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The Buddhist's so-called progression into *nirvana*, the absolute, is in reality a regression into the void. In order to maintain his logical consistency, since he had denied a transmigrating soul (as in Hinduism), the Buddha had to affirm that the ultimate state is extinction. The biblical proclamation of salvation as the bliss of fellowship with God and the ecstasy of union with one's Master, though it seems to be contradictory to the Buddhist notion of salvation, may be the most appropriate doctrine to fill the Buddhist void.

Finally, another concept related to salvation in Buddhism needs mention. The concept of *pattidana* or transference of karmic merit and the related *bodhisattva* ideal. This is particularly relevant in proclaiming the message of the Cross. Karmic merit transference, which in a sense is a departure from the strict law of moral causation, has developed in both forms of Buddhism. This is a usable bridge for the biblical doctrine of imputation. In the Buddhist practice, an individual may transfer his karmic merit, even to another dead person, to cancel that dead person's demerits, by volitional action. It is called the *kusala/akusala* phenomenon. This is further developed in the *bodhisattva* ideal. Where *bodhisattvas* are helpers of salvation, they postpone their own liberation, in order to liberate others. They are saviours and transferers of merits. In the proclamation of the salvation message, one might ask whether it would be considered sacrilegious, or creative theology, if at least as a starting point we were to proclaim Christ as the Immortal, Infinite, Uncreated, Unoriginated Supreme *Bodhisattva*? His *kenosis*, incarnation, substitutionary death and glorious resurrection generated an infinite quantum of *kusala* (merits) which is able to cancel the evil *akusala* (de-merits) of man. This 'karmic Christology' may be the answer the Buddhist void is waiting for. May God enable us to theologize and communicate with sensitivity and caution, precision and concreteness.

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Responses to Lostness in Modern Japan

Hisakazu Inagaki

At a first reading this article may appear to have little relevance to the theme of salvation and lostness. However, its importance lies in the clarity with which it discusses the conflict between the pragmatic modernity and utilitarianism of Japan as a modern industrial power and Japanese traditionalism based on animist culture and ancestral worship. The people of Japan who are no longer finding spiritual values and the basis for national identity in modernity are turning to their traditional pagan values in search of personal and national salvation. The author of this article shows how in the present ecological crisis the traditionalists are arguing for an organic view of nature as a living organism. In the growing tension between modernity and traditionalism he discusses the significance of the revival of the kokutai ideology surrounding the enthronement of the new Emperor. He calls for a much deeper understanding of the gospel as the basis for inner reformation of the thought and culture of Japan.

We may add that this discussion is very relevant for other developing nations in Asia and Africa but also for the post-Christian cultures of the West. It is significant that though the

church in Japan is barely one percent of the population, yet there is enormous goodwill for Christianity. Some pollsters claim that up to 35% of the younger generation say they would opt for Christianity if they had to choose a religion. This tension between modernity and cultural traditions remind us of the crisis faced by the early Church and of how God raised up his apologists and martyrs, who, in the words of Glover, 'outthought, outlived and outdied the pagan world'. In Europe the Christians turned the tide from pagan lostness to salvation in Christ. Today we face worldwide a parallel and equally gigantic task.

Japan has now become a major world power, at least as far as economics is concerned. At first glance the Japanese people seem to be enjoying materialistic prosperity, but, on a deeper level, it is clear that they are not satisfied with respect to their daily needs. They sense something lacking in their spiritual lives.

In the forty-five short years since the end of World War II, Japan has risen dramatically from the ashes of destruction. The Pacific War was a reckless war led by an unjust and ignorant power. The phenomenon is far too recent for us to be able to forget the role played by nationalistic ideology, known as *kokutai*, during the years when Japan invaded its p.77 neighbours, spreading the flames of war around the world before finally bringing self-destruction upon itself. This ideology, having thrown Japan into destruction as well as having incurred great loss upon other Asian countries, is now beginning to raise its head once again. This ideology, being essentially a religious one, unfortunately loses its ability for self-critique. It also lacks a sense of moral justice. Inspired by this ideology, Japan in the past made military raids into other Asian countries. Today the same ideology has become active as a motivating force behind the economic invasion of the world market. Confronted with this situation, Japanese Christians, who comprise only 1% of the total population, must warn the people against their immoral behaviour within the international community, in addition to assuming a priest-like role in praying for their country.

Many Western authors have written about Japan, from *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (written during the War by Ruth Benedict) to the recent *The Enigma of Japanese Power* by Karel van Wolferen. There are, however, few books which pay proper attention to the religious motive of Japanese culture and thought. I will here try to give a brief transcendental critique of modern Japanese thought.

Herman Dooyeweerd (Dutch Christian philosopher, 1894–1977) showed that there are two basic religious ground motifs, two central mainsprings operative in the heart of human existence. There is the dynamic of the Holy Spirit and the dynamic of the spirit of this world. The ground motif of the Holy Spirit is the one revealed by the divine redemption by Jesus Christ in the communion of the Holy Spirit. As for the worldly spirit, Dooyeweerd showed its manifestation in two forms in the history of Western civilization: first, the form-matter distinction as the motif of ancient Greece, and second, the modern motif of nature and freedom. A synthesis between the Greek and Christian motif is called the motif of nature and grace. The religious ground motifs are the spiritual driving forces operating from out of the supratemporal heart, and govern and direct all the temporal experiences of life in human culture and history. But human history surely includes the Eastern civilizations as well as Western civilizations. Thus in the Japanese case we have to ask, 'What types of ground motifs exist in Japanese culture?'

Dooyeweerd also showed that all of the non-biblical ground motifs are of a dualistic nature, internally divided against themselves. A nonbiblical ground motif deifies and absolutizes part of created reality. This absolutization calls forth, with inner necessity, the correlates of what has been absolutized. That is, the absolutization of something relative simultaneously absolutizes the opposite or counterpart of what p.78 is relative, since one

relative part of creation is necessarily related to the other. The result is a religious dialectic, a polarity or tension between two extremes within a single ground motif.

I will here propose the religious dialectic of modernity-tradition as religious ground motif for modern Japanese culture. Modernity and tradition form antipodes to each other, as is easily seen in the Japanese culture. All foreigners who visit Japan immediately notice a sharp contrast between modernity and tradition. Walking downtown in any city, for example, they might find a modern Western-style museum just next to a traditional Shinto shrine. And before constructing a nuclear power station people usually request the performance of a ritual Shinto ceremony intended to appease the spirits of the ground. Japan has first-rate electronic engineering, computer technology, automobile factories and chemical industries, thereby showing itself to be in the forefront of the highly advanced, industrialized countries. This is a manifestation of the modernity motif. And yet, at the same time Japan clearly belongs to non-Western cultural tradition with respect to the spiritual lives of the Japanese. The tradition motif becomes visible, for instance, in the widespread custom of ancestor worship, the moral values and principles of the people's action, the political system, and the management of various enterprises. Although a similar contrast between modernity and tradition is more or less seen in non-Western countries, Japan experiences it to an extreme. On the one hand, the dualism of the ground motif of modernity-tradition splits apart, with each pole claiming absoluteness and thus both mutually cancelling each other, but on the other hand, each pole also determines the other's religious meaning, since each is necessarily related to the other.

MODERNITY

Here the concept of modernity is almost synonymous with the 'nature' motif in modern Western culture, where 'nature' is understood to be a closed mechanistic system. Modernization in Japan started with the Meiji Restoration in 1868. The government promoted a policy of importing Western modern technology, which since the Enlightenment had been based on the concept of 'mathematical nature'. The government policy was reflected in the slogan 'Japanese spirit and Western technology'. Although the metaphysical meaning of mathematical nature, as found in the thought of Galileo and Newton, was not understood well by the Meiji era Japanese, the utilitarianism resulting from the industrial revolution and the optimistic progressivism of Western countries were welcomed by the Japanese. P. 79

And even after World War II this kind of ruthless pragmatism, at the cost of morality and justice, has been the driving force behind the nation's remarkable economic success. For most Japanese, there are no deep religious introspections which might restrain the idea that worldly success is the final goal or supreme value in life. The severe competition of free enterprise in the market is not a story restricted to the sphere of economics. It permeates, for instance, the realm of education. Competition among children for getting high marks in academics really begins with the lowest grade in elementary school. Children are pushed to train for passing severe entrance examinations for advancing to the higher schools. In the course of their education, there is no time or provision for developing the ability to think creatively, which of course is essential for producing fresh and novel ideas. And in addition to compulsory school education, children sometimes, even on Sunday, go to extra-curricular 'cram-schools' to prepare only for the entrance examinations. This presents a great challenge for children of Christian homes, since time for religious education must be sacrificed when they are involved in such activities. The true meaning of education is lost. Sphere sovereignties among societal systems are broken down. All aspects of human lives are exposed to mechanical competition. It is the

inevitable result of uncritically importing one of the modern Western motifs. People are surely incapable of tolerating this mechanistic view of human life.

TRADITION

In reaction to the above mentioned modernity motif in Japan, the motif of tradition which is the opposite pole from modernity, having previously been hidden from sight within the culture, begins to raise its head. Wishing to escape from the mechanistic world, the Japanese people are now rediscovering traditional values. They hope that 'the Japanese spirit' will save them from their current wretched situation. Examples of the move toward restoration of the traditional life and value system, which could be called 'Japanism' when viewed in a systematic way, can be found in many aspects of the culture, from politics to the foods people eat. This trend also seems to be being strengthened by recent scholarly developments, especially in philosophy and cultural anthropology. Japanese intellectuals sometimes use 'post-modern', the term often used by French thinkers, to mean 'antimodern' P. 80 or the recovery of the uniquely Japanese tradition. Recent anthropology usually claims to place equal value on all types of cultures or all types of religions, lending itself to the position of so-called cultural relativism. Thus animism, being the core of Japanese religiosity, is not at all regarded as a lower religion. A refined animism might be considered even to be a positive cultural response to Western materialism. Such Western thinkers as Claude Lévi-Strauss are often invited to international meetings held in Japan to give lectures to Japanese leaders, governmental bureaucrats and statesmen. Upon being told that Western culture is not the unique-advanced culture it is sometimes thought to be, but merely is one among many cultures, the audiences feel reassured. In addition to this current tendency in the sciences, the present economic power of Japan provides practical encouragement to Japanese traditionalists. Opinions of many Japanese intellectuals have recently shifted, so that they are now suggesting that, at the time when the influence of the major Western powers is diminishing, Japan should take on a leadership role in the international community by recovering its Eastern traditions.

Those who want to revive traditional values are presenting their case by emphasizing two points. *First*, they propose an organic view of nature as a new paradigm with the intention of remedying the mechanistic view of nature popular among the modern Western world. The organic view of nature is common in Japan, because its animistic natural religion, in which nature is looked upon as a living organism, is still vital to the Japanese world view. Some traditionalists say that their view might play a prominent part in future technological societies. Their ideas are very similar to what recent Western ecological movements have been lamenting. (Some Western ecologists are in fact influenced by Eastern religion.) Further, the animistic world view leads many Japanese thinkers to the point of believing that ultimate reality can be grasped only through intuitive feelings, and not through rational analyses. In the context of this intellectual trend, it is important for Japanese Christians to know and understand the true meaning of the creation motif in biblical Christianity.

Second, traditionalists are inclined to defend the Japanese community as such against any criticism from foreign countries. They think it is not necessary for Japan to accept Western standards and ways of thinking. In fact the form of the community is clearly influenced by the tradition motif. The present Japanese constitution certainly borrows certain concepts from western democracy, as, for example, the concept of the separation of the three powers (judiciary, executive, legislative), the declaration of sovereignty resting with the people, p. 81 respect of fundamental human rights as well as the

guarantee of freedom of religion. But in actuality the legal system does not function without traditional Japanese values and practices concerning human relations. In fact values and practices of human relationship valid only in a small village sometimes play an important role in national politics as well. Collective behaviour as a national characteristic is noticeable even if the constitution is written on the basis of individualism. Men who hold convictions governed by a universal principle as often excluded from the community. These traditional views of human relationships have been fostered by Confucianism adapted to a Japanese style and context. Traditional human relationships also play an important role in the management of enterprises. Japanese companies are not so-called 'Gesellschaft', but rather a kind of community to which people give a high degree of commitment which demands all of their energy. The Japanese sometimes exhibit extraordinary power as a group, even if a given individual person within the group is not especially talented. This peculiar Japanese characteristic of effective operation as a group is surely one of the reasons why Japan has achieved such a high GNP in recent years.

THE ISSUE OF EMPEROR WORSHIP

The practice of ancestor worship, so common to the Japanese family, is the result of Confucian ethics mixing with animistic religiosity. In fact, ancestor worship is the basic religion in Japan, and it functions as a unifying element on various levels of community in Japanese society, from the family to the village, and finally to the state itself. On the national level, ancestor worship has strong connections with the Emperor system. Before the War, the state was likened to a large, extended family, in which the Emperor was compared to a father in the home. It was very much similar to undifferentiated patriarchal folk groups in ancient times, but in the case of Japan it was actually constitutionally justified. That is, the system of divine imperial sovereignty, as codified in the Meiji Constitution of 1889, sought to place the ultimate basis for political authority in the myths surrounding the oracles of the sun-goddess, Amaterasu, who was said to be the ancestor of the imperial family. Under this system, the people of Japan were forced to believe in a pseudo-religion, *Kokutai* ideology, which centred on the worship of the Emperor as a 'living god'. Thus it is not incorrect to say that the Japanese Emperor system had its foundation on the customs of ancestor worship, practised in every home. The sphere sovereignty between home and state was completely destroyed. **P. 82** It is known that during the War some Christians, especially in Korea, chose martyrdom by refusing to worship the Emperor.

Looking back on this history, it is only natural that we should make clear distinction between the provisions of the present constitution which define the emperor as the symbol of state and the former system of divine imperial sovereignty, and that we should maintain strict vigilance to guard against any move toward a restoration of the old system. Nonetheless, we are deeply grieved to observe that now, at the time of the succession of a new Emperor, attempts are consistently being made to accept a series of ceremonies which have no basis in the current Imperial House Law. It appears that there is an attempt today to revive ceremonies which were once authorized in the by-laws of the now abolished pre-War Imperial House Law, by using the argument that they derive from tradition and convention.

Today freedom of religion without any restrictions is constitutionally guaranteed, along with the separation of state and specific religious institutions. The government, however, has already made the decision to perform the enthronement of the new Emperor, Akihito, which will be held on November 22-23 in 1990, as a purely traditional Shintoistic rite. Called the *Daijo-sai*, this is a ceremony in which the Emperor is considered

to be deified, or to be transformed into a 'living god'. Although the religion of the imperial family is Shintoism, the religious practices in the imperial household are now rigorously limited by law to the private sphere. But it is exceedingly difficult to draw a boundary line between the private and the public realm, since the Emperor is constitutionally defined as the symbol of Japan. This problem is amplified if the government sponsors the *Daijo-sai*. In that case the ceremony can not be limited to the private sphere, but inevitably becomes a public matter. Actually the government has decided to make a special budget of one billion yen for this Shinto ceremony.

The *Daijo-sai* has a long history. It is said to have been celebrated already in the seventh century A.D., when the Emperor system was actually established. This ceremony is based on a Japanese myth which connects the festival of thanks giving for the harvest of grain with the enthronement of a king. Recent developments in cultural anthropology, folklore and comparative mythology show that similar ceremonies were widely performed in ancient times in various cultures. For instance there are some common factors between Greek and Japanese myths. The Greek myth tells about a goddess of grain and growth, Demeter, who was actually worshipped by kings in Eleusis in a mysterious rite. Several mythologists recently point out that [p.83](#) Demeter was a model of Amaterasu, the ancestor goddess of the Japanese Emperor. In the Japanese myth Amaterasu in heaven gave the people on the earth the seeds of rice through the ancestor of the Emperor, while Demeter gave the seeds of wheat through the kings in Eleusis. The difference is that the highest god in the Greek myth is male (Zeus, brother of Demeter) but in the Japanese myth the highest deity is female (Amaterasu). The Japanese myth, written in the eighth century A.D. by the Royal court, claimed that the Japanese Emperors were the direct descendants of this highest goddess. It is interesting to notice the fact that the *Daijo-sai* ceremony surely started during this period of the completion of recording of the Japanese myth. Since that time about one hundred Emperors, who are believed to be in the same family line, have succeeded to the throne, and many of them have celebrated the *Daijo-sai*. The story of the myth, about a goddess who gave to the ancestor of the Emperor seeds of rice as well as an 'Emperor spirit', reappears symbolically in *Daijo-sai*.

One of the reasons why the government has decided to sponsor this Shinto ceremony concerns the problems of a national identity for Japanese. Surely, it is said, the economically powerful nation of Japan needs some spiritual backbone. It is distasteful for the people not to have a sense of values other than mere utilitarianism. Thus national leaders try to find some spiritual identity in Emperorism. For them the succession ceremonies of the new Emperor provide a good occasion for strengthening national identity and patriotism.

The Christian churches in Japan clearly oppose the *Daijo-sai*, since it is supported by the state. This ceremony is so thoroughly religious in its core that we need to battle 'against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in heavenly places' ([Ephesians 6:12](#)).

The religious ground motif of modernity-tradition thus seems clearly to be operative today in Japanese culture. This religious dialect breaks the heart of the modern Japanese. On the one hand, Japanese culture is very pragmatic, being rooted in modern utilitarianism. On the other hand, Japanese culture is reactionary and is based upon ancient tradition. The purpose of Christian theology in Japan is first of all to analyze this kind of schizophrenia in culture and thought. Then, as an alternative to the life and world view of 'Japanism', we have to demonstrate the Christian ground motifs: creation, fall and redemption through Jesus Christ, in communion with the Holy Spirit, for the inner reformation of thought and culture in Japan.

Issues in Evaluating Theological Education by Extension

Patricia J. Harrison

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The author, a pioneer in TEE, writes from wide experience in Distance Education in the Pacific area and in other regions of the developing world. She gives a very clear and comprehensive summary of that area of Distance Education that seeks to combine home study (with adequate materials), practical field experience in the church and in the community and regular seminars for interaction between tutors and students. She discusses the difference between formative and summative evaluation, and qualitative and quantitative factors in evaluation. The author raises issues concerning degrees of success in the transfer of learning to life and in involving the whole church in continuing education. For pastors and theological educators, this is a helpful and an insightful article.

DEFINITION OF TEE

It has long been my practice to define narrowly rather than broadly what I mean by Theological Education by Extension. We already have a considerable stock of general cover terms in the area of Distance Education; it is thus more helpful to add precise terms to our working vocabulary rather than more general ones. This is not to devalue other forms of Distance Education or the right of others to define TEE differently.

I use TEE to indicate that type of distance theological education which combines home study materials and practical ministry experience with regular seminars in which tutors and students can interact. In TEE proper, the weight of the cognitive input is carried by the home study materials; it is not given in lectures. The seminars provide opportunity for interaction and for learning experiences which cannot readily be obtained through home study, e.g. drama, videos, group study and discussion. The three strands of TEE—home study, seminar learning and practical ministry—should be integrated as far as possible. p. 85

The present discussion considers only TEE programmes of serious intent, whether focussed on lay or ministerial formation.

DIFFICULTIES IN EVALUATION

Since I have turned over my role as a tutor in the Australian Anglican programme known as New England TEE to local tutors, I no longer have in-depth contact with that programme. So I must evaluate it according to the best information I have been able to obtain. This was difficult since the programme director moved to another position several weeks ago and I have been unable to contact him.