Theology and Theological Education in Japan

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THE SELFHOOD OF THE CHURCH

IN THE INAUGURAL ADDRESS of the ceremony during which I was installed as president of Tokyo Union Theological Seminary some years ago, I spoke about the goal of theological education, identifying this goal as "the establishment of the selfhood of the church." I do not know what resonances this phrase has when translated into Korean, English, or German, but I hope that what it points to in the Japanese context will become clear in the course of this paper. It reflects, to be sure, a specific tradition in theological education handed down at Tokyo Union Theological Seminary, but it also expresses what was required of the church in order to cope with the confused situation into which it was plunged almost immediately after the start of its second century in Japan.

Although the Protestant church in Japan began its second century with new plans and fresh determination, certain disorders arose in the latter half of the 1960s that have not yet been fully resolved. These disorders appear to stand in contrast to those of the World War II period, but actually they can be understood as essentially identical, for in both cases it can be seen that the problems spring from the failure to establish the selfhood of the church.

The wartime problem is that most of our churches succumbed to the militaristic nationalism of the Japan of that period. In contrast, the problems of recent years are consequences of a trend imported from abroad. The movements in opposition to the Vietnam War and the New Left student revolts of the late 1960s swept the world of that time, and the theological world also underwent important changes with the coming into vogue of theologies of revolution and liberation. To the present day, our church has been unable to extricate itself from the disorders stemming from the strife on university campuses that came to a peak between 1968 and 1970. The fact that this strife made its way into the church is a sociologically important feature of Japanese society, but the point to be stressed here is that the second century of the church's witness in Japan opened in the midst of disturbances like these.

Theological education takes place, of course, within this concrete situation. Why is it that our church veers like this, sometimes to the right, sometimes to the left? This is the

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issue from which the question of "the selfhood of the church" emerges. Theological education is not merely a matter of what professors teach in their various fields; it is a matter of coming to grips with the question of how to establish the selfhood of the church.

Why is it that the selfhood of the church still needs to be established? From the perspective of churches in Europe and North America, the reason may seem to be that ours is a "younger church." And while it is true that our church has a history of only a hundred years, is it for this reason, because of its immaturity, that the selfhood of the church remains to be established? I think not.

On the contrary, I suggest that this problem cannot be reduced to the simple question of maturity versus immaturity. The countries of Northeast Asia are by no means "younger countries." They are countries with long histories and cultural traditions of their own into which the church has been set. The fact that the selfhood of the church remains to be established, or that the selfhood of the church is weak, may well involve elements of immaturity, but this viewpoint alone does not permit an adequate understanding of the matter.

The weakness of this selfhood stems, rather, from a different circumstance of greater breadth and profundity. This circumstance has its origin in a problem common to all Japanese people, a problem that in its unresolved form has been assimilated by Japanese Christians and churches and reproduced as a "Christian" phenomenon.

The problem shared by all Japanese people is that their selfhood involves two poles between which they lose track of their own identity. In ancient times Japan received important influences from China and Korea, and in modern times from Europe and North America. As a result, Japanese culture itself can be understood as having two poles, one representing indigenous traditions, the other representing traditions imported from abroad – and the relation between these two poles involves a certain amount of tension. This situation I will refer to as one of "polarity." This kind of polarity exists wherever cultures are in contact; there is nothing uniquely Japanese about it. But I think it can be suggested that this kind of polarity, having existed in Japan ever since its reception of Buddhism, has informed the dynamism of Japanese culture. Moreover, this polarity is reflected in the selfhood of the Japanese people who swing pendulum-like from pole to pole. This polarity underlies the problem of human identity in Japan. When this polarity is overcome in a positive way, selfhood is strengthened, but when this does not happen, it becomes a cause of weakness.

To people in Korea, this way of looking at Japanese people may seem odd. Indeed, there are very likely many who, when they think of Japanese people, recall with anguish the arrogance and presumption of those who formed the nucleus of Japanese imperialism. But arrogance and presumption by no means represent the strength of human selfhood. The Japanese people have sought, to be sure, to hold fast to the selfhood that stands at the core of this polarity. When receiving influences from China, they coined the term *wakon kansai* to represent the way these influences were to be received: "Chinese learning" (*kansai*) on the basis of the "Japanese spirit" (*wakon*). After 1868 when Western cultural influences entered Japan, the slogan was altered to *wakon yōsai*: Western learning on the basis of the Japanese spirit.

This idea became at once the principle for the modernization of the Japanese state and the goal for the education of its citizens. Its outcome was not only Japanese imperialism but also the collapse of this imperialism.

This aspect of modern Japan is still causing anguish to people in Northeast and Southeast Asia. It is certain that the *wakon yōsai* approach is once more gaining ground. But this approach cannot signify a true overcoming of the polarity-problem; so the problem of weak selfhood continues, as before, to lurk in our souls.

Establishing selfhood is something that has to come into existence through overcoming this polarity. Expressed in terms of the Hegelian dialectic, we are concerned here with an inner relationship of tension and opposition between thesis and antithesis. To overcome this tension is to sublimate the opposition in a higher synthesis. The principle of "Western learning on the basis of the Japanese spirit," however, does not represent a sublimation of this opposition in a new synthesis. Instead, it is merely a matter of taking from Western learning (the antithesis) the scientific and technical elements that lend themselves to application in Japan. Consequently, the Japanese spirit (the thesis) is made ready anew for a replay, as it were, of the military build-up of an earlier day—a development which, whether large-scale or small, is nothing but imperialism all over again. The real strength of independent selfhood, however, is not a matter of eliminating the negative, but of purifying and assimilating it so that through the negative medium a higher mode of existence may emerge.

The point I wish to emphasize here is that Japanese Christianity, unable to overcome this problem of human existence in Japan, has become entangled in the gap between thesis and antithesis. I became president of our seminary during a time when nearly every university in Japan, under the influence of the winds of student revolt that raged in many parts of the world, had become a scene of strife that eventually gained entrance into the church itself, bringing with it discord and heartache. Tokyo Union Theological Seminary (TUTS), as one of these universities, proved no exception. In our seminary we have a proud tradition and some fine examples of what I here call "the selfhood of the church." Uemura Masahisa, a member of the first generation of Protestant Christians in Japan, himself a pastor and theologian, laid the foundations for this tradition in theology and theological education at the seminary. His loyal follower Kumano Yoshitaka, also a professor of this seminary, carried forward and established this tradition. It is significant that neither of these men studied abroad, that both were theologians who, without ever leaving Japan, came to be what they were. Yet both remained free from Japanese nationalism. Exercising careful discrimination in selecting among good and bad influences from abroad, they held a clear vision of, and worked to establish, a free and independent church in Japan. Looking at the plight of this church since the beginning of its second century of witness to Christ, however, we are forced to admit that this tradition has not yet been made sufficiently vital in Japanese church life.

Why is it, though, that overcoming this polarity has to be grappled with as the problem of "establishing the selfhood of the church"? Later I shall have more to say about this when I turn to the question of theology, but for the moment I should like to explain why overcoming this polarity, if it is at all possible, must take shape as "the selfhood of the church."

Let us begin by looking at the term itself. Recent theology, when using terms like "existence" or "selfhood," has had immediate reference to Bultmann's existential theology. But the "selfhood of the church" differs from the "existence" that Bultmann stresses. In contrast to his "existence," which concerns individual selfhood, we are concerned with *churchly* selfhood. The selfhood of the pastor, for example, is not merely that of an individual Christian; it is the larger selfhood of one aware of responsibility for the church. The apostle Paul said, "If all were a single member, where would the body be?" (I Cor. 12:19) Churchly selfhood has to do with the member being conscious of the larger body. To cultivate this larger selfhood entails education that proceeds in relation to all the members, that is, in relation to the existence of each individual Christian. What the apostle Paul endeavored to point out to the spiritualists in the church at Corinth may well be identified as "establishing the selfhood of the church."

Our relationship with Christ, by the same token, is not merely an individual matter, but is to be understood as involving the church community. All who respond to Christ's invitation have a latent grasp of this selfhood of the church, and it is the task of theological education to actualize this latent understanding. As mentioned earlier, this goes beyond the level of debate over how subjects in the theological curriculum should be taught. Theological education means cultivating the selfhood of the church. When theology does this, then it becomes able, for the first time, to extricate Christians and the church from the previously described polarity. To put it another way, where the overcoming of this polarity takes place, there the church becomes actualized.

If Japan needs to transcend the easy solution implied in the phrase "Western learning, Japanese spirit," if it needs to overcome the polarity between thesis and antithesis and go on by way of a higher synthesis to a new mode of existence, and if this entails a new task in the area of public education, then theological education is to be understood not as an endeavor carried on apart from public education behind the confining walls of the church, but as education that, by fulfilling what public education should have done but could not, constitutes in this respect the culmination and crown of public education.

THE JAPANESE SITUATION

The topic assigned to me is "theology and theological education in the Japanese context," but everything hinges on how this context is understood. As you will have noticed, in discussing the problem of human existence in Japan I was already beginning to touch on the Japanese situation. That is to say, the polarity that shapes the human problem in Japan is a consequence of the cultural polarity that has come into being through Japan's contact with cultural elements from abroad.

The problem of cultural polarity also became prominent in the Mediterranean world during the first few centuries after Christianity entered the area. The problem diminished, however, as Christianity crossed the Atlantic and made its way into the American continents. Today, now that Christianity has crossed the Pacific and entered Northeast Asia, the problem has emerged once again. The Japanese people grasp this state of affairs from their position in Japan. This is not to say that cultural polarity in Japan first began with its nineteenth century encounter with Western culture. But in this encounter, Japan's cultural polarity first assumed a scope and significance that give it a place in world history. Despite the compromise of the formula "Western learning, Japanese spirit," the two tendencies that became evident soon after 1868, namely, nationalism and Westernism, have come to permeate modern Japan and continue to rival one another to the present day. One may even refer to this as a rivalry with implications for world history.

This rivalry, however, in addition to its extensive implications for world history, has profound implications for the problem of worldview. When we consider the Japanese situation, especially the theological task in this situation, we find it necessary to take a long, hard look at what this rivalry implies for the problem of worldview.

What, then, *is* this rivalry with worldview implications that gives shape to the Japanese situation? In order to clarify this matter, I should like to introduce here a man whose writings are highly regarded and widely read in Japan: the Meiji period literary figure Natsume Sōseki (1867–1916). Comparing Japanese and Western poetry, Natsume suggested that whereas in Japanese poetry the major theme is *nature*, in Western poetry the major theme is *human affairs*. This contrast between nature and human affairs, more than a difference between poetic forms, expresses a difference in the character of the cultures that underlie these forms. I myself am inclined to agree that what is distinctive about Western poetry is its concern with human affairs. And what makes this feature prominent in the West is the value placed on freedom. One may go so far as to suggest that even the scientific and technological skills that modern Japan learned from the West are expressions of Western people's freedom. Just as it is unnatural for a dog to fly, it is equally unnatural for people to fly. But today, by utilizing science and technology, human beings fly everywhere. Eastern people, however, attach importance to "nature" and find there the basis and criterion for existence. This Eastern perspective Natsume summed up in the overall concept of "nature."

One man who took up the problem treated here and considered it as a philosophical issue was Karl Löwith. A German philosopher whose mother was Jewish, Löwith left Germany after the Nazi rise to power. From Italy he came to Japan, where he taught at Tōhoku University in Sendai; later he accepted a position at Hartford Seminary Foundation in America, eventually returning to Germany to become Karl Jaspers' successor at Heidelberg. Löwith was strongly influenced by Nietzsche's thought. Nietzsche, totally rejecting the nineteen centuries of Christian history in the Western world, sought to return to the pre-Christian cosmology of eternal return held by the ancient Greeks. Together with the nineteen centuries of Christian history in the West, Nietzsche rejected the Christian God, advocating atheism instead. Löwith concurred with this view, and even though he was partly Jewish himself, he rejected the historically oriented Judeo-Christian worldview and tried, like Nietzsche, to go back to the ancient Greek cosmology, the "natural" cosmos of eternal return. His basic thesis appears in the following words:

> Taken literally, "world history" is an erroneous concept. For the only thing that embraces the world, the only thing that is universal is nature, within which our world of human history is but a transient trifle.

Löwith explains this thesis by means of a Bruegel painting with the caption "Icarus' Fall from Heaven." This explanation captures with remarkable accuracy the gist of his thought, which I paraphrase as follows:

> Icarus, fashioning a pair of wings, flew up into the sky. But because he flew too close to the sun, the wax that held the wings together melted, the wings fell to pieces, and Icarus tumbled head over heels into the sea. One foot is still visible above the surface, but it too will shortly disappear. Afterwards, the sun continues to glow brilliantly on the horizon, a handful of fishermen linger on the beach, shepherds and peasants labor on the

land. Eventually silence falls over the earth as if nothing had ever happened.

Anyone reading this philosopher's explanation will doubtless find it odd and will wish to ask him whether he really holds that World War II, including Auschwitz, in the last analysis amounted to nothing more than the flight of Icarus. Nonetheless, we must admit that in Löwith's thought there is an element continuous with that of the East Asian world. Jürgen Habermas characterizes Löwith's thought as a "stoic withdrawal from historical awareness," and it is doubtless true that Löwith regards the world with "stoic resignation." This attitude has something in common with Asian resignation. Löwith poses the problem in a way at once universal and radical: are we to grasp the world as "nature" or as "history"? If we discard the historical worldview, our view of human nature will accordingly become radically different.

Yet even though Löwith rejects the historical worldview on philosophical grounds, the real world of the present day is changing and moving in a direction exactly opposite to the one he envisioned—a fact that nobody can fail to recognize. Modernization and industrialization are the basic trends today. The American economist Walt Rostow, using the airplane as a metaphor, explains the various stages of economic growth as culminating in a "take-off," and the nature of this movement can thus be regarded as a departure from the world of nature. The situation of Japan today is comparable to the flight of a jet plane in that it remains stable only as long as it is flying. Löwith might wish to identify this flight with Icarus' folly. Yet for many centuries Japan was an agricultural society, and the Japanese people had a deep interest in the movements of nature—so much so that this interest still appears in everyday salutations (though nowadays these salutations have less to do with the weather and more to do with whether business is booming). Why is it that the Liberal Democratic Party has continued so long in power? In my view it is because the majority of Japanese people are unwilling to entrust the controls of this flight to the other parties and their inexperienced pilots.

Löwith's either/or worldview may be of considerable interest as a philosophical venture, but for Japanese people today it can hardly constitute a realistic option. His worldview involves more than a simple either/or choice; it must be scrutinized as a profound expression of the polarity problem in the contemporary world. For the opposition between "nature" and "history" that Löwith refers to implies far more than Icarus' eventual destruction by nature, far more than the destruction of mountains and forests, rivers and oceans (the destruction of external nature caused by industrialization), far more than the restructuring of the person's inner nature through science and technology (as in genetic engineering). It implies the full-blown and real danger that the entire world might be wiped out by nuclear war.

If we cannot choose between "nature" and "history," then we are indeed in a situation of serious polar opposition. This polarity, needless to say, also appears in Japan. Or perhaps one may venture to say that the polarity found in the Japanese situation carries over into this world-polarity. This is what the Japanese situation looks like in theological perspective, and it is in this context that theology must undertake its task.

THE THEOLOGICAL TASK

Theology in Japan is carried out within the context just described. This context, however, though evident in Japan, is actually one that involves the world as a whole.

I have deliberately used the phrase "theology in Japan" in order to avoid using the term "Japanese theology." Nowadays the term "Asian theology" is often heard, but we, who know from experience the error involved in the attempt during World War II to fashion a "Japanese theology," hope that today's Asian theologians will not repeat the same mistake. In the last analysis our mistake was to allow ourselves to become entangled in the previously mentioned polarity, as a result of which the solution that theology ought to have provided, the solution that people counted on theology to provide, became impossible – in fact, it even became an expression of the problem. To assert Asian theology vis-à-vis Western theology can only be taken, I imagine, as a classic expression of the immaturity of "younger churches." In the long run, however, the problem that we in Northeast Asia confront is one with which Western theologians too should come to grips – a grave problem that calls for theological exchange on a worldscale.

Earlier I observed that the task of theological education in Japan is "to establish the selfhood of the church." The establishing of this selfhood, however, is not something that comes about merely by devoted application to the study of theological subjects or by subjective commitment and diligence. Karl Barth used the expression "theological existence," but this existence itself can only come into being theologically, that is, as its selfhood is imbued with theological capacity. Karl Barth also called theology a "function of the church," but since the function called theology is inconceivable apart from selfhood, theology should properly be defined as a "function of the selfhood of the church." Establishing this selfhood and carrying out this function adequately go hand in hand.

To establish this selfhood means to overcome the opposition between thesis and antithesis. By overcoming thesis and antithesis, by ascending to a higher synthesis, selfhood takes shape. Earlier I posed the question, Why is it that the overcoming of this polarity in Japan must take the form of the selfhood of the church? Now I must try to deal with this question.

We need to remind ourselves, first of all, that this polarity, this opposition between thesis and antithesis, is rooted in a larger opposition that embraces the entire world. This being the case, the overcoming of this opposition is by no means something that can be actualized merely by logical speculation. This is the point at which the assertion that the overcoming of this polarity must take the form of the selfhood of the church becomes relevant. For this polarity cannot be overcome without a secure standpoint, a firm foundation, a solid place to stand on. What can it mean to overcome the opposition between "nature" and "history" anyway? In all likelihood, such a victory will never occur apart from the appearance of what the Revelation of John refers to as "a new heaven and a new earth." In this eschatological concept we find conjoined the natural concept "heaven and earth" and the historical concept "new." Or again, the equally eschatological concepts of "the resurrection of the body" and "resurrection body" likewise join together the natural concept "body" and the historical concept "resurrection." In any event, if an *Aufhebung* of this worldview opposition between "nature" and "history" is really conceivable, it will require us to direct our attention to the eschatological dimension. If, on the other hand, such an *Aufhebung* can emerge prior to the eschaton, that is, during the interim period in which we live, then this can only be possible in the church that anticipates the eschatological possibility. The church is the place that anticipates the eschatological conquest of the opposition between "nature" and "history," and in the church we do not, like Löwith, choose one to the exclusion of the other, but overcome their opposition.

The church in Japan is, to be sure, one element in a religion imported from abroad, and must therefore be regarded as a constitutive element in the antithesis to which the thesis stands opposed. This is because the church has so far failed to get beyond this polarity. But it is worse than meaningless to join the thesis (nationalism) simply to avoid being regarded as part of the antithesis. We know that the church has the ability to overcome this polarity. The problem is: how can this ability be brought into play? how can this victory be realized?

I should like to consider this matter by reflecting on a passage that Reinhold Niebuhr was fond of quoting, a passage from the prophet Amos:

> "Are not you Israelites like Ethiopians to me, O people of Israel?" says the Lord.
> "Did I not bring Israel up from the land of Egypt, the Philistines from Caphtor, and the Syrians from Kir?" (Amos 9:7)

Surprisingly, here we find Ethiopians, Philistines, and Syrians listed along with the Israelites. Even more surprisingly, that great event in salvation-history, the Exodus, is bracketed together with the migrations of other peoples. Before the absolute God, the entire world of history is relativized. This unique relativism I would like to call "theological relativism." It indicates that, as seen from God's point of view, the world as a whole is relativized and the histories of its various peoples come into being within this relativized world. For this reason Niebuhr saw in this passage the first occurrence of the concept of "world history."

The question of how to comprehend the thought of this prophet is a difficult one indeed. The Israel of his day could not accept his thought. But when it comes to overcoming the opposition between thesis and antithesis and establishing the selfhood of the church in Japan, it becomes essential to grasp his thought correctly. It is doubtless true that the church, as something imported from abroad, has its own specific history that stands over against the traditions of Japan. But the church, by virtue of the God manifested by the prophet Amos, has been granted the power to relativize the opposition between thesis and antithesis. Believing in this God, the church is capable of self-relativization—the self-relativization that becomes possible in relationship to the absolute God. This is where the capability of theology comes to bear.

"Self-relativization" means introspection that includes self-criticism. The Japanese theologian Watanabe Zenda once said, "The continuation of the church means that the church has held fast to its theology and also that it has withstood its theology." There is much truth in this saying. Why is it that heresy never long endures? Toward the end of the Middle Ages there were heresy trials, to be sure, and heresy was crushed. But in ancient times Marcion led a sizable movement. Why did his heresy fail to grow? Surely its failure to grow is due not so much to heresy trials as to the fact that it could not withstand theology. For the church to have the introspective capacity that theology represents is not a weakness but a strength. This is the function here identified as "the selfhood of the church."

In Japanese tradition (the thesis) there exists no such capacity for self-relativization. The "nature" that underlies the Japanese worldview includes no absolute God who arouses self-relativization. Consequently, the overcoming of this opposition between thesis and antithesis has to take place from the side of the antithesis.

Hence it is that even though the church historically belongs to the antithesis, its true standpoint is in the opposition-overcoming synthesis. This point may be illustrated through a consideration of the bicycle. In order for a bicycle to stand when motionless (the thesis), it needs a support to resist the power that would cause it to fall (the antithesis). But in order for a bicycle to move, the support must be removed. At this point the power that would cause it to fall changes into a power that causes forward motion, and the bicycle, by running, stands dynamically. As opposed to its earlier static stance (thesis), this is a higher way of standing (synthesis). Also important is the fact that in order to continue standing in this way, one must keep moving. For this purpose the rider must not only be aware of his or her immediate surroundings but also keep an eye on where he or she is going. I use this analogy in order to indicate what kind of theology is needed in order to function on behalf of the selfhood of the church. This theology, as opposed to an existential theology that emphasizes decision moment by moment, has to be one with a larger historical perspective. It must be a theology with a perspective on world history like that of Amos—a theology of history (*Geschichtstheologie*). This means more than theology that makes use of history (*historische Theologie*). It points to a theology of history with a historical perspective granted to it by virtue of the vertical orientation it shares with Amos.

By maintaining theologically this higher position of synthesis, the church that here performed a role in Westernization and there, conversely, curried favor with nationalism is enabled to extricate itself from this polarity-bound veering from left to right. Then the church in Japan, or more broadly the church in Northeast Asia, becomes free to consider what its task should be.

THE CONFESSION OF FAITH IN A WORLD IN PROCESS OF HISTORICIZATION

The fact that our world today is enmeshed in the rivalry between a worldview oriented to "nature" and another oriented to "history" comes to concrete expression in issues concerning the environment, natural resources, and nuclear war. Particularly in Europe these issues are felt with great sensitivity. But in Northeast Asia, which originally placed its trust in "nature" but is now in the midst of a drive toward modernization and industrialization, it is "historicization" that is becoming more and more pronounced. Japan has become a leader among the developed countries of the world in the area of science and technology, but dashing headlong in this direction, it has no clear idea of where its efforts are leading or where it wants to go. It is like the sorcerer's apprentice who, on learning the magical formula for making water gush forth, produced it in great quantities, but never learned the formula by which to turn it off. Especially in the area of genetic engineering, the locus of the most heated battles in the secret recesses of "nature" and "history," Japan is capable of causing great danger. This, together with the threat of nuclear war, the locus of the most heated battles in the outer world, will be a major issue for humankind for years to come.

The intense historicization taking place in Northeast Asia is also apparent in China since the Communist revolution. Marxism, the ideology of the revolution, is a form of thought patently alien to Asia. As Löwith observes, it stems from the historically oriented Judeo-Christian worldview and constitutes a kind of philosophy of history that, calling itself "scientific," aims to reconstruct both society and its members. Thus Northeast Asia is caught up in an immense movement of historicization.

Against this background, two opposing

views have been presented. One appears in a book by Hendrik Kraemer entitled *World Cultures and World Religions: The Coming Dialogue* (1960), and the other in a book by his successor, Arend van Leeuwen, entitled *Christianity in World History* (1964). According to Kraemer, modern people, when they have learned to treat nature, society, and human beings scientifically and technically, will fall into a "religious void," and people who do retain an interest in religion will be drawn not so much to Christianity as to religions of Indian origin (cf. pp. 323, 358ff.). Van Leeuwen, on the other hand, holds that what we see happening today is the spread of European culture throughout the world and that in all this the spirit of a "Christianity incognito" is at work. He claims that this process will involve humankind as a whole in Christian history (cf. pp. 18, 420). The two men differ markedly in their diagnoses of the ongoing "historicization" of the world, Kraemer calling on the basis of his diagnosis for an "apologia nova" (p. 365), van Leeuwen for an "ecumenical theology of history" (p. 431ff.).

So far as Japan is concerned, Kraemer's point of view is presently the more reliable of the two. If Japan's scientists and intellectuals were to take an interest in religion, it would probably be Buddhism to which they would turn. This tendency has a counterpart in Europe and North America, too. The problem, however, if put in terms of the sorcerer's apprentice, is whether Buddhism is really capable of teaching the magic formula by which to turn the water off.

Van Leeuwen's teaching is typical of many that, beginning in the mid-1960s, swept over the world in affirmation of secularization—a reversal that then attracted much attention by reason of its unexpectedness. About the same time Harvey Cox, in *The Secular City*, indirectly advanced a similar claim.

Kraemer's teaching took as its point of departure the classical understanding of secularization as the decline of religion in the face of scientific and technological advance. If there is a moment of truth in this understanding, van Leeuwen lost sight of it by turning this understanding inside out. This is the flaw in his doctrine. His affirmation of the spread of European culture throughout the world preceded the inundation of European markets by Japanese products. Van Leeuwen's point of view may be true, however, to the extent that it identifies "secularization" with "historicization." In this respect he has doubtless grasped correctly the situation of today's world. It is only too clear that a major problem in the contemporary world has been the rivalry between East and West.

Van Leeuwen calls for a "theology of history." In this respect he stands close to the position advocated here, though we differ fundamentally in that the theology of history I referred to earlier is not something undertaken from the side of an antithetically understood historicization, but is something based on a higher, polarity-transcending synthesis. This is theology of history as seen from Amos' perspective. It is from this point of view that we are to survey the overall situation that has emerged in Northeast Asia. Just as Löwith, in his *Weltgeschichte und Heilsgeschehen* (1953), pointed out theological presuppositions in Hegel's and Marx's philosophy of history (though he did so with negative implications, whereas we look at them positively), so this theology of history can, for example, take up the ideology of the Chinese revolution with regard to its theological presuppositions and point out their historical origin, meaning, and problems. In effect, the state of affairs in Northeast Asia as a whole is regarded from this higher position.

By the same token this theology of history requires us to examine our church and point out its historical origin, meaning, and problems. Thus this kind of theology of history is at the same time a theology of the church in Northeast Asia, a function of the established selfhood of the church. This theology leads of itself not only to a correct understanding of the history of the church but also to a clear recognition of the cultural values found therein. This church, for example, as one stream deriving from Anglo-American Protestantism, has given rise to specific cultural values, and it is to be recognized that the character of the church reflects its adaptation to them. These values include the ideas of separation of church and state, freedom, personality, human rights, and democracy. From this higher point of view the church must consider how these ideas can be brought to life. The question of how to bring them to life is not the same as that of appropriating and advocating them. In order to bring them to life, we need a thorough grasp of their origin, meaning, and difficulties.

In order to clarify this point, I should like to outline the meaning of one idea, the idea of "freedom," with reference to the Japanese situation. Japanese people born since the end of World War II, having been born in the midst of freedom and democracy, seem to think that Japan has always been a country that honored freedom. They enjoy and claim freedom as their own. Yet this is a shortsighted point of view. Only with awareness of freedom's historical origin, of how it came to Japan, of its meaning and difficulties, does it become possible to consider how this freedom can be defended and brought to life. This awareness, again, has to be deepened to include the question of why it is that this foreign idea of freedom has come to be meaningful to Japanese people living in a completely different Asian sphere of culture, and why, for this reason, it has to be shared with those who know it not. Moreover, it is important to become aware of what kinds of difficulties arise when this freedom is wrongly asserted. This kind of awareness cannot be adequately exercised at the lower level where thesis and antithesis stand in polar opposition; it requires us to stand on the higher level of synthesis.

From this perspective it becomes clear that the great task confronting Northeast Asia is not to embrace the destructive eschaton toward which the free nations and the former Communist nations once raced in their common movement toward historicization, but to discern how to actualize, at the very least, a stable relationship of peaceful coexistence. In order to cope with issues like these, what is needed is a theology of history based on a higher standpoint. It is also necessary to investigate, for example, how a society can appropriately make its own the ideas of separation of church and state, freedom, human rights, etc. But the presupposition for coping with these issues is the establishment of the selfhood of the church. In order to actualize peaceful coexistence, it is essential to determine realistically what state of readiness the free nations should aim for and what steps they should take for this purpose.

But the point to be emphasized here is that this worldwide movement toward historicization is a fact of remarkable significance. It is significant not because, as van Leeuwen believes, it represents a change in which the existence of Christianity plays a role of great meaning. Reinhold Niebuhr, dividing the cultures of the world into historical and ahistorical (nature-oriented), asserted that the messianic hope could arise not from the nature-oriented cultures but only from the cultures oriented to history. It is impossible to go into this matter in detail here, but it can be affirmed that, to the extent that this viewpoint is sound, a

Northeast Asia in process of historicization will find, as it seeks solutions to the problems it encounters on this road, that it must necessarily proceed by way of the messianic hope.

In agricultural societies and other cultures oriented to nature, it was the orderly progression of natural changes that yielded blessings to people, but in a historically oriented culture like Israel, it was *shalom* (peace and prosperity) with which people were blessed. Consequently, the people of Israel sought shalom and hoped for the Messiah who would bring shalom.

If a Northeast Asia in process of historicization likewise seeks peace and prosperity, it too will necessarily give birth to a messianic hope. This hope is bound to arise in the Communist nations as well, and thus there will doubtless appear false messiahs. But in the midst of this situation the church will confess, as the Messiah in whom it places its hope, Jesus the crucified Messiah (the Christ). The gospel of the forgiveness of sin revealed in the event of the crucified Messiah brings with it the realization of shalom.

It is when the crucified Jesus is confessed as the Christ that the process of historicization now permeating Northeast Asia finds fulfillment, and it is in the strength of this confession that the church is actualized. This church constitutes the eschatological completion of the process of historicization, its anticipatory reality within the historical process. For this church to take shape and become established in Northeast Asia with its own selfhood is the secret goal of the historicization process in Northeast Asia. Theology and theological education serve in the attainment of this goal.