

A NEW DOXOLOGY OF THE COMMUNITY OF THE FIRST FRUITS

—Christ and Culture in Japan

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I heard a voice from heaven like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder; the voice I heard was like the sound of harpers playing on their harps, and they sing before the throne. No one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who had been redeemed from the earth. It is the se who follow the Lamb wherever he goes; these have been redeemed from mankind as first fruits for God and the Lamb. (Revelation 14: 2-5)

In a beatific vision of the redeemed community described in the Book of Revelation, the members of the community of the first fruits sing a new song. Each taking his part by his instrument according to the signs of His guidance, they participate in a symphony of redemption. It is worthy of note that those who participate in this heavenly music are called the first fruits for God. They represent the foretaste of the coming harvest of which a messenger proclaims, "put in your sickle, and reap, for the hour to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is fully ripe" (Rev. 14: 15).

Furthermore we realize here that the community of the first fruits is not a static community just sitting and worshipping in a sanctuary. But it moves in and out. It is a dynamic community in action, constantly participating in the drama of redemption as it was stated, "it is these who follow the Lamb wherever he goes." (Rev. 14: 4). We often go outside of our tent without knowing where to go. But one thing is clear, that we know he is there before we start, inviting us with a "follow me". Here we see the inseparable interrelation between our worship as a gathered congregation and the service and witness of God's people in the world. Our service and witness in the world is the inevitable result of the acceptance of the word of God while our worship is the returning ground of God's People with the spirit of thanksgiving and renewal.

The most inspiring aspect of this beatific picture of the first fruits is that "they sing a new song before the throne". (Rev. 14: 3). The members of the community of the first fruits, when they dedicate themselves as a living sacrifice to God, offer their whole being by using their whole body and power, with all their heart, soul and mind. This suggests the creative and indigenous expression of Christian faith through the artistic means of our culture, such as through music and poetry, drama and dancing, painting and architecture, in the life and mission of the Church.

Renewal in Artistic Expression

Throughout the history of the Church, the Christian community has constantly wrestled with the question of Christ and culture¹⁾. Although the original subject is the same, namely, Jesus Christ himself, we see the great variety both of interpretations and expressions of the experience of the divine-human encounter, the meeting of men with Jesus of Nazareth. We acknowledge unity in Christ, but at the same time we appreciate diversity in the forms and means of expression of the Christian faith. H. Richard Niebuhr speaks of the unity in diversity in the relation of Christ to culture in the following way:

“Interpreted by a monk, he (Christ) may take on monastic characteristics; delineated by a socialist, he may show the features of a radical reformer; portrayed by a Hoffman, he may appear as a mild gentleman. But there always remain the original portraits with which all later pictures may be compared and by which all caricatures may be corrected. And in these original portraits he is recognizably one and the same.”²⁾

It is not the scope of this writing to review the entire history of Christian art, but to indicate two striking factors one notices in reviewing the course of its fascinating development. The first is the fascinating variety of responses to and expressions of the ultimate source and power of reality revealed in Jesus Christ. The second characteristic is the dynamic inter-relationship between the vitality of the Christian community in the particular period of history and the formation of powerful and imaginative Christian art which coincides with it. The former is related to the question of indigenous expressions of Christian faith, coming out of concrete personal experience and utilizing the indigenous materials and means of expression which are richly inherited among the people in the particular situation. The diversified images of Christ painted by different artists throughout history give visible testimony to the unity in diversity in Christian community.³⁾

The latter speaks of the fact that is the expression of the inner strength and vitality of the Christian community, which constantly stands in mutual reciprocal relationship with the existing culture and society. We notice that whenever the Church has renewed itself and regained vitality within the community it has not only made an effort of geographical expansion through mission, but also engaged in the artistic expression of Christian faith through imaginative and creative cultural means. We acknowledge geographical expansion in a horizontal direction, social contribution in ethical concern, and creative expression in artistic depth as the signs of vitality of the Christian community in a particular period.

The persecuted and struggling Christian community carved the symbol-

ical signs of Christian hope on the walls of a catacomb. When the church came to vitalize the structure of the Eastern empire, it produced the colorful and inspiring art of Byzantium. The works of creative and imaginative geniuses like Michaelangelo and Raphael and Da Vinci are the product of the period in which the Church played a significant role in shaping and ordering the destiny of the nations. Then, at the time of the Reformation, Christian art regained the meaning and support among the ordinary citizens of the new age which is expressed by the penetrating touch of Durer and Rembrandt. During the modern period of the Christian Church, it has stimulated the development of Western civilization by forming the pietistic and puritanical style of living. In the museums we still see many portraits of the leaders and pioneers of industrial society and the national community. Along with the emphasis on liberal and humanistic idealism which prevailed in the last century, we see the works of artists who painted Christ as a good and tender teacher of the enlightenment. It marks certainly a striking contrast with the figures of Christ painted by the modern artist, like Rouault, who reflected the agony and suffering in the Servant-king.

We have been searching for the Christian meaning and patterns of the Church's presence in our social and cultural situation in Asia. In the process of this search, I have become convinced of the importance and significance of art in the life and mission of the Church in Asia today. The renewal of artistic appreciation and creativity is one of the most encouraging tendencies of our time. We have to recognize, realistically, a rather wide gap which has developed in the course of the last one hundred years between the realms of church and art especially in the countries of younger churches. There is a serious estrangement between the world of the artist and the world of the Christian. Two communities naturally and intimately linked together throughout history are now separated without adequate communication and respect, having, rather, misgiving and misunderstanding. Yet we are glad to see some signs of renewal in the realm of art among the churches throughout the world. Since artists are often very sensitive to the challenge of reality and alert in expressing the urgency of the situation, they can not only provide a realistic reflection of the period in which we live but also play one of the important roles of frontier and vanguard for the renewal of man in contemporary society.

In 1957, when I wrote a book on Church and society in Japan, in my concluding reflections I depicted the lack of indigenous expression of the Christian faith as one of the limitations community in Japan.⁴⁾ In the last seven years, especially since 1959, when the Protestant community in Japan celebrated its centennial and when the East Asia Christian Conference was formed, we have seen an increasing awareness among Christians in Japan of the need for engaging in both actual experiments in the theological discussion of indigenous Christian art. We see a corresponding renewal of interest in Christian art in various parts of Asia today. The East Asia Christian Con-

ference has published *Asian Hymnal* gathering Asian expressions of praise through indigenous music and poetry. The book was published by 1964 for the Second Assembly of the East Asia Christian Conference. The second project, following the *Asian Hymnal*, to be carried out by the EACC, is a project to compile book on Christian Art in modern Asia, which was decided upon at the Working Committee meeting at Brisbane, November 1962.⁵⁾ Three factors are very significant in these projects.

(1) The regional Christian Community of East Asia has officially taken a stand to encourage and stimulate the development of indigenous art by compiling the works of Christian artists in Asian Churches. It is a decision which came out of spontaneous interest among Asian Christians themselves. In the past some pioneering works have been done on the art of younger churches, but most of them were organized and edited by Western appreciators.⁶⁾ Arno Lehmann, who teaches in missionology at Martin Luther University in Halle, Germany and who has made one of the most thorough and comprehensive studies of the art of the younger churches, after describing the complexities involved in the process of indigenization, stated:

“The Europeans do not have a big say in this matter, in spite of all our willingness to render any help wanted. We cannot say what is nice and beautiful, possible or unbearable, on African or Asian soil. We have no right to fire at once with heavy theological guns if something is against our taste—and a refined taste at that!—and if anything goes against our Western conceptions. We are but co-operators standing in the second line as if it were to come to the realization of the plans we might set going and keep going in the time to come. Ours is a very important work and help, but it is to be done with a humble mind and giving the last word to our Asian and African friends.”⁷⁾

Being encouraged by the patient and stimulating works of such pioneers and being challenged by the changing reality of Asia, now finally the Asians are by themselves beginning to develop both the theological search and the actual expression in Christian art on Asian soil.

(2) It is significant that in the EACC project on art there will be considerable attention given to contemporary Asian art, rather than regarding indigenization simply as the returning to the old cultural and forms of Asia. This does not mean, certainly, the exclusion of the traditional and inherited cultural forms of Asia. But in stressing the need of the indigenization, we must be aware that the ground of indigenization is the contemporary Asian society. The indigenization is not the effort of returning to the ancient period. We must reject the idea of equating modernization with Westernization, on the one hand; and indigenization with traditionalism, on the other hand.

(3) The signs of renewal in Christian art in Asia will have a far-reaching

impact beyond the Christian community in Asia. In facing rapid revolutionary social changes, the churches in Asia and Africa share similar concerns. We are all sharing a common destiny and struggle in one inter-dependent world today. A creative and imaginative expression of an artist, coming out of the concrete Christian experience in the Asian setting, will provide vivid stimulus to the Christians in a similarly changing situation in Africa, just as we have been inspired by them for a number of years.⁸⁾

Art and Christian Faith

There are several reasons why we take seriously the work of the fine arts in our life and mission of the church today. It is not primarily because art is useful for the expansion of the church. It is because of its own uniqueness and power.

First of all, let us consider the realm of art itself. Art is the realm in which man's response to the power of reality is most passionately and uniquely formulated. An artist lives constantly in triangle relationship, namely, the power of reality which he sensitively accepts, the concrete experience of encounter with the power of reality in a particular time and situation, and the imaginative and creative forms of expression he constantly wrestles to formulate. Here life of objective reality, existential experience of the subject and artistic forms of expression find an integrating unity in the process of artistic creativity. Jacques Maritain said, in describing art, "Art is the gush of the spirit on the alert." Artists are extremely sensitive and alert to perceive and respond to the power of reality around them. They make a creative, often struggling effort to express the experience of their encounter with life, through imaginative and vital forms. In this sense, an artist must possess and train dual gifts, one the ability to listen and grasp the power of reality, and the other the ability to express powerfully something which happens within himself in his encounter with the power of reality. If he has an amazing degree of listening ability, he could be a good critic of art, but he will not be a good artist if he is weak in the ability to formulate a creative expression. If he has a gifted ability of formulation, he could be a clever technician, but not an artist in the profound sense of the term if he is weak in the listening ability.

One cold day in mid-January, 1962, my son Makoto, then nine years old, returned from school. "Oh, a terrible cold day, Mother!", he cried out, "and what a strong wind! I had only my rain coat on. I thought the wind might take it away." He has been in the strange and mechanical city of New York in the last few months, with a slight knowledge of language and few mutual friends. But all of a sudden, on a cold and windy day, he encountered something extraordinarily powerful in the midst of the technological jungle of metropolitan civilization. He went into his room and did not come out for three hours. He passionately painted a colourful picture to express the fresh experience of the encounter with the power of life. There is something going

on in the depth of our life, whether we recognize it or not, in terms of the power of nature, the demonic and destructive forces in our reality, the corrective forces upon injustice, the hidden undercurrent of people towards one another, and reconciling grace among estranged groups of people. It is not only the child or the artist who is most sensitive to the power of reality, but although the degree of receptivity and the quality of response may be different, man is a being who responds to the movement of life. He just cannot keep silence. "I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out" (Luke 19: 40). He may not necessarily rely upon noisy means of communication to express his response. He may use a quiet, unspoken image, such as colour and form in painting and sculpture, or a symbolical and imaginative presentation such as drama and poetry, above all, his whole existence and entire being is a visible and moving response, either spoken or unspoken, to the power of reality. In Christian faith we believe that this universal power of reality is concretely and uniquely revealed in the historical event of Jesus Christ. Our response to life is not limited to the confined spheres of either art or religion, but in all realms of life with our whole body, as stated by Paul: "I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship." (Rom. 12: 1).

Art is not automatically produced. It comes out of a wrestling and struggling process of creative expression of encounter. Rollo May speaks of the relationship between an art of encounter and a creative expression in the following way:

"Creativity occurs in an act of encounter, and it is to be understood with this encounter as its center. Cezanne sees a tree. He sees it in a way no one else has ever seen it. He experiences, as he no doubt would say, a 'being grasped' by the tree. The painting that issues out of this encounter between a subject, Cezanne, and an objective reality, the tree, is literally new; something is born, comes into being, which did not exist before—which is as good a definition of creativity as we can get."⁹)

In the midst of the burning experience of encounter, one searches for the symbolical or vital means of expression because he is a man who is a responding self in the world. When you meet with someone you love, you do not need to give a long descriptive talk. A few sentences of symbolic poetry will be the most appropriate means of expression at an occasion of sorrow or joy. Drama is another means to express something which exists in the deeper reality of our life in this world, both in times of tragedy and comedy, and in suffering and hope. Painting is a colourful form through which one wishes to express something which touches the heart of the artist in his encounter with the power of reality. I believe that both the spheres of religion and art, each

in its own way, have the same concern, namely, to appreciate and respond to the power of reality.

Secondly, we find so vividly in the realm of art the visible ecumenical means of communication. This is one of the most universal and popular methods of sharing man's ultimate concern. This is one of the reasons why the art project and exhibit organized by the World Council of Christian Education has been receiving an enthusiastic response all over the world. Paintings in an unspoken but moving way can unite the minds of people around the world. They are silent but powerful echoes of people appreciated by all age groups both old and young, men and women, in the different parts of the world. When the World Council of Christian Education started the project, some of the churches were slow to respond, but amazing cooperation and enthusiastic responses were received from some of the secular agencies which are concerned with art work among young people in non-Christian countries.¹⁰⁾ The lines which the painter draws, the forms he shapes, the colour he paints, and the texture he builds are the inspiring means of communication which transcends geographical distance, racial and cultural differences, and political and economic cleavages. Here we become men and meet with fellow men sharing the common destiny and concern of humanity in one world.

Thirdly, art is one of the most unique areas in which we are invited to participate in the life of the universe. Art will never be produced if we just talk about art. Even observing and appreciating art is not enough. Participation and involvement in the power of reality are a necessary and essential aspect of artistic creativity. Not only when he engages in the work of artistic creativity, but the whole of his life, movement of body and mind, must come to participate in the power of reality. Here we recognize the unity of action and thinking, and mind and body, in the process of artistic creativity. Ultimately what he wants to express and what he is become one in the process of artistic formulation. There is an interesting emphasis in the thinking of Asian artists on the unity of thought and action on the part of the artist. Shiryū Morita, who is regarded as one of the leading *sho*, (calligraphy), artists, explains his philosophy of *sho*, the art of writing characters:

“While the art of writing characters may appear to be no more than the movement of the hand or the body, what we mean by *sho* is something different. It is the form which comes into existence during and as the result of action which consistently through each and every movement of the hand or the body is accomplished as a single unity... (Our body and our senses as they pass out into the world as our discriminating consciousness, so long as it is merely affirmed, *place* restraints and limitation upon us as agents.) Thus here also it required our attaining freedom from and into, as it were, the body, senses, and consciousness.”¹¹⁾

To be sure, *sho* does not come from the Christian religion. Rather it draws a spiritual resource from Zen Buddhism. I am not here advocating that we should imitate what Zen Buddhism does. But, stimulated by the work of *sho*, trying to rediscover and regain the corresponding emphasis which originally existed but is not quite unveiled in the modern development of Western Christianity. In *sho* art the inner unity of the artist and the power of reality not only at the time of production but in the whole life is emphasized. Since what he writes is a symbol of what he is, he must seek constantly for the freedom of himself. There is little lasting vitality in the art without the freedom of participation in the power of reality on the part of the artist. Here we recognize the importance of both the continuous participation of the artist in life, and the constant development of his whole person in maturity and wholesomeness.

Here I believe that there is an illuminating implication, when we think of Christian growth in terms of the image of the upbuilding of the body as stated in the letter to the Ephesians:

“So shall we all at last attain to the unity inherent in our faith and our knowledge of the Son of God—to mature manhood, measured by nothing less than the full stature of Christ. We are no longer to be children. No, let us speak the truth in love; so shall we fully grow up into Christ.”¹²⁾

Morita even states that in *sho* art seldom is there a young genius, since it is recognized that the art is a particular and decisive disclosure of what the artist is in relation of the power of reality. Even Hakuin, the great leader of *sho* in the seventeenth century, began to produce his outstanding pieces when he was over eighty years old. It is dangerous, of course, to lay too great a stress on the inner quality of the artist on the basis of his long period of continuous work. We must know that even if a man reaches the height of self-training and attainment, there is a limitation and bondage in his situation. The distinction between the justification by human work and upbuilding of the new man by grace should be kept in mind. But in recognizing the abundant grace operating in the universe, I would like to stress the importance of the personal growth of man, in terms of the process of the sanctification of the New Man, the first fruits constantly in participating in the process of renewal and transformation “to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4: 13).

I have been discussing so far one of the characteristics of art in terms of the artist's participation in the power of reality in the universe. I believe this has an immense significance in the life and mission of the Church. Let me give an illustration from my personal experience in order to clarify what I mean. It was my mother, the first fruits in our family circle, who was instrumental in bringing me into Christian faith. In our home as well as in a small church school in Dairen, the southern edge of Manchuria, where my mother

volunteered to be a church school teacher for eighteen years, from my earliest days of boyhood, we were surrounded by the spirit of active participation in the Christian community through various forms of art. My mother was a music teacher. Singing was a part of the constant language in our family life. At the church school we enjoyed with open eyes seeing Kamishibai (paper plays) to recapture the unfolding Biblical dramas of redemption. Kami-shibai is a well-loved Japanese folk art, traditionally used by the neighbourhood candy vandy. Clacking two sticks together, he calls the children to watch the story and buy candy. The church in Japan picked this indigenous means of communication to dramatize Bible stories. The Biblical stories such as the Ark of Noah, Joseph in Egypt, the Parable of the Prodigal Son, or the Lost Sheep and the Vineyard, etc. fascinated me as we watched and heard Kami-shibai. Later on we started to make Kami-shibai by ourselves, making stories from the surrounding life in Japan and drawing the lines and painting the pictures. Then not only at the big festivals, like Christmas, but also on various occasions, we were invited to participate in the drama, taking roles in the play, writing the script, and arranging the drama to fit the purpose. As I recollect my experience in my earlier life, I was taken into the life of the Christian community through a means of art which quite often was presented, not necessarily in an elaborately expensive way, nor in extraordinary or elegant fashion, but in a simple way, yet with an imagination and devotion which invited a common participation in the community of His people.

There is some reluctance on the part of Christian leaders to take the realm of art into the life and mission of the church, partly because they have a fixed notion of art, thinking that it is so financially expensive and energy-consuming. But from the concrete experience of the rather economically handicapped situation of church life in Japan, I would like to stress that what decisively lacking is not the economic resources but the spiritual resources of courage and imagination to participate in God's drama of redemption in history.

This lack of commitment and sense of participation is rather widely recognized among men in contemporary society, including even those who are involved in artistic production. Hans Hoffman, one of the expert and experienced teachers, remarked that art students "these days have a great deal of talent, but what they lack is passion, and commitment". Hoffman went on to say, interestingly enough, that "his men students get married early for reasons of security and they become dependent on their wives, and that often only through their wives he could draw out their talent." Rollo May after introducing Hoffman's statement, makes the following comment: "The fact that talent is plentiful but passion lacking, seems to me to be a very important facet of the problem of creativity in many fields in our day".¹³⁾

We see rather widespread evidence indicating the lack of the spirit of commitment and participation in our society, including the realms of art and religion, where ultimately one should find the spirit of creativity and personal

commitment. In some Western countries, there are positively advanced techniques of Christian education, widely developed organizations, well advertised periodicals and long established traditions among the Christian churches. In this sense, we can say that talent and resources are plentiful, but there is a danger that member of the church may lack the passion and devotion to participate in life and mission of the church in the world. Here Kierkegaard's distinction in reference to the art of worship is valid: worship is not a theatrical experience but a dramatic experience. A theater is a place to see a show, something going on the stage, as a spectator.

But worship is a drama in which we all participate, each taking a role in his own way, according to the design of the master. Christianity is not a theatrical religion but it is God's drama of redemption. The church is not a place to go on Sunday as one might go to the railroad station on Monday, but it is a community to which one belongs and in which one participates with commitment and devotion.¹⁴⁾ The mission is not something we just talk about or plan, but something in which we are involved and participate. It is my sincere hope and wish that through the appreciation and participation in the realm of art, each of us may regain a deeper recognition of the whole of life in terms of the drama of redemption, not staying as an indifferent observer or a curious spectator but participating in the unfolding drama of redemption in history, reshaping our gifts He has bestowed upon his people.

Fourthly, with the understanding of art as a part of the secular field, we would like to consider the need for a proper understanding of the vocation of the artist in this age of technological mass society. In view of the present emphasis on the renewal of the ministry of the laity and the appreciation and equipment of the unique gifts God has provided in His community for the world, the question of vocation of the artist is very important. I would like to discuss this question, depicting three important aspects which can be illustrated from a field which is somewhat more familiar in our life, namely, the medical profession. Today if we ask a doctor to be a Christian doctor in our society he has to face at least three important questions. (i) He should be a doctor in his own field, reliable and up-to-date, an able doctor in his technical competence. (ii) He should be a doctor who has a deep understanding of human values and life in relation to the patient. He is not a mechanical operator but a doctor concerned in the healing process of the whole man. Here Christian understanding of Creation, Redemption, and Sanctification provides a kind of perspective and guidance to a doctor in his effort to engage in the process of healing and the restoration of man. For this he needs a constant nourishment in the Christian community. (iii) If a doctor is to be a Christian in today's setting, inevitably he has to face the question of social responsibility for the medical doctor. What is his attitude toward the national welfare policy, and what is his role in the health insurance programme of the community, etc. What does it mean to be a good Samaritan on the road to Jericho in the

modern society? These are somewhat irritating questions, since they involve often many conflicting elements in the complexity of modern society, i. e. to what extent he should regard the value and interest of the welfare of the total community rather than merely be concerned with his own interest and security. But if he tries to be a doctor in the light of Christian faith he cannot avoid the struggling and searching question of the social responsibility of the medical doctor.

In a similar way, I believe, the artist must consider these three aspects if they take the work of the artist as a Christian vocation, namely, (i) the artist as a man who has a technical competence and respect in his own field; (ii) the artist as a man who shares a Christian perspective in relation to the universe, men, the event in history, and above all what he does in the realm of art; and (iii) the artist as a man living in contemporary society as reflective mirror of the time and as a sincere inquirer and reminder of the coming patterns of new civilization. These three aspects, the technical competence and quality of an artist, his passionate involvement in the life of the universe, and a sensitive contemporary social concern, are important elements when we consider the vocation of the artist.

In the previous statements I indicated that art is an expression of unique encounter experienced by the artist between himself and the power of reality. This experience gives to the artist a content, what he tries to express. But the expression must find a certain and concrete form. The form should have creative vitality and unique originality. Here, I believe, it is important, for the vocation of an artist, to acknowledge the importance of the balanced integrity between the content and the form of the art. Take, for example, one of the traditional arts of Japan, namely Sho, the art of writing characters by Fude, a Japanese brush, with sumi, Japanese ink. The underlying philosophy of Sho is a conviction that there is a unity between what the artist writes and what he tries to express. Both the form and the content of the art must come together. If he tries to write a character, the artist not only unites himself with the spirit of the character, but also the product of the work inevitably expresses the content. I heard once a man who talked more than one hour and a half on the need for dialogue. He wanted to express his conviction that group discussion is important in modern society through the form of a monologue lecture. One noticed an ironic contrast between what he was talking about in terms of the content of his message and the way in which he was expressing the content, in terms of the form. We must ask in what way the artist in modern society combines the form and the content of artistic creativity. Is he just playing a game by painting accidentally as his brush wants to make a movement? To what extent does the artist struggle and train himself in order to find a refined or creative form to express adequately something burning beneath the surface of the reality around him?

Here I believe we need to emphasize the quality of the artistic form in

terms of creativity and power when we think of religious art. However noble and religious the message and content of the work may be, we cannot regard it highly as religious art unless the form matches with the content. It is as unbearable to see some of the abstract art which does not contain solid artistic quality as to see the naive and mediocre Christian art. Paul Tillich, who is one of the few Protestant theologians of our time to provide a fruitful theological dialogue in the realm of art, distinguishes four different types in the relation of content and style in religious art.¹⁵⁾ One is non-religious content, such as nature, treated in a non-religious style, secondly, religious content, such as the head of Jesus, and Biblical stories are painted in non-religious style, thirdly, non-religious content, such as a chair and an apple, are expressed in a religious style, and finally, religious content is presented in a religious style. As an illustration of the first type we may think of a picture like a static and descriptive painting of nature by an artist who belongs to the formal and traditional school. The style does not touch the underlying power and unity, and conflict and harmony exist beyond the surface of nature. It touches only the surface of nature rather than encountering the power of nature.

For the second type we can draw abundant illustration from the Christian art of the past two centuries. Tillich refers to the portrait of Jesus painted by Hoffman, who gives a soft and tender touch to the figure of Christ. At least in its style it does not exhibit the real depth of the person of Jesus Christ, God becoming man through the form of the suffering servant, sharing the burden and misery of man and overcoming the power of sin and death. We find a pietistic good teacher image when we see the portrait of Jesus by Hoffman. It makes a good contrast when we look at the picture of the agonizing King painted by Georges Rouault.

Here we acknowledge the important contribution of the modern artists who have courageously tried to wrestle with a creative process of expression of the power of reality breaking through a static and descriptive form. It is a method of unveiling something beneath the reality of existence. Many times, what they painted, in terms of the subject of the painting, is not in religious theme, but was presented through vital religious style, touching and shaping something which one is concerned with ultimately. A good example is Picasso's "Guernica", which is the favorite illustration of Tillich, who calls it the most powerful Protestant art in this century. If we see it we can hear the vivid crying voices of protest being raised against the demonic power of destruction, symbolizes in the massive annihilation of a Spanish town called Guernica. We notice that through the powerful style of the artist it demonstrates a strong protest against the demonic power of madness and violent forces of dehumanization, on behalf of mankind. I believe Van Gogh is another powerful artist who made a passionate struggle to express the power of reality, using not primarily religious subjects but painting non-religious subjects like sunflowers, chairs, and a wheat field.

This type of inter-relationship between the content and the style of religious art is very suggestive in our discussion of the Christian style of living today. In our daily living in the world, are we like an artist who paints Christian symbols yet with a non-religious style? Do we talk too much about religion yet not exhibit it through our lives? Or do we live like an artist who takes non-religious subjects but speaks in a religious style? Do we act in manifesting the spirit of Christ, although we use non-religious languages?

We find very few good illustrations of the fourth type of relationship between the content and the style in religious art, namely that which tries to express religious content in religious style. There are two factors, it seems to me, which make it difficult to find the adequate representative of this type. One is a sociological reason connected with our time, and the other is a theological reason connected with human creative activity. The first reflects that we are living in an age of protest and uncertainty. In this situation one sees the dehumanization of society, the impersonality of wide areas of life, the loss of community and dissolution of former meanings and older loyalties in the process of changes. This is a sociological reason why we do not have many affirmative religious arts which combine the religious content and the religious style together. The second contains a much deeper theological meaning. The artist, however noble and creative he may be, inevitably faces a dilemma, for the more he touches deeply the depth and height of reality, the more he recognizes the limitation of human capacity to express vitally and creatively. The virtue of humility and a spirit of frustration often accompany artistic creativity. This is the reason why we cannot identify what the artist has produced with what is final or perfect, but it is a symbolic representation and indication of what is ultimate. It constantly points to something beyond. He does not fear being broken through, since he knows he is always in the process of renewal. Here again this has an illuminating implication for the Christian way of life in the world. In our earthen vessels we possess the treasure to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us (II Cor. 4: 7).

In this sense I recognize the importance of formulating the place of encounter among artists in the life of the church. Artists as other members of modern society badly need a community to belong to, and to be sustained and renewed in the bond of love and hope since they are simply a part of humanity. On many occasions, artists are lonely people without an adequate sense of recognition and appreciation, suffering from economic hardship working often on something which does not passionately concern them because of their livelihood, and above all constantly having the sense of agony and despair, experiencing their own dilemma between pride and helplessness, tension between courage and despair.

I believe that the Church, if she really awakens herself deeply to what is happening here, may be able to render an important service by providing a community of mutual nourishment and enrichment among the artists in our

contemporary society. The churches tend to be too quick to churchfy the realm of art rather than to render a service to the needs of artists who desperately lack a community of mutual acceptance. In this sense it is encouraging to see the development of small yet continuous fellowships among artists who share the common Christian faith. The Tanenokai (Association of the Seed) which was formed in 1960 among Christian writers, novelists and critics, in Japan, now counts about thirty members. Shiina Rinzo, the popular novelist, and Sako Junichiro, a literary critic, have been active in leading the group. By May, 1963, in order to avoid falling into the temptation of the narrow fraternalistic group, the Association was reorganized for wider and further development. In the Kwansai area, there is a fellowship among artists called The Sanbonashi, Three Legs, consisting of three artists who have been engaged in the creative process in the realm of Christian art. The members of the Sanbonashi were Miss Sute Ota, a teacher of flower arrangement, the Rev. Kazuyoshi Kimura, a modern painter, and Mr. Tsutomu Yoshida, a Sho artist.

Fifthly, art is the realm in which man becomes himself, unique as a person, and indigenous in each concrete situation. In this sphere we see the abundant recognition of the irreplaceable uniqueness and irreducible freedom of man expressing his inner mind vividly through an imaginative and creative form. It is highly important to have the concern for and development of art in modern society since we need a constant stimulus, which art provides in the confrontation and appreciation of the unique expression of the inward existence of man. This is one of the reasons why art, both in history and today, is much appreciated by many people, since we meet here the unique expression of what he is, at a particular period and in a concrete situation in the world. Especially in the period of technological automation, and in this time of social conformity and in the age of TV suppers, and in this era of uncertainty and social transformation it is significant to have the development of creative art which honestly and powerfully reflects and expresses the existence of man in a particular situation, where he is placed to live. Art is one of the powerful means of indication for man's freedom. This leads us to discuss the question of the indigenization of Christian art among the younger churches.

I would like to discuss here the meaning of indigenous art in the light of the above discussion on Christian art. It is encouraging to see today that there has been an increasing conscious concern for indigenous art among the churches in Asia. But not many of them are sure of what is the criterion or pattern for indigenous art. We are, in a humble sense, just a beginning of the whole new development. Naturally, in the process of the new formation there will be much uncertainty and struggle until something definite is formulated. Therefore, we should be patient and not be categorical about a rigid pattern of indigenous art as such.

But it will be helpful to reflect on the pitfalls, as well as the perspective, which are noticeable in the process of forming an indigenous Christian culture. What are the important dimensions in the formulation of an indigenous Christian culture? First of all, indigenous Christian culture must be a fruit of the spontaneous expression of Christian faith, rather than being forced artificially by others. One of the precious values of art and religion is the spontaneity of response with freedom and uniqueness. Imitation in artistic form is the corruption of creative spirit and enforcement in religious expression is the negation of religious freedom. Indigenous art is not art which is formulated artificially in order to satisfy the curiosity of those who enjoy seeing something different from that to which they are accustomed. The imitation in the East of the Western form of Christian art is not considered indigenous art as much as the artificial dressing of the Christian theme in classical form.

Christopher Dawson, using the image of seed and fruits, explains the process of spontaneous expression and formation of Christian culture as follows:

“We should look first and above all at the historic reality of Christianity as a living force which has entered into the lives of men and societies and changed them in proportion to their will and their capacity... Often it has been choked by the secular forces of a civilization, but where it has taken root, we see again and again the miracle of divine creativity and a new spiritual harvest springing from the old soil of human nature and past social tradition.

This flowering of new life is Christian culture in the highest sense of the word, but every believing Christian society already has in it a living seed of change which is bound to bear fruit in due time, even if its growth is hidden or hindered by the many other growths which are so deeply rooted in the soil of human nature that they can never be eradicated.”¹⁶⁾

Indigenous art in Asia means art which is a spontaneous expression of the joy and suffering of man in Christ, rooted in Asian soil. In this sense we shall not have a solid foundation for indigenous art until God's people of Asia participate vigorously in the every day affairs of Asian society. Through courageous Christian involvement in sharing the burdens and joys in our society, the new doxology of the first fruits will be sung. I am inclined to think that the starting point of an indigenization of the Christian faith is not so much in the field of architecture or music or art, not even in theology, but in the field of Christian participation in the ordinary affairs in the ordinary soil of Asia. If a man radiate the humanity restored in Christ among his friends in the process of common struggle in the Asian society, no matter how simple and dim a light he may be, he sets a radiating example of indigenous Christianity, by being what he is. Through the searching questions coming out of expe-

riences of struggle in secular life, theologians will develop deeper and more penetrating theological formulation in the Asian context. From the rhythmic life of coming and going in the process of Christian presence in Asia, there will be a spontaneous expression in art forms expressing joy and thanksgiving for his suffering and victorious ministry. Indigenous art will arise from within, in this sense, from the process of the wrestling participation of God's people in Asian soil.

We can find an echo of this emphasis in the report on the indigenization in the Kyoto Local Faith and Order Study Group.

“Christianity will send its roots deep into Japanese soil only when Christians, in their obedience to the reconciling God, participate in the destiny of their fellow citizens with loving criticism.”¹⁷⁾

The writings of Rinzo Shiina is widely read not because his novels are religious, quite the contrary, they are secular novels without a hint of religious language. However the author presents man, who, amid the struggles of daily life, somehow does not lose an outlook of hope and humor. Quite often Shiina writes his novels out of his own experience of involvement in the industrial society. His novels, which I believe have indigenous flavor are the fruits and reflection of his inner experience with Japanese working people. Here Christian faith does not radiate the smell of butter but the fragrance of soy bean soup.

Secondary, indigenous Christian art must be art before it can be called indigenous. So often younger churches tolerate, naive mediocre art as long as Biblical themes are used. Even if an artist paints explicitly on Christian themes combining some sensitivity of Asian life in the picture, if he does not possess the quality of artistic creativity and power, his work will not be called indigenous Christian art. We must seek to develop indigenous art which will be appreciated as art by non-Christian critics and artists. This does not mean that Christian art should shut itself off from the ordinary people and become the property of a limited group of professionals. Universal popularity of works of art does not necessarily exclude creative expression. But we must be aware of the danger of choosing naive mediocre art which deals with Christian subject without considering the quality of form in which the content is expressed. It is wrong to consider as indigenous Christian art a static, lifeless figure of Christ just because he is covered by an oriental dress. It will be equally wrong not to appreciate a vital dynamic expression of the power of reality being grasped by an Asian mind as indigenous religious art even if there is no explicit religious symbol being painted in the picture. Here lies the problem of interrelationship between form and content of artistic expression.

In recent years there has been an experimentation being supported jointly by Protestant and Catholic groups in Tokyo to encourage the performance

of Christian Noh Play. Noh is one of the traditional art forms which expresses the deeper reality of life using a symbolical mask and dance. It is not the direct action but indirect expression that indicates something going on beneath the surface reality. The performance of Noh requires the skill of highly trained artists. Dr. Bunnosuke Sekine, professor at Toyo Eiwa College and well-known Christian scholar of the history of Japanese thought, comments that "Noh-play is one of the important forms of a concrete expression of the spiritual life of the Japanese people and that it can be a channel for the communication of the Gospel."¹⁸⁾

In April, 1963 just after Easter, two different groups made successful productions the Resurrection using Noh play. Both were sponsored by the two largest newspaper publishers in Japan, Asahi and Mainichi. Even the ordinarily severe critics publishing in the secular press gave high praise to both performances. (See, *Geijyutsu Shinchyo*, one of the critical periodicals of art criticism in Japan, July 1963, No. 162.) Two factors seemed to contribute to the success of these attempts. One is that highly competent artists, most of them non-Christians, have sincerely and devoutly cooperated thereby maintaining the rather high level of artistic expression exhibited in secular Noh. The other factor contributing to the success is that the subject matter, namely, Resurrection could be expressed well through the medium of Noh. After watching the two productions of Noh on the Resurrection in April, 1963, Professor Kazo Kitamori expressed his impression as follows:

"I have come to consider 'Noh' as the unique, unparalleled way of presentation of Christ and His resurrection as a stage art. I have also come to think that this particular style of stage art has a universal adequacy to represent the 'Risen Christ'. Here, the important problem that particularity is transformed into universality can be considered."¹⁹⁾

Noh, therefore, may become a form to express the event of resurrection, which is very difficult to describe in other ways. But in order to make the adventure successful it is absolutely essential to maintain the quality of the artistic performance. Indigenous art, therefore, must be a spontaneous expression of a culture, and it must be genuine art.

This leads to the question of the use of traditional art forms. Since many of these forms, such as Noh, the Tea Ceremony and Sho (calligraphy) have been developed in close connection with traditional religions, this might lead to a syncretistic art. It is often pointed out that indigenous art should not be syncretistic art, that is, a hybrid form of art which is an artificial mixture of the various elements of different cultural values. However, it is not enough to make a theoretical judgement about the syncretistic danger. What is needed is courageous experimentation with a cautious attitude, yet with willingness to take a risk. Unless Christian groups make a courageous attempt to break

through the ghetto mentality, in order to formulate an alternative to syncretistic accommodation, there will be no indigenous Christian culture. Indigenization in this context, implies being born into and growing up in a particular "soil". The fruits of a potted plant which came from abroad may be called foreign fruits, whereas if the seed is sowed in the soil of the nation and bear the first fruits, they are indigenous fruits. Being indigenous fruits means the coming out of the indigenous ground of the particular place yet sharing the universal common source. The shapes and color of the fruits are different according to the climate and soil of the particular locality yet the basic structure of the seed is the same, namely, the Gospel, and the one who gave the growth and the one to whom the gift of the first fruits is dedicated is the same, namely, God. Furthermore, indigenization can be seen not only in terms of diversity in unity, but also it can be seen in terms of cultural transformation. To be born into the particular place means that he will not remain as the outsider but inner participant in sharing both burden and joy together from within. Yet he continuously accepts the nourishing power of Grace which judges but at the same time transforms and renews the existing forms of cultural expression.

One of the most indigenous aspects of worship in the Japanese church is the memorial service of the families who are members of the congregation. In our church in Kyoto, twice a year in the spring and in autumn, we have memorial services in which we remember those who died in the past and especially those who happen to have the "memorial anniversary year", such as first year, third year, seventh year, thirteenth year etc. Obviously the idea itself originated in the ancestor worship of primitive religion and carried through, and Buddhism took it over, thus providing continuity and integrity in family and community life. The early Protestant missionaries and Japanese Christian leaders, in order to maintain the uniqueness of the Christian Gospel, made a conscious effort to eliminate memorial service from the life of the Japanese church. In order to maintain the purity of the Christian faith they made a conscious separation from the traditional culture. This tended to make the church a Christian Ghetto apart from the existing society, and quite often also resulted in Western form of Christian worship. As a result, the church was not regarded as a part of the indigenous community. In the course of the past history, one of the strong criticisms of the Christian church in Japan raised by non-Christians was related to this point: namely, Christianity is an imported religion.

One of the recent sociological studies among high school students 16-18 years of age, made by Mr. Norihisa Suzuki, revealed that 325 out of a total of 619 (52.6%) took a neutral attitude toward Christianity while 175 (28.2%) showed a positive appreciation of it, and 119 (19.2%) were negative toward it. Moreover, among those who affiliated themselves with the last category, several reasons were given for this negative attitude: 35 (29.4% of the total 119)

said that Christianity was an imported religion, not indigenous to Japan; 32 (13.4%) argued that Christianity was more concerned with God than with man and his affairs; 16 (13.4%) found Christian doctrine to be at variance with science.²⁰ Here the negative aspects of Christianity were reflected among the younger generation, who saw it as a foreign, other-worldly, and irrational religion.

One of the well recognized scholars on the study of religion commented that Christianity is not accepted by the mass of the people, because, firstly, it does not promise immediate happiness, and secondly, it has no pattern for paying homage to ancestors. The devotion to express genuine respect and love toward those who are deceased is especially strong among the Japanese. According to one survey, 57.8% of the converts from other religions, mostly from Buddhism, still participate in family observances in order to pay respect to their ancestors. A study on indigenization conducted by the Kyoto Local Study Group on Faith and Order comments as follows:

“In such a situation, is it possible to develop a Japanese-Christian pattern of respect for the deceased without falling into animism? This is an urgent question which must be answered by Japanese Christian leaders if Christianity is to be accepted by the Japanese as their own religion. Christianity with its doctrine of the resurrection of the individual seems to be better fitted theologically for this purpose than Buddhism according to which the individual is thought of merely as a ripple in the water.”²¹

The observance of memorial services in the Japanese church is an effort to respond to the universal urge for the remembrance of those dear ones who have finished their earthly pilgrimage. The memorial service does not seek to make the dead an object of adoration, but to give praise to the one who led their pilgrimage, expressing gratitude and thanksgiving for the power of Grace which has brought us victory over sin and death. It is a sincere effort to take over the particular form of non-Christian culture, yet transforming it into new meaning and new content rather than either rejecting it or merely accommodating it. When we gather at the altar on the memorial Sunday we are reminded that “These died in faith, not having received what was promised, but having seen it and greeted it from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.” (Hebrews, 11: 13) There is a basic difference between the memorial service in Buddhism and Christianity, namely, that the latter radiates wonder and joy on the basis of the acceptance of the event of resurrection, and hope in anticipating the eschatological end of time. We must continuously be aware that there is a danger of this uncritical acceptance of non-Christian elements in the memorial service corrupting the genuine Christian understanding of eternal life. For example, in some of traditional Japanese memorial services, there is a

custom of making the dead person the object of the service, placing his picture in the center, addressing the words of lamentation to him, and dedicating flowers and foods to the dead. We must make clear what is the object of the service, who is the center, and what is the meaning of the acts we perform in the service when we accept the traditional pattern.²²⁾ It is one thing to make a critical warning against false indigenization. But it is another thing to make a struggling effort to find the adequate expression of Christian concern, in using yet transforming the traditional form. This reminds us of the courage and creativity of the early Christians, who made the use of non-Christian languages, yet transformed them and gave them an entirely new meaning. For example, in order to express the idea of God revealed in Christ, they used the term which was used to describe polytheistic Gods, but transformed it to express the personal, monotheistic God. In the same way, they used the word *agape* for God's love. In classical Greek, *agape* was not frequently used and had a vague meaning compared to the widely used term, *eros*. But the New Testament writers by using it in the context of God's unwarranting love in Jesus Christ gave a new vitality to the word.

The report of the section which dealt with the tradition and traditions at the Fourth Conference on Faith and Order pointed out the meaning of the dynamic process of transmitting tradition as follows:

“When the Word became flesh, the Gospel came to man through a particular cultural medium, that of the Palestinian world of the time. So when the Church takes the Traditions to new peoples, it is necessary that again the essential content should find expression in terms of new culture... By the power of the Holy Spirit the apostles were enabled to preach the mighty works of God to each man in his own tongue, and thus the diversity of nations and cultures was united in the service of God. Through recognizing this, Christians in countries where they are a small minority can avoid the danger of developing a ghetto mentality.”²³⁾

Let me here in this connection give a few examples of indigenous art which use the traditional forms but transform them in such a way to express Christian faith. In Japan probably the most widely known example is Sadao Watanabe who is rated one of the top ten artists of colour prints. Rather than using wood, he cuts an intricate design in a heavy stencil, then uses paint, paste and an overlay technique to produce his boldly modern prints on Japanese paper. He often uses a Biblical theme and through them expresses the joy and hope of the drama of redemption.

Futaba Hanayagi, one of the finest classical dancers in Japan, when she was 31 years old, through an illness which threatened to end her career, encountered the Risen Lord. With devotion and commitment, she started a new experiment in expressing her joy and hope in Christ through the means of

classical Japanese dance. It was symbolically significant that at the celebration of the Centennial of the Protestant Mission in Japan in 1959, Hanayagi and her company performed a beautiful Japanese dance, expressing the spirit of Mary Magdalene when she encountered the event of resurrection.

Another example of the use of the traditional cultural heritage in Japan is the expression of Christian faith through flower arrangement, for centuries a treasured art. Sute Ota, one of the teachers of flower arrangement, had been arranging the flowers in the Kyoto Church to which she belonged. One day I asked her, "Would you please arrange flowers to express the Holy Spirit, since the coming Sunday is Pentecost?" She never thought of such a theme but responded positively. After a number of trials, she came out with one which expresses so vividly the meaning and spirit of Pentecost in which "a sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind and there appeared to them tongues as of fire and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2: 2-4)

As a final illustration let me introduce an illuminating way to express Christian faith through another form of Japanese traditional culture, namely, Haiku. Haiku is a brief and sharp expression of life through composing 17 syllable poems. The delicate and intricate events of the four seasons are difficult to express adequately in a long sentence. It is Haiku which makes a bold attempt to express them through the cutting edge of the symbolical 17 syllables. Haiku originally was one of the favorite art forms of the Zen Buddhist monks, but now is very popular among ordinary Japanese. There is always a Haiku club in every university and company. As *Time* magazine describes its "Japanese take to Haiku as naturally as Canadians take to hockey!"²⁴ Haiku is also popular among Christians.

Although it is difficult to retain the original style, when it is translated into other language, here is an example of Haiku which is composed by Rev. Tetsuzo Takeda, senior chaplain at St. Paul University in Tokyo and translated by his colleague Gene Lehman.

For Lent:	At Morning Mass The water has lost its chill: Lent has come.
For Easter:	The Light of Spring New streams Into the empty tomb.
At Christmas:	Around the old monk The orphan children gather O Holy Night.

Takeda has been writing Haiku more than forty years but only in the last decade has he seriously begun to explore the Christian possibilities of the form. He writes, "I realized that in composing Haiku in praise of nature I had been responding in the praise to the creation of God."²⁵ His work is ap-

preciated even by non-Christian Japanese poets since it expresses the vivid inner mood of life, with the favor of the season.

In contemplating the early disciples at the summer time feast of Trinity Sunday he writes:

By the Sea of Galilee
They went forth

The trees' fresh green was everywhere.

Finally indigenous art should look toward the future rather than looking back to the past cultural heritage. This is a very important point to recognize, since we are living in the process of a whole cultural transformation. Our time is a period of rapid social change, in which whole fabric of the old culture is being shaken. Some try to revitalize the old values by reviving the traditional culture, and others try to impose new sets of value systems centering upon the collective worship of man's power, either in the form of ultra-nationalism, or in a framework of totalitarianism. And still many others, without finding the definite system to replace the old value structures which are shaken, become very critical, and skeptical about anything. There is a wide spread cynical mode of life among the people, especially among young people in large urban and industrial centers in Asia. They no longer possess the vision and devotion to excite themselves in the participation in the positive reconstruction of society. They are extremely cynical to any human attempt, without the sense of trust of one another. They are indifferent toward the constructive involvement in the relevant and struggling realm of daily life. Those who possess the energy even to fight against that which stands in their way become a minority. In general, the spirit of apathy rather than of courage, and the attitude of resignation rather than of hope tend to prevail in the mind of people. What he actually and dominantly is concerned with is the betterment of his own material condition. Even this is pursued often individually without maintaining the spirit of solidarity. This means that people are looking for something which will give them hope to live in the struggles of life and something which will directly give vision to point out the coming pattern of common life.

The discussion of the indigenous culture must be considered in this context. It should not be an effort to look back forward the old traditional value with some sense of nostalgia and with a conservative interest, but to look toward the future, pointing out constructively both the style of human living and the structure of human community in the emerging world civilization. I would like to call it the teleological dimension of indigenous culture. In the recent discussion on the indigenization this point was affirmed by Vern Rossman:

“Thus the solution of the problem of indigenization, for the whole world, would seem to lie not in any return to past, nor even in an adaptation to

aspects of present cultures or religions, but rather in a march to the future."²⁶⁾

The need for the forward-looking Christian art is not only demanded by the changing situation in our world but also it is primarily supported and directed by the nature of the Christian faith. I would like to point out two factors for further consideration. The first factor is that it is a part of the essential manifestation of the Biblical faith that the God who created the world and who revealed himself in the event of Jesus Christ continuously carries on his creative and redemptive work in history. God the Holy Spirit is always at work in breaking through old forms of culture and recreating new forms of cultural expression which are relevant in the contemporary context in pointing out in meaningful ways the quality and depth of the Kingdom to come. This does not mean absolutizing a specific indigenous form of culture and identifying it with the goal of cultural transformation. This would be disastrous since it would repeat the mistake of liberal and humanitarian theology of the past century. Rather than affirming the self-made effort to attain the final stage of cultural development through human elevation, what is necessary is the struggle to respond to the redemptive and creative work of the Holy Spirit to reshape the present chaotic form in the period of transition and to participate in the humble yet courageous process of formation of provisional cultural telos not as the ultimate end in itself but as a means to point out the ultimate end of history. This means to re-evaluate positively the whole Christian conduct, personal and corporate, in the secular realm as a sign post and as foretaste of the Coming Kingdom. We look toward the future not because we have the ability and quality to bring the future, but because the God in whom we believe leads us continuously on the journey toward the future. Thus, he renews, and sustains the earthen vessels which are in his disposal, showing that the transcendent power belongs to Him and not to us. (II Cor. 4. 7)

M. M. Thomas, who has continuously been wrestling with the question of nation-building brings a challenge to develop a constructive humanism in the realm of culture:

"This is to ask for a return not to the theological liberalism of the nineteenth century, but rather to the relevance of eschatology to the search for a true humanism and to the concepts and structures of cultural life which express man's essential humanity. Unless the Christian Church can develop a theology which can see the Christian significance of such a common effort to build indigenous cultural foundations for the new life of the East, it cannot understand the theological in wordless of the religious and cultural renaissance which is happening in Asia and Arab land today. It is when Christians participate in the common cultural efforts in these lands, along with men of other religions and no religion, that there can arise a real religious dialogue in depth on ultimate truth."²⁷⁾

This leads to the question of the cultural formation. If, as Tillich states, "religion is the substance of culture and culture is expression of religion",²⁸⁾ how can we have indigenous Christianity without making the effort to be the substance of a new form of culture? If Christianity is willing to remain as a negative religion to judge and criticize the relative aspects of the existing culture, or as a religion which primarily concerned with the life beyond this world, it will not be necessary to make the effort toward cultural formation. Also, if Christianity is a religion concerned with the momentary decision, without considering the continuity and structure of the *content* of decision, it may not be necessary to foster the specific cultural formation. But if we take the event of incarnation and God's continuous redemptive work in history seriously, we must consider the specific way of responding to his work not only through the use of cultural media but also of forming a new culture.

Here an important distinction must be made, in order to protect ourselves from a dangerous temptation and possible misunderstanding. One must distinguish cultural Christianity on the liberal assumption from cultural transformation as the response to God's redemptive work in all realms of man's life, including the sphere of culture. The former tries to build a Christian culture through identifying the Christian faith with a particular form of human culture. It is an effort of elevation to achieve an idealistic state of cultural development. The latter implies considering the realm of culture as relative rather than absolute, yet believing that in and through the earthen vessels the transcendent power of Grace operates constantly, renewing and reshaping the pattern of culture. If we use H. Richard Niebuhr's concept, this is the position of "Christ transforming Culture" in contrasting to the position of "Christ of Culture"²⁹⁾

Tokutaro Takakura, one of the most influential theologians before World War II and once the president of Tokyo Theological Seminary, has written a book called *Fukuinteki Kirisutokyo*,³⁰⁾ which made a strong impact upon the Japanese churches in 1930s. In one of the chapters of the book, he discusses the relation between faith and culture. He classifies the various positions on the subject into four types. The first type includes those who tend to identify faith culture, closely placing them together in same horizontal plane. At this point he made a strong criticism of liberal theology and the theology of the Social Gospel. The second position was the position taken by the Catholic Church which makes a synthesis between the two by establishing a hierarchical order. The third type was the Biblical position, which, according to Takakura, holds to a dualistic interpretation between God and the world. The final type included those who take a mystical and pietistic attitude toward culture and tend to withdraw from it. It was rather clear that Takakura himself belonged to the third position in his typology. He explained the position as follows:

“In the creature as he is now, there is a deep dualism which prevents him from perceiving the revelation of the glory of God. Thus, those who are created and first judged and rejected by the Word of God in order to be saved. There is no horizontal harmony between God and World, God and culture, God and sinner, spirit and flesh, but there is a basic paradox—a struggle—a constant tension between them.”³¹⁾

It is significant to note that the fifth type of Christ transforming Culture, which H. R. Niebuhr described in *Christ and Culture*, is entirely lacking from Takakura's typology. There was a recognition of the sinful nature of man and a separation between faith and reason. The Cross is the essence of Christianity and man's sin is judged by the Cross as well as redeemed through the Cross.³²⁾ The emphasis in Takakura's theology was to accept the Word of God through repentance and to live in the world in tension and struggle.

Takakura and his followmen expressed strong criticism against social Christianity. Hidenobu Kuwata who in his book, *Benshohoteki Shingaku*, (Dialectical Theology) made the following critical remarks:

“It is dangerous to think of the social task of the Christian too quickly, too easily and too optimistically. In doing so we tend to secularize Christ. They (the leaders of social Christianity) apply in teachings of Jesus as the law in the economic, racial, national and international order. Along with the expectation of a new world there must be the recognition of suffering, tension and anxiety rather than mere enjoyment of its development.”³³⁾

This is an important warning to listen to. But a further step must be taken to establish a constructive way of participation in the transformation of cultural pattern rather than remaining in the position of dualism and of negative criticism.

Through the course of history, we learn that whenever the inner life of the church was revitalized, there was a new development of Christian art and Christian participation in transforming the social and cultural life of the period, as in the formation of the Roman Empire, the Renaissance, the Reformation and the Enlightenment. In Japan, we see in the history of Buddhism that when Buddhism begun to take root in Japanese society, it helped to foster the formation and development of a culture based on Buddhist understanding, especially that of Zen Buddhism, in fields including the tea ceremony, flower arrangement, the art of building gardens and the Haiku etc., giving them a Japanese flavor and the spirit of Shinto simplicity.³⁴⁾

The Report of the Kyoto Faith and Order Study Group in discussing the problem of indiginization of Christian faith has expressed frankly its opinion as follows:

“One of the weakness of the Japanese Church is that it has not developed a Christian culture. People spend an hour or two within the church on Sunday, and the rest of the week they live within the heathen cultue. It can easily be imagined how difficult it is to develop a genuinely Christian personality in this situation.”³⁵⁾

At the end of the survey of Christian art covering the different regions of the world, Joseph Joke made a following reflection in regard to the future of the Christian art.

“Christian art, inherited from Middle Ages, from Byzantium and from Rome, today seems played out, effort. An ancient world crumbles, the rythms of life are unsettled, tradition ceases to have authority, and spiritual values became corrupted and lost. A new world is being born, selection, dynamic, in a sense a state of flux and unforgiving.

So this generation must recreate a civilization. Christian must accept the challenge of this turning-point in history and, by seeking to reconcile the old and new, respond to mankind’s desperate need for love and brotherhood, in short, carry out their master’s teaching.

Only in this way will our generation be able to hand on to those to come a new Christian art, different in its forms of expression, but inspired by the great unchanging truths of our religion of the divine Son of Man.”³⁶⁾

In the period of the rapid social change every one is looking for something new in transforming the old and reliable in the midst of uncertainty. No one is sure what will be the shape and patter of the coming civilization. But for Christians, one thing is sure, namely that Christians always open themselves toward the future with hope and constantly place themselves under the disposal of Grace in the process of transformation. Here again the Christian presence as the first fruits has a significant meaning since the first fruits represent the new creation. The Christian expericnces something radically new every morning. This was expressed by St. Paul so vividly. “If any one is in Christ, he is a new creation, the old has passed away, behold, the new has come.” (I Cor. 5: 17)

- 1) For the most fruitful discussion on the subject, see H. Richard Nieduhr, *Christ and Culture, 1951.*
- 2) op. cit. p. 13.
- 3) *Christ in Art*, a list of fifty-six great images of Christ, mimeographed report published by the National Council of the Churches of the Churches of Christ, U. S. A., December 1955. This includes an excellent list of the outstanding representatives of paintings of Christ, selected by a highly competent committee

- consisting of Alfred H. Barr, Jr., George Heard Hamilton, Charles Rufs Money, Perry T. Rathbone and Paul Tillich.
- 4) Masao Takenaka, *Reconciliation and Renewal in Japan*, 1957, p. 90.
 - 5) Minutes of the Working Committee of the East Asia Christian Conference, Brisbane, Nov. 19-22, 1962, p. 43.
 - 6) Daniel Fleming, *Heritage of Beauty*, 1937; Daniel Fleming, *Each with his own Brush*, 1938; Daniel Fleming, *Christtan Symbols in a World Community*, 1940; Arno Lehmann, *Die Kunst der Jungen Kirchen*, 1957.
 - 7) Arno Lehmann, "Indigenous Art and Bible-Illustration". first given as a lecture at the Study Conference on Bible Illustration at Edindurgh University, Sept. 1959, and later appeared in *Occasional Bulletin, from Missionary Research Library*. February 15, 1961, p. 8.
 - 8) For example, I find persoually more vitality and power in African Christian art than in Asian; examples can be found in two outstanding books, one by Daniel Fleming, *Each with his own Brush*, and Arno Lehmann, *Die Kunst der jungen Kirchen*. Although theological formulation on the indigenization of Christian art may not have taken place, certainly we see already powerful and and creative indigenous development possibly much more vital than Asia!).
 - 9) Rollo May, Creativity and Encounter, *Union Theological Seminarl Quarterly Review*, Vol. XVII, No. 4, May 1963, p369.
 - 10) The Exhibition of Children's Paintings of Bible Stories was held at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Dec. 1862. See also *Newsweek*, December 24, 1962.
 - 11) Shiryū Morita, *Action in Writing*, 1963, p. 4-6.
 - 12) Ephesians 4: 13-16, The New English Bible.
 - 13) Rollo May, Creativity and Encounter, *Union Theological Seminary Quarterly Review*, Vol. XVIII. No. 4, May 1963, pp, 371-372.
 - 14) Elton Trueblood, *The Company of the Committed*.
 - 15) Paul Tillich, "Existential Aspects in Modern Art", in *Christianity and Existentialism*, ed. Carl Michaelson, 1955.
 - 16) Christopher Dawson, *The Historic Reality of Christian Culture*, 1960, pp. 14-15.
 - 17) "The Indigenization of Christianity in Japan" is the Report of the Kyoto Local Study Group on Faith and Order, January, 1963.
 - 18) Japan Christian Activity News, Feb. 15, 1963.
 - 19) Kazo Kitamori, Universality of Christian "Noh-play". *The Christian Weekly*, May 11, 1963.
 - 20) Reported in *Japanese Religions* Vol. 3, No. 1, Spring 1963, p. 55.
 - 21) The Report of Kyoto Local Study Group on Faith and Order, January, 1963.
 - 22) There is very little literature available on the Christian attitude toward the funeral and memorial service among the yonuger churches. The Research Institute on the Mission of Church of the United Church has published a book. Kirisutokyo Sogi to Sono Ikyōjiban, (The Christian Funeral and its Non-Christian Background), 1959. This is a very useful study, seeking to define the Christian understanding of the funeral and to distingoiish the non-Christian elements creeping into the Christian funeral in Japan.
 - 23) Montreal Report, Section II

- 24) *Time*, March 15, 1963 p. 53.
- 25) *Time*, Ibid.
- 26) Vern Rossman, The Breaking In of The Future, the problem of indigenization and cultural synthesis, *The International Review of Mission*, Spring, 1963, p. 181.
- 27) M. M. Thomas, in a review of *World Cultures and World Religions: The Comming Dialogue* by Hendrik Kraemer, *International Review of Missions*, 1961, pp. 208-9.
- 28) *Protestant Era*, 1948.
- 29) H. Richard Niebohr, *Christ and Culture*, 1951.
- 30) Tokutaro Takakura, *The Evangelical Christianity*, 1927.
- 31) Ibid., p. 136.
- 32) Ibid., p. 117-118.
- 33) Kuwata Hidenobu, *Benshohoteki Shingaku*, (*Dialectical Theology*, 1933, p. 436.
- 34) See *The Report of The Kyoto Faith and Order Study Group*, Jan- 1963, p. 40.
- 35) Ibid., p. 41.
- 36) Joseph Joke, *ECCE HOMO*, 1962, p. 184.