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Paradigm Shift of Religion through Cultural Change

Christian Mission in Modern Society from the Perspective of the Sociology of Religion

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I would like to acknowledge the three institutes which gave me the academic impulse to investigate the theme of this paper. The first is to the Institute for the Advanced Study of Religion (the present Martin Marty Center) in the Divinity School, the University of Chicago. While staying in the Institute as a Senior Fellow, I attended the dissertation seminars held every other week. Originally I was expected to undertake the task of proofreading and criticizing the papers of the doctoral candidates. In reality, however, I did not teach them so much as they taught me, in that their papers and the heated discussions in the meetings widened my view and stimulated me to think about my own theme more deeply. I am especially indebted to Prof. Frank Reynolds, who invited me to the Institute as a Senior Fellow. The second is to the Chicago Theological Seminary and to Prof. Theodore W. Jennings. Since the C.T.S. and the dormitory of the C.T.S., my accommodations, were in the same building, Professor Jennings kindly invited me to talk in his office. We were able to have useful and pleasant discussions, which spurred me to write this paper. My last and special acknowledgment is to Prof. Eberhard Busch, Gottingen University. Not only did he kindly accept me, but even before my arrival he had already developed a plan in which he and two American scholars,

Prof. Darrell Guder, Columbia, Prof. Stacy Johnson, Princeton and I would take charge of a seminar in the spring term. It was a very exciting seminar for me. I am so grateful to him for providing me with the opportunity to lead a spring seminar. Through the profitable exchange of opinions with these three scholars and the students I was able to reconsider the tasks, features and functions of Christianity in modern society and in the future. When I was invited to Prof. Busch's home, over the course of a pleasant conversation, I informed him of my vague idea to, at some point in the future, write a paper in English or in German concerning sociological analysis of Christianity in contemporary society. His enthusiasm with the idea gave me the necessary encouragement to actually carry out that plan.

Each era has its own social problems and is confronted with demands from culture. Whether they are aware of social problems and cultural demands or not, the members of a society have them as tasks in their lives; and theologians are no exceptions to this rule. That being said, cultural demands have influence on what kinds of theological problems are taken up as urgent topics in each era and also on what kinds of theologies the theologians of each era advocate. In the following, the relationship or correspondence between the social and cultural demands and the theological arguments in response to them will be considered in light of the theological situation in the latter half of this century, and then some prospective features of Christian theology will be sketched out.

1. Theology in response to culture

Determining factors of theology

As is clear when one looks at history of Christianity, only certain topics have been chosen as important theological themes in each era,

though originally they can be infinitely diverse. What determines the theological topics of the day? If we could identify, to whatever degree, such determining factors in the formation of theology, it would contribute to the clarification of the relationship between cultural social demands and Christianity, and religion in general.

Christian theology itself might reply in the following manner to the question above: theology, as the response to the self-revelation of the eternally immutable one God, should deal with the knowledge of God. According to this reply, theology appears to always hold the knowledge of God as its constant and invariable subject. However, even if one were to accept this assertion on an ideal level, the subject of the theology can and must be diverse as a practical matter. For even though theology may be a response to God's revelation, it is at the same time nothing but a historically and culturally restricted human response. In fact, while the traditional doctrines such as the trinity, revelation, predestination, creation, providence, original sin, human nature, reconciliation, and salvation all deal with the knowledge of God, the decisions as to what particular doctrines are taken up as relevant and important are made by theologians living in definite situations. Theologians are not living in a neutral, value-free vacuum, but a particular and concrete society, and they are affected by its influences both materially and mentally. What then are the social factors that determine the theological tasks of each period?

It is the history of theology as concrete social context for theologians that first needs to be mentioned. Looking back at the theological developments of the past two millennia, it would be no exaggeration to say that the history of theology is the history of theological controversies. Before each theology begins to speak with its own voice, it must respond to the inadequate or insufficient theologies of the previous age. To take just one example, Karl Barth appeared early in the last century against the

background of liberal theology as a theologian stressing the discontinuity between God and man, and in later years he moderated his emphasis in order to give the pendulum of theological thinking a push in a more positive direction. According to Barth, the necessity to write *Prolegomena to Church Dogmatics* (KD I/1) came from two possible heresies, that is the two extremes of Catholicism and modernism as represented by Rudolf Bultmann. He refuted natural theology advocated by his opponents such as Emil Brunner. The objective aspect of the revelation was stressed in the first volume of *Church Dogmatics*, but he later asserted that a theology of the Holy Spirit that places more stress on human subjectivity would be possible. However, according to Barth, such a theology was an impossibility in the 20th century, which remained under the influence of the subjective theology in the 18th and 19th centuries. In other words, a new theological situation that makes a new type of theology possible would arise in the 21st century, which is adequately separated from the 19th century. In short and generally speaking, the concerns of those who are engaged in particular academic fields as their profession or semiprofession are dominated to a considerable degree by the concerns of their fields of the time. This is true of every academic field. It is extremely difficult for an academic professional to be indifferent to the problems about which most people in the same field are heatedly arguing.

The theological arguments of the day are not, of course, the sole determining factor. Looking at theological history from the viewpoint of the sociology of knowledge, the historical and cultural atmosphere of the time determines the tendencies of theology. For instance, the progress of human nature and moral sense was an important topic in the theology of the 19th century, which was an age of progress and evolution. After World War I people cast away the cheerful and optimistic Cultural

Protestantism (*Kulturprotestantismus*) and began to show great degrees of sympathy toward the pessimistic tenor of the arguments of Dialectic Theology. However, as people recovered their confidence in human nature and society after World War II, Dialectic Theology gradually began to lose its position as the theological mainstream. Thus theology speaks and is heard from its particular situation, and at the same time, it speaks to its situation. Barth's political writings provide the clearest examples of this. Theology standing in a specific cultural situation speaks to a specific cultural situation. This naturally affects the choice of theological topics. Therefore a topic enthusiastically argued among theologians in a period captures the attention of almost no one in the next period, and another topic takes its place. Theological topics vary with changes in the human situation. In this sense the history of theology can be said to be the history of theology's correspondence to the culture of each time.¹

Theological adaptation to culture

In its actual history Christianity continuously has put its message into various different languages, ways of thinking, world views, moral senses, and values, in short into different cultures. It is only in this way that Christianity has been able to adapt itself to the paradigm or horizon of understanding of each culture. This process can be called Christianity's adaptation to different cultures. Christianity must adapt itself not only to different cultures, but also it must adapt to continuous change within a particular culture. To the degree that Christianity fails to adapt itself to a different culture in both senses, it exposes itself to the danger of lack of understanding and indifference. It gradually loses social significance and room for existence. Theodore Jennings expresses this idea with the expression "critical reformulation of doctrine".² According to Jennings,

the vocation of theologians is first to inherit the traditions and secondly to reinterpret and reconstitute these traditions so that they may be understood in different cultural circumstances. Next I would like to mention a few examples.

In its initial period, Christianity, though originating in Jewish culture, adapted itself to Hellenistic culture. The theology of the ancient church was a synthesis of Christian tradition and Hellenistic culture. Medieval theology was a complex of Latin culture and ancient Christianity. The Reformation was able to establish itself in modern culture and put its mark on it precisely because it took the form of Protestant Humanism.³ When modern rationalism, which was skeptical and critical of all traditions, came to the fore of culture, theologians in turn responded with new ways of thinking, namely deism, liberal theology, demythologization, and so on. The struggle of German churches against National Socialism was a response to the political social situation into which they were forced. Not only the more striking movements but all movements in the history of theology are products of the process through which Christianity copes with particular forces, from both theological circles and the larger culture, and adapts itself to them. Concerning all the movements in the history of theology, we cannot make clear every factor affecting theology, and likewise we cannot identify every way in which it is affected. However, in principle the history of theology is the history of its response to culture, as is clearly seen in the representative examples above.

Contextualization

What is described in the previous section, that is, correspondence of religion in general to circumstances is often called contextualization. This process consists of relating the transmitted theological text to the social cultural context of each era. Here a dialectical relation between

the text and the context is usually pointed out. Jürgen Moltmann says:

An adjustment of Christian tradition to a contemporary culture is the most important task of theology in general. Christian theology loses adaptability and proves barren unless it keeps vivid relation to the contemporary situation and its problems. On the other hand, if it loses its connection with tradition, it comes to noncritical opportunism. The work of adjustment has to consider both sides: the pure identity of the Christian message and its adaptation to the age.⁴

Langdon Gilkey also makes the same assertion.

The tradition must be revised and set into modern categories lest it not be heard at all. But it must also transform those categories into Christian form lest no message be there. If we merely re-present tradition, we lose our touch with the world and with ourselves; if we merely re-present our world, we lose the message.⁵

What is problematic in their assertions is that the text is understood to be transcendent. In the case of Moltmann, Christian tradition as text is expressed as “the pure identity of Christian tradition” and in that of Gilkey it is more straightforwardly called the “the eternal message”. It is said to be “God’s presence in the event of Jesus Christ”, which transcends the concrete history of culture. In this understanding the text would be forever constant and the basis sustaining it would be God himself who preserves his immutable identity. Such a theological assertion is a proposition of faith, of course, and is therefore parenthesized here. In opposition to this, “the text” as it is used in the contextualiza-

tion theory in anthropology usually refers to “the great tradition” consisting of the so-called sacred scripture and its theology. From the viewpoint of this theory, “contextualization” means the process of the great tradition being accepted into the indigenous culture, i.e., the text. But even this theory does not go far enough. For the text here is sought in what is primitive and original, and tends to be fixed there. In reality, what exists in time is naturally the product of culture, and there exists nothing that is unchangeable. Even the earliest theology was produced in a particular culture and was merely the product of the context. The same thing applies to sacred scriptures. Every religious scripture is in principle nothing but the product of a particular culture, the most representative example of which is the sacred scriptures of Mahāyāna Buddhism, which were molded through an extremely long historical process. What is taken for text in a certain point in time is simply a product of the interaction between the text of a previous time and the current context. Likewise the current interaction between the text and the context will produce the text in the next age.

Contextualization theory was born from observations of the reaction of Western Christianity in the face of its transformation in the Third World. However, if this theory were also thoroughly applied, as it should be, to Western Christianity itself, it would become clear that Western Christianity is also a product of each age through the process of transformation in culture. In that sense Western Christianity is on equal terms with Christianity in the Third World. Contextualization theory is a general theory of cultural transformation which thoroughly relativizes everything to which it is applied.⁶

2. Four main streams of modern theology

If, as I asserted, the history of theology is none other than the history of theology responding and adapting itself to culture, and therefore if the history of theology is that of contextualization, the question as to what Christianity will take up as urgent and relevant topics cannot be answered by only observing Christianity by itself. In other words, the task of forecasting theological trends and topics in the future is not a theological task, but one of social science. It is specifically a sociological task. No science, however, can make predictions of an event in the future with absolute certainty, only predictions with degrees of probability. Meteorology, for example, can make a well-grounded prediction on the basis of past data. A corresponding method to this in the social sciences is the observation of history. This is the method adopted by Saint-Simon and Comte in the classical period of sociology. According to that method, if we put social matters into chronological order, we find a lot of things losing their influence with time on the one hand and a lot of things developing into prominence on the other. All the elements that make up the present age are divided into two directions: decline and development. In this manner an orderly stream of history emerges from the chaotic present state. Though it is impossible, of course, to see into the future by applying fixed laws of historical development, as Saint-Simon and Comte believed they could, we can read the trends of history to a certain degree. Moreover, if we observe over a long span of time, we can see beyond the mere temporary or accidental whims of history. Again we can predict trends more accurately if the social basis which determines the present state is made clear.

In the following, I would like to mention some topics about which

theologians of the latter half of the 20th century had animated discussions. Then I will consider whether those topics have a developing vector or declining one in theological history. Furthermore, I will attempt to identify the social basis which determines the trends of those topics.

The first movement that should be mentioned is the theology of liberation as advocated by Gutiérrez. While it is obviously not necessary to explain its content, it is important to note that the idea of fundamental human rights has often come to the fore front of the theology. The Second South and Central American Episcopal Congress asserted that the social and political systems in South and Central American countries were violently invading human rights, and the declaration of the Pope in 1986 approving liberation theology recognized that its aim was to bring to an end autocracies that trampled on human rights and the public good. Wherever in the world people have demanded social justice and freedom, that is respect for human rights, this theology has received broad support and similar theologies have developed. For example, black theology in the U.S.A. (J. Cohn) and in South Africa, feminist theology (R. Ruether), *Minjung* theology in Korea, and the civil religion which supported the civil rights movement in U.S.A., all developed out of the same social circumstances. The theology of the physically disabled has also been actively discussed lately. Most of these theologies are often collectively called “political theology”, but it is more accurate to call them a theology of “human rights”.

Secondly we should mention ecumenical theology. It began as a movement promoting dialogue between the Catholic church and the Protestant church. It has since facilitated dialogues and cooperation among all denominations and religions. It can be called a plurality-oriented theology.

Thirdly, I would like to mention a movement which can be called “secularized theology”. This theology aims to fit Christianity to modern rationalism. It made its clear appearance in the period of the Enlightenment and then it mainly dealt with the problem of the confrontation between religion (or revelation) and reason. This theology formed a significant stream also in the 20th century. It is precisely this kind of theology that Brunner is exploring when he addresses the urgent problems below.

The problem today is not the nature of God but His existence, not what is revealed but whether there is such a thing as revelation, not rationalistic corruption at individual points but the questioning of the miracle of revelation as such... In short, it is the problem of reason and revelation.⁷

It is Bonhoeffer’s idea of the adult world (*Mündige Welt*) and Bultmann’s demythologization that exerted the strongest influence upon the flourishing of this theology. Brunner and Bultmann were so influential in the Western Christian world that Barth could not help referring to them over and over, discussing both theologians in detail near the opening of the *Church Dogmatics* I/1, and confessing (in the Foreword of *CD* IV/1) that he was always conscious of Bultmann as he developed the doctrine of reconciliation, the core of his *Church Dogmatics*. Tillich’s apologetic theology and his method of correlation are conscious attempts to speak to modern secularity. After these theological attempts, some theologies followed in the same or similar direction. In the 1960’s John Robinson with his *Honest to God* and Harvey Cox with *The Secular City* drew considerable attention, giving their approval to secularity. For Cox secularization means urbanization, which is the social reality of the

rational, pluralistic and godless age. Urbanization and the collapse of traditional religions are two sides of the same coin, and both together characterize the modern world. Likewise in the Second Vatican Council the Roman Catholic Church was forced to face the problem of remaining relevant in the modern world, and began to take up the question of secularization so radically, in a sense exceeding Protestantism. Also P. Berger's attempt at "inductive faith" tries to find signs of transcendence in the secular world and reflects the same sort of social challenge, though Berger's attempt is somewhat more sociologically sophisticated than his predecessors'.⁸

Lastly we should mention the theology of ecology which has been drawing much attention lately. Although this theology includes a certain degree of variety in its objects, aims and content, its basic characteristics are the same. Now that we are in a critical phase concerning environmental issues, theology bears the burden of shedding light on it from the viewpoint of creation or eschatology. If Christianity believes all of nature to be God's creation, it is necessarily opposed to human beings destroying and exploiting nature at their pleasure. Thus the theology of ecology gains a firm standpoint within the common consciousness of the environmental crisis.

In order to forecast future developments of these four streams or subjects of theology mentioned above, that is in order to see into the future trends of theology accurately, it is necessary to make it clear whether these four streams result from theology itself or whether they are tied to and reflect more fundamental and broader social change. If the latter view is correct, the exact future developments of theology cannot be made clear unless we are able to identify and predict these fundamental social transitions.

3. Theology of human rights

Christianity is the origin of the theology of human rights?

First I would like to consider liberation theology, black theology, feminist theology, and the theology of the physically disabled: in short, the theology of human rights. Because this theology is a model case for considering the other three streams, I will discuss it in some detail.

According to the advocates of the theology of human rights, it was grounded in Christianity from its very beginnings. It can be said that Jesus' message in the Gospels may be summed up as "the gospel for the poor." The poor might refer to people who are unjustly oppressed by poverty, violence and the like and who have no choice but to endure these injustices. Therefore the gospel might refer to the liberation from these yokes to freedom and equality with which human beings were endowed by God in the creation. Bondage sometimes takes the form of political and economic oppression, sometimes racial (and national) prejudice, and sometimes discrimination and oppression based upon the social stratification by class, gender, or physical condition. Whatever a particular liberation Christianity declares in a particular situation, it always includes a universal liberation. "Christian faith is faith in the Messiah by its nature, and faith in the Messiah is always a liberating faith".⁹ Common to all theologies of human rights is the fundamental assertion that God's justice must be recovered and done on earth as well as in God's kingdom. The theology of human rights is stated in many cases from the viewpoint of soteriology, but also from that of creation. According to these standpoints, human beings are permitted to bear witness on behalf of God's glory and to reflect it. In doing so, the incomparable proper value of a human being exists. Hence to oppress and reject such a

human being means to deny God's glory itself.¹⁰ Though including different viewpoints and contents, all the theologies of human rights attempt to find their core assertion in the Bible or in theological traditions which claim to represent the Bible correctly. It is often mentioned as a good example that Jesus blessed the poor and oppressed people, and that he respected women and cured people suffering from physical pain and disability.

Although these arguments and their grounds seem to be correct, the theology of human rights does not appear to originate in Christianity. It is true that the Bible contains some elements of human rights. But it includes other, often contradictory messages. There was a great variety of elements in early Christian thought. And only particular elements among them came to the fore front in the theology of human rights. What made this theology? Christianity did not, because the oppression and denial of human rights are as old as the history of mankind and common to every place and every time. If the theology of human rights had resulted from early Christianity, the liberation of the oppressed would have been an urgent practical task, at least as a theoretical subject in early Christianity. In reality the theology of human rights did not make its clear appearance in the history of Christian theology until the latter half of the 20th century. This historical fact suggests that the theology of human rights actually came from the spirit of modernism.

Some theologians often assert that the Holy Spirit makes people return to the origin, that is the Gospel.¹¹ Since this is an assertion based on faith, it would be meaningless to argue its truth or falsehood here. But even as a faith-based assertion it is difficult to understand. If one were to accept this, it would mean that the Holy Spirit has been ignoring the gospel of liberation for two thousand years and has left theologians in the dark for just as long.

Other theologians assert that the modern social welfare policy toward the handicapped, as it exists in Sweden, could not have been realized without the Christian ideal. It is stressed that “this realization was only possible in a country where the Christian spirit is alive”.¹² I would like to make some objections to this statement. First, this kind of social welfare system cannot be realized by Christian spirit alone. Indeed it had not existed even in Christian countries. A lot of social, especially economic factors made it possible. Secondly, is Christianity really a necessary condition for realizing it? Movements appealing for respect for human rights and aiming to realize social institutions that protect these rights are found in other religions too. Furthermore, such movements have strictly secular counterparts as well. This secular type can be said to be the most usual and even the most effective. In this regard, if theologians, or Christians in general, regard themselves as being in a privileged position, it is nothing other than self-righteousness.¹³

So far we have looked at only the counterarguments. In the following, I would like positively to assert that the theology of human rights stems from modernism.

Human rights and modernism

Modern civil revolutions brought about civil societies and declared a new vision of human beings. They established civil rights for political liberty and for equal opportunity. English civil revolutions were carried out under the half-tacit ideal of the human being with freedom and equal rights. The American Revolution brought forth the first national political document in the history of the mankind that stated this ideal clearly. The French Revolution articulated the ideal in the Declaration of Human Rights, which was the philosophical culmination of common social experiences that Western modernity had gone through up to that time.

Needless to say, the idea of human rights which respects the dignity of man did not suddenly occur to the revolutionists on a fine day, but had a long prehistory in the idea of the divinely given or natural rights and in several ideas of individualism. The idea of human rights was based not only on the previous history of ideas, but also on real social situations. While it may be possible for an inspired individual to come up with enlightened ideas, a seed will not take root in infertile soil. Human life and the experiences of the day demand a new idea, and the tacit, unarticulated spirit of the times flows out of the mouths or pens of farseeing geniuses. Real life forms a tacit current of thought, and then this is translated into clear ideas. Thus a longing for freedom in civil revolutions is felt by the masses only when the breaking of their fetters seems a real possibility. Pain begins to be felt in restraints when the footsteps of liberation are really being heard. Oppression, though accepted as destiny thus far without protest, becomes recognized as an unpardonable injustice.

The ideas of divinely given rights and natural rights in the American *Declaration of Independence* were mixed. In the *Declaration of Human Rights* of the French Revolution, the right to freedom, equality, and happiness was affirmed as natural rights, and for this affirmation the Supreme Being was postulated. Behind all these declarations there is the idea which concerns human dignity to the effect that human beings must be respected just simply because they are human beings. Human beings should have basic rights as human beings, regardless of lineage, wealth or poverty, occupation, race, or nation. Freedom and equality are universal in principle in a new civil society from which the old status system has been removed and which is composed of free citizens.¹⁴

Reality, however, often lacks logical consistency. Modern civil societies brought about several reformations in the fields of politics,

economics, science, technology, social structures, social and philosophical thoughts. They also formed nation states, which seem to have exerted ambiguous influence upon the idea of human rights. On the one hand, nation states aimed to change people of a different nature to a group of homogeneous individuals called “a nation”. Here worked naturally the principle of excluding heterogeneity. On the other hand, within the nation as one community the notion of equality without any discrimination was held up as the ideal. And this ideal became limitlessly universalized through abstraction or formalization taking heterogeneous individuals for the same human being in general. In this sense the nation state produced an intolerant nationalism maintaining the identity of the nation, and at the same time it opened the possibility of realizing the universal ideal of equality beyond any one nation. The principle of universal equality, however, was not carried out, but some kinds of discrimination based on particular factors remained and some people were excluded from the ideal of equality: mental patients, females, homosexuals, ethnic minorities, and non-Christians. We can find this ambiguity or ambivalence in a typical instance: Rousseau’s Civil Religion. It held up the principle of religious tolerance and asserted that any religion should be permitted and treated equally on the one hand, but it still imposed strictly particular contents of religious doctrine.

The social basis for the idea of human rights

Previously I asserted that the idea of human rights was not only based on the preceding history of ideas, but also on the real social situation. Then what kind of social situation produced the ideal of freedom and equality and the idea of human dignity? The historical process producing such an ideal and idea is too complicated to be explained away by some mechanical explanatory scheme, still less by a

single cause. Nevertheless some historical factors were clearly at work here and also exerted influence upon the trends of modern theology. I will refer to some major factors, though somewhat schematic, in the following paragraphs.¹⁵

It was Hegel who took the lead in making an important assertion concerning this problem. For Hegel, it is characteristic for moral disciplines in premodern times to be particular and concrete when people lived in small, fixed communities, understanding one another directly. They shared the same knowledge and understanding of the same particular and concrete minutiae. In contrast, when people came to live in a wide open society, this society became composed of various people with different values, characteristics and interests. Then the norms of thinking and behavior cannot help but being formal without concrete particulars. Through this process people came to stand equally under universal principles.

Simmel emphasized the role of social differentiation as well as the expansion of the sphere of everyday life. He asserted that in a society not advanced in social differentiation the lives of the members are almost the same, therefore the members are homogeneous, and they accept all the social realities as fate and tend to follow them unquestioningly. Societies advance from such a stage, called the “organic type” to another called the “rational type”, which is an open and enlarged society consisting of various living circles or social circles. In the latter type of society, people come to choose freely their own living circles and groups in which they participate, with the result that various and heterogeneous people come to interact with one another. Thus in an enlarged and differentiated society the personalities themselves become enlarged, enriched, and heterogeneous, and the individuals and their individualities come to be respected. Once people anonymously sank into a narrow homogeneous

society without distinct personality. They however began to set themselves free from that with the expansion and differentiation of society. From this situation individualism emerged having the ideal of freedom and equality and at the same time individualism developed in such a way that meant that the individual could not be substituted.¹⁶

Durkheim considered in a way similar to Simmel how the idea of human dignity has developed. According to Durkheim, as a society enlarges, traditional norms must become flexible and easily changeable so that they may adjust to various and changing situations. For this reason traditional norms gradually lose control over the differences or deviances of individuals, and individual particular personalities can develop with fewer restrictions. In parallel with this, the division of labor develops with the result that each individual begins to live in his own respective part of the entire society and that consciousness of individuals become respectively different. In P. Berger's words, the life-world becomes plural and the world-view proper to it also becomes plural. In this situation each member of the society comes to have nothing in common but that each is a human being. This abstract concept of a human being becomes the only idea that is valued and respected universally.¹⁷

It is not inherent to human nature in Durkheim's opinion to respect the individual in general or personality in the abstract, as opposed to loving and respecting a particular individual owing to his particular and concrete attributes. In other words, it is not an innate human value that each person should be valued as one irreplaceable individual in the world. Formerly captives, prisoners and slaves were only valued as producers of goods, and they were not attributed human rights or human dignity which were products of the times, coming to the fore in early modernity. These ideas are not the result of the progress and advance of human intelligence or morality as the evolutionists in the 19th century believed. Or did

religious or moral virtuosos such as Buddha and Jesus suddenly begin to preach the dignity of a human being through sudden inspiration, and did that notion catch on from one person after another owing to its sublimity? This cannot explain why the notion spread over various societies in modern times and not in earlier times. Durkheim tried to account for this problem in the following way. As the division of labor develops and the functional differentiation within a society advances, each person becomes different from each other. It is not until each person recognizes mutual difference and heterogeneity that the concept of the "individual" emerges and the notion of the dignity of human beings is established. What we have in front of us, be it a thing, an animal, or a plant, is the only one in the world. This chalk is not that chalk; this rose is not that rose; this ox, which is about to be slaughtered in a slaughterhouse, is not the ox that stands next in line. These are not, however, distinguished individually, are not seen as unique, and are regarded as replaceable by others of the same sort. Likewise even human beings are replaceable by others when a whole society is homogeneous, where the notion of individual or of personality does not emerge. Even if it does emerge, it is an isolated single accident and cannot gain socially broad sympathy.¹⁸

Once the idea of human rights and dignity is established in a society, it demands to be carried through universally for logical consistency, showing relative autonomy from the social base. Namely it works as an ideology which tries to remove oppressions of human rights still remaining in a society. Therefore it continuously directs harsh criticism at the parts where it is not yet sufficiently realized. For example, substantial political and economic equality is required after formal equality under the law is acquired. The abolishment of slavery and the emancipation of slaves were large social tasks from the 17th century (at least in Europe), and after they were accomplished, a great number of people joined the

civil rights movements in the U.S.A., transcending the difference of skin color. Women have been deprived of their rights in patriarchic culture and liberation movements have been steadily gaining momentum through the last century. People with the idea of human rights under imperialism sought for independence and freedom and fought against their oppressors. Ever since P. Pinel set mental patients free from chains, the protection of their human rights has continued to be a relevant social task.

As these examples show, the tasks of the 19th century emerged from the accomplishments in the 18th century, and the mission of the 20th century came out of the achievements of the 19th century. And provided that history does not, as if by magic, turn into something wholly disconnected from the past, the same will apply to the 21st century.

The theological tasks of the last century rose clearly to the surface of the consciousness of theologians when the gigantic trends of modernism described above clashed with the real violations of human rights.¹⁹

Summary: the theology of human rights

I will summarize the important issues addressed so far as follows.

1. The idea of human rights emerging in modern times has continued to develop, demanding universal realization, and has come across real oppression, whether premodern, or that brought about by modernity itself. A great tide welled up from society to overcome this oppression. This tide consists of various trends of thought and movements, including a quite secular humanism and the theology of human rights. In short, all these movements, whether secular ones, Christian theologies, or currents of thought in other religions, stem from the eager desire based on experiences common to the times.²⁰

2. Every time new obstructions to human rights emerge, new theological tasks come out of them, and the contents of the tasks are naturally

determined by the contents of the obstructions, as is clear from the fact that various theologies emerged such as liberation theology, black theology, feminist theology, *Minjun* theology, and the theology for the handicapped. From this we can say that what will be the theological task in the next age is determined by how social conditions change. In other words, theology cannot see the next task no matter how closely it observes itself in its history and at present.

3. Near the beginning of this paper the history of theology was referred to as the environment determining the tasks of theology. Theological history provided the context for the emergence of liberation theology, black theology, feminist theology and the like. These theologians were disappointed at all kinds of preceding theology which did not seem to be able to deal with the distress in their lives. When people become disappointed at the present theological situation which cannot meet the demands of the times, that disappointment provides rich soil for new theologies.

4. The idea of and the movement for human rights have developed ever since the early modern era in their intensity and in their global extent. Social differentiation, the pluralization of society, and globalization, which can facilitate the idea of human rights, are moving ahead with the times, and the idea of human rights has not been brought to complete realization. This means that human rights must necessarily be a dominant value in public opinion and will cause heated controversies every time an instance of the oppression of human rights is brought to light. As long as this current of public opinion lasts, Christianity will continue to discuss human rights as its main theme; and the theologies of human rights will always be the focus of theological interest, taking various forms with time, even if their popularity sometimes declines.²¹

5. We can predict to a certain degree the topics that the theology of

human rights will take up. For this prediction we should take into account the way in which the oppression of human rights has become socially problematic. To what extent the invasions of human rights become socially problematic is not determined by the degree of the invasions themselves but by “the loudness of voice.” It is the minorities of a society whose human rights are invaded, and it is the “sub-majorities” within these minorities who first raise their voices in protest. Next, their voices must gain social support, and the probability of gaining social support is determined by the compatibility to the social norms. However loud the voice may be, it cannot be socially supported if it causes friction with the social norms. Considering these reasons for social support, the theology of human rights hereafter will first take up the problem of the handicapped. Along with this, the problem of homosexuals, and furthermore the problem of the ordination of homosexuals, will be a theological focus in the Western world, especially in the U.S.A.

4. Other streams of theology

Previously, on the one hand, we traced the movement of human rights theology through to contemporary times and on the other hand we traced the movement of the social base of human rights theology in order to gain a view of the future trends of this theology. I have illustrated one model, and as the same method of observation applies for other kinds of theology, I would like to briefly cover those here.

Theology of secularization

First, I would like to look at the theology of secularization. In investigating this kind of theology, it is not sufficient to look at only theological tendencies in the first half of the 20th century as represented

by Brunner and Bultmann. This type of theology began to take shape with 18th century Enlightenment Christianity. As is shown by Barth's characterization of this type of theology with the key terms "naturalization", "humanization", and "moralization", 18th century Christianity responded to the challenge of secularization by taking the position of immanent theology. If one looks at Brunner, Bultmann, and Tillich from that viewpoint, then basically they are nothing but descendants of liberal theology. Protestantism accepted the challenge of secularization straight on and after the Second Vatican Council, the attempt of Catholicism to adapt to modernism is also remarkable. The formerly accepted vertical theology "from above" was criticized and Catholic theologies attempting to cope with the era of secularization appeared one after the other. K. Rahner was one of those theologians and J. Metz was even more radical.

If we speak only on the conscious level, the secularization that caused such a response within the Christian church consisted in a societal permeability and the popularity of such ideas as the mechanistic view of the world and human beings, of the rationalistic, critical consciousness and of the scientific mind. If we take this negatively, then secularization can be seen in the fact that the mythical world-view, the magical style of thought, and the system of transcendent symbols have been retired or lost. This kind of change in consciousness must, of course, have a social base, which cannot be attributed to progress or evolution of the mind of human beings. In other words, this change of consciousness came from a change in societal life over a very long period of time.

So in this way, on one hand, since secularization and the basic elements that support it continue to exist and theologians are instilled with the general attitude of their day, and on the other hand, because religion, including Christianity, ultimately must involve transcendent,

magical elements, theologians necessarily make an attempt in some form to arbitrate between Christianity and secularization.

Ecumenical theology

The third kind of theology that needs to be discussed is ecumenical theology; but there is a reason that secular theology was discussed first. Ecumenicalism is not the result of modernism where human minds have become peaceful and tolerant, and where the savage and the barbarian elements have been thrown out. Instead it is a by-product of secularism, and as long as secularism progresses onward, ecumenicalism will also progress. Here I would like to consider the basic tendency which pushes the situation in that direction.

When society is a homologous community, there is a singular system of meaning that governs all of society. In this case, all of the members of the society live with the same normative consciousness, and the religion in which the system of meaning appears symbolically is also singular. In this case, the demand for freedom of religion is almost nonexistent and does not even become a topic, because the individual is not different from one another and the religion occupies a monopolizing and exclusive position.

However, when the division of society's functions proceeds, then the society becomes pluralistic, and then the "sacred cosmos" (Luckmann) or the "sacred canopy" (Berger) that once integrated the homologous society, that is, the traditional religion, must also become divided. Then the religion loses its absolute authority and the divided religions come to independently face each other. If this happens, then people who do not believe in the religion that previously occupied such a superior position will appear, along with a minority of people who choose to believe in other religions. The concepts of freedom of religion and of religious

tolerance then become, for the first time, problems as the minority makes demands for these rights. During the Enlightenment, for example, the element of religious tolerance that was seen in Rousseau's civil religion also appeared due to the reality of the social background, and it gained wide support.

In addition, as the veracities of various denominations become relative, their institutional, physical power also becomes relative. When it becomes no longer possible to expel the different assertions by force, then there is a growing chance for compromise and dialogue. Ecumenical theology emerged from circumstances like these and as Brian Wilson says, it is a product of the process of secularization and also an expression of churches as institutions getting weaker.²²

As the pluralization of society and globalization progress further, ecumenical theology proceeds not only in degree but also in quality. For example, through ecumenicalism Western Christianity meets Christianity of the Third World and overcomes its European-centered thinking. In addition, the progression of dialogues with various non-Judeo-Christian religions also opens the possibility for Western Christianity to throw off its self-centered attitude.

Theology of ecology

The last kind of theology we need to discuss is the theology of ecology. The roots of the ecological stream of thought lie in the consciousness about the destruction of the natural environment and in grave reflection on how the principle of "production first" in industrial societies brings about the destruction of the natural environment. In that light, it appears as if this theology has roots different from the three types of theology that have been discussed which all have their roots in modernization. However, if we look closely at this theology, we can see that this

is actually a different trunk coming from the same root system, or perhaps even a different branch off the same trunk.

The development of technology and industrial society could not have naturally occurred without secularization and de-sacralization. For as nature came to be understood mechanistically, it became the mere object of human activities using intelligence to its full potential. With this, the stage for technological development could be established and hence the importance of production activity increased dramatically. It was precisely this chain of events that was the indispensable condition for the Industrial Revolution. In this sense, ecological thought will be at odds with the main body of modernism and this will be the site of the most violent battle over modernism.

Within the broad, incessant stream of modernization, industrialization has caused ecological problems on the global level. Finding the solution is now an urgent theme for mankind. It is the social reality of this critical situation that supports secular and wide-spread ecological ideas. Ecological theology is merely based on and reflects these generally-held ideas. If we go back and think about the base, then we can think of no reason why this theology should die down in the short term.²³

So far we have looked at the future paths that human rights theology, theology of secularization, ecumenical theology and theology of ecology will take. In addition, I would like to identify here in a general theory the reasons why these theologies emerged, and why they are calling for wide discussion and sympathy.

The age and the religion

We are living in a particular form of social life. It always has a particular world-view which expresses and maintains it. This world-

view is different from the clearly articulated systems of thought outlined by philosophers. Instead it is close to a semi-consciousness, or a collective unconsciousness of *Ecole des Annales*. This is implicit in public opinion as an undercurrent of society, and it decides the direction in which society will move. When an intelligent person feels this stream and expresses it in clear words and deeds, then naturally society will support him and he will become a power that can move society. Conversely, the thoughts that are opposed to this stream are never given full attention, but are revised socially to conform to the stream, or if not, then they are completely ignored and they either die out soon or are pushed aside. Certain ideas are rejected by society, and certain ones gain wide support and are maintained. This is definitely not a coincidental affair. In order to be accepted, a large social base is necessary and it is the stream of public opinion that forms this base. The destiny of clear ideas is connected to and decided by the stream of public opinion. Theology is no exception. "Any particular theology is therefore a proposal to the church community, not an authoritarian or dogmatic edict, a proposal for understanding our common faith, a proposal for our consideration about our Christian existence, and thus a proposal to be assessed, criticized, amended, or rejected by each of us and by the community as a whole".²⁴ The age rejects the theology that does not fit it, and the age produces the theology that matches it or remakes an existing theology into one that suits its preferences. The reason why the theologies discussed before call for societal sympathy lies in their conformity to the era.

To be sure, all of the things that belong to one society do not experience the same age in exactly the same way. Whether institutions, organizations, or concepts, the social facts that once were formed are for humans external *choses* (=things: Durkheim) which have a very strong inertia. This tendency is especially strong in religious institutions and

concepts, and consequently the problems that religion speaks of are often not the problems of the people of the same time period. However, if this tendency continues for long and religion becomes completely anachronistic, then religion itself must die out from the society. So conversely, as far as religion can provide a timely, living message for its surroundings, give healing to the people of the same age, and also give them hope, religion can last and survive powerfully within the society. The religious message cannot be separated from the anxiety, fear, hope, anger or love that the people of society are actually embracing. Which is to say, the present form of each culture vividly reflects and expresses itself in the religious message.

Generally speaking, theologians do not want to recognize that their own knowledge, ideas, and words are influenced by the vectors of the age. However, when we think of the process of socialization by which persons develop from mere creatures into human beings, we see how much our knowledge stands on the existing social system of factual and normative knowledge or judgements. Nobody, including theologians, can be free from this system.

5. Exploration of Christianity's identity

Relativity of the orthodoxy

Above we have looked at the demands of society and the responses of religion. However, from this observation there is a major problem that concerns Christianity. That is, what exactly is the identity of Christianity, and how should we explore it.

As we have already stated, theology can be nothing but the critical reconstruction of the tradition. But theology is always new in the formation of its statements and therefore theology is a creation, a discovery,

and an invention. So as we look at the history of doctrines, it is clear that the variety of newly-formed doctrines are often rejected by the churches. “That Aquinas is the doctor ecclesiae is self-evident to late-nineteenth-century Catholicism, but many of his most characteristic theses were condemned as heretical by his contemporary community. The innovations of Anselm were condemned by Bernard of Clairvaux, Basil developed the doctrine of the third person of the Trinity in response to his repudiation as a liturgical innovator, and today Barth’s doctrine of election must certainly be regarded as far more ‘heretical’ than Schleiermacher’s Christology”.²⁵ As time passes, heresies often come to be called orthodox, and factions that were once called orthodox find themselves in the position of heresies. Everything depends on how the people of each era see theological traditions or new inventions. Consequently, we can say it is the iron law through the history of theology that those who come to power at each point in time become the orthodox. In other words, this is the principle of “might is right”. Of course, each point in time cannot help but be relative in its evaluation of orthodoxies and heresies and their positions. In principle, all is variable, and it is the victor each time who writes “authentic” history. If so, then Christianity’s identity is not an objective reality but a loose interpretation added on after the fact. To put this in the language of contextualization theory, in the dialectic between text and context a new text is constantly being rewritten so that the difference between the first text and the last is considerably large. This difference is sufficient to make us suspicious of the identity of the text.

Of course, even if theologians recognize that they are culturally relative, they still would think they speak in terms of the sole authentic Christian faith. It is the faith in the eternally identical revelation that supports this consciousness. However, if we put this faith proposition in

parentheses, then there is nothing to support, nothing to guarantee the identity and continuity of theology, much less of Christianity itself. The last stronghold is the identity of the canon. Logically speaking, humans make the decisions of whether to establish a canonical text or not and the decisions about what to include in that canon. Humans can change their decisions. Consequently the identity of the canonical text is temporal. Even if the text remains the same, the orthodox interpretation relies on the decisions of humans which are fraught with variables.

In re-examining theology in the latter half of 20th century from this viewpoint, we find there some theological arguments which catch our attention because they have several striking differences from the traditional theology. I would like to give some examples. Liberation theology, black theology, and other theologies are evaluated highly from the stance of contemporary theology since they aim for both the eternal saving of the soul and social liberation, God's indivisible one salvation. But these theologies might have been seen to be excessively political and intolerable deviances through the lense of cultural Protestantism of the 19th century. Again, "it is the very question whether and to what extent such theology of women's liberation can inherit the biblical and Christian traditions, and if that does not succeed, whether and to what extent that theology will lead to separation from Christianity itself".²⁶ Feminist theology's first purpose is to deal with the discriminatory language and traditions of the Bible and in theology. The second purpose is to find non-Christian tradition which supports the complete persona of the female and to place liberation from discrimination at the center of the Christian mission.²⁷ These purposes of feminist theology seem to have many differences from the Christian tradition. In addition, due to a unique conception of god, the identity of Christianity has been lost or at the very least diminished in the United States' civil religion.²⁸

If we look at Christianity's spread alongside syncretism with indigenous cultures, then we can see clearly how Christianity loses its identity due to the repetition of adaptation to those cultures. Modern Christianity has now been accepted in many areas, and among many races and cultures around the world and shows many varied forms. In contrast with the past, the Western church cannot now afford to label Third World Christianity "indigenous, syncretic heresy". Western Christianity itself has become one relative form among the various Christian forms around the world. Christianity has become an amorphous entity in which it is difficult to find a consistent thread running through all of its forms. While there has been a diachronic identity crisis mainly caused by adaptation to cultural changes in the Western history of Christianity, here we have a concurrent identity crisis caused by adaptation to contemporary different cultures of various areas. This is comparable to the spread of language. As English spread around the world, each area added its own change and as a result many forms of English exist. But in the case of language, the institutional compulsory strength is strong, so the deviation is not great enough to cause the loss of identity of English. However, the same cannot be said of religion.

In the modern day, no religions and no denominations cast each other out as heresies, but recognize the validity of their mutual existence. In the pluralistic society where all religions are relative, there is little room for the existence of heresies. Globalization further decreases this possibility. It is impossible for all denominations to recognize themselves in the midst of others, but they all continue to place themselves under the same banner. That is the state of modern Christianity. Even if it seems that the same canon and the same rituals are used, all religions, including Christianity have basically responded to the various demands of each culture in each era and they have continued to change themselves.

Diachronically and synchronically, no longer will Christianity be regarded as an identical monolith without any rifts.

Identity as interpretation

To begin with, the concept of identity as an invariable entity is open to question. The identity of Christianity, or of any other thing, cannot have an independent existence. Strictly speaking, history does not repeat itself, and nothing in history regenerates itself. Even if the same phenomenon seems to reproduce itself, the situation which surrounds it and in which it makes sense has already changed. The different situation gives a different meaning to the phenomenon, which means that the phenomenon is not the same. There is nothing constant in history at all. We cannot talk about identity in the sense of constancy, but only as existing in the midst of change. It can be said that identity can exist only when we can recognize a certain attribute, which we regard as its essence, to be preserved in something in the midst of change, even though that attribute may exhibit different and even contradictory phases. This means that identity cannot be recognized without the subjective judgement of an observer who perceives the constant essence in changing appearances. The “essence” cannot be recognized objectively. It is an “interesting”, “valuable”, or “important” thing for an observer. “The judgement about the essence of a certain historical phenomenon is a value judgement, a belief judgement” (M. Weber). Therefore identity can only be hinted at, existing only with relative probability.

Identity as a vague image

The identity of Christianity is often asserted based on the identity of the Bible. This assertion is open to question.

A certain religious understanding of reality often crystallizes into a

sacred scripture. He who gains the same, or at least a similar understanding in his real life will be ready to accept the sacred scripture which is handed down in society. However, when the *Lebensform* (form of life) changes with time and along with this the understanding of reality among people also changes, the dissonance between the sacred scripture and the believers' understanding of reality emerges. When the dissonance reaches a critical point, it is possible theoretically that the believers may throw away their traditional sacred scripture and start to form a new scripture suitable for the changed new age. This sort of drastic measure, however, is not adopted so often in reality. Usually the believers change the interpretation of the scripture little by little in order to adapt the scripture to the new understanding of reality which also changes gradually. This produces a slight difference from the previous age. Each difference is too slight to be noticed. This changing process is at work continuously. In this process the identity of a religion can be likened to the scales on a fish. Each scale lies in a row, partially overlapped without gap and forming one continuum. Usually we look upon this continuum as the identity of a religion, and imagine it as a vague image. But a religion continues to adapt itself to a new cultural situation over a long history, finally resulting in an unmistakable gap or difference lying between the first and the last.

In retrospect of the whole history of Christianity, we can find a vast variety of Christianities: Christianity in its beginning, that of the pillar-saints, the Roman Catholic Church dominating the Medieval societies, scholasticism, Mendicant orders, Christianity of the Church of England which was the religion legitimizing the kingship, Christianity dominating the colonies as a religion of the conqueror and invader, the Maronites in contemporary Lebanon, Pentecostalism, various contemporary Christian cults, and Christianity "syncretized" with indigenous religious cultures

everywhere. It is impossible to recognize the substantial continuity through these various Christianities as cultural complexes. In looking at contemporary Christian societies, we find a number of phenomena that have taken a firm hold on a society though they are contradictory to the Bible or the Christian tradition. Complicated rules of the Pentateuch are disregarded now; lending without interest or security now goes against common sense and in some cases is even criminal; people can divorce their spouse rather freely and disobey many or most of traditional Christian sexual mores. People can remain unconcerned about these kinds of cognitive dissonance as long as they are not harshly rebuked by churches. People change their interpretation in the direction that the Bible is read in different ways from before and particular passages in question can be neglected.²⁹ When the transformation brought about in Christianity is too rapid and striking, it is not generally concluded that Christianity has undergone a great change, but rather that a new religion has been born (e.g. Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses). An adaptation, a transformation and a new birth, however, are not so far from one another, rather they belong to the same logical class.

I have argued so far about identity of Christianity as an institution. Next, I will examine the subjective identity of Christians.

Identity as a commonly shared feeling

What is the personal identity of a man? It is a consistent tendency recognizable in each of his preferences and choices. This tendency reflects his normative consciousness or his values. Since this is a semi-conscious rather than a conscious effort, it is a feeling or sense of meaning. Against the background of this sense of meaning, one can integrate his various experiences and activities into a consistent life, i.e. one can feel that his life from past to present is consistent in its meaning.

One does not spend his life moment by moment without continuity with his past, but one always reinterprets his life in the light of the sense of meaning. So one always reflects on his own experiences one after the other, and tries to fit them into a consistent biographical framework (i.e. a narrative). Through this process scattered fragments of his life-history are given a meaningful integration. It is not necessary in this case for all fragments of his life-history to be logically consistent. If one converted from being a social democrat to a radical new leftist, and then a leader of a conservative party, one can interpret his career to be an integral pilgrimage, ending in awaking to authentic humanism. A young man who indulged in vices and then returned to Christian life with deep repentance comes to a meaningful understanding of his life through the Christian narrative of the prodigal son.

For the members of a religious group, the view of reality (i.e. the view of the world and the life) provided by the group gives that sense of meaning. That is to say, it gives a certain orientation to their lives. It gives them personal identity.

Personal identity cannot be maintained by a single person. Personal identity is transmitted to a person, moulded and maintained in him through innumerable social interactions which reaffirm that identity. Therefore, identity as a Christian, for example, may find reactions of disregard, doubt, criticism, scorn, or even hostility, adversity and abuse from surroundings where there are no Christians; and in any case he will not have any opportunities to reaffirm his Christian identity through positive interactions with other Christians. Identity gradually loses its vitality without being expressed to others and being accepted by them. It cannot be maintained solely in an inner reaffirmation. On the contrary, when Christians reconfirm their identity through mutual vivid interaction, full of sympathy, their identity gains the highest plausibility.

In this interaction Christians are encouraged to internalize their identity more, and in doing so they gain approval. The more people there are sharing the identity, and the more active the interaction, the higher the subjective plausibility of the identity becomes. This is the basis of the subjective identity as a believer of a religious group. We might call it “intersubjectivity”.

In the light of theological history

It seems that many Christians are not content with the sociological analysis of the identity of Christianity or of Christians. However, if Christians insist on identity as an objective reality, they are going against Protestant principle and tradition.

In the light of the history of Protestant theology, Christianity and all the phenomena related to it (the Bible, church, believers etc.) are miracles based on the absolute paradox, and their essence (i.e. their real identity) is invisible. For this reason, Barth said that the more destructive the effect of the historical-critical method is, the more desirable the situation becomes. Arguing against the critical comments to his *Romans*, Barth insisted that there is nothing godlike in the books and that in the Pauline Epistle to the Romans it is the human *pneuma*, not the *pneuma Christou*, that speaks (preface to the third edition of *Romans*). Likewise Kierkegaard said that if Christ be the very God himself, He must be unknown, for to be known directly is the characteristic mark of an idol.

The Protestant principle of *sola fide* refers to this characteristic of Christianity. It is anti-Protestant to rely on something on the earth as a reliable basis, whether it is a scripture, a ritual such as sacraments, or social institution like a church. It is also anti-Protestant to seek some verification of faith by human means. I will not here go into the question of whether such a Protestant principle is valid, since this paper is not a

theological one. However, to rest in something visible or concrete seems to deviate remarkably from the Pauline standpoint of putting confidence in “demonstration of the Spirit and power”.

Notes

1. This viewpoint is associated with a reductionism that regards theology as a dependent variable of the social situation. But needless to say, theology works as an independent variable. Nevertheless theology cannot lead society in whatever direction it likes. As will be shown, theology can exert its influence upon society only in a restricted way. That is, theology basically makes people aware of the direction the society is about to move in. And in doing so, theology facilitates the social change in that direction, based on its own logic, i.e. independently from society.
2. Theodore Jennings, “Theology as the Construction of Doctrine”, in: Theodore Jennings (ed.), *The Vocation of the Theologian*, Fortress Press, 1985, p. 76f.
3. Jürgen Moltmann, *Was ist heute Theologie?*, Herder, 1988, S. 59.
4. *loc. cit.* David Tracy makes a similar assertion. David Tracy, “Hermeneutical Reflections in the New Paradigm”, in: Hans Kung(ed.), *Paradigm Change in Theology*, Crossroad, 1989.
5. Langdon Gilkey, “Theology as the Interpretation of Faith for Church and World”, in: Jennings, *op. cit.*, p. 95.
6. As to contextualization, see Krikor Halebian, “The Problem of Contextualization”, *Missiology*, 11, 1983, p. 95-111.
7. Emil Brunner, “Theologie und Kirche”, *Zwischen den Zeiten*, 8, 1930, S. 414.
8. Peter Berger, *A Rumor of Angels*, Doubleday, 1970.
9. Moltmann, *op. cit.*, S. 31.
10. National Christian Council of Japan (ed.), *Toward the Theology of the Handicapped*, Shinkyoushuppan, 1993 (in Japanese).
11. *ibid.*, p. 11.
12. *ibid.*, p. 131.
13. As it was reported lately, sterilization had been forced till the mid-1970s on tens of thousands of people who were mentally handicapped in Sweden. This is not an exceptional incident in the so-called Christian world. For example, Francis Galton founded eugenics, through which he aimed at genetic improvement of human beings. His student, Karl Pearson wanted to put eugenics into practice by

facilitating natural selection artificially and by preventing the multiplication of the mentally or physically “inferior”. These movements of eugenics were carried forward in England, a Christian country. Furthermore, there was the sterilization law based on the eugenic idea in European countries before the Second World War. Similar situations can be seen in the U.S.A. When immigrants from non-Northern European countries increased and became a significant social problem, the United States enacted a racist law for the regulation of immigrants in 1924, and the scientific foundation provided was based on eugenic ideas. Moreover eugenic ideas were also realized in the enactment of the sterilization law in thirty states in the U.S.A. Germany under Nazism, which went to extremes with the eugenic idea, was of course a country of Christian culture.

14. Since *the Declaration of Independence* stated freedom and equality in a universal meaning, Jefferson thought that they held true for Negro slaves and wanted to set free his own slaves.
15. I will take up Simmel and Durkheim in the following paragraphs. The development of individuality was one of main problems they took up repeatedly.
16. Georg Simmel, *Soziologie*, Duncker & Humblot, 1908. See chap. 6 and 9.
17. Emil Durkheim, *De la division du travail social*, Presses Universitaires de France, 1978 (1893); id., “L’Individualisme et les intellectuels”, *Revue bleue*, X, 1898.
18. People in premodern societies easily sacrifice their lives for their community, i.e. they easily commit “altruistic suicides”, since they do not regard themselves as an irreplaceable individual but they identify themselves with the community. “Altruism” is in inverse proportion to the development of individuality. Durkheim brilliantly argued this in the argument of the “altruistic suicide”. Durkheim, *Le suicide*, Alcan, 1897.
19. I would like to make this point clear through an example. Although most of the Asian and African colonies gained independence after World War II, they were not independent of the economic dominance of industrially developed countries. Hope was placed on development assistance and self-help policies with the result that the Third world’s dependence and debt only increased. To break the cycle of debt, single cash-crop farming was started, but it further destroyed the self-support economy and caused an increase of dependence and debt. What is worse, where this happened, military dictatorial regimes were usually established. When one examines the cases where liberation theology has taken root, one generally finds three factors. First, there are violations of human rights. Second, most people hold values which do not accept the oppressive situation as fate

but which resist it as blasphemy against sacred and inviolable human rights. Third, there is a form of Christianity which takes the Gospel for the Gospel of liberation.

20. There seems to be an especially close relation between Christianity and the idea of human rights at first glance. Many theologians have asserted that there is a direct continuity from Christianity through deism to the idea of human rights. Liberal theologians such as Harnack and Ritschl did not consider the idea of human dignity to be an extension of Christianity, but in fact they went as far as to see the pure model or perfect form of the former in Christianity. And American civil religion took in a lot of elements from Christianity. However, other world religions more or less contain many elements of human rights. This can be said about most religions in the contemporary world.
21. To see the trend of this history correctly, we have to observe a long range of time. Social differentiation which brought about various heterogeneities within a society is an important index clearly separating modern from premodern. However, it did not happen at a single stroke but over a long period of history. Also values of freedom, equality and individuality emerging from social differentiation were not formed all at once in civil revolutions nor did they take hold on modern society suddenly. First of all, social members have to become conscious of these values and then to put them into action in their own lives. In other words, the values have to be learned and reconfirmed through the practice of everyday life and through the exchange of opinion and feeling. This process existed before and also after civil revolutions. This process proceeds for the length of some centuries, and it is precisely on this process that the idea of human beings is based. The idea or the theology of human rights is not a fad changeable in a short span of time.
22. There is no natural affinity between Christianity and the idea of human freedom; equality and dignity. Historical observation shows that Christianity has exceedingly stood against such ideas for long and that even in early modern times it harshly oppressed various modern secular movements such as modern science, democracy etc. Christianity was far from the spirit of tolerance and dialogue. This is clearly shown not only in the Christian history of Europe but also in the formation process of denominations in America. The Catholic church tried to do the same thing in the New World as it had done in the Old World, and the Protestant churches tried to do in the New World what had been done to them in the Old World. The unique American way of co-existence of the churches

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became possible only after all the churches realized that there was no possibility for them to last without mutual recognition.

23. These four theologies described so far are not isolated respectively, but different products of the same modernization with many phases. Therefore all of the four have a relation to one another. Three points should be mentioned here.

First of all, I have already pointed out that the theologies of human rights and various secular movements related to them such as labor movements stem from the same root, i.e. modernization. But that does not mean that they are pro-modernization. In fact, labor movements, movements for the rights of the disabled, ecological movements are clearly against modernization. It is one thing that something stems from modern society, and it is another whether it is for or against modernization.

As said before, modern society has many phases. It produced an exclusive nationalism on the one hand and the idea of universal philanthropism on the other. It tends to select a certain type of personality on the grounds of efficiency while it harshly criticizes such a standard of efficient production. At the end of the 19th century it produced a bright, rosy idea of social evolution, and at the same time melancholic and decadent ideas, literature and art emerged. Phrases such as “pro-modern” or “anti-modern” are rather rough, in that they disregard the multiphasic nature of modernity.

Second, if Christianity adopts a standpoint against modernity owing to its negative legacy, it may come to reject even the positive legacy of modernity. I would like to explain this by one example. The theology of human rights for the disabled often criticizes the principle of “ability first”. It critically asserts that the ability principle is dominant in modern society and that the disabled are evaluated much less highly than non-handicapped people (National Christian Council of Japan (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 22ff.). This criticism against the ability principle contains a misunderstanding and a danger. As far as the former is concerned, the modern principle of ability means that occupations should be distributed to people according to their ability and that they are rewarded economically and socially according to their achievements. Therefore, this principle does not evaluate the person himself or their whole personality. It may be true that the principle of ability is often almost at one with the evaluation of a whole person, but if those two become completely identical, the ability principle is harshly criticized as being distorted. Next, I would like to mention the danger inherent in the criticism against the ability principle. This principle is not isolated from other things in

the world. It is incorporated into the whole way of living in modern society. It is at one with civil and human rights, especially with the freedom of vocational choice or with equal opportunity, precious fruits of modern times. We cannot reject the ability principle without rejecting its social base and everything related to this base.

24. Gilkey, *op. cit.*, p. 93.
25. Jennings, *op. cit.*, p. 81.
26. Moltmann, *op. cit.*, S. 30.
27. Rosemary Ruether, "Theology as Critique of and Emancipation from Sexism", in: Jennings (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 28-30, 32.
28. When the identity of Christianity is open to question, then not only theology becomes problematic, but so does Christianity as a cultural complex including theology, ritual, church organization, and life itself. Even if the early Christian church and a certain contemporary church believe the same teaching of charity, both cannot be immediately said to have the same identity. The early Christians living a primitive communist life-style would believe a certain contemporary church living a competitive life in an industrial society to be quite a different church, infinitely distant from itself; they would probably feel that Christians of the modern church have lost the identity of Christianity. Thus, it is insufficient to look at the teachings, doctrines and thoughts in order to consider identity of religion.
29. It is not so difficult to introduce in Christian tradition what is not referred to in the Bible or even what is contradictory to the Bible. It is easier to endure the cognitive dissonance produced by changing interpretation of the passage of the text than to endure one produced by the changing of real life.