

**RELIGIONS AND INCULTURATION:  
Ebina Danjyo's Japanese Christian Theology**

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## Abstract

### Religions and Inculturation: Ebina Danjyo's Japanese Christian Theology

MA in Theology, 2000

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This thesis studies inculturation of Christianity in Japan. Inculturation, a dialogue between the gospel and culture, helps a local church to find a fruitful meaning of Christianity in a particular cultural situation. This notion, seeking latent forms of the gospel values in cultures, has developed since the Vatican Council II. In an older missiology, local culture is disregarded on account of an Augustinian view of human nature; however, according to John Hick, Irenaeus of Lyon (c. 130-c.202) holds an alternative view of human nature which appreciates human efforts in growth. This view encourages local churches to recognize positively the values of cultural activities. Danjyo Ebina (1856-1937), a Japanese Protestant theologian, tried to interpret the Japanese traditional culture in light of Christianity and developed a unique theology which appreciates his cultural tradition. His theology can be regarded as an early attempt to inculturate Christianity in Japan.

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## INTRODUCTION

Inculturation has been a serious issue for the Church in Asia and Japan. We may speak of it in various ways--the need for contextualization of faith, the necessity of developing the local Church, the creative growth of local theology, but all these attempts seek for the authentic faith which can respond to the real needs of the Christians. This is the faith that can interpret the message of life in their concrete situation. Considering this situation in the Church, in this thesis I will discuss this issue of the relevancy of faith by way of inculturation. Inculturation is a search to make faith rooted in the local Church through promoting the dialogical relationship between faith and culture. I will approach the issue with a special attention to the Church and religion in Japan. First, this thesis will explore the understanding of the notion of inculturation. Second, it will attempt to discuss the themes of the goodness of creation and humanity in Irenaeus of Lyon (c.130-c.202) and Augustine (354-430), and thus the goodness of culture. This attempt is intended to highlight two divergent understandings of these themes in the tradition of the Church. Third, it will discuss a Japanese Protestant theologian, Danjyo Ebina (1856-1937), who tried to inculturate Christianity in the cultural context of Japan.

The following appeal of a bishop from Japan at the Synod of Bishops from Asia held in 1998 reveals the depth of the issue of inculturation. Bishop Jun Ikenaga reported that the cultural differences between the Western form of Christianity and the Asian ways of thinking have blocked evangelization in Asia. He said, "Asian people, influenced by European and American ways, have learned to take an intellectual and logical approach in announcing truth. But in his

heart the Asian places great importance on the body, on existence, on what is practical, on nonlogical expression and symbols.”<sup>1</sup> He argues that the Church must use Asian ways of expression for effective evangelization. The discussion of inculturation will help to find a way.

This thesis, as I noted above, consists of three chapters. The notion of inculturation is considerably new to the Church. It has developed since Vatican Council II. In addition to this newness, there are terms which signify the similar attempts to seek the relevancy of faith in a concrete situation. It is necessary to clarify the meaning of inculturation so as to achieve its proper goal. I will present my working definition of inculturation, and continue to discuss its distinctiveness from other attempts, as well as its theological meaning. I hold that inculturation is a dynamic dialogue between faith and culture. This is the faith which authentically listens to Jesus Christ in the Gospel. I will explore the Vatican II documents to describe the Church’s attitude toward the issue of inculturation. The documents reveal how the Church took a step toward a new relationship with culture and other religions. I believe that it is important to take account of the attitude of the official Church, because it is not rare to find a tension between the local Church and the official Church in terms of the implementation of inculturation in the local context. Inculturation involves cultural phenomena in society, but as a theological notion, it is grounded in the mystery of the life of Jesus. As I explore the theological dimension of inculturation, I will stress the two moments of Jesus’ life--the incarnation and the Paschal Mystery. Pointing to creation and redemption, these mysteries set a paradigm for the dialogical relationship between the Gospel and culture. Inculturation is a process of journey toward a more authentic faith. For this process, culture needs both affirmation and purification.

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<sup>1</sup> Jun Ikenaga, “Asian Ways of Expression,” *Origins*, 27 (1998): 70.

The second chapter attempts to inquire into the tradition of Christianity in order to find a suitable theological foundation for inculturation. Inculturation presupposes ongoing process of maturing of faith in dialogue. It also presupposes the dynamic participation in dialogue. In order to answer these conditions, culture and humankind as the agent of culture need to be acknowledged for their positive contributions. Vatican Council II revealed the positive acknowledgement by using Justin Martyr's image of "the seed of the Word of God."<sup>2</sup> Turning to an older source to highlight a new understanding, the Council retrieved a forgotten aspect of tradition. The attempt of this chapter takes a similar route to turn to the source of traditions in Christianity. By consulting John Hick, I will discuss the divergent view of human nature and creation in Irenaeus, which contrasts with the Augustinian view.

Hick draws attention to Irenaeus' interpretation of the fall of Adam and his understanding of human nature with a distinction between "image of God" and "the likeness of God," whereas the Augustinian tradition stresses the corruption of human nature and thus holds a negative view on culture.<sup>3</sup> The contrast between these theologians is meaningful for the local Church because in the history of the Church, it is the Augustinian tradition that has been taught by the Western missionaries as the orthodox teaching. In turning to a divergent tradition, I believe that Irenaeus' alternative view of human beings and creation will provide a strong support to inculturation as well as some explanation of the conflict which the local Church has experienced in the process

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<sup>2</sup> This images appeared in the numerous conciliar documents. For the original use in Justin's text, see *Apologia 2*, 12, in Henry Battenson trans. and ed., *The Early Christian Fathers: A Selection from the Writings of the Fathers from St. Clement of Rome to St. Athanasius* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), 88.

<sup>3</sup> I mainly consult John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love*, 2d ed. (London: Macmillan, 1977a).



of receiving the Christian faith.<sup>4</sup>

As a concrete example of a theology inculturated in Japan, this thesis discusses the attempts of Danjyo Ebina. He was a convert of the first generation of the Protestant Church in Japan. Ebina developed a creative reinterpretation of Confucianism and Shinto religious development from the Christian perspective. Within the strong evangelical stress of the Protestant Church of his day, his attempt to explore the continuity between his Christian faith and his cultural tradition showed his originality. Believing in the goodness of humanity, he draws attention to religious consciousness wherein a human person may live in communion with God. He was convinced of the latent presence of God within Confucian and Shinto traditions. His understanding of human nature, and the emphases on religious awareness and the immanent God resonate with Irenaeus' view. Ebina was challenged by his contemporaries who held the Augustinian position as orthodox teaching, but his theology was an attempt at inculturation of faith in the cultural background. This attempt caused suspicion in other Protestant theologians, but in light of Irenaeus, Ebina's theology reveals more fully its significance. However, Ebina shows a tension between inculturated faith and cultural limitation. He lived in a society where a growing sense of nationalism and militarism was pushing the country toward World War II. I will observe the weakness in his theology, which reveals the problem of identification of the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Japan. Despite the problem surrounding nationalism, Ebina's theology can be appreciated as an example of inculturated theology. The study of his thought highlights areas in which a theology suitable to Japan can fruitfully develop.

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<sup>4</sup> I will attempt a critical reading of Hick's presentation of the contrast between the Irenaeian type of theodicy and the Augustinian type of theodicy. To discuss Hick's theodicy is not my primary intention in this thesis.

**CHAPTER ONE**  
**INCULTURATION:**  
**ITS EMERGENCE AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION**

**Introduction**

This chapter discusses the notion of inculturation in order to have a clear understanding of its meaning. In the history of the Church, the idea and practice of inculturation is not new. Christianity has developed in the context of each age without explicitly thematizing the reality of an inculturated church. The Church practised “inculturation” without naming its practices as such. The articulation of its meaning has more explicitly begun as the response to the new attitude of the Church, as revealed in Vatican Council II. Since then, the Church has begun to make attempts to concretize inculturation of the Gospel in theory and praxis. However, despite its familiarity with the term, which advocates the development of local churches, the understanding of its precise meaning does not always accompany it. Therefore, the clear understanding of the notion of inculturation is necessary if we are to continue to discuss the process of inculturation. The leading questions are: What is inculturation? Why is inculturation necessary? How is inculturation practised? In particular, this discussion attempts to highlight the meaning of inculturation for the churches in Asia.

Therefore, in this chapter, I shall first present the working definition of the term inculturation and then continue to discuss another important term “culture,” in referring to the anthropological

and theological understandings of culture. I shall attempt to compare inculturation with the branches of theologies which take into account the context of the local church so as to highlight the similarity and the difference between them. To explore the emergence of awareness of inculturation in the Church, selected readings from Vatican Council II and some papal documents will follow. In light of the Church's attitude towards inculturation, I shall discuss the theological significance of inculturation, and comment on the problems of syncretism which arise in the process of inculturation. Finally, I shall conclude this chapter with a brief observation of the need of inculturation for the Church in Asia.

### **The Working Definition of Inculturation**

Before exploring the nuanced meaning of inculturation, a working definition of inculturation will be presented to facilitate the discussion which follows. Fundamentally this thesis follows Pedro Arrupe's definition of inculturation, which he presented in his letter to the Society of Jesus in 1978. This letter was important for popularizing the term "inculturation" through an analogy on incarnation. His definition states that:

**Inculturation is the incarnation of Christian life and of the Christian message in a particular cultural context, in such a way that this experience not only finds expression through elements proper to the culture in question (this alone would be no more than a superficial adaptation), but becomes a principle that animates, directs and unifies the culture, transforming and remaking it so as to bring about "a new creation."<sup>1</sup>**

Arrupe revealed the theological depth of inculturation, which is observed in the phenomenon of encounter between the Christian message and culture. Considering Arrupe's insight, I highlight

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<sup>1</sup> Pedro Arrupe, "Letter to the Whole Society on Inculturation," in *Other Apostolates Today*, Selected Letters and Addresses, vol. 3, ed. Jerome Aixela (St. Louis, MO: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1978), 173.

the dialogical dimension in the process of inculturation; thus, the working definition of inculturation in this thesis is the dynamic dialogue and interaction between Christian faith and culture.<sup>2</sup> This will be more fully developed and nuanced in the course of the discussion.

### The Church and Culture

In Vatican Council II, the Church took a decisive step toward a new relationship with culture. The Church acknowledged the significance of culture for humankind and recognized the autonomy of culture. *The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* (Gaudium and Spes) says, “there are many links between the message of salvation and culture. In his self-revelation to his people culminating in the fullness of manifestation in his incarnate Son, God spoke according to the culture proper to each age (GS, 58).” In this Constitution, the Council showed the attitude of the Church as open to the culture of the contemporary world, thus moving beyond the sharp discrepancy between Christianity and the world. The Constitution established an appropriate relationship with culture in admitting the autonomy of culture, “Culture, since it flows from man’s rational and social nature, has continual need of rightful freedom of development and a legitimate possibility of autonomy according to its own principles (GS, 59).”

In light of this relationship with culture, the Church has begun to walk cooperatively with culture to develop the human world. This gives an important element for the understanding of inculturation. Since the Church seeks for meaningful dialogue and interaction between faith and

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<sup>2</sup> For this definition, I am indebted to Aylward Shorter. He presents a definition of inculturation as “the ongoing dialogue between faith and culture or cultures,” and “the creative and dynamic relationship between the Christian message and a culture or cultures” (Aylward Shorter, *Toward a Theology of Inculturation* [London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1988], 11).

culture in inculturation, an interdisciplinary study of culture is necessary. Although inculturation is a theological notion, and in order to approach culture comprehensively, it is necessary to consult an anthropological and sociological study of culture and religion.

### The Definition of Culture in Anthropological Perspective

Anthropological studies of culture contribute to the understanding of culture as human activities. Clifford Geertz presents a definition of culture as system, “[culture] denotes an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life.”<sup>3</sup> He regards his concept of culture as a “semiotic one,” and is thus concerned with interpreting it through symbols. He introduces another image: that of “webs” to highlight the dimension of meaning in culture. He adds, “Believing, with Max Weber that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be, therefore, not an experimental science in search of law, but an interpretive one in search of meaning.”<sup>4</sup> In his study of culture, Geertz attempts a “thick description” of culture to explore interpretively the symbolical dimension.<sup>5</sup>

Geertz’s understanding of culture highlights the inseparable relationship of culture and human life. He emphasizes two aspects of culture: that its patterns are historically transmitted

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<sup>3</sup> Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 89.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

from a generation to generation, and that it thus allows each person to create meaning in a system or web that is his or her culture.

Marcello de Carvalho Azevedo, though fundamentally appreciating Geertz's definition of culture, observes that Geertz' point of "symbolical aspects" needs more articulation. Azevedo points to a more comprehensive understanding of culture which includes the concrete social practices, and finds that there is a further dimension which involves both symbol and concrete social practices.<sup>6</sup> This dimension is "the set of meanings, values and patterns which underlies the social practice as well as the symbolical level."<sup>7</sup> For him, this is the meaning of culture.

Thus, Azevedo defines culture as:

The set of meanings, values and patterns which underlie the perceptible phenomena of a concrete society, whether they are recognizable on the level of social practice (acts, ways of proceeding, tools, techniques, costumes and habits, forms and traditions), or whether they are the carriers of signs, symbols, meanings and representations, conceptions and feelings that consciously or unconsciously pass from generation to generation and are kept as they are or transformed by people as the expression of their human reality. Culture, therefore, is the deepest code to reveal a human, social group and to make it understandable.<sup>8</sup>

By placing the set of "values, meanings and patterns" at the deepest level of culture, Azevedo tries to explain the relationship between cultures which may use the same symbol but in different cultural contexts. His definition of culture is useful for the discussion of inculturation

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<sup>6</sup> Marcello de Carvalho Azevedo, *Inculturation and the Challenges of Modernity*, Inculturation: Working Papers on Living Faith and Cultures, ed. Arij A. Roest Crolius, no. 1 (Rome: Pontifical Gregorian University for Centre "Culture and Religions," 1982), 9. Azevedo, quoting the definition of culture by J. Gritti, who proposes the distinction between the two levels: the practical and the symbolical, thinks that culture contains the level of social practice, i.e., the aspect of tangible realities, and the symbolical level, the aspect of meaning.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 10.

because the relationship between the message of Christian faith and culture is not a relationship merely between two cultures, but that of religious meaning concretized in a culture and the culture itself.

### The Meaning of Culture in Anthropological Perspective

In a further a discussion of inculturation, Arij Roest Crollius explores the theological meaning of culture and cultural multiplicity by employing Karl Rahner and A. van Leeuwen. Crollius regards human beings as “social beings” who exist and realize themselves in a community. In addition to this limitation of “this-worldliness,” human beings have another dimension as spiritual beings which is open to the transcendent. Therefore, human beings simultaneously live in a reality of these two—spiritual and social—dimensions. Crollius describes human reality as “man, as a spiritual being, or as a person, [who] is social in an eminent way: open toward a universal communion which takes its origin in the free self-communication of the spirit.”<sup>9</sup> He finds the spiritual values which are universal in the transcendental aspect of human being while allowing for the multiplicity and diversity of the ways in which the values are realized.<sup>10</sup> Admitting the diversity of cultural expressions in realization of the values, he

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<sup>9</sup> Arij Roest Crollius, “Inculturation and the Meaning of Culture,” in *What is So New about Inculturation?* Inculturation: Working Papers on Living Faith and Cultures, no. 5, ed. Arij Roest Crollius (Rome: Pontifical Gregorian University for Centre “Cultures and Religions,” 1984), 42..

<sup>10</sup> He describes the interaction of the two aspects of human beings in concretising the values in a particular situation. “Human groups, in the pursuit even of the highest spiritual values, are always exposed to the danger of an “individualistic” assertion of these values while excluding the rights of other persons (as can be see in the totalitarian imposition of a state-ideology, or in various forms of religious wars). At the same time, in the realization of the values which are per se connected with man’s being-in-the-world, and thus are essentially particular (e.g. the value of the economic order), the concrete community can be called upon to surmount the exclusiveness inherent in the pursuit of such a value, when this is demanded by a more universal good. In this way, these values are ennobled by the spirit” (ibid., 42-3).

proposes the “analogical understanding of human sociality” to have a “coherent concept of culture in general and of the relation between the various particular cultures.”<sup>11</sup>

Human sociality in Crollius is the synthesis of the personal and the individual. It is the synthesis of the transcendent and the particular. This twofold structure is a key for Crollius’ human sociality. By “analogy,” Crollius means “the relation between beings which are diverse precisely in the characteristic or quality that unites them.”<sup>12</sup> He explains that within a unity, the characteristic or quality is realised in a different degree in various beings. He finds the importance of such a qualitative difference as it leads to “the coordination and subordination of various forms of social life in one society.”<sup>13</sup>

The analogical understanding of culture enables to take into account all the aspects of cultural reality which Crollius thinks are distinguishable, but inseparable and interdependent.<sup>14</sup> Because of their unity as a whole derived from the ontological structure of human society, Crollius insists on embracing all cultural activities as the manifestation of human spirit and its creativity.<sup>15</sup>

Cultural diversity is caused by two aspects of human sociality; the limitedness of individual

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Four aspects of cultural reality in Crollius are, (1) division of work, (2) the results and products of technology and human labour, (3) communication in language and other art forms, (4) manifestation of the human spirit which expresses human transcendence, without any intention of utility. See *ibid.*, 44.

<sup>15</sup> Crollius warns against the understanding of inculturation which limits the areas of inculturation within theology, liturgy, and religious life, *ibid.*, 45, n. 24. In order to support his understanding of culture which underscores cohesion of four aspects of cultural reality, he consults Geertz’s concept of culture as a system of meanings. As we shall see in the following, the notion of cultural system is important for Crollius’ conception of universality. See *ibid.*, 46, 50.



sociality and the openness to the universal in the personal sociality. They manifest the limitation and the riches of the various cultures, so in the encounters of cultures, both mutual exclusion and communication may happen. Therefore, in order to promote fruitful communication in a cultural encounter, he encourages “dialogue.” Dialogue for Crollius is “a mutual communication of diverse meanings. It manifests the diverse meanings as well as their communicability, and reveals “the universality of these meanings beyond the confines of a particular culture.”<sup>16</sup> Crollius thinks that through this dialogue, a synthesis of originality and universality is achieved. Thus, he states:

Cultural meanings do not float in the air, but are embodied in symbols, and form part of a definite, inherited system of such meanings. It is precisely as such a particular, embodied meaning that it can be communicated. In other words, in their very originality cultures are communicable and their universality can only be conceived as a communion of distinct and diverse cultures.<sup>17</sup>

Crollius calls this conception of universality “a synthesis of unity and diversity.” By highlighting the aspect of communion, Crollius reformulates the notion of universality as applicable to the world of cultural diversity. Because of this understanding of universality, he successfully avoids “cultural monologue” which lacks mutual communication, and “cultural relativism,” which is “the affirmation of the absoluteness of each culture within its own realm;” thus he contends that “culture can only be conceived in an analogical way.”<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 51-2. Quoting St Thomas, Crollius explains “analogy” as “a mode of communication which holds the middle between pure equivocity and simple univocity,” (ibid., 50). He considers that “cultural monologue” is an example of “a univocal conception of culture,” and cultural relativism is an example of equivocity. Both do not accept cultural diversity but adhere their own particularity. In contrast, dialogue realizes what analogy signifies, through mutual interactions.

Crollius' discussion of diversity and universality is convincing in considering the relationship between the universal Church and cultures. He identifies the aim of the process of inculturation as "the creation of a new unity and communication, not only within the culture in question but also as an enrichment of the Church universal."<sup>19</sup> He thinks of inculturation in respect of the relationship between cultures within the Church. He finds in inculturation a challenge to the creative originality of the given culture and its ability to communicate in dialogue with others. Both originality and communicability of a culture are important elements of inculturation.

Crollius presents a model of discussion of inculturation using an interdisciplinary approach. He develops a theology of inculturation based on theological anthropology, while employing an anthropological study of cultural systems. He explores a question of how a theological understanding of human being is transposed to a discussion of culture and cultural encounter. At the historical and social level, a process of inculturation occurs in an encounter between cultures. And it has a further theological level of meaning. His insight into the meaning of cultural diversity is viable. Asking, "What is so new about inculturation?" he answers, "the more vivid awareness of the dialogal character of the relation between Church and cultures."<sup>20</sup> Crollius finds a meaning of inculturation in a new relationship within the Church.

### **Inculturation or a Theology of Indigenization, Contextualization, Localization?**

Theology of inculturation shares a great interest with all contemporary theologies in

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. Crollius calls a type of dialogue necessary for a fruitful cultural encounter "dia-logos" (speaking through), which is a "mutual communication of diverse meanings" (ibid., 50).

reflecting on the meaning of particular aspects of faith. Inculturation approaches this issue by exploring the dynamic process of dialogue between the Gospel and culture. These theologies are called by different names, such as “indigenous theology,” “contextual theology,” and “local theology,” but all share the same kind of interests in reflecting on the relevancy of faith in a particular situation or context. By comparing these types of theologies, I shall demonstrate the distinctiveness of inculturation.

*Indigenous theology.* Indigenous theology signifies a theology done for, and especially by, Christians who are natives of a local area. It attempts to embrace the local culture within its theological reflection. It is advantageous for maintaining integrity and identity of the given native group, but its awareness of indigenous culture creates a sharp contrast between the insider and the outsider. Indigenous theology may overlook the changes in the present situation when it holds a static and closed view of culture. Its rather limited focus on the cultural dimension may hinder the development of a critical view on cultures, both one’s own and foreign.<sup>21</sup>

*Contextual theology.* Contextual theology takes culture and cultural change seriously. By having a wider view of culture beyond cultural identity, its broader understanding of culture includes social, political and economic questions. Considering that contextual theology responds well to dynamic and flexible cultural reality of all areas, Stephen Bevans believes that it is more comprehensive than indigenization and inculturation.<sup>22</sup> The notion of context includes the

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<sup>21</sup> Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1992), 82. Shorter, 11. Peter Schineller, *A Handbook on Inculturation* (Mahwah, NY: Paulist, 1990), 18. Schreiter thinks that “indigenisation” is inadequate because of its historical implication. This term was used by the British Empire; thus its “colonialist ring” is not proper for East Africa and India. Robert J. Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1985), 5.

<sup>22</sup> Bevans, 21-22.

realities of contemporary secularity, technology, and the struggle for human justice. Contextual theology draws attention to the particularity of contexts by highlighting each particular situation. Its focus on the present and changing context is its strength while it may overlook the continuity with the past.

*Local theology.* Robert Schreiter holds that local theology is a preferable term. He recognizes that local theology shares the same focus on the role of context with contextual theology, and he admits that contextual theology is adequate for wider use without having many previous associations. Schreiter's reason for holding to local theology is its association with "local church," which he believes is the most common form of English translation for Vatican II *ecclesia particularis*. He prefers not to use "neologism."<sup>23</sup>

*Incarnation.* Incarnation is a model of and for inculturation. It is based on the understanding of Jesus Christ in John's Gospel, "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us (Jn 1:14)." Jesus was born in a culture and learned to live in it. His life incarnated in a cultural context presents the model for all Christians to follow. Thus, Peter Schineller holds that incarnation is not "an option" but "an obligation."<sup>24</sup> To take account of cultures and contexts is inevitable in order to live in communion with Jesus Christ, incarnated God.

*Inculturation.* Schineller explains that inculturation "combines the theological significance of incarnation with the anthropological concepts of enculturation and acculturation to create something new."<sup>25</sup> Inculturation as a theological term has much to learn from social sciences

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<sup>23</sup> Schreiter, 6.

<sup>24</sup> Schineller, 20-21.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 22. Schreiter presents almost the same explanation of inculturation; "a combination of the theological principle of incarnation with the social-science concept of acculturation (adapting oneself to a

and cultural anthropology, but in inculturation, the theological usages of terms and concepts borrowed from them are not exactly identical with their usages in their own disciplines. However, Schineller takes account of the empirical data of the social sciences as a distinctive aspect of inculturation. He gives three more distinctive traits of inculturation. Inculturation is a process through a “dialogue or interchange between culture and gospel / church,” initiated by Vatican Council II. Inculturation attempts to achieve “the reorientation, renewal, and transformation of culture from within in light of the gospel message.” Inculturation “underlines the central role of the local church and community in the mission of the church in the modern world.” Schineller emphasizes that inculturation embraces “all aspects of being a Christian.”<sup>26</sup>

Aylward Shorter prefers inculturation to other terms by explaining the nature of inculturation at three points.<sup>27</sup> First, he explains that inculturation is not limited to the first insertion of the Gospel, but understands culture as “a developing process.” This is why inculturation consists of an ongoing dialogue between faith and culture. The second reason is that “the Christian faith cannot exist except in a cultural form.” He thinks that the Christian faith and the Christian life are cultural phenomena, therefore, a dialogue between faith and culture seeks to embody faith within a culture. Culture must be discussed in order to understand the process of interaction of faith and culture. Finally, inculturation seeks for a step beyond an encounter between two

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culture).” See Schreiter, 5.

<sup>26</sup> Schineller, 23. It must be useful to quote Schineller’s working definition of culture because the understanding of culture affects the discussion of all embracing characteristic of inculturation. He follows Don Browning’s definition, which holds culture “as a set of symbols, stories, (myths) and norms for conduct that orient a society or group cognitively, affectively, and behaviorally to the world in which it lives” (Don Browning, *The Moral Context of Pastoral Care* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983], 73); quoted in Schineller, 23.

<sup>27</sup> Shorter, 11-12.

cultures, or acculturation, leading to reinterpretation of culture, a new creation.

The theology of inculturation discusses a dialogue between faith and culture at the anthropological level as well as the theological level. It holds an understanding of culture which asks questions at the level of the symbolical meaning, and also includes the empirical and phenomenological level of culture.

For the discussion of inculturation, it is necessary to understand the terms, such as acculturation and enculturation. These terms are useful in a discussion of the process of inculturation, but they are different from inculturation.

*Enculturation.* Enculturation in anthropology means “the process by which an individual acquires the mental representations (beliefs, knowledge, and so forth) and patterns of behavior required to function as a member of a culture. It can be seen the counter part, at the level of culture, of the process of socialization.”<sup>28</sup> Inculturation is different from enculturation because in inculturation, when a culture enters into a new situation in a dialogue with a new culture of the Christian faith, it brings in its own cultural tradition. By contrast with the possible reciprocity in inculturation, enculturation is a one way process of adaptive learning.<sup>29</sup>

*Acculturation.* Acculturation is an anthropological and sociological term. It is “the process of culture change set in motion by the meeting of two autonomous cultural systems, resulting in an increase of similarity of each to the other. It always involves a complex interaction.”<sup>30</sup> The

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<sup>28</sup> “Enculturation,” in *The Dictionary of Anthropology*, ed. Thomas Barfield (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997).

<sup>29</sup> Schineller, 22; Shorter, 5-6.

<sup>30</sup> “Acculturation,” *The Dictionary of Anthropology*, ed. Thomas Barfield (Blackwell: Oxford, 1997).

difference between this and inculturation lies, according to Schineller, in the nature and mission of Christian faith, which is not simply another culture from the theological point of view. The encounter in inculturation is not one between cultures, but the one between the Gospel and a culture. The process of inculturation leads, beyond the contact of cultures, to the insertion of faith into a culture. Acculturation is a necessary condition of inculturation, but it must be distinguished from inculturation.<sup>31</sup>

### The Emergence of the Notion of Inculturation

How did the notion of inculturation emerge? As Crollius says, is it really new? This section briefly explores the emergence of inculturation so as to understand its distinctiveness.

Vatican Council II is the decisive moment for inculturation, although the term inculturation did not appear in the conciliar documents. In his theological reflection of Vatican Council II, Karl Rahner observes that the Council was the first experience of the world Church in the history of the Church.<sup>32</sup> The Council was for the world Church with its diversity shown in the presence of participating bishops from all over the world and with its wide scope concerns embracing all of humankind and the entire world. Rahner regarded it as the third great moment in the Church history. Exhibiting a sharp awareness of cultural diversity in the world, he presents a critical issue: "Either the Church sees and recognizes these essential differences of other cultures for which she should become a world Church and with a Pauline boldness draws

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<sup>31</sup> Schineller, 22; Shorter, 7.

<sup>32</sup> Karl Rahner, "A Fundamental Theological Interpretation of Vatican II," *Theological Studies* 40 (1979), 718.

the necessary consequences from this recognition, or she remains a Western Church and so in the final analysis betrays the meaning of Vatican II.”<sup>33</sup> He does not mean the geographical expansion of the Church but the qualitative difference within the Church which entails many sorts of internal changes. This awareness of the world Church leads to a question of inculturation of the Gospel in other cultural situations besides the Western culture. Thus using the term inculturation as hindsight, he says, “the Church must be inculturated throughout the world.”<sup>34</sup> Rahner says that the Church has moved into the epoch of the world Church, which is a totally new stage for the Church without any clear picture for the future. Inculturation is an issue not only for the local churches but also for the entire Church if the Church is faithful to the vision of the world Church thematized in Vatican Council II.

With this insight into the importance of Vatican Council II, I turn to François Guillemette, who studies how “inculturation” as a neologism appeared in the theological circles.<sup>35</sup> In his study, the first appearance dates back to the year 1953. Guillemette observes that in the first usage the meaning of inculturation was not differentiated as a theological term, and it was synonymous with an anthropological term, “enculturation.”<sup>36</sup> While reporting that in the circle of missiology, “inculturation” was used for meaning of “l’entrée du christianisme dans une culture,” Guillemette noted the significance of the thirty-second general congregation of the Society of Jesus in 1974-75 for the fixation of the meaning “proprement théologique” of

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 724.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 718.

<sup>35</sup> François Guillemette, “L’apparition du concept d’inculturation: une réception de Vatican II,” *Mission* 2 (1995): 53-78.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 54.



inculturation as “l’inculturation de la foi et de la vie chrétienne.”<sup>37</sup> The letter of the Superior General, Pedro Arrupe to the whole society of Jesus was important for popularizing the term. Inculturation had to undergo another stage of differentiation of its meaning from a sociological term, acculturation. In exploring the process of differentiation of the term “inculturation” from other terms which describe cultural contacts, Guillemette finds the distinctiveness of inculturation in its “reciprocity” in the process of encounter.<sup>38</sup>

Aylward Shorter observes that the Church at the Council was not fully explicit about inculturation and finds a frequent obscurity of ideas and language; therefore, the Church gave an impression that it still held the concept of the Church as “monolithic” and “hybrid.”<sup>39</sup> He reports that before the Council, the *Ecclesiae Sanctae* of 1966 provided a preparatory notion for the new mission of theology. It showed a new awareness of socio-cultural reality in the local contexts.<sup>40</sup>

### Inculturation in the Vatican Council II Documents

In the Vatican Council II documents, Guillemette finds many uses of the term “adaptation.” First he examines “adaptation” in *The Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World, Gaudium et spes* (GS). It says in the section 44,

The Church learned early in its history to express the Christian message in the concepts

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 61. In his discussion of reciprocity in the process of inculturation, Guillemette develops the idea of “agent” of inculturation, who facilitates the insertion of the Gospel message to the culture but must be separated from the Gospel message itself. He highlights the aspect of “kenosis” in the role of the agent. See *ibid.*, 66-70.

<sup>39</sup> Shorter, 204.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 198.

and language of different peoples and tried to clarify it in the light of the wisdom of their philosophers: it was an attempt to adapt the Gospel to the understanding of all men and the requirements of the learned, insofar as this could be done. Indeed, this kind of adaptation and preaching of the revealed Word must ever be the law of all evangelization. In this way it is possible to create in every country the possibility of expressing the message of Christ in suitable terms and to foster vital contact and exchange between the Church and different cultures. (GS 44)

Guillemette finds that “adaptation” in this paragraph is insufficient to be identified with inculturation because of its strong emphasis on the Church’s efforts for adaptation.<sup>41</sup> It overlooks the aspect of encounter between the Gospel and culture.

The third paragraph of section 58, however, draws more attention to the relationship between the Gospel and culture. It states that “the Church has been sent to all ages and nations and, therefore, is not tied exclusively and indissolubly to any race or nation, to any one particular way of life, or to any customary practices, ancient or modern (GS 58).” Here the focus is on the universal mission of telling the Gospel message to all people. The paragraph continues to acknowledge the mutual enrichment between the Church and diverse cultures brought through the “communion” between them. It further explains the effect of the good news of Christ on cultures for their purification and for the development of their own goodness from within.<sup>42</sup> The Church takes a role of agent for this transformative process. This paragraph points to inculturation of the Gospel in cultures without explicitly using the term. There is a shift of focus

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<sup>41</sup> Schineller explains that “to adapt” essentially means to “make fit.” Adaptation refers to a practice such as taking the message and making it fit into a form prevailing in the culture. It assumes that “the center of the message is untouched, while peripheral expressions can change or be adapted.” Schineller, 16-7.

<sup>42</sup> “The good news of Christ continually renews the life and culture of fallen man; it combats and removes the error and evil which flow from the ever-present attraction of sin. It never ceases to purify and elevate the morality of peoples. It takes the spiritual qualities and endowments of every age and nation, and with supernatural riches it causes them to blossom, as it were, from within; it fortifies, completes and restores them in Christ (GS 58).”

from the Church to the Gospel in evangelization and missionary activity.

Another “break” Vatican Council II achieved is the Church’s new attitude towards the people of other religions and those who do not belong to the Church. *The Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions, Nostra aetate* (NA) explicitly recognizes the legitimacy of other religions. It says, “The Catholic Church rejects nothing of what is true and holy in these religions (NA 1).” Admitting many differences in the teachings, this document admits that other religions “reflect a ray of that truth which enlightens all men.” In this new relationship with other religions, Christ, not the Church, is focused as “the way the truth and the life.” Christ is the center of reconciliation of all things with God and the source of fullness of all religious life (NA 1).

*The Decree on the Church’s Missionary Activity, Ad gentes* (AG) explains the missionary activity in this new light. It defines the undertakings of “missions” as “the work of preaching the Gospel and implanting the Church among people who do not yet believe in Christ (AG 6).” It continues, “the special end of this missionary activity is the evangelization and the implanting of the Church among peoples or groups in which it has not yet taken root. All over the world indigenous particular churches ought to grow from the seed of the word of God.” The “implanting” of the Church into a new soil is a main image for mission in this document, but it highlights God’s initiative to grow local churches by using the image of “the seed of the word of God” which is already present in each culture. The idea of rootedness in local culture appears in section 15, which states, “this community of the faithful, endowed with the cultural riches of its own nation, must be deeply rooted in the people (AG 15).”

How does *Ad gentes* understand the relationship between the Church and culture? Section

19 states, “The implanted church consisted of the people, “already rooted in the social life of the people and to some extent conformed to its culture (AG 19).” And between the whole Church and the “young churches,” there must be the intimate “communion” so that the local churches may “engraft” the elements of the tradition of the Church onto their own cultures and that they may contribute to the whole Church (AG 19). François Guillemette comments on this paragraph that the Church is planted in such a way that by announcing the Gospel, the seed rooted in a culture will give birth to a particular church.<sup>43</sup> He reads the Council’s recognition of the significance of particularity of each culture to the growth of local churches. Here he finds the aim and method of inculturation.

The image of the “seed,” the “word of God,” appears again in section 22.<sup>44</sup> This section specifies this “seed” as the “riches of the nations,” such as “the customs, traditions, wisdom, teaching, arts and sciences” of the people. The people of local churches live in this richness of “the good soil.” The local church borrows anything useful from these riches. While this section emphasizes the harmony with the tradition of the Church, it encourages creative theological efforts to develop the understanding of the Gospel in the cultures.<sup>45</sup> The local churches are

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<sup>43</sup> “On plante l’Église par le moyen de l’annonce de l’Évangile pour que cette semence enracinée dans une culture donne naissance à une Église particulière,” Guillemette, 77.

<sup>44</sup> “The seed which is the word of God grows out of good soil watered by the divine dew, it absorbs moisture, transforms it, and makes it part of itself, so that eventually it bears much fruit. So too indeed, just as happened in the economy of the incarnation, the young churches, which are rooted in Christ and built on the foundations of the apostle, take over all the riches of the nations which have been given to Christ as an inheritance (cf. Ps. 2:8) (AG 22).”

<sup>45</sup> The document recommends embracing both intellectual and practical areas in the undertaking of the search for cultural adaptation. The search undertakes to know, “by what means the faith can be explained in terms of the philosophy and wisdom of the people, and how their customs, concept of life and social structures can be reconciled with the standard proposed by divine revelation (AG 22).”

encouraged to find the proper means of “a more profound adaptation in the whole sphere of Christian life (AG 22).” Adaptation must take on a naturalness by reaching to the level of life style of Christians. The uniqueness of “new particular churches” must be maintained within a Catholic unity with the whole Church. It must be noted that this section holds a Christocentric perspective for the discussion of the significance for local cultures. Two images of Christ are used, Christ incarnated and the Risen Christ. Thus, cultures are rooted in Christ and all cultural riches are given to Christ.<sup>46</sup>

The idea of mission in *Ad gentes* focuses on the encounter and interaction between the Gospel and culture in which the seed of the Word of God is already present. The Church’s task is to help the seed to grow, and to assist its maturation. Guillemette believes that in these sections of *Ad gentes*, the Church shows its new understanding of the service of evangelization as to enable people to encounter Christ and experience salvation in all those that constitute their humanity.<sup>47</sup> This affirmative attitude of the Church toward humanity and culture points to “inculturation.”

#### Pope Paul VI and Evangelization of Culture

The germinal idea of inculturation in Vatican Council II was developed by Pope Paul VI in his

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<sup>46</sup> Aylward Shorter compares two usages of the same quotation from Psalm 2:8 in AG 22 and LG 13. The image of the lordship of the Risen Christ is used in LG 13 in order to emphasize the unity of the whole church. It states, “The Church indeed is mindful that she must work with that king to whom the nations were given for an inheritance.” Its focus is on the Kingdom of God; thus it highlights the unity of “nations,” while AG 22 puts emphasis on the “riches.” Because of this difference, Shorter observes ambiguity in the understanding of the process of inculturation in the conciliar documents. See Shorter, 197.

<sup>47</sup> Guillemette, 78.

Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (On Evangelization in the Modern World) (EN). In this exhortation about the evangelization, the Pope followed Vatican Council in stating that “the whole Church is missionary (EN 59).” He appeals to the importance of the evangelization of culture by stating, “what matters is to evangelize man’s culture and cultures (not in a purely decorative way as it were by applying a thin veneer, but in a vital way, in depth and right to their very roots) (EN 19).”

The Pope emphasizes the unity of the Church, while admitting a tension between the universal Church and the “individual Churches.” As he recognizes the cultural multiplicity, he says, “The universal Church is in practice incarnate in the individual Churches made up of such or such an actual part of mankind (EN 62),” and he draws attention to the relationship between the two poles of the Church so as to perceive the richness in this relationship between the two.

Without using the term, he explains the process of evangelization which is identified with inculturation. He describes the process into three steps of assimilation, transposition and proclamation (EN 63). The object of assimilation is “the essence of the Gospel message.” The task of transposition is to put the Gospel message “without the slightest betrayal of its essential truth, into the language that these particular people understand, then of proclaiming it in this language.” The areas of transposition are wide, catechesis, theological formulation, secondary ecclesial structures, and ministries. By “language,” the pope intended both an anthropological and a cultural sense. He was keenly aware of a delicate tension between the universality of the Gospel message and its transposition into local culture. Therefore his writing is full of negative expressions:

Evangelization loses much of its force and effectiveness if it does not take into

consideration the actual people to whom it is addressed, if it does not use their language, their signs and symbols. . . . But on the other hand evangelization risks losing its power and disappearing altogether if one empties or adulterates its content under the pretext of translating it. . . . Now, only a Church which preserves the awareness of her universality and shows that she is in act universal is capable of having a message which can be heard by all, regardless of regional frontiers. (EN 63)

The Pope emphasizes the relationship between the universal Church and the individual Churches in developing a fruitful translation of faith into “the legitimate variety of expressions” of the whole faith life (EN 64). In this part, Shorter finds some weaknesses here with regard to inculturation.. He observes that the concept of “the essence of the Gospel” is not appropriate, and that evangelization is assumed as “doing things for the people.” In his understanding, inculturation must arise from the genuine contact with reality of the world, i.e. not at the level of “essence” as abstract speculation, and it must arise from community action.<sup>48</sup> However, how well this Pope understood cultural multiplicity and encouraged inculturation, though using the term “adaptation,” is observable in one of his speeches to Africans. He says, “An adaptation of the Christian life in the fields of pastoral, ritual, didactic and spiritual activities is not only possible, it is even favoured by the church. The liturgical renewal is a living example of this. And in this sense you may, and you must, have an African Christianity.”<sup>49</sup>

#### Pope John Paul II and Inculturation

Pope John Paul II speaks of inculturation on many occasions and represents the Church’s development in the understanding of inculturation. S. Iniobong Udoidem finds that the Pope

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<sup>48</sup> Shorter, 218.

<sup>49</sup> Pope Paul VI, address at the closing of the All-African Bishops’ Symposium in 1969, quoted in Shineller, 42.

presents inculturation, in its reciprocity, in the relationship between incarnation and evangelization.<sup>50</sup> The Pope began to use the term inculturation after the 1979 Apostolic Exhortation *Catechesi Tradendae*; however, in *Redemptor Hominis* (1979) he stated the idea of inculturation, without actually using the word. Inculturation is compared to incarnation, and some theologians, for example Stephen Bevens and Dennis Doyle, find in the Pope's exposition the "top-down" position. They read that the Pope presents inculturation with "the underlying question" as of "how a largely pre-set tradition and institution can have the greatest possible impact on any particular cultural situation while preserving what is good in that culture."<sup>51</sup> He thinks the same attitude continues to appear in the Pope's other writings, such as in *Redemptoris Missio*.<sup>52</sup>

The 1990 encyclical letter, *On the Permanent Validity of the Church's Missionary Mandate*, *Redemptoris Missio* (RM) more explicitly explains inculturation. Inculturation is a long process of the Church's insertion into peoples' cultures. Quoting the passage of the Final Report of the Extraordinary Synod of Bishops held in 1985, inculturation is distinguished from "purely external adaptation," because "inculturation 'means the intimate transformation of authentic cultural values through their integration in Christianity and the insertion of Christianity in the various human cultures'." The Church's task in inculturation is conceived so as to "make the

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<sup>50</sup> S. Iniobong Udoiem, *Pope John Paul II on Inculturation: Theory and Practice* (Lenham, MD: University Press of America, 1996), 2.

<sup>51</sup> Dennis Doyle, "Inculturation and the Interpretation of Vatican II in Recent Papal Documents," in the Proceedings of the Annual Convention of the CTS (College Theology Society) Held in Chicago 1991, 66; quoted in Bevens, 43.

<sup>52</sup> Udoiem observes that the Pope reached a definitive definition of inculturation in *Slavorum Apostoli* (1985), presenting inculturation as "the incarnation of the gospel (good news) in autochthonous cultures, at the same time the introduction of those cultures into the life of the Church." See Udoiem, 9.



Gospel incarnate in different cultures and at the same time introduces peoples, together with their cultures, into her own community. She transmits to them her own values, at the same time taking the good elements that already exist in them and renewing them from within (RM 52).” The Church is regarded as the instrument of mission to incarnate the Gospel in cultures. Between the Church and cultures, mutual enrichment is recognized. This interaction is identified with the relationship between the local Church and the universal Church because the local Church’s efforts of searching local modes of faith life in the process of inculturation enrich the universal Church. The Pope gives two principles which guide the implementations of the inculturation process: they are “compatibility with the Gospel and communion with the universal Church (RM 54).” He concludes that inculturation must spontaneously arise from the community.

Bevans calls the Pope’s understanding of inculturation “a translation model” of contextual theology.<sup>53</sup> With much emphasis on contextualization, Bevans’ view on the Pope’s expositions of inculturation is critical. While the Pope recognizes the significance of local culture and the richness of exchanges between the Churches, he emphasizes a universal message which should be expressed and translated effectively into particular cultural forms. The starting point is the universality of the gospel message, which leads to the top-down method of inculturation. Though finding that the Pope’s ultimate concern is to emphasize the primary universality of ecclesial communion and doctrinal expression, Bevans appreciates the Pope’s openness toward culture as showing a person “who is pledged to be the guardian and protector of the rich Christian

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<sup>53</sup> Bevans, 33, 42-46. The presupposition of the translation model is that “the essential message of Christianity is supracultural.” This model does not mean a literal translation, but it presupposes the core or essence of the Gospel to be translated into culture. See Bevans, 33-7.

tradition.”<sup>54</sup>

### Christological Foundation for Inculturation

We have seen how the notion of inculturation is accepted and developed in the Church through the conciliar documents and the popes’ writings. The emphasis on incarnation in Pope John Paul II corresponds with Pedro Arrupe’s analogy of incarnation for inculturation.

However, in using the same analogy of incarnation, it seems that they put focus on different aspects of inculturation. In our working definition of inculturation, “dialogue” is an important element for inculturation. Dialogue in inculturation is interaction between the Gospel and culture; it points to mutuality and reciprocity. It is important to understand in what way this dialogue is related to the incarnation of Jesus Christ. In this section, I will explore the meaning of inculturation in the light of Jesus Christ.

Incarnation is the model of inculturation: the Word of God became a human person and lived in a cultural context. Here inculturation finds its theological foundation for bringing the Gospel into a cultural context. However, incarnation is only the first aspect of Jesus’ life, though it has

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 46. Despite the Pope’s frequent mentioning of inculturation, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger takes a counter-position to it. He challenges inculturation in his address given in Hong Kong to the presidents of the Asian Bishops’ Conferences. In this address, he regards inculturation as unsatisfactory because he understands that inculturation presupposes the separation of culture and faith, but he believes that religion and culture are inseparable. Thus, inculturation is regarded as “artificial and unrealistic.” Instead of inculturation, he suggests a term “interculturality” or the “meeting of cultures.” By saying this, he identifies Christianity as one of the cultures, and fails to distinguish between the historically constructed European Christian culture and the universality of the Gospel. He states that “there is no such thing as naked faith or mere religion. Simply stated, insofar as faith tells man who he is and how he should begin being human, faith creates culture; faith is itself culture.” The Cardinal seems suspicious of the plurality of culture in today’s world. His attitude ironically represents the Church’s discouraging attitude to the local churches. See Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, “Christ, Faith and the Challenge of Cultures,” address given in Hong Kong to the presidents of the Asian Bishops’ Conferences and the chairpersons of their doctrinal commissions, March 1993, in *Origins* 24 (1995): 679-686.

a decisive meaning as God's self-communication. Thus, for a more comprehensive understanding of inculturation, Aylward Shorter believes that the notion of incarnation needs to be enlarged to include the whole Christian mystery.<sup>55</sup>

He points out three possible examples of insufficient apprehension of inculturation. First, if a focus is limited to the earthly life of Jesus and his cultural education, inculturation only applies to the first insertion of the Gospel into a culture. However, inculturation which we attempt is a process, achieved by an "ongoing" dialogue. Second, when the incarnation of "the Eternal Logos" is emphasized too much, inculturation causes "a one-way view." Because this understanding of incarnation leads to a christology "from above," inculturation is understood as "a disembodied essence being injected into a concrete human culture."<sup>56</sup> It overlooks the ordinary process of history and human communication. Third, when only the learning process of Jesus within a culture is focused on, Jesus' challenge to culture is overlooked. Shorter calls this oversight "the temptation of culturalism."<sup>57</sup> Jesus' life shows us his radical questions and his challenges to his cultural situation.

Shorter suggests including the whole mystery of the Christ event within inculturation so as to reach a more nuanced understanding. The Paschal Mystery is inseparable from incarnation. The goal and purpose of incarnation is accomplished through the Paschal Mystery. The redeeming death of Jesus and his resurrection are important moments for inculturation because they point to

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<sup>55</sup> Shorter, 81.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 84.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid. Schineller refers to the discussion of Jesus by Juan Luis Segundo. Segundo presents Jesus' challenges to the institutional religion of his time; Juan Luis Segundo, *The Liberation of Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1976), 77-81, and "On a Missionary Awareness of One's Own Culture" in *Studies in the International Apostolate of Jesuits* (1974): 33-47. See Schineller, 53.

the redemption and transformation of culture. Resurrection transcends the limitations of Jesus' earthly life. Likewise, Pentecost releases the Holy Spirit to all people and all cultures. The presence of the Holy Spirit in all cultures is a foundation of inculturation.

The Risen Christ is a more powerful image of inculturation for Shorter. He thinks that the Risen Christ is personally present in the socio-cultural sphere and the universal message to all cultures. This message embraces both the particular and the universal. The transcendent freedom of the Risen Christ appropriately reveals one goal of inculturation: that is to realize "a real continuity with the pre-Christian culture."<sup>58</sup> Through the Paschal mystery, more authentic cultural identity occurs. Shorter believes that with this image of the Risen Christ, the incarnation of Jesus is fulfilled, and reveals more the quality of an ongoing process of inculturation. Inculturation has its paradigm with the words of John's Gospel, "The Word became flesh and lived among us (Jn 1:14)," and it continues its process toward a fuller realization of the Kingdom of God with the cosmic image of the Risen Christ in Paul's letter to the Philippians (Phil 2:5-11). The balance between them is important, for these two images of Christ—becoming flesh and rising—are complementary. Because the Risen Christ reveals the presence of the Holy Spirit in all people and all cultures, it supports a "christology from below."

#### Further Theological Issues of Inculturation

How is this Christological reflection related to our life in the inculturated Church? This section will explore some issues on the theological foundation for inculturation. Peter

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<sup>58</sup> Shorter, 84.

Schineller presents three important theological areas to discuss as a basis for inculturation.<sup>59</sup>

The areas are revelation, grace and ecclesiology. First, Vatican Council II developed a new understanding of revelation. As we have seen, the conciliar documents used the image of the “seed of the Word of God.” This image revealed that God is present and in contact with a culture in an imperfect and hidden way, even before the culture encounters the Gospel.<sup>60</sup>

Accordingly, Vatican II shows respect for other religions. These reflections lead to an understanding that revelation occurs in diverse hidden ways. In addition to that, contemporary theology becomes aware of the mediated, historical nature of revelation. Revelation is understood by humankind through the mediation of culture.

Second, we believe that grace is offered to all people. This understanding contrasts sharply with the old exclusive understanding of grace, which caused disrespect for and rejection of local culture and traditional religion. Because grace is offered to all people, the dialogical and reciprocal process in inculturation is meaningful. Inculturation searches for the presence of grace in culture and builds something new in the Church by learning from culture. Schineller emphasizes that grace and the Holy Spirit are inseparable and universally offered.<sup>61</sup>

The third is a challenge in ecclesiology. We understand that the Church is a community of faith. It confesses itself imperfect and admits that it can make mistakes. It has both human and divine aspects. The new and more appropriate images of the Church today are “servant” or “searching pilgrim.” This is a Church that is not triumphalistic, but living humbly in history and

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<sup>59</sup> Schineller, 46-51.

<sup>60</sup> See AG 6, 22.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 47.

human culture. Accordingly, Schineller reinterprets the meaning of being “catholic” for today’s Church as being “open, adaptable, receptive in all contexts and cultures.” The Church is in “an ongoing and never-ending process.”<sup>62</sup> With this image of Church, inculturation is the work of an entire community. Thus, the laity’s role is important for inculturation because they embrace the Gospel values in the actual living. Inculturation is not hierarchy-centered, but lay-centered.

The issues in these three areas underscore the significance of laity, of all peoples, and of culture in inculturation. Schineller explains that the process of inculturation consists of the interactions of three poles: the Gospel message, the situation / culture and the agent of inculturation. The interaction between them is reciprocal and two-way, making a circle or a spiral. Listening and sharing among them creates something new. Schreiter calls these three components in inculturation, a message, the speakers and the hearers.<sup>63</sup> In the discussion of effective inculturation, he emphasizes the primacy of hearers. The local churches are the hearers, and the task of inculturation is to develop the local churches. In order to make the message of the Gospel heard, there are two different ways to accomplish this—either by being speaker-oriented or hearer-oriented. The choice of orientation involves the vision of the Church. Schreiter explains that, if the Church takes the speaker orientation, the Church regards itself as “coextensive with the kingdom of God,” and the world and the culture must fit into the Church. Thus, “Culture is attended to insofar as it helps with the transmission of the message as the

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>63</sup> Schineller, 62. Robert J. Schreiter, “A Framework for a Discussion of Inculturation,” in *Mission in Dialogue: The Proceedings of the SEDOS (Servizio Documentazione e Studi) Research Seminar on the Future of Mission Held in Rome 8-19 March 1981*, edited by Mary Motte and Joseph R. Lang (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1982), 545.

speaker understands it.”<sup>64</sup> However, he argues that the message can be heard, only when the speakers first conform themselves to the hearers, and then attend to the hearers’ need. The vision of the Church in this approach is the Church, as not yet coextensive of the kingdom of God, but on the way toward the fuller reality of the Church.<sup>65</sup> In this approach, inculturation is “imperative.” Because the Church is in service for the Gospel, it needs to acknowledge the needs of the hearers.

Believing that the aim of inculturation in a concrete situation, to be “the transformation of the human and social situation toward the kingdom of God,” Schreiter proposes two criteria for effective inculturation: “affirming the identity of the culture and locating the need for social change.”<sup>66</sup> Each criterion relates to the theological dimensions of creation and redemption. These two criteria provide the concrete points to be discussed for the effectiveness of inculturation.<sup>67</sup> These criteria of affirming identity and locating the need for change must be

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid. Questioning whether the Church’s emphasis on the “sovereign power of the gospel” over against culture brings about inculturation, Schreiter proposes to take the dynamics of culture as the starting point. He underscores that the gospel never enters a culture in pure form. He senses paternalism implied behind the Church’s stress of evangelization of culture. See Schreiter, “Inculturation of Faith or Identification with Culture?” in *Christianity and Cultures: A Mutual Enrichment*, Concilium, ed. Norbert Greinacher and Mette Norbert (London: SCM; Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1994), 15-6.

<sup>66</sup> Schreiter 1982, 548. Cultural identity is affirmed because “if God created the world as his own, and found it good, then there must be much to affirm in a local situation.” In this view of creation, incarnation is the model of inculturation, so that the Church searches for affirmative elements in culture. This provides the reason for effective inculturation: it is important to ask the question whether the particular identity of the local church is enhanced. On the other hand, the theology of redemption concerns the need of transformation in the local situations in order to become fully authentic. Transformation is the experience which undergoes the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (ibid., 548-49).

<sup>67</sup> Schreiter’s three criteria of affirming identity: (1) When values and identity of a community are in need of change, the change should be at a slow pace. (2) When a sense of identity grows in “inner consistency and continuity,” a community will maintain “a point of reference,” from which to face a new situation. (3) The attitude toward culture needs to be inclusive since the Church is on the way to a greater

used simultaneously because they are mutually related. Because Schreier understands that inculturation embraces the whole aspect of human life from the level of self-identity to the level of concrete planning for change, he stresses the primacy of hearers in inculturation. The dynamism of inculturation arises from the hearers' response to the Gospel.

It must be noted that the dialogue of inculturation is insufficient when it happens between the Church and culture. The basic dialogue is between the Gospel and culture. However, a question arises as to what we dialogue with; whether there is a "center" of the Gospel. To this question, theologians of inculturation give a negative response. Instead of assuming a "core," for example short formulas of Christian faith, Schineller suggests conceiving Christianity as a series of concentric circles. The more important contents are at the center, which is "undefined and continually being refined and reformulated," and the less important are at the periphery.<sup>68</sup> The question of the center of Christianity leads us to Jesus Christ as the center, to his life and message, and not to search for the formulation of a "core." Aylward Shorter suggests first meeting the person of Christ and second listening to the Gospel values. The Gospel is the good news about Christ, "being," and the "way" of life.<sup>69</sup> The subject matter of inculturation is Jesus Christ. Shorter emphasizes that Jesus Christ is the irreducible subject matter and tradition in the

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realization of the kingdom of God. There are three criteria for social change: (1) The changes involved with religious practice and popular religion need to maintain relevancy to the hearers' need and their previous self-understanding. (2) The process for exploring the need for social change must develop the community's openness to the world, and responsiveness to reality and problems. (3) The decisions for change need to challenge the root of problem (ibid., 548-550).

<sup>68</sup> Schineller, 56. He uses the idea of "a hierarchy of truths" found in Vatican II document, the *Decree on Ecumenism*, no. 11. He appreciates that the Decree does not specify the content of hierarchy.

<sup>69</sup> Shorter, 60.



Church.<sup>70</sup> In this process, discernment is absolutely necessary. Inculturation is a challenge of distinguishing the Gospel message and the less important and culture-bound elements around it. It is a long term process of maturing when a culture understands Jesus and itself through the dialogue with the Gospel.<sup>71</sup> Because of its dialogical nature, inculturation does not hold the set formula as the Gospel message, but it demands that the culture creatively searches for Jesus Christ through the relationship with him and tradition. This creative search leads to a question of syncretism.

### The Problem of Syncretism

In the process of inculturation, a question of syncretism arises from the encounter of the Gospel and culture. The views on syncretism show a wide spectrum from the very negative to the affirmative ones. The fact that there are variety of views shows that the meaning of syncretism for the Christian faith is unsettled.<sup>72</sup> The negative implication of the word has been

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<sup>70</sup> Shorter explains that some elements of tradition have irreducible quality because of they provides “a necessary symbolic and conceptual link with Christ” while other elements in tradition are culture-bound. The elements, such as devotions and doctrinal formulations, are useful for maintaining faith but they are not irreducible elements. See Shorter, 64-66.

<sup>71</sup> Théoneste Nkéramihigo holds that it is “the dreadful illusion” to think it possible to “isolate Christianity in its essence,” and admits that the Gospel takes a specific concreteness. Addressing the tension between the universality of the Gospel and its historical concreteness, he argues, “it was therefore unavoidable that Christianity was offered other cultures vested in its Western specificity. . . . It is normal, on account of the specificity of the incarnation, that the acceptance of Christianity was linked to the West and vice versa.” He proposes the following question for the criteria of inculturation: “How will Christianity commit itself to present Christ, “our Peace” as the one who realizes unity among all people.” He points to breaking cultural specificity and going forward to cultural unity. See Théoneste Nkéramihigo, “Inculturation and the Specificity of Christian Faith,” in *What is So New about Inculturation?* Inculturation: Working Papers on Living Faith and Cultures, no. 5, ed. Arij Roest Crollius (Rome: Pontifical Gregorian University for Centre “Cultures and Religions,” 1984), 25-6, 28.

<sup>72</sup> Schineller finds that the word syncretism is “too ambiguous, open, and subjective and has too many different connotations to be used fruitfully in discussing inculturation”(Peter Schineller,

strong, but the need for redefining its meaning is also acknowledged especially in regard to local and contextual theology and inculturation.<sup>73</sup> As inculturation seriously takes into account the dialogue between the Gospel and culture, it is a natural result that Christianity spontaneously receives some influences from culture through interaction with culture. The history of Christianity shows many examples which can be interpreted as syncretism.<sup>74</sup>

The problem of syncretism concerns the method of analysing the relationship between religion and culture. In order to have a clear understanding of that relationship, Schreier proposes to take only one set of analytic tools to study both religious activity and cultural patterns. He believes that in the process of inculturation in which the Gospel takes root in a local church, it is impossible to separate out religion from culture in the analytic process.

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"Inculturation and Syncretism: What Is the Real Issue?" *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 16 (1992), 51. Sharing the same difficulties about the word syncretism, Robert Schreier responded him in the following year and proposed to "continue to grapple with the term," instead of dismissing it. He still finds its meaning in today's missiology to "for the formation of religious identity in new circumstances." See Schreier, "Defining Syncretism: An Interim Report" in *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 17 (1993), 50-53. Among all these different views, Leonardo Boff holds a very affirmative view. He classifies the meaning of syncretism into seven different types: addition, accommodation, mixture, agreement, translation, adaptation, and he argues that Christianity "preserves and enriches its universality as long as it is capable of speaking all languages, incarnating itself in all cultures." He proposes this history of Christianity as "valid syncretism" (Leonardo Boff, *Church: Charisma and Power: Liberation Theology and the Institutional Church*, translated by John W. Diercksmeier [New York: Crossroad, 1985], 90-91). As my working definition of syncretism, I follow Schreier: "syncretism . . . has to do with the mixing of elements of two religious systems to the point where at least one, if not both, of the systems loses basic structure and identity" (Schreier 1985, 144).

<sup>73</sup> The collection of essays on syncretism edited by Jerald Gort is helpful to view the positions and attempts for new understanding of syncretism. See Jerald D. Gort, Hendrik M. Vroom, Rein Fernhout, and Anton Wessels, eds., *Dialogue and Syncretism: An Interdisciplinary Approach*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans; Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi, 1989.

<sup>74</sup> Schineller presents examples of syncretism in the history of Christianity. He includes examples such the Jerusalem Council, the feast of Christmas, the integration of Aristotelian philosophy with Christianity by Thomas Aquinas as are not usually taken negatively. Showing that Christianity is historically syncretistic, his presentation illustrates the need of reconsideration of syncretism. See Schineller 1992, 51.

Instead of starting with a study of explicit religious beliefs, he suggests beginning with an analysis of religious practice.<sup>75</sup> He observes that many examples of the fusion of Christianity and culture are revealed by the empirical study of the Christian history. Thus, fusion is “not only common” but “absolutely necessary.” Finding that the real issue is “who will control the process,” he warns against the split between setting up “ideational standards for religion and religious inculturation, and using a different set of standards for cultural analysis.”<sup>76</sup> When the effectiveness of inculturation is questioned, the aspect of syncretism is included in the answer of consistency and coherence between the Christian faith and new elements. Inculturation as a dialogue between the Gospel and culture needs to be ready to embrace the conceivable results arising through the reciprocity of interaction with the conviction of presence of the Holy Spirit in culture.

### The Need of Inculturation for the Church in Asia

The awareness of the need of inculturation in Asia dated back in 1974 in the Statement and Recommendations of the First Plenary Assembly for the Federation of Asian Bishops Conference. It states that “to preach the Gospel in Asia today we must make the message and life of Christ truly incarnate in the minds and lives of our peoples. The primary focus of our task of evangelization then. . . is the building up of a truly local church.”<sup>77</sup> Its definition of local

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<sup>75</sup> Schreiter 1982, 551.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 552.

<sup>77</sup> Statement 9 in the “Statement and Recommendations of the First Plenary Assembly of FABC (Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conference), *Evangelization in Modern Day Asia*,” held in Taipei, 27 April 1974 in *Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences, For All the Peoples of Asia: Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences, Documents from 1970-1991*, edited by Gaudencio B. Rosales and Catalino G.

church clearly points to inculturation: “the local church is a church incarnate in a people, a church indigenous and inculturated.” This church is in “continuous, humble and loving dialogue with the living traditions, the cultures, the religions—in brief, with all the life-realities of the people.”<sup>78</sup> The efforts of the Church to practice inculturation in Asia are related to its situation as a religious minority in Asia. The need for articulating the relevance of the faith in Jesus Christ is real for the growth of the local churches, and for living with the cultures and people of other religions.

Inculturation is a challenge for the Church in Asia because a characteristic of the religious situation in Asia is its strong interrelation between religion and culture. Nationality, religion and culture are often identified. Another characteristic is the syncretism or “spontaneous inter-culturation,” which arises from the friendly relationship of co-existence between world religions, ethnic religions and cosmic religiosity.<sup>79</sup> The Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conference has been initiating the triple dialogue with the poor, with cultures and with religions, but the gap between the vision and the implementation is a reality that is critically analysed by the Asian theologians.<sup>80</sup> Inculturation is “imperative” for the local churches in Asia so as to develop

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Arévalo (Quezon City, Philippines: Claretian; Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1992), 14.

<sup>78</sup> Statement 12, *ibid.*, 14.

<sup>79</sup> The theological consultation of the Office of Evangelization of the FABC, held in Hua Hin, 10 November 1991, explains the relation of these three religious systems: world religions relate more to the public or civic sphere, while cosmic religiosity informs the more private or personal and family sphere. Commonly world religions are experienced in the personal and family sphere as popular or cosmic. See “Conclusions of the Theological Consultation,” FABC Office of Evangelization, Hua Hin, 10 November 1991, in *Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences, For All the Peoples of Asia: Federation of Asian Bishops’ Conferences, Documents from 1970-1991*, edited by Gaudencio B. Rosales and Catalino G. Arévalo (Quezon City, Philippines: Claretian; Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1992), 336-7.

<sup>80</sup> Aloysius Pieris is a leading speaker for the inculturation of the Church of Asia. He defines inculturation in the Asian context: “the costly faith-response by which the Church. . . recognizes this voice

authentic incarnated faith. It is imperative so as to reveal that salvation is offered to all people as stated in Vatican Council II, in its affirmative understanding of culture in the process of evangelization<sup>81</sup> The recognition of the Seed of the Word of God is important for the inculturation of the Church in Asia, for its own self-understanding and appropriation of cultural tradition, and for the life with and service for the people of other religions.

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[of the poor] in the Asian (body of) Christ, the vast suffering peoples of Asia, wherever it is heard today, and responds to it in obedience so that the Church may become Good News to them as Jesus was, in the freedom of the Spirit.” He puts a strong emphasis on the presence of the Holy Spirit among the poor, regardless of their religion. The Church as the evangelizer is qualified and “evangelized” by their voice. In his understanding, inculturation in Asia is inseparable from the praxis for the liberation of the poor. See Aloysius Pieris, *Fire and Water: Basic Issues in Asian Buddhism and Christianity* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996), 129.

<sup>81</sup> See LG 16, GS 22, NA 2 and AG 3.

## CHAPTER TWO

### IRENÆUS' DIVERGENT VIEW OF HUMAN NATURE:

#### HUMANKIND IS CREATED TO *BECOME HOLY*

##### Introduction

The attempt of this chapter is to listen to the divergent voices in the Christian tradition. This is an attempt as a part of the practice of inculturation. When the Gospel and culture encounter, and engage in dialogue, they begin a process of knowing each other. The goal of inculturation is not adaptation and translation, but transformation and new creation. At the end of the last chapter, we observed some characteristics of religious reality in Asia. The question for this chapter is: What does the Church in Asia listen to and bring in, in the dialogue with the Gospel? This is a question of Asian Christians' self-identity and the continuity with cultural tradition. To this question, I will humbly approach in two steps. First, I will attend to the side of "hearer" of the Gospel in Asia in order to highlight a problem. Second, I will explore the Christian tradition in order to find a clue to discuss the problem.

The problem which I anticipate is the different understanding of creation and the goodness of the human being. Within the European Christian tradition, there are divergent understandings of these issues, and some of these significant differences lie in the differing theologies of Irenaeus and Augustine. I will critically consult the presentation of those theologians by John Hick. The aim of exploring the church tradition in pursuing the problem of Asia is to discuss a similar

example to ask whether there is a theology in Christian traditions that can serve better to assist inculturation. Hick presents Irenaeus' type of theodicy in order to challenge and demythologize the traditional traditional Augustinian understanding of the fall of humankind. Hick's method of reinterpretation of tradition will help us to read more creatively the church tradition in order to encounter the Gospel message embedded in the historically developed elements of that tradition.

### **African and Asian Spirituality: The Problem**

Manifesting the new awareness of African and Asian spirituality, Tissa Balasuriya

highlights its affinity with Biblical spirituality:

There is deep affinity between the traditional spirituality of Africa and Asia and the further spiritual growth we now aspire to; and between these and the spirituality of the Bible. . . . African and Asian spirituality or religiousness, no less than that of the Bible is concerned for life-giving blessings, not only in the after-life, but also within this world and within present history. It is a spirituality that thinks and acts and feels history and the cosmos, time and space; it is focussed on the unfolding of life on the stage of History on the face of this earth.<sup>1</sup>

Here he finds the root of the affinity between the two in the communities' experience of nature of history. He emphatically specifies "the biblical spirituality," because this address is his attempt to save the uniqueness of African and Asian spirituality which is distinct from traditional (European) Christianity, and to explore its continuity between the Biblical spirituality as the root of Christianity. By doing so, he hopes for a new creation. Turning to the Bible and Jesus Christ, Balasuriya finds that the values which Africa and Asia traditionally hold are envisioned in

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<sup>1</sup> Tissa Balasuriya, "African and Asian Spirituality," Appendix: Extract from the Statement of the Consultation on Africa and Asian Spirituality, Colombo, 18-25 June 1992, in *Any Room for Christianity in Asia?* ed. Leonardo Boff and Virgil Elizondo, Concilium (London: SCM; Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1993), 132.

salvation as life-giving blessings.<sup>2</sup> He contrasts their rootedness in nature and in history with the “other-worldliness” of “traditional post-Constantinian theology,” which hinders their commitment to their lives in this world.

Balasuriya’s criticism of European theology is sharp, because it “soft-pedalled the social commitment of the historical Jesus and emphasized his transcendental divinity and insisted on his other-worldly salvific function in a context of a presupposition of a universally damning original sin.”<sup>3</sup> He illuminates the points of conflicts which the European Christianity brought in as the Christian message to Africa and Asia. He now finds them contradictory with the biblical spirituality and the message of Jesus Christ. Against the traditional sense of sacredness experienced in nature and in concrete material life, Christian understanding of God was abstract and transcendental. The emphasis on the otherworldliness of salvation did not fit the traditional world view of Asian and African peoples and thus obstructed positive community life. The universality of original sin was a strong presupposition. In order to challenge these problematics, Balasuriya appeals to the spirituality of the indigenous people in Asia and Africa as the rich source of cultural tradition.<sup>4</sup> However, he attempts to incorporate it into Christianity by reinterpreting it. He proposes to integrate it with Eco-Feminist spirituality which preserves the

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<sup>2</sup> Balasuriya believes that in both the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures, salvation consists in the blessings of the present and the promise for future. The blessings sustain people in concrete material life and promise them justice and peace in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. See *ibid.*, 136-7.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 139.

<sup>4</sup> He thinks that the spirituality of indigenous people in Asia as a source to which Christians turn back and learn from for it “gives full values to creation as a dynamic and highly integrated Web of life. It exudes life-giving values: sacredness of the land, reverence for all creatures, judicious use and conservation of the earth’s resources, compassion for the weak, oppressed and marginalized. These cosmic values, rituals and practices are often considered ‘superstitious’. But they capture a cosmic interwovenness that can become a healing and transforming experience for all of us” (*ibid.*, 142).



traditional reverence for nature and reveals new meanings of nature, not as a mere materialistic place, but as a “God-infused and God-breathed place.”<sup>5</sup>

This proposal of symbiosis by a new interpretation of traditional spirituality is a method of inculturation. Balasuriya attempts to overcome the European understanding of creation by turning to the indigenous source. His appeal to the cultural tradition is convincing because it is supported by its affinity with biblical spirituality. In contrast with the strong emphasis on “otherworldliness” and redemption in the European Christianity, Balasuriya finds biblical spirituality affirming the cultural tradition because it takes nature and history into consideration.

Stephen Bevans observes two different basic theological orientations--a creation-centered orientation and a redemption-centered--which control the approaches to culture. He emphasizes that it is important take a creation-centered approach in order to develop contextual theology, because a creation-centered theology regards culture “as revealing God’s presence in a particular situation.”<sup>6</sup> The creation-centered theology holds the conviction of the goodness of creation while a redemption-centered theology tends to regard culture and human experience as “either in need of a radical transformation or in need of total replacement.”<sup>7</sup>

A question arises. In Balasuriya’s appeal to African and Asian spirituality, we have seen the clash between two different world views and attitudes to human nature and culture. The clash occurs between African-Asian spirituality and the European Christianity. Then, in the Christian tradition, is there a tradition of theology which serves better to develop a creation-centered

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Bevans, 15.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 16.

theology? John Hick presents an illuminating study of divergent traditions of theodicy. In contrasting the divergent views on human nature of Augustine and Irenaeus, this reveals that there is a plurality of cultural traditions in Christianity.

### Two Theodicies: John Hick's Presentation of Irenaeus and Augustine

In *Evil and the God of Love*, Hick asks a "theological" question of theodicy: "Can the presence of evil in the world be reconciled with the existence of a God who is unlimited both in goodness and in power?"<sup>8</sup> He undertakes the task of theodicy as to give a coherent answer to both questions of the felt reality of evil in the world and of God's total responsibility for the existence of such evil. To discuss the detail of Hick's theodicy is not the purpose here, but by exploring the contrast which Hick makes between the Augustinian and the Irenaean traditions, we shall see two different views of human beings and creation and their influences for the later theological understandings.

The Augustinian type of theodicy, which was developed through the Middle Ages and the Reformation, continues to be present today in both the Catholic and Protestant traditions. There are different emphases, however, in these traditions. The other type of theodicy, the Irenaean, does not develop a strong form of tradition but continues from Irenaeus to the Eastern Church tradition, and in some points, in the Western Church tradition. After a rupture of interest in it, this approach appears in Schleiermacher and other thinkers. As the founder of this type of theodicy, Irenaeus is not so strong a systematic theologian as Augustine, but Hick thinks that

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<sup>8</sup> John Hick, *Evil and the God of Love*, 2d ed, (London: Macmillan, 1977a), 3.

the distinctiveness in Irenaeus' thought deserves to be called by his name.<sup>9</sup>

### The Augustinian Type of Theodicy

In the discussion of the Augustinian type of theodicy, Hick distinguishes between theological themes and more philosophical themes in the Augustinian tradition, and argues against their sufficiency as an approach to the reality of evil. The theological themes are: "the goodness of the created world, pain and suffering as consequences of the fall, the 'O felix culpa', and the final dichotomy of heaven and hell."<sup>10</sup> The philosophical themes are: "evil as non-being, metaphysical evil as fundamental, the principle of plenitude, and the aesthetic conception of the perfection of the universe."<sup>11</sup> Hick summarizes his understanding of the Augustinian type of theodicy as follows:

God created a finitely perfect universe, realizing all the different possible levels, and kinds of being, including free human persons with ability to obey or disobey their creator; that humans did in fact fall, thereby causing nature also to 'go wrong,' so that we now exist as fallen creatures in a fallen world; but that a remedy has been provided by God the Son, Jesus Christ, in that all who are willing to benefit from his atoning death will inherit eternal life.<sup>12</sup>

This description contains the themes which Hick finds problematic, without using technical

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<sup>9</sup> Hick admits that "it cannot, however, be said that there is an 'Eastern Orthodox theodicy' which is Irenaean as distinct from Augustinian," but contends that Orthodox thought "indeed has taken very seriously the quite different theme" (ibid., 218). James A. Carpenter in his study on the understanding of nature and grace, uses the contrast between Augustine and Irenaeus as a framework to follow the interactions of different views on nature and grace among theologians. He regards Irenaeus as "one of the most influential of early Eastern theologians" (James A. Carpenter, *Nature and Grace: Toward an Integral Perspective* [New York: Crossroad, 1988], 18).

<sup>10</sup> Hick 1977a, 169. For the detail of his discussion on these themes, see ibid., 170-193.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 169.

<sup>12</sup> John Hick, "Response to Mesle" in C. Robert Mesle, *John Hick's Theodicy: A Process Humanist Critique* (New York: St Martin's, 1991), 117.

expressions. In this picture of the perfect universe, he finds the philosophical--Neo-Platonist--influences, which he proposes to set aside because of their non-biblical roots.<sup>13</sup> He argues that the doctrine of the fall of Adam and original sin support the negative view of human nature, which leads to the punitive view of suffering which assumes that every sufferer is sinner.<sup>14</sup> He questions the view of the historical fall which he believes is the source of the confusion in Christian theology.<sup>15</sup> Hick thinks that this negative vision of the human past does not respond to the aspects of growth and hope for future in human reality.

Hick concludes his criticism on the Augustinian tradition of theodicy by remarking that the critical point which overlaps them all is the "impersonal or superpersonal way in which God's

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<sup>13</sup> "The goodness of the created world / universe" is a biblical teaching, but Hick finds the Neo-Platonist philosophical argument here. In the discussion of these philosophical themes he calls for the need for distinguishing between "a valid theological insight arising out of the Christian revelation itself, and a questionable philosophical conceptuality by means of which this insight has often been presented" (Hick 1977a, 179). The "principle of plenitude," which the Augustinian theodicy tradition uses to explain the reality why there are both general and specific forms of imperfections (ibid., 189), and the "aesthetic perfection of universe" are likewise of Neo-Platonist origin. The "aesthetic perfection" is explained with an analogy of visual arts, whose perfection does not allow any change and development, assuming the dimension of time only as external (ibid., 192-3).

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 173.

<sup>15</sup> He regards the Genesis story as myth and our modern scientific understanding does not hold the idea of a single pair for the whole human nature. A mythic conception is not a description of an actual event (ibid., 175). He assumes no ideal state fully realized in the past; thus, there was no perfect creation which was already enjoyed but now lost. It must be noted that Hick rejects the confusion between myth and history, and that myth is an operative notion for Hick's theology. He holds that the Ultimate divine Reality "lies beyond the scope" of all human concepts; our thought and experience of the Real, including all theological discourse, are understood as "mythological" in character. The truth of myth is functional, not literally applied to the subject matter, but evoking in its hearers "a dispositional response which is appropriate to it" (Hick 1991, 116). In regard of the contemporary situation of religious multiplicity, Hick applies the notion of metaphor and myth to the incarnation of Jesus and states that "the idea of divine incarnation is a mythological idea (John Hick, "Jesus and the World Religions," in *The Myth of God Incarnate*, ed. John Hick [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977b], 177)." He regards incarnation as an historically developed idea. In his understanding, metaphor and myth contain a high degree of validity and truthfulness to evoke an appropriate attitude to their object, but they have no literal meaning. See also John Hick, "Divine Incarnation as Metaphor," in *The Metaphor of God Incarnate: Christology in a Pluralistic Age* (Louisville, KN: Westminster / John Knox, 1993), 99-111.

relationship to His creation is prevailingly conceived.”<sup>16</sup> He holds that the role of human beings in the universe lacks the aspect of personal relationship between the Creator God and human beings because the Augustinian world picture is constructed with the philosophical principles and the idea of the universal scale of nature, thus their role is to fill “a gap” in the chain of being. The metaphysical understanding of human contingency invites a lack of perspective on person; thus the view of sin as a personal act does not develop.

Hick believes that the Augustinian theodicy tradition does not take into account the contemporary emphasis of a personal relationship between God and human beings revealed by the person and work of Jesus Christ. Contemporary theological awareness highlights the meaning of the incarnation, and theological language has changed its tone and vocabulary to become more appropriate to express this personal relationship. Our understanding of God has changed, he argues: we understand that “God has revealed Himself to us in and through a human life;” therefore, we have to think of God in personal terms.<sup>17</sup> He demands a theodicy that expresses a personal relationship with God.

As a new conception of God, Hick proposes a view, “God the Personal Infinite” with whom human beings are capable of a personal relationship. He thinks two qualifications are urgent in this new understanding of humankind; human beings are made as “personal beings in the image of God,” and occupy “a unique place in creation” with the potential of having a personal relationship with God.<sup>18</sup> In the Incarnation, Hick observes God’s attitude expressed in Jesus’

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 193.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 196.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

attitudes and actions to the people with him. God's love is expressed in Jesus' activity and Jesus' healing shows the redemptive love of God. What Hick attempts to do by drawing attention to the Incarnation, is to shift the manner of theodicy from the metaphysical and abstract argument of the perfect God to a personal and experiential reflection of the incarnated God. He considers that this type of theodicy must include the aspect of a particular historical situation in order to respond the real experience of evil and suffering in the world. His concluding suggestion is to look for an alternative theodicy which puts emphasis on a personal relationship with God, and answers questions of creation, evil and morality in terms of the human person.<sup>19</sup> The Irenaean type of theodicy is another tradition which Hick believes has potential to respond these requirements.

### The Irenaean Type of Theodicy

Hick's presentation of Irenaeus' views on creation and human beings is a challenge to the major tradition of the Augustinian theodicy. Before he introduces the content of Irenaeus' theology, he attempts to discuss the historical background of how the story of fall in Genesis came to be regarded as a standard Christian view of human beings. This story provides the two important elements of the Augustinian tradition, assertion of "an inherited sinfulness or tendency to sin," and that of "a universal human guilt in respect of Adam's crime."<sup>20</sup> Hicks intends to

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<sup>19</sup> His suggestion for a new theodicy is a challenge to the Augustinian theodicy. He states: In the light of the Incarnation, then, any justification of evil must (I suggest) be a justification of it as playing a part in bringing about the high good of man's fellowship with God, rather than as necessary to the aesthetic perfection of a universe which, in virtue of its completeness, includes personal life. A Christian theodicy must be centred upon moral personality rather than upon nature as a whole, and its governing principle must be ethical rather than aesthetic (ibid. 198).

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 201.

show that this story is only “a” Christian view and it is historically developed, despite its wide familiarity.

Hick contends that Jesus taught the universality of sin, but made no specific reference to the myth of Adam or rabbinical teachings of evil, which were established by his time.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, a distinction needs to be made between Jesus’ teaching witnessed in the Christian Scripture and the successive attempts of the Church. Hick observes that the letters of Paul (Rom 5:12-21, 1Cor 15:21-2) formed the “root idea” of “original sin,” which affects all of humankind and is transmitted to all generations by physical inheritance.<sup>22</sup> Augustine follows the idea of the physical inheritance of sinfulness, and, through the Latin Fathers, the story of Adam’s fall, which became the tradition of the West.<sup>23</sup> This tradition maintains that because Adam’s descendants’ shared his guilt, all human beings are guilty.

The Hellenistic or Eastern Fathers, Hick believes, preserved divergent tradition which co-existed with the Western tradition. Irenaeus represents the Eastern tradition, which is not developed as a theodicy but provides the foundation for a “radical Christian alternative to the

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<sup>21</sup> Hick describes the traditions before Jesus’ time. In the text of Genesis, chapter 3, there is no story of Adam’s pre-fallen state nor any elaboration which suggests an inherited guilt or a congenital tendency to sin; however, he finds the instances of dramatic fall stories based on Genesis, chapters 3 and 4, among the popular and more apocalyptic religion of the more ordinary Jewish people. The doctrine of “evil imagination” based on Gen 6:5 appeared and explained that evil comes from evil inclination or impulse. At the time of Christ, rabbinical teaching established the myth of Adam, which taught that “Adam’s transgression has affected his descendants by generating an evil imagination with them” (ibid., 202-3).

<sup>22</sup> Hick explains that the term original sin first appeared in Augustine (ibid., 206, n.2) but Hick does not mention that the Vulgate translation of Rom 5:12 caused a different understanding in the Latin Church since Ambrosiaster and Augustine (*The New Jerome Bible Commentary*, 51:54-56, 59).

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 205-7. Hick notes a development through this period, which elaborates the mythological perfection of Adam and the corresponding tragedy of his fall. Here Hick finds a shift from the sense of “loss of something good” to an emphasis on “a wicked corruption” (ibid., 207).

Augustinian theodicy.”<sup>24</sup>

A distinctive characteristic of Irenaeus’ view on human beings consists of a distinction between the “image of God” and the “likeness of God.” Hick explains that the image (imago) of God “resides in man’s bodily form, apparently fellowship with his Maker, while the likeness (similitude) of God signifies “man’s final perfecting by the Holy Spirit.”<sup>25</sup> Irenaeus writes that:

The man is rendered spiritual and perfect because of the outpouring of the Spirit, and this is he who was made in the image and likeness of God. But if the Spirit be wanting to the soul, he who is such is indeed of an animal nature, and being left carnal, shall be an imperfect being, possessing indeed the image [of God] in his formation, but not receiving the likeness through the Spirit.<sup>26</sup>

Hick restates this distinction in more contemporary terms that “man’s basic nature, in distinction from the other animals, is that of a personal being endowed with moral freedom and responsibility.”<sup>27</sup>

In this Irenaean presentation of human nature, Hick emphasizes the aspect of growth of the human person as a finite creature. By the divine “image,” a human being is made as a person in the image of God, but as a finite personal creature, though capable of personal relationship with God, is only at a stage of potential. This view holds that God creates human beings by setting them toward perfection in the likeness of God, so that the human beings must continue a process of growth and development. Hick holds that the image of God represents human nature as

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 210.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 211.

<sup>26</sup> Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 5. 6. 1 in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1, *The Apostolic Fathers, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus*, ed. Alexander Robert and James Donaldson, (n.p.: Christian Literature, 1885, reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995) .

<sup>27</sup> Hick 1977a, 211.



personal and the divine likeness reflects finitely the life of God.

Irenaeus explains that the human condition of being imperfect but having the potential for perfection in the likeness of God is not because of God's lack of power, but comes from God's parental consideration for human beings as newly created beings. He writes that "God had power at the beginning to grant perfection to man; but as the latter was only recently created, he could not possibly have received it, or even if he had received it could he have contained it, or containing it, could he have retained it."<sup>28</sup> Hick highlights that due to his theory of this immature condition of human nature, Irenaeus takes a different view on sin, distinct from the Augustinian tradition, which regards sin as a damnable revolt against God. In Irenaeus, sin is regarded as "calling forth God's compassion on account of their weakness and vulnerability."<sup>29</sup> Accordingly, human finitude and weakness are both conceived affirmatively in the process of gradual spiritual growth. Irenaeus believes that because of their created nature as the image of God, human beings may maintain their relationship with God and are guided by God's revelatory activities in history.<sup>30</sup>

The idea of progress has the effect of embracing the notion of history within the world picture, which the Augustinian tradition fails to incorporate because of its emphasis on the original perfection of the universe. The Irenaean picture of human growth attempts to take

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<sup>28</sup> *Against Heresies* 4. 38. 2 Irenaeus explains it elsewhere with the analogy of mother: "It certainly in the power of a mother to give strong food to her infant, [but she does not do so], as the child is not yet able to receive more substantial nourishment; so also it was possible for God Himself to have made man perfect from the first, but man could not receive this [perfection], being as yet an infant" (*Against Heresies* 4. 39. 1).

<sup>29</sup> Hick 1977a, 212.

<sup>30</sup> "Neither does God at any time cease to confer benefits upon, or to enrich man; nor does man ever cease from receiving the benefits, being enriched by God" (*Against Heresies*, 4.11.2).

account of human imperfection and failure as the aspects of the learning process; thus he writes that “man, passing through all things, and acquiring the knowledge of moral discipline, then attaining to the resurrection from deliverance, may always live in a state of gratitude to the Lord, having obtained from him the gift of incorruptibility, that he might love Him the more.”<sup>31</sup> The growth process includes the spiritual dimension, since by faith human beings live in the relationship with God.

Irenaeus’ view on human beings in the growing process affirms the imperfect present state whose goal is envisioned in the image and likeness of God. Irenaeus presents a positive view on human nature as created and programmed by God toward the perfection in God. He finds the trinitarian participation in the human growing process.<sup>32</sup> Irenaeus recognizes human sinfulness but he does not regard human beings as totally corrupted. He holds that human beings learn to distinguish good and evil by experience:

Just as the tongue receives experience of sweet and bitter by means of tasting, and the eye discriminates between black and white by means of vision, and the ear recognises the distinctions of sounds by hearing; so also does the mind, receiving through the experience of both the knowledge of what is good, become more tenacious of its preservation, by acting in obedience to God.<sup>33</sup>

Here it must be noted that Irenaeus teaches us to learn by experience; he does not understand human beings according to a rigidly set model.

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<sup>31</sup> *Against Heresies* 3. 20. 2

<sup>32</sup> Irenaeus describes human beings as if working together with God: “Man, a created and organized being, is rendered after the image and likeness of the uncreated God—the Father planning everything well and giving His commands, the Son carrying these into execution and performing the work of creating, and the Spirit nourishing and increasing [what is made], but man making progress day by day, and ascending towards the perfect, that is, approximating to the uncreated One” (*Against Heresies* 4. 38. 3).

<sup>33</sup> *Against Heresies* 4. 39. 1

Hick contrasts the difference between the two traditions in the views of the fall of Adam. The Augustinian tradition regards it as “an utterly malignant and catastrophic event, completely disrupting God’s plan;” whereas Irenaeus conceives it as “an understandable lapse due to weakness and immaturity” which occurred in “the childhood of the race” rather than an adult crime full of malice.”<sup>34</sup> Hick holds that Irenaeus affirmatively views life’s trial as “a divinely appointed environment for man’s development towards the perfection that represents the fulfilment of God’s good purpose for him.”<sup>35</sup>

#### Different Emphasis: Process or Predestination

As Hick demonstrates, the Augustinian tradition and the Irenaean tradition are divergent but not contradictory to each other. Hick recognizes the agreements between them as well as their differences. For instance, both traditions agree in assuming the perfection of the creation, but they differ in their emphasis. The Augustinian tradition highlights the perfection of the creation from the beginning, while the Irenaean tradition sees the “eschatological perfection of the creation” at “the end and completion of the temporal process.”<sup>36</sup> Despite their differences— the

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<sup>34</sup> Hick 1977a, 214-5.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 215. James Carpenter comments that it is an exaggeration to think that for Irenaeus the fall is not a serious problem. On the contrary, Carpenter believes, “the act of disobedience for Irenaeus occasioned incalculable loss, loss of likeness to God and loss of immortality” (Carpenter, 33). In regard of the “determinativeness” of the fall, Irenaeus and Augustine are in agreement. However, Irenaeus understands that Adam is never forsaken by God or deserted by grace, though he is injured by the fall and consequently loses his direction (ibid., 31). As for the immaturity of Adam and Eve, Carpenter explains that Irenaeus regards them as “sufficiently developed to exercise deliberate choice.” He warns us not to lose sight of the importance of free will and its decisive abuse in Irenaeus. For Irenaeus, not only the power of choice belongs to human beings by creation, but also free will is a distinctive mark of the image of God (ibid., 22).

<sup>36</sup> Hick 1977a, 238.

Irenaeus' emphasis on process, and the Augustinian emphasis on predestination, their fundamental teachings on evil and its relation to God agree on many points.<sup>37</sup>

Hick's presentation of Irenaeus shows that Irenaeus holds a different attitude toward the fall of Adam, which is less harsh and radical than the Augustinian tradition and opens judgment eschatologically toward the perfection in God. Irenaeus' view on human nature is understanding and nurturing because it embraces the aspects of human experience and responds to the question of suffering in life. He does not blame and judge human weakness but tries to see the growth through failure, because he believes that if it is the reality that human beings are created as imperfect beings, they must be assisted by God, who embraces their imperfection as their given condition. The distinction between the image and the likeness of God in human nature provides him with the ground for this explanation. Irenaeus does not develop an abstract discussion of the place of human beings in the metaphysical framework of creation, but he draws more attention to the individual human being and on his or her personal relationship with God.

Hick argues against the Augustinian tradition because it takes the biblical myth of the fall of Adam as a historical fact. Irenaeus' reading of Genesis leads him to a different picture of human beings.<sup>38</sup> He finds the potential for growth despite the fall, while the Augustinian tradition finds

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<sup>37</sup> Hick presents five more points of their agreements, (1) God's ultimate responsibility for the existence of evil, (2) the idea of "felix culpa," (3) logical limitations upon divine omnipotence, (4) the reality of a personal devil and of a community of evil powers (5) belief in divine purposes at work within the created universe (ibid., 238-40).

<sup>38</sup> Irenaeus follows the biblical account of human sin caused by the fall of Adam: "For us by the disobedience of the one man who was originally moulded from virgin soil, the many were made sinners, and forfeited life; so was it necessary that, by the obedience of one man, who was originally born from a virgin, many should be justified and receive salvation. God recapitulated in Himself the ancient formation of man, that He might kill sin, deprive death of its power, and vivify man" (*Against Heresies* 3.18. 7). Salvation through Jesus Christ is the "recapitulation" and "recovery" of the initial state: "When [Jesus] became incarnate, and was made man, He commenced afresh the long line of human beings, and furnished

a perfection at the beginning of history that is lost by the fall. Irenaeus discovers the program of human growth from the story, which is applicable to our concrete life. Hick explains that the basic Irenaean view assumes the human being “as a creature made initially in the ‘image’ of God and gradually brought through his own free responses into the divine likeness, this creative process being interrupted by the fall and set right again by the incarnation.”<sup>39</sup>

By using Irenaeus as an alternative model to the Augustinian tradition, Hick maintains the differences between Christian myth, experience and theology. The Bible is the source and basis for theology but its treatment is latent and implicit. Hick understands that the aim of mythical story in the Bible is to “illuminate the religious significance” of religious experience, which is “the locus of mystery.” Therefore, “Christian mythology mirrors Christian experience in presenting, but not solving the profound mystery of evil.”<sup>40</sup> However, he observes that theology and mythical stories in the Bible worked jointly before scientific knowledge about the physical universe developed. Because of confusion between mythology and history, early theology used the mythological basis for its reflection. By theology, Hick primarily means a systematic attempt to explain faith provided by Christian experience. But a theology of the Augustinian tradition does not satisfy his criterion and he detects the confusion of philosophical, mainly Neo-Platonist, categories and principles in the tradition. Thus, Hick finds that this type of theological method overlooks the data of Christian experience. He argues that our religious experience must be

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us, in a brief, comprehensive manner, with salvation; so that what we had lost in Adam—namely to be according to the image and likeness of God—that we might recover in Christ Jesus” (*Against Heresies* 3. 18. 1).

<sup>39</sup> Hick 1977a, 217.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 249.

included into the source of theology because he believes in a “participation in a stream of religious experience which is continuous with that recorded in the Bible.”<sup>41</sup> Hick believes that the Irenaean view of human beings is more realistic.

Hick reads in Irenaeus an aspect which resonates with our contemporary understanding of revelation and the meaning of experience in our life. In this light, Irenaeus suggests a theology which embraces religious experience in ordinary life situations. Irenaeus affirms the potential of human nature as the image of God and believes in its growing process toward the likeness of God. This process of learning and growing to be the likeness of God can be said to be the journey toward holiness and the process of “deification.”<sup>42</sup> Irenaeus’ God is not distant and separated from humankind, but keeps relating with them through the continuing work of creation in their growth.

Hick develops his theodicy based on Irenaeus’ view on human beings. Human beings are created as being in a gradual process of becoming their full nature. In this light, evil and suffering become meaningful for our growth—our “soul-making;” thus he appeals to drawing more attention to the possibility of repentance and a new life than human sinfulness.<sup>43</sup> His theodicy has received many challenges; however, his contribution is to present a significant

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 244.

<sup>42</sup> Hick suggests that Irenaeus means by “likeness” of God “a certain valuable quality of personal life which reflects finitely the divine life” (ibid., 254). Irenaeus’ description of the human growth process is the process of becoming holy and “glorified” in his word: “It was necessary that man should in the first instance be created; and having been created, should receive growth; and having received growth, should be strengthened; and having been strengthened, should abound; and having abounded, should recover [from the disease of sin]; and having recovered, should be glorified; and being glorified, should see his Lord” (*Against Heresies* 4. 38.3). Leonardo Boff, however, observes that the theme of “divinization” is present in Augustine (Leonardo Boff, *Liberating Grace* [Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1979], 226, n., 10).

<sup>43</sup> Hick 1977a, 360.

alternative view of human beings by contrasting the Augustinian and the Irenaean type of theodicy.<sup>44</sup>

### **Irenaeus and Inculturation**

The Irenaean type of theology shows a divergent view of human being. How does this view develop the understanding of inculturation? The affirmative view on human beings in Irenaeus' theology contains viable suggestions for inculturation. Irenaeus' distinction between the "image" and "likeness" of God is effective in affirming human nature. The likeness of God, which is the goal of the perfecting process of the human beings, is revealed definitively in the person of Jesus Christ. Each person's process of attaining the likeness of God is assisted by the Holy Spirit. Jesus, as a human person, follows the growing and learning process in his earthly life. His life gives a pattern and model for our growing process. By focusing on the incarnated person of Jesus Christ, our discussion of the "image" and the "likeness" of God given to us can avoid being mythical and abstract, and become real and tenable.

In terms of the relationship between grace and nature, James Carpenter contrasts Augustine with the Greek fathers. He states that Augustine "jealously" reserved grace for the realm of redemption, while the Greek fathers "generously" declared that "grace was everywhere and that

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<sup>44</sup> Hick discusses Freidrich Schleiermacher as the successor of the Irenaean type of theodicy. Schleiermacher develops a theology based on the religious self-consciousness. Hick highlights that instead of presuming the ideal initial state, Schleiermacher conceives the "original perfection" for human beings as the basic character or environment for the emergence of "God-consciousness." Hick finds similarity between Irenaeus and Schleiermacher in admitting human imperfection and growing process. Schleiermacher transposes Irenaeus' image and likeness of God into the dimension of human consciousness. For the further discussion, see Hick 1977a, 220-235.

everything was a work of grace.”<sup>45</sup> In his view, the Greek fathers, including Irenaeus, did not separate the creative action of God and the grace of redemption. Creation and redemption are conceived as continuous. Irenaeus’ view of the human being finds continuity between creation and redemption. He is convinced of God’s presence in the created world; so he writes of God who “from the beginning even to the end, forms us and prepares us for life, and is present with His handiwork, and prepares us for life, and is present with his handiwork, and perfects it after the image and likeness of God.”<sup>46</sup> The universe is always blessed with grace. Therefore, salvation through Christ restores the human beings and enables them to continue their growing process. As Hick observed, the incarnation is an important occasion for restoring the whole creation. Jesus realized this by becoming part of creation himself. The aim of incarnation is to pursue the initial purpose of creation; human beings need to have the Word and Wisdom of God to fulfill God’s intention for them.<sup>47</sup> The incarnation of Jesus, his becoming human, reveals the fundamental goodness of human nature and creation. With Irenaeus, we can find a meaning of incarnation in a way which affirms human nature. Jesus became a human being because human beings are created good; therefore, Jesus shared human nature with us. The incarnation helps human beings to grow toward fuller realization by sharing mutually the divine and the human.

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<sup>45</sup> Carpenter, 18.

<sup>46</sup> *Against Heresies* 5. 16. 1

<sup>47</sup> “For there is the one Son, who accomplished His Fathers’s will; and one human race also in which the mysteries of God are wrought, ‘which the angels desire to look into;’ and they are not able to search out the wisdom of God, by means of which his handiwork, confirmed and incorporated with His Son, is brought to perfection; that His offspring, the First-begotten Word, should descend to the creature (*facturam*), that is, to what had been moulded (*plasma*), and that it should be contained by Him; and, on the other hand, the creature should contain the Word, and ascend to Him, passing beyond the angels, and be made after the image and likeness of God” (*Against Heresies* 5. 36. 3). About the transformation of humanity, see also *Against Heresies* 3. 19. 1.



Leonardo Boff regards this process as the “divinization of humanity,” which is the aim of the incarnation.<sup>48</sup> He thinks that it is grace that human beings progressively assimilate humanity to God and this aspect of grace culminated in the incarnation. It is the moment of grace when human beings are more conformed to Christ and he calls it “a prolongation of the incarnation within human beings.” Thus, in a real process of human growing toward God, he finds grace at work as “a small scale incarnation.”<sup>49</sup>

This reading of the incarnation attempts to preserve the humanity of Jesus while recognizing that Jesus is the Son of God. It is stimulated by Irenaeus’ affirmative view of creation. Irenaeus understands that not only the incarnation but also salvation as recapitulation maintains the goodness of created human nature, and helps human beings to continue the process of growing. Because this view on incarnation and salvation is based on human progress, it contrasts with the view of redemption as an historical event once for all which emphasizes discontinuity before and after. Irenaeus’ view on human beings leads us to a rethinking of the mode of salvation. It raises a question to how to conceive salvation in a framework of time which can embrace the element of progressive time.

Irenaeus urges us to look at Jesus who lived as a human person with people. If Jesus indeed became human and lived as a human person, did not he live the process of growing toward the likeness of God in his earthly life? The meaning of the incarnation is revealed through the life of Jesus. It seems more meaningful to understand the incarnation as a life or a way, which

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<sup>48</sup> Boff 1979, 178.

<sup>49</sup> Boff thinks that this process of assimilation of humanity to God is to have a new relationship with God which leads to “a new ontological richness,” which is a sharing of the human and the divine in the incarnation, and for us humans is deification and “consubstantiality with God” (ibid., 178).

occurs in a certain duration of time, than to think of it as a one time event which evokes an image that something foreign breaks into the world from outside. The emphasis on “becoming” human points to a Christology from below. Jon Sobrino suggests that “the Way” can be another name for Jesus.<sup>50</sup> Becoming human and becoming holy through becoming fully human presupposes time. It occurs in history; thus Jesus became the Son of God in his history. He learned obedience and grew into perfection. If Jesus showed his unique oneness with the Father through his life, death and resurrection, he showed the way to the Father which is the way of salvation. Roger Haight names this type “a pioneer soteriology.”<sup>51</sup> Jesus is the model and pattern to follow in our process of growing toward God because he showed the way to the Father. Jesus shows the way in history. Jesus shows the way to lead us to the fuller realization of humanity, by accepting human limitedness and overcoming it. We follow this way in our concrete life history. It is not an abstract universal way but a personal and communal way with Jesus. It is the way which affirms human creativity and culture.

Irenaeus describes the Son and the Spirit with the image of God’s two hands.<sup>52</sup> This image conveys the parallel importance of the two, and their active presence. Irenaeus calls for the awareness of the presence of the Spirit in our lives. When we think of salvation as a process of

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<sup>50</sup> Jon Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads: A Latin American Approach*, trans. John Drury (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1978), 339-40.

<sup>51</sup> Roger Haight, *Jesus: Symbol of God* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1999), 456 .

<sup>52</sup> The two hands, the Son and the Spirit are images of two inseparable components of perfect person: “Now God shall be glorified in His handiwork, fitting it so as to be conformable to, and modelled after, His own Son. For by the hands of the Father, that is, by the Son and the Holy spirit, man, and not [merely] a part of man, was made in the likeness of God. . .The perfect man consists in the commingling and the union of the soul receiving the spirit of the Father, and the admixture of that fleshly nature which was moulded after the image of God” (*Against Heresies*, 5.6.1).

becoming with an image of Way, we are led to a reflection of the Spirit. In the process of growing to the likeness of God, we grow because of grace, because God is present. At each moment of grace, we encounter God, we enter into a relationship to God, and begin a dialogue.<sup>53</sup> The moment of grace reveals God's immanent presence in the world. Irenaeus describes the role of the Spirit as vivifying and quickening human beings.<sup>54</sup> The Irenaean image of human beings in the process presupposes the continual presence of the Spirit who assists the growth. In our contemporary theological language, Irenaeus points to a Spirit christology, which believes that the Spirit of God is God.

A Spirit christology is a rich foundation for inculturation. A Spirit christology is an attempt to "explain the divinity of Jesus Christ on the basis of God as Spirit."<sup>55</sup> Roger Haight, defining a Spirit christology as "proceeding 'from below,'" presents its three major characteristics. First, it takes seriously account of "a historical consideration of Jesus," and maintains its integrity without compromising later interpretations. Second, its christological method is genetic; it discusses historically the genesis of various interpretations of Jesus. Last, it appeals to the Christian experience and "language of grace."<sup>56</sup>

As a Spirit christology explores the relationship between Jesus and God as Spirit, it bases

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<sup>53</sup> Boff 1979, 1.

<sup>54</sup> Irenaeus describes the communion of the human soul and the Spirit: "The vivifying Spirit . . . caused [man] to become spiritual. In the first place, an human being should be fashioned, and that what was fashioned should receive the soul; afterwards that it should thus receive the communion of the Spirit. . . he who was made a living soul fortified life when he turned aside to what was evil, so, on the other hand, the same individual, when he reverts what is good, and achieves the quickening Spirit, shall find life" (*Against Heresies* 5.12. 2).

<sup>55</sup> Haight, 445. In this thesis, I am not entering into the more elaborate discussion of Spirit christology being carried on today.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 447.

itself on the Christian scriptures, but it opens its consideration to embrace experiences of God as Spirit today. It takes account of our religious experience, for it presupposes the active spiritual dimension of our human nature as the locus of true communion with God as Spirit.<sup>57</sup> While maintaining the meaning of Jesus for Christians, this christology acknowledges that God as Spirit has been present and at work in the world for salvation. It recognizes that the Spirit is operative outside the Christian sphere.<sup>58</sup> This aspect is specially important to inculturation in order to appreciate cultural traditions which have developed outside the Christian sphere. A Spirit christology in many points agrees with and develops the Irenaean view of human being. It emphasizes the God as personal, the humanity of Jesus, the process of growth in terms of vocation and mission. It stresses the continuity between Jesus and human beings.

The implication of the Irenaean view of human beings is profound because of its affirming and empowering attitude toward human beings. It suggests new understandings in terms of his humanity and the Spirit. Irenaeus and contemporary theology tell us that God is personal and that, in conjunction of the human and the divine, God encounters us. Being human is our reality and the ground for being in relationship with God. In this light, as an alternative tradition, the

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<sup>57</sup> Paul W. Newman presents "interpersonal Spirit christology" as "an alternative to the Christocentric-trinitarian paradigm" ( Paul W. Newman, *A Spirit Christology: Recovering the Biblical Paradigm of Christian Faith* [Lenham, MD: University Press of America, 1987], 211). He explains that this Spirit Christology is based on "the idea of a relational unity between Jesus and God rather than an ontological, substantial, essential or biological unity" (ibid.). He argues that Jesus and God are united in "a personal, 'moral' or covenantal relationship," but that they are not "identical or sharing one identity" (ibid.). Newman holds that the interpersonal Spirit christology preserves fully the humanity of Jesus and that it embraces the process of Jesus' "pioneering and perfecting" the way of salvation. The salvation in this view is following Jesus in the way of the cross, the way of "God's Reigning" (ibid., 212). A follower of Jesus is in an interpersonal relationship with Jesus, in responding him. This view stresses the "unity in relationship between Jesus and God, and between the Christians and Jesus.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 456.

Irenaean view encourages creativity in diverse theologies in Christianity. Its basic biblical approach is suitable to the dialogue between the Gospel and culture.

The divergent message in the Irenaean view of the human being is liberating because of its challenge to the mainstream European Christian tradition, and because of its more affirmative interpretation of the reality of imperfect human nature. It has a liberating power because it does not hold the “myth of the historical fall,” which causes the negative view of human nature. In contrast, the Irenaean message is creation oriented. Because of its affirmation of basic human goodness, it appreciates life and human creativity. It can appreciate more human activity even though it is imperfect. Because of its enlarged vision of grace, it helps us to discover the richness of human culture. It can embrace cultures developed outside the Church.

An approach to culture led by the Irenaean message is not suspicion but appreciation, which helps to develop identity and integrity of culture. It encourages an appropriation of one’s own cultural tradition which leads to a reinterpretation of tradition. These points respond well to the need of local church which we have seen in Tissa Balasuriya’s address to the search for African Asian spirituality. Culture expresses the activities of people with whom God is present. The task of a theology of inculturation is to appreciate the cultural tradition as the process of growing toward God and to search for the presence of God in diverse cultural expressions. The next chapter attempts to seek for the presence of God in the cultural tradition of Japan.

## CHAPTER THREE

### A THEOLOGY OF EBINA DANJYO:

#### AN ATTEMPT AT INCULTURATING CHRISTIANITY IN THE CONTEXT OF JAPAN

##### Introduction

In Chapter One, we discussed the theory of inculturation by defining it as “a dynamic dialogue between the Gospel and culture.” Chapter two explored the contrast between two divergent traditions of theodicy in the Church tradition. The Irenaean type of theodicy, in contrast with the Augustinian type, shows an affirmative view on human beings with the idea of growth toward the “likeness of God.” Its recognition of the fundamental goodness of created human nature as the “image of God” admits human imperfection as well as the necessity of growth. The recognition of the fundamental goodness of human nature in the Irenaean view provides a framework to continue a discussion of inculturation in exploring an example of a dialogue between the Gospel and culture in the context of Japan. In light of Irenaeus, we affirm cultural tradition and encourage the dialogue between the Gospel and culture. The encounter for which we seek enhances the integrity of the cultural tradition of local Church.

This chapter will discuss a Japanese Protestant theologian, Ebina Danjyo (1856-1937), who is the earliest leader of the Protestant Church in Japan. As a Christian convert with a Confucian background, he attempted to develop in Japan a Christianity, which was not confrontational toward the Confucian and Shinto religious traditions. His theology was an attempt to inculturate

Christianity in Japan. His uniqueness lies in his theological method. He developed a theology based on his own religious experience of being “a child of God” and his awareness of the “God-human relationship as the parental relationship between father and son (father-son parental relationship).” Ebina’s experience of an intimate relationship with God as a child led him to find the immanent God who dwells in the heart of every human person. The sense of the immanence of God offered Ebina a link between Christianity and traditional religiosity. He believed that Christianity as a universal religion would converge all religions. In the early years of the Protestant church when the dominant attitude toward other religions was confrontational, Ebina’s theology was unique with its emphasis on the continuity of cultural traditions.

Discussion of his theology shows an example of the inculturation of Christianity in Japan. His theology appealed to the demands of his age as it found the point of contact with traditional thought in Japan. However, because of such continuity with past tradition, Ebina was accused of ambiguity and of alliance with the cause of the nationalistic and militaristic government. Despite this weakness, I believe that Ebina’s theology shows an interesting historical example of localization and suggests a unique way of relating Christianity and traditional thought.<sup>1</sup>

We begin the discussion with Ebina’s life and his Confucian background and continue with his conversion experiences to Christianity. The discussion of his theology explores his idea of religious consciousness in terms of personal relationship with the Father. By discussing Ebina’s ideas on Shinto and Confucianism, I will demonstrate his attempt at inculturation.

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<sup>1</sup> Ebina’s works are not published as collected volumes. Besides, it is not easy to access them in Toronto. This research considerably depends on the secondary sources to exhibit his theology.

## Life

Born in a *samurai* (warrior) class family in 1856 at the very end of the Tokugawa period (1600-1867) in southern Japan, he began traditional Confucian education at the age of nine. After one year of an elementary English course, in 1872 he moved to the Kumamoto School of Western Learning. He encountered Christianity and had his first conversion experience in 1875. With thirty-five other students, in 1876, Ebina took an oath to live out and serve Christianity. In September he moved to Kyoto to continue his education in the Doshisha English School and Doshisha Seminary.

Ebina began his missionary work in 1877 as a student, and after ordination in 1878, he served as a minister in a number of churches in different parts of Japan. He belonged to the Congregational Church, which was supported by the American Board. His success in missionary work and his leadership was acknowledged in the Protestant church. He served as the president of the Japanese Mission Board from 1890 to 1893. In 1900, he started a Christian journal in which he published his theological writings. Ebina developed his unique theological thoughts that were independent of Western influence, showing distinctively the continuity between them and traditional Japanese thought. While continuing his mission, he travelled to see the churches in America and Europe. In 1920 he was appointed president of the Doshisha School for eight years. After he resigned in 1928, he retired to Tokyo until his death in 1937.

## Confucian Background

Ebina's educational background was Confucianism which was the official learning for the Tokugawa Shogunate and the ethical principles that sustained the feudal society. As a youth,



Ebina experienced the fall of the political system and moral disorder at the time of the transition from the Tokugawa feudal regime to the Meiji restoration. His family belonged to the province of Yanagawa, which was not directly involved in the new government. As a *samurai* boy, he was determined to serve his feudal lord for his life, but with the new political system, the social class system was abolished. The samurai class lost its social status and all its privileges as the ruling class. Ebina experienced the loss of his feudal lord and the fall of the foundation of his Confucian ethics and traditional *Bushido* spirituality.<sup>2</sup> He went through a crisis in his identity, brought on by social changes.

Ebina encountered Christianity when he attended the Kumamoto School of Western Learning in 1875. The Kumamoto School of Western Learning was opened in 1874 to instruct the former samurai class youth in English and Western learning. The instructor was a retired American captain, Leroy Lansing Janes (1837-1909), who combined a balanced education of science and human growth based on Christianity. He was not a missionary but a devout Christian, and his personality made a great impact on the students. Although he did not teach the Bible at school, he invited some students to his home for Bible study and prayer services. He found some students who wanted to convert, and he baptised them. The religious enthusiasm among the students was so strong that an enthusiastic quasi-revival movement occurred. In January 1876, a group of thirty-five students, including Ebina, signed an oath to serve the cause of the Christian faith on a nearby mountain, Mt. Hanaoka. Ebina became Christian in June and his faith in Christianity as a new life principle healed his sense of loss. The edict against Christianity had

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<sup>2</sup> *Bushido*, the code of the warrior, is a traditional spirituality for the samurai class. Loyalty to one's lord is an important virtue which demands one's life for the service.

been removed in 1873, but this oath raised an anti-Christian reaction against the school, which finally caused its closure in 1876.

The Kumamoto School was opened because the province of Kumamoto had a progressive educational philosophy. Maintaining Confucian principles, the province welcomed Western learning and accepted Christianity as its background value and worldview to the extent that Western learning and Christianity were useful for the betterment of society. Confucianism in Kumamoto, called the “Jitsu-Gaku” (Real Learning) School, sought to develop a practical political philosophy. It inherited the Neo-Confucian tradition of Chu Hsi (1130-1200). Chu Hsi thought of the universe with the two metaphysical notions of *li* (reason or principle) and *ki* (material force), which developed into a moral philosophy and natural philosophy. This dualistic thought reinforced the attitude of acceptance of Western natural science for practical use while maintaining Confucian ethics. The Neo-Confucian teachings of Chu Hsi and Wang Yang-ming (1471-1529) metaphysically recognized the transcendental presence. The transcendental presence (Heaven, *ten*) was a philosophical notion of supremacy and different from the idea of God, but suggested an operative semblance to understanding the personal God in Christianity.<sup>3</sup> In contrast with the Chinese emphasis on reason, Real Learning put an emphasis on the personal aspect of Heaven as “being alive.” Ebina remembered how greatly he was impressed when he learned this new interpretation of Heaven. This interpretation of Heaven

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<sup>3</sup> Kanji Imanaka, “Higo Jitsugaku no Shiso (Philosophy of Real Learning in Higo),” in *Kumamoto Band Kenkyu* (Studies in Kumamoto Band), ed. Doshisha Daigaku Jinbunkagaku Kenkyu-sho (Tokyo: Misuzu, 1965), 34-5.

as a living entity helped him to understand analogically the personhood of God.<sup>4</sup> The supremacy of Heaven in Confucianism was, however, considerably different from the Christian God. Heaven was described as transcendental, but since the Confucian Heaven did not have the idea of revelation in the Christian sense, the Way of Heaven was limited within the understanding of human reason. Heaven was known only to the extent that it was embodied and realized by the sage.<sup>5</sup>

Within the Confucian tradition of the Kumamoto School, L. L. Janes introduced scientific knowledge, which inspired his students with systematic thinking and the idea of evolution. As a Christian, Janes held a liberal interpretation of the Bible with reasonable scientific understanding, which helped the students make a smooth transition from Confucian tradition to Christianity.<sup>6</sup>

### Initial Conversion Experience

Ebina's first conversion to Christianity occurred when he began to understand the relationship between God and himself. He understood this relationship in terms of loyalty to one's lord—an important traditional virtue. At one Bible study session with Janes in 1875, Ebina had an experience of offering himself in total surrender to God:

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<sup>4</sup> Akiko Yoshinare, *Ebina Danjyo no Seiji Shiso* (Political Thought of Danjyo Ebina) (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppan-kai, 1982), 14.

<sup>5</sup> Kiyoko Takeda, *Ningen kan no Soukatsu* (Conflicts in Views of Human Beings) (Tokyo: Koubundo shinko sha, 1967), 82.

<sup>6</sup> Kazuto Shinoda, "Nihon Kindai Shisoshi ni okeru Kumamoto Band no Igi (Significance of Kumamoto Band in the History of Thoughts in Modern Japan)," in *Kumamoto Band Kenkyu* (Studies in Kumamoto Band), ed. Doshisha Daigaku Jinbunkagaku Kenkyusho (Tokyo: Misuzu, 1965), 10.

At the end of the Bible sharing, [Mr Janes] said solemnly that prayer first of all was a duty of creature to the creator. Then as if lightening shone and a thunderbolt struck to crush me, I cried, "It is our duty! I surrender to our duty! I have been ignorant of this. I am sorry!". . . I could not raise my head, instantly remembering my past life. . . . Our teacher continued that secondly prayer was communication with God. . . . I had wished to hear a word from the emperor and that had been my earnest but impossible wish. What a mercy that we can communicate with the God of the universe! I was crushed down and surrendered to God. Then I, like the grass revived in warm rain, looked up at God. These thoughts came to me all at once. Mr Janes said that thirdly prayer was to ask God. Hearing this, I decide not to ask anything but communion with God. . . . With this sudden experience, I became a different person. In my heart a restoration happened. I recovered my conscience. My conscience was united with the supreme being of the universe. My personal desire lost power. . . . Between God and me, the electric line was connected. I became a God-centered new person who asked the will of God in everything and was eager to make it my own. God became my lord and I became his servant.<sup>7</sup>

Ebina was impressed by Janes' prayerful attitude and was struck by the sense of a personal relationship with God. He apologized for his own past neglect because prayer was not respected and practised in Confucianism. He realized that prayer was like a "duty" to the lord, but between God and human beings, there was an intimate relationship. Janes opened a totally new aspect of religious practice for Ebina, but Ebina interpreted this initial conversion experience with the images of "restoration," "recovery" and "reviving." His sense of personal relationship with God was significant. The secular authority of the emperor was replaced by God's religious authority that was superior but communicable. The servant-lord relationship originated in Ebina's feudalistic and Confucian mentality, but later developed into a father-son relationship.

When Ebina made the choice to serve the Christian God, he made it his priority to place the Christian God above all other traditional values. In traditional morality, loyalty to one's lord and filial piety were important virtues and duties. They were not contradictory, but connected within the feudal hierarchical system. Ebina's choice to serve God meant to revolt against his parents

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<sup>7</sup> Danjyo Ebina, "Kaiso-roku (Memoirs)", vol. 1. 75-8; quoted in Akiko Yoshinarc, 17.

as well as traditional virtues. His decision was an experience of individuality and freedom that disconnected him from the traditional worldview. In Ebina's decision to serve Christianity, the love of his country was a strong motif.<sup>8</sup> Changes in society affected his religious conversion. Patriotism was a new idea of the modern state. In the old worldview, the service of one's feudal lord was limited to the local domain. Love of country and the service for the emperor as the sovereign ruler of the country were new ideas of the Meiji period (1867-1912). In Ebina's mind, the Christian faith meant to serve Japan through the construction of a modern state with a new ethical principle which would be superior to traditional religions. He intended to serve through Christianity the country's regeneration from its moral confusion caused by the social changes. The idea of spiritual service for the country through Christianity was a typical reason for the conversion of young male Christians. After the fall of the Tokugawa feudal regime, Ebina had lost the aim, but now he found a replacement in God.

Ebina's conversion to Christianity did not destroy but transformed his basic Confucian values. Akiko Yoshinare suggests that the supreme presence of the universe in the Confucian idea of the Way of heaven helped Ebina to understand the personal God of justice.<sup>9</sup> The Way of heaven was regarded as the transcendental principle that rewarded the good and punished the evil. Finding similarity with Christian theology, Ebina easily went on to a new belief in God, who directs individuals and nations with moral principles and rules political leaders with rewards and punishments. Due to his Confucian background, however, at this first stage of his conversion,

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<sup>8</sup> Yoshinare, 16.

<sup>9</sup> Yoshinare, 19. Yoshinare notes that in Confucian classics, Ebina found the phrases which suggest the personal idea of the Supreme Ruler. See Yoshinare, 19.

Ebina found it difficult to accept some teachings . Ebina found it especially hard to accept the idea of the fallen nature of humanity. In traditional Japanese thought, human nature was conceived of as good. The Christian ideas of evil and sin were new to Ebina's Japanese mentality, but he shared a similar understanding of human nature with Irenaeus.<sup>10</sup> Though he admitted sinfulness in humankind, he was convinced of the fundamental goodness of human nature, and believed human beings were temples of the Holy Spirit. From the early days of his Christian life, Ebina had faith in the Holy Spirit as an indwelling God. He later developed this faith in his understanding of the Trinity. He believed that living with faith in God and with the Holy Spirit, human beings could overcome their personal desires. He interpreted his own experience of new life as a new birth in the Holy Spirit. Ebina first found the true effect of the Holy Spirit in moral strength and regarded it as a reason for the superiority of Christianity over Confucianism.

### Second Conversion Experience

Ebina had his second conversion experience after his first period of missionary work in the northern part of Japan. Ebina was missioned there twice, in the summer of 1877, and from February to March the following year. His mission was successful but he returned to Kyoto exhausted both physically and spiritually. His second conversion experience was an awareness of being "a child of God." It changed him from viewing himself as a proud and efficient servant

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<sup>10</sup> Robert Bellah marks relativity as the characteristic in the idea of evil in Japanese thought, "Radical evil tends to be denied in man, nature, or divinity. Evil is explained either as relative, only seeming evil but in a larger context not really so, or as a sort of 'friction' attendant on daily living or 'weight' due to our having bodily substance." See Robert Bellah, *Tokugawa Religion* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1957), 62.

to becoming aware of helplessness within himself. During his days of missionary work, Ebina tried to overcome his desires with ascetic practices. He did not find it hard to control his physical desires and pride. He believed that he had renounced his military and political ambition. However, he later confessed that he had found within him a strong ambition for power mingled with his passion for missionary work. It must be noted that Ebina identified service for Christianity with work for the development of his country. After bitter examination of himself, Ebina discovered that he had a strong affection for God, which even his sinfulness could not deny:

The power I wanted was not the political power of the state, nor church authority, but power of heart, spiritual power. Then, I believed that without this power the evangelization of Japan was impossible. The desire for this power . . . invincibly occupied the centre of my heart. . . . My mind inclined to devour knowledge God did not desire for me. Was I acting like a thief? Was I only a clod of sinful earth? Did I not have anything that was worthwhile and good and in harmony with the will of God? Yes, I did. I did have a sincere affection for God in the center of my heart. There was no sin in this affection. . . . I wanted to live with only this sincere affection for God, by nailing on the cross my desires for power, knowledge, missionary success and loyal service. I was convinced that this sincere affection alone would be granted by God, . . . I prostrated and prayed, asking God that the will of God be done. If it were God's will, I would not live as a faithful servant but live only as a child of God in God's hands.<sup>11</sup>

Ebina's conversion did not change his Confucian mode of life immediately. He faced the problem of how to grow in the awareness of being a child of God and concretize it in his life. He realized that he had attempted to overcome all his desires with stoic practices, which eventually brought him only the experience of failure:

I thought that with a heart of a baby, I was overcoming my desires for honour, achievement and intellectual power, but I found that I tried to do so with another great power, my pride. . . . I felt as if I had fallen from heaven into a deep valley and for the

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<sup>11</sup> Danjyo Ebina, "Kaiso-roku (Memoirs)", vol. 3, 22-38; quoted in Yoshinare, 23.

first time I had a crushed heart.<sup>12</sup>

The above passage shows that Ebina deepened his awareness of sinfulness within himself.

Spirituality and asceticism were part of the traditional Confucian and the *samurai* values. When he spoke of pride, he meant his aspiration for perfection without respecting his relationship with God. He discovered a difference between ascetic life style and a life as a Christian. Ebina struggled with his own aspiration for perfection:

Pride is powerful. I think that there is nothing more powerful in human nature than this. . . As a Japanese Bushi [*samurai*], I had believed that pride was the best virtue. Pride is the power which cannot be beaten by the power of riches, poverty, nor military success. It is sinful. No, it is the worst sin among sins. Glory to God! God has destroyed it. I was nailed on Christ's cross. By this death, God's child [in me] grew each year. When I was nailed on the cross with Christ, my desires were crucified. Then those desires once destroyed were mysteriously resurrected and became the slaves of the child of God. Then I came out of the bounds of pessimism and came into the realm of optimism. My negative life suddenly changed into a positive one.<sup>13</sup>

Ebina needed to distinguish traditional ascetic virtues from Christian strength in powerlessness, while developing his faith in the context of his Confucian background. He noted his struggle in his memoirs, the child of God "sleeping in his parent's lap in confidence" must be nurtured in the Christian life. The son of God, "besides experiencing the joy of receiving love, has to understand the parental relationship and with honest affection use this mind and intelligence to

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<sup>12</sup> Danjyo Ebina, "Kaiso-roku (Memoirs)", vol. 3, 67-69; quoted in Yoshinare, 25.

<sup>13</sup> Danjyo Ebina, *Kirisuto kyo Shinron (New Thesis in Christianity)* (Tokyo: Keisei sha, 1918), 7-8; quoted in Yoshinare, 25-6. In his discussion of a Spirit christology, Paul Newman regards "the way of the cross" as a mediatory moment for releasing the Spirit of God; thus he states that "Jesus' death became a medium through which 'in remembrance of him' the same Spirit that was his became alive and operative in those who remembered him" (Paul W. Newman, *A Spirit Christology* [Lanham, MD: University of America Press, 1987], 160). Ebina's recurring image of the death of his will on the cross which points to the resurrection and a new life in the Spirit of God suggests the element of Spirit christology in his theology. This aspect leads to his awareness of religious consciousness in which the Holy Spirit is present.



understand divinity and spirituality. . . . As an adult, one must participate in ruling the world with God.”<sup>14</sup> Ebina was nurtured by a growing sense of being a child of God, which he developed into the awareness of the father-son relationship between God and humankind. This awareness expressed Ebina’s conviction of the need for growth in faith. He stressed the need of humanity’s active participation in faith through service with all aspects of the human person.

### Father-Son Relationship with God

Ebina’s early religious experiences influenced the later development of his theological thought. He returned to them very often as his core experience which gave him a solid proof for assimilating Christian doctrines. His religious experience pointed to a felt experience of personal relationship with God. He thought that in contrast with other religions in Japan, only Christianity taught a personal relationship with God. It was what made Christianity distinct. The felt experience of the relationship held a great attraction for Ebina. Akiko Yoshinare notes that this emphasis on the spiritual aspect of Christianity did not cause a great break with his intellectual and rational aspects.<sup>15</sup> Without being caught in the dilemma of an either / or choice, Ebina assimilated Christianity in continuity with Confucianism. He did not lose his sense of learning truth in Confucianism when he reflected on the significance of the Confucian scriptures for his Christian faith. Remembering his attitude when he accepted Christianity, he sated, “we did not hold the whole Bible as revelation, but we believed that there is revelation in the Bible.

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<sup>14</sup> Danjyo Ebina, “Nihon Kokumin to Kirisuto kyo (The Japanese and Christianity)”, (n.p.: 1933), 348; quoted in Fumio Iwai, *Ebina Danjyo* (Tokyo: Nihon Kirisuto Kyodan, 1973), 89.

<sup>15</sup> Yoshinare, 19. Yoshinare suggests the relationship between Ebina’s stress on religious experience and the revivalistic enthusiasm among his class mates. See Yoshinare, 19.

Likewise, we believed that there is revelation in the Confucian scriptures.”<sup>16</sup> It is significant that he did not reject Confucianism as a pagan religion but attempted to recognize truth in it.

Because of his conviction of the personal relationship with God, Ebina was unique among his contemporaries, who out of evangelical faithfulness often neglected the experiential aspect in their faith lives. Ebina’s faithfulness to his own spiritual experience urged him to explain it, but he found no good explanation in theologies he learned.<sup>17</sup> Attempting to objectify his experience within the Christian tradition, Ebina developed insight into his spirituality nurtured by the Japanese religious tradition. He revealed particular emphases. In support of his position, Ebina quoted from St. Paul’s letter to Galatians on the new life in Christ, “it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me (Gal. 2:20).” For Ebina the awareness of being a child of God was an experience of regeneration. He explained that regeneration was a union with Christ in one’s spirituality which led to a transformation of the whole personality. By regeneration, Ebina did not mean the recovery of the original state of Adam, but progress in a life united with Christ.<sup>18</sup>

Ebina put emphasis on human participation for growth in awareness from being a child of God to being a son of God. A human being grows into a son of God by conscious participation in the life united with God. Ebina knew that the union realized in the father-son relationship with God consisted of both faith in God and grace from God. He recognized the importance of

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<sup>16</sup> Danjyo Ebina, “Kaiso-roku (Memoirs),” vol. 2, 46-7; quoted in Yoshinare, 20.

<sup>17</sup> Ebina 1918, 2; quoted in Iwai, 80.

<sup>18</sup> Ebina 1918, 84; quoted in Iwai, 81-2. Here Ebina shows a similar idea with Irenaeus.

human effort and God's initiative and that an experience of grace is the moment of communion between God and a human being. Besides his emphasis on direct relationship and on participation, because of his conviction of the goodness of human nature which he learned in Confucianism, he was criticised by Protestant theologians for undervaluing redemption. Ebina was criticized because he emphasized human effort too much to find affection with God, overlooking human helplessness without the gift of God's love.<sup>19</sup> According to evangelical Protestantism, Ebina was not strong in confessing Christ as the Lord, since he regarded the goodness of human nature as inherent to humankind; however, his affirmative view of human nature resonates with Irenaeus' view. Like Irenaeus, Ebina held that human nature was not totally corrupted but maintained essential goodness, as Irenaeus put it as "the image of God." This conviction leads Ebina to an affirmative understanding of growth and progress in life.<sup>20</sup> Through his experience of true life in regeneration, he stressed the presence of the Holy Spirit. For him, the sense of life was more significant than contemplation on his sinfulness. He fully focused on the divine in humanity.

Another aspect of Ebina's awareness of the father-son relationship was a close relationship in affection which was in great contrast to the emphasis of reason in Confucianism. Jesus is the model of a person who has a close relationship with God:

Personality is not cold reason, nor unreasonableness, but a manifestation of love which comes from God. It is a relationship in which no one but the father knows his son and no one but the son knows his father and there is no barrier between the two. . . . There is no

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<sup>19</sup> Yoshinare, 26.

<sup>20</sup> Akio Dohi, "Ebina Danjyo no Shingaku Shiso (Danjyo Ebina's Theological Thought)" in Doshisha Daigaku Jinbunkagaku Kenkyusho ed. *Kumamoto Band Kenkyu* (Studies in Kumamoto Band) (Tokyo: Misuzu, 1965), 288.

higher manifestation of God than a religious personality in this world. Crystallized reason has no life, but personalities, who love and know each other have self-knowledge and life.<sup>21</sup>

Ebina drew attention to the affective aspect of Jesus' relationship with God. As Jesus' affection with God was so pure and transparent, in his personality God revealed Godself. Likewise, the purity and transparency of this relationship enabled one to know God who revealed Godself in the personal relationship. Regarding the person as a locus of revelation, Ebina developed the idea of the dignity of the person.<sup>22</sup> He understood the personal relationship between God and a human being as the foundation of dignity of the person. Through personal relationship with God, human beings recognized their own dignity as the children of God. Self-knowledge and the awareness of being a child of God were correlated. Self-knowledge and belief in the dignity of personality led a person to a struggle for the perfection of personality through Christ's cross. The emphasis on personality was not distinct in other religions in Japan. By encouraging the personal development, Ebina tried to liberate people from the traditional mentality of fatalism. He valued individual growth in self-esteem. He further developed the notion of the dignity of each person into a call for democracy and internationalism. He believed that to promote individual dignity of personality was the essence and responsibility of Christianity in Japan. In relation to the standards of his time, his thought was considerably progressive.

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<sup>21</sup> Danjyo Ebina, "Nihon Kokumin to Kirisuto kyo" (The Japanese and Christianity), 161; quoted in Yoshitaka Kumano, "Ebina Danjyo no 'Shiso no Shingaku' (Danjyo Ebina's Theology of Thoughts)" in *Yoshitaka Kumano Zenshu* (The Complete Works of Yoshitaka Kumano), vol. 12 (Tokyo: Shinkyō, 1982), 162.

<sup>22</sup> Ebina identified the person with self which consists of reason, feeling and will. He put emphasis on the uniqueness of each person, and the integration of all aspects of personality in faith life. He believed that the Christian faith must be concretely lived. He was regarded as the first Japanese theologian who drew attention to the dignity of the person. See Jokichi Watase, *Ebina Danjyo Sensei* (Reverend Danjyo Ebina) (Tokyo: Ryugin sha, 1938), 407, 469.

Kumano Yoshitaka, however, notes that Ebina's description of Jesus' affection for God was closer to sympathizing than to having interaction between persons. Kumano suggests that sympathy is a favourite Japanese attitude. Ebina found Jesus Christ as the focal point in the traditional attitude.<sup>23</sup> While sympathy and affection were typically Japanese, he discovered Jesus Christ as the focus which directed them. He developed an ability of feeling sympathy in his Christian faith. This is another example of Ebina's assimilation of Japanese culture into Christianity.

The most important development in Ebina's awareness of the father-son relationship between God and humankind was his conviction of the immanence of God. With this recognition of God's immanence, Ebina found a link between Christianity and the Japanese indigenous religiosity.<sup>24</sup> He was convinced that the sense of the immanence of God was not taught by the missionaries nor learned through intellectual studies but had existed in him and each Japanese before Christianity. Ebina stressed the universal aspect of perceiving God in immanence, and stated, "the doctrine of the transcendental God does not describe the whole Christian idea of God. An understanding of God, who exists in and over all creation and

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<sup>23</sup> Kumano, 162.

<sup>24</sup> For the word "religiosity," *Encyclopaedic dictionary of Religion* cites three meanings. In the popular understanding, "religiosity" signifies "an exaggerated, inappropriate, or affected concern about, or preoccupation with matters of religions." This sense is pejorative. In anthropology, religiosity signifies "man's capacity to enter into communion with God and things or persons that are sacred." In this sense, "religiosity" is humankind's natural craving for the communication with an Absolute. Lastly in Hegel, "religiosity" signifies "the continual human effort to move beyond selfish or merely bodily interests, to participate in cultural achievements to grow into a community of spiritually concerned people." In this thesis, I use "religiosity" in the second sense. It denotes the basic religious orientation and sensitivity which develop into outer expressions in religious practices. See T. M. McFadden, "Religiosity," in *Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Religion*.

penetrates all, originated in the early Christianity.”<sup>25</sup> Reflecting on his religious experience, he found that his sincere affection for God led him to an awareness of the immanence of God:

With the mind of a baby, I first beheld the face of the Father. Then I was brought into the father-son relationship with God. I understood Christ’s consciousness that the Father is in me, and that I am in Father. My awareness of the immanence of God had gradually become clearer to me. My awareness of the immanent God is Christ’s consciousness.<sup>26</sup>

In saying that “My awareness of the immanent God is Christ’s consciousness,” he authenticated his perception of God’s presence within him. In a personal relationship with God, he discovered God through “Christ’s consciousness.” He gave a Christian expression to his sense of the divine traditionally nurtured.

Spiritual union with Christ Jesus was the way of growth in his awareness of being a child of God. The purpose of life was to live in Christ consciousness. As Ebina came to understand that forming Christ’s consciousness in his spirituality was God’s act in him, he found the true God, the immanent God and the transcendent God within him. Through spirituality, he discovered the immanent God and identified God with the transcendent God. The father-son relationship, as a child of God, is based on the awareness of the immanent God. This immanent God is the Spirit, dwelling within the center of each human person. Ebina saw the two aspects of God, the transcendental and the immanent, by observing religious consciousness. He shows the awareness of God as Spirit, experienced as a relationship with God in religious experience.

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<sup>25</sup> Danjyo Ebina, *Kirisuto kyo Taikan* (Survey of Christianity) (Tokyo: Senshin sha, 1930), 121; quoted in Yoshinare, 39. Ebina suggested that because of the view of God’s immanence, despite its monotheism, Christianity is not confrontational but rather considerably inclusive with other pantheistic religions. Here he found a good reason to relate Christianity and Shinto. See Yoshinare, 39.

<sup>26</sup> Ebina 1930, 126; quoted in Iwai, 183.

## Christ, the Holy Spirit and Human Religious Consciousness

We must ask what Ebina meant by the consciousness of Christ and the Holy Spirit. In his discussion on the Trinity, Ebina showed his unique understanding of these issues. He attempted to explain the Trinity using his own religious experience as the starting point. His premise was that his religious consciousness was formed by faith in Christ who is a person in the Trinity, so that to discuss the Holy Trinity was to interpret his religious consciousness. Ebina's concern was to describe the Trinity in terms of the Trinity's relationship with himself. Because of his conviction about the participation of redeemed Christians in growing in holiness, Ebina was challenged by Masahisa Uemura (1857-1925). In response, Ebina published an essay, "The Holy Trinity and My Religious Consciousness" in 1905. This debate exhibits the contrast between the two divergent Christian views of human nature--Irenaeus and Augustinian, which we studied in the previous chapter. Uemura, as an evangelist, was suspicious of Ebina's liberal theological position and questioned him about the role of Christ in salvation, especially the meaning of atonement.<sup>27</sup>

Ebina drew attention to the historical aspects of the language of the doctrine of the Holy

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<sup>27</sup> In the late 1880's, a liberal theology, the "new theology," reached Japan with the missionary societies, such as the Evangelical Missionary Society from Germany, the Unitarian Association and the Universalist General Convention from the States. Their liberal theology was welcomed by those who were not satisfied with the conservative fundamentalistic theology of the Doshisha theological school in which Ebina studied. Questioning the infallibility theory of the Bible, it introduced scientific and rationalistic biblical criticism and the liberal position on Biblical inspiration. The new theology was regarded as doubtful because of its liberalism and because of its potential alliance with state policy and nationalism. Ebina was not free from this type of suspicion. Mutsuro Sugii suggested that Ebina's theology contained syncretism when Ebina took a liberal position against evangelism. Japanese theologians and church historians regarded syncretism as a serious problem not only because of religious confusion and ambiguity but also because of the suspicion of having some continuity with Shinto, and ethnocentric nationalism. See Mutsuro Sugii, *Meiji ki Kirisuto kyo no Kenkyu* (Studies in Christianity in the Meiji Period) (Kyoto: Dohosha, 1984), 353, 361.

Trinity. He first surveyed the history of the formation of the doctrine of the Logos and went on to the Incarnation and the Holy Spirit before discussing the Trinity itself. Asserting the “Logos” was an historical form of understanding Christ in the ancient philosophical period, he marked that Jesus’ disciples had no doctrine of the Trinity. He focused on Jesus in the Gospel. Being aware that the doctrine of the Trinity was put in an historically conditioned language, Ebina held that as a person in the modern age, he needed to interpret it with his new awareness.

Ebina grounded his discussion of the Trinity in his own awareness of being a son of God. He believed that with his own awareness, he could comprehend Christ’s religious awareness, and assimilate Christ’s disposition and sensitivity. Similarly he proposed that Jesus also had the awareness of the father-son relationship with God. Ebina stressed that Jesus had perfect knowledge, and lived a perfect life because Jesus was sinless and was in reality the Son of God:

The awareness of a true son has religious energy which calls forth the true father. Christ had the reality of the son of God. Therefore, he could call the God of the universe his father. It seems that because Christ had an ontological father-son relationship with God, he also had a knowledge of an ethical father-son relationship with God. Before God, Christ had a deep and pure affection as his son and had a direct relationship with God. With humankind, Christ had a parental affection, and revealed the reality of a God who nurtures all creation. I cannot help but recognize the reality of God in Christ. I suppose that it is because Christ is the son of God and possesses the reality of God. Christ has two aspects, i.e., to God he is a human being, and to humankind he is God. These two aspects constitute the reality of the true son of God.<sup>28</sup>

Ebina’s Christology was a Christology from below. He tried to know Jesus’ ontological relationship with God by observing Jesus’ behaviour and attitude which were the observable outer expressions of Jesus’ consciousness. Seeing the perfection of humanity in Jesus, Ebina assumed that Jesus must have been human and divine. His Christology was supported by his

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<sup>28</sup> Danjyo Ebina, “The Dogma of the Holy Trinity and My Religious Consciousness”, *Shinjin*, 2 (1902), n.p.; quoted in Watase, 260.



conviction that human consciousness was not alienated from God. Just as Jesus and God are united in affection and one at the ontological level, human beings were united with God. As a Christian, Ebina was aware of the relationship between God and human beings, because he believed in God through Jesus. Ebina suggested that faith was not imagination but real in giving the human heart a true knowledge of God through Jesus Christ which led to vitality in life. Ebina's idea of the immanence of God lay in his belief in the active presence of God, the Holy Spirit in every human person.

Instead of using abstract arguments, Ebina appealed to the image of God in Jesus, which Ebina could know in his own faith life. He was very interested in what happened in the Christians' consciousness. Within his own religious experience, he was assured of God's presence in humankind. With his belief in the immanent presence of God, he attempted to explain the divine-human nature of Christ. It does not mean that he did not believe Jesus Christ was God. Ebina was not interested in doctrinal arguments of traditional theology, and avoided the confusion between the Incarnation and the idea of manifestation in Buddhism.<sup>29</sup> Instead, he tried to show the divinity of Christ in his relationship with humankind:

Knowing that Christ's nature is the best of humanity, I clearly know that he is God. I can see the heart of God in Jesus of Nazareth. Though God speaks to me through all creation, God revealed God's heart through the humanity of Christ. Through Christ I can directly behold the heart of God. As God in Christ is the lord of all creation, in Christ, finally the heaven and the earth reveal the light of unlimited love and grace. Therefore, I can

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<sup>29</sup> In the later writing, Ebina underscores the difference between incarnation and manifestation, "incarnation is very different from the idea of manifestation in Asian thoughts. In Buddhism, Bodhisattva is in primitive creatures and plants, and the whole land from mountains to rivers becomes Buddha. It is mistaken to think that the self-manifestation of God takes such appearances. When the many layers of the universe are uncovered, the innermost being will appear. Plants and minerals do not have depth in themselves" (Ebina 1933, 156; quoted in Kumano, 158).

directly meet God through Christ.<sup>30</sup>

Ebina insisted on discovering Jesus' divinity through his humanity. He was convinced that this was the natural way to reach some knowledge of God while he knew that grace comes from God and that the Holy Spirit has an important role. Ebina believed that the Holy Spirit not only assisted human beings in making progress in knowing God, but also enabled and impelled them to know and live with God.

Ebina strongly believed in the presence of and the works of the Holy Spirit not only in Jesus' disciples but also in himself. He called it "the Christ Spirit." The Holy Spirit enlivened the human spirit and led the followers of Jesus to live as Jesus did. Ebina recognized the vital and active presence of the Holy Spirit in the growth in holiness of human beings through felt experiences. Experiences are different. Nevertheless, the Spirit is the same, "the Christians named this vital spirit the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of the Son, the Spirit of Truth, the Spirit of God and simply the Spirit, but all these names originated in their experiences."<sup>31</sup> He regarded the Holy Spirit as the source of vitality which constantly helped the church to advance. He believed that through this Spirit the church develops its doctrines and creates new formulations. This Spirit forms human personality, as the Holy Spirit "gives all the virtues of Christ" to us to transform persons and communities into the likeness of Christ. The Holy Spirit gives "the mind of Christ to humankind and manifests his love, light and life. The Spirit deifies humankind into the image of Christ to complete the work of Christ."<sup>32</sup> Ebina

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<sup>30</sup> Watase, 261.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 262.

<sup>32</sup> Ebina 1902, n.p.; quoted in Watase, 264.

significantly discovered the deification of humanity in the transformative effects of the Holy Spirit.

Ebina's emphasis is on the activity of the Holy Spirit which can be found in human conscious experience. He argued that the activity of the Holy Spirit and the Trinity was a felt reality in his life; therefore, recognizing the works of the Holy Spirit in this present life was like seeing God in his consciousness:

I recognize the same God that is above all creation in Jesus Christ, in history, and in the Holy Spirit who defies the church. The only one true God is united with me by three manifestations, creation, salvation and deification. These three manifestations are not contradictory but complementary. Therefore, deification is the completion of salvation, and the great progress of creation. Omnipotence, charity and light . . . are a unity of three, one and the same God.<sup>33</sup>

The works of the Spirit in his consciousness assured Ebina that he was with God who reveals Godself. He stressed that divinity in humanity was understood in human consciousness.<sup>34</sup> He was not satisfied with abstract discussion at the doctrinal level, but sought an explanation at the relational level by appealing to his concrete experience. For that reason, Ebina underscores the awareness of union with God which reveals the presence of God in human consciousness, calling that awareness, "an awareness of union with God," "an awareness of the divine-human union," and "an awareness of being a son of God." Ebina regarded religious orientation as inherent in humanity, and argued that human religious consciousness was a spiritual "space" wherein one participates in the Trinity's life. He was convinced that his faith and religious consciousness grew into union with Christ's consciousness which concretely manifested itself in his life. He

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<sup>33</sup> Ebina 1902, n.p.; quoted in Watase, 264.

<sup>34</sup> By referring to Clement, Origen and Athanasius, Ebina drew attention to the notion of divinity in humanity in the Eastern Christian tradition. See Watase, 264.

concluded his discussion, stating “my consciousness should be Christ’s consciousness and my spirit should be the Spirit of Christ.”<sup>35</sup> He did not mean that he was in a perfect union with God, but meant that his religious consciousness had the potentiality for perfection because it was assisted by the Holy Spirit and oriented toward the Trinitarian God. Here also Ebina’s theology also came to a congruence with that of Irenaeus.

Ebina’s emphasis on the felt reality of the Trinity in his spiritual life was an attempt to develop Christianity in Japan. Attention to the Holy Spirit and to divinity in humanity, was maintained more profoundly in the Irenaean tradition than in the Augustinian tradition. The Christianity which Ebina encountered showed the Augustinian evangelical tradition. In this situation, Ebina searched alternative references in the Christian tradition to find a link between Christianity and spiritual traditions of other religions in Japan. As we saw, Ebina was aware of the notion of deification of humanity in the Eastern Christian tradition. His search for alternative references in the Christian tradition demonstrates interesting similarities to John Hick’s attempts. By consulting the Irenaean tradition, Hick tries to reinterpret Christian doctrines in the contemporary world of religious pluralism.<sup>36</sup> Ebina did not inspect the theologies of religions and religious pluralism on a worldwide scale, but he intended to find a link between Christianity and the spiritual traditions of other religions in Japan. He believed

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<sup>35</sup> Ebina 1902, n.p.; quoted in Watase, 267.

<sup>36</sup> Hick draws attention to the idea of *theosis* (deification), “assimilation to God” through virtue in the Eastern tradition. He notes that in contrast with the Latin view, the Orthodox view acknowledges the gradual transformation which causes the actual human change from a human animal into the finite “likeness” of God. Hick contends that salvation is in process. Human participation as response to the Holy Spirit has a significant role in the process. Hick reinterprets the atonement theory; salvation is not caused by Jesus’ blood as taught in the traditional ransom theory, but by Jesus’ life and teachings which showed the way to life in God’s kingdom. See John Hick 1993, 129-32, and for his presentation of Irenaeus, see the previous chapter.

that the Christianity which the Western missionaries brought was not the only form of Christianity. In addition, Ebina shared an interest with Hick when he insisted on modernity in religion and the historicity of traditions. They underscore progress and development in religions. For Ebina, in nineteenth century Japan, Christianity was the religion of the modern age which was regarded as free from superstition, brought by the Western world which represented science.

Ebina drew attention to his religious consciousness in which he experienced the presence of the Holy Spirit. The emphasis on the experiential aspect of religion led Ebina to integrate the religious traditions of Japan, in which he had been nurtured. His reflection on his spirituality brought him to a discovery of the richness of his cultural tradition. The appeal of the Spirit provided a way to place interpretations of Jesus Christ in a new context.

The idea of the Image of God in the Irenaean tradition helped Ebina recognize that all humankind has a potential divinity whether it is known or not. Ebina demonstrated the continuity between humanization which occurs even without knowing Jesus Christ, and deification which depends on a conscious following of Jesus Christ when he speaks of the religious practices of the Japanese. Ebina attempted to integrate religious history before the coming of Christianity to Japan. He also tried to appreciate the development of religious awareness in Japan before Christianity. The Augustinian tradition hardly allows one to find a positive relationship between Christianity and pre-Christian traditions; however, grounded in the idea of the presence of the Holy Spirit in human consciousness and the potentiality of deification, Ebina studied the Japanese religious traditions to show how they had developed toward God without knowing Jesus Christ. Ebina tried to preserve traditional religiosity. He did

not reject the older traditions as pagan influence, but he attempted to find their meaning in the formation of unique Japanese religiosity. It must be also noted that Ebina did not accept religious pluralism, but he believed that Christianity would integrate all other religions. However, his search for the uniqueness of Japanese religious religiosity contained the risk of taking too easily political and ethnocentric implications at a time when the nationalistic movement was becoming radical.

### Confucianism and Christianity

Profoundly nurtured by the cultural tradition of Japan, Ebina's theology demonstrated particular emphasis on the person, the immanence of God and the Holy Spirit. In order to understand his theology fully, we must discuss the relationship between Christianity and other religions in Japan. He never stopped studying Shinto and Confucianism, but he showed a smaller interest in Buddhism than he did on these two religions.<sup>37</sup> Especially in his later theology, he attempted to reinterpret the development in other religions as the preparation for Christian faith.

Confucianism was Ebina's educational background, and he recognized the cultural significance of Confucianism in the spirituality of Japan. Throughout his life, he searched for the meaning of Confucianism for Christianity. He recognized that Confucianism was not only his cultural background but the living cultural tradition for the people.

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<sup>37</sup> Ebina did not investigate Buddhism fully enough to compare its doctrines with those of Christianity. While thinking of both Confucianism and Buddhism as foreign religions, he appreciated Confucianism in respect of its development of idea of God, but he criticized Buddhism for its other-worldliness and negative attitude toward life. See Watase, 475.

Ebina highlighted the aspects of Confucianism which developed particularly in the cultural tradition of Japan. By paying special attention to the Confucian scholars who had developed the religious aspects, Ebina constructed a unique view of Confucianism in Japan. “Heaven” (*ten*) and “Way” (*do*) are important ideas in Confucianism. Their meanings were interpreted diversely by the Confucian scholars of the Edo period. In China, the neo-Confucianism of Chu Hsi identified “Way” with reason (*li*) as the idea of the natural order of humankind and of the world. Heaven was also identified with reason. In the Chinese tradition, the study of reason was highly esteemed to pursue objective and metaphysical interests in finding universal law and order.<sup>38</sup> The Japanese Confucian tradition, in contrast, shifted its interest from the objective study of order to developing the spiritual perception of Heaven. Ebina studied the major Confucianists from the seventeenth century, such as Banzan Kumazawa (1619-1691), Tojyu Nakae (1608-1648), Sorai Ogyu (1666-1728), and Jinsai Ito (1627-1705), who developed the characteristic Japanese ideas on Heaven and Way. Ebina tried to find the religious aspect of the Japanese Confucianism, which he developed into theistic faith.

Ebina regarded Confucianism as a cultural resource in which Japanese people developed their own spirituality. As a Japanese Christian, Ebina believed that Confucianism was a part of his own cultural tradition, so he positively acknowledged its religious aspects. During his trip to the United States in 1915, Ebina made a speech in English, entitled “The Development of the Religious Idea in Japan.” In that speech, with considerable patriotic pride, Ebina explained the religious aspects of Confucianism in Japan. He saw the religious aspects in the Confucianists’ worshipping attitudes toward “Heaven”:

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<sup>38</sup> Toru Sagara, *Nihon no Shiso* (Thoughts in Japan) (Tokyo: Perikan, 1989), 68, 104.

The idea of 'Heaven' or 'heavenly ruler', became through their [Confucian scholars'] life and teaching real and living. Some reverently relied on Heaven as eternal moral order, and regarded providence in its distribution of reward and punishment in the intricate affairs of mankind. Some worshipped the Supreme Ruler as the only true living God, and entered into a prayerful communion with him. Some taught that Heaven is the all Powerful and merciful Father of all things, especially of man, the spirit of the universe, who is the very image of "Heaven". Some adored him as the perfect and intelligent, delighted in a blessed contemplation through *Meitoku*, the pure shining intelligence of man which distinguishes him from brutes.<sup>39</sup>

Demonstrating the idea of a Supreme Ruler above human reason, Ebina pointed to the Confucianists' trust in Heaven and providence, which was distinguished from the rational quest of reason. He noted that the Confucianists lived out their conviction, because Confucianism was not merely intellectual speculation. He underscored the implications of a personal God. In the following quotation from Jinsai, Ebina presented Jinsai's definition of the ethical nature of Heaven. Jinsai's "Heaven" should be followed in the moral life, which was in harmony with human nature:

The way of Heaven is nothing but uprightness. . . . The really good is regarded as good by all mankind, and the really bad is regarded as bad by every man under heaven. That is uprightness. Everywhere in heaven and on earth the way of uprightness permeates and predominates. If there be any one in heaven and on earth who desires to stand, yet walks by perverse and crooked ways, his attempt is just like casting ice and snow into the boiling fountain or burning fire. Sooner or later he shall not be unpunished by Heaven. Gods and angels cannot make him happy. Therefore, whosoever sins against Heaven shall have no god or angel to pray to and supplicate. Only [by] following Heaven's ordinance sincerely, man may seek after much happiness.<sup>40</sup>

"Heaven" in Jinsai is uprightness, which rules over injustices on the earth, and it is superior over other gods and angels. Ebina believed that Jinsai had developed the "personal idea" of

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<sup>39</sup> Danjyo Ebina, "The Development of Religious Idea in Japan," 1915; quoted in Watase, 344-5.

<sup>40</sup> Ebina 1915; quoted in Watase, 345.



“Heaven” who was vital and active.<sup>41</sup> Compared with rationality and intellectualism in the Chinese tradition, Jinsai revealed a spiritual and agnostic aspect which Ebina interpreted as the religious perception of a personal God. The good and the bad were thought to be known with clarity, but it was not explained how they were known.

Ebina respected Tojyu as the most religious among the Confucianists, finding in Tojyu the implication of a personal God. Tojyu defined the nature of the way of Heaven as the Supreme Ruler. Ebina’s translation distinctively highlighted Tojyu’s idea of a personal God:

The Supreme Ruler is the only great divine spirit, the Lord and Father of Heaven and Earth, and all things in them. No particle in the universe and no moment in eternity can escape from the penetration of his divine light. Heaven and earth have each their own virtues, that cannot be compared with the perfection of God. The sun and moon shine alternately but cannot be equal to the continuity of divine light. They have shadows of light and darkness but the divine light has no shadow whatever. Heaven and earth have [a] beginning and end, but divine light is eternal. His beginning is unsearchable; his ending is inconceivable. He disappears, but never loses his opportunity to re-appear. He comes and goes, but we cannot catch him. Nothing is unknown before his omniscience, nothing is undone by his omnipotence. His substance fills space. No voice is heard, no smell is recognized, but his mysterious performance overflows infinite space, being himself unfathomable, and past finding out. He stands on nothing and enters where there is no break. He is the only honorable one, to none can he be compared. His virtue is unfathomable, he has no name. Sages reluctantly called him the only great, honorable, supreme Deity. He created heaven and earth and all things in them, controls happiness and misery, rewards the righteous and punishes the wicked, filling the least particle of the universe, being himself omniscient and changeable.<sup>42</sup>

Ebina presented Tojyu’s Heaven as a spiritual being. Tojyu contrasted natural forces and Heaven as the supreme deity and creator. Against polytheistic religious tradition in Japan, Ebina

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<sup>41</sup> Yoshinare, 41. In Chu Hsi, Heaven is identified with reason and the universe is under the of the balance between reason and vitality (chi / ki). Reason is prior to vitality. In Japanese Confucian tradition, reason and vitality are not strictly distinguished, but monistic interpretation is developed. Understanding of the universe as vital is a position which refuses the priority of reason. Sagara observes in Jinsai a strong emphasis on vitality alone as the whole principle of the universe. See Sagara, 107.

<sup>42</sup> Ebina 1915; quoted in Watase, 345-6.

appreciated Tojyu's notion of Heaven as an important development of religious awareness. Ebina observed that religious awareness in Japan perceived "god" by its natural light. When heaven was recognized as reason, the intellectual understanding of the universal principle was recommended, but when its vitality and spiritual aspects were the focus, the means of approaching it shifted from reason to the human heart and spirituality. The growing emphasis on spiritual qualities such as purity of mind, disinterestedness and sincerity was a characteristic development of Japan.<sup>43</sup> This aspect of tradition offered Ebina a link of continuity between Christianity and the traditional religiosity of Japan.

Traditional Japanese spirituality taught that purity of mind was the means of obtaining union with the Way of Heaven. At the level of morality, affective unity and the quality of purity in relationship were highly respected as a virtue of loyalty. In Banzan Kumazawa, Ebina found the notion of a spiritual relationship between Heaven and a person, which anticipated a Christian relationship with God. Banzan described the spiritual union, "the Heaven and I are one. . . . The light in my heart is the supreme being who creates all things. . . . Unless there is a supreme spirit over the spirits in the universe, my heart does not have light. Unless there is light in my heart, there is no spiritual space for the spirits of the universe."<sup>44</sup> In terms of relationship, Ebina found a connection between the "light of the heart" in traditional wisdom and the works of the Holy Spirit which enable the human person to be united with God. He suggested that humankind is united with the light of the heart, since the traditional religiosity perceived the presence of the supreme being in the whole of creation. He believed that the light of the heart which perceived

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<sup>43</sup> Sagara, 108-9.

<sup>44</sup> Yoshinare, 44.

the presence of the supreme being in the whole of creation pointed to the Holy Spirit. The human heart was recognized as important for knowing the supreme being. A human person approaches a Supreme Ruler with one's heart. Ebina discovered the development of spiritual sensitivity in Confucianism in Japan.

### The Personal Idea of God in Shinto and Christianity

Ebina attempted to find similar developments in Shinto. He thought that Shinto was more significant for the spirituality of the Japanese than Confucianism and Buddhism, regarding it as genuinely indigenous. Ebina focused on the development of monotheistic aspects in Shinto despite its general recognition as a polytheistic religion. He consulted the Shinto scholars, Norinaga Motoori (1730-1801) and Atsutane Hirata (1776-1843). Ebina appreciated Motoori's articulation of the role of the supreme deity (*Ameno minakanushi kami*) in creation. He notified that Motoori acknowledged that this deity was present before the beginning of the universe and was its creator. Ebina saw that Motoori prepared the polytheistic Shinto faith for the monotheistic faith.<sup>45</sup>

Motoori put an emphasis on the pure heart, which Ebina thought agreed with Confucian thought. Ebina understood that Motoori had the idea that "the Way" is given to the human heart.<sup>46</sup> Ebina believed that "the Way" suggested divinity in humanity. Motoori taught that "the Way" was in the pure heart which kept the original condition of its birth, though the pure heart

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<sup>45</sup>Danjyo Ebina, "Nihon Shukyo no Susei (Tendency in Religions in Japan)," *Rikugou* (1896): n.p.; quoted in Yoshinare, 39.

<sup>46</sup> Danjyo Ebina, "Shinto no Shukyo teki Seishin (Religious Spirit in Shinto)," *Rikugou* (1897): n.p.; quoted in Yoshinare, 45.

in Motoori was “the original heart given at the time of birth whether good or bad.” Having this original heart does not necessarily mean a person would live a just life. Ebina understood Motoori’s notion of heart as being fundamentally created good.<sup>47</sup>

In Atsutane Hirata, follower of Motoori, Ebina found a further development of the idea of a supreme deity. In Shinto mythology, *Ameno minakanushi kami* is the first deity who manifested himself in the universe. Shinto mythology, however, does not mention the creation of the world. It speaks only about the order of the appearances of the deities in the universe. In ancient tradition, *Ameno minakanushi kami* is not identified as the supreme creator.<sup>48</sup> Interpreting the ancient tradition, Hirata recognized the presence of *Ameno minakanushi kami* at the center of the universe, over the sun god, *Amaterasu ookami*, who is the ancestor god of the imperial household. Hirata’s view of a supreme creator deity was unique in the Shinto tradition.

The idea of creation in Shinto is different from creation in Christianity, but Hirata was familiar with Christianity and Western science. He systematized the ancient Shinto tradition under their influence.<sup>49</sup> Shinto does not develop the idea of one creation out of nothing, but holds piously to the influences of deities which nurture all creatures and continuously give a

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<sup>47</sup> Ebina 1896; quoted in Yoshinare, 39. Akiko Yoshinare argues against Ebina’s reading of Motoori. She suggests that Motoori did not intend to distinguish one deity from many deities as the creator of the universe but only made a counterargument against the Confucian understanding of the principle of the universe as impersonal “reason.” Motoori presented the mysterious and awesome quality in creation which is manifested by the Shinto deity, and contrasted it with the Confucian universal reason which was known by human reason but did not have religious quality. See Yoshinare, 45.

<sup>48</sup> Kenji Ueda, *Shinto Shingaku Ronko* (Studies in Shinto Theology) (Tokyo: Taimei, 1991), 19.

<sup>49</sup> Ebina did not comment on the differences in the two ideas of creation. Observing concrete Shinto practices, Ueda believes that pantheistic faith is an authentic form of Shinto in respecting each different deities. See *ibid.*, 21-22, 37.

vital spirit to humankind.<sup>50</sup> In the Shinto world view, prior to all deities, a preexistent being is conceived. The universe is regarded as given. Deities manifest themselves in the universe out of the preexisting chaos. Though the idea of a creator who is distinguished and separated from creatures is not developed, the perception of forces of deities who are ever-creating and life-giving is distinctive in Shinto. Human beings share a sense of belonging to nature with other creatures. In the Shinto faith, the distinction between deities and creatures is not absolute. The polytheistic faith in Shinto lies in the belief of the presence of spiritual entities in creatures.<sup>51</sup> Though highlighting Hirata's view on the Supreme deity, Ebina did not comment on the differences in the ideas of creation between Christianity and Shinto.

#### **Ebina's Idea of Christianity in Japan: A Pioneer of Inculturation**

Ebina's attention to religious experience and awareness led to a discussion of religions at the level of religious consciousness. He discussed their relationship with the divine, focussing on their authenticity in following their ideas of a god. Ebina's discussion was not merely at the affective level; more, he found a theological explanation of divinity in humanity. He believed that divinity in humanity, like a good seed in the Japanese, should develop into a true faith. He knew that all cultural traditions should be reinterpreted from a Christian perspective and they should be redeemed by the light of Christ. Influenced by the evolutionary idea of religion, Ebina held that all religions, including Christianity, developed from the "primitive" stage of pantheism

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<sup>50</sup> Yoshinare, 39. As Shinto does not have revelation in its tradition, deities are only known through the manifestations of their power and they are named after the manifestations. See Ueda, 27.

<sup>51</sup> Ueda, 37. Observing concrete Shinto practices, Ueda believes that polytheistic faith is an authentic form for Shinto in respecting each different deity. See Ueda, 21.

to the sophisticated stage of monotheism.<sup>52</sup> He understood this progression as the reason why all religions contained both immanent and transcendental aspects.

Ebina's reason for exploring the development of religious orientation in Japan was to show the history of religious interactions as the development toward monotheistic faith. He did not expect an amalgamation of all the religions in Japan but believed that the religions would converge into a monotheistic faith, namely Christianity. Based on his own Christian faith, Ebina understood the history of religions in Japan as a process of convergence. He was convinced that "the history of Japan is that of continual growth."<sup>53</sup> Ebina held that the religious history distinctively showed continual growth, which he believed to be the process of finding one true god among many. Ebina appreciated Shinto due to its latent personal idea of God. "Through the conflict with Buddhism and Confucianism, the idea of God [in Shinto] has grown gradually into that of a universal Godhead."<sup>54</sup> Ebina was convinced of the uniqueness of the Japanese mind which resisted "get[ting] entirely rid of the personal idea of God" even under the influence of the Confucianist and Buddhist impersonal idea of god.<sup>55</sup> Through his study of the development of ideas about God in Japan, Ebina discovered that the awareness of the immanence of God was inherent in the Japanese people. He believed that it was the Japanese Christians' responsibility to continue the development until it brought about the conversion of the Japanese religions into Christianity as a universal religion. Ebina was aware of the importance of respecting their

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<sup>52</sup> Ebina Danjyo, *Kirisuto kyo Jukko* (Ten Lectures in Christianity), (n.p., 1915), 277; quoted in Iwai, 205.

<sup>53</sup> Ebina 1915; quoted in Watase, 335.

<sup>54</sup> Ebina 1915; quoted in Watase, 338.

<sup>55</sup> Ebina 1915; quoted in Watase, 343.

cultural background so that Christianity might be rooted in Japan.

When Ebina attempted to solve the problem of the universality of Christianity within a particular cultural tradition of Japan, he was faced with the question of what led the development of religious awareness in Japan. He found that “the way of reverence to god” was the essence of the original Japanese religiosity prior to Confucianism and Buddhism.<sup>56</sup> He appreciated the Confucianists’ and Shinto scholars’ mediatory contributions to the development of religious awareness, “the way of reverence to god.” Throughout its history, Japan was guided by the light which the people perceived in their faith in “the way of reverence to god,” but they had not known that the light was from the Christian God.<sup>57</sup> Ebina rightly pointed to the legitimacy of natural light in other religions, and he hoped for their integration into Christianity. The Japanese Christians’ responsibility in society was to point to the true God which the people had anticipated in their traditional way. However, Ebina put too much emphasis on the Japanese people as an ethnic group.

The importance of the person was Ebina’s distinctive Christian message to his people. In that message, each person’s dignity was highly respected as each person had the potential to live in union with God. When Ebina considered the Japanese collectively, he overlooked the dignity of each personality, but overvalued the collective “personality” of “Japan.” He wrote in an article, “On the New Significance of the Japanese Soul” in 1905, “there are people who do not respect the awareness of being a child of God, but I have never heard of “a country” which refuses to be loved as children of God. I believe that this country will develop an awareness and be united

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<sup>56</sup> Ebina 1933, 8; quoted in Iwai, 212.

<sup>57</sup> Ebina 1933, 75; quoted in Iwai, 215.

with the Spirit of the Son of God.”<sup>58</sup> He foresaw that the soul of a country would become more important than an individual person. Ebina did not distinguish clearly the Spirit in a person from the “spirit” of the country. Without clear distinction, Ebina’s thought suggested an ideal national spirit which was mistakenly identified with the Holy Spirit. Because of this idealization of the Japanese as one country and one people, his idea of Christianity in Japan looked similar to the nationalists’ message of “Japanese spirit,” which was not liberating, but forcing conformity and sacrifice for the nationalistic cause. Despite Ebina’s hope that the Japanese would reach a recognition that the source of the traditional light was the Christian God, the society of his day did not reach his hope.

The traditional “way of reverence” was easily connected with Shinto mythology. It must be noted that Ebina lived in an age of the rise of nationalism. State Shinto in the Meiji period propagated the emperor’s religious and political authority. State Shinto intended to unite the people as a family with the emperor as their national father. The traditional “way of reverence to god” underwent the process of systematization in which all diverse elements were exclusively connected to one Shinto source. “God” in the traditional way was reinterpreted as a father figure of the Meiji emperor. Ebina rightly suggested a need to discern the source of the light in the traditional “way of reverence.”<sup>59</sup> However, the problem with Ebina was that he did not distinguish clearly between Japan as a political entity and Japan as a vessel of cultural tradition. He attempted to find universality in the Japanese tradition, and fell into the praise of the

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<sup>58</sup> Danjyo Ebina, “Nihon Damashii no Shin Igi wo Omou [On the New Significance of Japanese Soul]”, *Shinjin* [1905]: n.p.; quoted in Yoshinare, 185-6).

<sup>59</sup> Ebina 1933, 76; quoted in Iwai, 215.



particular within a patriotic framework. Hajime Nakamura speaks of the persistence of nationalism in the Japanese way of thinking and states, “the state was the basis of all thought in the Japanese. . . . Their thinking is an historical inheritance; it is a national cultural tradition.”<sup>60</sup> Ebina worked within this cultural tradition. Ebina’s Christian faith seriously attempted to find the significance of Christianity for Japan. He believed that Christianity in Japan had a unique task in developing a Christianity engrafted to the Confucian and Shinto traditions. He held that Christianity in Japan would be more comprehensive than Christianity in the West because of its multi-religious background.<sup>61</sup> Christianity is a universal religion and each cultural tradition adds uniqueness to Christianity. Ebina’s attempt to find the significance of Christianity for Japan revealed the critical problem of evaluating cultural tradition within the universality of Christianity. We must ask which Ebina advocated more, Christianity or cultural tradition? When a cultural tradition is powerful, it subordinates Christian faith under its control. Ebina presented the difficulty of dealing with this problem both in his strength and weakness.

Ebina, as a Christian, had the sense of his responsibility to guide his country in the right direction. However, because of his conviction that Japan had developed its religious awareness of a monotheistic faith by its natural human effort, he was misled to believe that Japan was under the guidance and protection of God. This belief made it difficult for Ebina to distinguish the source of unity and the identity of Japan from the imperial cult. When Ebina drew attention to the uniqueness of the religious traditions in Japan, he used a type of language which contained

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<sup>60</sup> Hajime Nakamura, *Ways of Thinking of Eastern Peoples: India-China-Tibet-Japan* (Honolulu: East-West Center Press, 1964), 448.

<sup>61</sup> Ebina Danjyo, “Nakahara ni Shika wo Ou (Hunting Deer in the Field)”, Osaka, 1885; quoted in Watase, 221-2.

elements against foreign influences and which asserted the superiority of the indigenous tradition. For example, Ebina acknowledged religious multiplicity in Japan and said, “as the people were the representatives of many nationalities and different races, so their religious conceptions were heterogeneous. . . . Almost all kinds of religious beliefs are still found in modern Japan.”<sup>62</sup> In the following statement, he gave a reason for the convergence of religions, but his reason was problematic. It suggests Ebina’s historical limitedness. He said, “as the one imperial family had been ruling over the different clans and several families, so the one Supreme Divinity, had been ever dominating ten thousand gods and goddesses.”<sup>63</sup> Ebina revealed an ambiguous identification of the political authority of the imperial family with the religious authenticity of Shinto. It is for this ambiguity that Ebina has been criticized despite his creative efforts to find continuity between Christianity and the religious tradition of Japan. His strong approval of Shinto gives the impression that the religious development of monotheistic faith was caused exclusively by Shinto’s authenticity, which was far superior to the foreign religions. Ebina spoke of the persistence of the Shinto tradition, “the rival spirit of the Japanese against Buddhism and Confucianism, both of which were introduced from foreign countries, and stood up in defence of the national divinity. Unless the Supreme authority of the national God had been acknowledged by the Buddhist and the Confucianist, they would not have been allowed even to exist in Japan.”<sup>64</sup> Ebina did not adequately distinguish between State Shinto and traditional religiosity; however, making a distinction between the two would be more

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<sup>62</sup> Ebina 1915; quoted in Watase, 335.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ebina 1915; quoted in Watase, 337.

appropriate because traditional religiosity was nurtured not only by Shinto but also by Buddhism and Confucianism. In addition, State Shinto was a form of Shinto established by the Meiji government, and was considerably different from the traditional Shinto practices. Ebina's interpretation of religious tradition was limited only to the development of the idea of god and he did not investigate the Buddhist doctrine of salvation. In this matter, Ebina was not in a position to compare religions correctly.

Ebina believed that the God of Christianity guided the history of Japan to reach monotheistic faith. He did not doubt that Christianity was the true religion for Japan. However, his position did not fully resist nationalism which merged with State Shinto and the cult of the imperial household. The alliance between the government and State Shinto was a major problem for the religious situation in Ebina's time. Ebina tried to appreciate the continuity between Christianity and other religions, but a critical question is whether his position was appropriate for his contemporary religious and social situations?

Through his studies in religious history, Ebina had come to the conviction that the development of religious awareness in Japan would lead the country to Christianity. He regarded religious history as an ongoing process which would lead to monotheistic faith. Through this process, human beings had the potential to become holy. Ebina believed in the essential goodness of human nature which contains an orientation toward perfection achieved by assimilating the life of Jesus. This conviction about humanity is not original with Ebina, but, as we saw, the Irenaean tradition retains this type of an affirmative view of humanity. He found a correlation between the divinity in humanity in Christianity and the Confucian and Shinto ideas of the fundamental goodness of humanity. His discovery of the presence of the Holy Spirit in

every person's religious consciousness was significant for him and helped him recognize the meaning of other religions. The affirmative view of humanity significantly offered Ebina a link to connect Christianity and other religious traditions. In Confucianism, humanity is regarded as essentially good. In the Shinto tradition, humanity is embraced by the sacred vitality of creation. Humankind is a part of creation, which keeps on growing. When Ebina developed his theology within this background, he could appreciate the best elements in other religions; however, he was too optimistic about the growth of Christianity in Japan. Just as Ebina found progress in religious history, he made an optimistic estimate of the future of Japan. He did not anticipate the sinfulness of humanity which misdirects religious development in the secular world. In actual history, unfortunately, his theology was likely to misrepresent Christianity by supporting ethnocentric nationalism.

Ebina's theology might be accused of a lack of confrontation with evil. Convinced of the right growth of religious awareness and of the political growth of Japan, he misjudged Japan's annexation of Korea as a part of Japan's responsibility to extend modernization and development to Korea. Ebina believed that Japan's rule would bring Korea regeneration since Japan would soon be under the strong spiritual influence of Christianity.<sup>65</sup> He overlooked the Korean's loss of their country and justified Japan's cause only. He did not look at the two countries as equal. Ebina held the conviction of the evolutionary process of human transformation toward perfection; however, he did not fully develop the means to check the course of history through discernment. Because of his emphasis on continuity within the

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<sup>65</sup> Ebina Danjyo, "Heigou go no Chosen (Korea after Annexation)", speech made in Keijyo, Korea, 1910; quoted in Watase, 367.

traditions, Ebina did not have good control over the Shinto ideas of vitality and growth in ethnocentric and nationalistic Japan.

Ebina rightly recognized the importance of the historical development of religions in Japan and tried to situate Christianity within history. He believed that Christianity would integrate other religions with its superior belief in the one and personal God. Ebina discovered the aspects of religious tradition through which Christianity continues to develop cultural distinctiveness. Though he was successful in drawing attention to similarities contained in traditions, such as the development of idea of God, Ebina was not strong in underscoring the differences between religious traditions. He did not explore the Buddhist doctrine of salvation. The question of evil and human sinfulness needed more exploration. Because of his lack of exploration, his theology was regarded as doubtful. In exploring the question of the significance of Christianity for Japan, he failed to go beyond nationalism and his cultural tradition.

Ebina was accused of not showing the distinctiveness of Christianity; however, he was deeply involved in the issues of his age. Without being aloof and distant, he continued to search into the relationship between Christianity and society. Ebina responded to the great challenge of living as a Christian and Japanese in an authoritative society. The formulation of the theology that Ebina attempted needed to be critically evaluated for authenticity within the Japanese cultural tradition. He did not distinguish between indigenous religiosity and State Shinto. More discernment needed to be made about the presence of the Holy Spirit in his discussion of the soul of Japan. Ebina proposed a good appreciation of traditional religiosity of Japanese people, but he also needed to be more aware of the strong nationalistic tendency within the history of religions in Japan, as well as to articulate more clearly Christian distinctiveness.

## CONCLUSION

As Christians in today's world, we search for the relevancy of our faith within our unique contexts. Inculturation as a dynamic dialogue and interaction between the Gospel and culture is a means of seeking the authenticity of our faith within our concrete situation. As we saw, Irenaeus encouraged this dialogue, by assuring, with his affirmative view of humankind, that we can positively participate in the development of culture. He taught us the meaning of growth as a process towards the likeness of God. Vatican Council II acknowledged the significance of culture and of other religions, and urged us to work cooperatively with them in order to find spiritual and moral truths which all of us share.

In this thesis, I discussed the issue of inculturation to demonstrate its importance in the process of contextualizing Christianity by exploring the relationship between the Gospel and culture. I approached this task from three directions, by clarifying the meaning of inculturation: by discussing an affirmative view of human nature and creation in Irenaeus' theology as a divergent Christian tradition, and by reading a theology of Danjyo Ebina as an example of a local theologian's attempt to inculturate Christianity.

In Chapter One I discussed the theoretical aspect of inculturation, in order to clarify the newness of its approach to culture. The notion of inculturation, derived from the shift of the Church's attitude toward culture, and became articulate in Vatican Council II. In the conciliar documents, the term "inculturation" did not appear, but by using an image of the "Seed of the

Word of God,” the Council recognized the significance of culture as well as of other religions. Pedro Arrupe contributed to popularizing the term “inculturation” with his analogy of incarnation, which gave a theological foundation for inculturation of the Christian life and message in a particular cultural context.

Inculturation demands interdisciplinary study because it involves the many levels of culture. It is necessary to take account of anthropological and sociological dimensions of culture, with special attention to its symbolical level, so as to achieve transformation and new creation beyond superficial adaptation. The term “inculturation” relates to some anthropological terms, such as enculturation and acculturation, but it is a distinctive theological term.

The process of inculturation occurs through a dynamic dialogue between the Gospel and culture. For this dialogue, the Gospel and the Church must distinguish between the message and the mediator. The Gospel message is mediated by agents of inculturation who are rooted in their own culture, but the Church does not belong to any particular culture. As for the Gospel message, we do not seek for an abstract “core” of Christianity but listen to Jesus Christ in the Gospel. On one hand, the analogy of incarnation reveals our rootedness in our cultural tradition as Jesus lived in a particular cultural context. On the other hand, the freedom of the Risen Christ liberates us from cultural limitation and relativizes culture. The Paschal Mystery is the moment of purification of culture, and the Holy Spirit released at Pentecost is present in the world. In following the life and mystery of Jesus Christ witnessed in the Gospel, inculturation seeks to live faith in a cultural context. In the process of inculturation, we must follow Jesus Christ in affirming the goodness of creation as the gift of God as well as in passing through his suffering on the cross if we genuinely hope to be transformed. To maintain a proper balance between

affirmation of cultural identity and purification of culture through necessary change is important in order to develop the local church through the process of inculturation. The need of local church must be taken into consideration so that the Gospel message is truly heard.

The Church develops itself historically and culturally. In the second chapter, by consulting the Irenaean tradition presented by John Hick, I discussed the importance of affirming the essential goodness of creation, and of embracing the process of growth toward holiness for inculturation. In contrast with the Augustinian tradition, which so deeply influenced mainstream Western Christianity, Irenaeus' view on human nature is a divergent tradition in Christianity. Hick develops his discussion of these two theologians into two types of theodicy, which present different views on creation and redemption. With Hick, we found that Irenaeus' distinction between "the image of God" and "the likeness of God" is a suitable foundation for inculturation since it maintains an affirmative view of creation and human nature, and encourages us to find positive aspects within culture and tradition. It incorporates the reality of human imperfection and embraces the potential of becoming holy. Being positive to progress, the Irenaean world picture is future-oriented, in contrast with the emphasis on the loss of the ideal past by the fall in the Augustinian tradition. The understanding of the fall of Adam caused significant differences between the two traditions. By pointing out the mythological nature of the biblical account of the Fall, Hick attempts to reveal the limited nature of the Augustinian tradition. He believes that the Irenaean idea of humankind progressing toward holiness is more convincing to the contemporary world picture which holds an evolutionary theory.

Another significant aspect of the Irenaean tradition is its emphasis on the Holy Spirit. The process of becoming holy presupposes the presence of the Holy Spirit in creation. This



understanding leads to a Spirit christology, which highlights the humanity of Jesus. It develops an understanding of God as Spirit which stresses the relationship with God as the locus of the presence of the Spirit. The emphasis on the Holy Spirit encourages us to approach culture so as to find the Seed of God with a freedom of the Spirit.

The Irenaean view as a divergent tradition enlarges the framework of theology as it points to the forgotten and unattended aspects of our faith tradition. The incorporation of the Irenaean view into Christian tradition bears rich fruit. By affirming the goodness in creation, the Irenaean view supports the local Church's efforts to enhance its cultural integrity and to develop its own expression of faith based on its cultural tradition. Because of this, to articulate the Irenaean aspect of Christianity is important for inculturation.

Danjyo Ebina developed a theology which bridged Christianity and other religious traditions in Japan. In Chapter Three I argued that Ebina's attempt to study the development of religious awareness in the Confucian and Shintoist traditions in Japan brought about a rich discovery of the traditional understanding of the human heart in religions in Japan. He tried to develop a theology which incorporated cultural expressions by respecting older religious traditions. His theology demonstrated that exploring tradition was a rich means and inescapable process of the inculturation of Christianity in Japan. In light of Irenaeus, his theology reveals its significance in discovering genuine religious aspirations in cultural tradition, despite misunderstanding from and conflict with the Protestant orthodox theologians. Ebina attempted to explain his Christian faith in the spiritual continuity between older religious traditions and Christianity.

For Japanese Christians, it is necessary to know our past and cultural tradition in order to develop our faith. By reflecting on the meaning of his cultural tradition, Ebina found the aspects

which resonate with Christianity at their deepest symbolical levels. He tried to find the elements of the universal message of the Gospel in particular cultural expressions. He believed in the presence of the Holy Spirit as the immanent God which is experienced in religious awareness. He developed a Christology from below, as he highlighted the relationship between God and Jesus as a human being, analogically based on his religious experience of being united with Jesus Christ. As a Japanese Christian, he discovered the immanent God, and found that there were similar perceptions of the sacred in cultural expressions. Through a new understanding of tradition as a Christian, he achieved the appropriation of cultural tradition. With his reestablished cultural identity, he developed a reinterpretation of tradition.

His limitation and weakness, however, lie in his tendency to absolutize culture in a nationalistic society. His theology risks corresponding too closely with the nationalistic pride of praising Japanese cultural tradition. Thus, we must note the importance of balance between affirming the cultural identity and illuminating the need for purification of culture in the process of inculturation. He would have benefited by distinguishing more carefully between the nationalistic tendency in State Shinto and the indigenous religiosity.

Because of his courageous attempt to explore the religious and cultural tradition, Ebina can be called a pioneer of inculturation in Japan. As we learn from Ebina, it is a challenge to discern between the elements which are genuinely directed toward God and those which are bounded to culture. In the present world, by interreligious dialogue, the way of coexistence of religions can be promoted. By knowing the distinctiveness of one another, the religions may avoid unhealthy syncretism. More positively, knowing others may help us to know ourselves in a new light. For us Japanese Christians, knowing other religions in Japan is genuinely knowing ourselves. We

find a new aspect of the Christian faith through interreligious dialogue. For a rich interreligious dialogue, familiarity with other religions is an essential necessity and helps each religion to know itself. For Japanese Christians, however, interreligious dialogue also occurs within our own religious awareness. Religions coexist a situation within each Japanese Christian. Inculturation begins with an authentic listening to the cultural and religious inheritance in each Christian's religious awareness because the dynamic dialogue of inculturation which occurs between the Gospel and culture first takes place in each Christian within the Christian individual.

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