question of Christian

²⁸³Hauerwas 1984, 29.

²⁸⁴Hauerwas 1984, 27, 28, 29.

²⁸⁵Hauerwas 1977, 76.

²⁸⁶Chapter 2, IIC 'Conclusions: Distinction of Understanding and Genre.'

absoluteness and other religious traditions particularly since the nineteenth century.

Hauerwas asserts that Christian story is a true story. What does he mean by that?

Hauerwas thinks that if a tree produces a good fruit, it is a good tree: if a story produces faithful people, it is a true story. In this section I would like to discuss three elements related to this idea of true story: concept of true-ness, problem of relativity with other religions, and diverse traditions within Christianity.

1. True-ness

Hauerwas' "true-ness" has two aspects: a sense of absoluteness and life involvement.

Firstly Hauerwas thinks that truth has an absolute aspect. He disapproves of pragmatic relativism. Hauerwas states:

We should not want to know if religious convictions are functional; we should want to know if they are true. . . . Yet this is futile insofar as ethics depends upon vital communities sufficient to produce well-lived lives. If such lives do not exist, then no amount of reflection can do anything to make our ethics fecund.²⁸⁷

He rejects the idea of using religion as a servant to keep social order. Rather from the distinctive Christian viewpoint he asserts that truth has an absolute and unchangeable essence which must not be modified for our convenience.

Secondly true-ness is closely related to real human life. Although truth has an absolute element, it is not statically and rigidly objective and is not isolated from human life. Rather it dynamically confronts us with the need to change. Hauerwas states: "We often think that a true story is one that provides an accurate statement, a correct description. However, I am suggesting that a true story must be one that helps me to go on." "A theory is meant to help you know the world without changing the world yourself; a story is to help you deal with the world by changing it through changing yourself."²⁸⁸ Thus truth existentially affects our life.

²⁸⁷Hauerwas 1984, 15.

²⁸⁸Hauerwas 1977, 80, 73.

We can also see his stress on life style when Hauerwas discusses the use of goodness which is similar to truth: "To say a bad person has done some genuinely good thing is a misuse of the notion of good. Of course what they have done may be good in the sense that some good effects have resulted, but the 'action' is not good if it has done nothing toward putting them on the path toward being good."²⁸⁹ He believes that character and action are inseparable, and a true story shapes character.

Thirdly true story, by confronting us with the need to change, helps us see God, ourselves, and the world properly. It gives "coherence to a person's life."²⁹⁰ Hauerwas asserts: "A true story is one that helps me to uncover the true path that is also the path for me through the unknown and foreign." Our sinful eyes do not wish to see our fallenness and descend into self-deception; and our seeing "is bounded by trying to secure our past achievements."²⁹¹ However a true story gives us courage to face reality and live amidst the human predicament with hope.

Thus the true-ness is also inseparable from human life. A true story existentially confronts us and helps us see rightly. Hauerwas obviously speaks from a distinctive Christian perspective, which helps him see properly. His understanding of true-ness is not 'objective,' but is determined by the absolute standard from the Christian viewpoint.

2. Relativity with Other Religions

There are numerous stories in human history which have created a variety of religious beliefs. If religions produce good people, are they equally true? Can religions be judged in their trueness only by their function of producing good people? If the Shinto story of creation of Japan produces good people who are faithful to their story, is it a true story? If the answers to these questions are positive, we are in religious pluralism and our engagement is not with theology but with

²⁸⁹Hauerwas 1994a, xxiii.

²⁹⁰Hauerwas 1977, 35.

²⁹¹Hauerwas 1977, 80.

anthropology, psychology or sociology.²⁹² If we claim the absoluteness of Christian truth, we need to acknowledge an independent external authority outside our belief which judges the goodness of people.

Although Hauerwas does not give positive answers to these questions, his position is somewhat ambiguous. On one hand he rejects total relativism; on the other hand he rejects absolutism. Whilst he does not affirm that every religion is equally true as long as it creates good people, he is aware that we do not sit in the absolute throne to judge all beliefs.

Firstly Hauerwas has a strong nonfoundationalist element. He speaks from a distinctively Christian viewpoint as a Christian witness without making a 'propositionalist-cognitivist' statement.²⁹³ He asserts that Christian ethics must testify to Christian belief nurtured in Christian narratives instead of dissolving it into universal principles. Hauerwas is no friend to sceptical relativism; he believes that the Christian story is true. Yet his focus is on inviting people to a life which was made possible to us by God's grace through the cross and resurrection of Christ, rather than rejecting other beliefs as false. He states: "We do not wish to claim that the stories with which Christian and Jews identify are the only stories that offer skills for truthfulness in the moral life."²⁹⁴ Thus this is a confessional approach rather than a doctrinal approach with forcing authority.

Secondly Hauerwas' approach has a slightly foundationalist flavour. He seeks objectivity within a nonfoundational approach. This is what I meant by 'ambiguous.' He gives four criteria for assessing narratives: "(1) power to release us from destructure alternatives; (2) ways of seeing through current distortions; (3)

²⁹²Hauerwas states: "It would be disastrous if this emphasis on the significance of story for theological reflection became a way to avoid the question of how religious convictions or stories may be true or false, i.e., you have your story and we have ours and there is no way to judge the truth of either." Hauerwas 1977, 72.

²⁹³George Lindbeck identifies three theories for understanding religion: the cognitive-propositionalist approach, the experiential-expressivist approach, and the cultural-linguistic approach. Propositionalists objectively judge religions as true or false. Lindbeck 1984, 16-19.

²⁹⁴Hauerwas 1977, 38.

room to keep us from having to resort to violence; [and] (4) a sense for the tragic: how meaning transcends power."²⁹⁵ These are merely guidelines and not universally objective standards. Hauerwas as a nonfoundationalist states: "There is no story of stories, i.e., an account that is literal and that thus provides a criterion to say which stories are true or false. All we do is compare stories to see what they ask of us and the world which we inhabit."²⁹⁶ Thus Hauerwas denies a meta-narrative standard to judge all narratives. Nevertheless he tries to provide vague working criteria to help us recognise a true story. Although two different paradigms share nothing in common and are incommensurable, we can compare the quality of theories within the same paradigms. Even if we cannot precisely judge the quality of the two things from two different paradigms, their qualities are different and sometimes people share a same judgement. Even if two stories are incommensurable, it is not totally impossible to see the variety of trueness amongst stories.²⁹⁷ Thus Hauerwas is trying to assess narratives in different paradigms without setting up a definite standard outside the paradigms. The validity of his criteria is not solid. Nevertheless his resolute claim for testing narratives without giving up such an attempt should be valued from the perspectives both of critically reshaping Christian performance and of enhancing dialogue between different religions.²⁹⁸

Thus Hauerwas asserts that the Christian story is a true story. It is not simply a nonfoundationalist confession of belief; rather it has some foundationalist characteristics. Although he denies that non-Christian stories are false, he never talks about any true non-Christian story. Instead we hear him confessionally asserting that the Christian story is a true story.

²⁹⁵Hauerwas 1977, 35.

²⁹⁶Hauerwas 1977, 78-79.

²⁹⁷Cf. Murai 1978, 109-147.

²⁹⁸Lindbeck and Milbank also suggest testing the truthfulness and falsity of narratives by assessing the church. Lindbeck 1984, 64.

3. Relativity within Christianity

The Christian story shapes our faith and living so that we are to live according to the story. Hauerwas thinks that when we are faithful to Christian story, it shapes our character toward the likeness of Christ. He, like Yoder, particularly declares pacifism as an essential element. However there are many communities within Christianity which have different traditions and emphases; quite apart from the major divisions -- the Roman Catholic Church, the Orthodox Church, and mainstream Protestantism -- there are numerous subdivisions particularly in Protestantism. Although Christian communities largely agree on the centrality of the story of Jesus: passion, the Cross, and Resurrection, they have interpreted it and acted differently throughout Christian history. Moreover many of such practices came not simply out of political convenience but also out of serious and pious considerations. Both Yoder and Hauerwas put heavy weight on the story of Jesus. How do they reconcile diverse Christian performances from a central story?²⁹⁹

Samuel Wells calls this "Hauerwas' weakest point," and Hauerwas does not give a clear answer to it.³⁰⁰ Wells shows that although Hauerwas and Johann Baptist Metz share many common convictions (the inseparable relationship of narrative and community, the centrality of the memory of Jesus' cross and resurrection, and the significance of Christian social action as imitating Christ), they disagree on the use of violence.³⁰¹ Whilst Metz supports "revolutionary force,"³⁰² Hauerwas is a committed pacifist; just as Yoder is a steadfast advocate of pacifism. Even these theologians of very similar positions go in different directions in terms of practice. Hauerwas positively acknowledges the diversity of Christian

²⁹⁹Paul Nelson likewise points out this problem of diversity around the New Testament story. "In the first place, attention to different narratives within scripture may yield discrepant conclusions. Second, the same narrative or biblical narrative as a whole can be construed in different ways and used to warrant a variety of substantive theological proposals." Nelson 1987, 83-84.

³⁰⁰Wells 1995, 81-82.

³⁰¹Cf. Lauritzen 1987.

³⁰²Metz 1968, 14.

convictions.³⁰³ Nevertheless both Yoder and Hauerwas seem to believe that they know the truth on which everyone should agree at the end, which appears quite arrogant.

In my judgement although we must agree on basic Christian convictions as long as we continue to do Christian theology, we should confessionally stay with our own convictions about ambiguous areas, including pacifism.³⁰⁴ However firm our convictions may be, we should not declare it as the truth for all and for every situation. Our understanding is always fragmentary and relative.

The confessional form of theology is more needed if Christianity has had diversity from its beginning. James D.G. Dunn concludes in his study of first century Christianity that "*there was no single normative form of Christianity in the first century*" although there was "an identifiable unity." He further declares: "How few the essentials are and how *wide* must be the range of acceptable liberty."³⁰⁵ Whilst first century Christianity is usually considered a norm for the Christian church, Dunn persuasively claims that it had both unity and a wide range of variety.³⁰⁶

All we can and should do is confess our convictions and live accordingly. This is the attitude of H. Richard Niebuhr's theocentric relativism, which we uphold. If we fully trust in God's providence (as Yoder and Hauerwas claim), there is no need for us to force others to accept our convictions. We should witness what we believe as our confession without condemning others as false. If it is of human origin, it will fail; yet if it is from God, no one will be able to stop it.³⁰⁷ It is this

³⁰³Hauerwas 1981, 52, 66, 92.

³⁰⁴Rome, 14:5. "Some judge one day to be better than another, while others judge all days to be alike. Let all be fully convinced in their own minds."

³⁰⁵Dunn 1990, 373, 374, 377. Dunn asserts that the unifying element is a common faith in Jesus-the-man-now-exalted.

³⁰⁶Dunn claims that there is "the fundamental unity," "fundamental tension," and "fundamental diversity" in the New Testament, and rightly asserts about the diversity: "Uniformity is not only unrealizable but theologically wrong-headed, since it would only result in the fundamental diversity itself in new and schismatic forms." Dunn 1991, 280.

³⁰⁷Cf. Acts 5:38-39.

confessional theology that requires trust in God's sovereignty and an awareness that we are not in control.

C. Conclusions: Distinction of Understanding and Genre

I have mentioned the limitation of the narrative approach. It is an enormously rich yet unfairly ignored approach. However it cannot claim exclusive supremacy and needs other approaches.

This becomes clearer if, in discussing Christian narrative, three elements of narrative within the internal story are identified and distinguished: original experience, narrative as common understanding of experience, and narrative literary form. They are not necessarily separable, but identification of them clarifies our understanding.

'Original experience of Christian narrative' is personal or corporate experience which the community has not much interpreted and reflected on yet. In the Gospel narratives themselves we see actions which seem to be spontaneous response to Jesus rather than premeditated choice.³⁰⁸ Experience is an act of immediacy; the time direction of experience itself is primarily forward.³⁰⁹

When the experience is interpreted and shared by a community, it becomes narrative as common understanding. Its time direction is primarily backward as we reflect on experience in the past.³¹⁰

This narrative as understanding can be communicated in many different ways, including narrative literary form. For example, the first Christians had an

³⁰⁸The biblical narratives are an interpretation of experience by Christian communities in narrative literary form. Therefore we cannot find the original experience in the Scriptures. Having acknowledged the limit, Thomas confessing "My Lord and My God," Zacchaeus giving up his possessions, Mary listening to Jesus without helping her sister Martha, and Peter jumping into water seem to be examples of immediate response.

³⁰⁹See for example Mori 1976, 42, 70-71.

³¹⁰Louis O. Mink also points out the retrospective nature of stories. MacIntyre 1985, 212. MacIntyre's quote is from Mink's "History and Fiction as Modes of Comprehension."

original experience with Jesus and its interpretation as the common understanding of the Christian community, from which four Gospel narratives were produced.³¹¹ The original experience and its interpretation had potential to be expressed as narratives, doctrines, poems, paintings, music, sculpture, architecture, and so on. Although we did not have the original experience, we have an indirect access to Christian common understanding through biblical narratives and through other parts of the Scripture. Through the Scripture, we take a risk of diving into the narrative as the common understanding of early Christians.

Why is such a distinction of original experience, narrative as understanding, and narrative literary form necessary? There are at least four advantages.

Firstly the distinction between narrative form and understanding helps us to be humble in interpreting the Scripture and to avoid the hubris of the biblicist. Biblicists regard the surface of the Scripture (though not limited to biblical narratives) as the Truth and believe that they unconditionally know the Truth. However the distinction reveals the possibility of failing to grasp early Christians' understanding rightly even though we have a direct access to biblical narratives. This leads our theology to a humble confession rather than forceful doctrine for everyone to accept unconditionally. This is an identical claim to H. Richard Niebuhr's theocentric relativism.

Secondly the distinction helps us avoid over-emphasis on biblical narratives. The Scripture contains not only narrative literary form but also other forms such as laws, poems, and letters. Narrative form is one of the ways in which the writers express their common understanding, although it can be central for integrating other forms into itself due to its inclusive historical nature. This distinction reveals that narrative literary form is not *the only* method to express human experience and its interpretation.

³¹¹James Dunn discusses the diverse understandings of Christian faith in early Christianity despite the fact that they agree on their focus on Christ as "the unity between Jesus the man and Jesus the exalted one." Dunn 1990, 371-372. See also Dunn 1985, Chapter 4.

Thirdly the distinction between the original experience and narrative as understanding highlights the significance of interpretation and urges us to reflect on our experience actively. There are many experiences we refuse or do not even care to interpret. We instinctively refuse to interpret some of our experiences when they were too painful; we very often do not pay enough attention existentially to interpreting experience. Although we can say that they were interpreted as valueless, we are habitually careless in reality.

Arimasa Mori similarly distinguishes *taiken* from *keiken*: the former is experience itself which anyone can have and the latter is existential learning through experience which makes one grow.³¹² He claims that although everyone who lived in the early 1940's in Japan had a *taiken* of the Pacific War, only a few people had a *keiken* of it. The *taiken* is similar to the 'original experience,' and the *keiken* is akin to 'narrative as understanding of experience' although he does not use the term 'narrative.'³¹³

Finally the distinction helps us clarify the problem in transforming culture. Culture is a vague term, including both the common understanding of particular people and its expression in various forms. The distinction shows us that both understanding and its expressions are to be transformed. When we talk about culture, we often focus on the expression. Yet culture as the common understanding of people produces the expressions, and the cultural products shape our understanding in turn. Our focus should be on both of them.

³¹²Mori 1976, 25-28, 44-46, 57-58, 62-67, 72-76, 94, 98-112, 116, 151-152, 173, 181, 183-185, 204. Mori calls this growth *henbou* [transfiguration], and claims that Japan as a corporate body has to experience *henbou*. Ibid., 73-74, 91.

³¹³Mori 1976, 204-207. Mori's *keiken* is a more vague and broader concept than interpretation of experience as narrative. Although he talks about corporate aspects of *keiken*, such as *keiken* as Japanese people, it does not necessarily mean interpretation of specific events in the past; it rather means commonality of existentially reached conclusions which people from a country share. However when people do not share their own common interpretation of actual events, their unity is fragile. I think that Mori's *keiken* should be supplemented by 'narrative.' See also *ibid.*, 108-110, for a discussion that a new *keiken* replaces an old *keiken*.

III. Ethics of Character

'Ethics of character' is Hauerwas' ethics rather than Yoder's. Yoder rejects limiting his ethics to any one category such as deontological, teleological, or character ethics. What he is afraid of is a division such as: I am a legalist; you are a situationist; he is a utilitarian; and she is character-oriented. He rather asserts that everything available should be utilised: "Serious moral debate only takes place when both available choices are being talked about in the same language, in the same universe of discourse, and by appeal to commensurate warrants."³¹⁴ He likewise does not think that whole categories of behaviour can be identified as virtues or vices "without taking part with that person in the struggle and the tension of applying them to his or her situation."³¹⁵ However both Yoder and Hauerwas agree on rejecting an ethics of abstract principle which is applicable to everyone in every situation.

A. Rejecting Foundationalist Ethics

Enlightenment ethics seeks a universal foundation and objective rationality for morality. It is an attempt to avoid vicious subjectivism and sceptical relativism, and certainly has a value. However both Yoder and Hauerwas utterly deny it. Yoder asserts, in discussing the morality of the Christian community, that ethics should be "closely bound to the local situation." The discussion should "not be taken into account in general statements of rules" which disregard the context.³¹⁶ Yoder not only emphasises the context of moral discernment, instead of principles, but also believes that personal relationship is the centre of ethical problems. "There is in every serious problem a dimension of personal offense or estrangement. . . . The idea that questions of right and wrong could best be studied somehow 'objectively' or

³¹⁴Yoder 1984a, 114.

³¹⁵Yoder 1994b, 333.

³¹⁶Yoder 1994b, 333.

'disinterestedly' is in itself an unrealistic misunderstanding of the personal character of every decision-making process."³¹⁷ Hauerwas claims: "It [attempting to seek a universal foundation for ethics] is a worthy effort, but one doomed to fail, for such ground lacks the ability to train our desires and direct our attention; to make us into moral people."³¹⁸ Modern ethics is represented by teleological and deontological theories. Although they have different emphases, Hauerwas sees a common flaw in them: "distorting our moral psychology by separating our actions from our agency."³¹⁹ Rational foundationalist ethics is concerned with universal principles and concentrates on actions and their consequences; it therefore lacks an attention to the people who act as agents and to factors which shape people, such as character, history, narrative, and community. Narrative forms community in history; and character is formed in history by community and its narrative.

As for our activities, moreover, modern ethics stresses making right decisions. "On such a model, ethics becomes a decision procedure for resolving conflict-of-choice situations. This model assumes that no one faces an ethical issue until they find themselves in a quandary." In such an understanding "moral decisions should be based on rationally derived principles that are not relative to any one set of convictions."³²⁰ Although Hauerwas affirms that we must make decisions and actions are important,³²¹ he thinks in contrast that "from the perspective of virtue, in a certain sense decisions are morally secondary."³²² His emphasis is rather on building up character.

³¹⁷Yoder 1994b, 328-329. See also *ibid.*, 343.

³¹⁸Hauerwas 1984, 11.

³¹⁹Hauerwas 1984, 21.

³²⁰Hauerwas 1977, 18.

³²¹Hauerwas 1984, 127.

³²²Hauerwas 1981, 114; Hauerwas 1994a, 83-89.

B. Character

Hauerwas attempts to unite the self and action which were separated in the modern period. He suggests that we "understand the self fundamentally as agent," and focuses his ethics on this self.³²³ Hauerwas asserts that ethics should primarily focus on people rather than actions since our character determines how we see the situation and how we act: "An ethic of virtue centres on the claim that an agent's being is prior to doing. . . . What is significant about us morally is not what we do or do not do, but how we do what we do."³²⁴

However it is not his intention to neglect actions. He believes that action, agent, and agent's character are inseparably related.

To emphasize the idea of character is to recognize that our actions are also acts of self-determination; in them we not only reaffirm what we have been but also determine what we will be in the future. By our actions we not only shape a particular situation, we also form ourselves to meet future situations in a particular way.³²⁵

Thus Hauerwas' strong stress on character and virtue is a reaction to modern ethics which abandoned the quality of the agent and concrete and contingent elements which formed the agent, such as history, community, and narrative.³²⁶

1. Character, Virtue, and Virtues

Character, virtue, and virtues are significant concepts in Hauerwas' ethics. How are they related to each other? Hauerwas finds that both Aristotle and Aquinas do not "make an explicit terminological distinction between the virtues, virtue, and character,"³²⁷ and he too seems reluctant to give a clear distinction.³²⁸ However some of his writings indicate his understanding about them.

³²³Hauerwas 1984, 38.

³²⁴Hauerwas 1981, 113. See also Hauerwas 1977, 46; Hauerwas 1984, 116; Hauerwas 1994a, 113.

³²⁵Hauerwas 1974, 49.

³²⁶"Any account of the virtues is context-dependent. . . . Any account of virtue involves the particular traditions and history of a society." Hauerwas 1981, 112.

³²⁷Hauerwas 1994a, 74.

Firstly Hauerwas suggests distinguishing individual virtues and virtue.³²⁹ The former includes concepts such as kindness, honesty, courage, and so on, and "are the trained skills of the person enabling him to act one way rather than another."³³⁰ The latter is used in phrases like "person of virtue." Although it is an ambiguous term, Hauerwas seems to use it interchangeably with "character." He uses expressions like "a person of virtue or character."³³¹

Secondly Hauerwas indicates the priority of becoming a person of character or virtue over gaining virtues. "Indeed to have the virtues rightly, it has often been argued, requires that one must acquire and have them as a person of character."³³² He similarly states: "We cannot depend on 'the virtues' to provide us with a self sufficient to give us the ability to claim our actions as our own. Rather, virtues finally depend on our character for direction, not vice versa."³³³ Thus up-building of character or becoming a person of virtue has priority in Hauerwas' ethics.

What then does Hauerwas mean by character? It has two aspects: character as the *qualification* of self-agency and character as *orientation* of self-agency.³³⁴ On one hand "Character is the qualification or determination of our self agency, formed by our having certain intentions (and beliefs) rather than others."³³⁵ On the other hand "character is not just the sum of all that we do as agents, but rather it is the particular direction our agency acquires by choosing to act in some ways rather than others."³³⁶ Whilst the former stresses a function of character in the moment of a decision, the latter emphasises it in the continuity of life.

³²⁸Hauerwas says: "I will make no attempt to suggest how the relation between virtue and the virtues should be understood. Indeed I remain unconvinced that any one account of this interaction is necessary." Hauerwas 1981, 113.

³²⁹Hauerwas 1981, 112.

³³⁰Hauerwas 1977, 49.

³³¹Hauerwas 1981, 112.

³³²Hauerwas 1981, 113.

³³³Hauerwas 1981, 143.

³³⁴Hauerwas 1994a, 114-128.

³³⁵Hauerwas 1994a, 115. See also *ibid.*, 11.

³³⁶Hauerwas 1994a, 117.

2. Habits

The emphasis on character leads Hauerwas to the concept of the formation of good habits.³³⁷ Today the term 'habits' generally means an automatic and mechanical response without deliberate thinking. Yet to be a person of character, for Aristotle and Aquinas, meant that one "has acquired certain kinds of habits called virtues," and Hauerwas uses the term in this sense.³³⁸ Habits as virtues are formed through intentional and deliberate actions. This seems to overlap with the second aspect of character mentioned above, character as orientation. Thus habits are a readiness or tendency for, not momentary, but lasting action.³³⁹ "The man of virtue is formed from repeated acts of deliberate decision and, when formed, issues forth in deliberative decision."³⁴⁰ Character is formed from repeated and deliberate virtuous actions, and character in turn produces virtuous actions.

Hauerwas asserts that an ethics of character with virtuous habits is more appropriate than decisionist ethics in two aspects.³⁴¹ Firstly most of the decisions we make are not 'hard' decisions. Hauerwas states:

Morality is not primarily concerned with quandaries or hard decisions; nor is the moral self simply the collection of such decisions. As persons of character we do not confront situations as mud puddles into which we have to step; rather the kind of 'situations' we confront and how we understand them are a function of the kind of people we are.³⁴²

We make decisions because of who we are. Although character is formed through deliberate choices and actions, decisions in daily life are usually made by habit rather than by deliberate choice. Hauerwas gives an example of his friend, who was proposed by a stewardess in a plane "that they might enjoy one another's company for awhile." "In refusing the stewardess," says Hauerwas, "he did not feel as if he had made a 'decision'; the decision had already been made by the kind of person he was and the kind of life he had with his family."³⁴³ Many decisions we make in life

³³⁷See for example, Hauerwas 1984, 42-43.

³³⁸Hauerwas 1994a, 69.

³³⁹Hauerwas 1994a, 70-71.

³⁴⁰Hauerwas 1994a, 71.

³⁴¹See Wells 1995, 24-26, 51-52.

³⁴²Hauerwas 1981, 114-115.

³⁴³Hauerwas 1984, 129-130.

are this kind. In addition, as Wells correctly says, the aspect of habits "preserves Hauerwas' ethic of virtue from charges of elitism." This "dimension of non-cognitive yet learned behaviour" is "a level open to people [even] with a mental handicap."³⁴⁴

Moreover even hard decisions we make are not derived simply from rational principles. Although they can be helpful, it is character as tendency to act that is central in decision-making. "Thus persons of character or virtue may, from the perspective of others, make what appear to have been momentous and even heroic decisions, but feel that in their own lives they 'had no choice' if they were to continue to be faithful to their characters."³⁴⁵

Virtuous people are virtuous not because they are knowledgeable about different moral principles and utilise them in decision-making. Most of the time they intuitionally make decisions by habit. Even when they make hard decisions, their character leads them through the decision-making process. Thus Hauerwas asserts that building character and how we act accordingly should occupy the centre in morality.

C. Conclusion: Both Character and Decisionist Ethics

Hauerwas believes that biblical narrative forms Christian character. He rejects any attempt to depart from biblical narrative in order to form abstract moral principles.

Attempts to formulate a 'biblical ethic' result in the somewhat embarrassing recognition that the 'morality' that is said to be 'biblical' is quite selective and even arbitrary. . . . Indeed when biblical ethics is so construed one wonders why appeals need be made to scripture at all, since one treats it as a source of general principles or images that once in hand need no longer acknowledge their origins.³⁴⁶

Paul Nelson distinguishes three kinds of Christian ethics regarding the use of biblical narrative by reference to three theologians: James Childress believes that

³⁴⁴Wells 1995, 52.

³⁴⁵Hauerwas 1981, 114.

³⁴⁶Hauerwas 1981, 58.

moral principles should be construed from the Scripture; Hauerwas rejects such principilisation and adheres to narratives; and Paul Ramsey identifies "certain themes and principles embedded in the narrative and to reformulate them for use in ethics," mediating between the two positions. Nelson discusses a dispute between Hauerwas and Ramsey about abstracting from the biblical narrative. Ramsey, for example, considers the "love" of I Corinthians 13 not only as "narrative dependant" but also as "conceptualizable as the traits of any other theory of virtues."³⁴⁷ Hauerwas criticises Ramsey for abstracting moral principles out of their biblical context. Hauerwas rejects processing principles out of context even if they are originally derived from biblical narratives.

Nelson negatively asserts that Hauerwas "has a material view of how narrative is to be understood, which he deploys in a highly normative fashion" and claims: "It seems that one either understands biblical narrative as Hauerwas does or one does not understand or appreciate the role of biblical narrative at all."³⁴⁸

Hauerwas (like Yoder) has such a tendency, but the problem for Hauerwas here is the adherence to the context of biblical narrative rather than construing the narrative in a certain way. We must remember that Hauerwas does not deny deriving principles from biblical narratives although he clings to the particularity and concreteness of narrative.³⁴⁹ I would call this deriving principles 'the primary principilisation.' What he is opposed to is not extracting principles in the context of narrative but separation of principles from narrative.³⁵⁰ He refuses to reject to

³⁴⁷Nelson 1987, 114-115.

³⁴⁸Nelson 1987, 115-116.

³⁴⁹Hauerwas 1977, 52; Hauerwas 1981, 113; and Hauerwas 1984, 22.

³⁵⁰Hauerwas states: "Principles without stories are subject to perverse interpretation . . . , but stories without principles will have no way of concretely specifying the actions and practices consistent with the general orientation expressed by the story." Hauerwas 1974, 89. He also states: "I do not doubt for a minute that the Gospel entails claims that may properly be called 'metaphysical,' but I do not believe they are known or best displayed by a clearly defined activity called 'metaphysics.'" Hauerwas and Jones 1989, 308. Wells states: "There is a danger in overstating the difference between 'narrative ethics' and an 'ethics of principles'. For narrative ethics cannot do away with principles. But Hauerwas derives principles from the narrative, whereas those he opposes derive principles from theories of human nature or elsewhere." Wells 1995, 80-81. Likewise, Yoder, whilst

regard the principles as independent of the narratives and to reformulate the principles out of the context, which I would call the secondary principlisation. He also rejects moral principles which do not originate from biblical narrative but from experience and reason, which I would call natural law principles. The second principlisation is an attempt to bridge the primary principles and the natural law principles.

Hauerwas' emphasis on the adherence to biblical narrative is understandable. Just as kerygmatic theology precedes apologetic theology, the distinctive Christian message embedded in the biblical narrative should occupy a primary position.³⁵¹ Extracting principles as primary principlisation is necessary both in forming character and in applying the narrative in our lives. An "outline" of narrative helps us remember the story; and we do have to make decisions, although our life is not full of quandaries and our character plays a considerable role there.³⁵²

Natural theology has apologetic value in its appeal to the goodness of the world, to reason, and to the order of creation. Natural theology works especially when a society has a common Christian foundation, as in the Medieval period in Europe. Although there is an abyss between the fallen creature and the Creator, in such a world the discontinuity did not practically appear to be a problem. Likewise the secondary principlisation is a diluting of the Christian message and is not in continuity with the primary principlisation.³⁵³ However it not only works in a strong Christian culture but also has an apologetic value in other cultures, such as

emphasising the priority of the story, affirms a limited use of principles: "We use principles to help us understand the story." Yoder 1979a.

³⁵¹H. Richard Niebuhr correctly asserts that apologetic theology should be secondary to kerygmatic theology. Niebuhr 1960a, 39. Paul Tillich -- probably the most distinguished apologetic theologian of this century -- states: "Apologetic theology must heed the warning implied in the existence and the claim of kerygmatic theology. It loses itself if it is not based on the kerygma as the substance and criterion of each of its statements." Tillich 1951, 7.

³⁵²Hauerwas 1984, 26.

³⁵³The principlisation here is a matter of interpretation of the Scripture and is different from the discussion of the Creator and creature. However they are related from the viewpoint of Christian distinctiveness and its generalisation.

Japanese culture today, as long as its limitation as being a dilution of Christian distinctiveness is realised.

Therefore the primary principlisation should be positively encouraged and the secondary principlisation should be conditionally accepted. However Hauerwas rarely mentions his approval of extracting principles from biblical narratives. His strong rejection of the secondary principlisation gives us an impression that he denies principles and rules all together. We need both character ethics and decisionist ethics (with the primary principlisation). The former has been unfairly neglected and deserves more attention today. However character ethic has its own limit; and character ethic has no right to demand its own supremacy. As long as we are directly rooted in the Scripture and not merely on speculative reason, we should use other methods. Yoder likewise claims that there is no reason to limit our theological inquiry in one way although he rejects natural law ethics apart from directly Scriptural support:

Some ethicists believe that the most important, and the procedurally prior, task of the ethicist is to disentangle the varieties of modes of moral argument and to argue that one of them is right. Do these apostolic models of social-ethical creativity [which is the five pioneering practices of the church which Yoder discusses³⁵⁴] reason consequentially or deontologically? Do they prefer the modes of story or of virtue? As far as I can tell, the questions are impertinent. Not only would the apostolic writers not have understood what these questions mean, had they understood them, they would have refused to answer. They would have seen no reason to choose among those incommensurate kinds of resources; why not use them all? . . . [Methodological analysis] is not the prerequisite for the community's right or capacity to reason morally.³⁵⁵

Hauerwas' strong support of character is understandable. Nevertheless character ethics needs other means. Both character and decisionist ethics are needed for Christian ethics.

IV. Christian Community

Christian community plays a crucial role in Yoder's and Hauerwas' theologies, and this section is an essential part of this chapter. Character, narrative, and community are closely related in Hauerwas' theology. Narrative attracts people

³⁵⁴See Chapter 2, IVC2 'Pioneering.'

³⁵⁵Yoder 1994b, 372.

and forms a community; and the community shapes narrative and people's character. "The formation of such character is not an isolated event but requires the existence of a corresponding society -- a 'storied society.'"³⁵⁶ He rightly claims that community and its narrative precede an individual and one's character. "The self is subordinate to the community rather than vice versa, for we discover the self through a community's tradition."³⁵⁷ Yoder and Hauerwas never regard Christian faith as an individualistic matter; rather it is social and communal matter.³⁵⁸ Hauerwas asserts: "The first words about the Christian life are about a life together, not about the individual."³⁵⁹ He claims that the early Christians clearly recognised the importance of Christian community:

What was original about the first Christians was not the peculiarity of their beliefs, even beliefs about Jesus, but their social inventiveness in creating a community whose like had not been seen before. . . . What is interesting is that they thought that their belief in God as they had encountered him in Jesus required the formation of a community distinct from the world exactly because of the kind of God he was. You cannot know what kind of God you disbelieve in, from a Christian perspective, unless you see what kind of community is necessary to worship him across time.³⁶⁰

Thus community of faith requires our attention.

Our concern is transformation of society. How do Yoder and Hauerwas think the transformation should be achieved? How should the Christian community play a role in the transformation? They disapprove of the church's direct involvement in social reform.³⁶¹ They rather claim that the church should become the true church, and by doing so it should become an alternative society to the world.

³⁵⁶Hauerwas 1981, 91.

³⁵⁷Hauerwas 1984, 28.

³⁵⁸Although Hauerwas earlier discussed general moral experience, he has recently focused on Christian morality and Christian community. As Arne Rasmusson states, "it is the church, not community as such, that has a central role in his theology." Rasmusson 1994, 178.

³⁵⁹Hauerwas 1984, 97. See also *ibid.*, 93.

³⁶⁰Hauerwas 1985, 42-43.

³⁶¹This reminds us H. Richard Niebuhr's religiously direct but socially indirect strategies. Niebuhr's emphasis was both on responsibility for societies and on personal conversion since the former, he believed, can be achieved only through the latter. Niebuhr 1936, 181.



A. The Church Should Become the Church

Both Yoder and Hauerwas assert that the church should be the church for the sake of transforming society. Hauerwas asserts: "The first social ethical task of the church is to be the church -- the servant community. Such a claim may well sound self-serving until we remember that what makes the church the church is its faithful manifestation of the peaceable kingdom in the world."³⁶² For him Christians' "most important social task is nothing less than to be a community capable of hearing the story of God we find in the scripture and living in a manner that is faithful to that story."³⁶³ Yoder in his article "Let the Church Be the Church" asserts:

The summons [to become what we are] is simply to live up to what a Christian -- or the church -- is when confessing that Christ is Lord. And yet at the same time this imperative says negatively, 'You are not what you claim to be. . . . She [the church] has been giving her attention to being something other than the church.'³⁶⁴

In *The Politics of Jesus* he also asserts on the basis of Hendrik Berkhof's interpretation of Paul:

The very existence of the church is its primary task. It is in itself a proclamation of the lordship of Christ to the powers from whose dominion the church has begun to be liberated. The church does not attack the powers; this Christ has done. The church concentrates upon not being seduced by them. By existing the church demonstrates that their rebellion has been vanquished.³⁶⁵

³⁶²Hauerwas 1984, 99-100. Hauerwas also asserts: "The church must recognize that her first social task in any society is to be herself." Hauerwas 1981, 83-84. "The church's social task is first of all its willingness to be a community formed by a language the world does not share"; "The call for the church to be the church means that the church is the only true polity we can know in this life." Hauerwas 1985, 11, 130. Miscamble correctly asserts: "This is not only Hauerwas' departure point. It is also his conclusion." Miscamble 1987, 72. Although Hauerwas asserts that the church must be the church, he does not describe in depth how the church can transform the world. Wells correctly claims: "If the Church's first social-ethical task is to be itself, one needs to know more what 'being itself' involves." Wells 1995, 99.

³⁶³Hauerwas 1981, 1.

³⁶⁴Yoder 1971, 113-114. This essay, "Let the Church Be the Church," was originally written for a lecture at the Episcopal Pacifist Fellowship in 1964.

³⁶⁵Yoder 1994a, 150.

1. Community of Character

Adding to this claim that the church has to become itself, Hauerwas asserts that only a community of character and virtues which is formed and shaped by the story of the Kingdom of God can understand the Scriptures and tell their stories rightly.

The church is where the stories of Israel and Jesus are told, enacted, and heard, and it is our conviction that as a Christian people there is literally nothing more important we can do. But *the telling of that story requires that we be a particular kind of people if we and the world are to hear the story truthfully*. That means that the church must never cease from being a *community of peace and truth* in a world of mendacity and fear. The church does not let the world set its agenda about what constitutes a "social ethic," but a church of peace and justice must set its own agenda.³⁶⁶

Hauerwas provocatively challenges the widespread Protestant assumption that everyone can and should read the Bible. Although "most North Americans assume that they have a right, if not an obligation, to read the Bible," Hauerwas does "not believe, in the Church's current circumstance, that each person in the Church thereby is given the right to interpret the Scripture."³⁶⁷ He deems that one cannot read the Scriptures rightly without being a part of a godly community. This certainly throws a new light on the issue of the significance of the church.

Then, how can the church become a community of character without reading the Scriptures rightly? Richard B. Hays correctly points out that Hauerwas thinks that the church learns from "the example of the lives of the saints [faithful Christians]" and from "the church's liturgy, especially the Eucharist."³⁶⁸ It is true that the lives of ordinary yet faithful Christians are often neglected despite the fact that we do learn from them. They may be our parents, members of our local church, or Christians in the past. Whether physically alive or not, they are compresent with us.³⁶⁹ It is extremely unfortunate that Japanese Protestant churches practically

³⁶⁶Hauerwas 1984, 99-100 (italics mine). John Milbank's claim that theology as itself is a social science is akin to this assertion that the church should set its own agenda. "There can only be a distinguishable Christian social theory because there is also a distinguishable Christian mode of action, a definite practice. . . . The [Christian social] theory, therefore, is first and foremost an *ecclesiology*." Milbank 1990, 380.

³⁶⁷Hauerwas 1993, 15, 16.

³⁶⁸Hays 1997, 255, 256.

³⁶⁹Cf. Niebuhr 1975, 247-248.

neglect Japanese Christians in history (even those who are recognised well by non-Christian scholars). They tend simply to remain objects of scholarly research. The Eucharist enacts a central part of biblical narrative and can help us learn it. From the story of the Emmaus road in Luke 24:13-35 Hauerwas argues that it was not the explanation of the Scriptures but the table fellowship with Jesus that opened the eyes of the 'two of them' and stresses the significance of the Eucharist.³⁷⁰

Both the lives of the saints and the Eucharist are undoubtedly significant in enhancing our understanding of the Christian belief and life. However, both the assessment of who the faithful Christians are and the interpretations of the Eucharist vary.³⁷¹ Moreover how can the church which cannot rightly learn from the Scriptures learn rightly through the saints' lives and through the Eucharist? Having recognised the case of the Emmaus road story, I still think that the church also has to learn from the Scriptures in order rightly to interpret the lives of faithful Christians and the liturgy. The church needs the Scriptures as the norm and other resources (including the lives of the saints and the liturgy) in order truly to become itself. Although the character of the church does matter for interpreting the Scriptures as Hauerwas claims, learning through the saints' lives and the liturgy does not necessarily precede the right interpretation of the Scriptures. They dialectically function. Nevertheless it is a significant suggestion that we must pay an attention to the character of Christian community, the lives of the faithful Christians, and enacted Gospel narrative.

³⁷⁰Hauerwas 1993, 49-62.

³⁷¹On one hand there is the traditional diversity between transubstantiation (Roman Catholic Church), consubstantiation (Luther), remembrance (Zwingli and Anabaptists), and spiritual presence in the communion elements (Calvin). On the other hand there is diversity between the liturgy and the table fellowship common meal which represents economic sharing (Yoder). Although Hauerwas understands that Jesus' breaking bread with His disciples as a fellowship meal, he tends to regard the Eucharist as liturgy which is an enacted story. See Hauerwas 1993, 60; Hauerwas 1983, 26. It may be due to his ecclesial preference to be a "*high-church* Mennonite." Hauerwas 1981, 6 (*italics mine*). See Chapter 2, IVC1 'Contrast Model.'

2. Against Constantinian Christianity

The statement, the church should become the church, implies that the church is not what the church is to be. What is the problem, and when did the negative shift begin? Yoder asserts that the church seeks power to influence society just as the state governs by power. Yoder points out that the shift was symbolically marked by the conversion of Constantine.³⁷²

Both Yoder and Hauerwas reject the idea that the church should control the world, which is represented as Constantinian Christianity. They rather insist that Christians should live by imitating Christ and God. Yoder repeatedly discusses the "Constantinian reversal," which is a major theme for him.³⁷³ Although the reversal certainly started before the year A.D. 313, the conversion of Constantine marked new characteristics in Christian history. What did Constantinian Christianity bring about?³⁷⁴

Firstly the church became "establishment" not only in social status but also in attitude. "What changed between the third and the fifth centuries was not the teaching of Jesus but the loss of the awareness of minority status, transformed into an attitude of 'establishment.'"³⁷⁵

Secondly "the meaning of the word 'Christian' has changed." Before Constantine one had to choose to become a Christian with conviction; yet after

³⁷²Yoder states that the shift "began before A.D. 200 and took over 200 years; the use of his [Constantine's] name does not mean an evaluation of his person or work." Yoder 1994b, 57.

³⁷³Constantinian reversal is discussed in the following articles. "The Constantinian Sources of Western Social Ethics," in Yoder 1984a, 135-147; "The Otherness of the Church," in Yoder 1994b, 53-64; "Peace without Eschatology?" in Yoder 1994b, 143-167; and "The Kingdom as Social Ethic," in Yoder 1984a, 80-101.

³⁷⁴LeMasters 1992, 153. Philip LeMasters articulates errors of Constantinianism from his studies of Yoder: "(1) compromising the demands of the gospel in order for the church to gain worldly power and prestige; (2) 'baptizing' uncritically a dominant cultural order which is in tension with the exigencies of God's reign; and (3) seeing the church as just another form of human social organization with no peculiar moral identity, as not being a foretaste of the new age and distinct from the larger society." LeMasters sharply criticises Constantinianism from the believers' church perspective just like Yoder and Hauerwas.

³⁷⁵Yoder 1971, 129.

Constantine "it would take exceptional conviction not to be counted as Christian." The church was no longer the assembly of believers; rather "the church was everybody."³⁷⁶ Yoder calls this phenomenon "the reversal of ecclesiology and eschatology."³⁷⁷ Before Constantine one had to believe God's sovereignty by faith; yet after Constantine millennium appeared to be a present fact on earth in dominant Christian culture. "Even if we had found it psychologically attractive," says Yoder "the vision of a local monocultural unity [such as 'Caesaro-Papism'] could remove all subjective choice from the belief question."³⁷⁸

Thirdly the government came to be regarded as "the main bearer of historical movement."³⁷⁹ Although the people of God as community were the main figure in biblical tradition, "with Constantine the civil sovereign becomes God's privileged agent."³⁸⁰ The church becomes simply a religious division of the government. "What is called 'church' is an administrative branch of the state on the same level with the army or the post office."³⁸¹

Fourthly Christian morality became double-standard. The New Testament teaching was too demanding and unrealistic for the nominal Christians; and "minimal morality of the 'precepts'" was applied to them. A higher level of morality "compatible with the call of the gospel is manageable only by virtue of some degree of special motivation, usually expressed in a vocational withdrawal from ordinary life."³⁸² Yoder values the medieval church as it maintained distinctive Christian elements of otherness in the upper storey, even though they were distorted; he rather blames the magisterial Reformers who abandoned the upper level altogether including "the higher ethical commitment of the orders, the missionary and international character of the Roman Church,"³⁸³ due to their opposition "against

³⁷⁶Yoder 1984a, 136.

³⁷⁷Yoder 1984a, 137.

³⁷⁸Yoder 1984a, 60.

³⁷⁹Yoder 1984a, 138.

³⁸⁰Yoder 1984a, 139.

³⁸¹Yoder 1994b, 60.

³⁸²Yoder 1984a, 83.

³⁸³Yoder 1994b, 59.

works righteousness and monasticism."³⁸⁴ The Reformers simply removed the more demanding level of morality and opened the door for the 'cheap gospel.'³⁸⁵

Fifthly ethics fell into utilitarianism.³⁸⁶ When the church stands on the side of the ruler, it tries to control the society, seeking "the most desirable 'for the good of the whole'" rather than seeking what the New Testament requires of the church.³⁸⁷ "Right action is what works; what does not promise results can hardly be right." Being dominated by nominal Christians, the church no longer expected God's intervening in history and started practising the "engineering approach to ethics." "Any ethic, any tactic, is in the minds of many, self-evidently to be tested by its promised results."³⁸⁸ This is an ethic of responsibility *to* the world, ethics from the ruler's viewpoint, and an ethics of Christianity as the majority. Here the church is the lord over the world or God's agent to rule over the world.

Sixthly the church adopted natural morality to control society. When Constantine became a Christian, it was assumed that "in order to continue being a sovereign, he needs to continue to act the way a (non-Christian) sovereign 'naturally' acts, thereby creating some tension with what the later prophets and Jesus taught about domination, wealth, and violence."³⁸⁹ It is presumed that "the moral insights of Gentile antiquity and the teachings of the Old Testament are for some reason

³⁸⁴Yoder 1984a, 139.

³⁸⁵It is to be noted, however, that Luther indicated a keen interest in committed believers' house church, which was not actualised under his leadership. "Those who want to be Christians in earnest and who profess the gospel with hand and mouth should sign their names and meet alone in a house somewhere to pray, to read, to baptize, to receive the sacrament, and to do other Christian works. According to this order, those who do not lead Christian lives could be known, reproved, corrected, cast out, or excommunicated, according to the rule of Christ, Matthew 18 [:15-17]. Here one could also solicit benevolent gifts to be willingly given and distributed to the poor, according to St. Paul's example, II Corinthians 9. . . In short, if one had the kind of people and persons who wanted to be Christians in earnest, the rules and regulations would soon be ready. But as yet I neither can nor desire to begin such a congregation or assembly or to make rules for it. For I have not yet the people or persons for it, nor do I see many who want it. But if I should be requested to do it and could not refuse with a good conscience, I should gladly do my part and help as best I can." Luther 1965, 64.

³⁸⁶Yoder 1984a, 140.

³⁸⁷Yoder 1984a, 84.

³⁸⁸Yoder 1984a, 140.

³⁸⁹Yoder 1984a, 82.

closer to 'nature' than are the teachings and example of Jesus." Natural moralities were accepted because they are "more affirmative than is the New Testament about the use of coercion, violence, wealth, status, tradition, and the justification of means by ends."³⁹⁰

Yoder insightfully describes the state church as the "chaplain," which takes the form of either priest or Puritan. The priest chaplaincy "limit[s] himself to calling down sacramentally the blessing of God upon society, sanctioning whatever means society (or rather the prince) needs to keep society (or rather the prince's place in it) afloat."³⁹¹ "The [priest] chaplain is called to bless an existing power structure. . . . [He] in turn will put the stamp of divine approval upon what is being done there."³⁹² It obviously lowers moral standards. On the other hand the Puritan chaplaincy "impose[s] the right standard on a whole society."³⁹³ "Those who do keep the rules are proud of it because they can; those who do not wish to keep them or cannot because of the way they are defined, are crushed or driven away." Although Puritanism enforces higher rules on everyone than the priest chaplaincy, it "concentrates its attack upon the coarse and crude sins which it is possible externally to punish or prevent."³⁹⁴ Yoder rightly asserts that "most debates about ethics have been between the Puritans and the priests. It is between those who say that there are objective, absolute standards which must be forced on everyone, and those who say that if we have to do what we have to do we had better be able to say it is morally all right."³⁹⁵

Yoder rejects these chaplaincy approaches in which Christian morality is realistically diluted for everyone in the society. He rather claims that Christian ethics must be limited only to committed believers because it requires utter trust and obedience to God.³⁹⁶ Likewise Hauerwas claims: "Christian ethics can never be a

³⁹⁰Yoder 1984a, 84.

³⁹¹Yoder 1971, 120.

³⁹²Yoder 1971, 119.

³⁹³Yoder 1994b, 344.

³⁹⁴Yoder 1971, 120.

³⁹⁵Yoder 1971, 121.

³⁹⁶Yoder 1964, 29.

minimalistic ethic for everyone, but must presuppose a sanctified people wanting to live more faithful to God's story."³⁹⁷

Yoder sees Constantinian Christianity not only in the medieval period but also in modern history. Although Renaissance, Reformation, Enlightenment, and Revolution gave significant impacts to it, and its form was reshaped each time, Yoder critically points out that the basic structure remains the same and Constantinian Christianity exists today.³⁹⁸

Each view along this progression is clear in rejecting the former one as having been wrong, and is blaming the blindness of earlier generations of churchmen for having accepted such identification with an unworthy political cause. This sense of rightness over against the others blinds each generation to the fact that the basic structural error, the identification of a civil authority as bearer of God's cause, has not been overcome but only transposed into a new key.³⁹⁹

Thus Yoder asserts that the church is to be believers' church, it should always have a minority stance, and it must never try to control society from an established majority viewpoint. That is how the church originally was. He does not accept the opinion that the non-established church has a value as an antithesis to established Christianity in the West, but not in countries like Japan where Christianity has always been in a minority. "I should not ask what complementary corrective is needed from a minority perspective after granting that the majority establishment does most of the work of being the church. I should ask rather what the whole church is called to be in the world where she is (really) in a minority position."⁴⁰⁰

There is no doubt that the church intended to make the world better by Christianising it. The assumption there was that Christian culture, even in diluted forms, would be better than a pagan culture. Perhaps this is generally true. However when the church stood on the side of rulers in gaining controlling power of the world, it lost Christian distinctiveness. Both Yoder and Hauerwas rightly assert that the church must be the community of committed believers.

³⁹⁷Hauerwas 1984, 97.

³⁹⁸A typical example of this century is Reinhold Niebuhr's theology. Yoder 1971, 138-139.

³⁹⁹Yoder 1984a, 143.

⁴⁰⁰Yoder 1984a 81.

3. Jesus and Other Authorities

What is the core theological problem of Constantinian Christianity? Yoder asserts that it is the problem of authority: whether Jesus is the Lord or there are other authorities. It is a question of "whether it is ultimately Jesus or some other authority whom we confess as 'the light of the world.'"⁴⁰¹ Yoder stands in the tradition of kerygmatic theology.⁴⁰² "When we confess that Christ is the light of the world this implies a critical attitude toward other pretended 'lights.' When we confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, this commits us to a relative independence of other loyalties which we would otherwise feel it normal to be governed by."⁴⁰³ This is his central claim and is the criticism given to H. Richard Niebuhr's Christology above. In "Christ the Light of the World," Yoder criticises natural theology, just war theory, and the theology of Reinhold Niebuhr from this viewpoint, and asserts that they have other authorities besides Jesus, such as reason, situation, or the order of creation.⁴⁰⁴

In *The Politics of Jesus* he similarly claims:

[Social ethics] will derive its guidance from common sense and the nature of things. We will measure what is "fitting" and what is "adequate"; what is "relevant" and what is "effective." We shall be "realistic" and "responsible." All these slogans point to an epistemology for which the classic label is the *theology of the natural*: Whether this ethic of natural law be encountered in the reformation form, where it is called an ethic of "vocation" or of the "station," or in the currently popular form the "ethic of the situation," or in the older catholic forms where "nature" is known in other ways, the structure of the argument is the same: it is by studying the realities around us, not by hearing a proclamation from God, that we discern the right.⁴⁰⁵

Other authorities can be summarised as "immediate revelation of the Holy Spirit" and the goodness of the Creation which includes reason, situation, and the order of creation.⁴⁰⁶ Yoder says:

From Montanus in the second century to the "situation ethics" of the mid-1960s, it has been held that if we were to do away with the definite prescriptions of past authority, there would

⁴⁰¹Yoder 1971, 135. See also *ibid.*, 140.

⁴⁰²Hays points out that although Yoder is close to Barth, "Yoder's position is more nuanced than Barth's, both because of his recognition of the historically contingent character of the New Testament documents themselves and because of his appreciation for the necessity of continuing process of communal moral discernment." Hays 1997, 250.

⁴⁰³Yoder 1971, 117.

⁴⁰⁴Yoder 1971, 134-145. See also Yoder 1994a, 165-167.

⁴⁰⁵Yoder 1994a, 8-9.

⁴⁰⁶Yoder 1971, 134, 140, 141. See also Yoder 1994b, 346.

be a clear present authority speaking in our midst, which would give us instructions different from those of the past authority.⁴⁰⁷

Today such phenomena are observed in charismatic movements. Yet their emphasis is on immediate experience more than reflected theology, and it does not deserve our further attention. Rather our focus should be on respect for the goodness of the Creation, which H. Richard Niebuhr affirmed and we upheld. The goodness of the Creation also resulted in natural theology. Natural law theory here means an understanding that there is moral principle in the world, which precedes human reason, is intelligible to all humanity with reason, and is the basis for human morality. The basis of natural law theory for theology is that both humans and the world are created by God as good creation. It encourages us to trust our reason and custom of the society as much as trusting in Christ. Natural law theory has brought about at least a common ground to unite the diverse Christian communities in Christendom.⁴⁰⁸ It may open a dialogue with the non-Christian world and may cause some positive effects, such as protecting human rights and preserving the natural environment.⁴⁰⁹

However both Yoder and Hauerwas reject such an approach and any other authority than Jesus.⁴¹⁰ Yoder claims:

All of them make or presuppose a case for placing our faith in some other channel of ethical insight and some other way of behaving, than that which is offered us through Jesus as attested by the New Testament. All these approaches thereby justify my trusting myself to have the wisdom to know.⁴¹¹

He also asserts: "If someone claims to be a Christian and yet commits himself to other revelatory authorities, then it is, by definition, impossible to debate

⁴⁰⁷Yoder 1971, 141.

⁴⁰⁸Hauerwas 1984, 51.

⁴⁰⁹Hauerwas does not call anything good unless it brings people toward being good. The ultimate good is to develop godly character, which is possible only by adopting Christian narrative as their own. n. 289.

⁴¹⁰Hays correctly states that Yoder values reason. He points out that "Yoder moves from the biblical stories to the stories of the radical Reformation without marking a distinction" and rightly suggests that for Yoder "*reason*, in the form of historical criticism, has at least some role to play in grasping the historical events that are ultimately normative for Christian faith." Hays 1997, 251. The reason which Yoder rejects is the reason to speculate, departing from biblical narratives; he obviously affirms reason to interpret the text and to think critically.

⁴¹¹Yoder 1971, 142.

theologically that option."⁴¹² Conformists in Germany, the 'German Christians,' accepted the Nazi state and the incursion of race as a natural order. When Christ and other authorities contradict, Christians of natural theology become schizophrenic between them.⁴¹³ Yoder and Hauerwas believe that the church must be a distinctive community which is different from the world, and reject diluting Christian distinctiveness by depending on the lowest common denominator between the church and the world.⁴¹⁴

Firstly Yoder and Hauerwas reject natural theology because Christian belief is meaningful only in its context. I have already discussed their sharp criticism of extracting principles from narrative whilst disregarding the narrative itself. In discussing Christian community, Hauerwas now attacks a "'natural law' ethic that is free from historic communities."⁴¹⁵ Hauerwas asserts:

Christian beliefs about God, Jesus, sin, the nature of human existence, and salvation are intelligible only if they are seen against the background of the church -- that is, a body of people who stand apart from the 'world' because of the peculiar task of worshipping a God whom the world knows not.⁴¹⁶

Likewise Yoder, in his discussion of the authority of the Scriptures, claims:

The most complete framework in which to affirm the authority of Scripture is the context of its being read and applied by a believing people that uses it guidance to respond to concrete issues in their witness and obedience. . . . The Bible is the book of the congregation, the source of understanding and insight as, with the assistance of the same Spirit under whose guidance the apostolic church produced these, texts, the congregation seeks to be the interpreter of the divine purpose in the church's own time and place.⁴¹⁷

This is the claim which we would uphold fully. So-called 'objective' reading of biblical stories and existential reading of it cannot be the same. As Hauerwas

⁴¹²Yoder 1971, 145.

⁴¹³Yoder 1994a, 155, 199.

⁴¹⁴Hauerwas asserts both Roman Catholicism and Protestantism are guilty. Catholic moral theologians seldom needed a theological foundation for ethics because of their confidence in the rational universe and the moral law which God created. Likewise "Protestant ethical reflection . . . tended to be as culturally assimilationist as the natural law tradition." Their "'Christian ethics' was little different from the consensus of whatever culture they found themselves a part. This is most strikingly illustrated by Protestantism's inability to be more than national churches." He sees true Christian ethics only in the stress on sanctification in Calvinist, Anabaptist, and Anglican traditions. Hauerwas 1984, 51-52.

⁴¹⁵Hauerwas 1984, 58.

⁴¹⁶Hauerwas 1985, 42. See also Hauerwas 1984, 62. Hauerwas rejects separating Scripture from the people of God, and claims: "When *sola scriptura* is used to underwrite the distinction between text and interpretation, . . . [even] *sola scriptura* is a heresy rather than a help in the Church." Hauerwas 1993, 27.

⁴¹⁷Yoder 1994b, 353.

says, Jesus "cannot be known abstracted from the disciples' response. The historical fact that we only learn who Jesus is as he is reflected through the eyes of his followers, a fact that has driven many to despair because it seems they cannot know the real Jesus, in fact is a theological necessity."⁴¹⁸ Biblical stories are lived, recorded, and kept by committed believers' community in the past; therefore they can be understood rightly only by committed believers' community today. Although the problems which present churches face are different from those of ancient community of God, there is something in common: seeking God's will and living accordingly at any cost. Christian belief cannot be separated from its context. We must not depart from biblical narratives but should adhere to community in the past and present.

Secondly Yoder and Hauerwas believe that the natural law which presupposes continuity between the church and the world can hardly recognise the world's falseness. Yoder asserts:

The distinction between church and the world is not something that God has imposed upon the world by a prior metaphysical definition, nor is it only something which timid or Pharisaical Christians have built up around themselves. It [the world] is all of that in creation that has taken the freedom not yet to believe.⁴¹⁹

They think that the world is different from the church in its unbelief and distrust in God. The world denies that Christ is Lord, and thus there is an abyss between the church and the world. Hauerwas asserts: "Because it seems to entail a strong continuity between church and world, natural law ethics fails to provide the critical perspective the church needs to recognize and deal with the challenges presented by our societies and the inherent violence of the world."⁴²⁰ He believes that unless the church has its own peculiarity, it fails to recognise the sins of the world. The world is so fallen that it cannot ultimately recognise its falseness by itself. The world needs a godly community which bears God's character and lives accordingly. Only such a community can show the falseness to the world by contrast with God's

⁴¹⁸Hauerwas 1984, 73.

⁴¹⁹Yoder 1971, 116. See also Hauerwas 1984, 101, 166.

⁴²⁰Hauerwas 1984, 63. Hauerwas lists seven problems of the natural law approach, among which this is the most important, regarding the discussion of the church.

character. Therefore Christian distinctiveness is a requisite in their ethics. This assertion of Christian distinctiveness reminds us of Yoder's claim in the previous chapter that we need a place to stand in order to transform the society and the church should be it.⁴²¹

It is right that Christian ethics is not for everyone but only for committed believers, and Jesus Christ of the New Testament is the final criterion for Christian ethics. The Lordship of Christ and His teaching in the New Testament have been diluted by other authorities in church history, particularly by our reason and common sense. Just like 'German Christians,' many Japanese Christians around the same time tried to be loyal to the nation as much as to Christ. The sole Lordship of Christ and total devotion of Christians cannot be overemphasised in Japan just as much as elsewhere.

However the different-ness of the church from the world must not be elevated to the otherness of the church; for the church and the world share common elements. We, with H. Richard Niebuhr, cannot deny the goodness of the Creation nor the incompleteness of the church. Although the church is the foretaste of the Kingdom to come, it still is on earth; there is continuity between the church and the world. It is to be noted that Yoder and Hauerwas do recognise some commonality. Yoder claims that world can learn from the church and thus the church can transform the world.⁴²² Hauerwas affirms the continuity much more than Yoder, and asserts: "I have no reason to deny that human nature may well require a fundamental orientation to truth, but I do not think it possible to abstract such truthfulness from its various narrative contexts in order to make it the basis of a 'universal' and 'objective' ethic."⁴²³ Although Hauerwas recognises the continuity, he claims that it is not firm enough to be a basis of Christian ethics: "Emphasis on the distinctiveness of Christian ethics does not deny that there are points of contact between Christian

⁴²¹See Chapter 1, IIID2 'Yoder's Approach: Selective Discernment.'

⁴²²"Paul's solidarity models of deliberation correlate with the reasons that the Japanese can make better cars than Detroit." Yoder 1994b, 370.

⁴²³Hauerwas 1984, 59. See also Hauerwas 1987, 88.

ethics and other forms of the moral life. Whilst such points frequently exist, they are not sufficient to provide a basis for a 'universal' ethic grounded in human nature per se."⁴²⁴ Such an observation enables him correctly to see the kingdom of God outside the church:

This kingdom sets the standard for the life of the church, but the life of the kingdom is broader than even that of the church. For the church does not possess Christ; his presence is not confined to the church. Rather it is in the church that we learn to recognize Christ's presence outside the church.⁴²⁵

Yet Yoder's recognition of the goodness of the world is only because of the potential to confess Jesus Christ as Lord, not because it is originally created by God.

Yoder's (and to some degree Hauerwas') emphasis is on the Redemption rather than the Creation; and their Christ is the Redeemer in the first century rather than Christ as the Creator and the Sustainer. When the abyss between the church and the world is overemphasised, Christology becomes narrow and exclusive. However the authority of Christ as the Creator, the Redeemer, and the Sustainer should not be limited to the first century Palestine window and we should accept the wisdom of the world as long as it does not contradict to the life and teaching of Jesus in the New Testament; for the New Testament does not deal with every aspect of human life in the later centuries. Although the New Testament is the norm, it has its own limit; although the Scripture is the norm for Christian morality, there is no reason why we should reject secondary and supplementary wisdom from the world.

Thirdly Yoder and Hauerwas reject natural law; for it may open the door to the use of violence and compulsion. Both of them support pacifism, but Hauerwas is more eloquent in discussing natural law and violence. The natural law approach accepts the use of violence. If a natural law is universally true, anyone who denies it should be forced to accept the truth, even with the use of violence. He states: "I do not mean to imply that adherents of a 'natural law' ethic are inherently more violent, but rather that violence and coercion become conceptually intelligible from a natural law standpoint."⁴²⁶ From a pacifist viewpoint he rejects such an implication of

⁴²⁴Hauerwas 1984, 60-61.

⁴²⁵Hauerwas 1984, 97.

⁴²⁶Hauerwas 1984, 61. See also *ibid.*, 114.

natural law. Since non-violence is a major theme for both Yoder and Hauerwas, we must discuss it below.

4. Problems: Pacifism, Revelation, and Monotheism of the Son

Having supported Yoder's and Hauerwas' main argument, I would like to point out and discuss three significant problems: Pacifism, revelation, and monotheism of the Son.

Pacifism?

Both Yoder and Hauerwas assert that Jesus rejected violence and that pacifism is the norm for Christian ethics.⁴²⁷ There is no need to argue today that enforcement of one's view on others by the use of violence should be avoided and peaceful dialogue is to be preferred. Violence causes negative effects such as destruction, hatred, and revenge even when a purpose is achieved. However we must discuss what Yoder and Hauerwas exactly mean by pacifism and to what extent we can accept it.

We fully uphold their claim that Jesus lived not as the ruling king but as the suffering servant. They also assert that the Jesus of the New Testament is the exclusive norm for Christian ethics. Although we do not limit the sources of Christian ethics only to the witness of the New Testament as long as they are not contradictory to it, we support their claim in as much as Jesus Christ of the New Testament in His life, suffering, and death is the norm for Christian life not only in devotional and personal aspects but also in social ethics. Christians are to live as Christ lived and are to suffer as Christ suffered, seeking the will of God. They are also right that the church is not to control the world but to be faithful to God, even at

⁴²⁷Hauerwas became a pacifist through the help of Yoder. Hauerwas 1994b, 117.

the cost of martyrdom. This is based on an eschatological understanding that Jesus Christ has inaugurated the Kingdom and that the church is a foretaste of the Kingdom.⁴²⁸ As Rodney J. Sawatsky says, "The rejection of violence is irresponsible from the human point of view, but eschatologically it is the way of victory."⁴²⁹ Early followers of Jesus were aware of the risk to their lives and there is no reason why His followers today should be exempt from such a possibility. Although Christians in the West today face fewer persecutions than in the pre-Constantinian era, it is obvious that we are expected to show no less commitment.

Violence is often taken to mean force of arms and other physical force exerted for the purpose of imposing one's will; and non-violence is rejection of it. 'Violence' includes (a) the use of any physical attack and (b) the use of any physical force, including defence. However it can be taken to mean (c) any material and physical coercion, for example economic sanctions and (d) any non-physical coercion, for example discrediting one's name. Although coercion is not always considered as violence, dismissals from a job at a personal level or economic sanction at a national level can be as evil as physical attack. For instance, the ABCD encirclement which was an economic sanction pushed Japan into the Pacific War as planned.⁴³⁰ Medical doctors' 'non-violent' strike, if it happens, can harm human lives. The mass media can manipulate public opinion. Whilst freedom of the press can reveal evil, the mass media can also harm the name of the innocent. At the local community level a rumour plays the same role. Coercively evil actions can seriously harm people financially and socially. Thus violence, I would argue, should not be limited only to the use of physical force but it can also include coercive actions which harm people physically, socially, or economically.

⁴²⁸Yoder 1971, 74-76; Hauerwas 1984, 82-83.

⁴²⁹Sawatsky 1982, 261.

⁴³⁰"War Plan Orange" of the United States was to lead Japan to a war since Japan was expected to become a competitor in the future. Nishio 1995, 22; Miller 1991.

What do Yoder and Hauerwas mean by pacifism? It is unfortunate that neither defines 'pacifism' precisely despite the fact that they strongly adhere to it.⁴³¹ Yoder tends to assume 'violence' is physical force, although it is not very clear.⁴³² Yoder prefers the terms 'non-resistance' or 'pacifism' to 'non-violence'.⁴³³ In *Nevertheless* he affirms that 'non-violence' is a tool or method for social change but it is not specifically Christian.⁴³⁴ He affirms in *The Original Revolution* 'non-resistance' over 'non-violence.' Whereas 'resistance' is a "response in kind, returning evil for evil," says Yoder, 'non-resistance' contains "creative concern for the person who is bent on evil, coupled with the refusal of his [evil] goals." Yoder sees "the origin of the label 'non-resistance'" in Matthew 5:39: "Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also." Although Yoder's 'non-resistance' (or 'pacifism') denies active violence, it is not "a weak acceptance of the intentions of the evil one, resignation to his evil goals."⁴³⁵ It rather includes efforts which do not allow the person to practise evil deeds. However Yoder does not seem to accept the use of force and coercion within his "creative concern."

Hauerwas interchangeably uses 'pacifism' and 'non-violence' although they are interpreted in diverse ways.⁴³⁶ By the term 'non-violence' he means not just a method but also a Christian virtue which is a part of forgiveness and reconciliation. Just as the Cross of Jesus was His "ultimate dispossession through which God has conquered the powers of this world," says Hauerwas, "to become followers of Jesus means that we must, like him, be dispossessed of all that we think gives us power

⁴³¹In *Nevertheless*, Yoder discusses 29 kinds of pacifism, yet does not define the term pacifism itself. Yoder 1992a. Hauerwas refuses to define violence since "Christian nonviolence, in short, does not begin with a theory or conception about violence, war, 'the state or society,' and so on, but rather with practices such as forgiveness and reconciliation." Hauerwas 1994b, 130.

⁴³²Yoder 1971, 48-49.

⁴³³Sawatsky correctly distinguishes Yoder's use of 'pacifism,' 'non-resistance,' from 'non-violence.' Sawatsky 1982, 242.

⁴³⁴Yoder 1992a, 52-54.

⁴³⁵Yoder 1971, 49, 48, 48.

⁴³⁶Hauerwas 1984, xvi-xvii; Hauerwas 1994b, 117, 120. For example, Jenny Teichman argues that pacifism is "anti-war-ism" and not "a total rejection of violence in all circumstances." Teichman 1986, 4. Bertrand Russell asserts that he did not think "that the use of force is always wrong," whilst supporting pacifism. Russell 1995, 30.

over our own lives and the lives of others."⁴³⁷ Thus, though there are minor differences, Yoder's and Hauerwas' 'pacifism' can be summed as an attitude of imitating Jesus and of seeking God's will without using force to impose one's will.⁴³⁸ It is based on eschatological awareness that the fate of the world is not in our hands but in God's, that Christ has inaugurated the Kingdom, and that God will fully actualise the Kingdom at the end.

In discussing 'pacifism,' it seems necessary to me that 'force' and 'coercion' should be distinguished from 'violence.' Whilst force and coercion are neutral terms, violence contains negative connotations, which is an abuse of force. The Scriptures do not reject the use of force and coercion altogether. Their use and the 'Peaceable Kingdom' are not always contradictory to each other.

The Hebrew Scriptures certainly do not prohibit force and coercion. Although the Hebrew Scriptures tell us, as Yoder asserts, that "God himself will take care of his people" and "saves his people without their needing to act," the use of military power was not forbidden.⁴³⁹ God Himself is witnessed to have killed people and to order the killing of people.

One might say that Jesus Christ is the full revelation of God and the Hebrew Scriptures should be interpreted through Him. We should especially note that He did not totally reject the use of force. Whilst Jesus sought the will of the Father and lived as a servant, He used force and coercion. In a real life situation His means were not always only persuasive dialogue.⁴⁴⁰ His allowing a herd (two thousand in Mark) of swine to be drowned by demons caused enormous financial damage to the Gentile owners. Probably it at least appeared to be violence to their eyes.⁴⁴¹

⁴³⁷Hauerwas 1984, 87, 86.

⁴³⁸Whilst Yoder's 'pacifism' seeks a creative way to stop evil actions, Hauerwas' 'pacifism' tends to be passive. Yet they do not define 'violence' and the difference is vague.

⁴³⁹Yoder 1994a, 83, 76.

⁴⁴⁰Cf. Milbank 1990, 418.

⁴⁴¹Mark 5:13; Matthew 8:32; Luke 8:32-33. Jesus perhaps "had the divine right to act as He did" and "[pigs'] destruction was as appropriate as that of the unclean spirits." Geldenhuys 1950, 256. Hooker 1995, 144. However "it was only natural that the owners [of the swine], thinking first and foremost of their material loss, should regard Jesus as responsible and request his departure." Micklem 1917,

Purification of the temple included some use of force.⁴⁴² Challenging the rich young ruler to give up his possessions led him to ruin his social reputation as a pious man.⁴⁴³ The social status of the Pharisees and the Sadducees are fundamentally challenged by Jesus. These passages report to us His use of force and coercion. The physical force, coercion, and damage can appear evil when the situation is not observed from a committed believers' perspective. Thus it is incorrect to say that Jesus rejected the use of force altogether.⁴⁴⁴

True, Jesus submitted Himself to the will of the Father and He lived a life of dispossession; yet he did use force which could be interpreted even as 'violence.' It is insufficient that Yoder and Hauerwas advocate 'pacifism' and reject 'violence' without clearly defining them. Physical discipline for children cannot be rejected as

81. I am aware that this account is controversial. Some scholars do not take it as a historical account. Robert A. Guelich reports: "Some have explained it as a 'Jewish' story originally . . . , as though this unintended slur made it more palatable for 'Christian' readers." Guelich 1989, 282-283. E.P. Sanders says: "I am at a loss to explain the story in the sense of finding a historical kernel" because "Garasa [which appeared in Mark and Luke] is thirty miles south-east of the Sea of Galilee, and there is no other large body of water around," and Gadara in Matthew is still six miles away from the sea. However Sanders does not explain why in this account of the Synoptic Gospels "Jesus' spiritual power over demons is so emphasized that it has resulted in an unattractive story." Sanders 1993, 155. Some take the account as a "kind of political cartoon critical of Roman imperialism" rather than as a historical event. "In Mark's world this Latin term [Legion] could mean only a division of Roman soldiers," amongst whom "the swine cult was popular." "This unlikely story offers a symbolic portrait of how Roman imperialism was destroying the hearts and minds of a colonized people. . . . The political humor finds its punchline as the Legion meets the same fate as old Pharaoh's army: they are swallowed into the sea . . ." Myers and Others 1996, 59. However this politically biased interpretation is not widely accepted by biblical scholars. Eyewitnesses told the crowd about what happened to the demoniac and the swine, which led them to ask Jesus to leave the territory (Mark 5:16-17). Therefore it does not seem to be appropriate to take this swine account as merely a symbol.

⁴⁴²Matthew 21:12; Mark 11:15-16.

⁴⁴³Luke 18:22; Matthew 9:21; Mark 10:21.

⁴⁴⁴Hauerwas claims: "The text of the Bible in and of itself does not require pacifism. Rather, only a church that is nonviolent is capable of rightly reading, for example, Romans 13." Hauerwas 1994b, 118. I agree with Hauerwas in as much as that only a church that seriously seeks the will of God at any cost is capable of rightly reading the Scriptures and that "we cannot see the world rightly unless we are changed." Hauerwas 1984, 30. See also *ibid.*, 16, 31. However our confessional theology based on theocentric relativism does not allow us to claim pacifism as *the* right Christian answer to any situation as we have witnessed so much diversity on this matter within sincere Christian churches.

evil in all circumstances. Oriental combative sport is often self-defensive.⁴⁴⁵ Self-defence arts often prevent the attacker from harming others. The rich young ruler learned that his possessions were his stumbling block to serving God. Paul practically forces Philemon to forgive Onesimus, which was an act of coercion out of love. Those who did not repent and those who lied to the church were rightly removed from the church.⁴⁴⁶ Thus the use of force is not always evil. Therefore it is misleading to claim that 'non-violence' 'non-resistance' or 'pacifism' as rejection of force is *the* Christian way without defining them more precisely.⁴⁴⁷

We rather should ask what makes the use of force evil. I would like to suggest that it is the lack of seeking the best for those to whom the force may be used; and 'the best' is to live as a part of the Kingdom of God. Salvation is the restoration of relationship with God and with others.⁴⁴⁸ When we lose the focus of seeking the best for those on whom the force is used, it becomes evil. The use of force and coercion is to be decided in each situation by the church with forgiving heart, submitting ourselves to God's will at any cost. If the church is given authority to bind and loose, as Yoder asserts and we uphold, the church should decide the best solution in the given situation in the atmosphere of forgiving love and serving others, humbly and obediently seeking the will of God.⁴⁴⁹

Jesus submitted Himself to the will of the Father even to the Cross. Yoder is right that Jesus was not the ruling king but the suffering servant and that Christians

⁴⁴⁵For example *Aikido* is a Japanese art of self-defence, which uses the attacker's own momentum against him.

⁴⁴⁶1 Tim. 1:20; Tit. 3:10; Acts 6:1-11.

⁴⁴⁷It is noteworthy that Hauerwas does not totally reject the use of violence. Hauerwas has sympathy with preventing a worse evil with violence and thinks that "it certainly cannot be discounted as a possibility for Christians", yet he gives a warning that use of violence distort our character. Hauerwas 1984, 114. Yoder does not require non-Christians to accept non-resistance. "We do not ask of the government that it be nonresistant; we do, however, ask that it take the most just and the least violent action possible [as a middle axiom]." Yoder 1964, 42. See also Sawatsky 1982, 263.

⁴⁴⁸Yoder 1994b, 351.

⁴⁴⁹See Chapter 2, IVC3 'Truth in Relativity: Binding and Loosing.' Hauerwas gives more room to the church's discernment in practical moral issues than Yoder. Hauerwas 1984, 132.

are to deny themselves, to take up their cross, and to follow Christ.⁴⁵⁰ However it does not automatically lead us to categorical rejection of force. We supported the Yoder who, unlike Hauerwas, did not limit his ethics to character but included an ethics of decision-making.⁴⁵¹ Christian ethics cannot be reduced to a matter of character, although character is a long-neglected and significant element. Likewise pacifism as rejection of force and coercion is too narrow to capture the overflowing richness and diversity of the testimonies of the Scriptures. Although it must result in non-violent solution (therefore without an abuse of force and coercion), the use of force and coercion, at least from the church's viewpoint, should not be eliminated. Their use or non-use should be decided by the church who knows the situation in so far as it seriously commits itself to seek the will of God and to become a godly community.⁴⁵² Whilst recognising the church's authority for discernment, we cannot overemphasise the necessity for the church to become truthful to God;⁴⁵³ for as Hauerwas rightly asserts: "We have learned through long centuries how quickly we can lose the habits necessary to being a people of peace."⁴⁵⁴

In sum, we reject violence which is an abuse of force and coercion. Yet the use of force and coercion should not be totally forbidden. The use or non-use should be decided by the church in the situation which truthfully seeks the will of God.

Revelation

Secondly Yoder gives insufficient attention to the human aspect in the reception of revelation and in the production and the interpretation of the Scriptures. Revelation includes not only the divine self-manifestation but also human reception.

⁴⁵⁰Yoder 1994a, 123, 127.

⁴⁵¹Yoder 1994b, 372.

⁴⁵²Cf. Hauerwas 1994b, 130.

⁴⁵³I totally agree with Hauerwas' interpretation of Reinhold Niebuhr: "No less than the pacifist, those who use violence for securing justice are subject to an extraordinary spiritual discipline, for they must never lose sight of the fact that they are employing a lesser evil in the hopes of achieving a relative good." Hauerwas 1984, 141.

⁴⁵⁴Hauerwas 1984, 133.

Although these two are inseparable since, as Tillich asserts, "God can never be an object, unless he is a subject at the same time," and although He works in human reception, both elements are distinguishable.⁴⁵⁵ Failure to recognise "the contribution of the receptive side in the revelatory situation" often leads one to identify "*one* individual and conditioned form of receiving the divine with the divine itself." Tillich calls this "the basic error of fundamentalism."⁴⁵⁶ The recognition of the human side does not discredit the authority of the Scriptures. The divine manifestation is always concrete and historical. Yoder appears rather 'naive' in his general claim that 'this is the way the early church understood and therefore this is the way we should think likewise.' True, he pays a keen attention to updated biblical scholarship, which supports his creative interpretation of the Scriptures;⁴⁵⁷ and he is by no means a fundamentalist or a biblicist. His 'naive' appearance is rather because of his strong inclination to kerygmatic theology. It is evident in his criticism of the apologetic approach and in his claim such as: "The first-century witness never understood itself as a hypothesis needing to verify itself by someone else's standards."⁴⁵⁸ He identifies his 'naive' appearance with Paul Ricoeur's 'second naïveté' which is to read a text as it stands after having gone through critical treatments.⁴⁵⁹ Barth came out of Protestant liberalism instead of simply rejecting it

⁴⁵⁵Tillich 1963, 120. Tillich mentions this panentheistic nature of God in his discussion of prayer. In the Hebrew Scriptures, says Samuel E. Balentine, "prayer is clearly a human response, a human activity. Nowhere is the vocabulary of prayer used with God as the subject of the action. That is, the Hebrew Bible nowhere suggests that God prays." However in the New Testament, "that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words." (Romans 8:26). See also Ephesians 4:6. Balentine 1993, 264. Cf. Godsey 1963, 25.

⁴⁵⁶Tillich 1955, 4.

⁴⁵⁷A topflight New Testament scholar Richard B. Hays is unstinting in his recognition of Yoder's knowledge of updated New Testament scholarship expressed in *The Politics of Jesus*. "In this respect," says Hays, "his work stands out clearly from Niebuhr and Hauerwas, and even from Barth." "[Many] elements of his presentation reflect careful harvesting of the best available insights of biblical scholarship in the early 1970s [when the book was written]." Hays 1997, 245.

⁴⁵⁸Yoder 1984a, 60, 58.

⁴⁵⁹Paul Ricoeur states: "Does that mean that we could go back to a primitive naïveté? Not at all. . . . If we can no longer live the great symbolisms of the sacred in accordance with the original belief in them, we can, we modern men, aim at a second naïveté in and through criticism. In short, it is by *interpreting* that we can hear *again*." Ricoeur 1967, 351. See also Wallace 1990, 51-85.

like fundamentalists; likewise Yoder adheres to the simple reading of the Scriptures as a "second level of ordinariness," having gone through critical biblical studies.⁴⁶⁰ The second stage of simplicity through critical analysis is a necessary attempt. If we try to be constructive, we should go beyond critical analysis.

However we must give Yoder the same criticism as we give to every exclusively kerygmatic theologian: although kerygmatic theology should precede apologetic theology, it needs apologetic theology for its completion. Yoder does state his awareness of relativity: "What we are looking for, I repeat, is not a way to keep dry above the waves of relativity, but a way to stay within our bark, barely afloat and sometimes awash amidst those waves, yet neither dissolving into them nor being carried only where they want to push it." He also says: "Yet within this relativity and in the style of noncoerciveness, we can and must still proclaim a Lord and invite to repentance. We report an event that occurred in our listeners' own world and ask them to respond to it."⁴⁶¹ These statements are strikingly akin to H. Richard Niebuhr's 'theocentric relativism,' and we would like fully to uphold them. However Yoder, after all, does not thoroughly recognise the human contribution and limitation to the production and interpretation of the Scriptures, and therefore gives an impression that he moves at the second level without fully going through the first level of the critical stage. Instead of discussing how the ancient document which is geographically and culturally conditioned can be valid to us today in our situations, Yoder bypasses such a question and seeks the "interworld transformational grammar" to claim that Jesus is Lord.⁴⁶² Failure to recognise the human contribution and limit leads Yoder to presume that every Christian can read the Scriptures 'correctly' and in the same way as he does. The criticism given to Hauerwas above is also applicable to Yoder who also adheres to pacifism.⁴⁶³ Christian communities of earnestly committed believers have performed diverse

⁴⁶⁰Yoder 1984a, 62.

⁴⁶¹Yoder 1984a, 58, 59.

⁴⁶²Yoder 1984a, 56.

⁴⁶³See Chapter 2, IIB3 'Relativity within Christianity.'

responses to the Scriptures in Christian history. Such a disagreement is evident over the problem of pacifism. Thus Yoder gives insufficient emphasis to the human aspect in revelation both in the production and interpretation of the Scriptures. When we fully accept the human aspect, our interpretation of the Scriptures and our decision-making will become more confessional, non-coercive, and humble than Yoder's.

Monotheism of the Son

Thirdly Yoder and Hauerwas, particularly Yoder, tend to fall into the 'monotheism of the Son.' Yoder insists that if we see the Son, we see the Father. Yet as we discussed above, the work of Christ cannot be limited to Palestine in the first century. It is true that it is the most explicit revelation of the nature of God, and therefore Christ of the New Testament is the norm to judge our understanding of the God's nature, appearance, and guidance. Nevertheless divine revelation is not limited only to the Scriptures, although anything that contradicts the way God acted, and most explicitly the way Christ lived and died, is to be rejected. Christ-in-God (and Christ-in-Spirit) was active not only in the Redemption but also in the Creation and Providence. Yoder criticised H. Richard Niebuhr that his Christ is not the Christ of the New Testament with absolute authority and radical teaching, but "a straw man," and that "Jesus is very important; Lord he is not, if 'Lord' denotes an ultimate claim."⁴⁶⁴ At the other extreme Yoder tends to limit his Christ within the first century Palestinian window despite his understanding the Son's "preexistence, co-essentiality with the Father, possession of the image of God, and the participation of the Son in creation and providence."⁴⁶⁵ However although Jesus Christ of the New Testament is the norm, He is not limited only there.⁴⁶⁶

⁴⁶⁴Yoder 1996, 60, 43.

⁴⁶⁵Yoder 1984a, 53.

⁴⁶⁶It is to be noted that one of the most Christocentric theologians of this century, Karl Barth, who was Yoder's mentor, states: "Theology would not respond

Yoder may intend to advance an antithesis to the present situation of neglecting the Lordship of Christ and the authority of His teaching. However he seems to overreact against the order of Creation. He nearly neglects the goodness of Creation by criticising other authorities:

They will rather say that these other values, which they call by less judgmental names like responsibility, nature, efficiency, wisdom, are also affirmed as a part of the meaning of "Christ," standing in some complementary relationship to the Lordship which is still ascribed to Jesus. This supplementary or complementary insight deals with some realm to which Jesus had not spoken, or fills in a gap which the radicality of the gospel had not taken time to deal with. It takes its cues from other positive values which Jesus can hardly be against like reason and created nature, like the orders which it takes to keep a society operating, *even though at certain crucial points this means specifically not doing what Jesus said or did or asked of his disciples.*⁴⁶⁷

True, if we believe and do things which contradict Christ's life and His teaching, we are not right. However as long as we keep the Christ of the New Testament as the norm, there is no need to reject other subordinate lights as the order of Creation.⁴⁶⁸

Karl Barth's Christ-centred theology and his rejection of natural theology were invaluable in the age of Protestant Liberalism; and Yoder's radically Christ-centred ethic is invaluable in the postliberal yet reason-centred age of relativism. However their value is as reactions to their situations. Any theology is wrong if it totally denies the original goodness of Creation by God through his Word.

In sum, Yoder and Hauerwas deny 'other authorities' and adhere exclusively to Jesus Christ of the New Testament. However I argue that anything that is not contradictory to Him should be accepted; for He is active all in Creation, Redemption, and Providence as the Lord of all.

B. Alternative Polity

How do Yoder and Hauerwas think that the church can transform society? We have seen their claim that the church should be the church, bearing its own distinctive integrity which is different from the world. The church bears the nature

to the whole Word of God if it wished only to hear and to speak of the Word become flesh." Barth 1963, 24.

⁴⁶⁷Yoder 1984a, 86 (italics mine).

⁴⁶⁸See Yoder 1984a, 11, 86.

of God by believers' treating each other as God treated the Israelites and by imitating Jesus. They deem that the committed believers' church with its distinctiveness should be the alternative society to the world so that people can see that there is a true and godly way to live. The truthfulness of the church becomes a contrast to the deceitful world so that people may perceive the deceptiveness of the world. Such an alternative society invites people to join in the life of the inaugurated Kingdom.

1. The Church as Polity

Yoder and Hauerwas believe that when the church becomes the church, it becomes an alternative and distinctive society to the world. The believers' church is not merely gathering of people but a distinct polity. Yoder asserts:

The free church is not simply an assembly of individuals with a common spiritual experience of personal forgiveness received directly from God; nor is it merely a kind of working committee, a tool to get certain kinds of work carried out. The church is also, as a social reality right in the midst of the world, that people through whose relationships God makes forgiveness visible.⁴⁶⁹

Yoder and Hauerwas believe that the very existence of the believers' church is a threat to the powers. Hauerwas by the phrase, "the church is a social ethic," indicates that the existence of this distinctive and alternative society experiences an influence to the society.⁴⁷⁰ Yoder most positively quotes from Berkhof's *Christ and Powers*: "The very existence of the church, in which Gentiles and Jews . . . live together in Christ's fellowship, is itself a proclamation, a sign, a token to the Powers that their unbroken dominion has come to an end."⁴⁷¹ Thus they believe that believers' church is an influential polity not by their power but by its distinctive godliness.

⁴⁶⁹Yoder 1994b, 341.

⁴⁷⁰Hauerwas 1984, 99.

⁴⁷¹Yoder 1994a, 147-148. Yoder's quote from Berkhof 1962, 41.

2. Imitating Jesus

Mainstream ethics claims that the teachings and the life of Jesus are not directly relevant to the questions of social ethics: Jesus' ethic was that of an Interim; Jesus did not intend to speak about social problems; Jesus and His followers were not in positions to control the society; Jesus' message was not social and concrete but spiritual and existential; Jesus pointed our attention away from concrete social matters to God; and since Jesus came to sacrifice His life for Redemption, His life and death are immaterial for ethics.⁴⁷² However Yoder and Hauerwas claim that the teachings and the life of Jesus in the New Testament are "not only relevant but also normative for a contemporary Christian social ethic,"⁴⁷³ and that we cannot "know Jesus or understand him apart from his ethical significance."⁴⁷⁴

Yoder and Hauerwas believe that the church as an alternative polity to the world is to imitate Jesus, God, and also Israelites. In discussing imitating Jesus, we must discuss three aspects: the problem of the abyss between the creature and the Creator, who Jesus is, and Christian community.

a. Over-bridging the Abyss

Before discussing imitating Jesus, we are to be reminded that there is an abyss between the Creator and the creature. Yet the abyss is not a grave concern to Yoder and Hauerwas; for they recognise that the Hebrew Scriptures carry the theme of imitating God, and it appears as discipleship of Jesus in the New Testament. Hauerwas asserts: "The call of the prophets to Israel was always a summons to return to the vocation of an *imitator Dei*"; "By learning to imitate Jesus, to follow in

⁴⁷²Yoder 1994a, 5-8, 134-136.

⁴⁷³Yoder 1994a, 11.

⁴⁷⁴Hauerwas 1984, 74.

his way, the early Christians believed they were learning to imitate God, who would have them be heirs of the kingdom."⁴⁷⁵

What is the qualification of the creaturely imitation of the Creator? Is it moral influence or participation? Tillich reminds us the abyss between the Creator and the creature in his discussion of the doctrine of the Atonement. Tillich rejects both subjective and objective theories; for divine suffering is not simply a moral influence or a substitute for the suffering of the creature. He suggests a participation theory that divine suffering is a participation in creaturely suffering and humans are also invited to the divine suffering.⁴⁷⁶ Although Hauerwas does not discuss the qualification of this imitation and discipleship, Yoder attributes it to the theme of "participation or 'correspondence,' in which the believer's behavior or attitude is said to 'correspond to' or reflect or 'partake of' the same quality or nature as that of his lord," and gives substantial discussion.⁴⁷⁷ It is an adequate understanding. The Saviour's life was not simply a substitution or a moral example for humans although there were such elements; it was a life which invites us to participate in the suffering of creature with Him.⁴⁷⁸ Christ is compresent with us in our imitating His life.

b. Jesus Whom We Imitate

Secondly what do Yoder and Hauerwas mean by Jesus whom we are to imitate? Yoder says that Jesus had four options in His ministry which He rejected: realist, hermit, separatist, and violent revolutionary. Jesus could aim what seemed to be realistic with a reasonably possible strategy, which was the "strategy of the Herodians and the Sadducees."⁴⁷⁹ Jesus also had an option to withdraw from the political and religious tension to a quiet place to have pure and religious life. This was a way of the Qumran community. Another choice available to Jesus was, "like

⁴⁷⁵Hauerwas 1984, 77, 78.

⁴⁷⁶Tillich 1963, 176.

⁴⁷⁷Yoder 1994a, 113.

⁴⁷⁸Romans 8.

⁴⁷⁹Yoder 1971, 19.

the desert sect, to keep themselves pure and separate" in the urban life.⁴⁸⁰ This was the Pharisee's way. The most tempting way for Jesus was, says Yoder, the Zealot's option for military power. This was a temptation to Jesus in the wilderness and again in Gethsemane; "more of His disciples came from the Zealot group than from any other part of Palestinian society, and their expectations were clearly along this line."⁴⁸¹ However Jesus refused "to use superior force or cunning to change society from the top down by changing its rulers"; for "An order created by the *sword* is at the heart still not the new peoplehood Jesus announces."⁴⁸² What Yoder and Hauerwas mean as the norm for believers is the Christ of non-resistance who conquers evil by grace and truth. I have discussed the misleading nature of pacifism; and therefore I would call Christ the suffering servant King who rejected non-constructive force and coercion.

The life of Jesus was most fundamentally symbolised by the Cross. Yoder asserts: "Only at one point, only on one subject -- but then consistently, universally - is Jesus our example: in his cross." In other words, the norm for believers is the life of Jesus which is characterised by His refusal to fight with violence in order to rule and by His voluntary submission of Himself to the Cross, serving and forgiving others. Yoder asserts: "Servanthood replaces dominion, forgiveness absorbs hostility. Thus -- and only thus -- are we bound by New Testament thought to 'be like Jesus.'"⁴⁸³ Hays rightly suggests that the "canon within the canon" for Yoder is the cross, which is not a text but an "element within Scripture that serves as the lens through which everything else must be read." Hays calls it a "focal image."⁴⁸⁴

Yoder and Hauerwas stress the eschatological implications of Jesus' life. The presence and future coming of the Kingdom of God was a central theme of Jesus' message; and He revealed the nature of the Kingdom in His life. "The cross is not a detour or a hurdle on the way to the kingdom, nor is it even the way to the kingdom;

⁴⁸⁰Yoder 1971, 26.

⁴⁸¹Yoder 1971, 22.

⁴⁸²Yoder 1971, 23, 24.

⁴⁸³Yoder 1994a, 95, 131.

⁴⁸⁴Hays, 248. See also *ibid.*, 246.

it is the kingdom come."⁴⁸⁵ "The cross is not just a symbol of God's kingdom; it is that kingdom come."⁴⁸⁶ Jesus inaugurated a new kind of life, living peacefully with God and others. "His very obedience unto death is itself not only the sign but also the firstfruits of an authentic restored humanity."⁴⁸⁷ Thus the life of Jesus fully revealed the nature of the Kingdom.

The most significant characteristic in Yoder's and Hauerwas' theologies lies in their understanding of the socio-political implications in the life of Jesus. "The cross is Jesus' ultimate dispossession through which God has conquered the powers of this world."⁴⁸⁸ Therefore the cross for the believer is not simply "an inward wrestling of the sensitive soul with self and sin; it is the social reality of representing in an unwilling world the Order to come." Yoder asserts: "The believer's cross must be like his Lord's, the price of his social nonconformity."⁴⁸⁹ Thus imitating Jesus is neither external mimicking nor internal experience but rather a political and social attitude.⁴⁹⁰

c. The Church as the Imitator of Jesus

Thirdly imitating Jesus leads one to a communal life as a foretaste of the Kingdom to come. The task of Israel was to imitate God. As God is just and compassionate, Israel was also to act accordingly. Yoder calls this forming of godly community 'the original revolution':

Abraham was called to get up and leave Chaldea, the cultural and religious capital of the known world in his age. . . . Abraham promised his God that he would lead a different kind of life: a life different from the cultured and the religious people, whether urban or nomadic, among whom he was to make his pilgrim way. . . . This is the original revolution; the creation of a distinct community with its own deviant set of values and its coherent way of incarnating them.⁴⁹¹

⁴⁸⁵Yoder 1994a, 51.

⁴⁸⁶Hauerwas 1984, 87.

⁴⁸⁷Yoder 1994a, 145.

⁴⁸⁸Hauerwas 1984, 87.

⁴⁸⁹Yoder 1994a, 96. Cf. *ibid.*, 130.

⁴⁹⁰Yoder 1994a, 127-130.

⁴⁹¹Yoder 1971, 27-28.

Hauerwas asserts: "Jesus' life was seen as the recapitulation of the life of Israel and thus presented the very life of God in the world."⁴⁹² Jesus called people "into being a community of *voluntary* commitment, willing for the sake of its calling to take upon itself the hostility of the given society."⁴⁹³ Yoder sees three characteristics in the community: (a) a voluntary society into which one cannot be born but one has to choose to join; (b) a mixed community racially, religiously, and economically; and (c) a community with a new way of life, forgiving offenders, sharing possessions, and creating a new order.⁴⁹⁴

The church as the imitator of Jesus sees this world eschatologically. God rules not by destructive violent force but by mercy and grace. Therefore imitating Jesus is to live in an eschatological Christian community which strives to actualise the Kingdom of God on earth, overcoming evil by mercy, serving each other.

Their strong awareness of the sovereignty of God and imitating Jesus results in their claim of non-violence. They believe that the use of violence cannot be justified if we are called to follow in the footsteps of Jesus who submitted Himself even to the cross. Although we cannot simply categorise Jesus as pacifist, He certainly lived and died as the suffering servant and not as the ruling king with power; and their claim is right in as much as that voluntary submission to God's will, even to the point of martyrdom, is requisite to every Christian.

d. Trusting in God: Faithfulness over Effectiveness

Yoder's and Hauerwas' underlying conviction of the radical obedience is based on trust in God with eschatological awareness.⁴⁹⁵ They believe that the fundamental difference between the church and the world is this trust in God. Jesus

⁴⁹²Hauerwas 1984, 78.

⁴⁹³Yoder 1994a, 37. Cf. Luke 14:25-33.

⁴⁹⁴Yoder 1971, 29.

⁴⁹⁵See Yoder 1971, 55-90. This eschatological awareness is akin to H. Richard Niebuhr's eschatological existentialism that God works in history here and now. This appears in his transformation type. It is also akin to F.D. Maurice's eschatological immediacy. Niebuhr 1975, 227.

did not intend to reform society by His own power in Palestine; rather He submitted Himself to the will of the Father and lived faithfully to Him. Therefore the godly church as the imitator of Jesus is also required to trust in God, to live faithfully to God rather than seeking strategies promising results in the short term.

Yoder and Hauerwas are most aware that it is not humans but God who is in charge of the universe and history. Yoder asserts:

Since we are not the lord of history there will be times when the only thing we can do is to speak and the only word we can speak is the word clothed in a deed, a word which can command attention from no one and which can coerce no one. But even in this situation the word must be spoken in the deed in confidence that it is the Lord of history and His Holy Spirit, not our eloquence or artistic creativity, which will make of our sign a message.⁴⁹⁶

Likewise Hauerwas claims that Christians should have hope which "is not in this world, or in humankind's goodness, or in some sense that everything always works out for the best, but in God and God's faithful caring for the world."⁴⁹⁷

This trust in God's absolute authority, love, and mercy with eschatological awareness frees them from an ethics of guardianship of history for faithfulness to God. Hauerwas asserts: "God does not rule creation through coercion, but through a cross. As Christians, therefore, we seek not so much to be effective as to be faithful."⁴⁹⁸ This claim reminds us of H. Richard Niebuhr who denied church's direct involvement in social reform and wrote "The Grace of Doing Nothing" (1932)⁴⁹⁹ on Japan's invasion to China, trusting in God's sovereignty. It was based on a strong eschatological and existential awareness that God is active here and now. In fact Hauerwas supports this approach of Niebuhr.⁵⁰⁰

⁴⁹⁶Yoder 1971, 161.

⁴⁹⁷Hauerwas 1984, 104.

⁴⁹⁸Hauerwas 1984, 104.

⁴⁹⁹Niebuhr 1932a, 378-380.

⁵⁰⁰In his response to Reinhold's criticism to "The Grace of Doing Nothing," H. Richard summarises the core problem: "The fundamental question seems to me to be whether 'the history of mankind is a perennial tragedy' which can derive meaning only from a goal which lies beyond history, as my brother maintains, or whether the 'eschatological' faith, to which I seek to adhere, is justifiable." Niebuhr 1932b, 447. Hauerwas intends to integrate H. Richard's trust in God with Reinhold's understanding of spirituality which is similar to Hauerwas' 'character.' "I think H. Richard Niebuhr's position is the one we Christians must take if we are to live in a manner appropriate to God's kingdom that has been made present in the life of Jesus of Nazareth. Yet to see the issue as choosing H. Richard Niebuhr's position rather than his brother's is a far too simple account of the matter. For I do not think the

Going a step further than Niebuhr, Hauerwas draws our attention not only to God's sovereignty but also to God's character, "*how* God rules and the establishment of that rule through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus," and encourages us to imitate His character.⁵⁰¹ Yoder likewise says: "The ethic of discipleship is not guided by the goals it seeks to reach, but by the Lord it seeks to reflect. It is no more interested in 'success' or in 'effectiveness' than He."⁵⁰² For Yoder "The key to the ultimate relevance and to the triumph of the good is not any calculation at all . . . but rather simple obedience," which is "reflecting the character of the love of God But the kind of faithfulness that is willing to accept evident defeat rather than complicity with evil is, by virtue of its conformity with what happens to God when he works among us, aligned with the ultimate triumph of the Lamb."⁵⁰³

When we think of ethics from a ruler's perspective, our ethic becomes human-centred, instantly effect-promising, and mechanical. This is a self-sufficient ethics which no longer needs divine intervention. When we are preoccupied with our goals as effect, we may compromise about the means to achieve the goals. Therefore Yoder and Hauerwas stress that faithfulness precedes effects which humans can cause. They avoid such a controller's ethics by leaning on God's sovereignty and by doing theology from a servant viewpoint. Yoder states: "When it *seems* to me that my unjust deed is indispensable to prevent some much greater evil being done by another, I have narrowed my scope of time, or of space, or of global variety, or of history";⁵⁰⁴ "The believing community [as a servant of God] has a longer sense of history past and future than do their oppressors," and "a position which is not justified on the grounds of calculating effectiveness will turn out in the long run to be more effective than one which at every step along the way is the object of a cost/benefit calculation. This only seems paradoxical."⁵⁰⁵ Hauerwas

kind of position represented by H. Richard can be sustained without a spirituality very much like that hinted at by Reinhold." Hauerwas 1984, 141.

⁵⁰¹Hauerwas 1984, 83.

⁵⁰²Yoder 1971, 39.

⁵⁰³Yoder 1994a, 238.

⁵⁰⁴Yoder 1984a, 38.

⁵⁰⁵Yoder 1984a, 95, 99.

likewise thinks that the truth "relies on the slow, hard, and seemingly unrewarding work of witness, a witness which it trusts to prevail even in a fragmented and violent world."⁵⁰⁶

It is to be noted, however, that faithfulness to God and (even instant) effectiveness are not always contradictory to each other. When people try to control history, "it almost always turns out to have taken another direction than that in which they thought they were guiding it."⁵⁰⁷ Reinhold Niebuhr called it irony. Important social movements in history were led by unexpected and unprogrammed incidents. "A full Christian accounting of history must make much of the inexplicable coincidences -- the pious call them providential -- at certain decisive points," which Yoder calls "wonder."⁵⁰⁸ Thus faithfulness to God can lead us to effective results although they are not mechanically and directly related. Yoder uses a stimulating analogy to depict the function of the faithful and distinctive Christian church in the world. "A minority may do for a society what the conscience does for an individual."⁵⁰⁹ The conscience cannot promise certain deeds yet it does leave significant effects.

Christians for Yoder and Hauerwas are to be willing to accept disadvantages caused by such faithfulness to God. "Personal survival is for the Christian not an end in itself; how much less national survival." True Christian love "seeks neither effectiveness nor justice, and is willing to suffer any loss or seeming defeat for the sake of obedience"; "Christian ethics calls for behavior which is impossible except by the miracles of the Holy Spirit."⁵¹⁰ Hauerwas similarly states: "Christian social ethics can only be done from the perspective of those who do not seek to control national or world history but who are content to live 'out of control.'"⁵¹¹ For them

⁵⁰⁶Hauerwas 1984, 15.

⁵⁰⁷Yoder 1994a, 230.

⁵⁰⁸Yoder 1971, 162.

⁵⁰⁹Yoder 1984a, 99. See Yoder 1992a, 54; Yoder 1994a, 155.

⁵¹⁰Yoder 1971, 86, 59, 121.

⁵¹¹Hauerwas 1981, 11.

Christian ethic is essentially to reflect God's character and to be faithful to Him at any cost rather than to seek one's achievable goal.

The church's responsibility, therefore, is not to control the world by power, but to be faithful to God by trusting in Him, by remembering who He is through biblical narratives, and by becoming a distinctive Christian community. The church must remember the way God treated the Israelites and the way Jesus lived. That is the way which the early church understood how she was supposed to live. The church as servant should seek to be faithful to God, reflecting His character rather than seeking effects.

C. Community Which Transforms Culture: Offering a Real Option

1. Contrast Model

Yoder and Hauerwas assert that the church as the alternative society becomes a contrast to the world. It is a community which imitates the way of Jesus with eschatological awareness. Its fundamentally different nature from the world becomes apparent in its trust in God and in its new life style of servanthood inaugurated by Jesus.

It has been said in the past that the true church is "one, holy, catholic, and apostolic," says Yoder, "where the sacraments are properly administered and the word of God is properly preached," where Christian morality is performed, or intensive piety of members is observed.⁵¹² However he asserts that "the real tests of whether the church is the church calls for measurements to be taken not in the meeting nor in the administrative structure but the point of the relation of church and the world [which is not the church]."⁵¹³ For Yoder the church is "a witnessing body, a serving body, and a body fellowshiping voluntarily and visibly . . . , [identifying]

⁵¹²Yoder 1971, 114. See also Niesel 1997, 91-102.

⁵¹³Yoder 1971, 116-117.

her thrice as not being the same thing as the total surrounding society."⁵¹⁴ Hauerwas supports Yoder's understanding of the church in its relation to the world.⁵¹⁵

Firstly the church shines the light onto the sin of the world by actualising God's standard. They believe that the world is so fallen that it cannot ultimately recognise its falseness by itself. The world needs a godly community which bears God's character and lives accordingly; only such a community can expose the falseness of the world by its contrast; in the light of the highest standard it realises its fallenness.

Secondly the church confronts the world by its Christ-likeness and presents itself as a real option. In "Sacrament as Social Process," Yoder discusses five socio-ethical practices of the church: fraternal admonition, the universality of charisma, the Spirit's freedom in the meeting, breaking bread, and induction into the new humanity.⁵¹⁶ Each of them in common "concerns *both* the internal activities of the gathered Christian congregation *and* the ways the church interfaces with the world." By "fraternal admonition" Yoder means the practice of 'binding and loosing' of Matthew 18:15-20.⁵¹⁷ The 'binding and loosing' has two aspects: one is withholding fellowship and forgiving in relationship, and the other is forbidding and permitting in moral discernment.⁵¹⁸ The authority to bind and loose was given to the church.⁵¹⁹ Protestant Reformers and some Anabaptists called this process "*Regnum Christi*, 'the rule of Christ,'" and regarded it as a way to live out the Reformation in daily life.⁵²⁰ This is a very important practice for Yoder. "The universality of Charisma" indicates that "every member of a church . . . has a distinctly identifiable, divinely validated, and empowered role" and bears "such a 'manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.'"⁵²¹ Whilst it seeks equality, denying hierarchy, it

⁵¹⁴Yoder 1971, 114.

⁵¹⁵Hauerwas 1984, 101.

⁵¹⁶Yoder 1994b, 361. See also Yoder 1993; Yoder 1984a, 92-94.

⁵¹⁷See also Yoder 1994b, 323-358.

⁵¹⁸Yoder 1994b, 327.

⁵¹⁹Yoder 1994b, 330.

⁵²⁰Yoder 1994b, 362. Cf. Yoder 1994b, 323-358; Luther 1965, 64.

⁵²¹Yoder 1994b, 362-363. This is based on Ephesians, I Corinthians, and Romans.

recognises the differences of the gifts which are given to all believers. Yoder also sees "the Spirit's freedom in the meeting" as an important practice.⁵²² This is "decision making by open dialogue and consensus" which involves "both divine and human action."⁵²³ It appears in the instruction to the Corinthians about the way to conduct a meeting and in the conclusion of the Jerusalem Conference that their decision "has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us" (Acts 15:28).⁵²⁴ Yoder discusses the next two practices which are traditionally called 'religious' sacraments, from a socio-ethical perspective with attention to recent scholarship. "Breaking bread" in remembrance of Christ, says Yoder, was not a religious ritual in the original setting and the disciples understood it as "common meal" which implies "hospitality and community formation" and "actually sharing with one another their ordinary day-to-day material substance." Yoder sees Jesus' bringing together of His disciples in His playing the "role of the family head distributing bread (and fish) around his table."⁵²⁵ "When the family head feeds you at his or her table, [with] the bread for which he or she has given thanks, you are [operationally] part of the family" in the sense that you are a "member of the historical community of the new age."⁵²⁶ The fifth practice is baptism, which inducts people into new humanity.⁵²⁷ In understanding baptism Yoder takes a "sacramental realism, whereby baptism is the constitution of a new people whose newness and togetherness explicitly relativizes prior stratifications and classification."⁵²⁸ It is based on new creation (2 Cor. 5:17), new humanity (Eph. 2:10), and the breakthrough of barriers of race, gender, and class (Gal. 3:27-28). Baptism symbolises status equality; whilst acknowledging social differences, it rejects "their discriminatory impact."⁵²⁹

⁵²²See also Yoder 1984a, 15-45.

⁵²³Yoder 1994b, 368, 364.

⁵²⁴Yoder 1994b, 363.

⁵²⁵Yoder 1994b, 365.

⁵²⁶Yoder 1994b, 366.

⁵²⁷See also Yoder 1980, 115-134; and Yoder 1983b, 277-284.

⁵²⁸Yoder 1994b, 367.

⁵²⁹Yoder 1994b, 369.

Yoder further identifies implications of these five practices of the church.⁵³⁰

Firstly they are wholly human yet divine acts. "*God is doing them in, with, and under the human practice.*"⁵³¹ "Each was derived from already existent cultural models. . . . [They] were not new ideas, yet in the gospel setting they have taken on new meanings and a new empowerment."⁵³² In this sense we can call them transformed acts.

Yoder rightly points out that both the divine and human natures are involved in these practices; indeed they are inseparable. Revelation contains both natures; so does Incarnation. This reshaping of what is already there in the setting of the gospel is a standard account of transformation.

Secondly these practices cannot be resolved into certain formulas of problem-solving ethics or into certain categories.⁵³³ "It gives more authority to the church than does Rome, trusts more to the Holy Spirit than does Pentecostalism, has more respect for the individual than humanism, makes moral standards more binding than puritanism, is more open to the given situation than the 'new morality.'"⁵³⁴ Yoder, unlike Hauerwas, rejects confining Christian ethics to one model, such as deontological, consequential, or character, and claims that we should utilise everything available.⁵³⁵

Character, virtue, and story were unjustly neglected for a long period, and in that sense they deserve our attention. However, due to their own limits, they cannot replace all other ethical approaches. We rejected the claim that Jesus was pacifist for the same reason that His life cannot be resolved into a single category. On one hand Yoder suggests not to confine Christian ethics to one model; on the other hand he steadfastly adheres to pacifism. That seems incoherent to me.⁵³⁶

⁵³⁰Although Yoder gives nine implications, I combined some which overlap with others.

⁵³¹Yoder 1994b, 369.

⁵³²Yoder 1994b, 371.

⁵³³Yoder 1994b, 372.

⁵³⁴Yoder 1994b, 325.

⁵³⁵Yoder 1994b, 372.

⁵³⁶Yoder is a relativist in his preference for using multiple ethical modes over a single mode. Yet he is absolutist in his adherence to pacifism. This indicates that

Thirdly they "constitute the believing community as a social body."⁵³⁷

Therefore "none of these practices makes the individual the pivot of change."⁵³⁸

Although individuals are not forgotten, "no trust is placed in the individual's changed insights (as liberalism does) or on the believer's changed insides (as does pietism) to change the world. The fulcrum for change and the forum for decision is the moral independence of the believing community as social body."⁵³⁹

This is a reconfirmation of Yoder's (and Hauerwas') emphasis that Christian life is communal, which we uphold. However it needs further attention to the qualifications for community decision-making.⁵⁴⁰

Fourthly "these practices are enabled and illuminated by Jesus of Nazareth, who is confessed as Messiah and as Lord. They are *part of the order of redemption, not of creation*."⁵⁴¹

Yoder's theology, like Barth's, revolves around Jesus Christ as the full revelation of God, and sharply rejects natural theology based upon the goodness of the Creation. Such a feature is more conspicuous in Yoder than Hauerwas, although Hauerwas too deems that Christian ethics cannot be built on the order of Creation. However, no matter how distorted the fallen creature is, it still originates in the good Creation by Christ-in-God; and it cannot be disregarded. Therefore it is to be said that 'these practices are normatively part of the order of redemption which restores the order of Creation.'

Fifthly Yoder claims that these practices are applicable to secular communities. "The reason for their paradigmatic accessibility to others and their translatability into other terms is that they [even breaking bread and baptism] are not 'religious' or 'ritual' activities at bottom. They are by nature 'lay' or 'public'

his relativist aspect does not originate from an awareness of human fallibility but a confidence that *he* knows the truth. Considering the fact that this is not a problem of Christian relativity with other religions but a problem of relativity within Christianity, this appears to me quite arrogant.

⁵³⁷Yoder 1994b, 369.

⁵³⁸Yoder 1994b, 371.

⁵³⁹Yoder 1994b, 371.

⁵⁴⁰See Chapter 2, IVC3 'Truth in Relativity: Binding and Loosing.'

⁵⁴¹Yoder 1994b, 370 (italics mine).

phenomena."⁵⁴² This is the most important claim from the standpoint of our concern of transforming the society; for Yoder's "pioneering" is essentially represented by this claim.

People who do not share the faith or join the community can learn from them. "Binding and loosing" can provide models for conflict resolution, alternatives to litigation, and alternative perspectives on "corrections." Sharing bread is a paradigm, not only for soup kitchens and hospitality houses, but also for social security and negative income tax. "Every member of the body has a gift" is an immediate alternative to vertical "business" models of management. Paul's solidarity models of deliberation correlate with the reasons that the Japanese can make better cars than Detroit. It was not by accident or whim that I could use as labels the modern secular handles "egalitarianism," "democracy," and "socialism," although each of these terms needs to be taken in a way different from their secularistic and individualistic usages.⁵⁴³

All five practices are 'pioneering' examples of the church in relation to the world, which most explicitly appears in this statement. Here Yoder presupposes the continuity between the church and the world, despite his claim of 'the otherness of the church,' and therefore it requires our attention.

2. Pioneering

Although not seeking to control history by power, the church offers the world a real option to adopt. The five ways above are typical examples. Yoder calls it the "pioneering" function of the church.⁵⁴⁴

It [each of the five models] tells the world what is the world's own calling and destiny, not by announcing either a utopian or a realistic goal to be imposed on the whole society, but by pioneering a paradigmatic demonstration of both the power and the practices that define the shape of restored humanity. The confessing people of God is the new world on its way.⁵⁴⁵

In the previous chapter we discussed that H. Richard Niebuhr claimed three functions of the Christian community in being responsible *to God for* the society: the apostolic function (preaching the Gospel), the pastoral function (concern with the society), and the pioneering function (godly modelling to the society).⁵⁴⁶ The pioneering function was the highest form for Niebuhr. Niebuhr advocated

⁵⁴²Yoder 1994b, 370.

⁵⁴³Yoder 1994b, 369-370.

⁵⁴⁴Yoder 1994b, 373; Yoder 1984a, 97; and Yoder 1971, 163. Yoder also uses the term "modelling mission." Yoder 1984a, 92. Hauerwas also states: "The church is the pioneer in displaying the implications of God's kingdom of peace brought in Jesus Christ." Hauerwas 1984, 132.

⁵⁴⁵Yoder 1994b, 373.

⁵⁴⁶See Chapter 1, IID7 'Christian Community with Distinctiveness.'

religiously direct and socially indirect involvement in social reform. The church is not responsible *to* society, but it is responsible only *to* God *for* society; and the Church's social responsibility can be achieved only through its own intrinsic function. This is identical to Hauerwas' and Yoder's claim that the church should be the church.

A significant difference between Niebuhr and Yoder, however, is the church's relationship to the world.⁵⁴⁷ Whilst Niebuhr's pioneering function of the church meant that the church responds to God as the representative of the creature, Yoder's pioneering means that the church offers an alternative option to the world. There is a sharp distinction in Yoder's approach between the church and the world. It comes from Yoder's adherence to Redemption over Creation.

The difference between the world and the church for Yoder and Hauerwas is the "personal postures of men" to confess or not to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.⁵⁴⁸ They see the difference in the attitudes of agents rather than in organisations.⁵⁴⁹ The difference for them is relational rather than ontological; for it lies in people's relationship with God. Therefore the world consists not only of non-Christians but also of unfaithful aspects of Christians to their profession. Hauerwas asserts "that the world consists of those, including ourselves, who have chosen not to make the story of God their story. . . . The world is those aspects of our individual and social lives where we live untruthfully by continuing to rely on violence to bring order."⁵⁵⁰

In this pioneering, Yoder presupposes the continuity between the church and the world whilst emphasising the otherness of the church. The world is fundamentally different from the church in its disbelief in God, yet some learning

⁵⁴⁷There is also a minor difference between Niebuhr and Yoder about the understanding of the church's intrinsic duty. Whilst Niebuhr had personal conversion in mind, Hauerwas and Yoder emphasise the eschatological and new way of life actualised in the church as a foretaste of the Kingdom to come. Yoder and Hauerwas overwhelmingly stress the socio-political aspect of the church.

⁵⁴⁸Yoder 1971, 116.

⁵⁴⁹Hauerwas 1984, 166.

⁵⁵⁰Hauerwas 1984, 101.

from the church's practices can take place without the acknowledgement of Christ's Lordship. Yoder's pioneering performance of the church for transforming the world perhaps presupposes two events. Firstly individuals become attracted by the way the Christian community lives and eventually join the life to confess Jesus Christ as Lord. Although this is not explicitly depicted, it is obviously included in the pioneering function. This includes personal and corporate conversions. Those who become part of pioneering community would show a godly example to the world. Secondly people in certain parts of the world, such as a government, a company, or a village, become attracted by the Christian way, learn from the church, and adopt a Christian manner in their community. This is what I called superficial adoption.⁵⁵¹ This, however, does not necessarily require confession of the Lordship of Christ as long as it adopts a Christian manner. The world practically becomes 'better' without conversion. Non-Christians are often attracted by Christian life on the surface level although they cannot fully understand the life of Christian community without accepting the Lordship of Christ. Thus Yoder practically thinks that the world without Jesus' Lordship can learn from the church.

Both of these two phenomena actually can and do occur, and the pilot function of the pioneering church is valuable.⁵⁵² However we have to ask one question: why do we have to limit our ethical foundation to Redemption, rejecting the original goodness of Creation? Why not both? Obviously Yoder is reacting against natural theology and its negative results such as the 'German Christians.' To Yoder's relational approach, however, I would like to respond that we need both relational and ontological thinking. If we limit our ethics only in relational aspects, we overlook the marks of the glorious God in the creation. The order of Creation must not surpass Redemption. However if transformation of the world does not necessarily require of the world the confession of the Lordship of Jesus Christ in the process of transformation as Yoder thinks, it is wrong to disregard the original

⁵⁵¹Chapter 1, IID4 'Three Factors for Transformation.'

⁵⁵²Yoder 1984a, 92.

goodness, although distorted, of the world. The world should be seen through Redemption; yet when we see the world through the Cross, we see the goodness originated in Christ-in-God. The capacity to respond to the way of the Christ-like community rests upon the original goodness of the Creation.

Do we with Albert Schweitzer revere all that is alive even beyond the sphere of the human? Do we further go with H. Richard Niebuhr and revere whatever exists even beyond the sphere of living creature?⁵⁵³ Or is the goodness of the world limited to the capacity to repent before the Creator? Our answer to the first two questions is positive. Niebuhr ontologically reveres not only all that is and was alive but also all that exists because of their origination in the Creator. Apostle Paul says that "the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now."⁵⁵⁴ According to Dunn, he most likely means by κτίσις [creation] "nonhuman . . . inanimate creation" and "total cosmos."⁵⁵⁵ True, as Hauerwas says, natural theology cannot be a foundation by itself for Christian ethics due to the lack of Christian distinctiveness and the fact that Jesus Christ of the New Testament is the norm; however such an ethics consciously or unconsciously presupposes the goodness of Creation. Acknowledging the original goodness motivates us selectively to seek the good elements in the sinner, corrupt system, and barren wilderness to transform, instead of giving them up and carelessly cutting them off.

The pioneering function of the church as Christian witness to the world is a naturally logical outcome of Yoder's (and Hauerwas') ethics of the church and their pacifism. It is right that whilst the church can invite people to a life together confessing Jesus Christ's Lordship, it, through its life style, can influence the world which is not yet ready to accept the Lordship. The combination of these ways, conversion and improvement, would be the best possible option if the church seeks to keep its distinctiveness and its ethical norm of Jesus. Yoder would say that the conversion precedes in significance the improvement since our call is primarily

⁵⁵³Niebuhr 1960b, 37.

⁵⁵⁴Romans 8:22.

⁵⁵⁵Dunn 1988, 472, 489.

being faithful to God rather than making society a better place, which we uphold. In such interactions with the world, Yoder and Hauerwas disprove the criticism given to them that they are withdrawn from the world. Although the term 'alternative polity' connotes a kind of sectarianism,⁵⁵⁶ their method is rather a positive witness to the world.⁵⁵⁷

However Yoder is too exclusive in his treatment of Creation. It seems to me contradictory that whilst his Redemption-based approach obviously presupposes the persistence of the original goodness of Creation in order to respond to the redemptive act, he rejects it. The Creation deserves a subordinate yet foundational position. It widens our theological scale from the realm of the human to the whole creation, and urges us to seek the possibility to redeem humans and other sorts of creation through the Cross.

3. Truth in Relativity: Binding and Loosing

Yoder values the authority of the church particularly in its decision-making process. He is aware of the relativity of the church as a human organisation, nevertheless he believes that the will of God is concretely revealed to the church (and the church's decision becomes authorised as God's will) when the church strives to be faithful to the life and the teaching of Jesus and to trust to the Holy Spirit in the interpretation of the Scriptures and in decision-making. Yoder's 'binding and

⁵⁵⁶Michael J. Quirk states: "I don't see how Hauerwas himself can possibly avoid sectarianism of *some* sort." He then suggests that Christians today should seek "not how to avoid sectarianism while remaining faithful to their distinctive forms of life, but to choose the right *kind* of sectarianism, while being open to the possibility that previous failures of nerve and acts of bad faith on the part of Christians precipitated the crisis wherein sectarianism has become such a doleful necessity." Quirk 1987, 81, 86. Hauerwas positively responds to Quirk: "As he [Quirk] puts it, the issue is not whether I am a sectarian but rather what kind of sectarian one should be." Hauerwas 1987, 88. R.H. Tawney likewise wrote in 1921: "Christians [today] are a sect, and a small sect, in a Pagan Society. But they can be a sincere sect." Tawney 1994, 125.

⁵⁵⁷Yoder 1994a, 154.

loosing' is akin to H. Richard Niebuhr's theocentric relativism which we uphold as a central theme in this thesis; and therefore it needs to be discussed.

a. Similarity of Yoder and Niebuhr

Both Yoder's 'binding and loosing' and Niebuhr's theocentric relativism share in common that the absolute truth is revealed in the church concretely despite its relativity.

Niebuhr's theocentric relativism was an attempt to go between Barth and Troeltsch. It was an existentially confessional theology; it was a communal and not individualistic theology. Since God and faith are inseparable, there is no such thing as a so-called objective statement about God; when our sins are exposed, we have no other way to respond than as confessors. It was also a communal theology. Rejecting individualistic subjectivism as much as static objectivism, Niebuhr claimed the reality of what we see in the internal history of Christian community. His social existentialism has its basis in the reality of revelation.

Yoder's 'binding and loosing' is based on the biblical witness: "Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."⁵⁵⁸ It is a claim that the church, despite its relativity, is given authority to discern the will of God. Yoder sees its foundation in the following four aspects. First, Jesus has given authority to the church which is parallel to His: "As the Father sent me, so I send you."⁵⁵⁹ The image of 'binding and loosing' is "that of the ambassador plenipotentiary or of the 'power of attorney'; the signature of the accredited representative binds the one who gave the commission."⁵⁶⁰ Second, the church is guided and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Receiving the Holy Spirit who teaches and reminds us of the teaching of Jesus is linked with forgiveness of sins.⁵⁶¹

⁵⁵⁸Matthew 18:18. Cf. Matthew 16:19.

⁵⁵⁹John 20:21. Yoder 1994b, 330.

⁵⁶⁰Yoder 1994b, 337.

⁵⁶¹John 14:26; 20:22-23.

Acts 1 and 2 indicate that the Holy Spirit empowers the disciples and Acts 13 and 15 indicate that the Holy Spirit guides in decision-making processes.⁵⁶² Yoder thinks that the promise of the presence of Christ where two or three gathered in His name (Matthew 18:20) is not simply a sense of spiritual presence but "the consensus . . . reached by the divinely authorized process of decision."⁵⁶³ Third, the assembly is normatively the place where decision-making takes place. "The Greek word *ekklesia* . . . is found only twice in the Gospels coming from Jesus' lips; the two times are the two 'bind and loose' passages."⁵⁶⁴ Yoder says: "Where this [binding and loosing] does not happen, 'church' is not fully present."⁵⁶⁵ Finally, adding to these Scriptural foundations, Yoder claims the firm authority of the church based upon the doctrine of the Incarnation. Despite "the abuses of Roman Catholic penitential practice" and Protestant reaction to it that "only God can forgive," asserts Yoder, "God really can authorize ordinary humans to commit him, that is, to forbid and to forgive on his behalf with the assurance that the action stands 'in heaven.'"⁵⁶⁶ Yoder says: "The real scandal of the way God chose to work among humans . . . is that it was an ordinary working man from Nazareth who commissioned a crew of ordinary people . . . to forgive sins."⁵⁶⁷

Thus Yoder claims the absoluteness of the decisions which are made by the church despite its relativity. It is to be noted that the decisions of the church are absolute not in the Hellenistic sense that they are perfect, abstract (beyond time and space), and static but rather in the Hebraic sense that they are concrete, dynamic, and flexible and are authorised by God. It is an attempt to seek a way between legalism and situation ethics. "Binding and loosing achieves the same flexibility to fit each context, without being too sweepingly permissive."⁵⁶⁸

⁵⁶²Yoder 1994b, 331.

⁵⁶³Yoder 1994b, 331. Yoder says: "'Two or three others' are the witnesses required in the Mosaic law for a judicial proceeding to be formally valid."

⁵⁶⁴Yoder 1994b, 332.

⁵⁶⁵Yoder 1994b, 337.

⁵⁶⁶Yoder 1994b, 330-331.

⁵⁶⁷Yoder 1994b, 331.

⁵⁶⁸Yoder 1994b, 333.

b. Truth, Relativity, and Mutual Support

Yoder's 'binding and loosing' inevitably accepts diversity of decisions amongst the churches. Judgements on identical problems at two different churches in the same town may differ yet are still the will of God. "Killing in war is a sin for a Mennonite congregation and not for a Lutheran one."⁵⁶⁹ This problem of decentralisation and diversity comes from Yoder's enormous weight upon the local churches' discernment. Yoder claims mutual responsibility of the churches, by which he avoids anarchistic relativism:

*The process of binding and loosing in the local community of faith provides the practical and theological foundation for the centrality of the local congregation. [However] It is not correct to say, as some extreme Baptist and Churches of Christ do, that only the local gathering of Christians can be called "the church." The Bible uses the term church for all of the Christians in a large city or even in a province. The concept of local congregational autonomy has, therefore, been misunderstood when it was held to deny mutual responsibilities between congregations or between Christians of different congregations.*⁵⁷⁰

Thus for Yoder openness and willingness to be challenged and corrected by other churches and other Christians are necessary conditions for a decision of a local church to be authorised as the will of God.

c. Differences of Yoder and Niebuhr

Yoder's 'binding and loosing' shares a common claim with Niebuhr's theocentric relativism that we can know the absolute despite our relativity. However there are at least two significant differences.

Firstly Niebuhr had keen awareness of the finitude of the human.⁵⁷¹ It includes both our limitation as historical beings and limitation due to human depravity. This was a reason why he was reluctant to write at the concrete level and tended to remain abstract despite his advocacy of confessional theology.

⁵⁶⁹Yoder 1994b, 355.

⁵⁷⁰Yoder 1994b, 352.

⁵⁷¹Niebuhr 1975, 234.

Yoder, however, believes that every claim is particular whether it is abstract or concrete and he is bothered neither by our ontological limitation nor by fallen human nature. He asserts:

To ask, 'Shall we talk in pluralist/relativist terms?' would be as silly as to ask in Greece, 'Shall we talk Greek?' The question is what we shall say. We shall say, 'Jesus is Messiah and Lord'; but how do you say that in pluralist/relativist language? If that language forbids us to say that, do we respect the prohibition? Or do we find a way to say it anyway?⁵⁷²

Yoder does claim that he uses confessional and non-coercive terms: "Since for some even the phrase 'truth claim' evokes echoes of theocratic compulsion or of pretensions to infallibility, let us use the more biblical phrases 'witness' and 'proclamation' as naming forms of communication which do not coerce the hearer."⁵⁷³ He also states that we should pay attention to human relativity.⁵⁷⁴

Nevertheless his 'not-coercing-hearer witness' of the 'Jesus is Lord' claim 'amidst the waves of relativity' is as modest as the Apostles' preaching in the New Testament; and it does not reflect his awareness of human limitation. Yoder severely criticises the use of violence as arrogant misunderstanding that one tries to eliminate the evil out there, overlooking the evil within oneself:

The one perspective which it is impossible for these [just war] approaches to deal with openly is the possibility (which is more than a mere possibility in the biblical witness) that the basic problem of man might not be that there are bad guys out there. It might be that what is most wrong with me and the world is my own will to power and my own calling upon God to legitimate my self-assertion.⁵⁷⁵

However Yoder's critical eyes do not become directed to the church; when he talks about the church, his tone rather becomes tolerant and optimistic.⁵⁷⁶ His kerygmatic theology is extremely optimistic about the possibility of interpreting the Scriptures and the given situation of the church and of discerning the will of God rightly. Hays likewise observes Yoder's optimism:

Unlike [Reinhold] Niebuhr, who derives from the biblical sources a dialectical view of fallen human nature, Yoder places little hermeneutical weight on the New Testament's

⁵⁷²Yoder 1984a, 56.

⁵⁷³Yoder 1984a, 56.

⁵⁷⁴Yoder 1984a, 58.

⁵⁷⁵Yoder 1971, 142.

⁵⁷⁶Hauerwas likewise has very optimistic view about the church. Although he sees the kingdom of God also outside the church, he presupposes the church's ability to recognise it. Hauerwas 1984, 97. He also says: "I find I must think and write not only for the church that does exist but for the church that should exist if we were more courageous and faithful." Hauerwas 1981, 6.

portrayal of human sin and finitude. His ethical approach is, as he forthrightly states, "more hopeful than others about the possibility of knowing and doing the divine will."⁵⁷⁷

It is true that kerygmatic theology precedes apologetic theology and that "The real issue is not whether Jesus can make sense in a world far from Galilee, but whether -- when he meets us in our world, as he does in fact -- we want to follow him."⁵⁷⁸

However kerygmatic theology needs apologetic and critical theology for its completion. Preachers need to be aware that some of their claims could be wrong; every experienced preacher realises that when reading old sermon notes.

Theological inquiries obviously need keen awareness of human relativity and fallibility. Most importantly in our context of the church's discernment of God's will, the church must have the sharpest sensitivity about human relativity and fallibility. If the church slights them, being given the authority to discern the will of God, it can easily elevate itself to a semi-divine throne and can abuse its authority as ruling power.

Whilst the first difference is a contradiction between Yoder and Niebuhr, the second difference is out of complementary emphases. Niebuhr has a keen awareness of the significance of decision-making as a moment. Kierkegaardian existentialism seemed to leave on Niebuhr a sharp sense of time.⁵⁷⁹ "The present moment is the time of decision; and the meaning of the present is that it is the time dimension of freedom and decision."⁵⁸⁰ Here the quality of time as moment is taken seriously, and decision-making is a sacred act. However in Yoder's decision-making the quality of time receives no attention. His attention is focused on more practical aspects of an ordinary life such as forgiving spirit, contribution of 'gifts' to decision-making, and so on. Hauerwas would reject the emphasis on the moment of decision-making because of his ethics of character. Yet the church does face a significant

⁵⁷⁷Hays 1997, 250. This includes Hays' quote from Yoder 1984a, 3. Hays firmly insists on the difference between Yoder's and Niebuhr's anthropologies, despite Yoder's denial of it. See *ibid.*, 286, n. 154.

⁵⁷⁸Yoder 1984a, 62.

⁵⁷⁹Kierkegaard distinguishes time (past and future) from eternity. "The moment is not properly an atom of time but an atom of eternity." Kierkegaard 1980, 88.

⁵⁸⁰Niebuhr 1975, 246.

moment (καιρός) and the existentialist approach is to be valued, adding to Yoder's concrete decision-making process and Hauerwas' character approach, since it reminds the church of the seriousness of its sacred responsibility.

In sum, Yoder's 'binding and loosing' is similar to Niebuhr's theocentric relativism in its claim that the church can know the will of God. The absolute God reveals His will in the concrete and fallible church. Yoder's approach leans on biblical studies whilst Niebuhr's approach is philosophical and theological; Yoder's approach is concrete whilst Niebuhr's approach remains abstract. In that sense they are complementary to each other. However Yoder does not pay sufficient attention to our fallen nature and is too optimistic. Yoder's claim of human relativity does not mean that the church as a limited being makes mistakes; it rather means that the church discerns the will of God in diverse ways. It positively affirms the church's decision-making function instead of negatively warning the church to present its decision in a humble and confessional way. However this 'binding and loosing' is the area where Yoder acknowledges human relativity more than any other aspect in his theology, therefore it is to be valued, although we must note that its attention to human limitation is still insufficient. If he paid full attention to human limitation, his ethics would become less determinative and more confessional and give more room for diverse responses, being tolerant of other positions.

D. Conclusion: From Alternative Polity to Normative Polity

Yoder and Hauerwas claim that the church should be an alternative polity to the world. The church is a distinctive society which differs from the world in its new life style as a foretaste of the Kingdom of God, by striving to be faithful to God, forgiving and supporting each other, imitating God. I have generally supported their claim with some modifications such as the necessity for other authorities besides the Jesus of the New Testament, the affirmation of coercion to some degree, and need

for the awareness of human fallibility. Here I would like to add another modification about the concept of an 'alternative' society.

The term 'alternative' means values which are different from those of the establishment and a choice between the two (or more). By the expression 'the church as an alternative society' Yoder and Hauerwas mean that the church is different from the world and from other organisations in its acceptance of the Lordship of Jesus Christ. "When we confess that Jesus Christ is Lord [which is the church's confession], this commits us to a relative independence of other loyalties which we would otherwise feel it normal to be governed by."⁵⁸¹ The alternative community also implies that we have to make a choice whether we belong to the church or the world.

However the term 'alternative' is misleading. It is a sociological fact that one belongs to several communities at once and plays different roles: a father at home, a business manager at work, a chairman of a university alumni association, a member of the Rotary Club, a member of a Christian church, and a trustee of a Christian campus ministry. We belong *both* to the church *and* the world at the same time and they are not in an either-or relationship. The idea of an 'alternative' society comes from Yoder's strong assertion of the otherness of the church.⁵⁸² His adherence to Redemption disregards the original goodness of the Creation. When we recognise the continuity between the church and the world and seek utter faithfulness to God, we should regard the church as a 'normative' or 'essential' community. Whilst one belongs to several communities, the church is the community to which full devotion is required, which determines our identity, character, life style, morality, and value system. It is a community in which Christians are called to live for Christ, even to the point of martyrdom. In that sense the church is a normative and essential community, which shapes its members' identity and offers alternative options to the

⁵⁸¹Yoder 1971, 117.

⁵⁸²Yoder emphasises the difference between the church and world more than Hauerwas.

world. Understanding the committed believers' church as an essential community helps us remove the blot on our church as sectarian.

To call the church an alternative society is misleading when we consider Yoder's claim, which we support, that the world can learn from the church without accepting the Lordship of Jesus Christ. When Paul's solidarity models are used for the basis of Japanese car industry's superiority to Detroit's, the church is not an alternative to the world as an either-or choice since in such a discussion the continuity between the church and the world is presupposed. Yet the church is not simply a better community. It is the community which sets the ultimate norm amongst plural organisations and offers real options.

The church is a contrast model to other communities, with its distinctive peculiarity of claiming voluntarily that Jesus Christ is Saviour and Lord. Although one continues to belong to numerous communities even after becoming a Christian, the church requires absolute commitment to God from every member, which determines the trajectory of one's life. The church is the normative and essential community for all Christians.

V. Conclusions

We have discussed Yoder's and Hauerwas' Christian ethics. From our concern of transforming society, the following four points are significant.

Firstly the believers' church is a *topos* in transforming a society. We would like to uphold the idea that the community is the norm not only in Christian life amongst Christians but also in Christian social interaction with the world. The community orientation was a historical fact among the Israelites and among the followers of Jesus Christ; it was also practically inevitable for preserving Christian tradition and Christian morality; and most of all it is a biblical claim.

Like Yoder we reject the totally individualistic existentialism of the interpretation of the Cross as inward brokenness through struggle with sin. His

socio-ethical interpretation of the Cross in the church is long-neglected and significant. Although Yoder is wrong to negate the existential interpretation of the Cross all together and adheres only to socio-ethical interpretation, his emphasis on community is invaluable.⁵⁸³

The way of Christ was rule not by power but through the Cross, voluntary suffering for seeking the will of God; and the way of the church lies in imitating it. The church becomes, though incompletely on earth, the foretaste of the Kingdom of heaven through serving, forgiving, and correcting each other and through discerning the will of God humbly in a confessional way, and through becoming a pioneering community, showing examples to the world for adoption. By doing so the church becomes the normative and essential community for its members.

A state church is incapable of coping with such a requirement; such a church must be *at least* a believers' church which people voluntarily join with full commitment, willing to seek a godly life and to rejoice and to suffer with and for Christ. It does not mean that any believers' church has the distinctive Lordship of Jesus Christ and therefore a firm Christian foothold for transforming society. Yet without voluntary acceptance of the radical Christian belief that Jesus Christ is Saviour and Lord, it is impossible to live up to the distinctive Christian standard.

Secondly the church must have complete trust in God that the fate of the world is in His hand, He is in charge of history and transformation, He is a merciful and capable God, and He intervenes in history here and now. The church's primary task is not to control the world; more than anything the church is required to be faithful to God and to imitate Him. This involves voluntary suffering for the Christian belief. Only the believers' church can dare to respond to such a request. I endorse Yoder and Hauerwas up to this point. I further modified their claim of pacifism. Although imitating Christ does not prevent us from using coercion and power, such a use should be limited for the purpose of building up each others' character and of enhancing Christian maturity.

⁵⁸³Yoder 1994a, 214-217.

Thirdly the church must realise its limitation both as fallen and as historically fragmented. It must humbly accept the fact with awe that the infinite God reveals Himself to it in finite situations. The divine revelation is not merely objective but requires our response. The church's awareness of its limitation should make its interpretation of the Scriptures and of its moral discernment confessional. The term 'confessional' has two meanings. On one hand it is a responder's adjective. Our statement about God should not be forceful and dogmatic but should be a witness. On the other hand the term 'confessional' expresses our humble awareness that we may be one-sided or even wrong. Despite our limitation we must respond to God. That must lead us to humbleness and tolerance and respect to others. We should enjoy diversity of Christian faith from committed believers' communities.

When the human limit is realised, the church does not rely on any one ethical method. Although character ethics was a long-neglected valuable source, it has no right to reject others; although narrative is likewise a significant tool to interpret the Scripture and the self, it needs other complementary sources. Although the lives of the saints and the Eucharist are invaluable resources for the church to learn virtues and character in order rightly to interpret the Scriptures and to live accordingly, both assessment of who are faithful Christians and interpretation of the Eucharist vary. Moreover they are not the only resources which we need. Although the Scriptures are the norm, anything is acceptable if it does not contradict to them. We also face different interpretations of the Scriptures according to different traditions. What we can and should do is humbly to witness to our own position with conviction and to be open to dialogue.

Our final point is about the relationship between the church and the world. Yoder asserts the otherness of the church and stresses the difference between them. Although Hauerwas supports Yoder's claim, he rightly recognises continuity between the church and the world more than Yoder. The relationship between the church and the world originates in the relationship between Creation and Redemption. When Redemption is emphasised, one tends to claim the otherness of

the church and exclusive authority of the Scriptures; when Creation is emphasised, one tends to claim the continuity between the two and accepts authorities even outside the Scriptures. Yoder's theology revolves around Redemption and stresses the otherness of the church. This leads him to the assertion of the church as the alternative community. However I argue that in such a structure Redemption is overemphasised. Jesus Christ is the most explicit revelation of God and His Redemption is a central theme in the Scriptures; and every aspect of Creation which is fallen will be restored. Nevertheless it is His Creation that must not be overlooked; for not only is the original goodness in Creation the basis for Redemption, but also whatever exists is good because it originates in the Creator as Niebuhr asserted. Whilst the church should be distinctively different from the world, there is continuity between them. Although the church does not possess the Kingdom, it strives to seek it on earth by God's mercy. The church does not represent the world as Niebuhr claimed; for it is not on the margin of the world. The church is located on the boundary between the world and the Kingdom of God.

In Chapters 1 and 2 we have discussed the theologies of H. Richard Niebuhr, John Howard Yoder, and Stanley Hauerwas. They were chosen because they had keen awareness about the church's role in transforming culture, and have consequently shaped our criteria for assessing Japanese Christianity.

The believers' church approach of Yoder and Hauerwas is particularly valuable for two important reasons. First, in reviewing the sixteenth and seventeenth century Catholic missions in Japan we shall see that the Christian community was very similar to a believers' community. It was the locus for authentic and vibrant Christianity as well as for survival under persecution. Second, the nineteenth and twentieth centuries experienced stormy nationalism and ethnocentrism throughout the world, and it will be seen that the church in Japan was severely tossed about by the same problems. The believers' church exemplifies the nonconformity, which adheres to an independent standpoint from a nation or a race and thus secures a

position of critical discernment and a prophetic voice. In the following three chapters we turn to examine the history of Christianity in Japan.

Chapter 3

Christianity in Japan 1:

Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century Catholicism

I. Introduction

This chapter examines Christianity in Japan in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the era of Japan's first encounter with Christianity. Although Francis Xavier reported after his stay in Japan that there was no evidence of Christian missions to Japan prior to him, several speculative theories about Christian influence on early Japan have been made by scholars.⁵⁸⁴ Various regional rulers in Japan sent envoys to China from as early as A.D. 57.⁵⁸⁵ Later the Japanese government, from the sixth century to the late ninth century, sent envoys to China. There are records that Nestorian Christianity in China sent missionaries to Japan in 736.⁵⁸⁶ However, the discussion of Christian influence on early Japan is to be left out in this thesis due to the lack of enough reliable materials until the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Christianity in this period grew faster than in the two subsequent encounters.⁵⁸⁷ It is therefore called the Christian century in Japan. However Christianity did not spread like wildfire, as is sometimes claimed, and its adherents only ever accounted for about one per cent of the Japanese population. Moreover, in the end it did not leave much direct influence on Japan. Kiichi Matsuda correctly asserts that although the acceptance of *Nanban* [southern barbarian] culture was a big fad in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Japan, it was not related to

⁵⁸⁴Xavier 1985, 538 (96:35); Furuya 1989, 37-40; Drummond 1971, 30.

⁵⁸⁵Goodrich 1951, 2.

⁵⁸⁶Hiyane 1938, 3-4.

⁵⁸⁷Ebisawa suggests that there were over 300,000 of Japanese Christians, at least 1.3 per cent of Japanese population. According to J. Laures, over one million Japanese were baptised between 1549 and 1639. In 1997, nearly 140 years after the restart of Christian missions in Japan, Christian population was 1,043,011, which was less than 1 per cent of Japanese population. These data prove that the initial Catholic mission was very successful. Ebisawa 1976, 146-147; Laures 1951, 95; Shimizu 1985, 35-38; Kirisutokyô Nenkan 1997.

Christianity, and the Japanese accepted Western culture but excluded Christian elements.⁵⁸⁸ George Elison similarly insists: "In short, the missionaries left no lasting influence."⁵⁸⁹ Christianity was eventually rejected by the country, and it seemed as if it completely died out.

Nevertheless, *Kakure Kirishitans* [underground Christians] doggedly survived in spite of surveillance networks of the government.⁵⁹⁰ Christianity did not become a state church in Japan, nor did it leave a long lasting effect on Japan. However it survived in the committed believers' community at least up through the mid-seventeenth century, which was closer to the early Church in character and also to the church which Yoder and Hauerwas advocate. Therefore it is worth examining its characteristics.

Many *Kakure Kirishitans* publicly denied their faith for survival and their faith often became syncretistic. There is even an argument whether they should be called Christian.⁵⁹¹ We do not answer this question due to the lack of available materials to judge the situations. We rather focus on the facts that in this period a significant number of *Kirishitans* kept their faith to the point of a martyrdom. This was a critical difference from the subsequent period (1859-1945) which also experienced Christian persecutions. We also have to notice that a significant number of *Kakure Kirishitans* passed on their faith to their descendants until Catholic missionaries came back to Japan in the nineteenth century. Over 3,000 *Kakure Kirishitans* publicly expressed their faith after 250 years and dared to endure persecutions. After surveying significant historical events, this chapter examines the

⁵⁸⁸Matsuda 1982, 211. Matsuda points out that the *Nanban* culture boom was between 1591 and 1612, which was after the ban on Christianity in 1587.

⁵⁸⁹Elison 1973, 248. Elison further summarises the Christian century in Japan as "Much effort to no effect." Ibid., 252.

⁵⁹⁰*Kirishitan* is a Japanese term which means Roman Catholic Christians in Early Modern Japan.

⁵⁹¹Johannes Laures claimed after a careful research that the number of *Kirishitan* martyrs was (at least) 4,045, which was 10 per cent of the *Kirishitan* population at that time. Laures 1951, 99. Matsuda asserts that by the end of the seventeenth century all *Kakure Kirishitans* had to pretend to recant in order to survive, and distinguish them from the martyrs. Matsuda 1992, 188-227. See also Neill 1966, 161-162.

characteristics of Japanese Christianity and reasons for the survival of *Kakure Kirishitans*.

II. History

Japan's first encounter with Christianity begins with Xavier's landing in Kagoshima on 15 August 1549 with two other Jesuits, Cosme de Torres and João Fernandez. In 1547 Xavier had met a refugee from Kagoshima, Yajirô. Xavier learned both from Yajirô and from the Portuguese who visited Japan that the Japanese were civilised, and Japan appealed to him as a nation with a great potential for Christian missions.⁵⁹² Japan was outside the *Padroado*.⁵⁹³ Xavier went on this new mission without obtaining permission from the king of Portugal.⁵⁹⁴ He believed that this Japan mission was the will of God, and after long consideration, rather on the basis of faith, dared to take up this task.⁵⁹⁵

Xavier spent two years and three months on missionary work in Japan: in Kagoshima, Hirado, Yamaguchi, Kyoto, and Higo. In such a short period he comprehended the characteristics of the Japanese people and culture well, and set a basic direction for the Japan mission.⁵⁹⁶ Firstly Xavier sought a strategic centralisation. He tried to make Yamaguchi the centre of the mission, although it later had to be moved to Higo. Secondly Xavier valued the intellectual capacity of

⁵⁹²Xavier 1985, 273-274, 359, 366, 380, 447. (59:16-18; 73:3; 74:3; 79:4; 85:7).

⁵⁹³The *Padroado* is an authorisation of colonisation as well as a commission to evangelise, which was first given to Portuguese Crown (1456), and then to the Spanish Crown (1493), by the Pope. Pope Gregory XIII recognised in his bull of 1576 that Japan was under the Portuguese *Padroado*, which was 27 years after the inauguration of the Jesuits' Japan mission. Pope Clemens VIII in December 1600 opened the door of mission in Japan to non-Portuguese orders. The Franciscans from 1593 and the Augustinians and the Dominicans from 1602 started missionary work in Japan. Pope Paulus V abolished all regulations about mission to Japan by the brief *Sedis Apostolicae Providentia* in 1608.

⁵⁹⁴Xavier 1985, 429-430. (83:1). Xavier informed the king of his decision from Malacca on his way to Japan on 20 June 1549.

⁵⁹⁵Xavier 1985, 377, 430, 447. (78:2; 83:1; 85:8).

⁵⁹⁶Xavier wrote two comprehensive reports (5 November 1549 and 29 January 1552). They, along with two personal letters, indicated his evaluation of the Japan mission.

the Japanese, and stressed an intellectual approach.⁵⁹⁷ In his first year in Japan Xavier wrote a catechism and translated it into Japanese with the help of Yajiro and Fernandez in Kagoshima, which is often called the *Kagoshima Catechism*. Thirdly such a highly developed culture led Xavier to a policy of accommodation. He considered that the Jesuits should adapt to Japanese culture, and instructed Torres that the Jesuits should keep Japanese customs, including dress and diet, unless an exception was necessary.⁵⁹⁸ Before coming to Japan, he had valued the Japan mission very highly. He continued to hold the same view even after leaving Japan. He wrote to Ignatius de Loyola, founder of the Society of Jesus and his close friend, on 29 January 1552 from Cochin that Japan was a very suitable nation to produce long-lasting Christians, and therefore it was worth investing as much effort as possible.⁵⁹⁹ He believed that the Japanese, among the known people in Asia, were the only ones who could sustain faith in difficult situations.

Alessandro Valignano was another significant leader in the Japan mission. He virtually succeeded to the spirit of Xavier. He went to Japan three times as *Visitor*, and set a direction for the Japan mission. The Japan mission flourished under his leadership. His *Japanese Summary* (1583) and *Additions* (1592) revealed problems the Jesuits faced and articulate his cultural accommodation policy.⁶⁰⁰

When Christianity was brought to Japan, Japan was in the civil war period. Although influential Buddhist sects had been born in the Kamakura era (1192-1333), by the mid-sixteenth century they declined and failed to play a leading role. Little respect was paid to tradition in the awful chaos of the civil war. Japan had room to accept Christianity. Absolute monarchs like Nobunaga Oda, Hideyoshi Toyotomi, and Ieyasu Tokugawa started to emerge.

⁵⁹⁷It is stressed in his letters before, during, and after his stay in Japan. Xavier 1985, 273-274, 366, 380, 447 (59:16-18; 74:3; 79:4; 85:7); *ibid.*, 473 (90:15); *ibid.*, 526, 532-533, 540, 545 (96:13; 96:21, 41, 43, 53).

⁵⁹⁸Kôno 1988, 258.

⁵⁹⁹Xavier 1985, 554 (97:18).

⁶⁰⁰Valignano 1973. *Valignanos Missionsgrundsätze für Japan* [Valignano's mission principles for Japan] by Josef Franz Schütte is the most complete study on Valignano in the West. Schütte 1951, 1958.

Christianity grew under Nobunaga's protection in the early stage until he was killed in 1582. Christianity certainly aroused his curiosity. It was also overlapped with foreign trading. Moreover he found a value in Christianity as a counter power of Buddhism, which was disturbing his unification of Japan. Furthermore Christianity was still small and was not a threat to him.

Upon his succession to Nobunaga, Hideyoshi was favourably disposed toward Christianity. However in 1587 he suddenly changed his attitude and declared the *Bateren Tsuihō Rei* [the Edict of Missionaries Deportation]. This was the first official persecution against Christianity in Japan and it caused severe loss to it.⁶⁰¹ Missionaries and Japanese Christians suffered greatly and churches were confiscated, although the persecutions gradually eased.⁶⁰² The Martyrdom of the Twenty-Six Saints of Japan occurred under his reign.⁶⁰³

There were several factors which seemed to cause this change. Amongst them the most significant ones are the following. Firstly earlier that year he had brought Kyushu under his control, which was a great step forward for the completion of his rule. It was an appropriate time for him to declare the establishment of the central government.⁶⁰⁴ The *Tsuihō Rei* was also a unilateral declaration of the supremacy of the central government over the regional lords. Secondly Christian monotheism and Hideyoshi's self-apotheosis were destined to clash with each other. An ideological backbone under the name of Hideyoshi was necessary. Since Hideyoshi was of humble birth, he was desperate for legitimacy for his reign. He found the answer in self-apotheosis.⁶⁰⁵ Thirdly Hideyoshi was afraid of Christian

⁶⁰¹First, it closed the door for manifold conversions. *Daimyo* became more careful about Christianity, which made evangelism in their fiefs more difficult. Second, banishment of missionaries caused a lack of Christian education. Frois and others 1969b, 276-277.

⁶⁰²Frois describes the suffering of a famous *Kirishitan* lord, Ukon Takayama and his subjects. Frois 1981, vol. 1, 338-348. Only a few out of some 120 Jesuits actually left Japan and the others remained. In the following year of the order, more than 5,000 people became Christian. Frois and others 1969b, 277.

⁶⁰³Kataoka 1979, 108-110.

⁶⁰⁴Frois and others 1969b, 223; Ebisawa 1976, 269.

⁶⁰⁵Ebisawa 1981, 41. Although Nobunaga first had appeared as an atheistic ruler, rejecting already established religions, later he too apotheosised himself and

unity as a power against him. Hideyoshi had already quelled *Ikkō* sect riots under Nobunaga and realised that a religion could forge strong unity. He asserted that Christianity was a stronger and more dangerous religion than *Ikkō* sect, which basically remained among lower class people, because Christianity involved also feudal aristocracy.⁶⁰⁶ Fourthly Hideyoshi wanted to utilise the suspicion that Portugal might invade Japan. Christianity was considered to be a means to that end. Although the military power of the Jesuits was not a threat to him, it may have led him to forestall such a threat. On the pretext of this suspicion, he occupied the privilege of foreign trading, which restricted economic growth and thus the military expansion of *Daimyō* [regional lords] and brought an explosive growth of Hideyoshi's wealth. Fifthly Hideyoshi tried to present himself as a guardian of traditional Japanese religions, since protecting traditional religions was likely to carry public favour. Buddhism was already weakened, and Christianity had lost its value as a counter power to it. Hideyoshi insisted on protecting this country of gods from the evil religion of Christianity.⁶⁰⁷ This led him to *Sankyō Icchi Ron* [theory of unity of three religions: Buddhism, Shinto, and Confucianism]. In Hideyoshi's reign, the clash between Christianity and Japanese tradition became more apparent than in Nobunaga's because the unification of the nation was almost completed.

After Hideyoshi died of sickness in 1598, Ieyasu Tokugawa ascended the throne, and the Tokugawa Shogunate lasted until 1868 under his successors. In 1612 Ieyasu banned Christianity in territories under his direct control. In 1612 his successor, Hidetada Tokugawa, declared *Hai Kirishitan Bun* [the Statement on the Expulsion of the Christians]. The statement, in summary, insisted upon the basis of *Sankyō Icchi Ron* that Christianity had to be removed since it was not accepted by successive ancestors of Japan and was dangerous and evil to Japan. The successive

required worship from the people. Frois and others 1969a, 207-208; Kitashima 1974, 5.

⁶⁰⁶Frois and others 1969b, 232-233; Frois 1981, vol. 1, 326-327.

⁶⁰⁷Hideyoshi's self-apotheosis along with the idea of Japan as a nation of gods served to rationalise his foreign invasion.

ancestors meant the *Tennô*, and the *Edo* Shogunate located the *Tennô* as the ultimate core of anti-Christian theory in Japan.⁶⁰⁸

Sakoku Rei [the Edict of National Isolation] was successively issued 5 times from 1633 to 1639. The Shogunate never totally closed the nation. Ebisawa makes the relevant remark that *Sakoku* was actually "an extreme form of trading control" by the central government.⁶⁰⁹ With successful trading control and on the pretext of an anticipated Portuguese and Spanish invasion, the Tokugawa Shogunate started to oppress Christianity, although Japan was by no means in military jeopardy. The Tokugawa Shogunate had enough military forces to repel such an invasion. However *Sakoku* was meant to block out Christianity and the possibility of Western invasions.

III. Characteristics of Christianity in Japan

Underground Christians lived with the danger of martyrdom for 250 years until the ban was lifted in 1873. There are two kinds of underground Christians in Japan. One is called *Hanare Kirishitans* [Separatist Christian].⁶¹⁰ They became heretical and syncretic with Japanese religions due to the lack of appropriate teachers and strong communities. They kept their underground faith and life style because of loyalty to their ancestors, who kept their faith even by risking their lives, rather than loyalty to God. They did not return to the Roman Catholic Church when missionaries came back to Japan and the ban was lifted. The other is called *Kakure Kirishitan*.⁶¹¹ They returned to Catholicism.⁶¹² Even in the case of the *Hanare Kirishitans*, however, one can imagine the earlier generations' strong commitment to Christianity, which at least enabled the following generations to continue Christian

⁶⁰⁸Murai 1987, 146-150.

⁶⁰⁹Ebisawa 1976, 295.

⁶¹⁰Ebisawa 1981, 213.

⁶¹¹The word "*Kakure Kirishitan*" includes "*Hanare Kirishitan*" in a broad sense.

⁶¹²Although there are no accurate figures, it is assumed that 50,000 to 60,000 people returned to the Roman Catholic Church.

living. What were the characteristics of the Christianity made possible these underground Christians? This section discusses them from sociological and theological viewpoints.

A. Ordinary People

Christianity was a totally new religion to the Japanese. What were the motivations for them to become Christians? Which classes accepted Christianity? The motivations varied according to their background and the situations in which they were. The intellectuals were attracted by positive scientific thinking and technology; lords and merchants were attracted by profits from trading; ordinary people were often attracted by a Christian view of humanity expressed in social activities of the Jesuits.⁶¹³ Yet these were merely entrance points to Christianity. Those who sustained faith under the persecutions experienced Christianity at deeper level, and we must examine what made them do so.

Japanese society consisted of five classes: the nobility, *Bushi*, peasants, craftsmen, and merchants.⁶¹⁴ The nobility tended to look back to their golden age, and did not wish the society to move to the Early Modern stage. Their religion was Shinto. They were not drawn to Christianity except for a few. *Bushi* were educated and constantly faced the risk to their lives in the civil war period. It was natural for them to be attracted to Christianity, which promised hope after death, upheld them with strong spiritual support from a personal God, and presented a very strict moral code, which could blend with the *Samurai* ethics.⁶¹⁵ Particularly regional lords were becoming a new ruling class and had an interest in the profits from foreign trading and in the new religion in the chaotic period when old values were destroyed.

⁶¹³Ebisawa 1976, 116.

⁶¹⁴The class system was developed by Hideyoshi, and was fully established in the *Edo* period. The first two were the ruling class. Although the peasantry was next to *Bushi* on the social scale, they were the poorest and most unprivileged. Below the five classes there were also lowly people: *Eta* and *Hinin*.

⁶¹⁵Elison 1973, 45.

Although Christian lords were more noticeable than Christians from lower classes due to their social status and influence, they were not many.⁶¹⁶ Among them those who were purely attracted by the gospel and sustained their faith under persecutions were few.⁶¹⁷ Others approached Christianity because of foreign trading and curiosity about foreign culture, and naturally abandoned their Christian garments when anti-Christian policies were strengthened.

Japanese Christians during this period were mostly ordinary people: the peasantry, craftsmen, merchants, and some lower *Bushi*.⁶¹⁸ Missionaries like Francis Xavier and Francisco Cabral aggressively approached lords since they had independence in their fiefs. Receiving their favour made their evangelism easier.⁶¹⁹ It is to be noted that ordinary people in their fiefs were not always blind followers of their lords. Whilst rulers' Christianity was often a result of political decision, the ordinary people did not win any merit by converting to Christianity, and their interest was often religious. Traditional Japanese thought lost its influence in this period and accepting the new teaching of Christianity was easier than ever. Except for lower *Bushi*, they were oppressed ones living in the chaotic civil war period. Whilst traditional thought supported the legitimacy of the rulers and therefore indirectly oppressed them, they found liberation in Christianity.⁶²⁰ Although sixteenth and seventeenth century Catholicism was feudalistic and accepted a class society, it taught the unconditional love of God and valued all humanity extremely highly, including women and children. Such a thought had never appeared in Japan and was fresh and comforting to the suffering people in the civil war period. The social activities of the missionaries, such as medical service and education, met people's needs as an impressive sign of Christian love in practice. Yet such practical aspects were of course not enough to support people's faith under the persecutions.

⁶¹⁶Ebisawa 1976, 145. Only one *Bushi* became a Christian in the first 20 years of the Christian mission.

⁶¹⁷Ebisawa counts only a few upper class *Bushi* of sincere faith. Ebisawa 1976, 142.

⁶¹⁸Ebisawa 1976, 142-143; Ebisawa 1981, 139.

⁶¹⁹Neill 1966, 156-157.

⁶²⁰Ebisawa 1976, 142.

The oppressed and exploited found liberation and human dignity in Christianity.⁶²¹ It is remarkable that there were *Kirishitans*, amongst these uneducated people, who understood the gospel and clung to it.⁶²² For example among the 26 Saints' Martyrdom 20 were Japanese and ordinary people.⁶²³ When the persecution started, on the other hand, many rulers dropped out. The persecutions divided sheep and goats.

Some were martyred and some kept faith underground, passing on the faith to their descendants. We have numerous examples to indicate that *Kirishitans* at least in the earlier generations had a sound understanding of Christian commitment.⁶²⁴ The ordinary people's faith was a characteristic of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Christianity in Japan.

What enabled them to sustain such firm faith? There were four elements which helped the gospel penetrate them: doctrinal education, suffering (doctrinal understanding of suffering, the living example of the Jesuits' suffering, and their own suffering), Christian communities, and the accommodation of Christianity to Japanese culture.

B. Doctrinal Education

The Jesuits were always keen on education from its early stage, and their education was very effective in Japan. The Jesuits had four kinds of schools in Japan:⁶²⁵ doctrinal schools,⁶²⁶ children's schools for Christian education, schools for training ministers,⁶²⁷ and medical schools.⁶²⁸ We have mentioned the *Kagoshima*

⁶²¹Kataoka 1979, 153.

⁶²²Ebisawa 1976, 147.

⁶²³Kataoka 1979, 108-110.

⁶²⁴Kataoka 1979.

⁶²⁵Matsuda 1982, 214.

⁶²⁶They were located in Hirado, Shishi, Iira, Kasuga, Gotôrettô, Oomura, Arima, Kawachi, Settsu, and Azuchi.

⁶²⁷Fujita 1991, 79-80; Elison 1973, 64, 69, 70, 81; Matsuda 1982, 216-225. As soon as Valignano arrived Japan, he decided to train Japanese Christian workers. The following were started: seminaries in Arima (1580) and Azuchi (1581), a novitiate in Usuki (1580), a college in Funai (1580). Yet they had to move around

Catechism. Doctrina Christiana was the major catechism in Japan.⁶²⁹ Valignano brought a printing machine to Japan as early as 1590 partially in order to strengthen Christian education even without missionaries.⁶³⁰ Missionary activities were already restricted from Hideyoshi's ban (1587), and he foresaw further persecutions. Although published catechisms were limited in numbers and seemed to be used by teachers to teach lay Christians, doctrinal education permeated Christians widely.⁶³¹ The Society produced numerous other documents for Japanese Christians.⁶³² Valignano highly valued the catechism, small confession material, and biographies of Saints for new Christians.⁶³³ Thus the publications covered intellectual, ecclesiastical, and devotional aspects.⁶³⁴

Missionaries had roughly two choices in communicating their teaching: to use European terms as they were or to use the Japanese terms which had the closest meanings. Xavier chose the latter, and wrongly used *Dainichi* for God, following Yajiro's suggestion.⁶³⁵ Although Buddhist terms were religious and had similar meanings, they sometimes carried wrong messages. The Society later made a policy

after Hideyoshi's ban on Christianity in 1587, and were destroyed in 1614 when severe persecution started. Valignano further planned to build the University of Kyoto, a language institute in Oomura, another seminary in Bungo.

⁶²⁸It was in a hospital built in Bungo in 1557.

⁶²⁹*Doctrina Christiana* was published in Kazusa probably in 1591, in Amakusa in 1592, and in Nagasaki in 1600. Fukushima 1983, 25, 27-29, 42-43. Ebisawa 1976, 92-111.

⁶³⁰Ebisawa 1981, 94.

⁶³¹Ebisawa 1976, 158. When Yûgi, a highly educated *Bushi*, met Diego, who was a new Christian and an ordinary person, he was amazed by Diego's confidence in God and religious knowledge, and later converted to Christianity. Ebisawa 1965, 10-11.

⁶³²Fukushima 1983, 19-82. The Ancient Japanese Mission Press includes 29 or 31 documents which were published and survive today. In addition to 22 other publications which no longer exist, there are at least 47 more documents. Some of them discussed Japanese culture from Christian perspectives. See also Laures 1957, 26-126.

⁶³³Schütte 1951, 224.

⁶³⁴However it took some 60 years to translate the New Testament into Japanese which is considered to have been done by 1613 and most likely the Old Testament was not translated. The emphasis of the Roman Catholic Missions was on other writings than the Scriptures. Oouchi 1970, 224-225; Drummond 1971, 316.

⁶³⁵*Dainichi* literally meant the great Sun, and was the divine figure of *Shingon* Buddhism (*Dainichi Nyorai*). Xavier later found out that it was totally different from Christian God and it also had an indecent meaning. He started using *Deus* in Latin.

that Latin and Portuguese should be used for essential doctrine and Buddhist terms for others. This enabled the Jesuits to convey their Christian message clearly whilst communicating in the language familiar to the Japanese.⁶³⁶ However even though such foreign languages were used, Christian concepts were novel to the Japanese, and they had to understand the notions through traditional Japanese thought, mainly Buddhism.

1. The Doctrine of Creation

The Japanese never had monotheism nor a concept of God as the Creator, and they had much difficulty in understanding them. For example *Kirishitan Bushi* understood *Deus* through the concept of *Tentô*.⁶³⁷ Xavier had already noticed the difficulty, and the missionaries who followed him treated the doctrine of Creation as the corner-stone of doctrinal education in Japan. Xavier wrote the *Kagoshima Catechism*. Although it has been lost, Xavier wrote in his letter that he first discussed the doctrine of the Creation as a foundation for evangelising the Japanese.⁶³⁸ The *Doctrina Christiana* also describes it as a foundational doctrine.⁶³⁹ Ebisawa suggests with some evidence that confession of God the Creator qualified one to be baptised because the doctrine logically denied Japanese religions which were based on polytheism, and that other doctrinal education was done in the *confraria* after baptism.⁶⁴⁰ The Japanese today still have much difficulty understanding monotheism, and the emphasis on the doctrine was appropriate.

⁶³⁶Ebisawa 1976, 100.

⁶³⁷Ebisawa 1981, 51-52. *Tentô* literally means way of heaven. It also means order, authority, or providence of heaven. *Tentô* was widely accepted by *Bushi*, and it rationalised social upheaval as heaven's will. The missionaries at first used this notion of *Tentô* to convey the Christian concept of *Deus*. Yet they stopped using it as they realised that it did not contain the clear meaning of the Creator.

⁶³⁸Xavier 1985, 526 (96:13). This catechism has been lost. In this thesis this catechism is called the *Kagoshima Catechism*. Yanagiya 1968, 94, 206. João Fernandez improved his Japanese quickly.

⁶³⁹Ebisawa 1991, 15.

⁶⁴⁰*Confraria* is a community of faith. It was called *Confraria* in Portuguese in Japan. Ebisawa 1976, 119-124. See Chapter 3, IIID 'Confraria.' Ebisawa thinks that the understanding of God as the Creator qualified candidates for baptism in the

2. The Doctrine of the Atonement

Since traditional Japanese thought did not contain a God as the Creator, it equally did not hold the concept of 'sin,' which included irresponsibility to the Creator. This lack made the understanding of the Atonement difficult. In addition, the Atonement was not as much emphasised as the Creation in Christian education. Comprehension of the Creation was so difficult for the Japanese that the missionaries' priority was on Creation. Although Shinto included a similar concept to sin, *Kegare* [impurity], it was easily to be brushed off by a ritual. *Jôdo* Buddhism also contained a concept which was similar to 'sin.' Although its focus was merely on evil thoughts and deeds rather than responsibility to God, the structure of its doctrine of salvation was similar to that of Christianity, namely trusting its goddess. It is natural to assume that some Japanese comprehended the doctrine of the Atonement through *Jôdo* Buddhism.⁶⁴¹

Uoki asserts that the missionaries did not emphasise Salvation much in their letters or in a major religious dispute, and suggests that Japanese Christians tended to remain in a Buddhist framework without having clear understanding of the Atonement.⁶⁴² However Ebisawa argues that Uoki's analysis is invalid. He quotes several Christian documents which discuss or mention the Atonement⁶⁴³ and a Buddhist priest's critical work about Christian doctrine.⁶⁴⁴ They indicate Japanese Christians' clear understanding of the Atonement and their communication of it with others.

Ebisawa is correct that the Christians paid enough attention to the Atonement, and it seems erroneous to claim that their understanding of the

early stage of the Japan mission, in the rural area, for the uneducated, and during the persecutions.

⁶⁴¹Ebisawa 1976, 31; Uoki 1941, 44, 63, 66.

⁶⁴²Uoki 1941, 45-47, 68, 86-89. Uoki however affirms that Japanese Christians consciously noticed the difference between Christianity and Buddhism.

⁶⁴³Ebisawa 1976, 129-137; Ebisawa 1979, 83-88.

⁶⁴⁴Ebisawa 1979, 89-90.

Redemption remained in a Buddhist framework only. *Doctrina Christiana* clearly teaches the doctrine of the Atonement theologically, and other publications cover devotional aspects about the suffering of Christ including the Cross.⁶⁴⁵ Japanese Christians had a custom of meditating on the Passion of Jesus existentially.⁶⁴⁶ Although *Kirishitans* initially understood the Atonement through a Buddhist concept, there is enough evidence to claim that it was understood intellectually and devotionally.

C. Suffering

Suffering was a crucial characteristic of Christianity in Japan in this period. Suffering here means any kinds of disadvantage, including physical and psychological discomfort and pain or even martyrdom, consequent upon one's faith in God. The suffering of Christ was understood by Japanese Christians both theologically and existentially. From Hideyoshi's ban (1587) Christian persecution was officially started, and it continued to become worse. Yet there were many Japanese Christians who dared to face suffering. If they wished to remain Christians under the persecution, they had no choice but to face suffering. It was the only way to lead them to heaven, according to their teaching. However besides such practical and passive reasons, they positively accepted the suffering. They believed that Christ suffered for them and they were to suffer for Him and that suffering was a genuine element in Christian life. Such an instruction was given by the missionaries who themselves were suffering for Christ and with Japanese Christians, and therefore was convincing. Nigel Griffin suggests that Loyola and his major colleagues shared the same tradition of knightly obligation, which was a basis of "the heroic sufferings of Jesuit missionaries in the service of their Lord."⁶⁴⁷ The missionaries' devotion to God was extraordinary, and there is no doubt that Japanese

⁶⁴⁵Ebisawa 1991, 16, 19-21, 45-46, 51-57.

⁶⁴⁶Ebisawa 1976, 134-136.

⁶⁴⁷Griffin 1984, 36-37.

Christians learned that suffering for the service to God was a part of being Christian from their lifestyle.

1. Xavier

Xavier set the basic tone of Christian suffering as the founder of the Japan mission. He believed that suffering was an essential element in Christian life. The words, 'suffering' and 'danger' were often used interchangeably in his letters, and suffering certainly included physical danger for the service to God. Yet it also meant psychological and any other pain for God as well. He sought to imitate Christ, and preferred to be poor and despised for the kingdom of God than to be rich and respected for his own sake.

His willingness to suffer was based on trust in God and to some extent on fear of God, yet mention of fear is less frequent. Having described the terrible danger of the trip to Japan prior to his actual journey, he wrote that he worried about nothing but being unfaithful, lazy, and ineffective in the service to God and being judged by God because of that.⁶⁴⁸ On 2 February 1549 Xavier wrote that he believed that many Jesuits would be martyred on the Island of Morotai.⁶⁴⁹ In this context he talked about his plan of going to Japan and its danger.⁶⁵⁰ He was thus willing to risk his own life for this Japan mission. He believed that there was no harm without God's permission and that if there were, it was allowed by God and it helped him grow in faith,⁶⁵¹ and the evil which fell on Christians was grace from God.⁶⁵² He was willing to take whatever was given or allowed by God, pleasure or pain, and did not wish to escape from sufferings.

⁶⁴⁸Xavier 1985, 377, 448. (78:2; 85:9-10).

⁶⁴⁹Xavier 1985, 387. (79:18). See also Xavier 1985, 233. (55:4).

⁶⁵⁰Xavier 1985, 388, 449. (79:19; 85:12). Xavier was told that it was extremely successful if two out of three ships reached Japan because of pirates and natural danger.

⁶⁵¹Xavier 1985, 468, 476-477. (90:8; 90:22-23).

⁶⁵²Xavier 1985, 486. (90:48).

Moreover, he seemed to seek sufferings rather than simply accepting them.⁶⁵³ For instance, he wrote that he prayed in the midst of a storm that he could be delivered from the danger but that was in order to enter even greater suffering for God.⁶⁵⁴ Xavier's journey from Yamaguchi to Iwakuni on his way to Kyoto was in the midst of winter in December 1550 and was extremely severe.⁶⁵⁵ Kôno suggests that Xavier dared to take the trip in the hardest condition because of his desire to suffer for the service to God, by mentioning four similar instances prior to his Japan mission.⁶⁵⁶ Although there are not enough materials to support the view that Xavier's desire for suffering led him to the winter journey, his letters indicate such a desire for suffering, and Kôno's suggestion sounds reasonable.

Although Xavier already sought suffering for service to God before going to Japan, he seemed to reach a deeper understanding of suffering in 1549. He used to think that he was doing some service to God in his missions, but after coming to Japan he came to realise that God helped him trust in Him more by sending him to Japan. Because the journey to Japan was extremely dangerous and the situation of the mission was more difficult than ever, he had to trust in nothing else but God.⁶⁵⁷

Suffering for God is not always meaningful by itself, and suffering can damage one's faith. However its constructive interpretation helps one grow in faith. Suffering and contemplation of it, both Christ's passion and human suffering, were inseparable in Xavier's life. Monasteries as a whole emphasised contemplation, and Xavier's life was spent in "contemplation in activity."⁶⁵⁸ In his busy ministry he spent time in contemplation, including the suffering of Christ and his ministry, and he discovered his sinfulness.⁶⁵⁹ Thus he further began to seek sufferings so that he could trust in God more and build character. He naturally found the ultimate value in martyrdom. Although he indirectly mentions before his journey to Japan that he

⁶⁵³Kôno 1988, 208.

⁶⁵⁴Xavier 1985, 276. (59:21).

⁶⁵⁵Schurhammer 1982, 167.

⁶⁵⁶Kôno 1988, 240-241.

⁶⁵⁷Xavier 1985, 486-487. (90:42-43).

⁶⁵⁸Kôno 1988, 208.

⁶⁵⁹Xavier 1985, 549-550.(97:2).

was willing to become a martyr if necessary,⁶⁶⁰ his desire to be with Christ in heaven is explicitly expressed in his first letter from Japan.⁶⁶¹ Hence his desire for sacrifice was deepened through his suffering experiences and contemplation, which enabled him to experience God more than before.

Suffering was for Every Committed Christian

Xavier believed that every Christian should seek suffering for God, since suffering was a way to receive comfort from God. He wrote that many Jesuit intellectuals should come to Asia and experience severe suffering in the dangerous voyages because the Jesuits are to trust in God, obeying the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and not trusting in knowledge.⁶⁶² He contrasted monastic life with secular life, saying that there was a huge difference between trusting in God in material prosperity and trusting in Him by choosing not to possess the necessities of life. Likewise, he wrote that in the life of the monastery there was a difference between trusting, hoping, and believing in God without danger and doing so by voluntarily choosing to suffer and risk one's life for God.⁶⁶³ Xavier also wrote to a Jesuit college, asking to have students write to him about their ascetic exercise and desire to suffer for Christ.⁶⁶⁴ He was planning to raise Japanese Jesuits, and therefore he had the same expectation of Japanese Christians as well. Thus Xavier believed that voluntary suffering for God by limiting one's rights was a virtue for every committed Christian. The sufferings given by God and contemplation about them helped one grow, but voluntary suffering was better; and Xavier lived such a life. Xavier came back to Yamaguchi after his journey to Kyoto and started his ministry there, baptising about 500 Japanese. He wrote that suffering with Japanese Christians in Yamaguchi brought him abundant satisfaction, and he called them "true

⁶⁶⁰Xavier 1985, 387-388, 449. (79:18-19; 85:12).

⁶⁶¹Xavier 1985, 489-490. (90:48).

⁶⁶²Xavier 1985, 449. (85:13).

⁶⁶³Xavier 1985, 449-450. (85:14).

⁶⁶⁴Xavier 1985, 614. (107:17).

Christians."⁶⁶⁵ Here Xavier had a good community of faith and co-sufferers for Christ.

2. Other Missionaries

Jesuit missionaries basically had a same mind-set as Xavier, and sought suffering for and with Christ and Japanese Christians.⁶⁶⁶ They could not go this far without such an attitude. Gaspar Vilela was going to enter Kyoto without permission from Mt. Hiei, the centre of Buddhism. When his partners urged him to stop, according to Frois, he replied that he did not mind to be martyred on the first day in Kyoto. He could not simply give up his missions because of danger. He told them that he would enter Kyoto alone if they were afraid of persecutions.⁶⁶⁷ When Buddhist priests of Mt. Hiei decided to get rid of the missionaries from Kyoto and to destroy Christianity, Vilela gathered all Japanese Christians, and told them that he would never leave them alone and he was determined to die with them if necessary.⁶⁶⁸ When the *Shogun* was killed and Christianity lost its protector and serious persecutions were about to come, missionaries decided to stay with Japanese Christians and were willing to be martyred.⁶⁶⁹ Valignano wrote upon his second and third visits to Japan during the time of persecutions: "We all are determined to die for the faith."⁶⁷⁰ Organtino was also willing to be martyred.⁶⁷¹ Thus suffering was obviously a part of the Jesuit missionary life, and they expected martyrdom. I must note that missionaries from other monasteries who joined the Japan mission later lived and taught similarly.⁶⁷² A Jesuit and a Franciscan were beheaded at

⁶⁶⁵Xavier 1985, 545, 533. (96:53, 22).

⁶⁶⁶Xavier 1985, 387-388. (79:18). Xavier said that seminaries prepared martyrs.

⁶⁶⁷Frois 1981, vol. 3, 60.

⁶⁶⁸Frois 1981, vol. 3, 206-207.

⁶⁶⁹Frois 1981, vol. 3, 329, 335-337.

⁶⁷⁰Schütte 1951, 49.

⁶⁷¹Schütte 1958, 144.

⁶⁷²Ebisawa 1981, 136. Ebisawa suggests that the Dominicans and the Franciscans had more influence on Japanese Christians in the era of persecutions.

Oomura in April 1617, which was the first martyrdom of Europeans, and a Dominican and an Augustinian followed them later in the same region.⁶⁷³ Thus missionaries were willing to suffer for Christ and Japanese Christians.

3. Martyrdom Education

Christian persecution in Japan after 1614 was extremely severe, and resulted in numerous martyrdoms. In comparison to the second and third phases of Christianity in Japan, in which many Japanese Christians abandoned their faith, this commitment even as far as the martyrdom is noticeable. A martyrdom occurred in Japan by 1559, which was only 10 years after the inauguration of the Japan mission.⁶⁷⁴ Japanese non-believers could not understand why Christians kept their faith even to martyrdom, and regarded Christianity as an evil religion which led them to death. Christians were willing to die for Christ, and revered the martyrs. Although some Buddhist sects experienced persecutions in Japan, they never valued martyrdom like Christianity.⁶⁷⁵

Missionaries were aware of the possibility of persecutions, and prepared Christians for them. Japanese Christians started a custom of meditating on the passion of Christ by 1552. Numerous devotional writings and biographies of saints and martyrs were published in Japanese, and were used for contemplation.⁶⁷⁶ For example, Passion narratives from the four gospels were edited and read widely amongst churches by 1565. There were at least three documents which specifically encouraged martyrdom: *Maruchiriyo no Kagami* [Paragons of martyrdom], *Maruchiriyo no Susume* [An exhortation toward martyrdom], and *Maruchiriyo no Kokoroe* [Preparing for martyrdom].⁶⁷⁷ Besides doctrinal education,⁶⁷⁸ missionaries

⁶⁷³Neill 1966, 161.

⁶⁷⁴Frois 1981, vol. 6, 224. This is considered the first martyrdom in Japan. Ebisawa 1981, 103.

⁶⁷⁵Anesaki 1932, 10.

⁶⁷⁶Ebisawa 1981, 90, 93-95.

⁶⁷⁷Anesaki 1926, 131-239. See also Turnbull 1998, 34-36.

emphasised the importance of Christian sufferings through sermons that every Christian is to follow in the footsteps of Christ and the martyrs.⁶⁷⁹

Missionaries devoted their energy to both intellectual doctrinal education and existential education about suffering for Japanese Christians. The lives of Christ, martyrs, and the missionaries showed them Christian suffering. It is crystal-clear that neither the missionaries nor Japanese Christians under persecutions regarded the Gospel as "cheap grace"⁶⁸⁰ and that they believed that to live for Christ is to suffer for and with Him.

D. *Confraria* [Confraternity]

1. Needs and Readiness for Christian Community

After the ban there was no material benefit in being a Christian in Japan. It is reported that Christians were despised and treated as the cursed, and new converts were called beasts. Frois noted that some who were weak in faith recanted and went back to idol worship.⁶⁸¹ Japan was a community-oriented society, and social opinions had much influence on individuals.⁶⁸² When a person becomes a Christian and when the primary community is anti-Christian, the person can not keep the same relationship with the community. When we lose an important community, such as family or the neighbourhood, particularly in community-oriented societies like

⁶⁷⁸Ebisawa 1991, 18. The *Doctrina Christiana* taught monotheism. Jesuit missionaries generally encouraged people to observe a feudalistic order, yet rigorous obedience to *Deus* was taught as a supreme command. Gay 1973. Gay 1980, 72-89.

⁶⁷⁹Ebisawa 1981, 94.

⁶⁸⁰Bonhoeffer 1960, 30. "Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate."

⁶⁸¹Frois 1981, vol. 3, 89.

⁶⁸²Frois also reported that people in Sakai were so cautious about saving their faces and concerned about what other people thought of them if they became Christians. Frois 1981, vol. 3, 205-206.

Japan, we desperately need a substitute. Missionaries rightly endeavoured to form *confrarias* in Japan.⁶⁸³

Such communities of faith were not only psychologically needed but also are theologically sound. Xavier himself confessed to Loyola how much he needed someone who cared about his spirituality.⁶⁸⁴ *Confraria* was a small group, which was similar to what is called a 'house church' today.⁶⁸⁵ Since there were not enough missionaries nor churches, Christians supported each other's faith in *confrarias*.⁶⁸⁶

2. Two Kinds of *Confraria*

Confraria had two stages in Japan. Initially it was a Christian mutual aid society which also functioned as a charitable institution for society; and it then became a support group for Christians under persecutions.⁶⁸⁷ The former was called *Confraria de Misericordia*. It was organised for the effective practice of Christian living and charity, working closely with a church and was approved in 1240 in Florence.⁶⁸⁸ It is hard to date the birth of *confrarias* in Japan, yet Neil Fujita suggests that the first one seemed to be born around 1560.⁶⁸⁹ Their purpose was to support members, meeting the needs both spiritually and physically, and to give charity to those outside the *confrarias*. They were modelled on *Misericordia* in Portugal and Goa. They regularly met at a member's house once a week or a month

⁶⁸³A Portuguese term for confraternity. The Franciscans, the Augustinians, and the Dominicans started missionary work in Japan around 1600. Although their organisations similar to *Confraria* were called *Confradías* in Spanish, We call them *Confrarias* to avoid confusion.

⁶⁸⁴Xavier 1985, 549-550. (97:2).

⁶⁸⁵Cf. Birkey 1988.

⁶⁸⁶Late medieval farmers had self-governing organisations called *Só*. *Só* often became *confrarias* in the areas of strong Christian concentration.

⁶⁸⁷Ebisawa 1981, 124-126.

⁶⁸⁸Kataoka 1979, 162.

⁶⁸⁹Fujita 1991, 169. See also Ebisawa 1981, 131 and Imamura 1955, 1. Imamura asserts that *confrarias* were formed based on the decisions made at the second Jesuit consultation in Kazusa in 1590 with Valignano. Ebisawa also says that the first *confraria* was born by 1592 in Oomura and held 3,000 Christians. Imamura and Ebisawa probably mean *confrarias* of the second stage under persecutions. Kataoka suggests that the first *confraria de misericordia* might have been started as early as 1570 and became active by 1583. Kataoka 1979, 163.

depending on the situation. They ate together, reviewed sermons they heard, and collected offerings for the poor and hospitals.⁶⁹⁰ It was a civil war period, and they also supported orphans and widows. Once persecutions started, they had to give up public activities due to their noticeable nature.⁶⁹¹ The Christian charities attracted many people to Christianity and served as entrance points to becoming Christians. Yet *Confraria de Misericordia* is not discussed further because it was not essential to the survival of underground Christians.

The latter originated in the former and was developed in order to support each other's faith as persecutions started. It was called *Confraria de Santa Maria*.⁶⁹² *Confraria* in this thesis means this kind of *confraria* unless otherwise noted.

Confrarias did not simply keep silent and hide themselves. Persecutions seemed to enhance their faith, and the number of the Christians increased under persecutions.⁶⁹³ *Confrarias* in Arima, for example, publicly requested the freedom of faith in early 1600s, knowing that such an act might cost martyrdom. About 1,500 people were willing to be martyred and joined the campaign with signatures.⁶⁹⁴ After experiencing the martyrdom of their leaders, the *confrarias* were even strengthened. *Confrarias* in Arima did not accept people as their members unless the applicants declared their total commitment to God, including all their possessions and their life. Good deeds were also required prior to joining the *confrarias*.⁶⁹⁵ Thus *confraria* here became believers' church with voluntary participation.

Confrarias functioned as underground churches as persecutions became severe. *Kakure Kirishitans* tended to survive where they had strong leadership and a solid *confraria* which overlapped with feudal structure of the village.⁶⁹⁶ More

⁶⁹⁰Yanagiya 1968, 241, 247.

⁶⁹¹Ebisawa 1981, 124-131.

⁶⁹²This was named after the feast of St. Mary (15 August) when Xavier came to Japan.

⁶⁹³Ebisawa 1981, 96.

⁶⁹⁴Ebisawa 1981, 181; Murai 1987, 13.

⁶⁹⁵Morejon 1974, 50-51; Ebisawa 1981, 182. See also Kataoka 1979, 165-166.

⁶⁹⁶Ebisawa 1981, 135, 214, 218-219, 235; Cieslik 1995, 392, 395, 398.

Kakure Kirishitans survived in Kyushu where missions were started early and produced three or four generations of Christians before severe persecutions. They had the advantage that Christianity became a family religion and Christians occupied important positions in the villages. However in the northern part of Japan missions were just started and the first generation of Christians faced persecutions. Although there were *confrarias*, they were not stable enough to support people's faith under persecutions.⁶⁹⁷

Cieslik claims that mass conversion was the most essential factor for *Kirishitans*' survival underground for 250 years, and states that *Kirishitans* who survived indispensably experienced a mass conversion.⁶⁹⁸ Phenomenologically it is a correct statement. Mass conversion and *Kirishitans*' survival appeared to correlate. However the term 'mass conversion' is misleading. It usually means conversions that occur at the same time or forced institutional change of religion. However by the term he seems to stress formation of Christian community in a real life situation based on genuine and personal conversions rather than its equally common meanings.⁶⁹⁹ Cieslik as a good Jesuit hopes to baptise a whole society and to make the society Christian; he then emphasises the necessity of the Christian community which functions at the level of daily life such as holding a birthday party and organising a hike.⁷⁰⁰ As for the former point we have already rejected in the previous chapter Constantinian Christianity which dilutes Christian distinctiveness. Yet on the latter point Cieslik is right that the Christian community should not limit itself simply as a religious organisation but should become a real life community. Mass conversion which is institutionally supported yet based upon genuine personal conversion may seem to be a good way to form such a real life committed believers' community. However it does not seem to happen without persecutions. *Confraria*

⁶⁹⁷Ebisawa 1981, 214-215; Murai 1987, 12-16. Murai suggests with enough evidence that village headmen and village people had a patriarchal relationship and it was a characteristic of Christianity in Shimabara and Amakusa in Kyushu.

⁶⁹⁸Cieslik 1995, 390, 392, 394, 398.

⁶⁹⁹Cieslik 1995, 380, 384, 400.

⁷⁰⁰Cieslik 1995, 400-401.

was such a community. I agree with Cieslik to the extent that the community of committed believers' life together is important in Christian life and was the key for *Kakure Kirishitans'* survival.

The *Edo* Shogunate forced every Japanese to belong to a Buddhist temple by the mid-seventeenth century. Christians outwardly pretended to leave the Christian faith and to join a temple whilst keeping faith underground. This was problematic, and always contained a danger of syncretism. It was conspicuous in villages without a strong *confraria* and leaders. *Confrarias* were not only shelters for Christians but also educational communities. Christians' recitation of basic teachings included the Apostle's Creed, the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, the Practices of Charity. Doctrinal education mentioned above was often practised in *confrarias*.⁷⁰¹ Thus the *confraria* played an important role both in hiding *Kirishitans* in the feudal structure of the village and in supporting each other.

The overlapping of the *confraria* and the village was beneficial to the Christians. They could camouflage their Christian life with ordinary village life. Village headmen were often leaders of the *confraria*, and *confraria* meetings looked like accustomed village meetings.⁷⁰² Systems for detecting Christians such as *Gonin Gumi* [five-family neighbourhood associations] were not effective if all five families and headmen were Christians.⁷⁰³ Their spiritual life and social life were inseparable, and their communities were bound together by a common fate.

When Japanese religions became official state religions, the Christians worked within the framework. A *confraria* became in effect an established religious community of the village. Everyone in the village had to belong to it without a voluntary choice. The first generation converts to Christianity under persecutions

⁷⁰¹Ebisawa 1981, 113-114, 136-137.

⁷⁰²Ebisawa 1981, 134-135, 186.

⁷⁰³This was a system of collective responsibility to maintain public peace and order. Each unit consisted of 5 families, and they were to keep watch on each other. If a crime was discovered, the whole unit was punished. It functioned to disclose underground Christians. Kataoka 1979 577, 579; Ebisawa 1981, 214. *Fumie* [a copper tablet bearing a Christian image] was also used to prove that one was not a *Kirishitan* by treading on it. Cf. Chapter 4, n. 1.

became *Kirishitans* and received believer's baptism by their own choice.⁷⁰⁴

Confraria in such a situation was identical to a believers' community. However the successive generations were born into a *confraria*, and probably had no choice but to live as *Kakure Kirishitans*. In this sense, a *confraria* became an established religious community of the village. Nevertheless there was a difference between this established religious community of the village and the state church of European countries during Medieval and Early Modern periods. The former was constantly under the possibility of persecution and lived a life of suffering as Christians whereas the latter was part of its surrounding culture. The Japanese *confraria* was always exposed to adversity which forced it to choose either to cease to be Christian or to become different from the world. Its members had to make a full commitment to it. Such a situation and missionaries' education encouraged them to internalise their faith, despite the fact that they practically did not have freedom of religion. It is hard to know if they always maintained internalised faith. However when a major *Kirishitan* persecution occurred in 1870, over two-thirds of these seventh generation *Kakure Kirishitans* endured under the severe tortures and kept their faith just as their ancestors. They were scattered into 20 different feudal domains for tortures to recant, and families were often separated. It is perhaps fair to say that *Kakure Kirishitans* maintained faith underground for 250 years with a potential to resist persecutions.⁷⁰⁵ Moreover their faith could not be individualistic. They lived a 'life together' in a committed Christian community to which the surrounding world was fundamentally hostile.

⁷⁰⁴Cieslik examines six major mass conversions during *Kirishitan* era, and concludes that people freely became *Kirishitan* by their own choice. *Kirishitan* lords did not force them to become *Kirishitan*. People were given opportunities to learn Christian teachings and were encouraged to become *Kirishitans*. Although they received some pressure from village headmen, they were neither forced to become *Kirishitans*, nor suffered any disadvantage for not becoming one. The only exception was the mass conversion in Oomura in 1574. Cieslik 1995, 339, 387; 352, 378. See also Kataoka 1979, 58, 63-64.

⁷⁰⁵Kataoka suggests that even most of those who recanted repented and restored their faith after returning home. Kataoka 1979, 637-646, 657-677, 684.

Thus Japanese *confraria* under persecution was generally started as a community which found itself distinctive from the world. Their faith was utterly based on a communal life; and their faith was encouraged to be internalised. This was the Christian community which had no intention to control the world and devoted itself to be faithful to God (and to its ancestors). The *confraria* was strikingly similar to the believer's church which Yoder and Hauerwas advocate.⁷⁰⁶

Yoder criticised the Constantinian Christianity which made Christian morality double-standard. However the *confraria* in Japan, which was still a Roman Catholic community, maintained a high standard of morality in its every member. Rules of *Confraria de Santa Maria* listed the following as intolerable sins: abortion or infanticide, divorce, arranging a child's marriage without the child's agreement, marriage without the sacrament of matrimony, human traffic, keeping a mistress, taking interest over thirty per cent, and frequent drunkenness.⁷⁰⁷ If one broke one of the above, one was forbidden to attend *confraria* meetings for three months; then if one still did not repent, one could be excommunicated. Here we can see the 'binding and loosing,' the uncompromising and serious attitude of *confrarias*, who adopted the missionaries' own committed Christian spirit. The ethic was extremely demanding by contemporary Japanese standards, and it was not easy for Japanese Christians. However the missionaries dared not modify the standard; they rather formed *confrarias* as communities in the midst of daily living whose members were to support, encourage, and correct each other.

⁷⁰⁶Yoder asserts that state church is 'chaplain' to the state and it takes the form of either the priest to bless whatever is, or the Puritan to impose a high and external Christian standard to the whole state. Japanese *confraria* was significantly different from the Puritan chaplaincy since each *confraria* was small and its members tended to have Christian faith. See Chapter 2, IVA2 'Against Constantinian Christianity.'

⁷⁰⁷Okada 1983b, 72-73; Kataoka 1979, 165-166.

E. Accommodation

It has been pointed out that the Jesuit mission to Japan was a milestone in Christian evangelism because of the accommodation policy. The missionaries valued Japanese culture highly and tried to utilise it in communicating Christian message. As Stephen Neill states, Xavier, prior to his Japan mission, had believed "the doctrine of the *tabula rasa* -- the view that in non-Christian life and systems there is nothing on which the missionary can build, and that everything must simply be levelled to the ground before anything Christian can be built up."⁷⁰⁸ Other contemporary missionaries probably had similar beliefs. However originally Christianity moved to Greco-Roman culture from Hebrew culture, and experienced cultural accommodation. It then faced Muslim culture through Muslim invasions of Christian countries. The Christian domain was conquered and disappeared as in East Europe and North Africa, or remained and experienced cultural accommodation as in the Iberian Peninsula. Nevertheless in the era of great voyages, indigenous cultures of Africa and South America had not been valued and had been simply swept out by missionaries. After the end of the Japan and China missions, cultural awareness disappeared from Christianity until the late nineteenth century. Therefore the accommodation of Christianity in Japan, and later in China, was not merely a local event in Far East, but has a universal significance for Christianity as an attempt in Early Modern period in considering the problem of culture and the Christian message.⁷⁰⁹

'Accommodation' here means to choose methods to communicate Christian message which was already established in Western Roman Catholicism, by drawing on the resources of local culture. The missionaries did not reinterpret the Christian

⁷⁰⁸Neill 1966, 156.

⁷⁰⁹There were numerous Japanese including Buddhist priests who were converted to Christianity through intellectual debates with Christians. This type of evangelism was not common in the previous mission fields, such as Africa, India, and South America.

message in Japanese context; they rather tried to establish European Roman Catholicism in Japan in the way that the Japanese could understand and live with.⁷¹⁰

1. Motivating Factors of the Jesuits' Accommodation

Portugal and Spain which sent missionaries to Japan -- especially Portugal with its longer history of the Japan mission and deeper understanding of the culture than Spain -- took a novel approach of accommodation in their Japan mission. Here I would like to suggest three factors which supported their resolution to adopt an accommodation policy.

Firstly, Japan already had a highly developed culture, and the Japanese were civilised when the missionaries came. Xavier and Frois reported that Japanese were more civilised than the Spaniards, who were considered to be the people of the most powerful country at that time; and Valignano called the Japanese and the Chinese 'white.'⁷¹¹ When European missionaries went to culturally less-developed countries than Europe, their aboriginal religions and cultures appeared to be primitive and sometimes even demonic, and therefore to be replaced by Christianity and Western culture. Japan, however, had a thousand years of history of Shinto, Buddhism, and Confucianism before it encountered Christianity. These three religions together had already become the theoretical backbone of politics of the country, and had produced a well-developed Japanese culture by the sixteenth century. The missionaries'

⁷¹⁰Fujita argues that there were three approaches in the Japan mission: the adaptational approach by Valignano and Organtino, the confrontational approach by Cabral, and the purist approach by the friars (The Franciscans, the Dominicans, and the Augustinians). He explains that the third approach contains "essential humility and friendliness toward the local people and culture" and an intransigent nature without "a sense of cultural superiority." According to J.F. Moran, the Franciscan Fray Martín, though in favour of accommodation, stated that the Jesuits' accommodation had gone too far, and there seemed a difference between the accommodation or adaptation approach and the purist approach. Further Ebisawa mentions that friars' *confradias* were more resistant than Jesuit *confrarias* under persecutions, and the friars seemed to have a more uncompromising nature than the Jesuits. This may indicate the significance of Christian distinctiveness. Fujita 1991, 133, 145, 263-264; Moran 1993, 135; Ebisawa 1981, 136. In Chapter 4 we shall look at Japanised forms of Christianity by liberal Japanese theologians.

⁷¹¹Ebisawa 1971, 41-42.

encounter with this highly developed culture seemed to trigger their accommodation policy.

Secondly, Portugal and Spain had had a long history of the co-existence of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, and had learned to value and appreciate different cultures. The original home of Xavier and Loyola, Navarre, too had "a surprisingly substantial Mudejar population."⁷¹² The Iberian Peninsula faced Muslim invasions from 711 to 1492. There had also been the Jewish inhabitants from the first century.⁷¹³ The Jews, though in a minority, also occupied an important position in the peninsula. In Spain, for instance, they functioned as intermediaries between Muslims in the South and Christians in the north and as financial supporters of the nation.⁷¹⁴ Christians learned to live together with Islamic and Jewish culture and religion.⁷¹⁵ Christians and Muslims were often separate in the most intimate parts of social life: marriage, hygiene and diet;⁷¹⁶ and the deeply rooted Christian attitude toward Muslims was aggressive and they finally expelled both Jews and Muslims in the late fifteenth century. Nevertheless, Islam, Christianity, and Judaism virtually co-existed in the Iberian Peninsula for nearly eight centuries and they experienced religious and racial toleration.⁷¹⁷ A.H. de Oliveira Marques states: "Four centuries of intermittent fighting had only brought Iberian Moslems and Christians close

⁷¹²Fletcher 1992, 142.

⁷¹³Fletcher 1992, 24.

⁷¹⁴Jackson 1972, 105-106. For instance, in 1294 the Jews, who occupied only 3 to 4 per cent of the population, paid 22 per cent of total tax.

⁷¹⁵Birmingham 1993, 16-18. de Oliveira Marques 1972, 67-73; Jackson, 101, 108-115, 142-149; A. Okada 1970, 78-79.

⁷¹⁶Fletcher 1992, 138.

⁷¹⁷Fletcher 1992, 35-36; Neill 1966, 63-64. Religious toleration under the Muslims was given because (1) Muslim conquerors were only partially 'Islamicised,' (2) Islamic law granted religious freedom to Christian and Jews because they were regarded as 'Peoples of the Book,' and (3) non-Muslims were tax-payers, (4) Muslims needed farmers since they were not, and (5) they needed educated ones such as office workers and interpreters. For the history of religious toleration and interrelation in Spain, see *ibid.*, 18-19, 24, 38-39, 112, 116-117, 137-139, 166-169; Jackson 1972, 104-106, 142. In Spain religious tolerance was traditional until the fourteenth century. Birmingham 1993, 15. Upon the Muslim invasion, Christians became in a minority along with Jews in southern Portugal, but their religions were tolerated by Muslims. Muslim worship and Jewish worship was allowed until the late fifteenth century when Christians took over the Muslim colony through the *Reconquista*.

together. Commercial and cultural relations were matched by many political alliances and personal contacts. For medieval minds and generalised intolerance, the Spaniards presented a rather surprising example of peaceful coexistence and religious respect."⁷¹⁸ Muslims in the ninth and tenth centuries and Christians from the thirteenth to the mid-fifteenth centuries sought to found a pluralistic administration involving Christianity, Muslim, and Judaism.⁷¹⁹ It seems to me that this long history of cultural interaction and high regard for it may have been an underlying motive for the cultural accommodation.

Thirdly, the missionaries believed in the absolute superiority of Christianity. Japan did not have Judaism or Islam, and it was religiously much less threatening than evangelism in Spain and Portugal. The Jesuit missionaries were convinced that they would win debates against Japanese religions without much difficulty. Xavier first attempted to visit Mt. Hiei, the centre of Buddhism, to dispute with Buddhist scholars, and also other missionaries often had religious disputes with Buddhist monks.

Thus, the accommodation of the Catholic mission in Japan was also supported by their confidence in the superiority of the Gospel to any other belief. However their respect for Japanese culture was something they had never shown in their overseas missions, and therefore is worthy of note.

2. Accommodation Policies of the Jesuits

Japan was in the civil war period when the Jesuits went there. Lords rose and fell, and their policies were fickle. Its central government was unstable until the establishment of the *Edo* Shogunate. The Jesuits' leadership also changed, and their

⁷¹⁸de Oliveira Marques 1972, 73-74.

⁷¹⁹Jackson 1972, 197; Fletcher 1992, 165. However, these attempts failed in civil wars and revolutions, and Spain finally completed the *Reconquista* in 1492. Although Spanish and Portuguese missions had an element as an extension of the *Reconquista*, their cultural interaction seemed to be a valuable experience toward cultural accommodation.

policies experienced some variations. We can identify at least five phases of Jesuit attitude toward Japanese politics and Japanese culture. These two were generally correlated. When one tried to understand and value Japanese indigenous culture, one tended not to be involved in political affairs; when one disregarded the culture, one inclined to control the situation by political and military power.

Firstly, Xavier valued Japanese culture and led the Jesuits' missions toward accommodation. Xavier produced basic Christian doctrines in indigenous languages in India and Southeast Asia, and the signs of his inclination toward cultural adaptation appeared before his Japan mission. Nevertheless Xavier before 1547 had expressed "nothing but antagonism and contempt for Hinduism, Islam and the primal religion of the Indonesian tribal people," and it was in Japan that his approach was deliberately and consciously changed.⁷²⁰ Although he never learned the Japanese language, he saw positive elements in the culture for Christianising the Japanese. His early production of the *Kagoshima Catechism* and evangelism using *Dainichi* for Christian God, although it was a wrong term, showed his solid inclination to accommodation. As Neill says, "[Xavier] saw that, while the Gospel must transform and refine and recreate, it need not necessarily reject as worthless everything that has come before."⁷²¹ Xavier's discernment was impressive, and his successors continued their inquiry into Japanese culture and religions and the gospel's adaptation to the Japanese context.

The second phase was from 1570 to 1579 represented by Francisco Cabral, the third Mission Superior of Japan (1570-1581) after Xavier and Torres. Cabral was a hard-core anti-accommodationist. Cabral had a negative and pessimistic view about the Japan mission. He was in western Kyushu where lords approached Christianity generally because of profits from Portuguese trading. Cabral was Eurocentric and despised the Japanese, which engendered extremely negative consequences.⁷²² Cabral failed to adapt himself to Japan and always lived as a

⁷²⁰Ross 1994, 19-20, 28.

⁷²¹Neill 1966, 156.

⁷²²Schütte 1951, 307. See also Moran 1993, 135.

European Jesuit. He was from a noble family in Portugal and his ability was well recognised by the Order from his early stage.⁷²³ He was a Portuguese in the Portuguese Order and walked the path of an elite. He then was sent to Japan as the Mission Superior. He did not seem ever to experience a minority status or marginality in his life. The superiority complex of this elite Jesuit may have been threatened by the small country in Far East where people were more civilised and capable than any other nation he saw in the previous mission fields. He wrote: "I have never seen people who are as arrogant, greedy, unsteady, and shifty as the Japanese."⁷²⁴ He also states: "After all they [the Japanese] are in fact Negro and have completely barbarian customs."⁷²⁵

Cabral's colleague, Organtino Gneccchi-Soldo (1570-1609 in Japan), had by contrast a positive and optimistic opinion. Organtino was an Italian and from the peasant class. He was in Kinki, where he later succeeded Frois as district superior. People were religiously motivated to approach Christianity without material advantage. According to Fujita, Christian population grew from 1,500 to 15,000 in three years under Organtino's leadership.⁷²⁶ He stated that the most effective way of mission in Japan was to adapt everything to the Japanese manner as much as possible.⁷²⁷ He ate rice instead of bread and wore Japanese clothes like a Buddhist monk. It is not hard to imagine that such an attitude to understanding their culture pleased the Japanese.

The third phase was from 1579 till 1582 during the first visit of Alessandro Valignano, *Visitor* to the East and the Vicar-General. He was an Italian. He visited Japan in the midst of a crisis caused by Cabral and chose an accommodation policy, rejecting Cabral's opinion. Valignano made a positive assessment of the Japanese.⁷²⁸ For example, he stated: "There was no question that the Japan mission

⁷²³Valignano 1973, 285-286.

⁷²⁴Schütte 1951, 309.

⁷²⁵Schütte 1951, 326. Cf. n. 711.

⁷²⁶Fujita 1991, 93.

⁷²⁷Schütte 1958, 150. Organtino's letter to General on 11 February 1595.

⁷²⁸Valignano 1973, 308-309, 313, 337-338, 340-347. Matsuda suggests that Valignano's assessment of the Japanese shifted from a negative one in his early

was the most important and rewarding amongst Asia and any other discovered areas," and gave ten reasons for that.⁷²⁹ He also wrote that he found in them attributes of a good missionary: religiosity, religious patience, and academic ability.⁷³⁰ His accommodation policy permeated his whole strategy. He wrote: "Since the Japanese would never give up their customs, we [the European missionaries] must adapt ourselves to their customs."⁷³¹

The fourth stage was from 1582 to 1590 during Valignano's absence from Japan. This period was represented by Gaspar Coelho, who was appointed by Valignano to succeed to Cabral in 1581, and became the first vice-provincial in the same year as Japan was upgraded to a vice-province.⁷³² Whilst Coelho was "a responsible withal avowedly pro-Japanese Jesuit, who admitted more native novices into the Society than any of his predecessors or successors,"⁷³³ he tried to bring in military power to back up the missionary work in Japan.⁷³⁴

Coelho died in May 1590, and the final phase was initiated by Valignano's second visit to Japan from July 1590 to October 1592.

Finally I would like to point out that Jesuits who tended to value Japanese culture were in a cultural minority. The pro-accommodationists were Xavier, Valignano, and Organtino, who were neither Portuguese nor Spanish. Anti-accommodation leaders were Cabral and Coelho, who were Portuguese.

Although the Society of Jesus was a Spanish-dominated organisation by far, its missions to Asia were supported by Portugal.⁷³⁵ There was a tension between the

stage, due to the influence from the Jesuits in Kyushu such as Cabral, to a positive one as he visited Kinki.

⁷²⁹Valignano 1973, 46. Chapter VI.

⁷³⁰Valignano 1973, 96-98.

⁷³¹Valignano 1973, 104.

⁷³²Boxer 1951, 445.

⁷³³Boxer 1951, 168; Valignano 1973, 232. (Additions, Chapter VII.)

Valignano stated that Coelho accepted as many as 70 Japanese novices in his second visit to Japan.

⁷³⁴Takase 1977, 100-101, 104-105; Ebisawa 1981, 107-110. See also Frois and others 1969b, 149-150; Frois 1981, vol. 1, 203-205; Ebisawa 1981, 110-112; Ebisawa 1965, 128-131; Takase 1977, 111-113.

⁷³⁵Griffin states that four of the first six Generals of the Society after Loyola were Spaniards. In 1556 nearly 20 per cent of the total membership was in Spain.

Spaniards and Portuguese Jesuits, and both had a conqueror mentality.⁷³⁶ The tension was present in Japan as well.⁷³⁷ Valignano and Organtino were Italian and Xavier was Navarrese; they were in a minority among the Jesuits. Valignano was born in Chieti under Spanish colonial rule like other southern parts of Italy, where Italians were often considered "the 'indios' of Europe" by Spanish officers.⁷³⁸ Although Valignano was of a noble family, Organtino was of the peasant class.⁷³⁹ Moreover Xavier experienced the loss of his own country, and tasted the suffering of being in a minority.⁷⁴⁰ Such marginal experiences of Xavier, Valignano, and Organtino, whilst contrasted with that of Cabral and Coelho, may have enhanced their accommodation policy.

The following statement by Ross is sound: "It was very difficult for anyone growing up in Spain or the Spanish empire or in Portuguese territory not to be deeply affected by the whole 'conquistador' understanding of Christianity and of the whole."⁷⁴¹ Ross also points out that the key figures in the initial period of the Jesuit missions to Japan and China were all Italians except for Xavier, and suggests that "Italian humanism" of the period played a role in shaping a non-conquistador approach. It might be the case. Nevertheless, missions were not merely intellectual products but actual living struggle, and one cannot underestimate marginal experiences of the Jesuits' accommodationist leaders in Japan.

In 1558 eighteen of twenty-five delegates at the General Congregation were Spanish. Griffin 1984, 16.

⁷³⁶Spaniards in this period were racially intolerant because of their expulsion of the Moors. It is surprising that "over 27 per cent of the letters from Spanish Provincials of the Society to headquarters during the years 1550-1579 refer specifically to racial problems in Spanish society." Griffin 1984, 11.

⁷³⁷Takase 1977, 158.

⁷³⁸Ross 1994, xv, 204.

⁷³⁹Ross indicates that Valignano prohibited not only the coming of Spanish Orders to Japan and China but also that of even fellow Jesuits from Spanish dominions, and suggests that Valignano more than anything wanted to exclude the Spanish conquistador mentality from the Japan and China missions. Ross 1994, 44, 65-66.

⁷⁴⁰Navarre, Xavier's (and Loyola's) country, lost the independence through invasions from 1512 till 1520 by Spain and France. The Xavier family lost its property. Francis, in the midst of this poverty, decided to pursue an academic life and he went to the Sainte-Barbe College of the University of Paris in 1525 at the age of nineteen.

⁷⁴¹Ross 1994, 205-206.

IV. Conclusions

What were the characteristics of Christianity in *Kirishitan* period? First, it was Roman Catholicism, a Constantinian Christianity, that was brought to Japan mainly by the Jesuits. The Society of Jesus was a new Order filled with dynamic Christian spirituality of Counter Reformation Movement and with a European modern spirit. It was fortunate for Japan that its most capable and culturally sensitive leaders, Xavier and Valignano, left a crucial influence on the mission. Second, these leaders set an accommodation policy, respecting Japanese tradition. It was a milestone in the history of the Christian missions. Missionaries who supported the accommodation were culturally in a minority. Portuguese and Spanish missionaries who were always on the conqueror's side could not respect Japanese culture. Third, the Jesuits emphasised education. Since some of Christian doctrines, such as God as the Creator and the Atonement, were quite difficult for the Japanese to understand, education was necessary. Educational institutions were established both for the Japanese and for the Jesuits. Printed materials were utilised. A catechism was produced already from the earliest stage of the Japan mission; biographies of Saints and other useful materials were published. Passion narratives were also communicated through dramas. Fourth, devotional and spiritual aspect of Christian life was also emphasised. The Jesuits expected that persecutions might occur and prepared Japanese Christians for them. Suffering was an inevitable consequence of being a Christian in this period. *Kirishitans* learned that through the Passion of Jesus, through the lives of the Saints, and through the lives of the missionaries, the living examples in front of them. Hauerwas asserts that the church learns from the example of the lives of faithful Christians and from the liturgy. It was certainly the case of early *Kakure Kirishitan*.⁷⁴² Fifth, the missionaries formed

⁷⁴²Early *Kakure Kirishitans* who still remembered the lives of the missionaries set a direction of underground Christian life. They also practised the sacraments even under persecutions.

Christian mutual aid societies called *confrarias*, which became a house church under persecution. *Kirishitan* life was a communal life. Sixth, most of *Kirishitans* were ordinary people. Although the Jesuits approached lords and people in power and there were well-known Christian lords, those with sincere faith were few. Particularly after the ban, peasants became the main bearers of Christian faith.

Why were *Kakure Kirishitans* able to survive underground? There seemed to be at least three reasons: internalised faith, accommodation, and *confrarias*. Internalised faith includes intellectual understanding of basic doctrines (theology), commitment to Christ's Lordship even to the extent of suffering for Him (Christian ethics). These were prominent in the earlier generations. Internalised faith here also means that they hid their faith from those outside their *confraria* for obvious reasons.

The Jesuits accommodation practices helped *Kirishitans* digest Christian message in daily life. *Kirishitans* naturally accommodated the Christian message and practices. Christian practices sometimes replaced Japanese customs; there were also some practices, especially Eucharist and Christian calendar, which were newly added to the traditional customs and formed Christian identity. They gradually became accommodated into Japanese customs in *confrarias*. Accommodation camouflaged Christian life with ordinary village life.

The *confraria* played a vital role in the survival of *Kakure Kirishitan*. More *Kakure Kirishitans* survived in the areas where *confrarias* were established and functioning well. In Europe the believers' church was formed by a small number of Christians, Radical Reformers, who were persecuted by both the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant churches. In Japan, however, Roman Catholicism survived as *confrarias* which significantly shared common elements with the believers' church particularly in the early stage. This was what both Luther and Zwingli hoped to exist yet could not pursue. It was an irony of history.

It is not certain how much the succeeding generations of *Kirishitans* maintained their faith in God along with their peculiar *Kakure Kirishitan* identity by

being faithful to their ancestors. However what is sure is that *Kakure Kirishitans* maintained their life underground for 250 years with a potential to be revived and to resist persecution when missionaries came back to Japan in the mid-nineteenth century.

Chapter 4

Christianity in Japan 2: From 1859 to 1945

I. Introduction

Through a dialogue with H. Richard Niebuhr's theology of culture, I suggested a central role of the church in the transformation of culture -- in particular the corporate-personal model. The church should be the distinctive believers' church in order selectively to discern and to transform society. Theocentric relativism and radical monotheism are Niebuhr's significant contributions. They remind us both of human relativity and of the certainty of revelation and lead us to a confessional and communal theology.

In discussing Yoder's and Hauerwas' theologies, I reconfirmed the centrality of the believers' church in transforming a society. The believers' church is a community of believers which imitates God in Christ and trusts in His sovereignty. It strives to be faithful to God and refuses to do anything that is contradictory to His character. Yet the church must not elevate itself and its judgement to an ultimate throne. It is a relative and fragmented being in which God, nevertheless, reveals Himself; it is on the boundary between the Kingdom of God and the world.

In the early *Kirishitan* era Christianity grew rapidly. Although it eventually became severely suppressed by the ruling powers, a significant number of *Kirishitans* accepted martyrdom. Even those who hid their faith had something that enabled their descendants to endure underground for 250 years. In this sense perhaps we can say that *Kirishitan* Christianity penetrated *Kirishitans'* soul. *Kirishitans* could not afford to develop a deliberate theology in their hard situation. However their Christianity in the early stage of persecution became very similar to the believers' church.

Christianity from 1859 till 1945 also faced persecutions by the Japanese government. In contrast to *Kirishitan* Christianity, however, it inclined towards

compromising Christian distinctiveness. The world situation was different from the *Kirishitan* era, and we cannot simply compare the two. However there seems to be a fundamental difference between *Kirishitan* Christianity and post-*Kaikoku* [opening the country] Christianity.

This chapter asks why Christianity in this period failed to penetrate the soul of the Japanese Christian. In order to answer the question, the following aspects must be discussed. Firstly we investigate the pattern of Japanese acceptance of foreign culture, and survey the history of Japan and Christianity in this period. This helps us grasp the historical context of this period. Secondly we examine the nature of the Christianity which encountered Japan in this period. This includes both the Christianity which missionaries brought to Japan and the Christianity which the Japanese accepted. Thirdly we discuss nationalism and accommodation. Christians in this period lived in a conflict between being a Christian and being a Japanese, and nationalism and accommodation must be treated together. *Mukyôkai* [Non-Churchism] receives special attention in the light of earlier discussions with Niebuhr, Yoder and Hauerwas because of its resistance against exclusive nationalism and keen concern about ecclesiology. This chapter is an attempt to assess Christianity in Japan from our criteria, namely the believers' church with its Christian distinctiveness which discerns the good and evil, sustains Christians even under persecutions, and transforms the society by pioneering the way of the Kingdom of God on earth. I argue that this period in Japan failed to have such a believers' church, and suggest that this is a reason for the church's compromise with Japan.

II. History

Japan's first encounter with Christianity was exclusively with the Roman Catholicism of Portugal and Spain. However its second and third encounters were mainly with Protestantism from the United States where church and state were

separated. Although the Japanese had developed a strong prejudice against Christianity during the isolation period, Protestantism from the young country came with modern technology and was accepted as a fresh and useful teaching to modernise Japan.

A. Nineteenth Century Japanese Economic, Political, and Religious Situation

1. Opening the Country

The Tokugawa feudal system was outdated after 250 years and was experiencing considerable internal structural fatigue. The majority of lords was suffering from severe deficit financing; and the merchant class -- the lowest class -- was practically controlling the economy. The Shogunate was losing power. Moreover Western countries were attempting to open up Japan. Western colonisation was started in the sixteenth century by Spain and Portugal. It took a new feature when the Industrial Revolution spread from the United Kingdom to other Western countries in the eighteenth century, and led to them colonising large parts of Asia as material supply bases and markets. Japan had a sense of impending crisis when China lost the Opium War (1840-1842) with the United Kingdom.

In 1853 an American commodore, Matthew Calbraith Perry, visited Japan, demanding the opening of the country. The United States gained California in 1848 and their interest in Asian countries was rising. In 1854 Perry returned to Japan with a military threat and achieved his purpose in the form of a peace treaty. Japan did not have enough the armed forces to fight against the young and powerful country. The superiority of Western technology to Oriental technology was obvious, and Japan had to import their technology and catch up.

In 1858 the first Resident (later Minister) of the United States, Townsend Harris, concluded a treaty of amity and commerce with the Shogunate government; and the government concluded an identical treaty with the Netherlands, Russia,

United Kingdom, and France in the same year. These treaties were forced on it by the West and the contents were unfair; later Japan had to make considerable efforts to revise them.

Western countries were aware that Japan had closed its borders to block out Christianity and they treated religious matters most carefully. However in the treaty Harris boldly yet without much expectation proposed freedom of faith for Americans, the right to build their church buildings, and the abolition of *Fumie*, and these were accepted.⁷⁴³ Although religious freedom was only for foreigners, it was a great foothold for a Japan mission. In 1859 three denominations in the United States sent missionaries under the pretext of ministering to Americans. Therefore this year is to be regarded as the beginning of Christianity's second encounter with Japan.⁷⁴⁴

Roman Catholic missions in Japan were carried out by France, which was the only Catholic nation amongst the countries which held a treaty with Japan. The Foreign Mission Society of Paris (Société des Missions-Etrangères de Paris) sent missionaries to Japan, and it remained the only Roman Catholic society working in Japan until 1904.⁷⁴⁵ P.S.B. Girard and P. Mounicou built a church in Yokohama in 1862 where numerous Japanese gathered to see it. They started to share Christian teaching with them although it was not yet permitted.⁷⁴⁶ In 1865 another church, Ooura Tenshudô, was built in Nagasaki by Bernard T. Petitjean and Louis T. Furet. This became the scene of *Kirishitan* restoration.

The Roman Catholic mission was overshadowed by Protestant missions in this period except for the *Kirishitan* restoration. Roman Catholic mission in Japan was interwoven with French diplomacy until the end of the *Meiji* period. France supported the *Edo* Shogunate which ceased to exist in 1868, being taken over by a

⁷⁴³Harris 1954, 124.

⁷⁴⁴See Dohi 1980, 11-14 for a chart of foreign missions which came to Japan.

⁷⁴⁵Other orders (15 orders of men and about 30 of women) joined the Japan mission between 1904 and 1914. Drummond 1971, 314.

⁷⁴⁶Marnas 1985, 196.

modern Japanese government. Therefore France did not have a strong influence on Japan; and so neither did Roman Catholicism.⁷⁴⁷

When the Shogunate opened the country without an Imperial sanction, it lost control of the country. In 1867, the fifteenth and the last Shogun, Yoshinobu Tokugawa returned the actual powers of government to the Imperial Court. In 1868 the *Meiji* government was established and the Imperial Rule was restored after some 700 years. This is the so called *Meiji* Restoration.

The *Meiji* Restoration needed a spirit to unite Japan. The people's identity in the *Edo* period was limited in their *han* [feudal clans]; moreover even after Japan opened the country, the Japanese were split into two: pro-Shogunate and pro-*Tennô*. The *Meiji* Restoration as a *Tennô*-centred revolution needed a system of thought to bring people together around the *Tennô*, namely Shinto.

2. Japanese Attitude over Accepting Western Civilisation: *Wakon Yôsai*

A quarter millennium of anti-Christian propaganda left Japanese people with a deep-seated antagonism toward Christianity. Even after Japan opened itself in 1854 and the *Edo* Shogunate was dissolved in 1868, Christianity was still banned. It was 1873, nearly two decades after the opening of the country, when the ban on Christianity was lifted. Japan did not wish to lift the ban if possible; it was reluctantly done due to foreign political pressure.

During the long period of Japanese isolationist policy, Western science and technology had immensely developed. Transmission of civilisation usually starts from technology such as the medical and military arts. In early *Meiji* Japan it was most apparent in the military arts, since Japan hardly developed military technology during the peace of *Edo* period. The United States wrenched Japan open with warships. In order to compete with Western countries in the modern Western paradigm, Japan now had to learn from their civilisation. Simply speaking, Japan

⁷⁴⁷Ebisawa 1970, 123.

intended externally to absorb Western civilisation whilst carefully rejecting the Western spirit, which basically meant Christianity. Such an attitude was called *Wakon Yôsei* [Japanese spirit and Western civilisation].⁷⁴⁸ It was a slogan widely accepted by the Japanese. Here I interchangeably use technology and civilisation although the latter has a wider connotation.

The concept of Japanese spirit and foreign technology has a long history. China had been an admirable example for Japan for centuries, and the attitude first appeared as *Wakon Kansai* [Japanese spirit and Chinese civilisation] by the eleventh century.⁷⁴⁹ It was a nationalistic reaction against uncritical acceptance of Chinese civilisation which was very influential.

What is *Wakon*? Is there such a thing as a Japanese soul or Japanese spirit which remains unchanged throughout centuries? Sukehiro Hirakawa correctly asserts that the content of *Wakon* changes: *Wakon* of *Wakon Kansai* meant the Japanese spirit before Chinese influence on Japan, and *Wakon* of *Wakon Yôsei* meant Japanese spirit moulded by Confucius' ethics.⁷⁵⁰ Thus *Wakon* is formed as a nationalistic reaction to foreign influence, and *Wakon* includes all the spiritual content which has been assimilated into Japanese culture at any point in time so that Japanese do not feel it to be foreign any more. Now there seems to be something that always appears (or at least is used) in the centre of its nationalism: the *Tennô*. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the *Tennô* occupied the central spiritual role in rejecting Christianity, and Shinto swallowed powerful political leaders in their attempts at self-deification. In the *Meiji* period, likewise, the *Tennô* was located at the centre of Japan; Shinto became the State religion to block out Christianity.

Wakon Yôsei presupposes that there are four logical combinations in encountering foreign civilisation: (1) native spirit and native civilisation, (2) foreign spirit and native civilisation, (3) foreign spirit and foreign civilisation, and (4) native

⁷⁴⁸Cf. Furuya 1989, 78-82, and Ohki 1994b, 74-76.

⁷⁴⁹Hirakawa 1987, 36-39.

⁷⁵⁰Hirakawa 1987, 35.

spirit and foreign civilisation.⁷⁵¹ The first refuses to absorb foreign civilisation. People do not absorb foreign civilisation when they are confident in their superiority to the foreign in every aspect or when they are afraid of the foreign. The second practically does not occur since people think that their spirit is superior when they exceed others in civilisation. Even if they recognised that their spirit was inferior to foreigners, they would seek an ideal model in their own spiritual heritage rather than in foreigners. The third occurs when a nation loses pride and confidence in its own civilisation and spiritual heritage. The fourth often occurs when a nation faces a powerful foreign civilisation yet is proud of its own spiritual heritage. This is a natural reaction of nationalism. *Meiji* Japan adopted this attitude as *Wakon Yōsai*. Japanese learned foreign civilisation, yet they were very proud of their culture and generally deemed that their spiritual heritage was deeper and superior to that of the West. Thus Japan intended to import the technology of the West, whilst rejecting the Western spirit, namely Christianity.

Wakon Yōsai was a natural choice. However it has two fundamental problems as much as do the three other choices mentioned above.

Firstly it presupposes that spirit and technology are separable. Technology and spirit are interwoven and should not be easily separated if we intend to understand and pay respect to the people who produce the technology. As Kanzō Uchimura asserted, "Christian civilisation is the civilisation which came out of Christianity, namely the civilisation which could not be born without Christianity, therefore the civilisation one cannot understand without studying Christianity."⁷⁵²

⁷⁵¹Cf. Hirakawa 1987, 10.

⁷⁵²Uchimura 1963c, 184. Likewise Kitarō Nishida, a renowned philosopher and ethicist, criticised the attitude of *Wakon Yōsai*, and claimed that spirit and technology are inseparable. Hirakawa criticises Nishida's claim that one needs to understand both Western spirit and Western technology as "wishful thinking," and asserts that historically non-Western countries first accepted Western technology, quoting Arnold Toynbee's study. However Hirakawa's argument is problematic. Hirakawa criticises Nishida's discussion of 'what needs to be done' from a viewpoint of 'what is likely to happen.' Hirakawa is claiming that since people in the past generally accepted foreign technology without its spirit, we should not seek to accept them together. Hirakawa 1987, 64, 68, 84, 90.

It is significant to ask the purpose of *Wakon Yōsai*. For utilitarians who superficially adopt Western technology only as a tool, the purpose is their prosperity, and they do not pay any attention to the Western spirit. However if we seek mutual understanding of cultures and mutual respect, the Western spirit and Western technology must be understood together, although it may be difficult. By studying the Western spirit critically, we realise that the Western spirit too has problems; and it does not automatically lead us to admire it. The Western spirit must be evaluated as much as the Western civilisation.

Secondly *Wakon Yōsai* presupposes that Western technology, Western spirit, Japanese technology, and Japanese spirit are monolithic. As I discussed Yoder's criticism of H. Richard Niebuhr's 'culture' in Chapter 1, culture is not monolithic; in history Christians selectively affirmed and rejected what was in the world. Both Western spirit and Japanese spirit embody numerous layers of heritage in themselves; both Western technologies and Japanese technologies came out of their own narratives and paradigms. When we attempt to accept foreign culture with the *Wakon Yōsai* slogan, we denounce the foreign spirit indiscriminately. Such an attitude, in turn, makes us uncritically affirm the Japanese spirit. What we need is selective discernment and appreciation of what is there.⁷⁵³ The *Wakon Yōsai* slogan prejudges what is to be accepted and what is to be rejected, and it does not leave us room critically and selectively to discern and to appreciate cultures. Japanese must be critical not only of Western technology and Western spirit but also of Japanese technology and Japanese spirit. Missionaries from the West tended to hold *Yōkon Yōsai*, yet they needed to be critical of Western culture as well. What we need is critical discernment and appreciation, not one of the four slogans.

What helps us to develop the critical eyes and the appreciation? I suggest it includes a viewpoint which is beyond both Japan and the West and a sharp awareness of the human predicament. A person of racially mixed blood, for example with a British father and a Japanese mother, may have more potential than

⁷⁵³Chapter 1, IIID1 'Radical Monotheism.'

others if the person loves both Britain and Japan. However the person may still lack appreciation and critical discernment of other different cultures (e.g. Egyptian culture or Russian culture). Apostle Paul wrote to Christians in Philippi, a Roman colony, who were proud of their Roman citizenship: "But our citizenship is in heaven."⁷⁵⁴ An identity as a Christian with heavenly citizenship and radical monotheism helps us relativise all cultures. Radical monotheism which affirms 'whatever is, is good' also helps us appreciate cultures. A sharp awareness of human fallibility and relativity helps us discern sinful aspects in cultures. The community with those qualifications nurtures us to develop appreciation and critical judgement.

3. Furuya's Twenty Year Cycle Theory

In order to understand characteristics of Christianity in Japan from 1859 to 1945 we must discuss significant events. However those significant events were not isolated from social trends; they should be understood in their historical context. Yasuo Furuya creatively advocates a twenty year cycle theory in modern Japan from the *Meiji* Restoration.⁷⁵⁵ He interprets Japanese history from the viewpoint of swings between internationalism and nationalism. Furuya asserts: "Since the *Meiji* Restoration, Japan has repeated periods of internationalism and nationalism roughly every twenty years"; "periods of internationalism were a 'good time' for Christianity and those of nationalism were a 'bad time' for Christianity"; "periods of internationalism value individualism more than totalitarianism, democracy more than fascism"; "international periods of the twenty year theory generally are pro-American periods, and nationalistic periods were pro-German periods."⁷⁵⁶

⁷⁵⁴Philippians 3:20.

⁷⁵⁵Furuya 1989, Chapter 4.

⁷⁵⁶Furuya 1989, 102, 105, 117.

Why did the period become twenty years? He suggests, although not with certainty, that it may be related to human memory capacity, psychological durability, length of interests, and generation and leadership change.⁷⁵⁷

Furuya discusses the nature of internationalism and nationalism. Firstly a swing between internationalism and nationalism is not unique to modern Japan. When people find a superior foreign civilisation coming in, they try either to adopt it or to reject it. Secondly in order to continue to have supporters of internationalism, a country must be independent and needs to experience the prosperity of the new foreign civilisation. If a country becomes a colony, it becomes critical about the foreign civilisation of the oppressor. When a country enjoys the foreign civilisation, it tends to become uncritical about it and to despise its own heritage, which eventually leads to a nationalistic reaction. Japan was far enough away to be independent from the continent of Asia.

Furuya's historical divisions are as follows.⁷⁵⁸ The first period (1868-1887) was the first twenty years of the *Meiji* period. It was a time of internationalism after a long nationalistic isolationist policy. *Kakure Kirishitans* publicly revealed their faith (although that was followed by severe persecutions); the Christian ban was finally lifted; Christian missions were started; the number of Christians rapidly increased;⁷⁵⁹ and numerous Christian mission schools and universities were established.⁷⁶⁰ The second was a nationalistic period (1887-1907) as a reaction to the internationalism. The Constitution of the Japanese Empire and the Imperial Rescript on Education were issued. They were written to block out Christian influence on Japan. Japan won two wars which also raised its nationalism: the Sino-Japanese War and the Russo-Japanese War. Christian growth plateaued;⁷⁶¹

⁷⁵⁷Furuya 1989, 113-114.

⁷⁵⁸Furuya 1989, 102-108.

⁷⁵⁹The number of Japanese Christian was none in 1859, yet it grew to 18,019 in 1887. Oouchi's quote from H. Ritter's *A History of Protestant Missions in Japan* (1890). Oouchi 1970, 194. Yanagida reports that the Christian population tripled in 5 years from 1885 to 1890. Yanagida 1957, 650.

⁷⁶⁰Dohi lists Christian schools in the early mission period. Sixty of them were established between 1863 and 1887. Dohi 1980, 77-80.

⁷⁶¹Oouchi 1970, 250, 296; Yanagida 1957, 652.

Christian schools suffered, and four had to be closed down.⁷⁶² In addition, from 1885 liberal theology came into Japan and caused theological controversy; and the unity of the church was shaken. The third was an international period (1907-1926) which was called '*Taishō* democracy' which encouraged the spirit of political liberalism. The number of Christians grew; Christian schools were newly established. The fourth period was the first twenty years of the *Shōwa* period (1926-1945). Although the number of Christians grew from 1927 till 1930, the growth soon stopped.⁷⁶³ It was the most nationalistic period in Japanese history. Christians suffered more in this period than in any since the lifting of the ban.

The twenty year cycle theory generally fits actual history. This bold claim is a descriptive observation and not normative or predictive about the future, as Furuya states.⁷⁶⁴ It is of course rough-hewn about actual years, and is based on a rather simple dualism. However this way of viewing history helps us grasp the history of Japan and its relationship with Christianity. Particularly Furuya's critical observation over Japanese nationalism is valuable. As H. Richard Niebuhr correctly states, nationalism has been an essential problem for the modern world and modern Christianity: "Christians were tempted in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, perhaps more than in most previous times, to consider themselves first of all as members of national and cultural societies rather than of the church and to turn Christian faith into an auxiliary of civilization."⁷⁶⁵

In sum, when Japan opened the country, its basic attitude toward the West was *Wakon Yōsai*. The Japanese were generally proud of their cultural heritage. Although Japan sought to receive the benefits of Western technology, it considered the Japanese spirit as superior to the Western spirit. On the basis of this attitude Japan experienced swings of internationalisation and nationalisation roughly every twenty years. This was the current in which Christians in Japan had to live. Having

⁷⁶²Dohi 1980, 79-80.

⁷⁶³Oouchi 1970, 545-547; Yanagida 1957, 668.

⁷⁶⁴Furuya 1989, 112.

⁷⁶⁵Niebuhr 1960a, 34.

this twenty year cycle in mind, we now discuss significant events in order to clarify characteristics of Christianity from 1859 to 1945.

B. A History of Japan and Christianity from 1859 to 1945

1. 1859-1887

a. *Kirishitan* Restoration, Persecutions, and the Lifting of the Ban

Baschan was a very influential Japanese *Kirishitan* leader in the late 1600s. He learned and taught how to keep the church calendar, which significantly shaped Christian identity under persecutions. He also prophesied before his martyrdom that after seven generations Catholic Fathers would come to Japan again in the big Western ships and it would become a good world for *Kirishitans*.⁷⁶⁶ This prophecy was widely spread amongst *Kirishitans* and it was the sole hope for *Kakure Kirishitans*. The Roman Catholic Church always hoped to find *Kakure Kirishitans* and to resume the Japan mission. After the treaty in 1858 Fathers actually came back to Japan, which was roughly in their seventh generation. Thus the extraordinary *Kirishitan* restoration occurred; yet it was followed by severe persecutions.

A group of *Kirishitans* visited Ooura Tenshudô on 17 March 1865, acting as if they were tourists and then confessed to a Father that they had the same faith. However Christianity was still prohibited in Japan, and numerous *Kirishitans* were arrested on 15 July 1867, which is called "*Uragami 4 ban kuzure* [the fourth roundup of Uragami]." Following the *Meiji* Restoration in 1868, the *Meiji* government handled the case. 3,394 of *Kirishitans* in Uragami village were banished to twenty different feudal domains and went through extremely severe

⁷⁶⁶Kataoka 1979, 558-559.

tortures to recant.⁷⁶⁷ The whole village disappeared.⁷⁶⁸ Over two-thirds of them remained faithful to their faith; even those who recanted, suggests Kataoka, were restored to the faith when they returned home.⁷⁶⁹ Although religious persecutions had been most cruelly exercised in the West, they had become no longer acceptable. Foreign ministers responded quickly and started making a strong protest against this brutal Christian persecution from the very day of the arrest.⁷⁷⁰ In 1871 another *Kirishitan* persecution occurred in Imari. 67 *Kirishitans* were arrested. In the eyes of the West Japan was notorious for Christian persecution; the news of these persecutions was widely spread in the West through foreign newspapers.

A delegation led by Tomomi Iwakura visited the United States, United Kingdom, France, and Belgium from 1872 to 1873 for revising the treaties. The delegation was severely and constantly accused of the Christian persecutions wherever they went. Iwakura gradually came to realise that Japan could no longer continue the ban if it wanted fully to join the modern Western circle. On 24 February 1873 the ban of Christianity operative since 1614 was finally removed after 259 years.

Thus the lifting of the ban was a result of pressure from the West. Japan had no intention of securing religious freedom as a given right for all. In fact this lifting hastened Japan to make Shinto a state religion.

The West in the past similarly persecuted those who did not fit in their existing paradigms: Jews, Muslims, and Anabaptists; and Japan persecuted *Kirishitans*. However Japan was far behind in realising that such persecutions were evil. Due to the isolationist policy Japan had much fewer opportunities to reform its paradigm through interactions with other paradigms than Western countries.

⁷⁶⁷Kataoka 1979, 626-627, 639. 114 *Kirishitans* were banished in 1868, and others in 1870.

⁷⁶⁸Kataoka suggests that only 39 remained in Uragami. Kataoka 1979, 640.

⁷⁶⁹Kataoka 1979, 684, 694. Kataoka also suggests that 662 died during the banishment.

⁷⁷⁰According to Kataoka, the protest by a French consul was only 8 hours after the first arrest. Kataoka 1979, 587, 594.

Although the ban was lifted, full religious freedom was not actualised in Japan until the defeat in the Pacific War.

b. The Coming of Protestantism

The Catholic Church expanded soundly from 1875 to 1890. Drummond states: "The Catholic Church was planted in almost all the important centers of Japanese life."⁷⁷¹ This was a period of Westernisation, and anything Western was welcomed.

The Protestant missions were also successful. A number of young Japanese became Christians in Yokohama, Kumamoto, and Sapporo through missionaries' influence. They were mainly of the *Samurai* class from clans which had supported the Shogunate which had ceased to exist, and they were socially so-called losers. Yet they were well-educated with Confucian ethics as an elite, and were motivated to learn advanced foreign studies, which were available only through missionaries.

When Japanese Christians started the Fellowship of Laymen in Japan (*Zenkoku Kirisutokyôto Dai Shinbokukai*) in 1878, there were only 1,617 Japanese Christians in the country; and they felt that it would be ridiculous to insist on denominational differences. Another ecumenical convention was started in 1880 -- Tokyo Young People's Society (*Tokyo Seinen Kai*). Several ecumenical periodicals were established. Although missionaries generally intended to form denominational churches according to their denominational backgrounds, they had to cooperate with each other whilst Christianity was still small in Japan. However there were some missionaries who intentionally pursued nondenominational evangelism.⁷⁷²

Translation of the New and Old Testaments was interdenominationally completed in

⁷⁷¹Drummond 1971, 309. By 1890 there were 3,110 Catholic Christians in Tokyo, including 247 baptisms in that year. According to a statistic of 1889, there were 520 Catholics in Kyoto, 512 in Kobe, and 555 in Okayama. Ibid., 312.

⁷⁷²Ishihara asserts that Reformed and Presbyterian missionaries, S.R. Brown in particular, supported a nondenominational Christian corporation. Ishihara 1967, 131-132.

1887. Missionaries in this period were generally of Puritan and of evangelical faith; and they were from the tradition of revivalism: Pietism, the Great Awakening, and the Methodist movement. That over-bridged the denominational gap. In 1880s Japanese churches experienced a revival, which bound Christians together. Moreover Japanese Christians sought to be independent from foreign support, which led them to ignore denominational differences of the foreign mission. Missionaries did not pay much attention to academic theology.⁷⁷³ Thus simple evangelical faith, unity, non-denominationalism, and Puritan ethics were characteristics of Christianity in Japan in this period. When liberal theologies came to Japan soon after, this church of simple theology became tossed about by them.

The church grew in this period. Christians believed that Japan was going to be a Christian country soon.⁷⁷⁴ However the growth largely depended on Japanese acceptance of the Western culture. When Japan became nationalistic in the next period, the church had to struggle.

2. 1887-1907

a. State Shinto

The chief problem hanging over Japan was a revision of the 1858 treaties; and Japan took a Westernisation policy in order to secure a successful negotiation. However when modern Western culture surged over Japan for the first time, Japanese reacted against it. This was a nationalistic period, and Japan in this period established the *Tennô*-centred institutional system.

In the last days of the Tokugawa Shogunate, the Japanese people were divided into two: *Sonnô Jôi* [reverence for the Emperor and the expulsion of

⁷⁷³Germany 1965, 2.

⁷⁷⁴Kozaki states that the number of Christians doubled every year and Christians expected Japan to be a Christian country within a decade. Oouchi's quote from Hiromichi Kozaki's *Reflection on 70 years*. Oouchi 1970, 194. See also Otis 1970b, 166.

foreigners] and *Kaikoku*. Although Japan opened the country, as Hirakawa correctly asserts, "The *Meiji* Restoration was not [simply] a victory of the *Kaikoku* party over the *Sonnō Jōi* party."⁷⁷⁵ After Japan opened the country, typical Japanese were holding these two slogans together as *Wakon Yōsai*. From a Christian viewpoint Furuya rightly argues: "The *Meiji* Restoration was modern Japan's response to the huge question of how to deal with Christianity which was given from the outside; Japan established a guideline of achieving Zealot [nationalistic] purpose by Herodian [international] means through trial and error from the last days of the Tokugawa Shogunate to the *Meiji* period, and stood on the starting mark."⁷⁷⁶

In many parts of Europe church and state had been united for centuries and the church was still a spiritual backbone of modern secular governments. However when Japan started as a modern capitalist country, it was lacking a firm religious foundation which could unite the nation; and Shinto was to play that role.

Throughout the *Edo* era Shinto was an official religion along with Buddhism and Confucianism. However toward the end of the *Edo* era, a nationalistic movement, *Fukko Shinto* [Restoration Shinto] was advocated by Norinaga Motoori (1730-1801) and Atsutane Hirata (1776-1843). It was an attempt to revitalise ancient Japanese thought and culture by stripping Buddhist and Confucian influence from Shinto on the basis of the *Kojiki* [Records of ancient matters] and *Nihonshoki* [Chronicles of Japan]. It absolutised the *Tennō*. It was an irony that Hirata had to use Buddhism, Confucianism, and even Christian theology to make a Shinto doctrine.⁷⁷⁷ Shinto was always an inclusive religion without a solid theology, and *Fukko Shinto* was estranged from its tradition. However this "heretic" Shinto was accepted as an ideology for overthrowing the Shogunate because of its intense focus on the *Tennō*.⁷⁷⁸

⁷⁷⁵Hirakawa 1987, 86.

⁷⁷⁶Furuya 1989, 85.

⁷⁷⁷It has been known that Hirata used the Chinese translations of Mateo Ricci and Giuglio Aleni's works. Further Ebisawa proves that Hirata plagiarised their writings. Ebisawa 1977, 122-131. See also Obata 1990, 42-46.

⁷⁷⁸Murakami 1982, 3.

Thus the restoration of Shinto began with the *Fukko Shinto*, and Shinto became a spiritual core of the *Meiji* Restoration. Soon after that, the *Meiji* regime pronounced that Japan restored its ancient ideal unity of religion and government (*Saisei Icchi*) in 1868. This *Fukko Shinto* movement resulted in State Shinto, and its doctrinal development was completed by the Constitution of the Japanese Empire (1889) and the Imperial Rescript on Education (1890).⁷⁷⁹

There were two major stages for Shinto to become State Shinto. Firstly in 1868 the *Meiji* regime dissolved a long-lasting Shinto-Buddhist amalgamation by *Shin-butsu Hanzenrei* [an edict of separation of Shinto from Buddhism] out of an intention of 'purifying' Shinto from Buddhism. It was followed by an anti-Buddhist movement which experienced a peak in 1870-1871. It is to be noted, however, Shinto was frail in its doctrine, organisation, and evangelism, and had largely to depend on Buddhists priests to carry out the Shintoisation of Japan.⁷⁸⁰ Thus in reality 'pure' Shintoisation of Japan did not take place.

Secondly in 1882 the *Meiji* government divided Shinto into two: Shrine Shinto (*Jinja Shinto*) and Sect Shinto (*Kyôha Shinto*). The former was State Shinto. It "claims to perpetuate the authentic and traditional beliefs and rituals of the Japanese race and declares that it has developed spontaneously in the national life without the aid of individual historical founders."⁷⁸¹ Sect Shinto was considered as a religion and kept a status the same as any other religious organisations. Thus State Shinto was considered as a 'non-religious' cult of national ceremony. The veneration to the *Tennô* became a duty of the Japanese citizen.⁷⁸²

⁷⁷⁹Murakami divides a history of State Shinto into 4 periods: (1) formation period (1868-1880), (2) doctrinal completion period (1889-1905), (3) institutional completion period (late 1900s-1930), and (4) fascist state church period (1931-1945). Murakami 1970, 78-80.

⁷⁸⁰Murakami 1970, 86, 99; Murakami 1982, 5-6, 10; Kitagawa 1987, 166-167.

⁷⁸¹Murakami 1982, 13-14. See also Holton 1995, 68. Another definition of State Shinto is "the life principle of the Japanese race." "The Japanese serve the *Tennô* who is a descendant of Amaterasu Oomikami [the Sun goddess], and the *Tennô* tries to actualise her will." Asoya 1985, 274. This 'life principle' is obviously religious.

⁷⁸²Isomae 1998, 2.

Why did the government have to divide Shinto? Freedom of religion was requested not only from the West but also from the Japanese; moreover Shintoists experienced a major doctrinal controversy in 1878-1880 which revealed that State Shinto doctrines were still incoherent and Shinto as a religion was too immature to become a leading system of thought. Shintoists agreed on prioritising the securing of Shinto's privileged status. They tried to make Shinto a super-cult for national ceremony to influence the nation; and the government accepted it. Thus State Shinto was created as a "nonreligious or super-religious cult of national morality and patriotism to adherents of all religions."⁷⁸³ This artificial status of State Shinto -- not a religion but a state cult -- was enigmatic to every person of reason. Kishimoto rightly asserts: "No matter how cleverly one argues, however, it is impossible not to recognize that Shinto is a religion."⁷⁸⁴ In reality State Shinto was a State religion which was forced on every Japanese and reigned over all religions in Japan including Christianity; it was incompatible with religious freedom and separation of state and religion. This 'non-religious cult of national ceremony' later became a basis for utter devotion to the nation. In the previous encounter with Christianity, Japan adopted an isolationist policy to block out Christianity; in the second encounter when Japan did not have a choice of isolation, it created State Shinto.

Furuya's following observation is insightful:

State Shinto was a newly forged religion by Japan from the *Meiji* period in order to protect itself from its Christianisation. In other words, it was a religion which would not have existed if Christianity had not come to Japan. Therefore it did not exist during the isolation period; and it was born when Japan opened the country and Christianity was going to come.⁷⁸⁵

Western Christianity was a threat to Japan. It was partially due to Japan's nationalistic spiritual pride based on its inferiority complex toward Western technology; it was, however, partially due to the nature of Western Christianity as a spiritual motivation for imperialism.⁷⁸⁶ Japan had to forge this artificial entity of State Shinto due to the threat from triumphant Western Christianity; and even those

⁷⁸³Kitagawa 1987, 167. See also *ibid.*, 279; Kishimoto 1956, 131.

⁷⁸⁴Kishimoto 1956, 94.

⁷⁸⁵Furuya 1989, 91.

⁷⁸⁶Dohi 1980, 25, 31-33.

who accepted Christianity intended to use Christianity as a basis for modernising Japan.

State Shinto was doctrinally backed up by the Constitution of the Japanese Empire and the Imperial Rescript on Education. The *Meiji Tennô* issued an imperial rescript in 1876 to draft a constitution, and Hirobumi Itô was sent to Germany in 1882 to prepare it drawn from the example of Prussian constitutional monarchy. Germany was a less developed country in human rights than the United Kingdom or France, and appealed as a suitable example for the Japanese government to clear the minimum Western standard.⁷⁸⁷

b. The Constitution of the Japanese Empire

The Constitution was issued on 11 February 1889, Anniversary of the Emperor Jinmu's Accession (*Kigensetsu*).⁷⁸⁸ This too indicated that the Constitution was based on the Shinto myths.⁷⁸⁹ The Constitution was an imperial constitution which was granted to the subjects by the *Tennô*. It was not a fruit of the civil rights movement. The constitution proclaimed the perpetuity of the *Tennô*'s reign (Article 1), his sovereignty (Article 4), and his sanctity and inviolability (Article 3). The subjects were to help the *Tennô* rule Japan, and civil rights were given to them as a favour from the *Tennô*. However in an emergency such as a war, the *Tennô* was allowed to limit their rights beyond the description of the constitution (Articles 8, 9, and 31).⁷⁹⁰ Religious freedom was permitted as long as the subjects were not acting against their civil duty (Article 28).⁷⁹¹ This 'religious freedom' was a 'religious freedom within the framework of State Shinto.'⁷⁹² Christians were 'granted'

⁷⁸⁷Cf. Ohki 1994b, 225.

⁷⁸⁸Murakami 1982, 35-36.

⁷⁸⁹Iwai 1987, 18-19.

⁷⁹⁰See for example Hariu and Yokota 1983, 49-53. This meta-constitutional nature of the *Tennô* was reflected in his army and bureaucrats' privileges beyond the Court's participation. Igeda, Yamanaka, and Ishikawa 1982, 190.

⁷⁹¹Oda 1992, 29. Igeda, Yamanaka, and Ishikawa 1982, 79-83.

⁷⁹²Murakami 1970, 128.

permission by the *Tennō* to believe in and worship God as long as they were faithful subjects of the *Tennō*. However this limited 'religious freedom' appeared favourable to Christians at this point after a long history as religious heretics, and the majority of them welcomed it. However it later caused serious problems when Christian monotheism and faithfulness to the *Tennō* became sharply contradictory to each other.

Thus the *Tennō*'s authority was reconfirmed in the Constitution based on the myths of *Kojiki* and *Nihonshoki*. The *Meiji* Constitution was not contextualised Western constitutionalism with ancient Japanese embellishments; rather it was an establishment of Japanese ancient ideology with Western constitutional terminology.⁷⁹³ It was an outcome of *Wakon Yōsai*.

c. The Imperial Rescript on Education

Educational policy occupies a significant role in ruling a nation. In Japan moral education was based on State Shinto. The Constitution had left education untouched; room was left for another imperial instruction to deal with it.⁷⁹⁴ In 1890 the Imperial Rescript on Education was issued. It was practically a canon of State Shinto.⁷⁹⁵ As Shigeyoshi Murakami rightly asserts, "State Shinto was the religious basis . . . for the modern *Tennō* system; and the doctrine of State Shinto was completed by the Imperial Constitution and the Imperial Rescript on Education."⁷⁹⁶

From 1884 there was a rise in the level of debate on moral education necessary in Japan. Prime Minister Aritomo Yamagata believed that Japan needed military power and education. The *Meiji Tennō* ordered the editing of a collection of educational proverbs.⁷⁹⁷ Although the Minister of Education Arinori Mori established a modern educational system, morality (or the spirit of education) was

⁷⁹³Hariu and Yokota 1983, 54.

⁷⁹⁴Igeda, Yamanaka, and Ishikawa 1982, 140

⁷⁹⁵Murakami 1970, 138.

⁷⁹⁶Murakami 1970, 225.

⁷⁹⁷Kubo 1979, 13.

still an issue of debate, seeking what kind of people they should raise. Mori had a favourable attitude toward Christianity, and was assassinated by a nationalist on the morning of the promulgation of the Constitution. The Rescript was drafted by Kowashi Inoue (the Director General of the Cabinet Legislation Bureau), and was edited by Nagazane Motoda (Privy Councillor). Inoue was a rationalist and believed in the separation of state and religion since morality and religion should be beyond national policy. However Motoda was a nationalist who used to be an Imperial tutor, and strongly believed in the superiority of *Wakon*.⁷⁹⁸ The Rescript became a "compromise" of these two individuals of different thoughts. The religious terms were excluded as a rescript beyond the political and religious realms, as Inoue wished; yet as Motoda wished, the Rescript was based on Shinto myths which claimed that Japan was built by the *Tennô*'s ancestors and that ideal virtues lay in them. This meta-religious and meta-political educational principle was integral, perfectly in tune with State Shinto which was in reality religious and political.⁷⁹⁹ This 'compromise' simply revealed that Inoue and Motoda, who were of different schools of thought, "agreed on the establishment of the *Tennô* system."⁸⁰⁰ These two elements, Western logical thinking and nationalism, symbolically indicated the nature of Japanese modernisation -- *Wakon Yôσαι*.

The institutional response to the Western spirit appeared as State Shinto, the Constitution of the Japanese Empire and the Imperial Rescript on Education. On one hand Japan officially claimed the separation of religion and State and the protection of religious freedom; on the other hand Japan sought to establish a nation around the *Tennô* on the basis of Shinto. When Japan rejected Christianity in the first encounter, the *Tennô* was used as a central reason of the rejection; and the *Tennô* was again located in the centre of rejecting Christianity in this period. As a result it created a super-religious cult -- State Shinto -- which was 'officially' non-

⁷⁹⁸*Kyôgaku Taishi* [the Principle of Education] (1879) which Motoda drafted clearly indicated *Wakon Yôσαι*. Oouchi 1970, 266-267.

⁷⁹⁹Murakami 1982, 41-43; Igeda, Yamanaka, and Ishikawa 1982, 139-142.

⁸⁰⁰Furuya 1989, 97.

religious. The Constitution established such a system and the Imperial Rescript supplementarily laid down an ethics based on it.

d. The Uchimura Incident

Kanzo Uchimura's lese majesty case (*Fukei Jiken*) was a symbolic clash between Christian faith and State Shinto. Uchimura was a teacher at Tokyo Number One Higher Middle School. When it had a ceremony to receive the Imperial Rescript in 1891, every teacher was to bow to the Rescript. However Uchimura hesitated to do so, which was treated as a 'disrespectful act' to the *Tennô*. As a result he not only lost his job but also was condemned nation-wide and his wife died due to the stress from it. In 1893 Tetsujirô Inoue, professor of philosophy at Tokyo Imperial University, wrote an essay "The Collision between Education and Religion" and rejected Christianity as a religion irreconcilable with the Japanese spirit as it appeared in the Imperial Rescript.⁸⁰¹ This caused a major dispute between Christians and nationalists. The Japanese became hostile to Christianity. Drummond writes: "From 1890 attacks on the Christian religion appeared frequently in newspapers and books" and after the Treaty of Portsmouth with Russia in 1905 as a result of the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905) nationalism rose and zealots destroyed Christian churches.⁸⁰²

e. Liberal Theologies

In the previous period missionaries generally had an evangelical and orthodox faith. Christianity grew soundly. However in this period liberal theologies came to Japan. As they denied orthodox Christian doctrines, Japanese Christians were confused and experienced theological controversies for the first time.⁸⁰³ They

⁸⁰¹Inoue 1988, 48-116.

⁸⁰²Drummond 1971, 312.

⁸⁰³The liberal theology was often called 'new theology.'

were mainly two groups:⁸⁰⁴ Der Allgemeiner Evangelisch-Protestantischer Missionsverein (Tübingen School)⁸⁰⁵ and American Unitarian Association.⁸⁰⁶ The former was the most influential since it introduced higher criticism. These Culture-Protestant theologies were based on reason and (or) intuition, and appealed to a wide range of audience. Some Japanese theologians sought to Japanese Christianity. The authority of the Scriptures was questioned; some Christians left the church since the foundation of Protestant faith was shaken.

Through the challenge from liberal theologies, Japanese Christians had to clarify their identity. When the Forward Evangelistic Campaign (1901-1902) was promoted at the turn of the century, theological differences between the evangelical and the liberal became apparent and confused the audience. Danjō Ebina of liberal theology and Masahisa Uemura of evangelical theology had a debate for 5 months from September 1901. As Akio Dohi says, "The theological trend in the 1880s had a characteristic of Christian apologetics against Japanese spiritual tradition and modern thought. . . . [However] the New Theology [Protestant liberalism] revealed that the Christianity which was to be commended to the world was not necessarily monolithic. Therefore Christians had to ask 'what Christianity is' all over again."⁸⁰⁷

Through the interaction with liberalism there developed three streams of faith: fundamentalism, liberalism, and neo-evangelicalism. Fundamentalists practically ignored the liberal challenge and remained unchanged. Some liberals Japanised Christianity and created a nationalistic Christianity, which was represented by Ebina. Some liberals started Christian socialism since liberalism paid much attention to the social situation. Neo-evangelicals accepted the critical studies of liberalism whilst adhering to (or after a swing returned to) orthodox doctrines;

⁸⁰⁴Some include Universalist General Convention and Plymouth Brethren as well. Oouchi 1970, 316.

⁸⁰⁵They sent Wilfrid Spinner in 1885 and Otto Schmiedel in 1887. See for example Munzinger 1987, 202.

⁸⁰⁶They sent A.M. Knapp in 1887 and C. MacCauley in 1889.

⁸⁰⁷Dohi 1992, 61-62.

they were represented by Masahisa Uemura, Kanzô Uchimura, and Hiromichi Kozaki.⁸⁰⁸

In this period Christianity suffered severely, particularly in the 1890s. The encounter with liberalism was unavoidable sooner or later, and it was something that modern Christianity had to go through. The encounter forced Japanese Christians who had passively accepted the missionaries' teachings to consider subjectively what Christian faith is, and it was not necessarily a negative incident. The conflict with Japan's national pride was something that Christians could have predicted. The Japanese were gaining confidence not only in their spirit but also in their technology as Japan was increasing its modern appearance with the Constitution and developing industries. If the church sought to appeal to the Japanese as a part of triumphant Westernisation, it lost its *raison d'être* when Japan did not any longer depend on the West.

3. 1907-1926

After the Russo-Japanese War Japan went into a financial crisis in 1907, and moved to imperialism. Japan colonised China and Korea: the South Manchurian Railway Company was established in 1906, and Korea was annexed in 1910. During World War I (1914-1918) in which Japan's participation was minimal, Japanese economy revived. Japanese products met the demand created by the war and filled Asian markets. Capitalism grew rapidly. The middle class emerged firmly from the economic growth, and was a major target class for Christian evangelism. Through the wars, industrialisation, and economic growth, Japan's international status was recognised. Although nationalism rose during the wars, Japan was now in the Western international circle, and foreign countries were its necessary partners. Japan could again afford to welcome Western culture, and '*Taishô* Democracy' flourished under the leadership of Sakuzô Yoshino who was a liberal Christian and professor of politics at Tokyo Imperial University.

⁸⁰⁸Kozaki called his theology 'progressive orthodoxy.' Germany 1965, 12.

a. Japan's Positive Attitude toward Christianity

In 1907 World's Student Christian Federation Conference was held in Tokyo, to which the Japanese government expressed its welcome. In the same year William Booth, the founder and the General of Salvation Army, visited Japan. He was not only officially welcomed by prominent Japanese celebrity,⁸⁰⁹ but also allowed to meet the *Tennô* in uniform.⁸¹⁰ This was partially because Great Britain was an ally with Japan, but it was in any case an enormous welcome. Christian schools were again built. Several missions and denominations started Tokyo Woman's Christian College in 1918; Doshisha in 1920 and Rikkyo in 1922 were upgraded to universities.⁸¹¹ The Jesuits established Sophia University in 1913. The Roman Catholic Church experienced a new stage as new missionary societies arrived from 1915. Christian education was accepted by the government.

In 1912 the Japanese government invited representatives from Sect Shinto, Buddhism, and Christianity to discuss their contributions to national morality (*Sankyô Gôdô*). The government now intended to use Christianity along with the other two major Japanese religions to unite the nation, instead of blocking out Christian influence on Japan. For the first time Christianity appeared to be treated equally with traditional Japanese religions. On the other hand, it was an invitation for Christianity to accept a status of serving the nation under State Shinto; and the church publicly pronounced that it was loyal to the *Tennô* system.⁸¹² Nevertheless these events clearly indicated that Japan had turned towards being internationalistic.

⁸⁰⁹*Tokyo Asahi* 1907a, 4.

⁸¹⁰*Tokinokoe* 1907, 4. One usually had to wear a tailcoat upon meeting the *Tennô*. *Tokyo Asahi* 1907b, 3.

⁸¹¹Dohi 1980, 255-258. Kwansei Gakuin was upgraded to a university in 1932.

⁸¹²Dohi 1980, 134.

b. The Protestant Ecumenical Movement

The church attracted students and the intellectual middle class, and grew steadily. Revivalism again arose. Barclay F. Buxton (1860-1946, 1891-1902 and 1905-1917 in Japan) who was an Anglican missionary and Jûji Nakada (1870-1939) who organised the Holiness Church were the dominant revival leaders.

The ecumenical movement of the church was enhanced in this period. The World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh in 1910 was a turning point in the ecumenical movement. It had a significant effect in Japan. John R. Mott set up the Japan Continuation Committee to actualise ecumenical co-operation in mission. As a result the National Co-operative Campaign of Evangelism (*Zenkoku Kyôdô Dendô*) was carried out for three years (1914-1917). This active evangelism with great vigour, says Drummond, "included perhaps 90 percent of the entire Protestant movement."⁸¹³ In 1922 the National Christian Council in Japan (*Nihon Kirisutokyô Renmei*) was organised.

When World War I was over, Japan was hit by another economic depression. Although the economy was growing as a whole, the gap between the rich and the poor was increasing. The Great Kantô Earthquake occurred in 1923, which accelerated the depression. The Japanese economy was unstable, and the socialist movement had a great impact. Christian socialists played an important role in the movement and helped the poor and the oppressed. Toyohiko Kawaga (1888-1960) practised leadership in the social movement in the 1920s. He lived in a slum area and established numerous social works including consumers' co-operatives.

This was a period when the second generation Japanese Christians emerged. Academic theological works started appearing. Seiichi Hatano's *Kirisutokyô no Kigen* [the Origin of Christianity] (1908) is often regarded as the first academic work in Christianity. His works were based on German academicism. Tokutarô Takakura

⁸¹³Drummond 1971, 245. Oouchi shows statistics of the campaign. Oouchi 1970, 465.

was an influential evangelical theologian and pastor.⁸¹⁴ Uemura was a mentor of both Hatano and Takakura.

In this period numerous international conferences indicated Japan's shift toward internationalism, and Christianity was well accepted. The churches which were established by denominations in the *Meiji* period geared themselves toward corporate evangelism in this period. Social problems became tangible, and the church started responding to them.

4. 1926-1945

The distortion of capitalism was increasing. The world-wide economic depression started in 1929. As the unfair distribution of wealth became apparent, Marxism gained a strong influence over Japan. Imperialism tried to solve internal problems by the expansion of the nation. This period was dominated by fascism and totalitarianism, and resulted in a series of wars: the Manchurian Incident (1931), the Shanghai Incident (1932), the Sino-Japanese War (1937) and finally the Pacific War (1941-1945). This was the most nationalistic period in Japanese history and was a hard time for the church.

a. Persecutions to the Church

In 1933 and 1934 persecution fell on the Roman Catholic Church. In Ooshima, where there were 4,000 Roman Catholic Christians, churches were destroyed, burnt, and removed, and missionaries were kicked out. The situation was identical to the *Kakure Kirishitan* period.⁸¹⁵ However, contrary to that period, the

⁸¹⁴Takakura had a keen interest in culture particularly during his studies in Europe. However he is not discussed further in this thesis because he did not develop his thought on culture. Sato 1963, 118. He also had a tendency of "being out of touch with the indigenous 'ethos and issues of the day.'" Jennings 1995, 492. His strong emphasis on the atonement overshadowed his social ethics. See also *ibid.*, 337; Dohi 1980, 271, 386; and Unuma 1988, 209.

⁸¹⁵Gonoi 1990, 294; Yanagida 1957, 668.

Catholic Church did not resist the religious control of the government. They accepted State Shinto as non-religious ceremony, as the government insisted, and this has never been officially repealed until today.⁸¹⁶

In 1934 the government strengthened State Shinto ideology. Protestant ministers went to worship at a Shinto shrine.⁸¹⁷ In 1939 the Religious Bodies Law was passed and religious organisations came under the control of the government in 1940.⁸¹⁸ The government urged Protestant churches to be united as one church, and the majority of Christians thought that the unification was the only way for the church to survive.⁸¹⁹ It was an irony that the ecumenical unity which Japanese Christians hoped to actualise from the beginning was now forced on them by political pressure. In the same year 30 high officers of the Salvation Army had been arrested on charge of spying for the West, which drove Japanese churches to break with foreign missions for survival. In October 1940 the church celebrated the 2,600th year of the Imperial Reign and decided that the Protestant churches were to be united. The *Nihon Kirisuto Kyôdan* [the United Church of Christ in Japan] was formed next year, and its representative went to the Grand Shrines of Ise to report the union to Amaterasu Oomikami [the Sun-goddess]. The *Kyôdan* declared that Japanese Christians were Japanese subjects, and wished to pledge their loyalty to Japan by taking part in leading the spirit of people beyond the denominational walls and by assisting the Imperial Rule.⁸²⁰

Thus the church became a religious servant to the nation by participating the Imperial rule. It is crucial for us to realise that the church here was taking the trajectory of a state church. In the West, as Yoder said, "What is called 'church' is an

⁸¹⁶Drummond 1971, 323. In addition, Sophia University, a Jesuit institution, publicly claimed in October 1932 that it was not a religious school. Gonoï 1990, 295.

⁸¹⁷Yanagida 1957, 669.

⁸¹⁸See Oouchi 1970, 564-565 for the content of the law.

⁸¹⁹Oouchi 1970, 577-578.

⁸²⁰Oouchi 1970, 568, 575, 588-590. Those who did not participate in the unification were persecuted. Some 140 ministers of the Holiness Church and 42 ministers of the Seventh Day Adventist Church were arrested, and the Salvation Army was dissolved. Yanagida 1957, 670.

administrative branch of the state on the same level with the army or the post office."⁸²¹ Although Christianity in Japan was always in a minority, the government gradually invited the church to take part in ruling the nation: granting limited religious freedom under State Shinto as long as it did not contradict the duty of Japanese subjects.⁸²²

This Western magisterial Protestantism, which occupied most of denominations in Japan, could not provide an effective model for Japanese Christians. Therefore our focus should be on those who chose not to compromise, dared to accept persecutions from the authorities, and gave a prophetic voice to Japan. They were mainly *Mukyôkai* Christians.⁸²³

Christianity re-entered Japan in 1859 and was only some 80 years old. It was brought by Western missionaries with Western culture in the storms of the radical modernisation period. Moreover soon after it arrived in Japan, it experienced the intense liberal-evangelical controversy which Western Christianity had been able to handle in a more gradual process. Furthermore Japanese Christians faced the sharpest nationalism in Japanese history when Japan as the last entrant to the imperialist stakes was facing the most serious crisis in its history, and its enemies were Western countries -- particularly the United States and United Kingdom -- which brought Christianity to Japan. We must acknowledge that Japanese Christians were in an extremely difficult situation.

b. Social Christianity and Neo-orthodoxy

The Christian response to the social problems appeared in two ways. One was a Christian students' response called Social Christianity. It was carried out by

⁸²¹Yoder 1994b, 60.

⁸²²For example in the worship service the church conducted the worshipping of the Imperial Palace, singing the national anthem, and praying for success in war as the "national observance." Unuma 1992, 57.

⁸²³We cannot say that no *Mukyôkai* Christian compromised. However the most distinct resistance emerged from them.

the Student Christian Movement (SCM) as a response to social injustice and to Marxism. However it remained largely within the Marxist paradigm without distinctive Christian perspectives.⁸²⁴ Whilst the Social Christianity of SCM remained critical of the established church, it failed to produce constructive alternatives, and it was dissolved in 1932. However its criticism of individualistic and passive Christianity without social interest was a significant contribution. It is most clear in the theology of Enkichichi Kan who was the theoretical leader of SCM.⁸²⁵

The other was the church's response, the Kingdom of God Movement (1930-1933). It was started by the National Christian Council under the leadership of Toyohiko Kagawa. It was an ecumenical campaign of evangelism and social improvement, which targeted the working class. The church, it was argued, had been mainly focusing on the intelligentsia and middle class especially its younger members, and had emphasised the so-called individualistic salvation of the soul. The church had neglected the working class and social injustice. However this movement claimed that the Christian message was inseparable from social problems and focused on the unprivileged people, and saw Japanese society from the marginal viewpoint. It was a prophetic voice both to the society and to individualistic Christianity.

Neo-orthodoxy was introduced in Japan in around 1927. Emil Brunner's works played an introductory role although the Japanese trend shifted from Brunner to Barth as his *Church Dogmatics* started appearing. Why did neo-orthodoxy become popular in Japan? Toshio Sato rightly claims that it satisfied both Christian and non-Christian intellectuals.⁸²⁶ Although the Christianity which the American missionaries brought had a fresh impact, it did not appear as deep as traditional Japanese thought. However neo-orthodoxy revealed the intellectual depth of Christian faith. Japanese intellectuals then were well acquainted with German

⁸²⁴Oouchi 1970, 495.

⁸²⁵Germany 1965, 55, 60, 72. Germany reports that Kan emphasised social reform which could reform individuals rather than personal change which could influence a society. Ibid., 69-70.

⁸²⁶Sato 1997, 55-56.

idealism. Neo-orthodoxy emerged out of the struggle with it, and it established its status in the academic world in Japan.

It was a tragedy that social Christianity and neo-orthodoxy had no interaction. The former had a sociological viewpoint; and the latter was 'pure' theology. H. Richard Niebuhr's theology, which we largely upheld, was an attempt to over-bridge the two. However there was no such theological attempt in Japan.⁸²⁷ As Yoshitaka Kumano regrets, social Christianity and neo-orthodoxy ignored each other, and within several years they were overwhelmed by 'Japanese' Christianity.⁸²⁸

c. 'Japanese' Christianity

When nationalism rose in Germany, 'German Christians' were organised to support Nazism. In the *Meiji* period liberal Japanese theologians tried to mediate between the Japanese tradition and Christian tradition, and ended up distorting the traditional Christian message. In 1930s and 1940s nationalistic Christianity again arose in Japan. This was a significant distortion which we cannot overlook.

The *Kyôdan*, for example, claimed to the churches in February 1945 when the defeat of Japan was already obvious that Christians should serve the nation with the faith of "whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's."⁸²⁹ Dohi is right to say that "Christianity was used as a spiritual weapon to drive humans to die,"⁸³⁰ and that the *Kyôdan* was occupied with the *Tennô* ideology just like any other Japanese of the era, and spontaneously served the nation.⁸³¹

According to Toshio Sato, such 'Japanese' Christianity made "certain changes in the content of the Christian faith" in its attempt at amalgamation or it advocated "cooperating positively with nationalism and war, while holding to the traditional Christian faith." He claims that those "who had adopted liberal Christianity" and

⁸²⁷One exception was a *Mukyôkai* sociologist, Tadao Yanaihara.

⁸²⁸Kumano 1982, 595.

⁸²⁹Romans 14:8b.

⁸³⁰Dohi 1980, 358.

⁸³¹Dohi 1980, 358-360, 415-416.

those who were "associated with pietism" tended to turn to 'Japanese' Christianity. Liberals did not have an anchor of orthodox faith; and Pietists, although they were sincere believers, were "more concerned with the Bible and piety than with orthodox doctrine."⁸³²

Even those mainline churches which did not develop a theology of 'Japanese' Christianity largely supported the wars. Christianity in Japan had been mainly supported by the missions from the United States and Great Britain which were enemies during the Second World War. The church was constantly suspected of alliance to those countries, and had to prove its loyalty to Japan.

This period was an extremely difficult time for the church. However it was a time for the church to examine what it really believed. When liberalism was introduced, the church had to re-examine its belief, and the majority of Christians came to a conclusion, particularly through the Ebina-Uemura controversy in 1901, that 'evangelicalism' was the essence of the Gospel although liberal inquiry was to be valued. In this period the church had to examine its attitude towards the nation. Most Christians sought to survive by compromising their faith, instead of insisting on Christian distinctiveness. Survival was the supreme goal for the church. *Kirishitan* Christianity accepted suffering for Christ as a part of Christian life and was rooted in community of faith. Christianity in this period seemed to be more theological and accommodating to Japanese culture and was less demanding about its unchanging truth. It is understandable that modern Christian minds found it more difficult to adhere to a simple and traditional Christian message than *Kirishitans*. Besides this problem of 'modernity,' however, problems seemed to lie in both Christianity which came to Japan from the *Meiji* period and the attitude of the Japanese who accepted Christianity. We now critically examine the characteristics of Christianity of this second encounter.

⁸³²Sato 1997, 57, 58.

III. Characteristics of *Meiji*, *Taishô*, and Early *Shôwa* Christianity in Japan

A. The Nature of Christianity in Japan

In order to discuss the nature of Christianity in this period, we have to examine both the Christianity which came with missionaries to Japan and the Christianity of Japanese converts.⁸³³

1. Christianity that Came to Japan

a. Three Kinds of Christianity

The background of the missionaries who came to Japan can be divided into three kinds.⁸³⁴ The first was Evangelicalism from the tradition of revivalism. It included Continental Pietism, the Great Awakening, and the Methodist movement. Despite denominational diversity the majority of missionaries shared this tradition in common, except liberals.⁸³⁵ The Evangelicals emphasised the authority of the Scripture, Salvation through the death of Christ on the Cross, personal conversion, and the urgency for evangelism.⁸³⁶ They also held orthodox doctrines. However their primary concern was not intellectual understanding of the Gospel but conversion of individuals and puritan ethics with a simple orthodox theology.

⁸³³Dohi similarly focuses on these two aspects of Christianity. Dohi 1980, 10-58.

⁸³⁴The division into three groups is generally accepted. Dohi 1980, 17-25.

⁸³⁵It has been suggested that early Christianity which came to Japan was Puritanism, and Puritan ethics did remain in the Japan mission conducted by American missionaries. However, as Dohi asserts, the mission was some 200 years after the hey day Puritanism, and the Christianity which came to Japan was not simply Puritanism but Puritanism which had gone through the New England theology and the Great Awakening. The situation was similar for missionaries from Great Britain where Puritanism originated. Therefore it is more appropriate to say that they shared traditions of revivalism and evangelicalism.

⁸³⁶Cf. McGrath 1994, 111.

The second was liberalism. We have already seen that American Unitarians and German and Swiss liberalism came to Japan around 1890 and had considerable influence. Their theology was based not on orthodox doctrines but on intuition and reason, and was free from traditional authorities. They were highly academic.

The third group was identified as Full Gospel.⁸³⁷ Barclay Buxton was an influential leader of this group. It was similar to Evangelicalism in sharing the tradition of revivalism, holding orthodox doctrines, and emphasising evangelism with a simple theology. However it was different in its stress on Holy Spirit and subjective experience led by the Spirit. Whilst Evangelical Christianity appealed to the upper middle class, they were able to reach lower middle class and working class. Some of them were considered as Fundamentalists due to a negative reaction to liberalism.⁸³⁸

Evangelical and Full Gospel missionaries taught at seminaries.⁸³⁹ However their theology was not so sophisticated and did not necessarily satisfy some gifted Japanese students.⁸⁴⁰ In the early stage, missionaries were not academically minded.

b. Magisterial Christianity

Another characteristic of missionaries in this period appears in their understanding of Christianity that Christianity should be the basis for a modern nation. I would call this magisterial Christianity. Magisterial Christianity is a distinctive kind of Christianity which seeks confederation with the ruler. Although it is congenial to Constantinian Christianity, I prefer to use the term 'magisterial

⁸³⁷Oouchi identifies 8 groups in Full Gospel. Oouchi 1970, 448-452.

⁸³⁸Dohi 1980, 23.

⁸³⁹Oouchi reports that although there were 17 Protestant seminaries by 1909, they should be called "mission training schools" due to the low quality of theological education. Oouchi 1970, 302-313.

⁸⁴⁰Oouchi 1970, 302, 312.

Christianity' in discussing Christianity in Japan where it has always been in a minority and has never had a chance to become a state church.

Magisterial Christianity presupposes a unity or complementarity between the church and state, and wishes to become a 'chaplain' to the nation.⁸⁴¹ In Europe it appeared as a state church; and in North America it appeared as magisterial denominational Christianity. The Christianity which was brought to Japan was naturally magisterial Christianity. Although Christianity has always been in a minority in Japan, magisterial Christians hoped that Christianity would be a chaplain to the society. The church had a "fundamental attitude to play a complementary role to the government by taking sides with it and by standing up for its policies."⁸⁴² Dohi points out in historical documents the co-operative attitudes of the church in Japan with the government.⁸⁴³

Magisterial Christianity should be distinguished from imperialistic Christianity, which also existed in the Japan mission.⁸⁴⁴ It held an attitude of a conqueror and imposed Western 'Christian' culture on their mission fields. Japanese Christians naturally rejected it. Magisterial Christianity could be culturally sensitive whilst maintaining its unity with state.

Colonisation and Christian mission were inseparable, particularly in the Roman Catholic missions. They "not only went hand in hand but were two sides of the same coin." As David Bosch asserts in his comprehensive work on Christian missions, "the new word, 'mission,' [which was first used in the sixteenth century by Ignatius of Loyola] is historically linked indissolubly with the colonial era" and with the idea of a papal commissioning. "The term presupposes an established church in Europe . . . and was as such an attendant phenomenon of European expansion." The colonialism of the Protestant nations was primarily secular until the nineteenth

⁸⁴¹See Chapter 2, IVA2 'Against Constantinian Christianity.'

⁸⁴²Dohi 1980, 245.

⁸⁴³Dohi 1980, 334-338, 344-345, 357-363.

⁸⁴⁴Imperialistic Christianity along with colonialism caused a nationalistic reaction from the Japanese. The evil nature of imperialistic Christianity is obvious. Here I rather focus on a kind of Christianity which appeared appealing and legitimate to both missionaries and the Japanese, namely magisterial Christianity.

century. The *Edo* Shogunate preferred Britain and the Netherlands to Portugal and Spain as trading partners largely because their trading was mission-free. However in the mid-nineteenth century, by the time Christianity re-entered Japan, the colonial expansion of Protestant nations became strongly linked to Christian missions.⁸⁴⁵

There is no doubt that revivalism played a significant role in the shift. However the 'Manifest Destiny' was no less important, which was a conviction of Western nations that God had chosen them in His providence for a certain destiny to carry out His purposes. It first appeared in the early nineteenth century and was commonly shared in the heyday of mission and colonialism (1880-1920).⁸⁴⁶ Bosch rightly claims that "'manifest destiny' is a product of nationalism," and further asserts:

It was only to be expected that [with the attitude of the Manifest Destiny] the nationalistic spirit would, in due time, be absorbed into missionary ideology, and Christians of a specific nation would develop the conviction that they had an exceptional role to play in the advancement of the kingdom of God through the missionary enterprise.⁸⁴⁷

The chief players of the Protestant Japan missions were Americans and the British. They had a strong awareness of the Manifest Destiny. In fact the notion of Manifest Destiny first appeared amongst Anglo-Saxons.⁸⁴⁸ In Christian mission there was an intention of sharing the success of the West.

Although the United States claimed a separation of the church and state, Americans were no less religious in their colonialism. As Sidney Mead claims, "the United States . . . had two religions": "the religion of the denominations" and "the religion of the democratic society and nation." The former was "commonly articulated in the terms of scholastic Protestant orthodoxy and almost universally practiced in terms of the experimental religion of pietistic revivalism"; and the latter was "rooted in the rationalism of the Enlightenment . . . and was articulated in terms of the destiny of America, under God, to be fulfilled by perfecting the democratic

⁸⁴⁵Bosch 1991, 275, 228, 303.

⁸⁴⁶Bosch 1991, 298, 301. Neill regards "the heyday of colonialism" as 1858-1914. Neill 1966, 322.

⁸⁴⁷Bosch 1991, 298, 299.

⁸⁴⁸Bosch 1991, 300.

way of life for the example and betterment of all mankind."⁸⁴⁹ Whilst the former was of Christian faith, the latter was of American civilisation. These two were interwoven in the American missions. "America's destiny came to be seen as her call to spread the amazing benefits of the American democratic faith and its free-enterprise system throughout the world, gradually transforming the world into its own image."⁸⁵⁰ *Our Country* (1885) by Josiah Strong (1847-1916), Congregational minister in Wyoming, was a very popular and stirring book.⁸⁵¹ He proclaimed that the expansion of the United States was of divine providence, and Christianisation of the world was the responsibility of Americans. He fitted the trend of that time.

Thus there were three elements interwoven in the Western mission: Western colonialism, Christian mission, and Western civilisation. Manifest Destiny rationalised colonialism and motivated Christian mission and 'civilising' the Japanese. There is no need to argue the evil of colonialism. Although introducing Christian faith and Western civilisation was well-meant, the Christianity of the missionaries was nationalistic and lost the sharp edge of prophetic faith to critique the fallen nature of their own nations. I have already rejected Constantinian Christianity from the discussion of Yoder and Hauerwas. Likewise this magisterial Christianity is unacceptable from our standard.

It was a nationalistic period in Japan as well, and the Japanese 'rightly' understood the missionaries' Christianity in that context. Missionaries did not dream that the Christian Church should be the State religion of Japan, but strongly believed in and advocated "Christianity as the spiritual basis of a nation or modern civilisation."⁸⁵² It was their firm conviction that in order to gain wealth like the West, Japan needed Christianity. This was an invitation to the Japanese to join a winning team rather than to create Christ-like communities in Japan, and Christianity became a means or a tool for Japan to become a successful nation.

⁸⁴⁹Mead 1963, 135.

⁸⁵⁰Mead 1963, 152.

⁸⁵¹Strong 1891.

⁸⁵²Dohi 1980, 25.

Missionaries' Christianity naturally had a triumphant and victorious flavour more than an image of the suffering servant. This seems to be a crucial reason for the Japanese superficially to understand Christianity without serious repentance and Christian commitment before God. They only imitated their mentors. Thus superficial 'Christians' came to the church in the international periods, yet they left the church in the nationalistic periods. Furuya calls them "graduated Christians."⁸⁵³

2. Christianity of Japanese Converts

a. Socio-psychological Background

What kind of people became Christian in the early *Meiji* period? Since they set the direction of Christianity in Japan, it is significant to inquire into this question.

Firstly people accepted Christianity in their youth. Rokurô Sugii discusses early *Meiji* Christianity from a questionnaire carried out from 1918 to 1921 which revealed a sociological aspect of Christianity.⁸⁵⁴ According to the report, says Sugii, baptisms between the ages 16 and 23 occupied 40 per cent and baptisms between the ages 16 and 30 occupied over 67 per cent, and the age 18 had the highest number of baptisms.⁸⁵⁵ One explanation may be that young people have less social responsibility than the old, and they are more flexible to accept a new religion.

⁸⁵³Furuya 1995, 83-84. Furuya compares these 'graduated Christians' and Marxists in Japan, saying that both Christianity and Marxism were foreign thoughts which attracted the young. However whilst Marxists felt guilty when they left Marxism, Christians felt little guilt when they left the church. Furuya points out the superficiality of Christian faith in Japan.

⁸⁵⁴The questionnaire was sent in 1918 to those who had been Christian more than 30 years, and received 859 responses. The questionnaire is a precious resource for knowing early Japanese Christians. They not only represented some 18 per cent of Christians who were baptised in the early *Meiji* period but also were those who kept the faith through the nationalistic period. The questionnaire resulted in Fukunaga ed. 1921.

⁸⁵⁵Sugii 1984, 13. Since the questionnaire dealt with those who had been Christian more than 30 years, it tended to exclude those who became Christian in their later years. However we can still see a tendency that long-time Japanese Christians in the early 1900s were baptised in their early years.

Secondly two kinds of social background are identified amongst the early Japanese Christians. One was young ex-*Samurais* from the clan who had supported the Shogunate. They were educated with ethical ideals, yet the Shogunate no longer existed. They were outsiders to the clan government of Satsuma and Chôshû and did not have a chance to enter the mainstream politics. They had already lost their status and wealth and did not have much more to lose. Their pride and responsibility for the nation as a (former) leading class and their high *Samurai* ethics were satisfied with Christianity. Aizan Yamaji already pointed out this tendency as early as 1906 in his study of Christianity in Japan.⁸⁵⁶ Yamaji himself was one of them. Sugii positively reconfirms such a tendency through the questionnaire.⁸⁵⁷

The other kind was wealthy young people from the upper-middle class both in the city and countryside. The questionnaire reports, according to Sugii, that they were merchants, government officials, medical doctors, and wealthy farmers.⁸⁵⁸ Dohi also reports that Christianity was spread in the towns and villages in the countryside and amongst the peasants from the late 1870s.⁸⁵⁹

A deep prejudice against Christianity as an evil religion was formed due to the long history of the ban. Japanese in the *Meiji* period were more cautious about the Christian religion than in the sixteenth century. In order to become a Christian, people had to have enough courage to approach and accept this religion of ill-repute from the West. They were young people; they were marginalised ex-ruling class with high ethics; or they were financially independent and intellectually motivated. They were more or less free from Japanese custom and motivated to taste a new Western culture.⁸⁶⁰

⁸⁵⁶Yamaji 1971, 350-351.

⁸⁵⁷Sugii 1984, 10-11.

⁸⁵⁸Sugii 1984, 21-22.

⁸⁵⁹Dohi 1980, 45-46.

⁸⁶⁰Sugii's analysis of the report about the baptism of women also affirms such an independence from Japanese tradition as a requisite for becoming a Christian. There were two peaks in the age of women's baptism: 16 years old and 26 years old. He suggests that the former was the age of graduation from school, and the latter was 4 or 5 years after marriage, probably due to the husband's influence. These two ages were the peak for liberating themselves from the conventional family. Sugii 1984, 14. Hidenobu Kuwada (1895-1975), a major Japanese

b. Motivations for Becoming a Christian

Ambitious young people studied under missionaries in order to gain western skills so that they could bring fame and wealth to their family and themselves. They initially had no intention of becoming a Christian. However as they were impressed by missionaries' character, some came to seek Christian faith. Although missionaries were generally not academic theologians, there were many missionaries of character and capability in their field of speciality such as medicine.⁸⁶¹ Ex-*Samurais* were raised with Confucius-*Samurai* ethics. It denied selfishness, and valued one's duty to the lord and sacrifice for the people. Japanese Christians saw the same characteristics in the missionaries. When they became Christian, they kept that ethics whilst accepting Christ as the new and true Lord. They did not feel that they had to abandon their ethics; rather they thought that Christianity enlightened and fulfilled their traditional ethics. They did not experience a fundamental conversion of their value system; rather they somewhat modified it with Christianity. In the *Meiji* period the object of faithfulness was shifted from their family or clan to the nation of Japan, and they had a strong nationalism. Christianity appeared to be a promising tool to modernise Japan. Such Christianity had no effect on their nationalism. Naoomi Tamura, one of the first three ordained ministers in Japan, confessed:

[My understanding of Christianity was] entirely nationalistic My heart was occupied by [the idea] that Christianity was a religion of civilised nations, Buddhism and Shinto were no good, and [Japan] could not become like Western civilised countries without Christianity. . . . Spiritual matters such as Christ or the salvation of Christ did not occupy my heart at all.⁸⁶²

theologian, also reflects on his process of becoming the first Christian from his village, that if his family had not gone bankrupt and he had not moved because of it, "there would not have been a chance in a million" that he became a Christian. Kuwada 1968, 192-193.

⁸⁶¹Oouchi 1970, 415.

⁸⁶²Tamura 1924, 24.

After confessing his nationalistic understanding of Christianity, he suggested that all his Christian friends were like him. Uchimura too confessed that both Yokoi and he believed in Christianity in order to save Japan in a nationalistic sense.⁸⁶³

Sugii's analysis of the questionnaire supports such a view. He categorises the motivations to become a Christian into three types: direct, indirect, and compound. The 'direct' type includes those who became Christian by being impressed by Christian teaching and missionaries' character without experiencing intellectual, psychological, or ethical conflict with their former value system. The 'indirect' came to Christianity through a defeat such as sickness or bankruptcy. The 'compound' had both 'direct' and 'indirect' experiences. According to Sugii, the 'direct' type occupied 82 per cent.⁸⁶⁴ It is not clear from Sugii's work if the 'indirect' type includes those who existentially (and not just financially or physically) struggled with problem of sin and salvation. However, even if this is the case, the analysis indicates that Christians then generally considered Christian faith as a fulfilment of their life without serious recognition of sin and repentance.

Christianity came with Western civilisation. Early Japanese Christians largely accepted Christian faith partially because they thought Christianity could enlighten the Japanese and modernise Japan. After all Christianity for them was a means to achieve modernisation. These people left Christianity when they found something more attractive to satisfy their interest. Japanese acceptance of Christianity thus tended to be pragmatic and superficial.⁸⁶⁵ They were disinclined to face the crucial question, whether to accept Christ as the ultimate Lord or not.

This tendency of Christianity in Japan as a means to modernise Japan was partially due to Japanese nationalism. However it was also partially due to the problem of Western Christianity. They believed that Christianity should be a basis of building a modern nation, and encouraged Japanese to become Christian for that purpose. This magisterial Christianity was hardly able to challenge nationalism.

⁸⁶³Shibuya 1988, 2; Suzuki 1950, 53.

⁸⁶⁴Sugii 1984, 19.

⁸⁶⁵Cf. Oouchi 1970, 261.

Although Japanese Christians were bothered by the Christianity of American and British nationalism, they did not deny nationalistic Christianity altogether. Instead, they sought a nationalistic Christianity for the Japanese.

B. Nationalism and Accommodation

In the sixteenth century it was mainly missionaries who intentionally sought a way of accommodating the Christian message and Christian life to the Japanese. Although *Kirishitans* accommodated Christian practices in their life, they did not have a clear intention to contextualise Western Christianity in a Japanese way. Moreover they did not feel the necessity to react against Western Christianity because of culturally sensitive missionaries like Xavier and Valignano. If ethnocentric and militant missionaries like Cabral and Coelho had set the direction of the Japan mission, the situation would have been different.⁸⁶⁶ Furthermore nationalism was not yet firmly formed in Japan. Although Japan already had a vague identity as a nation through an international relationship with China, Korea, and Southeast Asian countries, it experienced very few international wars which often shape a national identity.⁸⁶⁷

However in the nineteenth century, Japanese nationalism -- just as any other nationalism of Asian countries -- sharply emerged as a reaction to Western colonialism. Nationalism was a crucial problem in Christianity from the nineteenth century all over the world.⁸⁶⁸ It is often said that all *Meiji* Christians were nationalistic. Accommodation in this period was inseparably interwoven with nationalism, and we must discuss them together.

⁸⁶⁶Under Cabral's leadership before Valignano's first visit to Japan a deep emotional gulf was already formed between the Jesuits and Japanese Christians.

⁸⁶⁷Japan experienced only three international wars: Mongolians twice attacked Japan in the thirteenth century, and Japan attacked Korea once in the sixteenth century.

⁸⁶⁸According to Bosch, "the term 'nationalism' was only coined in 1798." Bosch 1991, 298.

1. Christianity Which Supported Nationalism

a. Nationalism

In order to examine the Christianity which supported Japanese nationalism, we need to discuss Japanese nationalism. Japanese nationalism then was largely formed as a reaction to the Western colonialism with which Christianity came to Japan. As Furuya asserts, "Japanese nationalism had an anti-Christian characteristic from its beginning."⁸⁶⁹ Japanese Christians were, therefore, in a dilemma between Christianity and Japan. The most well-known example of this kind was Uchimura's love for two 'J's: Jesus and Japan.⁸⁷⁰ Furuya discusses how Japanese Christians struggled with the dilemma in three ways: defensive, offensive, and emotional attitudes.⁸⁷¹ The defensive way was an apologetic approach to argue that Christianity was not harmful to Japan and that Christianity and Japan were not contradictory to each other. He states that this was an early attitude of most Japanese Christians who accepted Japanese nationalism and eventually supported wars. The offensive attitude claimed that Christian patriotism was the highest patriotism and that only Christianity could save Japan. Uchimura and Uemura are categorised in this approach.⁸⁷² The emotional nationalism was an unconscious attitude which the Japanese particularly before the Pacific War generally shared whether they were Christian or not, and was not exclusive of the previous two attitudes. This emotional nationalism, says Furuya, caused the majority of Christians to be "co-operative to wars from the Sino-Japanese War to the Pacific War."⁸⁷³

⁸⁶⁹Furuya 1989, 137.

⁸⁷⁰Uchimura 1963c, 31.

⁸⁷¹Furuya 1989, 139-146.

⁸⁷²Uchimura asserts: "There is no patriotism purer, more ardent, higher, and deeper than the patriotism of Christians." Uchimura 1963c, 32.

⁸⁷³Furuya 1989, 146.

Whilst these three are insightfully descriptive categories, we need normatively to assess Japanese nationalism.⁸⁷⁴ In Chapter 1 I have discussed H. Richard Niebuhr's 'henotheism' and 'radical monotheism'.⁸⁷⁵ It seems to me that there are two kinds of nationalism which correspond to these concepts of Niebuhr. Henotheistic love can be exclusive nationalism. It unconditionally affirms a nation and leads us to reject or to despise foreign nations (and foreign religion). Such a love is on the trajectory of idealising a nation (and its religion) and demands our full devotion to it. However radical monotheism, whilst valuing a nation as the given, demands critical discernment of its limit and fallenness. I would call this kind of love theocentric patriotism. This patriotism is based on our full devotion to the absolute One beyond many, and prevents us from being ultimately concerned about a nation which is one among many.

Thus whether one takes a defensive or offensive attitude for arguing for the legitimacy of Christianity in Japan, one has to seek radical monotheism, which results in theocentric patriotism. However there was Christianity which supported exclusive nationalism.

b. Independent Spirit

Nationalism appeared in the independent spirit amongst Japanese Christians, and they were inseparable. Churches in Japan were largely dependent on the Western missions, but both liberals such as Ebina and neo-evangelicals such as Uemura and Uchimura were very sensitive about Western imperialistic Christianity, and sought a way to liberate Christianity from the Western missions.

⁸⁷⁴Amongst these three Furuya seems to value the offensive attitude the most as he calls it "Christian nationalism" or "Christian reinterpretation (*Tenshaku*)" of so-called patriotism and nationalism." However it is not fully discussed. Furuya 1989, 142.

⁸⁷⁵Chapter 1, IID1 'Radical Monotheism.' Furuya too discusses Niebuhr's 'radical monotheism.' Furuya 1989, 206-213.

There were at least three motivations for this independence from foreign missions. Firstly independence was an intellectual requisite for liberal thinking. One had to be independent intellectually (and financially) in order freely to think.

Secondly, as Uchimura claimed particularly, independence was a necessary condition for making a contribution to Christianity in the world. Uchimura in "Kirisuto Shinja to Nihonjin [Christians and Japanese]" (1926) claimed to value one's given background. Just as Nathanael was a true Israelite, as Apostle Paul was a Hebrew of Hebrews, and as Luther was a German Christian, so Japanese Christians should understand Japanese virtues in order to become true disciples of Christ, instead of becoming like Americans or the British.⁸⁷⁶ He believed that Japan's true vocation was to restore Christianity from the Western 'fallen' Church through *Mukyōkai*, which is discussed below.⁸⁷⁷ This has a postmodern flavour which rejects a Western universal standard and values one's particularity.

Thirdly, independence was a reaction to Western imperialistic and denominationalised Christianity. This type of motivation for independence occupied a large part of so-called nationalism. Japanese exclusive nationalism was a vital motivation for accepting liberalism. Liberalism allowed Japanese theologians critically to think about Christian faith instead of accepting the theology of conservative missionaries who occupied a large role in the mission. Needless to say, the last thing that Japanese theologians wanted to do was uncritically to swallow missionaries' teachings.⁸⁷⁸ Some wanted to create a theology for the Japanese.⁸⁷⁹ In fact liberalism allowed them not only to be critical of the missionaries but also to

⁸⁷⁶Uchimura 1963c, 222-223.

⁸⁷⁷Ohara 1992, 509.

⁸⁷⁸Kanamori 1890, 418. Uemura resigned his position at the theology department of Meiji Gakuin due to a theological disagreement with American missionaries and started the first seminary by the Japanese, Tokyo Shingakusha, in 1904. Furuya asserts that Japanese Christians inclined to be independent from foreign missions since Japan was an independent nation unlike other Asian nations. Furuya 1991, 21-23.

⁸⁷⁹Kanamori and Yokoi indicated this strong ethnic identity in theology. Yokoi 1890, 221-225.

produce a 'Japanese' Christianity, which was another form of exclusive Christianity and a distortion of Christian faith.

Although the first two motivations are legitimate and healthy motivations, the third was a product of Japanese henotheism as a reaction to Western henotheism. Therefore it distorted the Christian message.

c. Liberalism

I have described two nationalistic periods in Japan: 1887-1907 and 1926-1945. In both periods the church indicated a tendency to compromise its Christian distinctiveness with exclusive nationalism. C.H. Germany rightly points out two reasons for the compromise in the former period, which seems to me also to be applicable to the latter period. One was pressure on the church from the nationalistic policy of the state. The other was an influence from liberal theology which tried to unite Christianity and Japanese culture.⁸⁸⁰ On one hand Japanese Christians had to prove that Christianity and Japan were not necessarily contradictory; and on the other hand they sought the unique contribution of Japanese Christianity to Western Christianity.

Protestant liberalism was a mediation of Christian faith with a modern spirit, and it was obviously a necessary step for intellectual modern theologians.⁸⁸¹ Missionaries before Wilfrid Spinner, who was the first liberal missionary, were quite conservative without an interaction with liberalism; and fundamentalist missionaries basically rejected liberalism. Both appeared outdated to intellectual Japanese. Thus Japanese Christians sought a possible mediation of reason and faith, which

⁸⁸⁰Germany 1965, 15.

⁸⁸¹Michitomo Kanamori summarised the New Theology [liberal theology]: (1) it emphasised historical criticism and (2) it questioned the divinity of Christ. Kozaki and Uemura considered it rationalism. Oouchi 1970, 325, 328. The Congregational Church was the most active denomination in accepting liberal theologies.

liberalism seemed to offer. Liberal Christianity also appeared attractive as it paid keen attention to social problems.

However liberal theology was frail in resisting nationalism. Because of its flexibility, it was fragile before the temptation to shape the Christian message to suit one's preferences. Germany is correct to assert that it had lost the basis for Christian resistance to the nation: the tradition of orthodox theology and the authority of the Bible.⁸⁸² As he suggests, there was a "tendency [in the academic tradition of liberal theology] toward such close interrelation with culture as to pass into compromise on such critical issues as nationalism and war."⁸⁸³ Although heteronomous and uncritical acceptance of external authorities is not what we should seek, autonomous individualism was not sufficient in Christian resistance to nationalism. I advocate that it is the believers' church as a distinctive Christian community that goes beyond the heteronomy and autonomy and discerns the will of God in a given situation.

Liberals tried to harmonise Christianity and Japan, and their Christianity was often a magisterial religion which affirmed exclusive Japanese nationalism, but not a prophetic faith which could criticise evil aspects of Japan.⁸⁸⁴ In the first nationalistic period, according to Sato, "Michitomo Kanamori advocated a Japan-like Christianity; Danjō Ebina advocated a Shinto-like Christianity, uniting Japanese ethics and Christianity; and Tokio Yokoi insisted on a kind of 'Japanese' Christianity that harmonized Confucianism and Christianity."⁸⁸⁵ In the second and extensive nationalistic period there were other exclusively nationalistic attempts which included regarding the Japanese as being descended from the Israelites, regarding

⁸⁸²Germany 1965, 15.

⁸⁸³Germany 1965, 44. See also *ibid.*, 49.

⁸⁸⁴Toyohiko Kagawa who constantly and most clearly opposed Japanese invasion of China is usually considered as a liberal Christian activist. However as Germany states, "the weight of his statements of basic theological ideas lay in the evangelical rather than in the liberal life." Germany 1965, 38, 47.

⁸⁸⁵Sato 1997, 57. According to Germany, Ebina attempted even to identify the Christian God with the highest god of Shinto. Germany 1965, 41, 163. Masao Takenaka asserts: "Ebina did not intend to syncretise indigenous Japanese thought and Christianity as often said." He suggests that Ebina's theology was an attempt to re-interpret the gospel on the Japanese soil as a Japanese, and values it as a bold attempt. Although I agree with Takenaka on Ebina's intention, Ebina's theology appears heretical. Takenaka 1975, 35.

Kojiki and *Nihonshoki* as the Old Testament for the Japanese, identifying Yahweh with a god of *Kojiki*, identifying the *Tennô* with Christ, and identifying serving Japanese emperor with serving the Kingdom of God.⁸⁸⁶ They obviously distorted Christianity.⁸⁸⁷

Antei Hiyane's *Kirisutokyô no Nihonteki Tenkai* [Japanese development of Christianity] (1938) and Tadakazu Uoki's *Nihon Kirisutokyô no Seishinteki Dentô* [The spiritual tradition of Japan-Christianity] (1941) justified Christianity in the Japanese context. They were written to seek a unique Japanese contribution to Western Christianity. Although they praised the Japanese tradition, they claimed that Japanese Christianity was to serve Christianity in other nations.⁸⁸⁸ Particularly Hiyane was most aware of the danger of the exclusive nationalism of so-called 'Japanese' Christianity and spent a chapter, criticising it.⁸⁸⁹ Uoki carefully avoids the term *Nihonteki Kirisutokyô* ['Japanese' Christianity, Japan-like Christianity, or Japanised Christianity] which contained a syncretistic flavour of Christian faith and Japanese tradition, and uses the term *Nihon Kirisutokyô* [Japan-Christianity].⁸⁹⁰ Germany negatively considers their theologies moderately syncretistic.⁸⁹¹ However these works seek a peculiar Japanese contribution to Christianity as such whilst avoiding exclusive nationalism and syncretism, and seem acceptable attempts to me.

Often the nationalism of neo-evangelicals also took a form of henotheism. As Furuya says, "even Masahisa Uemura who was considered [politically] most balanced" supported the Sino-Japanese War.⁸⁹² He also regarded Korea as the land

⁸⁸⁶Sato 1997, 57; Hiyane 1938, 176-180. See also Komuro 1997, 245.

⁸⁸⁷*Mikuni* movement by Genkichi Imaizumi was a typical example. Oouchi 1970, 590-593; Komuro 1994.

⁸⁸⁸Hiyane 1938, 229; Uoki 1941, 226-228.

⁸⁸⁹Hiyane 1938, 175-183.

⁸⁹⁰Reinhold Seeberg claimed five types of Christianity: Greek, Latin, German, Roman, Anglo-Saxon. Uoki argued for adding to them a Japanese (or East Asian) type, Japan-Christianity. Uoki 1941, 19-22. See also Sakabe 1985, 587.

⁸⁹¹Germany 1965, 163-166.

⁸⁹²Furuya 1989, 128. Uemura supported both the Sino-Japanese War and the Sino-Japanese War. Ohara 1992, 262. Uemura argued that the New Testament does not explicitly renounce war, and we sometimes need to use force to protect righteousness. Dohi 1980, 213-214.

which God had given to the Japanese.⁸⁹³ Uchimura was known for his nationalism and anti-missionary spirit. However from time to time they indicated a glimpse of radical monotheism, which enabled them to relativise Japan and led them to theocentric patriotism. It is most clear in Uchimura's theology which, along with *Mukyōkai* which he started, will later receive our attention.

d. Dualism

Neo-Lutheran dualism of the two kingdoms resulted in pro-Hitler 'German Christians.' The dualists' predominant concern about the spiritual realm leads them to be culturally conservative and in this case uncritically nationalistic. In Japan this kind of trend became most clear in the war period (1931-1945) and was carried out particularly by Reformed theology.

Neo-orthodoxy was introduced to Japan in the 1930s. It was accepted partially as a reaction to liberal theology, which had a keen social interest, and in accepting neo-orthodoxy Japanese theologians paid little attention to social problems. Amongst neo-orthodoxy the theology of Karl Barth became most influential. Barth's transcendent God and eschatological character were overemphasised by his readers. Reformed theology had traditionally paid much attention to social issues since Calvin; and although Barth had not initially indicated his political concerns, they became explicit, particularly in the Barmen Declaration (1934), after Hitler came to power.⁸⁹⁴ However Japanese Barthians did not respond to Barth's 'change' and concentrated on preaching the Word without fighting against Japanese exclusive nationalism.⁸⁹⁵ Germany calls such an understanding of Barth's theology 'Japanese Barthianism' in order to distinguish it from Barth's own theology and attitude.⁸⁹⁶

⁸⁹³Unuma 1992, 62.

⁸⁹⁴Barth 1969, 45-49.

⁸⁹⁵Barth's 'change' was known in Japan. Dohi 1980, 387, 390.

⁸⁹⁶Germany 1965, 169. Germany points out two reasons for the gap between Barth and Japanese Barthians about Christian social ethics: (1) Barth's 'change' was

Germany forgivingly suggests that the Japanese church was in a minority and this dualism was "one of realism and revelatory of a considerable degree of health within the Christian body."⁸⁹⁷ However we believe through Yoder's and Hauerwas' theologies that the church's primary task is to be faithful to God and to imitate Christ, and that the believers' cross is not simply internal devotion but involves political and social attitudes. Barth changed his mind and enlisted during the World War II;⁸⁹⁸ but Yoder went a step further than his mentor's original approach and claimed non-resistance. The majority of Japanese Christians, however, remained silent in an ambivalent dualism between Japan and the Kingdom of God. They did not have a theology to fight against exclusive nationalism.

2. Theology Which Stood against Nationalism

a. Biblical Orthodoxy and Minority Identity

Although the majority of Japanese Christians were swallowed in the waves of exclusive nationalism, there were a few who resisted it. Those who appeared dangerous to the government were imprisoned, which included *Yasokirisutono Shinyaku Kyôkai*, Plymouth Brethren, the Mino Mission, *Nihon Jiyû Kirisuto Kyôkai*, the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, the Holiness Church, the Episcopal Church, and *Mukyôkai*.⁸⁹⁹ It is to be noted, however, that not all of those who were imprisoned had a clear attitude to stand against exclusive nationalism.⁹⁰⁰

communicated to Japan so late that they had already lost strength to change their mind-set and to resist the nation, and (2) the Japanese church did not have enough tradition and experience to deal with the social problem in comparison with the Western church. Ibid., 172-174. Furuya suggests that the Japanese church generally has a problem of separating 'head' (understanding) from 'body' (action). Furuya 1991, 27.

⁸⁹⁷Germany 1965, 174.

⁸⁹⁸Barth voluntarily became an enlistee in April 1940 when he was 54 years old until the end of the war. Busch 1989, 432.

⁸⁹⁹Dohi 1980, 400. Dohi also mentions *Tôdaisha* [the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society].

⁹⁰⁰For example, the Holiness Church which severely suffered under persecutions did not seem to have a clear resistance attitude. In 1932 it had officially

Despite a variety of theological backgrounds, as Germany rightly points out, a common element amongst 'resistance Christians' was "biblical orthodoxy."⁹⁰¹ In other words, they were non-liberals who stood firmly on the traditional Christian doctrines. Although stiff and heteronomous conservatism often does not vitalise one's faith, conservative theology in this period became a solid anchor in the stormy world.

Another common element was that they were in a minority even amongst the Christians except for the Episcopal Church. Being in a minority prevented the church fantasising that it could be a 'chaplain' to society; it rather encouraged it to be truthful to God. Thus biblical orthodoxy and minority consciousness helped them to be faithful to the Christian message.

b. *Mukyôkai*

It was not that only *Mukyôkai* Christians were uncompromising towards Japanese exclusive nationalism, nor that every *Mukyôkai* Christian uniformly opposed it.⁹⁰² However *Mukyôkai* generally held anti-war views, which was extremely difficult in the 1930s and 1940s, and produced outstanding individuals who firmly and publicly criticised Japanese exclusive nationalism from a Christian viewpoint under the military government during the war periods and accepted persecutions.⁹⁰³ *Mukyôkai* had a sharp interest in ecclesiology as its name

approved the *Tennô* system, and its leaders never denied it. Dohi 1980, 403-408. Despite the unclear attitude, probably they still appeared to be a threat to the government.

⁹⁰¹Germany 1965, 175. Germany mentions Rinzô Onomura, the Holiness Church, *Mukyôkai*, the Seventh-Day Adventist Church.

⁹⁰²Masaichi Takemori mentions from a 'church' perspective the Holiness Church, Uemura, whose periodical *Fukuin Shinpô* was banned, and other individual pastors. Takemori 1949, 43. Kiyoshi Yabe, Seventh-Day Adventist minister, became the first conscientious objector in Japan in 1905, and was imprisoned. There was a diversity amongst *Mukyôkai* Christians in their attitudes toward the war. Furuya 1989, 161-162; Sekine 1949, 58. Even Toraji Tsukamoto, a top leader of *Mukyôkai* after Uchimura, privatised his faith and publicly announced in 1934 his decision to quit discussing social problems and to concentrate on the personal relationship with God. Dohi 1980, 395.

⁹⁰³Particularly Shigeru Nanbara and Tadao Yanaihara.

indicated.⁹⁰⁴ From the historical evidence of theological discernment and our ecclesiological concerns of this thesis, *Mukyôkai* Christianity deserves our attention. We shall discuss (1) what *Mukyôkai* was, (2) what enabled *Mukyôkai* Christians to discern evil aspects of Japanese nationalism and to stand against it, and (3) whether *Mukyôkai* ecclesiology was satisfactory according to our standard of believers' church.

(1) What is *Mukyôkai*?

Mukyôkai was started by Kanzô Uchimura, and he set its basic direction. Therefore we mainly focus on his thought. Although Uchimura had already used the term *Mukyôkai* in his book *Kirisutokyôto no Nagusame* [A comfort for Christians] (1893), he discussed the concept *Mukyôkai* for the first time in the first issue of his periodical *Mukyôkai* in March 1901. Even after the periodical discontinued with issue 18 in August 1902, he lived as *Mukyôkai* Christian throughout his life and the *Mukyôkai* movement has been continuously carried on by his followers.⁹⁰⁵

What is *Mukyôkai*? A good way to start clarifying *Mukyôkai* is to ask, "What is not *Mukyôkai*?" and "What does *Mukyôkai* resist?" The answer to both questions is the institutionalised church. *Mukyôkai* neither ordains ministers nor even has sacraments and the church calendar.⁹⁰⁶

⁹⁰⁴It is generally understood, however, that second generation *Mukyôkai* leaders such as Tadao Yanaihara and Toraji Tsukamoto had more interest in Christology than ecclesiology in comparison to Uchimura. For example Yoshiharu Hakari's "Apologia" in Takahashi 1994, 181.

⁹⁰⁵Uchimura wrote 72 essays on the church and *Mukyôkai* over 30 years, and his basic stance remained the same. Uchimura 1962, 229-231. He wrote to his friend Kingo Miyabe and his church (Dokuritsu Kyôkai) on 14 October 1929, some five months before his death, that he hoped to resign as its educational advisor: "I would like to break off my relationship with those who bear the name of the church and to finish my life as a pure *Mukyôkai*-ist." Ohara's quote. Ohara 1992, 516. See also Kanazawa 1950, 23.

⁹⁰⁶However Uchimura baptised people when asked, and had communion upon the approaching death of his daughter. Thus he was not an anti-church Christian. Uchimura 1962, 239. Ohara 1992, 504.

Firstly Uchimura regarded *Mukyôkai* as the most thoroughgoing Protestantism. "When Protestantism goes to its logical conclusion, it becomes *Mukyôkai*."⁹⁰⁷ "It is a pity that the Reformation by Luther and Calvin remained halfway through. They could not advocate the gospel without the church, and left us difficult problems to solve."⁹⁰⁸ The closest term to *Mukyôkai* which is used in modern Western Christian theology would be the 'Protestant principle' (Tillich)⁹⁰⁹ or 'reformation as continuing imperative' (H. Richard Niebuhr)⁹¹⁰ although *Mukyôkai* Christians do not use these terms. They are often used to claim that the Reformation of the church not only was a one time historical event in the sixteenth century but also should continually occur. Likewise *Mukyôkai* protests against institutionalised and static 'religion' so that its dynamic faith may be renewed by God. Tillich's 'Protestant principle' presupposed the 'Catholic substance.'⁹¹¹ Uchimura believed that *Mukyôkai* was the antithesis of Roman Catholicism and an unfeasible ideal in the Platonic sense. Five months before his death Uchimura wrote in his journal:

Mukyôkai is a principle which is unfeasible in this world. . . . The value of *Mukyôkai* lies in its unfeasibleness. . . . As I often say, if one wants to join a perfect church in this world, one should join the Roman Catholic Church at once today. *Mukyôkai* is an ideal. Therefore people of little consequence and vulgar people should not seek this.⁹¹²

Uchimura compared the church and *Mukyôkai* to system and life: "When living faith becomes hardened, it turns into church."⁹¹³ When dynamic faith loses its vitality, it becomes static. Uchimura was determined to reject such a settled faith and to seek continual renewal of faith by God. He believed that *Mukyôkai* itself had to be continually affirmed. "*Mukyôkai*-ism is the destruction of a crystallised church in

⁹⁰⁷Uchimura 1962, 34.

⁹⁰⁸Uchimura 1962, 124.

⁹⁰⁹"The Protestant principle is an expression of the conquest of religion by Spiritual Presence" and "a manifestation of the prophetic Spirit." Tillich 1963, 245. See also Tillich 1951, 37.

⁹¹⁰Niebuhr 1960c, 248.

⁹¹¹"Although my system is very outspoken in its emphasis on the 'Protestant principle,' it has not ignored the demand that the 'Catholic substance' be united with it There is a *kairos*, a moment full of potentialities, in Protestant-Catholic relations; and Protestant theology must become and remain conscious of it." Tillich 1963, 6.

⁹¹²Uchimura 1962, 250. Uchimura's Journal of 24 October 1929. Quoted by Taijirô Yamamoto.

⁹¹³Uchimura 1962, 89-93.

one aspect; in another aspect it is the construction of a living church. When *Mukyōkai* becomes crystallised and becomes a so-called church, we should destroy it with *Mukyōkai*-ism."⁹¹⁴ Thus *Mukyōkai* was an ideal or a principle.

Secondly we must remember that Uchimura was not totally against the church as such. What he criticised was the institutionalised church which was static in faith, the most thorough of which for him was the Roman Catholic Church.⁹¹⁵ Although *ekklesia* meant simply the gathering of the people of God, said Uchimura, it was eventually understood as a religious establishment. He argued from Matthew 16:18 that Christ intended to build a "family-like brotherly gathering [*ekklesia*] and not to establish a government-like church."⁹¹⁶ He asserts: "I wish to enter such an *ekklesia*, but do not wish to belong to the church of this world."⁹¹⁷ He blamed the Roman Empire which had institutionalised Christian gathering, and sought the true church whose "centre is Christ and people around Him are believers who wish to do His will in His name."⁹¹⁸ Thus he not only recognised but also admired and yearned for the true and ideal church.⁹¹⁹

Uchimura also held an attitude of testifying a belief rather than of dogmatic assertion. He encouraged his disciples to be independent and free from him, which resulted in the diversity amongst *Mukyōkai* Christians. He had no intention to unify *Mukyōkai*.⁹²⁰ In "*Kyōkaini taisuru Yohaino Taido* [My attitude towards the church]" Uchimura states:

I know that there is a certain truth in my *Mukyōkai*-ism; I also know that there is another certain truth in every church. A truth cannot be possessed by an individual or a group. Since I know my limits and weaknesses, I pay deep respect to all other faiths whilst securing my faith.⁹²¹

⁹¹⁴Uchimura 1962, 102.

⁹¹⁵Uchimura 1962, 34.

⁹¹⁶Uchimura 1962, 16.

⁹¹⁷Uchimura 1962, 19.

⁹¹⁸Uchimura 1962, 20.

⁹¹⁹The true and ideal church for which Uchimura longed seems to be the Church (H. Richard Niebuhr) or the Kingdom of God. See Uchimura 1962, 22-23; Kanazawa 1950, 23. See also Chapter 1, IIID5 'Community Approach.'

⁹²⁰Tsukamoto 1950a, 32.

⁹²¹Uchimura 1962, 113.

This is identical to H. Richard Niebuhr's theocentric relativism which we affirmed.

This indicates Uchimura's humble attitude toward the church.

Thirdly although *Mukyōkai* did not reject the church, its faith was very individualistic. Although Uchimura did not reject the horizontal relationship of believers, he predominantly emphasised the vertical relationship between God and each believer. Uchimura asserted: "The Protestant Church is a self-contradiction, such as *Mukyōkai* Church. . . . Protestantism is sanctified individualism."⁹²² He even claims that each Christian should become a church.⁹²³ "The independent church is the church built by independent Christians. It is the church built by those who stand only by Jesus Christ. . . . Those who cannot keep their faith without a teacher and those whose faith grows cold without a church are not independent believers. Their church . . . is a dependent church."⁹²⁴ 'Justification by grace through faith' required one's own response to God, instead of dependence on the church; and the priesthood of all believers could have opened the door to unordained ministers. However Uchimura's understanding of Christian faith is exceedingly individualistic. Although he values the gathering of believers, it is to be a gathering of independent and strong believers.

Uchimura did believe that his *Mukyōkai* was a principle to keep faith alive and to help the church be a true gathering of independent believers.⁹²⁵ However his influential disciple Toraji Tsukamoto totally rejected the existence of the church, and *Mukyōkai* eventually became even more individualistic.⁹²⁶

⁹²²Uchimura 1962, 34.

⁹²³Uchimura 1962, 36.

⁹²⁴Uchimura 1962, 26.

⁹²⁵Uchimura 1962, 131-132. Uchimura had to clarify in his fatal illness that he did not agree with Tsukamoto's anti-church *Mukyōkai*. It was published after his death. See also *ibid.*, 242; Tsukamoto 1950a, 28-29.

⁹²⁶Yanaihara's home meeting was exceptionally communal. However Takeo Doi reports that its members were not allowed to criticise Yanaihara, and its atmosphere seemed to be despotic. Yanaihara 1998, 436-438; Nishimura 1975, 179-187; Dohi 1980, 396; Doi 1992, 178-180.

(2) *Mukyôkai* Discernment

Although Uchimura supported the Sino-Japanese War from his understanding of Japan's leadership role in Asia, later he came to understand that one war leads to another war, and was converted to pacifism.⁹²⁷ Uchimura was firmly against the Russo-Japanese War. Once the war broke out, however, his realism appeared. Although Uchimura was generally an idealist particularly in his *Mukyôkai*, he had a realistic aspect regarding the war. He was a realistic pacifist.⁹²⁸ When his disciple Sôjirô Saitô wrote to him about rejecting compulsory military service and tax payment which could lead him to a death penalty, Uchimura visited him at a great distance and discouraged him from doing so.⁹²⁹ Although he repeated that war was evil and he wished to demolish it, in the actual war period he rather sought how a Christian could work realistically. Nevertheless to renounce the war as evil then was totally against public opinion and was extremely difficult. It deserved to be called prophetic. Tadao Yanaihara, Uchimura's disciple, also sharply criticised exclusive nationalism. In 1933 Yanaihara wrote an article "Nihonseishinno Kaikotekito Zenshinteki [the nostalgic and progressive natures of the Japanese spirit]" and in 1937 gave a lecture "Kamino Kuni [the Kingdom of God] both of which criticised Japanese nationalism.⁹³⁰

Why could they discern an evil aspect in nationalism and stand against it? There are at least two reasons.

Firstly *Mukyôkai* had an independent standpoint not only from foreign missions but also from Japan and even from the church. Despite his burning nationalism, Uchimura was totally rejected by Japan over the lese majesty case in 1891. Thus he started to see Japan more objectively even when the majority of the

⁹²⁷Ohara 1990, 45.

⁹²⁸Yanaihara too had a similar view. Dohi 1980, 397.

⁹²⁹Ohara 1992, 263.

⁹³⁰Yanaihara 1964, 73-87, 647-654.

church could not reject exclusive nationalism. He criticised the church as lacking a Christian distinctiveness:

The church and the world share the same principles. When the world advocates a war, the church advocates a war; the public opinion of the world is always the public opinion of the church; the church tries to do its business by using the names of politicians, businessmen, and scholars of this world. Nevertheless I as a disciple of Jesus cannot act in concert with the church.⁹³¹

This statement reminds us Yoder's criticism of the state church. Uchimura sees such a characteristic in the Japanese church. Although it was not a state church, it was the church of magisterial Christianity.

Mukyôkai enabled Uchimura to see the sins of the church. *Mukyôkai* also demanded that he be critical of himself. It is known well that when Uchimura heard the news that in the Russo-Japanese war Japanese navy had won the battle over Russian navy, he was filled with his 'old' nationalism and loudly shouted *Banzais* [hurrahs]! However he then laughed at himself and wrote to his friend, "What an inconsistent man I am!"⁹³² Furuya insightfully asserts that although Uchimura exhibited inconsistency or a tension between his love for Jesus and for Japan, his motto, which became his epitaph, saved him from it: "I for Japan; Japan for the World; the World for Christ; And All for God." This clarified, says Furuya, the priority between the two 'J's'.⁹³³ *Mukyôkai* as a Protestant principle never let him rest in exclusive nationalism.

Secondly *Mukyôkai*'s discernment stemmed from its Christian commitment, namely willingness to suffer for Christ. Besides *Kirisutokyôto no Nagusame* Uchimura wrote at least 29 essays on suffering, which was even more than on *Mukyôkai*.⁹³⁴ This indicates his strong concern about sufferings.⁹³⁵ He believed that "the purpose of life is to know God" and sufferings were necessary for that

⁹³¹Uchimura 1962, 106.

⁹³²Furuya 1989, 148. Furuya's quote.

⁹³³Furuya 1989, 150; Furuya 1995, 98.

⁹³⁴Uchimura 1962, 229.

⁹³⁵Norihisa Suzuki suggests that Uchimura's understanding of sufferings had four stages. Suzuki 1962, 93-112.

purpose.⁹³⁶ "Sufferings are part of Christian life and one can not truly be Christian without them."⁹³⁷ In fact his life was filled with sufferings.

There are sufferings which both Christians and non-Christians experience, which may be called tragedies. Uchimura valued them since they could make people humble before God and bring them closer to Him when they were rightly interpreted. His first and third marriage ended up in divorce. His daughter Rutsuko died at the age of 17. According to Taijirô Yamamoto, Uchimura "suffered poverty through most of his life, and with his [fourth] wife Shizuko made up his mind three times to starve to death."⁹³⁸ Soon after Rutsuko died he said in a lecture in Hokkaido: "Whether in a church or in a group, one can not do true work until someone dies."⁹³⁹ Although he had still had some ambition in his work, confessed Uchimura, his ambition disappeared after Rutsuko died.⁹⁴⁰

Moreover he was keenly aware that Christians were called to suffer Christian sufferings.⁹⁴¹ It is expressed in *Tozen no Kyûbô* [Natural destitution] (1917) which asserts:

The life of Christ in this world was a life of misfortune, sufferings, and persecutions. The world could not bear to accept him. Therefore it rejected, tormented, and finally killed him. The world which thus treated Christ is still the same today. . . . Every true disciple of Christ has no choice but to live a life of misfortune, sufferings, and persecutions like him. Believers cannot have a peaceful life in this evil world without compromising with it. . . . It is only natural that believers suffer in this world. . . . In so-called Christian countries emperors are enthroned in the name of the true God, Father of Christ; and the bishop of the Christian church lives in the bishop's residence which is equivalent to a palace of the emperor and exercises his authority over people. In this world where Christ had nowhere to lay his head, his self-professed disciple is crowned and robed. . . . The most obvious evidence that all Christian churches today are false is that they crave for power in this world. [However] our kingdom is in heaven.⁹⁴²

Uchimura criticised the church also in the context of suffering:

This world is always the world of unfaith. This world will never welcome Christ and his disciples. The true faith is [always] looked down and despised in every country in the world. . . . The best evidence that the faith of today's church is false is that the world does not persecute the church. The church seeks a harmony with the world and is leaving Christ.⁹⁴³

⁹³⁶Uchimura 1962, 143. Ibid., 145, 146, 150

⁹³⁷Uchimura 1962, 134.

⁹³⁸Uchimura 1962, 251.

⁹³⁹Ohara 1992, 320. Ohara's quote.

⁹⁴⁰Ohara 1992, 313.

⁹⁴¹Uchimura 1962, 133, 171, 174-178.

⁹⁴²Uchimura 1962, 154-155.

⁹⁴³Uchimura 1962, 179.

The Christian faith led Uchimura to Christian sufferings. The lese majesty case caused enormous sufferings psychologically, financially, and socially, and indirectly killed his second wife. His pacifism caused the accusation that he was unpatriotic. Uchimura was one of the most persecuted Christians in modern Japan. He asserts: "We cannot understand deeply what faithfulness means without sufferings."⁹⁴⁴ "The more we suffer, the deeper we can know Christ."⁹⁴⁵ Thus suffering is an indispensable element in Uchimura's theology.

Yanaihara too claimed that suffering should be a part of Christian life. He asserted in his Kanzô Uchimura Memorial Lecture in 1933 under the Japanese militarism period:

The one who is the salt of the earth and the light of the world cannot but be a person of sorrow. He shines in solitude when the world is in the darkness. He also cannot but urge the world to repent by discerning the sins of the world and pointing out the darkness of the world. What is more, he is not to reproach the world for its sins whilst justifying himself as pure; instead he is to suffer for the sins of the world, to accept the stench and the bitterness of the world on himself, and to accept persecutions and ridicule from the world whilst praying to God for the salvation of the world. He urges his people to repent, and his people kill him.⁹⁴⁶

Yanaihara further claims the necessity for indigenous Japanese sufferings in the Japanese context. "We need sufferings which are particular to Japanese Christianity for Japanese Christianity to be established. . . . Japanese Christianity must have Japanese persecutions."⁹⁴⁷ Yanaihara firmly kept this attitude and was stripped of his professorship at Tokyo Imperial University in 1937 due to his criticism of exclusive Japanese nationalism in his lecture 'The Kingdom of God.'

When we avoid suffering, we often either become detached from the world or become a mere part of the world, and lose Christian distinctiveness. When we regard Christian suffering as part of Christian life and hold our Christian distinctiveness, we tend to stand on the boundary between the world and the Kingdom. Thus an independent standpoint and suffering for Christ were essential in *Mukyôkai* discernment, particularly that of Uchimura's.

⁹⁴⁴Uchimura 1962, 136.

⁹⁴⁵Uchimura 1962, 146.

⁹⁴⁶Yanaihara 1964, 536.

⁹⁴⁷Yanaihara 1964, 540.

c. Assessing *Mukyôkai*

Mukyôkai's uncompromising and dynamic understanding of faith appears as the Protestant principle or continuing reformation. *Mukyôkai*'s independent standpoint from the world is necessary for the prophetic faith and is identical to the Christian distinctiveness of believers' church. *Mukyôkai*'s understanding of Christian suffering is also identical to that of believers' church. They are essential in Christian faith. *Mukyôkai* thus shared common elements with the believers' church.

However it is unfortunate that *Mukyôkai* became highly individualistic. Although Uchimura did not totally reject the church, the church for him was not a foretaste of what was to come; his idealistic yearning for the true *ekklesia* rather led him to a hope of its eschatological realisation but not to appreciation of a church on earth. He was a strong and independent idealist; and *Mukyôkai* after him became even more individualistic. Ohara points out that *Mukyôkai* today has become an exclusive gathering of intelligent and fastidious individuals so that there are many who could not fit in.⁹⁴⁸ Individualism contributed to this peculiar elitism.

Uchimura said that the church became like a gathering of starving people who just seek to receive from others, and urged Christians to grow and to be independent.⁹⁴⁹ True, every Christian should stand alone before God and be aware of one's own responsibility to Him; such an awareness was indispensable to the Japanese who were very group-oriented. Nevertheless, whilst going through that, we need to participate in a community of committed believers. The Bible claims to "welcome those who are weak in faith" and "to put up with the failings of the weak."⁹⁵⁰ The norm in the New Testament Christian life is not idealistic individualism or a gathering of strong and independent individuals but a community of believers, both the strong and the weak, who seek to follow Christ.

⁹⁴⁸Ohara 1992, 506, 510. Ohara says that a *Mukyôkai* leader is expected to be quite cultured such as a university professor who has studied abroad.

⁹⁴⁹Uchimura 1962, 27.

⁹⁵⁰Romans 14:1; 15:1.

Tillich's Protestant principle presupposed the Catholic substance. We need a stable substance to protest against. Otherwise protesting becomes spinning by itself without productive motion.⁹⁵¹ The lack of horizontal relationship is probably a cause of *Mukyōkai*'s exclusive and peculiar atmosphere.⁹⁵² *Mukyōkai* as a principle or an ideal needs the community, which is open continually to be reformed, for its completion. This is the believers' church which transforms the world by its witness to the world.

IV. Conclusions

Why did the Christian message fail to penetrate the soul of Japanese Christians in this period?

Firstly there was a problem in the Christianity which was introduced to Japan: the magisterial Christianity. In the second encounter with Christianity, Japan experienced Protestantism mainly from the United States and the United Kingdom. Its (particularly American Christianity's) relationship with the state was somewhat weaker than that of Catholic missions in the previous encounter. However it was still the imperialistic Christianity which was strongly linked to colonial expansion and imposed Western 'Christian' culture to the mission field. This triumphant Christianity did not emphasise suffering for Christ. Fortunately the imperialistic Christianity was not so destructive to Japan since some missionaries were aware of it and Japanese naturally rejected it.

It was rather the magisterial Christianity that was problematic. Although it was aware of the evil of imposing one's culture on another, it presupposed harmony or complementarity between the church and state. The Roman Catholic morality had a double-standard: minimal morality for all and higher morality for those who are

⁹⁵¹Uchimura's disciple, Masao Sekine, claims that although *Mukyōkai* blamed others too critically, criticism should be constructive upon Christian love. Sekine 1950a, 44; Sekine 1950b, 65.

⁹⁵²*Mukyōkai* Christians' habit of speaking ill of others has also been pointed out. Ohara 1992, 521; Takemori 1949, 41.

motivated.⁹⁵³ It at least maintained Christian distinctiveness. In the *Kirishitan* period, under persecutions in particular, the Counter Reformation missionaries taught the higher morality to prepare *Kirishitans* for survival. The missionaries' life reflected deep understanding of Christian commitment, of suffering for God, and of communal life whilst giving room for cultural accommodation. Unlike Roman Catholicism, the magisterial Protestantism simply abandoned the upper level. The magisterial Christianity as a chaplain to all seemed to be a fundamental reason why the Christian message failed to penetrate the soul of Japanese Christians.

Secondly there was a problem in the understanding of Christianity by the Japanese. The triumphant magisterial Christianity seemed to be promising for modernising Japan. Its appearance as a 'chaplain' looked attractive particularly to those who were concerned about the future of Japan. However this Constantinian Christianity undermined Christian distinctiveness. Many Japanese regarded this 'chaplain' as a means to modernise Japan. *Wakon Yōsai* was a way not only for the Japanese to accept Western technology but also for Japanese Christians to accept Western Christianity. It was not Christian faith but Japan that mattered the most to them. State Shinto dwelled in the centre of Japanese nationalism. People approached Christianity in the international periods; yet they left it in nationalistic periods when Christianity did not seem to serve Japan. Nationalism has been an essential problem particularly for the modern world and modern Christianity, and Japan was no exception. This superficial Christianity had no chance in standing against the prevailing nationalism in this period. Such an understanding of Christianity as a part of Western civilisation and as a principle to run a country undermined faithfulness to the Christ in the New Testament.

Was there no steadfast Christian faith and prophetic voice in Japan? There were some Christians who resisted the exclusive nationalism. They were largely from the traditions of biblical orthodoxy and were in a minority even amongst Christians. We discussed *Mukyōkai* in particular, which raised sharp prophetic

⁹⁵³See Chapter 2, IVA2 'Against Constantinian Christianity.'

voices and had a critical interest in ecclesiology. Since *Mukyôkai* refused to have the community of believers, its sharp criticism remained that of individualistic prophets rather than that of a distinctively Christian community of peace-making whose members supported each other. It was theologically wrong that *Mukyôkai* as a Protestant principle rejected a vital substance, the community continually to be reformed. Therefore the third reason why Christian message failed to penetrate the whole being of Japanese Christians was that Christianity was too individualistic. If there had been positive and constructive relationship between *Mukyôkai* and the church, in other words if *Mukyôkai* had been submissive enough to admit that it needed a substance and the church had been humble enough to listen to the prophetic voice of *Mukyôkai*, Christianity in Japan might have been able to have a community similar to the believers' church.

Like *confrarias* in the *Kirishitan* period, there were some faithful Christians also in this period. However the magisterial Christianity, its superficial and pragmatic acceptance, and individualistic Christian faith contributed to the unsuccessful witness to the world.

Chapter 5

Christianity in Japan 3: 1945-1985

I. Introduction

Japanese Christians in the previous two periods experienced major persecutions. In the first period, although persecutions drove away many *Kirishitans*, a significant number of steadfast ones stayed faithful. The Counter Reformation missionaries' theology and practice contained a deep understanding of Christian commitment and also flexibility for cultural accommodation in the communal life. Through their lives a high morality was communicated to *Kirishitans*. Although Roman Catholicism in the West involved a close relationship of church and state, under the persecutions the *Kirishitan* community in a minority became similar to a committed believers' church.

In the post-*Kaikoku* period nationalism was a core problem. Triumphant Western Christianity came to Japan with Western nationalism and the Japanese superficially accepted Christianity as a means to modernise Japan upon a base of Japanese nationalism. As a result Japanese Christians largely compromised in the war periods. Although there were a few steadfast Christians, their faith was too individualistic to support others.

The complete defeat in the Pacific War was a great turning point in Japanese history. Japanese Christians after the war gradually came to be ashamed of the compromise and repented. In the post-war period, full religious freedom was given and Christians did not experience severe persecutions. This is a significant difference from the previous two periods. However it is doubtful if the Christian message penetrated the souls of Christians in this period. The core problem lies in the theological understanding of the relationship between the church and the world. This chapter discusses Christianity in Japan after the war and major Japanese theologians from the perspective of the church's relationship to the world. We shall

argue that although there were significant theological contributions to overcome the compromise of the pre-war period, Christianity again sought a major status in the centre of society, and such Christianity, which I would call 'magisterial Christianity,' tended to fail in discerning what is acceptable in the society and in offering alternative choices.

II. History

A. Introduction

In the previous chapter I adopted Furuya's twenty year cycle theory for surveying the history of Japan and Christianity from the perspective of nationalism. In 1945 Japan was defeated in war for the first time in its history; moreover it was an unconditional surrender in the largest war which humans had ever undergone. There is no doubt that this caused a tremendous change to Japan. Nevertheless Furuya suggests that the core of Japanese spirituality, which is based on Shinto, has not been changed even after the war, and asserts that Japan still swings between nationalism and internationalism every twenty years.⁹⁵⁴ In the post-war period Japan was largely Westernised and there is less contrast between internationalism and nationalism periods than in the post-*Kaikoku* era. However nationalism is no less important in this period and we can still see swings between them. Therefore I shall follow his divisions to survey the history of Japan and Christianity.

⁹⁵⁴Furuya 1989, 109, 204.

B. History of Japan and Christianity from 1945 to 1985

1. 1945-1965

The defeat in the war is often called the second *Kaikoku*. This was an international period.

In religious and educational terms many missionaries were sent, largely from North America, and there was a 'Christianity boom.' Christian schools grew. Out of twelve newly approved universities and colleges in 1948, Christian institutions accounted for 50 per cent of them.⁹⁵⁵

In economic terms the Korean War (1950-1953) brought economic prosperity to Japan as a huge supply base for the American military. This was the beginning of Japan's economic growth towards a world power.⁹⁵⁶ In 1960 Prime Minister Hayato Ikeda devised the slogan of doubling the nation's income. In political terms the San Francisco Peace Treaty was concluded in 1951. In 1956 Japan joined the United Nations soon after it restored diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. The climax of this international period was the Tokyo Olympics in 1964, which was for Japan a celebration of returning to the international circle since its withdrawal from the League of Nations in 1933.⁹⁵⁷ However, as we shall see, although Christianity became popular in this period, it was a superficial boom which soon disappeared.

a. The Occupation

On 14 August 1945 Japan notified its surrender to the Allied Powers by accepting the Potsdam Declaration of the 26 July. Next day the *Tennō*'s pre-recorded message was broadcast to the entire nation, and the war ended. Two weeks

⁹⁵⁵Dohi 1980, 427.

⁹⁵⁶See for example Ishikawa 1984, 59-61.

⁹⁵⁷Furuya 1989, 110.

later the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (SCAP) General Douglas MacArthur arrived in Japan, and the Occupation (1945-1952) started.

(1) Religious Freedom

The Potsdam Declaration promised to establish religious freedom in Japan.⁹⁵⁸ On 4 October 1945 MacArthur repealed the Religious Bodies Law, which had triggered the *Kyôdan*'s existence; and on 28 December 1945 the Religious Juridical Persons Law (*Shûkyô Hôjin Rei*) was issued. From 1946 several denominations became independent from the *Kyôdan*. On 15 December 1945 the General Headquarters (GHQ) ordered the separation of Shinto from the state; here Shinto was deprived its privileges. On 1 January 1946 the *Tennô* disclaimed the myth of the divinity of the *Tennô*.⁹⁵⁹ On 3 November 1946 the Constitution of Japan was promulgated and it came into force on 3 May 1947. Although it was in theory an amendment of the Constitution of the Japanese Empire and there was some continuity, it was in reality a new constitution prepared by the Government Section of the GHQ.⁹⁶⁰ Article 20 of the Constitution declared the separation of religion and the state, and total religious freedom, which was applied to all religions. Christianity was given complete freedom in Japan for the first time. However it was not earned by the Japanese themselves but was given by the West. The GHQ supported Christian missions, and Western Christianity now sent numerous missionaries to Japan.

⁹⁵⁸Oda and Ishimoto eds. 1996, 682.

⁹⁵⁹Unuma 1992, 192-194. The disclaimer of the *Tennô*'s deity was designed to de-mythologise the *Tennô* according to the understanding of State Shinto. However such a deification was practised only from the *Meiji* period and had merely a short history. Shigeyoshi Murakami argues that the disclaimer simply brought the situation back to the pre-*Meiji* period and opened the door for preserving the *Tennô*'s religious authority. Thus the essence of the *Tennô* as the high priest has never been shaken. Murakami 1977, 214-218.

⁹⁶⁰Duus ed. 1988, 156. See also Hariu and Yokota 1983, 181-220.

(2) *Yōkon Yōsai*

The Occupation was carried out rather smoothly. Haruhiro Fukui gives three persuasive reasons for the "remarkably little overt opposition or resistance" to the Occupation. The majority of the Japanese were already tired of the war; food supply by the United States softened the hearts of the Japanese in their poverty; and "the mass media were under SCAP's tight control throughout the Occupation period."⁹⁶¹ The defeat appeared to be a confirmation of the superiority of Western technology, and Western technology was welcomed. However this time not only Western technology but also Western thought, such as democracy, was also accepted. From the viewpoint of Japanese attitudes towards their spiritual heritage, the control of the media played the most significant role. "The Japanese was . . . kept almost totally uninformed and unaware of the practice [of the control of the media]," says Fukui, whilst they were exposed to a "flood of articles and programs depicting or symbolizing the virtues of American democracy."⁹⁶² The GHQ's policy towards Japan, which was based on the Potsdam Declaration, could be summed up as disarmament of Japan, punishment of those in charge of the war, and democratisation.⁹⁶³ In order smoothly to achieve these purposes the GHQ censored publications and controlled information to lead public opinion in its favoured direction.⁹⁶⁴

This information control was very effective. In this period the Japanese lost confidence in their spiritual heritage. This was partially due to the demonic militarism which they had just experienced. The Japanese could not be proud of the

⁹⁶¹Duus ed. 1988, 166, 167.

⁹⁶²Duus ed. 1988, 167.

⁹⁶³Oda and Ishimoto eds. 1996, 682; Nakamura 1993, 387.

⁹⁶⁴The censor covered 30 headings, including criticism of the Allied Powers and even mention of the existence of the censorship. The GHQ made the Japanese mass media produce and distribute Western interpretation of the war and of the post-war situation which appeared to be a voice from fellow Japanese. The most influential example was that the GHQ ordered newspapers to publish from 8 December 1946 a history of the Pacific War, which became a standard interpretation of the war.

defeat and misconduct of the nation which was based on State Shinto. However it was also partially due to the post-war information control by the GHQ. The anti-Allied Powers information control by the Japanese government in the war period was taken over by the GHQ's to the opposite effect. Thus Japan started adopting a pro-American direction, despite the sufferings from atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki and firebomb raids on 60 cities. Whilst at the *Kaikoku* in the *Meiji* period the Japanese took a basic attitude of *Wakon Yôsei* [Japanese spirit and Western civilisation], *Yôkon Yôsei* [Western spirit and Western civilisation] may indicate the atmosphere of the time.

b. The Church

Seiichi Yagi rightly identifies three philosophical trends in post-war Japan: communism, Christianity, and existentialism.⁹⁶⁵ Although communism had been banned, it re-emerged as freedom of speech was secured and as the Soviet Union became a world power. Christianity was popular, being backed by the GHQ. Individualistic existentialism appeared, along with epicureanism and egoism, when *social faith* in the nation of Japan was broken.⁹⁶⁶ The loss of the war and the *Tennô*'s disclaimer of his divinity fundamentally shook the foundation of the Japanese spirituality based on Shinto. People sought something to fill their empty hearts, and the church was expected to play a leading spiritual role.

The Japanese church became active with the support from the GHQ and from the Western churches, mainly from North America, and the number of baptisms grew up to 1951. However the growth was largely based on such external conditions, and the church was not changed after the war.⁹⁶⁷ We cannot say that at this point the Japanese church deeply repented about its compromise during the war and renewed a commitment to be prophetic in Japan. The 'Christian boom' declined

⁹⁶⁵Yagi 1997, 84. They were not mutually exclusive.

⁹⁶⁶Cf. Niebuhr 1960b, 28. See Chapter 1, IIID1 'Radical Monotheism.'

⁹⁶⁷Oouchi 1970, 609-610.

rather quickly.⁹⁶⁸ When the Occupation was over in 1952, Japan regained a stability and the church faced reality.

A deep sense of repentance was lacking in the church. The board of directors of *Kyôdan* met on 28 August 1945, two weeks after the end of the war, and sent a message to the churches. It claimed that they regretted the loss of the war (instead of its co-operation to the war), yet did not indicate a genuine repentance.⁹⁶⁹ On 2 September 1945 the Japanese government invited the mediator of *Kyôdan* and a bishop of the Roman Catholic Church, and requested them to contribute to building a new nation of Japan. This was an even greater favour to Christianity than *Sankyô Gôdô* in 1912, and symbolised an international period. However a problem lies in the church's attitude that it uncritically accepted the 'honour' from the government who used to persecute the Christian faith. Shizuo Ono, a Reformed historian, says: "When the rulers requested [the church] to co-operate by letting all bygones be bygones, the Christian side concluded an agreement with the new power without harbouring any doubt. The church . . . tried to expand itself, depending on a power which was extraneous to the faith."⁹⁷⁰ We could understand the excitement of the church when it was granted by the government an opportunity to play an influential role on a main stage. However this was an indication that its nature was one of what I called magisterial Christianity. This 'chaplain' Christianity sought to influence the nation alongside the governing body rather than pursuing its prophetic role.

In January 1946 *Kyôdan* retrospectively claimed in its publication, *Kyôdan Shinpô*, that they had not meant to lead people to war; they had simply communicated the information which had been given by the army and the government, trusting them. Oouchi criticises such a lack of prophetic spirit in the *Kyôdan*.⁹⁷¹ On 9 June 1946 *Zenkoku Kirisutokyôto Taikai* [Japan Christian

⁹⁶⁸For example Takanori Saji divides post-war church history into three periods: chaotic period (1945-1946), booming period (1946-1948), and ebbing period (1948-). Ono 1989, 210.

⁹⁶⁹Ono 1989, 206-209.

⁹⁷⁰Ono 1989, 211.

⁹⁷¹Oouchi 1970, 612-617.

Convention] was held in Tokyo. Although it publicly confessed the church's responsibility for the war, as Ishihara points out, the confession was vague "without mentioning at all the *Kyôdan*'s [wrong] attitudes and plans during the war" or its plans for the future.⁹⁷² Thus it is quite doubtful if the church at this stage was aware of the seriousness of its failure to play a prophetic role in Japan, although there was a glimpse to such awareness.

The *Kyôdan* had to face the question of its own identity after the war. Numerous denominations became independent from the *Kyôdan* particularly in 1950 and 1951. It was a natural consequence, since its formation had been caused by political pressure. The *Kyôdan* set up a confession of faith in 1954, and shaped itself as a denomination.⁹⁷³

Evangelism became active in this period. We can see a strong American influence. Billy Graham conducted crusades in 1956. The World Vision, an American organisation, held crusades in 1959 and 1961. Japanese evangelists too practised mass evangelism. The year 1959 was the hundredth anniversary of the beginning of the Protestant mission in Japan, and was celebrated widely.⁹⁷⁴ Hendrik Kraemer was invited by the *Kyôdan* in 1960 and emphasised the significance of the laity in the church. He brought a theoretical contribution to evangelism in Japan.

The church as a whole became more involved in social issues than in the pre-war period. The new Constitution was based on democracy, and the church supported both the Constitution and democracy.⁹⁷⁵ Several books were published to support democracy from Christian perspectives.⁹⁷⁶ In particular, when the Korean War broke out, the Japanese church re-considered the issue of peace. Article 9 of the new Constitution declares Japan's renunciation of war and armed forces.⁹⁷⁷

Kirisutosha Heiwa no Kai [The Christian Peace Association] was formed in 1951. It

⁹⁷²Ishihara 1967, 263.

⁹⁷³Ishihara 1967, 257-259.

⁹⁷⁴See for example Ishihara 1967, 327-328.

⁹⁷⁵Cf. the *Kyôdan*'s statement to protect the Constitution (1962). Dohi 1980, 453.

⁹⁷⁶Ono 1989, 245.

⁹⁷⁷See Tsutsui and others 1976, 416-429.

regarded the new Constitution as "a precious gift from God to be cherished."⁹⁷⁸ Other Christian peace movements followed it.⁹⁷⁹ In 1954 a Japanese fishing boat suffered radiation from an American nuclear test. The movement against nuclear weapons significantly rose and the church was heavily involved. In 1960 the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty was revised. There was a major movement against the treaty; and the church was also involved from Christian viewpoints. In this period the church did not have to stand alone; a mass of people also supported the same direction -- anti-war, anti-nuclear weapons, and so on -- at least on the surface. Therefore it became easier for the church to be involved in social matters. Although we should not overestimate its activities, it is significant that the church was no longer indifferent to social problems.

c. Theology

The writings of Rudolf Bultmann, Paul Tillich, and Reinhold Niebuhr were introduced to Japan and gained a solid audience. In particular Niebuhr's Christian Realism appealed to the Japanese church which had failed to respond to the social problem due to a wrong interpretation of Barth's theology (Japanese Barthianism).

Barthian theology was still the most influential in Japan.⁹⁸⁰ We have seen the problem of pre-war Japanese Barthians: concentration on the Word of God and little interest in the world. Barth's resistance to Nazism became clear to the Japanese church only after the war. 'Japanese' Christianity quickly disappeared in this international period. Christians were more concerned about the purity of the Christian message. Barth's existential element and strong emphasis on the uniqueness of the Christian message appealed to the Christians who had experienced

⁹⁷⁸Kumazawa and Swain eds. 1991, 78.

⁹⁷⁹Dohi 1980, 449-453; Ono 1989, 252.

⁹⁸⁰Germany 1965, 178.

the compromise in the war period.⁹⁸¹ However Niebuhr's theology enabled the Japanese church to combine this with social engagement.

In 1950 a conference was held in Gotenba, Shizuoka over ten days to discuss Christian social responsibility. John C. Bennett was a main speaker. He lectured on the social ethics of Barth and Reinhold Niebuhr. This conference significantly stimulated the participants, and became a milestone for Christian social ethics in Japan. Germany suggests that the Bennett Conference greatly influenced not only some scholars but also the whole church.⁹⁸² Thus the church started paying more attention to social ethics.⁹⁸³

(1) Emil Brunner

Another theologian who helped Japanese Barthians to overcome the dualism between the Word and the world was Emil Brunner (1889-1966). Brunner was invited to the International Christian University in Tokyo from 1954 for two years, helping to build up the new institute. His works had been translated into Japanese and he was already one of the most well-known Western theologians in Japan.⁹⁸⁴ Although the Japanese theological trend was Barthian, Brunner's visit had a strong impact not only on Japanese theologians but also on Japanese intellectuals. The Japanese were deeply impressed by his visit as an educational missionary to the poor and ruined country in his prime as theologian.⁹⁸⁵ In fact he had a cerebral haemorrhage on his way back to Switzerland, and it became a very costly visit.

Brunner believed that Christianity was the foundation for democracy, and claimed that Japan needed Christianity. This was an identical missionary approach

⁹⁸¹Some Barthians became overwhelmed with social problems and there were even those, such as Sakae Akaiwa, who approached communism. Yagi 1997, 90.

⁹⁸²Germany 1965, 198. By the term church Germany primarily means the *Kyôdan*.

⁹⁸³Germany lists several Japanese writings which dealt with Christian social ethics from modified Barthian perspectives. Germany 1965, 202-204.

⁹⁸⁴Kuwata 1949, 13.

⁹⁸⁵Brunner 1996, 397.

to post-*Kaikoku* missions. Although it is not a wrong claim, in the previous chapter I have already rejected such a 'chaplain' approach since it tended to lose Christian distinctiveness. Brunner was after all a magisterial theologian, standing in the Zwinglian tradition. Brunner rightly pointed out that whilst Japanese Christians were pious and had an orthodox faith, they paid little attention to social ethics. Although Japanese Barthians emphasised preaching, they neglected evangelism and ethical aspects in daily life.⁹⁸⁶

One of the most important and difficult projects which Brunner attempted in Japan was bridging the gap between the church and *Mukyōkai*.⁹⁸⁷ His respect for the work of lay Christians and a keen interest in Christian social ethics naturally led him to a dialogue with *Mukyōkai* Christians, which initially brought him the cold shoulder from the church. He later regained trust from the church and set up a dialogue between them.⁹⁸⁸ It was a big step forward although there was not an immediate productive result from it.

(2) Kazoh Kitamori

Kazoh Kitamori (1916-1998) was one of the most well-known Japanese theologians in the West. His main work was *Kami no Itami no Shingaku* [Theology of the Pain of God] (1946), in which he interpreted the pain of God as the heart of the Gospel. Such an understanding appeared in Kitamori's writing as early as 1936.⁹⁸⁹ After Carl Michalson introduced Kitamori's theology of the pain of God to English-speaking world in *Japanese Contributions to Christian Theology* (1960), it was translated into English (1965), German (1972), Italian (1975), and Spanish (1975), which opened a dialogue between Kitamori and Western theologians.⁹⁹⁰ He was a forerunner of the growing post-world war concern over theodicy and the

⁹⁸⁶Brunner 1996, 392.

⁹⁸⁷Brunner 1955, 16.

⁹⁸⁸Brunner 1996, 396; Brunner 1950, 20.

⁹⁸⁹Kuramatsu 1986, 301.

⁹⁹⁰Michalson 1960, 73-99.

suffering of God, which was represented by Jürgen Moltmann's *Der gekreuzigte Gott* (1972).

However Kitamori's theology was not welcomed so much amongst Japanese theologians. Yagi correctly points out there were at least three reasons: it was unjustly misunderstood to be patripassian; Kitamori criticised Karl Barth's theology which was then dominant in Japan; and Kitamori positively valued Japanese cultural tradition in the post-war period when Japanese culture was disregarded.⁹⁹¹ Nevertheless Kitamori certainly is a creative theologian, whose theology is orthodox. For our concerns in this thesis Kitamori's theology has two significant aspects which we shall discuss: his understanding of suffering and of 'Japanese' theology.

2. 1965-1985

The post-war period as a whole is internationalistic in Japan. Interaction with foreign countries increased rapidly, in trading, academic studies, arts, tourism, and so on. The International Exposition in Osaka in 1970 was a symbolic event.

Within such a broad stream of internationalisation, however, Japan regained a nationalistic atmosphere in this period as it began to have confidence as an independent nation with economic prosperity. Furuya likewise states that post-war nationalistic periods are different from pre-war periods in their co-existence with the international.⁹⁹² However he notes several illustrative nationalistic events, which I describe below.⁹⁹³

⁹⁹¹Yagi 1997, 88.

⁹⁹²Furuya 1984, 307.

⁹⁹³Furuya 1989, 110-112.

a. Rise of Nationalism

The National Foundation Day was eliminated in the law regarding national holidays in 1948. However already in 1951 Prime Minister Shigeru Yoshida expressed his wish to restore it. It was legalised in 1966 as 11 February, which was anniversary of Jinmu *Tennō*'s Accession (*Kigensetsu*) according to the Shinto Myth.⁹⁹⁴ Moreover the hundredth anniversary of the beginning of the *Meiji* period was celebrated in 1968. Emphasising Japanese identity involving the *Meiji* period inevitably led the nation towards a restoration of a *Tennō*-centred identity.

Moreover the use of *Gengō* [the naming of a Japanese era upon the accession of the new *Tennō*] was also legalised in 1979. The *Gengō* obviously backed up the *Tennō* system. In addition, the rising-sun flag (*Hinomaru*) was restored to its status as the flag of Japan, although the GHQ initially prohibited its use.

Yasukuni Shrine is the supreme Shinto shrine in Japan, where the *Tennō* enshrines the war dead together. Attempts to nationalise Yasukuni Shrine already began soon after the end of the Occupation. Having failed to legalise its nationalisation, practical action was sought from 1975. Prime Minister Takeo Miki *privately* worshipped at Yasukuni Shrine on 15 August 1975. In April 1979 Prime Minister Oohira, who was Christian, worshipped at Yasukuni Shrine.⁹⁹⁵ It was problematic especially because just before that it was revealed that class A war criminals had been enshrined there. The enactment of the *Gengō* was also under his cabinet. Although we cannot discuss Oohira's faith here, we should note that these were symbolic events of compromising faith by Japanese Christians in mainstream politics in a nationalistic atmosphere. On 15 August 1985, the fortieth anniversary of the end of the war, Prime Minister Nakasone *publicly* worshipped at Yasukuni

⁹⁹⁴Hariu and Yokota 1983, 362-364. We should recall that the *Meiji* Constitution was issued on that day in 1889. *Kigensetsu Hōshuku Kokumintaikai* attracted some 2,000 people already in 1956. Asahi Shinbun 1956, 3.

⁹⁹⁵Hariu and Yokota 1983, 377-386.

Shrine. All Cabinet ministers, except for two on a business trip abroad, also joined him. Nakasone received severe criticism from abroad.⁹⁹⁶

The rise of nationalism was a reaction to post-war internationalism. It was stimulated by the confidence drawn from Japan's economic success. As Japan became a world economic power and received a high regard from the West, the Japanese gained confidence in their cultural heritage and in their capability, and nationalism increased.

b. The Church

In the earlier post-war period the church began to respond to social issues. In this period as nationalism was rising in Japan, the church firmly resisted it. At Easter 1967 Masahisa Suzuki as a representative of the *Kyôdan* publicly acknowledged the responsibility of the *Kyôdan* during the Pacific War, confessed its sin of collaboration in the war, and undertook not to repeat the same mistake.⁹⁹⁷ This was a significant event as the first sincere expression of repentance since the war.⁹⁹⁸ It seems to me as though the church gradually became sensitive about its attitudes towards social issues through social involvement and this led it to clear repentance. The church opposed every event mentioned above which showed a nationalistic tendency.

⁹⁹⁶It was Nakasone who expanded the military budget. He already claimed in 1982 that the defence budget unavoidably would rise above one per cent of G.N.P. He finally actualised it in 1986.

⁹⁹⁷Unuma 1992, 195-197.

⁹⁹⁸However Ohki mentions a negative aspect of Suzuki's critical spirit. The 1960s and 1970s were a politically unstable period. University students were at the centre of the anti-Vietnam War movement and anti-U.S.-Japan Security Treaty movement. In this unstable atmosphere of disturbance the *Kyôdan* experienced an unfortunate split in 1969, which is called '1-2 September' incident because of the dates when it happened. Ohki asserts that it was caused under Suzuki's leadership with his fanatic Barthianism. Ohki 1989b, 9-13; Ohki 1991, 5-9.

c. Theology

Influential theologians of this century passed away in the 1960s and 1970s. H. Richard Niebuhr died in 1962; Paul Tillich in 1965; Emil Brunner in 1966; and Karl Barth in 1968. Reinhold Niebuhr died in 1971; and Rudolf Bultmann in 1976. The theological atmosphere significantly changed in Japan in the 1970s, and it was called the 'post-Barthian age.'⁹⁹⁹

Hideo Ohki is one of the most significant theologians in Japan today. His methodological discussion theologically to deal with Japan is a crucial contribution in Christian social ethics, which will receive our attention. After he had studied under Reinhold Niebuhr at Union Theological Seminary, in 1961 Ohki called the Japanese theological situation 'Germanic captivity':

If one were to learn from [Reinhold] Niebuhr, one would liberate the theology of Japan from futile "Germanic captivity." One's own theology will become independent, and will have the ability to face up to the realities of Japanese history rigorously. In particular, one will break the dead-lock of Barthianism in Japan (which has existed from the pre-war through to the post-war periods), and will restore theology to a realism which is in close touch with the reality of the Church.¹⁰⁰⁰

This challenge was positively accepted. This well-known statement is significant for grasping the atmosphere of theology in Japan then. We can feel Ohki's frustration about Japanese theologians' passive acceptance of German theologies. One may wish to ask if Ohki was free from Niebuhrian captivity. However it is enough here to point out that Japanese theologians in the 1960s were becoming aware of the need to go beyond Barthian theology.

Ohki's claim was totally different from so-called 'Japanese' theology which failed to criticise Japanese culture; rather he claimed that Japanese theologians had to face the Japanese situation instead of passively accepting Western theology. However the understanding of Western theology -- including Germanic theologies -- obviously was a pre-requisite. In confronting the mistakes of 'Japanese' Christianity some theologians started dealing with Japanese indigenous problems with creative originality. Furuya and Ohki's *A Theology of Japan* is a typical example.

⁹⁹⁹Odagaki 1997, 113.

¹⁰⁰⁰Furuya ed. 1997, 6. Furuya's quote from Ohki.

III. Significant Theological Thoughts

A. Introduction

In this section we shall discuss the theologies of Kazoh Kitamori, Yasuo Furuya, and Hideo Ohki. All of them are very creative and influential theologians in Japan. They are chosen because they are the most distinguished contemporary theologians in Japan who squarely tackled the problem of Japan. Furuya and Ohki deserve to be better known in the West. Their major works are as yet not translated from Japanese.

There are two other significant theologians whom we had to omit for the want of space. Masao Takenaka studied at Yale Divinity School under H. Richard Niebuhr. Takenaka has a keen interest in culture and Christianity.¹⁰⁰¹ Takenaka's interest is not limited in Japanese culture; he has also been publishing books of oriental Christian arts. His works such as *God Is Rice* (1988) and *Cross and Circle* (1990) were written in English.¹⁰⁰² His theology is not discussed here partially because he has been already well-known in the West as an ecumenical Christian leader. In addition, he allows his artistic talent and love for art to lead him into an excessive inclusiveness about culture rather than a critical discernment of cultures.¹⁰⁰³

The other significant theologian whom we had to omit is Teruo Kuribayashi, a Japanese liberation theologian. He studied at Union Theological Seminary in New York where he was influenced by James Cone and Dorothee Sölle. His *Keikan no Shingaku* [A theology of the crown of thorns] is written from a viewpoint of the outcast in Japan, where he finds his own heritage and identity. His claim that the

¹⁰⁰¹Takenaka 1962; Takenaka 1990b.

¹⁰⁰²Takenaka 1988; Takenaka 1990a.

¹⁰⁰³Takenaka and Takenaka 1992.

church is to imitate Christ in strict discipleship is similar to ours to some extent.¹⁰⁰⁴ However his theology is not discussed except for his criticism of Ohki and his comment about Kitamori; for his concern revolves around the liberation and acceptance of the outcast, and significantly lacks the discussion of their discipleship as followers of Christ. In addition, his understanding of imitating Christ is different from ours because of his Christian realism with respect to commitment to their liberation.¹⁰⁰⁵

Kitamori sought to positively employ Japanese culture in his theology. He was aware of distorted pre-war 'Japanese' Christianity, and this was an attempt to re-evaluate culture beyond the mistakes. Furuya and Ohki chose a different direction. They are most aware of the danger of Japanese nationalism, and insist on a theology which critically deals with Japan as an object.

B. Kazoh Kitamori

1. Introduction

Kitamori was born in Kumamoto, Japan. He studied at Japan Lutheran Theological Seminary (1935-1938) and at Kyoto Imperial University (1938-1941). After teaching at the Lutheran College, he taught systematic theology at Tokyo Union Theological Seminary. He received a Ph.D. from Kyoto University.

He was a precocious and productive Lutheran theologian. Besides *Theology of the Pain of God* (1946), his writings include *Jūjikano Shu* [Lord of the cross] (1940), *Shingaku to Shinjō* [Theology and the creed] (1943), *Maruchin Rutā* [Martin Luther] (1951), *Shūkyōkaikaku no Shingaku* [Theology of the Reformation] (1960), and *Ureinaki Kami* [God without grief] (1991).

¹⁰⁰⁴Kuribayashi 1991, 438-450.

¹⁰⁰⁵Kuribayashi 1991, 463-466.

Kitamori's theology revolves around the problem of the suffering of God and human suffering. We value the understanding of divine suffering and of the church's participation in the divine suffering in its imitation of Christ.¹⁰⁰⁶ Moreover his emphasis on Japanese culture in his theology as a post-war theologian is distinctive. Therefore we discuss his theology from these two aspects.

2. Suffering

Kitamori's greatest contribution was a rediscovery of the suffering of God. This was inspired by "my bowels are troubled" [הַמֶּ֫יִן מַעֲיָן] in Jeremiah 31:20 and "the sounding of thy bowels" [הַמֶּ֫יִן מַעֲיָן] in Isaiah 63:15.¹⁰⁰⁷ As a Lutheran theologian he saw the pain of God through God's love and wrath. "Both Christ and man were originally objects" of God's immediate love without hindrance, yet "man has now *fallen* away from this kind of God's love." However God does not simply remain in His wrath towards humans and repulse them. Instead, God enfolds and embraces them, which causes Him pain in forgiving those who should not be forgiven and in sending His Son to suffer and to die. This pain of God's forgiving love persuades sinners completely to be obedient to Him. Kitamori calls this the "love rooted in the pain of God."¹⁰⁰⁸

Where does such understanding of God's love lead us? First, Kitamori correctly claims that we are to respond to God's suffering with our own suffering.

To follow the Lord of the cross is to serve the pain of God. Thus, to follow the Lord of the cross, bearing one's own cross, is to serve the pain of God by suffering pain oneself. *Serve the pain of God by your own pain* -- this is the Lord's absolute commandment. "Those who do not serve the pain of God by their own pain are not worthy of God's pain" -- this is the absolute declaration.¹⁰⁰⁹

Kitamori's emphasis on Christian response in suffering is significant. Despite the classic doctrine of the impassibility of God, imitation of Christ, including suffering, was always regarded highly in church history. Not only was

¹⁰⁰⁶Cf. Chapter 2, IVB2a 'Over-bridging the Abyss.'

¹⁰⁰⁷Kitamori 1966b, 151-167.

¹⁰⁰⁸Kitamori 1966b, 117.

¹⁰⁰⁹Kitamori 1966b, 50. See also *ibid.*, 138.

suffering a theological requisite but also one can hardly be prophetic and be faithful to God without the expectation of suffering for God as a part of the Christian life.

Second, Kitamori claims that serving God with our own pain heals our pain: Through our service in the pain of God, the wounds of our Lord in turn heal our wounds, thus our pain can actually be relieved by serving the pain of God. All kinds of pain experienced in this world remain meaningless and fruitless as long as they do not serve the pain of God. We must take care not to suffer human pain in vain.¹⁰¹⁰

Kitamori is right that if our concern were totally focused on and absorbed in the pain of God so that our pain is dimmed, our pain would be sanctified.¹⁰¹¹ When we are fully overwhelmed with and concerned about the depth, thrust, and the pain of God's love, we would not complain about our own suffering.

However sufferings often defeat our response to God so that the centre of our concern is our own pain. As Kitamori says, "Our human pain is by itself dark, meaningless, and barren. Man's pain is the wrath of God."¹⁰¹²

How then can we learn rightly to interpret our suffering from the viewpoint of God's suffering, so that it does not become 'in vain'? Kitamori says that "the *church* is the place where this pain of God is to be borne in this world. The pain of God actually takes place in the church, which is the body of Christ."¹⁰¹³ However it is unfortunate that his discussion of the church is not developed further.¹⁰¹⁴ We argued in Chapter 2 that it is the church that interprets the situation according to the Scriptures. As Hauerwas asserts, only the community of believers which is formed and shaped by the narrative of the Kingdom of God can rightly interpret the Scriptures and the situation.¹⁰¹⁵ The suffering should be not only carried out by the church but also interpreted by the church.

¹⁰¹⁰Kitamori 1966b, 53.

¹⁰¹¹Kitamori 1966b, 54.

¹⁰¹²Kitamori 1966b, 52.

¹⁰¹³Kitamori 1966b, 104.

¹⁰¹⁴Kitamori 1966b, 68, 90.

¹⁰¹⁵See Chapter 2, IV 'Christian Community.'

3. 'Japanese' Theology

Kitamori was aware of the distortion of pre-war 'Japanese' Christianity. Nevertheless he positively valued Japanese culture and consciously interweaves it in interpreting the Christian faith. He wrote three articles about Japanese Christianity and his theology of the pain of God in 1963 and 1964, and he hints that the theology of the pain of God is a successful example of Japanese theology.¹⁰¹⁶

In his discussion of the indigenisation of Christianity Kitamori identifies two approaches: pro-indigenisation and anti-indigenisation.¹⁰¹⁷ Pro-indigenisation seeks a "universality [of Christian theology] mediated through 'particular [and concrete] national traits.'"¹⁰¹⁸ It positively affirms cultural participation in forming the nature of Christianity.¹⁰¹⁹ Kitamori quotes Masahisa Uemura and Kanzô Uchimura as typical pro-indigenisation examples in Japan. In discussing Uemura he also mentions John's Gospel as a Greek indigenisation of the Gospel.

Anti-indigenisation accepts that when the Japanese understand the Gospel, there will naturally be a Japanese flavour in their interpretation as a result. However it consciously rejects the positive participation of Japanese culture in interpreting the Gospel. Karl Barth is regarded as a typical example of this type. In the introduction to the Japanese edition of *Evangelical Theology* Barth wrote in 1962 that just as 'German' Christianity failed, 'American,' 'Swiss,' or 'Japanese' theology would not produce a positive result. He then put an "earnest question mark" to Kitamori's *Theology of the Pain of God* as a 'Japanese' theology.¹⁰²⁰

Kitamori argues, however, that Barth was reacting to human-centred Protestant Liberalism, which made his God too detached from the human, and

¹⁰¹⁶These three articles, "Nihon no Kirisutokyô [Japanese Christianity]," "'Nihon no Shingaku' toiukoto [The problem of 'Japanese theology']," and "'Kami no Itami no Shingaku' nitsuite [On *The Theology of the Pain of God*]," are included in Kitamori 1966a. The second article was translated into English. Kitamori 1969.

¹⁰¹⁷Kitamori 1966a, 21-25.

¹⁰¹⁸Kitamori 1966a, 23.

¹⁰¹⁹Kitamori 1966a, 3.

¹⁰²⁰Barth 1968, 204.

claims that as the infinite God incarnated Himself into the finite world, a theology must be incarnated in an indigenous manner.¹⁰²¹ One cannot and should not avoid the question of particularity in Christian faith. A problem is, says Kitamori, rather how much universality such an indigenous Christianity has.¹⁰²²

Kitamori discusses two examples of substantial cultural participation in shaping Christianity: Greek Christianity and German Christianity. The Hellenistic mind produced orthodox doctrines, as a universal truth. It was successful in contributing universally to Christian theology although it had its own cultural particularity and limit, such as a tendency to be objective and metaphysical, disregarding the problem of the subject.¹⁰²³ He sees the most clear examples in the doctrine of the Trinity and in Christology.¹⁰²⁴ The German mind, on the other hand, shifted the problem from the object to the subject and its faith.¹⁰²⁵ Its handling of the problem became more existential. 'How can I be saved?' was a crucial question for Luther.¹⁰²⁶ Although the emphasis on the subject was significant, it should not have overshadowed the objective aspects. Bultmann's Christology was such an example. Having criticised both Greek objective distortion and German subjective distortion, Kitamori argues that theological focus should be shifted to the relationship between God and the human, which is Hebraic. He believes that a Japanese contribution should be found there, and claims that his theology of the pain of God was such an attempt.¹⁰²⁷

¹⁰²¹Kitamori 1966a, 27-29.

¹⁰²²Kitamori 1966a, 34.

¹⁰²³Kitamori 1966a, 8-17, 35-37, 59-61.

¹⁰²⁴Kitamori's awareness of the problem of Hellenistic thinking in Christian theology is not unique but seems to be similar to the *Dogmengeschichte* [history of dogma] movement in the late nineteenth century. However Kitamori's contribution is to criticise also the problem of German thinking.

¹⁰²⁵Kitamori 1966a, 17-18, 37-39, 61-62.

¹⁰²⁶Kitamori thinks that the Reformed tradition (Calvin and Barth) is more concerned about the objective aspect of God like the Greek mind. Kitamori 1966a, 61.

¹⁰²⁷Kitamori 1966a, 18-19, 40.

4. Conclusions

Kitamori's theology was regarded as "most self-consciously Japanese" and he strongly affirms indigenisation of the Gospel.¹⁰²⁸ In fact he interprets the Gospel through Japanese concepts such as *higeki* [tragedy], *tsurasa* [pain, bitterness, or sadness], and *tsutsumu* [embracing or enfolding].¹⁰²⁹ However a large part of *Theology of the Pain of God* is a dialogue with Western Christian thought, which reveals Kitamori's appreciation and criticism of the Western Christian tradition. Thus Kitamori's theology is neither an accommodation of the Western Christian faith to the Japanese context, nor an uncritical amalgamation of Christian faith with Japanese culture. As Furuya asserts, "his [Kitamori's] intention was not to develop a uniquely Japanese theology, but rather to present the eternal and universal truth of the Gospel, which became clear through the medium of the nation of Japan."¹⁰³⁰

Kitamori's theology brought our attention to the suffering of God, which had been neglected or slighted over centuries. His claim that we should respond to the pain of God through our own pain and commitment is a valuable assertion against a dominant triumphant Christology. In addition, his theology strongly reflects Japanese culture. Obviously emphasis on the relational aspect is not exclusively Japanese. However there is no question that Kitamori's theology is a significant contribution to Christian understanding of God from his own cultural background.

Nevertheless from our interest of transforming culture, Kitamori's theology tends to slight God's transforming power. He has been criticised for allowing his theology to be overshadowed with suffering so that the Resurrection was neglected. Teruo Kuribayashi suggests that despite a deep insight into biblical faith and Asian culture Kitamori's theology does not fully express the liberating power of God.¹⁰³¹ Kitamori does talk about self-transformation in that the pain of God does not allow

¹⁰²⁸Michalson 1960, 73.

¹⁰²⁹Kitamori 1966b, 25, 135, 144, 148.

¹⁰³⁰Furuya 1987b, 16.

¹⁰³¹Kuribayashi 1991, 397.

"my affirmation of the status quo" and drives me to a "self-transformation so that it may ease the pain of God."¹⁰³² However this sanctification seems to remain an individualistic self-improvement rather than participating in God's transforming act as a people of God.

Moreover his pro-indigenisation approach tends to lose a sharp edge in discerning and transforming culture. A pro-indigenisation Japanese theology tends to be less critical about Japanese culture and less sensitive to other cultures. True, Kitamori does not simply value Japanese culture but also tries critically to discuss it;¹⁰³³ yet standing in the midst of Japanese culture blinds him to some of fundamental problems of the Japanese. We have discussed that our standpoint must be on the boundary between the Kingdom and the world. Furuya sharply criticises Kitamori that whilst expressing "a deep sensitivity toward the 'tsurasa' (painful feeling) of ordinary Japanese people," *Theology of the Pain of God* does not have "any sensitive sympathy toward the pain of ordinary Asian peoples who were made to suffer by Japanese soldiers."¹⁰³⁴

This book makes no reference whatever to the severe pain and suffering of the Asian peoples inflicted by the Japanese before and during World War II. . . . There is no mentioning of the pain and suffering of Taiwanese and Koreans under Japanese colonialism, nor of the mass slaughter of Chinese civilians by Japanese soldiers during the invasion of mainland China. The pain and agony of Asian peoples in Manila, Singapore and all over South East Asia can hardly be found, not even in a single sentence.¹⁰³⁵

Kitamori wrote the book in 1944 when the Japanese mass media were controlled by the military government.¹⁰³⁶ Nevertheless even then there were individuals who criticised it. The fact that even a capable and sensitive theologian like Kitamori totally ignored the pain of other people which was directly related to the Japanese indicates a danger of standing in the centre of culture. As Yoder says, "those who seek to modify society by taking 'more positive' attitudes toward it are actually rendered unable to do so, when by 'positive attitude' they mean abandoning an

¹⁰³²Kitamori 1966a, 47.

¹⁰³³Kitamori 1966a, 95-99; Kitamori 1966b, 26-27. See also *ibid.*, 133-138.

¹⁰³⁴Furuya 1987b, 25.

¹⁰³⁵Furuya 1987b, 24.

¹⁰³⁶Kitamori 1966a, 93.

independent standpoint."¹⁰³⁷ In order "to move the environing culture" we need not only a "bar and fulcrum" (canonical foundation) but also a "place to stand" (believers' church).¹⁰³⁸ Kitamori had a bar and fulcrum, but it is not certain if they rested on a firm community of believers who supported him, discerned the good and evil of Japan with him, and actually walked with him on the boundary between Japan and the Kingdom.

C. Yasuo Furuya

1. Introduction

Yasuo Furuya was born in 1926 as the son of a pastor. The relationship between Christian faith and Japan has been an enduring problem for Furuya from his childhood. Born in Shanghai, he was seeing Japan from outside. Coming back from China caused bullying from fellow Japanese. Being a Christian further brought persecutions upon him during the war period. The war obviously left a crucial impact on him. He writes: "I decided to become an evangelist of the Gospel when I heard the Imperial message on the defeat of Japan on 15 August 1945 as a Private of Japanese Imperial Army."¹⁰³⁹

After studying at Tokyo Union Theological Seminary, he studied at San Francisco Theological Seminary, Princeton Theological Seminary (Th.D.), and Tübingen University. He taught at the International Christian University (I.C.U.) in Tokyo and was pastor of I.C.U. Church from 1959 till 1997, as well as lecturing at several Japanese and foreign institutions.

Some of his essays were published as books: *Kirisutokyô no Gendaiteki Tenkai* [The modern development of Christianity] (1969), *Purotesutantobyô to Gendai* [Protestant disease and modernity] (1973) *Gendai Kirisutokyô to Shôrai*

¹⁰³⁷Yoder 1996, 71.

¹⁰³⁸Yoder 1996, 77.

¹⁰³⁹Furuya 1995, 1.

[Modern Christianity and its future] (1984). He is also the author of *Shûkyô no Shingaku* [A theology of religions] (1986), *Daigaku no Shingaku* [A theology of the university] (1993). His recent lectures and sermons are included in *Nihon Dendôron* [A theory of evangelism in Japan] (1995). He is the editor of *A History of Japanese Theology* (1997), which is "the first book on the history of Japanese theology ever to be written by Japanese themselves."¹⁰⁴⁰ He is a co-author of *Nihon no Shingaku* [A theology of Japan] (1989) with Hideo Ohki, which is a crucial work in the Japanese language on our concern, and therefore receives extensive attention below. Furuya plays a significant role in Christianity in Japan through his writings, lectures, and preaching. As an active and open-minded scholar, educator, and minister of mainline Christianity (the *Kyôdan*), he has a keen ecumenical interest both within Christianity and with other religions.¹⁰⁴¹

2. Common Ground between Furuya and Ohki

Furuya and Ohki are close friends. Although they take different approaches in *A Theology of Japan*, they share a common attitude towards the problem of Japan in Christian theology.¹⁰⁴² Before discussing Furuya's approach (and then Ohki's below), we need to grasp their common ground.

Firstly Furuya and Ohki advocate a 'theology of Japan' which deals with Japan as an object. Their 'theology of Japan' must be distinguished from similar terms such as theology in Japan, Japanese theology, and theology for Japan.¹⁰⁴³

Theology in Japan means theology which exists or is produced in Japan. This is simply a description about a geographical aspect of theological activities. Although their 'theology of Japan' is written in Japan, its intention is to go beyond such a geographical description.

¹⁰⁴⁰Furuya ed. 1997, 1.

¹⁰⁴¹Furuya 1995, 110-121; Furuya 1987a.

¹⁰⁴²Ohki 1989a, 23; Furuya and Ohki 1989b, 5.

¹⁰⁴³Ohki 1989a, 11; Furuya ed. 1997, 141.

'Japanese' theology is an attempt at conscious cultural participation in forming Christian theology. I have discussed in the previous chapter the two occasions when Japanese theology was emphasised in the pre-war Christian history in Japan. There were a number of distorted theologies. Kitamori called it pro-indigenisation theology. He consciously worked on his theology with Japanese culture. Although it was a creative and orthodox theology, and was by no means distorted, its weakness appeared as insensitivity towards other Asian people in its ethnocentricity. It is probably fair to say that his attitude towards Japanese culture was affirmative rather than critical. Such a stance contains a risk of leading Japanese Christians towards exclusive nationalism in a Christian persecution or in a war period, although that was not Kitamori's intention.

Furuya and Ohki are most aware of the danger of Japanese nationalism, and tackle the problem. In fact such an awareness seems to me a motivation for them to pursue this work.¹⁰⁴⁴ I mentioned Furuya's suffering as a young Christian in the war period; as I shall describe, Ohki is from a military preparatory school. He states that whilst Kitamori's theology was in a sense subordinate to Japan by making Japanese culture participate in Christianity, a theology of Japan "totally and radically deals with Japan as an object of theological inquiry."¹⁰⁴⁵ Likewise Furuya writes:

According to the authors [Furuya and Ohki], the theology of Japan is not a Japanese theology. The word *of* in the title indicates not the genitive but the accusative case; thus it indicates the object, Japan. This theology questions Japan, totally and radically, from a theological point of view. The theology of Japan is a theology that pursues the question of what Japan is. It is probable that this kind of theology has never been proposed or attempted in the history of Christian theology.¹⁰⁴⁶

Their theology of Japan is not simply theology for Japan. Its primary purpose is not to seek the prosperity of Japan, although it should benefit Japan by its discernment.

Thus theology of Japan is not theology in Japan, Japanese theology, or theology for Japan, but a "theology which studies, considers, and understands *Japan*

¹⁰⁴⁴Cf. Ohki 1989a, 238.

¹⁰⁴⁵Ohki 1989a, 229. See also Furuya ed. 1997, 114.

¹⁰⁴⁶Furuya ed. 1997, 141.

from a theological viewpoint."¹⁰⁴⁷ This is a very important contribution to the Christ-and-culture problem particularly with their peculiar interest in Japanese nationalism.

Secondly both Furuya and Ohki seem to promote magisterial Christianity. This is not explicitly claimed; it is rather implicitly presupposed in their minds upon the basis of the tradition of mainline Christianity. Ohki in particular is aware of the problem of the parish church and the voluntary church (congregation) from his interest in covenant theology.¹⁰⁴⁸ However even his theology has an inclination towards magisterial Christianity. Here I just would like to note that both Furuya and Ohki take a magisterial direction as a common tendency. I shall deal with this problem below in discussing their respective theologies.

3. Theology of Religions: Theology and Social Science

a. Introduction

In *A Theology of Religions* Furuya states that his theology of Japan is an extension of this work. In what sense is it an extension of theology of religions? Although it is not fully discussed, we need to examine it since this reveals his basic theological stance. I shall identify this and discuss if such an approach is acceptable. Furuya is aware that it is controversial, as he writes in the 'Afterword' of *A Theology of Japan*: "However I may have to dispute with Professor Ohki on this issue [between 'theology of Japan' and 'theology of religions']."¹⁰⁴⁹ Later Ohki also

¹⁰⁴⁷Furuya 1989, 34. Furuya says, and probably Ohki would agree with him, that dealing with Japan as an object includes investigating why Japan is one of the hardest mission fields and what is needed for Christian penetration of Japan. Then such a theology will examine the nature of Christianity which comes to Japan and exists in other parts of the world. Furuya 1989, 36.

¹⁰⁴⁸Ohki 1966, 76-101.

¹⁰⁴⁹Furuya 1989, 322.

mentions his disagreement with Furuya on this issue, although he does not articulate how he disagrees.¹⁰⁵⁰

b. Beyond the Barthian Theology

A Theology of Religions is a comprehensive study of religions from a theological viewpoint. Furuya's doctoral thesis was about the absoluteness of Christianity, and in that sense this book was in preparation for a long time. Furuya defines theology of religions as "theology which investigates what religions are from the standpoint of Christian faith" with the help of "other religious studies."¹⁰⁵¹ It is different from philosophy of religions, which is "philosophical examination and assessment of religion"; it is also different from the science of religion which is "scientific examination and assessment of religion." It is not study of religions from a so-called neutral point, since there is no such viewpoint. It is a study from the viewpoint of Christian theology.¹⁰⁵² Theology of religions examines and assesses religions not merely from the standpoint of reason or rationality but from *revelation*.¹⁰⁵³ It is also a "*Kirchliche Theologie* [church theology]": "a theology of the church for the church by the church" which seeks to be ecumenical.¹⁰⁵⁴ This obviously resembles a Barthian approach.

Odagaki suggests that Furuya's theology of religions was an example of trying to "break out of the 'Barthian Captivity.'"¹⁰⁵⁵ Although Furuya's basic approach is still identical to that of Barth, this statement is true in two senses. On

¹⁰⁵⁰Furuya and Ohki 1989b, 6. Ohki, like Reinhold Niebuhr, does not talk about pagan culture. Perhaps this is a difference between Furuya and Ohki.

¹⁰⁵¹Furuya 1987a, 15, 17.

¹⁰⁵²Furuya 1987a, 33.

¹⁰⁵³Furuya 1987a, 207. Furuya has been very clear about this point. For example he asserts in the context of criticising John Hick's relativism in 1977: "For us [Asian Christians] who have lived in a society which consists of diverse cultures and religions, Christianity (more precisely the gospel of Jesus Christ) is not another religion along with other religions. . . . We certainly experienced a 'Copernican change.' Namely we experienced a radical change from a human-centred viewpoint to a God-centred viewpoint. . . ." Furuya 1984, 210-211.

¹⁰⁵⁴Furuya 1987a, 26-27.

¹⁰⁵⁵Odagaki 1997, 124. Cf. Furuya 1995, 28.

one hand Furuya's theology of religions was an attempt to break with 'Japanese Barthianism,' which was a misunderstanding of his theology. Barth's theology was used as an excuse for Japanese theologians to avoid discussing religions, namely State Shinto and the problem of the *Tennô*.¹⁰⁵⁶ However in reality Barth was open to discuss religions as long as the discussion was based on the standard of the *revelation*, and this is what Furuya pursues in his theology of religions.¹⁰⁵⁷ On the other hand, although Furuya highly values Barth's theology, he states that it is "insufficient and inadequate" in dealing with religions today since it was not written for the situation of religious pluralism, which we are facing today more profoundly than Barth did.¹⁰⁵⁸ Thus whilst keeping revelation as the standard, Furuya goes beyond Barthian Captivity and creatively opens a way to deal with religions.¹⁰⁵⁹

What is Furuya's disagreement with Barth? How does he go beyond him? In short, whilst accepting Barth's Christological concentration, Furuya asserts that Barth remained there and did not go through it to deal with religions.¹⁰⁶⁰ However Furuya tries to do so with a trinitarian approach. This brings an apologetic element in his theology.

Furuya asserts that the Christological concentration should be the entrance which leads us to a wider universe.

Through the Christological concentration . . . we believe in the Father the Creator of the earth and heaven, and meet the wide universe which He created. Moreover through the Son of God, Christ, we believe in God, the Holy Spirit, and meet the humanity of each person to whose spirit God is talking. The Church has expressed this by the doctrine of the Trinity.¹⁰⁶¹

Furuya uses Alan Race's three types in order to discuss the present Japanese theological situation about religions.¹⁰⁶² *Exclusivism*, which strongly emphasises the uniqueness of Christian faith, includes most Protestant theologians in Japan;

¹⁰⁵⁶Furuya 1987a, 21, 100.

¹⁰⁵⁷Furuya 1987a, 206-210.

¹⁰⁵⁸Furuya 1987a, 328.

¹⁰⁵⁹Furuya says in 1989 that although as a Barthian he used to criticise Emil Brunner, he now appreciates Brunner more. Furuya and Ohki 1989c, 14.

¹⁰⁶⁰Furuya notes that although Barth hoped to pursue theology of religions, he could not develop it. Furuya 1987a, 329.

¹⁰⁶¹Furuya 1987a, 332.

¹⁰⁶²See Race 1983, Chapters 2, 3, and 4.

inclusivism, which regards other religions as insufficient yet recognises the work of God in them, is represented by Roman Catholic theologians; and *pluralism*, or relativism, which is rarely found amongst Japanese theologians. In discussing his trinitarian approach, Furuya talks about H. Richard Niebuhr's "Theological Unitarianisms" in which Niebuhr emphasises trinitarian theology, rejecting the unitarianism of the Son, of the Spirit, and of the Father.¹⁰⁶³ He concludes that Japanese Protestant theologians (exclusivists) should listen to inclusivism and pluralism.¹⁰⁶⁴ This conclusion is drawn from H. Richard Niebuhr's trinitarian theology. H. Richard Niebuhr attempted to bridge a gap between Troeltsch and Barth. Having studied Troeltsch, Furuya too pursues a somewhat similar direction, having a Japanese context in mind.¹⁰⁶⁵

Furuya asserts that theology of religions should not only criticise religions, including Christianity, but also restore their religious nature, particularly that of Christianity. In order to achieve these two purposes from the standard of Christian faith, he suggests utilising other religious studies (history of religions, religious sociology, religious psychology, and religious phenomenology).¹⁰⁶⁶

Kerygmatic theology should take precedence over apologetic theology whilst the latter is a necessary complement to the former. Furuya's theology of religions is an apologetic attempt to prepare Christianity for the age of religious pluralism. It is built upon a Barthian kerygmatic basis, and is a balanced approach.

c. Theology of Religions and Theology of Japan

In *A Theology of Japan* Furuya mentions the relationship between theology of Japan and theology of religions:

'Theology of Japan' has the task of responding to a particular problem of Japan. The task requires two approaches. One is 'theology of religions.' This is an approach theologically to

¹⁰⁶³Niebuhr 1983. Cf. Chapter 1, IIIC 'Christ' and IID1 'Radical Monotheism.'

¹⁰⁶⁴Furuya 1987a, 336.

¹⁰⁶⁵Ohki too locates himself between Troeltsch and Barth. Ohki 1997, 5.

¹⁰⁶⁶Furuya 1987a, 20, 28, 34.

investigate and interpret Japanese religions, Shinto, Buddhism and other religions and to elucidate the problem of 'Why Christianity?' The other is an approach to be called 'theology of ethics' or 'theology of morality,' which elucidates the problem of 'Why Christianity?' by theologically investigating and interpreting Japanese ethics, Shinto ethics, Buddhist ethics, and other ethics.¹⁰⁶⁷

Furuya's *A Theology of Religions* was an attempt at the former approach. It is a part of the basic components which comprise his theology of Japan. Although he admits that the ultimate answer to the question of 'Why Christianity?' is 'Because I believe so' as a matter of faith, theology of Japan and theology of religions should apologetically and comparatively seek to answer the question of 'Why Christianity?'

However when we carefully read these two works, we can see another common element between them. As mentioned above, Furuya's theology is a Barthian *Kirchliche Theologie*, which is based on revelation. However it has not only kerygmatic proclamation but also an intention of forming healthy Christianity and the use of social science for that purpose.

In *A Theology of Religions* Furuya claims that theology of religions needs to utilise other religious studies in order to avoid distorted subjectivism. He asserts that faith would become fanatic and arbitrary without them.¹⁰⁶⁸ In *A Theology of Japan* he insists on the significance of *social science* in Christian discernment for the same reason.¹⁰⁶⁹ Social Science usually includes sociology, psychology, anthropology, economics, political science, and history. The 'other religious studies' can be considered social science. This adoption of social science in theological inquiry for avoiding distortion of Christianity seems to be another common element between the two books.

Systematic theology is not enough by itself for theology of Japan. We must have social science for Japanese society . . . since a Christian viewpoint comes out of the tension between theological judgement and analysis of social science. Social science without theology will be corrupted into cynicism or relativism. This is not good. However theology without social science nearly always becomes dogmatism or self-justified. This is worse.¹⁰⁷⁰

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Tadao Yanaihara was a *Mukyōkai* Christian who assertively criticised exclusive Japanese nationalism and militarism

¹⁰⁶⁷Furuya 1989, 211.

¹⁰⁶⁸Furuya 1987a, 17-19.

¹⁰⁶⁹Furuya 1989, 190-196.

¹⁰⁷⁰Furuya 1989, 194.

during the war period, and paid a price for it. Furuya claims that Yanaihara's empirical science and positivism as a social scientist helped him see the reality of the *Tennô* system, of extreme nationalism, and of the imperial war. Furuya contrasts Yanaihara with Takeshi Fujii, who was also a devout *Mukyôkai* Christian and Yanaihara's brother-in-law. Fujii unlike Yanaihara had fanatic anti-Americanism and exclusive Japanese nationalism, and sometimes even sounded like a serviceman. Furuya then asserts that theology, particularly theology which deals with Japan as an object, needs social science. It is because social science deals with the problems of people, societies, and nations, "namely problems of the horizontal dimension" whilst theology deals with "vertical dimension."¹⁰⁷¹ I have already discussed in relation to Barth's theology that Furuya believes in the priority of the vertical dimension to horizontal dimension. This need for 'horizontal dimension' and 'vertical dimension' is Furuya's basic claim which supports both his theology of religions and theology of Japan.¹⁰⁷²

Theology should be open to dialogue with other studies. Such a dialogue should benefit not only theology but also other studies if it is constructively carried out. As long as Furuya does not mean to give a privileged status exclusively to social science by rejecting other studies, this is a right approach. Christians without the knowledge of social science can make a right judgement, although it is no doubt a helpful companion. There were Christians who fought against the Nazism without much a knowledge of social science. Uchimura, who was one of the most prophetic voices in Japan and the founder of the *Mukyôkai* movement, did not have a background of social science, although he studied a natural science at Sapporo Agricultural College. However theology should be open to a dialogue with other studies in fulfilling its task.¹⁰⁷³

¹⁰⁷¹Furuya 1989, 195.

¹⁰⁷²Ohki likewise says: "We . . . follow the line of Reinhold Niebuhr between Troeltsch and Barth. A current situation does not allow us to wrestle [with problems] only from a Barthian viewpoint. Namely we must see with *two eyes* the vertical dimension and the horizontal dimension." Ohki 1994c, 249.

¹⁰⁷³Cf. Tillich 1957b, 74-98.

I have argued in Chapter 2 that the church's primary task is to imitate God and to be faithful and obedient to Him instead of seeking a *realistic* compromise upon common sense, social science, or other studies. This makes the church a unique contrast model to the world which reveals the sins of the world despite its incompleteness. The church is an essential community to its members, and offers alternative options to the world. For example martyrdom can hardly be a choice based on social science for fulfilling the church's responsibility to the world, whilst it is sometimes an unavoidable option of faith, as the life of Jesus Christ (and the lives of Christians) clearly indicated.¹⁰⁷⁴ Social science and other studies are after all only advisory voices for decision making. Having claimed that, however, the benefit from a dialogue between theology and other studies is invaluable and must be emphasised especially in Japan where such a dialogue has been unfairly neglected. It is very much needed not only in forming healthy Christian faith through criticism but also in evangelism to non-Christians in Japan, which almost always requires Christian apologetics.¹⁰⁷⁵

4. Historical Approach

In *A Theology of Japan* Furuya's theological inquiry utilises social science, seeking to form healthy Christianity in Japan. Although a socio-psychological study by Kiyoko Takeda appears in Chapter 7 where he deals with the problem of the *Tennô*, Furuya largely takes a historical approach in theologically critiquing Japan.¹⁰⁷⁶

Furuya analyses Japanese history from a viewpoint of how Japan responded to Christianity. This is a legitimate way to examine the nature of Japan. When we

¹⁰⁷⁴However a certain kind of aesthetics may suggest such a choice.

¹⁰⁷⁵I am aware that the relationship between Christian faith and social science is a huge problem. However it is enough here in a dialogue with Furuya to note the supremacy of Christian faith and useful advisory function of social science without voting rights. Cf. Milbank 1990; Gill 1996.

¹⁰⁷⁶Furuya 1989, 174-185.

investigate the nature of a substance, we can directly approach the substance itself; however we can also analyse the response of the substance to a certain stimulus. Furuya's approach is of this latter sort. When we make an inquiry especially into the relationship between Christian faith and Japan, this is an indispensable approach. Such a historical approach is needed since we cannot investigate such issues apart from concrete historical interaction. Furuya correctly asserts: "History clearly shows that Japan is not an abstract problem for Christianity. On the other hand, neither is Christianity an abstract problem for Japan. They have been formidable opponents of each other [in concrete situations]."¹⁰⁷⁷ Thus the historical approach is necessary to investigate the nature of Japan from a theological viewpoint.

I basically support Furuya's approach, although I, unlike Furuya, see the history from a believers' church perspective. I use a similar approach in Chapters 3, 4 and 5 where I examine the history of Christianity in Japan. It is because, as Furuya says, in dealing with Japan theologically, "We would not like to begin with an abstract and general discussion such as 'what Japan is.' What we are interested in is persistently concrete and real Japan. Therefore we would like to start with Japanese history, particularly [the part of] Japanese history which encountered Christianity."¹⁰⁷⁸

Furuya analyses the reasons why Japan has rejected Christian faith and how Christian faith can be accepted in Japan. He expresses a concern about evangelism in Japan more explicitly than Ohki, although this does not mean that it is not Ohki's concern.¹⁰⁷⁹ Ohki is more interested in a theological methodology for a theology of Japan, which is a different emphasis in dealing with the problem. Obviously theoretical discussion is no less important, which is significantly fulfilled by Ohki's contributions in *A Theology of Japan*.

¹⁰⁷⁷Furuya ed. 1997, 141.

¹⁰⁷⁸Furuya 1989, 37.

¹⁰⁷⁹Ohki 1989a, 235-236.

5. Core Problem of Japan

What is the core of problem of Japan from a Christian perspective? Why can Christianity not grow in Japan? Why did it compromise during nationalistic periods? Furuya discusses H. Richard Niebuhr's *Radical Monotheism and Western Culture* in answering these questions. As I showed in Chapter 1, Niebuhr discusses *henotheism* (social faith), *polytheism* (pluralism), and *radical monotheism* as forms of faith. Although *henotheism* takes one object, it is one among many as a substitute for the infinite God. Nationalism is a typical example of *henotheism*; Niebuhr also sees *henotheism* even in Christianity: church-centredness and Christ-centredness.¹⁰⁸⁰

Furuya thinks that *henotheism* is a core problem of Japan and of Christianity in Japan. He claims that it appears in two ways. One is Japanese nationalism, namely "Japan-supremacism which places absolute trust in a nation, Japan, and a people, the Japanese." He calls this an "objective reason."¹⁰⁸¹ The problem of the *Tennô* and Shinto lies at the heart of Japanese nationalism. He asserts that although the *Tennô* became *mere a symbol* of Japan under the new Constitution of 1947, the *Tennô* still has a fundamental influence to the Japanese, and the core of the Japanese spirit has remained the same. Furuya also mentions the meaning of keeping the *Tennô* as a symbol of Japan, quoting Tillich who continually asserted that a symbol participates in the reality whilst a sign does not.¹⁰⁸² Having the *Tennô* as a symbol of Japan logically results in the permeation of the Japanese by his substantial influence.¹⁰⁸³

Furuya is right in his criticism of Japanese nationalism and of the *Tennô*-Shinto problem. In the *Kirishitan* period nationalism was not yet formed. However

¹⁰⁸⁰See Chapter 1, IIID1 'Radical Monotheism.'

¹⁰⁸¹Furuya 1989, 215.

¹⁰⁸²Furuya 1989, 203.

¹⁰⁸³Alan M. Suggate also suggests: "'Symbol' is a very ambiguous word. In the West, which has either tamed or abolished monarchies, it has the connotation of 'figurehead.' Many Japanese Christians by contrast fear on the evidence before them that the *Tennô*'s place in the religious and social affairs of the nation has undergone no essential change." Suggate 1996, 80.

the *Tennō*-Shinto unity already was a basis for rejecting Christian faith not only in the hostile attitude of the Imperial Court towards the Christian missions but also in the deification of political and military leaders in the Shinto system. In the post-*Kaikoku* period the *Tennō*-Shinto unity became a dominant shield to block out Christianity (and Western imperialism) from Japan. Strong nationalism was formed. In the post-war period, Japan was trying to restore Shinto at the heart of the national identity. Since the *Tennō*-Shinto problem is a complicated problem, it requires a separate full-scale study. This thesis cannot deeply discuss it but identifies it as a significant problem and indicates a general guideline: the churches should be open to dialogue and decide their own response based upon their conviction and awareness of relativity, seeking to imitate Christ.

The other appearance of *henotheism*, according to Furuya, is Christianity in Japan. He calls this a "subjective reason" for the problem.¹⁰⁸⁴ Furuya sees it in the class consciousness of Christianity in Japan. Christianity has been individualistically accepted by the intelligentsia (including students), and such an elitist Christianity neglected the working class. In addition it often failed to practice evangelism. Furuya criticises its tendency to value 'quality over quantity.' For the intelligentsia, says Furuya, "Christianity is one of the values of polytheism or value-pluralism, and is not radical monotheism which relativises henotheism. Therefore a pattern has been repeated that people have left Christianity in nationalistic periods whilst they joined it in the international periods."¹⁰⁸⁵ This may be called an individualistic and superficial acceptance of Christianity by the intelligentsia. Furuya suggests two approaches to this problem: the formation of Christian homes and mass evangelism.¹⁰⁸⁶

I would like to question this claim. Furuya's understanding of henotheism appears obscure. Whilst Niebuhr saw henotheism in Christianity as church-centredness and Christ-centredness, Furuya sees it in its elitism without a clear

¹⁰⁸⁴Furuya 1989, 215.

¹⁰⁸⁵Furuya 1989, 218 (italics mine).

¹⁰⁸⁶Furuya 1989, 218-220. See also Furuya 1995, 23-32.

explanation about his disagreement with Niebuhr.¹⁰⁸⁷ Although the *Kyôdan* may have such a tendency, its members seem to be aware of its negative effect. If they do not consider the elitism as a supreme form of the church, it should not be called henotheism. Yet this claim may be an overstated self-critical statement by a *Kyôdan* theologian.

However Furuya is right in pointing out the problems of superficial acceptance of Christianity and individualistic faith. This is to be considered, as he says, a matter of the quality of Christian faith.¹⁰⁸⁸ However Christianity in Japan is not 'quality over quantity' as Furuya claims; rather one should say 'neither quality nor quantity.' There is no doubt that mass evangelism is significant. At least in the tradition of evangelicals in Japan, evangelism has always had a strong emphasis. However the problems of Christianity both in the mainline church and the evangelicals are superficial Christianity (or the lack of Christian commitment) and individualistic faith.

Individualistic faith and superficial Christianity are compatible concepts. Individualistic faith often takes the form of dualism: so-called internal faith and no deeds of Christian commitment. Tadao Yanaihara rightly emphasises the significance of concrete deeds upon Christian commitment:

If what he [a Christian] sees and speaks remains an abstract and general concept, persecutions do not come to him. In some situations the fame and happiness of this world could become his share. However the truth is real and concrete, and contains individual contents and applications. If he attempts to apply the truth to concrete and real problems, rejection overtakes him.¹⁰⁸⁹

The commitment should appear as believers' commitment to a local church as the essential community in their willingness to suffer for God, for brothers and sisters, and then for others who are created by God. It also should appear as the pioneering community which is determined creatively to provide godly alternative options to the world by imitating Christ. Furuya criticises individualistic faith by emphasising the formation of Christian homes. His claim is not totally foreign to

¹⁰⁸⁷Niebuhr 1960b, 58.

¹⁰⁸⁸Furuya's 'quality' seems to mean academic and intellectual understanding of Christianity without Christian commitment.

¹⁰⁸⁹Yanaihara 1964, 538.

ours, although his understanding of Christian commitment is not fully spelled out. This leads us to a discussion of Furuya's ecclesiology.

6. Ecclesiology

Furuya has not deliberately developed an ecclesiology. Therefore I would like to discuss his understanding of the relationship between Christianity and the world, based on some of his essays.

We should focus on Furuya's claim about the necessity of Christian distinctiveness. In discussing the church's responsibility to the world he criticises modern Christianity that it "has uncritically yielded to the modern world and its trend." He demands Christian distinctiveness: "The church becomes the church. Namely the church becomes the church *with a sense of transcendence* in the midst of the modern world, instead of becoming a function of the modern world. This very thing is the church's responsibility for [or to] the modern world."¹⁰⁹⁰ This is a natural outcome if we consider his preference for Barthian theology.

We uphold the Christian distinctiveness which Yoder and Hauerwas claimed. However how similar is Furuya's Christian distinctiveness to Yoder's and Hauerwas'?

Furuya deems that Christianity, particularly Protestantism, is deeply related to modern society, and therefore the church is responsible for its problem. He then claims that the church is to be critical of the world and at the same time to be formative about culture and society: "We need a church-culture theory which is more culture-forming than the ecclesiology of Barth, yet more church-forming than Tillich's view of culture. In any case [the church has to be] the church which is responsible for criticising and for forming the modern world."¹⁰⁹¹ It is true that Tillich's 'culture' is so vague that it is not very useful when we actually try to

¹⁰⁹⁰Furuya 1984, 318, 319-320 (italics mine). This is a translation from Japanese and the preposition can be either *for* or *to*.

¹⁰⁹¹Furuya 1984, 320.

transform culture. However what does Furuya mean by 'culture-forming'? As we saw in Chapter 1, culture is not a monolithic substance but a name which is given to an extremely complex set of human products. Christians in history have selectively chosen what was acceptable and rejected the others. Christians also created something new. However 'culture-forming' gives an impression that Christianity guides a major culture of a society with its influence. Although it remains quite abstract, it at least means that the church is to be in the centre of society and responsible to it: the church used to be in the centre in the past, and it is to be so now. In Yoder's term this is to be a chaplain to the society. Thus Furuya is similar to Yoder and Hauerwas in his belief that the church should not be merely a function of the world. However he is different from them in his assumption that the church is to be the centre of the world and responsible to it. I have discussed H. Richard Niebuhr's claim that the church is not responsible *to* society but responsible only *to* God *for* society, which was compatible to Yoder's and Hauerwas' claim of Christian distinctiveness. Although Furuya does not clearly state it, his church gives an impression that it seeks to be responsible to the world with its 'sense of transcendence' (whatever he means by it) rather than thoroughly pursuing to be faithful only *to* God.¹⁰⁹²

Furuya's church responsible to the world also appears in his 'ethics of the future'.¹⁰⁹³ He criticises 'here and now' ethics, and claims that in the age of atomic bomb we need an ethics which is *realistic* and *responsible* to the future. We live in an age when we can actually destroy the whole globe. This awareness of urgent crisis brought him to a calculable ethics on which everyone can bank. This is not a distinctively Christian ethics but an ethics for all with a Christian flavour of the 'sense of transcendence.' He seeks a common ground for ethics from all different stances. In this sense he is quite modern. He hopes that a Christian ethics can play a

¹⁰⁹²At least Furuya's church is not as clearly focused on its responsibility only *to* God as the church of Niebuhr, Yoder and Hauerwas. This is a major difference between them. See Chapter 2, IVC2 'Pioneering.'

¹⁰⁹³Furuya 1984, Chapter V. See particularly 262-269.

leading role on this common ground with a Christian flavour. Furuya's understanding of the church's current situation also seems to project his presupposition that the church is to be the centre of the society as a chaplain.

The collapse of *Corpus Christianum* in Europe was the end of the medieval period.¹⁰⁹⁴ However the West still considered itself to some extent Christendom even after the widespread acceptance of the separation of church and state. It was in this century, particularly after the second World War, that the Christendom of the West finally ended. Furuya says that understanding that the West is no longer Christendom is important, since it makes us realise that "[Christianity in] Europe and America is *no longer a model for us* [Japanese Christians] . . ." and that the problem of Christianity is now the same in the West or in Japan.¹⁰⁹⁵ Thus he claims that there can no longer be such a thing as a Christian nation.

Furuya then claims that it is now 'the age of personal decision' after the age of the state church, quoting Franklin Hamlin Littell.¹⁰⁹⁶ According to Littell, although radical reformers had already emphasised the significance of personal decision in faith in the sixteenth century, the age of personal decision actually starts in the nineteenth century when signs of the collapse of the Christendom appear. Furuya asserts: "Christians are becoming in a minority in all nations or societies; for Christendom is collapsing, and the social pressure to believe Christianity is disappearing. So-called nominal Christians are declining. . . . Rather only those Christians who continue to have faith even under social disadvantages will remain."¹⁰⁹⁷ Thus Furuya descriptively states that the church is currently moving towards the believers' church all over the world.

However the believers' church does not necessarily seem to be a prescriptive form of the church for Furuya. He has a nostalgia for the more influential church which is responsible to the world. It was the state church in Europe or the Christian-

¹⁰⁹⁴Furuya 1984, 283.

¹⁰⁹⁵Furuya 1984, 287 (italics mine).

¹⁰⁹⁶Furuya 1984, 293-294.

¹⁰⁹⁷Furuya 1984, 296.

centred society of denominationalism in the United States. The latter was in reality quite similar to the European state church, as Furuya himself states.¹⁰⁹⁸ Such a nostalgia is indicated in his claim above that Western Christianity is "*no longer* a model for us." However from a believers' church perspective we rather need to ask if the West has ever been Christian.¹⁰⁹⁹

Thus although Furuya acknowledges that the church is currently moving towards the believers' church, he seems to hope that the church *realistically* and *responsibly* stands in the centre of the society and plays a leading role with a Christian flavour of the 'sense of transcendence.' His church does not seek to be a contrast model to the world although it consists of voluntarily participating believers. So-called Christian influence on society seems to overshadow Christian distinctiveness. It seems to me as if Furuya wants the believers' church to play a similar role as state church did in the past.

However I argue in this thesis that the primary task of the church is to be faithful to who God is. Therefore the church has to be at least the believers' church. I welcome the collapse of Christendom. However believers' church is not merely a description of the current trend but a norm for us.

D. Hideo Ohki

1. Introduction

It is generally important to know the background when we try to comprehend a person's thought; for thought is usually formed in the narrative of the person. In Ohki's case knowing his background is indispensable since his theology was profoundly formed through his life in history.

¹⁰⁹⁸Furuya 1984, 286.

¹⁰⁹⁹Cf. Wessells 1994, 3-5. Although not from a believers' church perspective, Anton Wessells, professor of Missiology and Religions in the Free University of Amsterdam, asks if Europe has ever been Christian.

Ohki was born in 1928 in Aizu, Fukushima. Aizu was famous for its passionate pro-*Tennô* ideology.¹¹⁰⁰ He considers himself a native Aizu-ite, a background which has major implications.¹¹⁰¹ He went to Tokyo Military Preparatory School. He experienced the defeat of Japan in the war as the final year student of the school when he was sixteen years old. The school was literally destroyed in the war along with his (and national) *Tennô*-centred value system. Ohki states that his eschatology is rooted in this experience.¹¹⁰² After he was led to Christian faith through Toyohiko Kagawa, he studied at Tokyo Union Theological Seminary of the *Kyôdan* for 6 years and at its graduate school for two years. He also became an assistant to Emil Brunner at the I.C.U. during this time. He went to Union Theological Seminary in New York (1956-1960) and studied under Reinhold Niebuhr (S.T.M. and Th.D.). Upon his return to Japan he taught at Tokyo Union Theological Seminary from 1960 till 1997. He became the president of the seminary when it was shaken by the campus (and *Kyôdan*) disturbances.¹¹⁰³ He is currently a pastor to Takinogawa Church in Tokyo and the chairperson of the board of trustees of Seigakuin Schools.

Ohki is a productive theologian. *Burunnâ* [Brunner] appeared in 1963. His doctoral thesis was published under the title, *Pyûritanizumu no Rinrishiô* [The ethical thought of the Puritanism] in 1966.¹¹⁰⁴ This book opened the door for him to a dialogue with Japanese journalism, and he started writing essays on civilisation from a theological perspective. His essays were published in *Shûmatsuronteki Kôsetsu* [Eschatological investigations] (1970).¹¹⁰⁵ By and large this book reflected

¹¹⁰⁰Aizu *han* [feudal clan] was passionately pro-Tennô. However in the *Meiji* Restoration period it supported the *Edo* Shogunate. Aizu thought that Satsuma *han* and Chôshû *han*, which later became the centre of the *Meiji* government, were misleading the young *Tennô* and had *Boshin Sensô* [the battle of Boshin] against them. Aizu was regarded as a rebel against the *Tennô* when it lost in the battle. Since then natives of Aizu had hoped to prove their loyalty to the *Tennô* until the World War II. They tend to have a bitterness towards Chôshû and Satsuma even today.

¹¹⁰¹Ohki 1994c, 306; Furuya and Ohki 1989b, 5.

¹¹⁰²Ohki 1997, 2; Ohki 1994b, 8.

¹¹⁰³Cf. n. 45.

¹¹⁰⁴Ohki 1966.

¹¹⁰⁵Ohki 1970.

his thought on the problem of the disturbances of that period. Whilst it contained eschatological analysis of modern civilisation, the eschatology itself was discussed in *Shûmatsuron* [Eschatology] (1972).¹¹⁰⁶ In *Pyûritan* [Puritans] (1968) Ohki discussed the problem of the modern mind through historical and theological research on Puritanism.¹¹⁰⁷ Thus Ohki was capable of having a dialogue with secular journalism, and his audience included both Christian and non-Christian intellectuals. The *Kyôdan* disturbances, which Ohki squarely tackled at the seminary, were caused by Japanese Barthians.¹¹⁰⁸ This led him to a serious investigation of Barth's theology, which resulted in *Baruto* [Barth] (1984). Although Ohki has also written other books, *Nihon no Shingaku* [A Theology of Japan] (1989), which Ohki co-authored with Furuya, and *Atarashii Kyôdôtai no Rinrigaku* [An ethics of new community] (1994) require our special attention; for the former discusses his methodology of theology of Japan, and the latter comprehensively reveals his ethics, including ecclesiology.

2. Theological Methodology for Theology of Japan

Whilst Furuya takes a historical approach, Ohki discusses the methodological foothold for theology of Japan.¹¹⁰⁹ In 1987 Ohki wrote an article "Theology of Japan -- But Not Japanese Theology."¹¹¹⁰ This became the opening essay of his part of *A Theology of Japan*. In this essay he attempts to establish a method theologically to tackle the problem of Japan.

¹¹⁰⁶Ohki 1994a.

¹¹⁰⁷Ohki 1968.

¹¹⁰⁸Ohki 1989b, 13; Ohki 1991, 7; Ohki 1997, 8. Furuya and Ohki 1989c, 15.

¹¹⁰⁹Ohki 1989a, 23; Furuya and Ohki 1989b, 8-9.

¹¹¹⁰Ohki 1987.

a. From the Marginal Viewpoint

Kitamori positively involved Japanese culture in forming the nature of his theology. Ohki calls it Japan's *subjective* effect on theology. However Ohki's theology of Japan is an attempt to make Japan an object of theology.¹¹¹¹ *Meiji* Christians uniformly had an intention of 'saving Japan' by means of Christianity. This motif saw Japan as an object. However Ohki deems that they were dragged in exclusive Japanese nationalism and a theological method was not established to resist it.¹¹¹²

What is the method for Ohki to deal with Japan as an object? Ohki modifies and adopts Kenzaburô Ooe's 'dissimilation' method, which Ooe described in *A Method of a Novel*. Ooe is a Japanese novelist, who received a Nobel prize in 1994. In his novels Ooe tries to see an essence of reality from 'marginality.' He has a handicapped son, and this is probably a natural way for him to see Japanese society. When we see a society from a marginal viewpoint, its appearance becomes radically different from what we see from a ruler's viewpoint. The oppressed and the poor see Japan very differently from how the privileged and the rich see it.

However Ohki questions if Ooe's marginal viewpoint is firm enough "totally and radically" to make Japan an object and to be an "Archimedean fulcrum" to move Japan. He then proposes that thoroughgoing dissimilation requires a "theological eschatology," which is discussed below.¹¹¹³

¹¹¹¹Ohki 1989a, 229. It is needless to say that Japan cannot simply be an object for a Japanese theologian. As Kitamori pointed out over 'anti-indigenisation,' when a Japanese interprets the Gospel, Japanese culture is *naturally* reflected. Theology of Japan is to be understood as a theological endeavour most critically to deal with Japan (symbolically as an object) without positively inviting Japanese culture in its nature.

¹¹¹²Ohki 1989a, 235-236.

¹¹¹³Ohki 1989a, 230.

b. Theology of Japan and Liberation Theology

Ohki's claim shares a similarity with liberation theology in its emphasis on a marginal viewpoint. However Kuribayashi critically discusses Ohki's approach from a viewpoint of liberation theology. I would like to respond to Kuribayashi's criticism; for this clarifies my claim.

Kuribayashi values Ohki's emphasis on the marginal view as a "certainly remarkable claim."¹¹¹⁴ However he criticises Ohki's shift from a concrete and particular viewpoint of the suppressed to a viewpoint of abstract eschatology. Kuribayashi suggests that Ohki's concern as an orthodox (and mainstream) theologian lies in modern Christianity weakened by secularisation, theological diversity, and so on. Kuribayashi asserts that a crisis of Western traditional theology is due to its habit of seeing the world from the viewpoint of the privileged.¹¹¹⁵ He denies a "theoretically monolithic system" on some common ground and insists on "flexible and fragmentary thought."¹¹¹⁶

However Ohki is not worried about secularisation itself. He distinguishes secularisation and secularism, and positively values secularisation as a movement to liberate society, culture, and religion with a critical spirit.¹¹¹⁷ Nevertheless Ohki is concerned about Christian responsibility to society, and believes that modernisation should move towards a world community.¹¹¹⁸ Ohki hopes Christianity will play a central role in its healthy formation.¹¹¹⁹ However Kuribayashi is correct in his suggestion about Ohki's basic attitude towards weakened Christian influence in modern society.

We have claimed that magisterial Christianity tends to lack Christian distinctiveness and prophetic spirit. In the West such a Christianity sat on the

¹¹¹⁴Kuribayashi 1991, 193.

¹¹¹⁵Kuribayashi 1991, 191-195.

¹¹¹⁶Kuribayashi 1993, 40.

¹¹¹⁷Ohki 1968, 184-187. For Ohki Puritanism is also a secularisation movement.

¹¹¹⁸Ohki 1968, 191. See also Ohki 1994c, 80.

¹¹¹⁹Ohki 1989a, 253.

mainstream throne as a 'chaplain' to the society; in Japan, although it failed to obtain the throne, it sought such a direction. Ohki's theology is rooted in this tradition. Ohki intends theologically to critique Japan by treating it as an object. However we have to note that his sense of Christian responsibility to the world as a mainstream theologian carries the danger of dulling his sharp and prophetic edge.

Kuribayashi is also correct in his criticism of the modern presupposition of a monolithic common ground (and universal principle). I have upheld the 'theocentric relativism' of H. Richard Niebuhr and the 'authority of local churches' of John Howard Yoder in Chapters 1 and 2. They allow us to make diverse decisions in concrete and particular situations in earnestly seeking to imitate Christ.

However Kuribayashi does not answer Ohki's question: whether the viewpoint of the suppressed is firm enough to be an Archimedean fulcrum in order radically and totally to critique Japan. Kuribayashi, just as some other liberation theologians (and communists), tends to idealise the marginalised. Kuribayashi is correct in his claim that those suppressed by the mainstream of the society *can rightly recognise* the structural defect of the society.¹¹²⁰ However his unhesitant paean to them baffles us. "It is suppressed peoples, suppressed classes, and suppressed minorities that can squarely respond to the crisis and open the path of a new culture, new social structure, and new era. They are creative media. There exists amongst them a hope, and a power which brings a new value system."¹¹²¹ Although the suppressed know the problem of the society, it does not automatically mean that they can create a preferable society just because of their unfortunate experiences. Yoder correctly points out the problem of such an understanding: "Much of Marxism . . . has tended to talk as if the [poor or victimised] people would have some automatic virtue, some unspoiled insight so that they could have some saving role, if only we gave them a chance." However, "When a poor person becomes rich or when a victimised person becomes powerful, that person will often

¹¹²⁰Kuribayashi 1991, 194.

¹¹²¹Kuribayashi 1991, 194.

fall prey, unless there has been some special healing, to the same vices under which they suffered before."¹¹²² Being suppressed by itself cannot be a sign of virtue. The narratives of their unfortunate experiences need to be shaped and interpreted by the church which understands and participates in their suffering. Although their experiences throw a challenging and invaluable light on the mainstream, including magisterial Christianity, they themselves also have to be an object of a theological inquiry just as much as the society. Theology of Japan has a potential to be critical not only of the mainstream in Japan but also of all, including the marginalised. To see Japan from just any marginal viewpoints can be a sufficient challenge to the privileged. However it is not enough thoroughly and theologically to critique Japan. In order to do so, Ohki claims that we need 'God's viewpoint.'

c. Theology of Japan as Theological Relativism

Ohki's theology of Japan intends to see Japan from the "viewpoint of 'God' as the transcendent and absolute objectivity." He is critical of recent theological trends, and calls feminist theology and black theology as "an abuse of the term 'theology.'" Ohki asserts that it is God that is to be the subject of theology, and claims: "Only when theology becomes [God-centred] theology does it become possible theologically to consider 'Japan' from the viewpoint of 'God.'"¹¹²³

In *An Ethics of New Community* he further discusses theological relativism and says: "Faith enables us to see ourselves from [the viewpoint of] God. This viewpoint makes human reflection and self-criticism thorough."¹¹²⁴ Obviously we as finite beings cannot have God's viewpoint, and it should be symbolically understood. However this is Ohki's basic direction.

¹¹²²Yoder 1978b.

¹¹²³Ohki 1989a, 232.

¹¹²⁴Ohki 1994b, 246, 257.

Here we do not discuss if feminist theology and black theology are distortions as Ohki says. However we support him to the extent that theology should not primarily and uncritically revolve around any other subject but God.

Ohki values Barth's concept of 'revelation.' God has to be the centre of interpretation. This enables us to relativise the creature. Barth tended to disregard different values within history due to his concentration on the absolute.

However like Furuya Ohki does not remain there. Whilst Furuya goes beyond it with a trinitarian approach, Ohki does so by means of Reinhold Niebuhr's "theological relativism." This is based on Amos 9:7: "Are you not like the Ethiopians to me, O people of Israel? Says the Lord. Did I not bring Israel up from the land of Egypt, and the Philistines from Caphtor and the Arameans from Kir?" In *The Nature and Destiny of Man* Niebuhr claimed that the prophet understood the relativity of his people for the first time in history.¹¹²⁵ Here Ohki sees a biblical basis for interpreting history with God-centred relativism. Unlike Barth the relative matters to Ohki. In 1972 Ohki already expressed his interest in cultural synthesis.¹¹²⁶ He says that if we saw the earth from heaven, it would look flat. However the difference between Mt. Fuji and Mt. Tsukuba cannot be disregarded; for the difference requires different preparations to climb the mountains (ethical problems). If we prepare inadequately, we may be lost on a mountain.¹¹²⁷

Thus first Ohki asserts that theology of Japan is to be rooted in revelation, which offers "God's viewpoint." Second he also believes that theology of Japan is to be a "historical theology."¹¹²⁸ Only by putting God in the centre we are able rightly to interpret history, which is always relative. Ohki is *not* a sceptical relativist without a sense of the absolute. He rather tries to overcome such a relativism with the theological relativism which stresses the centrality of God.¹¹²⁹

¹¹²⁵Ohki 1994b, 235-240; Reinhold Niebuhr 1943, 23-26.

¹¹²⁶Ohki 1994a, 215.

¹¹²⁷Ohki 1994b, 219-220.

¹¹²⁸Ohki 1989a, 234.

¹¹²⁹Ohki 1994b, 2.

d. Theology of Japan as an Antithesis to Japan

How does theology of Japan relate itself to Japan? Ohki's approach is dialectical.

Ohki sees a typical Japanese mentality in *Wakon Yôsei*.¹¹³⁰ He criticises the self-affirmation of the Japanese soul in *Wakon Yôsei*. He pronounces that the Japanese should dare to expose their soul to a challenging antithesis so that they can experience a higher ground of synthesis through a struggle with the antithesis. He believes that Buddhism has failed to be a successful antithesis to Japanese history, yet Christianity can be one.

How can a sublation of Japan occur? Ohki uses the motif of *conversion*. Ohki asserts: "It [sublation] certainly occurs as a Christian conversion. When the conversion *reaches* 'Japanese spirit (*Yamatogokoro*),' 'Japanese spirit' as 'converted Japanese spirit' is raised to a higher synthesis."¹¹³¹

It is unfortunate that Ohki does not articulate the concept of 'conversion.' The term 'conversion' in Christian setting usually means conversion of individuals to Christian faith. However Ohki also seems to mean, to some extent, social conversion -- a profoundly positive change of social awareness towards self-criticism through daringly accepting a challenge from Christianity.¹¹³² Thus Ohki's theology of Japan is to be an antithesis to Japan as an object so that Japan can be sublated to a synthesis.

e. The Locus of Theology of Japan: the Church

Where is the locus of theology of Japan to be? Ohki had denied the marginal viewpoint of Ooe, and insisted on God's viewpoint, which relativises all human

¹¹³⁰Ohki 1989a, 237-245. Cf. Chapter 4, IIA2 'Japanese Attitude over Accepting Western Civilisation: *Wakon Yôsei*.'

¹¹³¹Ohki 1989a, 253-254, 295.

¹¹³²Cf. Ohki 1989a, 237, 253; Furuya and Ohki 1989b, 9.

beings and endeavours. He also believes that theology of Japan has to be a productive antithesis to Japan. He rightly claims that theology is not merely an abstract speculation but needs a place.

Ohki pays a respect to Japanese tradition and discusses the oriental philosophy of Kitarô Nishida (1870-1945), probably the most renowned Japanese philosopher and ethicist. Nishida discusses the problem of place in his religious philosophy.¹¹³³ Nishida's philosophy finds the place of 'true self' in the acceptance of paradoxical self-identity by the absolute being, and embraces opposite concepts together, such as life and death. However it does not contain a dynamic dialectic, and rather statically holds the paradox. Therefore it fails to be a fundamental challenge to Japanese soul. Ohki criticises the shortcoming of Nishida's philosophy, and seeks a place of theology of Japan.

"When we make Japan an 'object,'" says Ohki, "The theological existence [of theology of Japan] is to be located 'outside' Japan."¹¹³⁴ This was made possible through *conversion*. Within the vast realm outside Japan, Ohki specifies the locus of the theology of Japan, using another motif, *resurrection*: the locus of theology of Japan is the church as the "body of Christ the Resurrected."¹¹³⁵ This is probably what he means by eschatological viewpoint.

In sum, Ohki's theology of Japan is rooted in revelation, which enables us to interpret history with God-centred relativism. The motifs of *conversion* and *resurrection* help us to see Japan as an object and to confront Japan so that it can positively be changed. His theology of Japan is located in the church as the body of Christ the resurrected.

Ohki's discussion is complicated. First clarification of significant concepts and their relationship would help us understand his argument. Besides the concept of *conversion*, *resurrection* is also not clearly defined. The relationship between the church and the *resurrection* is also vague. He writes: "The Archimedean fulcrum is

¹¹³³Ohki 1989a, 256-261.

¹¹³⁴Ohki 1989a, 255.

¹¹³⁵Ohki 1989a, 269.

the *event of the resurrection*. It is the theological 'place' of theology of Japan." On the same page he writes: "The 'place' [of theology of Japan] is the 'church.' In that sense 'theology of Japan' is a theology whose 'position (*za*)' is the 'church,' [namely] a church theology."¹¹³⁶ The relationship between "the *event of resurrection* and the 'church' is unclear. He also needs to clarify the relationship between the revelation, eschatology, and the church.

Moreover whilst Ohki discusses Nishida's philosophy at length (over 14 pages!), his conclusion about the church as the locus of theology of Japan is less than two pages. A critical discussion of an influential Japanese philosopher from a Christian viewpoint is probably needed for a dialogue with the Japanese intellect. However it is unfortunate that what he positively affirms is much less clear than what he denies.

However Ohki's theological relativism is compatible with the theocentric relativism of H. Richard Niebuhr, which we upheld in Chapter 1. H. Richard had an emphasis on believers' certainty despite our relativity and diversity. Ohki's theological relativism has an emphasis on the viewpoint of God and human relativity.¹¹³⁷

We also would like to support his claim of the need for clearly confronting Japan as a qualification for theology of Japan. Antithesis contains a confronting element. He later mentions a pioneering function of the church. Although Ohki's church is significantly more vague than ours in terms of Christian distinctiveness, at this point it follows a similar direction.

Moreover we would like to support Ohki's attempt of locating his theology in the church, despite the difference between his church and ours. In the following section we shall examine Ohki's ecclesiology.

¹¹³⁶Ohki 1989a, 269-270.

¹¹³⁷This is guided by a (Reinhold) Niebuhrian Christian realism as we see below.

3. Ecclesiology

a. New Community

Ohki's 'ethics of new community' presupposes an ethics of old community in Japan.¹¹³⁸ It is represented by the ethics of Tetsurô Watsuji (1889-1960), one of the two most influential Japanese philosophers along with Nishida. Watsuji defined a human being from an analysis of its Chinese character (人間) as a being of relationship. Community was a starting point for Watsuji's understanding of individual. A village was typical of his community.

However Ohki rightly criticises Watsuji that his community is a primitive and *natural* community like a herd of animals or an anthill, which not only fails to respect freedom of the individual but often suppresses it. Ohki asserts that Watsuji's ethics of community represents Japanese attempts to resist Western modernisation with the Japanese tradition of *nature* and harmony, which was doomed to failure in the Modern era. Therefore, says Ohki: "We must inquire into an 'ethics of new community' -- a way of the Japanese with universal morality in the process of globalisation."¹¹³⁹ He believes that the new community should be modelled after the church. This is a universal ethics for all, for both Christians and non-Christians.

b. Nature, Freedom, and History

In order to understand Ohki's criticism of *natural* community, we need to grasp his distinction of *nature* and *history*. He sees *history* as a movement 'from *nature* to *freedom*,' and says: "*Freedom* changes *nature* into *history*."¹¹⁴⁰ He learned this from Reinhold Niebuhr. Niebuhr divided culture into two: historical culture and

¹¹³⁸Ohki 1994b, 92; Ohki 1994c, 127-128.

¹¹³⁹Ohki 1994b, 97.

¹¹⁴⁰Ohki 1994c, 79, 94. Due to this clear distinction Ohki seems to criticise Furuya's 'Twenty Year Cycle Theory.' Ibid., 144.

non-historical culture.¹¹⁴¹ Christian culture is typically historical. Although not only is our freedom finite but also sin dwells in it, freedom does not let us be content with the status quo and urges us to seek the ideal. This tension between the ideal and the limit leads us to a messianism.¹¹⁴² Non-historical culture is typically oriental. It does not recognise meaning in history; for history is basically identified with nature, and nature is to be accepted as it is. In this view caste in India, for instance, could be fatefully accepted. Such a society, says Ohki, is a *natural* society, which we must overcome with freedom: "If an old community was built on 'nature,' a new community must be built on this 'freedom.'"¹¹⁴³

c. Congregation

Ohki recognises the prototype of freedom in the Exodus. However he rightly sees through his studies of Puritanism its modern model in 'congregation' (personal church) which came out of the parish (geographical church).¹¹⁴⁴ 'Congregation' was a community of faith which was voluntarily formed. People joined the 'congregation' by their free will. Each member voluntarily covenanted with the 'congregation' and therefore is responsible to it. The committed believers' church which we uphold in this thesis belongs to this 'congregation' type.

Ohki says that the 'congregation' as a covenant community required two kinds of process from its members.¹¹⁴⁵ One is an establishment of individuality (or subjectivity). This lets us stand out of an old (and *natural*) community such as a village. This typically occurs through conversion, namely an "experience of freedom as a soul-penetrating liberation."¹¹⁴⁶ Ohki regards this establishment of individuality as a move from nature to history. Using Tillich's term, Ohki calls this

¹¹⁴¹Ohki 1994c, 143.

¹¹⁴²Ohki 1994c, 90, 143.

¹¹⁴³Ohki 1994c, 275.

¹¹⁴⁴Ohki 1994c, 61-74, 77. See also Ohki 1968, 92-100.

¹¹⁴⁵Ohki 1994c, 112-115.

¹¹⁴⁶Ohki 1994c, 130.

'the courage to be as oneself.'¹¹⁴⁷ The other is an establishment of a new community. Ohki believes that humans are communal beings and individualisation is merely a transitional stage. The newly established individuality should be integrated in the formation of a new community.¹¹⁴⁸ Whilst Tillich used 'the courage to be as a part' in a Medieval sense, Ohki uses it to depict the church's ideal today which has gone through individualisation.¹¹⁴⁹ Ohki also supports this from I Corinthians 12:12-13 that we are baptised into one body.

Communal Subjectivity

Tillich believed that "the structure of the community . . . is qualitatively different from that of the personality": "The community is without complete centeredness and without the freedom which is identical with being completely centered."¹¹⁵⁰ However Ohki denies such a claim; for on one hand a community can be united with a common spirit and should take responsibility for its action, and on the other hand an individual's responsibility cannot be questioned if the individual is minor. Thus Ohki believes that a community can have a communal subjectivity.

In order for a community to have centredness and subjectivity, it has to be a voluntary community. Therefore Ohki believes that the church today is to be the 'congregation,' and not the parish church. Subjectivity is based on freedom, and only a voluntarily formed covenant community can be a responsible community.

Moreover he deems that the world is moving in the direction of covenant society (such as the movement from monarchism to republicanism), and the church is to be the model for the world. In other words the church ('congregation') is the prototype of the new community for the world to seek.

¹¹⁴⁷Tillich 1952, Chapter 5.

¹¹⁴⁸Ohki 1994c, 145-163, 209.

¹¹⁴⁹Tillich 1952, Chapter 4.

¹¹⁵⁰Ohki 1994c, 153; Tillich 1963, 41.

Ohki's affirmation of the 'congregation' is solidly based on historical and theological studies of Puritanism. We have insisted that the church which lives a distinctively Christian life has to be at least the believers' church. Ohki's analysis of the 'congregation' as the beginning of the modern freedom supports our claim. He even thinks that the 'congregation' is the model for the world to follow. As we shall see, Ohki's Puritanism is still a magisterial Christianity. For us 'congregation' is a necessary yet insufficient qualification. Nevertheless we support Ohki's direction of the 'congregation.'

Another significant contribution by Ohki is his focus on the process of individualisation from the old community and the formation of the church as the new community. This includes both historical and descriptive analyses, and a theological and normative claim for the future. This claim on the 'congregation' also helps us clarify the nature of our believers' church. The articulation of this process is extremely important in Japan where the natural and old community is strong. Japanese Christianity has emphasised individual subjectivity in leading people to Christian faith. On one hand, those who made a clear personal decision to become Christian went through a radical individualisation process. However they tend to remain individualistic whether with explicit faith or with so-called internal and personal faith. Although they usually belong to a church, they remain individualistic in the church. The church is not their essential community. Therefore the claim for a new community cannot be overemphasised. On the other hand those who did not make a clear decision tend simply to replace an old community with the church as another natural community without an individualisation process. Although we must accept the weak in faith, this process -- from an old community to the new community through individualisation -- is normative for the believers' church.¹¹⁵¹

¹¹⁵¹Cf. Suggate 1996, 94.

d. Relationship between the Church and the World

(1) Eschatology: Between the Times

Our ecclesiology is generally determined by our eschatology. Ohki's ecclesiology is significantly shaped by his eschatology. He not only wrote two books which had eschatology in their titles but also describes his church as the "eschatological eucharistic community."¹¹⁵²

Although Ohki feels affinity for inaugurated eschatology, I would like to call his eschatology that of 'between the times' (or intermediate period).¹¹⁵³ It is partially because he often uses the term 'between the times (*chûkanji*)';¹¹⁵⁴ and it is partially because I would like to distinguish his eschatology from Yoder's and Hauerwas' which hold a much stronger sense of the inaugurated Kingdom than Ohki's. For them the church is the community of believers who strive to live, according the values of the Kingdom revealed in the New Testament. Although the church is not equal to the Kingdom and the inaugurated Kingdom exists also outside the institutional churches, the believers' church which is formed by the narrative of the New Testament is the norm to discern the inaugurated Kingdom.

In *Eschatology* Ohki rejects the non-eschatological theology of Aquinas and the thoroughgoing future eschatology (*Konsequente Eschatologie*) of Albert Schweitzer.¹¹⁵⁵ Ohki also criticises C.H. Dodd's realised eschatology and Bultmann's existential eschatology. The former failed to recognise that the finite (current age) is not capable of fully holding the infinite (the Kingdom) and to value the apocalyptic element of the future. The latter disregarded the objective aspect of the Kingdom. Its God, says Ohki, is like a "refugee king."¹¹⁵⁶ Oscar Cullmann

¹¹⁵²Ohki 1994c, 217; Ohki 1981.

¹¹⁵³Ohki 1994a, 95. He indicates a positive attitude towards Joachim Jeremias's 'sich realisierende Eschatologie' and George Florovsky's 'inaugurated eschatology.'

¹¹⁵⁴Ohki 1994c, 57, 95, 149.

¹¹⁵⁵Ohki 1994a, 89-95, 107-109, 137-148, 171-182.

¹¹⁵⁶Ohki 1994a, 93.

harmonised the eschatologies of 'already' and 'not yet,' which Ohki basically supports.¹¹⁵⁷ Ohki also seems to appreciate Moltmann's eschatology, which, in the same line, sees the future approach us instead of assuming time flowing from the past to the future.¹¹⁵⁸ Thus Ohki takes the view of an intermediate period.

In *An Ethics of New Community* he repeatedly rejects realised eschatology.¹¹⁵⁹ This indicates his strong resistance to it. This seems to be partially due to his personal reaction to Marxism and its utopianism during the campus disturbances period.¹¹⁶⁰ Ohki asserts that the realised eschatology believes that "we hold the divine truth whether literally [fundamentals] or spiritually [pentecostals]." He stresses that we now live in an intermediate period, whose virtue is "tolerance." As mentioned above, Ohki is not a sceptical relativist. His theological relativism is an outcome of a thoroughgoing God-centred theology. However his emphasis is significantly laid on our relativity and tolerance. He claims that we should "open a relative and realistic scene which is called 'between the times.' And we come to claim . . . 'civil peace' or 'city peace.'"¹¹⁶¹ Civil peace or city peace is a result of a middle axiom approach. Although it does not contradict Christian value, it is not distinctively Christian. This is an ethics for all. Thus Ohki takes a typical (Reinhold) Niebuhrian approach of Christian realism.¹¹⁶²

(2) Goal and Strategies

What does Ohki hope to achieve in the age between the times? In 1972 he wrote that it was an "actualisation of the world community which is hinted by the symbol of the 'Kingdom of God.' What we need is a community of true humankind, which corresponds to the small-scale of human community which was

¹¹⁵⁷Ohki 1994a, 95, 182-185.

¹¹⁵⁸Ohki 1994a, 187.

¹¹⁵⁹Ohki 1994c, 57-59, 95-97, 149, 208, 220, 222, 248, 292-294.

¹¹⁶⁰Ohki 1994c, 218.

¹¹⁶¹Ohki 1994c, 57.

¹¹⁶²Ohki 1994b, 220.

actualised in the Medieval Europe, yet is large enough to include the [whole] earth."¹¹⁶³ *An Ethics of New Community* (1994) basically keeps the same direction. Ohki believes that although the church notifies the world of the crucified Jesus Christ as the goal of the world history, the ultimate task of (Christian social) ethics is the problem of the world community.¹¹⁶⁴

(a) Pioneering Community

How does Ohki deem that the world community can be achieved? He believes that the church ('congregation') is to be the model for the world to follow.

He makes an astonishing claim: "The world wants to become the church."¹¹⁶⁵ He not only presumes the continuity between the church and the world and normativeness of the church to the world but also believes in the world's desire to become the church. He does not necessarily mean that everyone consciously or unconsciously wants to become a Christian. He means that the world is moving from nature to history by freedom. It is the direction of the covenant society. The world has been experiencing individualisation and those individuals are seeking a new community in which to participate. In this sense the world has the same structure as the church, and the church is the model for the world to reach its goal of the world community.

In other words, Ohki's church is a pioneering community. He says that the church should "pioneeringly take the fate of world history and challenge the possibility of its fulfilment." "The Protestant church is a 'laboratory (*jikkenjô*)' for the possibility of the new community"¹¹⁶⁶ This is similar to our claim of the church's pioneering function.

¹¹⁶³Ohki 1994a, 241-242. See also *ibid.*, 10.

¹¹⁶⁴Ohki 1994c, 220, 226.

¹¹⁶⁵Ohki 1994c, 157, 215, 297; Ohki 1994a, 200.

¹¹⁶⁶Ohki 1994c, 224, 297.

However, unlike ours, Ohki's concern is not Christian distinctiveness.

Although Ohki recognises the difference between the church and the world, it is not his major concern. Despite the difference, they rather appear smoothly united. "The world cannot become the Kingdom of God; at best it can become the church."

"According to the degree of how well the church is formed, humans can have a hope in the future of the world." Ohki's concern is rather the relationship between the Kingdom and the world. He says that "the church is the 'bridge' to unite world history and the Kingdom of God" and "the church is between heaven and earth." He also states: "The Kingdom of God is an inevitable demand of world history."¹¹⁶⁷ He believes that history awaits a messiah due to the paradox between its ideal and limit, and the messianism is to be fulfilled with the Kingdom. The church is a bridge without which "world history can never be connected." He also calls the church a "bridgehead, speaking from God's side."¹¹⁶⁸

Ohki's ecclesiology inclines to be metaphysical and abstract. It is because he thinks that the bridge (the church) is the place where "people do not become settled but go through, walk, and advance."¹¹⁶⁹ The church appears to be in-between the Kingdom and the world or a process which we have to go through before reaching the Kingdom, rather than as a community with its own value as the inaugurated Kingdom. Ohki's church appears to be dominated by the Kingdom so that it becomes a shadowy being.

I have mentioned that Ohki believes that the church should become the 'eschatological eucharistic community.' In 'breaking bread in remembrance of Christ' Yoder saw an aspect of the church in material sharing as a table fellowship. It implied hospitality and forming a community. It was a significant example of the church's pioneering function for him.¹¹⁷⁰ However Ohki's eucharist is abstract and transcendent. He does say: "A meal indicates the concreteness of life. A

¹¹⁶⁷Ohki 1994c, 215, 208, 211.

¹¹⁶⁸Ohki 1994c, 210, 213.

¹¹⁶⁹Ohki 1994c, 210.

¹¹⁷⁰Chapter 2, IVC1 'Contrast Model.'

community's foundation is laid by a dining table." However "the bread and wine of the eucharist are absolutely not sufficient for maintaining physical life," and the eating and drinking of the eucharist is merely symbolic. He quotes Romans 14:17: "For the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit," and interprets I Corinthians 11:21ff as a "separation between eating and eucharist," since, says Ohki, the Apostle asked them to eat at home.¹¹⁷¹ Ohki does not totally reject a concrete and life-sharing community. In discussing the church's communal subjectivity, he mentions the possibility of a material-sharing community.¹¹⁷² Nevertheless his church inclines to become abstract and symbolic rather than a real life community as a foretaste of the Kingdom to come. It is "not a life community but a *worship* community."¹¹⁷³

Ohki seems to slight the concrete aspect of life by overreacting to the old and natural community. However there is no reason to separate the concrete life community from the worship community. The worship community without the concrete life-sharing remains individualistic and does not reflect the character of a new community as an inaugurated Kingdom. The former passage is written in the context of concretely forming a community which supports the weak in faith. Whilst the Apostle rejects a superficial argument of acceptable food, he never denies the value of the common meal and concrete community in which each builds each other up. The latter passage does not deny the value of the common meal, either. The Apostle reminds them that communion is not simply an intake of food, and rebukes those who selfishly and individualistically satisfy their own appetite. This too is written in the context of considering brothers and sisters in the concrete church setting.¹¹⁷⁴ Thus whilst Ohki's eschatological eucharistic community is abstract and transcendent, we insist on concrete and real-life community where members care for each other, which is represented by the table fellowship. This is not the fully

¹¹⁷¹Ohki 1994c, 219.

¹¹⁷²Ohki 1994c, 147.

¹¹⁷³Ohki 1994c, 221.

¹¹⁷⁴Cf. Kreider 1997.

realised Kingdom. It is a community of faith as an essential part of the inaugurated Kingdom, which, in the intermediate period despite its relativity and fallibility, strives to live as a foretaste of the Kingdom.

(b) Universal Ethics

Ohki also believes in universal ethics for achieving the world community. His world community needs universally acceptable rules. Ohki rejects two approaches: "evil universalism" and "evil provincialism." The former is "imperialism" which "enforces [one's] abstract universality." However Ohki thinks that this experienced a setback with the collapse of the Soviet Union.¹¹⁷⁵ For Ohki imperialism is primarily Marxism. The latter is often united with nationalistic pluralism, which insists on an inviolable cultural sanctuary and rejects foreign intervention. Ohki thinks that in the postmodern period, particularly in Japan, this 'evil providentialism' is a problem. Having rejected these two, Ohki asserts: "Ethics today must seek 'universality.' It [ethics in Japan] must be ethics for the Japanese which is universally acceptable. It must be ethics of the world community."¹¹⁷⁶ Thus Ohki seeks a positive universalism.

Naturally Ohki accepts natural law whilst recognising the Bible as the superior authority.¹¹⁷⁷ He affirms imperialism if it brings a positive value and result. He mentions an opinion that the U.S. post-war scholarship for the Japanese to study in the States was an attempt to indoctrinate them with American values. He then says: "Is it not to be affirmed that we become 'indoctrinated' with the value system of human rights? The universalisation of the idea of human rights is a [historical] 'fact,' which denies ideological value-relativism; and the waves of such an ideology break on the rock of this 'fact.'"¹¹⁷⁸ Ohki denies that he is a "so-called

¹¹⁷⁵Ohki 1994b, 7.

¹¹⁷⁶Ohki 1994c, 8.

¹¹⁷⁷Ohki 1994c, 266.

¹¹⁷⁸Ohki 1994c, 238.

modernist," and claims that instead he thinks thoroughly eschatologically.¹¹⁷⁹ However although he may not be a modern-supremacist, his presupposition of universal principles, the separation of subject and object, and a common ground reveals that he takes a typically modern approach. However even though the *eschaton* universally occurs, our ethical claims in the intermediate period do not have to be monolithic and universal.

Ohki's abstract and transcendent ecclesiology makes his ethics universal; and his strong sense of the intermediate and imperfect period makes it realistic. His Niebuhrian Christian realism is linked with a deep sense of Christian responsibility to the world. After comparing a nation to a ship at sea, Ohki asserts: "An ethics is a matter regarding the steering of the entire ship."¹¹⁸⁰ His ethics is not distinctively Christian but universal ethics for all. This assumption (or recovery) of the church on the main stage of society is a characteristic of magisterial Christianity.

His sense of political responsibility also appears in his conformity with Puritanism which lies between Thomas Hobbes and John Locke.¹¹⁸¹ Hobbes saw human nature pessimistically and claimed that a covenant community needs a 'common power' to establish a society and to force individuals to protect a common benefit. Locke saw human nature opportunistically and believed that a covenant community can be successfully led by a majority opinion. Ohki, however, asserts that he seeks a "realistic endeavour" between them.¹¹⁸²

Moreover Ohki seeks to be responsible to the whole realm of culture. Ohki believes: "Improvement of the cultural level of people (*Mindo*) produces the possibility of forming the new community."¹¹⁸³ His theology is a "service to improve the cultural level of people."¹¹⁸⁴ Ohki wishes "to actualise a cultural synthesis which corresponds to that medieval cultural synthesis." In 1972 he already

¹¹⁷⁹Ohki 1994c, 304.

¹¹⁸⁰Ohki 1994b, 5.

¹¹⁸¹Ohki 1994c, 232-236.

¹¹⁸²Ohki 1994c, 236.

¹¹⁸³Ohki 1994c, 94.

¹¹⁸⁴Ohki 1994c, 297.

wrote this in the context of discussing the new community.¹¹⁸⁵ In 1994 he likewise says that his aim is a "restoration of cultural values."¹¹⁸⁶

Thus Ohki's ethics is for the whole nation of Japan from a Christian camp. It is an attempt to be responsible for guiding the nation upon a Christian foundation. The intention of his universal ethics is partially to expose the Japanese soul to the ethics of a global standard so that the Japanese cannot hide their vices behind the excuse of cultural pluralism. We agreed with Ohki that theology of Japan should confront the Japanese soul as an antithesis. However we do not accept a universal ethics as *the* Christian ethics. First it usually disregards or even neglects the teaching of Jesus in the New Testament as a possible option. We can hardly call it distinctively Christian. Diluting the distinct Christian ethics for universal acceptance undermines the *raison d'être* of the church. Second it is not clear who can decide the universally acceptable rules. Universal ethics often supports the use of violence, even as a destructive force; for it believes that if one does not accept the universal truth, we can enforce its acceptance upon the person or the nation. This is proven in Ohki's affirmation of the United Nations' response to Iraq at the Gulf War.¹¹⁸⁷ In *Eschatological Investigations* he insists on a harmony of prophetic intellect and priestly intellect in politics. However although he states that "criticism cannot be thoroughly carried out unless we stand on the 'outside,'" his prophetic aspect is overwhelmed with the realistic and universally acceptable ethics.¹¹⁸⁸ Ohki takes the direction of a socially mainstream ethics and fails to maintain a sharp and prophetic Christian edge. It is radically different from the political choice of Jesus in the New Testament.¹¹⁸⁹

¹¹⁸⁵Ohki 1994a, 215.

¹¹⁸⁶Ohki 1994b, 221.

¹¹⁸⁷Ohki 1994c, 161.

¹¹⁸⁸Ohki 1970, 16, 18.

¹¹⁸⁹See for instance Ohki 1994b, 223.

4. Conclusions

Ohki made a very significant contribution theologically and constructively to critique Japan. His theology of Japan and ethics of new community are probably the most significant works in this field which have been written in the Japanese language.

First we support Ohki's approach which sees Japan from a marginal viewpoint and his claim that the church is the locus of theology. Although he does not thoroughly pursue this direction in our judgement, this is the right direction.

Second we support Ohki's preference for the 'congregation' over the parish church through individualisation. Although we believe that the church should accept the weak in faith, this is the right direction to be pursued in forming not only a 'congregation' but also a believers' church.

Third we support Ohki's claim for the communal subjectivity as it is compatible with the *corporate-personal* aspect of our believers' church.¹¹⁹⁰ Ohki sociologically clarified the existence and significance of communal subjectivity in a covenant community. The believers' church should seek to actualise the full function of the communal subjectivity as much as the 'congregation.' This requires members' participation and responsibility to the church.

Fourth Ohki insightfully points out the sociologically identical structure between the church and the world: a covenant society. This explains continuity between the church and the world, and rationalises the church's pioneering function to the world. Although there is room for argument whether the covenant society is *the* normative direction for the world to pursue, this is an important Christian apologetic to the world, particularly in Japan where the social significance of Christianity is disregarded.

¹¹⁹⁰Chapter 1, IID5 'Community Approach.'

It is unfortunate, however, that Ohki's church is so abstract and transcendent that it can hardly be the locus of theology in concrete situations. Using his expression, it is too vague to be the 'Archimedean fulcrum' to move Japan.

Firstly Ohki's abstract and transcendent ecclesiology comes from his 'theological relativism.' We support Ohki in pursuing the direction of God-centred relativism. However his relativism has heavy emphasis on relativity itself during the intermediate period. An awareness of relativity and the intermediate period can be a safety device against an elevation of the finite to the infinite. However its overemphasis can lead us to an agnostic and 'for the time being' ethics without certainty and commitment.

On the contrary, we have insisted on 'theocentric relativism' as a humble conviction of the absolute despite our relativity and fallibility in a confessional and communal form. It reminds us of the centrality of God's revelation, the significance for us of seeking the will of God as the church in our incompleteness, and the value of dialogue with other churches.

Secondly Ohki's abstract and transcendent ecclesiology comes from his eschatology. Like Ohki we are aware that we live in the intermediate period between the 'already' and the 'not yet.' In Chapter 1 it was expressed as the church on the boundary between the Kingdom and the world in an ontological sense. However we see the nature of the church as the inaugurated Kingdom more strongly than Ohki. Whereas Ohki finds his way in tolerance through relativity, we on a basis of relativity find the certainty of truth in a confessional and communal form. By losing the tension between the relativity and certainty, Ohki's church loses its centripetal force. Its members become reluctant to make a deep commitment to it; without a commitment it is hard to have a communal subjectivity as the body of Christ. Thus it becomes a loose gathering of individuals (supposing they have gone through the process of individualisation) who suggest realistic choices with a good common sense with a Christian flavour, which is universally acceptable. Their choices may be good, but not necessarily marked by the obedience to Jesus Christ.

Thirdly Ohki's abstract and transcendent ecclesiology comes from a universal ethics. The church has to dilute its peculiarity in order fully to be compatible with a universally acceptable ethics. Ohki's church gives an impression that it leads the world into its image without a sharp confrontation. It is also not clear if his church as a new community seeks a discipleship of its members. True, we with H. Richard Niebuhr affirm the original goodness of the world as God's creation; we with Hauerwas claimed the continuity between the church and the world; Yoder too mentioned a possibility of the world's adopting the church's way without accepting the lordship of Christ;¹¹⁹¹ however we insisted on the church's radical obedience to Jesus Christ and to His teaching in the New Testament as the church's *raison d'être*. Yoder and Hauerwas rightly claimed that the sin of the world is so deep that it cannot even know how deeply it is affected without the church as a contrast model. Formation of a world community is a good intention. However it is not the supreme goal of the church.

Ohki is correct in his claim that the modern world owes so much to the church; an essential part of the modern world -- such as freedom and human rights -- came from the church, though not solely by any means. The church appears to have a legitimate claim to participate in the councils of the world. However his ethics largely depends on Puritanism, which was already magisterial in its premise. Despite his emphasis on the marginal viewpoint and on the prophetic intellect, his ethics seems to be overwhelmingly priestly in its presupposition of leading the whole nation of Japan on the main stage, having the whole world in his vision. This jeopardises the sharp Christian edge and shakes the *raison d'être* of the church. This universally acceptable ethics, along with his theological relativism and intermediate-period eschatology, makes his church a vague being.

In sum, we highly value Ohki's comprehensive ethics, which reflects his erudition. His Christian apology is one of the most eloquent contributions in Japan. However we suggest that his ecclesiology is too abstract and transcendent to be the

¹¹⁹¹Chapter 2, IVC1 'Contrast Model.'

'Archimedean fulcrum' to move Japan, which receives all the weight of the object and lever. Ohki's 'congregation' is a right direction. However his realism is not prophetic enough. It inclines to move towards the centre of the nation instead of standing on the boundary between the Kingdom and the world. Once the church takes a direction of magisterial Christianity, it loses the sharp edge of Christian faith. Therefore the fulcrum should be the distinctively Christian believers' community, which receives commitment from its members as the essential community, earnestly seeks the will of God and the ethics of the Kingdom to come at any cost in a concrete, communal, and confessional manner, and offers alternative choices to the world.

Conclusions

This thesis has sought an appropriate relationship between Christian faith and culture. Our claim can be summarised as follows.

Firstly the ethics of Jesus is the norm for Christians not only in their devotional life but in all aspects, including the political sphere. His life and teaching have often been understood only as the ethics of the perfected Kingdom, but unrealistic for the eschatology of 'between the times.' However, the Kingdom was inaugurated in this world with His life. This is the Kingdom in which we are called to participate despite the incompleteness of this intermediate period.

The ethics of Jesus is based on absolute faithfulness to and trust in God. He is a merciful and capable God; the fate of the world is in His hand; He intervenes in history 'here and now' so that it is God, and not we, who is in charge of history and ultimately transforms the world. Jesus did not realistically and directly change society by his power and stratagem. Trust and faithfulness to God are our primary task.

This type of the faithfulness to God is distinctively Christian. An ultimate expression of it is martyrdom, which is one path to the cross. This cannot be derived from common sense or a type of universal ethics. Christian ethics should be derived from the narratives of the Scriptures, rather than from universal principles.

Secondly the church is on the boundary between the Kingdom and the world. The church is distinctive from the world in its confession that Jesus Christ is Lord, although there is continuity between the church and the world. Despite the ambiguity and relativity of the intermediate period, God reveals Himself to the church; therefore the church is the norm of the inaugurated Kingdom, and discerns the signs of the Kingdom outside itself. The nature of this boundary enables the church selectively to discern what is (and is not) acceptable to it in the complex human product which is named culture.

Thirdly such a church is a believers' church. Faithfulness to God requires a voluntary commitment. Obedience to Christ often leads us to sacrifice and suffering. The church is to be a voluntary covenant community of committed believers. However we have seen that persecutions in Japan in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries challenged the parish church to become similar to believers' church, which, rather surprisingly, became evident amongst Japanese Roman Catholics. Not only missionaries but also a significant number of *Kirishitans*, at least in the earlier generations, had high moral standards and deep commitment to the *confraria*.¹¹⁹²

Moreover the prophetic spirit requires an independent standpoint. When the church seeks to locate itself centre stage in society, it loses a sharp edge to critique society and to offer creative alternatives.

Church history has experienced non-productive and destructive forms of the believers' church. They were sometimes individualistic and lacked commitment to their community; they were sometimes religiously fanatic and totalitarian, which lacked self-criticism and respect for individual freedom. We have suggested qualifications of the believers' church.

Firstly, we upheld Niebuhr's radical monotheism and theocentric relativism, which remind the church of its relativity and fallibility. Radical monotheism reminds us of the danger of static henotheism: church-centredness and Christ-centredness. Our understanding is always limited and fragmentary. We should never lift up the church to the infinite throne. Although Christ of the New Testament is the norm as the most explicit revelation, Christ should be understood in the relationship with Father and Spirit. Monotheism of the Son must be avoided.

Theocentric relativism, however, reminds us that God reveals Himself in the church despite our relativity, and the church should hold its certainty and conviction

¹¹⁹²*Kirishitans* of the early modern period did not go through an individualisation process. In this respect their *confraria* is not an ideal model for our believers' church. However a significant number of them not only had a deep devotion to God, but also a strong commitment to their community and marginal viewpoint. These are what Protestantism in Japan has been lacking.

in a confessional and communal form. This leads us to accept not only the unity but also the diversity of Christian convictions and to be open to a dialogue with those who hold different convictions.

Secondly, we suggested a corporate-personal model in terms of the relationship between the church and individuals. We rejected not only individualistic and totalitarian Christianity but also personal Christianity. As Uchimura asserted most clearly, we should become independent from the natural community. However we also should voluntarily participate in the church as a new community. Ohki clarified the distinction between natural community and voluntary congregation. Although we do not totally deny the value of the natural community, a covenant should be made and renewed in the relationship with the church as the new community. Such a community has communal subjectivity.

Thirdly, we insisted that the church is to be an essential community to its members. The believers' church approach has sometimes been seen as sectarianism. However individuals live in the midst of society and belong to other communities, whilst the church is the normative community which shapes their identity and to which their essential commitment is given. Such a community is formed by the narrative of the Scriptures and accordingly it shapes our narratives, which provides a basis for critiquing society and offering alternatives.

Fourthly, we insisted on the significance of the church as a concrete local community. Although the church is incomplete in the intermediate period and we acknowledge the universal Church, we refuse a purely futuristic eschatology and an abstract ecclesiology, admiring and waiting for the ideal community to come. The church has to make decisions in concrete situations, although in a communal and confessional form. Moreover brothers and sisters should share their goods, as represented by the table fellowship of communion.

We did not seek intentionally to contextualise the church in a Japanese situation. Rather, we sought authentic Christian faith in our given situation. On one hand, such intentional contextualisation tends to result in nationalistic and distorted

Christianity. We upheld Furuya and Ohki's theology of Japan which critically evaluates Japan as an object. On the other hand, contextualisation cannot but naturally occur when we earnestly seek to be faithful to God and to communicate the Gospel with people in our situation.

Persistence is an indicator of its genuineness. Therefore we valued the church's attitude towards suffering and persecutions. It was most clearly indicated in the life of Roman Catholic missionaries and *Kirishitans* in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, some *Mukyōkai* Christians, and Kitamori's theology. However we found in our investigation that although Christianity has always been in a minority in Japan, the church in Japan -- like the church in the West -- inclined to be co-opted by political powers.

The world is suffering: "We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labour pains until now."¹¹⁹³ Through its faithfulness to God the church is to participate in the redemptive suffering of God with the creature.

¹¹⁹³Romans 8:22. See also 8:17, 26-27.

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