

5-1-1992

Theology of the Pain of God: An Analysis and Evaluation of Kazoh Kitamori's (1916-) Work in Japanese Protestantism

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THEOLOGY OF THE PAIN OF GOD: AN ANALYSIS AND
EVALUATION OF KAZOH KITAMORI'S (1916-)
WORK IN JAPANESE PROTESTANTISM

A Dissertation Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Historical Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Theology

by

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May 1992

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

History is an enigma to man.¹ In history he is compelled to question his very existence. But no amount of objective observation of history ultimately provides him with an evidence of its meaning. History presents perennial and excruciating problem to man, because man seeks the meaning of his existence in history, while history often thwarts his every attempt to do so.

Though "predetermined" by historical forces in many ways,² man feels called to justify his existence. He feels that he is a bearer of responsibility, even if on the rational basis he can argue for his freedom from it. What underlies all the enigma

¹The term "history" basically means two things: the objective events themselves and man's understanding of their meaning. When we here speak of history, we mean by the term man's opaque existential conditions about which man learns when he tries to grasp the meaning of the historical experience. History in this sense constantly goes against man's longing and dream for self-realization. Speaking of the collapse of the optimism of the nineteenth century after the experience of the two World Wars, Erich Frank says: "To the extent to which man, through his reason, has learned to control nature, he has fallen victim to the catastrophe of history. Thus, his dream that he may be entirely free to shape his future according to the ideals of his own reason is frustrated by history. Man is thwarted by man himself, by his own nature" (*Philosophical Understanding of Religious Truth* [London: Oxford University Press, 1959], 121).

²"Yet," says Frank, "in his endeavor to fulfill his destiny man does not stand alone; he is inextricably entangled in the loves of others. He is determined by the social, economic and intellectual conditions into which he is born; in short he is molded by history" (ibid., 116).

man experiences in history is his disquieting notion of his inner disorder and contradiction, "something wrong" in him.

The enigma of history and man's accountability in it is the basic feature of man's existence. Man longs to come to terms with his existence. He can do so by negating either one or both of these aspects, but in so doing he is called back, after all, to the same tribunal that demands that he justify himself. History and existence is man's remaining agony. The agony eventually leads him to seek redemption which lies beyond the possibilities of history.

The Gospel became part of history when "the fullness of time came," when "the Son was born of woman, under the law."³ By this Pauline verse the Gospel's intrinsic relatedness to a historical reality is declared as the paradigm of the Christian understanding of history.⁴ The Gospel had in its beginning a historical situation as its constituent counterpart.

If "the fullness of time" is the setting for the Gospel's becoming a historical reality, we find another aspect of this in the Johannine proclamation that "the Word

³Gal. 4:4.

⁴Many established textbooks of church history describe that initial circumstance under this Pauline viewpoint. Hans v. Schubert is one who begins his own presentation of Church history with this Pauline verse, a *locus classicus*. He writes: "Indeed, we cannot properly appreciate the wisdom of God's guidance until we realize in how many ways the gospel formed a link in a chain, to what an extent the growth of a universal religion had been prepared by the conditions of the age." (*Outline of Church History* trans. Maurice A. Canney [New York: Williams & Norgate, 1907], 1).

became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory."⁵ This means the Gospel actively takes initiative in its interaction with historical reality. Throughout history the Gospel has actualized itself only by becoming "flesh," that is, part of historical reality, while assuming current cultural aspirations and longings as "earthen vessels." Without a continuous interaction with historical reality, the Gospel has never become gospel.

The Gospel approaches man in a cultural garment. Being the *incarnate* Logos, Christ himself was "determined" while on earth by historical traditions of Judaism.⁶ But, as Christ transcended that historical determination,⁷ so the Gospel

⁵John 1, 14. The "flesh" (σὰρξ), according to R. H. Lightfoot, signifies "humanity" "in its transitoriness, weakness, and purposelessness" (*St. John's Gospel: A Commentary*, ed. C. F. Evans [London: Oxford University Press] 84). The humanity of these characteristics is the typical feature of history. Lightfoot then identifies the logos' become flesh with "becom[ing] historical" (*ibid.*). Humanity sees the Logos *incarnate in history*, "full of grace and truth." By this event of the Logos' incarnation, history is qualitatively changed. Though history still retains the character of "flesh," it is, in faith, no longer merely "*die innerweltliche Existenz der Verläufigkeit und Nichtigkeit*" (Siegfried Schultz *Johannesevangelium* [NTD] [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1972], 30). Rather, history is carried by the Logos. It is thus radically qualified by the Gospel as filled with hope and meaning. Cf. *basar* in Isa. 46:6.

⁶This relativization of Judaism as "a culture" is to be made in light of the Gospel as the crucifixion and resurrection of the incarnate Logos of the Father (cf. 1 Cor. 2:9). If the disciples had rigidly remained within the confines of traditional Judaism, it would have been impossible for any of them to confess Jesus Christ as "my Lord and my God" (John 20:17). An interpretative point of view (e.g., of A. C. McGiffert, *A History of Christian Thought* [New York: Scribners, 1953], 15) that this confession was a later Pauline Hellenistic development points, by way of refutation, to a clear historical discontinuity between the traditions of Judaism and the Gospel. According to Bernhard Lohse, the primitive church, though displaying "great reserve" toward calling Jesus "God," "regarded Jesus as God from the very beginning" (*A Short History of Christian Doctrine*, trans. F. E. Stoeffler [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988], 73).

transcends historical particularities. Because of this, it has universal validity and actuality. When the Gospel broke the Judaen boundary into the Hellenistic world, it met an audience that had a totally different metaphysical orientation.⁸ It found, however, more and more responses from that expectant world and, in the course of a few centuries, it established itself as the dominant historical power in that world. The Gospel proved itself as a historical power.⁹

This particular assimilation of the Gospel was designated by Adolf von Harnack as the "Hellenization" of the Gospel.¹⁰ This is a paradigm of all the subsequent interactions between the Gospel and the historical reality. The Gospel

⁷The Messianic figures in the traditions of the Old Testament and later Judaism--namely, the Son of David, the Suffering Servant, the Son of man and the others--are in themselves not fully direct types of the Messiah who actually entered into history. Certainly they contributed to understanding who Jesus is, but Jesus transcends all of them. He is *sui generis*. That both the Ebionite adoptionistic Christology and the Hellenistic Gnostic Christology failed, each in its own way, to do justice to the reality of Jesus Christ points to his *sui generis* quality.

⁸Edwin Hatch, *The Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages upon the Christian Church*, (London and Edinburgh: Williams and Norgate, 1890), 1-3). Hatch held the view that Christ came "not to destroy but to fulfill" the "beliefs and usages" existent in a given people's tradition. With this conviction he wrote "classically" that no one would "fail to notice a difference of both form and content between the Sermon on the Mount and the Nicene Creed." However, this difference cannot be established categorically between the New Testament as a whole and the Nicene Creed. One finds the Hellenistic elements in the Johannine and the Pauline theology.

⁹The German term *geschichtsmächtig* would be a pertinent expression for the Gospel's power in history. What we are saying here, however, is not that the development leading to the Constantinian turn is an empirical evidence of the Gospel's power (for it has proved a mixed blessing to the church), but that the Gospel is capable of shaping the course of history while always remaining critical toward the development of history, even that of the church.

¹⁰Quoted here from Hans V. Schubert, *Outline of Church History*, translated by Maurice A. Canney. (New York: Williams & Norgate, 1907), 51.

allowed itself to be assimilated with the longings of the recipient culture. The Gospel's "Romanization," "Germanization"¹¹ (and "Anglicanization" and "Americanization" for that matter) necessarily follow¹² if the Gospel should become actual and relevant.¹³

But this historical movement of the Gospel had never been without tension. The Hellenistic world, for example, with its metaphysical concept of salvation, "absorbed" the Gospel accordingly. It was not so much interested in the forgiveness of sins and in the earthly Lord; its occupation was rather with the incarnate *Logos* who revealed the truth and, through the impartation of the *gnosis*, liberates man from the entanglement of the visible world into a union with the highest God. Thus emerged a gap between the Gospel of the New Testament and Hellenistic soteriology.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Although Edwin Hatch's above-mentioned work is a century old, his observation made there concerning the Gospel's taking root in a different culture is still objectively valid: "[N]o permanent change takes place in the religious beliefs or usages of a race which is rooted in the existing beliefs and usages of that race. . . . A religious change is, like a physiological change, of the nature of assimilation by, and absorption into, existing elements" (4).

¹³We note at once that the inevitability of the Gospel's Hellenization, Romanization, and so on should be considered as not caused by the Gospel's own cultural identity that would be alien to a recipient culture, but rather by the historical power of the Gospel which infiltrates into any recipient culture. The historical process of Hellenization, and so on, is not something which deprives the gospel's dynamic identity, but the Gospel's own self-actualization in history. This process is carried on by the Gospel's *Geschichtsmächtigkeit*. The much-discussed issue of contextualization of the Gospel seems tantamount to man's encounter with the Gospel in his own cultural existence, and this encounter must be a *primary* encounter with the Gospel, even if it needs to be led by theological traditions. Put in an analogy, a contextual theology is not a copy of another copy of the original, but it must be a *primary* copy of the original (though the previous "copies" would be indispensable for correctives and enrichments of the copy made).

The same paradigm applies also to Romanization, Germanization, and so forth.

Under those assimilation processes the Gospel itself remains an ever-actual, ever-transcendent and ever-salvific power. It "reacts critically" to particular interpretations of the Gospel and constantly urges them to modify their interpretations lest they be petrified. For no culture under any historical circumstances can be identified with the living Gospel; culture by its own nature is bound to be a spatio-temporal particularity.¹⁴ Only in this critical distance from, and continuous interaction with, a historical reality, the Gospel actualizes itself as the power of salvation.¹⁵ A "synthesis" of the Gospel and a particular historical reality remains

¹⁴The term "culture" is always used with a spatio-temporal definition once discussions on culture begin. When we speak, for example, of Japanese culture, it always involves a definite space, Japan, and a definite time, the culture of the Nara era, of the Tokugawa era, of the pre-Pacific War modern era, and so on. Although it is possible to abstract a set of common traits of a nation's culture, these traits are also constantly under modification. Just as every given point in time is particular, so the culture it produces in a given space is also particular. A given culture remains therefore within a limited validity as "a working hypothesis" for the existence of a particular group of people.

¹⁵Gustaf Aulén, *Christus Victor*. Trans. A. G. Hebert (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1969), 17. As an historical case of this statement we mention Irenaeus. "His [Irenaeus'] strength lies," says Aulén, "in the fact that he did not, like the Apologists and the Alexandrians, work along some philosophical line of approach to Christianity, but devoted himself altogether to the simple exposition of the central ideas of the Christian faith itself." Aulén is somewhat one-sided in arguing for a non-speculative, non-philosophical line, and therefore a less typically Greek line of Irenaeus' theology. According to Schubert, Irenaeus warned against the Greek curiosity to pierce through hidden mysteries, but he himself, without knowing it, was true to his Greek nature, putting forward speculative statements (100). It seems that in Irenaeus the Gospel and his Greek context lie side by side, the former constantly penetrating the latter. The Gospel explodes the framework of recipient presuppositions from inside out. The same can be observed even in Origen, as when this great Alexandrian, whose theological axiom includes God's impassibility, wrote: "The Father Himself and God of all is long-suffering, merciful and pitiful. Has he not

temporal with its own limited validity. A "successful" theology is necessarily historically limited,¹⁶ for human responses to the Gospel change, but the Gospel alone is ever-actual and ever-dynamic.

The first Japanese converts of Protestant Christianity,¹⁷ mainly recruited

then in a sense passions? The Father Himself is not impassible. He has the passion of love" (quoted in: William Fairweather, *Origen and Greek Patristic Theology* [New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1901], 144).

¹⁶A once-powerful theology often possesses influences over centuries: e.g., the theologies of Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, and Calvin. However, a theology in the past never replaces contemporary theologizing. The so-called repristination of theological traditions involves the risk of making theology abstract. A fresh theologizing is therefore always required for the Church to go on in history with the *ministerium verbi*. A theology with lasting significance is a theology that allows and challenges contemporary theologizing in the light of what it once pointed to, namely the Gospel of the living Lord.

¹⁷Early in the middle of the 16th century, prior to Japan's encounter with Protestantism, the Jesuit missionary pioneer, Francis Xavier, with his daring missionary ambition, initiated the so-called "Christian Century" in Japan (1549-1650). Successful and apparently prospectful in the beginning, but desperate and virtually exterminated in the end, the nascent church was the setting for a deeply moving and highly tense drama, filled with both the uplifting heroism of martyrdom and the saddening weakness of apostasy. Ruthless persecution, with refined methods of torture, was conducted by the Shogunate which conceded no toleration of whatever was potentially dangerous to the realm's stability. Memorable endurance was shown by the believers--the missionaries and the Japanese, the learned and the unlearned. It would be the deepest interest, in view of the appropriation of the Gospel by the first Christians' (the so-called *Kirishitans*'), to study how those who offered their lives for the faith and those who apostatized understood the tidings of Christ brought by the Catholic missionaries. We must be content here, though, with the following references: C. R. Boxer, *The Christian Century in Japan 1549-1650* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1951); Hubert Cieslik, "St. Sebastian Kimura (1565-1622): Der erste japanischer Priester," *Neue Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft* (1959): 15, 81-98; George Elison, *Deus Destroyed: the Image of Christianity in Early Japan* (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1973) [which to a large extent deals with a well-known Japanese apostate, Fabian Fucan (1565?-1621), who in his Christian years wrote an apologia of the faith but later refuted the apologia "word by word" in his *Deus Destroyed*, the English translation of which is included in Elson's book]. In this study, however, we admittedly cannot trace the development of

from the disfavored group of the ruling samurai class, found their longing and need fulfilled in the Gospel. High ethical standards, new ideals of the nation, a concept of universal human solidarity, equal value of every human individual were the marks of the Gospel they found valuable for their new existence. Above all, they met in the Gospel the one God who is the Father and the Lord of heaven and earth; they found a new Lord to live and die for. Protestant Christianity appealed to them as the belief which should be their new "guiding principle" and bring their traditional values to higher fulfillment. By this belief, they were convinced, they could chart their own life and serve the building up of their feudal nation into a modern state.¹⁸

These "points of contact" may be peripheral aspects of the Gospel when seen from an evangelical faith. One could ask to what extent their Christian faith was

the Roman Catholic Church in modern Japan. There have been many forms of cooperation between the Protestant churches and the Roman Catholic Church. Catholic writers often contribute to Protestant publications. A significant testimony to this ecumenical cooperation is the completion of the Common Translation of the Bible in 1988 which has been achieved as the joint project of the Protestant churches and the Catholic Church, after the assiduous work of eighteen years.

¹⁸Yasushi Kuyama, ed., *Modern Japan and Christianity: the Meiji Era* (Tokyo: Sobunsha, 1968), 54-56. A bibliographical note is due here: This work (together with the succeeding volume on the Tasho-Showa Era and the Contemporary Era [*Gendai*]) is the result of symposia, held under the auspices of the editor, Kuyama, where both Christian scholars and non-Christian scholars with a sympathetic understanding of Christianity exchanged their views on various aspects of interaction between modern Japan and Christianity. Kazoh Kitamori himself was a participant in the symposia. The works are in many ways informative in terms of description, analysis, and interpretation. When a participant's specific view is cited, his or her name is given. When citing a general view, we give only the page(s) concerned.

evangelical and orthodox.¹⁹ Historically, however, the question would be irrelevant, for with their little experience in the Gospel and their ethically "optimistic" Confucian background, the first Christians "were not able to have any deeper understanding of the Gospel of sin and grace."²⁰ A deeper appropriation of the Gospel by them and later generations was a gradual, historical process. Masahisa Uemura (1857-1925), an able, deeply-spiritual church leader in the history of Japanese Protestantism, was aware of the need for time in order for the Christians to grow to the depth and maturity of faith. Instead of jumping into sophisticated theological speculations at once, he argued for a "natural order" to be followed in the process of spiritual and theological maturity.²¹

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 85ff. In the discussion on the conversion of the first Christians, it is Kitamori who tries to understand, in the light of "Orthodoxy," what was the main motive for embracing the new faith: "So the first missionaries [from the United States] brought an orthodox faith with them but the question is whether their conversion was made in an orthodox way or in a quite different way. . . ."

²⁰The faith of the first converts had "God the Lord" as its center, and was not yet "Christological." One convert of a samurai son, Kaiseki Matumura, found an identity between the God of Christian faith and the *Jo-Tei* [上帝] of Confucianism: "Is not the so-called God in the teaching of Jesus the so-called *Ten-Tei, Jo-Tei, Ko-Ten* [天帝、上帝、皇天]? If so, we must have been believing in this God from our childhood" (quoted in Kuyama, *ibid.*, 66). "They [the first converts] might think that they understood God well. Their feeling was that, though they had difficulty in understanding the divinity of Christ, God is understandable in the essential. . ." (Seigo Yamaya in Kuyama, *ibid.*, 70).

²¹"Thus, it is not a strange thing that there is yet nothing noteworthy in matters of doctrine and theology in Christianity in Japan," and without the real and deep experience of a Paul, a Luther, a Bunyan, or an Augustine, says Uemura, "how can one personally regard the doctrine of redemption as all-important and elucidate its real meaning?" If one has not had the deep experience in his own spirit and still tries to cry it out, he is like a man "groaning without being really ill [無病呻吟]" (quoted in Yoshitaka Kumano, *A History of Theological Thoughts in Japanese Christianity* [Tokyo: Shinkyō Shuppansha, 1968], 4-5).

The *kairos* of Kitamori's theology of the Pain of God came in the early 1930s.²² As will be seen in more detail in what follows, the nation was then going through a highly fluid process of modernization. During the process, individuals' uncertainty was steadily being exacerbated. A conflict between traditional and modern values tormented the individual's soul. Caught between personal aspirations for freedom and government pressures toward national uniformity, the individual found himself in an agonizing situation. This tended to deepen philosophical and religious thought in Japan. The nascent Protestant theology was called on to make intensive efforts to articulate the Gospel as a relevant and meaningful message to the situation. It did this first by voraciously digesting incoming theologies from the West both "classic" and "liberal." Protestant theology in Japan then rapidly reached sophistication within half a century from its start. These factors were, in a preliminary sketch, the stage setting of the emergence of the theology of the "Pain of God."

Kitamori's theology began with the discovery of a suffering God as the Gospel itself. In a mystical vision, engendered by the tangible image of the crucified Christ, Kitamori envisaged that God was suffering pain for man. Through this vision of a God in pain, Kitamori appropriated the Gospel. He was then firmly convinced that the Gospel is the fact itself that God is suffering pain for man. Further, Kitamori

²²Since a more extensive description of the circumstance under which Kitamori's theology emerged will be given in the following chapter, footnotes for the substantiation are omitted in the introductory presentation concerning the general circumstance and Kitamori's place in it. Exceptions are made where it is pertinent to the Introduction.

held that this vision of a suffering God is an experience of the God of the Bible through a specifically Japanese sensitivity, *kankaku* his own term for a spiritual sensitivity for the tragic undertones of human reality. Later he came to assert this sensitivity as most congenial with the Biblical image of God in pain, and considered it as the ultimate key to the understanding of "the holy of holies" of God's essence as love. Explicating the Gospel as the truth of a God suffering for man, Kitamori's theology made its name as perhaps the most successful theology in modern Japan in its attempt to formulate the Gospel in the spiritual and cultural terms indigenous to the Japanese. *The Theology of the Pain of God*, published in 1946, became the "classic" work of Kitamori that has been printed six times since World War II.²³ Winning also a wide non-Christian readership, Kitamori's theology has been generally considered as a unique Japanization of the Gospel.²⁴

It is Carl Michalson who, in the early 1960s, characterized Kitamori's theology as "the most self-consciously Japanese of the current theological tendencies in Japan."²⁵ This theology proved its ecumenical relevance early as well as its ability to draw attention to itself from the Euro-American theological community. Prior to

²³The second edition was published in 1947. Succeeding editions were published in the years 1951, 1954, 1958, 1972 and 1986.

²⁴The last two editions mentioned in the above note were from one of the leading "secular" publishing companies in Japan, that is, Kodansha. The last edition is in a "*bunko*" (pocket book) form, of which Dr. Kitamori told me in a personal meeting (June 30, 1987): "Being included in a *bunko*-series, the *Theology of the Pain of God* has become a classic of Japan."

²⁵Carl Michalson, *Japanese Contributions to Christian Theology* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1961), 73.

Michalson, Emil Brunner had commented that Kitamori's theology was "opening a new line."²⁶ The English translation of *The Theology of the Pain of God* was made in 1965,²⁷ and the German version became available in 1972. According to one estimate, this theology obtained its second *kairos* in Germany and in Europe, three decades after its initial publication, in connection with "gegenwärtigen Diskussion einer Theologie des gekreuzigten Gottes (E. Jüngel, J. Moltmann, K. Rahner, H. Mühlen among others)."²⁸ Kitamori's idea of the Pain of God is considered by J. Moltmann to be an anticipation of the latter's idea of "*der gekreuzigte Gott*," and to be developed further as the only legitimate theological conception of God.²⁹ As a

²⁶Kitamori noted this comment of Brunner in the preface to the third edition of *The Theology of The Pain of God*.

²⁷The name of the translator is not given in the English version. According to I. J. Hesselink, it is "a Canadian veteran missionary, Dr. Howard Norman. An account of the unfortunate background for the absence of the translator's name in the book is given by Hesselink in "Windows of Japanese Christian Thought Opened for the West," *Theological Studies in Japan* 5 (1966): 96-103.

²⁸Rudolf Weth, "über den Schmerz Gottes: Zur Theologie des Schmerzes Gottes von Kazoh Kitamori" *Evangelische Theologie*, 34 (1974): 431-436. He writes among other things: "K. Kitamoris Buch, während des Zweiten Weltkriegs geschrieben und 1946 abgeschlossen, hatte seinen japanischen Kairos in einer außerordentlichen 'Zeit des Schmerzes'. Manches spricht dafür, daß nun seinen deutschen Kairos haben wird."

²⁹J. Moltmann, *Der gekreuzigte Gott* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1987), 49. Moltmann also finds in Bonhoeffer's thought a German parallel of the idea of a God who saves man through His own suffering in weakness and powerlessness: "Gott läßt sich aus der Welt heraus drängen ans Kreuz, Gott ist ohnmächtig und schwach in der Welt und gerade und nur so ist er bei uns und hilft uns. Es ist nach Matt. 8,17 ganz deutlich daß Christus nicht hilft kraft seiner Allmacht, sondern kraft seiner Schwachheit, seines Leidens! . . . nur der leidende Gott kann helfen. . . ." (Bonhoeffer, *Widerstand und Ergebung* [Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1951], 242, 244; quoted in Moltmann, *ibid*).

theology that was *particular*, due to the Japanese spirituality, Kitamori's theological conception has also proven to possess an ecumenical actuality.

Though originating in the Japanese spiritual soil, the theology of the Pain of God is not a theology in church-historical isolation. Kitamori absorbed much from the traditions of the Church in his attempt to elucidate the idea of the Pain of God. Even his initial experience of the Pain of God was not one "out of the blue"; in particular, Luther's experience of sin and of God in His wrath and love toward a sinner has been instrumental for Kitamori's experience of the Gospel.³⁰ But at the same time the pristine vigor in Kitamori's initial writings strongly suggests that the basis of his theology has been an "*original*" experience of God who suffers pain.³¹ Tradition and

³⁰Besides Luther's influence (which will be substantiated adequately later) a note on other influences is in order here. We are informed by Kitamori's essay "My Encounter with the Bible" (in *An Introduction to the Bible* [Tokyo: Kawade Shobo, 1954], 171) that, prior to his experience of the Gospel, Kitamori read the books of Kanzo Uchimura (1861-1930), who particularly struggled with the problem of his sinfulness. Kitamori's ambivalent relationship to Uchimura's thought suggests the former's extensive reading of the latter (see *The Theology of the Pain of God* [Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1965], 91-92.) At the same time, Kitamori seems to have been well acquainted with Blaise Pascal, in addition to "[Raphael] Koeber, [Henri F.] Amiel, [Carl] Hilty" (in the essay mentioned above, *ibid.*) to whose thought Kitamori refers when he substantiates the centrality of pain in the Christian faith (cf. *The Theology of the Pain of God*, 64, 79, 80). Other writers must have been in his mind as well, e.g., Søren Kierkegaard, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Leo N. Tolstoy, according to his references to them in his above-mentioned *magnum opus* and *Literature and God* (Tokyo: Nihon no Barasha, 1983).

³¹An example from Kitamori's first work, *The Lord of the Cross* (Tokyo: Shinseido, 1940), will suffice here: "[On the publication of this book without the extensive footnotes I have provided] I feel an uncertainty, but I decided to put all my trust not in my *presentational* competence of the issue but in the power of *the issue itself*. . . I am not confident in my competence, but I am fully convinced [揺るぎない確信をもっている] of *the issue* I am now seeing" (2). Yasushi Kuyama, a close friend of Kitamori, once said: "In *The Theology of the Pain of God* one finds

originality co-exist in Kitamori's thought. Here a dynamic interaction takes place between an indigenous spirituality and church-historical traditions in a person, and leads him to a primal experience of the Gospel.

Special mention is to be made of Luther's thought in Kitamori's theology.³²

Kitamori has constantly endeavored to penetrate deeper into the mystery of the Pain of God and to formulate his understanding of it into a theological system. In so doing, he uses theological as well as non-theological sources extensively. But it is said that Luther's thought has been the basic source of Kitamori's concept of the Pain of God. Our preliminary observation, then, is that Luther's thought is appropriated by Kitamori through his experience of the Pain of God, while the Pain of God is formulated into a theology with the categories of Luther's basic understanding of the dialectic between God's wrath and His love. What result this interaction produced remains to be seen. For Kitamori, the Lutheran understanding of the Gospel and the Pain of God as the Gospel coincide in the essential. Kitamori means that the theology of the Pain of God is the Gospel actualized by the Japanese sensitivity through the

a [burning] passion filled, as often is the case with a virgin work. A clear logic peculiar to Mr. Kitamori penetrates the very heart of the Gospel, which is such a feature as to evoke even an emotional excitement in the reader. His work is not a kind of cool and detached introduction of foreign theologies, but a work filled with the hot blood that runs in the whole body of Kitamori. And a commanding authority is prevailing throughout the work. . ." (*A Companion of the Faith* [Tokyo: Sobunsha, 1953], 100).

³²"I may say that I have spoken of [the Gospel in] *The Lord of the Cross* in a Lutheran way [ルッター的に]" (*The Lord of the Cross*, 75).

mediation of Lutheran theology.³³

Kitamori's theology has been concerned with the doctrinal traditions and heritage of the Church.³⁴ This fact is important, indicating that, as a consciously original theology, Kitamori's conception of the Pain of God earnestly aspires to be a theology of the *Church* in Japan. In other words, it is not attempted as a free-lance theological "experiment" outside the Church, but it tries to be a responsible theology both for the universal Church and for the particular Church existing in Japan.

The *Sitz im Leben* of Kitamori's theology is another significant factor. It has

³³In an essay attached to *The Lord of the Cross*, "The Gospel and Japan," Kitamori writes: "In the above I spoke of the two things I love, Lutheranism and Japan. As to the first, it is concerned with 'the love based upon the Pain of God as the theological *axiom*,' while the second [Japan] as the theological *actuality*. Truth lies in 'the love based upon the Pain of God' as the identity of 'axiom and actuality' with each other" (94). Kitamori here speaks of a dialectic of the "theological axiom" and the "theological actuality." With the former, *in this connection* he means the Lutheran *sola fide*, while with the latter, he means, the "Pain of God" as an understanding of the Gospel which is to cover the whole human reality. We shall deal with this dialectic further in due course, but here it suffices to call attention to this dialectical synthesis between Lutheranism and the Pain of God.

³⁴There is a dilemma between the identity of the Gospel and the bringing forth of its actuality and relevance in a given historical-cultural context. Trying to actualize the Gospel in a concrete situation, one may easily reinterpret (*umdeuten*) it and lose the identity of the Gospel. Trying to preserve the identity of the Gospel, one may easily become victim of traditionalism. It is Kitamori's intention, at least, to have both. How he does this will be discussed later. A contemporary New Testament scholar, Seiichi Yagi, is an opposite example to Kitamori. According to Heinz Guenther, "Kitamori and Yagi appropriate Christianity for Japan, just as Shō toku Taishi and Fujita Tōkō had adapted Buddhism and Confucianism for Japan"; Guenther means that in both Kitamori and Yagi Japanese religiosity plays a dominant role ("Overtones of Japanese Religion in Japanese Theology: Kazoh Kitamori and Seiichi Yagi," *Studies in Religion* 6 [1976]: 17-31). Still there is a distinctive difference in their respective understandings of the Bible and the ecclesiastical traditions. On this, see John O. Barksdale, "Seiichi Yagi's Typology of New Testament Thought," *The Northeast Asia Journal of Theology* 17 (1976): 49-50.

been a Lutheran theology in the midst of the strongly Reformed-Barthian theological milieu.³⁵ Kitamori intended to "balance" the two great streams of the Reformation for the formation of a solid evangelical Church in Japan. His holy ambition was to "Lutheranize" the theological substance of Japanese Protestantism.

But what have been the actual responses to Kitamori's endeavor? His theology has not been favorably recognized by the theological community in Japan. It has been ignored by a majority of "academic" theologians in Japan.³⁶ However, in terms of its theological impact, "fair" and objective criticisms were due to Kitamori by the theological community. But an academic willingness to take his theology seriously has been largely denied. Instead, even to the present day, his opponents react with tacit contempt³⁷ or cynically ignore³⁸ his theology.

Why is this? Has he been overly confident and assertive in his theology,

³⁵See below, Chapter 2, 45 and 65.

³⁶We read, e.g., "The theology of pain, although hailed by Western Christianity as the 'most self-conscious Japanese theology of the post-war era,' exercised practically no influence on Japanese scholarship itself" (Guenther, 20).

³⁷"That theology [of the Pain of God] with an empty logic turning around itself, which under routine circumstances has been even despised [何もない時は侮蔑を受けつつも]. . .": a denouncing word from a leader of the student protest of Tokyo Union Theological Seminary, Hajime Hibun'ya (*Gospel and World* [January 1970]: 4).

³⁸A Luther scholar, Isao Kuramatsu, who is one of a few supporters of Kitamori, writes that until well-nigh 1970 "this theology has been either negatively evaluated or cynically ignored by [Japanese] theology and theologians" (Introduction to the pocket book edition of *The Theology of the Pain of God* [Tokyo: Kodansha, 1986], 301).

thus giving a quixotic impression of himself?³⁹ Has this "overconfident" tone of his argumentation sounded arrogant to some and thus offended them?⁴⁰ Has his way of developing theological logic been judged as pedantic and even sophistic?⁴¹ To some, an enthusiastic international hailing of this theology as a genuinely Japanese formulation of the Gospel seems to have been based upon ignorance and therefore unwarranted.⁴² His theological work may not have followed ordinary academic rules

³⁹Although his theological work is filled with vividness and a very personal character, making itself a unique work, it may be offensive to some. One has an impression that the author has received a completely new revelation about God and His nature. . . . At some places it appears that he is so passionate as to initiate a crusade" (Hesselink, 97-98).

⁴⁰Only the Japanese religious mind, Kitamori maintains, can penetrate what the Christian Bible truly signifies by love rooted in and authenticated by pain. . . . In Kitamori's system of Christian theology, the Japanese way of appropriating religious truth thus has received a distinct place in the hermeneutics of religion. . . . After all, is Japanese religion [in Kitamori's thought] a sublime form of religious arrogance?" (Guenther, 24).

⁴¹According to Katsumi Takizawa, a university professor with philosophical training in the Kyoto School of Philosophy (as is the case with Kitamori) and theological studies under Karl Barth, Kitamori's eye is not really opened yet for the living truth called Jesus Christ. Kitamori's theology is only a theology conceived by a deficient Western scheme of thought and filled with "his casual and self-complacent fancies [たんに偶然的、自己満足的な思いつき]" (*A Problematization of "Religion"* [Tokyo: San'ich Shobo, 1976], 123-126). Prof. Masami Ishii of Japan Lutheran Seminary writes: "His [Kitamori's] view seems quite sound, but his supremacy of logic may be questioned" ("Systematic Theology in Japan," Wi Jo Kang and Masaru Mori eds., *Christian Presence in Japan* [Tokyo: Seibunsha, 1981], 150).

⁴²See Takizawa, 123. Keiji Ogawa, who wrote an introduction to Kitamori's theology in German, *Die Aufgabe der neueren evangelischem Theologie in Japan* (Basel: Friedlich Reinhardt, 1965), criticizes elsewhere an attitude of exotic curiosity in theology in Europe and America. From such an attitude "no productive theological dialogue would originate" between the East and the West ("On a Formation of Japanese 'Indigenous Theology' -- in the Case of the Theology of the Pain of God *Gospel and World* 38 [Tokyo, March 1983]: 79).

and discipline so that even if one tries to work with his theology, it is not easy to keep pace with Kitamori's thought.⁴³ Perhaps his declared Lutheranism may have been the main reason for his theological isolation.⁴⁴ Is it because of his attempt to "Lutheranize" the mainstream of Japanese Protestantism that he remained a "loner" in that *Sitz im Leben* throughout his career as a professor and church-leader?

The overall negative appraisal of Kitamori must be considered as a critical reaction to various aspects of his own theology. Perhaps not one or two aspects of his theology alone are responsible for this. The reason for the negative responses is surely of a composite nature. However, it is not the main concern of this study to find answers individually to the questions raised above. The intention of this study is to analyze and assess Kitamori's theology as a whole. But to try to find the answers to the questions is useful for the purpose here: they provide methodological clues.

An approach to the appraisal of Kitamori's theology can be taken from various points of view, but the one congenial with Kitamori's theology would be that of Lutheranism. He has never doubted that his basic orientation in theology is given

⁴³"Some of us who tried to read through this book [*The Theology of the Pain of God*] have been often tempted to stop on the way, because there seemed to have been no development [of thought] in the book. . . . This book gives occasionally an impression of a believer's diary rather than of an academic work of theology" (Hesselink, 98).

⁴⁴Simon Bayens, showing a sympathetic understanding of "the cross" in the Japanese soul, critically remarks that Kitamori's theology as a "pure theology" is not sufficiently related to the actual situation, and comments: "One cannot escape the impression that Luther and Lutheran tradition means more to the author than Japan and its understanding of the Gospel" ("The Japanese and the Cross," *Japan Christian Quarterly* 46 [Summer 1980]: 148).

by Lutheranism. Kitamori is entitled to be understood on the basis of his confessed premises before any criticism. The following questions have the priority. To what degree can Kitamori's theology be considered a Lutheran theology? In what does he stand in the Lutheran tradition, and in what does he not? In other words, to what degree and in what sense is the theology of the Pain of God a Lutheran theology?

Now we state the objective of this study. In this study we investigate: in what sense and to what extent the theology of the Pain of God, as a Lutheran theology, has been an actualization of the Gospel in Japan; what course it took in the theological milieu of Japanese Protestantism during the last decades; and what contributions it actually made to the development of Japanese Protestantism and its theology.

Before we proceed with our investigation, a set of methodological notes is appropriate here. It consists of notes on the sequence of our investigation, doctrinal points of evaluation, the criteria of evaluation, and technicalities.

After this introductory chapter, we shall explore the historical context of Kitamori's theology. We shall elaborate on what we have touched upon in this introduction: we shall give a brief presentation of the line of development of Protestant theology in Japan, and along with it, historical data about modern Japan, from the middle of the nineteenth century on. This sketch is intended historically to "contextualize," in a more focused way, the presentation that will follow it.

Our next step will be a study of the man Kitamori, his *Lebenslauf* and his theological development: his formative years, his most productive theological years,

and his years as professor of theology and as church leader in the post-War history of Japanese Protestantism (within the so-called *Kyodan*⁴⁵). Following this, we shall proceed to an assessment of Kitamori's theology proper. First we give a descriptive presentation of the basic feature of Kitamori's notion of the Pain of God. Then we shall attempt to understand, while interpreting, what Kitamori primarily means by the notion of the Pain of God, and analyze what theological structure the notion of the Pain of God has in Kitamori's thought. We shall do this under the two main themes: "God in Pain" and "Man in the Pain of God."

Once we develop a cohesive picture of the Pain of God in Kitamori's theology, we shall go into the question of his theological methodology. This methodological question is placed after the question of the theological content of the Pain of God. According to Kitamori, it is the Pain of God that provides a methodology of theological endeavor.⁴⁶ We investigate his theological epistemology, his principle of building a system and his understanding of the nature of theology, and his conviction of the mandates placed upon theology.

Next, we place our assessment. We see his theology first in its *Sitz im Leben* in order to recognize the extent of the contribution Kitamori has made to

⁴⁵*Kyodan* is short for *Nihon Kirisuto Kyodan*, that is, the United Church of Christ in Japan. For more about this church body, see 69-70, Chap. 2 and 145-149, Chap. 3.

⁴⁶It is Kitamori's firm position that the content of the Gospel sheds light on the form of theology (methodology). He says: "This content [the Gospel] should determine the formal issues of theology which should serve the Word of God" (*Introduction*, 17).

Japanese Protestant theology. We shall learn first what evaluation Kitamori has of Calvin's, and more particularly, Barth's theology. Then we investigate what have been the causes of the negative appraisal of Kitamori's theology in his own country, and how Kitamori responded to them. It is our intention to compare the specific features of Kitamori's theology and Barth's theology.

After having gained a total understanding of Kitamori's theology of the Pain of God through the steps described above, we shall assess it against the background of Lutheran traditions.

Finally, we sum up the results of our investigations. On the basis of the summary, we shall give our assessment of Kitamori's theology in the context of Japanese Protestantism and try to give our reflections on future prospects of his theology in that context.

The pivotal point of this study is the assessment of Kitamori's theology in the light of Lutheran traditions. This involves two issues. The first is on what doctrinal points we shall assess Kitamori's theology, and the second is what is meant by "Lutheran traditions." With regard to the first issue, we shall identify what concept Kitamori, in his notion of the Pain of God, has: 1) of God (God the creator, *Deus absconditus et revelatus*, the problem of evil); 2) of man (his *status integritatis*, the nature of sin, his *status corruptionis*); and 3) of salvation (the meaning of Christ's death, the understanding of Law and Gospel, the believer's condition of *simul justus et peccator*, the significance of the Holy Spirit in Christian existence, the nature of the eschatological hope).

As regards the second issue: by "Lutheran traditions" we understand the interpretation of the Gospel found in Luther's writings and the Lutheran Confessions, the interpretation of the Gospel which has been confirmed and reconfirmed by later and contemporary Lutheran theologians.

A word is to be added in connection with this procedure. When we undertake an assessment of Kitamori's theology measured by the yardstick of Lutheran traditions, we follow the instruction given concerning the distinction between *norma normans* and *norma normata*. Lutheran traditions are *norma normata*. *Norma normans* is "God in Christ" witnessed in Scripture and made alive to us through *Spiritus Creator*. When we shall assess Kitamori's doctrinal position by Lutheran traditions, we are going to do this with the conviction that Lutheran doctrinal traditions as *norma normata* stand under the authority of *norma normans*. This means we assess Kitamori's theology ultimately in the light of *norma normans*.

Remarks on sources are in order. Concerning the sources in Japanese (both primary and secondary), their titles will be translated and given in English, as we have already done above. The original titles in Japanese characters are found in the Bibliography, where they are given along with the translated English titles. The titles of the secondary sources in European languages will be given in their original.

It is appropriate here to make a brief comment on the theological works of Kitamori to which we shall refer from time to time. His *opus magnum* is *Theology of the Pain of God* (1946), a work great not in terms of its page volume but in its significance. Other important works for our study are those preparatory works to the

opus magnum, namely, *The Lord of the Cross* (1940) and *Theology and Creeds* (1943). Though these works are also relatively modest in page volume, they already represent Kitamori's thought as a full-fledged theological system.⁴⁷ There has been no significant development since the completion of the *opus magnum*.⁴⁸ These works thus constitute the main sources for grasping Kitamori's theology. The works of importance which were published after *opus magnum* are *Character of the Gospel* (1948), *Theology Today* (1950), *On God* (1953), *The Logic of Salvation* (1953), *An Introduction to Theology* (1959), and *The Theology of Reformation* (1960). A special mention is to be made of Kitamori's *Theological Autobiography* in two volumes, volume I (1960) and volume II (1968), covering the period from his childhood reminiscences to the completion of *The Lord of the Cross*. These works are based on Kitamori's "theological diary-notes" which the author edits with his own retrospective comments. These two volumes of his autobiography are the most direct and important

⁴⁷These works are modest in page volume: *The Lord of the Cross*, without the appendix of a few related essays, counts 71 pages of a smaller-than-normal booksize; *Theology and Creeds*, without an exegetical appendix (which was also included in *Theology of the Pain of God*), 84 pages; *The Pain of God*, 259 pages (the English version, 183 pages). This external feature would already suggest an aspect of the character of Kitamori's theology: it is more of intuitive nature than of an objective-theological (*wissenschaftlich*) nature. His later works mainly consist of shorter writings--lecture notes, theological essays, occasional commentaries, and reflections on various political, cultural, religious issues--which are combined into several volumes. An exception is *The Theology of Reformation*, which was presented in 1960 to Kyoto University as a Ph.D. dissertation.

⁴⁸"His subsequent publications [the works after his *opus magnum*]," writes Yoshio Noro, "are the adaptations to the contemporary theological problems of the principles which are expressed in it" ("Impassibilitas Dei" [Th.D. dissertation, Union Theological Seminary, 1955], 31).

sources to learn how Kitamori's inner life and theological thought had developed during his formative years. Through these autobiographical works we can learn, "from the inside" as it were, the steps of the formation of the theology of the Pain of God in its essential core.

For our further references, the titles of the works above will be abbreviated. First, a remark is due with respect to the *Theology of the Pain of God*. The Japanese version we use is the Fifth Revised Edition, 1958, published by Shinkyō Shuppansha, Tokyo. The reason for this is that both the English version and the German version have been prepared on the basis of this edition. Quotations in this study will be from the English version, unless noted otherwise, for the sake of the reader's accessibility to the work. Reference in such cases will be abbreviated as *Pain*. When a quotation from the Japanese original is preferred, we shall use another abbreviation, *Itami* (the Japanese term for "pain"), in order to indicate this preference. In these cases, the page numbers given refer to the Japanese version. However, in order to make it possible to locate the reference in the English version, the corresponding page number of the English version will be provided in brackets: *Itami*, 26 [*Pain*, 24]. When quotations or references are made from the German version, *Schmerz* shall be used. Thus the abbreviations to be used, including the other works, are as follows:

<i>Theology of the Pain of God</i>	<i>Pain</i>
<i>Kami no Itami no Shingaku</i>	<i>Itami</i>
<i>Theologie des Schmerzes Gottes</i>	<i>Schmerz</i>
<i>The Lord of the Cross</i>	<i>Cross</i>

<i>Theology and Creeds</i>	<i>Creeds</i>
<i>Character of the Gospel</i>	<i>Character</i>
<i>Theology Today</i>	<i>Today</i>
<i>On God</i>	<i>God</i>
<i>The Logic of Salvation</i>	<i>Logic</i>
<i>An Introduction to Theology</i>	<i>Introduction</i>
<i>The Theology of Reformation</i>	<i>Reformation</i>
<i>Theological Autobiography I</i>	<i>Auto I</i>
<i>Theological Autobiography II</i>	<i>Auto II</i>

In providing quotations from the sources (both primary and secondary) in Japanese, I shall translate them into English. However, when more adequate translations are available, they will be borrowed from there. Such cases will be noted. Translations are made in such a way as to convey the original meaning and intention, thus becoming semantic translations.⁴⁹ Where it is pertinent to insert original texts to provide a better understanding for those who know Japanese, they are given in square brackets. If crucial terms in the original language are considered necessary for inclusion, they are given, transliterated in square brackets, along with the Japanese characters. As to emphasis given in texts, we note the following. Since Kitamori

⁴⁹It is often difficult to translate adequately even among cognate languages. Japanese is different from English or any other European languages with regard to the thinking scheme which determines the sentence construction. When one translates from Japanese to English, he has to make explicit what are often implicit in the Japanese text. In that case, there emerges considerable room for interpretation. With "semantic translation," however, I try to reproduce the original meaning and intention as objectively as possible.

uses emphasis quite frequently,⁵⁰ it is proper to make it the rule that emphases, in quotations, whether from the primary texts or from the secondary, are original and made by the authors themselves. When I place emphasis, it will be noted with "emphasis added" or a similar phrase.

Japanese names are written in the Western order, the given name first and the surname last, which is a reversal of the original Japanese order. Scriptural quotations are made from the New King James Version unless noted otherwise.

⁵⁰Once Kitamori wrote that his theology is the "side-dots" (*boten*, the Japanese equivalent of underlining) to the theology of the cross. In fact, his writings, especially earlier ones, are filled with side-dots for the purpose of conveying passion and shades of meaning.

CHAPTER 2

THE PROTESTANT CHURCH IN MODERN JAPAN

The Meiji Era

The beginning of Protestant missionary work in Japan was closely related to the nineteenth century international situation. The European powers such as Spain, Holland, Britain, and France, pursued their own interests in the East; India, South-East Asian countries and China were under European imperialism. Japan, though having enjoyed a *Pax Tokugawa*¹ for more than two and a half centuries by total self-seclusion,² was no longer allowed a comfortable dream of peace.

It was the American squadron under Commodore Matthew C. Perry,

¹The period was so called because from the beginning of the seventeenth century to the middle of the nineteenth century there was virtually no major war in Japan which could have caused serious political destabilization. Under the skillful and firm control of the Tokugawa shogunate the country enjoyed "peace."

²This total seclusion was directly occasioned by the Tokugawa shogunate's fear of strong Christian influence, which seemed to have dangerous destabilizing effects upon peasantry. Such were experienced in the Shimabara Rebellion, 1638, during which 37,000 Christian peasants could withstand the assembled army of the shogunate power for three months. Though the government was interested in trade with Spaniards and Portuguese, they preferred the country's security and stability to commercial profits. The government then issued a total seclusion act, the so-called *Sakoku-rei* in 1636, according to which henceforth no Japanese was allowed to go abroad nor any Japanese abroad was permitted to return to Japan. For more detail see: E. O. Reischauer, *Japan the Story of a Nation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970), 91-95.

anchoring off Uruga Bay in Edo (Tokyo) in 1853, that forced Japan "at the gunpoint"³ to open her ports to foreign vessels. This event also signaled the long-awaited beginning of Protestant missionary work in Japan.⁴ Prior to this event, however, Japan had already been one of the lands for Protestant missionary interest in the nineteenth century, and preparation for the work was underway.⁵

The opening of the country was followed by a political revolution, the so-called Meiji Restoration of 1868, by which the Tokugawa shogunate was abolished by the pro-emperor forces, and Emperor Mutsuhito was restored to the throne. This period, beginning with his restoration of power and concluding with his death in 1912, is called the Meiji Era.

Suddenly unleashed into a modern world with its overwhelming civilization, the nation was at a loss and the traditional value-system, which formed the backbone of Japanese life, seemed obsolete and destined to collapse all at once.⁶ Therefore,

³Hugh Borton, *Japan's Modern Century* (New York: The Roland Press Company, 1955), 29-37; Richard H. Drummond, *A History of Christianity in Japan* (Grand Rapids: Wm. E. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1971), 141-143.

⁴*Ibid.*, Drummond, 145.

⁵"What was then [in the first half of the nineteenth century] known as the hermit nation of Japan became the object of 'prayers, contributions and efforts' of a growing number of Christians, especially in England and America" (*ibid.*, 139).

⁶Since the establishment of the Tokugawa Government in the very beginning of the seventeenth century, Confucianism, or specifically the Chu Hsi school, had been the strongest force within the Japanese value-system. It maintained the socio-political order of the country. But in the face of the Western ideas of man and society, it suddenly seemed obsolete. "The emperor is man; people is also man. There is no difference between the emperor and people. What nonsense it is that man made a heaven-and-earth distance between the emperor and people, assigning the right only to the former! How unfortunate it must be that one was born in such a rude and

"Civilization and Enlightenment"⁷ became the slogan for this new era. The new Meiji government desired to modernize its feudal, backward nation through the help of Western civilization and technology. Behind this desire, however, there was a fear that the nation might become merely another Western colony.⁸ The Meiji government was therefore eager to absorb Western culture as much and as quickly as possible in order to bring Japan into the realm of advanced nations. Accordingly, the government policy began "enriching the nation and strengthening the military."⁹

The first decade of the Meiji Era was highly fluid. The oligarchs of the Meiji government took drastic measures, introducing heavy industries, conscription

despicable [野卑陋劣] nation!" wrote Hiroyuki Kato, a Meiji intellectual (cited in Yasushi Kuyama, ed., *Modern Japan and Christianity: The Meiji Era*, [Tokyo: Sobunsha, 1968], 36).

⁷ 文明開化 . How open-minded the Meiji leaders were in the beginning toward Western civilization and how universally oriented in their thinking, we observe in the Imperial Oath proclaimed in April 1868; it aspires a parliamentary polity ("An assembly widely convoked" for "public discussion" of national issues), "the welfare of the whole nation," diligence for the building of the nation, emphasis on abolition of "absurd usages" and on "justice and righteousness," and that "knowledge shall be sought for all over the world." For the English text of this Oath, see Borton, 72.

⁸According to E. H. Norman, there was at that time no imminent danger for Japan to be colonized by European powers, because China at that time largely satisfied the colonialistic greed of European powers. Besides, in contrast to China, Japan was not a lucrative object as a market for the products of European manufacturing or as a supplier of raw materials; in addition, it was hard to conquer by force, here referred from Kuyama, *Meiji*, 25.

⁹ 富国強国 .

systems, and a super-modern school system like those of France and America.¹⁰

Protestant Christianity entered Japan in the midst of this turbulent scene. As a result, it was bound to play both cultural and political roles, equal to the needs of the time.

Much of Western civilization came with Protestant Christianity.¹¹

The first converts (mainly from disfavored samurai groups) learned about the new faith from American missionaries and later came to accept it.¹² To them the

¹⁰Those and other modernization measures taken by the Meiji government were said to be "almost utopian to Japan at that time," says Masamichi Inoki, one of the leading historians of modern Japan (Kuyama, *Meiji*, 33).

¹¹Keiu Nakamura (1832-1891) was a representative thinker of the Meiji enlightenment. He saw that the reason for the advancedness of the Western nations was Christianity, and therefore emphasized that when one absorbed the Western civilization he should not forget the spirit of Christianity; see Genshichi Aizawa, "Nakamura Keiu and the Reformation," *Luther Studies*, vol. II, ed. Yoshikazu Tokuzen (Tokyo: Seibunsha, 1986), 249. Of Nakamura, another historian, Masaaki Koosaka, speaks: "He seems to have received Christianity as a 'Träger' of the European culture" (Kuyama, *Meiji*, 83). We can safely say that many of the first Christian converts had more or less the same understanding.

¹²A detailed presentation of the very first period of Protestant missionary activity until 1873 is given by G. F. Verbeck (one of the pioneer missionaries and an advisor of the Meiji government), "History of Protestant Mission in Japan," reprinted in *Japan Christian Quarterly* 26 (1960): 47-67. Here we only briefly mention the so-called three Bands as the origins of Japanese Protestantism. These Bands are so named according to the places of their origins, Yokohama Band, Kumamoto Band and Sapporo Band. S. R. Brown (1810-1880) and J. H. Ballagh, (1832-1920) missionaries from the Reformed Church in America, were directly instrumental in the formation of Yokohama Band, whose most prominent representative was Masahisa Uemura. Kumamoto Band was formed by the inspiration of Captain L. L. Janes (1838-1909), a graduate of West Point, who established a Western school in Kumamoto on the request of the former feudal lord there; Danjo Ebina (1856-1937) and Hiromichi Kozaki (1856-1938), were most well-known figures from this Band; Sapporo Band came into being under the influence of W. S. Clark (1826-1886), president of the Massachusetts Agricultural College, who came to Japan on the request of the Japanese government to establish a higher school of agriculture in the northern island of Hokkaido; Kanzo Uchimura (1861-1930) and Inazo Nitobe (1862-1933) were the most productive Christian leaders from this Band. It should be noted that Sapporo Band

Protestant faith was the embodiment of truth and ethics in one, which would meet their needs within a new life situation. Fervently patriotic as they were, they thought that, with the ideas and values of the faith, they had found a way of life which broadened and deepened the meaning of their existence while maintaining their patriotic ardor.¹³ Christianity was to them a better, more civilized way of life than religion, religion in the sense that it touches deeply contradictory dimensions of human existence.

It is significant to note that the notion of "one" God, who is a loving heavenly Father of all human beings and the Lord of all the universe, possessed an explosive power; this monotheistic notion alone had exerted a revolutionary effect upon their thinking and life. A simple reading of the Bible even within their "indigenous" spiritual and cultural background, was powerful enough to cause an inner revolution in them.¹⁴ Their budding "theological" conviction in the new faith was sturdy and "elementary." At that time, there was an eager and enthusiastic absorption

and Kumamoto Band came into existence by lay Christians; W. S. Clark and L. L. Janes were not missionaries.

¹³"To many of the first believers, it is more urgent to civilize their nation than to love God and believe in Christ, because they thought that without Christianity Japan could not be civilized; this is the basic characteristic of the first believers of Meiji" (Kuyama, *Meiji*, 57).

¹⁴To take one example: Jo Niijima (1843-1890), the founder of Doshisa University in Kyoto, was one of a few who came across "the name of the Creator of heaven and earth" during his Dutch study. Later he was greatly moved in his heart when he read the story of the creation of Genesis in the Chinese Bible. Learning elsewhere in the Bible that God was the heavenly Father, he felt that "my reverence [toward this Creator] was made deeper." Unable to suppress his "burning desire" to learn more about the Gospel, he dared to venture a foreign voyage, a gravely illegal attempt, to a country where the Gospel is freely propagated," *ibid.*, 81-82.

of the Gospel. Yet an awareness of the tension between the new belief and the old stratum of their conscience was soon to come.

An initial enthusiasm about Christianity spread widely among the leading intellectuals. One of them even advocated that it be adopted as a state religion with the emperor himself proceeding to baptism.¹⁵ In the highly mobile conditions at this initial stage, the Christian ideas of God, of man and of society appeared to be revolutionary and were instrumental in bringing forth a powerful movement of "democratization" of society from below.¹⁶

In the meantime, the oligarchic leaders of the government came to realize, through numerous uprisings, that the nation had to be reorganized politically and ideologically. For that purpose they saw it necessary to provide the nation with a new spiritual backbone. The national reorganization began to take form when Hirobumi Ito, later to become the first prime minister, came home from Europe in 1884, where he had studied about the parliamentary system and constitutional law. The

¹⁵It was the aforementioned Keiu Nakamura who wrote this in English in the disguise of a Westerner. He wrote: "If Your Majesty at least desires to establish Christianity in Nip[p]on he should first of all be baptized himself, and become the Chief of the Church, and be called the leader of the millions of his people" (quoted in Aizawa, 252). It aroused a vehement reaction, and Nakamura later withdrew this sentence.

¹⁶There started a movement for democratization in 1874, only several years after the Restoration, called the "Liberty and People's Rights Movement." Inspiration to this movement may not have been from Christianity directly, and yet the ideas of people's rights and equality were imported from Britain and the United States, partly also from France (Rousseau's *Contrat Social* available in translation by 1877!). But it was very natural for this democratization movement and Christianity to go together from the beginning. The Christians provided this movement with the value foundation that "before God all are equal." See further Borton, 93-95; Kuyama, *Meiji*, 101.

government learned, through Ito, the pivotal function of Christianity in the Western countries and recognized the significance of religion for the building of the nation. The governmental leaders then looked for a candidate for an equivalent function in Japan. Traditional religions, Buddhism or Shintoism, were not actual candidates; to the leaders they did not seem to possess any capacity for disciplining the people. Nor was Christianity a suitable religion as the nation's new spiritual pivot, for with its emphasis on individuals' worth and right, and its egalitarian ideas, which were truly revolutionary to the people used to living in authoritarian feudalism, Christianity seemed more likely to engender centrifugal rather than centripetal effects, quite detrimental to their policy of rapid nation building. The new government thought it more urgent to strengthen the nation economically and militarily by rallying the unquestioning and undemanding populace, even at the cost of their maximal sacrifice. In reality, the government eventually fell back on the feudal Confucian ethics, which were readily available and most feasible for the national needs. The old feudal society was now to be reorganized into a new form with the emperor as the pinnacle and pivot of a pyramidal national polity.¹⁷

Monumental to this "reactionary" polity by the government was the issuance of the Meiji Constitution of 1889 and the Imperial Rescript on Education of 1890. The Constitution gave an appearance of modernity and enlightenment because its formal framework was a constitutional government. But its substance was kept pre-

¹⁷On Ito's principle for drafting the constitution, see Borton, 138. Further, Kuyama, *Meiji*, 179-180.

modern by the measure that the emperor was made the absolute sovereign by the Constitution.¹⁸ The substance of the Constitution was a form of absolutism. Of critical importance for our interest is Article XXVIII on religious freedom; religious freedom was granted to "Japanese subjects" "within limits not prejudicial to peace and order, and not antagonistic to their duty as subjects." Religious freedom was thus given, but at the same time its substance was virtually taken back by the crucial clause of "within limits. . . ."

The Imperial Rescript of Education, another monument of the Meiji government, remained as the main framework of the nation's education until the end of World War II. The Rescript was Confucian in substance, proscribing, for example, that "should emergency arise, offer yourselves courageously to the State; and thus guard and maintain the prosperity of Our Imperial Throne coeval with heaven and earth."¹⁹ It is easy to discern that what the government intended to do with the

¹⁸"[In drafting the constitution] I have paid special attention to the provision that the rights of the emperor were emphasized and the limitations of it were held as little as possible," wrote Ito in his "Principle of Draft" [*Kian no Taiko*, 起案ノ大綱]. The text in Japanese is as follows:

「我国ニ在テ機軸トスベキハ独リ皇室アルノミ。是ヲ以テ此憲法草案ニ在テハ専ラ意ヲ此点ニ用イ、君憲ヲ尊重シテ成ルベク之ヲ束縛セザラン事ヲ勉メタリ。 . . . 君主国ニオケル主権ハ、ジ実ニ君主ノ一身ニ附着スルモノナリ。」

Quoted, *ibid.*, Kuyama, *Meiji*, 180.

¹⁹See Borton, 175-177, under the section "Education to Serve the State." According to Kiyoko Takeda, professor at International Christian University in Tokyo, the purpose of the educational system of the Meiji government was to mold a national character which was useful to the building up of the absolutist state embodied in the person of the emperor. The goal of education was therefore not the fundamental formation of individual character in the citizen as a human being (Kuyama, *Meiji*, 182).

Constitution and The Rescript was to give the nation an external appearance of modernity and enlightenment on the one hand but to fill that modern political apparatus with feudal ethical codes based on Confucianism.²⁰

From the above it is possible to observe the government's attitude toward Christianity, which had been strictly banned as an evil religion before the Restoration.²¹ The government was not openly hostile to it, because Japan could not dare to keep the Western religion under ban for fear that she might be considered an uncivilized nation. But Christianity was potentially dangerous to governmental policy. To meet these two aspects of the situation, the oligarchs legalized the faith but at once subordinated it to the national goal. The provisional clause of "within limits. . ." was apparently aimed at Christianity. The governmental policy throughout the Meiji Era and until the end of World War II dealt cautiously with Christianity. It was not outright persecution, as was the case with socialist movements, but was rather a policy of domestication with "carrot and stick."

²⁰Reproducing Ito's principle in drafting the constitution (ibid.), Borton seems to be mistaken when he writes that "in Japan neither *Confucianism* nor Shintoism had sufficient power to control the people" (italic is added). We read the text in Kuyama, *Meiji*, 180: 「仏教ハ一度隆盛ノ勢ヲ張り. . . タルモ今日ニ至リテハ己ニ衰替ニ傾キタリ。神道ハ祖宗ノ遺訓ニ基キ之ヲ祖述スルト雖モ宗教トシテ人心ヲ帰向セシムルノ力ニ乏シ。」

It is not Confucianism Ito discarded as the leverage of the people's control; discarded was Buddhism. In fact Confucianism was to play a crucial role, as we see below.

²¹In 1873, the government withdrew the edict against Christianity from the public sign-boards throughout the country. The official "reason" given for the removal was that the issue of the edict "was already sufficiently imprinted on the people's minds." Formally, however, Christianity remained illegal until the promulgation of the Constitution. See Verbeck, 65-66.

The rigorous measures taken by the government for modernization were all motivated by its burning patriotism and national pride. The modernization was urgent for obtaining Western acknowledgement of the nation as a full-fledged modern state. This urgency had practical aspects. Without Western acknowledgement of Japan as a modern state, she could not hope to secure her own tariff-autonomy or to abolish humiliating extraterritoriality and various unequal treaties.

The Meiji Christians did not fall short of these political leaders with respect to patriotism and national pride. To many of them it was a matter of course to render their utmost to the nation.²² In their minds, during these first decades, there were no problems between "state and church." These two entities made an unquestioned unity. They grasped their life and existence in the light of salvation received by faith, but thus to grasp their new life was virtually identical with recognizing their existence in service for the nation.

Whereas national modernization was the unanimous goal for government leaders and patriotic Christians, they were deeply at variance with each other with regard to the goal and program for carrying it out. The oligarchs primarily aimed at modernizing *the nation* in terms of the consolidation of governmental power, the strengthening of national economy and the building up of military force. In order to achieve this goal, they opted for the measure of "freezing" again the mentality of the

²²"I am a subject of the true God," wrote Niijima, "and also of Japan, my country. To serve the true God and Japan with utmost devotion is my urgent duty" (cited in Kuyama, *Meiji*, 56). A typical expression of this union of faith and patriotism can be seen also in Uchimura's epitaph on his tomb: "I for Japan, Japan for the World, the World for Christ, and All for God."

general populace at the pre-modern feudal stage.²³ The entire mechanism of education and influence was mobilized to mold docile "subjects" willing to sacrifice themselves for the state. We should say that Japan in this formula was externally modern but internally pre-modern.

Christians thought that the "New Japan" should be built upon the ideals of Christianity.²⁴ The message of salvation through Christ for every human being did not fail to entail a new view of man and his worth. The Gospel was capable of renewing man from the inside. They thought that the New Japan should be born from below, from the renovation of human beings themselves through new awareness of God-given dignity and their calling toward universal ideals and virtue. Naturally, this revolution of the view of man had already effected sociological and political

²³The Imperial Rescript on Education was a crystalization of this "freezing" measure. Of this, Borton observes: "It was a triumph for Emperor Meiji's Confucian teacher, Eifu Motoda, who was convinced that Western ethical teachings were not suitable for Japan. . . . In terms of modern methods of propaganda, it was a powerful weapon of thought control" (178). Kijoko Takeda also notes that "the type of mentality, qualitatively similar to that mentality from feudal times was re-mobilized and made the basis for the absolutist nation. . ." (Kuyama, *Meiji*, 186).

²⁴One of the representative Christian thinkers was Hiromichi Kozaki. In his *New Theory of State and Religion*, he criticized Confucianism: "The most unacceptable aspect of Confucianism is its artificial imposition upon society of the distinctions between noble and common, superior and inferior; it despises the commoner as ignorant and crude, and bestows the absolute rights on the noble who are as erroneous as the other, assigning the noble alone the obligations of government, and of education of the common religion, culture and other things." Confucianism had been useful under the feudal system, but it was obsolete now. Presently it was "urgent to transform the minds of the people by Christianity" (quoted *ibid.*, 107). On this view of Kozaki and some others along this line of thought, see Yoshitaka Kumano, *A History of Theological Thoughts in Japanese Christianity* (Tokyo: Shinkyō Shuppansha, 1968), 181-215.

ramifications. In fact, social reform movements with political potentialities during the initial decades were essentially Christian-inspired.²⁵

Against this background, confrontation was inevitable between the government policy and the hope of the Christian-inspired "idealists." The government was therefore apprehensive of the potential dangers of Christian influences. The above-cited Article XXVIII of the Meiji Constitution, more than anything else, represented this inevitable confrontation. The Christians were rejoicing over the promulgation of the Constitution, because the article of religious freedom formally legalized the Christian faith for the first time in Japan. But, at the same time, this very article put them under the yoke of the inviolable emperor and the state.²⁶ The *lèsé-majesté* incident of Kanzo Uchimura in connection with the issuance of the Rescript on Education bore an ominous sign.²⁷ The prohibition of religious

²⁵A close relationship between Christianity and the aforementioned *Jiyu-Mineken* movement is referred to in Kumano, 177-78. Many prominent members of this movement were devout Christians. See also C. H. Germany, *Protestant Theologies in Modern Japan* (Tokyo: IISR Press, 1965), 14.

²⁶Mikio Sumiya, former professor in economics at Tokyo University, observes that it was from around the time of legalization of religious freedom by the Constitution that Christianity began to lose its vigor; one of the reasons for this is said to be a strong external pressure caused by conservative reactions of society at large (Kuyama, *Meiji*, 205-206).

²⁷Early in 1891, the Middle High School in Tokyo, where Uchimura was a teacher, held a ceremony for the reception of the Rescript. At the ceremony everyone was required to bow to the copy of it. On his turn Uchimura, following his conscience, declined to comply with the requirement. At this sight the faculty and students reacted vehemently against him, accusing him of grave *lèsé majesté*. Known to the public, this incident occasioned the camps of nationalists to contend that his behavior was a sure proof of the incompatibility of Christianity with Japan's national polity. For more detail, see: Akio Hashimoto, "Jesus and Japan' in the Thought of Kanzo Uchimura" (S.T.M. thesis, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1983), 40-41.

(Christian!) education at all the government-recognized private (mission!) schools (1899) was still another example of the government's growing apprehension about Christianity.²⁸

As a result of the progress of national reorganization, Japan became a peculiar mixture of pre-modern feudalistic elements forced into a super-modern external apparatus. Thus, the first two decades after the opening of the country moved in conservative directions. The situation for Christianity changed unfavorably. Christianity was after all contrary to the sacrosanct Japanese national polity. This emerging antagonism to Christianity was the general sentiment in Japan around the turn of the century.²⁹

As long as Christianity was generally in vogue, there was no need to defend it. But, with the counter-swing of the pendulum, Christians now had to defend their

²⁸According to Kozaki, the decree of the Education Ministry ("There shall be no religious rituals or teachings in schools which perform the education of the citizen") damaged mission schools to a large extent, see Kuyama, *Meiji*, 192.

²⁹The anti-Christian waves spread to the whole nation since the *lèsé -majesté* incident of Uchimura. Most instrumental for the spread of anti-Christian sentiment was Tetsujiro Inoue, philosophy professor at Tokyo Imperial University, who published (1891?) a pamphlet against Christianity titled "Collision between Education and Religion." He contended that "Christianity was contrary to the concept of national polity, that monotheism and undivided loyalty to God were subversive to the principles of obedience, loyalty, and nationalism as expounded in the Rescript," quoted from Borton, 184. Against this "accusation" of Inoue, Uchimura for one argued back that Christians were not particularly behind Buddhists, Confucianists, Shintoists or atheists in observing the virtues contained in the Rescript. However, Inoue saw aright, at least partially, that there is an undeniable tension between the absolutist claim of the national polity and the monotheistic ultimacy of obedience to God. As a matter of fact, it was this tension that came to the surface in the form of the question: Emperor or Christ? placed before Christians by the thought control police during World War II.

faith and legitimize their very existence as Christians in a new Japanese climate. Theological reflections began to emerge in a rudimentary form. In view of the dominant values, a new integrative approach became necessary to the Gospel. The leading Christian thinkers tried to more explicitly formulate a continuity between Christianity and Japanese religious-cultural heritage. Ebina affirmed Shinto and advocated a Shinto-Christianity;³⁰ Uchimura conceived the relationship between Christ and Buddha as the relationship between sun and moon;³¹ Uemura had an idea of the baptized Bushido as an excellent form of Christianity.³²

It is, however, essential to note that this urge toward integration was not conditioned by external forces only; it was rather caused by the internal dynamics of the Christians' faith. Sooner or later this urge should emerge. In the depth of their minds, the drive behind their theological reflections there was a strong existential

³⁰There were two Shinto theologians, Norinaga Motoori and Atsutane Hirata, who identified in Shinto an unique Japanese element that was absent from Confucianism and Buddhism, which were both of "foreign" origin. Hiera is said to have also studied part of Christian theology. Ebina maintained that these two Shinto theologians were like "the great prophet of Israel to us." "It is more appropriate to judge that Christianity perfectly fulfills the Way of Revering God [敬神の道] of Japan from olden day," argued Ebina, "than to think that Christianity should be grafted on it" (quoted in Kumano, 152).

³¹In a "poem" written in 1926, Uchimura presents his view of Buddha and Christ: "Buddha is the Moon; Christ the Sun. . . . I love the moon and I love the night; but as the night is far spent and the day is at hand, I now love the Sun more than I love the Moon; and I know that the love of the Moon is included in the love of the Sun, and that he who loves the Sun loves the Moon also" (*The Complete Works of Kanzo Uchimura*, vol. 4 [Tokyo: Kobunkwan, 1972], 29-30).

³² 洗礼を授けられた武士道

drive which sought for the integration of the new faith and the old spiritual soil.³³

The Protestant Church from around the turn of the century became more and more introverted. To be sure, concerns for external political, social and international issues never disappeared from the minds of Christian leaders, but in general the circumstantial precariousness of the Church prompted them to defend and consolidate the very basis of the Church's existence. They were no longer able to expend half of their energy upon external issues. And in addition to this, political and social relations of Christians became more and more difficult due to the complexity of the modern state and its political and social implications.³⁴ In the long run, it was more important to work for the laying of solid foundations for Christianity and the Church. Examples for this line of thought can be found in Uemura's "Line of the Church"³⁵

³³When the first Christians--such as Ebina, Uchimura, Uemura and Kozaki--thought of the Christian gospel in terms of continuity with Japanese cultural and spiritual heritage (Confucianism, Bushido, Buddhism, or Shintoism), it was a genuinely truth-searching desire that motivated their "theological" reflections. This continuity consciousness had been latent in their minds. "When discussing evangelism in Japan years before, I spoke of the relationship between Christianity and *Bushido*," wrote Uemura. He maintained that *Bushido* could be preserved and improved best by Christianity--"I have been deeply convinced of this ever since," he wrote (*Sermons of Masahisa Uemura*, ed. Tsuneaki Kato [Tokyo: Shinkyo Shuppansha, 1972], 31).

³⁴An example of this difficulty were the views of war among the church leaders, the views which came to surface in connection with the Russo-Japanese War of 1904. Uchimura declared publicly against war's justification, while Uemura, Ebina and Kozaki defended the war. The division was there not only among the leaders, but also among individual pastors and believers. See Kuyama, *Meiji*, 265-278.

³⁵The term, "Line of the Church," is *Kyokai Rosen* in Japanese [教会路線]. and it signifies the central emphasis in the formation and building up of the Church as the visible body. Uemura's "Line" was founded upon his theological understanding of the nature of the Church as the visible body of Christ. "Christ did not preach the Way in the world in an abstract manner. Rather contrary, He gathered a group of sincere people around Himself, trained and educated them for a special organization,

and Uchimura's concentration on "the Bible Study."³⁶

Once successful in bracing the nation with feudal ethics, the Meiji government had only to mobilize the whole national mechanism toward the goal of "Enrich Country, Strengthen Military." And once mobilized, the nation should only run the course to the end according to its own law. The blind force which swayed the nation was a historical burden overwhelming the young Church. Once optimistic, Christians came to recognize that cultural and spiritual traditions could not be replaced overnight in this historical world. It was then natural for the Church, once it was made sober about reality, to look into deeper dimensions of human reality under history.

Toward the end of the Meiji Era, the government could boast of considerable achievements even though there were numerous uprisings and political tumults. Japan had secured the tariff-autonomy and gotten the extra-territoriality

this organization into a society confessing His holy name, and let it represent the heavenly kingdom in the midst of this evil world" (quoted in Kumanop, 239). Uemura was the man who set the foundation of the mainstream Protestant Church in Japan.

³⁶Aizan Yamaji (1864-1917), a prominent Christian historian and journalist of Meiji era, sympathetically "complained" when he spoke of Uchimura's withdrawal from mundane associations, devoting himself instead to a small group of people, the readers of his monthly publication, *Bible Study*, as the following excerpt testifies: "We cannot but judge it as a genius' propensity until he (Mr. Uchimura) will come out of his hermitage and throw himself into this mundane world and wage a greater war of spirit in this world," (quoted in Kuyama, *Meiji*, 332). But Uchimura's intention with *Bible Study* was rather a long-range strategy; to build a Christian Japan by the rich supply of Biblical truth, and this vision of Uchimura is still alive in the Mukyokai circle.

treaty abolished (1894).³⁷ She had "won" two wars, with China (1895) and Russia (1905) respectively. Measures against social and political elements that potentially threatened national polity and public security had been effectively taken. The educational system had been completed and religious movements were all under government control. By this time, the modernization of Japan had been roughly achieved, as far as the initial intention of the Meiji government was concerned.

As a result, while a majority of the populace lived in the pre-modern mentality, a minority of intellectuals, who had been recruited from the upper and middle classes, were left to themselves with a tormenting contradiction between knowing new ideals and not being able to set them into practice. They had already been awakened to an independent, modern consciousness of their own autonomy and a set of new moral and political ideals. But there was very little or no room any more for them to live out their new aspirations and ideals. The minority group to which most Christians belonged thus suffered a desolate feeling of rootless isolation in Japanese society.³⁸

The Church, turned in upon its own affairs, as we have seen in the above, became a spiritual haven for the rootless modern individual. The fact that the Protestant Church in Japan has its sociological basis mainly in the middle class has its

³⁷For the significance of Japan's victory in the war with China, see *ibid.* 206-208. The Chinese hegemony over Korea having been eliminated, Japan came to assume that hegemony which eventually led to the annexation of Korea in 1910.

³⁸On this suffering of minority urban intellectual and "enlightened" population, see Kuyama, *Meiji*, 229-242.

historical origin here. An inexorable dualism as it were, resulting from this, was a basic feature of the situation toward the end of the Meiji Era. It was a dualism which consisted of the tacit acceptance of the reality of the state running its course on a "Machiavellian" principle on the one hand, and the search for the meaning of existence in the inner, transcendent spheres on the other.

The nation was now settled; the initial vogue of Christianity was gone. As historical forces dictated, the Church became more and more introverted into its own "religious" affairs. The meaning of this introversion of the Church at the end of the Meiji Era one can discuss and judge as a deterioration.³⁹ Historically speaking, however, this introversion must be considered necessary: Separated from the initial "booster," the Church was now placed in the position of following its course in Japan on its own terms. The Gospel is the good tidings to human beings in whatever existential contradiction and circumstances; as the problems of human existence cannot be reduced to "external" solutions merely, the Gospel transcends historical particularities. But, at the same time, it includes the external particularities within its salvific power. The Gospel therefore requires of the saved to determine the forms of witness and love. Salvation and love constitute an inseparable unity. Under historical

³⁹There have been critical voices against this introversion, that the Church became more and more out of touch with Japanese society and the general population (see Kuyama, *Meiji*, 248). A present critic of Uemura, the alleged originator of the introversion, says that although this Meiji church leader endeavored for the purity of the Gospel, his and his followers' effort resulted in the loss of the Gospel's influence in history and society; "Was this [effort of theirs for the purity of the Gospel] not a spiritualization of the Church into an abstract entity?" says this critic (Mitsuo Hori, *The Japanese Church and Confession of Faith* [Tokyo; Shinkyō Shuppansha, 1970], 40).

limitations, however, it is not an easy task for any Christian thinker to do justice to both at one and the same time. In this sense, the initial experience of Japanese Protestantism in the Meiji Era reflects the picture of *ecclesia militans* under the burden of history. By the introversion, Japanese Protestantism sought to consolidate the Church as Church in Japan upon the "evangelical" understanding of the Gospel.⁴⁰

Perhaps it was providential that the task of this consolidation of the Church fell upon Uemura. In an earlier stage of his career as the Church leader, as early as 1890, he recognized that the priority of Japanese Protestantism was the establishment of a solid evangelical Church on the basis of the "orthodox" (Reformed) understanding of the Gospel.⁴¹ And Uemura was a man who knew the deep tragedy of human existence, the tragic dimension under the surface of human life.⁴² Though an able

⁴⁰It is generally acknowledged that the Meiji Christians understood Christianity mainly in terms of its socio-ethical "benefits." Naturally, it was not due to individual awareness of sin that many of the converts came over to Christianity from Confucianism. For the evangelical understanding of the Gospel to take place, they first had to become aware of themselves standing before a holy God. Of this says Sumiya: "They [the Meiji Christians] did not appropriate the Christian faith in their own personhood [人格性]. Generally, they considered it only as a socio-political resource, as something filling their emotional needs or as a means of ethical training," (Kuyama, *Meiji*, 88).

⁴¹On Uemura's deep affinity with Calvinism, see Kumano, 222-226. On this affinity, he says among other things: "We hold high the fact that Calvinism is earnestly soteriological. Its theology clearly recognizes sins and it is painfully sensitive (感覚が沈痛) to sins. Ethical Christianity currently predominant, this emphasis of Calvin's theology should be the best remedy for enervating a slacken Church" (ibid., 225). But his Calvinism was mild and not rigoristic. As to the first missionaries' efforts to introduce a Calvinistic orthodoxy, see Germany, 3.

⁴²"You know," said Uemura once to his friend, "the *Story of Heike Clan* or the *Story of Genji and Heike* are certainly heroic stories, but their literary excellence lies in the tragedy (悲哀) under the surface. Tragedy, it is true, is the fact of life. Since this world of ours is cursed by human sins, we unconsciously recognize

social and political critic, Uemura devoted his energy wholly to the building up of the Church. The well-known Christological debates between the "liberal" Ebina and the "orthodox" Uemura⁴³ only strengthened Uemura's awareness of the urgency to establish an evangelical Christianity for Japan. For that purpose, he established in 1904 the first independent seminary in Japan, called Tokyo Shingaku-sha.⁴⁴

An event which symbolized the general mood in the minds of the intellectuals including the Christians was perhaps the so-called *Taigyaku-Jiken*, or the High Treason Plots, of 1910. It was an incident in which two dozen socialists were

our sorrows when we read these stories. It is why literature captures us," (quoted in Kuyama, *Meiji*, 109).

⁴³This Christological controversy between Ebina and Uemura, 1901-1902, the first theological debate within Japanese Protestantism, is significant in many ways. It indicates the first Church leaders' independence in theological thinking. As for Ebina, he was under the influence of "a new theology" (that of the Tuebingen School brought into Japan by Allgemeiner Evangelisch-Protestantischer Missionsverein in 1885). But the influence was not formative to his theology, giving only a momentum toward a development of his own theology. One also observes how their indigenous heritages play different roles in their respective theological reflection. One can also trace the line of theological controversies in the history of Japanese Protestantism from this "proto-typical" controversy. Yet in historical retrospect, it is Uemura's orthodoxy that has been far more *geschichtsmachend*. However much Uemura's *Kyokai Rosen* is criticized, it has always been within the framework of, and under the presupposition of the existence of the "orthodox" Church as the organized body, that theological controversies ever since have been carried on in Japan. Also to be noted is that Ebina as a thinker tended toward "liberalism" even prior to European influence, due to his own mystical inclination and unquestioning affirmation of the "good" in the indigenous spiritual heritage. See a concise summary of Ebina's theological position in: Germany, 18-27. As to the controversy, see: Yoshiro Ishida, "The Uemura-Ebina Controversy of 1901-1902," *Japan Christian Quarterly* 39 (Spring 1973): 63-69. In this article, Ishida sees a dialectical complementarity of Uemura's tradition-bound "orthodoxy" and Ebina's experience-based "liberalism" for dynamic appropriation of the Gospel for indigenization.

⁴⁴This seminary is the direct predecessor of the present Tokyo Union Theological Seminary (TUTS).

apprehended by the security force for plotting to assassinate the emperor with explosives, and half of them were doomed to death in a secret court and executed immediately.⁴⁵ With this ruthless measure taken by the authorities, all the socialist movements were temporarily brought to an end. Socialist movements at that time were to a large extent coterminous with a modernization from below. And many of the socialists were in fact Christians or ex-Christians.⁴⁶ The socialist movement was a forum, the only hope remaining for the "New Japan." In fact, the severe measure of execution was perceived by many as the extinguishing of all prospects for Japan to become a new nation worthy to live in.⁴⁷ It is deeply symbolic that Uemura dared to hold a funeral service for one of the executed dozen under the threatening vigilance of police forces.⁴⁸

Throughout the Meiji Era, Protestantism had been in close interaction with the state. In the beginning phase, it radically challenged old Japanese values and ways of living; it seemed to be on the verge of replacing the traditional culture of Japan.

⁴⁵This incident was allegedly led by an anarchist, Shusui Kotoku, but it is now generally agreed that they were innocent, not actually plotting an assassination attempt, even though some of Kotoku's associates intimated such a plot. See Drummond, 211-212.

⁴⁶Kuyama, *Meiji*, 249-258.

⁴⁷Takuboku Ishikawa, a contemporary poet, for instance, wrote regarding the hopelessness of the situation in his diary on the day of the execution of the convicted: "No hope any more for Japan!" [日本はダメだ] (quoted in Kuyama, *Meiji*, 336).

⁴⁸"One of these [executed] was Seinosuke Oishi, who was a Christian and whose relatives requested Uemura to conduct a memorial service on his behalf. Uemura agreed and assumed full public responsibility in the midst of an atmosphere of public shock and antipathy that could well have led to his own assassination," (Drummond, 212).

But the indigenous cultural heritage proved to be far more tenacious than initially thought. Reaction was no less vehement against modern ideas of man and society, a large portion of which Protestantism had introduced. As that peculiar form of modernization advanced under strong government leadership, traditional values began to devour the Christians. The Church became more and more conformed to redressed Japanese values. Instead of becoming the leading life-philosophy of the nation, Christianity was reduced to a tiny minority religion. This Meiji experience of Japanese Protestantism represents a continuing pattern ever since. The basic pattern for interaction between Protestantism and the state seems to have been established during the Meiji Era in the history of modern Japan.

The Taisho and Early Showa Era

By the "victories" of the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese wars, Japan, a country insignificant and fearful of Western colonization only a half century ago, emerged onto the international scene as one of the world powers and began to compete with Western powers for interests in the East-Asian regions. This "phenomenal" success of modernization was the result of many factors: the iron-determination of the Meiji leaders; the successful cooperation of *zaibatsu* entrepreneurs with government in building up industrial capitalism; servile sacrifices of the docile populace; and favorable international circumstances.

The price of success was very high and this price was to be paid under modernization. An early fortune is not always very beneficial to an individual or to a nation in the long run. In retrospect, one may discern that this early success was a

remote reason for the national catastrophe three decades later, which came to involve also all of Japan's neighbor nations.

For a time, historical possibilities for "healthier" development were open for Japan. In fact, speaking purely in pragmatic terms, Japan was brought to a favorable economic place by World War I, and her international position was greatly promoted. With a nominal participation in the war as a British ally, Japan obtained the former German holdings as her share in East Asia. Thanks to the European nations, exhausted economically by the war, Japan enjoyed such a growth of economy and international trade that in the course of a few years she could enjoy a trade surplus and emerge from a heavy burden of debt. Moreover, in this boon, Japan attempted more expansion of her interests in China while Britain was heavily occupied with her own troubles.

World War I deeply disturbed the European consciousness of existence. With the collapse of the nineteenth century optimism for human history, man learned how abysmal human nature was. But this traumatic experience of the Occidentals had very little effect in Japan.⁴⁹ Rather, due to economical advantage, even a boom, the nation as a whole enjoyed temporal prosperity.

Once a new framework of national polity proved to function and achieved the initial national objectives to some satisfactory extent, it seemed natural that the national psychology became slack in various fields of life. Thus the bulk of the

⁴⁹One finds an exception in Uchimura; this war, to him, being waged among the "Christian" nations, put a devastating question-mark not only upon the European civilization, but also credibility of Christianity itself. See Hashimoto, 47-48.

Taisho Era was a relatively calm period, and with respect to government control of religion and thought, it became more free. Ideas and thoughts toward democratization were resuscitated and came into the open. A hopeful humanism won wide circulation. In short, a general liberalism flourished in this era of so-called Taisho Democracy.

During this period of national pause, the Protestant Church in Japan had accommodated itself to the order of the state. The government authorities were no longer disturbed by Christianity. The state could now use this religion along with Shinto and Buddhism to "educate" and settle the uneasy minds of people. Most of the Protestant churches were willing to render service to the state.⁵⁰ By and large, the state was no longer an acute problem for the church, at least for the time being. The Church was now more concerned about modern individual man. After awaking to individual self-consciousness in the universe, these modern men struggled with the meaning of existence in the seemingly settled nation.

Under the surface of this slack and even decadent era, one discerns a process of disintegration taking place. The Meiji oligarchs, after settling the initial rivalry among themselves, provided the nation with a strong government leadership, civilian

⁵⁰An interreligious conference of the three religions [三教合同] was held in 1912 under the auspices of Home Ministry, to which the representatives of Buddhism, Shintoism and Christianity were invited and asked to strengthen and discipline the national moral character. Sumiya calls attention to the particular significance of this conference for further change of the Church's attitude in the direction of cooperation with the state, and observes that with this official acknowledgement by the government (by the "carrots") the Church became more and more cooperative with the state, even uncritically so (Kuyama, *Meiji*, 337). Kozaki approved this conference; Uemura cautiously admitted its significance for the awakening of public consciousness of the needs of religion and for the introduction of Christianity among the general public; Uchimura was disapproving.

and military. However, the oligarchs gradually disappeared from the scene of history. Emerging new leaders, parliamentary (civilian) and military, were of quite different stripes in comparison to the Meiji leaders, modern and diverse, due to their upbringing and education. The civilian leaders went one way and the military followed their own path.⁵¹

Another critical polarization was that of society and its cultural structure. There was an urban minority of the "enlightened" and modernized on the one hand, and there was the vast majority of those mainly living in rural areas with the feudal ideas and values on the other. We have already mentioned this tendency above,⁵² yet in this period this polarization was further accelerated into fatal dimensions, the consequences of which will be noted shortly. This polarization reflected a peculiar side-by-side existence of urban modernism and rural feudalistic ways of thinking, internationalism and nationalism, democratic inclination and authoritarianism. The unprecedented modernization of Japan left behind this dual structure of Japanese society.⁵³

The problem was that the stratum of intellectuals, to which most of the

⁵¹Yasushi Kuyama, ed., *Modern Japan and Christianity: the Taisho-Sahowa Era*, (Tokyo: Sobunsha, 1972), 2-4.

⁵²See note 23 above.

⁵³This dual structure of modern Japan perhaps is to be deemed as the result of the modernization policy of the Meiji government; it conceived the policy of an agenda that should absorb the external apparatus of the politics, economics, and technology from the West, whereas the internal spirit had to be molded by the traditional Japanese values. The expression for this is the so-called Japanese Spirit and Western Skills [和魂洋才].

Christians belonged, and who were supposed to contribute further to the modernization of the nation from below,⁵⁴ was so thin and limited in strength that they could not make an effective initiative for the political and cultural elevation of the general populace.

This weakness of the progressive forces, including the Christians and the Church, was surely explainable in terms of the short historical experience of modern values in Japan. In other words, even in the hearts of the modernized people there was the same dual structure, modern ideas and inherited values, painfully creaking side by side.

The Taisho Democracy was a seminal phenomenon indeed, but it was a feeble one in terms of endurance and impact, for it was limited to the circle of the intelligentsia. Industrial capitalism in Japan grew, accompanied by the multiplication of social problems in cities. The unstable world economy, with its intermittent depressions, duly taxed the nation's economy, which, even under favorable circumstances, was precarious and vulnerable to even tiny fluctuations. Natural calamities aggravated the situation of the rural areas to tragic dimensions. The increase of the population, by this period amounting to sixty million (twice as much since the start of the Meiji Era), was of an exploding proportion to a country with very limited arable land.

Emperor Taisho was weak from his birth and incapable of reigning. Crown Prince Hirohito took over his father's duties in 1921. Emperor Taisho died in 1925,

⁵⁴See supra, 7.

and Hirohito ascended to the throne immediately, thus ushering in the Showa Era.

It was from this beginning of a new era that the country began to make a transition toward totalitarian national polity and militarism. The political and social situation was already unstable. The two major political parties at that time, Kenseikai and Seiyukai, led civilian government alternately. In this rather "calm" and slack period their exercise of political powers degenerated into a game of personal prestige and gain. Their liaisons with the two major *zaibatsu*, Mitusi and Mitsubishi, were conspicuous and corruption was inevitable. Thus the two pillars of civilian government were utterly powerless to curb the rise of militarism. The Great Economic Panic of 1929 struck the nation severely, and with the subsequent depressions unemployment became a critical social problem. The rural farming population suffered most, the price of rice and silk, the main sources of its income, plunging sharply.⁵⁵

It was under these circumstances that the military took the situation into its own hands while increasingly ignoring the civil government. Domestically, some of the young officers of the military organized themselves into small groups and staged *coup d'etats* by a series of assassinations of "corrupt" government ministers. On the Chinese Continent, military operations and plots were rampant, carried out by the order of the generals in charge without sanction from the government. Beginning with the Manchurian Incident, Japan escalated military operations on the Continent and eventually embarked upon the fatal Sino-Japanese War in 1937.

Why did the history of Japan develop so tragically? The conditions in urban

⁵⁵Kuyama, *Taisho-Showa*, 176-177.

and rural areas alike were on the border of bankruptcy due to international economic dismay and to poor government policy. These economical factors surely had triggering effects. However, if the nation's problem were purely economic there would have been better solutions than militaristic expansionism on the Continent. As a matter of fact, it was not the military alone which headed for totalitarianism. The broad support of the general populace was a strong factor to the rise of militarism. Since the civilian government was inept and the *zaibatsu* greedily conducted their lucrative business at the cost of the majority's well-being, the nation was suffering from chronic economic impoverishment and dislocation; hence, the common people joined in the young officers' "sincere" denunciations of the corrupt elements in government and business, and they were not antagonistic toward the officers when they attempted a *coup d'etat*.⁵⁶

What was the ideological link between the military and the non-intellectual, unmodernized, rural majority of the population? Due to universal conscription first introduced as early as 1879, the soldiers and even the officers among them were recruited from farmers' sons. The suffering and misery of rural areas was immediately felt by those in the military. Deep indignation and a sense of obligation to rectify these unjust conditions crystallized into direct actions against the responsible government leaders.

What factors were involved under the process of Japan's falling into totalitarianism? There were surely many. But we regard as basic the measures which

⁵⁶Reischauer, 183-188.

the Meiji government leaders employed when they attempted the modernization of Japan.⁵⁷ On the one hand, the leaders "froze" the general populace in the pre-modern feudal consciousness by reintroducing traditional Confucian ethics. On the other hand, they not only defined the emperor as the absolute ruler but also deified him as the object of religious devotion in Japan. This deification of the emperor was designed to make Japanese thought similar to that of Christianity in the West. Later, this deification of the emperor was underpinned by elevating Shintoism as the inviolable state cult. Then, the rigid Confucian codes of "loyalty and piety,"⁵⁸ in which people were trained, were fused with the deification of the emperor. "Unanimous Devotion to the Emperor,"⁵⁹ the national slogan at that time, was the amalgam of these two factors. Under uncertain and difficult social conditions, this slogan was a religious creed for the people who sought their spiritual pivot.⁶⁰ As the samurais in the feudal period found justification for their existence in undivided devotion to their feudal

⁵⁷See supra 4.

⁵⁸ 忠孝

⁵⁹ 天皇掃一

⁶⁰Of this quasi-religious tendency, Katsuichiro Kamei, one of the most prominent literature critics and thinkers, well-versed in Buddhism and Christianity, speaks as follows: "Looking back the history from Meiji Era to the present, I cannot suppress the impression that Japan has been 'a quasi-religious nation [擬似宗教国家],' having no parallel in the world. The ruling strata admittedly stood behind the emperor system, but this alone does not explain the whole. This quasi-religious nation, to me, seems to involve a latent danger of self-swelling [自己膨張], of which even the Meiji leaders hardly dreamed. Their design was, seen in an authentic religious perspective, a formidable attempt to duplicate 'God,' though unknowingly made. By this design, they not only imposed [this monster] upon the people, but they themselves were under the curse of this grotesque complexity, finding no way to deal with this" (Kuyama, *Taisho-Showa*, 180).

lords, so now, in the uncertain modern era, the same longing for an absolute object of devotion was created by the two catalysts: the emperor and Confucian ethics. This devotion in turn became a blind force which led the nation to totalitarianism and catastrophe.

While the nation became more and more totalitarian in its political outlook, a strong communist movement was going on from around the end of the Taisho Era, and it particularly captured the attention of young searching intellectuals.⁶¹ Prior to this emergence of communism, however, social-democratic movements saw their opportunities during the time of Taisho Democracy. These movements were humanitarian and largely Christian-led.⁶² At the same time, however, more serious studies of socialism in terms of Marxism were being conducted among socio-politically conscious intellectuals. A communist party was organized in 1922 and infiltrated gradually into labor unions and even rural areas.

As the nationalistic government resumed severe suppressions against all "heretical" thoughts and movements toward the end of the 1920s, the communists alone remained in open opposition. Their "scientific" theory of history and society was deeply convincing, and their messianic heroism, shown under heavy government

⁶¹Osamu Kuno, a student at this time and later a leading leftist intellectual, recalls and writes: "To the young and the students, who felt their future threatened by economic depressions in the midst of a 'no-way-out' situation of cultural decadence and opaque political impoverishment, socialism alone appeared as the ideal to save cultural decadence, political impoverishment and economic corrosion. . . . To the untainted eyes of the young and the students, socialism almost looked like self-evident socio-economic truth" (quoted in Kuyama, *Taisho-Shoa*, 186).

⁶²Reichauer, 173-174. See also Burkman, 40-41.

persecution, even won a religious halo among the non-participating but sympathizing intellectuals.⁶⁹ In fact the communists were the only opposition group throughout the fascist government until the end of World War II.

What were the contributions of Christianity to society during this critical period? What were the theological responses to the situation? During this period a bifurcation within Christianity became more and more distinct. On the one hand, Christianity was more concerned with theological and inner-churchly issues. On the other hand, there was a Christian stream which strongly felt the Christians' responsibilities to society and nation. The former was represented by the theology and career of Tokutaro Takakura (1885-1934), and the latter by the Student Christian Movement (SCM).

We shall view their respective positions briefly in order to know the Christian responses during the beginning period of acute national crisis.

At the height of his theological career, Takakura succeeded Uemura in 1925

⁶⁹Kamei, who was one of the students then irresistibly drawn to the Communist ideals, describes his inner emotion at that time. As a freshman at Tokyo Imperial University, he met a group of young "Leftists"; to him they looked as if "young priests of a new God" when they went "into the people," people and workers who were now gods. "A [romantic] mood infiltrated among young students," recalls Kamei, "yes, that particular mood of overwhelming joy with accompanying arrogance and sentimentality peculiar to self-sacrificing believers of a new God" (Kuyama, *Taisho-Showa*, 204-205). We have another witness from one, Yoshio Inoue, who was a professor in Tokyo Union Theological Seminary. "From 1927 to 30," recalls Inoue, "I was a student attending Kyoto Imperial University. And it was almost a matter of course among us students to pay respect to and put trust in the Communist Party which was the only organization of resistance, disregarding one's having courage himself to join it or not," (The War Responsibility of the Church", Eiichi Amamiya et al. eds., *The Mission of the Church under the Yoke of Guilt* [Tokyo: Shinkyo Shuppansha, 1987], 117).

as the president of Tokyo Shingaku-sha, the first independent seminary in Japan founded by Uemura. Takakura himself was one of the students of Uemura. He carried forward what his teacher initiated, namely, the building up of an evangelical Christianity solidly founded on the orthodox Protestant (Reformed-Presbyterian) doctrine of the Gospel. His *opus magnum* was "Evangelical Christianity" of 1927.⁶⁴

Takakura was a man who was involved in a continuous struggle with his sinful ego throughout his life. His life-long struggle revolved around the tension of redemptive grace and renewing grace, justification and sanctification. As a result, he penetrated into the core of the Gospel more deeply than his teacher, Uemura. Takakura and many of his contemporaries during this period were more concerned with elucidating the enigma and plight of individual existence than the immediate problems of the nation at large.⁶⁵ For Takakura, an evangelical theology was a theology by which his own contradictory existence could be redeemed and carried on.

What is his basic theological profile? "In the basic theological ideas of Takakura we see nothing original. In his concepts of God, Creator, or of the religion of conscience and call one sees the influence of Calvin and Kark Holl,"⁶⁶ according

⁶⁴ 福音的基督教 . See for the outline of Takakura's theology, Germany, 87-122.

⁶⁵According to Sumiya, the general masses of the Japanese live in the collective body, whereas the intellectuals from the years around the Russo-Japanese War walked out from that collectivity and tried to grasp their selfhoods as independent individuals; but this individualism caused a deep psychological dislocation and desolate feeling, and Takakura was a child of that era of existential desolateness (Kuyama, *Taisho-Showa*, 124, see also 122-125).

⁶⁶Oshio's view point is thus summarized by Germany, 106.

to Tsutomu Oshio, one of Takakura's students who has written a sympathetic but sober biography about his teacher.⁶⁷ In turn, C. H. Germany, a presenter of the history of Japanese Protestant theology, does not see that there is anything new in Takakura's doctrine of atonement,⁶⁸ which according to Oshio should be "Takakura's most original contribution to the theological world in Japan."⁶⁹ Furthermore, in Oshio's estimate, "we probably cannot say that he [Takakura] did more than carry Japanese theology a step forward."⁷⁰ On this point Germany sees more: Takakura's theology was carrying Japanese theology "commandingly in a new direction," that is, in the direction of a theology of a more religious, personal grasp of the Gospel.⁷¹ Though not quite original in his understanding of the Gospel, Takakura appropriated it more deeply than any of his predecessors. Thus, "with his deeply personal explication," Takakura's theology proved, in its own way, to be a creative and influential contribution to the formation of Japanese Protestant theology.⁷²

As Takakura's theology dealt with the vertical dimension of Christian faith, the SCM movement could be understood as concerned with its horizontal dimension. The SCM was not a social movement sponsored by any of the denominational

⁶⁷Tsutomu Oshio, *Takakura Tokutaro Den*, (Tokyo: Shinkyō Shuppansha, 1954).

⁶⁸Germany, 106.

⁶⁹Quoted *ibid.*

⁷⁰Quoted in Germany, *ibid.*

⁷¹Germany, *ibid.*

⁷²Quoted in Germany, *ibid.*

churches or by a federation of churches. It was a student movement under the auspices of the YMCA in Japan. The formal start of this movement was July 1931, and its turbulent dissolution was in the summer of 1932. Prior to the formal launching of this movement, there were precedent moves within Japanese Protestantism. One of them was the establishment of the "Labor Mission" in 1928 at Doshisha University (a Christian institution founded by Jo Nijima and later led by Congregational leaders from the Kumamoto Band)⁷³ which had been strongly conscious of Christian responsibility for society. Another was a concern within the YMCA for students, including Christian students, who were strongly drawn to Marxism because of its appeal for a classless society and its convincing theory and practice. The leaders of YMCA wanted to reorganize its student mission by providing a Christian alternative of ideas and program for a just and humane society.⁷⁴ These

⁷³It deserves to be noted here that this combination of Congregationalism (started by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Mission in 1886), Doshisha University and Kumamoto Band, has constituted a section of Japanese Protestantism. Ebina was from Kumamoto Band, a Congregational minister and also the Chancellor of the university. The historical relationship is that L. L. Janes entrusted his convert students to Jo Nijima who was cooperating with the American Board when Janes was forced to resign the school at Kumamoto due to his "missionary" activities. For more on the contribution made by this "combination," see Darley Downs, "The Contribution of Congregationalism to the Church in Japan," *Japan Christian Quarterly*, 25 (Spring 1959): 99-102.

⁷⁴"Again," admonished a leader of the YMCA in an article written around this time, "we [the Church] need openly and frankly to face the question of why the church is losing its influence among the students. There are, of course, many students in the churches, but even those who do come do not seem to be entirely satisfied that they are getting what they need in meeting their life-problem" (Soichi Saito, "The Communist Challenge and the Christian Campaign," *Japan Christian Quarterly*, 6 [Summer 1931]: 274). Written "on the spot," this article conveys the Communist impacts at that time firsthand, see the entire article, 270-276.

and the other historical factors provided the start of this movement.

As to the general theological view of this movement, it is helpful to look at the so-called Tozanso General Principles of 1931,⁷⁵ which run: 1) God is the constantly unfolding life-power; 2) Christianity is God's pulsation in history, begun in Jesus and is the movement for the realization of the Kingdom of God; 3) Salvation is nothing else than common participation in that movement for the realization of the Kingdom of God; 4) Our faith develops in harmony with a growing comprehension of scientific truth.⁷⁶ Another utterance made by two vocal leaders of the movement, Enkichi Kan (Tokyo area) and Shigeru Nakajima (Kansai area), both university professors at that time,⁷⁷ set the thrust of the Declaration in a sharper focus:

"Salvation, then simply means participating in the building up of the Kingdom of God here on earth";⁷⁸

"The religion of Jesus is not merely a religion of individuals' salvation. It is not a meditative religion for the perfection of the self. It is a practical, ethical and social religion through and through. It is a religion which enables us to live out God and to reach to God."⁷⁹

These strongly socio-ethically oriented viewpoints betray a telling impact of

⁷⁵ 東山荘綱領 . Tozanso is the name of a YMCA site at the foot of Mt. Fuji.

⁷⁶This English translation is quoted from Germany, 56. Elsewhere, he compares these four principles with "the dominant idea-foundations of the Social Gospel in American Protestantism" (ibid., 64).

⁷⁷Of the two, Enkichi Kan has been known as a leading Barthian theologian. He was Anglican and a professor at St. Paul University (or *Rikkyo Daigaku*) of the same denomination.

⁷⁸Kuyama, *Taisho-Showa*, 280.

⁷⁹Ibid., 273.

the Social Gospel, adopting the movement's developmental and immanent ideas of the Kingdom's coming into being.

The SCM was short-lived due to external government pressures, churchly criticisms and centrifugal forces within the movement itself. But it is essential to note that the movement represented the unquenchable Christian consciousness of and readiness for socio-ethical responsibility present in Japanese Protestantism. The movement was critical of "churchly Christianity" which seemed to the activists of the movement to have lost willingness to serve the world "out there" with socio-ethical commitments and to be content with its own salvation. According to the "social" Christians, "churchly Christianity" individualized the Christian faith, internalized it, and made it subjectivistic, with the result that it was separated from social reality and without inner power to reform life.⁸⁰

On the other hand, the SCM became heated so quickly and radically in its claims that it could hardly be distinguished from a communist movement.⁸¹ The main-stream churches could only denounce it. To be sure, this is not to deny that the social Christians' criticism of the "churchly" Christians had its validity; yet the "churchly" Christians' denouncement of the SCM had its own validity. Indeed, it

⁸⁰These are Kan's viewpoints, quoted in *ibid.*, 279.

⁸¹"This group [the Japanese Student Christian Movement] is trying," wrote Saito, "to follow the line and tactics of the Marxian doctrine, while at the same time endeavoring to remain Christian. Such a paradoxical effort to meet the present situation deserves every sympathy on the part of those who would understand the causes which prompt such an attempt to meet the problem. Time will show whether they are right or wrong in their present method. . ." (Saito, 274).

needs only to be mentioned in passing that the positive commitments to both viewpoints represented legitimate Christian concerns.

In fact, there were complementary perspectives in both camps; surely no Christians would fail to recognize the two dimensions of Christian faith, the religious and the ethical; it is much like the two aspects of a curved line with concave and convex sides in an inseparable unity.

On the one hand, Takakura himself was concerned with the social relevance of Christian salvation.⁸² In 1928 a council of major denominational churches⁸³ issued a "Social Creed" which stated the churches' socio-ethical positions and goals, and their commitment to bring them into realization as much as their resources allowed.⁸⁴ On the other hand, from one of the SCM leaders, Gan Sakakibara, we can obtain a strong conviction for the need of the individual's inner salvation, a need which cannot be dissolved into the ideals of society, and a sober perception of the limitations of social activities. He made it clear that "even if a rationalization (liberation) of society should make a remarkable progress, the individual as the carrier of irrational inner longing would always seek a religious salvation." "A social

⁸²Germany, 112.

⁸³ 日本基督教聯盟

⁸⁴Germany places a very reserved evaluation on this statement issued by the council, saying: "The extent to which the mind and resources of the churches went beyond the formation of this declaration is not noticeable in the records of the time" (82-83). But according to another study of this period, conducted by a Doshisha University scholar, "the significance of this social creed was not slight; practical commitments to various social problems in compliance to this creed were eagerly promoted within and without the constituting churches. . ." (Nobuo Kaino, "Political Statements of the Kyodan," in: Eiich Amamiya et al., 146).

Christianity would never forget that in salvation the individual is united with God." He further held that social Christianity would say that "the individuality of salvation is to prove its living faith in the activity of solidarity."⁸⁵

Throughout this period, Protestant Christianity was assigned a twofold task: to respond to the fundamental inner sufferings of individuals and to come to terms with social needs. Y. Kuyama, a friend of Kitamori, recalls what he, as an elite student, experienced during these years. His agony would be representative of what a sensitive Christian intellectual and *mutatis mutandis*, the Church in general, might perceive. He wrote:

When the Sino-Japanese War broke out [in 1937], I was a student at Kyoto Imperial University. . . . Students at that time were skeptical about the war. But due to severe government repressions they were totally unable to engage themselves with social activities and other issues. In fact, we were not sure of the availability of help from social activities. . . . We felt we were damned, because we did nothing even though we knew there had to be something done to breakthrough the contradictions in our class society. . .⁸⁶

During the time that this polarization within Protestant Christianity became more conspicuous, dialectic theology was introduced into Japan.⁸⁷ This introduction of the new theology, particularly that of Karl Barth, was of momentous significance for the formation of Japanese Protestant theology. Introduced by Takakura in his *Evangelical Theology*, this theology called forth strong attention and interest among

⁸⁵Kuyama, *Taisho-Showa*, 119.

⁸⁶Ibid.

⁸⁷According to Isao Kuramatsu, who wrote an article on "The Theology of Barth and the Church in Japan" (*Gospel and World* [May 1956]): Takakura introduced Barth "orally" around 1924-25 (see Kuyama, *Taisho-Showa*, 309).

his students and the theological world at large.⁸⁸ Emil Brunner was the first among the dialectic theologians to be known, but it was Barth who was to dominate Japanese Protestant theology.

The theology of Takakura itself was not influenced by the theology of Barth, but it was, in one view, very much in the same vein, due to the fact that he was under the influence of P. T. Forsyth, who is often referred to as "a Barthian before Barth."⁸⁹ Already in the early 1930s two later professors of TUTS, Yoshitake Kumano and Hidenomu Kuwada, both students of Takakura, produced theological works, *Outline of Dialectic Theology*⁹⁰ and *Dialectic Theology*,⁹¹ respectively. The translation of the works of the dialectic theologians (mainly those of Brunner and Barth) increased year by year.⁹² This strong interest in dialectic theology, particularly that of Barth, was not only confined in the circle of Tokyo Shingaku-sha,

⁸⁸After mildly criticizing Schleiermacher's theology as an amalgam of the Biblical religion and the German culture of his time, Takakura observed that the European Protestantism prior to World War I had compromised to the currents of the contemporary culture. It is in this context that he mentioned the emergence of "a religious movement" by "younger theologians in Germany and Switzerland" which "is trying to enliven Christianity as the religion of the Bible"; Takakura includes here the names of K. Barth, Fr. Girgensohn (*Evangelical Theology*, [Tokyo: Nagasaki Shoten, 1930], 260).

⁸⁹Kuyama, *Taisho-Showa*, 310.

⁹⁰弁証法的神学概論, 1932.

⁹¹弁証法的神学, 1933.

⁹²The translation of the works of dialectical theology counts more than fifteen titles in the first part of the 1930s; to mention some, E. Brunner's, *The Theology of Crisis* (original in English), *Erlebnis, Erkenntnis und Glaube*, *Der Mittler*, and Barth's *Credo*, *Das Wort Gottes und Theologie*, *Rechtfertigung und Heiligung*, *Die Note der evangelische Kirche*.

but it was also found among the theological faculty members of Doshisha University, known as being predominantly liberal in its theological stance. The translation of Barth's *Romans* was attempted by this group.⁹³ The beginning impact of Barth's theology was thus felt widely within Japanese Protestantism and even outside the Christian circle.⁹⁴

It has been said that it was the theology of Barth that sustained the Protestant Church in Japan during World War II and provided her with strength to recover from the ruin of the postwar years.⁹⁵ But if this is true, how did Japanese theologians understand Barth's theology, given that Barth himself fought politically against the Nazis, whereas Japanese "Barthians" rendered no resistance but even made theological

⁹³This attempt was made under the leadership of Keiji Ashida, professor at the university, who at the age of sixty-five is said to have turned himself to Barth with learned enthusiasm, lecturing over *Der Römerbrief* in classes always with exclamation and enthusiasm. Though terminated halfway by the death of Ashida, the work itself indicates how powerful the impressions of Barth's theology were, even to liberal theologians at Doshisa (Kuyama, *Taisho-Showa*, 312-313). It is of interest to mention that Chitose Kishi, then a young Lutheran scholar and another young theologian, translated an introductory work to Barth's theology, John McConnachie's *The Barthian Theology and the Man of Today*.

⁹⁴Kitaro Nishida (1870-1945), a most prominent philosopher of modern Japan, captured the issue of the theology of Barth. He advised K. Takizawa, one of his followers, to pay attention to Barth, when he was to study philosophy in Germany, saying: "There seem to be no particularly interesting philosophers there right now; there rather are interesting theologians, Barth in particular" (quoted in Kuyama, *Taisho-Showa*, 314).

⁹⁵Yasuo Fufuya, "Succession of the Theology of Barth," in *Japanese Christianity and Barth*, ed. Iwao Morioka (Tokyo: Shinkyo Shuppansha, 1986), 98.

compromise?⁹⁶ This, however, is not the place to go into this question further. Discussion on this question is saved for later. But this much needs to be said: Barth's concentration on the Word and rejection of any "point-of-contact" between the Gospel and culture was interpreted by Japanese theologians as being in the direction of total separation of spiritual from political reality.⁹⁷

In view of the responses Japanese Protestantism made to the turbulent social situation, one may level criticisms against both camps of Christianity and learn important lessons from their experience. In doing so, it is necessary to recognize the proper dimensions of the burden of history and to measure these with the actual strength of the young Church which was on an uneven footing due to external pressures from national conformity and the uncertainty of a short church-historical experience.

Nonetheless, it is the glory of the Church in Japan that however small and feeble she may be, it remains her commitment to witness to the complete Gospel of Christ in Japan, struggling with the forces of the world however formidable they may be. In other words, the Church is not excused from this holy commission even if she as the Church *in Japan* has her own limitations due to ethnological, cultural and

⁹⁶Hidenobu Kuwata (see note 92), for instance, wrote a pamphlet in 1942 (*An Apologetic for Japanese Evangelism*, 日本伝道弁証論) and praised the militaristic national polity as "a glorious national polity" (*Kakaru Kokiuru Kokutai*. . . かかる光輝ある国体). Inoue criticizes this as a grave compromise, for no intellectuals at that time were ignorant of the unacceptability of the China invasion by the military government (*"Responsibility,"* Amamiya et al., 117).

⁹⁷Germany, 169. See also Hori, 100-101.

historical factors.⁹⁸ The Church is therefore held accountable for her faithfulness in witnessing. When she fails to be faithful to her God-given call, she has to confess her sins without any excuse for her failures; otherwise it would not be possible for her to make a new start as Church.

We observe in this historical experience a polarization within Christianity, the church-centered form and the socio-ethically oriented form of Christianity. There is tension between these poles, caused by historical conditions and human limitations. We shall point out here with emphasis that this tension has been a perennial one in Japanese Protestantism ever since the initial experience of the polarization.

While the Church struggled for her own identity, Japan was only heading for catastrophe. With her own "foolhardy" endeavors on the Chinese Continent, especially launching the Sino-Japanese War in 1937, it became practically impossible for the nation to stop her catastrophic downfall. Japan, it seems, had to run her course to the end, causing immense suffering for herself as well as for her neighboring nations.

In the meantime, surveillance by military government, manifested in the thought control of the special police, intensified more and more. Fanatic indoctrination concerning the deity of the emperor and cruel coercion of allegiance to Shintoism as the expression of loyalty to the emperor and the nation were carried out

⁹⁸A distinctive national trait which by itself can be a strong side of the nation, may very easily turn out to be a definite weakness to the Church in Japan in terms of its critical *Auseinandersetzung* with the state. This trait can be termed as *taisei junno*. It means both "conformity to the established system" and "conformity to the ruling trends." Both aspects are strongly present in Japanese minds even among Christians.

all over Japan and other occupied countries.⁹⁹ The military government sought frantically to rally all things to the national cause.

It is important to note, in this connection, that the government enacted the Religious Bodies Law, the intention of which was to put all the recognized religious bodies under government "protection" and supervision. As a result of this, a united Protestant church body, called Nihon Kirisuto Kyodan (Kyodan for short), a unification of Protestant denominations (thirty odd major and minor denominational churches), was formed under this law in 1940.¹⁰⁰ A united Protestant Church, which

⁹⁹One of the painful examples of this is to be noted, and it was the experience of the Church in Korea. It was not only the military government's thought control policy that demanded the Church in Korea to worship at Shinto shrines; the leaders of the Church in Japan also demanded that the Church in Korea go to Shinto shrines. In 1965 under his visit in Korea, Isamu Omura, the Kyodan moderator then, met with some of the Korean Church leaders and reconfirmed the Kyodan's wartime responsibility, as the leaders determinedly criticized the cooperative and conformist attitude of the Kyodan during World War II. Now belated historical studies are being done in Japan on the relationship between the two neighboring countries from a church historical point of view, see Isao Shoji, "Toward a New Era of Asia," Amamiya et al., 229.

¹⁰⁰As soon as this law was passed through the Diet in 1939, all the denominational bodies began to prepare themselves to meet governmental requirements. But in July 1940, the Education Ministry summoned the denominational representatives and notified them that in order to be approved as a religious body by the government, a church body was to comprise fifty congregations and five thousand members at a minimum. That meant only seven "major" denominations were entitled to approval; the rest, more than twenty-five "minor" bodies, were to be denied approval. In this situation, the National Christian Council (see note 84) decided to form a unified Church body. According to Seigo Yamaya the formation of the unified Church was to "assist" minor denominations to survive under governmental control. In this sense, the decision made by the NCC was nothing but an emergency measure. See Seigo Yamaya, *The History of the United Church of Christ in Japan* (the Kyodan) (Tokyo: Nihon Kirisuto Kyodan Shuppanbu, 1967), 91-93. See also Drummond, 256-262. In the process of the denominational integration, there was a considerable hesitancy on the side of the Reformed-Presbyterian *Nihon Kirisuto Kyokai* regarding

had been desired from the very beginning of the history of Protestantism in Japan, materialized, ironically enough, by a wartime ordinance of the government.

Being thus forced to comply with the government, the Protestant churches in Japan in the form of the Kyodan were obligated to play roles in conformity to national war-policies. In fact, many forms of active cooperation with the military government were planned and executed by the Kyodan.¹⁰¹

With the explosion of two A-bombs over Hiroshima and Nagasaki in the summer of 1945, a militaristic and overambitious Japan was definitely terminated. Many of "the emperor's subjects" were utterly disillusioned to learn that what they believed in and devoted themselves to had been merely a hollow shell. What a historical coincidence it is, however, that the termination of modern Japan was sealed by the formal unconditional surrender to General MacArthur on board the battleship

this attempt. The Anglican *Nihon Seikokai* stayed out of this integration and consequently ceased its official existence.

¹⁰¹On the documents of this active cooperation of the Kyodan; see Kaino, "Statement," in Amamiya et al., 149-156. A sympathetic appraisal of the Kyodan under the war is given by Charles Inglehart in : "The Church and War Time Pressures," *Japan Christian Quarterly*, 18 (Winter 1952): 34-42. Comparing the wartime attitudes found in America and Japan respectively, Inglehart wrote of the American part: "On the other hand, year by year church-wide pronouncements are being toned down. Step by step they recede from former positions. . . to safer and saner, more general and less sharply ethical statements of conviction. Fine distinctions are drawn, much rationalization of motives and methods is elaborated, but when the smoke clears, the churches are found backing the national objectives straight down the line" (41). Though not to be used as an excuse by Japanese Protestantism, this generalization of the American situation is strikingly similar to the Japanese churches as well. Sophisticated theologians were able to elude the traps of "Emperor or Christ" placed by the thought-control police, while the less sophisticated pastors of the Holiness Groups, unable to escape, were imprisoned and some of them martyred.

Missouri in Tokyo Bay, a scene tragically reminiscent of the opening of modern Japan about a century before.

The war, which began in 1930 with the Manchurian Incident, involved the sacrifice of tens of millions of lives on the Chinese continent, Korean Peninsula and in South-East Asian nations, in addition to several millions of Japanese soldiers and civilians. Who was responsible for this meaningless suffering and immense sacrifice? What were the reasons for the condemnable and tragic outcome?

Before going further with this historical sketch, we have to stop here to consider the nature of human history as it had been played out in prewar Japan. At once it must be stated that no group of Japanese can plead "not guilty" or claim freedom from responsibility for the war and all the carnages it involved, based upon the excuse that they were themselves deceived and misled by those who were "really" responsible. Sins and atrocities committed against tens of millions of humans were historical, objective eternally indelible facts, and all the Japanese should bear upon themselves that burden of guilt.

Having clearly recognized this inexorable fact, we need also to consider the nature of historical forces. This consideration is necessary to confirm the guiltiness of the people who imposed injustice and crimes upon other nations. Otherwise, one would dare to exonerate oneself, placing all fault on the blind historical forces. To state the point here, the nation lives under historical forces which on rational analysis seem to overwhelm human moral and physical capabilities. For this reason, destiny could provide the ground for self-absolution from guiltiness. However, even if on the

basis of rational analysis one could establish irresistible forces or "fatal" determinants in the historical course of events, man is still responsible for his acts.

In our sketch of the historical development of modern Japan toward the catastrophe, we have pointed out that the fascist totalitarianism of the nation was in one sense preconditioned by the Meiji oligarchs' reorganization policies: the absolutization of the emperor and the re-indoctrination of feudal Confucian social views. The national objective, "enriching the nation, strengthening the military," contained a latent inner tendency toward unethical pragmatism.¹⁰² But, in view of the Meiji leaders' ideological presuppositions conditioned by their upbringing and culture, questions arise: was it possible for the Meiji leaders to opt for different policies from those they actually chose? Further, under the intermittent economic depressions, with a steadily aggravating population explosion and increasing social and economical miseries in urban and rural areas, was it practically feasible for the young military officers with their indoctrinated ideology, to think otherwise than they actually did? A question of particular significance for us is this: Was it also possible for the Church leaders to act defiantly against the military government? In fact, the majority of Christians, leaders and laymen alike, naturally wanted themselves to be loyal Japanese in national emergency, although they did indeed feel governmental pressure in the direction of a fanatic nationalism. These are some sober questions raised from "objective" historical observations. One can answer these questions in the negative,

¹⁰²Aritomo Yamagata, a general and one of the Meiji oligarchs, "admonished the (Japanese) cabinet in the final year of the conflict (of World War I) that 'nations make war to extend their interest, not to advance idealistic principles'" (Burkman, 38).

saying that in whatever walk of life (military or civilian, Christian or non-Christian), citizens in Japan as a whole during the turbulent historical period had no choice but to be drawn along by the irresistible force of fate. This deterministic view, not unreasonable in itself, can be used as an argument for claiming a verdict of "not guilty" by those who tend to exonerate themselves from historical responsibilities.

But, though fate and guilt are rationally irreconcilable, human beings are still responsible for what they actually have done, because ethical responsibility under any circumstances is actual and is something which makes man Man. Theologically, we are accountable before God; this holds true disregarding the historical circumstance under which we live and act. And it is a fact that without recognizing one's own sin, there is no possibility for a person to learn from historical experience or to live anew as a forgiven and restored human being. The same holds to a greater degree for the Church.

The Post-War Years to the Present

Japan was now reduced to her physical and spiritual minimum. Japan was utterly defeated, and the emperor now declared himself human. This collapse of the Japanese myth of "the divine nation" with the emperor as the living god, was a complete reversal of the once high national values. Disillusionment and desperation could have caused an anarchical situation in the country immediately after World War II. As the true features of the warfare beginning from the Manchurian Incident were gradually known--government deception in propaganda, military atrocities and meaningless sacrifices--popular dismay became deeper and deeper. Sincere

intellectuals found their real lives terminated, recognizing their wartime failures unredeemable.¹⁰³

On this scene of historical crisis, General MacArthur of the United States, as Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces, provided the center of gravity for Japan politically, socially and spiritually. Though it may sound strange that the military general of enemy forces was gradually received in Japan as if he were a savior, it was not without reason. In the midst of the total collapse of the authority that the nation desperately needed, General MacArthur was capable of commanding authority, thus winning deep respect among the general populace. The first occupation measures taken by the Allied (substantially American) Forces were those aimed at abolishing the old political, economical and social systems. The Imperial Military Forces were disbanded; repressive legislations were all nullified; all the political prisoners, in particular the Communists, were freed; State-Shintoism was dismantled; all the higher officials under the military regime were purged from their government posts; and all big *zaibatsu* were dissolved.

But the constructive policies were conceived immediately after these

¹⁰³From a history of Japanese literature, one reads that a number of novelists and poets were compelled to deep self-criticism and nihilism. Yasunari Kawabata, a Nobel Prize laureate, wrote after the war: "The war being over and lost, I have nothing now but to retreat into the (world of) sorrows of old Yamato," and "as a dead being I have no desire from now on to write a line but that transitory beauty of Japan" (quoted in: Takeo Okuno, *A History of Jap Literature*, [Tokyo: Chuo Koron Sha, 1970]), 184. In this connection, Okuno says that there were many established writers who kept on writing after the war as if there had been no war. And yet a small number of writers were deeply conscientious to assume their own responsibilities after the war. "The [conscientious] attitude of this minority of writers was deeply touching, disregarding whether their wartime thoughts and sayings were 'good or bad,'" observes Okuno.

"clearing" measures and they were benevolent in nature and carried out with determination. Of the most momentous significance for postwar, and also present Japan, was the formulation of the new Constitution. Drafted originally in English by the Staff of the Supreme Commander, it was promulgated in November 1946 and went into effect on May 3, 1947.¹⁰⁴

In substance, the new Constitution was a reversal of the Meiji Constitution. The emperor became the symbol of national unity, "deriving his position from the will of the people with whom resides sovereign power (!)."¹⁰⁵ Political responsibility and authority were definitely placed in the people. Fundamental human rights were guaranteed by the Constitution "to the people of this and future generations as eternal and inviolable rights."¹⁰⁶ One of the most significant points of the Constitution was Article 9 on the renunciation of war, namely that Japan would never maintain any war potential in any form.

Indicating a high mark of pacifist and democratic idealism, the Constitution was of revolutionary significance for the formation of postwar Japan. With these constitutional measures and other social, economic and educational reform policies, which were wisely and efficiently carried out under the authority of the Supreme Commander, Japan was changed completely from a fascist country into a pacifist nation, from a feudalistic and authoritarian country into a decentralized and democratic

¹⁰⁴On the process of drafting the new Constitution, see: Borton, 409-502.

¹⁰⁵A phrase from Article 1 of the new Constitution.

¹⁰⁶A phrase from Article 11 of the Constitution.

nation. As the nation settled more and more, reactions against this ideal constitution were bound to sooner or later occur, but the substance of the new Constitution, once introduced and appropriated by the Japanese, would never fade away from the nation's political and social consciousness.¹⁰⁷

The reconstruction process was going on steadily, though admittedly the political, social and economic situation was precarious and turbulent during the first few post-war years. A measure of dissatisfaction with the policies of the Allied Forces "came to the surface" now and then. Even rumors of Communist revolution were heard. But the firm authority of the Allied Forces and the largely docile, cooperative majority of the population held the situation under control. As the national recovery proceeded, the day of re-assumption by the Japanese of full responsibility for the nation approached.

Furthermore, when the Korean War erupted in June 1950, the once collapsed national economy was gaining definite momentum toward recovery. This provided extraordinary demands for goods and services needed by the American Forces in conflict with the Communist regime of North Korea. Pausing to reflect upon the nature of history, one wonders: How "unfair" history's dispensation appears to be, that the nation once "victimizing" her neighbor country should recover economically by the latter's tragic sacrifice!

In the meantime, on September 8, 1951, in San Francisco, the peace treaty was signed by forty-eight nations and went into effect on April 28, 1952, marking the

¹⁰⁷See Reischauer, 273-275.

independence of Japan. In September 1953 Japan was admitted into the United Nations. From this point on, the nation again rose to the status of a nation among the nations, only this time as a pacifist nation.

During these postwar years, the Protestant Church, or the Kyodan, suffered disorder and material damage. But thanks to the help from oversea partner churches, the Church in Japan was able to resume its rebuilding activity and missionary work in war-torn Japan.¹⁰⁸ In its third General Assembly held in the beginning of July 1946, the leaders and laymen issued a declaration, first confessing their sins before God and apologizing to their fellow countrymen for their negligence of duties as Christians during the war and then stating their determination to carry out the mission of the Church for the restoration of the collapsed nation.¹⁰⁹

The Protestant Church was placed in a favorable position in Japan again. A so-called "Christian Boom" came and the churches were visited by many of those who were spiritually dislocated. The church-leaders were busily occupied with the questions of strategy about how they could meet the needs of those people visiting the

¹⁰⁸On October 23, 1945, a deputation of four men representing the Foreign Missions Conference of North America and the National Council of the Churches in the U.S.A. arrived, and fellowship meetings were held, under which various aid programs were arranged. See Yamaya, 181-82; Drummond, 272.

¹⁰⁹"Standing now in the midst of the Capital reduced to ashes," the Declaration runs, "we Christians as the believers of the Gospel of peace painfully recognize our sins of being unfaithful and negligent toward our mission, and express our deepest repentance before God and men." Beginning with these words, the Declaration deplores the aggravation of spiritual and material suffering and the wide spread of materialistic thought into every stratum of society, and expresses the Christians' determination to stand up for the ministry with the Gospel for the rebuilding of the nation (Kaino, Statements, Amamiya et al., 151-52).

churches. But the question of the church's wartime responsibility, which was bound to emerge sooner or later, seems not to have occupied the minds of the Kyodan leaders deeply and properly.¹¹⁰

However, the Kyodan, especially its leaders, seems to have jumped on the opportunity provided by the "Christian Boom" instead of probing deeply on how faithfully the Kyodan had carried out its God-given ministries to the nation during the war and reflecting what the war meant to neighboring nations. The leaders may have felt that they were victims rather than victimizers. They may have had no spiritual resources left over to reflect deeply on these matters and the immediate tasks facing them may not have allowed them to examine these issues. Understandable as these situations may be, the fact of wartime responsibility remains, and the issue would demand, sooner or later, that it be settled theologically and ethically by the Church in Japan.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰Although the Declaration had been issued, Yamaya admits that the Kyodan should have made its rebuilding with a deeper self-examination and a more candid repentance. He continues: "True, it [repentance] was done to a certain extent, but to our regret it was not sufficient. . . . Certainly, it was important for us to look forward, leaving the past behind. But even so, were not we too insensitive to our responsibility then? In sum, we were not conscientious enough in our faith, this we cannot but confess" (Yamaya, 177). This reflection of Yamaya is significant because he wrote this as a senior leader of the Kyodan and as one personally involved in all the painful experiences of the Kyodan under the war. We also will see this reflection of Yamaya against the background of his overall very sympathetic presentation of the Kyodan under the war in the work we refer to presently.

¹¹¹Tsutomu Oshio, the biographer of Takakura, also a senior Kyodan leader, pointed out the failure of the Kyodan at the beginning of rebuilding, saying: "We might leave the questions open about behaviors of the Kyodan during the war, but at least those who were in the positions of responsibility during the wartime should have put aside their private considerations, resigned from the leadership, and tried to

Partly related to these wartime behaviors of the Kyodan, some held that, to make a new start, the Kyodan should be dissolved because of its "irresponsible" conduct during the war.¹¹² In fact, a dissolution process within the Kyodan took place when the Allied Forces replaced the Religious Bodies Law of 1939 with the Religious Corporations Ordinance, a process by which some of the major denominational churches began to withdraw from the Kyodan.¹¹³

The reason for this dissolution was manifold. One view was that since the Kyodan was brought into existence by the Religious Bodies Law of the military regime, the basis for the Kyodan's continuance no longer existed. Another view was that in the Kyodan--a "disorderly" composite of different denominations--it was impossible for any particular denomination to realize its own traditional values. Still another factor was the desire in respective denominations for the restoration of relations with missionary societies overseas.¹¹⁴ For these and other reasons, many of the denominations withdrew themselves. By the end of 1947, Reformed, Anglicans,

establish a new form for the Kyodan. The failure to do so was the gravest and most irrecoverable mistake the Kyodan had made then toward the Church of the world and the Japanese people" (Yasushi Kuyama, ed., *Modern Japan and Christianity: The Present* [Tokyo: Sobunsha, 19], 34).

¹¹²According to Ken Ishihara, there were two positions concerning the continuation of the Kyodan: the one party held that despite all the deficiencies and mistakes, the Kyodan was a fact of the united Church in which participating denominations once saw the providence of God; the other party was equally convinced that the wartime behaviors of the Church were inexcusable and the Kyodan for that reason should be dissolved to make a new start (*Essays on Japanese Church History*, [Tokyo: Shinkyō Shuppansha, 1967], 236).

¹¹³Yamaya, 222-223.

¹¹⁴Ishihara, 238.

Lutherans, Baptists, the Salvation Army, Holiness Groups, and other small denominations had withdrawn.

In the early phase, the Kyodan had no resources for countering to these dissolving forces. But it became clear that a need for the Kyodan's reorganization from inside was acute and urgent. Some former denominational groups, though still remaining in the Kyodan, felt the same problems as those who had left it. During the first decade after the end of the war, three major issues were taken up for reorganization and redefinition of the Kyodan as a united Protestant church body. They were, the restructuring of the Kyodan (completed in October 1950), the formation of its confession of faith (approved in October 1954), and the settlement of the so-called Kai-ha problem,¹¹⁵ which was raised by former Reformed and Baptist

¹¹⁵The *Kai-ho* problem was not a surface phenomenon. It has its roots in the very nature of the Kyodan's coming into being under the Religious Bodies Law. As we saw, the formation of the Kyodan was occasioned by government pressure. It was an emergency measure of the nation. It is therefore only in a highly dialectical sense that one can hold that the Kyodan was formed by divine providence. The claim therefore cannot be made in a facile and direct sense. The *Kai-ha* problem had an inner necessity that surfaced, in the sense that, formed by non-theological motives, the Kyodan could not provide any *theological* ground to those earnestly seeking the way to further build-up of the church in Japan. The Kyodan, in substance, had been a federation of the different denominational churches. The Reformed *Kai-ha* claimers seem to have been demanding the clarification of this form of federation in the Kyodan. But the Kyodan "declared that it is the united Church with the theological and organizational integrity" in the fourth General Assembly in 1946 (Yamaya, 232). Thus there was a deep gap between the Kyodan leaders and the *Kai-ha* claimers as to understanding of the nature of the Kyodan itself. Earlier, the Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church, for instance, insisted on the understanding of the Kyodan as a federation and, finding no place in the Kyodan for this understanding, decided to withdraw from that body (see Benjamin Paul Huddle, *History of the Lutheran Church in Japan* [New York; the Board of Foreign Missions-the United Lutheran Church in America, 1958], 218-221: We shall deal with this Lutheran withdrawal more below). The *Kai-ha* problem was a problem of profoundly difficult nature; it was no less than

denominational factions in the Kyodan in the form of claim for formal recognition of their semi-independence ("settled" in October 1950). As we shall see later, Kitamori actively participated in all three reform-programs and played a very crucial role as the secretary of every committee for these efforts.

The first item for the Kyodan was the restructuring of its organization necessitated by the need for democratization. The district system was introduced, as was local autonomy. More difficult to solve, however, were the two others. The *Kai-ha* problem, if handled unwisely, could have caused the Kyodan's virtual dissolution. The committee dealing with this problem struggled hard to find a solution for the contradictory claims between the preservation of the Kyodan's *de facto* integrity on the one hand and the factions semi-independence on the other. Standing on the conviction that the Kyodan was providentially formed and should continue to work as the united Protestant church in Japan, the committee denied any form of denominational independence within the Kyodan, though open fellowship among the churches of former denominational affiliation was admitted.¹¹⁶ Through this "settlement," the Reformed claimers for the *Kai-ha* constituted their own denomination in May 1951.

a confessional union of highly diverse denominations! In fact, this issue is still on the agenda in the Kyodan today, the witness of which is the publication of: Iwao Morioka ed., *The United Church of Christ in Japan as a United Church--Its Denominational Traditions and Particular Nature* (Tokyo: Shinkyo Shuppansha, 1989). In this pamphlet, the Reformed-Presbyterian, the Methodists and Holiness Groups, Congregational and the Baptist traditions are discussed by the authors from respective traditions within the Kyodan.

¹¹⁶Ishihara, 285-289.

A still more important issue for the Kyodan was the formation of its confession; it was thought urgent to unify all the denominational differences within the Kyodan. Immediately before the war, the preparatory committee of the proposed Kyodan attempted to formulate a confession. But due to the nature of providing such a confessional consensus from large denominational diversity, it was naturally not possible for it to be formulated under the time restrictions imposed by the Religious Bodies Law.¹¹⁷ Nor was it possible for the Kyodan to prepare a confession under the postwar turbulences. But its leaders thought that, due to their lack of a confession, the Kyodan would face the danger of self-dissolution. As the postwar crisis of the Kyodan intensified, it became more and more urgent for the Kyodan to formulate the confession upon which the united Protestant church could be re-unified and further established. But it was a formidable task.

As a matter of fact, the desire for a confession to be formulated as soon as possible was on the agenda during the Kyodan's third General Assembly held in 1946, immediately after the war. A committee was appointed at that time for the task and it began to study the possibilities.¹¹⁸ Although it was reorganized once in the process of

¹¹⁷During the preparatory process, there were debates about the wording of the confession of the proposed united Church body. But since it was not a confession that the Education Ministry required but a "Summary of the Teachings," all the dealings with the formulation of the confession were suspended due to the wartime emergency, while a simple summary was provided to meet the government requirement and included in the Kyodan's constitution; see Hori, 103-115.

¹¹⁸Since the reorganization in 1951, this committee was called as the Special Committee for the Formulation of the Confession; the chairman of this committee was changed, but Kitamori, the secretary, remained throughout, and he, ex-officio, played a crucial role in formulating the final draft of the Confession; we keep this in mind for

the Kyodan's restructuring, the committee members remained the same and continued the work to the end of the project.

In October 1954, the text of the Kyodan's confession was finally presented to the eighth General Assembly and approved by majority vote.¹¹⁹ The Confession begins with the words: "We believe and confess. . ." Then belief in the Bible and the doctrine of Trinity is confessed. After these ecumenical parts comes the Reformed doctrine which confesses:

God chooses us by His grace, and by faith in Christ alone He forgives our sins and justifies us. In this unchangeable grace the Holy Spirit accomplishes His work by sanctifying us and causing us to bear fruits of righteousness.

And for our understanding of the Kyodan and Kitamori's theology it is necessary here to get acquainted also with the following paragraph on the Church:

The Church is the Body of Christ the Lord, and is the congregation of those who are called by grace. The church observes public worship, preaches the Gospel aright, administers the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, and being diligent in works of love, waits in hope for the coming again of the Lord.

In order to accomplish this Confession the committee spent a number of assiduous years. What were some of their points of difficulty? One fundamental requirement of this Confession is that all the factions within the Kyodan had to be able to find room for their denominational backgrounds and emphases, and interpret the

the later presentation.

¹¹⁹The English text of the Confession is found in "Documents of the United Church of Christ in Japan," *Japan Christian Quarterly* 45 (Summer 1979): 172. Other official Kyodan documents such as the Constitution, Guidelines for Christian Living, the Confession of the Wartime Responsibility are also included in the "article."

confession according to their denominational convictions. In a sense this confession is a formulation of the minimum consensus of "theological views" of the constituting denominational factions. The underlying assumption of the entire attempt to formulate the confession seems to have been that there existed a common ground of faith in a latent form, a ground which could include all the denominations. It seems as if they presupposed that there were no genuine theological problems between the Protestant denominations, between Lutherans and Reformed, between the Anglicans and the Baptists. The task is then to articulate the latent consensus and formulate it in a way acceptable to all the constituents. This is not a confession which came into being by the urging of an external situation which demanded the defense of evangelical truth against other theological or secular ideological attacks. It is a confession to unify the factions by formulating the latent theological consensus. The question is whether or not this formulation of the Confession could possess a *Geschichtsfähigkeit* in reality.¹²⁰

As to the content of the Confession, it is clearly ecumenical and evangelical. And the emphasis is on the soteriological aspects of the Christian faith. The understanding of the Church is, though somewhat simplified, reminiscent of Article

¹²⁰This Confession is very much Kitamori's work. He wrote an explanation of this Confession to which we shall come back. A question we keep in mind in this connection is whether it is possible to settle the problem by simply formulating the theological consensus on a "facile" assumption as I suggested here. In retrospect, the Confession seems to possess only a limited significance beyond the temporarily ameliorating effect on the Kyodan in the danger of dissolution.

VII of the Augsburg Confession. We see that the Kyodan defined itself in a church-centered way with this Confession, true to the Uemura-Takakura tradition. With a confession thus formulated and officially approved, the Kyodan was now reorganized and expected to work in the world as the bearer of the Gospel of Christ.

Speaking of the reorganization of the postwar Kyodan, we have to include an important item, the establishment of Tokyo Shingaku Daigaku, or Tokyo Union Theological Seminary (TUTS), in 1948. The former Nihon Kiristo-kyo Shingaku Senmon-gakko, or Japan Christian Theological School (1944) was reorganized and recognized by the postwar Education Ministry as a university level institution in compliance with the new educational ordinances. Because of its history and location, TUTS has been the leading theological seminary in Japan.

Due to the international situation, particularly the onset of the Cold War, Japan publicly began to rearm herself with a "Self-Defense Force" in 1954, based upon the government interpretation of the Constitution that, while renouncing war, the Constitution does not renounce self-defense. Along with this reformulation of military policy, the educational systems and the police force were also recentralized simultaneously. Most crucial of all was a strong drive from the ruling conservative Liberal Democratic Party to the "reconsiderations" of the Constitution. In 1956 a commission was appointed to prepare for a revision of the Constitution. This revisory work was conducted on the basis of the theory that the Constitution had been brought into existence and imposed upon the nation by the Occupation Forces; it was argued that a new constitution should be drafted by the initiative of the Japanese. The focus

of the "reconsideration" was, first of all, on Article 9, which declares the nation's renunciation of war as a means to solve international conflicts.

The Kyodan and other Protestant churches issued a strong protest against the move to revise the Constitution. In 1962 the Kyodan officially issued a declaration for the defense of the Constitution which "was born with the sacrifice of many lives and much property and represents 'the universal human principle' of popular sovereignty, fundamental human rights and pacifism."¹²¹ Subsequently, large scale campaigns were held by the Kyodan in Tokyo and Osaka for the preservation of the current Constitution, and sessions were arranged for the study of the Constitution on the grass-roots level among Protestant churches.

Certainly, this revisionist thrust was only a part of the total political tendency which came to surface as the nation gradually gained confidence in its national strength. Proposals made by the government for the restoration of National Foundation Day¹²² and the re-nationalization of the two prominent Shinto shrines, Ise and Yasukuni, were examples of this tendency in the early 1960s. The Kyodan responded to these issues with strong protest declarations. These responses indicate that these "external" political issues could not be disregarded by the Church; rather they might have grave consequences politically, socially and religiously, and the Church had to make her position clear and act out what was deemed necessary.

¹²¹The text of this declaration see: "The Document. . ." note 117 above), 173-174.

¹²²*Kigen-setsu*, 紀元節, which is now called the National Foundation Day (建国記念日).

Is the Church only to respond passively to dangerous tendencies present in society and the nation? Does she have no constructive and preventive role to play? Japanese Protestantism, as church body, was generally slow to respond to socio-political issues. This situation may be attributed to the fact that, as a small minority with limited resources in theology, personnel, and other areas, the church body and the local congregation had enough to do with the task "proper" to the Church.

However, there have been active, constructive movements for peace and democracy within the Kyodan. A prominent one is the Christian Society for Peace,¹²³ organized in 1951 as an influential group within the Kyodan. One of its leaders, Yoshio Inoue, a former TUTS professor, was a student of Barth and one of the translators of Barth's work. Inoue strongly advocated the unity of Christian faith and socio-political responsibility. According to Inoue, there were two forces that occasioned the formation of this Christian peace movement: "one was the crisis of the Korean War, and the other was a consciousness of war responsibility among the participants."¹²⁴ It was forces like this group within the Kyodan that stood behind the Kyodan's issuance of a protest statement in 1959 against the renewal of the U.S.-Japan Security Pact, which was scheduled in 1960 and, in fact, occasioned nation-wide

¹²³See on this point: Yataka Sishido, "The Peace Movement of Postwar Japanese Christians," *Japan Christian Quarterly* 51 (Fall 1985): 215-224. The name of this peace organization in Japanese is

¹²⁴An utterance of Inoue at a panel discussion recorded in: "Reassessing the Kyodan's 'Confession of Wartime Responsibility,'" *Japan Christian Quarterly* 45 (Summer 1979): 156.

protest waves against the government.¹²⁵ The Christian Society for Peace indicates the fact that there has been steady undercurrents of strong consciousness of socio-political responsibility in the Kyodan and in Japanese Protestantism at large.¹²⁶

This is an appropriate place to include a brief overview of theological

¹²⁵Yamaya, 316-317. Yamaya admits that "the Kyodan is responsible toward society and nation as the United Church of Protestantism in Japan." Even so, Yamaya says, it was rather rare for the Kyodan to address itself to social and national issues. But on the occasion of the renewal of this security pact, the Kyodan's Mission Department prepared the protest statement together with its theological explanation and issued it upon the approval of the Standing Committee. According to this document the Church confessing the Lordship of Christ is entrusted the ministry of "the Watcher" and "the Salt of the Earth," and therefore cannot remain silent, but should clearly state its opposition when the state heads for a military alliance with a specific nation and her own rearmament against the pacifist current toward detente. Although issued with the approval of the Standing Committee, this statement was severely criticized by those who had different views on this issue. They held that a political statement issued in the name of the Kyodan deprives the rights of those in the Kyodan who have different political convictions. Upon this criticism, the Standing Committee apologized for its indiscretion over this delicate political issue.

¹²⁶In 1960, the year of the renewal, an interdenominational movement organized against the pact renewal. The Kyodan people made up the core of this movement. This movement, called the Christian Protest Group Against the Renewal of the Security Pact, issued a declaration, which is of interest for us to know its theological viewpoint, so we quote its entirety: "The prophetic idea of eternal peace of the world by total disarmament, expressed in the word 'beating swords into plowshares,' has become to the human race a most urgent imperative by the coming of the ultimate weapons. It therefore is against the spirit of the Peace Constitution of Japan and also against the present world-wide currents moving from the peace by power to the peace of negotiation, that Japan now is going to renew the Japan-U.S. Security Pact and to make it a military alliance. Now is the time that, also in order for her to compensate her sins against China and other Asian nations, Japan should contribute to the realization of peace, offering herself as a bridge between the East and the West. We demand not only to terminate any negotiations for the renewal of the Security Pact, which shall ruin such a noble mission entrusted to Japan, but also to abolish the Pact System itself as soon as possible. We declare that we shall make our best efforts to the establishment of a God-pleasing international order in which all the international conflicts be solved not by the deployment of weapons," (quoted in Yamaya, 315-316).

background of the development of the Kyodan. First of all, it should be pointed out that it was Karl Barth who remained a dominant theological force.¹²⁷ Surely the Japanese theological community has been quite attentive to theological currents in Europe and America, and influences from these currents are readily noticeable.

Emil Brunner came to Japan twice, 1949 and 1953, as a "missionary" and left certain influences corrective to Barth's "exclusive" line.¹²⁸ In 1950, John C. Bennett of Union Theological Seminary in New York visited Japan, and introduced Reinhold Niebuhr while comparing him with Barth. Thus Niebuhr also had his influence on the reflection of the Church's socio-ethical relevance.¹²⁹ Rudolf

¹²⁷Yasuo Furuya, "The Influence of Barth on Present-day Theological Thought in Japan," *Japan Christian Quarterly* 30 (Fall 1964): 262-267; Yoshio Noro, "Postwar Japanese Theologies: Retrospect and Prospect," *Gospel and World* 40 (Tokyo: September 1985); Toshio Sato, "Forty Postwar Years: A Review of Systematic Theology," *Bible and Church* (Tokyo: February 1987).

¹²⁸When Brunner came to Japan the second time, he was to serve as a professor of Christian ethics and philosophy at International Christian University in Tokyo as well as TUTS. In an interview, Brunner mentioned that there were three reasons for his coming to Japan again: Japan's strategic position for Christian influence in Asia, an imminent urgency to fill Japan with Christian influences, and the need of the Japanese Church to see the way of "interpretation of the Gospel in terms of our problems, and of the problems in terms of the Gospel." He thought that, with his inclusive theological method, he could help with these challenges "in some small way." "I heard the voice of God in this call to come to Japan," see more in detail of this interview: "Why I Returned to Japan," *Japan Christian Quarterly* 20 (Winter 1954): 14-17. Even with his energetic work in Japan for two full years, observes Toshio Sato, "it is not certain how convincing his inclusive method vis-a-vis Karl Barth had been to Japanese theologians under the influence of Barth" ("Review," 21).

¹²⁹"Dr. Bennett gave us," wrote a Doshisha professor, "a better understanding of the social situation and stimulated us, students, ministers and theologians, to Christian action. It is not to be forgotten that his personal visit called forth a new zeal to face up to the current problems" (Tadakazu Uoki, "Theological Trends in Japan Today," *Japan Christian Quarterly* 18 [Summer 1952]: 212). On a deep significance of Bennett's visit, see further Germany, 198-200.

Bultmann's theology of demythologization and his existential interpretation of the New Testament aroused lasting responses among theologians around the early 1960s.¹³⁰

And Paul Tillich was invited to Japan in 1963 and lectured at various universities on his "correlative" theology and was a great influence toward the formation of immanent theology in Japan.¹³¹ Responding to these and other theological impulses, corresponding types of theology have been formed. These theologies should be of deep interest and concern for any student of Japanese Protestant theology.

But in terms of "practical" impacts upon the working churches, they do not stand beside the overwhelming influence and impact of Barth. And the translated books of Barth's extensive writings seem to be almost co-extensive with the German publications, at least as far as his major works are concerned. A solid bulk of the Kyodan leaders, who are also pastors of local congregations, are readers of Barth's *Kirchliche Dogmatik* and other writings for their concrete congregational work, whether for sermon inspiration or pastoral care.¹³²

¹³⁰Of a wide impact of Bultmann, see Furuya, *Influence*, 263-264.

¹³¹According to Noro, Tillich's influence gradually infiltrated the thought-world of Japan. Noro points out that Tillich's visit in Japan and the turning point of Japanese theology from the idea of a transcendental God to the idea of an immanent God fell together, *Postwar*, 35.

¹³²We almost at random can glean the samples of this mode of Barth's reception among Japanese theologians and pastors from Morioka, *Japanese and Barth* (see note 94 above). Shin Murakami, a leading Bonhoeffer scholar, confesses: "First and foremost, it is Karl Barth [who determined my theological pilgrimage], all his writings are an inexhaustible fountain of comfort and inspiration to me as a pastor with daily ministry. He, to me, is more my own pastor than a world-renowned great theologian" (ibid., 21). "I firmly believe this," also writes Masatoshi Fukuda, a former Professor at TUTS and a Kyodan leader, who calls Barth my *sensei* ("teacher" in Japanese, a revered but also affectionate appellation), "that in the midst of this

In this connection, we suggest that the cause of the conflicts within the Kyodan seem to be traceable back to Barth's own theological position vis-à-vis socio-political relevance of the Christian faith, and perhaps also to each theologian's interpretation of Barth. In this sense, the conflict can be said to be between the two "Barthian" camps.¹³³ Be this as it may, it is clear that the rediscovery of Barth has been a major factor behind the conflict. We will be back to this issue when we deal with Kitamori's position in this constellation of theological influences.

A name which must be mentioned, besides Barth's, in terms of theological and practical influence on the Kyodan after the 60s, is that of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. First introduced to Japan around 1950, Bonhoeffer's life and thought, as a martyr during World War II, captured the attention and interest of Japanese theologians, pastors and ordinary Christians.¹³⁴ His heroic life and sublime mixture of Christian idealism and realism won many followers; *Gemeinsames Leben* was widely read in the churches. Bonhoeffer's ideas of the "World Coming of Age" and the "Non-Religious Interpretation of Biblical Concepts" were enthusiastically welcomed as hermeneutical

present time of no directions, no meanings and no strength for life, it is only his [Barth's] theology that can point the way of living with true freedom and responsibility" (ibid., 47). Although in this booklet there are a few articles which warn against the wholesale affirmation of Barth's theology, a majority of the contributors entertain the same "devotion" to Barth as Murakami and Fukuda.

¹³³In Amamiya et al., 155-157, Yoshio Inoue, an interpreter of Barth, severely criticizes the elder Barthians, Kumano and Kuwada, for their religious transcendentalism over socio ethical responsibility of the Church. Here is a case in point concerning the ever-recurrent conflict within the Kyodan. In other words, it is the two Barth interpretations that are in conflict with each other within the Kyodan.

¹³⁴Toshio Sato, "Forty Postwar Years," 23.

levers for the New Testament message by the rising theologians of the postwar decades. In addition to these ideas, his thoughts on the Church's responsibility to this world and his own testimony to this responsibility have been deeply influential from the middle of the 60s.¹³⁵ Japanese theologians, keenly conscious of the socio-political crisis in Japan, drew lessons from his *Widerstand und Ergebung* and *Die Nachfolge*.

Now, along the line of socio-political emphasis within the Kyodan, an event of momentous significance for the Kyodan's future occurred toward the end of the 1960s. On Easter morning in 1967, a confessional document was issued in the name of the Moderator of the Kyodan, Masahisa Suzuki (1913-1969),¹³⁶ titled "The Confession on the Responsibility of the United Church of Christ in Japan during World War II."¹³⁷

¹³⁵Heita Mori, "The Church's Confession of Guilt," Amamiya et al., 165-169.

¹³⁶Concerning this distinctive figure of the postwar Kyodan, Otis W. Bell, an IBC missionary to Japan from 1950 to 1969, gives a first hand impression. See his article: "Concerning The Rev. Mr. Masahisa Suzuki," *Japan Christian Quarterly* 38 (Winter 1972): 52-54; further, Robert M. Fukuda, "Masahisa Suzuki: Preacher in the Prophetic Tradition," *Japan Christian Quarterly* 45 (Summer 1979): 163-168; Shin Murakami, "Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Suzuki Masahisa on Death," *Japan Christian Quarterly* 52 (Summer 1986): 174-178.

¹³⁷The English text of this Confession is found in: "Document" (see note 119 above), 176. According to Heita Mori, the date of the announcement of this confession was carefully selected, March 26, 1967. On Easter day in 1944, the Kyodan, in the name of the *torisha*--the highest authority of Kyodan at that time--sent out an official "pastoral" letter to "All the Christians within the Great East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere." The letter exemplifies the "sins" of the Kyodan under the war; distortion of the Gospel, *de facto* affirmation of the war's legitimacy and insensitivity and inconsiderateness to all the sufferings of peoples in the "Sphere." The announcement of the "Confession of Wartime Responsibility" intentionally tried to redeem the wrong of the issuance of the letter of 1944 when the "same" date of

Although the confession of wartime responsibility, in one view, was long overdue (twenty-seven years after the end of the war!), this "prophetic" moderator firmly took the lead of issuing it. On the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Kyodan's formation, sensing the coming of a new phase of building this church body for tomorrow, the Kyodan's moderator and its General Assembly felt it indispensable to face up to the ambiguity of its origin and its past mistakes during World War II, and decided to issue the confession. It states: "At this time we are reminded of mistakes committed in the name of the Kyodan during World War II. Therefore, we seek the mercy of our Lord and the forgiveness of our fellowmen."¹³⁸ After acknowledging the dual aspect of the formation of the Kyodan (the internal momentum toward the formation of the united Church and the external government coercion thereto), the confession candidly admits:

"The Church, as 'the light of the world' and 'the salt of the earth' should not have aligned itself with militaristic purpose of the government. . . . However, we made a statement at home and abroad in the name of the Kyodan that we approved of and supported. . . . Now with deep pain in our hearts we confess this sin, seeking the forgiveness of our Lord, and from the churches and our brothers and sisters of the world, and in particular of Asian countries, and from the people of our own country."

And this confession of wartime responsibility further expresses the Kyodan's "humble

announcement and the same office (the *torisha* then, and the moderator now) are "matched" to the letter of 1944 (Heita Mori, "Contemporary Significance of the Church's Confession of Wartime Responsibility," *[Japan] Christian Year Book*, [Tokyo 1969], 43-49); on this particular point, 45.

¹³⁸The confession expresses its historical "context" with the following words: "Now, we are faced with the serious task of building the Kyodan. In order to express our sense of responsibility which the Kyodan has toward Japan and the world, we prayerfully take as our theme 'OUR CHURCH-TOMORROW.'"

determination" to correctly "accomplish its mission in Japan and in the world" by "God's help and guidance."

Although the tone of the language used in this confession is restrained and conservative, its substance is very clear in declaring the Kyodan's emerging self-understanding. It unmistakably affirms the Church's inherent responsibility to society and nation, not confining itself within its "spiritual" domain. In this sense, it could be considered complementary to the Confession of Faith of the Kyodan which was "enacted" in its eighth General Assembly.¹³⁹ In fact, to many of the younger theologians, this confession is more than simply a socio-political appendix to the Confession of Faith; it is a confessional statement. It is not simply something ecclesiologically "desirable" to have, but it has to do with what is essential and indispensable for a church to be a church.¹⁴⁰ The younger theologians argued that

¹³⁹In one of his studies, Ishihara speaks of the Confession of Faith of the Kyodan. He says that the Confession is the best possible statement of evangelical faith relative to the resources time-wise and strength-wise then available to the committee members. And yet, Ishihara's modest self-criticism about this Confession was on the following point: As the Confession of the Church in the contemporary "heathen" environment of Japan, does this sufficiently express our Protestant faith, our position, conviction and criticism? "Our Confession of Faith, I wish, should possess criticism to the modern age in a way more sincere. In this sense, I wish the Kyodan that it produce the second confession complementary this present one," Ken Ishihara, *Essays*, 307. The Confession of the Wartime Responsibility may not be exactly the second one Ishihara thought of, but his expectation seems to have come true to a certain extent.

¹⁴⁰Hori, perhaps in a somewhat one-sided way, represents the vanguard position of the Kyodan theologians concerning ecclesiological debates. We can see this in his aforementioned work; *Church and Confession* (see note 39). According to him, the Confession of Faith of the Kyodan is "pragmatic in character" (*gomokuteki-sei*, 合目的性) and "theologically insubstantial" (*shingakuteki muimi*, 神学的無意味), 263, but the Confession of the Wartime Responsibility "is concerned

the Kyodan could not remain in faith if it should fail to live up to the socio-ethical mandates underlying the Confession of Wartime Responsibility.

Once issued, this Confession of Wartime Responsibility caused a controversy over its "fairness" and appropriateness.¹⁴¹ Indignant and critical voices were raised against the major points of the confession by the conservative wing within the Kyodan. Their criticism was based on the conviction that the Kyodan came into being by God's providence in spite of the government order. It should be unnecessary, they thought, for the Kyodan to repeat the confession of wartime mistakes, for the Kyodan confessed its failure and insufficiency in carrying out its responsibilities during the war. By the "re-issuance" of the Confession of Wartime Responsibility, the conservative leaders thought the Kyodan would tread on the path of the same opportunistic mistake, for this church body would now desire to keep pace with fashionable contemporary ideologies and try to align itself with the current domestic and international social upheavals.¹⁴²

vitality with the faith" (286). To be noted here for a further reference is the context in which Hori sharply criticizes Kitamori's theology for his theological formalism. To many theologians in the Kyodan, the Confession of the Wartime Responsibility is the starting point for the Kyodan's ecclesiological renewal.

¹⁴¹Heita Mori, "Significance," 47-48.

¹⁴²Due to the unexpectedly large repercussions within the Kyodan aroused by the Confession of the Wartime Responsibility, the Standing Committee appointed a working committee, the so-called "Five-Member Committee," to deal with *pro et contra* on the questions of the Confession's content "constructively and pastorally." The Standing Committee set Kitamori as the chairman of the committee. The report of this committee, which reveals much of Kitamori's theological thinking, was trying to take the legitimate points of both parties. Oddly enough, however, the committee defined the wartime failure of the Kyodan as lying not in the wartime behaviors but in the fact that the formation of the Kyodan was made without the unifying confession of

In this controversy there were two opposing ecclesiological views; one view was that the Church in its proper mission is above socio-political spheres and primarily deals with inner spiritual issues of human existence, leaving secular matters to reason and good sense; the other view was that the Church by its nature is involved in the life of this world, thus contradicting the first view as an illegitimate dualism. The issue here concerns ecclesiology, but it ultimately concerns the very understanding of the Gospel itself.

The latent conflict within the Kyodan violently came to the surface when the Kyodan's participation in the Expo 70 was legalized by the Kyodan's General Assembly in October 1968.¹⁴³ The participation in the Expo 70 was supposed to be a joint enterprise of the Catholic Church and the Protestant churches, setting up the

faith; further, as to the Kyodan's wartime behavior, the committee stated that the Kyodan performed the intercessory ministry for the state, although deficient in the prophetic and kingly ministry; furthermore, regarding the Church's relationship with socio-political issues, she should maintain her own transcendence over particular historical realities, allowing the believers within the Church multiple ways of dealing with concrete socio-political problems. With this mediating report of the committee, however, both parties expressed dissatisfaction. In particular the report was severely criticized by the supporters of the Confession as attempting to desubstantialize () the Confession and to settle the situation politically rather than theologically (Mori, *ibid.*). However, Mori gives credit to the Five-Member Committee, that with this report the Kyodan won tranquility for a time.

¹⁴³This Expo participation of Japanese Christendom was first proposed by the National Council of Churches (NCC). Responding positively to this proposal, the Protestant denominations affiliated to the NCC (the Kyodan is the core), the Catholic Church in Japan, evangelical-conservative denominations and other Christian bodies, jointly organized a preparatory committee. As to the General Assembly of the Kyodan held in October 1968, it seems there were no problems felt then, even by the "prophetic" moderator Masahisa Suzuki. This indicates that the participation in the Expo as such was not an "absolute evil," but it rather seems to have triggered the latent inner tensions of the Kyodan to an explosive level.

"Christian Pavilion" at the site of the exhibition for the witness of the Gospel.¹⁴⁴

The Expo 70, however, had been viewed with suspicious eyes by many socio-ethically conscious theologians and laymen. They believed that the Expo 70 served a three-fold political and economical purpose; the first purpose was to show off of the nation's economic and technological strength which was built upon various forms of exploitation of economically weaker nations; the second was to stimulate economic demands for big businesses; and third was to divert the attention of the public from the up-coming renewal of the US-Japanese Security Treaty.¹⁴⁵

The opposition was first formed by seminary students in the Kansai area and then joined by those in Tokyo district. It became quite a large force when a group of younger pastors and professors from both areas took part in the opposition. Initially, rather moderate in claim and demand, the opposition rapidly gained momentum in demanding the unconditional cancellation of the Christian Pavilion plan. The Standing

¹⁴⁴Kitamori was the chairman of the theme committee of the Christian Pavilion. The theme for the Pavilion was "Eye and Hands." Kitamori's explanation of this theme represents also the view of those who promoted the Pavilion project, and it says: "The Expo can be compared to a huge body symbolizing the progress and harmony of the human race. We wish that the christian Pavilion be the eye of this body. It certainly is a small eye, but it is the eye of discovering the lost humanity, the eye of finding the way of harmonious progress, the eye of seeing the true through all the disturbances, the eye of believing, hoping and loving. . . . And the eye looking for the progress and harmony are to be united with the working hands. The hands are those of reconciling, those of praying and those of serving" (quoted in [*Japan*] *Christian Yearbook* [Tokyo 1969], 63).

¹⁴⁵For the view of those in opposition to the Expo participation, see: Akio Doi, "Toward an Evaluation of the Problem," [*Japan*] *Christian Yearbook* (Tokyo 1971), 45-49; for the view of the supporters of it, Yoshinobu Kumazawa, "The Problem of the Expo Christian Pavilion," *ibid.*, 43-45. Kumazawa gives a detailed "chronology" of the development of this traumatic conflict.

Executive Committee of the Kyodan took the churchly disturbances aroused by this radical opposition seriously, and decided to convene an irregular General Assembly to reconsider the issues of Expo 70. But by then the situation exacerbated to an unreconcilable stage of confrontation. This made it impossible for the General Assembly to deal substantially with the issues.¹⁴⁶

Part of the reason for the confusion was a traumatic incident which took place prior to the extraordinary General Assembly. On September 1, 1969, the first discussion was held between the Standing Committee and the anti-Expo forces. What was traumatic and tragic was that Kitamori, a member of the Standing Committee and the chairman of the Theme Committee for Expo 70,¹⁴⁷ was struck twice by a student during the session.¹⁴⁸ The faculty of TUTS, meeting immediately after this incident,

¹⁴⁶Of this development of the conflict, see: Ian MacLeod, "Wither Kyodan?" *Japan Christian Quarterly* 36 (Summer 1979): 168-174. MacLeod then was an executive secretary of the Kyodan's Standing Committee and was an observer ex-officio at the meetings of the Standing Committee.

¹⁴⁷See supra note 144.

¹⁴⁸On one occasion several years later, Kitamori recalls the tragic September 1st incident and I quote his own words here: "At the September 1st meeting, some forty or fifty paper pellets made of hard paper were thrown at me, and my eyeglasses were cracked. It was not merely a matter of jeers and shouting; some used rubber slingshots to shoot their paper pellets. No one can speak freely under such circumstances. Then we were packed into an all-night session of more than twenty hours and became thoroughly exhausted; our judgment was dulled. Just as in the mass-pressure meetings of campus confrontations, fatigue and anxiety bring one to a point of willingness to do anything for relief. The other side produced an already prepared document confirming its position and demanded our signature. I, too, gave in and signed the document, in a moment of indiscretion, but tore the paper up on the spot. It was then that I was struck." (The Task of the Federation of Evangelical Churches," *Japan Christian Quarterly* 45 [Summer 1979]: 151-154). The Spokesman of the TUTS Student Struggle Body, i.e., "the other side," as Kitamori puts it, has a different "version" of this incident to tell: "Speaking of that incident, it is necessary

issued a statement condemning the violence to which Professor Kitamori had been exposed and called upon the clergy present to account for their failure to restrain this violence. The students and clergy in opposition reacted violently to this statement and accused the faculty of distorting the issue itself.¹⁴⁹ This incident triggered campus turmoil at TUTS. The student body set up a barricade around the seminary building, and the faculty refused to negotiate with the student body. The students then began to ask critical questions concerning the very foundation of TUTS' theological position, which, according to the opposition, was based upon an abstract, individualistic, pietistic and pro-establishmentarian theology. In early March of the following year, 1970, forced by practical necessities and finding no measure to break a half-year impasse, the faculty eventually decided to "settle" the matter by calling the riot police onto the campus. Three students were arrested. This measure was defended by the conservative wing of the Kyodan as inevitable and legitimate, but the faculty was severely criticized and even accused of betrayal by the opposition and the moderate

to be aware of the very urgent situation caused by the de-substantialized General Assembly proceedings of the Kyodan. . . the situation in which debates were easily overheated emotionally. It was in the midst of this circumstance that one student unintentionally struck Professor Kitamori in the cheek when Kitamori was too contemptuous toward the students in his dealing with them" (*Gospel and World* 24 [Tokyo, May 1971], 38). On this issue, MacLeod writes: "It is the writer's opinion that the refusal, or incapacity, of the aforementioned professor [Kitamori] to respond at an appropriate level of emotional commitment to the students on the night of September 1 helped to inflame them to the point of the rough treatment that they gave him, and that the profound alienation between him and them, that resulted from this encounter has played a significant part in the escalated estrangement between the students and the faculty [of TUTS]. . ." (174, see note 145).

¹⁴⁹See MacLeod, *ibid.*

stratum of the Kyodan clergy.¹⁵⁰

The work of building the Christian Pavilion was completed simultaneously with the time of the calling of the riot police onto TUTS campus, and the Pavilion featured the "soft-pedalled" Christian programs as the Expo 70 itself opened. TUTS resumed its "normal" operations. But the deep scar made by the vehement confrontation was traumatic for the Kyodan and TUTS, leaving theological and emotional tension between the leaders of the two bodies.

The tension within the Kyodan between the "evangelical" wing and the socio-political wing was latent during the postwar decades. It became conspicuous with the issuance of the Confession of Wartime Responsibility. And it came to a head as the controversy erupted over the Kyodan's participation in the Expo 70. However, the tragic confrontation was not accidental. The Christian faith itself is of "bi-focal" nature. The vertical relation to God is inseparable from the horizontal relation to the

¹⁵⁰One of the TUTS alumni, Noro, writes: "That group of TUTS students, who were influenced by the Movement of all Campus Struggle, put several questions to the faculty and demanded the answer to them as they shut themselves up in their dormitory. While making efforts to persuade the students, the faculty eventually gave up the efforts and called in the riot police to settle the problem. That, also to me, was a very sorrowful incident. Even now, I cannot believe how my [faculty] seniors and friends could take such a measure. Professor Kuwada taught us that TUTS was a church. And yet a church now has settled the conflicts within the Church by the help of the state power. Even among non-Christian universities, which have nothing to do with religion, I know there were many professors staking their posts in opposition to calling the riot police onto their campuses in order to protect their campus autonomy [from government infringements]; [we Christians have to know that] their's was not to preserve the rule of the Holy Spirit over the Church" ("Postwar," 33-34). See also Akio Doi, (note 143), 48-49. A moderate and sympathetic reconciliation attempt between the faculty and the students was given by Kuwata, the former President of TUTS, "Post the TUTS Problem," *[Japan] Christian Yearbook* (Tokyo 1971), 49-52.

neighbor in love. In fact, neither wing denies these two foci. The question is, then, how can the Church live the "bi-focal" Gospel and witness to it faithfully in a given historical situation. Surely, the question cannot be answered with a formula; it must be sought in a concrete situation in the living encounter with the Gospel. Deeply traumatic as it was, the harsh clash between the two wings may have been a necessary historical step toward a deeper understanding of the Gospel in Japanese Protestantism.

During the three postwar decades the Church enjoyed religious freedom. No government restrictions were imposed on her. The Church has been offensive, with her protests and statements vis-à-vis "reactionary" government policies. Rather, the major problem has been within herself: how can the Church come to terms with her divinely given mission to preach the Gospel to the world? What does it mean to preach the Gospel which has also socio-ethical implications? Both "evangelical" and "social" wings fought for a proper definition of the Gospel and the Church in the worldly reality of Japan. As the representative church body of Japanese Protestantism, the Kyodan is now struggling for that definition, at the cost of her own traumatic experience.

Summary

Looking back, we now recognize suffering running through the history of Protestantism in Japan. Protestant theology took pains to grasp the meaning of the Gospel in encounter with modern Japan in its cultural and historical setting. In this endeavor, theologians and thinkers in the Church formulated their understandings of the Gospel. Due to their cultural, historical and personal limitations, they are often

one-sided and partial, either "religiously" one-sided or socio-ethically. A living theology is bound, it seems, to be one-sided and partial. Surely, this is the mark of *theologian viatorum*. Because of this partiality and imperfection, the Protestant Church and her theologies in Japan had to suffer severe conflicts within itself. However, we do not believe the suffering was in vain. Through this suffering for the truth of faith, the hope has emerged for a deeper penetration of the living truth of the Gospel. It is in this stream of the experience of suffering and hope of Japanese Protestantism that the theology of the Pain of God of Kazoh Kitamori was born and of which it became a part.

CHAPTER 3

KITAMORI'S LIFE, THEOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT AND CAREER

Formative Years

Kazoh Kitamori was born in 1915 in Kumamoto, a city on Kyushu, the island immediately south of Honshu, which is the main island of Japan. The time was that of the Taisho Democracy. The nation was enjoying an economic boom. Democratic ideas were openly advocated. A literary movement called *Shirakabaha* promoted an idealistic vision of life. In general, the nation enjoyed a relatively calm atmosphere.

"My family was very pious *Jodo-Shinshu Buddhist*," writes Kitamori, "and when I was six or seven, my grandmother and mother often brought me to the temple along with them."¹ But what he remembers about Buddhism was a "dead" form of Buddhism; he found "no agreement between sermons on Buddha's mercy and believers' daily lives, no relation between their lives and Buddhist teachings."² As for Christian influence, Kitamori says that he had none in his childhood. In fact, it was rather usual that, except for major cities on the main island of Honshu, Christian

¹*Auto I*, 8. (A bibliographical note: Those of Kitamori's works which are of primary significance and therefore quoted frequently are abbreviated like the note here. The list of those works is found at the end of the Introduction chapter.)

²*Ibid.*

influence on ordinary people was very modest at that time. But, to Kitamori, who now sees things in retrospect, this otherwise usual fact should not have been the case in Kumamoto, because this city was the birthplace of Kumamoto Band, one of the main "fountains" of Japanese Protestantism. The fact that he knew nothing of Christianity at all in his childhood is, for him, a sad symptom of distance between Christianity and the ordinary people in Japan.³ There, on the top of a hill called Hanaoka-yama, in 1876, thirty-five students of the Kumamoto Western school, who were under the influence of Captain James, declared that they would become Christian. In his childhood Kitamori played "nearly every day" around this hill, without knowing anything about the hill's historical significance for Japanese Christianity.

The middle school years were not very encouraging for Kitamori; rather, he felt his youthful life was stifled by elitism and the school policy of "success-education." The rank of a school was measured, then as now, by the number of students successful in the entrance examinations to prestigious high schools and then to universities. The middle school he attended was no exception in this regard. Thanks to the elitistic training, Kitamori finished a five-year curriculum within four years, and was entitled to proceed to the literature department of the Fifth High School in the same city, Kumamoto, in 1932, at the age of sixteen."⁴

³Ibid., 7.

⁴Ibid., 9. As to the school system of Japan at this time, compulsory education was limited to six years at primary school. A middle school ordinarily had a five year curriculum. High school continued the middle school education for those who aspired

The Manchurian Incident a year before, the assassination of the prime minister early in the same year, and harder and harder measures taken against the individuals with thoughts and ideologies deviating from national polity caused the historical atmosphere in general to become gloomy. However, Kitamori, a freshman at high school, could still enjoy his youthful life, only vaguely feeling the imminent era of darkness.⁵ But his adolescent joy did not last long; shortly after, writes Kitamori, "another problem" confronted him, one concerned with human existence as such. He gradually became aware of a fundamental question of human life: is not human life and existence only at the mercy of a chain of senseless chances?⁶ We do not know what kind of experience directly occasioned this awareness in the mind of Kitamori; the sources tell very little about specific details. Kitamori says it was "a kind of intuition."⁷ This awareness led him to a feeling of abandonment, that "nobody supports and sustains me from behind."⁸ In his groping for any clue to certainty of life, he decided to try reading the New Testament.

He constantly felt the threatening of blind chances that could visit upon him

to enter a university. High school was at the same time a preparatory school to the university education with a three year curriculum. It was more like a German Gymnasium organically related to university curriculum.

⁵Ibid., 11.

⁶Ibid., 12.

⁷Here Kitamori uses "*chokkan*, 直感" (ibid.). This term is a translation of English "intuition" or German "Anschauung," an immediate insight of a truth. In Kitamori's theology, this term and other related concepts play a vital role as an epistemological principle.

⁸Ibid., 12.

at any time. One day, reading in the New Testament, Kitamori was caught by the words of Jesus in the Gethsemane prayer: ". . . nevertheless, not as I will but as You will" (Matt. 26:39). In this word Kitamori found the One Being who "possesses the will that unceasingly watches and leads my life in the midst of existence [seemingly] under chances."⁹ This was the beginning of his "providential faith." An initial solution to Kitamori's "existential" problem was thus given: Life is not at the mercy of blind chances, but under the will of God.¹⁰

In an essay for *Ryunan*, the internal periodical of the school, written shortly after this discovery of providence, Kitamori expressed his recognition:

"When we become able to make interchangeable entities '[our] life' and 'the manifestation of [the will of] Providence,' then we have learned what religion truly is. Religion is that we make ourselves possessed by the Most High. '. . . nevertheless, not as I will but as You will.' Everything is in order with this. . . . Only in the peace which one obtains from this [praying word of Jesus] is true peace humanly possible; here life is no longer at the mercy of chances."¹¹

The words of the Lord praying in the garden made so strong and deep an impression on the mind of the boy Kitamori that he was immediately convinced of the truth expressed by these words as the valid solution of his existential agony.

Unlike many of his contemporary Japanese (for instance, his later philosophy teacher, Hajime Tanabe, who had difficulty in assimilating Christianity into his

⁹Ibid., 13.

¹⁰"Providential faith" is *setsuri shinko* [摂理信仰], which is Kitamori's coinage. "If I call this will of God as His 'providence,'" Kitamori writes, "is it not this very providence that should save me [who stands on the edge of a cliff facing down an abyss of nihilism]?" (Ibid.)

¹¹Ibid., 14-15.

thought,¹² Kitamori knew no obstacle in receiving the "revelation" and committing himself to it. It seems he knew no doubt about the notion of God's providence, not to mention God's existence! The way for Kitamori to walk from now on was definitely given to him by the word: ". . . as Thou wilt." We can characterize this as Kitamori's intuitive conviction which can stand as truth prior to any rational support, an axiomatic intuition as it were. The truth, for Kitamori, is something to be given to a sensitive individual's intuition and obtained intuitively. Further, this intuitive way of appropriating Biblical words is one of the typical features of Kitamori's theological thinking.

The "solution" obtained from the prayer words of Christ was, however, only a tentative one for Kitamori, bound to become problematic shortly. He took divine providence as the will of God, which is "law," calling on him to become conformed to the law. He began to make strenuous efforts to remain in this "providential" sphere of

¹²During high school years in Tokyo, his native city, Tanabe was under the influences of Uchimura, Uemura and Ebina. He said elsewhere that to young students at that time Christianity was something "unavoidable"; every thinking student was confronted with it in one form or another. Tanabe also received a strong impression of Seiichi Hatano (1877-1950), one of the most prominent Christian philosophers, who lectured on primitive Christianity at his high school. In spite of this strong Christian influence, Tanabe was not fully convinced of the truth of Christianity until about four decades later. He "had the feeling of having his eyes opened to the truth of the Christian Gospel for the first time" when he worked on his "Philosophy of Repentance." Yet, Tanabe's Christianity is not "orthodox" (Yasushi Kuyama and others, "The Development of Tanabe Hajime's Thought," *Japan Christian Quarterly*, 47 [Summer 1981]: 140). It is interesting to observe a contrast between Kitamori and Tanabe in their appropriation of Christianity with regard to environment, influences and accessibility to Christian thought.

God. Initially he did not doubt he could stay in the sphere.¹³ Just as he wrote, the making manifest of divine providence in one's own life was to him the essence of religion. "Even though God's grace is bestowed upon us," Kitamori contended, "we cannot claim that the grace is made manifest in us, unless a joyful life, which must emerge from grace be converted to good will manifest [in our moral life]."¹⁴ We observe here a change of Kitamori's themes. Initially he was in a deep existential uncertainty and God's gracious providence was a liberating discovery for him. Now equating God's providence with divine will, Kitamori here implicitly argues how to conform to divine will. His concern here is with the question of how to live up to the ethical norm implicit in divine providence. Now the existential question is not with the uncertainty caused by the intuitive feeling of blind chance, but with how to

¹³The young Kitamori here identifies the divine providence with God's will in the sense of law. This seems a "diffuse" use of the concept "providence." This concept usually denotes "the Fatherly love and care of God, his beneficent providential control of all that happens" (Alan Richardson, "Providence," in *A Theological Word Book of the Bible* [New York: McMillan, 1950]), and its connotation is rather "evangelical." In fact, Kitamori understood "providence" in this sense when he wrote that "here [in the Lord's prayer word at Gethsemane] it is shown that there exists the Possessor of a Will behind my life ruled by chances, a Will which unceasingly looks after me and guides me," *Auto I*, 14. His identification of providence and law seems to be a "confusion" in the mind of the young Kitamori. Possibly, the reason for this is the double meaning of God's will. On the one hand, the will of God is understood as being manifest in this "accidental and nihilistic" world as His providence; but, on the other hand, God's will is also His will which obliges an individual to become conformed to it. What links providence and law is, therefore, the concept of the will of God. In fact, however, providence is God's will to sustain the fallen world despite man's disobedience to His will as law. Perhaps in this "confusion" we find a "remote" reason for Kitamori's negative appraisal of the reality of the created world and law.

¹⁴*Tbid.*

manifest the divine will in one's own ethical life. In other words, in Kitamori's thought, the meaninglessness of life is now overcome by knowing that there is the divine Will behind all the happenings. In order then for him to remain in this Will it is now necessary to live in conformity with the Will. Here in a rudimentary form, we see that an existential problem, an ethical imperative and a religious longing merge into a unity in the experience of Kitamori in his early years.

Kitamori, in retrospect, characterizes this providential faith as a "legalistic" Christianity devoid of Christ.¹⁵ He calls this "a religion of immediateness"¹⁶ or a religion based upon "divine love immediate [not mediated by Christ]."¹⁷

Contrary to what he previously wrote, Kitamori, a year later, had to confess: "to learn that 'life' is nothing but the denial of providence is a wisdom. This wisdom should come before all the other wisdom."¹⁸ If life is the denial of providence, the result is that man only falls back again into that nihilism of chance. And worse than the previous nihilism, he now knows he himself is responsible for this falling back.

In the meantime he was reading voraciously in Pascal, [Raphael] Koeber, [Henri F.] Amiel, [Carl] Hilty" and in much of Kanzo Uchimura.¹⁹ He also mentions

¹⁵Ibid., 17.

¹⁶ 直接的の宗教 , ibid.

¹⁷ 直接的なる神の愛 , ibid.

¹⁸Ibid., 18.

¹⁹Ibid., 15.

the names of Kierkegaard,²⁰ Dostoiyvsky,²¹ and Karl Barth.²² According to Kitamori, he was introduced to the emerging dialectic theology through the works of Kumano and Kuwada.²³

From the fall of 1932 to early 1933, he was "imprisoned under disobedience." He was in the darkness of trials. He was brought down to an abyss to gaze at his own misery and sinfulness, being constantly threatened by the thought of divine judgment. It was the Psalmists in the Old Testament and the great Russian novelist, Dostoyevsky, that accompanied him in the struggle for light. They taught him not to escape from this terrible lot, but rather to face up to it.²⁴

In June 1934, Kitamori came across a scholarly work on Luther's *Lectures on Romans* by a "Lutheran" theologian Shigehiko Sato (1887-1935).²⁵ It was this work that definitely freed him from the chains of providential faith and led him into the grace of Christ. Immersed in this work, Kitamori recognized his deep sinfulness as he learned from Luther that he had sought God not for God's own sake but for the

²⁰Ibid., 24.

²¹Ibid., 25.

²²Ibid., 22-23.

²³Ibid., 33.

²⁴Ibid., 36-38.

²⁵*Luther's Fundamental Ideas as Found in His Lectures on Romans* (Tokyo: Seibunsha, 1965) on this work and the author, see below, 118-120.

sake of his own peace.²⁶

But, he says, this was not an abrupt change in his faith. He had been on the way to that breakthrough.²⁷ Prior to "the Luther experience," in the spring of the same year he jotted down two notes, suggesting something momentous in his theological development: "the abandoned [by God for sin] is now picked up [by Him in grace], this is Christianity" and "If Thou did not pick me up, I would not put my trust in Thee."²⁸ These are confessional words, he says, indicating, "the dawn [in me] of a material [content-filled] faith in Christ," as contrary to the previous providential faith with no Christ (as its content).²⁹ Kitamori says that he was unconsciously waiting for this breakthrough, since he had already been aware of the

²⁶"I was then irresolutely wavering between immediate faith [直接性の信仰] and faith in Christ. It was this book [of professor Sato], or rather Luther himself in this book, that struck me with a definitive blow. The Luther given to me in this book was that Luther who confessed his ultimate self-recognition that to seek God for one's own sake is not faith but sin. This very point [of Luther's self-recognition] knocked me out completely. . . . Hitherto I had never sought and loved God for the sake of God; I had thought of God for my own sake. . . . I had now only to submit myself to God's judgment." (ibid., 51-52).

²⁷Ibid., 52.

²⁸Ibid., 41.

²⁹Ibid., "Now [in these crucial words for my spiritual pilgrimage] the Savior who would pick me up was about to appear on the stage; not the Christ preconceived in abstract manner but the living Savior who was now to replace the providential faith with faith in Himself. This is the dawn of a qualitative-material faith in Christ [質的内実的キリスト信仰]." With this specific terminology Kitamori means a personally experienced and lived faith in Christ. In other words, it was an evangelical faith in Christ the Redeemer, as contrary to formal and legalistic faith in providence which so far had captured his mind because of its conceptual clarity but seemed to him to lack in something "vital." Luther's faith was to Kitamori "strong" because it had a "vital" content (ibid., 52-53).

futility of providential faith. He needed only a final little "push" to an authentic conversion. "Neither Barth nor Kanzo Uchimura had provided me with the definitive push."³⁰ Luther was the only one who "destroyed my providential faith totally" and helped his breakthrough.³¹ Thus obtaining faith in the grace of Christ, Kitamori from now on was on the way of winning one theological insight after another.

In this connection, we note Kitamori's striking "competence" in theology. He was yet a high-school student at the age of eighteen in a remote country city; it was only two years since his first acquaintance with the Bible. Still, to some extent he was versed in the recently introduced dialectic theology through reading of the works of K. Barth or introductions to his theology alone. Not even baptized yet, Kitamori could regret that the highly sophisticated Swiss theologian or Uchimura had been of no help to his struggle for a light in Christian faith!

It is still more striking to us to learn from his autobiography that under the agonizing spiritual crisis and even before deciding to be baptized he was thinking critically of the nature of a true theology:

Those who dare to be ambitious to build a [system of] theology for the sake of theology were like those who, though wanting to stand on the side of this world, steal the material from the world beyond and try to make shrewd carvings from the material, which are worth only contempt. . . . If it is only a scholarship for the sake of scholarship, theology is nothing but 'a dead dog' (Hegel). If there is ever a true theology at all, it must be born only from a true faith. In order that we may be given a true faith, we must die to this world and despise theology In order for a true theology to be born, contempt for theology is

³⁰Ibid., 52.

³¹Ibid.

necessary."³²

This looks to be a very "mature" reflection for a high-school student brought up in non-Christian religious and cultural environment and at the threshold of his Christian faith. One might almost wonder whether or not an autobiographical anachronism is the case here.³³

Upon his transition from the providential faith to the faith in the grace of Christ, Kitamori was baptized on August 19, 1934, at the Lutheran Church in Kumamoto. A testimony of Kitamori to a new faith, given immediately after the baptism, runs: "Man [becomes] the more miserable, God the holier, Christ the nearer."³⁴

As a young student searching for a firm ground of existence, Kitamori found the clue to it in the work of Sato on Luther, began to go to a Lutheran Church in his native city of Kumamoto and became a Lutheran. He never forgot his Lutheran roots in faith and theology.

In historical retrospect, it seems to be "providential" that the first Lutheran missionaries to Japan began their work on the remote island of Kyushu four decades earlier. In fact, before Kitamori's baptism, Kumamoto had been the center of

³²Ibid., 48-49.

³³"I cannot recall of whom I had in mind when I wrote this. . . ," says Kitamori in his own editorial comment, "these sentences appear like yelling at 'the spirit of wickedness in the heavenly places' [Eph. 6:12]. In fact, one cannot deny that this kind of spirit can very well become an actuality. It can be actualized in myself" (ibid.).

³⁴Ibid., 58.

Lutheran missionary activities.

This is, therefore, an appropriate place to sketch the beginning history of Lutheranism in Japan. The first Lutheran missionaries to Japan were sent by the United Synod of the South in the United States. In 1888, the Board of Missions of this Lutheran body resolved to establish a mission in Japan.³⁵ The first missionaries from the synod were J. A. B. Scherer and Rufus B. Peery. They arrived in Tokyo in 1892. The arrival of the Lutheran mission to Japan was three decades late in comparison with the aforementioned missionary organizations. As latecomers, they looked for an untouched region perhaps with a bit of pioneer idealism. By way of an "accidental" acquaintance with an American teaching English in Saga, a city located on the western edge of Kyushu, these first missionaries chose this city as a field for their work and the Board in the United States approved it.³⁶ On Easter Sunday, April

³⁵On the history of a Lutheranism in Japan, in addition to B. P. Huddle's work: *History of the Lutheran Church in Japan* (New York: the Board of Foreign Missions-the United Lutheran Church in America, 1958), which was mentioned in note 116 of Chap. II, see also Takeshi Fukuyama, ed., *A History of Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Tokyo: Ruteru-sha, 1954), Sueaki Utsumi and B. P. Huddle, *A Brief History of the Japan Lutheran Theological Seminary* (Tokyo: Japan Lutheran Theological Seminary, 1959), Kurt Walter Biel, "The First Two Decades of Danish Lutheranism in Japan" (M. A. diss., Washington University, 1948), and Edward C. Eskildsen, *Historical Sketch of the Lutheran Church in Japan* (Shizuoka, Japan: privately printed stencil document, 1972). No recent historical work on Lutheranism in Japan is available presently, but it is said that the Historical Department of Japan Lutheran Theological Seminary is preparing a new one for the occasion of the first centennial of its history in Japan in 1993.

³⁶Huddle comments on this strategy: "Shortly after Peery arrived in Japan the new missionaries undertook to decide on a specific field of work, and looking at it in historical perspective, it cannot but be regretted they had moved as they did. Had they looked over the whole Empire they could scarcely have found a more difficult place in which to begin. . . . Scherer and Peery seemed to have an idea that they

2, 1893, the first public Lutheran worship was held in Japan. It is reported that seven converts were baptized the first year.³⁷ In the course of five years, the converts totalled about sixty, and in June 1899 the first Lutheran Church in Japan was organized in Saga.³⁸

The Lutheran missionary work in Japan was later supplemented by the missions of the United Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church and the General Council of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in North America. In 1910, a cooperating body was formed by the three Lutheran missions, called the Joint Conference of Lutheran Missions Cooperating in Japan.³⁹

While the mission of the General Council located its missionary work in Tokyo, the main field of the work continued to be in Kyushu. Worthy of mention is the name of J. M. T. Winther (1874-1969), a Danish-American missionary of the United Danish Evangelical Lutheran Church. He was a life-time missionary in the literal sense, arriving in Japan for the first time in 1896 and serving as pastor, administrator and teacher until his death in Kobe in 1970 at the age of ninety-six.⁴⁰

wanted to undertake work in a place where they would be approaching those reached by no other mission and the Board endorsed this plan," *Lutheran Church*, 73.

³⁷Biel, 10.

³⁸Ibid., 11.

³⁹Ibid., 21.

⁴⁰I had the privilege personally to hear him lecture over the Old Testament and the New, while attending Kobe Lutheran Bible Institute between 1966 and 1967. The vigorous sound of the old teacher's voice and his "archaic" Japanese rings in my ears even today. He died while he was a professor at Kobe Lutheran Theological Seminary, where I am presently a faculty member. Winther dedicated his whole life

Upon arrival in Japan, Winther had no contact with the missionaries of the United Synod of the South in Kyushu, apparently not yet knowing about the Lutheran mission already started there. But he soon came to know the name of Peery. While reading *The Japan Mail*, an English daily printed in Yokohama, a port city near Tokyo, he found an article written by the missionary in Saga. Sending a letter to Peery, Winther received in reply an invitation to come to Saga to discuss possible cooperation. The meeting resulted in the Danish-American missionary soon joining the work already started by the United Synod of the South. The joint missionary work gradually expanded, and the Winthers moved to another city called Kurume to start new work there. During this period several national workers were added.⁴¹

The small missionary efforts were beginning to bear fruit. By 1905 there were four Lutheran congregations with 114 members in the region. At this time the Lutheran church in Kumamoto where Kitamori was baptized was built and started its evangelistic work. As the missionary work progressed, the need for a theological seminary for the training of national workers became clear. The first missionaries, Sherer and Peery, had longed to establish a seminary at the earliest date possible.⁴² Eventually, in September 1909, a Lutheran Seminary was established in Kumamoto, at

to missionary work for Lutheranism in Japan. Mention must also be made of A. J. Stirewalt, who, though arriving a decade later than Winther, also had a whole-life ministry in Japan, almost parallel with the Danish-American missionary. Stirewalt died while he was a professor of the aforementioned seminary. His gentle manner of teaching is still vivid in my mind.

⁴¹Biel, 13-15.

⁴²Utumi-Huddle, 10.

a missionary's residence with four students enrolled. In addition to the expansion of activities, the joint Lutheran mission opened a Middle School for boys, Kyusho Gakuin, in April 1911, in order to "supply the need for efficient Japanese workers in evangelistic work."⁴³ Simultaneous with the establishment of Kyushu Gakuin, the seminary was reorganized as the Theological Department of Kyushu Gakuin.

Kumamoto had been the center of Lutheran missionary work for two decades with the seminary, Kyushu Gakuin, and a "big" congregation located there. In the meantime, the work was expanded outside Kyushu, in Osaka, Kyoto, Nagoya and Tokyo. Together with this geographical expansion of evangelistic activities, the vision of the Lutheran contribution to theology and evangelism grew. The Kyushu-centered strategy was not considered very favorable to the realization of the Lutheran mission in Japan. Thinking of the future strategy, the missionaries and national leaders considered relocating the seminary to Tokyo. Now, a few of the former students with academic aptitude had finished their theological studies in the United States and returned home and a few others with higher theological training joined the faculty of the seminary. Together with missionary teachers, the national staff persons were ready to take on their share of academic responsibilities. After a few years of preparations, the Board of Trustees of the Kyushu Gakuin, in the fall of 1924, decided that the Theological Department should move to Tokyo. Once the decision was made, the work for the relocation of the seminary proceeded quickly. The seminary buildings on the new site in Tokyo were complete in August of the next year, and the

⁴³Biel, 19.

dedication was held on September 10, 1925, now officially known as the Japan Lutheran Theological Professional School.

It is appropriate to insert a note on Shigehiko Sato. His work on Luther, which served as a dissertation for his doctoral degree from Kyoto Imperial University, was the first academic treatise in Japan specifically on the Christian religion.⁴⁴ It was this book that was instrumental to Kitamori's definitive conversion. Sato was first a student at the Tokyo Imperial University. Then he transferred to Kyoto Imperial University and graduated from there.

As a Christian, Sato was strongly influenced by Uemura and for a while helped in his pastoral and evangelistic work. Confessionally, he was a Reformed.⁴⁵ But since his student days, in search for the certainty of salvation, he was strongly drawn toward Luther. In the meantime, one of his earlier works, *The Young Luther* (published in 1918), caught the attention of J. M. T. Winther of Kyushu Gakuin.

⁴⁴Sato himself spoke of this: "This dissertation of mine was the first one purely Christian and purely theological, to which the imperial university granted the degree. Therefore I deeply felt I should be responsible [for future Luther scholarship in Japan], and my devotion to this study was strengthened still more" (*Fundamental Ideas*, 4).

⁴⁵Although his primary concern was with Luther and his theology, Sato was equally interested in Calvin, retaining his Reformed heritage. From his short essay on the plan for his future study included in his *opus magnum*, we recognize that Sato wished to clarify the nature of Protestantism for Christianity in Japan, by seeing Luther and Calvin as identical in the understanding of the Gospel: "I hold that Melancthon was not the successor of Luther at all; it was Calvin who was the true successor. The late Professor Karl Holl . . . had more interest in Calvin and held him in high esteem. . . . Only those who have studied Luther can clarify why Calvin could supplement Luther's theology" (ibid., 385). It was also part of Sato's work that he translated a section of Calvin's *Institutio* as well as his commentaries on Romans, Ephesians and Philippians.

This Danish-American missionary quickly recognized the potential of the young scholar, and invited him to be a special lecturer for the Theological Department in Kumamoto.⁴⁶ Sato gratefully responded positively to the invitation, and at the same time accepted a pastoral call from a Reformed congregation in the same city. Sato began to teach at the Theological Department in 1920, while also serving as the pastor of the Reformed Church. Sato's initial connection with the Lutheran Church was now established.

Two years later, in 1922, Sato found an opportunity to study in Germany at Tuebingen under Otto Scheel and in Berlin under Karl Holl.⁴⁷ After staying in Germany for two years, he returned home in 1924.⁴⁸ He was then installed as professor at the newly reorganized Lutheran Seminary in Tokyo. "It was not too much to say," remarks Sueaki Utsumi, a retired Lutheran leader and one of Sato's disciples, "that our Church, which had been inclined toward humanism and had

⁴⁶Fukuyama, 190.

⁴⁷While teaching at the seminary and serving as a pastor, Sato found it difficult to continue his scholarly studies. In the meantime he preferred to study more of Luther's theology in Germany. Knowing this wish of Sato, the Lutheran Seminary offered to financially support Sato's study in Germany under the condition that Sato would also contribute to the seminary with his Luther studies (Sato, 363).

⁴⁸Assisted by Karl Heim who visited Japan prior to Sato's departure for Germany, Sato first went to Tuebingen to study under Otto Scheel about whose achievements on "the young Luther" Sato had already heard in Japan. Under Scheel, he studied about the relationship between Luther and German Mysticism. Then moving to Berlin, he continued his study on Luther and German Mysticism under Karl Holl. He learned Holl's critical methods and his viewpoint of the significance of the Reformation. In Berlin he arrived at the idea of taking up Luther's *Romans* as his material for a systematic dissertation on the Reformer's thought. The foundation of Sato's dissertation was prepared in its outline during his stay in Germany (ibid., 365-367).

existed in a remote part of Japan, was first awakened to Luther's evangelical faith by this man [Sato]."⁴⁹

Prior to World War II, the Lutheran presence in Japanese Protestantism was not very visible. In general the Lutheran contribution to Japanese Protestantism has been modest. The combination of the temporal lag of the arrival of Lutheran missions and the "unstrategic" choice of the place for their initial work may partly account for this very modest influence.⁵⁰ But it is to be noted that the first missionaries had a clear consciousness of the necessity of Lutheran contributions to Japanese Protestantism. This can be observed in the document written in connection with the formation of an independent Japanese Lutheran Church. It reads as follows:

We believe that we are commissioned by the Lutheran Church in America to establish the Lutheran Church in Japan--not in a spirit of rivalry or sectarianism, but because we believe that the Lutheran Church has a mission to fulfill in Japan, a contribution to make to the Christianity of Japan; and that it is our God-given duty and privilege to make this Lutheran contribution to the Christianizing of this nation. We believe then that we are here to plant the Lutheran Church on Japanese soil. . . .⁵¹

Kitamori, perhaps without knowing this desire of the pioneer missionaries, early felt a

⁴⁹Utsumi-Huddle, 30.

⁵⁰"The first forty years [of Protestant mission in Japan (1860-1900?)] which our [Lutheran] church had missed was, in a sense, a golden era for evangelism in Japan. . .," wrote Fukuyama, "When our [Lutheran] church started its mission work, it was an era of reaction [against Christianity] and it was most difficult time for evangelism. In addition to this, the evangelistic policy of the first missionaries [of our church] resulted in the selection of a field which was most conservative and most difficult to evangelize, namely Saga in Kyushu. Since Kyushu was the center of our evangelism for a long time, our church was not able to establish the bases for evangelism over all of Japan. . . ." (Fukuyama, 3).

⁵¹Here quoted from Biel, 37.

calling to this mission of making a Lutheran contribution to Japanese Christianity with his own version of Lutheranism.

We are now back to Kitamori. It is around the time of his baptism that he was thinking about his future studies, giving thought to the study of linguistics or English-American literature at Tokyo Imperial University. His teacher in English managed his classes so competently that Kitamori became fascinated by language study, particularly the etymological analysis of vocabulary.⁵² It is of interest to mention this because he often used etymology in both scholarly discussion and popular exposition of faith, regardless of whether he used Japanese, English, German, Latin or Greek. It is his understanding that etymology is a tool by which to grasp profound implications often hidden under the surface of the common usage of words.⁵³

An incident, however, moved Kitamori's toward thinking seriously about theology instead of linguistics. One of his friends, brought up in a Christian home of

⁵²"Prof. Kazuo Nakamura [in English] infused into me an immense interest in linguistics. . . . [Once made enthusiastic about his classes] I began to imitate even his very gestures. . . . Often I felt very much interested in analyzing the English word etymologically," tells Kitamori of his enthusiasm about etymology (*Auto I*, 64-65).

⁵³In the following we shall meet many cases of Kitamori's etymological analysis and his discussion of the analysis. A presupposition underlying his use of etymology is his "metaphysical" understanding that words, often composite forms (such as prepositional prefix plus a simple form of a verb, e.g., in connection with "symbol," *sym-ballein*, provide clues to the inner dynamics of the human understanding of reality. To Kitamori, a change in the usages of a word is not merely accidental with the flow of time, but it involves an inner necessity so that if one properly analyzes a composite word, he can retrace an inner necessity of reality itself, thus enabling one to uncover an important secret hidden under the surface of words. See on this feature of Kitamori, for instance, his dealing with "Creed and Symbol" in *Creeds*, 70-71.

Anglican faith, came to him one fall evening with a serious spiritual problem. This friend confessed that he had no choice but to commit suicide if he could not find the answer to the problem. The problem was that this friend sincerely attempted to fulfill every "iota of the law" and thus glorify God, but what he actually experienced was a total failure in this pursuit. Kitamori helped him greatly by pointing to the wounds of Christ, "a little like Statupiz to Luther," as Kitamori says, because he himself had just gone through the same spiritual abyss.⁵⁴

The Gospel, though proclaimed, is still hidden, thought Kitamori, and even many of the believers are suffering under the curse of the law; his lifework must then be the study of theology, a study which should serve for the clarification of the Gospel as a truly glad tiding.⁵⁵ Though hesitant, initially due to some misgivings on theology and the necessary sacrifices, he decided for the study of theology.⁵⁶

In April 1935, Kitamori entered the Lutheran Seminary at Tokyo. At the very start of his new life, he witnessed two tragic incidents. One was a train accident on the way to Tokyo. A little girl, following her mother on a railroad crossing, was run over by the very train Kitamori was on and he saw the little victim's mother beat the ground in a vehement wail. A bad omen, he thought at first, but this accident

⁵⁴*Auto I*, 67-69.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 73.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 75. To Kitamori, it was a sacrifice to give up entering the prestigious university "only" to enter an unknown lesser "professional school." Thus, he characterizes this decision as a "kind of *shukke*, 出家," a Buddhist term for entering a monastery or the priesthood.

seemed to tell him that his very calling from now on should be to minister, as a man of the Gospel, to such people as the mother helplessly wailing in the face of a absurd reality, "the people who were at the very bottom of absurdity."⁵⁷

The second tragic incident was the premature death of professor Sato at the Lutheran Seminary on the very day of Kitamori's registration. Sato died of cancer in the prime of his scholarly career. Though he felt deep sorrow at his dreamed-of teacher's funeral,⁵⁸ Kitamori learned to stand on his own feet, alone with the Lord Christ whom he believed to be his sole Teacher as well as Redeemer. He also learned to "relativize" all the human authorities, be it Sato, Uchimura, or Luther. It was this experience, assures Kitamori, that saved him from falling victim to a dominant "Barthian captivity" of Japanese theology.⁵⁹

It seems that these sad experiences intensified Kitamori's sense of the tragic dimensions of reality and sharpened his "sensitivity to the Gospel,"⁶⁰ an intuitive sensitivity that feels the Gospel has to do with "reality at its very bottom."⁶¹ The

⁵⁷Ibid., 79. The expression "the people who are at the very bottom of absurdity" is "*donzoko no ningen*, どん底の人間" in Kitamori's own terms.

⁵⁸Once he decided to study theology, Kitamori was determined to study it under Sato, especially about Luther. It was the presence of Sato at the Lutheran Seminary in Tokyo that made him decide to apply to this seminary. At Sato's funeral, Kitamori thought he might as well give up his studies at the seminary, saying to himself, "to stay at the seminary without Prof. Sato anymore is meaningless. . . . I can quit the seminary right away" (ibid., 84).

⁵⁹Ibid., 86. This expression "Barthian Captivity" is Kitamori's coinage.

⁶⁰In Kitamori's terminology, *fukuin e no kankaku*, 福音への感覚 .

⁶¹In Kitamori's terminology, *donzoko no genjitu*, どん底の現実 .

incidents thus contributed toward ingraining a sorrowful base as the ground-tone in his theology of God's pain.

Development of Theological Thought

At the seminary, Kitamori was an independently thinking student, and even an autodidact in theology. He devoted all the time of his theological pilgrimage to an ultimate recognition of the truth of the Gospel.⁶² In his autobiography, though it may sound strange, Kitamori does not mention any theological influences he might have had from seminary teachers. "Externally, my seminary life was poor and lonely," he confesses looking back, "but internally [within myself] it was a life in which I was given something definitely essential."⁶³

What does "externally" mean? He says he had ample time to think by himself. When we now compare this silence and his later reference to the professors and teachers at Kyoto Imperial University, we can infer that the seminary teachers were not equal to Kitamori's theological theme and concern.

What was the teaching staff like at the seminary at that time? E. T. Horn was the president lecturing in the Old Testament, C. W. Hepner succeeded Sato in church history, and J. K. Linn was responsible for the New Testament and Greek. Besides these three American professors, there were two Japanese teachers, Inoko

⁶²"The nature of Musashino [the name of the site of the seminary] which surrounds the seminary was the best class-room for me; she fostered me tenderly. . . or while viewing Mt. Fuji far away in a small silhouette against the sky colored by sunset, I pondered upon the Gospel day and night," wrote Kitamori (ibid., 96-97.).

⁶³*Auto II*, 55.

Miura who trained the students in practical theology and, the most important of all to Kitamori, Noboru Asaji who taught systematic theology (dogmatics, ethics and philosophy) and English. According to Kitamori, this professor in systematics, who was educated at Philadelphia Lutheran Seminary in the early 1920s, was not fully in tune with Kitamori's theological disposition. "This professor disliked Luther and preferred Melancton," he recalls, ". . . and the Melancton he presented in classes was a strange one emphasizing the free will, a troublesome Melancton to the Lutheran Church, and Prof. Asaji's lectures almost seemed to instigate us to keep distance from Luther."⁶⁴ Since Kitamori had this impression, it is not difficult to see why he went his own way for theological maturation during his seminary years. Not very pleased with his teachers of theology, Kitamori trained himself to think independently.

Although the external circumstances were "poor and cold," his inner, "spiritual life" was enriched and grew from one insight to another. He spoke of "daily progress, monthly leap," as he recalled the pace of his spiritual and theological progress during the second year of his training.⁶⁵ In fact, it was during this very year of 1936 that the crucial notion of the Pain of God was definitely formulated in

⁶⁴Kitamori's utterance in a panel discussion held in the ninetieth anniversary of Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church: "The Ninetieth Anniversary of Lutheran Church in Japan--Its Heritage of Faith," *Ruteru* (the JELC organ, November/December 1971).

⁶⁵*Auto I*, 158; "Speaking with a bit of exaggeration, my spiritual life around 1936 was a continuous eye opening [for theological truth], with a pace of 'daily progress, monthly leap' (日進月歩). I can say that the core which forms me now began to be born around this time" (ibid.).

his thinking.

Early in February 1936 he wrote in his diary the following words:

The Pain of God, all things in this world of ours can be viewed under the single viewpoint of the fact of the Pain of God! Irrespective of our knowing it or not, we [always] exist under the Pain of God. To me, the meaning of the world is the Pain of God. What else does the Bible show us but the Pain of God? Faith and the Pain of God, faith is the faith in the Pain of God. What I write about and what I speak of are but to point out the Pain of God. . . . Christianity should never give its central significance to anything but to the Pain of God. The Pain of God must occupy the center of Christianity. Even 'faith' is never allowed to occupy this place.⁶⁶

We clearly observe that the all-embracing dominance of the Pain of God in Kitamori's theology had even here gained its clear contours.

We now review the *genesis* of the concept of the Pain of God. How was the concept born in Kitamori's inner world along the way of his spiritual pilgrimage? His own account will shed light on our understanding of it. The concept of the Pain of God has as its presupposition Kitamori's most personal experience of his own sinfulness. Among other sinful thoughts of his, Kitamori secretly wished, out of jealousy, the death of his rival student at the seminary,⁶⁷ and this sin in himself tormented his conscience. When, to his deep dismay, this wish came true two years later when the friend died of a brain infection, he recognized himself as one never-forgivable; he felt condemned as if falling infinitely deep into the darkness, into non-existence.⁶⁸ In other words, this experience made him feel he was brought before the

⁶⁶Ibid., 178-179.

⁶⁷Kitamori became jealous of this student, "because he was Sato's most loved disciple," he says later (ibid., 99).

⁶⁸Ibid., 103-104.

tribunal of God's inexorable judgment.

In June 1935, the very word, *Kami no Itami*, the Pain of God, "visited upon him" for the first time.⁶⁹ "God never abandons them — sinners, betrayers and detestable ones — not only that, but even lets Himself be slain on the cross for the sake of them. O what an amazing love, an unfathomable Pain of God! A God never abandoning the hopeless, a God who loves those sinners at the cost of His life exactly because they are detestable!"⁷⁰ To Kitamori, this notion and the very word of *Kami no Itami*, the Pain of God, came to him "as if it were from heaven."⁷¹ It, to him, was virtually a divine revelation, the revelation of God and His love. "The second visit of the word" occurred on him in November of the same year. Kitamori grasped the grace of God as the Pain of God this time more clearly; by what else can it happen but by the Pain of God that He holds in His grace the rebellious sinners who stand against Him "with spears in their hands," says Kitamori quoting P. T. Forsyth.⁷²

The Pain of God is a love that loves the unlovable, the detestable, the abhorrent, a divine love impossible to human grasp, and for this love to come about, therefore, there is a cost of an immeasurable pain on the part of God. The love for

⁶⁹In June 1935, His word [*Kami no Itami*] visited on me [for the first time], and it captured me long. For the time, my whole thought kept flowing into this word day and night" (ibid., 109).

⁷⁰Ibid., 107.

⁷¹"This word [*Kami no Itami*] came down to me as if from heaven [あたかも天来のもののように] and hit the very heart [of what I experienced as the Gospel]. No other word than this very word [could be adequate for the Gospel], at least then" (ibid., 109).

⁷²Ibid., 129.

the unlovable is impossible without pain on the side of God. This radical contrast between man in rebellion against God and God embracing this very man in His unfathomable love is the foundation of Kitamori's concept of the Pain of God. Kitamori held therefore that if one would truly recognize the Gospel, he must first recognize his radical rebellion against God.

Kitamori wrote down a few notes on the Christmas Day of the same year and they indicate this polarity between man's sinfulness and God's inscrutable love in Pain: "Christmas is a day of joy for man, but it is a day of pain for God, and only those who know this can [truly] celebrate Christmas. Man is the disgrace of God. 'Never of God, ever of Christ' [Never belonging to God, ever belonging to Christ], this is the tiding of Christmas, granting a man like me to celebrate Christmas, and allowing those who do not belong to God to celebrate Christmas."⁷³ The formula "Never of God, ever of Christ" is Kitamori's equivalent to Luther's *simul justus et peccator* or, as he puts it, "*semper peccator, semper justus*."⁷⁴

While he was making decisive progress in the development of theological insights, Kitamori's writing reveals very little reflection on the issues of the time. The so-called "2.26" (meaning February 26, 1936) coup attempt by young military officers involving the assassination of three cabinet ministers does not seem to have found any

⁷³Ibid., 139.

⁷⁴Ibid., 113.

substantial resonance in his theological reflections.⁷⁵ (The steadily threatening menace of Nazism, which occasioned the issuance in German of *Barmen theologische Erklärung* [1934] did not, it seems, catch Kitamori's attention.⁷⁶) Occasionally he touches upon the contemporary situation, but in very general terms, and the impressions those occasional references provide are an indication of Kitamori's understanding of worldly reality: it was under an irresistible external force, like an inexorable destiny. Rather, he seems to have been consumed with the idea of the Pain of God more than anything else. To Kitamori, the link between reality and theological concern lies deeply in the Gospel, that is, in the Pain of God. He thus concentrated on this idea, which to him alone was the solution to the most radical and fundamental

⁷⁵The situation around this time described by Utsumi-Huddle was as follows: "[In 1930, two prime ministers were assassinated, one after the other, by ultranationalists.] Then in 1936, because of the 'February 26 Incident' (an unsuccessful military revolt led by army officers), the capital was placed under martial law. The Japan withdrew from the League of Nations and established Manchukuo, in consequence of which the Japanese and Chinese armies came into open conflict on July 7, 1936" (Utsumi-Huddle, 36).

⁷⁶Not only to Kitamori but also to many of the contemporary theologians, "worldly concern" in the sense of concrete participation in worldly affairs was invisible in their theological thinking. One example of this can be seen in a letter written by Karl Barth, dated September 15, 1940, to a Japan missionary by the name of Egon Hessel. Referring to a request made by a certain Matsutani of the permission for translating a selection from his treaties, Barth wrote in this latter: "He [Mr. Matsutani] wrote to me asking the permission to translate a selection of my treaties, a selection made by him in a highly original way. A strange thing of this selection is that no single treaty on political themes which I have written these years is included" (quoted in Yoshiki Terazono, *A Shooting Range of the Theology of Barth* [Tokyo: Jordan-sha, 1987], 13: Barth's word is my translation from Terazono's Japanese translation). However, we are not concerned here with an evaluative judgment of Kitamori's theological tendency except descriptively to point out this "a-political" feature of it, the feature which has remained one of the consistent features in Kitamori's thinking.

problems of human reality. This concentration on the most essential may have been his so-called "transcendence to the very bottom of reality," a paradoxical expression found in his later terminology.⁷⁷

In the meantime, Kitamori had an important encounter with Anders Nygren's *Agape and Eros*. He first became acquainted with this classic work on love as a result of overhearing two professors talk about the book. "What I have learned from this work was. . . how exciting theology can be, and it had a decisive influence upon me," he remembers.⁷⁸ As a specific feature of this book, Kitamori points out that it operates with "material thinking" in distinction from "formal thinking." "Material thinking" in Kitamori's concept, is a thinking in theology guided by the concrete contents of the Gospel. In distinction to this, "formal thinking" is thinking that gives a primary emphasis on formal concepts such as the word of God, the revelation of God, the knowledge of God. These formal concepts must be filled with contents to be

⁷⁷This orientation in the "transcendental" sphere in Kitamori's thought can be seen in a passage from *Logic*, 64: "The activity for social renovation by the 'love' of God must be based upon the *radical* [根源的] salvation through the 'Pain' of God. Social salvation does not know yet the bottomless abyss [無底の深淵] of man's being. Agonies originating from social irrationalities are something still seeing the bottom [有底的]. The children of this world, however clever in the affairs of an age, do not know about the true feature of man, nor about the bottomlessness of man's fallen being. . . . The believers, while trying to be relevant in their activity for social renovation, must recognize the bottomless abyss which is seen open beyond the bottom of relative problems. The believers have to pray an intercessory prayer for the guilts of the fallen beings." With this recognition of the bottomless abyss of man's being was related man's recognition of the Pain of God, and vice versa. But how the relationship between the Pain of God and activity for social renovation has been related in Kitamori's theology *in concreto* remains to be seen in a later chapter.

⁷⁸*Auto I*, 159.

concrete and meaningful. In theology, Kitamori holds, "material" (content) must precede form (container), although the "formal" cannot be dispensed with to the extent that theology is a rational discipline operating with "logos," or concepts with logical consistency.⁷⁹ By this time, Kitamori was aware of the priority of the "material" vaguely, but it was Nygren's book that definitely brought him to this recognition. "Nygren introduced me into 'the theology of the love of God' over against 'the theology of the Word of God' of Barth." He acknowledges that Nygren rendered a very important service to his later theology of the Pain of God.⁸⁰

A few months after this initial enthusiasm for Nygren's work, Kitamori came to feel that there was something deficient in Nygren's thought. According to an analysis made by him in retrospect, Nygren's *agape* remains "very vague with regard to its Christological structure."⁸¹ When Nygren faced the question of why God loves the sinner, this Swedish theologian answered: because it is God's nature to love; God's love toward the sinner is spontaneous and without cause. "But," Kitamori ponders, "is not the love, with which God loves the sinner, 'the men worthy of hatred,' more than a [simple] love which flows naturally from His nature? It certainly is the love of God [that loves the sinner], but is that love of God simply God's natural love? Is it not the love of God based upon the Pain of God? Is it not so that exactly because of this nature of God's love, this love of God had to crucify His only begotten

⁷⁹Ibid., 160.

⁸⁰Ibid.

⁸¹Ibid., 165.

Son?"⁸²

In these penetrating questions about Nygren's position, Kitamori offers a crucial distinction with regard to the love of God; God's natural love and His love based on His Pain, God's love of a higher order. Something totally new, "supernatural" love seems to emerge from God's "natural" love, when He loves sinful human beings who are worthy of His "hatred" and unworthy of His love. The cross of Christ marks a new phase in the development of God's love! But we will leave this issue for later discussion, only noting it now as a striking feature of his view of development in God's love.

According to Kitamori, Wilhelm Dilthey said that his whole work is only an elaboration of what he thought and planned in the years of his youth. As a student at the seminary Kitamori felt a strong affinity with the observation of this German philosopher, and later at the peak of his career, he confirmed that this was also his own experience.⁸³

Kitamori first thought of the notion of the Pain of God in the age of his youth. One more remark concerning the genesis of the pain of God is necessary here. The text of Jeremiah 31:20 has been considered as the Scriptural basis of Kitamori's theology. In this verse we read: "Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child? For though I spoke against him, I earnestly remember him still. Therefore my heart

⁸²Ibid., 201. A strong expression of Kitamori is "the men worthy of hatred." This expression is "*nikumubeki mono* (憎むべき者)" in Kitamori's Japanese.

⁸³Ibid., 158.

yearns ["aches(!)" in an older Japanese translation of the Bible Kitamori used] for him; I will surely have mercy on him, says the Lord." But Kitamori's term "the Pain of God" was not inspired by this Biblical word originally; rather the concept was his own theological idea independent of the Jeremiah verse.⁸⁴ His "discovery" of the Jeremiah text came about two years after the initial "visit" of the notion of the Pain of God.⁸⁵ This means that Kitamori's theology of the Pain of God as such does not depend on a single Biblical verse. It does not, Kitamori would say, stand or fall with an exegetical decision as to whether or not the Hebrew word *hamah* actually means what Kitamori puts into his concept of the Pain of God.

"Lord, give life to me, thy servant, in order to preach Thy love," prayed Kitamori when he was about to graduate from the seminary on March 19, 1938.⁸⁶ The Sino-Japanese war was, he recalls taking on steadily worse dimensions. "To be given life at that time," he says, "was almost a miracle. It was an age of death in the literal sense."⁸⁷ But it was not an ordinary wish to live but an evangelistic desire that urged him to this prayer, assures Kitamori.

⁸⁴Quoting his own diary note from early 1936 that "Amos saw the righteousness of God, Hosea the love of God, Isaiah the Holiness of God, and Paul saw the Pain of God," Kitamori explains that the name of Jeremiah was then not linked with the Pain of God and this shows that he as yet did not know the Jeremiah text. "In other words, I used the term 'the Pain of God' as my own term. In other words, it is a theological *terminus technicus*." . . . But I believe I can point out that, 'the Pain of God' being used then as 'my own' term, it was not a theory but a [real expression of my] life" (ibid., 2).

⁸⁵*Auto II*, 11.

⁸⁶Ibid., 54.

⁸⁷Ibid.

After graduation from the seminary in March 1938, he immediately proceeded to philosophical studies at Kyoto Imperial University, staying there for four fruitful years until 1941. In contrast to the seminary milieu which was "poor and cold externally," the life at the university in the ancient capital was "a continual satisfaction and tension" as well as "challenging."⁸⁸ There was "something intense and vehement"⁸⁹ in the academic milieu of the university. This "something intense and vehement" was for Kitamori the philosophy of Kitamori Nishida (1870-1945), founder of the so-called Kyoto School of Philosophy. Kitamori began to study the philosopher's thought. Reading meticulously in the master's *Fundamental Problems of Philosophy* in two volumes, he was enthralled by the beauty of the logical structure in Nishida's thought of "the dialectical Universal" in which the determination of the individual by the Universal is simultaneously the determination of the Universal by the individual.⁹⁰ This is a philosophical idea with Buddhist as well as Hegelian connotation. Kitamori was deeply captivated by the beauty of the structure of the thought as such.⁹¹ This was what he calls the "something intense and vehement" he met at the university.

By the time he entered the university, however, Nishida had already retired from regular lecturing. It was his prominent disciple, Hajime Tanabe (1885-1962),

⁸⁸Ibid., 58.

⁸⁹ 強烈なもの

⁹⁰Ibid., 60.

⁹¹Ibid.: "思想の美しさと言うものに魅せられた."

who was Kitamori's philosophy professor there. Kitamori says he learned from Tanabe what thinking means. The impression on Kitamori's mind of Tanabe's stringent thinking was so deep that he could not help but think that the thinkers he had known so far were not thinkers in any proper sense. Kitamori recalls that the intensity of "thinking" as such, or thinking formally considered, was the first thing Kitamori acquired at the university before any "material" learning.⁹²

In addition, lectures on Kant, the history of philosophy, the introduction to comparative religion,⁹³esthetics, ethics, psychology--all were fascinating to Kitamori. This academically "intense and vehement" milieu and its influences almost devoured all of Kitamori's previous accumulation of theological concepts.⁹⁴ He admits that the influence of "Nishida Philosophy" is conspicuous in his programmatic formula: "The theological axiom is simultaneously the theological reality, and the theological reality is simultaneously the theological axiom."⁹⁵ "But what influenced me," Kitamori

⁹²Ibid., 62: Looking back, Kitamori comments on the "theological world" in Japan in comparison to philosophical thinking at Kyoto and says: "My acquaintance with the theological world might be limited, but frankly speaking I had never met in it at that time a kind of 'thought' [思想] to which I was being exposed at the philosophical department of Kyoto University. I felt hollow a saying like 'Theology is a scholarship based on revelation and of the Word of God, and not like philosophy which is a human scholarship'" (ibid.).

⁹³Shin'ichi Hisamatsu was the professor of this discipline, and Kitamori was impressed deeply again by the beauty of a thought presented by this professor on the basis of Zen (Rinzai) Buddhism (ibid., 65). We take note of Kitamori's strong inclination of the esthetic side of human thought (cf. note 91 above).

⁹⁴Ibid., 63.

⁹⁵Ibid., 60.

insists, "was purely formal, being limited to the logical structure [of my thinking]."⁹⁶ "As to the material aspect [of my thought]," he says, "the 'much more intense and vehement' [the Pain of God] held me so firmly that it protected me from the vehement influences of the material side of that philosophy."⁹⁷ We shall come back to this issue of whether or not it is possible for the influence of the Kyoto School on him to be purely formal, as Kitamori claims. Here it is sufficient to note that the Kyoto School had a crucial influence upon Kitamori's theological formulation.

In this connection we briefly touch upon Kitamori's personal encounter with Nishida. This retired philosophy professor, occasionally visiting the campus, looked to his admiring eyes like "a walking classic of philosophy."⁹⁸ On one occasion, Nishida held a series of lectures on campus on *The Problem of Japanese Culture*, a series extending to several sessions. This series of lectures dealt with the threatening prospect of war and was for Kitamori a very special occasion to hear Nishida lecture. According to Kitamori, Nishida struggled with a metaphysical elucidation of the relationship between the house of the emperor and the Japanese citizenry. Although Kitamori was versed in "the system of Nishida Philosophy to some extent," the lecture was difficult for him to comprehend. He was, however, left with a clear impression that the thought of Nishida was "quite rhythmical and filled with movement."⁹⁹ "I

⁹⁶Ibid.

⁹⁷Ibid.

⁹⁸Ibid., 74-75.

⁹⁹Ibid., 75; " きわめてリズムカルで動的 ."

bodily felt this character of Nishida Philosophy," says Kitamori, "a character we can describe as carrying a musical rhythm."¹⁰⁰

Later, this lecture of Nishida was printed and Kitamori quotes part of it for reflection in historical perspective. Nishida's viewpoint in the lecture was that "the house of the emperor is to be thought of as a manifestation of the world of things that are mutually 'absolutely contradictory and at the same time identical,' the house as the Eternal Now embracing both the past and future, and we are from and to this house through and through. This is the idea bringing up and helping all the people."¹⁰¹

Although we cannot here trace the detail of Nishida's thought, the point is clear that it was a philosophical justification of the house of the emperor as the absolute value of the Japanese nation in the world. This less-critical justification of the national polity of Japan was criticized severely by many thinkers in the postwar years as only conforming to the tides of the time. His philosophy was brought into discredit for a while after the war.¹⁰²

Judging in historical perspective, one feels deeply disturbed that a

¹⁰⁰Ibid.

¹⁰¹Ibid., 75-76.

¹⁰²It must be recognized in fair-mindedness that the philosophical thoughts connected with the names of Kitaro Nishida and Hajime Tanabe are not of second or third class," urges Kitamori, "one should not be obstinate in this. Instead of easily putting on these thoughts labels like 'idealistic,' 'bourgeois,' and 'war-cooperative,' . . . one should rather examine the proper content of their thoughts. It is necessary to recognize the power of these thoughts and to acknowledge its significance [in the history of thought]" (Kitamori, "Nishida Philosophy and Tanabe Philosophy--the Secret of the Absolute Nothingness" [originally written in 1955], *Philosophy and God* [Tokyo: Nihon-no-Bara sha, 1985], 209).

philosophy, struggling sincerely to come to terms with reality, can be easily led to supply a *de facto* rationalization and justification of the existing order which is dominating the day. This danger is obviously true of theology as well. It is much to our interest that after the war when Nishida's philosophy was discredited, Kitamori came to its defense as valid in its philosophical substance.

Here, however, we are more interested in the question of how Kitamori in his autobiography reacts to Nishida's viewpoint in retrospect. He only observes that the philosophy of Nishida then faced the "absolute contradiction," and was then trying hard to solve it by the philosophical axiom of "identity [of the absolute contradiction]." ¹⁰³ In this reference, Kitamori raises certain criticisms to Nishida's viewpoint indirectly, but avoids getting into the specifics of the problematic elements of Nishida's thought in the lecture. Also in this reference Kitamori recalls that critical time when the problem imposed upon philosophy by militarism of the time was the problem of theology as well. ¹⁰⁴ As we shall see shortly, Kitamori's own theological posture, *mutatis mutandis*, does not seem far from the dangers found in Nishida's thought, namely the tendency to *a posteriori* rationalize and justify the dominating order of things.

We are not here concerned to indict the people who lived in a harsh situation; true, anyone who was not actually involved in the situation then may not say anything condemnatory without due historical considerations. We are concerned only

¹⁰³*Auto II*, 75.

¹⁰⁴*Ibid.*, 76.

with how Kitamori looked at the situation of Japan and the world at that time. Was the problematic situation, for Kitamori, after all, something to which the individual is only to acquiesce because of its formidability, or something to fight against for a *better* situation however small the improvement may be? What was (and is) his view of the problem of the state if it "does wrong?" A clue to the answers to these questions *may* be found in the following note of Kitamori. On the day Nazi Germany concluded a non-invasion treaty with the Stalin Soviets, August 24, 1939, Kitamori saw his nation like "a reed shaken with the wind" and wrote a memo on this:

The state itself always belongs to the world rebellious against God's love, the broken order of creation, the world of 'destruction and tribulation' and is never an object of God's love nor led by the will of God nor under God's blessing. It is only by Christians' prayers and their services rendered in faith alone that makes the state an object of God's love, makes it led by the will of God and under God's blessing. In truth, a state was sustained only by Christians.¹⁰⁵

A detailed exegesis of this note of Kitamori would lead us too far afield, and it is not appropriate here. At this point, we will only raise questions and make a few reflections. We certainly can subscribe to his description of the state's rebellious nature to the will of God. Kitamori recognizes the undeniable darkness of the state. It certainly is true that the intercessory prayers of the believers sustain the state (although in what sense it concretely does is not clear here). But to us it seems that in his view (as far as this passage is concerned) something essential is missing, that is, God's positive reign over his creation even if fallen. Kitamori's posture seems to be

¹⁰⁵Ibid., 178, and Kitamori added: "[Written on] the day when the fatherland is being shaken like a reed in wind."

an *a priori* resignation toward the problems of this world.¹⁰⁶ Is the darkness so absolutely dark that in it every cat must be gray? In other words, is there no theologically *substantial* significance of the relative betterment of this fallen reality which can claim our serious commitment? Is this, in essence, a quietism with regard to the socio-ethical and political reality, or is this so profound a recognition of the hopelessness of the fallen reality of humanity that there is little positive meaning in any attempt to work for the betterment of the world? We leave this question open for our further reflection below.

During his university years, Kitamori virtually gained the substance of his theology. This substance was eventually to crystalize in his *The Lord of the Cross* published in 1940, a year prior to his graduation. The accumulation of theological insights, which had been gained by intensive reflections over several years, came to fruition by the "formal" help of the philosophy of the Kyoto School.

We also note as essential the role Barth's theology played in the crystallization of Kitamori's theological position. He sharpened the contour of his theology in a constant confrontation with the Swiss theologian. As early as the fall quarter of his "freshman" year at the university he "poured almost all energy into the

¹⁰⁶In 1963, Kitamori has the following to say in connection with a peace movement: "If we only consider a peace movement on [the level of] the roaring sea-surface [of reality], a prayer alone [for world peace] could be said as abstract. But what I am talking about now is the radical 'bottom,' deep down beneath the surface. This 'bottom' is 'the very bottom' of human reality, a formidable place where mere human 'efforts' are totally helpless and where things like human efforts avail little and there can be only intercessory prayers" (*My Reflections on Life*, [Tokyo: Kyobunkan, 1963], 13).

reading of K. Barth's *Kirchliche Dogmatik*, I. 2.¹⁰⁷ This volume of this great dogmatic work deals with *das Wort Gottes* and includes the prolegomena on dogmatics. In his struggling with this volume, Kitamori found pages 974-976 to deviate fundamentally from the Reformation's understanding of the Gospel.¹⁰⁸ These pages were so crucial to him that he copied them verbatim for intensive study and analysis.¹⁰⁹ For Kitamori, these pages were to provide the keys to the understanding of Barth's theology. An analysis of Kitamori's criticism of Barth's standpoint will be made in a later chapter. Here we only indicate Kitamori's understanding of Barth in the pages of the latter's dogmatics. Kitamori found in these pages a Barth who contended that the Reformers and their Orthodox successors elevated the doctrine of reconciliation to *articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae* in an arbitrary act to control the Word of God instead of being controlled by it.¹¹⁰ Further, according to Kitamori, Barth considered the word of "*Versöhnung nur als ein Moment*" in the whole line of divine history of salvation. Kitamori thus saw in Barth a blatant denial of the main article of Reformation.¹¹¹ In one sense, his initial work, *The Lord of the Cross*, is not only a programmatic writing of his theology but also his first public

¹⁰⁷*Auto II*, 96.

¹⁰⁸"I can say," writes Kitamori, "this discovery [of Barth's deviation from Reformation] was made around this time. My criticism of Barth has been carried from then til the present day by this discovery" (ibid.).

¹⁰⁹Ibid., 98.

¹¹⁰Ibid., 97.

¹¹¹Ibid., 99.

Auseinandersetzung with the theology of Barth.¹¹²

With *The Lord of the Cross*, written when he was twenty-three years of age, Kitamori thought that he had reached the goal of theological pilgrimage. This initial book was originally written for the organ of the Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church, *Ruteru*, in the form of ten installment essays from January to December 1938. The size of the book is less than a hundred pages; *The Lord of the Cross* itself about seventy. Though it seems impropotional to the size, that is, to the extent of the coverage of dogmatic *loci*, Kitamori was fully convinced of its "revolutionary" significance to the history of theology. He thought that he had seen something awful and crucial and said it in this book.¹¹³ Echoing what the prophet Isaiah saw in the temple, the awfulness of the holy God (Isaiah 6), Kitamori wrote, "I even fear that one who has seen such an awful and crucial thing and said it were to die instantly."¹¹⁴ Kitamori was also convinced that this work would have a crucial significance for the future of the world.

"What I have now reached, the love based upon the Pain of God, which is 'theological] axiom at the same time [the theological] reality' is like a seed,"¹¹⁵

¹¹²Kitamori's criticism against Barth written down in his "theological" diary (and presented in his Autobiography) is reproduced verbatim in his first book, see *Cross*, 1-6.

¹¹³*Auto II*, 206.

¹¹⁴*Ibid.*

¹¹⁵The expression in Japanese is: 神学の公理即神学の現実性 . On this formula we are to go into more detail below, but so much can be said here that the Pain of God is the expression of the totality of the Gospel; it is at one time the theological axiom, by which one recognizes all the theological truth. At the same time

said Kitamori, "and in this seed there lies the whole of the tree which shall grow to the full in future even if it is not yet actualized. In order for this whole thing to be actualized within a soul even of a single individual. . . , it will take more than *five hundred years*. And when this whole thing is *actualized*, the whole universe will reverberate and tremble with exhilaration."¹¹⁶ But Kitamori did not reckon with an immediate acceptance of his discovery, for "it is indeed common that a good and great thing is initially often considered as insignificant ([Karl] Hilty)."¹¹⁷

The idea of the love of God based upon the Pain of God is the objective truth which had now been fully recognized by Kitamori. There is no room anymore for further material modification of the idea of the Pain of God. The Pain of God is "as absolute and eschatological as the order of reconciliation, allowing now no room anymore for [conceptual] development."¹¹⁸ The love based upon the Pain of God is

it is the "field" in which all the theological "realities" (creation [the fallen reality cursed by sin], redemption and sanctification, Gospel and Law, faith and love, etc.) are all dialectically integrated to the totality of the Gospel, the Pain of God. In this sense the Pain of God is of both formal and material character.

¹¹⁶Ibid., 212.

¹¹⁷Ibid., 207.

¹¹⁸Ibid., 220. This portion is Kitamori's "editorial" insertion, thus reflecting his lasting view on the nature of the Pain of God. When Kitamori says that the concept of the Pain of God is absolute and eschatological, it is tantamount to saying that this concept is the final concept of the Gospel in history. In fact, he contends directly or indirectly that he has unified all the major theological developments into the final form in his notion of the Pain of God. It is therefore a theological parallel with Hegel's claim in the history of philosophy that all the philosophical currents found their final destination in his philosophical system. Perhaps, it can be Kitamori's logical claim that the truth of the Pain of God even exceeds the Hegelian claim, embracing, as the divine truth, the latter as well.

therefore not a relative human theological notion; it is the divine reality itself, and as such it exhaustively expresses the divine essence. It is from this soaring idea of the Pain of God in Kitamori that we can understand the radical consistency in his theological thinking. "The theme is already given, only the variations of the theme remain," he wrote.¹¹⁹ The variations are to be developed by logical necessity and consistency.

The theme is now definitively given! With this we can safely set the *terminus ad quem* of Kitamori's theological development in its material aspect. Going on to live in the historical reality of the human world, he now has in his hand the ultimate truth as the key with which he was sure to unlock virtually all the problems and realities of human existence. What remains is to deepen the understanding of the truth of the Pain of God and to apply it to the realities, thus bringing the salvific truth into its historical realization.¹²⁰

¹¹⁹Ibid. The expressions "theme" and "its variations" seem to be borrowed from Karl Barth. Defending the necessity of theological endeavor in the Reformed Church, Barth calls attention to Calvin's example. According to Barth, Calvin wrote *Institutio* first, then about practical issues. In this connection, Barth says: "In a word, he [Calvin] first had a *theme* and *then* developed its variations; first he knew what he wanted and then wanted what he knew" (*The Word of God and Word of Man*, trans. Douglas Horton, [New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1957], 224). Kitamori was familiar with this work by then.

¹²⁰Kitamori is convinced of the finality of the Pain of God in the theological quest for truth. But he makes room for development in theology. For this, he has recourse to the order of reconciliation and sanctification, and locates the finality of the Pain of God in the former and the development in the latter. To Kitamori, theology from now on is an endeavor to *apply* the final truth to reality to the effect that the Pain of God may be actualized as the power of salvation both existentially and ethically.

Kitamori's Career as Professor and Church Leader

Upon graduating from the university in 1941, Kitamori immediately became an academic assistant there. Simultaneously, he lectured at Lutheran Seminary in Tokyo. The Pacific War broke out on the eighth of December of the same year. This caused all the ties between the Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church and the Mission Boards in America to be broken. It also affected the Lutheran Seminary; Professors Horn and Linn returned home to America immediately after the outbreak of the war. The leadership of the seminary fell on the Japanese professors. In September 1943, Kitamori became a professor in systematic theology at the seminary. As part of the wartime efforts, the government, in April 1943 enacted the Professional Schools Law, according to which, along with the Kyodan, the theological seminaries should also merge so that the number of the seminaries became minimum. The Lutheran Seminary which was located in Tokyo was now to be incorporated into a new Eastern Japan Theological Seminary together with Reformed, Methodist, Baptist and other denominational seminaries. As the result of this merger, Kitamori became an assistant professor of this integrated seminary.

Due to ill health, Kitamori was not drafted for the battle field. He remained as a teacher at the seminary during the war years. His main concern was theology, and he continually pursued his reflection on and clarification of the Gospel as the Pain of God.

The fruit of his efforts during these precarious and uncertain years was *Theology and Creeds*, which was published in July 1943, in the midst of the war. In

the preface, Kitamori wrote of the content and context of this work in brief sentences:

Three years ago, in *The Lord of the Cross*--a note to dogmatics, I have already spoken the main theme [of my theology]. The treatises included in this volume are variations of the main theme. But, due to an historical event of the formation of the United Church of Christ in Japan [Kyodan], these variations now carry different resonances which were not heard then.¹²¹

Although this work is not an extensive one either--counting a little over a hundred pages--Kitamori enunciated the whole of his theological methodology in it. At first sight, *Theology and the Creeds* seems to present a highly abstruse treatment of the necessary development within the Ecumenical Creeds (development from Apostolicum through Nicaeno-Constantipolitanum to Athanasianum) on the one hand, and these Creeds' inner relationship with the Reformation creeds, particularly with Confessio Augustana. The abstruseness is further intensified by the fact that it was carried on in a singular passion for the clarification of the relationship between the immanent Trinity and the economic Trinity, and also for the relationship between the Trinity and Christology, operating the whole with the highly sophisticated dialectic logic of the Kyoto School. In this work Kitamori aims at bringing home the idea that the whole history of creedal development, or the understanding of the Gospel, was about to reach its final goal in Japan in what he called a Christological Trinity in his theology.¹²² Even in this highly abstruse treatise can one discern the spirit of the

¹²¹*Creeds*, 3.

¹²²We shall deal with Kitamori's doctrine of trinity in a later chapter in more detail. We want here only to mention Kitamori's strong consciousness of an historical *raison d'être* of the newly formed Kyodan as the Church of Japan in the universal Christianity, and Japan in the world as the nation. "All that can survive through the judgment of history," asserted Kitamori, "are only those things that bear the

time--a strong nationalism.

An attentive reading of this work uncovers more of Kitamori's passionate commitments to the actual situation of the Church's and his own existence in the war regime. A peculiar and impressive synthesis is observable, an abstruse logical operation and concrete situational application. While dealing with purely dogmatic intricacies, Kitamori drew from them a concrete "evangelical" foundation of Christian consolation, endurance and inner victory under the "heavy pressures of reality," as he refers cryptogramically to the wartime governmental pressure.¹²³

In this work we find a viewpoint of momentous significance for his later church-political career. Already at that time Kitamori seriously took up the problem of the theological foundation of the Kyodan--the problem which was to become one of the major problems of the postwar Kyodan. In so doing, he reflected on the content of the "Summary of the Teaching" as the basis for a real unification of Protestant

necessities [of historical mission] upon themselves. Unless [the Kyodan with its confession implied in the Summary of the Teaching] bears upon itself this necessity [of creedal mission], it would be only futile to cry for Japanese Christianity, Japanese Theology, or Japanese Creed. We should not use the name 'Japan' in vain. Once we use it, we have to assume responsibility toward it. The way to discharge this responsibility is to make her something necessary [in history]. We make her eternal in this way" (ibid., 68).

¹²³"What is the reality [現実] in which we are placed today? The reality must be taken at its very face value. What is it that makes a reality a reality? Reality asserts itself as if there would be nothing besides. Reality presses. The self-assertion of reality is its pressure. Reality refuses to be absorbed by whatever else. Reality is self-contained and self-served. . . . Reality stands besides faith, but it refuses to be absorbed by faith. It rather presses faith" (ibid., 15). We read this paragraph, substituting the wartime national polity for "the reality." Truly, "let the reader understand!"

denominations. Kitamori for one was firmly convinced of the formation of the Kyodan as the design of God whose providence is at work in the confusion of men.¹²⁴

The "Summary of the Teaching," included as Article V of the Kyodan Constitution, states, as the main content of the Christian faith, that "the triune God--the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit--who is revealed by Jesus Christ and witnessed in the Holy Scripture, forgives sins, justifies, sanctifies, and bestows eternal life upon those who believe, through the redemption of the Son who became incarnate, died and rose again for the sins of the world and its salvation."¹²⁵ Kitamori called into question the doctrinal validity of this formula's wording, particularly the description of "the triune God revealed by the Son." It is right, holds Kitamori, to say that the Son reveals the Father. But to say that the Son reveals the triune God, according to him, would be not acceptable should one follow the traditional understanding of the Trinity. Doctrinally it is "a confusion of men" pure and simple.¹²⁶ And yet, lending his own theological insight to the "confused" formula, Kitamori believed he could make manifest something revolutionary in church history which lies implicit in this formula! Kitamori finds here his idea of Christological Trinity formulated, a synthesis of the doctrine of immanent Trinity and economic Trinity through Christ as "the field" in which the divine Three Persons find themselves. The Christological Trinity, to

¹²⁴Ibid., 39.

¹²⁵Ibid., 37.

¹²⁶Ibid., 39.

Kitamori, is the structure of the Gospel, that is the Pain of God.¹²⁷

In other words, formulated by the preparatory committee of the formation of the Kyodan, this formula "accidentally" contained Kitamori's new insight into the truth of the Gospel. Thus, the Kyodan, together with Kitamori's theology, was now assigned a church-historical mission for the universal Body of Christ in the ultimate clarification of the truth of the Gospel. And with this thought, Kitamori was now able theologically to justify the coming into being of the Kyodan.¹²⁸ Thus the Kyodan, a new United Protestant Church in Japan born out of the confusion of the world but by the providence of God, now became the *Sitz im Leben* for Kitamori's theology.

Kitamori dealt with these highly abstruse theological issues during the time in which the Japanese army was forced to steadily retreat and Tokyo and other major cities were under heavy air-raids. It is astounding to observe that Kitamori was

¹²⁷Ibid., 44-45.

¹²⁸Under the headline "The Theological Significance and Task of the Kyodan's Constitution" in *Creeds*, Kitamori advocated a positive acceptance of the Kyodan, giving a theological significance to its coming into being. In spite of all the governmental pressure for its formation, Kitamori contended, the Kyodan should have its place in "the history of the Gospel" [福音史]. In other words, in reliance on God providence which is at work in human confusion, the Kyodan, with its specifically being Japanese, could carry an historical mission for the new actualization of the Gospel in history. "When we stand on this awareness [of the Kyodan's historical mission], the Kyodan is never a burden imposed upon us by force, but becomes an organ serving the Gospel in a most significant way" (ibid., 36). And, by the help of "confused" formula of the "Summary of Teaching," Kitamori could supply a theological justification and positive significance, even with an eloquence, to the Kyodan formed under the pressure of the wartime government. The critical point is then whether or not things, seen in this way, can be justified at will, losing any thrust for critical confrontation and self-analysis. Is not this procedure similar to Nishida's "a posteriori" justification of the existing order of the nation by the help of philosophy?

sovereign and even heroic in his theological writing in the midst of the war. The situation brought by the war was severe both spiritually and materially, and even university students were drafted into war service. There were naturally a huge number of casualties. Kitamori was not exempted from experiencing the pain of war casualties within the circle of his close friends. In his sovereign manner, however, we notice that he was struggling hard to strengthen faith in the invincible and all-conquering Gospel of the Pain of God, but we, on the other hand, speculate about who would have been the readers of this work at that time and how much they understood Kitamori's intention.

A good measure of nationalism can also be traced behind Kitamori's wartime endeavor in theology.¹²⁹ More circumspect than Kuwada¹³⁰ and Oshio,¹³¹ Kitamori avoided all concrete references in his writings so that he did not need to face any military censorship then, nor churchly criticism later.

This work, composed in war time, reveals much of Kitamori's theological thinking. Further, including the exegetical studies on Jer. 31:20 and Is. 63:15, which were the Scriptural "foundation" of *The Theology of the Pain of God*--his opus

¹²⁹See note 128 above.

¹³⁰See note 95 in Chap. 2. In the same place, though criticizing Kuwata for what he wrote uncritically of the national polity then, Inoue praises Kuwata for Kuwata's sincere endeavor to face the problems of the time and to come to terms with them.

¹³¹Germany, 168: "[In an article entitled 'Torinashi' (Intercession)] he [Oshio] seems to tread on very dangerous ground as a Christian scholar when he intimates that John 10:34 might serve as a rationale for the divinity of the Emperor." Oshio is said to have corrected this mistake recalling that intimation (ibid.).

magnum to come out later--this work is also future-oriented. This is a preparatory work for the *opus magnum*, which had been in preparation during the war. But it is also the statement of his ecclesiological commitment to the Kyodan.

Further, it gives us a singular witness to Kitamori's theological posture of consistency and transcendence. Indeed, his theological writings immediately before, during, and right after the war, all indicate little interruption in the enfolding of his theological theme, showing an undisturbed, monolithic passion and tone. This feature can be seen in *The Character of the Gospel*, his second publication after the war, in which one reads the essays written before the war and treatises immediately after, without noticing any difference in tone and content. Since he was so deeply immersed in his theological struggle with the abysmal depth of human reality, Kitamori paradoxically was able to relativize the history of human suffering on the surface.

In this posture of his theology, Kitamori is true to his own concept of the Gospel, that the truth of the Gospel is the absolute truth, and that, once discovered, there would be no development or modification of the idea of the Gospel as the Pain of God. To Kitamori, theology, as an occupation with the Gospel, is not affected substantially by the temporal situation for the human situation, and is not different from one situation to another; it remains constant in its substance.

The Theology of the Pain of God was ready for publication in 1946, a year after the end of the war; the *kairos* of the work had come. Once published, this book found immediate popular response. Kitamori himself saw that the term "the Theology of Pain" was now in wide circulation. Writing, one year later, in the preface of the

second printing of this book, he confesses that to him this vogue of his theology was totally unexpected, and he was deeply surprised at this.¹³² The virgin work, *The Lord of the Cross*, was not widely understood;¹³³ but this work, which was a further elaboration of the former one, was in vogue! How popular the theology of the Pain of God had become!

Here, however, a closer look at this popularity is due in order to glimpse and anticipate a bit of the destiny of this theology in post-war Japanese Protestantism. Yoshio Noro, a former student of Kitamori, recalls that this book captured the attention of Christians, especially those of the younger generation, with the sweeping effect of "a prairie fire";¹³⁴ they were thirsty and devoid of spiritual values after the war, longing for something to saturate their hearts, and they found in Kitamori's book that for which they searched. But on the other hand, many theologians, especially in the circle of TUTS, did not approve "the *idea*" of "an aching God"; they were critical and even cynical toward it. According to K. Ogawa, already at the publication of Kitamori's *opus magnum*, "the orthodox theologians viewed it with suspicious eyes and they criticized; 'that is not a theology but an essay.'"¹³⁵ Thus, at the very beginning Kitamori's theology experienced a mixed reaction, and the assessment of his

¹³²*Pain*, 9.

¹³³*Auto II*, 167, 171-172.

¹³⁴Yoshio Noro, *God and Hope* (Tokyo: Nihon Kirisutokyodan Shppankyoku, 1980), 454.

¹³⁵Keiji Ogawa, "Formation of the Japanese Type of Indigenous Theology--On 'The Theology of Pain of God,'" *Gospel and World*, 38 (Tokyo: March 1983), 72.

theology has ever been controversial in Japan, even after its gradual international recognition from the early 1960s to the present.

In addition to securing his theological position in Japanese Protestantism, Kitamori simultaneously took a definitive standpoint for his "denominational" affiliation. In November 1947 Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church (JELC) officially announced its withdrawal from the Kyodan as a resolution of the Extraordinary General Assembly held in Kumamoto.¹³⁶ The crucial questions raised by the Lutheran leaders then were the following. Was it possible for JELC to preserve the Lutheran faith within the current organizational form of the Kyodan? If not, was there any possibility in the Kyodan leadership for providing a structural frame in which JELC was able to develop herself as a semi-independent Lutheran Church?¹³⁷

These questions were natural for the Lutheran leaders for two reasons. First, it was confessional consciousness. The Lutheran Church by this time became strongly conscious of its confessional heritage.¹³⁸ While in the process of the

¹³⁶A detailed record of JELC's participation in and withdrawal from the Kyodan is found in: "Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church in its *Process of Participation and Withdrawal* from the United Church of Christ in Japan [the Kyodan]," ed. the Archive Room of Japan Lutheran Seminary (the exact date of editing is not known, but according to the bibliography given at the end of this document, it was edited after 1971, probably around 1972).

¹³⁷*Ibid.*, 18.

¹³⁸Historically it took time for the Lutheran Church to be conscious of its confessional heritage. Early on, many of the first workers were "adopted" ones; the first Japanese pastor, Ryohei Yamanouchi, was from the Reformed; he was actually the brother-in-law of Masahisa Uemura. It was also natural that most of the earlier Japanese teachers at the seminary were also from other denominations (Noboru Asaji, for instance, was from an Alliance church). Lutheran consciousness was gradually awakened around 1925 when the "adopted" workers became aged and the new "born-

formation of the Kyodan immediately before the war, it was the JELC leaders who insisted on denominational autonomy within the Kyodan until the very last phase of the process. In the process, they strongly advocated the idea of the Kyodan as a federation of denominational churches as "blocks" within the Kyodan.¹³⁹ Initially accepted, the block system was soon abolished as the war efforts were intensified.¹⁴⁰ It was this idea of federation the JELC leaders took up again at the table of negotiation with the Kyodan officials. Second, JELC as one of the minor forces in the united church body, was also fearful of being totally absorbed into the denominational "syncretism."¹⁴¹

In the course of the negotiations, held early in December 1946 between the Kyodan officials and JELC leaders, it became clear to the Lutheran leaders that, the Kyodan officials denying the idea of a federation, the answers to these Lutheran

as-Lutheran" teachers began to take teaching responsibilities.

¹³⁹*Process of Participation and Withdrawal*, 10.

¹⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 11; the abolishment of the block system within the Kyodan was unanimously voted for in the first General Assembly of the Kyodan held in November 1942, "no opposing views presented and all calling for an immediate abolishment." The editor comments on this unanimous decision: "[Even within our Lutheran church] there was no opposition or discussion on the abolishment of the block system, although it was we Lutherans that had previously insisted on the block system." It is of interest to note that Kitamori, a few days later, gave to Lutheran pastors a lecture on "A Theological Consideration on the Abolishment of the Block System" (*ibid.*).

¹⁴¹*Ibid.*, 18. Against this fear of being absorbed into "syncretism," Kitamori expressed his view that "even if the Lutheran church is a minority, there will be no fear of it if we Lutherans have a clear awareness of [the evangelical] truth. The Kyodan in fact pays respect to Lutheranism now" (*ibid.* 17).

questions would lie in the negative.¹⁴² Upon this conclusion JELC decided to withdraw and to reorganize an independent evangelical Lutheran church.¹⁴³

This formal decision of JELC did not affect Kitamori's further career as a theologian within the Kyodan. In the above, we already touched upon his theological justification of the formation of the Kyodan as the result of God's providence amid the human confusion. Remaining in the Kyodan, Kitamori was consistent with his theological conviction. Though it is not necessary to go into more detail of JELC's withdrawal from the Kyodan, it greatly interests us to go through a document submitted by Kitamori in May 1947 to the Preparatory Committee of JELC's Reorganization. The title of the document is "Proposals to the Standing Board Committee and to the Committee for the [Lutheran] Seminary Reestablishment."¹⁴⁴ This document reveals his understanding of Lutheranism, the mission of the Lutheran Church in Japan, his position within the Kyodan, his "holy" ambition to Lutheranize this Protestant ecumenical church body. We will dwell on this document at some length.

"There are two crucial issues for a true reconstruction and development of the Lutheran Church in Japan," Kitamori pointed out, "the one is its self-fortification and self-integration, and the other its self-giving and self-opening." JELC, in this

¹⁴²Ibid., 16.

¹⁴³The text of the Withdrawal Declaration is found in: *ibid.*, 10-21. The text in English in: Huddle, *Lutheran Church*, 220-221.

¹⁴⁴I obtained from the Archive Room of Japan Lutheran Seminary a copy of Kitamori's handwritten manuscript of "The Proposals. . ." Following references are made from this document.

critical time, will follow the path of the truth, only when she is willing to do justice to these two issues; otherwise, suggests Kitamori, it would be impossible for her to hope for a future for true Lutheranism in Japan. Kitamori, for one, emphasizes the latter factor; self-giving and self-openness. The truth of the Gospel itself dictates this latter standpoint. The Lutheran understanding of the Gospel, according to him, is the Gospel which embraces the unembraceable, and which is also "the origin of all the evangelicalism." The Lutheran understanding of the Gospel, therefore, must prevail in the Kyodan, a unified church body of Japanese Protestantism. The formation of the Kyodan, in this sense, was not merely a result of ignorant and erroneous confusion, but also an opening for a way to the church unity which *Confessio Augustana VII* deeply longs for, that is, an ecumenical concordance on the basis of the doctrine of the Gospel. JECL, as the Lutheran Church in Japan, would fall into "*contradictio in adjecto*" if she shuts herself up against the "unembraceable" and seeks her own existence for her own sake. Further, Kitamori insists, the *consentire doctrina evangelii* of *Confession Augustana VII* is not to be understood in an abstract manner. It must be materialized in a concrete visible church body, which in the present Japan is the Kyodan.

The JECL leaders were naturally eager to get Kitamori to go along with them in their withdrawal from the Kyodan, but the young theologian with a highly independent theological judgment followed his own convictions, even if he had to go

against an oriental code of "filial piety."¹⁴⁵ Private emotion should not have any say in matters concerning theological truth. Kitamori had to pursue the fulfillment of the ecumenical mandate of the Lutheran Church as he understood it expressed in the *Confessio Augustana*. Self-consciously, he argues that the decision of a theologian's "come and go" must be made theologically, and if made non-theologically, it would only ruin the integrity and credibility of a theologian. It is therefore impossible for him to move from the ecumenical stance in the Kyodan to a denominational position of the Lutheran Church without sacrificing his theological integrity. As long as the Kyodan was open to his Lutheran theology he was theologically obliged to remain in it.¹⁴⁶

Kitamori would suggest the two conditions in which he could return to the "denominational" Lutheran Church without ruining his theological integrity. The one was that the Kyodan should cease to be an ecumenical Protestant Church in Japan, and the other was that the Kyodan no longer would accept his theology.¹⁴⁷

Embracing what he calls "Ecumenical Lutheranism," Kitamori wanted to be a Lutheran in the Kyodan, making his professorship a Trojan horse to Lutheranize Japanese Protestantism. Once the withdrawal of JELC became a fact, Kitamori had no choice but "jumped off from the [JELC] train," and became part and parcel a Kyodan

¹⁴⁵"Pastor [Denki] Honda [one of the Lutheran leaders] tried day and night to persuade me to come home [to JELC]. . . I wanted him to understand my decision. . . I did him *oya-fuko* [親不孝] [disobedience to a parent. . .]. I regard myself as a prodigal son," says Kitamori (*Ruteru* [see note 64 above]).

¹⁴⁶Kitamori, "Proposals."

¹⁴⁷*Ibid.*

man.¹⁴⁸

What were the conditions in the Kyodan under which Kitamori was favored to become one of the most influential theologians for the postwar Kyodan? Kitamori candidly admits that he would never have occupied the professorship at TUTS if it were not for the support of the prewar JELC.¹⁴⁹ Fortunately for him, he was from the Lutheran Church, one of the minor denominations; if he were from, say, the [Reformed] Church of Christ in Japan (one of the major denominations), or the Congregationalists, or the Methodists or the other "major" ones, none of these rivaling denominations would have approved him for long. In fact, it was those "major" denominations mentioned above, the Congregationalists, the Methodists and the other, that supported Kitamori as a counter-measure to that powerful [Reformed] Church of Christ in Japan.¹⁵⁰ Kitamori thus secured his place on the power balance of denominational "rivalry" within the Kyodan.

The position assigned to Kitamori at TUTS, the central theological institution of the Kyodan, was highly satisfactory to him. The document previously mentioned

¹⁴⁸*Process*, 17. A comment of Kitamori in *Ruteru* made on this issue after the Kyodan troubles in the early 1970s draws our attention, because Kitamori's viewpoint is somewhat different three decades later. He now understands that it would be desirable for the Lutheranism in Japan to have an "Ecumenical Lutheranism" and a "Specific Lutheranism." It is necessary to share the Lutheran mission in Japan by Kitamori's Ecumenical Lutheranism and JELC's Specific [Confessional] Lutheranism (*bungyo-ron*, 分業論, in Kitamori's term). Both of them are now desirable and necessary. Without Specific Lutheranism, the Lutheranism in Japan may evaporate, holds Kitamori!

¹⁴⁹Kitamori, "Proposals."

¹⁵⁰Yasushi Kuyama, *Modern Japan and Christianity: The Present* (Tokyo: Sobunsha, 19??), 42-43.

gives a good testimony to how deeply he appreciated his current position theologically;

The Seminary of the Kyodan unequivocally has declared its ecumenical position on theology. It also has assigned to me the lectures over the prolegomena of dogmatics, which, as well known, is by far the most crucial discipline of theology. . . . The Kyodan gave me "a blank check" concerning this crucial discipline. I gave a clear expression of my Lutheran position; the Kyodan, fully admitting this, trusted its ecumenical theology to me. . . .¹⁵¹

In the midst of the Barthian dominance at TUTS, Kitamori understood that he now occupied the key position for the formation of the Kyodan theology.

Once set on this career, Kitamori was able to establish church-political credentials by his own theological conviction, practical wisdom and persuasive eloquence. During the chaotic years of reorganization, the Kyodan had to face difficult tasks of mediating differences of denominational factions, including those "non-theological" all too human factors. Kitamori managed to lead complicated negotiations with his clear logic and oratorical as well as political skills. He thus soon became the "spokesman" of the Kyodan.¹⁵²

In the preceding chapter, we have already touched upon how crucial a role Kitamori had played in the efforts of settling the vital problems of the postwar Kyodan; the restructuring of the organization, the *Kai-ha* controversy and the formulation of the Kyodan's Confession of Faith. Committees were organized to settle these problems. Due to a seniority principle and also perhaps to considerations of denominational power balance, Kitamori did not lead any of these committees as

¹⁵¹Kitamori, "Proposals."

¹⁵²Ogawa, "Indigenous Theology," 72.

the chairman, remaining the second man throughout as the "secretary." However, it is not difficult to discern that in the capacity of secretary Kitamori was the man who substantially provided the committee's solution proposals with theological substantiations and directions.

One therefore could not regard it as a usurpation on the part of Kitamori when he would claim, as he occasionally intimates, that settling the problems and setting the Kyodan on the road again was mainly his work. It was Kitamori who led difficult negotiations with the *Kai-ha* claimers and provided the formula of the solutions to the problem; it was also he who wrote a commentary of the Kyodan's Confession of Faith, the commentary which remains the only one of its kind.¹⁵³

In his own person, Kitamori was functioning as a mediator among the mutually opposing parties within the Kyodan for two decades or so. He was in good cooperative relationships to the senior leaders of the Kyodan (those from before the war), thus winning their trust. Actively joining the young generation of theologians, he pursued solutions of theological and practical problems. In fact, these activities of Kitamori were quite true to the inclusive line of his theology of the Pain of God.

Certainly, the settlement of the problems of the Kyodan wrought by the efforts of Kitamori was not the final one, as the later experiences of the Kyodan painfully demonstrate. In fact, there was a shadowy side in the efforts of Kitamori. Tsutomu Oshio once commented on Kitamori's postwar work in the Kyodan, a

¹⁵³Kitamori, *The Explanation of the Kyodan's Confession of Faith*, (Tokyo: Nihon Kirisuto Kyodan Shuppanbu, 1955).

comment which interests us much here.¹⁵⁴ Oshio was a moderate personality with whom Kitamori himself felt a deep theological sympathy. According to him, Kitamori's theology proved to be a convenient means for those in power in the Kyodan from the war years and who wanted to preserve the church body in the status quo. Unfortunately, the more theological justification of the Kyodan's status quo appeared plausible and logically undefeatable, the more fiercely the opponents (the Kai-ha claimers) reacted against that justification, and they themselves eventually decided to withdraw from the Kyodan and formed their own denomination. Oshio regretted this tragic incident, saying that "they [the opponents] were people more trustworthy with regard to faith."

This senior Kyodan leader acknowledged that for the first postwar decade the foundation of the Kyodan had been provided by Kitamori.¹⁵⁵ To him, however, Kitamori's theology also ran the risk of self-deteriorating into the Kyodan's puppet theology. Oshio blames those in power for their "irresponsible exploitation" of Kitamori's theology, but he also found Kitamori himself responsible for this. So much was Oshio's comment.

Certainly, Kitamori, an attentive observer of the nature of human beings, was never unaware of the "non-theological" motives of those conservative leaders. But his theology did not exclude those unembraceable elements; to Kitamori, God works in the midst of human confusion. Just on this point, however, one notices the

¹⁵⁴Kuyama, *Present*, 34-36.

¹⁵⁵*Ibid.*

strong side and the less fortunate side of Kitamori's theology. His intuition of the deep depravity of this world made visible a proportionally profound implication of the Gospel, that the Gospel is absolute in the sense of all-embracing. This understanding of the Gospel provided a sober perspective of reality. But, on the other hand, his theology tends to grind out the sharp edges of criticism raised by the awareness of the holiness of the divine commandment against all human complacency. A theology on the way or *theologia viatorum*, is bound to be limited, finding it difficult to steer between the scylla of idealistic enthusiasm and the charybdis of facile sanction of the status quo. Kitamori's theology seems a case in point.

"For the Kyodan," Kitamori judges in retrospect, "1950 was the most critical year." It was in the Sixth General Assembly of the Kyodan held in the year that the *Kai-ha* problem was "settled." "At that time we got over that [*Kai-ha* problem], and there have been no serious problems in the Kyodan since then," observes Kitamori.¹⁵⁶ In fact, about two decades from that time, he was able to perform his mission unhindered. His ministry ranged wide. He taught at different seminaries and visited several universities in the capital and elsewhere as a lecturer. As a prolific author he wrote theological articles extensively as well as essays on humanistic themes to Christian publications and secular media alike. Often he engaged himself in broadcasting lectures. In addition to all these activities, he sat on various theological and administrative committees of the Kyodan. In the spring of 1953, he gave lectures on Christianity to the present emperor Akihito, then crown

¹⁵⁶Ibid., 33.

prince. He is one of a few theologians who took pains to communicate the Christian truth to a broader public beyond the hedge of the Christian community in Japan.

Before we go to the next section a short note is to be included as to Kitamori's relationship with his senior colleagues, Yoshitaka Kumano and Hidenobu Kuwada, at TUTS. Kitamori's activities are a sharp contrast to theirs. Both were strongly influenced by the theology of Karl Barth. While their concerns were more strongly oriented to the deepening of theology proper for the Church's ministry, Kitamori rather sought the "applicability" of the Gospel, the Pain of God, to the problem-filled reality of this world. Due to deep differences between Kumano and Kuwada on the one hand and Kitamori on the other in regard to theological conviction, orientation and methodology, it was virtually impossible for each to take up the other's theological viewpoints for critical public examination.¹⁵⁷ It was perhaps practically necessary for both sides, being in the same boat, not to criticize each other openly. However, it was not possible to totally hide the tension; the one criticizes the other by ignoring him or by indirect complaint.¹⁵⁸ In a sense, it should

¹⁵⁷To the lecture by Kitamori entitled "the Spirituality of the Japanese," a questioner made a comment: "The Kyodan is a typical case of the Japanese 'embracing-all-ness' [*mugen-hoyo-sei*, 無限抱擁性] and 'living-together-unorganized-ness' [*zakkyo-sei*, 雑居性]. We can see this, for instance, [the Kyodan's] in *Basic Theories of Mission*, in which everything [seemingly pertinent to the theme] is included anyway. And as a typical case of no communication [for the overcoming of *zakkyo-sei*], we can point out no communication between Kitamori Theology and Kumano Theology" (The Kyodan's Faith and Order Commission, ed, *Indigenization of the Gospel*, [Tokyo: Nihon Kirisutokyodan Shuppanbu, 1962], 65).

¹⁵⁸As for Kumano vis-à-vis Kitamori, there is complete silence except for one case (as far as I know), in which Kumano briefly criticizes Kitamori's concept of Trinity: "There are theologians who contend: 'Although it is true that the Father, the

be understood as quite human, but at the same time quite tragic for the Kyodan. In fact, it indeed means a theological relativism that two types of theology have been poured from the podium at the same seminary without interaction between them. This in fact indicates that the Kyodan was as yet not a united Church theologically. In addition to this, one may wonder how students at the seminary who were to carry the Kyodan in the future won their theological identity.

Now one can safely say that Kitamori's career as a professor at TUTS and an influential church-man of the Kyodan was uninterrupted throughout the two postwar decades. During this period, Kitamori was indeed one of the most influential pillars of the Kyodan.

Kitamori's Career in Decline

Kitamori's influence, as well as the "credibility" of his theology, however, declined abruptly as a result of his way of dealing with the upheavals in the Kyodan in the late 60s and the early 70s in the regard to the Confession of Wartime Responsibility, the problem of the Kyodan's Expo participation and the campus

Son and the Holy Spirit is the One Godhead, the notion of Trinity should be corrected right away which has no "gap" or no "mediation" in it. The unity of the Godhead must be a unity mediated by contradiction' (for instance 'the Theology of the Pain of God'). This is an erroneous standpoint, for it mistakenly puts the Trinity and the being of the historical world on the same level, thus making light of the Lordship of God who is truly the Creator" (Yoshitaka Kumano, *Faith, Church and Doctrine* [Tokyo: Zenkoku Rengo Choro-Kai, 1982], 18). Kuwada has virtually nothing to say about Kitamori's theology. On the other hand, Kitamori intimates the inadequateness of a highly scholarly theology such as Kumano's for the communication of the Gospel to a broader public. Perhaps the following quotation may be directed also to his opponents in silence at TUTS: "Just as we do not recognize as men of literature those who only translate and introduce foreign theologies" (*Introduction*, 149).

turmoil at TUTS. We have seen the course of these events in the preceding chapter. In this section we investigate the theological background of the decline of Kitamori's influence. Our investigation will be an assessment of Kitamori's career as a church leader. Of course, the leading idea of his commitment to the Kyodan infiltrates his ecclesiology. So we will touch upon it when necessary. But the main concern here is to see why Kitamori's influence declined so abruptly. Admittedly, it is still too early to give a full historical account. But it is necessary for us to dare to give an account, though a preliminary one, to discover Kitamori's theological contribution. In so doing, we go only as far as evidence will allow.

Our focus is on the three events which took place around the late 60s and the early 70s: the issuance of the Confession of Wartime Responsibility, the Kyodan's participation in the Expo 70, and the TUTS turmoil. First of all, we recognize that Kitamori was consistent with his theological conviction and principle in dealing with all the problems involved.

As for the Confession of Wartime Responsibility, those who felt an inner urge to issue the confession were deeply troubled over the fact that the Kyodan as yet had not sincerely repented of what it had done during the war. To them, the Kyodan had fallen into grave sins by cowardly cooperating with the military regime, in justifying the war, collecting money for war planes, glorifying the emperor and the nation, abandoning some of the Kyodan pastors to martyrdom, and so on. They felt that there was no excuse for the Kyodan's "crimes"; without repenting squarely over the past sins, there was no true forgiveness and therefore no true future for the

Kyodan as the Church of Christ.¹⁵⁹

But Kitamori saw this issue differently.¹⁶⁰ This we touched upon in the preceding chapter. Here we recapture the main points. First, the Kyodan's main failure was that it had not thought a confession of faith was necessary and had provided none. Second, though certainly insufficient in her prophetic ministry and erroneous in her works during the war, she was still faithful in her priestly ministry--in her intercessory prayers for the state--and in faithfully preaching the Gospel during the war. Third, the Kyodan remained the Church despite all the erroneous deeds because of her preaching of the Gospel, the true sign of the Church. Fourth, compared with the negligence on the Kyodan's confession of faith, these shortcomings in her works

¹⁵⁹ Ken'ichi Kida, a professor at one of Christian universities in Tokyo, spoke of his grandfather who was "abandoned" by the Kyodan: "My grandfather was a minister of the Nazarene Church. When he was seventy years old he was arrested by the military police and forced to make a choice between Christ as divine and the emperor. He was in prison for six months I heard that the wartime Kyodan had taken away the ministerial credentials of persons like my grandfather. Unless the Kyodan had repented of such criminal acts and made the Confession of Wartime Responsibility, I do not believe that I could dedicate myself fully to the Kyodan" (quoted from: "Reassessing," *Japan Christian Quarterly* 45 [Summer 1979]: 158 [see note 125 of Chap. 2 above]). In a personal card responding to my letter in which I wished God's blessing to the inauguration of his moderatorship of the Kyodan in 1987, Rev. Norimichi Tsuji, whose father was a minister of the Holiness Church in Japan, suffered martyrdom during the war and was abandoned by the Kyodan officials, wrote to me something as follows: "I feel something moving deep inside me by the fact that I, the son of a pastor abandoned by the Kyodan, am now entrusted the office of Moderator of the Kyodan."

¹⁶⁰ For the following view of Kitamori, see Heita Mori, "Contemporary Significance," [Japan] *Christian Year Book* (Tokyo: 1969), 48 (cf. note 137 of Chap. 2 above).

did not negate the Church's *esse*. A confession of faith deals with the Gospel upon which alone the Church of Christ stands."¹⁶¹

These viewpoints of Kitamori were clearly formulated in a document which was prepared by the so-called Five-Member Committee which was appointed by the Board of the Kyodan to settle the disturbances within this church body. As the chairman of this committee, Kitamori naturally reflected his inclusive mediating viewpoints in the solution-document. But Kitamori's view of the Kyodan's main problem--failing to provide a confession of faith in the process of the formation of the prewar Kyodan--was rejected by the adherents of the Confession of Wartime Responsibility as distorting the real issue of wartime responsibility. His contention that the Kyodan essentially remained the Church preaching the Gospel even under the pressures of wartime government was labeled an abstract theory. All of Kitamori's viewpoints mentioned above were severely criticized by his opponents as only diverting the very thrusts of the Confession of Wartime Responsibility.¹⁶² To the opponents, the settlement proposal of inclusive and mediating concepts was a typical

¹⁶¹We also pay attention to the following saying of Kitamori: "[Although it is said that there was not much attention paid to Barmen Declaration,] the situation in Japan for Japanese theologians was different from the situation in Germany for the German and Swiss theologians. In Japan the concern of the theologians was that the logos [Gospel] be declared faithfully. The leading theologians in Japan during this [war] period felt . . . that what they [the German and Swiss theologians] were saying was not necessarily essential to the declaration of the Gospel within the Japanese situation" (quoted in Germany, 172). However, we doubt if Kitamori here represents the view of "the leading theologians" at that time, because Kuwada for one tried to come terms with the actual Japanese situation at that time theologically, see note 129.

¹⁶²"Assessment," 159-60.

recurrence of the same "Kitamorian" church-political maneuver by which Kitamori again would try to preserve the unity of the Kyodan for unity's own sake, while not allowing the Kyodan people to confront the serious issues that concerned its ecclesiastical to be or not to be.¹⁶³

True, it is one of the crucial problems inherent to Kitamori's inclusive theology that there often seems to be little room for serious confrontation between "rights and wrongs." One is therefore often compelled to question if it is possible by the theology of Kitamori to provide a real renovation of the Church urged by the Holiness of God. But Kitamori's way of seeing the issues is understandable from his own premises. To him, the *nota ecclesiae* is the Gospel, the Gospel as the message of salvation given to unlovable sinners through the death of Christ, the supreme expression of God's love as His Pain. The Kyodan's wartime insufficiency in prophetic witness did not nullify its *esse* as the Church of Christ, because the Kyodan preserved the preaching of the Gospel, which alone and exclusively constitutes the Church and which is more real and powerful than any human frailties. The Gospel can heal the Kyodan's wounds of sins.

The problem with this position of Kitamori is, once again, the danger of escaping from the painful confrontation with the past and also from confessing sins not only before God but also before man in clear and unequivocal terms. Kitamori was not ignorant of all this. He admitted, in the settlement proposal, the human frailties

¹⁶³Heita Mori, 48.

and the need for serious repentance.¹⁶⁴ The question is, however, whether the actual effect of his theology as a whole was to let the people escape from acknowledgment of their past sins however excusable the situation in human terms.

Be this as it may, for Kitamori it is the Gospel through and through that must reign in the question of the *esse* of the Church. The Kyodan's problem, for him, was her failure to take a confession of faith seriously at the time of the formation of the Kyodan.¹⁶⁵ Thanks to Kitamori's theological contribution the Confession of Faith was given to the Kyodan.¹⁶⁶ The importance of taking the Confession seriously holds true also today. For the Kyodan can stand only on the Confession of Faith.

Here we recognize that the understanding of the Gospel and the understanding of the *esse* of the Church are inseparably linked. What is the Gospel? In fact, the opponents' criticisms raised against Kitamori ultimately are concerned with his understanding of the Gospel. For Kitamori, the Gospel is given an objective

¹⁶⁴Ibid.

¹⁶⁵Kazoh Kitamori, "A Progress of the Kyodan during the Past Twenty-Five Years," *Christianity of Japan* (Tokyo: Sobunsha, 1966), 265. "[Due to this suspension of the task of formulating a Kyodan's Confession of Faith] the Kyodan had to suffer from this [negligence] for fifteen years since its establishment," holds Kitamori here. "Of course, we are to be sympathetic with those leaders during the war, the leaders who were responsible for the establishment process, but it is still necessary to point out their negligence. The first generation men came to impose this vital issue on the second generation men." However, Denki Honda (see note 144 above), a Lutheran delegate in the establishment process of the Kyodan, said the following in 1940: From the beginning I thought that the attempt to unify the churches involved something insurmountable. It is truly formidable to form, out of more than twenty different church bodies, one Church with one organization and one creed" (quoted in: *Process of Participation and Withdrawal*, 10).

¹⁶⁶Kazoh Kitamori, "The Twenty-Five Years of the Kyodan," *Christianity of Japan*, (Tokyo: Sobunsha, 1966), 299.

magnitude, eternally unchangeable truth, the love based upon the Pain of God. It has all the powerful potential to sustain the full range of fallen reality. The question is not one of hearing here and now the Word of God anew; it is rather one of application of the Gospel already discovered. The Gospel as the Pain of God is unchangeable; it cannot change.

Different from this objective view of the Gospel, his critics held that the Gospel involves the believers' subjective living; to believe in the Gospel and to act according to it are inseparable. To them, therefore, Kitamori's viewpoint that the Church can preach the Gospel while falling into "errors" in her works--as was the case with the Kyodan during the wartime--is unacceptable. They hold that when the works of the Church are wrong, her faith is also wrong.¹⁶⁷

In this connection, it is striking to learn that a fundamental ecclesiological difference between Kitamori and Masahisa Suzuki, the issuer of the Confession of 1967, was there already in one of the early postwar-decade publications whose title is *The Church--the Task to Its Formation*, 1948.¹⁶⁸ Suzuki was three years older than Kitamori, that is, of the same generation. Suzuki, although he had Methodist background, had been a student of Barth most of his life. Because of its

¹⁶⁷Hidetoshi Watanabe, a theologian of the younger generation within the Kyodan and a radical critic of Kitamori's theology, maintains that "in reality there is no faith that does not express itself in acts. Therefore, it is quite natural, when speaking of faith, to ask also about works. Faith separated from works is merely assent to a creed. But our point is that the Confession of Faith is essentially a matter of how one lives," quoted from: "Assessment," 160.

¹⁶⁸Masatoshi Fukuda and Kazu Yamamoto, eds., *The Church--The Task of Its Formation* (Tokyo: Shinkyō Shuppansha, 1948).

ecclesiological significance for both Kyodan leaders we dwell on their contributions to the book at some length.

To this volume, Kitamori contributed "Luther's View on the Church,"¹⁶⁹ whereas Suzuki provided "Protestant Denominations in the Modern Era."¹⁷⁰ In a sovereign manner, Kitamori advanced his conviction in *The Lord of the Cross* that the Lutheran understanding of the Gospel is the very origin of evangelicalism; it must prevail in Protestantism as the axiomatic "place" in which every other Protestant denomination finds its place. Like the sun which lets red look red, Lutheranism is the Protestant axiom which lets the Reformed be the Reformed, the Anglican the Anglican, the Methodist the Methodist and so on.¹⁷¹ The definition of the Protestant Church, or the Church simply, is clear to Kitamori. He refers to Luther's notion of the Church and characterizes it as follows: the Church is conceived in an organic relation to the Gospel through and through; the Reformer's ecclesiology is fully liberated from "sectarianism;" Luther emphasizes "the invisibility and *visibility* of the Church."¹⁷² Conceiving Luther's idea of the Church this way, Kitamori stated that the Gospel alone constitutes, and determines the nature of, an ecumenical Church in a *visible* manner in Japan. According to him, this ecumenical feature of the Kyodan in Japan is a church-historical *unicum*, bearing a vital implication for the universal

¹⁶⁹Kitamori's contribution, *ibid.*, 139-172.

¹⁷⁰Suzuki's contribution, *ibid.*, 261-302.

¹⁷¹*Ibid.*, 161-162.

¹⁷²*Ibid.*, 156.

Church of Christ, namely the realization of the one Church in the world on the basis of the Gospel--the Pain of God.¹⁷³ Kitamori thus had ready in his hand the blue-print of the Church to be made visible in Japan.

In contrast to Kitamori's sovereign manner in advancing his position, Suzuki was deeply reserved in his claim of objective validity of his observation of denominational history. Suzuki held to the effect that every historical event, including the denominational development in the Christian Church, took place as the result of interactions between various persons; but those persons were unique and particular each in his own way. To Suzuki, an individual, who happens to look at an historical event from the present, cannot comprehend it exhaustively. An individual is limited in his recognition of the thoughts of the others. "A crab digs a hole like his own carapace," Suzuki quotes a folk saying to make his point.¹⁷⁴

According to Suzuki, denominations are necessary consequences of the Reformation faith; he holds that the Reformation is a re-establishment of the

¹⁷³"[We shall continue to fight a 'liebender Kampf' to win the Roman Catholic Church to the Gospel.] Because it is a 'loving struggle,' our way [for overcoming sectarianism in the Church] will take on a feature of 'the way of pain' (*via dolorosa*). However, first of all, this way must be practiced for the unification of denominations within Protestantism. Despite Luther's anti-sectarianism, the history of Protestantism throughout four centuries has been a history of [the Church's] splitting into denominations. . . . Even if we admit that the denominational split has involved its inner necessity, we must overcome it to achieve an integration and unification. The way to this goal cannot be but the way of pain which is a 'loving struggle'" (ibid. 160-161, and see also ibid., 166). According to Kitamori, in the very search of the way by which the Kyodan is to be formed into a united catholic Church, there lies a task of world-historical and church-historical significance [世界史的教会史的課題] (ibid., 171).

¹⁷⁴Ibid., 264.

pre-Constantinian appropriation of faith through the individual's existential encounter with the Gospel.¹⁷⁵ On this understanding, Suzuki summarized the history of modern denominationalism as the process in which the personal appropriation of faith was again brought into effect, or the nominal and customary faith was made the real, personal faith again. Thus Suzuki acknowledged denominationalism as a corrective element in the history of the Church, as an antidote to cool objectivism and intellectualism in church and theology.¹⁷⁶

This viewpoint of Suzuki represents quite a different theological profile from that of Kitamori, both in methodology and outlook. Perhaps the most striking feature, compared to Kitamori's position, is Suzuki's recognition of man's relativity and limitedness in respect to his understanding of the Word of God and God Himself. At the end of his essay, Suzuki quoted from A. C. McGiffert's *Christianity as History and Faith*. Although the American author resignedly gives up any hope of postulating something common and universal to different "Christian" denominations, Suzuki himself turned to the Apostolic Council in Jerusalem (Acts 15), and rather took the message from there, while paraphrasing: "There occurred a great dissension and debate. They came together to discuss it. All the assembly came to silence after they finished speaking. James then gave a reply. The words of the prophets agreed with his reply. We judge all by the words of the prophets."¹⁷⁷ He emphasizes that the

¹⁷⁵Ibid., 269.

¹⁷⁶Ibid.

¹⁷⁷Ibid., 302.

congregation in Jerusalem obeyed the prophetic word. Then Suzuki continues to say:

The Lord alone, in His Word, is the free Lord of the Church. The Church and the believer on this earth remain in the tensions of relativity even in their most profound understandings of the Word. And the Bible as the Word of God, while remaining ever as the free lord in the midst of the dialectical tensions, gives us *new understandings* from time to time.¹⁷⁸

Suzuki's understanding of the Church is typical of the Reformed, *ecclesia verbo divine semper reformanda*. The Church in time and space is and remains relative, always needing to be open to the Word of God in Scripture in order to be formed ever anew by it. Neither Church nor any theology can make claim to the "habitual" possession of the eternal, absolute truth of the Gospel while on earth. The living Lord alone is the truth, and this Lord is a free Lord who never allows himself to be grasped exhaustively by the sinful and finite mortals. There is, however, little need to mention that the whole of Suzuki's theology is supported by the deep recognition of the sovereignty of divine grace and mercy given to frail and sinful man. If we then follow the implications of Suzuki's view to its logical conclusion, we arrive at a sharp contrast to Kitamori's theology.¹⁷⁹

Kitamori and Suzuki, the two contemporary Kyodan leaders, thus advanced

¹⁷⁸Ibid.

¹⁷⁹In addition to this theological difference between Kitamori and Suzuki, there was also a marked contrast between the two Kyodan leaders as to their church-political approaches immediately after the war. Whereas Kitamori was respectfully cooperating with the senior Kyodan leaders from the wartime for the reorganization of the Kyodan (see Kuyama, *Present*, 43), Suzuki was one of the young pastors who demanded, in 1946, an election of new representatives of the General Assembly of the Kyodan to form a new leadership. Suzuki and others demanded this in order to prevent the old leaders from getting their own revised proposals of the Kyodan's constitution and rules sanctioned by the old representatives (Yamaya, 192).

their theological views in the postwar joint publication in search of the way for the formation of the Kyodan. It was Kitamori who played a decisive role in the years immediately after the war, when many unsettled problems threatened a dissolution of the Kyodan itself. His inclusive, mediating theology seems to befit the needs of the time. But when the need and wish to radically renovate the Kyodan in theology and ethics began to be felt keenly from 1950s on, Kitamori's theology appeared to be too static and too schematic; it no longer seemed to be able to contain the new wine of the theological and socio-ethical consciousness of the rising generations. Suzuki's prophetic vision for the future Kyodan symbolically replaced Kitamori's realism and conservatism. For those who supported the Kyodan's renovation, it is the moderator Suzuki who, though long overdue, initiated the real history of the Kyodan as the Church of Christ.¹⁸⁰

The intensity of criticism against Kitamori's theology and his position in church-political issues was heightened still more in connection with the Kyodan's participation in the Expo 70 in Osaka and the campus tragedy at TUTS. His theology was accused of being pro-establishmentarian and reactionary; his critics said that Kitamori had no desire but to preserve the Kyodan for the Kyodan's sake; it is

¹⁸⁰"The importance of the confession [of Wartime Responsibility in the name of Moderator Suzuki] is found in its timing," says Yoshio Inoue, "which, I believe, marked the *real beginning of Japan's postwar church history*. Without examining what was solely lacking in the church during the war, its postwar era could not begin, nor could future be projected. The confusion in the [Kyodan] church today is a natural result of a kind of retribution for having failed to conduct this essential soul-searching much earlier. And this is a problem that cannot be solved by political maneuvering. In other words, we must look again at what it means to be the church" (quoted from: "Assessment," 162, emphasis is added).

contrary to the nature of the Church, they claimed, for she exists in the world for others.

Yet, in dealing with these issues, Kitamori was consistent with his theological premises. In his view, the constitution of the Church cannot be made conditional on the quality of its socio-ethical practices. The Gospel of the Pain of God is the very gospel exactly because it embraces even the Church's socio-ethical insufficiency and frailty. For this reason, Kitamori never gave in even an inch with regard to his ecclesiology; his ecclesiology and his concept of the Gospel made an inseparable organic whole. In fact, Kitamori gave an impression of separating the Gospel totally from the Church's socio-ethical existence. Certainly, on the level of individual ethics, Kitamori emphasized the quality of the believers' love as the necessary fruit of the Gospel. But when it came to the discussion of the Church's socio-ethical behavior, Kitamori seems to have advanced a view nullifying any socio-ethical claim placed on the Church by faith itself. Kitamori therefore asserted that the Kyodan might be mistaken in her "work" but she remained the Church because she preserved and believed the Gospel during the war. The opponents then ask: what kind of a Gospel is the Gospel Kitamori advances which could stand side by side with "open misdeeds" contrary to the ethical implications of the message of salvation given in Christ?¹⁸¹

¹⁸¹Kitamori holds that the Church is constituted by the Gospel. Who can deny this statement? The question then becomes more specific: what kind of Gospel, or what kind of understanding of the Gospel is it? The Kyodan's understanding of the Gospel during the war is found in its Summary of the Teaching (p. 39), which is clearly soteriological, expressing the main content of the Protestant understanding of

For further investigation, we raise two questions. First, why did Kitamori actively and willingly cooperate with the political and business establishments in the Expo as the Chairman of the Theme Committee? Second, why could he as a senior member, or an actual leader, of the TUTS faculty approve the measure to call in the metropolitan riot police onto the campus? Now, in retrospect, the Expo participation and the calling in of "riot police" are generally considered as questionable and condemnable steps for the Kyodan to take. To be sure, an ingredient of the tragedy may have been a power struggle going on in the Kyodan. But from a theological point of view, Kitamori had to take the stand that he did, if he would remain consistent with his theological conviction.

In fact, in Kitamori's contribution to the joint publication mentioned above (three decades earlier!), we believe we have a documentary clue to the answers to these questions. In dealing with Luther's view on the relationship of Church and state

the Gospel. Kitamori believed to have found in it a profound implication, and "spelled it out." The problem is, this Summary of the Teaching included "the Rules of the Believers' Life" the first one of which urged the believers, as the faithful subjects to the emperor of "eternal lineage," to assist the prosperity of the emperor's house and to make utmost efforts to manifest "the quintessence of the national polity of Japan." This regimentation led the Kyodan to a tragic compromise with the state during the war; "The Kyodan degraded itself to be [voluntary] spokesman of the military regime; The Kyodan leaders and believers alike officially visited Shinto shrines for worship(!); the Rescript of War Declaration was read in the Church before worship service and holy communion. . . . (Hori, *Confession*, 111). What is, then, the Gospel which could stand side by side with this compromise? An essential issue is, as we see it, the problem of the Law. What seems to us crucial to the problem of Kitamori is the lack of the Law's function for the Gospel. The Gospel without the Law's unceasing claim in men's life would cease to be the Gospel as the living message of salvation.

(he does this with reference to Karl Holl's work¹⁸²), Kitamori advances the view that "for the ultimate goal of man's service to the Gospel, the Church and the State should cooperate with each other; they should not be antagonistic to each other in vain."¹⁸³ Drawing a parallel line between the situation of Luther's Germany then and the present one in Japan, Kitamori viewed the state more positively than his opponents. As for Expo 70, for Kitamori, it was an outstanding opportunity to present the Gospel in cooperation with the establishment. Kitamori was not unaware of the problems his opponents pointed out as inherent in such an enterprise. But, "in spite of" the shadow side of this festival, held Kitamori, the Christians can at least "show" something of the Gospel to tens of millions of visitors, and by participating in it make them aware of the problematic elements of modern technological civilization. Kitamori consistently argues that Christians cannot render their service to society in an ethically pure room and form, but the service is only possible with the often painful but inevitable "in spite of" and "putting up with" imperfection and shortcomings inherent in the world in this aeon.

It needs to be mentioned that Kitamori made it clear that in the understanding of the Gospel there should never be dissensions in the Church, but concerning the approach to socio-ethical matters--the Expo 70 is one of such matters--

¹⁸²Kitamori uses for his contribution two of Karl Holl's treatises in his *Gesamelte Aufsätze I*: "Der Neubau der Sittlichkeit" and "Was verstand Luther unter Religion."

¹⁸³Fukuda and Yamamoto, *Church*, 154.

multiple possibilities must be allowed.¹⁸⁴

The issue of calling the riot police onto the TUTS campus was a catastrophe both for TUTS and the Kyodan, and yet even that tragic measure was no less consistent, it seems, with Kitamori's view. In the absence of direct documentary evidence, we again resort to the contribution he made to the joint ecclesiological publication. Given Kitamori's consistent theological viewpoint, this document serves to make intelligible what he advanced on this particular occasion.

To him, the protesting students and the theologians sympathizing with them denied the Gospel formulated and given in the Confession of Faith of the Kyodan. By the same token, they departed from the Gospel. Falling into "another Gospel" and resorting to violence only to destroy the order of the seminary and the Church, they ceased to be the members of the Body of Christ unless they would repent of their errors in their grasp of the Gospel and in the consequent violence. Since repentance was virtually impossible, they were now little more than *boryokusha* [*die Gewalttätigen*] committing *bogyaku* [*die Ausbeutung*].¹⁸⁵ The Kingdom of God must be protected from the doers of violence to the power of the state to which God provides the peace necessary for the Church to grow. Thus seen, Kitamori's "come and go" as a theologian is consistent also in this issue.

In all these critical events, Kitamori has been consistent with his theological

¹⁸⁴Kazoh Kitamori, "The Task of the Federation of Evangelical Churches," *Japan Christian Quarterly* 45 (Summer 1979): 151-154.

¹⁸⁵These are the words of Karl Holl, which Kitamori uses translating thus in his contribution to: Fukuda and Yamamoto, *Church*.

premises. And yet, due to his very consistency, Kitamori failed to advance the unity of the Kyodan. To the contrary, he became the target of vehement criticism. The same theological position experiences the opposite reactions when situations alternate. History goes, and things change.

With these catastrophic incidents, the leadership of the Kyodan went into the hands of those who followed Suzuki's line. Hideo Oki, a former TUTS president, has his own view of the issues which interest us here. Oki himself was not an Expo-supporter but antagonistic to the Suzuki followers due to their criticism of TUTS. In an interview held a decade after the TUTS tragedy, he said that "the anti-Expo group and its sympathizers now occupy leadership positions in the Kyodan and the NCC. . . . It took them ten years to gain control of the Kyodan, but the important point is that they used physical force and coup d'etat methods to do so."¹⁸⁶ Our concern here is not with the objective validity of this saying. We only want to draw out two things: the one is how acrimonious the feeling of a TUTS faculty (perhaps also the majority of the faculty) remained toward the Kyodan leaders even a decade later, as revealed by Oki's tone; and the other is that Kitamori was no longer in the leadership position in the Kyodan either theologically or church-politically. According to Isao Kuramatsu, these new leaders of the Kyodan "have driven the professor [Kitamori] away from the position of being the Kyodan's theological

¹⁸⁶Hideo Oki, "Reflection on the Kyodan Problem" (an interview article), *Japan Christian Quarterly* 45 (Summer 1979): 169.

pillar."¹⁸⁷

The schism between the Kyodan leadership and the TUTS faculty is not the only one. There is another "schism" among the churches within the Kyodan. Those who adhere to the more distinct "Suzuki Line," and those who bitterly oppose that line. In between, there is a moderate, mediating group, represented, for instance, by the "Ministers' Forum."¹⁸⁸ It is ironic and tragic that Kitamori is now among the rivaling factions, no longer a mediator as he had been during the two postwar decades.

The Kyodan is in chaos. One would wonder where her center of gravity is, if there is any at all. In 1976, the so-called Federation of Evangelical Churches¹⁸⁹ was formed within the Kyodan "to make manifest the binding force of the Confession

¹⁸⁷Isao Kuramatsu, "An Attempt to Understand the Theology of Kitamori," *Journal of Theology* 45 (Dedicated to Kitamori as Festschrift on Kitamori's retirement) (Tokyo: TUTS, 1983), 12.

¹⁸⁸See note 190 below.

¹⁸⁹*Fukuinshugi Kyokai Rengo*, 福音主義教会連合 . According to Rinzo Washiyama, a leader of this group, the "Federation" was formed by the merger of the former Evangelical Ministers' Emergency Alliance in Kansai area (with Osaka-Kobe as its center) and the Kyodan Normalization Alliance in Kanto area (with Tokyo as its center), both of which emerged as counter-organizations to the faction following the line of the Confession of Wartime Responsibility and the Expo opponents. The merger occurred when it became clear that "the main stream of the Kyodan politics lined itself up with the views of the Problem-Raiser [問題提起者]. This "Federation" intends "to form one true Church" "by recovering the Gospel through the establishment of sermon and sacraments." This organization held its own ministerial examination and ordination approval in 1979, see Rinzo Washiyama, "Nihon Kirisuto Kyodan Fukuin-shugi Kyokai Rengo," Arimichi Ebizawa, ed. *Lexicon of History of Christianity in Japan* [Tokyo: Kyobunkan, 1987]. By administering its own ministerial examination and ordination approval, this organization within the Kyodan seems to recognize itself as the legitimate continuation of the Kyodan within the Kyodan.

of Faith [of the Kyodan] and its character as our basic standard."¹⁹⁰ Kitamori is the leading theologian of this group. Was this, we wonder, not the last thing Kitamori would imagine for himself--to form an organization which *de facto* nullifies the unity of the Kyodan?

If we should assume that also in this issue Kitamori is consistent with his understanding of the Church, then a possible justification of this federation on the part of Kitamori may run as follows: since the Kyodan under the current leadership has *de facto* relativized the Confession of Faith and thus virtually nullified it, those churches which follow the current leadership are no longer the Church. The true Kyodan must be found in those churches which hold firmly to the Confession of the Faith. "Those others," wrote Kitamori in the ecclesiological publication, "who do not amend their doctrinal errors [concerning the truth of the Gospel], in spite of utmost efforts on our

¹⁹⁰Kitamori, "Federation of Evangelical Churches," 154. There is a mixed reaction to this "Federation" in the Kyodan. Yo Shikama, a member of "Ministers' Forum [教職者懇談会]" which was formed for the rebuilding of the Kyodan, says of the "Evangelical Federation": "It has been the Kyodan's urgent task as a living body of Christ the Lord to form an evangelical Church while settling the external and internal problems assigned to the Kyodan. In the light of this task, we understand the intention of the 'Federation' to a certain extent. But its approach to the task seemed to us somewhat too narrow. [As an alternative to this] a study group has been formed by the ministers who had the same desire for the Kyodan, not as a church-political move but as a theological movement hoping to harvest fruits through our study. This group is the 'Ministers' Forum'" [Yo Shikama, ed., *The Kyodan as a United Church* [Tokyo: Shinkyo Shuppansha, 1989], 3). A severe criticism of the "Federation" made by in Yoshikiyo Ito, a Kyodan minister, in his short essay on the Kyodan's problem: "One should be careful not falling into provocation of 'Evangelical Federation.' What is 'Evangelicalism'? What is conspicuous in this group is only political will to gain power within the Kyodan, and we do not call theology those theological theories attached to their [preconceived] views" (Iwao Morioka, ed., *Christianity in Japan - Its Present and Future* [Tokyo: Shinkyo Shuppansha, 1985], 87).

side, are no longer the Church."¹⁹¹ How plausible this word of Kitamori three decades ago sounds even today!

Now we recall what he once wrote, that only when the Kyodan would not accept his theology, then he could move from the ecumenical standpoint to the denominational standpoint without sacrificing his theological integrity.¹⁹² Is the Kyodan with the current leadership the one which "would not accept" his theology? It is definitely so. But the crucial question is now: who are the Kyodan? The Suzuki disciples and their supporters who are now in the leadership position of the Kyodan, or the people within the Kyodan who, as Kitamori himself, hold firmly or supposedly hold firmly, to the Confession of Faith? These questions are impossible for an outsider to answer. But a crucial question is: how does the repeated claim of Kitamori's theology to embrace the unembraceable apply to this situation?

"The difference of views among the Kyodan people on the participation in the Expo in Osaka more than a decade ago," holds Akio Dohi, a Doshisha professor, "gradually turned out to be a loss of common ground and became [a breeding pool of] lasting friction of human relationships."¹⁹³ There are no agreements, laments this professor further, on such issues as evangelism, confession of faith (!), the relationship between Church and State, or any other Kyodan issue which came to the surface in connection with the problem of the Expo participation. He complains that TUTS,

¹⁹¹Fukuda and Yamamoto, Church, 159-160.

¹⁹²See 42-43, above.

¹⁹³Akio Dohi, "Departure for Renovation and Unity," Iwao Morioka, *Present and Future*, 94.

despite its privileged status as the seminary run by the Kyodan itself, does not participate in the common work for the solutions of the Kyodan's problems. "The present situation of the Kyodan," describes this professor, "is deeply chaotic and its future infinitely opaque."¹⁹⁴

"Wither Kyodan?"¹⁹⁵ A Kyodan missionary put this question in the vortex of the Expo and TUTS conflicts. That was relevant then and is still more relevant today. Apparently it is not easy to answer this question. Yet it is necessary for us to form an idea of the direction the "wither" if we want to assess Kitamori's contribution in the Kyodan and Japanese Protestantism at all. We are aware that this is a risky attempt on our part, because the Kyodan situation is still chaotic, which makes it formidable to predict any direction whatsoever with any degree of historical validity. True, events in the solid historical past can only occasionally be revived into a new meaning and perspective, it is even more difficult when issues are of such recent origin. But we will rely on the reasonable validity of our historical experience that a historically conditioned thought, once it has seen its day, will only rarely be restored to its pristine vigor. And this we assume against Kitamori's own prediction of the future of his theology.

The Kyodan's ideal has been to form an ecumenical Protestant church in Japan. This ideal was also a burning theological ambition of Kitamori throughout his career. His theology of the Pain of God should have been the formative principle of

¹⁹⁴Ibid., 94-95.

¹⁹⁵See note 146 in Chap. 2.

the Kyodan as the "unity of contradictions." The Kyodan's official English name is the United Church of Christ in Japan. But, in fact, there are many writings in which we read that the Kyodan is still on the way to becoming a united Church, that is, it is now a "uniting church."¹⁹⁶ Now, Kitamori would also agree with this way of viewing the Kyodan's unity, but the main thrust of his view on this matter is still that the Kyodan is already a *united* church by virtue of the Confession of Faith of 1954. The recent publication by the leaders and pastors of the mediating group¹⁹⁷ indicate the fact that they have been studying their respective denominational backgrounds and re-examining how they can come to terms with the current chaotic situation and form a new theological and ecclesiological basis for the Kyodan and for her continued existence. In other words, the Kyodan is in reality not yet united, but, given the goal of unity in advance, is now struggling to reach that goal. This would say that new efforts of the denominational synthesis, which were supposed to have been settled decades ago, are now being taken up all over again.

A crucial question is now whether the Kyodan in the near future can emerge as a united Protestant church without falling back to one of the already existing

¹⁹⁶Yo Shikama, explaining the meaning of the title of the volume produced by "Ministers' Forum," incidentally speaks of the Kyodan's current unitedness: "We chose as the title of this volume 'The Kyodan as a United Church.' Yet what we mean by that title is not that the Kyodan is already a united Church. Needless to say, we wanted only to express that the Kyodan is on the way to its formation, not as a 'United Church' but as a 'Uniting Church,' (Shikama, *United Church*, 4, [the two terms in the single quotation marks are put in English by Shikama]). Kitamori's name is mentioned besides three others in Shikama's acknowledgment as one of the advisers who "have played a leading role" for the "Ministers' Forum."

¹⁹⁷See note 188 above.

denominations. In other words, is it possible to have a united Protestant church without a certain ruling confessional orientation which after all determines the outcome of the proposed united church? We must consider two elementary issues before we can give an answer. First, are there real theological conflicts among the Protestant confessions? The answer to this question is apparently in the affirmative, as numerous ongoing confessional dialogues demonstrate. Second, can one begin to form a church confessionally from scratch? Given historical reality, the answer is evidently in the negative. If we now put these answers together, we should almost conclude that there could be no such a thing as a really united ecumenical Protestant church in which all the Protestant denominations are integrated in terms of doctrinal tradition and ethos. In fact, Kitamori wanted a Lutheran Kyodan; his opponents now seem to want a Reformed-Barthian Kyodan in opposition to Kitamori. Still others may want a Congregational Kyodan.

The Kyodan as a united ecumenical Protestant church is perhaps an eschatological vision, and to realize it here on earth may be *a priori* denied. Actual prospects of the future of Kyodan seem as follows. If the late moderator Suzuki's "prophetic line" should determine the course of the future formation of the Kyodan, those following Kitamori's "evangelical line" would be compelled to form a new Church, and vice versa. Or, if this does not happen, the Kyodan can probably remain in a perpetual tension between the denominational differences within it. Or, as we suggested in the above, the Kyodan may become a united church but with a distinctive confessional orientation, probably a Reformed Kyodan or less probably a Lutheran

Kyodan. With a feeling of tension one watches the direction that the Kyodan will develop as a united church in Japan.

Now that Kitamori's influence is in the Kyodan past, we are left with the following questions. What does the outcome of the postwar history of the Kyodan imply to Kitamori's theology? Has Kitamori's vision of a united Protestant church as the "unity of contradictions" on the basis of the Lutheran axiom collapsed after all? It is still too early to give a definitive answer to these questions. But in view of the actual development of conflicts in the Kyodan, it seems at least probable that Kitamori's goal of a visible "unity of contradictions" as an ecclesiological formula is a theoretical postulate which did not actualize. Contradictions seem to be contradictions, after all. Perhaps the recent history of the Kyodan witnesses to the "bankruptcy of his theology,"¹⁹⁸ as far as his ecclesiology is concerned. In other words, nothing can embrace in itself all the contradictory things in this actual reality. As limited beings, humans often live under the alternative of "either-or" at a given historical time. Even the "both-and," as we see in Kitamori's inclusive theology, in reality falls back to the "either-or." Although here we do not have a definitive assessment of Kitamori's contribution to the Kyodan, our impression is that Kitamori's theology had its appointed time and mission in its *Sitz im Leben*, in the history of the Kyodan. The theology of the Pain of God is not an eternal theology, as Kitamori had been convinced. It is, after all, a *theologia viatorum*. As such we shall see the whole of his theological contribution to Japanese Protestantism.

¹⁹⁸Hori, *Confession*, 289.

Summary

Kitamori grew up in a deeply uncertain and tragic period of the nation's history. His formative years were not conducive to a happy idea of existence. In encountering the Bible, Shigehiko Sato and, through him, Luther and others, he gradually appropriated the Gospel as God's forgiving grace and was baptized in a Lutheran church. He was then led step by step to the vision of the Pain of God as the truth of the Gospel, a Triune God suffering Pain for the love of sinners. He grasped the Gospel as the Absolute grace of God--that no sinner, however detestable and unworthy of God's love, can fall outside this love based upon God's pain. The love of God in His Pain is all-embracing. In the critical confrontation with the theology of Karl Barth and under the influence of the philosophy of the Kyoto School, he developed his evangelical intuition of the Pain of God into a theological system, the theology of the Pain of God. He published his main work, *The Theology of the Pain of God*, soon after World War II, which was an unexpected success. Remaining in the Kyodan after the Lutheran withdrawal, Kitamori worked as an "ecumenical Lutheran" for two decades for the Kyodan's ecclesiological consolidation and the Lutheranization of its theology. Thus the Kyodan has become his life-work. But as the "Barthian" understanding of the Gospel with the "activistic" emphasis gradually won the field in the Kyodan, Kitamori's theology turned out to be deeply incompatible with this new theological trend. After the tragic incidents around 1970, he no longer could stay in a leading position in the Kyodan, either theologically or church-politically. Though presently working for the Kyodan through an evangelical

faction of churches, Kitamori's influence seems to be largely terminated. His work now seems to have entered into the field of history.

We now try to locate Kitamori in the history of Japanese Protestantism. Kitamori belongs to the "Line of the church." In this sense he followed the Uemura-Takakura line. His theological outlook with the emphasis on the individual's personal salvation witnesses to this. The link between Uemura-Takakura and Kitamori is their common understanding of the tragic dimension of man's existence. Kitamori thus pursued what Uemura initiated, "an solid evangelical church on the orthodox doctrine of the Gospel." Kitamori "only" replaced Uemura's Reformed orientation with his own "Lutheran" perspective. As we shall see below, this link indicates the character of Kitamori's Lutheranism: a synthesis of Lutheran and Reformed tradition on the basis of Lutheranism. We have seen that there are two streams with regard to the understanding of Christianity and the nature of the church; the "evangelical" one and the "social" one.¹⁹⁹ These two understandings have constituted a perennial tension in the history of Japanese Protestantism. Kitamori had to suffer in this tension. He tried, with his theology, to do justice to both the "evangelical" focus and the "social" one. But this "both-and" in Kitamori's aspiration did not work out in

¹⁹⁹This polarization within Japanese Protestantism is not primarily caused by denominational differences, say, between Lutheranism and the Reformed tradition. As we have seen, there was a polarization before Kitamori's 'Lutheranism' came on the scene. However, present concerns for socio-ethical issues have been strongly motivated by the theology of Barth, perhaps a "political" Barth. Kitamori then allied himself with the evangelical wing of the Reformed and other traditions in Japanese Protestantism. This may have an influence on Kitamori's understanding of Lutheranism. We take up Kitamori's relationship with the Reformed tradition when we assess his theology.

reality. His emphasis is definitely "evangelical," which is after all "relative" to the "social" focus. This relativity, against Kitamori's claim to the absoluteness of his theology, eventually constituted the acrimonious antagonism between his camp and the opponents. So far his efforts to Lutheranize the Kyodan have failed to show their fruit. An ecumenical Protestant church on the basis of the Lutheran understanding of the Gospel has been Kitamori's holy ambition. Nor did this ambition come true. Kitamori's theology lacks, it seems, the realization of its holy ambition in the history of Japanese Protestantism.

Before we finish this summary, we include a few of Kitamori's personal traits. He has been personally active in concrete congregational work; until very recently he was a pastor at one of the Kyodan congregations in Tokyo, which he himself founded in 1950. He is said to be a dedicated pastor, winning devout congregational support. Although Kitamori has been rather a loner in the theological community of Japanese Protestantism, a few of his former students at TUTS have taken up his theological insights for further development. A well-known one is Kosuke Koyama (the author of *Waterbuffalo Theology*), formerly a missionary sent by the Kyodan to Thailand and, at the time of this writing, a professor at Union Theological Seminary in New York.²⁰⁰ As a very personal trait, we also mention

²⁰⁰"Dr. Kitamori was," says Koyama, "my revered teacher at Tokyo Union Theological Seminary. . . . Dr. Kitamori shared [the truth of 'communion in pain'] with us in his lucid exposition of the pain of God," *Waterbuffalo Theology* (New York: Orbis Books, 1974), 116. Another former student to be mentioned is Hiroshi Obayashi, who has written *Agape and History* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1981) and is presently serving as a faculty member of Rutgers University in New Jersey. Both of these "disciples" have developed their teacher's idea of the pain

that he has remained a bachelor, not as a sign of ascetism, but willing to sacrifice marital joy and familial happiness as a witness to God in Pain.

With the historical survey finished, we go on to analyze Kitamori's theology itself.

of God with critical modifications, Koyama "relativizing" the absolute claim by Kitamori of the concept of the pain of God as an indigenous hermeneutic concept, and Obayashi substituting the concept of "evil and suffering" for "pain." Later we shall come back to their viewpoints in our evaluation of Kitamori's theology.

CHAPTER 4

AN ANALYSIS OF THE THEOLOGY OF PAIN OF GOD (1)

Preliminary Observations

The Pain of God as Primary Experience

"Each religious individual," wrote Friedrich Schleiermacher in his *Reden*, "is totality complete in himself, and to understand this totality you should strive to search out the primary revelation which constituted the ground of it."¹ This conviction is true also of Kitamori. "Oh, the unintelligible love of God, the unfathomable Pain of God!" exclaimed Kitamori when he experienced God's love in the depth of his soul; God [in Jesus] allows Himself to be slain for those sinners, the rebellious and the detestable."² It is a vivid vision in which Kitamori saw God Himself in Pain and suffering Pain for the sake of defiant sinners. For Kitamori, this vision is an unshakable inner experience.³ Although in later theological elaboration

¹Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Über die Religion: Reden an die Gebildeten unter ihren Verächtern*, ed. Rudolf Otto, 6th ed., (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967), 181.

²*Auto I*, 107. [A bibliographical note: Those of Kitamori's works which are of primary significance and therefore quoted frequently are abbreviated like the note here. The list of those works is found at the end of Introduction, Chapter 1].

³*Ibid.*, 136. Regarding this immediate inner experience, Kitamori also writes: "As long as Christianity is looked upon as an historical and cultural entity, it cannot be fully grasped. Only when I encounter the Gospel as a personal fact overwhelming

Kitamori deals with this experience in more abstract terminology (which tends to deprive it of its vividness), the idea of the Pain of God in its most concrete sense never loses its power for Kitamori; it continues--not merely as a figurative expression of the inexpressible, but as a literal term describing the God sensed in his inner vision; a God aching for the sake of sinful humanity.⁴ Thus the Pain of God becomes Kitamori's primary vision of God.

Included in the background of Kitamori's visionary experience are two important contributing factors in juxtaposition: his experience of the abysmal depth of human sinfulness, and a vivid mental image of the crucified Christ, a suffering God par excellence. "Our sins (even when we are in faith) kill God Himself," cries Kitamori; "you believers, it is you who are the criminals killing Christ!" Sinful humanity is detestable, a "stinking, putrid heap of trash!" Man is "a disgrace to God." Nevertheless, Jesus "the very Son of God!" still would have us as His, visiting detestable sinners--as if He could not help but search for us. "This is totally unintelligible to man!"⁵ exclaims Kitamori. For him, the word love is too conventional to accurately describe this "amazing" love. No word but Pain is capable of expressing this extraordinary love. This love of God is the Pain of God, and in this love, love and Pain are inseparable; in God's love, love and Pain are one.

⁴Speaking of God's Pain vis-a-vis humanity's pain, Kitamori has the following to say: "We see here [in man's pain] the image of the reality which is taking place in the grace of God. '*God is aching!*' [神が痛んでい給う] Jesus Christ is the *Persona* of the Pain of God." (*Itami*, 258 [*Pain*, 167]).

⁵*Auto I*, 139.

"Christ, who is God Himself," says Kitamori, "is willing to bear the sins of those trying to kill him, as if the sins were his own, and died the death of the convicted."⁶

To Kitamori, his vision of an "aching" God is a vision of overwhelming impact, beyond human comprehension. "God has even died!" he proclaims. "Be appalled, O heavens; at this, be shocked. . ."⁷ This horrid fact of God in Pain and death is, however, not simply a demonstration of God's immeasurable love--it is much more. The vision of the Pain of God has revealed to Kitamori something extraordinary regarding God's otherwise impenetrable essence: "The cross of Christ, is a *tragedy* of God before it is a tragedy of man. Before man suffered pain, God suffered Pain."⁸

One might think that God's suffering (if God is capable of suffering at all)⁹ should be contingent upon the reality of human sins; being moved in love and compassion by the sight of human miseries. However, Kitamori sees that the Pain of God is a divine reality within God Himself, a reality inseparable from human *sin* but independent from human *suffering*. The Pain of God is seen not as a secondary, but as a primary reality. It seems that in Kitamori's thought, Pain is not a contingent reality, but a necessity within God. Obviously, this idea produces a whole series of logical obstacles which would lead to profound speculation (a problem to be dealt with

⁶Ibid., 92.

⁷*Pain*, 44.

⁸*Auto I*, 127.

⁹This possibility will be discussed in Chapter 6 in conjunction with Luther's idea of the suffering of God.

when we later discuss Kitamori's assertion of the eternal nature of God's Pain).

God in Pain is Kitamori's vision of God Himself, of His innermost essence. As His innermost essence, this Pain cannot be contingent upon anything or anyone-- not even upon human sins or human misery. Our point here is to recognize Kitamori's notion of the Pain of God as not only God's reaction to human sins, but also as an inherent characteristic of God Himself. In a sense, this position explains why Kitamori states he is not primarily concerned with human suffering (however appalling and meaningless it might be) but with the Pain of God.¹⁰ Although this is a difficult concept to understand, it is Kitamori's unique concept of making the Pain of God independent of human suffering, that has made this particular concept such a powerful, flexible and even "almighty" vehicle for Kitamori's subsequent theological exploration, as we shall see later.

Let us now look a little more closely at Kitamori's experience of the Pain of God. "The real feature of the cross of the Lord," says Kitamori, "is the Pain of God."¹¹ This vision of God in Pain is deeply related to Kitamori's own experience of salvation. Kitamori obtained absolute assurance of the forgiveness of sins when he, in an "audition," heard the crucified Christ, God in deep misery on the cross saying,

¹⁰First, the primary theme of this book is to behold ["adore," 仰々] the Pain of God, since the theology of the Pain of God is literally concerned with his pain. Our human pain should only be considered as service to God's pain. . . ." (*Pain*, 233).

¹¹*Itami*, 68 (*Pain*, 50). The original term in the text is translated "the real feature" [真相]. "Das wahre Wesen" in *Schmerz*, 47.

"My son, I am the Christ. I died for you. I became as you see me now, only for you. . . . My son, you are now released from God's judgment. I am the Christ."¹² Believing in Christ, through the vision of the Crucified, Kitamori intuitively learned to know the Pain of God *ens realissima*. Kitamori assures: "As for me, I really feel the Pain of God in my soul, just as I feel the air on my skin."¹³ Everything else can be doubted, but not the Pain of God, since experiencing the Pain of God has the power to overcome all other doubt. "To use an expression in my theological diary written later, 'the world is more under the Pain of God than under the firmament,'" recalls Kitamori while reflecting on his experience of God's pain. "The Pain of God has a reality more certain than the reality of the firmament."¹⁴

The vision of the Pain of God is a mystical *Urerlebnis* for Kitamori. This experience of God in Pain is charged with a burning energy, consuming his whole being;¹⁵ it is an experience of divine "pathos," as Kitamori would say. As with any primary religious experience, Kitamori's vision of the Pain of God cannot be successfully reduced to or ordered into a system of thought, or into a system of "logos," since in God, pain is love, and love is pain, and the Pain of God as the

¹²*Auto I*, 89.

¹³*Ibid.*, 136.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 136-137, cf. *ibid.*, 178.

¹⁵One of Kitamori's friends, Kazuo Muto, confesses in the introduction to Kitamori's *Logic* that he was overwhelmed by Kitamori's strong conviction of the truth of the Pain of God. "I was really overwhelmed by finding in him [Kitamori] a man who is driven by the truth he discovered and who is ecstatically absorbed in it [それに心狂へるばかりに酔へる人]. Perhaps in this, we find one of the reasons why the author [Kitamori] has been a loner." (224).

divine pathos is a totality that cannot be analyzed.

In any analysis of Kitamori, it is essential that this feature of the Pain of God be kept in mind. It is the reality of this pathos in Kitamori's inner world that passionately drives him in his attempt to communicate the Pain of God to others through logic and reasoning. It is therefore not logic that upholds Kitamori's theological idea of pathos, but the reverse. It is the pathos that animates the logic within his structures. The true fountainhead of Kitamori's theological thinking is his personal vision and experience of the Pain of God.¹⁶

Pathos and Logos in Kitamori's Thought: Experience to Structure

There were many influences which were instrumental in Kitamori's primary vision. The external historical environment provided a general framework for his developing perception of reality, his personal world view. The Bible itself was a continuous source of influence. Uchimura, Uemura and other Christian figures in Japan, as well as a number of prominent thinkers from the west, also helped him along the way toward his experience of the Gospel. Most instrumental was the person of Shigehiko Sato, and through him, Luther. However, Kitamori's personal encounter

¹⁶A passage from Schleiermacher's *Reden* will *mutatis mutandis* aptly describe the kind of vision Kitamori has experienced: "Die erste bestimmte religiöse Ansicht, die in sein Gemüt mit einer solchen Kraft eindringt, daß durch einen einzigen Reiz sein Organ fürs Universum zum Leben gebracht und von nun an auf immer in Tätigkeit gesetzt wird, bestimmt freilich seine Religion; *sie ist und bleibt seine Fundamentale-Anschauung, in Beziehung auf welche er alles ansehen wird, und es ist im voraus bestimmt, in welcher Gestalt ihm jedes Element der Religion, so bald er es wahrnimmt, erscheinen muß*" (179, emphasis mine).

with the Gospel and the culminating vision of the Gospel as the Pain of God can be claimed as solely his own.

The concepts Kitamori gleaned from this collection of influential "external" personalities were rational, communicable ideas, but for Kitamori the result was an unutterable, amorphous and irrational vision of experience. Kitamori's experience borders on mysticism: "I know all things, but I do not know the one thing--the Pain of God. Oh, so calm a vision!"¹⁷ Kitamori's vision can be characterized as his initiation to an irrational, indescribable experience of the Supernatural.

But as long as this vision is an experience of the Gospel (and the Gospel must be proclaimed to others) it cannot remain in a theological fog; an amorphism in the domain of the irrational and the inexpressible. Kitamori is left with the task of taking a vague primary experience and translating it; reducing it to a rational structure capable of communication. It naturally follows that in attempting a process of "reduction," tension is bound to occur between the inexpressible vehemence of the primary experience and any rational structure that follows.

Kitamori himself has reflected on the relationship between the "passionate" primary experience and the need for a rationalization of it. Even though seemingly lucid, Kitamori's elaboration of this relationship betrays an intrinsic tension. On the one hand, Kitamori maintains "there is logic in the Gospel,"¹⁸ that is, that the Gospel has its own rational structure, allowing the theologian to elucidate the Gospel by

¹⁷*Auto I*, 180.

¹⁸*Character*, 236.

logical inference and deduction.¹⁹ In his view, "our salvation [the Gospel] is a 'pathetic' event which involves us totally" and "the fire of its pathetic character should utterly consume the framework of the logos."²⁰

But at the same time, Kitamori holds that the logic of the Gospel is "the way in which a thing makes itself manifest; speaking figuratively, logic is like ruts left behind after a vehicle has passed through." If a reality which is called "the Gospel" has had an effective touch upon a soul, Kitamori continues, it necessarily leaves its ruts on the soul, and the ruts left behind are "the logic of the Gospel."²¹ Thus, Kitamori maintains that his primary experience has its own logical structure which allows him to present his experience of the Gospel to others in a rational form. But, in saying this, he again makes a reservation. The "pathos" refuses to be put into a

¹⁹"For us to be subdued by the irresistible problem [in our reality] is our collapse. The solution to this problem is our salvation. The Giver of the solution is the Savior. . . . Our concern is then to ask what kind of a savior our Savior is. In other words, what kind of structure the salvation has. On this point we are urged to search out the *logic* of the salvation."

[救済の論理] (*Logic*, 14).

²⁰*Ibid.*, 20.

²¹*Character*, 236. "Logic is not an abstraction of things," says Kitamori, "but it is the way through which things make themselves manifest [to our consciousness]" (*ibid.*). Kitamori seems to take over this "metaphysical" viewpoint from Kitaro Nishida. In an essay entitled "Understanding of Logic and Understanding of Mathematic Logic," Nishida writes: "All the understanding through logic is the inner development of something Universal [God]. I regard this [logic] as a kind of creative activity. 'Something Universal' here is not an abstract *universalia* but an inner creative Power." (Kitaro Nishida, *Classic Works of Japan - Kitaro Nishida*, ed. Shunpei Ueyama [Tokyo: Chuo Koron Sha, 1970], 252).

logical order, or to use Kitamori's original language, "logicalized."²² He even gives assurance that if one "succeeded" in the "logicalization" of the pathos, it would mean that the pathos had been distorted into what it is not.²³

We take note of Kitamori's admission that the competence of theology does not match the unfathomable depth and vehemence of the reality of the Gospel.²⁴ How then does it become possible to put the primary experience of the Gospel into communicable terms? According to Kitamori, the necessary link between "pathos" and "logos" is provided by "pathos" (the Pain of God) itself. "Pathos" is the event of salvation. Salvation must be communicated to those needing to receive salvation, and communication becomes possible only by the mediation of the "logos." "Pathos" is "chaotic flame" which must be brought into the sphere of the "cosmos," braced by the framework of the "logos." "But," Kitamori writes, "the logos is destined to be burned up by the fire of the pathos." Thus Kitamori is trying to argue both for and against the "logicalization" of "pathos." His point is clear--the Gospel of the Pain of God constantly breaks the framework of man's rational comprehension.²⁵

In Kitamori's thought, what makes this "rationalization" of "pathos" possible is to be found in the "pathos" itself, which (being salvation for man's reality) also "saves" the inadequacy of the human attempt to make the "pathos" comprehensible

²²*Logic*, 20. The original Japanese terms for "logicalization" and "logicalize" are: ロゴス化、 and ロゴス化する。

²³*Ibid.*

²⁴*Ibid.*

²⁵*Ibid.*

and communicable. Kitamori's elucidation of the relationship between "pathos" and "logos" gives the impression (especially in the original Japanese) of a logical symmetry. Images and logic are skillfully interwoven, and one is tempted to question whether his logical operation in this task *de facto* argues against the very point he is trying so passionately to make. Our question here is whether Kitamori has succeeded in balancing his "pathos" and "logos" without losing the "pathos," that is, the Gospel. Adept and resourceful though he is at interweaving concrete images and abstract concepts into an impressive discourse, Kitamori's theologizing, by the same token, comes dangerously close to unbalanced rationalization at the expense of the "pathos"--even at the expense of his original vision of the Pain of God.²⁶

Kitamori's primary vision is, in its initial stage, still quite amorphous, and there are several possible types of theology into which it could develop. Since the development into a system depends on several factors, including the cultural and historical, it is helpful for us to form two hypothetical questions before we go on to examine them with the available evidence. First, how does his own individuality come into play in the process of development? Seeing that Kitamori is a highly independent thinker, this aspect of his personality is surely essential for understanding him. Second, in whose thoughts does Kitamori find a conceptual affinity with his own? Here we are thinking of a metaphysical scheme. Third, against whom does he launch his polemics while giving his own theology its shape? This is quite essential,

²⁶Kazuo Mutoh writes in the introduction to *Logic*: "The author [Kitamori] is successful, perhaps too successful, in his 'logicalization of pathos' [to the point] that one may be afraid whether there is a danger here." (Ibid., 226).

and we shall take up this issue in due course. At this point, we shall consider the first two items. Specifically, we are thinking of Kitamori's passion for synthesizing "pathos" and "logos" and his other personal traits, and of the metaphysical scheme of the philosophy of the Kyoto School.

Kitamori reveals his distinctive personality traits in his writings. On the one hand, he is a man of refined sensitivity. He "feels" the nature of a thing rather than trying to recognize it analytically;²⁷ his emotional perceptivity is intense. The frequent use of exclamation marks in his writing gives witness to the fact that he is deeply moved by things overlooked by others.²⁸ In addition to this comes his inclination to describe things in superlatives. Kitamori is a man of pathos himself. His longing for beauty can hardly escape attention; in his appreciation of nature and of the practical way of life and existence, one observes a sort of aestheticism.²⁹ But on

²⁷"The Japanese are weak in conceptual and formal thinking, but they are strong in intuitive and material [content-oriented] thinking," says Kitamori (speaking of himself), "and this is certainly a weak side of the Japanese, but in it a strong side is included. It is an advantage for us to grasp the Gospel. For Hebraism is also an intuitive and material thinking." (*The Contemporary and the Pain of God* [Tokyo: Kobundo Shobo, 1970], 187).

²⁸Knowing of Schelling's idea of *Natur in Gott* and of "an agonizing God," Kitamori feels "a violent breath of the truth [真理の凄まじい息吹]" (*Itami*, 29 [*Pain*, 26: the English translation here, "within a hairbreadth to truth," does not convey Kitamori's passion]). This is a typical example of Kitamori's way of putting things, which reflects his passionate perception, cf. *Character*, 193-194.

²⁹In a section of his *magnum opus* where he speaks of the *Wissenschaftlichkeit* of his theology, Kitamori includes his apology of the "crudeness" of the language used for the discourse in the *Pain of God* (*Pain*, 30-31). "Crudeness" in Japanese is "yabo" [野暮] which is the opposite of "iki" [粋], a refined aesthetic way of life and attitude. Perhaps having 1 Corinthians 1:25 in mind, he says that "yabo-ness" in his theology is far superior to all human refinements. This apology, however, eloquently reveals his concern for "iki-ness."

the other hand, in his unquenchable drive for logical clarity in matters he would like us to grasp, we see Kitamori's inveterate drive for understanding the rationality of things.³⁰ It seems to be his *a priori* conviction that things in reality must have a rational structure. This idealistic inclination is undeniable in Kitamori the thinker,³¹ and Kitamori's theology distinctively bears the marks of both of these personal traits.

As to his "adoption" of the philosophy of the Kyoto School, we have a few things of vital importance to say. First, the philosophies of Nishida and Tanabe provide Kitamori's theology with a basic conceptual framework and structure, making it virtually impossible to interpret Kitamori without having these philosophies in mind. Kitamori's terminology and his pattern of the operation of concepts can be understood only in the light of the philosophy of the Kyoto School.³²

In the preceding discussion, we have placed the word *adoption* in quotation marks. But Kitamori's adoption of the philosophy of the Kyoto School for his theology is not an accidental or unbiased decision, but one based upon necessity. This necessity seems to lie in the basic cultural traits common to both the philosophy of the

³⁰"For a long time I have been tormented by a problem concerning the relationship between the Word of the Cross and the Holy Spirit," says Kitamori in an essay (*Character*, 234). His problem is which one, the Word of the Cross or the Holy Spirit, is the theological axiom. We have here an example of Kitamori's passion for logical clarity; he had been tormented for many years!

³¹In his literary masterpiece, Kitamori speaks of the Pain of God which transcends worldly reality. It is an Idea in a Platonic sense. In this sense, he says, "we must be Platonists." (*Itami*, 155 [*Pain*, 102]). Kitamori is also a Hegelian. See *Pain*, 27.

³²In this study we have no separate section for this philosophy, but I shall provide necessary notes on this philosophical school whenever necessary to better understand Kitamori.

Kyoto School and the theology of Kitamori. Though both are strongly influenced by western thought, their products are distinctively Japanese as we will see below. It is possible for us to think of the affinity between Kitamori and the Kyoto School in the following way: Kitamori's vision is an original, religious experience, not a secondary elaboration based upon borrowed thoughts. By "original" we mean that Kitamori has experienced the Gospel through his distinctively Japanese sensitivity and spirituality, and his native cultural and spiritual complex permeates his personal interaction with the Gospel message. In other words, Kitamori's primary vision is strongly colored by a Japanese spirituality; a spirituality nurtured by traditional elements of Shinto, Buddhism and Confucianism. In Kitamori's theology, *original* also means *native*. As for the philosophy of the Kyoto School, it is a system built upon Japanese sentiment and metaphysical orientation; in grasping reality it tends to be holistic, intuitive, harmony-seeking and all-embracing. According to one critic, the philosophy of the Kyoto School can be understood as a refined form of ordinary Japanese thinking patterns.³³ Our observation is as follows: Kitamori is an original and independent thinker firmly rooted in a Japanese spirituality; this means that he stands on common ground with Nishida and Tanabe in religious and metaphysical orientation. In view of

³³Mineo Hashimoto, "The Principle Supporting the Japanese Metaphysics," *Japanese Philosophy*, eds. Mitsuru Yoshida and Keiji Ikumatsu (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1972), 85-87. According to Hashimoto, the highest principle of Japanese metaphysics as a whole is "the contradictory identity of the One and the many." Shuzo Kuki, whose lecture on modern western philosophy Kitamori heard at Kyoto University, has a similar viewpoint when he says: "God is the One who is in sorrow with men and rejoices with them; God is the One who dwells in men; man is at once God [人間即神である]" quoted in *ibid.*, 87).

this, one can understand why Nishida's philosophy has deeply influenced Kitamori's theology.

Kitamori's theological writings bear the mark of strong conviction, sometimes overwhelming the reader to the point of uneasiness.³⁴ It is a witness to the fact that the impact of the Gospel has reached the bottom of Kitamori's heart, since it has directly affected his highly Japanese sensitivity. An actualization of the Gospel took place in Kitamori through the meditation of his native culture, but it is not difficult to see the possible danger of "distorting" the Gospel through an unhealthy occupation with one specific aspect of it. We recognize a perennial dilemma here: If one tries to "make" the Gospel actual, the resulting theology should be as close as possible to the "target culture;" but if the theology takes on too powerful a cultural coloring, it runs the risk of distorting the Gospel. This ambivalence is inescapable in any attempt to communicate theology for a specific language and culture.

Any primary experience of the Gospel undergoes the process of development into a theology as a "testimony" to it. In this process, various metaphysical "tools" come into play. It is immaterial whether the "tool" is used consciously or unconsciously. It is not necessary to remark here that the metaphysical tool employed does not remain purely formal but determines the character of the theology it serves to shape. The crucial question is this: Is the "tool" subordinated to the Gospel and open to modification by the Gospel, or does the tool dictate the Gospel and cast the content of the Gospel into its own metaphysical mold?

³⁴See note 15 above.

An important issue here is that Holy Scripture, to which a theologian constantly refers in his work, is inexhaustible in theological richness and infinite in its perspectives, and therefore refuses to be reduced into a neatly organized set of categories, but constantly "disturbs" a theologian's system. This fact indicates that a theology can remain vital only as long as it remains a finger pointing to that which is infinitely greater than itself.

Kitamori himself is clearly aware of this issue,³⁵ but in theological endeavor, as in any human effort, to know is one thing, to follow the knowledge in practice is quite another. In the following, we shall pay particular attention to how Kitamori has managed to resist the danger of metaphysical overhand in his interpreting the Gospel.

Overview of the Concept of the Pain of God

The impact of the vision of the Pain of God has urged Kitamori to proclaim what he experienced. With his conviction that "there is a logic [logical structure] in the Gospel," Kitamori developed his theology of the Pain of God. His aesthetic urge for clarity and symmetry in thought is part of his passion in "doing theology." In the following, we review the appearances of the concept of the Pain of God in Kitamori's writings. We shall then observe the distinctive features of the concept of the Pain of

³⁵In his graduation thesis, Kitamori writes that "a theology, if it wants to be a true theology, is always *theologica viatorum*" ("The Recognition of God in Christ." [Japan Lutheran Theological Seminary, 1937], 295-296). In this connection, he also touches on the very term "the Pain of God" and writes as follows: "This term should never be identified with the 'Sache' itself; our term witnessing to God has no permanence and security." (Ibid.).

God.

As is often the case with influential thinkers, Kitamori found in the concept of "the Pain of God" a powerful, versatile handle with which to grasp a whole range of reality (theological, philosophical and otherwise). The Pain of God is his methodological axiom and his most comprehensive term for describing the reality of God. To Kitamori, this term alone is capable of conveying his view of God. While he was still a student at the Lutheran Seminary in Tokyo, Kitamori wrote that "we must make the truth of 'the Pain of God' the very foundation of every truth in the Gospel."³⁶

"What is revealed in the Son," explains Kitamori, "is not merely the wrath of God nor merely the love of God, but love truly conquering wrath, that is, *the Pain of God*."³⁷ As long as we are sinners, we are only the object of God's wrath; but God loved (and still loves) the object of His wrath, and this love which has conquered wrath, is the Pain of God.³⁸ "The love of God which loves the object of the wrath of God," Kitamori further explains, "is the Pain of God."³⁹ This love became a historical reality when Christ died on the cross, bearing the wrath of God on behalf of

³⁶*Auto I*, 183. One finds a similar pattern of thought in Nishida; his philosophical (and religious!) *Urerlebnis* is what he calls "pure experience," an intuitive knowledge of the ultimate in reality: "It has been my wish for many years that one day I would try to explain all things in the light of 'pure experience' as the sole reality." (*Studies in the Good* [Tokyo: Iwaname Shoten, 1923], 2).

³⁷*Cross*, 23.

³⁸*Pain*, 37.

³⁹*Introduction*, 45.

sinners. In other words, the Pain of God is the love made manifest in the Crucified.⁴⁰

Describing the Pain of God in this way, Kitamori never tires of emphasizing the full reality of the wrath of God. It is this wrath in God that causes the pain in God. Here we are warned not to misunderstand the Pain of God. According to Kitamori, it would be a theological mistake if one would say (in a prayer for instance) that we cause the pain in the heart of God by sinning. Pain is not God's reaction to human sins, it is wrath that is aroused in God by sins committed by man.⁴¹ The reality of the wrath of God is irreducible and is the very presupposition of the Pain of God. The Pain of God is the love of God bearing the wrath of God. Because of this bearing, the love of God toward sinners became a reality. "The true feature of the Cross of Christ," expounds Kitamori, "is the Pain in love."⁴² Thus, the Pain of God is "the forgiveness of sins."⁴³ It is "the grace of God."⁴⁴ In short, it is nothing but the Gospel of the Cross. As Kitamori emphasizes repeatedly, it is the victorious character of love of God which makes His love "irresistible" to a sinner.⁴⁵ Man

⁴⁰*Pain*, 90; *Character*, 258; *Auto I*, 81, 137.

⁴¹*Pain*, 115. "If what one sees in the crucified God were 'sympathy or goodwill,' Christianity would be a lie pure and simple. If it were so, Nietzsche had seen the truth. . . . There one sees the Pain of God ['a love which loves the detestable' (*Auto I*, 195)]" (*Auto II*, 80-82).

⁴²*Character*, 258.

⁴³*Pain*, 40, 103.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 103.

⁴⁵*Auto II*, 85; cf. *ibid.*, 90.

cannot fall out of this love in the Pain of God, and this means, from the sinner's viewpoint, the absolute certainty of salvation.

Expounding on the meaning of the Pain of God, Kitamori follows traditional dogmatic categories of creation, reconciliation and sanctification. When Kitamori says that the Pain of God is the forgiveness of sins, he means that the Pain of God belongs to "the order of reconciliation." As the basis of reconciliation, the Pain of God is also the basis of a new life, and has two aspects: first, it sustains the believers in this world of sin and pain; secondly, it effects sanctification in the believer's life.⁴⁶ Therefore, emphasis is also placed on the order of sanctification.

It is true that God in pain embraces man, man with all his sinful reality, a being who is absolutely "unembraceable." But the Pain of God cannot remain without effecting sanctification in both the sinner's life and the larger reality around him. In Kitamori's understanding, God's "embracing of the unembraceable" is made on the basis of God's Pain, His real suffering. Thus it cannot be a gratuitous indulgence to a sinner, but a costly grace, a forgiveness based upon God's own self-sacrifice. "We see," writes Kitamori, "that the love of God which embraces the sinner has the character of pain, and this shows that it is the love which never allows any *laissez-faire* with the sinner's reality but moves man to fight against the reality, conquer and change it [into a new reality]."⁴⁷ In Kitamori's thought, the love of God in Pain is

⁴⁶"Whereas the Pain of God embraces the sinner just as he is, the Holy Spirit as the love based upon the Pain of God is the love which actually removes the sinner's sin" (*Logic*, 60).

⁴⁷*Auto II*, 50.

absolutely embracing; no sinners (no matter how sinful they may be) are left out. The Pain of God is a constant challenge to overcome sins. The Pain of God is the basis and energizing power for a new life and a new reality.

In spite of the sanctifying power of the Pain of God, in which Christians now are living, we still remain *semper peccator*. As long as we remain so, the wrath of God continues as a constant reality, because, according to Kitamori, our sins invariably evoke the wrath of God; an undeniable relentless reality.⁴⁸ It is therefore necessary for God to be continually in Pain, bearing His own wrath upon Himself. Because of His love for us, God remains in His Pain in order that we may not be destroyed by his wrath.⁴⁹ In this sense, the Pain of God is a soteriological concept. It summarizes man's salvation.

Though the Pain of God is a strongly soteriological concept, soteriology in the narrow sense is not Kitamori's primary theological concern. Kitamori rather admonishes Christians to remember that our primary concern should be the Pain of God rather than our human pains. If our concern was primarily for our own pain and suffering, we would remain in our sins. Our rebellion against God, holds Kitamori, matters more than our own misery, since the former has to do with God, while the

⁴⁸"What we call the 'Pain of God' is not simply the response of his heart to our sins. It is the *wrath of God*, and not his pain, which responds to sin. . . . God is angry at our sins, never hurt. God suffers pain only when he tries to *love* us, the objects of his wrath." (*Pain*, 115).

⁴⁹"What actually smites us and destroys us is the *wrath* of God. But the 'Pain of God' results from the love of the One who intercepts and blocks his wrath toward us, the One who himself is smitten by his wrath. Because God's pain has intercepted his wrath, those within his Pain are protected" (*ibid.*, 123).

latter only concerns our own life.⁵⁰ In other words, we should be more concerned with our sin and with the Pain of God (which is caused by our sins) rather than with our pain.

We cannot deny the deep concern for human suffering felt by Kitamori (and who as a theologian would deny the problem of suffering and pain in life?). Nevertheless, it is conspicuous that in Kitamori's theology of the Pain of God, God Himself in Pain is the primary concern. "The primary theme of this book is to behold the Pain of God, since the theology of the Pain of God is literally concerned with *His* pain."⁵¹ Writing the preface to the third edition of his *magnum opus* in this way, Kitamori makes the main intention of this theology very clear; obviously he is aware that the "practical" applicability of this work may threaten to overshadow the writing's main issue. "Human pains are not my main [theological] theme," writes an unambiguous Kitamori.⁵²

The author declares: "Theology is ultimately concerned with the *view of God [kami-kan]*."⁵³ A theology which fails to make a decisive contribution to the concept of God has no right to speak in theology. According to Kitamori, "*kami-kan* is: how one grasps and adores the form of God."⁵⁴ He holds that various *kami-kan*

⁵⁰*Auto I*, 119.

⁵¹*Pain*, 11.

⁵²Kitamori, *Literature and God*, (Tokyo: Nihon no Bara-sha, 1983), 233.

⁵³*Pain*, 46. "The view of God" is our translation of [神観], a term more akin to the German *Gottesanschauung*.

⁵⁴*Ibid.* *Sugata*, [姿] in the original Japanese.

have appeared in the Creeds of the Church throughout the centuries. In his view, as far as *kami-kan* is concerned, the Ecumenical Creeds ("produced by the Greek and Roman churches") provided the definite view of God.⁵⁵ In this regard, the Reformation contributed very little to the view of God, and subsequently, even the Reformation's decisive contribution to the doctrine of faith [soteriology] was adversely affected.⁵⁶

In this regard, Kitamori acknowledges Karl Barth's "contribution;" believing that Barth restored the right perspective for understanding the Gospel, namely, his concentration on the doctrine of God. In his graduation thesis, Kitamori writes, "The theology of Karl Barth is a theology pointing to *God*; there has never been a theology so faithful in pointing to God as that of Barth."⁵⁷ Kitamori then approvingly quotes from Barth's *Das Wort Gottes und Theologie*: "The Bible has only one theological

⁵⁵Ibid., 46.

⁵⁶*Creeds*, 7-10. According to Kitamori, the main issue of Reformation theology was how to come to terms with the *sola* in *sola fide*, and the *et in fides et opera*. In his view, *sola fide* is the "field" in which *fides et opera* find themselves; this should reflect the Trinitarian structure where *solus Christus* is the field in which *Pater, Filius et Spiritus Sanctus* find themselves.

Concerning this argument Kitamori has the following to say: "The structure of the [Reformation] soteriology is the Trinitarian structure [of the Ecumenical Creeds]. But were the Reformers aware of this issue? If they had been, Melancthon, for instance [in his *Locī*], would not have put aside the Trinitarian dogma as an item of *frigida disputatio*. Nor would Luther have passed it by as something not subject to controversy. . . . If they had applied the Trinitarian dogma to their soteriology, their struggle would have won a greater victory--a victory of the Gospel without the tragedy of schism from the Roman Church." (Ibid., 9-10.). An analysis of Kitamori's viewpoint here will be made later in this study.

⁵⁷*Recognition*, 25 (see note 35 above).

interest and that is. . . interest in God himself."⁵⁸ "Barth alone sees God; all the other theologians did not see God," judges Kitamori.⁵⁹ Here he fully agrees with Barth on this necessity of theological concentration on God, believing the Swiss theologian has opened the way for a right understanding of the Gospel through this particular emphasis, since only where "God is [properly] seen is it possible to understand the Gospel aright; one cannot expect a precise understanding of the Gospel where God Himself is not seen."⁶⁰ But for Kitamori, Barth's emphatic and exclusive concern with God is only the starting point for a deeper penetration into the truth of the Gospel. Kitamori feels it is necessary to either go further than the solution posited in Barth's *Vorfrage*, and to set-up a prolegomena more "radical" than that of Barth.⁶¹ We shall deal with the question of relationship between Kitamori and Barth on the issue of theological prolegomena in a later discussion.⁶² Here, we briefly touch upon some of the more pertinent points affecting our present analysis.

For Kitamori, Barth's *Deus dixit* is still formal in nature, void of the essential content of the Gospel; this formal *Deus dixit* cannot be a prolegomena for a

⁵⁸Karl Barth, *The Word of God and the Word of Man*, tr. Douglas Horton (New York: Harper & Row, 1957), 75.

⁵⁹*Auto II*, 69.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, 69-70.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, 70.

⁶²See Chapter 6 below.

proper evangelical theology.⁶³ It must be filled with the essential content, holds Kitamori, and that is *Deus in dolore*. In this way, Kitamori means that he has gone a step further than Barth, claiming to have laid the real foundation of an evangelical theology.⁶⁴ In his view, the Gospel (the Pain of God) must be the prolegomena, the methodology, for dogmatics as well.⁶⁵ In other words, the Pain of God must hold the sole sway in theology, both as its content and as its method.⁶⁶

For Kitamori, the concentration on God means the concentration on God in Pain. With Barth, concentration on God is not limited to the redemptive sphere in the narrow sense, as is the case with Kitamori. Redemption is understood as one factor in the order of *operatio ad extra* besides creation and sanctification. With this broader perspective, Barth's theological intention seems easier to understand, while grasping Kitamori's theological viewpoint is more difficult because of the intrinsically negative nature of his central concept: The Pain of God.

⁶³"According to Barth, 'Gott redet, daß er redet.' But we shall say, 'Gott redet, daß er liebt.'" (*Recognitio*, 271).

⁶⁴"What we have to do is not to build up *materiale Frage* [the content of theology] on the ground Barth has opened by his *Vorfrage*, but we do have to build up a further *Vorfrage* than what Barth has accomplished by his own *Vorfrage*." (*Auto I*, 213-214.)

⁶⁵"Criticizing Barth, I was trying to carry through 'faith alone' and 'the Cross alone' as the sole methodology of theology," says Kitamori, recalling his earlier confrontation with Barth.

⁶⁶The place of the Pain of God in Kitamori's theology is comparable to the place of justification in Luther's theology, when the Reformer says: "*Articulus justificationis est magister et princeps, dominus, rector et iudex super omnia genera doctrinarum, qui conservat et gubernat omnem doctrinam ecclesiasticam et erigit conscientiam nostram coram Deo.*" (WA, 39 I, 205, 1-9).

Kitamori explains and defines this concept at various places in his writings. At one point, Kitamori says that "the Pain of God is the definition of the essence of the Absolute." In another context, "The Pain of God is His essence."⁶⁷ Kitamori claims, "the truth of the Pain of God is the head and king of all divine truths, and demands all our concern as its witness,"⁶⁸ and, "the Pain of God is all [all-inclusive] and *eternal*."⁶⁹ All of these quotes are of crucial importance in interpreting Kitamori's theology, and require careful analysis. We recognize that for Kitamori, the Pain of God is the essence of God. To know His pain or see Him in Pain is to see God in His innermost essence!⁷⁰

In view of this "definition" of the essence of God, we immediately feel compelled to ask: Can the concept of "pain" be used as the description of God's innermost essence? Pain, in the sense of suffering, is a negative concept and remains so, regardless of modification. Of course, what Kitamori means by "pain" is not pain pure and simple; but a form of love which is inseparably united with experiencing pain. However, when Kitamori emphasizes pain so strongly as the essence of God, we must suppose that he has something specific to advance with regard to his view of

⁶⁷Kitamori, *The God of Double Negation* (Tokyo: *Nihon no Bara-sha*, 1981), 149. "The Pain of God as the Pain of God," also says Kitamori, "is the truth of the transcendental Being [超越的実在者]" (*Auto II*, 136).

⁶⁸*Character*, 51.

⁶⁹*Pain*, 123.

⁷⁰"To the Jews, to see the face of God meant instant death. How can he who saw the Pain of God live any further! Is it really allowed to the mortal to touch upon the Pain of God? If it had not been allowed, he who saw it would not have lived any longer!" (*Auto I*, 200).

God; it is therefore necessary for us to pay attention to what he intends to convey by this particular emphasis on the Pain of God. Another question also arises when Kitamori holds that it is our sins which evoke God's wrath and then cause the Pain of God. Does this not mean that the Pain of God is something contingent, for our sins are contingent. How can the Pain of God, which is contingent, be the essence of God?

Again, these are very important questions, questions which we shall deal with shortly. First, it is necessary to preface these concerns with a few preliminary remarks. Kitamori's fervent devotion to (or even adoration of) God in Pain strongly supports the view that for Kitamori, the Pain of God is an absolute value, not a secondary condition with God; not *alienum* to God but His *proprium*. We see in Kitamori's statements an attempt to make the Pain of God absolute and eternal (an "absolutization" and "eternalization," if one so will).

This concept of Pain as absolute, eternal and essential to God is bound to have far-reaching consequences for one's view of God, ontology, anthropology, soteriology, ethics, and so on. If the Pain of God, as Kitamori believes, is a tension-filled coexistence of God's love and His wrath; and if God's wrath is something, in principle, negative in God Himself (as Kitamori also seems to suggest); and if we dare to reasonably consider the logical consequences of these statements, what would our conclusion be? Our conclusion: for Kitamori, humanity is, for some reason, preconditioned to sin against God (therefore arousing His wrath), in order to "help"

God to become a more true God in His Pain (Pain as a divine love of a higher order).⁷¹ This reasoning seems to be leading Kitamori's thought *ad absurdum*. But each hypothetical step we follow is not completely without supporting evidence, and therefore, our conclusion cannot be completely dismissed as unwarranted.

This hard idea of Kitamori may have its origin in the hidden side of the Godhead, which has found expression in his theology. If this is true, Kitamori may be treading on the shaky ground of human speculation; a risky undertaking, since it is impossible to penetrate the mystery of God and without incurring serious consequences to our interpretation of God and the reality around us.⁷²

But, as we remember, his primary vision of God in Pain was quite concrete and "tangible" in nature. Kitamori considered it to be a positive value in itself, an absolute value. In comparison with God in Pain, even the most painful human misery

⁷¹Later we will analyze issues surrounding this crucial theme. Until then, we posit this problem pointedly.

⁷²Kitamori is a strongly Christocentric theologian; he finds his theological "axiom" in 1 Corinthians 2:2: "For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified." (NRSV) Even so, he profoundly speculates upon the trinitarian mystery contained in "him crucified."

This feature of Kitamori is in significant contrast to Luther, whose thinking was exclusively based upon the incarnate Son. While Luther's Christocentrism warned against any speculation of the divine majesty, Kitamori goes in the opposite direction. From this difference we learn that Christocentrism as such is no sign that a theologian is opposed to speculation. We quote a short passage from Luther: "*Dis [the traditional appropriation of the three Persons to *opera ad extra*; the Father to creation, the Son to redemption, and the Holy Spirit to sanctification] sind die unterscheid der personen uns im Euangelio geben. Darüber mag weiter denken, wer da wil, wird aber keine mehr, die gewis sein mochte, finden. Darumb sollen wir einfeltiglich dabey bleiben und uns daran benügen lassen, bis wir dorthin komen, da wirs nicht mehr hören oder gleuben, sondern klerlich sehen und erkennen werden.*" (WA, 50, 275, 27-31).

should lose all color and fade away.⁷³ This strongly suggests that Kitamori's vivid intuition urged a theological analysis of the Pain of God. We can suggest that the attributes of God, anthropology and ontology themselves are preliminarily deduced by Kitamori, while the Pain of God retains absolute theological primacy. At one point, Kitamori says that we should seek the wrath of God in order that we experience our own pain, and give witness to the Pain of God.⁷⁴ This thought implies that in Kitamori's theology, the Pain of God is believed to be a value in and of itself, even the absolute value.

So far, we have not taken up the concept of "pain" itself. The meaning of the term "pain" as emotional and mental misery and sorrow can be considered as self-evident, but in order to clearly understand Kitamori's thought, we need to reflect briefly on the phenomenon called pain and see how Kitamori personally understands the term, particularly when it is applied to God.

The primary meaning of "pain" is "a localized physical suffering associated with bodily disorder," as well as "a basic bodily sensation induced by noxious stimulus."⁷⁵ Without a physical body, the sensation of pain in this primary sense is impossible; pain thus presupposes a physical organism possessing a nervous system. As with any concrete term, "pain" has also been used in a more abstract sense. Pain

⁷³"Listen! Jesus is about to be *buried*. God's only Son, God Himself in the person of His Son, is about to be *buried*! We to whom this fact has been revealed forget *everything* else. We can no longer be interested in anything else. *God is in pain*! Before this fact all other actuality loses (sic) significance." (*Pain*, 101).

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, 64.

⁷⁵*Webster's Ninth Collegiate Dictionary* (1988), s. v. *pain*.

is thus used to describe mental agony or spiritual anguish (because of man's psychosomatic nature, it is possible for physical disorders to originate in the mind; agony, anguish, dismay and other types of pain may be used in a literary sense). In this regard, the term "pain" is also appropriate in expressing "actual mental distress or suffering."⁷⁶

What does "pain" mean when it is applied to God? God is an incorporeal Being, and therefore He does not experience pain as a bodily sensation. In other words, "God in Pain," as in all positive statements of God, is analogical language. Obviously Kitamori understands this: "We cannot know directly what the pain of God is," he says, because "man is essentially different from God."⁷⁷ How then can we actually know if God is in Pain? Through our own pain, Kitamori answers, which symbolizes God's Pain. *Analogia* is called for here; Kitamori specifically uses the term *analogia doloris* to describe this way of knowing God in Pain.⁷⁸

According to Kitamori, the term "pain" should serve as a theological *terminus technicus* describing "the character of God's love."⁷⁹ Formally speaking, the character of God's love is the "mediated love of God."⁸⁰ Pain is also defined as

⁷⁶Ibid.

⁷⁷*Pain*, 60.

⁷⁸Ibid., 56. We will come back to this theme when we deal with Kitamori's theological methodology in Chapter 5.

⁷⁹*Introduction*, 46.

⁸⁰Ibid., 44. The phrase "the mediated love of God" is given by Kitamori in English.

"the love of God which embraces the *extra* (sinful men) within the *intra* (God's love)."⁸¹ In addition, Kitamori gives a more abstract definition when he writes: "the term 'pain' is a qualitative expression of negative mediation."⁸² Kitamori even denies that "the pain of God exists in God as substance;" "the pain of God is not a 'concept of *substance*'--it is a 'concept of relation,' a character of 'God's love.'"⁸³

We should reflect for a moment on the meaning of pain in this rather abstract sense. It first appears as if Kitamori has taken back what he has been saying until now concerning the Pain of God. In his "sober" reflection on the term, Kitamori thus gives his solution to the semantic problem pertaining to "pain" (although we do not find any detailed description of the problem in his writings).

And yet, making "pain" a technical term does not in any way nullify the immediacy and concreteness of his inner perception of the Pain of God. In connection with Kitamori's exposition of "the immanence and transcendence of the Pain of God" in his *magnum opus*, he refers to Matthew 26:12, exclaiming: "Listen! . . . God's only Son; God himself in the person of his Son; is about to be *buried!* . . . *God is in pain* [literally, *God is aching!*]"⁸⁴ In another context, Kitamori confesses his bliss in language tinged deeply with mysticism: "When I am dissolved in [literally, 'melted with'] the Pain of God and become one with Him in pain, it is *pure joy*, and there can

⁸¹Ibid., 81.

⁸²Kitamori, *Negation*, 149.

⁸³*Pain*, 16.

⁸⁴Ibid., 101; cf, note 73 above.

be no greater happiness for me."⁸⁵

The Pain of God is more than a theological cipher; more than a Hegelian *Vorstellung*,⁸⁶ it is something "substantial" in his theology! In fact, it is this immediacy and concreteness of the Pain of God that gives the very force to Kitamori's theology. Even though Kitamori now presents the term "the Pain of God" as a theological *terminus technicus*, the Pain of God remains in Kitamori's thought in its literal sense. It is a vision of God who is "really" in Pain; a vision of the crucial reality beyond and prior to any analytical reflection on its nature. Perhaps, even in a corporeal sense! Jesus suffered pain as a man! Thus, even a concept like "suffering" would be too abstract and too weak to describe the reality of the God in Pain experienced in Kitamori's vision.⁸⁷ From our perspective, therefore, the concept of

⁸⁵*Pain*, 72.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*, 28.

⁸⁷Perhaps, on this point, Kitamori is most akin to Uemura, who reflected deeply on the immediate and concrete image of God in pain. In his *magnum opus*, Kitamori quotes Uemura twice. One of these quotations is quite relevant in this context. To properly appreciate Kitamori's affinity with Uemura, it is helpful to reproduce the quotation in a "literal" translation. "God opened the way of sins' forgiveness for man" wrote Uemura, "tasting unspeakable suffering and pain, going through an aching [heart-aching] process, and offering His own body as a sacrifice." (quoted in *Itami*, 21-22). It is this tangible image in Uemura's thought of "God in suffering" that Kitamori primarily thinks of when he speaks of the Pain of God. "Christianity is," wrote Uemura elsewhere, "a faith which recognizes the heart of God in the Cross of Jesus; the Cross means God's suffering and pain." (*Sermons of Masahisa Uemura*, ed. Tsuneaki Kato [Tokyo: *Shinkyō Suppansha*, 1972], 297).

It is, however, possible that in Uemura's thoughts on divine suffering obtained inspiration from Horace Bushnell, A. M. Fairbairn and other English theologians of suffering (see J. K. Mozley, *The Passibility of God*, [Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1926], 138-65), for Uemura had been reading these theologians (see *Sermon*, 211, 261).

"pain" is irreplaceable in Kitamori's theology; for him it is *sine qua non*. God is "really" in Pain, as Kitamori's mystical exclamation clearly indicates.

Basic Characteristics of the Concept of the Pain of God

Now we shall make the following observations concerning distinctive traits of Kitamori's concept of the Pain of God and their implications.⁸⁸ We learned that there were two main issues involved in the Pain of God: soteriological concern and theological concern. When we look more closely at these two points, it is apparent that in Kitamori's thought the Pain of God is the sum of both the doctrine of God and the doctrine of salvation; soteriology is *theo*-logy and *vice versa*. More precisely, the doctrine of God has absorbed the doctrine of salvation, becoming soteriology as well. We shall now focus on the reason for this merger.

"Theology is the science of [God's] grace."⁸⁹ Kitamori says it is "a precise understanding of the Gospel."⁹⁰ In other words, "we must fathom 'the heart of the

⁸⁸In this part of the present section, we shall give an orientation of Kitamori's theological landscape. Cursory discussions here on these themes will be dealt *in extenso* in following sections. Since the arguments below are somewhat complicated, it is felt that an overview would be helpful to show respective issues in their total context, although this may involve the risk of repetition.

⁸⁹*Itami*, 134. The original Japanese [恩寵の学たる神学] has not been translated in *Pain*, 89.

⁹⁰*Pain*, 20. When we place God's giving up of the Son in the present tense, we indicate that this divine sacrifice is an eternal act on the part of God which is manifested on the Golgatha *ephapax* in history. Ontologically, the sacrifice is an eternal act of God; phenomenologically, it is an *ephapax* event in history. We may even dare say that in Kitamori, there is death in God Himself eternally; the death of Christ is the paradigm of this element of death in God Himself. We shall analyze this issue shortly.

Gospel' by knowing the will of God minutely (Colossians 1:9 ["For this reason, since the day we heard it, we have not ceased praying for you and asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding. . ."]) and by searching the depth of God (1 Corinthians 2:10 ["these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God."]).⁹¹ In these quotations, we see a constellation of two concerns: first, an interest in the view of God ("by knowing. . . and by searching. . .") and second, an interest in soteriology ("grace" and "the Gospel"). These two groupings indicate our observation above that soteriology is *theo*-logy and *vice versa*. We hear from Kitamori that this is the essential thing in theology: to know and search for God and the Gospel. "It has been our sincere desire," he concludes in his most representative work, "to see deeply into the heart of God. . . ."⁹² In other words, to gain insight into God in Pain is also to know the Gospel, and this means that God Himself is the Gospel. To "see and know" is thus the constitutive factor for the theology of the Pain of God.⁹³ To make a point here, we could twist the Melanchthonian dictum a bit and state: *Hoc est beneficia Dei in Christo cognoscere, cognoscere Eum in dolore*.

Here it may be helpful to note Kitamori's "intellectualization" of faith: "Although this world is filled with the grace of God, this grace does not become actual until we *believe* it and *comprehend* it. . . . Only when we believe this with a

⁹¹Ibid., 17.

⁹²Ibid., 145.

⁹³Ibid., 221.

clear and sure comprehension, [does] the grace [of God] become real grace, and it is the *Holy Spirit* who makes grace clear and sure for us."⁹⁴ An intellectualization of faith or the Gospel, as exhibited here and elsewhere, seems a logical consequence of Kitamori's concept of God as reviewed above. By "intellectualism," we mean an attitude of faith which seeks to penetrate a deeper meaning of the Biblical texts beyond their immediate clarity. In other words, it is a theological attitude which seeks *ratio veritatis* behind the external words of the Biblical texts. "I am filled with thankfulness because it has been allowed to me to enter the depth of God's heart."⁹⁵ This saying of Kitamori is a case in point when we speak of his theological intellectualism. Kitamori's theology can well be characterized as that of *fides quaerens intellectum*.⁹⁶

What then does this merging of soteriology into *theo*-logy indicate in Kitamori's theology? When Luther speaks of *favor Dei*, he speaks of God turning Himself toward us with His favor; a movement primarily from God to us. When Kitamori speaks of the Pain of God, or God in Pain, the direction is mainly from us to

⁹⁴*Auto II*, 209. "To believe in Christ means to have a truthfulness [眞実、*pistis*]," says Kitamori referring to the Greek word, "and this means one assumes his responsibility toward the grace of Christ, a responsibility which does not permit the believer to be ignorant of the grace but rather drives him to know more of it. . . . This is the connection between faith and knowledge. *We should therefore say that a faith which does not reach to knowledge is no faith.* The Anselmian '*Credo ut intellegam*' should be understood to this depth." (*Theology in Dialogue*, [Tokyo: Kyobunkan, 1961], 176; italics mine).

⁹⁵Pain, 19-20; cf. *ibid.*, 145.

⁹⁶It is not widely known that Kitamori is deeply inspired by the Archbishop of Canterbury. Anselm's ontological argument is used by Kitamori in the necessity of the historical Jesus as the constitution of the concept of the Pain of God (*ibid.*, 34). See further, *Introduction*, 131-34, *Character*, 11-13, and note 93 above.

God. Certainly, for Kitamori, this direction of movement from us to God is initiated by God's self-revelation in the crucified Son. But, as we shall see shortly, God has been in Pain prior to the revelation of the Son in history. This means that the Pain of God is in principle the *terminus ad quem* to which man lifts himself.⁹⁷ We saw that, to Kitamori, the Pain of God is the essence of God, something within the Godhead Itself. God in Pain, we may say, is an object of man's contemplation and *theoria*.

The idea of God eternally in Pain also indicates Kitamori's distinctive view of the mode of God's presence in the world. What is missing in Kitamori's thinking is the belief that God actively intervenes, or is "aggressively offensive" in history. In other words, we do not find in Kitamori an awareness of God in His *creatio continua*; his concept of God's presence in the world is static in nature (and this, apart from the manifestation of God's wrath!). He uses terms like "the Gospel of the love of God [the pain of God] covers the world,"⁹⁸ "the grace of God fills this world,"⁹⁹ "the Pain of God embraces the world,"¹⁰⁰ and the like. Certainly Kitamori states that God is immanent in the world, but it is an immanence in His "defensive" and passive solidarity with the suffering reality of man; God in Pain inviting man to find the

⁹⁷Speaking of the "epistemology" of salvation, that "salvation effects not only salvation but also lets the believer recognize salvation," Kitamori has the following to say: "Now here at the end we have to consider [not salvation but] the Savior Himself. As a matter of fact, to recognize [認識] the Savior [God in Pain] is the ultimate duty [究極の責務] of the believer. How can it be possible for me to be ignorant of the Being who saved me!" (*Logic*, 54).

⁹⁸*Itami*, 213 (*Pain*, 140).

⁹⁹*Auto II*, 209.

¹⁰⁰*Auto I*, 136.

meaning of his suffering in the Pain of God. Transcending the immanent suffering reality of man while at the same time covering and embracing it, the Pain of God is triumphant over the world and gives man the triumph over his existence in the world. The truth about God (that is, the truth of God in Pain) is an already "established" reality, which is therefore possible to be "searched, seen and known" by those who have an intuitive sensitivity to the Pain of God. We are therefore left with the strong impression that Kitamori's God is passive and "defensive."

Further, we mention the possible danger in Kitamori's concept of the Pain of God: the narrowing of the perspectives of *theo*-logy and soteriology. Kitamori has incorporated soteriology into *theo*-logy, emphasizing the knowledge of God in Pain. When the concept of God is identified with the doctrine of man's redemption, the doctrine of God is in danger of being absorbed into the sphere of redemption. The sphere of the creation which is to be redeemed easily disappears. But the God of the Bible is not only the Redeemer; He is also the Creator of man. He is Creator before He is the Redeemer. God is the One who gives each individual his life and existence in the world. In Kitamori's theology, God as Redeemer occupies the pivotal place, throwing a shadow upon the other reality of God (this can be seen in his Christology as well). Conversely, his soteriology also becomes meager since it is absorbed into the Pain of God, reflecting a pessimism about the world. This particular issue will be addressed in more detail in later pages; the above should be of sufficient notice.

Lastly, we speak of the predominant emphasis of love in the theological system of Kitamori. Love in this context understood as an inner fellowship between

personal beings, transcending the eternal, material existence. Kitamori's passion for "the precise understanding of the Gospel (the Pain of God)," is closely related to his love for God. Only when one possesses the exact knowledge of the Pain of God [or God in Pain] is one brought to a proper response to God's *love* in Pain. Thus, for Kitamori, the knowledge of God and the love of God is intimately linked. The background of this concept of relationship (as we anticipate the following discussions) is found in Kitamori's concern with our love for God.¹⁰¹ His theology can therefore be seen as a theology of love in the following ways: first, God's love in His Pain flows to man, and second, man's love in pain flows to God in Pain; both directions are qualified by pain.

God in Pain

Cur Deus in Dolore?

If Anselm of Canterbury raised the question "*Cur Deus homo?*" on the basis of faith in the mystery of the incarnation, Kitamori might well raise the question "*Cur Deus in dolore?*" on the basis of his mystical vision of God in Pain in the person of Christ on Golgotha. We shall now take a closer look at the ontological structure of the Pain of God.

We should note that Kitamori never forgets to stress that the *Pain* of God

¹⁰¹"For these twenty years," wrote Kitamori in 1953, "I have been tormented by the question of the relationship between the love of God [for us] and our love for God. . . . In this book I give a satisfactory answer to this question. I hope it is now clear that in order to witness to God's love [in His Pain] we are challenged to love God through our own existence." (*God*, 5).

does not correspond to the *pains* of sinful humanity. The pains of man are the result of God's wrath; His reaction to man's sin. Prior to the healing of man's suffering, there must be forgiveness, the forgiveness that is unavailable until the wrath of God is conquered by the Pain of God.¹⁰² Thus, the Pain of God is primarily an "inner-divine" issue.

Kitamori distinguishes between two aspects in answering the question of why God suffers Pain within Himself. Kitamori's starting point for reflecting on "*Cur Deus in dolore?*" is concrete human experience as an analogy to God's own experience. First, God is in Pain because He "loves the unlovable;" second, because He gives up His beloved Son as a sacrifice of love for the unlovable.¹⁰³

He illustrates both from the Old Testament "witnesses," Hosea and Abraham. In an essay entitled *Christmas According to Hosea*, Kitamori gives the following exposition in support of the first aspect of his explanation:¹⁰⁴ the prophet Hosea was commanded by the Lord to take himself "a wife of harlotry and children of harlotry." (Hosea 1:2). For Hosea, this divine commandment was a task of unbearable misery and, at the same time, one of glory, says Kitamori. With this assignment, the prophet is called to give witness to God's own "hatred" for the Israel found in harlotry, and to His unquenchable love for the chosen people (despite their

¹⁰²"To turn from man's suffering to God's suffering means, in other words, that we turn our heart from our 'suffering' to the problem of our sins. For the suffering of God takes place, first and foremost, to forgive our sins." (*Character*, 41).

¹⁰³*Pain*, 90.

¹⁰⁴Kitamori, *On Love and Hatred*, (Tokyo: Kyobunkan, 1960), 98-111.

betrayal of the love He has shown in the past). Hosea's unforgiving indignation over Gomer's continuous harlotry and the Lord's consuming wrath against Israel coincide "as if they were [two sides of] one sheet of paper." Reading words such as "I will . . . slay her," (2:3) and "I would kill her children," (9:16), Kitamori describes the whole story as "almost like a scene of a love scandal."¹⁰⁵ "The days of punishment [over Israel] have come," (9:6). In this Kitamori sees an unmistakable expression of divine rejection and punishment. But God shows that He is "God, and not man," (11:9), for "I will heal their backsliding; I will love them freely, for My anger has turned away from them." (14:4). In this love, comments Kitamori, God "infinitely transcends Hosea and shows His heart to him." Through this love of God, Hosea also learns to receive his adulterous wife. In Kitamori's exposition, God's love for the unlovable is witnessed through the experience of the prophet.

Here we see a familiar psychology of the human relationship of love. It is no doubt "suffering" when a husband continues to love his wife, even after her betrayal of his love through adultery. Kitamori uses the Japanese term *miren* for this ambivalent, indecisive psychology between hatred and love.¹⁰⁶ In this psychology, we see a form of intensified love for the person once so dearly loved. Although Kitamori judges *miren* by itself as "an ugliness" because of its "self-seeking motive," he finds an analogy between God's seeking love for straying man and this human, all

¹⁰⁵ まるで「痴情沙汰」と称されそうな場面" (ibid., 106).

¹⁰⁶ [未練]. This discussion is based on a short essay entitled "*Miren* and the Cross." in *An Introduction to the Bible*, (Tokyo: Kawade Shobo, 1954), 155-62.

too human *miren*.¹⁰⁷ Imitating Pascal's "*Rien n'est si semblable a la charitate que la cupiditate, et rien n'y est si contraire,*" Kitamori writes: "Nothing is so contrary to God's love than self-seeking love; and nothing is so similar to God's love than self-seeking love."¹⁰⁸ *Amor est souffrir!* For Kitamori, this also holds true for God's love in Pain.

Kitamori's second witness is Abraham during the offering of his son.¹⁰⁹ He agrees that Abraham is certainly "the father of faith," but this expression does not fully recognize the significance of what Abraham has done; for Abraham is "the father of service to God" as well, giving a paramount witness to God's Pain as he allowed Isaac to die as a sacrifice.¹¹⁰ Who could plumb the depth of Abraham's heart in this sacrifice? The eyes of anyone watching Abraham on Mount Moriah, writes Kitamori, would be frozen by this appalling scene!¹¹¹ It was, holds Kitamori, Soren Kierkegaard who perceived the true dimension of this shocking, even lurid scene, when the Danish thinker wrote: "From that day Abraham became an old man."¹¹² But to Kitamori, the significance of Abraham's action on Mount Moriah "has not been

¹⁰⁷*Ibid.*, 158-159.

¹⁰⁸*Ibid.*, 102; Pascal's adage is taken from his *Pensees*, (Brunschwig, 663).

¹⁰⁹*Pain*, 50-52.

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*, 50.

¹¹¹*Ibid.*, 51.

¹¹²*Ibid.*

fully recognized," and Kierkegaard is no exception in this regard.¹¹³

What then is the real issue in Abraham's sacrifice of his beloved son? It was nothing else than his service, in pain, to God. Abraham with ineffable pain in his heart served the God who "caused his own Son to die, the God in Pain, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."¹¹⁴ This "experience of God," the experience of suffering pain when God caused His beloved Son to die, is not far from human experience (especially under the particular wartime situation in which Kitamori wrote his *magnum opus*). "In this world," wrote Kitamori, "the strongest expression of human pain is found when parents send a beloved son into suffering and death."¹¹⁵ This was not an abstract statement, but a real experience for many parents in Japan; to send their sons into the battlefield for the sake of the nation was virtually identical to sending them into suffering and death. Analogous to this, God also truly suffers when He sends His beloved Son into death, in order to save sinners.¹¹⁶

Kitamori's primary vision of God in Pain was a product of contemplating the concrete historical suffering of Christ. He is convinced, as was Uemura before him, that the Cross of the Lord Jesus is the manifestation of the heart of God. This heart

¹¹³Ibid.

¹¹⁴Ibid., 52.

¹¹⁵*Itami*, 64, (*Pain*, 47).

¹¹⁶Speaking of what constitutes divine *agape*, Kitamori contends that *eros* must be "the structural moment" of *agape*. *Agape* as a sacrificial love constitutes itself first on the basis of *eros*, which is bound to the "unabandonable." The analogy of human parental love for a child has an essential position in Kitamori's interpretation of divine *agape* found in God's abandoning of His Son, *Literature and God* [Tokyo: Nihon-no-Barasha, 1983], 201-202).

of God cannot be described by the simple term "love," but only by "Pain." And yet, this Pain in God is not a historical and temporal phenomenon. Behind the historical event of the Cross, there is the eternal Pain of God. "The Pain of God," explains Kitamori, "is the infinitely deep background of the historical Jesus."¹¹⁷ Kitamori's interpretation of Abraham's sacrifice (before the historical sacrifice of Jesus) as a witness to the pain of God *par excellence* also indicates the presupposition of the eternalness of the Pain of God.¹¹⁸

A crucial question arises here: how can the Pain of God be an eternal reality? Kitamori even says that "Pain is the definition of the transcendent Being."¹¹⁹ Ordinarily, we understand God's work in temporal sequence, and Scripture speaks in that mode. God created heaven and earth; "And it was indeed very good!" (Genesis 1:31). This is, as it were, God's joyful exclamation when He completed His work of creation. After the fall of man his redemptive act follows this work of creation. If one, perhaps in a "simplistic" way, confines one's thinking to the temporal, one would have immense difficulty grasping the idea that God's Pain is eternal. Certainly, St. Paul, for instance, speaks of supra-temporal events ordained by God for man's salvation (1 Corinthians 2:7-10; Ephesians 3:9-12; Colossians 1:26). These and other

¹¹⁷*Pain*, 35.

¹¹⁸This viewpoint is supported by Kitamori's own refutation of Ignatius' [of Antiochia] *tou pathous tou theou mou*, saying that the apostolic father spoke "only of the sufferings of Jesus *on earth*. . ." (*Pain*, 115, emphasis mine). In other words, Kitamori presupposes the eternalness of the Pain of God when he comments on Ignatius' view in this way.

¹¹⁹*Negation*, 149.

passages in Scripture would suggest the inevitability of a way of thinking which refers to an extraordinary dimension of God's reality. The question would then be: how, to what extent, and with reference to what, a relativization of the "ordinary category of thinking" is required and legitimate. This question suggests the problem of "time and eternity." We cannot deal with this problem here at any great length; but later we will include aspects relevant to the discussion at hand for a deeper understanding of Kitamori's theology (when we deal with the question of the eternalness of the Pain of God).¹²⁰

The Wrath of God

When God wants to "love those sinners who cannot and should not be loved," and when He even "causes His beloved Son to die" for their sake, God suffers Pain.¹²¹ In Kitamori's view, "God as such" [that is, God without Christ] cannot love sinners. Before He can love them, God must be reconciled to Himself. Why is this so? There exists, Kitamori answers, an absolute conflict between the God who desires to love sinners and the God who must annihilate those who have denied His love, "killing" Him. The loving God now bears upon Himself the wrath of God which

¹²⁰On the Biblical concept of time and eternity, see Regin Prenter, *Skabelse og Genløsning*, (Copenhagen: G. E. C. Gads Forlag, 1955), 245-50. Prenter sees God's faithfulness in eternity which makes man's time filled with blessing and meaning: "Evigheden betegner for israeliten ikke, som graekeren, den over al timelighed haevet eller bag al timelighed hvilende, abstrakte *tidsløshed*, men tvaert imod selve det faste i al timelighed" (248). Prenter sees this holds true also of the New testament concept of the relationship between time and eternity. See further Erich Frank, *Philosophical Understanding*, 64-66.

¹²¹*Itami*, 136 (*Pain*, 90).

should have stricken sinners. This is the Pain of God. God suffers Pain for His love toward sinners, and this because of His own wrath.¹²² But after this explanation, we are left wondering: what then is the wrath of God in Kitamori's thought?

"For the wrath of God," writes St. Paul, "is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of those who by their wickedness suppress the truth." (Romans 1:18). The wrath of God is an undeniable reality in Biblical faith, a reality in which all men are placed. It is one of the basic features of Luther's theology that the law of God reveals death, sin and the devil "*praesertim intensive vel in conscientia*," all the threatening forces which are ultimately the revelation of the wrath of God.¹²³ In Luther's thought, in addition to the ethical aspect of the concept of God's wrath, there is also included a transcendental dimension of God's reality toward man, particularly in connection with his idea of *Deus absconditus*.¹²⁴ It is also a well-known trait of the Reformer's thought that the wrath of God is *opus alienum* in contrast to the love of God, His *opus proprium*. There is no doubt that God's *opus alienum* is considered subordinate to His *opus proprium*, the former serving the

¹²²It is important to note that God does not suffer for the love toward sinner directly; love and suffering are not directly linked; divine suffering is related primarily to divine wrath. We can say, therefore, that for Kitamori, God suffers Pain for the love of sinful humanity only indirectly. God's suffering is primarily "for His own sake," because He *wants* to love us despite His own wrath.

¹²³WA, 40, I, 481, 1-2.

¹²⁴Of this dimension of the hidden God, says Werner Elert: "This God, who holds us responsible for demands we cannot fulfill, who asks us questions we cannot answer, who created for us that which is good and, in spite of this, leaves us no choice but to do that which is evil--this is the hidden God." (*The Structure of Lutheranism*. tr. Walter A. Hansen [St. Louis: Concordia Publ. House, 1962], 22).

realization of the latter.

Kitamori's concept of the wrath of God occupies an essential place in his theology; it is "an absolutely stubborn, absolutely nonnegotiable reality."¹²⁵ In his view, this absolute character of the wrath of God therefore refuses to be absorbed into the love of God; if God's wrath were assimilated, there would emerge what he calls "the monism of love," an idea of divine love that would not know of the Cross of Christ.¹²⁶ This would, then, totally miss the central message of the Bible--the Pain of God, and make superfluous the Cross of Christ, which Kitamori calls the very revelation of "the innermost heart of God."¹²⁷ No, the love of God is not a love pure and simple, but a love which involves friction, contradiction and suffering.¹²⁸ For Kitamori, divine wrath ever remains "an absolutely stubborn, absolutely nonnegotiable reality," as long as man is sinful. It is not propitiated once for all on Golgotha. It is, we must add, not even propitiable!¹²⁹

Genuinely consistent with his basic conceptual scheme of theology, Kitamori expounds upon the emergence of the wrath of God in light of the preceding concept of

¹²⁵" 神の怒りは絶対に頑固な現実である " (*Itami*, 21 [*Pain* 21]).

¹²⁶Kitamori thinks primarily of the Ritschlian understanding of divine love. "The monism of love" in Kitamori's terminology is " 愛の一元主義 " (*Introduction*, 46-47. See also *Character*, 23-24.

¹²⁷*Itami*, 221 (*Pain*, 145).

¹²⁸*Character*, 23-24.

¹²⁹If, in Kitamori's thought, the propitiation had been actually carried out as the *ephapax* of Hebrew 9:12 ([Christ] entered once for all into the Holy Place, . . . with his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption"), the Pain of God could not be eternal, a statement contrary to Kitamori's view.

God's love:

When the love of God is betrayed by man, it turns into the wrath of God. The wrath of God is the same as saying: Divine love betrayed. The love of God becomes the wrath of God [when betrayed] because it is true love. True love once betrayed turns into wrath. If a love does not become wrath, even when betrayed, it is no true love at all. That God is God is shown by His wrath. A God without wrath is no God at all.¹³⁰

Here we see that the wrath of God is a reaction on the side of God which has its origin in the love of God. This idea of divine wrath as a "reactionary" form of love has as its conceptual background Kitamori's notion of God, that is, God is exclusively love; all the other attributes of God are only different aspects of God as *love*, including His holiness. If ordinary human love is believed to be analogous with divine love, interpreting God's wrath as a reaction to the betrayal of love in a personal relationship is readily understandable; love, when intense, is highly charged with spiritual and personal energy, which, when betrayed, naturally results in a destructive reaction against love's object. For Kitamori, the intensity of the love of God surpasses human comprehension; the wrath of God (His love betrayed) therefore also surpasses human comprehension.

To understand this concept of divine wrath, we need to pay particular attention to Kitamori's category of love and the significance he gives to it. Divine wrath is a reaction to man's sin. In Kitamori's thought, sin is conceived as man's betrayal of divine love, and the reaction of God to sin is vehement. To describe this,

¹³⁰*Logic*, 130. "Sin is the betrayal of love. . . . Sinners who betray this love should never be loved. Sin therefore presupposes intense love. When intense love is betrayed, anger becomes intense." (*Pain*, 91).

Kitamori borrows P. T. Forsyth's expression: "Sin is the death of God. Die sin must or God."¹³¹ The Scottish theologian speaks of a death struggle between divine holiness and sin. Forsyth is concerned here with God's vindication of His holiness which is absolutely incompatible with the dominion of Satan.¹³² This concerns an absolute either/or situation. Kitamori now understands Forsyth's idea as a death struggle between God and *sinners*. "Sinners are the death of God." Kitamori would read, "Die must the sinners or God." Wrath is thus God's absolute negation of sinners.

Kitamori reads Forsyth "differently" from what the latter intended, since the Japanese theologian replaces Forsyth's idea of "divine holiness" with his own idea of "divine love."¹³³ As Forsyth could not give up the claim of God's holiness, so Kitamori cannot admit that God's love (a love betrayed) can tolerate the sinner's

¹³¹*The Justification of God*. (London; Duckworth & Co., 1916), 151.

¹³²*Character*, 43; *Itami*, 181 (*Pain* omits three sentences at the end of the paragraph, which includes the quotation from Forsyth. Schmerz translates the sentences omitted in *Pain*: "*Gott allein erleidet wahrhaftigen Schmerz, weil er eigentlich Sünde nicht vergeben darf*. [The quotation from Forsyth comes here.] *Und doch hat dieser Gott die Sünde vergeben!*" [118]). On this point, Forsyth has the following to say: "The more love there is in a holy God, the more wrath. Sin, in the sinner He loves, against the law of His own nature, which He loves better still, could not leave Him either indifferent, or merely pitiful. For Love would then desert its own holiness. A being holy, God's concern with sin is more than pity, more than pain. It is holiness in earnest reaction." (Samuel J. Mikolaski, ed. *The Creative Theology of P. T. Forsyth: Selections from his Works*. [Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1969], 132-133).

¹³³See the quotation in note 132 above.

existence. The sinner must die, or God ceases to be God.¹³⁴ God's wrath, divine love betrayed, is thus an absolutely nonnegotiable reality to the person who betrays God's love.

Despite this absolute divine negation, God still wants to love the sinner. There emerges then a severe conflict between the God who must destroy sinners, and the God who earnestly seeks them. In fact, Kitamori's idea of the struggle within God closely resembles Forsyth's concept of the relationship between God's holiness and His love. When Kitamori speaks of God bearing upon Himself His own wrath,¹³⁵ it sounds similar to Forsyth's phrase ". . . also there [on the Cross] bearing Himself the Judgment of His own holiness."¹³⁶ A major difference between these two theologians is the direction of the divine reaction. Whereas Forsyth sees the reaction of divine holiness directed against sin, Kitamori believes the wrath of God is directed against sinners; and thus, the wrath of God against the sinner is a destructive, annihilating reality. Because of sin (man's betrayal of God's love), "the world is laid

¹³⁴"It was sin," writes Forsyth (in contrast to Kitamori's interpretations of Forsyth), "that had to be judged, more even than the sinner, in a world of salvation; and God made Christ sin in this sense, that God as it were took Him in the place of sin, rather than of the sinner, and judged the sin upon Him; and in putting Him there He really put Himself there in our place (Christ being what he was); so that the divine judgment of sin was real and effectual." (Ibid., 142). We see that Forsyth makes a clear distinction in his argument between sin and the sinner.

¹³⁵Speaking of the *poena*-aspect of redemption, Kitamori says: "The Christ who bears the punishment is the Christ who bears the wrath of God. And Christ was the very God who loved the sinner. Accordingly, the Christ crucified is the figure of God's love bearing God's wrath upon itself. The fact that one bears one's own wrath upon one's own love is pain. But is there more vehement Pain than this kind of Pain?" (*Character*, 21).

¹³⁶Forsyth, *Justification*, 151.

down under the wrath of God."¹³⁷

God's love of "the first order" (to anticipate what follows) is now betrayed and has become wrath; but God does not cease to love sinners. Here we see in Kitamori's idea divine love split into two opposing realities within God.¹³⁸ This love of God which still loves the sinner is now called the love of "the second order." But the integrity of the divine love of the first order must retain its own *proprium*, otherwise God would cease to be God [Forsythian!].¹³⁹ God therefore takes upon Himself His own wrath, so that He may be able to love sinners.

The love which sinners now receive from God is, therefore, not a love coming to them "im-mediately" (that is, without mediation). God's love for the sinner is invariably a divine love which is already gone through and mediated by the Pain of God. It is an already "processed" love as it were. Moreover, God's Pain is *conditio sine qua non* for God's love towards us. Thus, the Pain of God is not synonymous with God's eternally unchangeable love (in Kitamori's view, the love of God is not an

¹³⁷Logic, 33.

¹³⁸"Sin is the death of God. Sin must die or God.' This is the wrath of God. But God in Christ is the God who loves the children of wrath. What kind of love is this? Here God is split in Himself. Real sin is that which splits God into two." (*Character*, 44).

¹³⁹"The grace of God is [first and foremost] forgiveness of sins; forgiveness of sins means that the love of God conquers the wrath of God. But [it is vital to note that] sins [actually] forgiven are at the same time something which shall not be forgiven. This means that one should not regard the wrath of God as dissolved into nothing [even when sins are forgiven]. When God forgives sins, the wrath of God is not dissolved into nothing but it continues to be borne by God Himself. The love of God bears upon itself the wrath of God in forgiveness of sins" (*Character*, 57).

eternally unchangeable identity; it is "changeable" and has movement).¹⁴⁰ The Pain of God is a term that genuinely describes God's suffering within Himself.

For a better understanding of this we turn to a "longhand" term for the Pain of God, namely, "the love based upon the Pain of God."¹⁴¹ In this phrase, primary stress as well as logical primacy is on "Pain of God" rather than "love." The Pain of God is *not* the pain based on God's love. If this were the case, there would ultimately be no pain within God for the love of sinners (God already loves the sinner before His Pain!); Pain would then only be an expression of His love and sympathy. On the contrary, according to Kitamori, God must suffer a fierce conflict within Himself, because He wants to love sinners whom He must also destroy. Whenever He loves sinners, He therefore suffers this Pain prior to loving them. The Pain of God is thus primarily God's problem in His love for sinners.

In comparison with other theologians who have developed theologies of suffering,¹⁴² a distinctive departure in Kitamori's system is that the suffering of God

¹⁴⁰We shall see this later in this section.

¹⁴¹The original term of "the love based upon the Pain [of God]" is " 神の痛みに基礎づけられし愛 ." *Pain* translates this as "love rooted in God's pain." The original image of the term is that of a house standing on a foundation. Kitamori may hold that God's Pain supports His love. *Schmerz: "Die im Schmerz begründete Liebe Gottes."* Despite some incongruity between *Pain* and my translation, I prefer in this study "the love based upon the Pain of God." However, when I quote from *Pain*, I do this without change.

¹⁴²Including the theme of God's suffering are the following: J. K. Mozley, *The Impassibility of God*, (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1926); Jürgen Moltmann, *Der gekreuzigte Gott*, (Munich: *Chr. Kaiser Verlag*, 1972); Jung Young Lee, *God Suffers for Us*, (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1974); Geddas Macgregor, *He Who Let Us Be*, (New York: Seabury Press, 1975); Warren McWilliams, *The Passion of God*, (Macon, GA: Mercer Univ. Press, 1985); Paul S. Fiddes, *The*

is an inner-divine suffering. In other words, while most other theologians concerned with a theology of suffering emphasize divine suffering *for* us, Kitamori concentrates primarily upon the Pain of God as suffering *within* God Himself, suffering because of His own conflict; "only" secondarily does God suffer for sinners. To put it bluntly, the sinner is for a time a spectator of the drama of the Pain of God. Kitamori therefore constantly emphasizes that believers should concern themselves primarily, exclusively, with the Pain of God. The theology of the Pain of God is a theology of the Pain of God. The wrath of God is absolutely constitutive for this particular theological system.¹⁴³ We can therefore maintain that in the mind of Kitamori, the wrath of God is *proprium* in the Pain of God.

One may better understand Kitamori's use of the phrase "divine wrath" by analyzing of the traditional idea of God's wrath and love. Figuratively speaking, the

Creative Suffering of God, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988).

¹⁴³Moltmann and Lee, among others, speak of the wrath of God, but their conceptualization of divine wrath is somewhat vague, something other than the usual understanding of the idea of wrath. Moltmann writes: "*Als verletze Liebe ist Zorn Gottes nicht zuerst ein Zufügen, sondern ein göttliches Erleiden von Übel.*" (261, underline mine). Can wrath which is not primarily *Zufügen* be described as wrath? Lee, who has many thoughts similar to Kitamori, is also not clear regarding the concept of divine wrath when he says, for instance: "The wrath of God is. . . to be understood as an act of the inner struggle between transcendence [the eternal will to assert His own glory and power] and immanence [the compassionate heart to renounce and sacrifice Himself] of God when He is fully involved in the existential estrangement of the world. It is the symbol of the struggling love to accept that which also is rejected by Him." (14-15). Lee's thought scheme is quite similar to Kitamori's, but still, the concept of wrath is not as specific.

The ambiguity concerning the idea of divine wrath as found in Moltmann and Lee indicates that theologies of the suffering of God built upon the love of God have difficulty in the coming to terms with the wrath of God, a transcendental aspect into which humanity cannot fully penetrate.

traditional idea of God can be described as an ellipse with two foci: holiness and love, while for Kitamori, God is described as a circle with a single focus. When Luther in his Small Catechism explains the Commandments individually with the introduction: "We should fear and love God. . .," he also presupposes the elliptical model. Holiness marks divine otherness, which is not absorbed into His relationship of love towards us. In contrast to this, we can characterize Kitamori's formal scheme in this regard as "loveism," in the sense that love is the sole category of theology.¹⁴⁴

This interpretation by Kitamori of the wrath of God on the basis of his "loveism" has both strong and weak aspects. On the one hand, it has a definite advantage in making the reality of God's wrath intelligible. If God loves us so deeply and intensively, then our rejection of His love cannot leave Him indifferent to us. The Old Testament idea of a jealous God is a case in point. On the other hand, when Kitamori reduces the holiness of God to love, he runs the risk of losing the dimension of God's "numinous" transcendence over man. In other words, the wrath of God has also dimensions which defy our rational comprehension; it sets the borderline of our understanding of the mystery of God and the world under His inscrutable providence.¹⁴⁵ This means, in practice, that when one does not take this divine

¹⁴⁴We could have used the term "the monism of love," but this term has been used by Kitamori already, as we saw above. In need of a handy term to describe his use of "love" as the sole classification in his theology, we have coined this term.

¹⁴⁵One of the themes of the Book of Job is the recognition of the ultimate transcendence of God's way of dealing with us. In his studies in "*Gottesrede*" in the Book of Job, Jürgen van Oorschot makes the following observation: "*Sowohl die Tendenz weisheitlicher Theologie im nachexilischen Judentum, die undialektisch das Weltgeschehen und Gotteswillen gleichzusetzen begann, als auch der Protest dagegen,*

transcendence, he is forced to explain what is unexplainable, and this with the risk of straining the reality we experience and the reality of God as witnessed in Scripture.¹⁴⁶ We are under the wrath of God, and there is no question about it. But this statement, if understood in the same way as it is by Kitamori, does not explain the whole problem of tragedies, miseries and absurdities of human reality.

We are told that God's love betrayed by sinners causes Pain. The love which still loves sinners causes Pain as it has to bear the wrath of God upon itself. Why is God in Pain? It is because God loves sinners who are unlovable and "unembraceable" by their own right. God's love has this character of Pain, or tragedy. When Kitamori reflects on this tragedy of God, however, he finds "an infinitely deep background." What is this background?

The Pain of God as the Essence of God

The Pain of God in Kitamori's thought is an inner-divine conflict caused by human betrayal of God's love. God suffers Pain within Himself because of the love

der sich auf eigene Erfahrungen beruft und diese zum Maßstab der Bewertung des Handelns Gottes in Schöpfung und Geschichte macht, überschreitet anmaßend die Grenze menschlichen Möglichkeiten." (Gott als Grenze, [Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1987], 199-200).

¹⁴⁶Just as Job's friends were forced with their "rationalistic" view of *lex talionis* to convince Job that he was guilty for what he was receiving, so Kitamori's contention of human suffering purely as the wrath of God is compelled to assert the seriousness for the betrayal of divine love. The wrath of God is most difficult concept for the Japanese to "digest." But Kitamori's contention involves the same danger as Job's friends in this regard. When man rationalizes the wrath of God, it results (*mutatis mutandis*) in "entweder gegen seine [Leidenden] Gewißheit an eine eigene Schuld glauben zu müssen oder sich in den Händen eines das Recht verachtenden Tyrannen zu wissen." (Ibid., 206).

he has for sinners. But this does not exhaust Kitamori's ideas concerning the Pain of God. In fact, he often alludes to a more profound background of a metaphysical nature of the reality of the Pain of God. This is concerned with the essence of God, and its reflection in the world.¹⁴⁷ We are thinking of a contradiction in God Himself or in His love.¹⁴⁸ We consider here the eternalness and essentiality of the Pain of God, Pain as an intrinsic issue in God.

What is the essence of God? Kitamori says that God's essence is "His inner world."¹⁴⁹ Concretely, what is in "His inner world" is His essence, and that is "the Pain of God as seen by Jeremiah and the love shown in the Cross as seen by Paul."¹⁵⁰ His inner world is "His heart," which is the Pain of God.¹⁵¹ The Pain of

¹⁴⁷When God's essence is Pain, then the world is also ultimately in pain. This is a simple metaphysical equation. In fact, while still a student at Kyoto University, Kitamori wrote the following striking note: "The deepest feature of reality is the 'identity of absolute contradictions,' [the axiomatic formula of Nishida Philosophy]. . . Why is it so? Because, I believe, the very love of God for the world is the 'identity of absolute contradictions.' The reality of this world is the *imago* [似像] of this God." (*Auto II*, 171). Whether this view will logically lead to the conclusion that the suffering in this world has its origin in God remains to be seen in the below.

¹⁴⁸Explaining Hegel's *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, Hans Küng characterizes the Great Idealist's concept of God: "*Die Gottheit umfaßt alles, ohne daß die Differenz übergangen wird. Ganz im Gegenteil: die Diferenz wird schon in Gott selbst gesehen. Das Leben Gottes besteht geradezu im Kampf mit dem Gegensatz: eine auseinandersetzung Gottes mit sich selbst, in deren Lauf es zur welt aus Gott und zur Versöhnung der Welt in Gott kommt.*" (Existiert Gott? [Munich: *Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag*, 1981], 177). See also Paul Tillich's exposition of Hegel on this point: *A History of Christian Thought*, (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1963), 429.

¹⁴⁹*Itami*, 59 (*Pain*, 45).

¹⁵⁰*Pain*, 46.

¹⁵¹*Ibid.*

God is the essence of God. It is the holy of holies in God, which no mortal could dare to see and live. "Awe is fitting here to us!"¹⁵²

"God is love," (1 John 4:8). This is the cardinal conviction of the Christian faith about God. And yet, when one tries to give a closer definition of this love, then differences will emerge. Kitamori's definition of God's love as the love based upon the Pain of God may be a distinctive one; for him, God's love is not a simple, "happy" identity but a composite nature of love and pain. Kitamori's originality can be seen in his "exegesis" of John 3:16. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. . . ." The text seems to speak of the very depth and intensity of God's love for the world. In other words, this passage emphasizes the degree of intensity of God's qualitatively unchangeable love (οὕτως - ὥστε). Kitamori interprets differently: "But this 'so' in the verse is not the 'so' of merely accidental but of an essential force; that God gives 'His only begotten Son' does not speak of the *degree* of His love to the world but of the necessary *condition* for that love's *constitution*."¹⁵³ That is, "God's love would not have become love to the world without His giving up of the Son."¹⁵⁴ In Kitamori's view, the love of God is not a static identity from eternity to eternity; the "primordial love" of God¹⁵⁵ or the "love of creation"¹⁵⁶ has

¹⁵²*Itami*, 59 (*Pain*, 45).

¹⁵³*Auto I*, 211.

¹⁵⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵*Pain*, 119.

¹⁵⁶*Logic*, 45. The original term is " 創造愛 ."

turned into the wrath of God. A new love should emerge if the human race is to remain the object of God's love. This love of a new order can only be constituted by the Cross of Christ, that is, the Pain of God.¹⁵⁷

For Kitamori, the eternal essence of God is love, but in the sense of the love based upon the Pain of God (in short, the Pain of God). In view of his exegesis of John 3:16 above, we quickly notice a difficulty in grasping Kitamori's thought if we take the Cross of the Lord as a mere historical event. If this were the case, there would be no love for the world prior to the Cross in 30 AD; nor could it be said that Pain is God's eternal essence. Apparently, Kitamori's statement alludes to more than a historical event. Although he often speaks of necessary historicity of the Cross (indeed a very important concept for him), Kitamori also speaks of the Cross of the Son as in an eternal order. Also on this point, Kitamori agrees with Forsyth, who wrote: "The cross was a reflection (or say rather the historic pole) of an act within the Godhead itself."¹⁵⁸ Kitamori also agrees with Forsyth's view that "His sacrifice began before He came into the world, and His [sic] cross was that of a lamb slain before the world's foundation [Revelation 13:8]."¹⁵⁹ The Pain of God is from

¹⁵⁷In addition to John 3:16, Kitamori has warned of the insufficiency of the "ordinary" exegesis of $\delta\tau\iota$ in Romans 5:8; if $\delta\tau\iota$ is taken as a pleonastic participle, holds Kitamori, the meaning of the verse only indicates an illustration of the depth of divine love, whereas if taken as a causative participle, then the meaning of the verse becomes: God showed His own love toward us because Christ died for us. . . . Kitamori interprets the $\delta\tau\iota$ in the *causative* sense in the light of the Pain of God (*Auto II*, 22).

¹⁵⁸*The Person and Place of Jesus Christ*. (London: Independent Press, Ltd., 1909), 270.

¹⁵⁹*Pain*, 45.

"before the world's foundation," and Kitamori strengthens his view by noting "according to Luther, 'Seen from the eyes of God, the Gospel is proclaimed before the foundation of the world.'"¹⁶⁰ Also referring to Theodosius Harnack's Luther studies, Kitamori finds that Luther should contend that "the presupposition for the [divine] counsel of redemption is '*eine absolute, innergöttlich begründete Notwendigkeit der Dahingabe des Sohnes.*'"¹⁶¹ Here Kitamori sees the eternity of the

¹⁶⁰Kitamori's quotation is an indirect one via Theodosius Harnack's *Luthers Theologie II* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1927). (The first volume was published two decades earlier. Here we use the two volumes of the Luther studies published by the same publisher in the same year.) The quotation is from one of Luther's sermons of 1537, and the Reformer's own words are as follows: "*Do erfarnn wir, wie unß Gott gnedig ist, Gnad und gnad gibt, Daß ist nun daß gewiß Zeichen, daß uns versichert, daß uns Gott gnedig sey umb deß Liben Sonß willen, der uns deß vatterß hercz eroffnet, Daß Evangelium von yhmm gehort, Gepredigt worden vor Gotteßangesicht, Ee der welt grundt gelegt wardt. Aber diß alleß were unß nicht nuczlich geweßen, Das Christus von Ewigkeit vor Gott am Crewcz ist gehangen, wenn man unß daß nicht hett eroffnt durchs wort und durch ein Eusserlich Zeichen." (WA, 45, 414, 39415, 6; emphasis mine.) We are especially interested in the words underlined; what does Luther mean by this? An eternal cross? The tense is present indicative, so we cannot interpret this as hypothetical. Luther says this (even though there is the possibility of a scribal insertion). If taken in a literal sense, it would be a kind of speculation which Luther elsewhere determinedly warns against ("*Non debes ascendere ad deum, sed incipe ibi, ubi [Christus] incepit: in utero matris, 'factus home et factus,' et prohibe sensum speculationes.*" [WA, 40 I, 76, 9-10]). We leave this question open here.*

¹⁶¹*Pain*, 45. The German quotation is from Harnack's *Luther II*, 242. Kitamori's interpretation of Luther is heavily influenced by Harnack. Gerhard Rost, in his article on Luther's concept of the wrath of God, comes into Harnack's interpretation of Luther's view of the relationship between divine wrath and love. Rost criticizes Harnack's creation of a deep gap between divine wrath and divine love, asserting "*ihren kontradiktorischer Gegensatz*" and relativized both to each other in the higher concept of divine righteousness, thus moving into speculation. Rost, then, makes the following observation: "*Diese beiden Versuche einer Relativierung der Gegensätze haben eins gemeinsam: Sie stellen beide eine an der geschichtlichen Offernbarung Gottes anknüpfende metaphysische Spekultaion dar, durch die das Wesen Gottes begreiflich gemacht werden soll. Tatsächlich will Harnack ausdrücklich Luther*

Gospel, which is the same as the Pain of God. "And eternity involves necessity," concludes Kitamori.¹⁶²

The Pain of God is the eternal essence of God. What does this mean? We are in the heart of Kitamori's theology, his doctrine of God. Our purpose here is to grasp Kitamori's meaning of God's *eternal* "aching" as precisely as possible.

Although Kitamori does not mention it explicitly, there is a logical crux in his assertion of the eternalness and essentiality of God's Pain. On the one hand, in order to assert the eternalness of the Pain of God, it must be a supralapsarian reality. And if the Pain of God is supralapsarian, then the *proprium* of the human fall and sin is lost. A further question is why should God suffer even "prior" to His creation of man? If, on the other hand, Kitamori would maintain the *proprium* of man's sin (as he earnestly does) it means that the Pain of God is infralapsarian. Then, how can the Pain of God be eternal and essential to God, the Pain of God being contingent upon the human fall? Certainly, we do not insinuate that we have a more rational solution to the problem which Kitamori faces here. Rather, there cannot be any rational

gegen einen 'theologischen Empirismus' für die 'theologische Metaphysik' in Anspruch nehmen, die bestrebt ist, sich durch die äußeren Tatsachen des Heils die 'in ihnen offenbarten ewigen Heilsgedanken Gottes und den inneren Kausalnexus erschließen zu lassen, in welchem sie mit göttlichen Notwendigkeit zueinander zu stehen.' Ohne Zweifel, werden hier Gedanken in Luther hineingetragen, die diesem selbst völlig fremd sind. Seine Theologie ist ja in jedem Augenblick Offenbarungstheologie." ("Der Zorn Gottes in Luthers Theologie," *Lutherischer Rundblick*, vol. 9 [1961, 2-32], 3-4). See for the polemic background of Harnack's Luther studies and its overall evaluation Gerhard O. Forde's *The Law-Gospel Debate*. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publ. House, 1969), 81-95.

¹⁶²*Pain*, 46.

solution. Our question here is only this: whether it is possible in our theology to postulate pain or suffering as eternal and essential to God, without falling into the pit of rationalizing evil. In raising this question, we admit our own assumption that in addition to the rational unsolvability of the question concerning evil, suffering (whether it be God's or man's) is in itself intrinsically evil, something which must be eventually overcome.

We now examine Kitamori's supra- and infralapsarian ideas of the Pain of God more closely. First, his supralapsarian concept. Our methodological question here: is the creation of man based also upon the Pain of God? In other words, was the Pain of God "before" creation?¹⁶³ What would Kitamori answer to this question?

We read:

God created man as a free personal being [free to respond to God's love] and, [considering this] we cannot but say that the creation involved a risk from the beginning. If we go a step further, we have to say that the creation of man was not merely an act of simple and immediate "love of God". . . but it already bore a character of "the Pain of God." The Pain of God is to say: the love of God embracing the negative being, and this is the proper content of salvation. The fact of the creation thus already bore the character of pain [on the part of God].¹⁶⁴

Kitamori speaks clearly--the creation of man bore the character of the Pain of God.

¹⁶³With this "before" we show the time-category limitations of human thinking. If time is also created along with man and the world (see Frank, 62-64), we cannot transcend this category, although we are aware of the limitation. But our purpose here is to see more closely whether or not the Pain of God is essential to God and reality. This "before" is an ontological concept.

¹⁶⁴*Logic*, 29-30.

Further, Kitamori advances his understanding of Christ in creation, quoting Colossians 1:16 in connection with his quotation above. Paul writes, "For by Him all things were created," and Kitamori reads in this statement that "for that reason [namely, the creation bore the character of the Pain of God] the Bible speaks of Christ not only in redemption but also in creation."¹⁶⁵ Christ is "the Person of Pain" within the Godhead.¹⁶⁶ That Christ is also involved in creation means that Pain was already there from eternity. Putting this idea into personal terms, "my very being [called into existence] is by the Pain of God."¹⁶⁷

It is also highly significant in this connection to note that Kitamori's understanding of the structure of the Gospel corresponds to the eternal Trinitarian structure of the Godhead. According to Kitamori, the classical formulation of the Trinity is that of immanent Trinity. Since the doctrine of immanent Trinity, he holds, "only saw God the Father as the Father of *generatio* of the Son" and not as "the Father causing the Son to die," it has missed "the crucial point," namely, the Pain of God.¹⁶⁸ The Trinitarian dogma has often been considered, Kitamori thinks, as the source of "frigid and alien disputations apart from Christ," because the doctrine is

¹⁶⁵Ibid., 30.

¹⁶⁶*Character*, 28.

¹⁶⁷*Logic*, 47. Cf. Luther's explanation of the first article of the Creed in the *Small Catechism*: ". . . and all this purely out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me."

¹⁶⁸*Itami*, 63 (*Pain*, 47).

separated from the love of God in Christ, the Pain of God.¹⁶⁹ Kitamori, however, maintains that the Trinitarian dogma is the truth guaranteeing that "the Cross of Christ is God's self-split and sorrow in pain [viz. the Pain of God]."¹⁷⁰ This means that the dogma of the Trinity should not be conceived apart from "the existence of sinners."¹⁷¹

The doctrine of the Trinity, for Kitamori, should be primarily "economic," that is, soteriological.¹⁷² Against this background, Kitamori relates each Person in the Trinity to three aspects of "the existence of the sinners." The first of the relations of God to man is that of the Father in His immediate love. But this love of the Father is able to be negated by man, and as far as it is liable to man's negation, God the Father's relation to man leaves "a crucial problem unsolved."¹⁷³ The first relation thus necessitates the second, the relation of the Son which is "to overcome the negation" that the first relation has found in man.¹⁷⁴ "At this point here," writes Kitamori, "the love of God conquers the negation [of man] and becomes the love which embraces the *extra* [the state of falling from God] into the *intra* [the state of

¹⁶⁹*Creeds*, 7.

¹⁷⁰*Character*, 80.

¹⁷¹*Ibid.*

¹⁷²*Creeds*, 12.

¹⁷³*God*, 81-82.

¹⁷⁴*Ibid.*, 82.

finding oneself in God].¹⁷⁵ With the relation of the Son, man cannot fall outside of God's love in the Son, the Pain of God. With this love within the second relation, God wins the victory over man's disobedience. "Here the negative is turned into the affirmative, the *extra* into the *intra*."¹⁷⁶ This victory of God over the sinner, in Kitamori's view, is the relation of the Holy Spirit.

Here we have a triad movement from creation to redemption and finally to sanctification, and this triad corresponds to that of wrath, pain and love. The doctrine of the Trinity is thus put into a soteriological scheme. By equating the structure of the Trinity with the structure of the Pain of God, Kitamori in this way also indicates that the Pain of God, as an essential mode of the Divine Being, is a supralapsarian reality. We continue by dealing with the infralapsarian view of God's Pain in Kitamori's thought.

In a small book entitled *On God* (1953), Kitamori gives an exposition of God's attributes under the following headings: existence, omnipotence, omniscience, ubiquity, faithfulness, Trinity and holiness-righteousness. This booklet contains a characteristic viewpoint of Kitamori's approach to the attributes of God, the centrality of God's love. Following the Johannine definition of God as "love" (1 John 4:16), Kitamori says that even when he speaks of God's omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence, he does so in terms of divine love. "God's love," writes Kitamori, "is not one truth of God among the other truths of him; evidently, it occupies the place to

¹⁷⁵Ibid.

¹⁷⁶Ibid., 83.

integrate all the other truths of God."¹⁷⁷ Earlier, we mentioned that Kitamori's theology is a theology of love. Here in his book we see a characteristic concentration on love.

Dealing with God's omnipotence, Kitamori takes up God's creation of nature and man, asserting that one sees in non-human creatures the omnipotence of God which fully prevails in the form of natural law.¹⁷⁸ But this understanding of omnipotence captures only "the fragment and torso of this truth." To grasp "the complete form" of the truth of Divine omnipotence, it is necessary to see it "in the light of the truth of Christ,"¹⁷⁹ that is, in the light of negative mediation.¹⁸⁰ What does this mean?

God created man as a free personal being, who can freely choose either to respond to Divine love or reject it. The nature of the relationship God desires with man is not that of "iron chains of coercion," but that of "a thin thread of love" which can be broken at any time man wills.¹⁸¹ From this, Kitamori deduces "the very fact that God created man as a being free to love means that God was prepared to impose

¹⁷⁷*God*, 177.

¹⁷⁸*Ibid.*, 28.

¹⁷⁹*Ibid.*, 29.

¹⁸⁰*Theology of Dialogue*. (Tokyo: Kyobunkan, 1961), 184. The original Japanese term is "否定媒介的キリスト論".

¹⁸¹*Ibid.*, 35.

a limit on His own omnipotence."¹⁸² But "man cut the thin thread of love" and thus "the image of 'God's omnipotence' is destroyed" by "the negative force of human sin."¹⁸³ "The 'power' of God," says Kitamori, "thus had to suffer this damage because He risks His 'love.'"¹⁸⁴ The initial omnipotence of God is thus invalidated by human sin.

But how can the omnipotence of God be removed from this "damage?" "Only the Cross of Jesus Christ [we read: the Pain of God] is the guarantee of the omnipotence of God," holds Kitamori.¹⁸⁵ Why? It is because Jesus Christ, the *persona* of Pain, "is the Subject of Love which, in spite of sin, still embraces man, fallen from the love of God into the *intra* [God's love], the love which no one can resist any longer."¹⁸⁶ The initial divine love, now mediated by the Pain of God (which naturally includes the negative mediation of man's sin), emerges as the absolutely victorious omnipotence of God. This omnipotence can no longer be

¹⁸²Ibid., 36. MacGregor, basing his view on "God is love," presents a similar view of the limitation placed on God by the creation of man: "To say that the biblical God is love is to say that his creation is an act, not of self-expansion but of self-limitation. For the biblical God, being ontologically perfect himself as well as sovereign over and independent of his creatures, could have nowhere to go by way of expansion. He could have no ambitions to fulfill or goals to attain or projects to promote either for his aggrandizement or for his betterment. The only way he could go in his creative act would be a way of self-limitation, self-emptying, self-abnegation. That is what *agape* would entail." (19)

¹⁸³*God*, 37.

¹⁸⁴Ibid., 38.

¹⁸⁵Ibid.

¹⁸⁶Ibid.

negated. God's omnipotence, in Kitamori's thought, thus becomes the absolute omnipotence by the mediation of human sin.

In a similar manner, Kitamori expounds God's omniscience and His omnipresence, namely in terms of God's love as developing from the positive through the negative to the final victory. Explaining this theme, he uses Matthew 10:30. That the very hairs of your head are numbered "most impressively" conveys the meaning of God's omniscience vis-a-vis man.¹⁸⁷ It is the full knowledge of us, which is virtually identical with love. Divine omniscience was, however, limited by human sin. For instance, Kitamori interprets the "repentance of the Lord" found in Genesis 6:6 when he says: "The concept of omniscience had to suffer a total collapse in the face of the situation described in this verse."¹⁸⁸ This limitation was placed upon God by human sin! A significant point here is that Kitamori advances *expressis verbis* the possibility of the limitation of God's knowledge. Kitamori now holds that human wickedness created a novel situation in which God came to have an "outside" to God's "omniscience." In order, then, to maintain evil as true evil, he concludes: "Evil is a derailment from the will of God; it is the darkness which [even] the knowledge of God cannot penetrate."¹⁸⁹ The recovery of God's "omniscience" (now qualified as the omniscience of love) is again achieved by Jesus Christ because "He alone is the omniscience of God who still takes into God's knowledge (love) those who fall out of

¹⁸⁷Ibid., 42.

¹⁸⁸Ibid., 45.

¹⁸⁹Ibid., 47.

the knowledge."¹⁹⁰ Thus God's omniscience is reestablished as true omniscience through the mediation of Jesus Christ.

We include here a few items of importance in Kitamori's idea of the omnipresence of God. While interpreting this idea he introduces two concepts; substance (*jittai*) and relation (*kankei*).¹⁹¹ In fact, he presupposed these two concepts when he dealt with omnipotence and omniscience. In his view, the omnipresence of God does not mean the omnipresence of God as substance. If this were true, he asserts, we would have difficulty making a proper distinction between the Christian idea of divine omnipresence and pantheism.¹⁹² "The omnipresence of God signifies the mode of God's being as a personal Being in His relation of love to man," says Kitamori. "What Psalm 139 [7-10] would say is that God supports us, protects us and guides us everywhere in His love."¹⁹³ Kitamori interprets the verse "For in Him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28) as meaning: "In God who is love we live, etc."¹⁹⁴ "The God who embraces the world and us in His love," states Kitamori, "is the God who is present everywhere; this is God's omnipresence in the Biblical sense."¹⁹⁵ Kitamori sees God's omnipresence of love violated when man

¹⁹⁰Ibid.

¹⁹¹The original Japanese terms are " 関係 " and " 実体 ."

¹⁹²Ibid., 52.

¹⁹³Ibid., 53.

¹⁹⁴Ibid.

¹⁹⁵Ibid., 55-56.

denied His love but recovered by Jesus Christ, in whom the *extra* has been embraced within the *intra*; in Christ God's love is present in all places.¹⁹⁶

So far Kitamori's exposition of divine omnipresence has been made within the category of love. Now we ask what does Kitamori intend to advance by replacing the "substantial" omnipresence of God with a "relational" ("in love") omnipresence? This distinction between "substantial" and "relational" may be original for Kitamori's theology. By the term "substantial," Kitamori seems to mean an equivalent to "physical," which his criticism of pantheism indicates. Of course, no theology would posit God's "substantial" or physical existence univocally; it would be a contradiction in terms, the term "physical" being limited within the frame of time and space by definition. But it is still a fundamental part of the Christian faith, we believe, to assert that God is also present and active in the world "physically" or "substantially." This

¹⁹⁶In this regard we can characterize Kitamori's interpretation of divine "omni-attributes" as the "spiritualization of God." The relationship between God and man is "immediate" to use Kitamori's own term, that is "without external means." But if creation involves God speaking to us through physical objects and reality, as the incarnation of Christ affirms, then Kitamori's conception of God in Kitamori's "loveism" would curtail the most basic datum of the Christian faith. A consequence of this is that Christian existence in this physical world would necessarily be severed from its Biblical faith in God who "totally" rules the world.

Concerning this point Kitamori's phrase "God's Turn to Make an Appearance on the Stage," and his so-called "出る幕論" is suggestive; what Kitamori means by this phrase is that God should not yet show up on stage when it is not His turn to make an appearance. "In our drama of life there are some acts in which we can somehow solve our problems by our own resources [in such sections of the drama, God needs not show up Himself]. . . . But here [1 Corinthians 1:8, 9] Paul speaks of God's turn on stage." (*Short Meditations on Biblical Verses*, [Tokyo: Chikuma Shobo, 1964], 42-43). Is not this limitation of God's reality in this world the criticism which Dietrich Bonhoeffer announced with his non-religious interpretation of Christianity?

can be most clearly seen in the faith of God's *creatio continua*. For us, Kitamori tends to reduce the reality of God to love in which God's reality is confined within the framework of a direct, *inner* relationship between God and man; in other words, God's relationship with us is within an "immediate" relationship of love between God and man. In this concept, the physical world in which we live is on the edge of disappearance.

We have examined Kitamori's "infralapsarian" view of the Pain of God on the basis of his exposition of God's attributes. We attended to his concept of dialectic movements within God vis-a-vis man's sin. We also observed that the divine attributes are reduced to love, a love on the verge of becoming an almost too human love.

How can we now reconcile this "infralapsarian" view of the Pain of God with the supralapsarian view? Is not Kitamori aware of this logical difficulty? Does Kitamori believe this is not a problem at all, since he thinks in the logic of dialectic? How do these two views constitute a unity in Kitamori's thought? To the best of our knowledge, Kitamori does not explicitly take up this problem. Although we must rely on less direct evidence, we shall attempt to grasp the unity of these two aspects of Kitamori's Pain of God in our attempt to better understand his theological system.

Our first step in reconstructing Kitamori's view here is to observe that the infralapsarian limitation of the divine "omni-attributes" is completely overcome by God in the person of the Son. The Son is, as the negation of negation, the absolute mode of God's being. Divine love, in this mode of being, embraces the *extra* into its

intra. The mode of God's being as the Son is seen as a victorious one.

But is this divine conquest over negation through the embracing of the Son temporal or contingent? No, Kitamori would answer that it is essential and eternal. His concept of the essence of the Son as the mediation between the human negation and the divine negation of the negation is eternal and necessary,¹⁹⁷ of both and accordingly, the divine conquest over the negation is also eternal. How can we then understand Kitamori's assertion in relation to the authenticity of human sin as a responsible act, an act that incurs guilt upon the sinner, if (after all) the Pain of God is supralapsarian?

Perhaps we must understand Kitamori's concept of God as having a dialectic structure. On the one hand, there is the first mode of God's being, which is capable of being "limited" by a negating force. In Kitamori's thought, this first mode of the divine being, "the wrath of God," does not cease to exist nor does it become *aufgehoben*, but remains as a presupposition for the emergence of the authentic Pain of God. Also, man's sin becomes authentic sin in the sphere of this first mode.

But there is also for Kitamori a second mode of God's being, in which this antagonism between God in the first mode of being and man as sinner is overcome. This second mode of God's being, God in the person of the Son, is also eternal and necessary in nature, Christ being the eternal essence of God. In view of the existence

¹⁹⁷While attempting to protect sin's "authenticity" and at the same time to maintain the eternal victory of divine love, Kitamori says: "As Ephesians 3:1ff shows, the Christ who came to the world to save the sin of Adam is *in reality the eternal essence of God*, the eternal essence which embraces the sin of Adam" (*Dialogue*, 184; emphasis mine).

of both of these two modes of God's being, we are brought to the conclusion that there is a dialectical movement within God, the second mode bearing upon itself the first mode, that is, the Pain of God. When Kitamori says: "God exists in pain; speaking more exactly, God is aching,"¹⁹⁸ he seems to indicate such a movement.

We see here two modes of God's being, but to Kitamori, these two constitute one reality, while containing at the same time two opposing elements. The "infralapsarian" Pain of God has been preceded by the supralapsarian Pain of God. In Kitamori's own words: "Essentially [or ontologically], the reality of salvation ['the Pain of God'] precedes the presupposition of salvation [the wrath of God], though phenomenologically the latter precedes the former."¹⁹⁹ The Pain of God in Kitamori's thought is thus simultaneously supralapsarian and infralapsarian, while ontologically it is supralapsarian but phenomenologically infralapsarian.²⁰⁰

By introducing this subtle dialectic of, let us say, "essence and phenomenon," Kitamori seems to believe that he has done justice to both aspects of God's being in relation to humanity: the Pain of God is at one and the same time

¹⁹⁸*The Contemporary Man and Christianity*, (Tokyo: Kobundo, 1959), 63.

¹⁹⁹*God*, 22, 30.

²⁰⁰Here it seems that Kitamori is confused in taking the orders of ontic and noetic categories for that of essential and phenomenological categories. It seems apparent that ontically wrath precedes salvation, whereas noetically, salvation is prior to the recognition of reality under wrath. However, it is still possible to understand that Kitamori as the idealist believes that knowing constitutes being as well.

eternal and historical.²⁰¹

A serious danger inherent in the eternalization and "essentialization" of the Pain of God is the rationalization of evil. Kitamori with his infralapsarian version of the Pain of God has tried to protect the authenticity of man's sin and the justice of divine wrath, but does he actually succeed in this attempt? Or does he after all fall into a theodicy, making evil, suffering and pain something inherent to reality and also indispensable for a higher value?

The Ontology of Love

In our attempt to understand Kitamori's idea of the Pain of God, we initially raised the question, "*Cur Deus in dolore?*" We now append *in aeternum*, since the eternalness of the Pain of God is Kitamori's ultimate motif behind his idea of the Pain of God. Now our question is this: what is Kitamori's metaphysical presupposition to

²⁰¹As far as we can grasp Kitamori's thought as presented above, there are similar traits very much in common with prominent thinkers within process philosophy (Alfred N. Whitehead and Charles Hartshorne). According to Fiddes, process thinkers have proposed "a diapolar God." God on the one pole is transcendent and on the other pole is deeply involved. To process thinkers, God in transcendence is impassible, while Kitamori's supralapsarian Pain means that God in His transcendence is in Pain.

However, despite this difference (a difference of no consequence since Kitamori "essentializes" the Pain of God, making Pain no more a pain in the true sense) there is a strong similarity to the thought schemes. Fiddes' following reproduction of the process thinkers' thought sounds quite "Kitamorian;" "God [who is 'deeply involved in the world']. . . suffers in his contingent nature. . . . In his worldly aspect. . . . God is influenced and created by the world; he is caused by the world in a supreme manner, and as the archetypal sufferer he grows and develops in response to the world as we do." (124; see note above). For process theology see John B. Cobb, Jr. and David Ray Griffin, *Process Theology*, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976).

the eternalization of the Pain of God? This question is acute because the Pain of God as the eternal essence of God involves theological and practical problems.

Kitamori's theological *Ansatz* is highly concrete and quite near the ordinary human experience of love. Why does he then develop this concept of the Pain of God with a sophisticated dialectic? Thinking of this, we are naturally led to his concentration on love. In fact, Kitamori's understanding of love seems to provide a clue to the understanding of his motif regarding the eternalization of the Pain of God. What is contained in Kitamori's idea of love? In other words, what is the ontological structure of love in his thought? In view of his thesis that God's relationship with man is based solely upon love, we understand love as the ultimate reality in Kitamori's thought. The question of the ontological structure of love is then not confined to a partial aspect of reality; the structure of love is the ontological structure of reality itself.

We also ask: what is the relationship between the ontological structure and the dialectic movement within the Godhead? In dealing with Kitamori's exposition of the divine attributes above, we came across his notion of the process of the "absolutization" of God's omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence. This notion of process suggests itself as the background for Kitamori's motif behind his integration of love, movement and absoluteness. We shall now examine this problem complex.

There is an organic relationship between the notion of divine *passibilitas* and that of divine love. Most theologies of divine suffering are based on the conviction that "God is love." In this sense, Kitamori's theology also moves in a similar orbit.

When an idea of the eternalization of God's suffering is advanced, there are two factors involved; one is the belief in the presence of the eternal in the temporal, the other is the structure of love itself. The former is a logical requirement for those whose metaphysical presupposition is idealism (Platonic or otherwise); historical phenomena being the reflections of the ideas in the eternal order.²⁰² Idealistic thinking becomes problematic in theology when it attenuates historical reality. We saw that Kitamori's theology is not free of this problem. Here, however, we will primarily analyze Kitamori's understanding of the nature of love.

"'God is love' necessarily entails the fact that God creates the world," says Kitamori, "because Love necessarily sets up Its object which receives Love."²⁰³ In his way of thinking, the Subject of love [God] which does not set up its object is a contradiction; it is not love.²⁰⁴ For Kitamori, the creation of the world is *creatio ex amore*, as it were. In comparison, the traditional doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* has a

²⁰²See note 147 above.

²⁰³*God*, 31.

²⁰⁴*An Introduction to the Bible* (Tokyo: Kawade-Shobe, 1954), 46. In view of Kitamori's strong emphasis on the correlation between God and man, one would ask whether Kitamori has any idea of the *aseitas* of God. Is God eternally together with man? On this point, Nishida's idea of God is suggestive. Admittedly, we cannot go into detail concerning Nishida's thought on this theme; however, we note one interesting position of this prominent Japanese philosopher: God is the Absolute; the Absolute transcends all relations; but the Absolute that merely transcends is "nothing;" "The God who does not create the world is nothing." Thus God does and does not transcend the world. This Nishida terms the Absolute Nothingness, which is Nishida's definition of God in philosophical terms. Being the Absolute Nothingness, God is omnipotent and omnipresent. "Therefore I say that because the people is, so is Buddha, and because Buddha is, so is the people; because the Creator is, so is creature and because there is creature, so is God." (*Complete Works of Kitaro Nishida*, 11 [Tokyo: Iwanaami Shoten, 1949], 397-398).

wider conceptual range, extending from the personal to the impersonal, from the spiritual to the non-spiritual, from the visible to the invisible, and so on. However, there can be no contradiction between *creatio ex amore* and *creatio ex nihilo*.

Designating Kitamori's view as *creatio ex amore*, we again take note of Kitamori's emphasis on love within his theological system.

From his distinct view of God's creation, we also learn of his understanding of divine love. "In the creation of man. . . there is already a reflection of the Pain of God." We have touched upon this viewpoint in the above.²⁰⁵ According to Kitamori, man is brought into being by God's "natural" love, but also by His Pain. What does this mean? The Pain of God is "God's tragic love."²⁰⁶ We now realize that Kitamori's position implies that divine love is intrinsically tragic in nature; God's love *per se* is a tragedy, filled with suffering. Humanity, by its sin and rebellion against God, hurts the loving heart of God. Man used his God-given freedom, not to love Him but to damage the glory of God. Why is this disaster brought upon God? It is because God wants a created being who freely and spontaneously loves Him. If it were not for God's creation of the world, says Kitamori, "there would be no being at all who loves God, an ineffable loneliness [for God]." Therefore, "abhorring this loneliness, God decided to enter into the fellowship of love with man, which was a risk." God opted for a love involving risk *au lieu de* a solicitude involving no

²⁰⁵*Logic*, 31.

²⁰⁶*Pain*, 43.

risk.²⁰⁷ For God, however, this risk produced a tragedy due to man's betrayal of the divine love offered.²⁰⁸

If the divine love out of which man was created bears the character of "pain," then it is logical to conclude that love intrinsically involves pain, suffering and sorrow. They are constitutive to a reality called love; or rather, suffering is another side of love. Observing the two shades of meaning "ache" and "long for" in *hamah* (the key Hebrew term to his theology), Kitamori suggests that this linguistic phenomenon reflects something essential to love. "It is appropriate to maintain," he says, "that pain and love are complementary to each other."²⁰⁹ This overlapping of "pain" and "love" can also be observed in other languages, including Japanese. In Japanese, the ideograph [Chinese character] closest to the meaning of the English word "love" is 愛. This written symbol can be either read love (ai) or sorrow[ful] (*kanashi*). Reflecting on this particular linguistic feature, Kitamori suggests that "there is something in the structure of man's spirit which testifies that when loving, one [inevitably] suffers; love always carries sorrow along; I feel it is a universal law [of reality]."²¹⁰

In the mind of Kitamori, love and man's existence are inseparable. Truly, it

²⁰⁷*The Contemporary and the Pain of God*, (Tokyo: Kobundo Shobo, 1970), 134.

²⁰⁸*Ibid.*

²⁰⁹*Literature*, 210.

²¹⁰*Ibid.*, 211. The original Japanese term for "the structure of man's spirit" is "精神構造".

is a fact of life that humanity suffers because of love. There are many factors which cause the one offering love to suffer--sacrifice, loss, betrayal, sympathy, human limitations, and so on. Whatever the cause, love worthy of its name is willing, even glad, to suffer for the benefit of its object. In this fallen world it is inevitable for individuals to suffer if they love other human beings. From this universal experience it is quite natural that some languages and cultures reflect this empirical connection between love and suffering.²¹¹ Language is the reflection of man's experience.

There is, therefore, no reason to object to this observation pertaining to the coincidence of love and suffering in actual life. But it becomes theologically debatable when one draws the conclusion that love is ontologically one with suffering.²¹²

Theologically, we shall assert, love *in se* is an unalloyed bliss, which can gladly sacrifice itself when it encounters obstacles.²¹³ In that case, sacrifice is no longer simply suffering but a supreme expression of love; there is no inner conflict in the subject at the moment of self-sacrifice. As a matter of fact, love *can* often express itself in suffering, but this does not mean that it *must* suffer. It is also an ordinary human experience (one need not always be profound in recognizing the truth) that love

²¹¹According to linguistic information Carl Michalson (obtained from E. A. Nida) the language of the Miskito Indians of Nicaragua contains a word for "love" that literally means "pain in the heart" (*Contribution*, 172). Kitamori has also learned from a Taiwanese theologian that the native language of Taiwan includes a word meaning both "pain" and "love" (*Literature*, 213).

²¹²On this point, Lee makes a clear distinction between love and suffering: "However, we must make clear that the very nature of *Agape* is not suffering but is only capable of suffering." (19).

²¹³See the unmistakable link between love and the fullness of joy in John 15:9-11!

among people can be realized where no "explicit" sacrifice or suffering is required.

From Kitamori's standpoint, however, love is intrinsically one with suffering. Here we observe the conceptual core of Kitamori's idea of the Pain of God. When Kitamori says that God's creation of man already involved Pain, he is advancing the view that God suffered by the very fact that He created humanity. Behind this, we must presume, there lies a set of metaphysical and theological presuppositions. Since Kitamori does not state these in an explicit manner, we shall endeavor to spell out these presuppositions ourselves, reconstructing the theologian's idea behind this identification of love and pain. We are aware of the risk of misinterpretation involved here. Nevertheless, we hope that the result of this clarification will help us to grasp the overall structure of Kitamori's theological stance, thereby confirming our reconstruction as valid.

God has opted for "a risky love" instead of "a solicitude without risk" as we have already seen. Yet the expression "a risky love," when applied to God, seems to lose its force as an "objective" description of the issue and turns out to be a "rhetorical" statement. This hardly needs any elaboration. Kitamori's explicit contention that creation bears the mark of God's Pain suffices here to make it plain. In his thought, the "risk" had been taken by God in eternity, and it had also been already "taken care of" by God in eternity. A typical statement of Kitamori shows this: "The death of the Son is the primary word of the Gospel."²¹⁴

²¹⁴*Pain*, 47. It is not clear what Kitamori has in mind here as to the immanent relationship between the Father and the Son. When Kitamori says that the death of the Son is the primary word *in the Gospel*, does he mean that this primacy of death is

In other words, there was a divine history prior to the beginning of the world, a supratemporal history which consists of the eternal divine decision of, and preparation for, the creation of man and the world. What movement and preparation then had been going on in God in eternity? We could say that it is God's overcoming of His own negation of creature (though still only potential). In Kitamori's conception this divine self-overcoming seems to involve two issues: first, the overcoming of His negation of the human creature,²¹⁵ and second, His becoming true, absolute God.²¹⁶

On the basis of some documentary clues we pursue the metaphysical assumptions for these two issues. First, why is it necessary for God to overcome His own negation of the human creature before His act of creation? Created as a finite being, man is by definition bound to be imperfect vis-a-vis the perfect God. Metaphysically speaking, man's imperfection means that man inevitably deviates from God's will. For if man's will is totally conformed to God's, Kitamori holds that man

only soteriological and not for God Himself? However, taking into consideration the argument in the succeeding pages, we clearly recognize that he does not give a positive theological significance to *generatio* (as well as *processio* of the Spirit). By this reversal of the significance of *generatio* and *mors* of the Son, Kitamori makes the immanent Father-Son relationship a tragedy of pain.

²¹⁵As the basis of this concern in the theology of Kitamori we mention his quotation from Dante's *Divine Comedy* in *Pain* (119), where Kitamori particularly borrows the expression "the primordial love of God," which can be equated with Luther's phrase the "naked God" (*Character*, 164). Here Kitamori thinks of God as *mysterium tremendum*. This side of God is to be overcome within God Himself. In addition to this, there is Kitamori's clear approval of Schelling's "*Natur in Gott*" and other ideas (*Pain*, 25-26).

²¹⁶See note 148 above.

would become like God; man would cease to be man.²¹⁷ Also Kitamori's contention that man is created as a free subject of love is an important factor in this connection. The fact that man is free vis-a-vis God is tantamount to being rebellious against Him. In other words, the freedom given to the human creature can only be actualized by his rebellion against God. For man to be man means "in practice" to be against God. Speaking pointedly, when God decided to create human beings, He decided to create His antagonists. Creation therefore must be preceded by God's overcoming the antagonism of His own creation.

Second, concerning God's becoming a true, absolute God. In Kitamori's theological framework God is not simply *ipsum esse*. The fact that God is love, Kitamori would hold, itself excludes this notion of the solitude of God. God is never without His relation to man.²¹⁸ In this sense He is relative to a being other than Himself. In fact, without this relativity of God there would be no possibility of any

²¹⁷In order to understand Kitamori's stance that man as a created being *de facto* is rebellious, we need to carefully read the following passage: "God who is the Infinite and Absolute has the freedom which does not include the possibility of turning to evil. But the freedom of man as a finite being includes the possibility of evil. If it were not for this possibility, man would cease to be finite and [would] become equal to the Infinite. For, in such a case, what man wills becomes completely conformed to the will of God. That there is a possibility in man for evil is what makes man man. But this possibility is not the *actuality* of evil." (*Logic*, 29).

Does Kitamori really think that this human possibility is actualized in good? If such is the case, when man's will totally conforms to God's will, does man become God Himself? We doubt it. In his thought, man is a dialectic being also in this regard: *semper justus et semper peccator*. This *semper peccator* is so to speak a metaphysical definition of man, rather than theological, due to the difference of mode in being between God and man.

²¹⁸*God*, 31-32. See also note 204 above.

fellowship of love with man. Yet, as we have just seen, this relativity necessarily entails the radical, ontological antagonism between God and man. A paradox! And, according to Kitamori, this antagonism (as man's negation of God) is a very sign of relegating God to relativity.²¹⁹ Although Kitamori sometimes holds that human sin degraded God to a relativity, we should rather contend, following his reasoning consistently, that it is God who has relativized Himself by His very creation of man. And as far as this divine self-relativization is concerned, we regard it as conformed to the Biblical revelation, especially actualized by the incarnation of the Son. It is of course to be noted that this divine self-relativization does not fully absorb God's absoluteness. God retains his absoluteness intact even when He relativized Himself "partially," as it were. The only question, then, is whether God's self-relativization vis-à-vis man *a priori* involves divine-human antagonism, as we believe Kitamori would hold for he believes that God had to overcome this relativity vis-à-vis man and win His absoluteness over man. This divine winning of the true absoluteness over relativity is an eternal divine process. In other words, this is a process of God becoming a true, absolute God.²²⁰

Putting these two issues of Kitamori's thought together, we can say that God has overcome His own negation of man's negation of Him. By this overcoming God can establish the basis for an "authentic" relationship of love with man; humanity has freedom to rebel against God; it is not bound to love God by necessity. When man

²¹⁹*Character*, 258.

²²⁰See above on Kitamori's explication of God's "omni-attributes."

loves Him whom he meets as the God in Pain, he loves Him freely, although he still rebels against God. Kitamori's formula "Never of God, ever of Christ" expresses this paradoxical situation. Man's love for God has thus a dual aspect: love in rebellion, and this necessarily so because of the nature of love and of the metaphysical antagonism between God and man. In this overcoming, God Himself becomes a true God.

We now review our argument above. A reconciliation of the divine-human antagonism, necessitated by the nature of love, must have been established within God before creation. This involves "pre-creational" Pain of God. On this basis man's authentic freedom in love vis-a-vis God is secured and at the same time redeemed. Creation, made possible on the basis of God's Pain, awaits the historical actualization.

We now examine the Pain of God specifically as a reality within the divine Trinity. The doctrine of the Trinity is the heart of the Christian faith; from Kitamori's perspective, the divine Trinity is the structure of the Pain of God. Relating the Pain of God to the Trinity, Kitamori clearly expresses the Pain of God as God's eternal essence.

Kitamori strongly underlines the importance of Trinitarian dogma, because in this he sees the suffering of Christ on Golgotha as nothing else than God's own suffering in eternity.²¹ We have already seen the reason for God's eternal suffering; what we want to examine here is Kitamori's concept of that eternal overcoming within the Godhead--the overcoming of the contradiction which emerged when God decided

²¹*Character*, 80.

to create His *Gegenüber*.²²² It is necessary to understand his Trinitarian concept to see why Kitamori passionately defends the central position of the Pain of God in theology and Christian experience.

Before we discuss the Trinitarian movement within the Godhead, we insert a reminder about Kitamori's idea of God, which is necessary to understanding the nature of this movement. Kitamori's image of God is not a vision of a transcendent God far above. As in the case of God in the Old Testament, God is a passionate, loving Being. When Kitamori reads "God is love," it is always in the sense of a God filled with *pathos*. For him, the character of love, or the trait which makes love authentic, is that of a "flowing unhindered to its object with a passionate longing."²²³ It is not distilled water, pure but tasteless. Divine love is filled with emotional and spiritual energy. In this sense, the love defined by Kitamori can be said to be akin to *eros* in its intensity. When this notion of love is applied to God, it gains a "demonic" connotation and represents the numinous aspect of God. This intense, jealous and "erotic" love is said to be God's "nature." We should attend to this theological position of God's "nature." "Nature" here is a crucial category for Kitamori; he makes the distinction between nature and essence when he speaks of the eternal attributes of the Godhead. When Kitamori uses the term "nature" he means something immediately given and not "processed yet by negation," whereas the term "essence"

²²²This German term is appropriate because of its double meaning of "face-to-faceness" and of contradictory position. In our interpretation, Kitamori conceives of the divine-human relationship in these two contradictory aspects as a unity.

²²³Itami, 164 (*Pain*, 122).

connotes something which is both the cause and the result of the continuous overcoming of nature. Essence in this sense is a dynamic concept. An important point in the thought of Kitamori is that nature is never abolished by essence. We can say that essence is the dialectical process which continuously fulfills itself by the help of nature as the negative mediation into a higher reality.

Now we take up the Trinitarian movement. The love of God in the first order (the wrath of God in our present reality!) is something "natural" within the Godhead. It is a sheer, intense love with which God created man and the world.²²⁴ Is this love in the *proprium* of the Father? The answer is both yes and no. On this point Kitamori is ambiguous, depending on the context from within which he speaks.²²⁵ Here he would say "Yes." This "natural" love is in the order of the Father, the Creator. However, this love is a "simple" love, which is bound to react vehemently in wrath to man's negation. *Deus simplex in amor simplex* will sooner or

²²⁴The character of this love of the first order is to love the loveable, that is "erotic" love. Of this Kitamori writes: "Both Christ and man were originally objects of God's love of the first order, but now only Christ is its object. Man has now fallen away from this kind of God's love, and has become unworthy of it because of rebellion and sin" (*Pain*, 118).

²²⁵To grasp this we might propose the term "di-unitarian" for Kitamori's concept of the identity of oneness and two-ness between the Father and the Son, vide "fui-stu-funi" (不二不), another technical term from Nishida's philosophy. When Kitamori speaks of the Pain of God in a trinitarian way, then the Father is the God of wrath (see for instance: "the Father who ordered the death of the sinner. . ." [*Creeds*, 23]), but when he speaks in the "di-unitarian" way, the Father is the subject of Pain, perhaps more than the Son. See Kitamori's explanation of Abraham as the witness to the Pain of God *par excellence* (*Pain*, 50ff). As far as can be seen there is no proper place for the Holy Spirit in Kitamori's theology of the Pain of God. It could very well operate within this di-unitarian scheme of thinking. We shall see more of this later.

later result in the destruction of the creature; it cannot endure for long in the face of negation. For "nature is powerless [in the face of its negations]," says Kitamori quoting from Hegel. It is "like something healthy [but] unvaccinated which, once infected, is utterly powerless."²²⁶

At the beginning of time, human rebellion is yet potentiality and not actuality. Yet, in the order of eternity, the wrath of God against man's fall is already an actual wrath. The primordial love of God is negated by human sin already in eternity. Man's betrayal of God's love must be redeemed by God Himself for actual creation to ever take place.²²⁷ In this sense, the Gnostic dictum *esse est salvari* would apply to Kitamori's thought here. In order to overcome this reaction of wrath in God which emerges by the mediation of human sin, God the Son takes the wrath upon Himself, thus protecting the human creature from God's destructive reaction.²²⁸ The Pain of God is love which is triumphant over God's negation of man and man's negation of God. Thus in Kitamori's thought, the Pain of God in the Person of the Son is the negation of two negations. It is, on the one hand, the negation of divine

²²⁶*Negation*, 148.

²²⁷When speaking within categories of time concerning the thought of God's "actual" creation, we take for granted that Kitamori also thinks in similar paths, but we are not sure that this is clearly the case with Kitamori, particularly in view of his strong emphasis on the correlation between God's love and its necessity to set up its object. In Kitamori's thought there is no concept of trinitarian fellowship among the Persons in perfect love, the fullness of God's *aseitas*. Rather, God cannot be *an sich*; He needs *für sich* so as to become *an und für sich*. Thus, if Kitamori sees, as Nishida did, a kind of co-eternalness between God and man, the Pain of God is the essential nature of God and man's essential condition of existence.

²²⁸See Kitamori's parable of thunder (*Pain*, 126-127).

negation of sinners. Now it is not necessary for God to destroy man in order to preserve His deity because God himself has taken His own wrath upon Himself. On the other hand, it is the negation of man's negation of God, the absolute affirmation [salvation] of the sinner. For Kitamori, God's absoluteness would not be established if God destroyed those who negate Him.²²⁹ If He destroyed the sinner, He would then only stand on the same relative level with His negators. By destruction, God relativizes Himself and is defeated by His negators. But now, by taking up His own negation upon Himself, God truly becomes an absolute God.²³⁰ No one can negate Him anymore, because He has negated all the negators in eternity, in His eternal Pain.

This eternal drama within the Godhead can be seen in the historical Cross of Christ. Kitamori believes that the historical Cross is a reflection of the eternal Cross within the Godhead. Put in another figure, the historical Cross is the window through which the eternal scene of the Pain of God is seen. Or, one sees the essence of God backward from the historical manifestation to the eternal inner sphere of the Godhead. God the Father abandoned God the Son unto death in order that human beings might be brought into existence. This abandonment by the Father of the Son unto death in

²²⁹*God*, 44-45.

²³⁰We need to include here a brief comment on Kitamori's concept "absoluteness." "Absoluteness" in Japanese is 絶対 [zettai] which, in an etymological analysis, means "to cease to stand over against." According to this concept of absoluteness, it cannot have any confrontation with a relative being (man) without ceasing to be absolute. In theology this means in theology that God cannot stand over against man in the ultimate sense; by definition, God must embrace his antagonist. God *ultimately* cannot destroy His *Gegenüber*; by embracing the negation in Himself, God establishes His absoluteness.

eternity is the meaning of Kitamori's statement that the Pain of God is God's eternal essence. (Here we notice that the Father is also the Subject of the Pain, the Bearer of His wrath.) The Gospel is thus also from eternity, as Kitamori quotes from Luther. In this sense, Kitamori is akin to Barth when the latter says that reconciliation precedes creation.²³¹ We then understand that when Kitamori says that "the Gospel is the tragedy of God," it is not an accidental, casual remark. It hits the main chord of Kitamori's theology. Love is suffering; for the sake of love, even God has to go through tragedy, since love has no other ontological possibility either for God or for man. Love's very ontology dictates, as it were, the divine-human tragedy.

This Pain of God remains as long as man remains a *free* subject of love. Man's freedom never ceases to exist as long as the fellowship of love (based on man's free will) between God and man endures. According to Kitamori's definition of God, the fellowship of love must endure because "God is love" is only possible in relation to man. Christ, God the Son, remains crucified from eternity to eternity, and God the Father is in Pain from eternity to eternity. This view of reality (or ontology in general) we characterize as "*Pantragismus*," as it corresponds to Hegel's philosophy.²³²

We can understand this divine tragedy, or the Pain of God, as something in the relationship between God the Father and God the Son. In this sense, the

²³¹Kitamori's relation to Karl Barth will be dealt with in the next chapter.

²³²Hajime Nakano. *Hegel: Reason and Reality*. (Tokyo: Chuo-Koron-sha, 1968), 49.

Trinitarian framework is constitutive. But in addition to this Trinitarian aspect of the divine tragedy, there is also a unitary aspect of God's overcoming His wrath. Both the Father and the Son are suffering in this movement. The Father and the Son are not divided; God the Father and God the Son in *unitas* bear the wrath of God in common Pain. God thus becomes a true, absolute God in His continually overcoming the negative moment (of His wrath) within Himself in the Pain of the Father and the Son.

We observe in this theology the eternal movement between the Father and the Son; a divine tragedy which is preeminently witnessed in Abraham's service of sacrificing his son Isaac. To describe this relationship between the Father and the Son, Kitamori often uses the term of "non-one-nor-two," meaning that the Father and the Son are two distinctive Persons but one "substance." *Duo personae, una substantia*. It is truly "Trinitarian" as far as the Father and the Son are concerned.²³³

In view of this fact, we are very interested in understanding how Kitamori conceives of the Holy Spirit. Two things seem to stand out in his concept of the Holy Spirit. The first prominent characteristic concerns the very reserved place expositions on the Holy Spirit occupy. The term "Holy Spirit" occurs less than ten times in Kitamori's *magnum opus*. We are left with the impression that Kitamori deals with the Holy Spirit as "*non ut illud diceretur, sed ne taceretur.*" However, this is to be expected in the works of Kitamori since God the Holy Spirit has no place in the "event" of the Pain of God itself. The second prominence involves the observation

²³³Cf. note 225 above.

that when God the Spirit is mentioned it is in connection with the dialectic of love within God.

To complete this section we now look at Kitamori's idea of the Trinity as divine love of three orders. Again we use the "long-hand" term of the Pain of God, namely "the love based upon the *Pain of God*." According to Kitamori, this "long-hand" formula serves in explicating the meaning of the Trinity. In his work *The Lord of The Cross*, Kitamori "appropriates" the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit respectively as "God," "Pain" and "love," the three components of his long-hand formula of the Pain of God. The sequence of the three components of this formula in the original Japanese follow the ordinary sequence of naming the Trinity (namely, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit) and thus serves to illustrate the Trinitarian structure of the Pain of God, or in the "long-hand" formula, the love based upon the Pain of God. But when we translate the formula into English, the word order is turned around as we see from the translation above, that is "love," "Pain" and "God." To understand Kitamori's exposition, we need to read the "long-hand" formula "backwards" as it were; the love (3. Holy Spirit) based upon the Pain (2. the Son) of God (1. the Father).²⁴ The movement follows the creedal order of the Trinity. In his view, the immediate love of the Father, as we saw above, is the love that became His wrath in this fallen reality. This wrath is borne by the Son as the Pain of the Father and the Son. But the inner-divine movement is not complete in this stage of the Pain of God. Dealing with an ethic on the basis of the Pain of God, Kitamori says

²⁴*Cross*, 21.

that "the true feature of the Pain of God consists in the fact that it immediately develops into the *love* based upon the Pain of God."²³⁵ Kitamori illustrates this development of love in an ingenious way when he gives an exegesis of Ephesians 5:25-33. In his view, the phrase "Christ. . . gave himself for her [His church]," points to the same divine act as described in Acts 20:28, "the Church of God which He purchased with His own blood," namely love on the level of the Pain of God. However, Kitamori holds that Ephesians 28-29, in which Paul speaks of the analogy of marital love and Christ's love for the Church, shows the love of this last order, love which is no longer a painful love as witnessed by Hosea, but an immediate love which is so intense as to be called an *eros*-like love.²³⁶ The initial, intense love of God is now recovered through the mediation of the Pain of God. The divine love thus attained is "the absolute affirmation which is the [divine] negation of the [human] negation [of the initial love of God]."²³⁷ This is the victorious love of God against which human rebellion is no longer possible, since it embraces men who have fallen out of the love of God in the first order.

Kitamori identifies this victorious love of God as "the resurrection of Christ, the Holy Spirit which is the Spirit of Christ and the sanctification which is the work of the Holy Spirit."²³⁸ He emphasizes that in the Gospel this victorious love occupies

²³⁵*Itami*, 141, (*Pain*, 93).

²³⁶*Ibid.*, 142, (*ibid.*, 94).

²³⁷*Ibid.*, 240, (*ibid.*, 156).

²³⁸*Cross*, 36.

"the ultimate place."²³⁹ "Without the resurrection of Christ everything is in vain," he says, "without the works of the Holy Spirit nothing becomes intelligible, and nothing reaches without the sanctification God's love does not reach its goal."²⁴⁰ Thus Kitamori views the Holy Spirit as the victorious power of love. The Spirit is power, and this power finally realizes the goal of God's love, that is, man's sanctification, which (in Kitamori's thought) is the actualization of man's willing and spontaneous love to God and to fellow human beings. We observe that he repeatedly underlines the triumphant aspect of the love based upon the Pain of God, and the Holy Spirit as the agent of this triumph of God's love. Viewed thus, the Holy Spirit is the final level of the dialectic movement of love within the Godhead. However, is this triumphant love in the Holy Spirit the final sublimation of the previous stages of divine love? Again the answer is both yes and no. Kitamori would say that as the *love* based upon the Pain of God, the love in the Holy Spirit has already gone through the levels of God's wrath and Pain. But, on the other hand, as the love based upon the *Pain of God*, it still remains fragmentary. In it, the love of the first order (the Wrath of God) and that of the second order (the Pain of God) remain intact with their respective *propria*.²⁴¹ For as long as man remains *semper justus, semper peccator*

²³⁹*Pain*, 123.

²⁴⁰*Ibid.*

²⁴¹It is the basic pattern of Kitamori's argument on the movement of love within the Godhead that he allows the love of God to develop from the wrath through the Pain and finally to the victorious love in which the Pain is overcome. But since the victorious love in the Holy Spirit, exposed to man's negation, is not yet fully "victorious" and therefore is broken and fragmentary, Kitamori brings the victorious love back to the Pain of God again. [Is the victory of love in the Holy Spirit, which

before God, the wrath of God over man never ceases to be an actual reality. The triumph of divine love in the Holy Spirit is only a fragmentary fulfillment which is always broken.²⁴² (In view of Kitamori's concept of eternal Pain, one doubts whether there is an ultimate triumph of love.) Thus, both the first order and the ultimate order of love are sustained by the Pain of God. Consequently, the Pain of God also occupies the pivotal place in the development of love within God. In all this we remember that within this theological scheme, the development of divine love is not a temporal event but an eternal event within the Godhead. In addition to this, we also note that just as the divine Persons are "three in one" and exist "side by side," so "all the levels of divine love are in one" and retain their respective *propria* side by side. It is because of this coexistence of mutually contradictory levels of divine love that God is eternally in Pain.

Summary

In this chapter, we have seen that God in Pain is Kitamori's primary experience. It is a vision of God's pathos, and as such, it cannot be reduced to logos. But when it is developed into a theology, it calls for profound speculation. Though related to man in sin, God in Pain is not a contingent state of God. For Kitamori, it

can be negated by man, truly victorious? Is it not a contradiction in terms on the part of Kitamori?] Thus, he characterizes this triumphant love in the order of the Holy Spirit as also having Pain within itself; the verse "the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groaning which cannot be uttered," (Romans 8:26) holds Kitamori, should indicate the Pain of the Holy Spirit (*Logic*, 60).

²⁴²*Pain*, 123.

is *ens redissima*. It is eternal and essential to God. As God's eternal essence, the Pain of God requires an infinitely profound background. When the wrath of God is a constituent factor of God's suffering Pain, and when the wrath of God is contingent upon human sin, then it becomes necessary for Kitamori to introduce the two orders for the emergence of the Pain of God. Supra- and infralapsarian emergencies of the Pain of God are conceived. Kitamori, as he emphasizes the eternalness of Pain, regards the supralapsarian idea of the Pain of God as ultimate. The Pain of God is thus an eternal event. Why is God eternally in Pain? Kitamori answers: because He is love. Love cannot be without Its object, and God cannot therefore but create man. Love, however, can be authentic only in freedom. Freedom "factually" means man's rebellion. This incompatibility between love and freedom in the divine-human relationship is due to the metaphysical difference between God and man. If man spontaneously loves as God wills, man becomes God himself. Man's love for God must involve a negative element, sin. Sin is then *de facto* what makes man man. In eternity, the "potential" rebellion of man evokes the wrath of God, and God, who wants to create man as the object of His love, had to take this wrath upon Himself. God's own bearing of His own wrath upon Himself is an eternal inner-Trinitarian movement of Pain. In this Trinitarian movement, love "logically" develops into victorious love in the Holy Spirit. But wrath, pain and love (all of which are different modes of divine love) remain the constituent factors of God's love called the Pain of God. Thus, in Kitamori's theology, the dogma of the Trinity occupies the central place. This dogma provides *dramatis personae* for the Pain of God. Man's being is

eternally redeemed by the Pain of God. Even saved by the Pain of God, man remains a sinner, thus continually causing God to bear His wrath against the sinner upon Himself. God is eternally in Pain because He loves man, who is "metaphysically" antagonistic toward God. Love suffers intrinsically. God is Love, so He is eternally in Pain.

What we find above includes our own interpretation of Kitamori. Upon our interpretation, we are now ready to draw some consequences. First, in Kitamori's thought, there should be no end of the Pain of God, no eschatological end of Pain. If this were not so, the Pain of God could not be eternal or essential to God. Accordingly, there would also be no end to human suffering. Second, if Pain is essential and eternal to God, it should be an intrinsically positive value.²⁴³ Third, perhaps the Pain of God would even be the absolute value which should transcend all human suffering so that concern for solving the problem of suffering would ultimately be irrelevant.

Do we carry Kitamori's concept of the Pain of God *ad absurdum*? We pick up this question in the next chapter.

²⁴³We argue for this viewpoint by Kitamori's own argument. He writes in connection with his refutation of the eternal dualism of good and evil: "If we admit that [the consequence of] good and evil is the principle of dualism, we have to also admit that evil as well as good should exist as something essential. And can this 'something which exists essentially' be designated as evil? . . . If evil exists from eternity to eternity together with good, shall we not say that evil is also ultimately something good?" (*Contemporary Man and Christianity*, 22-23).

CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS OF THE THEOLOGY OF THE PAIN OF GOD (2)

Man in the Pain of God

The Nature and the Reality of Sin: Anthropology

One could ask why the world as a whole exists and why I myself exist in it. In fact, it is a wonder that I together with the world exist at all. "Creation is a miracle, the idea of which human reason alone cannot grasp."¹ Kitamori finds the reason for this miracle in the Biblical "definition" of God as love. As love, God cannot but have those who receive His love, otherwise He would not be love.² His love is the fundamental motive for the creation of heaven and earth, and of man. With this Scriptural message of creation by divine love, says Kitamori, the world and man are saved from contingency and meaninglessness.³

What then is the meaning of man's existence in Kitamori's view? "The meaning of man's existence is to receive God's love with clear knowledge of it and to

¹E. Frank, 61.

²Kitamori, *The Contemporary and the Pain of God* (Tokyo: Kobundo Shobo, 1970), 14. "Love necessarily demands [要求する] its receiver," says Kitamori (ibid.).

³*God*, 21.

thank God for it."⁴ In fact, man alone is capable of responding to the love of a personal God with his own personality. In this, Kitamori holds, we find the meaning of "*imago Dei*" (Gen. 1:26-27). In other words, the *imago Dei* consists in man's being "a personal subject of love."⁵ Thus in understanding man's creation and defining him, Kitamori emphasizes the relationship of love between God and man.

To recognize Kitamori's position in contrast, it is helpful to take Luther's explanation of the first article of the creed in the Small Catechism, where God's creation is understood as motivated by "God's benevolence and mercy" and mediated through "physical" gifts ("body and soul, eyes and ears, etc."). There would be, of course, no objection from Luther against the statement that God created the world and man out of love. But in Luther's view, the creation of man is out of the benevolence and mercy of the sovereign God and is "dinglich" oriented; the relationship between God and man is mediated by "external things." In comparison with this view, Kitamori's view of the divine-human relationship as reflected in his concept of creation is in the category of personalism, that is, of a direct personal "Ich und Du" relationship.

Here we see love as the basic category of Kitamori's theological thought. Thus, when he thinks of man's fall, it is the falling from God's love, or from the

⁴Kitamori, *An Introduction to the Bible* (Tokyo: Kawade Shobo, 1954), 47.

⁵Ibid.

sphere of God's love, to use Kitamori's own space-figure.⁶ Sin is "not a physical or sociological concept," says Kitamori, "but a personal concept through and through." "This personal relationship is love itself."⁷ "Sin constitutes itself as sin when man betrays this love."⁸ True, in defining sin as the betrayal of love, Kitamori is consistent with his concept of love as the ultimate reality. God Himself is love, and sin against Him is nothing but the betrayal of the Love.

In Kitamori's thought, this is the basic form of sin. With this understanding of sin's nature, Kitamori then speaks of the propagation of original sin through sexual love. Again, sin is man's falling from the true love of God and once the fall occurs it

⁶*Logic*, 25. The original phrases are 神の愛からの脱落 and 神の愛の外に脱落. Kitamori uses this term in analogy with the English term "fall." We note, however, that this "definition" in terms of a space category is very essential to Kitamori. Phrases like "to embrace the extra into the intra" [外を内に包む] "to enter into the fact of salvation" [救済の事実の中に入る], "the proper field of salvation" [救済の固有の領域], "Christ as the God who comes out from God to save those who fall outside of God's love," etc. abound in Kitamori's writing. This would be an important theme of a separate study. Here we only attend to the implications of this predominance of a space category in Kitamori's thought scheme, namely, its ahistorical character. A similar indication can be found in his frequent use of the phrase "logical structure" (of salvation, for instance). An analyzable structure presupposes its unchangeable existence. Space and time are the basic categories of our thinking, and on which category one places emphasis is determined by one's own metaphysical presupposition.

[A bibliographical note: Those of Kitamori's works which are of primary significance and therefore quoted frequently are abbreviated like the note here. The list of those works is found at the end of the Introduction.]

⁷*Ibid.*, 27.

⁸*Ibid.*

necessarily entails "the perversion of love."⁹ Referring to Gen. 3:7 ("Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings"), Kitamori finds a symbolic manifestation of sin's consequence. "It is made plain," maintains Kitamori, "that the sexual love of man is [a form of] love which came into existence out of man's betrayal of and his falling from the true love [of God]."¹⁰ Kitamori thus affirms Augustine's idea of original sin when the former says that "the idea, since Augustine, of the hereditary transmission of sin through sexual acts is still valid." Kitamori, however, qualifies this "biological" view of original sin with his idea of love and writes: "We must conceive of this [propagation of original sin through sexual acts] as [a matter deeply related to] personal relationship or the essence of love."¹¹ What he maintains is that since humanity's sexual love is invariably a love perverted,¹² the result of such love, the conception and birth of human beings, involves the inheritance of the perverted love.¹³ Kitamori conceives of the entirety of sin and sin's consequences

⁹Ibid., 30; "the perversion of love" is " 愛の狂い " in the original language. "We cannot love our neighbor for his sake. We love him for our own sake. This is what the Bible calls sin. Sin is the deception of love [愛の虚偽]," says Kitamori (*Martin Luther* [Tokyo: Kobundo, 1951], 26). See further *Contemporary and Pain*, 31-33. "The essence of sin," says Kitamori, "the impurity of love ['that man cannot love God and his neighbor as sincerely as he loves himself; the reason of this impurity is his self-love'], (*Dialogue*, 151).

¹⁰*Logic*, 30.

¹¹Ibid., 31.

¹²" 脱落壊廃せる愛 " (ibid., 36).

¹³Ibid.

solely as phenomena within the category of love. The perversion of love, according to Kitamori, is the root problem of man's existence.

Again, it is useful to grasp Kitamori's concept of the nature of sin by comparing it with *Confessio Augustana's* definition found in the statement of Article II: "*sine metu, sine fiducia erga deum et cum concupiscentia.*" Here the nature of sin is more specific, its emphasis going in the direction of man's *hybris*. Certainly, *hybris* is one of the most blatant forms of man's betrayal of God's love. Thus, there is no contradiction between Kitamori's view of the nature of sin and the Confession's. But the difference we observe in the way Kitamori and the Confession conceive of sin's nature reflects their respective views of salvation.

Let us now take a brief look at the problem of sin and evil. It has remained a mystery in the history of Christian thought why man, the crown of God's good creation, is so thoroughly sinful and so helplessly inclined to evil. The inability to reconcile God's absolute goodness and sovereignty with the actuality of evil has been a theological *crux*. If one maintains on the one hand that there is no other principle but God Himself in this universe, one would logically ascribe the origin of evil to God and lose the authenticity of sin's ultimate seriousness. If, on the other hand, one proposes another principle beside God, then one would "rescue" God from responsibility for evil but fail to maintain faith in an all-sovereign God. The existence of evil becomes most troublesome in view of man's radical sinfulness. However, the problem of evil is not a reality solely confined within man's inner sphere. At the same time it transcends man's subjective reality. We should even say

that man is partly a victim of this reality of evil; certainly we say this without excusing man from his own responsibility for his being and his acts.

In his essay entitled "Man and Christianity," Kitamori deals with the problem of evil.¹⁴ He holds that there are three possible ways to approach the problem of evil, mentioning first a monistic approach and a dualistic approach. As for the monistic approach, Kitamori gives Plotinus and Leibniz as examples, the former a representative of the idea of evil as *privatio boni* and the latter a proponent of the concept of evil as a complementary reality for the enhancement of good. Neither of these explanations, sees Kitamori, is acceptable for those who suffer evil. They are abstract and avail little in the face of evil. As for the dualistic approach, Kitamori explains that the parallelism of good and evil from eternity is bound to nullify the serious force of evil, meaning that something which exists eternally by definition must be good.¹⁵ With the understanding that neither of the two approaches does justice to the reality of evil, Kitamori dismisses them both as inadequate.

Now, on to the third approach as presented by Kitamori. "The real strength of an idea," maintains Kitamori, "can be measured by the tenability of its solution to the problem of evil."¹⁶ "No idea is first class unless it is able to solve the problem of

¹⁴*Contemporary and Pain*, 20-31.

¹⁵Discussing the problems in the dualism of good and evil, Kitamori says: "To admit the dualism of good and evil is to admit that both good and evil exists *essentially* [本来]. But can a thing that *essentially* exist be said to be evil? Is not evil evil because it should not exist essentially? . . . If evil should exist eternally together with good, does not evil also become good?" (Ibid.)

¹⁶Ibid., 22.

evil."¹⁷ What is the solution of the problem of evil given by Christianity, or rather Kitamori's own solution? We are told by him that Christianity overcomes "the abstractness of dualism" by its doctrine that "man was not evil originally []." By this doctrine, Christianity understands the reality of evil as contradiction, because evil is something which must not exist originally and yet exist in reality. But as to the solution of the monistic approach, Kitamori argues that through the fall from God's love, "man became . . . evil"¹⁸ and that since man became evil, evil became a[n objective] reality. Kitamori's argument here sounds like a simplistic statement; it is not a substantial reflection on the problem of evil. Be this as it may, we are, however, more interested in these arguments, because here Kitamori maintains that the origin of evil is man's voluntary fall from God's love, a reduction of the origin of evil to the inner sphere of man.

Now we take a closer look at how in Kitamori's view evil became a reality in this world. Kitamori formulates the process as follows:

Man as a created being had merely possibilities to become good and evil, and as such he was as yet neither good nor evil in actuality. When man actually uses his freedom to choose good, then he actually becomes good, and when he chooses things against God's will then he actually becomes evil. "The fall" means that man *actually* used his freedom to choose evil. This deed [of the fall] is an *actuality*, behind which there was nothing to necessitate the fall. If there were any, man would not be a free being The fall of man means therefore that it was completely *accidental*. And yet this accident came to signify something fundamental and essential to man.¹⁹

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid., 30.

¹⁹Ibid., 18.

Here it is possible to observe two things. First, in addition to his reduction of evil to a reality within man, Kitamori locates the origin of evil *solely* in the freedom of man. Second, in so doing, Kitamori maintains that man actually became an evil being, using his freedom to choose evil. Here he seems to distinguish between act and being and to hold that act determines being. In other words, man's *own* act toward evil has fundamentally and essentially determined his being. The view of Kitamori will be better grasped by comparing it with the statement in the Book of Concord that man's nature as the creation of God is not capable of being corrupted to the point where it ceases to be man. That is, the nature of man as created by God, in its core, remains constant irrespective of man's act.²⁰ Kitamori seems to assert that man's own act of rebellion has determined the nature of man to be evil. Perhaps we should not press these viewpoints of Kitamori too hard because he says elsewhere that the doctrine of original sin is unintelligible.²¹ Yet, we attend to his view that this accidental choice, *by man's own will*, towards evil resulted in constituting his fundamental and essential nature as evil. In other words, it was solely of man's own making that he is what he actually is.

This particular anthropological viewpoint is of crucial significance because

²⁰*Formula Concordae*, Sol. Decl. 1:33; after speaking of an "empirical" difficulty in making the distinction between man's nature created by God and his actual state brought out by sin, the article firmly states: "Discrimen igitur retinendum est inter naturam nostram, qualis a Deo creata est hodieque conservatur, in qua peccatum originis habitat et inter ipsum peccatum originis, quod in natura habitat."

²¹"The doctrine of original sin is unintelligible, but without this unintelligible doctrine, our existence would become more unintelligible" (*Dialogue*, 178).

on the basis of this viewpoint Kitamori's concept of the divine-human relationship is built, namely a relationship solely on the basis of love and betrayal of love. As we have already seen, the reality of the wrath of God is described only as the reaction of divine love against man's betrayal of this love.

The radical corruption of man's nature is the consequence of his free choice of evil. With this view Kitamori emphasizes man's responsibility for what he actually is. Certainly, man cannot rightly excuse himself from the responsibility for what he is and what he does by taking refuge in any "predetermined" conditions of his existence, conditions over which he never had any control. "*Mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa!*" is a cry from the believer's existence. However, by itself, man's subjective denial of God does not adequately dismiss the mysterious reality of evil and sin. It is a clear Biblical witness that there exists a transpersonal and trans-human reality of evil. The accounts of Gen. 3:1-19 and of Jesus' temptation in Matt. 4:1-11 provide the clearest Biblical paradigms. The origin of satanic reality is not confined exclusively to the inner sphere of man, but it is an "objective" reality, independent of man.²² On this point Kitamori is virtually silent. Although he occasionally refers to

²²Goethe, observing a fundamental contradiction in reality which he names the "Demonical," finds "the most fearful manifestation of the Demonical" in men like Napoleon and Cagliostro, and writes in his *Truth and Poetry*: "All the moral powers combined are of no avail against them; in vain does the more enlightened portion of mankind attempt to draw suspicion upon them as deceived if not deceivers--the masses are still drawn on by them. Seldom if ever do the great men of an age find their equals among their contemporaries and they are overcome by nothing but the universe itself; and it is from the observation of this fact that the strange but striking proverb must have arisen: *Nemo contra Deum nisi Deus ipse*" (here quoted in E. Frank, 145-146). True, the proverb is daring as well as dangerous because it ultimately leads to the conclusion that the Demonical has its origin in God. But this recognition of a

Gen. 3, he does not delve into the details of the text. Nor does he find any significance in the agent of Jesus' temptation in the desert, reducing the issues of temptation to the psychological struggles within His inner consciousness.²³

The crucial point in Kitamori's view here is that all the satanic realities surrounding human existence are totally absorbed into man's betrayal of divine love. This view constitutes the foundation of what we present as Kitamori's thought of man's existence under the caption of "Man in the Pain of God." This means for example that there is no cosmic struggle between God and Satan. There are virtually no transhuman evil forces in his thought. The consequence of this view is immediately apparent. Speaking pointedly, man as such has become evil itself; he is "diabolized." If man is thus "diabolized," its consequence must naturally dictate a denigration of man. Man possesses no value at all, being totally unworthy of divine love. He is not only of no value to God but also detestable "minus value" to Him.²⁴

trans-human dimension of the abysmal reality of evil is important.

²³Logic, 149-151. Explaining the first item of the temptation, the problem of the bread, Kitamori for instance writes: "Berdyayev speaks of a truth when he says that 'the concern for one's own bread' is a material issue, but it becomes a spiritual issue when it is translated into 'the bread of the others.' That the liberation of the oppressed is an expression of love for one's neighbor must be truth. But what is more tragic than the discrepancy between intention and effect if the oppressed become 'happy pigs' once they are liberated? Jesus refused this kind of a materialistic and economic savior [concept]. How painful [悲痛な] it must have been for Jesus (a merciful One) to restrain His true emotion [真情] and to refuse this [materialistic concept of savior]" (ibid.).

²⁴" 無価値・反価値 ," (*Introduction to Bible*, 62). "God the Father abandoned His beloved Son for the salvation of man. That is, He abandoned the most beloved Object, the fountainhead of His happiness. And this sacrifice was made for a being of no value, and even minus value. . ." (ibid., 61-62).

It then becomes difficult for us to grasp why "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son," the world so "diabolized." What will be the consequence of this view in Kitamori's thought with regard to God's relationship to man?

Man's Reality under the Wrath of God

"The world lies under the wrath of God," writes Kitamori, "and any eyes capable of penetrating to the very bottom of the world see the world lying under the wrath of God."²⁵ What is the reality of man under the wrath of God? Kitamori quotes from Ezek. 5:13: "Thus shall My anger be spent, and I will cause my fury to rest upon them and I will be avenged; and they shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken it in My zeal, when I have spent My fury upon them." Based upon this verse, Kitamori comments that the wrath of God is most clearly manifested when sinners are totally annihilated. With one more quotation, from Gen. 6:13 and 17, he writes: "God will utterly destroy those men who are sucking the juice of carnal pleasure, just as a man in a summer evening slaps mosquitos sucking the blood delightedly from the skin."²⁶ Truly, he says, the wrath of God is "an authentic destructive force which does not cease until it destroys its objects utterly."²⁷

Kitamori's language, to us, seems extraordinarily fierce, even horrifying, bordering on the verge of sadistic irrationality. He describes the wrath of God as the vehemently negative reaction to man's betrayal of love. But can we interpret Kitamori

²⁵*Logic*, 33.

²⁶*Ibid.*

²⁷*Ibid.*, 39.

here as speaking in a rational language, or does he speak a language of a mystic experience of God which is often almost irrational in expression. Or does he paint the wrath of God with the darkest black transitoriness so as to provide the most effective background for the Gospel of the Pain of God? Perhaps both elements may be included. But one thing which is important for us to note is Kitamori's well-nigh "animosity" toward human beings. One may wonder if Kitamori is so perfectly in tune with God in His wrath that he can, standing with God, bitterly denounce sinful humanity by depicting the wrath of God on His behalf. In order to recognize this feature of Kitamori's thought, we recall that Luther makes the distinction between God's love as His *proprium* and His wrath as His *alienum*, subordinating the latter to the former. On this point, Kitamori criticizes Luther for not taking his experience of the wrath of God fully into his theological system.²⁸ To Kitamori, God's wrath is not merely *alienum* but rather *proprium* in the sense that it refuses to be subordinated to anything.

What is the reality of man under the wrath of God in specific terms? Why does the world of humanity endure if, as Kitamori describes, the wrath of God is so fierce and formidable a reality? "It is not necessarily so," he says, "that the wrath of God only manifests itself as a sweeping destruction of the world."²⁹ Before the

²⁸"Luther's experience of the wrath of God was fearful enough to 'turn his bones into ashes.' Moreover, the experience of his judgment under the wrath of God became the starting point for his inner development. It is most regrettable that this fundamental experience of his could not have been utilized fully in his central thought, 'the hidden God'" (*Pain*, 108).

²⁹*Logic*, 33.

destruction, the world "is abandoned" by God.³⁰ The world of man is abandoned by God in His wrath into transitoriness and contingency; cut from the very origin of meaning, man is only drifting around in total meaninglessness.³¹ First, Kitamori finds the concrete manifestations of the divine abandonment in the curses imposed upon man and woman, which are described in Gen. 3:17-19 and 3:16 respectively. Man is placed under the sufferings of labor, and woman the pain of conception. In Kitamori's interpretation, these features are the "routinization of the wrath of God"³² in man's daily life; man's life under labor and his family life which is based upon marriage is permeated by the wrath of God. The fundamental aspects of human life are thus under the wrath of God, and this means that "human life is, in the final analysis, deprived of [God's] blessing."³³ Elaborating on this point, Kitamori holds: "Biblically speaking, labor itself is by no means filled with blessing."³⁴ He is therefore critical of the Puritan identification of labor as God's *Beruf*, because to him the Weberian identification overlooks the problem inherent in human labor.³⁵

More than in man's labor, Kitamori sees divine wrath glaringly manifest in

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ibid.

³² 神の怒りの日常化 , " ibid., 34).

³³Ibid.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵"We cannot concur with Max Weber's idea of 'Beruf' without further ado. The problem of labor is here skipped over in a rough manner. This standpoint is only available for those who have enough 'guts' to take labor as God's blessed calling. It is the standpoint only for the spiritually privileged few" (ibid.).

woman's conception. To grasp this we here need to touch upon the role Kitamori assigns to human sexuality. Strikingly, in his view, "sexual love is a love fallen from true love [God's love]," a perverted love as we saw above.³⁶ Now, more radically, Kitamori intimates his view that sexual love has been the cause of the original fall. We make this inference from the following sayings of Kitamori. The fall, according to him, is human betrayal of and falling from the true love of God. Kitamori seems to speculate why this fall took place. Sexual love between man and woman rivaled God's love, and overwhelmed them to betray of God's love.³⁷ Sexual love, in his view, is a characteristic manifestation of human self-seeking nature ("*Selbstsucht*"). In sexual love, human beings reveal their real nature of defiance of God. Kitamori then argues that "undoubtedly, sexual love--a form of love perverted and corrupted--must have had something to do with the fall."³⁸

We observe here that for Kitamori human sexuality and marriage are not the

³⁶Cf. note 12 above.

³⁷Quoting 1 Cor. 7:33-34, Kitamori argues that "marital love divides one's mind between his love to spouse and his love to God. Here the self-seeking and exclusive character of sexual love (which is the necessary component of marriage) becomes manifest. Sexual love as the desire for an exclusive possession refuses to surrender its spouse to God" (*Logic*, 49). In this connection he gives Kierkegaard's "abandonment" of his fiancée as an example of this contradiction between sexual love and love for God.

³⁸"Since the Fall is the falling-apart from God's love--the true love--, undoubtedly sexual love--a form of love perverted and corrupted--must have had something to do with the Fall [愛の壊廃としての性愛と何らかの意味で関連していたことは明白]" (*ibid.*, 35). See further *ibid.*, 48.

blessings of God's original creation.³⁹ Rather, they both belong to *status corruptionis*. From this concept, Kitamori connects the fundamental contradiction in human existence ("the perversion of love") with the mode by which every individual comes into existence (that is, through sexual love). In other words, for Kitamori sexual love is the bearer of original sin. That an individual is born as the result of sexual love reveals the very "ugliness" [醜悪] of man.⁴⁰ In support of this concept, Kitamori quotes from Ps. 51:5: "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me."⁴¹ Man is, we are told, a being who only emits a rotten odor! Man is a disgrace to God!⁴² Kitamori further intensifies the ugliness of man that results from his sexual origin: "By love perverted and corrupted ['the sensual desire of a female spider that consumes the male' (Dostoyevsky)], humanity

³⁹"Because of the desire [in sexual love] for exclusive possession [of its object], marriage contradicts the love of God Marriage, however, becomes a blessing and a holy order when it is brought into the Pain of God. But we should never forget that this can only be said in the salvific love of the crucified Christ, never in the field of love in the order of creation" (ibid., 49). To see Kitamori's point here, we need to recall the distinction between nature and perverted nature. Kitamori holds that marriage as such is a form of perverted love which must be embraced and redeemed. In Kitamori's thought this redemption of marriage is the change of its nature, and not the restoration of its original nature. To some extent, this can be seen as parallel to his view of man as such (cf. note 20 above).

⁴⁰This term is most characteristic when Kitamori describes the fallen man; he uses this term often (*Logic*, 25, 26, 36, 46; *Introduction to Bible*, 56, 58, 152). It connotes a strong abhorrence with an aesthetic overtone. The most pregnant expression for man's status under the wrath of God is man's existence under "contingency, nonsense and ugliness [偶然性と無意味と醜悪]" (*Logic*, 46).

⁴¹*Logic*, 31; *Introduction to Bible*, 29.

⁴²*Auto I*, 107; " 塵捨場の如き人間の世界、臭気ふんふんたる罪人の間 " (Ibid.).

gives birth to 'a brood of vipers' (Matt. 3:7)."⁴³ "The brood of vipers is worthy of even *our own wrath*," he continues, "and if so, how can they possibly flee from the wrath of God?"⁴⁴ God's wrath becomes manifest in the suffering of humanity into which man by "the sensual desire [like that] of a female spider" gives birth to "a brood of vipers."⁴⁵

"Down-trodden by miseries, still driven to rebellion [against God]--this is the reality of the life of the sinner," wrote Kitamori when he was still a seminarian.⁴⁶ This picture of man's reality has remained throughout Kitamori's life. Abandoned by God--the Fountainhead of meaning, humanity ultimately does not find anything but misery, absurdity and meaninglessness in its world.

Dealing with man's historical reality, Kitamori bases his interpretation on his concept of the freedom of man. We recall a similar approach Kitamori used in his exposition of man's original fall from God's love. Kitamori is also here consistent with his fundamental notion of man as a free being. Man repeatedly uses his freedom to choose evil. "History," writes Kitamori, "is formed solely by the decisions of free man."⁴⁷ Freedom, to Kitamori, must ontologically include the possibility to choose

⁴³Ibid., 139.

⁴⁴Logic, 36.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Auto I, 120.

⁴⁷Character, 231.

outside," explains Kitamori using his etymology of "Ex-istenz," and he is thus "driven to rebellion."⁴⁹ To the "existing" man (though he is "free" in theory), the reality turns out to be contingent, absurd and the worst possible, a diametrical reversal of what man longs for. Here is paradox in Kitamori's thought. Freedom is a destiny of man's contradictory reality. The well-known existential dictum, "condemned to freedom," might serve to illustrate Kitamori's paradox. Like the tragic ontology of love, freedom is also destiny that equates to an ontological condemnation of man. We again call Kitamori's fundamental idea as an ontological tragicism. "Freedom, contingency, absurdity, evil and misery, these are the fundamental characteristics of history," observes Kitamori.⁵⁰ As long as history maintains its own *proprium* [and on Kitamori's anthropological premises it must], "there is no room for God in man's historical reality."⁵¹ Historical reality denies God totally; it is apart from God, "atheistic" through and through. "God" in this context means a God who is supposed

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Ibid. It is necessary here to ask what Kitamori means by "no room for God in man's historical reality [歴史が固有性を有する限り、神の入り来る余地はない]." It is true that we cannot discern the meaning of history; history more often than not stages events which drive men to total nihilism, although it sometimes can present an optimistic "illusion" (the nineteenth century!). Our question to Kitamori here is what is meant when he says this as a Christian theologian. Does he speak for atheistic existentialists? If he does, it seems sure that he agrees with them in this way of viewing historical reality. If he speaks of this on behalf of himself, it means that Kitamori does not adequately consider the total lordship of God in actual history. Either way, it seems to me, Kitamori does not acknowledge the positive rule of God in history. Certainly, this critique is based upon faith in God, so it is not based on objective observation. What I am concerned with is how we *theologically* conceive of God's active governance in history. If God's lordship does not extend to the realm of history, the Gospel becomes an issue of a purely inner sphere.

"atheistic" through and through. "God" in this context means a God who is supposed to save man in man's struggle for meaning and life. Fallen "outside" of God's love, man is without God and without hope. There remain then two contradictory realities: God who cannot bear man's history and man's history which cannot bear God.³² In Kitamori's thought, this is the absolute contradiction!

Man and his world as such are thus abandoned by God. This connotes two things: negatively, God's non-intervention in man's own doomed struggle and, "positively," His carrying out His judgement over man. Kitamori is never tempted by the optimism to which some hopeful omens on "the surface of the sea" occasionally encourage man. He will rather continue to gaze at the very abyss of man's reality. We can further observe Kitamori's view of human reality in his discussion of the specific mission of the Christian peace movement in Japan. Kitamori was critical

God's active governance in history. If God's lordship does not extend to the realm of history, the Gospel becomes an issue of a purely inner sphere.

³²Ibid., 231-32. On this point, see: Helmut Thielicke, "The Godless World and the Worldless God," *Church, Word and Spirit*, eds. J. Bradley and R. Muller [Festschrift to G. W. Bromiley] (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1987), 291-298: Thielicke, here being critical of his own Lutheran tradition concerning the doctrine of the two kingdoms for its liability to be abused, still maintains that God rules the world in His right and left hands; speaking of incompatibility of the Sermon on the Mount with the worldly reality (the Godless world), Thielicke warns against a misunderstanding here: "if the structure of the world seems to make the radical demands of the Sermon on the Mount unfulfillable, then we must not conclude that this means that the world is related in a radical contradiction. . . . [God works through the orders of this world.] For this reason, the orders have always been understood as measure of providential care and love" (295). In view of the doctrine of the two kingdoms (a theological scheme which in the Lutheran perspective aptly renders justice to the relationship between God's lordship of the world and the fallen reality of man), Kitamori's absolute separation of God and the world looks as if it is an abstract construction.

toward the movement, saying that in joining "secular" peace movements it does not contribute anything specific from its own "religious" resources.⁵³ In this context, he urges the Christian activists to a sober, "religious" recognition of man's reality. He calls this reality "the bottom." "This bottom is, as the extreme bottom of man's reality, a formidable and tragic field over which man's so-called movement is utterly powerless to exercise any influence."⁵⁴ Why is it so formidable? Because God abandons man to that condition. "The bottom," warns Kitamori, "is a field in which no means—including man's movements—avail except our intercessory prayers to the *merciful* Lord."⁵⁵ Man and his world lie under the wrath of God.

The Reality of Salvation in the Pain of God

Kitamori presents a hard picture of man's reality under the wrath of God. Man's reality has no meaning, no assurance of existence; it is only misery and absurdity. Nihilism is the word for man's reality under the wrath of God. However, in Kitamori's thought, this reality at the same time has a totally different aspect. He also intuitively perceives that it lies under the Pain of God. "Our world and all things in it," says Kitamori, "can only be seen under the single reality of the Pain of God."⁵⁶ Whether we know it or not, he says, we exist only under the Pain of God.

⁵³Kitamori, *My Reflections on Life* (Tokyo, Kyobunkan, 1963), 9-11.

⁵⁴Ibid., 13.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶*Auto I*, 178.

For Kitamori, the meaning of the world is [found only] in the Pain of God.⁵⁷ For God's love is possible only on the basis of the Pain of God; our joy, victory and hope are all possible only on the basis of the Pain of God.⁵⁸

We were told that for Kitamori the world lay under the awful curse of God. Now we hear that man's world is under the Pain of God. In Kitamori's thought, are these two contradictory realities at one and the same time describing how God deals with man's world? Is he following the Lutheran concept of the duality of God's relationship to the world, the dialectic of divine wrath and love? One should answer yes to these questions, at least as far as its conceptual scheme is concerned. The wrath of God noetically precedes the Pain of God. Also for Kitamori, wrath drives man to desperation. In this desperation one experiences pains, and through pains one comes to see God in His Pain. Now it is necessary for us to look more closely at Kitamori's view of the relationship between God's wrath and His Pain and its conceptual presupposition.

In Kitamori's concept, the reality of man is a composite of two antithetical facts. We see this in his view of man's existence. Man is "a double being" [二重存在]. On the one hand, Kitamori says, man is brought forth into existence "by God's love and blessing."⁵⁹ For Kitamori, "the cruciality of this postulate is almost immeasurable." Without this man can hardly continue to live, for the world

⁵⁷Tbid.

⁵⁸Tbid., 180.

⁵⁹*Logic*, 31; here Kitamori quotes from Ps. 139:13 and 119:13.

would become sheer nonsense and he would only know his own ugliness.⁶⁰ On the other hand, says he, "an individual is brought forth into being by the very fact of man's fallen condition."⁶¹ What Kitamori is saying is that the existence of man is a result of the sheer sin of man, namely sexual love which is nothing but the cardinal manifestation of sin, *die Selbstsucht*. This means that an individual owes his existence to two parallel causes. "In man light and darkness entangle themselves with each other."⁶² What does Kitamori want to advance here in particular? At this juncture we need to pay attention to a subtle but crucial point in his view. It is a form of dualism that Kitamori finds in the origin of the individual. Man comes into being as the result of a contingent and even cursed human relationship but also by the blessing of God. Does this dualism not involve an illegitimate mixture of the domains of discourse? On the one hand, without the divine revelation of salvation there is no recognition that man is created by God. But on the other hand, with revelation one cannot theologically say that man's coming into being has a double origin. In faith, one believes that man is brought into being solely and ultimately by God's will despite the empirical fact that human contingency and sin are involved in it. It is therefore either/or in the understanding of man's origin. This dualism in the thought of Kitamori, however, entails some serious consequences for the understanding of man and the nature of his redemption. Above we have already observed in Kitamori's

⁶⁰Ibid., 25.

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Ibid., 31.

thought a strong tendency to "diabolize" man. We find the reason here in this dualism. Man's coming into existence, understood as the result of human sin (evil itself), is ontologically antagonistic to God, totally separated from God; but on the other hand, as the result of God's love, God wants to redeem him in His Pain. Man is thus in himself an absolute contradiction.⁶³ Consequently, God can only relate to man as his Redeemer. The concept of God the Creator as the basic relationship between God and man in His created world has substantially disappeared from Kitamori's thought.

It therefore seems natural for Kitamori to reverse the ontological sequence of creation and redemption, namely redemption first and creation second. In other words, he conceives of the reality of creation as meaningful only in light of redemption. Without redemption creation is only a curse because of man's sin. Therefore, creation in its actuality is, to his "penetrating" eyes, nothing but "ugliness, absurdity, meaninglessness."⁶⁴ The most crucial point here is that redemption does not redeem the fallen creation; it constitutes the meaning of creation.⁶⁵ In other

⁶³The viewpoint here that man is a being in contradiction stands in parallel with the contradiction between God and man's historical reality which we saw in the above. This is logically consistent on the part of Kitamori. Our concern here is whether this dualism is an adequate description of reality in the light of the Bible or is rather an abstract construction which is required by the scheme of his thought.

⁶⁴See note 40 above.

⁶⁵In addition to "narrowing" the range of God's active presence in man's reality (the narrowing which we have touched upon in the above and will discuss more in the below), this way of seeing the relation between creation and redemption has an apparent logical difficulty. If man's existence is contingent, meaningless and ugly, how can one know about all this nonsense? Does this not presuppose a reality with signs opposite to these negative signs? Yes, it must, otherwise it would be impossible

words, redemption itself becomes the meaning of creation rather than the restoration of the blessing and meaning inherent in creation, and this with a theological consequence that man's sin and God's Pain become constitutive to the ultimate reality.

We here discern how a basic conceptual scheme can dictate the whole interpretation of the Gospel. To Kitamori, the order of redemption is primary and constitutive to the order of creation. Thus, the order of creation by itself is reduced to a total nothingness. To set this concept of Kitamori in relief, it is helpful to have an alternative scheme in view. It is a scheme which simply follows the order of the Apostolic Creed; creation first, and then redemption. On this order one can construct various theological systems.⁶⁶ The main point in this scheme is, however, that the order of redemption is the confirmation of the original will of God in creation; it is the recapitulation of creation. Although the world of creation, as fallen, cannot stand without the redemptive act of God, it still has not lost God's blessing; God the Creator

not only to know but even to desire its overcoming. In Christian theology, it is exactly the vision of the original creation in God's unalloyed satisfaction ("Indeed it is very good!" [Gen. 1:31]) that provides the presupposition of the recognition of man's fallenness and longing for redemption. Though under misery and contradiction, creation is not totally meaningless; labor and marriage outside the revelation of Christ still retain vestiges of the blessing of creation. Our bare existing is of infinite value to us. For this reason, we cling to life in the face of death. MacGregor, to whom "'bare' existence" is already the *summum bonum*, says meaningfully: "I wish to suggest that 'bare' existence is the most priceless because it is the most basic of all possible gifts. There is nothing for which I could be more grateful, for every other possible object of my gratitude would depend absolutely upon it" (16). In this sense, Kitamori's totally negative view of creation is not only abstract but also disturbing.

⁶⁶We shall deal with the relationship between creation and redemption in more detail in the next chapter. Here my basic viewpoint on this theme is briefly mentioned.

works even in the fallen world as a merciful God even though His wrath and judgment are undeniable forces in it. The point is, the world is still God's, even if it is fallen; in His redemption He *reclaims* it because it is His own creation. As to the "origin" of man's existence, there will be no dualism in this conceptual scheme. Despite a deep sinfulness of human reality, an individual is totally and fully God's creation. In fact, only in this scheme one can speak meaningfully of the concept of *creatio continua* or God's universal activity in the world irrespective of man's knowledge. This divine activity in the created world is what we want to emphasize, not only as the judgement (and, even in this case, not for the sake of judgement itself) but more importantly for the sake of the preservation and redemption of the creature.

As far as we can see, in Kitamori's basic scheme of thinking the order of creation and that of redemption constitute a sharp antithesis.⁶⁷ The reality of creation, "diabolized" by human sin and lying under the destructive forces of God's wrath, must be overcome by the reality of the redemption which God had provided by His Pain. The tension of both realities is, in Kitamori's idea, a reflection of the tension within God.⁶⁸ His often-recurrent formula, "Never God's, ever Christ's," strongly suggests this.⁶⁹ With this formula, Kitamori means that in the sphere of God, that is of "God im-mediate [God not mediated by Christ]," the reality of man does not belong to God, but to "the outside of God"; whereas in the sphere of Christ

⁶⁷See note 52 above.

⁶⁸See note 147 in Chap. 2.

⁶⁹*Auto I*, 114.

--God mediated by Christ, the reality of man is absolutely embraced. As is seen here, the dialectic of the *extra* and the *intra* in his theology is also indicative of this sharp antithesis between the reality of creation and that of redemption.⁷⁰

"Salvation," writes Kitamori, "is the fact that God still loves man fallen outside of the love of God."⁷¹ In short, "the love which embraces the *extra* into the *intra*"⁷² is the redemptive love. Using these categories of the *extra* and the *intra*, Kitamori explains the necessity of the Son's incarnation in history.⁷³ The love of God which loves the man fallen outside cannot remain inside of God; it is the love which "comes out" from God. The God who comes out to the human reality is the God incarnate, the man Jesus.⁷⁴ For, Kitamori argues, the fact that God comes out from God Himself is God becoming an *aliter* of God, namely, man. This, in his view, is the very reason why the Savior can be the Savior only as an historical being; this being is Jesus.⁷⁵

⁷⁰The Ansatz for this distinction in Kitamori's thought seems to have been Th. Harnack's interpretation of Luther, that to the Reformer the way to grasp *die gnädigen Gott* is given by God Himself in His revelation in Christ: "Eben deshalb will er [Luther] auch, daß man lerne 'Unterschied machen zwischen Gott und God', zwischen Gott *außer Christo* und *in Christo*" (Luther's Theologie I [Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1927], 84; emphasis is added). It is probable that Kitamori builds his dialectic upon this distinction made by Harnack.

⁷¹*Logic*, 38.

⁷²This phrase in the original Japanese is " 外に包む愛 " (*Auto I*, 135).

⁷³*Logic*, 39.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*

⁷⁵*Ibid.*

Kitamori sees fallen mankind as "children of wrath."⁷⁶ Salvation of the children of wrath, he says, cannot be carried out by "mere" love. The wrath of God can never be overlooked, because in it God maintains His Deity. We recall Kitamori's quotation from Forsyth that "sin [read: the sinner] must die or God." Thus, God's wrath can never be silenced without the risk of placing His honor in jeopardy. Man's salvation, therefore, involves formidable commitment on the part of God, the Pain of God. "Atonement is," holds Kitamori, "the salvation which is brought into fulfillment by God's own taking upon Himself, in His love, the wrath of God."⁷⁷

In the explication of atonement, Kitamori emphasizes that Christ died bearing the wrath of God upon Himself; the wrath of God striking His Son on the cross. Thus, he stands in the doctrinal tradition of atonement as *et poena et satisfactio*.⁷⁸ Kitamori, however, feels it necessary to go further than mere statements of "punishment and satisfaction" to explicate the doctrine of atonement. To him, the Anselmian theory of satisfaction is "the first well-built doctrine of atonement and worthy of admiration as to its logical transparency It must be acknowledged that there is truth in his view."⁷⁹ But, he says, this theory misses a crucial aspect of

⁷⁶Eph. 2:3, (*Logic*, 39).

⁷⁷Ibid.

⁷⁸According to Ted Peters, the Anselmian alternative *aut poena aut satisfactio* is understood by Luther as *satisfactio* including also *poena* ("Atonement in Anselm and Luther," *Lutheran Quarterly* 24 [1972, 311]). Kitamori follows Luther's view.

⁷⁹*Character*, 13.

atonement, which must be recovered. Agreeing with Gustav Aulén's critique (in *Christus Victor*) of Anselm, Kitamori sees a fatal weakness of the Anselmian doctrine in its rational character. Kitamori acknowledges the validity of both Anselm's *Fragestellung* on atonement and the structure of his solution. And yet, because of the rational character of his problem and solution, the great Scholastic missed "the vehemency [激烈さ] inherent in the issue [of atonement]."⁸⁰ In Kitamori's terminology, the missed "vehemency" in Anselm's conception is the "quality" of the issue of atonement. By this term he apparently means the "quality" of the divine "pathos" involved in the issue of atonement. One needs, says Kitamori, "a qualitative expression for this contradictory struggle of [divine] righteousness and love."⁸¹ If one leaves unamended the doctrine of atonement in the rational aridity of an Anselmian type, it would only "assassinate this issue [of atonement]."⁸² For Kitamori, the need for the "qualitative expression" of atonement is only adequately met with the concept of the Pain of God, that is, God in suffering.

Further, Kitamori highly values *Christus Victor* for Aulén's exposition, of Luther's concept of atonement. According to Kitamori's reading of Aulén, the basic line of Luther's concept of atonement is that the love of God struggles with the wrath of God and "win[s] victory" over it.⁸³ It is also Aulén's contribution, holds

⁸⁰Ibid., 15.

⁸¹Ibid.

⁸²Ibid.: Kitamori uses the very term "to assassinate," " 暗殺する ." We attend to Kitamori's usage of strong vocabulary.

⁸³Ibid., 16.

Kitamori, that in Luther's thought the Swedish scholar finds God primarily as the active subject of the drama of the atonement rather than merely as the passive receiver of propitiation. Kitamori also holds that Aulén emphasizes the character of the irrational pathos of God in the work of atonement.⁸⁴ Yet, Kitamori is not satisfied with Aulén's evaluation because of the latter's "one-sided" emphasis on the victory of Christ in the work of atonement. To him, Aulén dissolves the "struggle element" in Luther's concept into the "victory-motif."⁸⁵ This means that Aulén does not adequately sense the "qualitative" aspect of atonement implied in the idea of the "struggle" in God. The "struggle" element in atonement, Kitamori claims, must have its own "quality [independent value]" before the work of atonement is characterized as victory. This indispensable "quality" is the Pain of God.⁸⁶

The idea of the divine atonement, for Kitamori, should not deteriorate into rational aridity nor into a simple triumphalism.⁸⁷ It must retain the "quality" of the pathos involved and the "painful" struggle in it. Still, there is one more element in Aulén's doctrinal discussion on atonement which Kitamori sees it necessary to refute. We have seen above that Kitamori regards the punishment motif as essential to the idea of atonement. Kokichi Kurosaki, a Bible commentator affiliated with the Mukyokai, once criticized the view of atonement as *poena*; he saw this as making God

⁸⁴Ibid.

⁸⁵Ibid., 17.

⁸⁶Ibid.

⁸⁷Ibid., 18.

too mechanical and impersonal.⁸⁸ Further, this Bible commentator felt it unthinkable that the Father, loving the Son so deeply, could seriously punish the Son with His wrath; he would hold that "objectively God's wrath did not assault the Son, rather the Father looked down upon the suffering Son in His deep fatherly love."⁸⁹ On an other occasion, Kurosaki even quoted Kitamori's *opus magnum* as a support for his critique of this punishment motif.⁹⁰ In reality, Kitamori's position is quite opposite Kurosaki's. The punishment motif is the corner stone of Kitamori's concept of the Pain of God. Taking up Kurosaki's critique, he concurs with the commentator, admitting that the traditional theory of punishment certainly has the tendency to become impersonal and mechanical. "In spite of this critique," Kitamori insists, "one cannot say that the theory as a whole is erroneous."⁹¹ As far as the "form" of this theory is concerned, it has a truth element; but what is lacking in this theory is "*the*

⁸⁸Discussed in Kitamori, *ibid.*, 20-21.

⁸⁹Referred in Kitamori, *ibid.*, 22.

⁹⁰"What I want to say," writes Kurosaki, "is that, seeing from our human standpoint, we should have made apology to God for our sins by taking our own lives ourselves before we are destroyed by God's punishment; but Christ died in our place; if we see this from God's viewpoint He has shown His pain over the depth of humanity's sins by the death of Jesus, sending the Son to death . . . (cf. Mr. Kitamori's *The Theology of the Pain of God*)" (quoted in *ibid.*, 25). That is, though Kitamori's *opus magnum* has an abstruse background of speculation, the idea of the Pain of God is expressed in a language which appeals directly to the minds of "uncritical" readers. In my view, however, this way of reading Kitamori is not a total misunderstanding. The initial success of this book immediately after World War II can be understood as a result of this "understandable" side of the book.

⁹¹*Ibid.*, 21.

world of quality.⁹² The concept of the Pain of God rectifies the shortcomings of this *poena*-theory.⁹³ In this connection, Kitamori deals with Kurosaki's expression of "God's suffering and pain," an expression which the latter used in connection with his description of the Father as He looks upon the Son on the Cross with deepest sympathy. Kitamori makes a sharp distinction between Kurosaki's usage of the expression and his own, saying that Kurosaki's pain of God is that of "God's sentimentality" [神の感傷],⁹⁴ while his own is the Pain of God in which God bears His wrath in His love.⁹⁵ "The Pain of God is the Pain of God just because God the Father assaults *His beloved Son* with *His wrath*," assures Kitamori.⁹⁶

Thus Kitamori is adamant in his assertion of the absolute objective reality of divine wrath. As a matter of fact, the concept of the objective wrath of God is today reconfirmed as the fundamental factor of Christian faith and theology. In this particular regard, Kitamori's stance is the traditional Protestant stance, but this adamant assertion of Kitamori must be seen against the background of his concept of the Pain of God. This concept *logically* requires the wrath of God; where there is no wrath, there cannot be the Pain of God. There must be the wrath of God!

For Kitamori, the Pain of God is the absolute theological axiom, a

⁹²Ibid., " 質の世界 " .

⁹³Ibid.

⁹⁴Ibid., 23.

⁹⁵Ibid.

⁹⁶Ibid.

self-evident truth, or "the king of truth" as he says elsewhere.⁹⁷ This means, in his practical theologizing, that everything in theology--whether doctrine or the life of faith--must be judged, understood and systematized in conformity with the concept of the Pain of God. In fact, we know that the absolute dominance of an axiom is what brings a set of ideas and thoughts into a system. Kitamori's theology is one example of this. We saw Kitamori's view of atonement in the light of the Pain of God. The Pain on the part of God is essential in this doctrine. This feature determines Kitamori's understanding of Christian existence in the Pain of God, as we shall see later in this section.

The world lies under the wrath of God and the Pain of God. This perspective of two divine relationships with the world is similar to the Lutheran dialectic of God's wrath and God's grace. However, we cannot determine here exactly whether or not Kitamori's concept of this divine duality vis-à-vis the world is substantially identical with the Lutheran concept. We shall return to this question on a later occasion.

However, on the basis of what we have observed in his idea of the sharp antithesis between the fallen reality of the created world and redemption through the Pain of God, we can here at least say that Kitamori has a highly idiosyncratic variation of this fundamental Lutheran dialectic. The very concept of the Pain of God also indicates this. "On the one hand," Kitamori describes man's situation in relation to God, "his [man's] existence, as far as he is one from the 'brood of vipers,' is the

⁹⁷Ibid., 51.

object of divine wrath, but, on the other hand, he is brought into existence also by the love of God, and thus he is in the Pain of God which is the unity of contradiction between God's wrath and His love."⁹⁸ We shall look at this passage a little more closely. God's love and God's wrath are here synthesized into the Pain of God.⁹⁹ This means that Kitamori ultimately speaks of a single divine reality vis-à-vis man, the Pain of God.¹⁰⁰ Put differently, in Kitamori God does not simply confront man with the wrath of God nor merely with the love of God; He meets man in His Pain.

⁹⁸Logic, 42.

⁹⁹The original text reads:

"人間は神の怒りと神の愛との矛盾的統一としての神の痛みの中にある" (ibid.).

¹⁰⁰To Kitamori God in Pain is a primary experience. It is an "unanalyzable" reality. But, in his attempt to conceptualize it as God's Pain, Kitamori analyzes it into elements and synthesizes them again to a conceptual unity. In this, he recognizes the Pain of God as something different from God's wrath and His love, namely the contradictory unity of God's wrath and love. Kitamori calls this quality of God's essence *tertium*, relying on Th. Harnack. "Theodosius Harnack says that on the cross the third (*tertium*) emerged [生じた] from the two elements--the wrath of God and the love of God. This third is nothing but the Pain of God" (*Itami*, 21 [*Pain*, 21]). What is Harnack's own view of this? The German scholar first observes a very strict dualism of divine wrath and love. In his view, Luther denied genetic relationship between the wrath of God to the love of God. But at the same time the Reformer was not satisfied with this acute dualism either. In Harnack's view, both of them are "nur Erzeugnisse eines verlegenen oder verzweifelnden Denkens" (*Luthers Theologie: I*, 338). Then he says: "Es gibt ein *tertium*, und eben dieses Dritte ist es, das auch Luther, der Schrift und den Glauben gemäß, bezeugt und lehrt" (ibid.). From this reference we point out several things. First, Harnack himself does not embrace the idea of a development of love in God himself in Luther's thought (. . . daß er [Gott] Liebe absolut ist, aber der Zorn nur relativ, d. h. in Relation zur sündigen Welt . . ." ibid., 358). Second, Harnack does not use "Sich-Ereignen" of *tertium*, but simply: "Es gibt . . ." Third, Harnack's *tertium* is not the result of a conflict within God. It is "Gottes Gerechtigkeit" which can effect both wrath and love toward the sinner (see further Gerhard Rost's critical evaluation of Harnack's interpretation of Luther, 3-4). One can therefore say that Kitamori's interpretation Luther via Harnack is "unwarranted" and that the content of the *tertium* is fully Kitamori's own.

This single reality is absolute salvation, but it still has two aspects; wrath and love side by side. The Pain of God is the love of God which bears upon itself the wrath of God. The wrath, or judgment of God, therefore no longer assaults man because of the Pain of God. (But this is so ontologically but not "phenomenologically."¹⁰¹) Thus in Kitamori, the real dialectic of wrath and love exists in God Himself, and it is for this reason that God suffers Pain eternally. But there is no such dialectic in His relationship with us any more. The wrath now being borne by God Himself is ontologically overcome as far as our salvation is concerned; wrath remains now only phenomenologically present for us, and this phenomenological presence of wrath serves toward the actualization of and witness to the Pain of God by causing in us pains and sufferings in this world.¹⁰² This ultimate overcoming of God's wrath by God himself can be seen in Kitamori's use of another image for the Pain of God, that of a "shield" which protects the sinner from the assault of the wrath of God.¹⁰³ This image excellently matches his image above that the world lies under the wrath of God. A layer below this wrath, as it were, there lies the layer of the Pain of God and it shields us from the attacks of God's wrath. We recognize from this image that the Pain of God, now as the single mode of God's relationship with man, is the objective reality of salvation for the sinner.

¹⁰¹To Kitamori, the Pain of God is the absolute salvation. The wrath of God which we should have experienced has been ontologically "taken care of." The "poison of the snake" which might be called the wrath of God is taken away from it (cf. *Logic*, 51).

¹⁰²See Chap. 5, 409ff.

¹⁰³*Pain*, 126.

Does this mean that salvation is now universal? That is, lying under the Pain of God, is every individual already in salvation, even though he may subjectively lack knowledge about it? Kitamori answers a definite "yes" to the question.¹⁰⁴ In this "yes" one finds Kitamori's version of "the triumph of grace," which is the very heartbeat of Kitamori's theology. "We can turn our back on the love of God [immediate]," writes Kitamori, "but we cannot turn our back on the very love of God --the Pain of God, by which God loves us who defy that love of God. The only thing on which we cannot turn our back is the Pain of God, and by the Pain of God alone God triumphs over us."¹⁰⁵ Phrases like this concerning the triumphant Pain of God abound in Kitamori's writings. According to him, this is the absoluteness of God's Pain; the Pain of God being the absolute negation of man's negation of God. Man's falling from God's love, his betrayal of it, and his turning back to it cannot "outbeat" the Pain of God, which ever "outruns" man and embraces him from further outside.¹⁰⁶ This notion of the Pain of God--the absolute love of God--presupposes his

¹⁰⁴In a section where he discusses the existence of the unbelievers in the order of creation, he says: "Lastly, I have to say something crucial. The unbelievers who are now without salvation are placed in the field of the Cross which is the theological axiom. They are not saved in actuality [現実], but they cannot go out from the Cross; the problem [of sin] has been solved on Golgotha. The 'not-yet-solved' reality [the existence of unbelievers] which we are now seeing is of reality in the solution [解決の中の未解決]" (*Cross*, 34-35). See also *Pain*, 89.

¹⁰⁵*Auto II*, 25.

¹⁰⁶Perhaps we can visualize this structure of the Pain of God with three concentric circles. The innermost circle is the love of God which can be betrayed and stand against man in a relative *Gegenüber*; the second circle represents man's falling out from the innermost circle of divine love; finally, the outer circle stands for the Pain of God which embraces all. It would be helpful if we think of the Pain of God as absolutely greater than the second so that the second cannot outrun the third, largest

deep recognition of man's sinfulness. Man's defiance of God is infinitely deep; the Pain of God is still "more" infinite in embracing the sinner. Redemption is thus an absolute and objective reality in the Pain of God.

Salvation is now objectively established for the sinner. Cursed things in the order of creation--life in its basic form in work and marriage included--are now embraced in the Pain of God and redeemed into blessing.¹⁰⁷ Due to the Pain of God embracing the unembraceable, says Kitamori for instance, "marriage becomes a holy ordinance guaranteed by the will of God."¹⁰⁸ The Pain of God as the order of redemption embraces the fallen reality of man *just as* it is. This is, to Kitamori, the meaning of the forgiveness of sins. We can therefore say that Kitamori sees the forgiveness of sin as identical with God's absolute embracing of the fallen reality as such.¹⁰⁹

From this "objective" idea of salvation, we may easily grasp Kitamori's concept of "faith." Faith, to Kitamori, is the act of a believing subject, by which he

circle.

¹⁰⁷*Logic*, 47-49.

¹⁰⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹"God has already justified us [by His Pain]. That we enter into the fact of this justification of God, that is [our act of] 'faith'; God regards this as righteousness (Rom. 4:5)" (*Auto II*, 112). "According to the satisfaction theory," writes Kitamori, "the Cross is raised before the forgiveness of sins God crucified Christ in order to forgive our sins. According to 'the Pain of God' the Cross is raised after the forgiveness of sins. The Cross is the consequence of the forgiveness of sins. Since God has forgiven sins already, He crucified Himself in the *Persona* of His beloved Son" (*Auto I*, 220; italic is mine). But here we pay special attention to one thing, namely the universality of the forgiveness of sins.

enters into "the salvific love of God [救濟愛 = the Pain of God]."¹¹⁰ We now follow Kitamori's exposition of faith in order to understand his concept of faith. "The Pain of God [the Cross of Christ]," emphasizes Kitamori, "has actually occurred; it exists now as an objective fact; we are factually in this Pain of God."¹¹¹ Why can we not "see" then the fact of salvation, Kitamori asks, and the Savior? the fact by definition being something we can see! "Yes, we are actually in the salvific love of God," Kitamori says, "but it must be remembered that we, as the beings who have fallen from God's love, could not have been in the love of God, but actually we now find ourselves in this salvific love, a fact which could not have taken place but is a reality; a sheer paradox!"¹¹² To believe this impossibility is really "contrary to hope (Rom. 4:18)."¹¹³ Thus, according to Kitamori, our incapability of seeing salvation is due to the fact that the impossibility of our being accepted by God is now an actual reality. To *know* the reality of salvation is salvation,¹¹⁴ and in this fallen condition of humanity it is through faith alone that one knows the reality of salvation.

In keeping with his general emphasis on the significance of knowing, Kitamori maintains also here that salvation is to know the salvation which has already been objectively given. To see this a little more closely, we take up one of his

¹¹⁰*Logic*, 41.

¹¹¹*Ibid.*

¹¹²*Ibid.*, 41-42.

¹¹³*Ibid.*

¹¹⁴For this "intellectualism," see also Chap. 6, 511-512 below.

discussions on this theme. The unbeliever, holds Kitamori, is also objectively in the Pain of God, but it does not mean that he is aware of this fact; "he does not yet take the act of faith."¹¹⁵ So long as he remains ignorant of the objective fact of salvation, salvation does not become actual to him. To explain this, Kitamori uses terms from English and German: "actuality--Wirklichkeit--Tatsach." According to his etymological analysis, all these words include a component which signifies action, "act, wirken and Tat"; they indicate the nature of "actuality," and in Kitamori's context, the believing subject's involvement in the salvation through his act of faith. "Only through the act of faith, the salvific love becomes an actuality [事実]."¹¹⁶

Faith is thus emphasized by Kitamori as the believing act of man. But he at once adds that this subjective act of faith is something impossible for man to undertake. It is only possible by "the power of the One who transcends the believing subject." The salvific love [of God] itself "pushes us into the salvific love."¹¹⁷ It is, then, the salvific love itself that ultimately makes salvation actual for man. For this reason, holds Kitamori, faith cannot be considered "a ticket for exchange of which one receives his ration." In keeping with the essence of the Pain of God itself, "faith is given equally to all men."¹¹⁸ Since the Pain of God is the very love of God to those who even say they cannot believe, it is impossible for them to remain in their

¹¹⁵*Logic*, 42.

¹¹⁶*Ibid.*

¹¹⁷*Ibid.*, 43.

¹¹⁸*Ibid.*, 44.

unbelief.¹¹⁹ For they are already embraced by the Pain of God!

Kitamori conceives of faith in its dual aspect: on the one hand it is a subjective act and on the other a gift of God. In putting forward this concept he stands in the doctrinal tradition of Protestantism. We can see here a theoretical paradox in the nature of faith: God's sovereign gift and man's "free" act of faith at one and the same time. Kitamori for his own part strongly underlines that though a gift of God faith never loses "the character of the subject's spontaneous decision."¹²⁰ Faith is a spontaneous act, holds Kitamori, because "salvation [by faith] is concerned with the problem of love through and through."¹²¹ In his definition, love never knows coercion. Faith, as a spontaneous response to salvific love--the Pain of God, can include in itself unbelief, against which we have to struggle.¹²² This means, says Kitamori, that in us there ever remains the "possibility of stumbling." Even in faith, we sinners can deny the Pain of God. However, the Pain of God already embraces this possibility, holds Kitamori, and for that very reason the triumphant love of God still remains as the Pain of God.¹²³

In view of this spontaneous character of faith,¹²⁴ how can Kitamori

¹¹⁹Ibid.

¹²⁰Ibid.

¹²¹Ibid.

¹²²Ibid.

¹²³Ibid., 45.

¹²⁴Ibid., 44.

maintain the absoluteness of the Pain of God? How can he ascribe irresistibility to the Pain of God? Involved are two issues which need to be taken up here.

One issue is whether his assertion of the absoluteness and irresistibility of the Pain of God is already defeated by his own strong insistence on love's spontaneity. In this regard (and in general), Kitamori does not work with the doctrine of predestination. In fact, the idea of predestination is incompatible with his idea of love as the basis for his theological work. There seems therefore to be a logical as well as material contradiction here. Logically, freedom and irresistibility are at odds with each other. Materially, love in Kitamori's own definition must be resistible. Love denies coercion as well as irresistibility. Actually, we can resist the love of God, as Kitamori also admits.

The other issue is whether the Pain of God as divine love "outrunning" man's constant denial is tenable in our reality, a reality where there are many cases of defiance of the love of God. In Kitamori's own argument, the objective reality of the Pain of God would be of little help unless one grasps it in faith. If man can infinitely continue to resist the Pain of God by his will, then the irresistible victory of the Pain of God will not be actualized and mean little. For not willing to know of the Pain of God is the same as being under the wrath of God, even if the Pain of God objectively should be a salvific love.

Dealing with these two issues, we are seriously concerned about Kitamori's claim that the Pain of God is an irresistible love. In our view, this irresistibility of divine love cannot be postulated objectively and universally. It is meaningless simply

because love is resistible. In fact, when the "irresistibility of grace" is spoken of-- just as in case of predestination, it is as confession of faith. And a confession of faith cannot be objective and universal; it is a recognition of faith gained from personal commitment to the living Person.

In Kitamori's thought, man's redemption by the Pain of God is an objective reality. For man to be saved is to know this fact of salvation through faith. Faith, in Kitamori's thought, is to know the Pain of God. Once known, the Pain of God is the power to overcome sinners' rebellion.

We now examine Kitamori's idea of redemption. As an interesting feature of Kitamori's soteriology we mention his very reserved use of the concept of *justification*. It is therefore meaningful to see his view of redemption against the Reformation's *justificatio sola fide*. Except for his study on Luther's doctrine of justification, we do not come across this term very often in Kitamori's work.¹²⁵ Of course, we do not have to take this as a sign that the substance of the doctrine of justification is absent in Kitamori's thought. Particularly in an indigenous theology, traditional terms can be replaced with more familiar ones in the language in which the indigenous theology is formulated. As a matter of fact, Kitamori, like Luther, equates justification with forgiveness of sin.¹²⁶ Our question is then: Does this lack of the term "justification" indicate Kitamori's independent understanding of this doctrine, or does he replace the term with a more adequate one while retaining its substance?

¹²⁵See *Reformation*, 78-145.

¹²⁶See note 109 above.

When we in Protestant theology speak of justification by faith, we could discuss a wide spectrum of dogmatic issues. But we admittedly cannot pursue it here at any great length. We want only to take up the basic issue of justification by faith, namely that man is constantly justified by his exercise of faith.¹²⁷ In view of this, justification is not something "habitual" in the believer. To be justified before God is a constant movement of faith grasping the assurance of God's acceptance for the sake of Christ. Justification cannot be a state guaranteed by an objective salvific reality. It is not something objectively given as *securitas*. In the believer's existential situation, one is always driven to seek justification *coram Deo* through faith. In this connection faith as *fiducia* becomes meaningful, because with this trust one can grasp the promise of acceptance because of Christ. Through faith as *fiducia* a believer is granted *certitudo* even though he constantly knows that his sinful inclination is to live by his own resources rather than to live in God's justification in Christ. It is this experience of one's sinfulness that constantly drives the believer into *Anfechtung* and compels him to seek refuge in *justification sola fide*. Justification is not something settled once for all in the believer's life; it is the believer's mode of existence under the dialectic of Law and Gospel.

In light of this concept of justification by faith, we recognize that to

¹²⁷See faith's character of *Anfechtung*, Carl Heinz Ratschow, *Der an angefochtene Glaube* (Gütersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1967), particularly 233-294; Chitose Kishi, *Luther's Theological Thought in His Lectures on Hebrews* (Tokyo: Seibunsha, 1961), 191-208.

Kitamori justification as forgiveness of sins is a "settled" issue.¹²⁸ The Pain of God is already the absolute, most comprehensive and universal reality which embraces a most unembraceable world. This view of Kitamori accounts for the fact that there is virtually no substantial reference, in his *opus magnum* (or other main works), of such *loci classici* of justification by faith such as Rom. 1:17, 3:24, 3:28, Gal. 2:16, 3:6-7, 3:24. Perhaps Rom. 5:1 is the only Scriptural verse of this sort in his *opus magnum* which Kitamori uses in his discussion on *Deus absconditus*. In this verse we read: "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Commenting on this verse, Kitamori writes: "Here Paul is saying that though he was once the object of the real wrath of God, now he is no longer so, and he has now obtained peace with God since Jesus Christ bore the real wrath for him and overcame it."¹²⁹ We note the last clause beginning with "since. . ."

Justification is understood as Christ overcoming the wrath of God. We see now that Kitamori has interpreted justification as the Pain of God embracing the sinner.

Justification as *certitudo* to be obtained through the daily exercise of faith is foreign to Kitamori concept. The Pain of God is absolute salvation, which knows little of *tentatio*.¹³⁰

¹²⁸This can be seen as closely related to his concept of the Pain of God as a contradictory unity of wrath and love or Law and Gospel, which is a dialectic in God and not vis-a-vis us.

¹²⁹*Pain*, 111.

¹³⁰To my knowledge Kitamori does not discuss the problem of *Anfechtung* in Christian faith. We understand this particular trait of Kitamori well when we consider what causes *Anfechtung* in the believer's life. Luther says: "Es muß *Anfechtung* sein: entweder widerfährt dir Krankheit des Leibes oder deine Kinder sterben, daß du sagen möchtest 'ich wollt, du warst im ersten Bad gestorben', oder dein Weib ist dir untreu oder anderes Unglück geschieht, so daß du denkst, Gott sei von dir gewichen"

The Pain of God is salvific love, which now embraces the unembraceable fallen reality of man just as it is. The wrath of God is a constant reality as the reaction to human sin; but the Pain of God constantly bears this wrath upon itself, the wrath which should have fallen upon man. Redemption is universal and absolute. The world is under the Pain of God, Pain which only waits to be recognized and received as the all-victorious love of God.

Does this mean, then, that everything is harmonious with this all-embracing love of God called the Pain of God? In the theology of the Pain of God, what do we then do with the *remaining* problems, sins in ourselves, miseries, suffering, and meaninglessness in the lives of Christians as well as in the world at large?

Existence in the Pain of God

In an essay on Buddhism written by Kitamori, he quotes the well-known Zen scholar Daisetsu T. Suzuki as saying that the Absolute in the East, "like a mother, unconditionally embraces all and does not say whether one is good or the other evil."¹³¹ According to Kitamori, this saying was made in view of Christianity,

(quoted in Ratschow, 234). In addition to these things which belong to "das gemein creutz," one sees his own existence under God's law which accuses him before God. In Kitamori, both elements are, so to speak, "neutralized" by the Pain of God; as to the former, sufferings in this world are made meaningful as a witness to the Pain of God, and as to the latter, the tension between God's wrath and love is transposed into the inner divine sphere. Although he speaks of the struggle of faith (*Logic*, 44-45; *God*, 118-119.), his conviction of God's absolute embracement *a priori* excludes the dimension of true *Anfechtung* of faith.

¹³¹Kitamori, *Japanese Heart and Christianity* (Tokyo: Yomiuri Shinbun Sha, 1973), 26.

especially concerning its "legalistic" overtone.¹³² Discussing this "critique" of Suzuki, Kitamori defends Christianity with his idea of the Pain of God which embraces all sinners while maintaining the righteousness of the law.¹³³ But, in turn, Kitamori criticizes this Zen scholar's saying as "a typical conservatism maintaining status quo."¹³⁴ Kitamori, in this essay, wants to advance his view that in true evangelical Christianity, that is, the Gospel of the Pain of God, one does full justice to the religious concern in the East and to the Christian notion of the Father who embraces all men while maintaining His righteousness intact.

In Kitamori's view, a conservatism which only affirms the status quo, whether religious or ethical, is impossible according to the character of the Pain of God. In other words, Kitamori underlines a strong ethical motif and Ansatz in his theology. Above we saw the dialectic movement of the divine love in Kitamori's thought; the immediate love of God has turned into the wrath of God, then the love of God which bears upon itself the wrath of God is the Pain of God, and lastly the love of God based upon the Pain of God is the divine love triumphant. We also recall that this dialectic movement is not a linear development of divine love. It is at the same time the simultaneous coexistence of the divine love in three orders. The "field" of this coexistence is then the Pain of God. This means that the Pain of God possesses a dual significance in this dialectic of divine love. That is, in addition to its being the

¹³²Ibid., 27.

¹³³Ibid., 32.

¹³⁴Ibid.

field of this coexistence of wrath, Pain and love, the Pain of God is divine love of the second order. For the following presentation, we here again pay particular attention to this concept--the "structure" of divine love in Kitamori's thought.

"The true essence of the pain of God," writes Kitamori, "is to be found when it develops directly into a love that is rooted in his pain."¹³⁵ This underlining of the development of the Pain of God is almost ubiquitous in Kitamori's writing. "The Pain of God is immediately the 'love' of God," he says also elsewhere."¹³⁶ Kitamori also emphasizes the renovative power of the Pain of God using abstract concepts: "The Ultimate and most Concrete [that is, God in Pain] is the Being who accepts and embraces all our contradictions and, at the same time, encourages us to wrestle with the contradictions for their concrete solutions."¹³⁷

From the above observation we recognize that Kitamori is deeply concerned with the power of the Pain of God for the ethical renewal of man. As a matter of fact, this emphasis on the renovating power of the Pain of God is understandable when we consider Kitamori's concept of the triumphant Pain of God. This Pain of God must demonstrate its triumphant power in sinners.¹³⁸ This strong concern can be

¹³⁵*Pain*, 93; here the word "nature" in Pain is replaced with "essence" due to Kitamori's distinction between nature and essence.

¹³⁶*Cross*, 42.

¹³⁷*Contemporary Man*, 269; this formula is in fact Kitamori's synthesis of the viewpoints of his teachers in philosophy, Nishida and Tanabe. Theology embraces philosophy as well in Kitamori's thought.

¹³⁸We recall Kitamori's scheme of the development of divine love: wrath, pain and love. In Kitamori's thought, the effect of the Pain of God necessarily becomes manifest in the actual life of man: "The love of God by itself is a truth separate from

clearly seen in his way of dealing with the doctrine of justification. In his *Theology of the Reformation* Kitamori discusses Luther's theology as well as Calvin's.¹³⁹ In this work he tries to understand the two Reformers' respective theologies in the light of his own theology of the Pain of God. One of the major concerns in this work is the problem of justification and sanctification, or faith and works. In dealing with Luther's doctrine of justification, Kitamori approaches this central issue of the Reformation under the subtitle of "Justification and Sanctification."¹⁴⁰ As for Calvin's theology, Kitamori is mainly concerned with the Genevan reformer's recognition, in Kitamori's view, of the "theological axiom" of "*sola fide*" wherein the "theological reality" of "*fides et opera*" finds itself.¹⁴¹

the Pain of God, but it points to the truth of the Pain of God and confirms it; . . . the Pain of God itself is victory [over the power of sin], but the victory is still not actual but potentially so; because it is still potential, the Pain of God can not be received as the truth; it is then the love that actualizes the truth of the Pain of God and confirms it," (*Logic*, 56-57). This indicates that unless the Pain of God becomes manifest in love, its truth is not established in actual reality. In other words, it requires empirical confirmation.

¹³⁹See note 125 above.

¹⁴⁰*Reformation*, 78.

¹⁴¹*Ibid.*, 195. It is helpful toward the understanding of Kitamori's theology to note his way of grasping the central problem of Reformation theology. Kitamori interprets both Luther and Calvin from the viewpoint of a synthesis between faith and works. His dialectic of "axiom and reality" represents the same issue: *fides et opera*. In his view, "Luther is strong in 'axiom' while not sufficiently strong in 'reality,' whereas Calvin was strong in 'reality' while his view is not so clear in 'axiom'" (*Auto II*, 225-226). In other words, Luther is strong in "faith alone," while Calvin is strong in love. This means that "Lutheranism should learn the aspect of 'reality,' whereas Calvinism the aspect of 'axiom'" (*ibid.*, 226). Underneath this argument, we notice a conceptual presupposition which we think is significant, namely that, in Kitamori, faith first is *separated* from work and then the two are synthesized again as a conceptual unity. This presupposes that "faith alone" ('axiom') is "not enough" but is

Particularly significant is Kitamori's approach to Luther's doctrine of justification.¹⁴² First, Kitamori establishes the pivotal significance of this doctrine in the Reformer's theology, referring to the Smalcald Articles. Then, he takes up the Counter-Reformation document of Tridentinum to examine the Catholic position on the doctrine of justification. He concludes that the ultimate problem of Catholicism [seen from Protestant viewpoint] comes to a clear expression in its assertion that justification includes not only the forgiveness of sin but also sanctification, which is understood as a "substantial change" in the justified. As for Luther's doctrine of justification, according to Kitamori, it is more complicated than the current interpretation of the Reformer's thought, in which sanctification is simply separated from justification; Luther, to Kitamori, has understood justification as including both the forgiveness of sin and sanctification. Admittedly, here we are not concerned with the question of the objective tenability of Kitamori's interpretation of Luther.¹⁴³ Our intention is only to

to be completed by love ("reality"). Does he not here mean the very concept of *fides formata caritate*, against which Luther waged a death-struggle? See note 56 in Chap. IV above. Luther's concept of faith is different from Kitamori's concept of faith which, as the 'axiom,' is to constitute a dialectical unity with the "reality." Luther's well-known preface to *Lectures on Romans* speaks of the dynamic character of faith, in which faith is characterized: "O es ist eyn lebendig, scheffig, thettig, mechtig ding umb den glauben, das unmöglich ist, das er nicht on unterlas solt gutts wircken, usw" (WA, Bible, 7, 9:30-10:23).

¹⁴²*Reformation*, 78-80.

¹⁴³Kitamori claims that in Luther's thought faith and works are separate things also to the Reformer, and constitute a dialectic unity. Faith in Luther's thought, as we saw in Note 141 above, is a God-given dynamic reality which involves the whole existence and work of man and therefore cannot be separated from it. Kitamori first separates it into two different things and again synthesizes to a unity. This conceptual operation alone calls for Occam's razor. More serious, however is the danger of transforming faith into something that only belongs to the inner sphere of man.

grasp *his* understanding of the problem of Reformation theology. On the basis of what we briefly presented above, Kitamori says: "Thus understood, the problem of Reformation theology is, after all, concerned with the relationship between justification and sanctification, or, in other words, with the question of how to relate sanctification in salvation [justification(?)]."¹⁴⁴ We note from this quotation that the question of sanctification in salvation is Kitamori's own concern in his theology of the Pain of God. We discern that salvation in the sense of *remissio peccatorum* is a settled issue in Kitamori; justification (if we may still use this term in Kitamori's theology) is already an accomplished work in God. It naturally follows that Kitamori's attention is now directed to the question of how the believers who have already been brought into the Pain of God shape their lives in this reality. The Christian existence in the Pain of God is now considered on the basis of this theological understanding of the accomplished "justification."

Kitamori's understanding of the believers' existence in the Pain of God can be understood from two perspectives: one is an ethic based on the Pain of God; the other is the service to the Pain of God, which is their witness to the Pain of God in the world or the "evangelistic ministry" of the believers. We shall take up these issues below.

Since the Pain of God in its essence develops into the triumphant love of God of the third order, it is logical for Kitamori to see that "the true nature of the

¹⁴⁴*Reformation*, 93.

ethic of pain must be an ethic of love rooted in pain."¹⁴⁵ Ethics in the evangelical faith is thus ethics based upon the Pain of God. But what does this "ethic rooted in the Pain of God" mean? Since the Pain of God is another name for the Gospel in Kitamori's thought, we formally designate his ethical thinking as based on the Gospel. In the section "the Pain of God and Ethic" in his *opus magnum*, he writes, "it is our evangelical understanding that the power of sanctification is contained in forgiveness, and one is sanctified because of forgiveness."¹⁴⁶

We now examine Kitamori's view of sanctification. He pictures substantial change for the sinner, saying: "By the power of love rooted in the pain of God even real sinners may be changed into lovable people, people who are actually good."¹⁴⁷ (Certainly, Kitamori is aware of the incompleteness of this "change" in this life, and it is for this very reason that even the triumphant love rooted in the Pain of God still finds itself in the Pain of God, which embraces the unembraceable.¹⁴⁸) One will then ask: What is this sanctified "lovable people," theologically speaking? What does Kitamori mean when he says "actually good people?" Does he speak of these things in a common-sense meaning, that Christians by and large are better people than non-Christians? If so, Kitamori's view would be less problematic, though quite nonsensical. But, if he speaks in the language of theology, one would say that

¹⁴⁵*Pain*, 93-94.

¹⁴⁶*Itami*, 142 (*Pain*, 94).

¹⁴⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸*Pain*, 95.

Kitamori operates quite superficially. Nevertheless, this facile statement gives us a clue to understanding his ethical thinking.

"The love for the unlovable [the Pain of God]," says Kitamori, "when it carries its effects through, manifests its power of transforming the unlovable into the *lovable*."¹⁴⁹ It is true, we hold, that the Gospel has the power of renewing the old Adam into the image of the new Adam. But this remains a formal statement; no tangible content can be described because sanctification is paradoxical in nature. For the more sanctified one is, the less he knows of his sanctified state and the more he recognizes his true sinfulness, sinfulness which remains *vera peccata* before God.¹⁵⁰ Kitamori, however, seems to advance the view that the Pain of God provides the power of sanctification for the sinner, a kind of sanctification which is empirically "registerable."

Now we recognize that in his dealing with ethics Kitamori argues from his basic idea of love, from the position we have termed "love-ism." We remember that his concept of love is of a "human, all too human" nature. In other words, Kitamori's basic stratum of thought pertaining to love is centered upon that of *eros*.¹⁵¹ *Eros* is

¹⁴⁹*Itami*, 142 (*Pain*, 94): " 真実の罪人も神の痛みに基礎づけられし愛の力によって、ついには愛すべき罪人、実質的に善き者と化せしめられるであろう."
Cf. *Logic*, 69.

¹⁵⁰Egil Grislis, "Luther on Sanctification: Humility and Courage," *Conseusus* 9 (January 1983), 3-16.

¹⁵¹With this issue we shall deal shortly. *Eros* is a kind of love which is "dependent on value," a "natural" love not knowing any pain. God's love in the first order in Kitamori's thought is this kind of love, which he calls "God's love in law." We quote a passage Kitamori writes in connection with the possibility of a true ethic: "Man's natural love is an impure love, and as such it cannot build a true ethic,

the basic ingredient. The divine love is also described in terms of the dialectic of *eros* and *agape* with the former as the basic driving force.¹⁵²

Here in this connection, it becomes clearer to us that the category of "value" seems to be intrinsic to his theology of the Pain of God. It may be worthwhile to pursue this point further.

The category of "value" is comprehensive and profound. Although it is not possible to go into an analysis of it of any length, we recognize the basic importance of this category. We need this category in our appreciation of our being. Our very existence, in the Christian faith at least, has its inestimable value because it is given by God. Love is the basic value in our life. We appreciate nature around us and all the spiritual and physical blessings as invaluable and indispensable. Tradition and culture, civilization and technology are of indispensable value.

Here we shall limit our discussion to the category of value as found in the concept of *eros*. *Eros* is, as Kitamori says elsewhere, the love dependent on the

because it is a love dependent on the value of its object. This impure love--that is, sin --is provoked by the mediation of the law (Rom. 7:8). Why is it so? It is because the law says that God loves those who fulfill [the commandments of] the law. What this is saying is nothing but that God's love in the law is dependent on value" (Kitamori, "The Inevitability of the Reformation--In View of Ethics," Kazu Yamamoto, ed., *Protestant Ethics in the Present Era* [Tokyo: Sobunsha, 1959], 32).

¹⁵²*Agape* does not simply contradict *eros*. *Agape* is *agape* because it abandons the *eros* intrinsic in it. The *agape* of the Father became manifest when He abandoned His beloved Son. For the Father, His only begotten Son is the fountainhead of His Happiness. By abandoning the most valuable Being (the Son), God actually became the God of *agape*. This is the reason why I [Kitamori] hold that *agape* is not simply a transparent love but the Pain of God" (*Introduction to Bible*, 153-154). See also *Literature*, 201-202.

values of its object.¹⁵³ Once the values disappear from *eros*' object, *eros* also disappears, however intense it may have been. The category of value is of constitutive significance to *eros*. In the case of Kitamori, however, *eros* is not as "bad" as might be characterized by Anders Nygren.¹⁵⁴ According to Kitamori, it is a natural love which most clearly manifests the intrinsic nature of love, immediate, intense, flowing like a water from the higher place downward.¹⁵⁵ The very love the Father has toward the Son, for Kitamori, is love of this nature.¹⁵⁶ In short, it is the love with the basic characteristics of *eros*, an "erotic" love, as it were.

We can illustrate this aspect of Kitamori's thought by the concept of the Pain of God in the following way. We saw above that the Pain of God has occurred, on the one hand, because God has loved those of "minus value." God's love cannot be a "single-minded" love because humanity is not worthy of God's love due to the ugliness of man. Just as in ordinary human experience, God must make an effort in order to love the detestable. When this love of God loves us (in spite of our "minus value") with the strenuous efforts of His Pain, it implicitly presupposes God's judging our value. This value judgment is of the same nature as ours. Put differently, God

¹⁵³See note 152 above.

¹⁵⁴*Pain*, 94-95.

¹⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 118, 122.

¹⁵⁶Speaking of the three orders of divine love, Kitamori discusses the love of the first order [the value-dependent love]: "The object of this love [of the first order] is the person worthy of receiving it. This immediate 'love of God' is expressed in the father-son relationship when God the Father loves his completely obedient son. We must consider such a Son, who deserves his Father's love, as none other than God the son, Jesus Christ" (*ibid.*, 117). See also note 152 above.

basically operates with the same value category as humanity. Only on the basis of this value category can we understand why God must go through Pain when God loves the unlovable. It is painful to love those who are unlovable!

Another aspect of the Pain of God is that it occurred when the Father gave up His Son unto death for sinners. In this case, the Pain of God means that the Father has abandoned the unabandonable, His only Son, "the fountain of his joy and happiness."¹⁵⁷ This is a real sacrifice on the part of God, because the Father has abandoned the Son, a Being most precious to Him."¹⁵⁸ Admittedly, these viewpoints involve many problematic issues; the most serious one would be Kitamori's "psychologization" of God's inner consciousness, a highly debatable operation indeed. But our concern here is limited to calling attention to the fact that such a "value" category as is found in *eros* is the main ingredient of Kitamori's version of a theology of love.

Before we go further, we need to see Kitamori's position in a different light. It is a basic self-recognition of the believer in the Protestant faith that he is totally valueless in and of himself; he is nothing before God. This had to be true, even if man had never fallen and never been the sinner. We are never "valuable" by our own

¹⁵⁷*Introduction to Bible*, 153.

¹⁵⁸We see here a synthesis of *agape* and *eros* in Kitamori's thought, which is now the Pain of God. It is true that also in Kitamori God's love as *agape* is an unconditional love toward man, but this *agape* as an "unconditional" love is not a natural one, "not from the beginning," as it were; but it is a "processed" love. The conditionality of love is overcome already in God, in His Pain. Concern here is whether or not one is disturbed by this idea that God makes psychological efforts to love us, because of our unworthiness before His sight.

right; because we are God's creatures, our existence is totally dependent on God's mercy. The fall is nothing but man's attempt to secure his own value by his own right. But when we are actually sinners with a bottomless abyss in ourselves, this truth applies to us all the more. In this sense, Kitamori rightly emphasizes our ugliness, detestableness and unlovableness. In fact, in terms of ethical values, we remain so even after we are justified and even "sanctified." But, on the other hand, we are told that God loved us so deeply that He even gave Himself for our sake in the Son. It means, as we understand it, that we are "valuable" in His sight despite our deep sinfulness and rebellious nature. This is an evangelical comfort which a sinner, deeply acknowledging his unworthiness, may receive from God the Creator and the Redeemer in all humility. Man is not at all worthy in his own right before God either religiously or ethically, but he is truly worthy of God's love, because he is God's creature; he is given a value, an ontological value, as we may call it. We understand this as the nature of divine *agape*.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁹Seiichi Hatano, who also inspired Kitamori, discusses the nature of *agape* in his *Time and Eternity*. Admitting that our love in actual reality cannot transcend the character of *eros*, Hatano sees that *agape* helps *eros* transcend its limits. Then he characterizes the nature of *agape* as follows: "In contrast [to the limitations of *eros*] the first characteristic of *agape* consists in the fact that it unconditionally makes the [benefit of] other [human beings] its own principle [of being], transcending the mediating limiting principle [of *eros*]. Seen from the subject [of *agape*], it has nothing to accomplish [for its own sake by loving] nor must anything necessitate [its loving from outside]; seen from the other [to be love in *agape*], [all concerns for] *the quality or qualification and all the value concept* [in the person to be loved] *are completely overcome*" (in *The Complete works of Seiichi Hatano*: vol. 4, Takenosuke Miyamoto et al. eds. [Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1969], 427; emphasis mine).

"A true ethic," writes Kitamori, "is possible only when love is *intense*."¹⁶⁰ The term "intense" is a key word in Kitamori's ethical thinking. This term denotes the intensity of love, but in addition to this it also connotes the genuineness of love. The commandment "Love your neighbor as yourself" affirms, says Kitamori, the *intensity* of self-love, not self-love itself. The basic issue in Kitamori's ethical thought is that our love for our neighbors must be intense and genuine. Thus, he reads the commandment of love: "You shall love your neighbor as intensely as you love yourself."¹⁶¹ "Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep" (Rom. 12:15) is another Scriptural basis for Kitamori's ethical thinking. The intensity and genuineness of love find its expression when one rejoices and weeps in solidarity with those rejoicing and weeping.¹⁶²

Conceiving his ethical ideas during "the days of pain," Kitamori naturally identifies his theology also as an ethic of Pain. When sorrows and pains are predominant, ethics must become the ethic of pain. This ethic consists of a genuine solidarity with those who are in pain and sorrow.¹⁶³ In other words, love, in solidarity with those who weep, must be as genuine and intense as if the neighbor's pain and sorrow were one's own. If, with "a pained appearance" and a pretension of sympathy "with our neighbor's pain," "we actually only want to stare curiously at him

¹⁶⁰*Pain*, 85.

¹⁶¹*Ibid.*

¹⁶²*Ibid.*

¹⁶³*Ibid.*

pain," it surely is a sin "worthy of death."¹⁶⁴

Kitamori's orientation is toward an individual ethic, and belongs to the so-called "Gesinnungsethik," in which the individual's inner quality is of central concern. Love in genuineness, purity and intensity in the individual's ethical consciousness is the scope of Kitamori's idea of ethics. To him, one of the tasks of ethical thinking is finding out how to restore love to its proper intensity and genuineness. Thus, in keeping with his doctrine of sin, or the fundamental disorder of man's existence, "love's disorder," Kitamori posits that the goal of ethics is the restoration of love in the man who is allowed to enter into the Pain of God.¹⁶⁵

Following Karl Holl's interpretation of Luther in his *"Der Neubau der Sittlichkeit"*, Kitamori sees the realization of a true ethic is found in the dialectic movement, a movement of the initial ego-centered, natural "*Gewolltes*" through the "*Gesolltes*" to the final "*Gewolltes*" in which the natural inclination of human will and the objective ethical demand find their synthesis.¹⁶⁶ In Kitamori's view, there is a development of this ethical concept (though not following a temporal sequence) which can be traced from Augustine through Kant to Luther.¹⁶⁷ Translated into Kitamori's category of love, *eros* love ("*Gewolltes*") is to be elevated by the Pain of God ("*Gesolltes*") to *agape* love ("*Gewolltes*"). On this final stage, *agape* love is a

¹⁶⁴Ibid., 85-86.

¹⁶⁵"The core of ethics," writes Kitamori, "consists in pure love [純粹な愛]," (Yamamoto, *Protestant Ethics*, 19).

¹⁶⁶Ibid. 97.

¹⁶⁷Ibid.

synthesis of "*Wollen*" and "*Sollen*" with genuineness and intensity--the true nature of love. Our "ethical imperative" is fulfilled in this higher order of the *Gewolltes* of love.

Kitamori's ethic is a strongly individualistic ethic. Does this then mean that he has no scope for social ethics from the viewpoint of the Pain of God? Not at all. Yoshio Noro, a former student of Kitamori, informs us that Kitamori was a theologian who more than anyone else pointed out the Church's responsibility to social and political issues.¹⁶⁸ As a matter of fact, Kitamori often speaks of socio-ethical issues in his earlier writings. The Pain of God is not a partial truth; rather, it is the truth embracing the complete reality of man, including also social reality. Once before he spoke of the nation of Japan as "a collective neighbor," indicating his concern for the nation.¹⁶⁹

Kitamori also theologically grounds the socio-ethical commitment in his concept of the Pain of God. His argumentation for ethics based on the Pain of God

¹⁶⁸"Against this tendency of the church to isolate herself from the contemporary social and political matters, Professor Kitamori points out that, if the church wishes to be the witness to the love of God, she has to extend herself outward in order to fight, forgive and embrace man's disobedience to God which is the real problem of social and political matters" (Noro, *Impassibilitas*, 87).

¹⁶⁹Looking back to the nation of Japan during the war, Kitamori reflects on the relationship between Christians and the nation: "The nation as a worldly order belongs to the sphere of darkness, an institution breaking the order of creation; I could not find a good side to our nation. The most clear evidence of this was that she was waging war and going along the way of destruction and tribulation. But was it then sufficient for the Christians only to curse the nation and pronounce its destruction? Is it not possible for us to conceive of the nation as 'a collective neighbor' and therefore as the object of the Christians' love? Or is it totally impossible for the Christians to have patriotic love? (*Auto II*, 179).

runs as follows: the salvation given to us in the Pain of God bears the character of pain; in other words, the Pain of God involves a "radical contradiction" within itself. "Since the completeness [of salvation] is based upon the Pain of God," warns Kitamori, "it never allows him [the believer] to sit in a [*laissez-faire*] affirmation of the status quo [of social injustice]."¹⁷⁰ "The hearts of [those who believe in this] salvation" know in themselves a sincere desire to ameliorate and remove concrete contradictions in society at large."¹⁷¹ The Pain of God necessarily develops into a love which conquers contradictions in human reality. "This love," says Kitamori, "is the principle that works for the change of current situations."¹⁷² Man's love, energized by the love of God in Pain, mobilizes him to change the social status quo into a better condition. In social practice, advises Kitamori, the believers must learn shrewdness from the children of this world in order for their efforts in society at large to be effective.¹⁷³ Thus, in the believer's concrete ethical life, the Pain of God provides the basic motor for socio-ethical efforts, whereas practical measures for their effectivity need to be learned and thought out concretely.

Kitamori's theological reflection on ethics does not go beyond this principle. In other words, he has no specific social ethics on the basis of his theology. We understand this from his orientation in idealistic ethics, and even more from the very

¹⁷⁰*Logic*, 61.

¹⁷¹*Ibid.*

¹⁷²*Ibid.*, 62.

¹⁷³*Ibid.*, 63.

nature of his theology.¹⁷⁴ This leads us then to speculate whether Kitamori's assertion of the church's socio-ethical responsibility really contains a formative force in it,¹⁷⁵ since in order for his theology to have a formative force, the assertion needs to be specified and applied theologically.¹⁷⁶

Above we pointed out that in Kitamori's thought the order of creation does

¹⁷⁴Because Kitamori is concerned with the restoration of the purity of love in the subject and confines his ethical reflection as a *Christian* theologian to the level of *Gesinnung*, it is only natural for him not to have a specific Christian social ethic. What this does entail is clear: concrete ethical measures largely tend to be taken from worldly practice. This in itself is not questionable, but does become questionable when one loses the sight of the "sharp" edge of the divine commandments which should urge the Christians to speak out for love and justice. In addition to this, we have to say that, being justified by faith, the purity of our inner disposition should be "immaterial." One is reminded of Luther's bold words to Melancton: *Pecca fortiter, sed fortius fide!*

¹⁷⁵Noro, who informs us that Kitamori was a theologian most sensitive to socio-ethical matters in his years at seminary, in the same dissertation, reflects on his previous remark: "Although I wrote that he is different from other Japanese theologians . . . , he does not give us in his theology the power to fight evils in our political and social life. His theology gives us the impression that we should rather stay in the pain caused by these evils" ("Impassibilitas," 99).

¹⁷⁶We have remarked above that Kitamori's ethical thinking is focused on the purity of the disposition of an individual ethical subject. This ethical orientation in the direction of *Gesinnungsethik* is more akin to the traditional Japanese judgement of ethical conduct. If the motive of an individual in his action is pure, the action can be pardonable even when it is objectively breaking an established law or results in an irresponsible action. The Lutheran ethics is contrary to this type of "ethics of disposition." The following word of Dietrich Bonhoeffer can be a critique to Kitamori's ethical thinking: "Whoever wishes to take up the problem of a Christian ethic must be confronted at once with a demand which is quite without parallel. He must from the outset discard as irrelevant the two questions which alone impel him to concern himself with the problem of ethics, 'How can I be good?' and 'How can I do good?', and instead of these he must ask the utterly and totally different question 'What is the will of God?'" (Eberhard Bethge, ed., *Ethics*, tr. N. H. Smith [London: Collins Clear-Type Press, 1968], 188). It is suggestive that Bonhoeffer's ethical concept has been one of the major socio-ethical resources in the post-war Japanese Protestantism, particularly in the Kyodan (cf. Chap. 2, 45-46, above).

not have its own positive meaning, lying in the shadow of the order of redemption. *Creatio continua* is totally missing from Kitamori's theology. This fact pertains to the formulation of theological ethics in that his theology is formalistic and passive. In other words, the theology of the Pain of God is less than conducive to a positive formulation of Christian social ethics. One of the reasons for this is to be sought in the fact that in Kitamori's theology the use of the Law has no significant place, not only its *usus civilis* but also *usus spiritualis*.¹⁷⁷ We can see this in his understanding of the Law in particular. It is reduced to the category of love in his love-ism. He says for instance: "Law is, in short, the will of God which loves only the lovable."¹⁷⁸ An ethic based upon the Gospel alone (as is the case in Kitamori) is bound to be limited in its scope.¹⁷⁹ When Kitamori reduces all the theological issues into the category of love in his love-ism, its effect is most visible in the narrowing of the ethical scope.

¹⁷⁷To my knowledge there is no passage in Kitamori's writing which deals with the traditional understanding of the Law's preserving function in the fallen world. This is an expression of God's love which, while accusing and preserving, leads to the encounter with the Gospel. Since Kitamori sees the fallen reality lying outside even the preserving love of God and under the wrath--divine love betrayed, it is logical for Kitamori not to have any "positive" idea of the Law. One may suspect that this absolute antithesis between the wrath and the love of God is something which is required by the iron-firm scheme of thesis-antithesis-synthesis in his theology.

¹⁷⁸*Pain*, 91.

¹⁷⁹When Kitamori conceives of the Gospel solely in the category of love--in his narrower, personalistic sense, it is natural for him to interpret the Gospel as the restoration of this love. To him, the Gospel alone realizes a true ethic, and the content of this realization of a true ethic is, as we saw, the purification of love. This internalization of ethics inevitably narrows the scopes of ethics. The Gospel cannot be the content of ethics in this world. Rather, the Gospel supports man's broken ethical existence.

Though obviously concerned with socio-ethical issues, he is hardly a social revolutionary. In dealing with concrete social issues, he is an earth-bound realist. Perhaps it can even be said that he is too realistic. A sophisticated political deftness is acknowledged by Kitamori himself.¹⁸⁰ The rules of play of this world, holds Kitamori, should not be discarded in a puristic naiveté. Tactical insights are needed to achieve designed goals in this world. Behind Kitamori's ethical "realism" we readily recognize his deeply pessimistic view of the fallen world under the wrath of God. The reality of this world is formidable, against which human efforts for its betterment often avail little. In view of this, we can now see that on the one hand Kitamori insists on the necessity of social commitments for the believers, but, on the other hand, he also warns that socio-ethical commitments do not solve the deep problem of human existence.¹⁸¹

Kitamori's sober recognition of reality is surely important. In fact, there is no place for a utopian optimism in this world. In this sense, Kitamori's viewpoint is quite balanced. The question will then be how the theology of the Pain of God locates a relative betterment of reality in its system and how it works this out in its actual practice.

Characteristically, Kitamori sees intercessory prayer as the basic link which

¹⁸⁰Recalling the difficulty to involve Shigehiko Sato in JELC's commitments--Sato was aloof from the "synodical" fellowship, causing a lasting friction within this church body in 1930--, Kitamori says: "It would have been far better if Dr. [J. M. T.] Winther had had higher political skills and could hold Sato in his hands" (*Ruteru*, December, 1971).

¹⁸¹*My Reflection on Life*, 12-13.

relates those who are in the Gospel (the Church) to the "outside" world. "Believers," says Kitamori, "are to seek the most effective possible means of socio-ethical work, and at the same time they must be aware of the existence of the bottomless abyss, [an awful reality] which opens its mouth under the [relative] problems on the surface of reality."¹⁸² It is the Christian's duty to "bring intercessory prayers to the merciful Lord for the forgiveness of the fallenness [of the 'outside' society]."¹⁸³ The fallen world lies under the wrath of God, but, says Kitamori, in the light of the commandment "you shall love your neighbor as yourself," one must include the unbelievers in understanding of the phrase "your neighbor".¹⁸⁴ Unbelievers are borne by the believers and carried by their intercessory prayers into the Pain of God.¹⁸⁵ In this sense, the world is sustained by believers who are already in the Pain of God. In Kitamori's thought, this intercessory praying is the most essential work Christians and the Church should perform for the outside world. In comparison with this, concrete socio-ethical commitments are of only relative significance.¹⁸⁶ Against this background, we now better understand the conservative tendency of Kitamori's socio-ethical thinking.

The human reality betrays an abyss which cannot be controlled by man's ethical

¹⁸²*Logic*, 63.

¹⁸³*Ibid.*

¹⁸⁴*Pain*, 89.

¹⁸⁵*Ibid.*, 90.

¹⁸⁶See Chap. 2, note 77 above.

efforts, the sum total of the abysmal reality is the manifestation of God's wrath.¹⁸⁷

For this reason, Kitamori so strongly emphasizes the believers' intercessory prayers. By regarding intercessory prayer as the ultimate form of the believers' commitment to this fallen world, Kitamori lets us understand more clearly why he does not develop social ethics despite his claim of the socio-ethical impact inherent in the concept of the Pain of God and why he has confined Christian ethics to the realm of individual *Gesinnungsethik*. Even Christian ethics does not avail very much. How then can Christian existence become meaningful in this world if not in ethical sphere?

But in this reality Kitamori sees salvation. Not beyond this reality but in the midst of this reality he finds salvation. What is this salvation? Now, the meaningless reality of suffering is made into the *symbol* of God's suffering in Pain. The deeper a suffering is, the deeper it symbolizes the Pain of God. In a deeply moving tone, Kitamori writes about the sufferings of the Japanese people during World War II. The period was characterized by the popular saying of the time: "Life lasts only

¹⁸⁷In the above we established that in Kitamori's thought there is no more wrath of God in an ontological sense, but at the same time it exists in a phenomenological sense. When we again have to speak of the wrath of God, we understand this in a phenomenological sense. The wrath of God still remains a formidable reality even if it is ontologically overcome. Certainly, it can be questioned whether this circular operation of taking away, and replacing again, the wrath of God contains a theological paradox relating the problem of the suffering of both God and man. Be this as it may, Kitamori also makes the following distinction regarding the reality of the wrath of God vis-a-vis the world: "When man is brought into the Pain of God, the wrath which has been directed to him is resolved [解決された] and his pain healed. But that the love of God has overcome the wrath of God means the overcoming [克服] not the *dissolution* [解消] of the wrath of God; for this reason the love of God must [continually] bear the wrath of God upon itself" (*Character*, 60).

twenty-five years."¹⁸⁸ Hardly any family was without war casualties. At that time Kitamori wrote: "In our time infinitely precious resources [the suffering of the people] have poured into the making of our age to the age of pain."¹⁸⁹ Even if all the efforts of the world turned out to be meaningless, wrote Kitamori, one thing would never become meaningless, the fact that "the world has suffered today as never before."¹⁹⁰ Kitamori should assert this; this could not be left unsaid. The suffering the people experienced was beyond description. How could all the sufferings have any meaning? "It is," Kitamori writes, "because the suffering and pain of the world is the symbol of *God's suffering and pain*."¹⁹¹ Suffering and misery which fall upon man under the wrath of God are now given a profound meaning as they become the symbol of the Pain of God.

It is in this context that Kitamori pronounces with a strong conviction that the Pain of God is "the ultimate truth of salvation and the king of all truth."¹⁹² The truth that God Himself is in Pain for the love of the world, holds Kitamori, would have never been actualized if it were not for the suffering of Japan at that time.¹⁹³ The sufferings then were instrumental to the articulation of the truth of the Pain of

¹⁸⁸*Itami*, 208 (*Pain*, 137).

¹⁸⁹*Pain*, 137.

¹⁹⁰*Itami*, 208-209 (*Pain*, 137).

¹⁹¹*Ibid*, 209 (*ibid.*).

¹⁹²*Ibid.* (*ibid.*)

¹⁹³*Pain*, 137.

God. Thus, even the most meaningless suffering is given meaning, the meaning of serving God who is in Pain. One can readily see that Kitamori is here dealing with the problem of suffering. Surely, he assures us that his primary theological concern is with the Pain of God and not with man's suffering. But in Kitamori's theology the doctrine of God and that of man's salvation are indivisibly interwoven with each other. In Kitamori's thought, theology is soteriology. Soteriology inevitably reflects the deepest concern of man's existence in reality. Thus seen, the theology of the Pain of God is to a great extent motivated by the problem of human suffering, and that of theodicy.¹⁹⁴

According to Kitamori, man's suffering (which by itself is "dark,

¹⁹⁴It is recognizable that this theodicy motif has been latent in Kitamori's theology. However, in view of his earlier writings, he does not seem to have been aware of this himself. Even throughout his career as theologian, he has been convinced that the Pain of God is not anthropologically conditioned. It, to him, is a divine revelation ("we cannot believe the pain of God unless it is his revelation" [Pain, 25]). But three decades later, in connection with his review of a work of Rinzo Shiina (a novelist who became Christian in the early 1950's), Kitamori expresses a clear theodicy motif in his theology. In this work (*Three Accusations*, [published almost simultaneously with Kitamori's *opus magnum*]), Shiina accuses God for His making this world so inexorably dualistic and contradictory: "O, God! [You made two human beings, a male and a female, the creation which, I believe, symbolizes the contradiction in Yourself.] Due to the fact that the expression of Your love is the contradiction of two things, humanity from its very beginning has been trapped in the tragedy of contradiction. In the beginning there was a contradiction. And there will be a contradiction in all eternity" (quoted in Kitamori, *Literature*, 64-65). Kitamori was overwhelmed when he read this work. We understand that the impact this experience had on Kitamori is due to his deep affinity with Shiina. In response to this viewpoint of the novelist, Kitamori writes: "The turning point of this man from God's accuser to His believer is to know that *this accused God is already the executed God*. I intuitively felt then that a man [like Shiina] who accuses God and wants to kill Him is only hair-breadth from [the faith in] 'the Crucified God'" (ibid.; emphasis is mine). Perhaps this response is a clear expression of Kitamori's theodicy motif in his own theology.

meaningless and barren") is brought into the sphere of light when it is allowed to serve as a witness to the Pain of God.¹⁹⁵ By serving as a witness to the truth of the Pain of God, man's pointless suffering is given meaning and, by the same token, its meaninglessness is overcome. Kitamori speaks of the conquering of the meaninglessness of man's suffering as follows:

By serving as witness to the pain of God, our pain is transformed into light; it becomes meaningful and fruitful. By the pain of God which overcomes his wrath, our pain, which had hitherto been the reality of the wrath of God, ends in salvation from this wrath. By serving the pain of God which is the glad news of salvation, our pain ends in sharing this salvation.¹⁹⁶

In this passage Kitamori tries to express his strong conviction that the meaninglessness of man's suffering is overcome through its service as a witness to the Pain of God. How can our suffering witness to the Pain of God? We shall deal with this issue at some length later. This much is to be said here: our suffering makes it possible for us to recognize God's suffering and through our suffering the revelation of the Pain of God becomes actual.¹⁹⁷ Yes, for man to *know* that God is suffering is indeed to win salvation in the midst of his desperate suffering! God also suffers like us! Then, it is not only to give witness to the Pain of God, but also, through his own suffering, man becomes united with God in Pain. *Unio mystica in dolore!*

From the passage quoted above, we realize that to know and to let others know that God is in Pain is salvation itself. Only on the basis of this concept can we

¹⁹⁵*Pain*, 52.

¹⁹⁶*Ibid.*, 52-53.

¹⁹⁷The Pain of God is "a new pronunciation" of "the old words" (*Pain*, 59).

understand Kitamori's idea of overcoming of the meaninglessness of human suffering under the wrath of God. But in order to know more about the nature of the conviction of Kitamori, we need to consider more closely the logic behind it.

But, before a closer examination one specific matter needs to be mentioned: Kitamori's basic idea that the Pain of God must be witnessed through our suffering. When Kitamori says that the truth of the Pain of God would have never become actual if it were not for the mediation of the suffering of the Japanese people, we see the focal point of his basic idea.¹⁹⁸ Already Kitamori's idea of the suffering of man serving as a witness to the Pain of God implicitly indicates the necessity of human suffering in order for the Pain of God to be known. This basic idea is expressed with clarity when Kitamori writes: "The Pain of God must be witnessed. For this purpose man's pain must occur to become the symbol of the Pain of God. In other words, the wrath of God must be made actual. Thus, we come to seek the wrath of God."¹⁹⁹ In Kitamori's view, the Old Testament prophets sought the wrath of God, and even wrath for the sake of wrath. Likewise, we seek the wrath of God, says Kitamori, but, unlike the prophets, we seek it in order that the Pain of God may be witnessed by our

¹⁹⁸*Pain*, 137.

¹⁹⁹*Itami*, 90 (*Pain*, 64). The Pain of God must be witnessed. But the Pain of God cannot be recognized by man immediately. The Pain of God must be witnessed by the pain of man. For this reason, the service [of human pain] is called to be the witness to the Pain of God" *Character*, 56). "In order for the Pain of God to become recognizable, the pain of man must serve as the witness to the Pain of God. Since the Pain of God is the Pain of God, it would remain transcendent and apart from man's recognition if it were not for the witness [through human pain]" (*Logic*, 55).

pain, Kitamori's idea of pain brought forth by the wrath of God.²⁰⁰ Kitamori's idea here is to positively seek the wrath of God and our pain.

Here we encounter a striking idea from Kitamori. Together with his already pronounced concepts of the relationship between the pain of man and the Pain of God, this constitutes a complex of thought with various ideas interwoven with one another. Though complicated, this thought complex is able to reveal the very basic theological concern in Kitamori.

There are four components here. First, the pain of man is the manifestation of the wrath of God. This is a clear concept. Second, the Pain of God occurred in order that it might heal the pain of man, the Pain of God bearing upon itself the wrath of God. "Our God is the One who resolves our pain and the Lord who heals."²⁰¹ We can grasp this idea easily. Now, third, the pain of man is healed when it serves as witness to the Pain of God. Although this thought is not as clear as those preceding, we interpret this as indicating that meaningless sufferings can be made meaningful if they serve the Pain of God. Finally, Kitamori says, as we have just seen, that the pain of man must occur in order to give witness to the Pain of God so that people may know God's Pain as the salvific reality. None of these four ideas are difficult to understand when taken individually.

What is the problem then? Each item, taken by itself, is understandable. When put together, however, their relationship with one another becomes difficult to

²⁰⁰*Itami*, 90 (*Pain*, 64).

²⁰¹*Pain*, 20.

grasp. The problem is as follows: What does Kitamori mean by "healing" when he holds that the Pain of God occurred for the healing of our pain? We raise this question because Kitamori seems to advance an opposite view to this postulate when he strongly insists that our pain must occur to give a witness to the Pain of God. In other words, he seems to be taking away what he gave previously. Or the goal (the healing of man's pain) and the means to the goal (the Pain of God) are made so fluid that the goal becomes the means and vice versa. Put pointedly, the Pain of God, which is said to heal the pain of man, needs the pain of man as a witness to itself; but this witness to the Pain of God is intended to make known to those under the wrath of God the message that the Pain of God heals man's pain. The key to the understanding of this circular thought complex can be found if we ask what Kitamori means by the term "resolving" or "healing" our pain through the Pain of God. This brings us back to the question we raised at the beginning of this paragraph.

When using the terms "resolving" and "healing," an actual resolving or healing of man's pain is usually understood. In eschatological fulfillment the final healing will be established; there will be "no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying," nor any more "pain" (Rev. 21:4). But Kitamori uses the terms "resolving and healing" in different meanings. Kitamori is, we believe, thinking of the conquering of the *meaninglessness* of suffering by knowing its God-given meaning, instead of the actual removal or healing of man's pain. Elsewhere Kitamori says that the real nature

of suffering consists in its unintelligibility.²⁰² In other words, for man to be resolved and healed from pain is to know the meaning of his sufferings. Such an "intellectualized" understanding of "resolving" and "healing" is often helpful in the face of senseless empirical reality. In fact, when one knows the meaning of the suffering he undergoes, the suffering becomes not only tolerable but also meaningful. However, the problem with such an understanding is the inherent danger that the *actual* overcoming of suffering and meaninglessness is put aside while suffering and pain are made indispensable for the knowledge of a reality which is supposed to overcome these evils. The more overwhelming in value this "resolving and healing" reality is to a thinker, the more acute this danger would become. If such a preposterous development takes place in a system of thought, then it obviously fails to accomplish what it intends.

To Kitamori, the reality of suffering and pain remains for the believer as well. This suffering reality is employed by God as the witness of His Pain.²⁰³ Thus,

²⁰²Using the analogy of an "impossible" division (e.g., 10 divided by 3), Kitamori identifies the real feature of suffering as its rational "indivisibility," saying: "The proper force of suffering consists in its 'indivisibility.' A suffering, the riddle of which is solved, is rationally 'divided' and whose fang is taken away; it is no longer suffering in its proper sense" (*Character*, 36). Without making any caricature of this, one would ask a question: if this be so, would the suffering of God still be suffering in its proper sense? For it seems that the suffering of God is meaningful; it aims namely to save a lost humanity. If divine suffering is not suffering in its proper sense due to the meaning given by love which overcomes suffering's meaninglessness, one can see that love and suffering are not intrinsically related, contrary to what Kitamori contends (cf. my presentation in the section of "The Ontology of Love" in the previous chapter).

²⁰³*Ibid.*, 56.

the remaining suffering is given an indispensable value by playing a role in the actualization of the knowledge of the Pain of God. Above we identified Kitamori's logically circular structure of the relationship between the pain of man and the Pain of God. The meaning of this structure now seems to emerge: the suffering of God and the suffering of man move in the same orbit of perpetual suffering; the Pain of God seeks the pain of man so that it may be known to suffering man; the suffering believer seeks the meaning of his suffering in its witness of the Pain of God. Thus, all reality ultimately converges on the suffering of God. The Pain of God has ultimately become the sole, absolute reality and value, to which the very existence of man is subordinated. God in suffering is to be glorified through man's suffering. This can be characterized as Kitamori's understanding of *Soli Deo gloria*.²⁰⁴

The problem of suffering and evil is acute everywhere in our present *αίών*. A reality filled with meaningless suffering often overwhelms man and leads him to absolute nihilism. Even though the sufferings man experiences can certainly be considered the result of the wrath of God, this conception should not be understood as a rational and objective theory; if it were so, the evangelical doctrine of God as a merciful Father would inevitably be jeopardized. The suffering under the wrath of God, even if it is formulated in rational terms, must ultimately remain an insolvable mystery. In this sense, it is helpful to read: "Religiöse Frage werden nicht

²⁰⁴Ibid., 59.

[theoretisch] gelöst, sondern [praktisch] überwinden."²⁰⁵ If one rationalizes the problem of evil in whatever way, it is inevitable for him to justify evil itself and give a meaning to it so as to justify the perpetuation of evil.

We strongly perceive this danger in Kitamori's thought. Even a cruel reality can be made to serve the purpose of God, a theological procedure which brings the image of God to a point far away from the immediate presentation of Scripture. A typical example of this danger is found in Kitamori's exposition of "the Love of God" in his book, *On God*.²⁰⁶ In this discourse he takes up the awful cases of tragedy found in the Old and New Testament: Abraham who was ordered to sacrifice Isaac, Jacob and Rachel who lost their Joseph, and those mothers whose sons, under two years of age, were killed by Herod in connection with the birth of Jesus, an unintelligible event of which it is said: the prophesy of Jeremiah concerning the lamentation of Rachel is fulfilled. Kitamori then asks why the prophecy of Jeremiah must be fulfilled in the event of the birth of Christ? "Only through the deep sorrow and pain of those people who have lost their most beloved ones," writes Kitamori, "is the deep sorrow of the Father who has abandoned His most beloved Son witnessed."²⁰⁷ In his view, this sacrificial love of God "must" be witnessed by man's sacrifice of his loved ones.²⁰⁸ To serve the Pain of God with their utmost pains was,

²⁰⁵Wolfgang Trillhaas, "Theodizee," *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 3rd ed.

²⁰⁶*God*, 85-88.

²⁰⁷*Ibid.*, 92.

²⁰⁸*Ibid.*

holds Kitamori, "the meaning of their [Abraham, Jacob and Rachel, and the mothers'] lives."²⁰⁹ On this point Kitamori writes:

God demands from man the sacrifice of everything to the service of His glory. But this God is also the Savior. To save man is to say that this God will do everything for the sake of man. Here is the most vital truth The traditional idea *solī Deo gloria* tends to affirm the *Selbstsucht* of God directly We understand this service to the glory of God as our service to God the Savior. The God who demands the service from man to His glory is the God who totally abandoned Himself for man. Man will therefore abandon everything to glorify the God who became the Savior of man, the Savior who has abandoned His glory.²¹⁰

It is clear that in Kitamori's thought God and man find themselves in the communion of suffering;²¹¹ God suffers for man's salvation, and man suffers for the glory of the God who suffers. God and man suffer for each other. In view of this, our observation above is confirmed; the Pain of God is considered the sole, absolute reality and value, to which man's life in pain is to be subordinated. We emphasize here that the Pain of God is the absolute reality in the sense that it is beyond the "ordinary" blessing or suffering of human reality. In other words, man's suffering is unified with the Pain of God, the absolute Good. In this way, the pain of man is also glorified. The field of this communion of God and man is a tragedy of love. The

²⁰⁹Ibid.

²¹⁰Ibid., 100.

²¹¹Kosuke Koyama, who was "rewarded" by Kitamori with "a middle-sized pumpkin" for his bringing the manuscript of the teacher's *opus magnum* to the publisher, writes humorously: "Since then the sight of pumpkin has become a reminder to me of the truth of '*communion in pain*' which Dr. Kitamori shares with us in his lucid exposition of the Pain of God" (116; italic is mine). *Mutatis mutandis*, "communion in pain" is an apt and pertinent expression of Kitamori's concept of the divine-human relationship.

whole issue bears the tone of tragedy. To properly describe this scheme of thought we scarcely have any word more suitable than pan-tragism.

It is Kitamori's repeated admonition that "we must focus all of our concern on the Pain of God."²¹² Behind this admonition there are two ideas present. First, Kitamori holds that a preoccupation with one's own suffering is a typical sign of sin.²¹³ In Kitamori's view, sin diminishes the glory of God; man's concern with his own suffering is a concern for his own happiness. A true conversion, therefore, means that man is more concerned with the glory of God than with his own suffering or happiness.²¹⁴ Second, so long as our suffering remains our main concern, we can never find its solution. The true conquest of our suffering can be obtained only when it is used by God Himself as a witness to His Pain.²¹⁵ In addition to these clearly formulated ideas, it cannot be forgotten that Kitamori's vision of the Pain of God has a strong overtone of mysticism as we have already noted above. These three elements, presented by the Japanese theologian, true conversion, healing of suffering, and joy in the Pain of God, seem to account for the fact that Kitamori has made the Pain of God, or God Himself in Pain, the absolute reality, or the absolute Good. In one context, Kitamori says: "If we are so concerned with the Pain of God that our

²¹²*Character*, 40.

²¹³*Pain*, 53.

²¹⁴*Character*, 42, 59.

²¹⁵*Pain*, 54.

own pain fades away, then we are saved from our sin."²¹⁶ In this short sentence the three elements are unified with the Pain of God as its center.

Are then both the joy and the meaning of our existence ultimately found in the Pain of God? In other words, are they possible only through our actual suffering, suffering that results in living within God who is eternally in Pain? It is by now clear that Kitamori's answer to this question is definitely affirmative. To remain in the Pain of God through one's own suffering is the meaning of the existence of man. As is the case for the Biblical figures whom Kitamori cites in connection with his dealing with the sacrificial love of God, the believer's life is a life of dedicating his suffering to the witness of the Pain of God; at the same time the believer remains under the wrath of God, so that he really suffers pain. With his own pain the believer serves God in Pain.

In this regard, it is highly significant that Kitamori takes up the "problem" of a situation in which "a shortage" of suffering becomes actual. Kitamori observes that in history there are two types of eras; one is "the era of life or joy" and the other "the era of death or pain."²¹⁷ When one finds himself in the era of joy, then, says Kitamori, one cannot serve the Pain of God because pain does not exist. This is "the problem of the era of joy."²¹⁸ Kitamori admits that ordinary happiness is a gift of God, which belongs to the sphere of the *love* based on the Pain of God, the love of

²¹⁶*Itami*, 75 (*Pain*, 54).

²¹⁷*Ibid.*, 208 (*ibid.*, 136).

²¹⁸*Character*, 72.

the third order.²¹⁹ The "problem" of the lack of suffering in "the era of joy" to serve God in Pain is now solved by the "monastic ideals."²²⁰ Kitamori holds that the monastic virtues (obedience, poverty, labor, fasting, celibacy, etc.) can be understood as the visualization of "the day of pain."²²¹ In other words, there must necessarily be "a double standard of moral [or Christian existence]": one standard for the "happy" majority (including the ordinary believers!) and the other for the exceptional minority.²²² Those who are exceptional, however, cannot provide suffering by their own making; if so done, their suffering would be only "a play."²²³ In order to actively dedicate their suffering in service to the Pain of God they must possess "material" (that is, suffering), which must be true suffering, not self-made. The thing that is then left for those exceptional few to do is to pray to God that He provides the pain necessary for them to serve God in Pain.²²⁴ To us who may happen to live more or less in "the era of life and joy," this may seem amazing, not to say absurd. Yes, it is a highly idiosyncratic idea of Kitamori that the era of joy (not a decadent joy, but a God-given "healthy" joy) becomes a "problem" that requires solution in a "dual standard of morals." This strangeness witnesses to the vital aspect of Kitamori's

²¹⁹Ibid., 73.

²²⁰Ibid., 74.

²²¹Ibid.

²²²Ibid.

²²³Ibid., 76.

²²⁴Ibid. See note 200 above.

theology. The Pain of God is indeed the absolute value.

"When I am dissolved in the pain of God and become one with him in pain," writes Kitamori, "it is pure joy, and there can be no greater happiness for me. In the Pain of God my pain is healed, my old self dies; I become God's obedient servant and am resurrected into a new life."²²⁵ The highest form of man's existence is his existence in fellowship with God in His Pain. In this Pain of God there is an eternal bliss and resurrection to a new life.

But we are strongly tempted to ask here at the end of this section: Is there then no real (we mean, not merely intellectual) overcoming of our actual pain and suffering? Is there any room for an eschatological hope in God in which we may expect "no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying," nor any more "pain" (Rev. 21:4)?

The Eschatological Fulfillment of Salvation?

"What will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" (Matt. 24:3). With this question that the Disciples present to Jesus, Kitamori begins the writing of his view of eschatology in his *opus magnum*.²²⁶ To him, the sign of the end is ultimately not related with "the appearance of antichrists, wars, famines or earthquakes."²²⁷ Certainly they are signs of the end, but with these signs the end has not yet arrived. Matt. 24:14 shows, he believes, that the Gospel alone is correlative to the end of the age. The end of the age is the advent of the Kingdom, that is, of the

²²⁵*Pain*, 72.

²²⁶*Ibid.*, 139.

²²⁷*Ibid.*

rule of God.²²⁸ This rule of God, says Kitamori, is made actual not by the power of God but by His love, His love being in fact the Gospel. Thus, the advent of the rule of God takes place when the Gospel [the Pain of God] is thoroughly and fully actualized in the world "just [as] the air encircles the globe."²²⁹ "A complete diffusion of the Gospel," writes Kitamori, "this is the sign of the End."²³⁰ What does happen at the end? What is Kitamori's vision of the end? Unlike the richness of eschatological images contained in the Bible, Kitamori's vision of the end seems to be comparatively abstract and scarce. To Kitamori, "the End is the time when the ultimate thing is realized and the world finds its conclusion."²³¹ What is the conclusion the world finds at the end? "All unsolvable questions will be answered, all doubts will be resolved, and all tears will be wiped away."²³² "In short," writes Kitamori, "the world finds salvation."²³³

Throughout Kitamori's eschatological discourse in his *opus magnum*, we do not find very much specific thought on the eschatological issues found in traditional dogmatic works; the second coming of Christ, the resurrection of the dead, the Last

²²⁸Ibid., 140.

²²⁹Ibid.

²³⁰Ibid.

²³¹Ibid.

²³²Ibid.

²³³Ibid.

Judgment, eternal life, the consummation of the Kingdom.²³⁴ Surely, this particular feature of Kitamori's treatment of eschatology can be explained by the nature of eschatology itself; the reality of a new heaven and earth is largely beyond our comprehension. But we do not think this is a complete explanation of the scarceness and abstractness of Kitamori's view of the end. A full explanation is rather to be sought in the nature of Kitamori's theology. We have seen that in Kitamori's thought all human beings are already embraced in the Pain of God, thus objectively forgiven. This provides no room for the thought of a Last Judgment. We may also ask whether there is room in Kitamori's thought for the vision of an eschatological restoration of the world such as John the Seer saw on the island Patmos (Rev. 21:1-6) or as the Prophet Isaiah saw (Isa. 9:6-7, 11:6-9). With his idea of the eternal Pain of God, these blissful visions of the new heaven and earth may have been difficult for Kitamori to incorporate within his system.²³⁵

In contrast to this relative silence on the end of the age, Kitamori deals

²³⁴In Chapter 8 of his *Explanation to the Confession of Faith of the Kyodan*, Kitamori seems to avoid going into the section "From thence he will come to judge the living and the dead," saying that he will omit an explanation of this section since he has "dealt with this in Chapter 5" (74), in which, however, there is no explanation of the Last Judgment.

²³⁵To my knowledge, there is only one place where Kitamori explicitly takes up Rev. 21:1-4. In his Short *Meditation*, Kitamori characterizes this verse as "the most beautiful description of eschatological faith" (220). "The starting point of this ultimate solution [究極的な解決] is based only upon the fact that 'God is with men.' The riddles imposed upon the world and our lives are, according to the Bible, due to our being not with God" (ibid.) The last meditation in the book (224-225) reproduces the viewpoint of his *opus magnum* as we have presented it above. As we see here, the main emphasis is on God's being together with us as the solution of the riddles of reality.

extensively with the "correlation" between the Gospel (as the Pain of God) and the tribulation of the world at the end. Kitamori finds a correlation between the Pain of God (which is, says Kitamori, also "God's tribulation" [神の悩み]) and the eschatological tribulation of the world.²³⁶ The end is the time, holds Kitamori, when the Gospel or the Pain of God is thoroughly and fully actualized.²³⁷ Since the Gospel is the Pain of God, he sees, the tribulation of the world at the end will be also thoroughly and fully actualized.²³⁸ That is, the eschatological tribulation will be of such an extent as to be proportional to the depth of the Pain of God. This tribulation will be a witness to the Pain of God. That the end is not yet, he interprets, means that the pain in the world is not yet fully actualized.²³⁹ (For the end to come, must there be an unimaginable catastrophe, such as nuclear annihilation on a global scale proportional to the Pain of God?!) So the true sign of the end can be found by the extent to which the pain in the world is actualized. Through the tribulation which is intensified as the end approaches, holds Kitamori, we shall devotedly look to the full manifestation of the Pain of God.²⁴⁰ This tribulation, by itself, is a dreadful reality because it is the manifestation of the wrath of God. But due to the grace given in the Pain of God, even this tribulation will be used as the witness to the Pain of God

²³⁶*Itami*, 214 (*Pain*, 140).

²³⁷*Pain*, 141.

²³⁸*Ibid.*

²³⁹*Ibid.*

²⁴⁰*Ibid.*

and, by the same token, also healed.²⁴¹ This is analogous to the believer's experience of pain.²⁴² Here Kitamori follows the Biblical witness to the eschatological sequence of events which Jesus Himself foretold in His "apocalyptic" discourse. Thus, Kitamori foresees that the end will be an intense tribulation, but at the same time humanity caught in it will be healed by the Pain of God, becoming a witness to it.

In view of the Word of the Lord, we believe, we are to be prepared to meet the coming eschatological tribulation. However, Kitamori's attempt to correlate the tribulation with the actualization of the Gospel is an original interpretation of eschatology. Now, there arises a concrete problem. If the Gospel can only be actualized in proportion to the intensity of tribulation and if the end takes place when this tribulation reaches its deepest dimension, then what significance does our work for the betterment of the world have? Are we not commanded to work for the betterment of this created world, according to the will of God the Creator, even if we can only make relative improvements? Is it not necessary for us to work for our neighbor as well, while being prepared for the eschatological tribulation? Surely, we admit a paradox here. It seems, however, worth considering whether it is correct for us to directly correlate the actualization of the Gospel with an eschatological tribulation. For one thing, it deprives humanity of a foundation for both positive, constructive work and preventive endeavors. For another thing, it does not do justice to the

²⁴¹Ibid., 142.

²⁴²Ibid.

judgmental aspect of the eschatological tribulation. These two issues are, however, each in its own way, in keeping with Kitamori's basic theological view: world pessimism and the all-embracing nature of divine Pain.

Above we have paid attention to the abstractness and the formal character of Kitamori's eschatological view. We are deeply "curious" about what Kitamori has to say regarding eschatological fulfillment. Certainly, here in time, we cannot fully comprehend the whole range of eschatological hope. But one thing is a firm conviction of Christian faith relative to the end. "For I consider," writes Paul, "that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18). But is it possible for Kitamori, with such a strong emphasis on the eternal Pain of God, to form any idea of a positive eschatology? When we use the term "a positive eschatology," it is Rev. 21:4 that we have in mind: "God will wipe away every tear from their eyes, there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying, no more pain, for the former things have passed away." If we follow Kitamori's line of thought, it would be quite natural to suppose that there is no room for such a "happy" eschatology. If he had such an eschatology, then he would be inconsistent with his basic idea of the Pain of God. It is, we believe, no accident that Kitamori does not have any positive vision of the eschatological fulfillment. To our knowledge, there is no clear statement in Kitamori's writing that pain will ultimately be removed from reality. Most probably, it is not possible for Kitamori to say that. If he had said so, then the Pain of God could not be eternal.

As a matter of fact, the chapter on eschatology is perhaps the weakest portion of his *opus magnum*, and this in terms of both forcefulness of language and richness of content. Only a cursory reading of the last few paragraphs would betray this weakness. What is, then, Kitamori's own notion of eschatology? The answer to this question is unmistakably given in the concluding chapter of Kitamori's *opus magnum*: "My prayer night and day is that the love rooted in the Pain of God may become real to all men. All human emptiness will be filled if this gospel is known to every creature, since the answer to every human problem lies in the gospel."²⁴³ This statement actually summarizes what he says in the chapter of eschatology.

But, we ask further, what does Kitamori mean when he says that the Gospel --the Pain of God--becomes actual? If there is no positive eschatology in Kitamori's theology, then only one possibility seems to remain: one's *unio mystica* with God in Pain. In fact, as long as the Gospel is understood as the *Pain* of God, an intrinsically negative reality, a positive eschatology is impossible. Further, if we recall our discussion on the ontology of love (love is suffering intrinsically), then it is only logical that Kitamori has no positive eschatology.

In keeping with this train of thought, we can say that Kitamori's eschatology belongs to the type of "realized eschatology." Admittedly Kitamori mentions, though briefly, one aspect of the hope of the end. This hope is mainly, or rather only, concerned with the resurrection of "the body." Even this, however, is reinterpreted by Kitamori according to his basic idea of sin as falling from God's love. For

²⁴³Ibid., 150.

Kitamori, "the body" represents "the mode of the fallen existence of man."²⁴⁴ In contrast to this, says Kitamori, "the spirit" is the mode of being saved by and brought into the Pain of God despite this fallenness, and is already now life together with Christ.²⁴⁵ From this contrast of spirit and body, we discern that Kitamori thinks of "spirit and body" as corresponding to the formula of *semper justus* and *semper peccator*. "The body" then stands for *semper peccator*. This aspect of "always sinner" is to be fully brought into the Pain of God, or "spiritualized" to use Kitamori's own terminology. Accordingly, says Kitamori, "the resurrection of the body means "the fulfillment of salvation from the *remaining* mode of fallen existence."²⁴⁶ Formally speaking, Kitamori thus captures one basic aspect of eschatology, a total redemption. But it is not in the "literal" sense of the resurrection of the body. What we are totally missing in Kitamori is the eschatological restoration of man and the world, or eschatology as the restoration of creation. We regard this as vital because in this alone we find hope in its proper sense, hope in the total renewal of man and the world into an eternal joy without the mingling of pain. Even with Kitamori's idea of total redemption, we are not quite sure whether this is a redemption of sheer joy. Is it even a continuation of man's mystical union with God, which is certainly joy-- but joy in Pain, since the essence of God is the Love based upon His Pain? For the lack of explicit evidence we have to leave this question unanswered. And yet, one

²⁴⁴*Logic*, 66.

²⁴⁵*Ibid.*

²⁴⁶*Ibid.*

thing seems to stand fast: the very concept of the Pain of God makes it ultimately impossible to have certain hope of salvation in eternal *blessing and joy*.²⁴⁷ Kitamori says that the Pain of God stands for the love based on the Pain of God, but still, with his "essentialization" of the Pain of God, the aspect of love has been unmistakably overshadowed, to say the least. As long as God's love is eternally in Pain, we can never have an unmingled hope of His blessings in the world to come. The existence in the Pain of God knows no eschatological fulfillment of God's positive salvation. Transcending the empirical pain and suffering, the Pain of God is the absolute Good in which man finds his ultimate meaning and bliss, for in pain man is united with God in Pain, Pain as the character of God's love.

Summary

In Kitamori's thought God has brought man into being out of His love in such a way that man responds to God's love freely and spontaneously. Due to the nature of love which excludes any coercion, God's creation of man as the object of His love involves the risk of man's "betrayal" of divine love. Seeing that man's freedom and spontaneity in response to God's love *de facto* can only be actualized in man's defiance of divine love, God's creation of man already involves the Pain of

²⁴⁷A remark made by Marshall Randles in his *The Blessed God--Impassibility* (1900) on the problem inherent in an outright affirmation of divine passibility is, *mutatis mutandis*, pertinent here: "If His sympathetic pity for us involves His suffering on our account, our pity for Him as the greatest of all sufferers must involve our deep suffering on His account--a state of things which cannot but disturb and depress our feelings as we approach Him for worship and communion, and thus alloy what should be our purest bliss on earth or in heaven" (176; quoted in Mozley, 170).

God. In fact, man has betrayed divine love and fallen from the sphere of His love. God's love in which He created man has turned to wrath as an ever-remaining reality. Man's own love is essentially corrupted and perverted. Because of divine wrath, man's reality as a whole has become ugly, absurd and meaningless.

The fallen world lies under the wrath of God. But this wrath is borne by divine love. God Himself bears His own wrath upon Himself, which is God in Pain or the Pain of God. The curse and condemnation which should have been imposed upon man in the reality of creation are borne by God Himself in Pain. Thus, divine wrath no longer seeks the eternal annihilation of mankind. Objectively man finds himself in God's salvation. The reality of humanity is now in the Pain of God. Salvation is an objective and universal reality for man. God's Pain means the universal justification of humanity, but man must know this objective reality for this reality to become actual for him. Faith is then understood as knowing this reality and moving into the sphere of the Pain of God.

To exist in the Pain of God means that man's love which has been corrupted and perverted is now restored to a real and authentic love toward both God and neighbor by the power of the Pain of God. Thus salvation signifies a renewal of man's ethical disposition. The restoration of pure love as the synthesis of *Sollen* and *Wollen* is the content of salvation. Justification and sanctification are coordinated in the sequence of *ordo salutis*.

Another aspect of man's existence in the Pain of God is that man serves God by his own suffering and pain. Man's existence in service to God through his pain

has two aspects. One is that man serves as witness to the Pain of God through his own pain, and another that man is brought into *unio mystica* with God in Pain. Thus, in man's existence in the Pain of God, suffering and pain in the reality of humanity play a vital role. This presupposes that divine wrath is an indispensable component in Kitamori's understanding of man's existence. Although divine wrath no longer presents an ontological threat to humanity, it remains as phenomenological reality, which takes the form of man's suffering and pain. In fact, the suffering reality of humanity is the reflection of the suffering within the triune God Himself. Understood in this way, the ultimate reality which includes both God and man is Pain; love as the ultimate category of the relationship between God and man entails this tragic state of affairs. But all this does not result in a pure tragedy; rather, in and through tragedy and Pain an authentic fellowship of love between God and man has been established. In Kitamori's thought, there is therefore no need for a positive eschatology. Man's ultimate bliss is already realized in the midst of the reality of suffering and pain by being united with God in Pain through one's own suffering and pain. Thus, the Pain of God signifies the ultimate meaning of man's existence. God and man exist in the community of Pain.

The Pain of God as Theological Methodology

Kitamori's Understanding of Theology and Its Methodology

"My theology," wrote Kitamori when his first work, *The Lord of the Cross* was published, "must function as *the answer* [to all the theological questions]. It must

save all the errors in theology instead of denouncing them."²⁴⁸ As a matter of fact, he asserts in the same work that "a theological statement worthy of its name must not be simply a question but also always be an answer; the procedure of theology, when it questions [the validity of other standpoints], must first give its own answer [to them] before it proceeds to question [them]."²⁴⁹ As the truth on which one will stake all his being, theological truth must not be uncertain. "In this sense," Kitamori further asserts, "theology must be the theology of the Gospel. In other words, it should not be a theology having the Gospel merely as its object, but it must be the Gospel itself."²⁵⁰ In Kitamori's view, a true theology is not merely a relative reformulation of the Gospel given at a particular junction of time and space. It must be capable of claiming the absoluteness of the truth of its statement.²⁵¹

²⁴⁸*Auto II*, 218.

[A bibliographical note: Those of Kitamori's works which are of primary significance and therefore quoted frequently are abbreviated like the note here. The list of those works is found at the end of the Introduction.]

²⁴⁹*Cross*, 3.

²⁵⁰*Ibid.*

²⁵¹Whether a theology can claim absoluteness in its statement of God or the Gospel is a problematic question. This depends on what is understood by "theology" and what nature theological truth has. A reflection on the relationship between dogma and theology may shed light on this problem. The dogma of the two natures of Christ and the divine Trinity in its intrinsic relationship with *justificatio sola fide* is absolute truth for the Protestant Christian faith. Theology as the explication and actualization of dogma is relative to man's historical situation. Dogma is infinitely deep in its implications because it "refers" to the Triune God Himself in its most general terms; theology reflects on this dogma in order to listen to what God speaks through this fundamental dogma. As long as one understands his theology as an actual interpretation of dogma, one's theology remains relative and limited as to its truth claim. But when he regard his "discovery" of the mystery of God as eternally valid as the truth, it is natural for him to regard his theological statement as of equal footing

Obviously, the truth of the Gospel to Kitamori is the Pain of God. The truth of the Pain of God is certainly articulated under a specific intersection of time and space--during World War II in Japan; nevertheless "it is truth acceptable all over the world. *This universal truth* would not have been discerned without Japan as its medium."²⁵² The Pain of God discovered by Kitamori as the very content of the Gospel is thus the universal truth of the Gospel. It is the answer to the questions asked by all theologies.²⁵³ Further, this truth claim of Kitamori is not confined to the sphere of Christian theology. It is also valid as absolute truth in the sphere of other religions and philosophies. This is to be inferred from his argumentation that even though the Pain of God is a divine revelation, "the deepest thoughts the world has ever produced unknowingly have searched for the pain of God."²⁵⁴ In Kitamori's

with dogma. Advancing the absolute truth-claim for this concept of the Pain of God, Kitamori may be thinking that the Pain of God has the status of dogma. But is this view of Kitamori tenable? This is my question to Kitamori's theology. We shall have further occasions to discuss this issue.

²⁵²*Pain*, 137; emphasis is mine. *Schmerz* renders: "Es [der Schmerz Gottes] ist die für die ganze Welt gültige Wahrheit. Jedoch hätte sich diese allgemeingültige Wahrheit nicht verwirklichen können ohne die Vermittlung *Japans*" (137).

²⁵³Commenting on an apparent empirical contradiction between the reality of God's salvific will in Christ and the fallen reality of created world, Kitamori holds that neither Brunner (*Anknüpfungspunkt*) nor Barth ("Nein!") nor Althaus (*Uroffenbarung*) has given a satisfactory answer to the Reformation dialectic of the Gospel (which, to Kitamori, is the structure of the Pain of God), that is, the "theological axiom" (grace) embracing the "theological reality" (the fallen world in creation). With his notion that God's grace in Christ has already solved the "unsolved" actual reality, Kitamori writes as follows: "The order of [the fallen] creation which is the theological reality finds itself in the field of God's grace in Christ. Thus, I believe that I have answered the views of Brunner, Barth, Althaus, etc. at once" (*Auto II*, 185).

²⁵⁴*Pain*, 25.

thought, therefore, theology in its true sense must be identical with the Gospel itself, theology as the Gospel, and at the same time it must be universal truth as well.

In view of this sweeping claim Kitamori makes of theology, one feels compelled to reflect more closely upon the nature of theology as such. Can human theologies possess absolute validity? Can a particular theology be identical with the Gospel itself? Or is it possible for a theology to "discover" the ultimate truth so that upon the basis of the discovered truth the particular theology may claim to be identical with the Gospel itself?²⁵⁵ Apparently Luther claimed his doctrine of *iustificatio sola fide* to be the content of the Gospel. The Reformer held that it is the re-discovery of the Pauline *sola fide*. A certain parallel can be found between Luther's conviction of *sola fide* as the absolute truth of salvation and Kitamori's claim of the Pain of God as the same. In the next chapter, we shall deal with common traits and differences between Luther and Kitamori in their theologies.²⁵⁶ But here it may be said that we should make distinction between fundamental assertions on the Gospel and derivative

²⁵⁵Since the content of the Gospel conceived by a theologian inseparably presupposes the doctrine of God Himself, our question can be also formulated: Can theological statements about God be considered as describing God as He essentially is? Or more radically: Can God be defined by human theology in analogy with other objects in the empirical world?

²⁵⁶Still, a note will be appropriate here. Whereas Luther's *sola fide* is an existential, unspeculative soteriological concept in which the Reformer "passively" remains within the confines of the revelation in the crucified Christ, Kitamori is more inclined to "actively" penetrate the eternal essence of God, thus being more speculative and attempting to gain the knowledge of God. Luther has the following understanding of the theme of theology: "Theologiae proprium subiectum est homo peccati reus ac perditus et Deus iustificans ac salvator hominis peccatoris" (WA. 40 II, 328, 17).

elaborations of the fundamental assertions. Although to Kitamori himself the doctrine of the Pain of God is the most fundamental truth of the Gospel, we, on the basis of what we have seen in the previous presentation, are very much inclined to hold that his conception of God as being eternally in Pain is a highly debatable doctrine. As to the fundamental articles of faith, Christological and Trinitarian dogma which is revealed in the message of *iustificatio sola fide*, is not subject to any theological relativism. It is *sine qua non* for the Christian faith. But as to "secondary" elaborations of the fundamental dogma, it is not possible for any theology to lay claim to absoluteness. When we regard Kitamori's concept of the Pain of God as a secondary elaboration of the Gospel of the Cross, we have already made our own interpretative decision, making at the same time a qualitative distinction in theological significance between Luther's re-discovery of *solus Christus et sola fide* and Kitamori's *Deus in dolore*. Luther's discovery must be regarded as the axiomatic reconfirmation of the very foundation of the Christian faith since the Apostle Paul; this is a recognition we *a posteriori* gain when we understand the Biblical message of salvation in the light of the Reformer's theology. It is on the basis of this decision and distinction that we analyze Kitamori's theology.

Beyond this axiomatic datum of the Christian faith, all theological formulations are relative to a specific historical context. Luther is no exception in this regard; his further elaboration on *iustificatio sola fide* into various loci must be critically evaluated and reinterpreted in the light of Scripture and in reference to contemporary situation. Thus, any theology as a particular response to the impact of

the Gospel maintains the character of *theologia viatorum*. In addition to this, it is an obvious fact that no one theologian, however profound and genius, can hear the whole truth of the Gospel alone. When we acknowledge the distance between the Gospel itself and human explication of it in a given historical context,²⁵⁷ then we have to question Kitamori's sweeping claim of the universal validity of the concept of the Pain of God.

But Kitamori's understanding of the nature of theology helps us to grasp the character of his own theology from a methodological point of view. On what basis can Kitamori claim his theology to be the absolute truth of the Gospel, or the theology which is to "answer" all the questions other theologies have been asking? Questioning in this way, we return to his concept of the Pain of God. Kitamori does not conceive of the Pain of God merely as a particular experience of the Gospel conditioned by his own personal historical circumstances. It is the direct revelation of the Gospel or of God Himself in His eternal essence.²⁵⁸ Standing firmly on this conviction, Kitamori feels obliged to assert his "discovery" as the conclusive articulation of the Gospel in

²⁵⁷If we take the Pauline "God in Christ" (2 Cor. 5:19) as the pregnant expression of the Gospel, we can at the same time regard it as the formal description of the Gospel, which serves to the continuous actualization of the salvific reality of the Gospel in a given historical context. Thus the Gospel is not a static *Lehrsatz*, but a reality to be concretized and actualized by man's response to the living Triune God. Thus understood, the dogma which is the formal expression of the Gospel is the exclusive framework in which alone the concretization of the Gospel takes place through human theologies at every given historical time. We can say that the Gospel to which the dogma points is the constant whereas theologies which respond to the dogma are the *variable* and *relative*.

²⁵⁸*Pain*, 25.

history.²⁵⁹

One may then ask: If the Pain of God is the ultimate truth of the Gospel which has already been made known to Kitamori, formulated by him in his *opus magnum*, and then only waits to be appropriated and actualized, is it still relevant to speak of theological methodology? If what a theology strives to grasp has been laid hold of, there would be hardly any reason for reflection on methodological problems in theology.²⁶⁰ But as a matter of fact, Kitamori places strong emphasis on the clarification of this methodological question. "Luther in the Reformation era took pains for the establishment of 'sola fide' as the 'content' of theology," observes Kitamori, "but the central issue of contemporary theology is the problem of theological methodology."²⁶¹ Why does he hold that the issue of prolegomena is so crucial today as the *sola fide* was in the period of the Reformation? As we shall see shortly, Kitamori holds that evangelical theology is threatened by the theology of Karl Barth, which according to Kitamori is a legalistic deviation from the Protestant faith. And this alleged legalism is due to his prolegomena, which Kitamori understands to be

²⁵⁹See 427-433 below of this section.

²⁶⁰To elaborate on this point a little further, we take note of a difference between *iustificatio sola fide* and "the Pain of God" as to their theological character. Whereas *iustificatio sola fide* is formal in character thus enables one to explore its ever-actual implications in any given historical context, the Pain of God is material and definite, which means that it is already a specific elaboration on the dogma of the Trinity given in *iustificatio sola fide*. However, methodological questions are raised when a theologian tries to elaborate on the dogma. But if the result of the exploration of the Gospel's implications is already given (as is the case with Kitamori), then there is no need for reflection on methodological questions in an ordinary sense.

²⁶¹*Auto II*, 121.

based on the First Commandment.

What should then be the nature of theological prolegomena? Kitamori holds that it must be "evangelical." The theology of the evangelical Church must be also evangelical in its methodology, otherwise a truly evangelical faith would not be established. In Kitamori's own word, "the content of theology [the Gospel] should come out from the content of theology and become the prolegomena [for theology] as well."²⁶² In Kitamori's thought, this involves two methodological concerns. The one is that only the methodology which is based upon the Gospel (the Pain of God) can constitute theology as the sinner's endeavor; the other is that this methodology alone makes it possible for the theologian to be obedient to the total message of the Bible--for instance the Pauline *iustificatio sola fide* and the *iustificatio per opera* in the letter of James--the obedience which is of fundamental importance for theological work. For Kitamori, the Gospel is the power which saves the sinner's theology and lets him be obedient to God in his theological efforts; the Pain of God embraces sinful realities and realizes itself through them while not negating them nor simply absorbing them, and this holds true of the sinner's theological work more than anything else.

According to Kitamori, it is important to note that the nature of a

²⁶²*Christian Culture* (Tokyo: September, 1950), 45. "It is Barth who took the problem of prolegomena seriously, but my own thought then [on the issue of prolegomena] involved confrontation with Barth's conclusions on prolegomena. In Barth's thinking, the word of man is made transparent and required to be obedient to the Word of God. But I denounced it as legalistic. What I wanted was to bring the Gospel fully into the question of prolegomena," recalls Kitamori during his confrontation with Barth in the early stages of the Japanese theologian's theological development (*Auto II*, 147).

prolegomena determines the whole character of the theology which is built upon the particular prolegomena. If prolegomena is formulated with a primary concern for the Law--the First Commandment as is the case with Barth in Kitamori's view, then the whole theology becomes legalistic, even if in this or that specific *locus* it presents an evangelical discourse.²⁶³

Thus, Kitamori has in mind Barth's allegedly "exclusive and negating" prolegomena, and disputes him, for Barth's theology as a whole, to Kitamori, is legalistic in its "real intention" [本音].²⁶⁴ "Prolegomena," says Kitamori, "is a thinking which, prior to speaking of the content of theology, deals with the formal question by what right theology can be constituted as man's endeavor."²⁶⁵ Here we find Kitamori's fundamental concern with prolegomenal issues.

"How is it possible [for us theologians] to be obedient to all the aspects of

²⁶³"Whether a theology is legalistic or evangelical can be seen in its prolegomena. Even if a theology speaks of the Cross of Christ in one of the chapters of its dogmatics, it does not necessarily follow that the dogmatics is evangelical. But when the Cross of Christ which is the object of dogmatic discourse comes out from being the content of dogmatics and embraces the dogmatician's work itself, then it becomes an evangelical dogmatics" (ibid., 151).

²⁶⁴Discussing the problem of prolegomena in terms of scriptology, Kitamori argues that Barth would conceive of the nature of Scripture only in analogy with the Incarnation and does not go further to the Cross, that is, the Gospel. This would determine, writes Kitamori, the basic character of the theology of Barth, and he continues to argue: "This of course does not mean that Barth does not take up the Cross as the 'content' of the Bible. How can it be possible for a theology not to take up the Cross! But if a theology fails to acknowledge the crucial significance of the 'form' of theology (prolegomena), that theology does not yet take up the Cross as its ultimate concern. This failure entails a legalistic scriptology and theology" (ibid., 129).

²⁶⁵Ibid., 147.

the Word of God?--this exhausts the problem imposed upon us. Think, is there any other problem [for theology today] except this?²⁶⁶ This Kitamori's concept of methodological problem may be unintelligible without reference to Barth's concept of divine mandates imposed upon dogmatics. Barth's main concern is how theology can be obedient to what the Word of God speaks here and now through the Bible. For Barth this obedience is divine challenge to believers in general and theologians in particular who are placed in the grace of God. But Kitamori maintains that Barth's methodological position neglects the most fundamental issue in theological obedience, namely the fact that the theologian is a sinner. What Barth presupposes as already given prior to his theological work--the forgiveness of sin, is not a matter of course in theology and is still an unsolved problem for Kitamori. In other words, the prolegomenal question to Kitamori is not a question how it is possible for a forgiven sinner as a finite being to speak of God--the *totaliter aliter* (as is the case with Barth), but for a *sinner* who remains a sinner to give witness at all to the Gospel in obedience. For Kitamori, "to be a sinner means to dominate God and God's Word."²⁶⁷ We cannot exist, he holds, without dominating and defying God and God's Word.²⁶⁸ Even when we give witness to God, we speak with our own words.²⁶⁹ Our words which inevitably remain opaque because of our sins cannot be fully

²⁶⁶Ibid., 152.

²⁶⁷*Cross*, 1.

²⁶⁸Ibid.

²⁶⁹*Today*, 107.

"transparent," as Barth allegedly presupposes that they can be. To Kitamori there are no transparent human words which let the Word of God go through without any impediment. But at the same time it is impossible to give witness to the Word of God without our sinful words. In this sense, a theologian needs the forgiveness of sin in his theologizing. "We cannot speak of the Gospel," says Kitamori, "for we always dominate the Word of God."²⁷⁰ How can we serve God with our theology? It is the Gospel itself that, while forgiving our sin in theology, supports it and uses it as witness to the Gospel. The Pain of God is the solution of the fundamental problem of disobedience in theology.²⁷¹

In contrast to this "evangelical" prolegomena, holds Kitamori, Barth's methodology is ruled by the First Commandment. According to him, Barth would have answered the basic prolegomenal question raised above, the question of obedience to God's Word: "The obedience to God is only possible by obeying God."²⁷² Kitamori is aware that this is a tautology, but he says that "this is a 'substantial' answer, seeing this as an expression of the Law's dominance in Barth's

²⁷⁰*Cross*, 3.

²⁷¹"That we are sinner means that we try to subjugate [even] God by our own power or the Word of God to our own word. . . . How can we speak of the Gospel when we are such sinners? Thus before we begin to speak of the Gospel, we find ourselves in the midst of the fundamental problem. For us to speak of the Gospel is already the problem itself. But it is the Gospel itself that solves this problem" (*Cross*, 1-2); "the Gospel which is spoken of by its witness is the very Gospel which lets the witness speak of itself. I am going to speak of the Gospel of the Cross, but that I can speak of it is now possible because I have been possessed by the Gospel of the Cross" (*ibid.*, 6); "Insofar as the Gospel of Christ is the Gospel of the Cross, it should signify something crucial to interpret the Gospel of the Cross as the Pain of God" (*ibid.*, 13).

²⁷²*Auto II*, 152.

theology.²⁷³ In Kitamori's view, Barth can answer in this way because the Swiss theologian has overlooked the existential problem of man's sin in doing theology. For, argues Kitamori, one cannot render obedience to the Word of God by making "Let God be God" the theological prolegomena. Only the Gospel, the truth of God in Pain who embraces the unembraceable, saves man's disobedience in theology and accomplishes obedience to the Word of God in a sinner's theology.

Kitamori's basic concern in the question of prolegomena is thus "soteriologically" conceived rather than epistemologically.²⁷⁴ Kitamori claims that when both the content and method of theology are determined by the Gospel itself, a theology first truly becomes an evangelical theology. This view, to Kitamori, is far from Barth's legalistic orientation in prolegomena. In the next chapter, we shall deal with Kitamori's confrontation with Barth in detail, so we here leave open the tenability of Kitamori's interpretation of Barth on this issue. At this juncture we are concerned with the fact that Kitamori has an entirely different concept of prolegomena by his "soteriologization" of it; he narrows the scope of theological prolegomena.²⁷⁵

²⁷³Ibid.

²⁷⁴Ibid.

²⁷⁵How can we grasp Kitamori's "soteriological" concept of prolegomena if it is not, on his part, a misunderstanding of the concept? Is not my total being as a Christian forgiven before I undertake my theological efforts? Is not theology possible only with this general presupposition of the forgiveness of sin? In other words, do not the problems of prolegomena, that is, of the relationship between faith and systematic understanding through rational examination of the contents of faith, stand on a different plane than that of the "dying and rising up again in daily repentance?" If there is something in doing theology which still causes a serious concern with sin, this problem should perhaps be dealt with in the domain of repentance than in theological prolegomena. As for Barth's theological methodology, this Swiss theologian strictly

Kitamori's problem in theological prolegomena is thus exclusively concerned with how a sinner can theologize and how evangelical theology can be brought forth, and these two things are only possible by integrating the Gospel itself into methodology, or "the redemption of theology by the theology of redemption," to use his own terminology.²⁷⁶

Kitamori's Theological Epistemology

By now we have clearly seen that the concept of the Pain of God functions as the very pivot of Kitamori's theological prolegomena. It is the keystone of his theological arch. As the keystone, the concept of the Pain of God is expected to be methodologically well-substantiated in order for Kitamori's hermenutical circle to properly function, otherwise the whole of this theological system would quickly collapse.

Kitamori also calls the Pain of God a "theological axiom." Certainly an axiom in the mathematical sense is a basic, self-evident truth upon which further understanding of mathematical relations is built. Analogically, a theological axiom would be the truth which is "self-evident" to all the believers. In fact, it is not

confines his reflection on method within the relationship between "Glauben und Erkennen." See for instance his *Fides quaerens intellectum: Anselms Beweis der Existenz Gottes im Zusammenhang seines theologischen Programms* (Munich: Chr. Keiser, Verlag, 1931).

²⁷⁶Introduction, 116.

unproblematic to introduce such an abstract concept as "axiom" into theology.²⁷⁷ If however we should follow Kitamori's own scheme of thought, we might include in the category of theological axioms such fundamental truths as the doctrine of the Trinity, the two natures of Christ, justification by faith and Scripture as the ultimate norm of doctrine and life. No one can deny any of these without ceasing to be a Christian in the sense of the Protestant faith. For Kitamori, however, the Pain God is the self-evident theological reality *par excellence*, and thus it has the status of a fundamental dogma in his thought.²⁷⁸ It is literally the "theological axiom," according to Kitamori, that all doctrines of Christian faith--Trinity, Christology, Soteriology, Ecclesiology, and so on--should be grasped from the preeminent concept of the Pain of God.

To the critical examiner, the Pain of God gives a strong impression of being an assertion which exemplifies *petitio principii*. The question is, namely, how one can be sure that Kitamori's primary vision of the Pain of God is an authentic recognition of the essence of God, and not an individual theologian's private, even erroneous, perception of God. The validity of this question is intensified when one is deeply uncertain of the tenability of Kitamori's exegetical, doctrinal and church-historical substantiation of the concept of the Pain of God.²⁷⁹ It is difficult to escape the

²⁷⁷The expression "theological axiom" itself is borrowed from the title of Karl Barth's essay: "Das erste Gebot als theologisches Axiom" (1933). For this essay and Kitamori's reaction to this essay, Chap. 6, note 37.

²⁷⁸See note 4 above.

²⁷⁹See the section of "Application of the Pain of God as Method" beginning with 415 below.

suspicion that the concept of the Pain of God *a priori* dictates exegetical results, the outcome of his doctrinal discussion or the conclusion of his church-historical investigation. So we are compelled to ask: how can we then know "objectively" that the concept of the Pain of God is not Kitamori's theological "illusion" but a trustworthy penetration of the essence of God?

We realize from his writings that Kitamori himself has already anticipated this question. To see this problem more closely, we need to trace an interesting feature of Kitamori's understanding of the term of the Pain of God.

The substance of the ideas of a suffering God has been in circulation in the history of theology from the very beginning, even in the Japanese Protestant tradition (thus the Solomonic saying would apply to theology as well: there is nothing new under the sun!).²⁹⁰ But the very term "the Pain of God" is still Kitamori's own.

²⁹⁰A brief overview of the idea of God's suffering in church history is included in the next chapter. As for the notion of divine suffering in the Japanese Protestant tradition, we have seen Uemura's thought in the above (see note 87 of Chap. 4). Here we shall include another Japanese theologian, Danjo Ebina, whose thoughts on divine suffering are strikingly similar to Kitamori's, also in terms of vocabulary. He was, as we recall, the opponent of Uemura in the Christological debate in the early Protestant history of Japan (see note 43 of Chap. 2). Ebina writes: "Seeing that even Christ, the perfect Personality, had to suffer, we must conclude that the root of suffering is to be sought deeply in God Himself. When St. Paul wrote that the Spirit makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered, he meant that God suffers among men. Truly, we are to be thankful for this. We find the true notion of Christian salvation right here. Our religious longing will never be satisfied until we find God's suffering. In other words, there is suffering and pain when God reveals Himself to the extreme point" (quoted in Yoshitaka Kumano, *A History of Theological Thoughts in Japanese Christianity*, [Tokyo: Shinkyo Shuppansha, 1968], 163). It is most probable that Kitamori is well acquainted with this prolific but rather speculative thinker. If so, it is an interesting question why Kitamori does not mention Ebina's name in his writings. Is it because Ebina is less orthodox in his theology?

And to Kitamori the concept of the Pain of God cannot be substituted by another concept. The term is the *alter ego* of Kitamori as the theologian. Because of this "absoluteness" of "the Pain of God" in his theological reflection, he has had a strong affection for this term. When he was at the Lutheran seminary, he had to struggle with this "affection."²⁸¹ Although he was aware that the term "the Pain of God" should not be any more than a finger pointing to the crucified Christ, he even "felt more love for this term than for the term: 'the Cross of Jesus Christ.'"²⁸² This was even a temptation! One day he determined to give up the use this term.²⁸³ In retrospect, Kitamori tells us that this "heroic" determination was motivated by Barth's "Let God be God" and, following this Barthian demand, decided not to use the term which he felt was a human term.²⁸⁴ Be this as it may, we notice here two things in Kitamori's "struggle" with his affection for the expression "the Pain of God." First, Kitamori indirectly says that he loved the term as his own so deeply but, second, he was aware that it is not identical with "the crucified Christ." One month later, however, he resumed the use of the term. In fact, we observe that this "giving up and

²⁸¹*Auto II*, 18.

²⁸²*Ibid.*, 20.

²⁸³"To you, the term 'Pain of God,' I say 'Sayonara!'" wrote Kitamori in his diary the day he determined to give up the term, "to this day you served me well as the term pointing to Christ the Crucified; I thank you; you are not Christ the Crucified Himself, you shall not be loved by more than He!" (*Ibid.*, 21).

²⁸⁴*Ibid.*, 27.

using again" of the term is the basic pattern Kitamori has followed throughout his life.²⁸⁵ This state of affairs leads to interesting questions: why has Kitamori had to waver between the terms "the Pain of God" and "the crucified Christ" in his theological endeavor? Why does he feel the constant necessity to give up the term? Does the "temptation" persist in his mind? If so, what does it mean when Kitamori has still been unable to give it up totally? And why does he retain the term throughout his theological career despite his declared abandonment of the use of this term? Perhaps we are not totally mistaken when we suggest that the reason for this life-long retention of the term is the deep difference between the theology of the Pain of God and Luther's theology of the cross. To this important issue we shall return in the next chapter.²⁸⁶

²⁸⁵In the preface to the Fifth Edition of his *opus magnum*, Kitamori writes: "I myself do not find the necessity of using the term the 'Pain of God' as a theological term any longer, since this term has served its purpose adequately in stressing the mediatory and intercessory love of God over against the immediate love of God. The appearance of the Japanese Revised Standard Version [which adopted the translation 'My heart yearns over him' (Jer. 31:20)] may necessitate my using this term consciously again" (*Pain*, 16-17). Whether his continuous use of the term "the Pain of God" is conditioned by the appearance of the Japanese "RSV" [more correctly, "the Japanese Colloquial Version" (1955)] is open to discussion. It seems that Kitamori would never have been able to abandon this term irrespective of any external circumstance. Without this term Kitamori's theology does not function.

²⁸⁶In this connection, only the following is noted: Luther's *theologia crucis* has a very close relationship with his idea of *Deus absconditus*, both of which in turn have to do with God's self-revelation to us *sub specie contraria*. With regard to the revelation through the crucified Christ, Luther does not go beyond this historical revelation itself; and for him to know God is to learn to rely on Christ, that is, what God has done for us. To go beyond this *beneficia* inevitably leads to speculation about the majesty of God. Kitamori means to see the very eternal essence of God through the event of the Cross of Christ, which is hidden in the revelation of Christ. To Kitamori the historical Cross of Christ is crucial as the vestibule to the holy of the

We observe the nature of this struggle in Kitamori's mind in a somewhat different light when we read his justification of the concept of the Pain of God through his so-called *analogia doloris*. He "problematizes" the application of analogy in the discourse of God. "Do not the willfulness, illusion, and disobedience [of man]," Kitamori questions, "accompany our service to God, a service which is done on [the basis of] similarity [analogy]? When we dare to speak [of God] with similarity as our medium, are we not making the mistake of ascribing to God what should not be ascribed to Him?"²⁸⁷ *Mutatis mutandis*, this concern with analogy can also be seen in Kitamori's understanding of the very concept of the Pain of God. Is it totally excluded that the concept of the Pain of God does not ascribe to God what should not be ascribed to Him? Kitamori has not been totally unconcerned about this issue; the very question above indicates this. What then is the solution of this deep problem?

Kitamori writes:

The only analogy which can solve the problem of disobedience so helplessly entangled in every vanity of analogy, is the *analogy of pain (analogia doloris)*. In the pain of God is his power which completely conquers the disobedience so deeply embedded in all human activity. In the analogy of Pain, man's pain serves the pain of God, who completely conquers our wilfulness, illusions, and disobedience.²⁸⁸

Here Kitamori speaks of the conquering power of the Pain of God, meaning that God in His Pain forgives these sins and still uses them as service to Him. We again

holies, but not the ultimate, the Pain of God; the Cross of Christ is the historical "concretization" of the Pain of God. This may be the reason why the Pain of God and the Cross of Christ are not interchangeable.

²⁸⁷Pain, 55-56.

²⁸⁸Ibid., 56.

observe his soteriological approach to theological method. Also in his exegetical discussion (included in his *opus magnum* as appendix), he advances a similar argumentation. "When those who cannot pursue theological activity without falling into disobedience," argues Kitamori, "are loved and accepted by God, their theological intention can no longer fall into disobedience. The use of the Biblical word ['my bowels ache' (Jer. 31:20)] as a theological term and the use of human experience [pain] as the symbol for divine reality are now liberated from disobedience."²⁸⁹

Disobedience in theology is conquered by the forgiveness of God in Pain!

No doubt, this is part of the consolation and encouragement of the Gospel in our theological endeavor. But where can we make the distinction between remission and permission of "sins" in our theological pursuit? To stay in "sin" or "error" in our theology has "more" serious consequences than "ordinary" sins. If Kitamori means "methodological" forgiveness by the conquering power of the Pain of God, then he would imply that man is permitted that "sin." Certainly we are sinners, and we can be disobedient to God also in our theology and bring the Gospel into serious jeopardy. We, however, need a methodological "repentance" and amending of our theological procedure once we realize that our theological concepts or methodology are erroneous. The Gospel is infinitely more important than our theology. In fact, it is for this very reason that Kitamori himself contends with Barth's theology in particular. As we cannot confuse the (*a posteriori*) remission of sin with the (*a priori*) permission to sin

²⁸⁹Ibid., 164.

in our life, neither can we do this in our theology.²⁹⁰

But here again it becomes necessary to raise a serious question concerning Kitamori's argument to justify the use of the Pain of God. Is not his argument a closed circle? He says that his concept of God in Pain can be liable to his "wilfulness, illusion and disobedience." But the disobedience which may be involved in his concept of the Pain of God as the expression of the truth of God's essence is healed and conquered by the very concept of the Pain of God. Is this not a perpetual "self-justification" of the concept by the concept itself? If some elements of "wilfulness, illusion and disobedience" are suspected in a theological concept, they must be "checked" by something other than that very concept. In Kitamori's case we see that the often legitimate "hermeneutical" circle is totally closed by his idea of "self-justification." Kitamori's conceptualization of the Pain of God undoubtedly includes elements of truth, and that is one of the main reasons why his theology has survived till the present day. But if Kitamori's concept of the Pain of God involves a serious theological error, as we suspect, where can he find a place to break his erroneous circle? Or does not erring in theology belong to us mortals?

When Kitamori maintains the conviction of the truth gained through his

²⁹⁰Actually we cannot deal with disobedience in our Christian existence and "disobedience" in our theological endeavor as problems in the same category, for the former belongs to the spiritual kingdom, as it were, whereas the latter as a problem of our "work" belongs to the worldly kingdom. And "disobedience" in work cannot be embraced; it should be rectified once its error or deficiency is suspected and recognized. For this very reason, we must constantly confront different theological formulations for the sake of *die Sache selbst!* If this criticism of Kitamori is correct, there actually is a categorical confusion here on the part of Kitamori.

primary experience, despite these apparent logical difficulties, we suppose that there must be "something undeniable" in such a primary experience. A thousand contra-arguments would not be able to shake this primary conviction. What then is this "something undeniable?" Reflecting on this, we arrive at Kitamori's "epistemological" conviction. Unfortunately, however, Kitamori has no separate elaboration of his own theological *Erkenntnislehre*. So we need to reconstruct his doctrine of cognition on the basis of evidence from his writings.

What is it, then, which constitutes the principle of cognition in Kitamori's thought? It is *chokkan* or immediate cognition and perception (and also the cognate modes of perception). An axiomatic conviction in Kitamori's epistemology is, it seems, that the true nature of things is to be recognized not by analytical reasoning but by immediate intuition.²⁹¹ Analytical reason follows intuition to "verify" the truth the *chokkan* has intuitively grasped.²⁹² Certainly, this *chokkan* is not everybody's possession but is given only to a selected few (as is the case with Kitamori himself). But once given, this is virtually infallible. Reading Kitamori's two volume autobiography, we come across this term (or its cognates) on virtually every crucial point in his theological development; and there is no doubt concerning its reliability. The fact that we are in the love of God, holds Kitamori, cannot be experienced as

²⁹¹See Chap. 4, note 27 above.

²⁹²It is evident that one often starts the investigation of some object with a kind of intuition that helps one set up a "working" hypothesis; and this is followed by trying to see whether or not the hypothesis can be verified. It would be, however, another thing if one is so confident of one's own intuitive capacity that one only needs to verify *a posteriori* what one claims to have intuitively recognized.

reality immediately, but in Christ we can really perceive it. "I really experienced [実感した] that the Cross of Christ is the Pain of God," says Kitamori.²⁹³ On another occasion where he reflects on Barth's dealing with the issue of the election of Esau and Jacob in his *Römerbrief*, Kitamori "intuits" [直感する] in Barth's thinking "a [painless] smoothness."²⁹⁴ On still another occasion, when Kitamori felt that he had touched upon the "untouchable" sanctity of God's innermost essence [the Pain of God], he experienced a threat of death, but still "immediately perceived" [直覚した] that he would not die because he was in Christ.²⁹⁵ Though we could quote still more examples,²⁹⁶ the above sufficiently shows how crucial a role *chokkan* or cognate terms play in Kitamori's thought. We said that this *chokkan* is *virtually* infallible. As a matter of fact, most cognitions perceived through his *chokkan* are later "confirmed."²⁹⁷

It is necessary here to also touch upon Kitamori's view of the "Japanese

²⁹³ *Auto I*, 137.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 198.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 201.

²⁹⁶ "I had already then *chokkan* that 'esprit of fine sensitivity' (Pascal) is needed for a precise theology not to fall into an arid formalism" (*ibid.*, 190); "Sören Kierkegaard will answer the question: 'What does it mean to love God?'; I will answer the question: 'What does it mean to be loved by God?'. . . Thus I had *chokkan* of the essence of [the thought of] Kierkegaard" (*Auto II*, 10); see also *ibid.*, 14.

²⁹⁷ Only one place, Kitamori says that his *chokkan* "hit the mark half and missed it half" concerning the Christian Rinzo Shiina's conversion (*Literature*, 67; for Shiina, 194 in "Man in the Pain of God" in this chapter).

heart."²⁹⁸ Speaking of his so-called "Gospel History," he discusses each nation's particular contribution in enfolding the truth of the Gospel. He advances in this connection his viewpoint that the "Japanese heart" has a sensitivity particularly congenial with the Pain of God, and explains what the people's "heart" is: "The 'heart' is what we call 'sensitivity' [感覚], which is not thought nor theory, nor spirit [精神] either! It is something more profound and more concrete, namely sensitivity."²⁹⁹ By this "more profound and more concrete sensitivity" Kitamori means an epistemological faculty which is capable of immediately grasping the deepest reality. "The Japanese heart" has then a particular "sensitivity" to penetrate the very reality of the divine essence. This "Japanese heart," according to Kitamori, is mainly represented by ordinary, uneducated people.³⁰⁰ They know, without being specifically taught, the deep tragic dimension of human relationships which are governed by inter-personal obligation of duties (between superior and inferior) and which therefore often occasion the sacrifices of (inferior) individuals' "unsacrificeable" objects of love, a son dear to his father in particular. The "Japanese heart" which perceives the depth of tragedy in inter-personal relationships is, in Kitamori's view, most clearly observable in the popular stories now played in the form of Japanese dramas called *Kabuki*. To designate the perception the "Japanese heart" experiences vis-a-vis the inter-personal tragedy, Kitamori "technicalizes" the rather common

²⁹⁸ "日本のこころ ." (*Itami*, 208 [*Pain*, 137]).

²⁹⁹*Ibid.*, 209 (*ibid.*).

³⁰⁰*Ibid.*, 203 (*ibid.*, 133).

Japanese term "tsurasa."³⁰¹ Then he finds an analogy between God in Pain for giving up His Son and a Japanese father sacrificing his son to save another (the son of his feudal lord for instance).³⁰² By generalizing the term of *tsurasa* he holds that the "Japanese heart" is now given a divine assignment to make manifest the innermost essence of God, or God in *tsurasa*. "The Pain of God is brilliantly discerned by the Japanese heart and particularly adored by it."³⁰³

In Kitamori, *chokkan* and sensitivity (or *kankaku*) to *tsurasa* become the

³⁰¹The English version, *Pain*, offers an explanation of the term "*tsurasa*" as follows: "The sense of *tsurasa* is best expressed by the Latin phrase *lacrimae rerum*. It is the feeling of inevitable fate and sorrow that overhangs human life. Star-crossed lovers, parting never to meet again, feel *the tsurasa* in their destiny" (177). Although Kitamori holds that the term "*tsurasa*" (the noun form of an adjective *tsurai*) is a particular Japanese vocable for this particular emotion, it is rather a common word designating "bitter, sad, hard, painful" ("It is *tsurai* to get up early in the cold morning"), which can be used even in the title of a popular comedy movie ("Otoko wa *tsurai* yo!" [We (guys) has it rough!]). This *tsurasa* is, therefore, Kitamori's own technicalization of the term.

³⁰²This interpretation by Kitamori of the popular stories (for the content of the stories, see *Pain* 177, and the petit section of *Schmerz*, 132-134), which originated from the early tenth century and were "dramatized" in the eighteenth century, was questioned by critical reviewers. One of the dramas, *Terakoya* (A Temple School), in which Kitamori finds a father-son relationship analogous to the Father-Son relationship in the Pain of God, is in its original form a drama of revenge and belief in the revenge of the spirits of the dead. The spirits are governed by feudal ethics. Observing the drama and its usage by Kitamori, Shozo Suzuki writes: "Kitamori's logic is not aware of the qualitative difference between the human pain which the father felt when he gave up his son--to show fidelity to his feudal lord and thus to destroy the lord's enemy--and the love of God who gave His Son to the enemy (this world)" (*Christianity and Daijosai [the Emperor Deification Rite]*, [Tokyo: Shinkyō Shuppansha, 1987], 304). Katsumi Takizawa writes that these dramas "by no means reflect the genuinely Japanese spirit but only a form [of the Japanese spirit] distorted by feudal society" (*Religion*, 135).

³⁰³*Itami*, 209 (*Pain*, 137).

cardinal media in grasping the Pain of God.³⁰⁴ In other words, through these intuitive faculties, even the deepest theological truth is recognized. This is the substance of Kitamori's epistemological axiom. (In rough terms, this is akin to Zen epistemology in which analytical reasoning is ultimately considered inadequate to grasp the inner-most dimensions of reality.) Due to this epistemological axiom, we believe, Kitamori has not felt the need for theoretical elaboration on theological epistemology. What, however, does this imply for Christian theology which is based on historical revelation? If we follow the traditional "Western" distinctions, we might maintain that Kitamori's *chokkan* and sensitivity belong to the sphere of *natura* in contrast to *gratia*. Transcending this scheme, however, Kitamori presupposes that man's natural faculty of cognition is indispensable in penetrating the truth of God.³⁰⁵ A question arising from this concept is how one can solve the problem inherent to everything natural, a question of which Kitamori himself is aware. This epistemological feature is again

³⁰⁴Kitamori is aware of the problem inherent in these natural media and tries to solve it in the following way: "We grasp the Pain of God with the sensitivity to pain [痛みへの感覚]. Insofar, however, as this sensitivity is that of man, it retains arbitrariness and disobedience. This disobedience of human sensitivity must be overcome by the Pain of God. . ." (*Itami*, 210 [*Pain*, 138]).

³⁰⁵Kitamori's implicit assumption here, as everywhere in his theology, is that we are obliged to know God in His inner-most essence. This intends beyond the external historical revelation and recognize God in His essence. The historical revelation of Christ certainly provides the clue to the penetration. One must "see into" the reality of God implied in the event of the crucifixion (*Character*, 10; this seeing-into is decisive and essential to the constitution of divine salvation in us). But what plays a decisive role in discerning the truth beyond the historical revelation is man's natural faculty. If man's natural faculty is accorded such a crucial function as seeing the essence of God, then a serious danger is at hand, that man conceives of God according to natural human categories and thus *de facto* denies God's absolute transcendence. See further 410-412 of this section.

"justified" by the same circular argument that the Pain of God has already resolved the problematic aspects of man's natural intuition and sensitivity.³⁰⁶

We can now characterize Kitamori's theological epistemology as having "immediate" access to the knowledge of God. To grasp this, we may draw an interesting parallel from Kitamori's own thought. We have seen that Kitamori's basic contention is that the love of God is not an immediate love; it is mediated by Christ, the *persona* of Pain. We cannot stay in the immediate love of God because it is His wrath. But in his theological epistemology, that is, in his cognition of the Pain of God, nothing ultimately mediates between God in Pain and the knower. In view of Christ on the Cross, the "heart" immediately intuites the essence of God.³⁰⁷ "In our mode of the thinking through which we grasp and adore the figure of God [神の姿]," maintains Kitamori, "this sensitivity plays a crucial role."³⁰⁸

When Kitamori conceives the Pain of God as the ultimate truth of God in an intuitive manner, we have to ask its methodological consequences in his theology. Put

³⁰⁶See note 302 above. Kitamori's justification is only logically tenable if the Pain of God is the truth itself; this truth guarantees the validity of natural recognition as long as it grasps the Pain of God. Kitamori is consistent in his thinking in this sense. The problem we again feel in view of this is that the Pain of God *a priori* justifies questionable means such as intuition or "sensitivity" in theological recognition.

³⁰⁷We interpret that Kitamori's primary experience of God had this "immediate" character. The result is that his idea of God is strongly "anthropomorphic," that is, very close to human psychological experience. This occasions, we believe, the danger that God eventually is absorbed into human reality. Where is the Pauline cry in Kitamori's theology: "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" (Rom. 11:33).

³⁰⁸Itami, 203 (*Pain*, 133).

in a somewhat simple manner, intuitive recognition in religious experience presupposes a direct and immediate relationship between the knower and the Object of knowing. And in this process of intuitive knowing, the subject and the Object are in an intimate unity. We should say that in knowing and being known the Object is the subject and vice versa, for it is the Object which "takes" the initiative (if it is conceived of as a personal Being) or "moves" the knower to know (if an impersonal Reality) in the process of knowing. It can be the Object's self-development in the knowing "subject." This pattern can be clearly observed in Kitamori's thought. "There is logic in the Gospel," says Kitamori, "and the logic is not an abstraction of reality but it is the way in which the reality reveals itself."³⁰⁹ This reminds us of a Hegelian pan-logicism; an idea includes in itself its own logical or conceptual development. This metaphysical presupposition deeply affects Kitamori's theological method. Put pointedly, the logic supposedly inherent in the Gospel follows its own development. This means that the logical necessity of the Gospel has produced dogmas and theologies.³¹⁰ It sounds somewhat impersonal and gives the impression that this inherent logic of the Gospel is the norm of all theologies.³¹¹ But this does

³⁰⁹*Character*, 236.

³¹⁰See 43-53 of this section.

³¹¹It is one of the conspicuous features of Kitamori's theology that various concepts are "hypostatized" and have logical movement. We have already come across such sentences as: "The Pain of God is the fact that the love of God bears the wrath of God upon itself." We have here a typical example. This feature gives Kitamori's theology an abstract character. But the conceptual abstractness of his theology is interwoven with a very strong "anthropomorphic" way of speaking about God. We can observe this singular mixture of the two contrary ways of theological speech in *Pain*, 117-119, where Kitamori speaks of the three orders of the love of

not mean, of course, that Kitamori dismisses Scripture, creeds, confessions or traditions. On the contrary, he uses them extensively to confirm the validity of his concept of the Pain of God. This means, however, that he interprets these sources according to the already established truth of the Pain of God. In other words, these norms have no "creative and originative" function but "confirmative" significance. We understand that behind this procedure there is an implicit assumption in Kitamori's thought that all "norms" without exception witness to the Pain of God; there cannot be any contradiction between the orthodox traditions of the Christian faith and the Pain of God. It is therefore natural for him to bring these norms into a logically harmonious relationship with the Pain of God and make their "hidden" meanings explicit.

The conceptual development of the Gospel takes place according to its inherent dynamics. In Kitamori's view, the Gospel or the Pain of God precedes to its conceptualization, and this conceptualization follows the development of the Gospel itself.³¹² A critical examiner, however, can see this process in a different light. We have already observed that the initial vision of the Pain of God is still conceptually undifferentiated. Still one thing is absolutely clear to Kitamori, namely that God is "aching" for the sake of the sinner. God in Pain is not simply God in love in the

God. We can observe this singular mixture of the two contrary ways of theological speech in *Pain*, 117-119, where Kitamori speaks of the three orders of the love of God.

³¹²That a concept has an inherent *dynamis* is a dialectic way of thinking. Kitamori speaks of his way of thinking: "I can at least confess that this dynamic way of thinking of mine is here influenced indirectly by the philosophy of the Kyoto School" (*Auto II*, 148).

ordinary sense; it is much more than that! In his conceptual analysis of the Pain of God, Luther's idea of the wrath of God is included as an important *Ansatz*. But what has shaped the conceptual development of the Pain of God is actually the philosophy of the Kyoto School. The decisive influence of this school on Kitamori's theology is beyond doubt. "The love of God toward this world [the Pain of God] is," says he, "the self-identity of absolute contradictions."³¹³ Speaking of the inter-relationship of the three Persons of the Trinity, Kitamori uses the very term "the self-identity of absolute contradictions."³¹⁴ We thus clearly discern that the conceptual framework of Kitamori's theology is that of Nishida Philosophy. Kitamori, however, maintains that the influence of the Kyoto School remains formal in his theology. But in view of Kitamori's formulation of the Trinitarian dogma, one cannot but see that Kitamori "capitulated" to Nishida Philosophy.

We dare to maintain that the theology of the Pain of God is, to a considerable extent, a theological version of Nishida Philosophy. Although this is not the place for an in-depth discussion on the relationship between Kitamori's theology and Nishida Philosophy, it is still necessary for our present discussion to look at a

³¹³Ibid., 171.

³¹⁴"When the doctrine of the immanent Trinity is integrated with soteriology, the character of the doctrine changes considerably. In the divine Trinity there are now contradiction, discontinuity and friction. The aspect of one-ness in the Trinity as the theological axiom and the aspect of the three-ness in the theological reality are mutual contradictions to each other. But this absolute contradiction is integrated in the Trinity which is the 'axiom' and the 'reality' at one and the same time. Thus, the Trinity is the self-identity of absolute contradictions" (*Creeds*, 22). It is clear that a Trinitarian concept which quite alien to the Biblical witness is observable here. For an interpretation of this dialectic of the 'axiom' and the 'reality,' see 425-426 below.

specific passage from Kitamori and see whether our above contention is warranted.

An article written in 1948 under the title of "On Nishida Philosophy--the Philosophy of Nothingness and the theology of the Pain of God," Kitamori explains that Nishida's concept of the Absolute (which is "the Absolute Nothingness") ultimately remains in the reality of "tranquility," acknowledging no pain in the Absolute.³¹⁵ What seems striking to us in Kitamori's discussion is the following passage in which he comments on a quotation from Nishida:

"The Absolute God ["says Nishida, "] must include in Himself the absolute negation. He must descend into the [sphere of] extreme evil Only the God who saves the [sinners of] extreme evil and wrong doing is truly the Absolute God." In this saying, I should say that *Nishida Philosophy stands most closely to evangelical theology [the theology of the Pain of God]*. Here we must be most precise in our theological examination. So long as Nishida's God is identified with the Absolute Nothingness, it must decisively part ways with "the God in Pain. *The form of the logic [of Nishida's God] is almost undistinguishable [from that of the God of the Gospel]*. But the difference is apparent with regard to the quality of the logic [of the Absolute.]³¹⁶

In this passage Kitamori remarks on how close Nishida Philosophy is to evangelical theology. But he tries to draw a line of demarcation between Nishida and himself. We are not quite sure how successful Kitamori really is in this attempt to defend his theology against Nishida Philosophy by making a distinction between the "form and quality" of the logical structure of the concept of God (is this a real distinction, and not merely a terminological distinction?!). Though this issue is quite interesting, it is not our main concern here. Rather, we are interested in his way of describing the

³¹⁵*Philosophy and God* (Tokyo: Nihun-no-Barasha, 1985), 179.

³¹⁶*Ibid.*, 190.

closeness of Nishida Philosophy and evangelical theology (that is, his own theology). In Kitamori's view, Nishida Philosophy is one of the most profound thought systems; it unknowingly seeks the ultimate truth of reality, which is to Kitamori identical with the truth of God in Pain. But to those who know that Kitamori's theology has been formed under the strong influence of Nishida Philosophy, Kitamori's argumentation seems preposterous. In other words, it is evident that Nishida Philosophy stands very close to Kitamori's theology because Kitamori has conceptualized the Pain of God according to the categories of Nishida. It is not Nishida's concept of God which stands so closely to Kitamori's. It is Kitamori's concept of God which stands so closely to Nishida's idea of the Absolute. If we were to rewrite, in an "objective" way, what Kitamori writes in the passage above, it would run as follows: "Kitamori's theology stands most closely to Nishida Philosophy. . . . The form of the logic [of Kitamori's Pain of God] is almost indistinguishable [from that of Nishida's God]." This analysis of Kitamori's methodological feature shows that Kitamori has run the risk of bringing the whole framework of Nishida's metaphysics into his theology.³¹⁷

Kitamori's epistemology consists of his personal conviction of an infallible intuition and of the metaphysical dynamism which corresponds to the notion of intuition. This main characteristic of Kitamori's theological epistemology is quite akin to Nishida Philosophy.

³¹⁷For more of Kitamori's relation to the philosophy of the Kyoto School, see 448-450 below.

Analogy and Symbol

In theology--or philosophy, psychology or the other human sciences which have as their task the inquiry into the ultimate ground of reality and the depth of human reality, analogy and symbol are of crucial significance. They are the means by which man's cognition transcends its immediate limitations, the limitations which are conditioned by man's mode of being, namely, man as a spiritual and physical being. Theology extensively uses analogy, disregarding how the nature and function of analogy is conceived by different theological traditions. *Analogia entis* in the Thomistic tradition is well known; Barth's *analogia fidei (revelationis seu relationis)* is widely discussed.³¹⁸ Even other theological systems still presuppose some form of analogy and understanding of the nature of symbol even if inexplicitly.

From the outset, the theology of the Pain of God bears the obvious marks of an "analogical" theology. Pain ascribed to God is unmistakably conceived in an analogical sense. Kitamori discusses the issues and problems of analogy in his *opus magnum*, even if he deals with them only briefly. Kitamori, like Barth, holds that there is a serious problem in the Thomistic *analogia entis*. But the Japanese theologian shows more sympathy than Barth does concerning the intention of this type of analogy, for according to Kitamori, it is an expression of "a positive theological

³¹⁸A lucid presentation of the issues of analogy is found in: Horst Georg Pöhlmann, *Analogia entis oder Analogia fidei? : Die Frage der Analogie bei Karl Barth* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1965). Pöhlmann argues against the alternative "either analogia entis or analogia fidei" and tries to do justice to both types of analogies by placing the analogy of being in the sphere of general revelation and the analogy of faith in the sphere of special revelation according to the Lutheran scheme of Law and Gospel.

attitude.³¹⁹ When theology dares to speak of God, holds Kitamori, the use of analogy is inevitable. In its use of *analogia entis* Roman Catholic theology is not unaware of the existence of the distinction between God and man; Kitamori means the continuity between God and man in this concept of analogy is "continuity in discontinuity."³²⁰ As to Barth's concept of *analogia fidei*, however, Kitamori is critical, saying that "[in this theology] the proper meaning of analogy seems to have evaporated from the very beginning."³²¹

What then is Kitamori's own concept of analogy? Is there any need for him to investigate the implications of analogy in theological epistemology, given his strong reliance on intuition in grasping the essence of things and of God? Are the problems of analogy relevant for Kitamori, or for the intuitive thinking pattern as such for that matter? "Our pain," says Kitamori, "should serve as testimony to the Pain of God: in theological terms; there *emerges* between God and us an analogy (*analogia*) through the medium of pain."³²² This is the only sentence in his *opus*

³¹⁹*Itami*, 77 (*Pain*, 55).

³²⁰*Ibid.*, (*ibid.*).

³²¹*Ibid.*, (*ibid.*). This judgment of Kitamori is obscure; he gives no substantiation for this statement. It is well-known, however, that Barth's use of analogy as his theological method is extensive, although his *analogia revelation* has its basis on *von oben* (from Creator to creation), in distinction from *analogia entis von unten*. Barth's analogy as analogy is not questioned, although his "overuse" of it is widely criticized (see Heinz Zahrt, *Die Sache mit Gott* [Munich: Piper Verlag, 1966], 123-125).

³²²*Pain*, 54; italic is added. We are not certain of the meaning of this sentence. The translation in *Pain* seems to reflect a similar uncertainty. It can mean: Since there has been an analogy between God and man through the mediation of pain, man's pain can become the witness to the Pain of God (like *analogia entis*). It can

magnum in which Kitamori speaks of analogy as related to his own theology. And analogy in his theology is not something which *a priori* functions as a theological method of cognition. It is rather an *a posteriori* observation of its emergence through the union of God and man in "pain." Theoretically, it would be possible to suppose that this analogy that emerges serves as the point of departure within a hermeneutic circle. But the fact that the analogy in Kitamori's thought is an *a posteriori* consideration tells us that it, as a method of theology, is wholly dispensable in his thought. This is why he deals with it so scarcely.

Instead Kitamori approaches the problem of analogy "soteriologically." He sees the sin of disobedience also in analogy as a theological method. "In short," he writes, "man's disobedience is part of man's nature. The paramount problem of the Roman Catholic 'analogy of being' is that it hurriedly sought the solution without seriously thinking about what was basic in human existence. Catholic analogy has been unable to solve the question of disobedience because it went no further than the

also mean: Since God uses man's pain as the witness to His own Pain, there emerges an analogy (like *analogia revelationis*). Schmerz seems to accept in the former sense when it is translated as: ". . . zwischen Gott und uns eine analogia besteht, die durch den Schmerz vermittelt wird" (52). The original term is *seiritsu suru*, which literally means: "to constitute itself." So Pain faithfully translates the original wording, though perhaps uncertain of its meaning. In Kitamori's thought these two meanings need not be differentiated. It may mean both. But here Kitamori seems to intend the latter sense, namely that analogy emerges because the Pain of God uses the pain of man as its witness. In my view, however, there has never been a real problem concerning analogy as a theological method in Kitamori's thought since he means that our intuition or sensitivity plays a vital role in grasping the essence of God. Analogy, to him, is an *a posteriori* problem as it were, and it is the question of its "justification" by the Pain of God.

analogy of being."³²³ What, then, is the proper "remedy" for this deficient Catholic analogy? "The only analogy," Kitamori maintains, "which can solve the problem of disobedience . . . is the *analogy of pain (analogia doloris)*. In the pain of God, his power completely conquers the disobedience so deeply embedded in all human activities."³²⁴

This "soteriological" approach of Kitamori to the problem is fully in accord with what we have seen above in Kitamori's idea of the "redemption of theology." Sin is ubiquitous in man's existence as a whole, including his theological endeavor. In one sense, one could say that Kitamori may have seen "the very bottom" of the human situation also in this issue; but it is in fact quite "a matter of course," for Christian theology is a human endeavor only possible as *theologia regenitorum*, which means that a theologian is already forgiven his sins as a Christian before his theological efforts begin (as is the case with all his other activities). The forgiveness of sins is the "evident" presupposition for the sinner's continuing existence as a whole. However, the problem of analogy is, like other related methodological issues, that of epistemology which deals primarily with the law of human cognition; the question concerning analogy is whether one uses it correctly or incorrectly, and the answer is to be sought in epistemological reflection regarding one's use of analogy. Is it congenial with the Biblical witness?³²⁵ It is not a matter of the forgiveness of sins

³²³*Pain*, 56.

³²⁴*Ibid.*

³²⁵See note 73 above.

but of rational reflection about the suitability of a specific usage of analogy and of readiness to strive after its best possible use.

What is far more important than analogy in Kitamori's thought is "symbol." This can be seen in the fact that he reserves one whole chapter in his *opus magnum* for discussing the relationship between the Pain of God and its "symbol." First we examine what Kitamori means by "symbol." Speaking of the Pain of God as the *tertium* emerging from divine wrath and love, he says: "However, we cannot know directly what the pain of God is; we can know it only through *our own pain*. Our pain must witness to the pain of God by becoming the symbol of the pain of God."³²⁶ We notice here three points: first, Kitamori implies that there is distance between God and man; second, God's Pain can only be known through our pain; third, our pain becomes a symbolic witness to the Pain of God. These are the three major components of his dealing with the "symbolization" of our pain as a witness to God in Pain.

Now Kitamori briefly explains the nature of symbol while relying on Calvin's commentary on Jer. 31:20 (the very "proof-text" of Kitamori's theology). The Genevan reformer writes while commenting on this verse that the Lord is a long-suffering God who shows His love to the defiant people of His election on the basis of His covenant. At the end of his commentary on this verse, Calvin says concerning "the sounding of His bowels within Himself": "Sic etiam ubi Deus suscipit in se teneri patris affectum, dicit *viscera sua sonuisse*, quoniam velit rursus populum

³²⁶*Pain*, 54; italic is mine.

ipsum recipere in gratiam. Hoc *quidem* proprie in Deum non competit, sed quia non potest aliter experimere magnitudinem sui erga nos amoris, ideo *crasse* loquitur, ut se ruditati nostrae accomodet."³²⁷ Here Calvin emphasizes God's accommodation in conveying "the greatness of His love toward us" through the expression of the sound of His bowels. God uses, according to Calvin, this expression "where He has a *tender fatherly affection* in Himself." But this *viscera sua sonuisse* does *not* properly belong to God and Calvin emphasizes this by *quidem* and *crasse*. Kitamori quotes this part of the passage: "proprie in Deum non competit, sed quia non potest aliter experimere," because in this he finds the essence of symbol "expressed perfectly."³²⁸ In the phrase "non . . . proprie" Kitamori sees "inappropriateness [非本来性]" [of symbol?] while in "non . . . aliter", "the necessity of it [必然性]." This part of his discussion is not very clear. What does he consider by "inappropriate?" The term for "inappropriateness" which we give in the original Japanese characters reads *hi-honraisei*. This can refer either to "the Pain of God" or to an essential aspect of a symbol in its relation to that which it symbolizes. When in the English version of *Pain* this term is translated as "inappropriateness," the term is understood as referring to symbol, that is, the symbolism of a symbol is an inadequate pointer to the object. Kitamori, however, seems to indicate that the term refers to the Pain of God when he says that "because of this *hi-honraisei* [in the expression of the Pain of God], man,

³²⁷*Corpus Reformatorum*, 66, 677; emphasis is added.

³²⁸*Pain*, 60.

essentially different from God, is required as a witness."³²⁹ That pain (or the like) "properly" does not belong to God is Calvin's meaning. In view of Kitamori's use of Calvin's commentary on the verse, it seems as if Kitamori had concurred with the Genevan reformer on this point in order to "explicate" the meaning of symbol. But this use of *hi-honraisei* in referring to the Pain of God would be an "absolute contradiction" to his idea of the Pain of God as the essence of God. This is an obscure way of reading Calvin, because Kitamori changes the reference of the *hi-honraisei* from what Calvin means by "*non . . . proprie*," namely God's *viscera sua sonuisse*, to the "inappropriateness inherent to the essence of symbol."³³⁰ In

³²⁹Ibid.

³³⁰In response to the criticism that pain does not belong to God, raised by Masaichi Takemori, a New Testament scholar and Kitamori's colleague at TUTS, Kitamori writes: "The issue itself which is identified by the expression 'the Pain of God' undoubtedly exists in God and is therefore essential to God. But the expression 'pain' which points to the issue is, as Calvin says, a 'human emotion' and as such does not belong to God. A symbol has this two-fold aspect. Takemori thinks that since the 'expression' of pain does not belong to God, the issue itself does not belong to God either; this is apparently a misunderstanding due to the lack of a proper grasp of the meaning of the concept of symbol" (*Character*, 86). As far as Calvin's view is concerned, the reformer means that although the "issue" [the pain in God] does not belong to God, the "expression" is unavoidable to convey God's mercy to man; Calvin considers divine mercy the main point while pain is an expression which must give way once the main issue is gotten across (see further, Mozley, 120-122). Kitamori seems to have turned the meaning of the Reformer around. In addition to this, a very intricate problem of theological language is involved. Kitamori holds that the "expression" (that is, "human pain" in Kitamori's view) does not belong to God. In so saying, he makes it clear that there is a distance between God and man, a distance the analogical language presupposes. But the analogical language also presupposes a continuity between "*analogatum*" and "*analogans*," and that is why *analogia entis* is always exposed to the danger of gliding into a direct continuity. And it is, perhaps, even in the analogous sense that Takemori denied the pain in God. In fact, all the positive statements about God by human language are invariably analogous, and it is in the analogous level of language that we defend or challenge the passibility of God

other words, the inappropriateness of symbol is emphasized, but the question of the inappropriateness of the very ascription of "pain" to God is not questioned.

This is a "difficult" rhetorical operation on the part of Kitamori, but the motif behind it is clear, namely, on the one hand to assert the appropriateness of the concept of "pain" for God's reality and on the other hand to drive home the point that man's pain is "necessarily" required as a symbol to the Pain of God. "The essence of symbol lies in its *hi-honraisei* and necessity," says Kitamori, for this reason "man, essentially different from God, is required as a witness; because of the necessity, God, of necessity, requires man."³³¹ What he is saying is that the transcendental Pain of God is different from the pain of man. Therefore it cannot be known directly. In order to make the Pain of God known, God requires the pain of man as a symbol for His Pain. Because of the distance between God's Pain and human pain on the one hand and the need for a witness to the Pain of God on the other hand, the use of symbol is called for. This way of understanding the nature of symbol seems nearer to the concept of analogy.³³² It is exactly this condition of "inappropriateness and

or for that matter all other positive statements about God. The question then is whether the Pain of God, in an analogous sense, can be considered the essence of God. Our overall impression of Kitamori's discourse of the Pain of God, however, borders on a univocal direction of theological discourse, and attributes pain to God almost in its univocal sense. Kitamori's reason for using this rather intricate conceptual operation is clear: it is further defense of the essentiality of the Pain of God.

³³¹*Itami 84, (Pain, 60).*

³³²The meaning of symbol varies greatly, but we are interested here in its religious sense, namely, as a means with which to represent the transcendental reality. Apparently, symbol and analogy are closely related as, for instance, in the baptismal water; just as ordinary water cleanses, so the baptismal water cleanses man's impurity of sin. We can say to our present purpose that when a cognitive concern stands in the

necessity" under which analogy constitutes a bridge between God and man. In other words, one uses analogy where qualitative difference between an *analogatum* and an *analogans* is observed but still it is necessary for man to speak of the "analogatum" by the help of the "analogans." But Kitamori prefers symbol to analogy. We shall see the main reason for this preference toward symbol in the following. In passing, however, we mention another reason for the preference. Analogy emphasizes an essential difference between *analogatum* and *analogans*, God's Pain and human pain. But Kitamori's real inclination (contrary to his declared position) is to the effect that God's Pain is not qualitatively different from human pain; difference is found only in intensity. Kitamori is deeply devoted to the meaning of symbol. It has a "methodological" import in his theology, and this import is conceived not only on a theoretical level but also on an existential level.

We shall now see how Kitamori explains the meaning of symbol. The point of departure for his explication is the etymological analysis of the Greek term "*symballein*." According to his etymology, this Greek term means "to unite."³³³ "A symbol," says Kitamori, "witnesses to divine truth by uniting human and divine truth. Man's pain becomes a symbol of the pain of God because God and man are united

foreground, the analogical aspect of a symbol becomes predominant, whereas when the participation in the divine reality is the primary concern, the symbolical aspect of analogy comes into play. This close relationship between analogy and symbol is observed in Kitamori's thought. For the meaning of symbol, see E. Buess, "Symbol," in *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 3rd ed.; J. M. Sommerville, "Symbol," in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*.

³³³*Creeds*, 72.

through this condition in man."³³⁴

Apart from the question of whether or not his etymology of symbol provides a convincing basis for an important argument,³³⁵ his point is clear: man is *united* with God through the "symbolization" [象徵化] of his pain as a witness to the Pain of God.

To Kitamori, it is only through this "symbolization" of man's pain that one knows what the Pain of God actually is. In this "symbolization" there are three elements involved; the recognition of the Pain of God, the witness to it, and the union with God in Pain. In other words, in the symbolization of man's pain, theology, Christian existence and *union* with God are intimately integrated with each other. Let us now read what Kitamori writes about this triad in his theology:

The Pain of God is not the pain of anybody else; it is the Pain of God. The most difficult problem lies right here. We understand the pain of other human beings well. But we cannot know of the Pain of God. God is only God in so far as He is "qualitatively different" from man; God who can be known by man immediately is not God at all. For this reason it is said that God is known only by revelation. The Pain of God is only known by divine revelation. But how does the divine revelation become actual? It becomes actual only by the help of [man's] witness. God's truth is revealed through [man's] witness. But what is it that witnesses the truth of God? Nothing but the truth [pertaining to the reality] of man [人間的真理]. The truth of God is revealed through the witness of the truth of man. In witness the truth of God and the truth of man are united. But,

³³⁴*Pain*, 60-61.

³³⁵"Etymologically, the word 'symbol' can be traced to the Greek, '*symballein*,' which means to 'throw together' or simply to 'place together,' as when two things are juxtaposed for the purpose of comparison. In one of its noun forms, the comparing or setting together refers to the custom of tallying or dovetailing the two halves of a broken coin, called 'symbols,' in order to establish the identity of one or both of the persons possessing the matching halves" (Sommerville [see note 81 above]).

as we saw, divine truth and human truth are separated from each other by a "qualitative difference." In witness the two things which are infinitely separated are united. This "unity in the total discontinuity [断絶における結合]" we call symbol. Symbol[ization] is the act of uniting (*synzballein*) things which are in total discontinuity. . . . When the Pain of God is revealed, our pain must become its symbol as a witness to the Pain of God. That man's pain becomes the symbol of the Pain of God is to say that God and man are united in the condition of pain.³³⁶

We notice here a peculiar mixture of distance and closeness between God and man. Some logical inconsistencies are also observable. The nerve of the problem in this passage, however, is his understanding of the "actualization" of revelation. According to Kitamori, man's witness must have a constitutive significance in order for divine revelation to take place. Without a human witness, revelation cannot be actualized. What does Kitamori mean by this? We recall now that the content of God's revelation is the Pain of God. The truth of man must serve as a witness of the Pain of God. And the content of this "human truth" is the "ordinary" suffering of man. When we follow Kitamori's implicit argument in connection with this, we recall quickly what Kitamori expressed concerning the examples of Abraham, and Rachel, and the mothers whose infant boys under two years of age were killed by Herod.³³⁷ Kitamori thinks of the sufferings of these men and women as witnesses of the Pain of God. It is also with this understanding that Kitamori says that the "truth of God and the truth of man" are to be united in order for the Pain of God to become actual. And in this actualization, God in Pain and human beings witnessing to the Pain of God are

³³⁶*Character*, 51-52.

³³⁷See 355-356, above.

united in Pain. When Kitamori implicitly equates the divine and human truth with "common pain," we again discern how fundamental the concept of pain is in Kitamori's theology; it surely gains the most fundamental ontological status. In this regard Kitamori seems to suggest that the ultimate thing is Pain as a mystical reality, even if it might be "qualified" by love.³³⁸

However, our crucial question to Kitamori's concept of revelation is this: is not the revelation by the Son (including the prophetic and apostolic witnesses to this revelation) complete by itself? Is not the divine "symbolization" of His loving will through the incarnate Son not sufficient for us to know the "heart of God?" Did not the disciples behold "His glory, the glory as of the only begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14), without the mediation of human sufferings? Did not the hearts of the two disciples on the way to Emmaus burn within them while the risen Jesus talked with them and while He opened the Scriptures to them (Luke 23:32)? All this without any witness from the "human truth" of suffering! But when Kitamori says that the "human truth" of suffering must assist the actualization of the revelation of the divine truth (the Pain of God!), he must mean that the "ordinary," "external" word given in the Scriptures is not sufficient (although the Scriptures are traditionally understood as letting us encounter the triune God through the work of the Holy Spirit). This implies, then, that the Pain of God as the Gospel *de facto* is the deepest meaning and it can only be known through human suffering, especially through the suffering of those few who are qualified to perceive the Pain of God with

³³⁸See 367-368 above.

their keen spiritual sensitivity. Ordinary Christians may enjoy their "happy" days, but the selected few should never abandon their pain in order that they might witness to the Pain of God.³³⁹

But by what right, we must ask, can human suffering as such be qualified to such cardinal significance as the medium of divine revelation? Kitamori repeatedly emphasizes that human suffering is the expression of the wrath of God as His reaction to human sin. This fact of human pain, however, is embraced by the Pain of God and is changed into light as it is made to witness to the Pain of God.³⁴⁰ Kitamori finds a profound paradox here; human pain which, as the result of God's wrath over sin, is a radical separation from God is now made the sole means by which man is united with God. For Kitamori, this "paradox" again confirms the ultimacy of the Pain of God as absolute human salvation.³⁴¹ Thus when the Pain of God is understood as the ultimate truth hidden far behind the "clear" meaning of the Word of God, this ultimate truth, as "the King of Truth," must logically dictate in advance the result of Biblical exegesis, historical investigation, dogmatic examination and ethical thinking. Is this not the result of the closed circle which we mentioned above? With this methodological circle, it is quite natural that Kitamori's theology shows no substantial

³³⁹*Character*, 76; *Pain*, 64.

³⁴⁰*Itami*, 72-73.

³⁴¹*Character*, 59.

development since the day when "the theme" for his theology was revealed to him.³⁴²

This would also raise the question of whether Kitamori's theology has authentically heard the Word of God in its totality and diversity or if it has simply reflected other sources.

Analogy and symbol are methodological concepts, but in Kitamori's thought they are soteriologically developed. They are also absorbed into the Pain of God. The concept of symbol is filled with the content of the Pain of God, that is, "man's being united with God in Pain." "We recall," Kitamori writes, "that the word 'symbol' means *union* [] in its original Greek sense. The transformation of our pains into a symbol of the pain of God signifies our unity [] with God through pain. What does this union of God and man imply? It is a mystical condition, *union mystica*. It is clear, then, that the mystical

³⁴²It has been unfortunate for Japanese Protestantism that Kitamori did not develop his theology in a direction which could have been more effectively communicated to other theologians in Japan. One of his close friends, Yasushi Kuyama, wrote in 1953 of Kitamori's *opus magnum* that "the criticism Kitamori has made toward other theologies and philosophies hit the mark but it still seems to be only like memos; it is not a full-fledged [academic] confrontation with them." Carl Michalson, who introduced Kitamori to the West for the first time, wrote of the prospect of Kitamori's theological development: "It would be difficult to recall anyone in Western Protestantism of whom it can be said more truly than of Kitamori that the human imagination has been placed at the disposal of theology Will he [Kitamori] content himself with developing theological essays, not taking the trouble to construct a systematic theology? Or will he one day write the dogmatics implicit in 'the theology of the pain of God'? . . . In the case of the theologian who is still in his early forties, there is no real urgency about an answer to the line of questioning." In fact, Kitamori does not develop his theology beyond his *opus magnum*. The main content of the publications in recent years (under new titles) are the reprints of his writings from the 1950s and 1960s. It would be interesting to know whether or not his theological *Ansatz* has hindered him from further elaboration of his own theology.

[reality] is contained in the concept of symbol(!)."³⁴³

Application of the Pain of God as Method

"The Cross is the only loophole through which we gain the overview of the whole of God," wrote Kitamori when he was a university student.³⁴⁴ To him, the Cross is another name for the Pain of God. When we examine his theological methodology, we only confirm that he has followed this conviction consistently. Every theme of import is looked upon through the loophole of the Pain of God, and every profound idea is brought into harmony with the Pain of God. We now understand more what Kitamori means when he says that the Pain of God is not only the ultimate content of the Gospel but also his theological methodology as well. The Pain of God is really a powerful methodology in Kitamori's theology in the sense that it leads his exegetical, historical, systematic and practical investigations, from the very outset to the goal. The result of every investigation he undertakes eventually flows into the Pain of God. The sure goal is given and all that is left to do is to "walk" toward this goal or to "retrace" his steps from the goal to the point of departure. "Look out, look out, look out," he wrote while he was still struggling with Barth, "the only way I can walk without erring is the narrow way of the Cross."³⁴⁵ We shall now examine how the Pain of God as a method has functioned in Kitamori's theology;

³⁴³*Pain*, 70.

³⁴⁴*Auto II*, 85; " 十字架は神全体を見渡し得る唯一の鏡口である ."

³⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 120.

first, we shall see his "exegesis" of Scripture; second, his way of dealing with historical materials; third, his interpretation of dogmatic issues; and lastly, his "conversation" with non-Christian perspectives.

First, what is Kitamori's "exegetical" method? Before we examine this, it is necessary for us to briefly review his understanding of the Bible. In his article entitled "Another Aspect of Scriptology," he first maintains that various problems pertaining to the view of the Bible are not yet solved.³⁴⁶ In his view, the traditional discussion on the nature of the Bible has gone largely in the "noema-tic" direction,³⁴⁷ that is, in a direction in which the Bible is "objectified" and considered of as the formal and external authority standing over against the believer.³⁴⁸ Kitamori understands this view of the Bible to be legalistic. Being legalistic, the "objectified" Bible demands our obedience. But as an expression of the Law, this view only provokes sin, or disobedience of the Bible.³⁴⁹ The only way to solve this

³⁴⁶*Character*, 199-201.

³⁴⁷"Noema-tic" is here defined to explain Kitamori's use of the term. This term is originally from the Greek, *noema*, "a thing recognized." Together with this *noema*, another term *noesis* ("recognition") is used as a technical term in Nishida Philosophy. This also shows that Kitamori is deeply immersed in this philosophy. What Kitamori wants to say is that a proper view of the Bible should be formed in connection with "the existence of the believer," that is, the Bible is the Bible only insofar as it proclaims the Gospel to sinners. So to view the Bible independently from this speaking the Gospel to the sinner is irrelevant to Kitamori (*ibid.*, 202). In his view, the unity of *noema* and *noesis* aspects is required also for the actualization of the meaning of the Bible.

³⁴⁸*Character*, 204-205.

³⁴⁹*Ibid.*, 205; "When one maintains [as the 'noema-tic' aspect of the Bible] that 'God is the author of the Bible,' one cannot but acknowledge his obedience to the Bible. . . . This way of approaching scriptology is legalistic. . . . [As to the

fundamental scriptological problem is to regard the Bible as Gospel, that is, as the (expression of) love of God (the Pain of God!). When one is within the victorious love of God, it is impossible for sinners to fall outside or be disobedient to it. What Kitamori is saying is that to be in the Pain of God is to be *de facto* obedient to God. This same "principle" is also to be applied to the view of the Bible. According to Kitamori when one interprets the Bible under the norm of the Pain of God, this fact itself "guarantees" obedience to the (perhaps) "true" intention of the Bible.³⁵⁰

Formally speaking, Kitamori follows Luther's view of Scripture with the priority of the material principle as typically expressed in the dictum "was Christum treibet."³⁵¹

Kitamori substantiates his viewpoint by referring to Luther. As we readily notice, however, the content of "the material principle" in Kitamori's thought is the Pain of God, altering the dictum of Luther to read: "was den Schmerz Gottes treibt."

Beyond this Kitamori does not deal with the problems of scriptiology.³⁵²

Orthodox view of the Bible] one should say that it is legalistic. The Bible which speaks of the Gospel is looked upon legalistically as far as its formal aspect is concerned. *Contradictio in adjecto!*" (ibid.).

³⁵⁰"As long as the Bible stands over against us, we can be outside the Bible and our disobedience to it is possible. This is why the legalistic view of the Bible does not save us [from our disobedience to the Bible]. But how will it be if the Bible embraces us disobedient sinners within itself. In other words, if the Bible becomes to us the fact of the love of God? When we are embraced by the love of God, our disobedience becomes impossible. Since disobedience is going away from the love of God, our disobedience becomes an impossibility when we are embraced by the love of God in such a way that we cannot go away from it" (ibid., 208).

³⁵¹Ibid., 209-211.

³⁵²He mentions the inspiration of the Bible and also of the theory of verbal inspiration, but does not elaborate. His practical attitude toward the Bible is to accept the Bible as the divine word, without questioning the formal issues of the Bible.

One particular feature of Kitamori's understanding of Scripture needs to be mentioned: Kitamori reads the Bible more as an "esoteric" document which contains the eternal truth of God which man seeks to find out through his intuition and sensitivity than an historically conditioned document which is to be read in the light of historical contexts.³⁵³ In other words, the Bible hides profound truths of the divine mystery (the Pain of God!), truths even independent of the original intentions of the "human" authors. Thus, in some places he pays minute attention to various individual terms used in the Bible.³⁵⁴ Thus Kitamori's "exegesis" is to be characterized as an "in-depth method" in contrast to a historical and "contextual" method. This gives the impression that he espouse the verbal inspiration of Scripture, which he does not.³⁵⁵ To Kitamori, the Bible is itself powerful without any formal support, because it materially witnesses to the Pain of God.³⁵⁶ With this overview we proceed to look at some "exegetical examples" of Kitamori's work.

John 3:16 is known as the "little Bible," the Gospel condensed. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him

³⁵³For this "esoteric" reading of the Bible, see *Pain*, 124-126, where he deals with God's love and His wrath on the basis of Luke 12:4-7.

³⁵⁴See *Pain*, 44-45, where Kitamori on the basis of *eprepen* in Heb. 2:10 reads that the Pain of God is essential and necessary to God.

³⁵⁵"Yet we exclude from our discussion on scriptology the positive extreme of the theory of verbal inspiration and the negative extreme of 'liberal investigation' of the Bible (*Character*, 206).

³⁵⁶Kitamori's favorite expression is that "the Bible has a real power [to convince]," or " 聖書は実力をもっている " (his utterance in Kuyama, *Companion*, 119).

should not perish but have eternal life." To Kitamori, this is certainly a joyful message, but he says it is "by no means easy to understand; we need to give explanation to it for the truth in it to become actual."³⁵⁷ Why is it difficult to understand this verse? It is because the love of God here expressed is not simply love. In his view, "the love of God which had never become actual before the giving up of the Son has now become actual by this very giving."³⁵⁸ So he reads the "little Bible" as follows: God now loves the world because He gave up His only begotten Son.³⁵⁹ To him, this central verse cannot be the expression of God's "immediate" love; it must be the expression of (the love based upon) the Pain of God. Accordingly, the verb *edoken* is not a "simple" benevolent divine giving; it primarily signifies an "abandoning" [放棄する];³⁶⁰ "God the Father has abandoned God the Son in order to save the world."³⁶¹ Thus, John 3:16 is the "tragic word" of God.³⁶² The traditional reading of this verse, in Kitamori's view, is then a superficial reading, having no sensitivity for the deepest meaning of God's love through Pain. To him, therefore, it is essential for the believer to keep in mind that God's love for the world is divine love through God's Pain.

³⁵⁷*Short Meditations on Biblical Verses* (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobo, 1964), 96.

³⁵⁸*Auto I*, 211.

³⁵⁹*Ibid.*

³⁶⁰*Dialogue*, 172; *Introduction to the Bible*, 153.

³⁶¹*Negation*, 150.

³⁶²*Pain*, 43.

The second "example" is taken from Luke 16:19-30. This passage is discussed in connection with the "symbolization" of man's pain to witness to the Pain of God that man might become united with God in Pain. "Does not the story of the rich man and Lazarus . . . shed light on the above-discussed point [man's union with God in Pain]," writes Kitamori.³⁶³ In his comment on this passage, he warns that "we should not read into this text a value judgment of good or evil, nor faith and unbelief."³⁶⁴ In Kitamori's "exegesis" (and *not eingesis!*), this story should mean that "man [as Lazarus] (regardless of his goodness or his faith) is united with God by his pain; man [as the rich man] (regardless of his goodness or his faith) is severely estranged from God by his lack of pain."³⁶⁵ But the rich man in Hades, where his pain is now actualized, "too . . . saw from far off the symbol of the pain of God," and "cannot we then say," Kitamori asks, "that he also is received into union with him [God in Pain]?"³⁶⁶ "Is this not the truth of Christ's 'descending into hell,' as well as the truth [真理契機] of the doctrine of universal salvation?" How can we characterize this is "exegesis" of Kitamori?!"³⁶⁷ A speculative exegesis or rather *eingesis*?! This has only been possible, it seems, because Kitamori is so absolutely convinced of the truth of the Pain of God!

³⁶³Ibid., 63.

³⁶⁴Ibid.

³⁶⁵Ibid.

³⁶⁶Ibid.

³⁶⁷Ibid.

The third case is also from his *opus magnum*. In the chapter dealing with the "Transcendence and Immanence of the Pain of God," Kitamori takes up Matt. 25:31-26:13 in order to substantiate this notion of the dialectic of transcendence/immanence.³⁶⁸ What Kitamori wants to demonstrate in this chapter is the priority of the Pain of God over man's pain. In other words, the priority of the forgiveness of sins must be maintained over socio-ethical concern. So Kitamori proceeds in his explanation of the point. In connection with the "prophecy" by Jesus of the Last Judgment, Kitamori writes that according to this story God's judgment "will finally determine our destinies."³⁶⁹ And the criterion of this judgment is "the love toward this actual world." "What we learn from this Scripture passage," he writes, "is that God expects us to love Him, not as the immediate object of our love, but rather through love for our neighbors."³⁷⁰ God is in solidarity with suffering humanity; that is, the Pain of God is *immanent* in this world. So it is vital for the disciples of Christ to love suffering neighbors as if the suffering neighbors were God Himself. But this is not the whole story. In the following story, in which we read about a woman who poured very expensive ointment on Jesus for his burial, Kitamori finds something diametrically opposite to what Jesus described of in His judgement "prophecy." In Kitamori's reading, Jesus commanded His disciples to be in solidarity with suffering neighbors, but here He says something quite different. "Speaking a bit

³⁶⁸Ibid., 98-100.

³⁶⁹Ibid., 98.

³⁷⁰Ibid.

strongly," he interprets Jesus' intention, "Jesus would say: 'you [the disciples] may leave the poor to themselves; you have to concentrate your concern on me.'³⁷¹ This should be a surprise to the disciples, explains Kitamori, because in accusing the woman of wasting the expensive ointment (which could have been exchanged for money and given to the poor) they only "applied" what the Master had taught. But they are now reproached by the Lord. Kitamori, however, sees here the *transcendence* of the Pain of God. In view of the solemn reality of the Pain of God "that God himself in the person of the Son is about to be buried," all the other human pains totally lose their colors.³⁷² In so arguing, Kitamori tries to secure the transcendence of the Pain of God, because it corresponds to the priority of the forgiveness of sin vis-à-vis "worldly" help for one's neighbors. Thus on the basis of the two stories, Kitamori finds the two aspects of the Pain of God, the immanent aspect and the transcendent aspects. Whether it is in accord with the intention of the text to teach us these two aspects of the Pain of God--we do not mean this literally but in its theological substance--is an open question. Apparently, on the basis of these texts Kitamori intends to find both aspects of Christian existence, for the Church as well as for individuals. But the net effect of this "exegesis"--also his intention--is to justify the Church's modus operandi in the actual reality, transcending the world only on its "surface level." But this interpretation of these Scripture passages in the scheme of the transience-immanence dialectic of the Pain of God has been severely

³⁷¹*Itami*, 152 (*Pain*, 100).

³⁷²*Ibid.*, 152-153, (*ibid.*, 100-101).

criticized.³⁷³

Lastly, we review his "exegetical" study of Jer. 31:20 and Is. 63:15. As we mentioned above, Jer. 31:20 is the "proof-text" of Kitamori's theology of the Pain of God. Is. 63:15 also contains the very term, *hamah* and for Kitamori this is the text which confirms that the Pain of God is "at once" the love of God, due to the fact that the one word has a dual meaning of both "pain" (Jer. 31:20) and "intense love" (Is. 63:15). How is it with the Jeremiah verse? It reads: "Is Ephraim My dear son? Is he a pleasant child? For though I spoke against him, I earnestly remember him still; therefore My heart yearns ["My bowels ache" in an older Japanese translation] for him; I will surely have mercy on him, says the Lord." This "exegetical" study is now included in the *opus magnum* as an "Appendix," which was originally written before

³⁷³Hidetoshi Watanabe, one of the most vocal critics of Kitamori, finds "a interpretative distortion." in Kitamori's "reading out" of the transcendence of the Pain of God from Matt. 26:6-13. Watanabe writes: "But Jesus said: 'For you have the poor with you always (*pantote*), but Me you do not have always (*ou pantote*).' What is here compared is the contrast (made by the help of the two temporal adverbs) between the issue the disciples have with them 'always' and the issue of 'not always' (that is, the thing actual only *now*). In Kitamori this [temporal] contrast is changed into a non-temporal contrast of actual reality and the transcendental reality over it. . . . What Jesus emphasizes here is the historical *ephapax* of His Passion--'only now.' The Son suffers in the midst of history. Jesus walking toward the Cross is the pain of God itself, God in pain who becomes immanent the suffering of the world. How can we speak of the poor without gazing at the 'now' of the *ephapax* in the pain of God. . . . If we do not see in the Cross of Jesus God in pain who bears the pain of the world (and thus the world borne by the pain of God), we can never see the pain of God immanent to the pain of the world" (*Contemporary Mission and Biblical Exegesis* [Tokyo: Shinkyō Shuppansha, 1986], 69-70). This criticism is significant because, as we see in the quotation, Watanabe regards the pain of God as a valuable theological insight. Watanabe criticizes Kitamori's logic in this exegesis: "We cannot accept a dialectic which cuts the head and the body from a living man and tries to put it back together claiming that 'now we have a living body'" (*ibid.*, 68).

the *opus magnum* itself and included in his second work, *Theology and Creeds*. In distinction from his other "exegetical" work with Scripture (as we have seen above and other places), this study follows a more solid exegetical procedure; Kitamori compares various occurrences of *hamah*, consults lexicons, refers to Luther and Calvin and other modern authorities.³⁷⁴ (This study seems to show the possibility that had Kitamori been more meticulous about his exegesis, his theology would have been more convincing and easier to communicate.) What he wants to "get across" is that Jer. 31:20 truly expresses the Pain in God, and not merely love. As far as this point is concerned, namely that God suffers pain, Kitamori's arguments stand well. God can suffer, and can experience pain. Beyond this, however, neither the Jeremiah text nor the Isaiah text "prove" anything; in other words, they do not by themselves support the Pain of God as the *tertium* emerging out of the wrath and the love of God. The Jeremiah text speaks rather of the love of God for the astray Ephraim; a "plain" reading of the verse shows that God has a painful feeling toward Ephraim "directly" and not a kind of love which had gone through an inner-divine struggle which Kitamori calls the Pain of God.³⁷⁵ When Kitamori claims that "there is absolutely no

³⁷⁴Still *Schmerz* gives it as "*Meditation* über Jer. 31, 20 und Jes. 63, 15" and not as "Exegese" (152; italic is added).

³⁷⁵Jeremiah is the most tender-hearted prophet of the Old Testament. From his prophesy we can learn from his prophesy the love of God for straying people. We see God's unquenchable and longing love through the heart of the prophet, for instance in the verse: "'Return, backsliding Israel,' says the Lord, 'I will not cause My anger to fall on you, for I am merciful, says the Lord; 'I will not remain angry forever'" (Jer. 3:12; 4:1-3, 8:4-7, 15:5-8). Even in the fierce pronouncement of divine judgement, one reads God's sorrowful love toward Judah between the lines (cf. Jer. 4:27-29). God's sorrowful love for His straying people fully sides with the people.

more appropriate expression of the truth of the Cross than this expression [found in the Jeremiah *hamah*],³⁷⁶ it certainly is beyond the warrant of the text, at least in the sense of the Pain of God. It is, in reality, Kitamori's own perception apart from the text.

Our impression gained from even a cursory review of Kitamori's reading of the Bible has clearly revealed that the Biblical text does not support Kitamori's idea of the Pain of God but the Pain of God guides his reading of the text; the idea of the Pain of God even "elucidates" the text's meaning beyond its "external clarity." In view of this we should perhaps recall that the Pain of God was "revealed" in Kitamori's vision prior to his "discovery" of the Jeremiah text!³⁷⁷

The Pain of God as a theological method is used also in the field of "historical" investigation. Kitamori sees his concept of the Pain of God as the background of church history, especially of the history of dogma. His point is that the whole of the historical development of the central doctrine of Christianity has reached its zenith, as it were, in his concept of the Pain of God.³⁷⁸ Briefly, we shall see Kitamori's method in tracing the line of the dogma-historical development of the

Jer. 31:20 also depresses the undivided love of God for the people. In this sense, we cannot read the verse as Kitamori seems to: "My bowels ache in Me because your sins arouse My anger and I have to fight within Me to overcome My own wrath, thus having Pain in Me when I still want to love you." We should hold to a "plain reading," because it is this love God wants us to know more than what is going on in Himself.

³⁷⁶Itami, 84 (*Pain*, 59).

³⁷⁷See Chap. 3, 25.

³⁷⁸See note 117 in Chap. 3 above.

doctrine of the Trinity. In two articles entitled "The Fourth Century, the Sixteenth Century and the Twentieth Century" and "The Ecumenical Creeds and the Particular Creed" in *Theology and Creeds*, Kitamori makes a short survey of the Trinitarian development in the Ecumenical Creeds (Apostolicum, Neca[e]no-Constantinopolita]num and Athanasianum) in trying to find out their inner connection with the "Particular Creed" (Confessio Augustana). In Kitamori's view, the development of the Trinitarian dogma from Apostolicum through Necaenum to Athanasianum has been driven forward by the inner necessity of the Gospel (the Pain of God!) itself.³⁷⁹ He maintains that theologians through the centuries, while they took pains to formulate the Trinitarian dogma, in reality worked hard to do justice to the reality of the Gospel without knowing toward which specific goal they were striving.³⁸⁰

Before we follow his "historical" survey, we recall his own understanding of the Trinitarian dogma in his scheme of the theological "axiom" and "reality." According to his conception, the threeness of the Godhead corresponds to the different aspects of man's existence before God; in other words, the Father corresponds to man's existence in the order of creation (under wrath!); the Son, in the order of reconciliation (the Pain of God); the Spirit, in the order of sanctification (God's triumphant power of love). This is what Kitamori calls the "theological reality." The "theological axiom" is identical with the content of the order of reconciliation in the "theological reality", but, at the same time, functions as the field in which all the

³⁷⁹*Creeds*, 7.

³⁸⁰*Ibid.*, 62-63.

aspects of the "theological reality" find themselves in a dialectical unity. This dialectic tries to do justice to all the aspects of man's existence before God; man under the wrath of God and in the hope of final redemption is ultimately supported by the reconciliation in the Son (the Pain of God). This soteriological structure corresponds to the Trinitarian structure as "axiom" and "reality," that is, as the theological "axiom" God is one (*Solus Christus!*), whereas as the theological "reality" God is three (*Pater, Filius et Spiritus Sanctus*).

According to Kitamori, the *proprium* of each divine Person vis-a-vis man's existence is formulated in the Apostolicum "with astonishing clarity."³⁸¹ This, he says, is the creed of "the theological reality."³⁸² In this lies its strength. However this strength involves weakness as to the "axiom" aspect of the dogma.³⁸³ In other words, wrath, reconciliation and redemption are all independent and not soteriologically integrated; in Kitamori's view the first article of the creed denies the forgiveness of the second article by its emphasis on divine wrath, while the third article is repugnant to the second because the third claims actual transformation of the sinner to actual righteousness. This weakness in the Apostolicum is bound to call for a creed which emphasizes the oneness of the Trinity.³⁸⁴

In Kitamori's view of creedal development, the Nicaenum stands between the

³⁸¹Ibid., 58-59.

³⁸²Ibid., 58.

³⁸³Ibid.

³⁸⁴Ibid.

Apostolocum and the Athanasianum, not only chronologically but primarily theologically. He maintains that "the Nicaenum is the creed of Christology," or "the creed of the [theological] axiom."³⁸⁵ The main contribution of this creed, says Kitamori, is its establishment of the "essential" unity of the Father and the Son by the term "*homo-ousios*."³⁸⁶ To Kitamori, however, this unity of the three Persons in the Godhead is a unity in the Son, or the Christological unity. But a full-fledged formulation of the unity aspect of the Trinitarian dogma is not yet available in the Nicaenum. Even though the concept "*homo-ousios*" points to the unity of the Father and the Son, the "*homo-ousios*" of the Spirit is still "out of sight."³⁸⁷ "The Nicaenum has opened the way," writes Kitamori, "in coming nearer to the truth of the unity in Trinity, which is of infinite importance."³⁸⁸

The Athanasianum, he says, completed the classical development of the Trinitarian dogma by giving a "perfect expression" to the Trinity; *Unum Deum in Trinitate, et Trinitatem in Unitate*.³⁸⁹ "How long the Church had waited for this truth [of the Trinity] to be formulated in a creed in such a way!"³⁹⁰ He, however, finds no substantial Christology in the Athanasianum; although in the second part of

³⁸⁵Ibid., 61.

³⁸⁶Ibid., 60.

³⁸⁷Ibid.

³⁸⁸Ibid.

³⁸⁹Ibid., 62.

³⁹⁰Ibid.

the creed, holds Kitamori, one reads a somewhat Chalcedonian description of Christology. Still, "no necessary [organic] inner-connection between the first part and the second part can be recognized in it," observes Kitamori.³⁹¹ Thus, the way to the Christological Trinity, which Nicaenum had opened, was closed again. In his view, a real integration of the Trinitarian dogma on the basis of Christology--that is, on the basis of soteriology--did not take place throughout this early development of the dogma, although the Nicaenum and the Athanasianum both tried to solve the problem left uncompleted by the Apostolicum. Thus creedal history develops into the Reformation era, jumping over the Middle Ages--the ages of "another gospel."³⁹²

"Confessio Augustana," writes Kitamori, "is the first creed [confession] of the Evangelical church" in which one can find "the particular force of all the Reformation creeds preeminently expressed."³⁹³ He confirms that in it [Confessio Augustana] soteriology "or, put more exactly, the doctrine of justification" occupies the central place.³⁹⁴ To Kitamori, however, neither the Augsburg Confession nor the Smalcald Articles of Luther is quite explicit with regard to "its *inner* connection with the ecumenical creeds."³⁹⁵ On this observation, Kitamori proposes to "read Article I

³⁹¹Ibid.

³⁹²Ibid., 63.

³⁹³Ibid.

³⁹⁴Ibid.

³⁹⁵Ibid., 64. Since Kitamori holds that Luther "just passed by this doctrine without particular attention," it is necessary for us to insert a comment on Luther's understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity. As to the "scrutinization" of the divine Trinity, writes Klaus Schwarzwaller, "Luther betant seine Hilflosigkeit diesem

of the Confession [viz., the trinitarian dogma] in a different light," and advances his view that the trinitarian article of the Confession be read as the "methodology" for [the understanding of] the soteriological truth which is developed in the following articles in the Confession.³⁹⁶ For "the dogma of the Trinity is the structure of the Gospel and soteriology."³⁹⁷ According to him, what the ecumenical creeds sought but failed to grasp and what the Reformation Confession now sheds light on, is "a Christological Trinity," that is a soteriological Trinity.³⁹⁸ With this

Gegenstand gegenüber und desse Sprödigkeit gegen alle Logik wie überhaupt Uneinsichtigkeit für den menschlichen Verstand, derzufolge man hier nur stammeln kann" (*Theologia crucis* [Munich: Chr. Keiser Verlag, 1970], 201-202). But in establishing of the inscrutability of the divine majesty, says this author, it "suddenly" becomes necessary and meaningful. Only against this background does Luther's understanding of the trinitarian dogma gain its clear contour that "in Christum und seinem Evangelium, hier und nur hier begegnet Gott" (ibid., 205). One must conclude that Luther's concept of the divine Trinity is soteriological. Here "soteriological" strictly means that we recognize God as the Giver of salvation. In other words, it is not for us to speculate about *Gott an sich*, as we can see in the following passage from Luther: "Der Vater gibt sich uns mit Himmel und Erden samt allen Kreaturen. . . . Aber solche Gabe ist durch Adams Fall verfinstert und unnütze worden. Darum hat darnach der Sohn sich selbst auch uns gegeben, all sein Werk, Leiden, Weisheit und Gerechtigkeit geschenkt und uns dem Vater versüht Weil aber solche Gnade niemand nütze wäre, wo sie heimlich verborgen bliebe, . . . so kommt der Heilige Geist and gibt sich auch uns ganz und gar, der lehret uns solche Wohltat Christi" (WA 26, 505f., quoted in Jan Koopmans, *Das altkirchliche Dogma in der Reformation* [Munich: Chr. Keiser Verlag, 1955], 104-105). As we have seen, Kitamori also speaks of a soteriological doctrine of the Trinity, but we find a basic difference between him and Luther: while Luther sees the three divine Persons *in Christ*--and as *pro nobis*, Kitamori sees into the mystery of the Trinity through Christ--primarily *Deus in se*. For Luther, the full knowledge of the divine Trinity has been reserved until we shall see it in *lumen gloriae*. But for Kitamori it is already available here and now.

³⁹⁶Ibid., 64-65.

³⁹⁷Ibid., 65.

³⁹⁸Ibid., 67.

"Christologization" of the Trinitarian dogma, the "*inner* connection" between the ecumenical creeds and the Reformatory, "particular" creed, holds Kitamori, is *explicitly* established. However, this explication of the latent inner connection between the ecumenical creed and the particular confession [of the Reformation] is not made by the Reformation itself, but *by us*.³⁹⁹ Kitamori maintains that "our *interpretation*" of the Trinitarian dogma, formulated in Article I of Confessio Augustana as the methodology for understanding the Gospel, is "not an arbitrary act [on our part] but it is the result of our following the necessity which the issue [the Gospel] itself requires."⁴⁰⁰

Thus, what Kitamori sees as the ultimate formulation of the Trinitarian dogma is a "Christological Trinity," in other words, a soteriological formulation of the dogma of the Trinity. This means, in substance, that the Trinitarian dogma is nothing but the formal framework of the truth of the Pain of God.⁴⁰¹ In order for the Trinitarian dogma to reach final clarity and formulation, it had to go through the Reformation and eventually reach the theology of the Pain of God.⁴⁰²

³⁹⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰⁰Ibid.

⁴⁰¹"When we grasp the dogma of the immanent Trinity together with the existence of the sinner--or unite the dogma with the love of God in the Gospel, the dogma of the Trinity necessarily becomes the theology of the Pain of God. By the dogma of the Trinity, the truth that the Cross of Christ is in the divine 'inside.' This 'inside' is nothing but the essence of God. When the theology of the cross and Trinitarian theology are integrated, the theology of the Pain of God necessarily emerges" (*Character*, 80).

⁴⁰²*Creeds*, 67.

We observe the same historical viewpoint in the presentation of Kitamori's so-called "Gospel History" in his *opus magnum*.⁴⁰³ Taking Acts 17:26-27 as his point of departure, he argues that each nation has been divinely assigned its specific contribution to the deepening and clarification of the Gospel. The Jewish nation had its appointed time and assignment; the Greco-Roman world had its own; the Germanic nation had its own. There have been antitheses between Jew and Gentile, between the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant Church concerning the understanding of the Gospel. And in these antitheses it has been the latter (Gentile and Protestant) which preserved the Gospel and deepened the understanding of it. However, neither Germanic spirituality nor Greek spirituality possessed the crucial sensitivity to the Pain of God.⁴⁰⁴ "Even in the case of the *Gottesgestalt* which Luther admired and adored," writes Kitamori, "we cannot but help saying [to the reformer], 'Friend, not to that melody.' Certainly, Luther possessed a sensitivity to God's grace, but he did not grasp the meaning of grace as God's pain."⁴⁰⁵ In fact, holds Kitamori, the Japanese people were uniquely qualified by their sensitivity to pain to grasp the deepest feature of God: God in Pain. But this view of God, Kitamori warns, is not a relative one that stands beside the Graeco-Roman view of God or the German view.⁴⁰⁶ For "the Pain of God is the definitive expression of the Biblical view of

⁴⁰³*Pain*, 128-130; see also *Creeds*, 28-30.

⁴⁰⁴*Pain*, 133.

⁴⁰⁵*Itami*, 202 (*Pain*, 133).

⁴⁰⁶*Ibid.*, 207 (*ibid.*, 136).

God,"⁴⁰⁷ in other words, the ultimate penetration to the essence of God. "The loss of this definitive issue [the Pain of God]," warns Kitamori, "means the misfortune of the Church in the whole world."⁴⁰⁸ Following Kitamori's sweeping generalization of historical data, one is deeply astonished that it is possible for a theologian to quickly assert such an absolute claim about his view and his theological idea without supplying adequate documentary substantiation. Is this a prophetic vision? Given the fact that Kitamori does not elaborate on this gigantic claim, we have no grounds to assess his vision. What we have certainly learned, however, is that Kitamori sweeping historical perspective can only be founded on an extraordinarily strong conviction of the truth of the Pain of God. Kitamori's argumentations seem to be difficult to follow, but this fierce conviction of Kitamori alone stands out. The Pain of God is surely a "powerful" method, also in historical investigation.

In examining the third point of Kitamori's idea of the Pain of God as theological method, we shall now see it applied to his work in dogmatics. In fact, we have already sufficiently seen the centrality of the idea of the Pain of God when we dealt with "God in Pain" and "Man in the Pain of God" in the previous chapter. The same feature can be seen also in his "historical" study of the Trinitarian dogma in the above; the Pain of God as "the conclusion" directed all the arguments to corroborate. However, it is still necessary to see one more aspect of his methodology which is observed in the crucial *locus* of dogmatics, namely Christology.

⁴⁰⁷Ibid.

⁴⁰⁸Ibid.

To Kitamori's theology, Christology is of principal importance both in content and in methodology. He adopts two mottos as his own methodological standpoint. One is 1 Cor. 2:2: "For I determined not to know anything . . . except Jesus Christ and Him crucified"; the other is Luther's "Christocentric" dictum from the Heidelberg Disputation: "In Christo crucifixio est vera Theologia et cognitio Dei." In fact, 1 Cor. 2:2 is also Luther's motto for his first Lectures on the Psalms. In this sense, Kitamori has made these two "Christocentric" mottos his own. Now it is our interest to learn in what sense this "Christocentricism" is understood in Kitamori's theology; in other words, how is Christology conceived in relation to his basic idea of the Pain of God?

We recall that his first publication was entitled "The Lord of the Cross." It would then be natural for us to turn to this work first. In reality, however, this work does not deal with Christology proper. It mainly deals with the issues of dogmatic "prolegomena," and we have already seen above what his concept of "prolegomena" is and how he has "solved" its issues. The table of contents of this work demonstrates what we have observed.⁴⁰⁹ In this work, Kitamori characterizes "God the Son as the Pain of God."⁴¹⁰ "God the *Son*," he writes, "that is, Jesus Christ, is God for us only

⁴⁰⁹The Table of Contents runs: 1. Introduction; 2. The Cross Alone; 3. The Trinity (the Love based upon the Pain of God); 4. God the Son (" . . . Pain . . ."); 5. God the Father ("God . . ."); 6. The Holy Spirit (. . . Love); 7. The Gospel as Fact; 8. The Bible; 9. The True Church; 10. The Situation Today; 11. Conclusion; all these issues are condensed in 71 pages.

⁴¹⁰*Cross*, 23.

as the one God together with the Father and the Spirit."⁴¹¹ "God the Son is the Son of God the Father," he continues, "and we show this [relation] by the fact that 'the Pain' is 'the Pain of God.' This means that the [real] subject of the Pain [observable in Christ] is God."⁴¹²

Kitamori shows that the designation of the Son as the Pain of God involves three things; first, what is revealed in Christ is neither God's wrath nor God's love, but the love conquering the wrath of God, "that is, the Pain of God" which is "self-identity of the two absolutely contradictory realities: God's wrath and God's love";⁴¹³ second, that the Son is the Pain of God points to the self-identity of God the Father and God the Son, or the self-identity of the God who "decrees the death of the sinner" and the God who "still loves this sinner as His own";⁴¹⁴ third, that the Son Jesus Christ is the Pain of God points to the fact that "Law and Gospel are one in Christ," in other words, Christ was cursed by Law and crucified for us, but "Law is the will of the Lord of the Gospel, thus the Pain of God emerges."⁴¹⁵ The detailed exegesis of this reference is, however, not our primary concern here, though it contains

⁴¹¹Ibid., 22-23.

⁴¹²Ibid., 23.

⁴¹³Ibid.

⁴¹⁴Ibid., 23-24.

⁴¹⁵Ibid., 25.

"provocative" viewpoints.⁴⁶ What we want to note is that Kitamori's Christology is *a priori* designated as the Pain of God. This means that the basic conceptual category for Christology is God's Pain. This is fully in keeping with his theology.

What does this *Ansatz* of Christ as the Pain of God entail in Kitamori's Christology? His Christology is concentrated on the Cross of Christ as divine Pain, and this at the cost of other Christological aspects. Certainly, the Cross of Christ is the most essential reality of Christian theology, and concentration on the Cross as such can be said to be the touchstone of all true evangelical theology. But even this concentration on the Cross is not "free" of the danger of misinterpreting the Gospel.⁴⁷ What we have in mind is that according to our understanding of Kitamori, "Christ the Crucified" is made into a cognitive "tool" in the process of penetrating to the deepest mystery of God. As a matter of fact, after a thorough reading of his writings, we are left with a strange feeling about the meagerness of Christology in Kitamori's thought. Although he often speaks of the Cross of Christ,

⁴⁶The last point sounds as if it were a "Barthian" statement of "*Offenbarungsmonismus*" in which "Gospel and Law" (in this order!) is defined as the one word of God. Formally, Kitamori follows the scheme of Barth. Further, this way of seeing Gospel and Law is also influenced by Nisida's dialectic, with the result that the antithesis between Law and Gospel, the traditional Lutheran understanding, is synthesized (or "*aufgehoben*") in the Pain of God. We shall deal with this issue more in the next chapter.

⁴⁷Here is a fine point which is of vital importance. When we speak of the Cross of Christ, the ultimate emphasis should not be on the Cross but on Christ, not on suffering as such but His suffering for our salvation. The Cross is the divine "means" to reveal His ultimate salvific will. When Kitamori makes use of the term the "Cross alone" (see note 158), a dangerous misconception of the Cross of Christ is at hand.

he devotes very little of his attention to the suffering of the earthly Christ Himself.⁴¹⁸

"We are thinking here of Christ's struggle and pain as Man in His earthly life from His birth through His public life to Golgotha, as is described for instance in Heb. 5:7-10; 4:15-16; Matt. 26:36-39. (Incidentally, we do not find these references within his *opus magnum*). In this regard, we can even say that Kitamori's concept of the Pain of God is overwhelmingly concerned with the Pain of the Father.⁴¹⁹ In a sense, it is a striking feature. Perhaps, an accusation (by Yoshio Noro, for instance) of Kitamori's theology as a form of patripassianism may have been occasioned by this specific feature.⁴²⁰

Still, some other features of Kitamori's Christology must be mentioned.

Christ as the Pain of God can be designated as a "negative" Christology in the sense that this Pain is a negative reality. But when we refer to the New Testament, we

⁴¹⁸The Pain of God must be distinguished, writes Kitamori, "from what Ignatius calls the 'suffering of our God' (*tou pathous tou theou mou*, on Rom. 6:3). . . , " for this "position indicates only the suffering of Jesus on earth. . .". (*Pain*, 115; emphasis is added).

⁴¹⁹"The Son [, 'when the Father crucified the Son,'] is the Pain of God because the Son is the Son of the Father. And the Father is also the Pain of God because He is the Father of the Son. Since the Son is born of the Father, the Father is *the first in the order* [of the Pain of God]. The Son is the mirror of the heart of the Father 'He who has seen Me has seen the Father' (John 14:9)", "The Recognition of God in Christ" (Graduation Thesis, Japan Lutheran Theological Seminary, 1937), 288; underline is original, while the italics are mine. We see here that the Pain of the Father is the main concern for Kitamori. In a recent publication, this point is criticized: "Though Kitamori speaks of the pain of the Father, does he develop the pain of God as the pain of the Son? The pain of God the Son is not his main theme" (Yoshiki Terazono, *The Range of the Theology of Barth* [Tokyo: Jordan-sha, 1987: cf. note 373 above).

⁴²⁰See Kitamori's defence on this point, *Pain*, 15-16.

observe a "positive" Christology, in which Christ is seen as the Healer and Conquerer of human predicaments, even of physical sufferings. Christ's answer to the disciples of John the Baptist is a case in point: "The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them" (Matt. 11:5). And it may not be totally accidental that in Kitamori's *opus magnum* the reports of Jesus' miracle are entirely missing. Furthermore, Jesus promises the unalloyed joy to His disciples (John 15:11, 16:22, 24). And according to the Gospels and the other New Testament writings, Christ is not only an embracing God as Kitamori claims; He pronounces judgment as well both in word and action. He cleanses the corrupted Temple; He utters "woes" to "the scribes and the Pharisees." According to Matt. 25:31ff., it is Christ who is the Judge of the Last Judgment, while Kitamori calls it "God's" judgment. In Rev. 6:16, we have the expression "the wrath of the Lamb." In a word, there is no difference between God the Father and God the Son with regard to judgement and mercy. *Opera trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa!* In fact, Kitamori has obvious difficulty trying to do justice to the whole range of New Testament witnesses to Christ!⁴²¹ In view of the inexhaustible richness and depth of the Scriptural witness to the living Person of

⁴²¹One of Kitamori's consistent criticisms of Luther is that the Reformer did not do full justice to *tota scriptura* because of his concentration on *sola fide*. Kitamori finds an example of this "failure" of Luther in his depreciation of James as a letter of straw (*Introduction*, 124). Kitamori holds that the hermeneutical principle in the theology of the Pain of God alone is obedient to the whole range of Scripture. But we often find in his careful selection of the Biblical verses supporting his points the very opposite of what he claims vis-à-vis Luther. See for instance note 168, where we see he chooses John 14:9 instead of John 1:14 or 1:18.

Christ, one is compelled to conclude that it is impossible for any theologian to reduce the reality of Christ into one single category without doing violence to the very Reality. The infinite depth and wealth of the Biblical witness to Christ reflects the infinity of Christ Himself. Therefore, it seems that like any other so-called "genitive theology," Kitamori's theology of the Pain 'of' God is not exempt from falling victim to the danger of unbalanced one-sidedness. Thus, when interpreting the significance of the Cross of Christ, one cannot isolate this cardinal event from either its precrucifixion or its post-crucifixion witnesses.

In his *opus magnum* Kitamori explicitly deals with the relationship of the Pain of God to the historical Jesus. The view expressed is able to shed further light on our understanding of Kitamori's Christology.⁴²² According to him, there are two directions of movement in this relationship between the Pain of God and the historical Jesus; the first one is from the historical Jesus to the Pain of God and the second one is from the Pain of God to the historical Jesus. The first direction Kitamori already dealt with in the chapter entitled "the Gospel as Fact" in *The Lord of the Cross* (and included in the *opus magnum*). Kitamori expounds on the movement. According to him, the Gospel is a fact independent of our subjective affirmation or negation, but not an objective fact pure and simple; at the same time it involves the believing subjects.⁴²³ If one sees "the fact of Jesus" apart from the love of God which embraces us, the birth of Jesus would only be the birth of another founder of a

⁴²²*Pain*, 32-34.

⁴²³*Ibid.*, 32-33.

religion; His death, the catastrophic end of an idealist; and His resurrection, a hallucinatory product of religious enthusiasm.⁴²⁴ "Only when the birth and death of Jesus Christ is seen as 'the Pain of God' is the resurrection of Jesus Christ seen as 'the love [based upon the Pain] of God.'"⁴²⁵ This, says Kitamori, is the direction from the historical Jesus to the Pain of God. He seems to be saying that the fact of the historical Jesus should point to the Pain of God, although his argument rather suggests that the significance of the historical Jesus can only be properly understood against the background of the Pain of God. But he feels a need to complement this direction with another direction. This second direction demonstrates, holds Kitamori, that the historical Jesus is "a necessary constituent factor [必然的な成立契機] of the Pain of God."⁴²⁶ To explain this, Kitamori draws a parallel to Anselm's ontological proof of the existence of God. Just as the concept of God cannot be without the actual existence of God [the existence which is greater than a mere concept], so the concept of the Pain of God is impossible without the actual historicity of Jesus.⁴²⁷ Explained by only a few lines, it is somewhat obscure but the point Kitamori wants to get across concerns the inseparability of the Pain of God and the historical Jesus. This seems to be required by Kitamori's desire to safeguard his

⁴²⁴Ibid., 33.

⁴²⁵Itami, 39 (*Pain*, 33).

⁴²⁶Ibid. 41 (ibid., 34).

⁴²⁷Ibid.

concept of the Pain of God against any accusation of docetism.⁴²⁸ Therefore he warns that "the direction from the Pain of God to the historical Jesus does not simply mean that the Pain of God is the meaning of the historical Jesus nor that the historical Jesus is the concretization [具体化] of the Pain of God."⁴²⁹ Although Kitamori argues that the necessity of the historical Jesus is inherent in the concept of the Pain of God, we are not sure whether his arguments are valid. The Pain of God is the eternal essence of God, which necessarily exists prior to the Son's incarnation. This has already been established on the basis of Kitamori's own often-repeated statements. If the Pain of God is the eternal essence of God, how can the incarnation of the Son in history be necessary for the constitution of the Pain of God itself, which was in existence prior to the incarnation? Did not, in Kitamori's view, Abraham serve the God in Pain with his sacrifice of Isaac? Did not Jeremiah see deeply into the heart of the God in Pain? Did not Hosea give witness to this Pain of God with his tragic experience? Kitamori seems somewhat ambiguous in defending his conception when he writes: "The Pain of God means that the love of God had conquered the wrath of God (which this *historical* world should have borne) in the midst of the

⁴²⁸Despite this "safety-measure" on the part of Kitamori, Noro is not able to wipe away his suspicion of a docetic tendency in Kitamori's thought: "This [logical necessity of the historical Jesus in Kitamori's thought] is because he [Kitamori] does not limit the pain of God within its relation to the Jesus of history; but rather Jesus is only a symbol of the eternal fact of the pain of God. Jesus has only a shadowy existence in the theology of the pain of God Am I wrong in saying that there is a docetic tendency in Professor Kitamori and that ultimately we can even speak of the pain of God without any reference to the historical Jesus?" (*Impassibilitas*, 88-89).

⁴²⁹Itami, 41 (*Pain*, 34).

historical world. The *Persona* of the Pain of God [the Son] must therefore necessarily enter the plane of history."⁴³⁰ What Kitamori attempts to argue is that the Pain of God requires the historical Jesus for its constitution. But when Kitamori presupposes "the *Persona* of the Pain of God" prior to the incarnation of the Son in history, had not the Pain of God already been established prior to the historical Jesus? Further, in the same context, one reads that "the direction from the Pain of God to the historical Jesus owes as its background the direction from the historical Jesus to the Pain of God," but he immediately adds that "the Pain of God is *the infinitely deep background* of the historical Jesus."⁴³¹

In supporting our view that the Pain of God constitutes itself independent of the historical Jesus, we shall consider two specific terms which do not appear in the English version of his *opus magnum*. They are *oso* [往相] and *genso* [還相].⁴³² These two technical terms are used by Pure Land Buddhism. *Oso* means "going to the Pure Land to live together with Amida Buddha" and *genso* means "coming back

⁴³⁰Tbid., 42 (ibid.).

⁴³¹*Pain*, 35; italic is mine.

⁴³²On these Buddhist technical terms, Bettina Oguro-Opitz writes extensive excursus, where she means to find an indication of the "inhaltliche Einfluß dieser buddhistischer Denkstruktur auf munus Christi" in Kitamori's theology (*Analyse und Auseinandersetzung mit der Theologie des Schmerzes Gottes von Kazoh Kitamori* [Frankfurt a. M.: Peter D. Lang, 1980], 74; cf. 70-78). As we shall see, the influence of the Buddhist way of thinking is quite noticeable in Kitamori since he is influenced by the philosophy of the Kyoto School. It is very interesting to ask how deeply Buddhism in a technical sense has influenced Kitamori. The usage of *oso* and *genso* in our present context seems to indicate, however, that Kitamori does not use these terms in a technical sense but only to describe the directions.

from the Pure Land to this impure reality to lead all the living to the truth of Buddha [salvation]."⁴³ The "fixed point" of these movements is the Pure Land or Amida Buddha. In other words, the absolute point in this bi-directional movement is the transcendental Reality. Using this terminology, Kitamori implicitly indicates that the Pain of God is the reality which is already "established," the reality to which the historical Jesus owes His meaning. In fact, what he warned in his *opus magnum* he affirms a decade later when he writes in plain language: "Jesus of Nazareth as a historical being is the concretization [具体化] of the Pain of God and its *Persona*."⁴⁴

As the last point of this Christological examination of the Pain of God as theological methodology, we briefly look at his short essay entitled "Christology as Method."⁴⁵ According to him, Phil. 2:6-11. gives "a typical expression of the Christological truth."⁴⁶ God in Christ, holds Kitamori, did not cling to His own "stand," but rather took the "stand" of man who is a being other than Himself, served man and was crucified. This feature of God in Christ is "most unlike" God, but

⁴³See "oso-genso," *Iwanami Dictionary of Buddhism*.

⁴⁴*Introduction*, 83. "As I said in the above, since the Absolute is actualized only in pain, I have chosen the religion of 'God in Pain'; and since the Pain of God is concretized on the Cross of Christ, I have chosen Christianity as my faith; and as the Pain of God is the love embracing the things in opposition, I enter into dialogue with other religions, which are in opposition to Christianity" (*Japanese Heart and Christianity* (Tokyo: Yomui Shinbansha, 1973), 20-21.

⁴⁵*Introduction*, 123-125.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 123.

through this contrary feature God became most "God-like."⁴³⁷ "In Christ," writes Kitamori, "God caused every knee to bow, every tongue to confess that 'Jesus is Lord,' and thus established His sovereignty and received His glory."⁴³⁸ In Kitamori's view, the truth of Christology is focused on the relationship between the "Self" of God and the "otherness" of man. (In other words, man is to God a being "other" than Himself; this "other" connotes man's sinfulness because of which God cannot embrace man without His Pain.) And "the central truth of Christology is that the 'Self' of God is established by the mediation of the [unembraceable] 'otherness' of man." In a word, "the establishment of divine Self by the mediation of the 'otherness [of sinful man]'" is the content of the Christological truth.⁴³⁹ This means, maintains Kitamori, that the "greatest enemy" of Christology is the im-mediated self-assertion, because this self-assertion is Law as opposed to Gospel.⁴⁴⁰ "The First Commandment: 'You shall have no other gods before Me' represents Law," holds Kitamori, "whose spirit is the Self-establishment by exclusion of the 'the other.'"⁴⁴¹ In his view, the legalistic self-assertion, only provoking man's sin, is incapable of accomplishing the establishment of the divine glory and sovereignty among men. Only evangelical self-abandonment and self-establishment by the mediation of the

⁴³⁷Ibid.

⁴³⁸Ibid.

⁴³⁹" 他者媒介的な自己貫徹. . . がキリスト論の真理内容 " (Ibid.).

⁴⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴⁴¹Ibid., 124. We also notice that Kitamori has Barth in mind and criticizes his "legalism."

"other" is really capable of establishing God's glory and rule. Applied to the task of theology, this Christological method does not "legalistically" exclude the given [fallen] reality, even if it is "alien to Christology," but embraces the reality and makes it useful for the task of theology, and in so doing establishes the sole rule of Christ.⁴⁴² This is the structure of Kitamori's Christological method, and is nothing but the essential structure of the Pain of God.

In the above we have seen that in the formulation of Christology Kitamori invariably thinks in the scheme of the Pain of God. The conspicuous point is that Christology is made abstract, schematic and even narrow, and is totally absorbed in the concept of the Pain of God. The reality of Christ is thus molded according to the formal character of the Pain of God.

In our review of Kitamori's concept of the Pain of God as a theological method, we have now arrived at the last field, namely its practical application. By practical application, we are thinking of his dealings with socio-ethical issues and of his dialogue with non-Christian religions and thoughts. As to the socio-ethical application of this method, we have already seen in Chapter II how Kitamori dealt with these issues in connection with the Kyodan's Wartime Responsibility and Expo 70.⁴⁴³ Here we only want to recall that his theology was finally denounced as a theology of the status quo, unable to challenge the Church in Japan to self-renewal and to socio-ethical commitments in society. As to dialogue with non-Christian religions

⁴⁴²Ibid., 125.

⁴⁴³See 92-102 above.

and thought-systems, we need to touch upon them briefly. Again it is necessary for us to find the "cases" of such dialogue and we choose, as representative of Kitamori's dialogue, a Buddhist "denomination," the True Teaching of Pure Land Buddhism, as well as Nishida's and Tanabe's philosophies.

According to Yasuo Furuya, Kitamori is "the first theologian in Japan who took up the spiritual traditions of our nation, particularly Buddhism, *theologically*."⁴⁴ In other words, Kitamori initiated a theological dialogue with Buddhism. What then is the theological point of departure for such dialogue? What is the theological assumption for the point of departure itself? And what is intended by such dialogue? Although it is not our present concern to find the answers to these questions, we need to keep them in mind in order to understand Kitamori's basic idea of the Pain of God, an idea which supports the methodology of dialogue.

In Kitamori's view, the basic presupposition for such interreligious dialogue is the concept of "the religious Absolute" [宗教的絶対者].⁴⁵ What then is the true character of the Absolute? What can truly be called the Absolute? A Reality which stands over against other realities and asserts itself while negating them is not worthy to be called the Absolute, holds Kitamori.⁴⁶ This kind of an assertive Absolute is the worst thing one can imagine. "The religious [and real] Absolute" writes Kitamori, "does not stand over against the other, nor contends for itself by

⁴⁴Yasuo Furuya, *A Theology of Religion*, (Tokyo: Jordan-sha, 1985), 107.

⁴⁵*Japanese Heart*, 16; *Philosophy*, 215.

⁴⁶*Japanese Heart*, 62.

force nor tries to annihilate but embraces the other The true Absolute is the abolition of opposition, and consequently 'trans-descends'⁴⁴⁷ to the very bottom of reality in opposition and embraces it."⁴⁴⁸ To Kitamori, this religious Absolute is nothing but "God in Pain." It is with this concept of the religious Absolute that Kitamori approaches Buddhism.

Kitamori has written an essay on *Tan'nisho* or "Lamentation over Heresy," a doctrinal dictation made by Shinran (1173-1262), the founder of the True Teaching of Pure Land Buddhism in Japan. Shinran's Buddhism is also relatively well-known in the West due to the basic feature of this Buddhist saint's thought which is strikingly similar to the Protestant faith; Shinran emphasizes the radical predicament of human existence, recognizes the depth of man's sinfulness and sin's ineradicability by man's own efforts, and teaches that salvation is given only by uttering the name of Amida Buddha and relying on the salvific vows He made in His mercy; this is, in short, a Buddhist *sola gratia* and *sola fide!*⁴⁴⁹

⁴⁴⁷We have coined this term "trans-descend" following Kitamori's idea that God does not find himself in a sphere above human reality of sin and tribulation, but in a sphere under the deepest bottom of it. In other words, God does not transcend our reality in a traditional sense, but His transcendence goes in a downward direction; He "trans-descends" our reality. Compare the following view Kitamori expresses in connection with the concept of "absoluteness:" "The Absolute Being is a Being who abolishes relative polarity [between Himself and the finite beings]. This means that the Absolute trans-descends the bottom of relative reality [相対性の地平を底へと超える] and embraces the oppositions on the surface [from the bottom]" (*A God of Double Negation* [Tokyo: Nihon-no-Barasha, 1984], 148).

⁴⁴⁸Ibid., 16.

⁴⁴⁹For Shiran's doctrine, see: Alfred Bloom, *Shinran's Gospel of Pure Grace* (Tuscon, Ariz.: The University of Arizona, 1965).

Kitamori's essay on Shinran's *Tan'nisho* was prepared at the request of the headquarters of this particular Buddhist body. Commenting on Shinran's recognition of the radical sinfulness of man and salvation only by "the power of the Other," Kitamori acknowledges that in Shinran's thought the basic structure of religion is "perfectly expressed."⁴⁵⁰ Kitamori holds that the saint's recognition of the very bottom of human existence and his radical reliance on the mercy of Amida Buddha "cannot be criticized but only admired."⁴⁵¹ "A true religion invariably has this structure," writes Kitamori.⁴⁵² But upon the request made by the headquarters to give a critique from "other standpoints," Kitamori takes up the issue of the religious Absolute in the "theology" of Shinran Buddhism. Buddhism, both in its original form and the contemporary *Shodomon* Buddhism,⁴⁵³ deny the objective existence of the Other. In this form of Buddhism, which does not know the Other, Kitamori argues that it is impossible to conceive of the radical nature of man's existential predicament (for the recognition of man's sinfulness is only given vis-a-vis 'the Other' who is man's real *Gegenüber*). He also asks whether or not Shiran Buddhism ultimately shares this kind of non-existence of the Other and may therefore lose the "basic structure of true religion" despite the founder's deep religious experience and

⁴⁵⁰*Japanese Heart*, 34.

⁴⁵¹*Ibid.*, 38.

⁴⁵²*Ibid.*, 34.

⁴⁵³Literally it means "the Holy Way" and is also called "the Hard Way" in contrast to Shinran's and his teacher Honen's "the Easy Way." While Pure Land Buddhism relies on "the poser of the Other" or Amida Buddha, *Shodomon* Buddhism attains the salvation by man's own power.

cognition.⁴⁵⁴ This danger is acute, holds Kitamori, because the oriental Absolute does indeed embrace all, but does not know pain.⁴⁵⁵ The Absolute knowing no pain inevitably loses the true Otherness, Kitamori seems to argue. What is the problem of this oriental all embracing Absolute? According to Kitamori, if the Absolute does not know pain, religion and ethics are severed, and the oriental Absolute, not knowing pain, cannot secure the true structure of religion, which in Kitamori's view consists of the dialectic between faith and ethics.⁴⁵⁶ But according to Kitamori, Buddhism also has an *Ansatz* to this idea of the pain of the Absolute. It is the concept of *ji-hi* [慈悲] which is the idiomatic combination of "mercy" and "sorrow" in the Chinese character system.⁴⁵⁷ But, explains Kitamori, in the original Pali language, the latter concept of *hi* [sorrow] does not connote pain but signifies only mercy.⁴⁵⁸ If, therefore, Shinran's teaching remains in the original framework of Buddhism, a

⁴⁵⁴*Japanese Heart*, 43. Kitamori's argument here runs as follows: "If the Oriental meonism [of the Absolute which does not know contradiction in itself] can also be found in Shinran, the two-ness of contradiction is negated. [Translated into religious terms, if Amida Buddha only knows mercy and not judgement, the tension between mercy and wrath is negated in the Absolute.] Does not the [concept of salvation as] 'becoming Buddha' indicate a tendency in this direction? If this should be the case, the Other ceases to be the Other and becomes another name of [the so-called] true self. But is it possible, then, to have true recognition of one's self as 'an evil man' or 'a man with sins deep and grave' where there is no 'contradiction' [in the Absolute vis-a-vis the finite]? One questions in this way because [the recognition of the self as] 'a man with sins deep and grave' is only possible in the light of man's own contradiction against the Absolute (or the absolute Good)."

⁴⁵⁵Ibid., 42.

⁴⁵⁶Ibid., 43.

⁴⁵⁷Ibid., 44.

⁴⁵⁸Ibid., 64.

framework which does not know pain in the Absolute, even the saint's doctrine would ultimately not reach the true Absolute nor the true religious existence in total reliance on the Absolute on the one hand and the true ethical life on the other. "The very *nota* of the Absolute," writes Kitamori, "is the Pain which embraces the unembraceable. If 'hi' . . . gains the meaning of 'sorrow and pain,' the faith of the 'power of the Other for salvation' constitutes the ethics of 'our own power,' and at the same time the absolute assurance of the 'faith of the power of the Other' [for salvation] will emerge from this embracing."⁴⁵⁹ Somewhat unfamiliar concepts make this passage difficult to fully understand, but his point is clear: the Pain in the religious Absolute alone constitutes *sola fide* and *fides et opera* also in Shinran Buddhism. Kitamori here recommends to Shinran Buddhism his own dialectic of "theological axiom and reality," an idea derived from the Pain of God.

When we proceed to Kitamori's dealing approach to philosophies of Nishida and Tanabe, we observe exactly the same critical viewpoint in Kitamori, namely, whether the Absolute is all embracing or not, and whether this includes Pain. This same pattern can be understood by the fact that both Nishida and Tanabe deeply breath the air of Buddhism, the former in Zen Buddhism and the latter in Pure Land Buddhism. According to Kitamori's characterization of the philosophy of Nishida, this philosopher's "Dialectic of Nothingness" has overcome both the abstractness of Hegel's idealistic dialectic and Marx's materialistic dialectic, and has also established the idea of the religious Absolute which embraces all the contradiction of reality in

⁴⁵⁹Ibid., 47.

Itself.⁴⁶⁰ But Kitamori questions: does the "contradiction" in Nishida truly bear the character of pain, even though this philosophy is based upon a deep recognition of reality as "the self-identity of absolute contradiction?" Contradiction as such, holds Kitamori, does not necessarily connote pain or tragedy.⁴⁶¹ The Hegelian "contradiction" is, for instance, a "comic" contradiction, says Kitamori (following Kierkegaard's characterization of the thought of the great Idealist philosopher). But how about the character of Nishida's "contradiction?" Since Nishida's concept of the Absolute is "Absolute *Nothingness*," argues Kitamori, "Nothingness as such" cannot have pain. Nishida's "contradiction" is neither comic nor tragic, maintains Kitamori, it is "null" (or we may say neutral).⁴⁶² Since the Absolute in this metaphysics ultimately does not know pain, holds Kitamori, the popular accusation that Nishida's thought is a philosophy of the status quo is not totally unwarranted. As a philosophical thought system, Kitamori remarks, this philosophy does not possess the power to free us for the task of socio-ethical renovation.⁴⁶³

Tanabe, as we recall, was Kitamori's philosophy teacher at Kyoto Imperial University. Kitamori finds a marked difference between this teacher's thought and that of Nishida. Tanabe's critique of Nishida, explains Kitamori, consists in two points: first Tanabe clarifies "the negative moment" in his system and, second, he

⁴⁶⁰Ibid., 140.

⁴⁶¹Ibid., 143. Ibid., 42.

⁴⁶²Ibid., 144.

⁴⁶³Ibid.

emphasizes actual ethical commitment. These two points clearly contrast to Nishida's contemplative philosophy, says Kitamori.⁴⁶⁴ Due to Tanabe's recognition of "the negative" (or contradiction) in the Absolute, his thought has gained a strongly ethical character for the actualization of the Absolute through one's own act in this relative reality. But, to Kitamori, Tanabe's understanding of the Absolute has already lost the true character of the Other, for Tanabe thinks that the reality of the Absolute must be actualized through one's own act. This means, maintains Kitamori, that Tanabe has lost the truth element of Nishida's philosophy, namely the all embracing Absolute.⁴⁶⁵ What synthesizes the truth elements of these "first class thoughts" is the idea of "the Real Being who resumes the responsibility of and embraces all our contradictions and at the same time urges us to seek the solutions of the contradictions; this Being is the Ultimate and most Concrete Being."⁴⁶⁶ That is, God in Pain.

In Kitamori's dialogue with Shinran's Buddhism and the philosophies of Nishida and Tanabe, the Pain of God functions as both method and criterion of truth. In so doing, Kitamori tries to demonstrate the higher degree of logical completeness in the concept of the Pain of God, perhaps even the ultimate logical formulation of the

⁴⁶⁴Ibid., 145. Kitamori interprets Tanabe's thought in the following way: "When the negative character of contradiction gains definitive significance [in the Absolute], the affirmation of the status quo is abandoned, the merely contemplative life is broken and the subject is forced out to change the status quo. 'The Absolute Nothingness' is no longer the object of intuition as 'the field' [in which all things finds themselves and work with one another]. That is to be unceasingly actualized by the [subject's active work for] change through negation."

⁴⁶⁵Ibid., 146.

⁴⁶⁶Ibid., 147.

true Absolute. Although we should not be hesitant to acknowledge what should be properly acknowledged, and it may have been Kitamori's unique contribution that he has thus initiated an interreligious dialogue with Pure Land Buddhism (and also with Zen Buddhism), we still feel the need for a more thorough examination of such an interreligious dialogue. It seems that Kitamori begins dialogue with Buddhism and Buddhist (and Hegelian) philosophy with the latter's religious and metaphysical assumption as the point of departure (and this procedure is fully in keeping with Kitamori's methodological principle). Kitamori's concept of the religious Absolute is a case in point. One must seriously question whether this concept of the religious Absolute can really be congenial to the Christian concept of God. Can the God proclaimed by the Scriptures be defined by a concept like the religious Absolute?⁴⁶⁷

⁴⁶⁷According to Kitamori, the Absolute or God would not or cannot stand over and against his negation. In so doing, God becomes relative to other beings. Surely God is not relative to another being on his level of reality. But does this mean that God cannot be relative to, or stand against other beings (men)? Is He a captive of His own absoluteness? In this connection it will be helpful to recall the concept of absolute in the Scholastic distinction of God's "power" between *potentia absoluta* and *potentia ordinata*. "*Absolutum*" in this context means "unrestricted" or "set free" (free from all limitations). The nominalistic concept of *potentia absoluta* thus indicates the basic trait of the Biblical concept of God's unlimited sovereignty and lordship. Although it is entirely legitimate to employ a human concept to describe the divine reality, the criterion of legitimacy in using the concept should be whether it is in harmony with the Biblical witness, disregarding whether its origin is in the West or in the East. In my judgment Kitamori's concept of God is confined within His own concept of absoluteness, which *de facto* cannot be normative for men. Kitamori bases the certainty (or security) of salvation on this absoluteness of God in Pain, but it must be given from time to time by Him who is absolutely free and sovereign over us in His wrath and mercy.

Or more radically, can we in the Christian faith "define" God at all?⁴⁶⁸ Even if Kitamori had been right in his "definition" of the religious Absolute and his "definition" had been applicable to the reality of God in the Scripture, it would still not be able to exhaust the infinite unfathomable reality of God. If Kitamori had been at all successful in his dialogue with these religio-philosophical partners (in establishing the common ground for the understanding of the religious Absolute, for instance), it would surely indicate that he had adopted his partners' scheme of soteriology and structure of ideas.⁴⁶⁹ What would Kitamori say, if, for instance, Pure Land Buddhism would one day discover that its "*he*" should after all have the connotation of pain with the conclusion that the religious Absolute in this form of Buddhism also suffers pain? Then would the Christian Gospel and the Salvation of

⁴⁶⁸"Deus est mutabilis quam maxime," writes Luther (WA 56, 234.2; here quoted in: Haruo Kaneko, *Luther's Anthology* [Tokyo: Sobunsha, 1975], 565). Commenting on this, Kaneko says: "The only attitude man can take in face of this living God who breaks all the human categories [of understanding] is obedience and humility" (ibid., 556).

⁴⁶⁹Although it is not our main concern here to examine the content of the dialogue itself, it is still helpful to include a following note. The "critical" viewpoint of Kitamori which we have seen above in his dialogue with Shinran Buddhism and the philosophy of the Kyoto School is complete in itself and there is no further development in his thought. To my knowledge there is no more dialogue with these partners. Nor do I have any documentation of reactions from the scholars of Shinran Buddhism or from the direct disciples of Nishida and Tanabe. Nor does Kitamori report any response to his critique. We observe that Kitamori's thought, once given, stays there where it is given, and in this we see a parallel between his theology and his dialogue. In 1982, he was granted an opportunity to speak on "Nishida Philosophy and Christianity," starting his lecture with the following words: "My understanding of Nishida Philosophy has not changed very much since I wrote the two essays on it [one given in 1948 and the other in 1955] I apologize for speaking about this philosophy on the basis of these two old materials (*Philosophy*, 195).

Pure Land Buddhism be parallel expressions of one and the same religious Absolute? It might be simplistic to put the question in this way, but our elementary point is that the difference between Buddhism and Christianity is not simply a matter of the logical structure of the concept of the Absolute or of God; it touches the most basic and fundamental understanding of God, man and the total reality.⁴⁷⁰ In *regnum gratiae*, we cannot form a concrete idea of God's universal rule. A "positivistic" concept of the Absolute is in fact *contradictio in adjecto*. We the finite cannot define the Absolute; a "definable" Absolute is no Absolute at all. If we still mistakenly dare to formulate the essence of the Absolute beyond the limits set by our finitude, "the formulation" would invariably remain a figmentation of human thought.

It is deeply ironic, however, to recall that the theology of the Pain of God was denied and denounced by his opponents within the Kyodan as an theological ideology for defending the status quo in the Church and society, an accusation which, to Kitamori, should be the last thing directed at his theology of the Pain of God.

⁴⁷⁰It is possible that Kitamori thinks that the Pain of God is the "*Überbegriff*" of all the "positive" religions under which Christianity as a historical religion comes (see note 83 above). He may have conceived of the Pain of God and Christianity on the one hand and Christianity and other religions (and philosophies, thoughts, etc.) on the other with his dialectic of "axiom" and "reality": Christianity as the religion of the Pain of God is a religious "reality" as all the other religions but at the same time it is the religious "axiom" in which all the other religions finds themselves with varying approximation to the Pain of God. Either way, Kitamori most probably thinks of Christianity as an all-embracing absolute religion, which according to his definition of absoluteness, shall not stand over and against the other religions but leads them to the Pain of God (each in its own way?). If we interpret rightly, Kitamori embraces an idea similar to Karl Rahner's anonym Christianity, even with a patronizing condescension (see *Itami*, 32 [*Pain*, 28]).

Summary

Kitamori's theological methodology is derived from the intuitive conviction that the Pain of God is the divine truth itself. This absolute conviction itself is the cornerstone of his theology. As the absolute truth, the Pain of God is also the exclusive theological method. It is also the criterion by which all other theological systems and views must be judged, the guiding principle of all the theological investigations--whether exegetical, historical, dogmatic or practical, and *terminus ad quem* of all such theological inquiries. The Pain of God is thus the alpha and omega of Kitamori's theological methodology. The singular feature of Kitamori's theology is that the object of theological investigation and its method are totally identical. One can therefore describe this as a methodological circle. Since the object of investigation legitimately claims a method congenial to its own nature, a methodological circle is legitimate and inevitable. But the circle is valid only under the condition that such a methodology is fully open to the object of investigation and capable of modification whenever the object demands it. In order to secure this openness, there must be objective norms to "test" the results of investigation (or intuition); otherwise there would be no *extra nos* to guard against subjectivism. In Kitamori's theology, the Pain of God claims the validity of absolute truth. This very claim is itself deeply problematic, for no mortal can claim that his cognition and experience are absolutely true; this applies all the more to claims about the God who is deeply hidden even in his revelation. The problem becomes more acute when one recognizes that Kitamori's concept of God is profoundly influenced by non-Biblical

notions of God, man and salvation. We have seen how the concept of the Pain of God dictates the results of investigation in all the theological fields. Everything converges upon the Pain of God. In Kitamori's thought the Pain of God does not contradict Scripture, the dogmatic traditions of the Church; they should be more deeply explained, clarified and made explicit by the ultimate truth of the Pain of God. This results in the *de facto* conviction that the Pain of God is above all the norms and authorities. Since the Pain of God is the ultimate clarification of the truth of the Gospel, there cannot be any further development in Kitamori's theology (or any development in the history of theology for that matter). Our examination of Kitamori's methodology, however, has shown that Kitamori's theology is a closed circle in which the Pain of God turns upon itself. If "a tree is known by its fruits," we are led to suspect that Kitamori's theology of the Pain of God has some "built-in problem," which lies at the very root of his theology, namely the concept of the Pain as the eternal essence of God.

CHAPTER 6

THE THEOLOGY OF THE PAIN OF GOD IN DIALOGUE WITH THE REFORMED AND LUTHERAN TRADITIONS

Although Kitamori has not written any extensive dogmatics on the basis of his concept of the Pain of God, his theology does have a systematic character. Both theological content and methodology, dogmatics and ethics, apologetics and dialogue are based on the sole principle of the Pain of God. So far we have occupied ourselves mainly with the analysis and understanding of Kitamori's theology as such. In this chapter we shall observe Kitamori's theological system in dialogue with the Reformed and Lutheran traditions. Up to this point we have occasionally touched on the influences the two Protestant traditions had upon Kitamori. We now attempt to examine in a more focused manner how Kitamori's theology relates to the Reformed and Lutheran traditions. First we take up his dialogue with the Reformed tradition. Under this section we shall focus our attention on Kitamori's life-long critical position to the theology of Karl Barth--the strongest theological stream in modern Japanese Protestantism.¹ Introductory to this, we shall look at Kitamori's general view of Calvin and Calvinism. After these examinations concerning the Reformed tradition we shall see Kitamori's theology in light of Lutheran tradition. At the end of this second

¹See 79-90 above.

section we shall attempt an overall assessment of Kitamori's theology as a Lutheran theology.

*The Theology of the Pain of God in Dialogue
with the Reformed Tradition*

Kitamori's view of Calvin and Calvinism.

Modern Japanese Protestantism has been influenced most by Calvinism.² Accordingly Calvin's theological ideas have been the guiding paradigm in Japan. Luther's name was known early in the history of Japanese Protestantism, but as to influence in terms of theological substance, he has been subordinated to the Genevan reformer. However, in Japanese Protestantism the two Reformers were considered the founders of the Evangelical Church defenders of the same faith, and were held with equally high respect and admiration. This is mainly due to the fact that Japanese Christendom did not see the "subtle" confessional differences between these two streams of the Reformation; the distinction, for instance, between *communicatio idiomatum* and *extra Calvinisticum* seems to have been "practically" immaterial. Early Japanese theologians by and large saw Luther and Calvin as representing the same theological standpoint and thus in synthesis.

In accordance with this general trend, Kitamori regards Calvin with deep reverence and admiration. Because of his early acquaintance with Shigehiko Sato's Luther studies, it is probable that Kitamori directly inherited positive view of Calvin. As we recall, Sato was originally Reformed and had never lost his interest in Calvin's

²See 45 above.

theology, working throughout his life to introduce the Genevan reformer's theology into Japanese Protestantism, with the conviction that it was the Genevan reformer, and not Melancthon, who was the true successor of Luther's theology and work.³

In view of the relatively early reference to Calvin in Kitamori's theological autobiography, it is reasonable to conclude that Kitamori had begun to study Calvin's work, *Institutio* in particular, quite early.⁴ The depth of his acquaintance with Calvin's theology seems to have been gained already during his university years.⁵ Perhaps Kitamori read the Genevan reformer's work in parallel with Barth's writings. Besides these "external" stimulations in regard to the reading of Calvin's work, there must have been "internal reasons" as well for Kitamori's high admiration of this founder of the Reformed tradition. When we recall Kitamori's deep thirst for logical clarity of theological thoughts, it is not difficult to understand why Kitamori often employs superlatives to praise Calvin's precision of theological expression.⁶ Calvin's

³See Chap. 3, 114-115.

⁴*Auto I*, 213-214: In the first year at the Lutheran seminary Kitamori had already read Barth's *Kirchliche Dogmatik I/1* and commented that the theological motif which he found in Barth is "not identical with Calvin's." This comparison of Barth with Calvin presupposes Kitamori's familiarity with the Reformer by this time. A Japanese translation of the first of the three volumes of Calvin's *Institutio* was available by 1934 (the complete *Institutio* in Japanese was ready in 1939).

[A bibliographical note: Those of Kitamori's works which are of primary significance and therefore quoted frequently are abbreviated like the note here. The list of those works is found at the end of the Introduction.]

⁵*Auto II*, 225-226, see also 464 of this chapter below.

⁶"Calvin's exposition of the doctrine of the Trinity in his *Institutio* 1:13 carries the mastery of perfection" (ibid., 226).

humanistic lucidity in theological style and stringently systematic theological presentation must have been very attractive to Kitamori. Even Calvin's theocentric orientation in theology and his stern theological ethos may have been closely akin to Kitamori's own thoughts.⁷

Although this is not the place to deal with Kitamori's theological relation with Calvin *in extenso*, it is vital to recognize one particular aspect of Kitamori's interpretation of Calvin. In 1952, Kitamori wrote a paper entitled "A Direction of the Development of Calvin's Theology."⁸ The main reason Kitamori wrote this paper was to show his own methodological idea of "axiom" and "reality" has also been established in Calvin's *Institutio*, in the Reformer's relationship between "nature and grace" and "faith and work." In Kitamori's view, the dialectic of "nature and grace" corresponds to relationship between "the order of creation and that of reconciliation," and the dialectic of "faith and work" coincides with the dialectic of the order of reconciliation and that of redemption. Kitamori sees tension in the "and" of each set, and also in the "and" among the three orders. This is, as we recall, his concept of "the theological reality." His thesis is that this tension threatens the very foundation of the evangelical faith which stands on *sola gratia et sola fide*, unless properly integrated. The order of creation threatens the *sola gratia* by introducing natural

⁷Kitamori is perhaps emotionally more complex in his personality than Calvin, but he is no less determined in his theological conviction than the Genevan reformer. His concept of the Pain of God is not merely inclined to emotionalism; strange though it may sound, it also has a tone of rigorism particularly in his summon to serve God in Pain with one's own pain (see note 204 of Chap. 5 above).

⁸*Reformation*, 193-211.

theology, while the order of redemption (sanctification) by leading to the idea of justification by works. But all three orders are proper aspects of the Word of God, which demand us to take them as they are revealed. This three-ness of the "reality" of the Word of God and the exclusive *sola gratia* pose a dilemma for Kitamori, and accordingly, Calvin's theology presents "a marvelous light to the solution [of this dilemma]."⁹ "When all the righteousness of work," Kitamori quotes Calvin, "is said to be based upon the righteousness of faith, the latter is still not at all diminished (*imminui*) by the former but confirmed (*confirmari*) because by it the latter shines still brighter."¹⁰ "This is a marvelous statement," exclaims Kitamori commenting that here Calvin expresses that doing justice to the "theological reality" of "faith and work" is held together by holding intact the "theological axiom" of *sola fide*.¹¹ Kitamori adds more "proof texts" from Calvin and continues his comments in the same vein. Moreover, Kitamori deals with Calvin's concept of "scintilla" (a vague natural light in man) and argues that Calvin has expressed the independence (*proprium* in Kitamori's terminology) of the order of creation over against the order of redemption.¹² Also referring to Calvin's recognition of relative "goodness and badness" among "natural men" in the empirical world on the one hand, and his recognition of the universal corruption of all men on the other, Kitamori sees that the Genevan reformer

⁹Ibid., 194.

¹⁰Ibid., 195 [*Institutio*, 3:17].

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid., 208-209.

juxtaposed the orders of creation and reconciliation.¹³ Seeing these things together, Kitamori holds that in Calvin the orders of creation and redemption should have their own independence over against the order of reconciliation, thus doing justice to all three aspects of the Word of God. At the same time Kitamori maintains Calvin firmly preserved the evangelical *sola gratia et sola fide*, because the Genevan reformer had a Christological theology. Christology embraces all other realities in theology without denying their respective propria and at the same time unites them into a dialectic whole in Christology.¹⁴ In other words, Calvin's theological foundation is supposedly compatible with Kitamori's Christological trinity.

This is Kitamori's interpretation of Calvin, and also his conceptual operation with which we are now familiar. Whether Kitamori's interpretation of Calvin is "objective" or merely an imposition of Kitamori's own preestablished theological scheme is not our concern here. We are interested in the fact that Kitamori believes that his view of prolegomena in agrees with the Genevan theologian when Kitamori spells out the implications of the reformer's view.¹⁵

¹³Ibid., 207.

¹⁴Ibid., 209-210.

¹⁵Ibid., 211. Referring to the Barth-Brunner debate on natural theology on the basis of Calvin's theology, Kitamori quotes Barth as saying that Calvin was "insufficient" in expelling from his theology any *ansatz* to natural theology (*Kirchlich Dogmatik III/1*, 140 [where however Barth does not mention specifically Calvin but "the Reformers"]). If Barth is right in his judgment that Calvin does not sufficiently deny natural theology, "how can we trust Calvin," writes Kitamori, "as one of the fathers of the Evangelical Church?" He then feels the need for a new interpretation of Calvin to do justice to the Reformer's view of the order of creation as independent from the order of reconciliation and at the same time to rescue him from the "disgrace" of having traces of natural theology. Kitamori holds that he himself has

Kitamori has already interpreted Luther's concept of justification as having the same methodological dialectics of "axiom and reality."¹⁶ In his interpretation, therefore, the theologies of Luther and Calvin basically have the same methodological structure. Is there then any essential difference between these two Reformers?

Kitamori has a short diary memo on Calvin:

On Calvin: A theology which claims to be an evangelical theology must have the structure of "the love based upon the Pain of God" as "axiom and reality simultaneously." No theology which lacks this structure can be an evangelical theology. But in practice it is possible that an evangelical theology may have a stronger emphasis on one aspect than on the other; in fact we observe this difference in emphasis. Luther placed stronger emphasis on the axiom [*sola fide*] than on the reality [*fides et opera*], being insufficient as to the latter. In contrast to this, Calvin had a stronger emphasis on the reality, while not being as fully clear as to the axiom as is the case with Luther. . . . Lutheranism should learn the reality [*fides et opera*] from Calvinism, whereas Calvinism the axiom [*sola fide*] from Lutheranism. Evangelicalism in its fullest sense must be strong in both aspects.¹⁷

Thus Kitamori is not unaware of the difference between the two confessions. But he sees this difference as one of degree only; one emphasizes one aspect over the other, but both operate within the same structure of evangelical theology. The theology of the Pain of God should then do full justice to both aspects. Kitamori believes his theological mission is to bring these two forms of evangelical theologies into a fuller synthesis. In another context, dealing with the Reformation Christology, he tries to synthesize the Lutheran *Cummunicatio Idiomatum* and the Reformed *Extra*

now spelled out the latent "ratio" in Calvin's thought on the relationship between creation and reconciliation and provided a new line of development of Calvin's theology.

¹⁶See 323-326 above.

¹⁷*Auto II*, 225-226.

Calvinisticum, holding the former as the constitutive principle of Christology and the latter as the regulative principle.¹⁸

Kitamori's embracive approach to Calvin is clearly observable. His ingenious conceptual operation on the basis of his notion of the Pain of God argues, at least logically, for an agreement both between his own theology and Calvin's, and between Lutheranism and Calvinism.¹⁹ It is Kitamori's conviction that the "profoundest Luther"²⁰ (that is, Kitamori's interpretation of Luther's understanding of

¹⁸*Reformation*, 244. According to Kitamori, both Luther and Calvin are faithful to the Chalcedonian formula of Christology, namely, the two natures in Christ being unmingled, immutable, indivisible and inseparable. But, maintains Kitamori, in Luther with his *communicatio idiomatum* the unity of the two natures is emphasized whereas in Calvin with his *extra* the distinction is stressed. The Lutheran *communicatio idiomatum* as the "constitutive principle" is the basis of the positive statement of the unity of the natures in Christ, whereas the *extra Calvinisticum* as the "regulative principle" serves to preserve the mystery of the union of the two natures from losing its extraordinary character. In Kitamori's view, the *extra Calvinisticum* reminds us of "the fact that the miracle of God's incarnation in Christ is the miracle, because God, who should not have become man, actually has become man" (ibid., 246). (The expression of "constitutive and regulative principles" is perhaps borrowed from Barth [see note 49 below]).

¹⁹Kitamori's operation of synthesis between Luther and Calvin is carried by two principles, "constitutive and regulative." We need to reflect here on Kitamori's procedure of investigation. In order to be objective in our investigation, we should give the constitutive significance to the sources although we need our own interpretative hypothesis as a "regulative" principle ("regulative" in the sense that our hypothesis is also derived from the sources and thus is not an arbitrary hypothesis but a substantiated one). But in Kitamori the relationship of the two principles is reversed so that the outcome of his investigation is quite predictable before reading his arguments. The sources are used in such a way as to serve as proof for his own viewpoints. Exactly on this point we have difficulty to assess Kitamori's theological achievement, and that is why we are so often compelled to suspend our judgment of the tenability of his arguments. Rather we have a strong impression that Kitamori develops his own monologues in most of his investigations.

²⁰*Today*, 135.

the Gospel) transcends the confessional distinction between Lutheranism and Calvinism; Luther is the cardinal basis for evangelical Christianity. In this sense, Kitamori has "no interest at all in any Lutheranism which would stand over against the Reformed."²¹

It is of interest to note that Kitamori is more generous and less critical of Calvin than of Luther.²² One can explain this as a product of Kitamori's theological *Sitz im Leben*; in the Kyodan he is the sole Lutheran theologian. It has been practically necessary for Kitamori always to have a "positive" attitude toward Calvin and to enlist Calvin's theology to legitimate his own. But this is apparently not the primary reason for Kitamori's sympathy towards Calvin. In addition to what we have already mentioned above, there is still another internal reason for Kitamori's being drawn to Calvin, and a weighty one at that. In one context where he speaks of dedicating our pain to witness to the Pain of God, Kitamori has the following to say: "We dedicate our pain to this revelation [of the Pain of God], and this means nothing but for us to serve the glory of God. On this point, the theology of the Pain of God

²¹Ibid., 139.

²²"Luther's so-called "inneres Vertrauen," however true and beautiful it may be, is not [identical with] righteousness. Man is not justified by offering his inward trust to God. . . .' This means that I was already then [in my first year at the seminary] freed from [uncritically following] Luther" (*Auto I*, 90); "Man is not justified by '*fiducia*'" (Ibid., 138) [the reason for Kitamori's criticism of *fiducia* is his recognition that a sinner trusts in God for the sake of his own inner peace; in other words Kitamori sees a selfish motive in *fiducia*]. See also *Auto II*, 42 on Luther's exegetical method.

follows the tradition of Calvinism: *Soli Deo gloria!*²³

Next to Calvin in the Reformed tradition, we mention the name of P. T. Forsyth in particular. We have already touched upon Kitamori's dealing with this Scottish theologian; especially during the writing of his *opus magnum* and the period immediately after its publication, Forsyth played a very important role in "confirming" Kitamori's theological conviction.²⁴ Among Japanese theologians, Uemura and Takakura are predecessors of Kitamori's type of theology.²⁵ Thus, in terms of both "church-historical necessity" and of theology proper, Kitamori has been quite open to the Reformed tradition, to the point that the Reformed tradition has become one of his main theological ingredients.

Kitamori's Theological Confrontation with Karl Barth

Kitamori has been one of the few declared "anti-Barthian" theologians in Japan.²⁶ One may even say that throughout the development of Kitamori's theology only the theology of Barth remains "unembraceable." But this characterization would be one-sided if we did not immediately add that Kitamori, in a qualified sense, is himself a Barthian.²⁷ What Kitamori presents in his *opus magnum* is said to be closer

²³*Character*, 58.

²⁴See 246 above.

²⁵See 45-46, 58-59 and 189.

²⁶By the publication of *The Lord of the Cross* Kitamori captured the attention of an observer of theological trends by the name of Yoshiki Shimizu, who mentioned Kitamori as one of the four anti-Barthians at that time (*Auto II*, 238).

²⁷See 39 below in this section. 510-521 below.

to Barth's doctrine of reconciliation than Kitamori himself acknowledges.²⁸

Kitamori's relationship with the Swiss theologian can therefore be characterized as highly ambivalent; his "anti-Barthianism" can even be considered within the general framework of the theology of Barth.²⁹ In the present part of this section we shall see Kitamori's interpretation of Barth, try to understand this interpretation within our present perspective and attempt to grasp Kitamori's theology in the light of Barth's theology. In this attempt we note that our discussion of Barth's theology will be restricted to the limits Kitamori himself sets in his confrontation with Barth.

Kitamori's Criticism of Barth

Initially Kitamori did not doubt the continuity between Luther and Barth.³⁰ While studying at the Lutheran seminary in Tokyo, he even kept a photograph of Barth on his desk, (a portrait included in an anthology of Barth's writing edited by a Japanese theologian), "admiring him day and night."³¹ Barth's two articles from the

²⁸Rudolf Weth, "Über den Schmerz Gottes," *Evangelische Theologie* 33 (1973), 436: Weth, wishing the German readers to be given more access to Kitamori's writings beside his *opus magnum*, writes; "Vielleicht würde auf diese Weise auch K[itamori]'s kritisches Verhältnis zu K. Barth faßlicher als in diesem Werk und im Vorwort zur deutschen Ausgabe (9-14). Denn der Sache nach scheint K[itamori] der Versöhnungslehre des späten Barth, ohne die übrigens auch die gegenwärtige Diskussion nicht denkbar wäre, näher zu stehen, als er erkennen läßt" (436).

²⁹See below 510-517.

³⁰Kazoh Kitamori, "From My Personal Viewpoint," ed. Iwao Morioka, *Japanese Christianity and Karl Barth* (Tokyo: Shinkyō Shuppansha, 1986), 10.

³¹*Auto I*, 124.

early 30s, "Die Not der evangelische Kirche"³² and "Rechtfertigung und Heiligung"³³ deeply impressed Kitamori.³⁴ Kitamori made particular note of Barth's words which strongly appealed to him: "Not with her [the Church's] own wealth but only by the mercy of God, not by the things of her own or in her but by what comes to her from outside, does the evangelical Church live."³⁵

Kitamori, however, gradually came to recognize something different between Barth's basic theological motif and his own. According to Kitamori, Barth's main concern was to defend "Deus dedit" against all the enemies in the man-centered 19th century theology, Kitamori's concern is to "the Pain of God" or "the Gospel of the Cross."³⁶ At this stage Kitamori believed himself to be exclusively concerned with

³²*Zwischen den Zeiten*, 9 (1931), 89-122. In this essay Barth emphasizes that the Protestant ("Evangelical") Church does not know anyone but the crucified Christ as her head. She therefore also exists under the Cross. Kitamori "has read this essay with deepest sympathy" (*Auto I*, 123) because of Barth's strong emphasis on the crucified Lord. Barth, speaking of the "Evangelical" Church as the Church expelled from "the old Church," writes: "Die evangelische Kirche wurde und ist also konstituiert durch die Erkenntnis des Draußensein des gekreuzigte Christus. Beides sein Gekreuzigtsein und sein Draußensein, hatte für die Reformatoren ebenso wie einst für grundsätzlich Bedeutung" (92). A strikingly similar idea can be found in *Pain*, 150.

³³*Zwischen den Zeiten* 5 (1927), 281-309.

³⁴*Auto I*, 123.

³⁵The sentence which Kitamori quotes here is perhaps the following: "Sie [die evangelische Kirche] kennt den Menschen auf der ganzen Linie als den, der Christus gekreuzigt hat und der nicht von seinem Reichtum, sondern von Gottes Barmherzigkeit lebt, nicht von dem, was ihm eigen und innerlich ist, sondern von dem, was äußerlich und fremd zu ihm kommt" (96). Does Kitamori quote here from the work of an insufficient translation?

³⁶*Ibid.*, 213.

the very basic aspect of the Gospel, whereas Barth was confronted with a situation in which God's sovereignty was "domesticated" by man in the midst of Christianity itself.³⁷ It was one of Barth's better-known articles written in 1933, "Das erste Gebot als theologisches Axiom,"³⁸ at which Kitamori was "appalled."³⁹ To Kitamori, it seemed impossible for an evangelical theology to present the First Commandment as the theological axiom. An evangelical theology cannot be built upon Law, Kitamori thought; theology can only be done properly when the Gospel itself embraces a theologian who is a sinner. In Kitamori's view, Barth has established God's exclusive sovereignty and lordship with his theology, but this was still formal, devoid of the true content of God's rule over us (His love); Barth sounded legalistic. Kitamori's position was that God's lordship can be established only by the Gospel; the Gospel alone conquers man's disobedience. This also holds true of the very constitution of theology.⁴⁰

Kitamori's polemics against Barth are concentrated on this issue of

³⁷It is apparent that the situation in which Kitamori found himself was totally different from that of Barth; Kitamori was still a seminary student who was seeking the clarity of his theological idea in a "non-Christian" nation while Barth was already one of the most responsible leaders of the renovation movement in the Church of "Christian" Europe since World War I. While it is an elementary issue that theological statements are to be interpreted in the light of their historical context, Kitamori tends to interpret them in isolation; the underlying assumption is that they are the formulations of timeless theological ideas. This unhistorical approach to theological ideas is a conspicuous feature of Kitamori's interpretation of theological texts. This also applies to his interpretation of Barth.

³⁸*Zwischen den Zeiten* 11 (1933), 297-314.

³⁹Morioka, *Japanese Christianity and Karl Barth*, 10.

⁴⁰See 378-379 above.

theological prolegomena. This concentration is due to Kitamori's understanding that the character of theology is determined by its prolegomena; when its prolegomena is conceived of legalistically, the rest of the dogmatic loci must inevitably be developed legalistically. Although it is another question whether the the main tone of Barth's theology is in fact legalistic--as Kitamori understands it; Kitamori has never revised his initial interpretation of Barth.⁴¹

Although Kitamori was appalled at Barth's article on the theological axiom, he did not discuss the details of the article. It seems as if Kitamori had regarded the title itself as sufficient to tell the basic position of Barth.⁴² One may wonder whether it is legitimate to launch so critical an argument as was directed against Barth's theology without discussing the issue *in extenso*. Whatever the answer to this

⁴¹Even after Barth's so-called "Wendung" in 1956 which was expressed in his essay "Die Menschlichkeit Gottes," Kitamori writes in 1959: "Barth does not see that as the crucial problem of the modern Protestant theology since Schleiermacher is that the Cross of Christ was brought to naught; this is particularly so in the early Barth. Later, Barth came to emphasize Christology and as we see more recently. But we have to pay attention to the fact that he still has the First Commandment as his theological axiom or the leitmotif of his theology. In place of the God of the First Commandment he only puts Christ, but his motif invariably is the First Commandment" (*Introduction*, 25-26).

⁴²The gist of this article by Barth is to refute the theology of the so-called "Schöpfungsordnungen" and its implicit theological axiom which, according to Barth, like a mathematical or logical axiom, has nothing to do with "göttlicher Wahl, Bundesschließung, Gnade, Sündenvergebung" but leads to natural theology. "Das theologische Axiom aber gilt und erkennt im regnum gratiae und eben darum in der Kirche, wo die Botschaft von diesem Reich gehört geglaubt und verkündigt wird" (304). Here Barth at least presupposes the Gospel before he challenges the decision to make the First Commandment the theological axiom. Without dealing with this aspect of Barth's viewpoint, Kitamori holds that Barth advances a legalistic position. In due course we are to examine Kitamori's concept of law, but our preliminary question is how he conceives of the meaning of admonishment to obedience to God?

question, the basis of Kitamori's categorical criticism fails to take fine modifications into consideration. In the same vein, he finds in the last section of Barth's *Kirchlich Dogmatik I/2*, "the key that unlocks the secret of the theology of Barth."⁴³ To Kitamori, the most crucial pages to Kitamori of the section are 966-968 and 974-976, the latter of which he has copied verbatim into his theological diary. Since he later presents the "resume" of these pages in his *Autobiography II* as Barth's "fundamental thought,"⁴⁴ we can safely regard this as the basis of Kitamori's lifelong understanding of Barth's theological motif. We now dwell at some length on Kitamori's polemics against Barth on the basis of these pages.

Let us now see what Kitamori says of Barth's position:

According to Barth the "Hauptartikel" of the Reformation is, put pointedly, [the product of] "Willkürakt," and the Church's confession of this is only a procedure "in bestimmter Zeit und Lage"; such a thing as "Grunddogma" is an arbitrary (verfügbare) truth. But [, I shall say,] the fact that Protestant Orthodoxy established *articuli fundamentales* proves that the truth of the Reformation still has not totally lost its fragrance. The Church was still aware of the truth then. If we should ever criticize Protestant Orthodoxy, the point should be that its awareness of the very truth [the Gospel of Christ/the Pain of God] has been gradually attenuated and then the sole *articulus fundamentalis* broken down into the several *articuli fundamentale*. All the *articuli* are [in reality] to be included in the field of the sole *articulus*.⁴⁵

One can discern that Kitamori is committed to opposing Barth here. His way of presenting Barth's viewpoint carries a tone of deep indignation and borders on caricature. But Kitamori's main concern is clearly observable: Karl Barth has

⁴³*Auto II*, 98.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 99.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 97.

relativized *the articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae*. Kitamori sees in Barth's presentation "the main article" of the Reformation faith fundamentally threatened.

In order to better understand Kitamori's point, it is necessary for us to look at what Barth himself argues in these particular pages. Dealing with the dogmatic method, Barth maintains that dogmatics must be "voraussetzungslos". The Word of God determines what the content of dogmatics should be. Barth understands the Word of God as God's sovereign revelation in encounter with man here and now. The Word of God in Barth's theology is therefore a highly actualistic concept. Thus it is not identical with the Bible. God never ceases to be the Lord over His Word. This means that dogmatics cannot be a system, because a system is built upon a particular axiom, or "Grundanschauung," which *a priori* dictates the content of dogmatics.⁴⁶ Only the Word of God is the legitimate and sovereign Lord of dogmatics. Barth writes:

Das Wort Gottes ist . . . durch keine noch so reiche und tiefe und in ihrer Weise wohlbegründete Grundanschauung vom "Wesen des Christentum" auch nur stellvertretend zu ersetzen und das darum nicht, weil sein Inhalt freilich Wahrheit, aber eben die Wahrheit der Wirklichkeit des in ihm sich ereignenden Werks und Handelns Gottes ist, die sich als solche weder in einer Anschauung noch in einer Idee noch in einem Prinzip auffangen und kondensieren läßt, über die immer nur konkret. . . berichtet werden kann, ohne daß doch einem solchen Bericht die Stellung und Funktion des Gegenstandes der Dogmatik zukommen dürfte.⁴⁷

The Word of God in which God effects revelation is absolutely free in itself; no human concept of the Gospel can be identical with the Word of God itself. Does this

⁴⁶Ibid., 99.

⁴⁷*Kirchliche Dogmatik (KD) I/2*, 964-965.

mean that all dogmatic distinctions made by the Orthodox theologians between *articuli fundamentales* and *articuli non fundamentales* were the result of arbitrary acts on their part? According to Barth in his minute exposition in the fine print, this procedure of distinction is the result of the Church's actual encounter with God's work and in His Word, and as such it is quite legitimate and required. One can think of various confessions of faith as the results of such an encounter; as the Church's historical encounter with the Word of God. In other words, "[i]m Bekenntnis berichtet die Kirche, ohne ihr Wort mit dem Wort Gottes zu verwechseln, über die Erfahrung die sie im bestimmter Zeit und Lage mit dem Wort Gottes gemacht hat."⁴⁸ It is Barth's view that the historical confessions, insofar as they are also human products (even though made in encounter with God at work in His Word), are still to be under the sovereign Word of God. To transfer Barth's own ideas here, they are not the "constitutive" principle but the "regulative" principle.⁴⁹ Here Barth is consistent: "Die Feststellung bestimmter, ein für allemal als solcher eingesetzter Fundamentalartikel würde ihr [Dogmatik] und mit ihr der Kirche den Ausweg ins Freie bzw. sie würde dem Wort Gottes seinen weiteren Laufe in der Kirche sperren."⁵⁰ In Barth's view, only by avoiding this fixation of the confessions can the various historical confessions be properly accepted as they are. As to the failures of the Orthodox theologians, Barth holds that their selection of *fundamentum dogmaticum*

⁴⁸Ibid., 966.

⁴⁹Ibid., 681.

⁵⁰Ibid., 967.

is not "materially" condemnable; their reduction of the Word of God into a preconceived mold is unacceptable, because it binds the Word of God; it is an abuse of the confessions.⁵¹

We now recognize that Barth's intention in the *petite* section is to make the point that *norma normans* [the Word of God in Barth's sense] should remain as *norma normans*, and that *norma normata* should not be changed into *norma normans*. *Normans* in *norma normans* should also then be taken in the strictly actualistic sense of "ever-ruling." In other words, Barth seems to provide a means to break a self-perpetuating hermeneutical circle in dogmatics by introducing an actualistic concept of the Word of God.⁵² In so doing, however, he does not diminish the

⁵¹Ibid., 968.

⁵²It is important, I think, to note the significance of this actualistic aspect of Barth's theology. Actualism in Barth's thought is not totally formal; it presupposes the whole complex of the Christian message of salvation. But as is often said both by Lutherans and the Reformed, the truth of the Gospel is not under our control, that is, we never own it as our habitual possession. For the Gospel as man's ever-new existential experience is nothing but the living Lord. The *articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae* of *justificatio sola gratia et sola fide* is not a theological formula which can simply be repeated or repristinated; it cannot dispense with an ever-actual appropriation in the encounter with the living God. And this encounter of man with God--it is God Himself who takes the initiative in this encounter--has infinite depth and infinite wealth corresponding to God's own reality and His way of dealing with man in Law and Gospel. In this sense the cardinal article of faith, justification by grace alone and faith alone, is to be understood as the most comprehensive description of the God-man relationship which is to be filled materially by man's ever-new encounter with the living God. Kitamori's theology of the Pain of God is to be understood as one expression of such an encounter (as he himself says, his theology is a new pronouncement of the Gospel). But this means that a time-conditioned theological formulation cannot be eternal or perpetuated. A theological achievement can be considered a contribution to a deeper understanding of the Gospel, but every new generation must listen to the Gospel afresh in light of old experience. In this sense it is essential for a theology to be open to God's speaking to us here and now,

importance of the confessions.⁵³ In fact, he emphasizes how critically important it is for a dogmatist listening to the "Teachers of the Church" in order to make a proper exegesis of Scripture.⁵⁴ His intention is therefore to subordinate all human theological "products" under the ever-actual, ever new revelation of God in His Word. Indeed, Barth as a Reformed theologian is faithful to the tradition to which he belongs, especially with respect to the concept of confession of faith; a confession of faith is the Church's response to the Word of God "in bestimmter Zeit und Lage." One can now easily see why Kitamori reacts to Barth so passionately. While Barth, acknowledging God's absolute freedom and lordship, allows no habitual possession of divine truth and conceives of it as an event occurring ever anew from above, Kitamori's concept of the truth of the Gospel [the Pain of God!] is definite as to its content, and as such it is valid as the truth irrespective of time and space.⁵⁵

for God meets man in his concrete history.

⁵³It is unnecessary to specifically document this point. His *Einführung in den Heidelberger Katechismus* (1938) and *Die Christliche Lehre nach dem Heidelberger Katechismus* (1948) witness to Barth's "confessionalism." His *Credo* (1935) and *Dogmatik im Grundriß im Anschluß an das apostolische Glaubensbekenntnis* (1947) show Barth's fundamental anchorage in the Church's tradition.

⁵⁴See *KD I/2*, 673-677: "Ist die heilige Schrift allein der göttliche Lehrer in der Schule, in der wir uns befinden, wenn wir uns in der Kirche befinden, so können wir uns doch auch nicht in dieser Schule der Kirche befinden wollen ohne unsere Mitschüler, nicht ohne Zusammenarbeit mit ihnen und besonders nicht ohne Bereitschaft, uns von unseren älteren und erfahreneren Mitschülern belehren zu lassen: als von Mitschülern, aber belehren zu lassen" (677). There is no collision between the First Commandment and the Fourth Commandment! (652).

⁵⁵As to Kitamori's understanding of the nature of theological truth, we can summarize his thoughts as follows: theological truth, the most fundamental of which is the Pain of God, has been "discovered" by successive theological epochs (the

Let us now examine more closely Kitamori's criticism of Barth, which he places in his autobiography in connection with pages 974-976 of *Kirchliche Dogmatik* I/2. According to Kitamori, there are three points in Barth's presentation here which deny the theology of "Luther's *sola fide* fundamentally": first, Barth should recognize "the word of reconciliation 'nur als ein Moment'" in all events [of God's salvific work]; second, he should consider the selection of "the word of reconciliation" [on the part of the Reformers] as the "Hauptartikel" as an "arbitrary act"; third, he should maintain that God's lordship as God is not to be absorbed into the word of reconciliation but maintained by the doctrine of God which is independent of the word of reconciliation.⁵⁶ We shall examine each of these items in the light of Barth's own text. As to the first point, in what sense does Barth contend that the word of reconciliation is "only one factor in the whole of God's salvific work?"

"[W]eil Gottes gnädige Herrschaft in einer Überwindung menschlichen Not besteht," writes Barth, "ist Offenbarung sachlich dasselbe wie Versöhnung: der Akt Gottes, in welchem er dem menschlichen Widerspruch überlegen widerspricht und damit die Not des Menschen wendet zum Heil."⁵⁷ To Barth, in other words, divine

forth-century, the sixteenth century and his own twentieth century), and the discoveries of theological truth have followed an evolutionary development so that the last one, that is, the truth of the Pain of God, has the ultimate validity. In addition to this, Kitamori conceives of theological truth as an objective reflection of God's reality itself so that one may deduce other derivative truths from the fundamental truth. In this sense, Kitamori's concept of theological truth is basically static and analogous to a mathematical axiom.

⁵⁶*Auto II*, 99.

⁵⁷*KD I/2*, 974.

revelation is materially identical with reconciliation. After establishing this material "equation" of revelation and reconciliation, Barth proceeds to ask the question whether we should make this equation the "Grundanschauung" for our dogmatic work; both the Reformers' theologies and the Bible itself seem to support this procedure. If so, one should cast away any hesitation to employ systematization in dogmatic work, with the word of reconciliation as the "Grundanschauung." But in reality, says Barth, "the Word of God itself" does not force us to take this path, but calls us back from this procedure. Certainly, Barth holds, dogmatics must be fundamentally Christological and only Christological. Christology in dogmatic work is, however, not that narrowly limited Christology, "als ob die Offenbarung des Vaters durch den Sohn Jesus Christus und des Sohnes durch den Heiligen Geist in der Sache nur jenes Handeln Gottes in der Überwindung des menschlichen Widerspruch und der menschlichen Not wäre."⁵⁸ Undoubtedly reconciliation is the center, writes Barth, but this center should be seen in connection with the other acts of God, namely creation and redemption. Against this background, the critical phrase of reconciliation "als nur ein Moment" appears:

Vorausgegeben ist uns Jesus Christus als das durch den Heiligen Geist zu uns gesprochene Wort des Vaters, aber damit keineswegs im Besondern, keineswegs *in abstracto* die Versöhnung, sondern die Versöhnung doch *nur* als ein Moment des ganzen damit--aber doch nur: auch damit!--bezeichneten Geschehens.⁵⁹

Here Barth labors hard to defend his conception of the unconditional sovereignty of

⁵⁸Ibid., 975.

⁵⁹Ibid.; italic is added.

divine revelation on the one hand and to preserve the centrality of reconciliation in dogmatics on the other hand. Nonetheless, his point is clear that even the Reformation traditions of, and the seemingly evident witness of the Bible itself to, the cardinal significance of the word of reconciliation does not surpass divine revelation which actualizes itself in the acts of God through these means. But Barth's contention seems to be rather shaky because he only asserts his point without further arguments. In view of this, Kitamori exactly captures Barth's point. However central the locus of reconciliation is in Barth's thought, it is one of the features of God's word to man.⁶⁰

As to the second point of Kitamori's criticism, we do not find that they are valid. Nowhere does Barth say that the word of reconciliation was made the "main article" by an "arbitrary" act.⁶¹ Rather, Barth means that to do so seems almost self-

⁶⁰In a somewhat simplified manner we can understand this as follows: while the Lutheran emphasis is placed on justification by faith as the very context of all theological discourse, the Reformed view subordinates the soteriological to the *theological* so that the doctrine of God becomes the basic context of theological discourse. The Lutheran concept of *favor Dei* as the primary concern in theology can be compared with the Reformed concern with *gloria Dei* as the primary theme of theology. Kitamori's view is a peculiar mixture of these two motifs; the Lutheran motif of *favor Dei* is deeply qualified by the Reformed *gloria Dei* and the resulting view of Kitamori is *dolor Dei* with a strongly theocentric overtone (Cf. 7 above in this chapter).

⁶¹*KD I/2*, 966: Barth holds that the distinction made by the Orthodox theologians (Lutheran or the Reformed) between fundamental articles and non-fundamental articles is totally legitimate and its legitimacy cannot be denied, and as to the doctrine of reconciliation as the *fundamentum dogmaticum* Barth has the following to say: "Was man mit *fundamentum dogmaticum* meinte, das war offenbar das, was wir den jeweils möglichen und notwendigen Bericht der Kirche über ihre jeweilige besondere Begegnung mit dem Werk und Handeln Gottes in seinem Wort genannt haben. Aber eben dieses Berichten als solches ist Sache des Bekenntnis. Im Bekenntnis berichtet die Kirche, ohne ihr Wort mit dem Worte Gottes zu

evident for a dogmatician when he tries to get on with his work.⁶² And Barth's own theology is centered upon the doctrine of reconciliation, though differently than Kitamori's theology is. In the continuing pages, Barth argues that not only reconciliation but also creation or redemption cannot be set up as the "Grundanschauung."⁶³ Barth is attempting to do justice to the whole wealth of the truth of God's Word by obedience to God's sovereignty in His revelation, obedience which is a gift from God.

As to the third point, namely that Barth would contend that God's lordship as God should not be absorbed into the word of reconciliation, Kitamori observes Barth's position correctly. Barth contends that God Himself or God's sovereignty cannot be subordinated to any reality which He Himself brings forth in the world. But he is at the same time very precise in what he means by this sentence: That God is God can only be brought to full expression when the doctrine of God is dealt with separately and independently, "ohne daß die Wahrheit der Versöhnung auch nur einen

verwechseln, über die Erfahrung, die sie in bestimmter Zeit und Lage mit dem Wort Gottes gemacht hat. Im Bekenntnis findet also selbstverständlich angesichts der Fülle der biblischen Wahrheitswirklichkeit eine bestimmte Auswahl statt, in welcher, geleitet durch die Situation, in der sich die Kirche dem Worte Gottes gegenüber jetzt und jetzt befindet, Einige als zur Zeit wichtig hervorgehoben wird, Anderes als zur Zeit weniger wichtig mehr oder weniger zurücktritt." As to "Willkürakt" of the Orthodox theologians (mentioned by Barth in particular is the Reformed theologian Turretini), it is not a kind of denunciation on the part of Barth; he rather demonstrates it as the historical fact (see Ibid.)

⁶²Ibid., 966-967.

⁶³Ibid., 977-979.

Augenblick aus den Augen zu lassen wäre."⁶⁴ What we recognize from this way of Barth's writing is that he formally wants to secure the absolute lordship and freedom of God in his revelation but he materially tries to follow the truth of reconciliation in his dogmatic work.

Kitamori's interpretation of Barth does indeed touch upon the vital point of Barth's basic motif. Kitamori thus accuses Barth of ruining the very foundation of evangelical faith, *sola fide* or forgiveness of sin, by his "relativization" of the *locus* of reconciliation. In this criticism, Kitamori defends the Lutheran understanding of *articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae*. But Barth, on the other hand, stays faithfully in the Reformed understanding of *finitum non capax infiniti* as well as in the motif of the theocentric *gloria Dei*.⁶⁵

But Kitamori's confrontation with Barth does not limit itself to this Lutheran-Reformed difference. Even on Kitamori's own premises the difference between Barth and himself are not irreconcilable, since Barth *de facto* pursues his

⁶⁴Ibid., 976.

⁶⁵We understand that the emphasis on the distance between God and man expressed by these two Reformed theological motifs has been fundamental to Barth; it may be an interesting question whether the "crisis" theology in the beginning of this century also included this Reformed emphasis on distance. In view of this emphasis, it is totally natural that dogmas and confessions of faith, in the Reformed tradition, are understood as not being identical with the Word of God. About Barth's radical "relativization" of theological traditions, writes Bent F. Nielsen: "Når man nu som Barth erkender alt menneskeværks fundamentale krisis i forholdet til Gud, så er den menneskelig produktion af sætninger om Gud, incl. dogmer og bekendelser i kirken, naturligvis ikke undtæget. Derfor stilles problemet omkring teologiens tale om Gud så kompromisløst radikalt op i perioden netop efter 'nybruddet'" ("Karl Barths teologiske grundafgørelser under utarbejdelsen af den dogmatiske metode," *Dansk Teologisk Tidsskrift* 46 [1983], 49).

theological work Christologically with reconciliation as its center. In his dealing with Barth on another occasion, Kitamori accuses Barth's basic position of being legalistic, characterizing it with "three Gs: *Gegenüber*, *Gebot* und *Gehorsam*."⁶⁶ Indeed, since this characterization is based on Barth's earlier works (such as *Romerbrief* [the Second Edition] and *Das Wort Gottes und Theologie*), it would be natural for Kitamori to react to Barth's theology in this way; what Kitamori reads in these titles is "a despotic" judgmental God. Kitamori's early reaction was quite categorical, perhaps lacking a proper historical perspective to properly view Barth's earlier writings. This in itself is easily understandable when we consider Kitamori's idea of God in Pain. But, in view of this, it is interesting to ask why Kitamori can be so sympathetic to

⁶⁶*Today*, 161-162: Kitamori tries to find this motif of the three Gs from the earliest works of Barth; he believes to find these characteristics of Barth's theology most clearly expressed in the following sentences *KD I/2* 603-604; ". . . Empfänger der Offenbarung werden und sind sie [die biblische Zeugen: Kitamori "erroneously" translates this "sie" as "die Kirche"], weil und indem ihnen Offenbarung *gebieterisch* begegnet und weil und indem sie ihr *gehorsam* werden" (603); "Kirche Jesu Christi kann also jedenfalls nur da sein, wo es zu einer Wiederholung dieses *Gehorsamsverhältnisses* kommt. . . . Die Existenz der Kirche Jesu Christi steht und fällt mit dem erkennbaren und jederzeit aktuellen *Gegenüber* von Menschen und Offenbarung, das keine Umkehrung zuläßt, in welchem der Mensch empfängt, lernt, sich fügt und sich richtet. . . ." (604: the italicized parts are given in the original terms in Kitamori's quotations). Commenting on these quotations, Kitamori writes: "the three Gs of *Gegegenüber*, *Gebot* and *Gehorsam* are the summary of Barth's prolegomena." It would be interesting to study Kitamori's translation of Barth's texts into Japanese and the significance of the parts he omits. Intentionally or not he translates "Gegenüber" constantly as *tairitsu*, which in Japanese means "opposition," usually with the connotation of antagonism. Apparently "Gegenüber" would mean in the present context as well as in ordinary theological usage the framework of Personal "Begegnung." One would therefore say that this reading of Kitamori is somewhat inadequate and "unfair." The part of the text omitted by Kitamori is quite delicate for him, because there Barth speaks of the illegitimacy of any claim by the Church to the habitual Possession of the truth of God, the claim which in Barth's view invalidates the Church as the Church of Christ. We shall see this issue in the below.

Calvin whose idea of God is no less "despotic" and stern?⁶⁷ If Kitamori is able to integrate Calvin's theology as being strong in the aspect of the "theological reality," why is Kitamori so categorically antagonistic to Barth when the Swiss theologian, regardless of his formal relativization of reconciliation, still *materialiter* has so strong an emphasis on it in his theology?

The reason for Kitamori's rejection of Barth must be seen in Barth's thorough argument that setting-up a dogmatic system with a particular "Grundanschauung" as its principle is impossible and illegitimate if dogmatics is to be obedient to the Word of God. Though it looks strange, Kitamori does not discuss this issue directly at all,⁶⁸ but this methodological view of Barth must have been like an axe at the root of the tree of Kitamori's theology. If Barth's argument is valid, Kitamori's theological "system" is totally ruined. As we readily understand, Kitamori's theological endeavor is based upon exactly what Barth calls a "Grundanschauung," namely, the Pain of God as the ultimate divine reality. In the

⁶⁷"The God of Calvin is the omnipotent Will, ruling throughout the world; the God of Luther is the omnipotent energy of Love manifest in Christ. In the one case, we have acts of compulsion even in the heart, subjection, law, service; in the other, inward conquest by the power of love, free self-surrender, filial love without compulsion. . ." (Reinhold Seeberg, *Textbook of the History of Doctrines*, tr. Charles E. Hay [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1952], 416).

⁶⁸According to his own account, Kitamori had read *KD 1/2* thoroughly. But he does not contrast his own view with Barth's. I think the nerve of the prolegomenal confrontation between Kitamori and Barth is found exactly on this point of the "Grundanschauung" in dogmatic method. It seems that Kitamori carefully avoids this delicate point and beats around the bush without coming to the issue itself. This is, one may imagine, why Kitamori's confrontation with Barth does not gain a conceptually sharp focus.

same section of *Kirchliche Dogmatik*, Barth meticulously delivers his argument with which Kitamori must have been struggling throughout his life. Let us now consider Barth's argument briefly.

According to Barth, a system is a stringent connectedness between premises and their consequences, and thus it inevitably has the character of law. This means that a systematic work is nothing but an analysis of the premises and their course of logical development. When one applies this procedure to dogmatics, maintains Barth, the openness to the Word of God, openness which is the basic requirement of dogmatics, is *a priori* excluded. In other words, a system-building in dogmatics with a particular "Grundanschauung" would make it impossible for a dogmatician to be obedient to the Word of God and free in his dogmatic work. This means that the dogmatic "Grundanschauung," on the basis of which a system is set up, inevitably takes the place of the Word of God and itself becomes the very object of dogmatics.⁶⁹ Speaking from another viewpoint, Barth maintains that theological axiom cannot be a content-filled concept but must be of a formal nature, that is, obedience to the Word of God or to the First Commandment. But if a material axiom or "Grundanschauung" is set up, dogmatics would shut itself up to the real Object of its work and cut itself off from this Object. As a result, one loses contact with the event of revelation. Barth holds that all that remains in such a theological endeavor is, "sich in dem durch vermeintlichen vorgegebene Grundanschauung bezeichneten Kreis zu bewegen."⁷⁰

⁶⁹*KD I/2*, 963.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, 965.

Barth rejects the retort that even in this circle-movement man could be obedient to the Word of God. Barth sees that in this setting-up of "Grundanschauung" a dogmatic work is ultimately based on a "Willkürakt."⁷¹ It is interesting, however, to note that Barth can admit the *a posteriori* emergence of such a "Grundanschauung" in dogmatics. This can be seen when we read his distinction between an *a priori* desire for a system and an *a posteriori* resulting system:

Der Wille zum System wird doch auch daraufhin nicht erlaubt sein, daß es eine Vergebung auch der Sünde unerlaubten Systematisierens geben und daß endlich und zuletzt auch in der fatalen Gestalt eines an unerlaubter Systematisierens wirklicher Gehorsam sich bewähren und dann auch der Schatten der Wahrheit sichtbar werden möchte.⁷²

Is this Barth's "self-justification?" In fact, Barth's gigantic dogmatics is one of the most systematic achievements in the history of the Church. And the "Grundanschauung" in the so-called "'late Barthian' Barth"⁷³ would be the triumph of the eternal grace of God. Man's will to obedience and openness to the Word of God can ultimately take the form of a system based on a "Grundanschauung," as we can understand Barth, and there can be forgiveness for the sins found in these *a posteriori* results. What he maintains in the above quotation is that dogmatics must always be

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Ibid., 971.

⁷³Will Herberg offers a helpful scheme of the theological development of Barth; "(1) first, 'pre-Barthian' Barth of the 'liberal' period; (2) next, the 'proto-Barthian' Barth of the first edition of *The Epistle to the Romans*; (3) then, the early Barthian' Barth of the second edition of *The Epistle to the Romans* (1922) and of the *Christian Dogmatics* (1927); and (4) finally the 'late-Barthian' Barth of the *Church Dogmatics* (1932 to date)" ("The Social Philosophy of Karl Barth," an essay given as the introduction to: Karl Barth, *Community, State and Church* [New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1960], 15).

open to the Word of God. This point can be seen in Barth's concept of his own theological works (including *Kirchliche Dogmatik*), that they are relative human responses to the living Word of God, thus subject to revision under the sole lordship of the Word of God.⁷⁴ In other words, Barth holds that an evangelical theology is, as it were, *theologia semper reformanda verbo divino*.

In view of these arguments of Barth, several points of contrast between Barth and Kitamori surface. First, because Barth considers "Grundanschauung" something which must be clearly distinguished from the Word of God, he recognizes the relativity of theology; Kitamori conceives of "Grundanschauung" (the Pain of God) as something which is given to him as divine revelation, given materially once and for all. This then means that Kitamori's theology is identical with the Gospel itself, thus claiming absolute validity. Second, Barth contends that the theological axiom must be obedience to the Word of God in the sense of the First Commandment in dogmatics,

⁷⁴At the end of his essay "Das erste Gebot als theologisches Axiom," Barth urges "die Theologie heute" definitely to part from natural theology and to go through the narrow way of the divine revelation in Christ. In this context he implicitly holds the viewpoint we have in our text: "Aber auch die Theologie wird tatsächlich nie durch das gerechtfertigt sein, was sie als Leistung rechten Gehorsams, als Erfüllung des Gesetzes nach bestem Wissen und Gewissen meint denken und sagen zu sollen. Keine Theologie Jede Theologie hat auch 'andere Götter' und sicher immer da am meisten, wo man und wo sie selbst es am wenigsten merkt. Darum muß Rede und Gegenrede stattfinden, darum muß Streit sein in der Theologie, damit es nirgends zu einem Frieden komme mit den sicher überall mit herrschenden und mit anerkannten 'anderen Göttern'. . . . Nur in gemeinsamer Hoffnung kann der notwendige theologische Streit recht geführt werden" (313-314). But this viewpoint does not mean that Barth embraces an idea of doctrinal relativism; he holds, for instance, that the Lord's sovereign grace in a dialectic relation to human doctrinal work provides the doctrinal authority the Church needs in history (see *Die Theologie und die Kirche* [Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1928], 317).

so that dogmatics is a human service to the living Word of God who actualizes the Word through this service; Kitamori holds that the theological axiom must be another name of the Gospel which leads one to the whole of divine truth and which actualizes itself as the theology of the Pain of God. Third, whereas Barth argues that if "Grundanschauung" becomes the object of dogmatics both dogmatics and the Church will necessarily suffer "Erstickungstod,"⁷⁵ Kitamori contends that the Pain of God as the new pronouncement of the "Gospel of the Cross" must ultimately be the sole object of dogmatics as well as its method; that is, the Pain of God alone is *evangelium vivificans* and truly available in the reality under the wrath of God. Fourth, Barth observes that a theology with a material "Grundanschauung" as its theological axiom would inevitably be bound within the circle which it has drawn by the "Grundanschauung," which is the very symptom of disobedience to the Word of God; Kitamori is convinced that the Gospel of the Pain of God leads the dogmatician to full obedience to the Word of God since the Pain of God forgives the sin of disobedience (which is inevitably attached to dogmatic work) and even uses the sinful procedure of dogmatic work to achieve its own actualization. Lastly, whereas Barth condemns the *a priori* setting-up of a "Grundanschauung" as an "arbitrary" act of the dogmatician, Kitamori cannot but proclaim the Pain of God as the ultimate truth of the Gospel because the Gospel itself urges him to do so.

Thus in Barth's view, Kitamori's idea of the Pain of God would be nothing but a "Grundanschauung." Kitamori who meticulously studied this particular volume

⁷⁵KD I/2, 968.

of Barth's dogmatics must have been aware of the critical points we mentioned above. But Kitamori is adamantly convinced that the theology of the Pain of God represents the unshakable truth of God Himself. How can the problems raised by Barth concerning "Grundanschauung" be solved? In the light of what Kitamori writes during his earlier career,⁷⁶ we can safely conclude that this methodological stance of Barth has been the basic problem in the first phase of Kitamori's system-building. In Kitamori's eyes the dogmatic method presented by Barth is legalistic in the sense that it first demands obedience to the Word of God; legalistic because a dogmatician who as a sinner cannot be obedient to the Word of God is here urged to be first obedient to it. Kitamori feels that a theologian must be forgiven of doing theology even with a particular "Grundanschauung," and the very Gospel of the Pain of God forgives sins in theology and makes it possible for a theologian to do his work. In Kitamori's view, this is the ultimate issue of prolegomena, in which one asks how theology as a human attempt to speak of God can be constituted. We have thus seen why Kitamori felt compelled to "soteriologize" the prolegomena of theology.

But Kitamori's argument fails in its attempt to escape the closed circle-movement to which Barth objects. Kitamori's methodology is based upon the idea of the all-embracing Pain of God, but the idea of the Pain of God can only be established as valid by the very method which is deduced from the idea of the Pain of

⁷⁶The very title of Kitamori's first work, *The Lord of the Cross*, is the most programmatic expression of his anti-Barthian struggle; it is not Christ simply, but the *crucified* Christ that Kitamori upholds against Barth. The title can be properly understood only against the background of Kitamori's fundamental struggle with Barth's methodological view.

God itself. As we saw, it is the self-justification of the concept of the Pain of God through itself. The devastating problem of *petitio principii* is clearly at work in Kitamori's theology. How can he defend himself against Barth's accusation that such a "Grundanschauung," or the Pain of God in Kitamori, is a "Willkürakt?" As Barth would suggest, it is quite another thing that the Pain of God *a posteriori* might emerge as the cardinal view of God in Kitamori's theology as a partial witness to the infinite reality of God. However, it is quite clear that Kitamori's theology is what Barth describes, a theology captured by its own "Grundanschauung," only moving within the circle of its own drawing.⁷⁷ In contrast to this, Barth's theology has a methodological *tertium*, which in principle makes it possible to break the hermeneutical circle, when necessary, in its encounter with the Word of God. To illustrate, Barth with his "open" methodology proved that even his enormously prolific life was no match to the object of dogmatics (he even left his multi-volume dogmatics "unfinished"); Kitamori's productivity in terms of theological substance was terminated by the completion of his *opus magnum*.⁷⁸ Although we must admit that there is a difference between Barth and Kitamori in terms of intellectual disposition and power, we do not think that the relatively short-lived theological development of Kitamori is due to his limited

⁷⁷We have touched upon the problem involved here in 386-387, namely Kitamori's confusion of *a posteriori* remission and *a priori* permission to sin in theological work. "Das rechte Gehorsam, *das gute Werk* in der Theologie muß in einem rechtem theologischen Denken und Reden bestehen" (*Das erste Gebot*, 313; emphasis is added). As also clearly seen in this essay, Barth presupposes the forgiveness of sin in his doing theology. And his urge to be obedient to the Word of God is the same as pursuing theology in the best way humanly possible.

⁷⁸See 414 above.

theological capacity. Kitamori could have accomplished a much greater theological achievement which certainly would have contributed more to Japanese Protestant theology.

We saw that Kitamori's interpretation of Barth is limited to the locus of prolegomena. There Kitamori found his most crucial death-and-life struggle with Barth's theology. But Kitamori does not deal with the "late-Barthian" Barth, that is, with the material aspects of Barth's later theology. In fact, already in the very volume Kitamori meticulously studied, Barth is said to have gradually replaced his initial prolegomena centering upon the Word of God with a Christological prolegomena.⁷⁹

⁷⁹In his interpretative presentation of Barth's theology, Hans Urs von Balthasar points out that Barth's methodological emphasis conspicuous changes from the Word of God to a more comprehensive one of "the Son." Since the Son becomes man within creation, the whole of the created world is related to Him and He to the created world. With this shift, Barth's methodology of analogy based on the incarnation of the Son gradually develops in his thought. This shift towards a more concrete Christological orientation begins already in *KD I/2*, 134-221, which is systematically developed in the *KD II/1*. Balthasar writes: "Wenn vorhin der Begriff der Analogie bis zu einer Vereinbarkeit zwischen Gott und Geschöpf geführt wurde, so hat diese ihren letzten Grund und Beweis . . . im Wunder der Menschwerdung Christi. Und sofern Christus das Maß aller Dinge ist, kann an die Tiefe dieser Kompatibilität kein Widerspruch mehr zwischen Gott und Welt heranreichen. Noch die Prolegomena sprachen von 'Gegensatz, Widerspruch' zwischen dem Wort Gottes und seiner Gestalt in der Bibel, Verkündigung, Theologie. *Dieser Gedanke--und damit jede auf ihn aufgebaute theologische Methodologie--ist schlechterdings überholt*, wo der Gedanke der Menschwerdung durchgeführt wird" (*Karl Barth: Darstellung und Deutung seiner Theologie*, [Cologne: Verlag Jakob Hegner, 1962], 124; emphasis is mine). If this interpretation by Balthasar of Barth's fundamental change of methodology is correct, then Kitamori did not notice it and saw Barth's theology only in light of his first impressions. But that Kitamori was aware of Barth's emphasis on the incarnation as methodological *ansatz* can be seen in the following: "In the Gospel the primary words are 'the Father causes his Son to die'; the secondary words are 'the Father begets his Son.' The secondary words prepare the primary" (*Pain*, 47). Different concepts of the inner-trinitarian relationship between the Father and the Son have their counterpart in the understanding of the Son's incarnation.

This would mean that Kitamori had been struggling with the Barth whom Barth himself had discarded long ago. But this "petrification" of his first impression of Barth seems to be consistent with Kitamori's view of theology--that theology is a system of thought which must be built consistently upon its initial axiom; Kitamori does just this in his own theology, while the real Barth is much more flexible. One exception can be mentioned here in Kitamori's dealing with Barth beyond the issues of prolegomena. Barth marked his so-called "Wendung" in 1956 with the well-known essay of "die Menschlichkeit Gottes."⁸⁰ Kitamori comments on this "Wendung" on several occasions, holding that Barth corrected the error that Kitamori pointed out in his early polemics against him.⁸¹ But Kitamori still finds the same problem of Barth's prolegomena, saying: "Despite the recent self-correction ["Wendung"], Barth is about to conclude his theological life without correcting his prolegomena, which is the core of his theology."⁸²

Reactions to Kitamori's Criticism of Barth

Although Kitamori has been known to be a vocal critic of Barth's theology

⁸⁰In: *Theologische Studien*, Heft 48 (Zürich: Zolikon, 1956). For the nature of Barth's "Wendung," see Heinz Zahrnt, *Die Sache mit Gott* (Munich: Piper Verlag, 1966), where he presents Barth's own view that the emphasis on God's humanity was already present in the emphasis on God's deity which was advanced so one-sidedly and exclusivistically more than three decades ago; the "Wendung" is the outcome of a consistent thinking-through of his initial theological *ansatz*.

⁸¹*Introduction*, 41; *Today*, 219-221; Morioka, *Japanese Christianity and Karl Barth*, Tokyo: Shinkyō Shuppansha, 1986), 11.

⁸²*Auto II*, 122.

in Japan, there have only been a few explicit confrontations between the Japanese "Barthians" and Kitamori. And even the few confrontations are not properly geared with each other on an academic level. In a sense, this is understandable because, as we have seen above, Kitamori's criticism is confined to the basic area of prolegomena, having no ongoing confrontations with the material aspect of Barth's theology in such a way to generate sufficient interest.⁸³ Kitamori's "soteriologization" of dogmatic prolegomena has made it difficult for other theologians to grasp what Kitamori tries to get across. On the one hand, professional theologians' general hesitation to acknowledge Kitamori's theology as a full-fledged academic achievement has been less than fortunate, hindering a fruitful academic cooperation throughout the post-war decades. On the other hand, Kitamori has been rather categorical in his criticism of Barth, which has not been favorable for winning a sympathetic following of theologians and scholars. Critics of Kitamori unanimously claim that his view of Barth involves "elementary misunderstanding,"⁸⁴ "accusation based on his own illusion [of Barth],"⁸⁵ or "an unintelligible misunderstanding."⁸⁶

In the following we shall briefly review how Barthians have reacted critically

⁸³The problem of Kitamori's "freezing" of his criticism against Barth in the latter's earlier stage of theological development is pointed out by Rudolf Weth, see note 28 above.

⁸⁴Keiji Ogawa, "On the Formation of Japanese Indigenous Theology," *Gospel and World*, 38 (Tokyo, March 1983), 79.

⁸⁵Yoshio Yoshimura, "On the Interpretation of Barth: A Review of K. Kitamori's *Theology Today*," *Christian Culture* (Tokyo: July/August 1950), 48.

⁸⁶Takizawa, *A Problematization of Religion*, (Tokyo: San'ich Shobo, 1976), 125, 130.

to Kitamori. To my knowledge, Kitamori does not respond to any of the criticisms except the one raised by Yoshio Yoshimura. We shall take up the debate between Kitamori and Yoshimura to the extent that it will serve our purpose here.

"According to Kitamori," writes Katsumi Takizawa, "Karl Barth does not know anything about the Gospel; there is only 'Nein' in Barth's theology. What we find in Barth is only the wrath of God over man and all human values. For Barth the First Commandment is the alpha and the omega in Christian theology."⁸⁷ Takizawa, philosophy professor of a national university in Japan, is a close student of Karl Barth, and has developed his own "Theology of Immanuel" on the basis of Nishida's philosophy and Barth's thought.⁸⁸ A tone of indignation toward Kitamori is clearly noticeable in this particular essay by Takizawa. "How can he [Kitamori] so coarsely misunderstand Karl Barth," continues Takizawa, "what does he read in Barth's writings?"⁸⁹ Takizawa tries to refute Kitamori's accusation of Barth as totally unfounded. Takizawa contends that his teacher never speaks of the Law as separate from the Gospel. According to him, Barth has found in Jesus Christ (the true God-man) the point of contact and the qualitative distinction-border between God and man. "On this very point the holy God grasps me the sinner and all mankind

⁸⁷Ibid., 125.

⁸⁸For Takizawa, see: Kazuo Hasumi, "Eine kritische Betrachtung japanischer Theologien," *Evangelische Theologie* 49 (1989), 552-555; Tokiyuki Nobuhara, "Katsumi Takizawa's Approach Toward a World Theology," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 41 (1987, 3), 39-54.

⁸⁹Takizawa, 125.

radically and totally."⁹⁰ This is God's radical grace, Takizawa writes interpreting his teacher's thought, the grace which at the same time solemnly forbids us to have any other gods besides this one God. Barth's "Nein" is not merely a negative "Nein" but the clearest and firmest "Ja" on the side of God.⁹¹ In substance, Takizawa argues against Kitamori's accusation of legalism with the great dogmatician's idea of the unity of Gospel and Law: the Law is the form of the Gospel and the Gospel is the content of the Law. According to Takizawa, Kitamori also addresses what Barth addresses in his dogmatics--the pain of God (!), the suffering and death of Christ on the Cross as "die einzige Wirklichkeit." In view of this Takizawa maintains that Kitamori's accusation of Barth is unintelligible.⁹² But Takizawa finds the reason for Kitamori's "terrible misunderstanding" of Barth in the former's concept of the dialectic of love (immediate divine love, divine wrath, divine pain).⁹³ Takizawa then continues to argue on the basis of his understanding of Kitamori: "If human sin had not entered this world, the love of God would have lost its most essential core; in order that the love of God does not lose the core, or that it may become true divine love, it needs human sin."⁹⁴ He thus denounces Kitamori's theology as being built upon his

⁹⁰Ibid., 127.

⁹¹Ibid.

⁹²Ibid., 130.

⁹³Ibid.

⁹⁴Ibid., 132.

pseudo-academic manipulation of hollow concepts.⁹⁵ Although, as we mentioned earlier, Takizawa is also deeply influenced by Nishida Philosophy, his criticism of Kitamori is made from a totally different theological and philosophical viewpoint and also on the basis of little familiarity with Kitamori's thought. One would say, therefore, that Takizawa's attack on Kitamori is no less "sach-gemäß" than Kitamori's polemics against Barth. To my knowledge, Kitamori did not offer his reaction to this indignant criticism by Takizawa. But this criticism does show how little Kitamori is understood by his own contemporaries in Japan, even by a man like Takizawa who has the same philosophical background.

The second critic we shall now take up is Yoshiki Terazono, also a university professor, who wrote a dissertation in Bonn on the theological relationship between Barth and Takizawa. In a lecture given in 1986 Terazono refers to Kitamori's understanding of Barth as characterized by the latter's "three Gs." "According to Kitamori," continues he, "the love of God of which Barth speaks is not love in pain but an immediate love knowing no Cross and thus it is nothing but the Law in Barth's thought."⁹⁶ Terazono can find "a certain parallel between Barth and Kitamori." "For instance," he writes, "when Kitamori speaks of the Cross as a divine work not alien to God but essential to God, . . . we may say so [that there is a certain parallel."⁹⁷ As Terazono formulates his criticisms of Kitamori's theology of the Pain

⁹⁵Ibid., 123.

⁹⁶Yoshiki Terazono, *The Shooting Range of the Theology of Barth* (Tokyo: Jordan sha, 1987), 17.

⁹⁷Ibid., 18.

of God, his most important point runs as follows:

Was Kitamori's intention successfully carried out when he tried to overcome the notion of *theos apathes* by his idea of the Pain of God? When the Pain of God presupposes a contradiction between God and God, this contradiction is between the passible God and the impassible God. Does this not mean that Kitamori presupposes an impassible God contrary to his intention? In contrast to this view, Barth speaks of the event of the Cross as the possibility of God's love in His freedom and as such it [the Cross] is "suitable" to God Himself. Thus, Barth can speak of the Cross as rooted in the depth of God's being, the cross which is the free act of His love.⁹⁸

What Terazono wants to get across is that Barth's concept of the God who is free in His love is capable of speaking of divine suffering in a more adequate way than Kitamori's idea of God in Pain. It is striking to note here that Terazono does not problematize the notion of a suffering God. The difference between Barth and Kitamori now seems to consist in the question of which theologian, Barth or Kitamori, properly explicates the implication that the Cross of Christ is the suffering of God.⁹⁹

The third critic is Keiji Ogawa. As we mentioned, in 1965 he wrote a book in German on Japanese Protestant theology, which mainly introduces Kitamori's

⁹⁸Ibid., 18-19.

⁹⁹In this volume Terazono includes an essay entitled "Is the Theology of Barth a Theology of the Cross?" (257-269). While quoting the viewpoints of H. G. Geyer, E. Jüngel and B. Klappert on this question, who all speak of Barth's theology more or less as a theology of the cross, Terazono also argues for the interpretation of Barth's theology as such. "That the true God empties Himself to the depth of the Cross corresponds to the immanent history within God in which the Son obeys the Father. The event of the Cross must be understood as 'a remarkably consistent and ultimate continuation' of the inner-divine being of God's deity. Thus the analogy between the event of the Cross and God's being of immanent Trinity clearly characterizes Barth's theology as a 'theology of the cross'" (266).

concept of the Pain of God.¹⁰⁰ At the end of this book Ogawa advances critical remarks concerning Kitamori's theology, especially against the latter's understanding of Barth. First he acknowledges that the strength of Kitamori's theology consists in its "subjective appropriation of theological thinking and active interaction with the indigenous spiritual situation [of Japan]." Kitamori's theology is, according to Ogawa, thoroughly systematic. "Man könnte," he says, "ihren Standpunkt fast einen theologischen Panlogismus nennen."¹⁰¹ The weakness of Kitamori's theology, Ogawa judges, can be found in its schematic understanding, as well as its categorical criticism, of the European theologies. A typical example of this is found in Kitamori's understanding of Karl Barth, writes Ogawa, and he reports that Kitamori understands "daß diese [die Theologie Barths] nicht nur eine exklusive Theologie sei, sondern auch in der Richtung der Gesetzreligion stehe."¹⁰² What is the reason for this "one-sided, less adequate interpretation of Kitamori?" Ogawa finds it in Kitamori's view of the history of theology. According to him, Kitamori sees the development of theology in a dialectic triad: thesis, antithesis and synthesis. In this triad of development, the new Protestantism of the nineteenth century would be the thesis; the dialectic theology in the early decades of this century would be the antithesis to the new Protestantism; and the theology of the Pain of God would be a theology mediating "thesis and antithesis," and itself becoming the synthesis. Here

¹⁰⁰Keiji Ogawa, *Die Aufgabe der neuen evangelischen Theologie in Japan* (Basel: Friedlich Reinhardt, 1985), 114.

¹⁰¹Ibid.

¹⁰²Ibid.

Ogawa finds in Kitamori a "Denkschematismus" which always follows its own way of logical development independently of the objective analysis of the issues themselves.¹⁰³ In Kitamori's *Theology Today*, says Ogawa, the weakness of his theological thinking becomes most obvious. Ogawa, speaking of perspective of missiology, emphasizes the importance of openness to the church-historical traditions and to the Word of God, and this particularly in view of Kitamori's theology. "Die allzu straffe Geschlossenheit der Denksystems und die logische Konsequenz," writes Ogawa, "ist keine hilfreiche Waffe für ein theologischen Denken, sondern ein gefährliche, zweischneidiges Schwert. Wenn wir diese Offenheit das Wort Gottes verlieren, wird die Heimischmachung des Evangeliums zum Selbstzweck, und die theologische Unernehmung zur Leistung des menschliche Hochmutes."¹⁰⁴ Nor in his review of Kitamori's understanding of Barth, does Ogawa find Kitamori's interpretation adequate. If Kitamori's criticism fails to adequately understand Barth, one could easily see why there has been no fruitful dialogue between the Japanese Barthians and Kitamori.

From his own viewpoint, Kitamori would say that all the critics listed above do not capture the issue itself. His main issue is whether Barth's theological prolegomena can be an adequate basis for an evangelical dogmatic. None of the critics listed above takes up this problem. Is this because Kitamori's opponents do not see the very issue of prolegomena, as Kitamori considers it, as vital or because

¹⁰³Ibid., 115.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., 118.

Kitamori's problem is itself illusory? This issue came to the surface in the early fifties. As we mentioned, the occasion was the debate between Kitamori and Yoshio Yoshimura, the translator of Barth's *Römerbrief* into Japanese.

In his review of Kitamori's *Theology Today*, Yoshimura held that Kitamori's criticism was based upon his own interpretation ("illusion") of Barth and not on what Barth himself had said.¹⁰⁵ Yoshimura protested against Kitamori's "summary" of Barth's theology as the three Gs: "Gegenüber, Gebot und Gehorsam," a summary which in Yoshimura's view was unacceptable, although he admitted that Barth had used these terms often. The question is in what sense one should understand these terms of Barth. Yoshimura argues that Barth never uses these terms undialectically, nor does he employ these terms univocally to describe the relationship between God and man.¹⁰⁶ When Barth speaks of "Gegenüber" between God and man, holds Yoshimura, he intends to negate the direct relationship between God and man at the same level of being. Paradoxically the qualitative difference between God and man becomes manifest in the person of Jesus Christ, the true God and the true Man. "What Barth means by the 'Gegenüber,'" writes Yoshimura, "is not an immediate opposition between God and man; it is the 'Gegenüber' of divine grace which comes to expression" "in the incarnation of Christ," "a paradoxical, immediate, absolute and merciful Gegenüber."¹⁰⁷ In this sense, Yoshimura holds that Barth's

¹⁰⁵Yoshimura, 48.

¹⁰⁶Ibid.

¹⁰⁷Ibid.

theology is a theology of grace. In Yoshimura's view, Kitamori one-sidedly picks up the negative pole of Barth's dialectics while leaving behind the affirmative pole, forcing the conclusion that Barth's theology is a legalistic theology. Barth's theological statements made on the negative pole can be interpreted in their proper meaning only in light of the other affirmative, gracious and promise-filled statements.¹⁰⁸ Against the dialectic nature of this theological discourse, holds Yoshimura, Kitamori dissolves the two dynamic poles into static entities. "This would be," accuses Yoshimura, "not only a one-sidedness but a total distortion of the picture."¹⁰⁹ The same things can be said, contends Yoshimura, of the other Gs. Barth commandment and obedience is not meant legalistically; on the contrary, it is "*God's* commandment and obedience *to God*," God who is full of grace and mercy.¹¹⁰ Following Barth, Yoshimura argues that there can be no commandment and obedience apart from the foregoing Gospel. In Yoshimura's view, Kitamori illegitimately interprets Barth as legalistic and falsely accuses the Swiss theologian of being legalistic.¹¹¹ Quoting from Barth's own preface to the English version of his *Römerbrief* in which Barth characterizes his own opponents in Germany as launching quixotic accusations against him, he maintains that Kitamori also makes the same

¹⁰⁸Ibid.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., 49.

¹¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹¹Ibid., 48.

interpretative mistake.¹¹²

Kitamori responds to this critical review of Yoshimura in an article under the title of "The Fundamental Problem of Theology Today."¹¹³ In this article Kitamori insists that his criticism of Barth is not based upon any misunderstanding of Barth. Kitamori contends that he has reproduced Barth's view with the author's own words in his *Theology Today*.¹¹⁴ As for his opponents' criticism that Kitamori one-sidedly picks up the negative and silences the positive in Barth's thought, Kitamori refuses to acknowledge any validity of these criticisms; he is certainly aware of the fact that Barth speaks of the Gospel, for no Christian theology would possibly dispense with speaking of both transcendence and immanence, negative aspect and positive one, exclusiveness and inclusiveness, judgement and grace. His issue is not concerned with the content of dogmatics but "the form of dogmatics which qualifies its content."¹¹⁵ In Kitamori's view, as we understand him, the Gospel alone that redeems man's sin inherent in theological work and thus constitutes evangelical dogmatics. If dogmatics is only possible, as Barth contends, on the basis of our obedience to the Word of God, which in Kitamori's view is impossible for a sinner to render, how can dogmatic work become feasible?¹¹⁶ Is it not doomed *a priori*, by

¹¹²Ibid., 49.

¹¹³In *Christian Culture*, (Tokyo: September, 1950), 44-50.

¹¹⁴Ibid., 44.

¹¹⁵Ibid.

¹¹⁶Ibid.

first asking a sinner to do what is impossible for him? This is the central problem for Kitamori. "The content of theology, i.e. the Gospel itself, does not remain to be the content of theology only but becomes the prolegomena of dogmatics as well," says Kitamori, "thus conquering [the sin of disobedience of] a witness himself [theologian] by its grace and making him obedient [to the Word of God]."¹¹⁷ Kitamori observes that Barth in his prolegomena does not speak of the Cross of the Christ at all but only of the Word of God and obedience.¹¹⁸ This argument of Kitamori has failed to convince Yoshimura that Barth's theology is ultimately legalistic.¹¹⁹

To understand the poor-communication between Kitamori and Yoshimura, we need to clarify the problem complex in Kitamori's *Theology Today*. This work is mainly directed against the theology of Barth, but in preparing for this criticism Kitamori deals with the liberal theologians of the nineteenth century: Schleiermacher, Ritschl, Hermann, Wrede, von Harnack, Althaus, Nygren and a few others. According to Kitamori the cross of Christ was significant to the liberal theologians; neither Althaus nor Nygren took a definitive stand against the liberal theology.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷Ibid., 45.

¹¹⁸Ibid., 46.

¹¹⁹Ibid.

¹²⁰It would be a challenging task to go through Kitamori's views of each of these theologians in this work, but due to the length of such a project we must leave that discussion to a future work. Still, the following is to be noted. To examine "the situation of modern theology" (39) Kitamori uses a single criterion, namely the Gospel of the Cross, the Pain of God. In this "simplification" (41) Kitamori means to follow Luther's example which in Kitamori's view would be summed up as "justification by faith or by work." Kitamori's procedure is then to see whether the Cross of Christ is brought to naught in each theological thought. Throughout his examination, Kitamori

Barth reacted, Kitamori holds, against the elevation of man at the cost of God's deity, for instance, Barth denounced Schleiermacher's psychologization of faith in God but he did not react to the fact that the Cross was deprived of its cardinal significance in the theology of Schleiermacher.¹²¹ In other words, Barth did not capture the very core

deals with theological ideas without taking into consideration what historical background and presuppositions these theologies have; religious wars, enormous scientific discovery, enlightenment, and resulting changes of world view, anthropology, cultural and ethical consciousness, all of which necessitated various theological formulations. While we are saying this, however, we do not mean to imply whether these theologies were right or wrong. What we mean is that theology is bound to live in a concrete historical situation and tries to reach people with the Gospel as it hears with the ears of that time. We must therefore be prepared to see them in historical context before we apply "a simplified criterion" to them. To this viewpoint we add that Kitamori's concept of the Pain of God is one of the interpretations of the Cross of Christ. The Cross has, as the divine event, infinite dimensions and defies being defined by a single concept. It can be seen as the supreme manifestation of the "amazing grace" which is certainly wider, deeper and richer than all human conceptions, including the Pain of God.

¹²¹Kitamori's criticism here is based on the following text of Barth: "Es war ein böser, böser Augenblick in der Geschichte des neuern Protestantismus, böser als Alles was in dieser Tragödie noch weiter sich ereignen sollte, als man anfang, das Haben der Gnade als eine Herzens-oder Gewissenserfahrung des frommen Menschen zu verstehen" ("Rechtfertigung und Heiligung," 285). "To Barth," writes Kitamori commenting on this text, "the primary concern is not with the fact that in Schleiermacher and modern Protestantism the Cross of Christ is brought to naught but rather with the fact that here religion is understood as something to be grasped by the psychological and historical possibilities of man and thus is built upon something within man's experience" (*Today*, 18-19). Kitamori's analysis of the text is not quite adequate. What Barth is trying to do is emphasize the radical *extra nos* nature of justification and sanctification "mit Luther verstehen als justitia und sanctitas extrinseca, nicht intrinseca, aliena nicht propria, passiva nicht activa, extra nos habitans, nicht domestics" ("Rechtfertigung," 284, see also 285). It is true that Barth throughout this essay does not use the word "das Kreuz Christie" and that is one of the reasons why Kitamori concludes that "Barth is hardly concerned with the question of how the Gospel of the Cross stands in modern Protestantism" (*Today*, 19). But one may question what it does actually mean to speak of the Cross; in order to be reminded of God's suffering for us? or to know of His love through suffering? or to appropriate the "benefits" of it? or to learn of our discipleship in the shadow of the

of the problem of modern Protestantism. In Kitamori's view the true restoration of the evangelical faith is not by way of Barthian legalism, for it is little better than liberalism.

Kitamori's dealing with Barth is complicated by the following: whereas the liberal theologians dispensed with the Cross of Christ and made Him to an ideal of human ethical aspiration, Barth rejected this elevation of human beings to the well-nigh divine, thus uncompromisingly proclaiming God's deity. In this negation of liberal optimism of man's ethical nature, God's doom became the main concern of Barth's theology. But the divine doom alone would not constitute theology. In the very "No" of doom the divine "Yes" was deeply involved. That is why Barth's theology was enthusiastically acclaimed and received.¹² But Kitamori tries to argue that the problem of theology today lies in the fact that the Cross of Christ has been absent in modern Protestantism or not taken as seriously as it should have been, and

Cross? or what? When one spells out what the Gospel of the Cross means in specific terms, one could have such formulations as Barth's, and this without using the term "the Gospel of the Cross."

¹²The theology of Barth deeply moved many Japanese Christians from the early thirties on. Mikio Sumiya, a Christian historian, to whom we referred earlier, is one such person. He writes recalling his days as student: "When I got sick and the doctor advised absolute rest At that time I came across the sermon-book of Barth-Thurneysen which was available in translation then and read it with tears flowing down my cheeks The theology of Barth radically dealt with the problems of real life and at the same time, beyond that, dared to believe salvation in Christ. I felt that I had found in this theology a new world of faith. As militarism advanced, I thought there was no compass in the harsh reality of life other than this theology [of Barth]" ("My Encounter with Barth's Theology" in: Morioka, *Japanese Christianity and Barth*, 15).

he reduced liberal theology and Barth's theology to this common denominator. But Barth's theology, though strongly anti-liberal, was not generally considered legalistic but intensively filled with divine grace and intensively Christocentric at that. And this "grace-orientedness" was already more conspicuous in Barth's theology at the time when Kitamori wrote his *Theology Today* in 1950. This state of affairs may have caused some confusion among the Barthian readers of Kitamori's work.

In a "round-table" talk which was held between Kitamori and Yoshimura to settle the debate,¹²³ Kitamori tried to communicate his point but Yoshimura failed to understand Kitamori. "I understand," Kitamori said, "that grace permeates the theology of Barth What I see as the problem is how it is possible for us to be obedient to the Word of God. For I doubt if it is possible for our words to become transparent to or like a mirror of the Word of God [as Barth demands]. The issue is the fundamental problem of a man as man who speaks of the Word of God."¹²⁴ To this, Yoshimura replied: "It certainly is something self-evident; no human words cannot become pure as you correctly maintain, nor does Barth express the whole issue in that sense."¹²⁵ At the end of this discussion, Yoshimura asked Kitamori whether his theology is done in the forgiveness of sins. Kitamori answered yes to this question. So also Barth does his theological work, replied Yoshimura. Thus Yoshimura did not see that there existed a real problem as Kitamori so passionately

¹²³Kitamori-Yoshimura, "On the Motif of the Theology of Barth," *Christian Culture* (Tokyo; January/February 1951), 49-57.

¹²⁴Ibid., 54.

¹²⁵Ibid., 57.

argued.¹²⁶

Having reviewed four theologians' reactions to Kitamori's criticism of Barth, we now mention the following points by way of summary. First, we ask whether it is possible for Barth to speak of the Cross of the Christ specifically as the issue of prolegomena in dogmatics. In Kitamori's view, the content of the Gospel must be prolegomena as well. Barth, however, refuses to adopt the definite content of the Gospel as a human "Grundanschauung" (such as the Pain of God for Kitamori) and consequently it is impossible for him to make such a "Grundanschauung" into a methodological foundation. To Barth, theology is constituted by God's sovereign lordship over the creature in His grace.¹²⁷

Second, even if the theological prolegomena had been "legalistic" as Kitamori maintains, the actual content does not necessarily become "legalistic." Barth is said to have abandoned his earlier prolegomena and switched to a Christological

¹²⁶Ibid.

¹²⁷It is unnecessary to substantiate this point by quoting Barth. But it would be helpful to include one passage from his article on the First Commandment as the theological axiom: "Er [Gott] hatte sich schon erwiesen, mit Luther zu reden, als 'der [Gott] ein ewiger Quellbrunn ist, der sich mit eitel Güte übergeußet und von dem alles, was gut ist und heißt, ausfleußt' (WA. 30 I 136, 1). Dann und darauf hin tritt er mit seinem Gebot auf den Plan. Seine schon erwiesene Güte ist die Kraft des Gebotes. Sein Gesetz steht keinen Augenblick für sich und auf sich selbst. . . . Der theologische Axiom laßt sich nicht lösen aus diesem soteriologischen oder sagen wir gleich konkret: aus diesen christologischen Zusammenhang" ("Die erste Gebot," 303). In view of this concept of theological axiom it is difficult to follow Kitamori's accusation that Barth's theology is legalistic even in its prolegomena. In faith as well as in theology obedience is an integral part. And Barth himself says in this very article that divine grace precedes divine commandment. The difference is then to be seen in how Kitamori or Barth sees the nature of divine grace, and not in terms of the false alternative "evangelical or legalistic."

method, and again, this can be said result from the openness of his theological method. The "Sache" itself modifies the method in theology.¹²⁸

Third, as we recall from the previous chapter, Kitamori consciously or unconsciously has felt that his personally "unabandonable" concept of the Pain of God needs to be "forgiven" and restored to serving as the witness to the salvific reality of God, a reality for which he had no other support than the Pain of God. This concern of Kitamori had difficulty claiming an objective validity in dogmatic prolegomena, for this prolegomenal "forgiveness" is needed for Kitamori's own theology, a concern which might be seen as Kitamori's own "private" issue and therefore has been difficult for other theologians to grasp.

And last, we shall mention that Barth's formal idea of God--the sovereign and absolute Lord, basic to the Reformed theology--is be deeply incompatible with Kitamori's idea of the all-embracing God. In Kitamori's view, God in Barth's theology is the "despotic" God to whom men must be obedient. For Kitamori, the love of God in Barth's theology is *terminus a quo* while the obedience to God is *terminus ad quem*. Kitamori thus holds that even the most eloquent exposition of God's grace by Barth is ultimately and legalistically directed to man's obedience to God the Lord. In other words, the main motif of Kitamori's criticism of Barth is that

¹²⁸It is necessary to note here that in this comparison of Kitamori with Barth I am not concerned with "defending" Barth against Kitamori's criticism. As I shall examine shortly, Barth has theological traits to which I feel I must criticize. But it is quite essential for any theology to be open to God's actual dealing with us in our concrete situation. God leads us into an ever-deeper "experience" of Himself, because He is living with us in concrete history, which ever-anew urges us on in the quest for God's speaking to us today.

Barth does not know God in Pain, which to Kitamori is the very core of the Gospel, and without which a theology inevitably degenerates into legalism.¹²⁹ It is, we know, obvious that Barth is deeply concerned with man's obedience to God and with the Law's significance in Christian existence. But to call the theology of Barth "legalism" would be too gross a simplification to be taken seriously as a valid criticism. Perhaps, Kitamori's "Denkschematismus" practically reduced Barth's theology to a caricature

¹²⁹Quoting Nishida's comparison between his philosophical idea of God as the "self-negating God" and the Western "despotic" God [君主の神], Kitamori in his essay, written in 1963, identifies this religion of the "despotic God" with the theology of Barth and writes as follows: "The theology [of Barth] which has the First Commandment as its theological axiom ultimately cannot but negate and exclude 'human reality [as is lived by the sinner]' by its legalistic exclusiveness; it remains so even when it begins to speak of 'Gottes Menschlichkeit' unless its prolegomena as the basic method of theology is changed. The concrete manifestation of this exclusiveness can be seen in the fact that it negates and excludes [the approaches to] concrete existence and indigenoussness" (*Japanese Heart*, 128). For Kitamori, Barth's prolegomena with which he struggled in his youth fundamentally determined the whole of Barth's theology as an exclusive and legalistic theology. As to the indigenoussness of a theology, we have a comment of Barth on Kitamori's theology, a comment Barth wrote to the Preface of the Japanese edition of his *Einführung in die Evangelische Theologie* in 1962. By then Barth read Carl Michalson's book on Japanese theological contribution and was acquainted with Kitamori's theology. Barth wrote: "Rechte Theologen stehen und gehen überall auf ihren eigenen Beinen, und das wird immer und überall auch eine gewisse nationale Eigentümlichkeit ihres Denkens in sich schließen müssen. . . . Immerhin: es kam bekanntlich nicht gut, als man sich zum Beispiel in Deutschland aufmachte, ein spezifisch 'deutsches' Christentum und dementsprechend eine spezifische 'deutsch' Theologie zu entwickeln und zu pflegen. So könnte auch bei dem Versuch einer spezifisch 'amerikanischen' oder 'schweizerischen' Theologie bestimmt nichts Erfreuliches herauszukommen, und so auch nicht bei einer spezifisch 'japanischen' Theologie. . . . In dieser Hinsicht möchte ich zur 'Theologie vom Schmerze Gottes' von Kazoh Kitamori, die mir unter den Michalsons Buch . . . dargestellten Unternehmungen nicht nur geistvollste, sondern auch am meisten 'japanischen' vorkommt, ein ernstliches Fragezeichen setzen dürfen Richtung auf eine Theologie, die nicht 'japanisch', sondern evangelisch, biblisch begründete, ökumenisch gültige Theologie in japanischer Eigentümlichkeit sein wird" (quoted in Ogawa, *Aufgabe*, 112-113).

and thus hindered him from having critical but fruitful dialogues with Barth and other Japanese "Barthians."

All the evidence now leads us to conclude that Kitamori has failed in his attempt to communicate his criticism of Barth to the Japanese "Barthians." His opponents are certainly partly responsible for this failure. But as we have seen, the material focus of Kitamori's criticism is not quite clear; his criticism does not match the "real" Barth. In view of this ambiguity, we are here compelled to speculate: why, *materially* and beyond the somewhat vague prolegomenal issue, has not Kitamori developed his criticism of Barth on the basis of his own vision of God in Pain, and this particularly concerning the view of God? Is the difference in "Gottesanschauung" really vital and cardinal to Kitamori or is this only an apparent difference? Why doesn't Kitamori find anything substantial to criticize in the theology of the "mature" Barth? Do these things indicate that Kitamori's theology is not so *materially* incompatible with Barth's (except for the fact that Kitamori hesitates to abandon his old, "time-encapsulated" criticism of Barth)?

The Theology of the Pain of God--A Barthian Theology?

Though adamantly critical of his theology Kitamori is, nevertheless, deeply influenced by Karl Barth. When his writings are read somewhat attentively, one can hardly escape the impression that Kitamori's theological ground-scheme is strikingly similar to that of Barth. In fact, he himself acknowledges that he deeply breathed

Barthian air during the formative years of his theology.¹³⁰ "From now on," Kitamori can write, "for anyone who wants to do theological work it is unavoidable to become a Barthian once; I for one cannot but confess that I am also a Barthian in this sense."¹³¹ In this connection we recall that Kitamori had been under the influence of Nishida Philosophy. It is then highly interesting to speculate on the relationship between Barth's theological thought and Nishida's philosophical ideas. Although presently it is nothing more than mere speculation, these two thinkers may not be totally separated from each other; they may have an interesting philosophical affinity for each other. Kitamori may be an example of the compatibility of Barth's theology and Nishida's philosophy.¹³² This issue is a theme for another study. What we wish to point out is that Barth's influence and the influence of Nishida philosophy are not totally unrelated; in formal aspects they may have some affinity for each other. But

¹³⁰"During the first half of the twentieth century the theological world was filled with the air called the theology of Barth. To be born as a theologian in this age means to be born in the air of Barthian theology. It was then natural for me to inhale and exhale the air of Barth's theology," writes Kitamori (Morioka, *Japanese Christianity and Barth*, 10).

¹³¹*Today*, 20.

¹³²For the interesting relation between Barth and Nishida, see Chap. 2, note 94. There we mentioned that it was Nishida who strongly advised K. Takizawa, his young follower then, to study Barth in Bonn. In fact, the synthesis of Barth and Nishida became Takizawa's life-long mission (see note 88 above). Does this suggest a speculative character in Barth's theology which can even capture the attention of a Buddhist philosopher? Or the universality of the truth of the Christian message of salvation? We here have a highly interesting question regarding Barth's theology and the Christian faith's relation to Nishida philosophy. This question of the character of Barth's theology may further relate to the exceptionally enthusiastic reception of Barth by mainstream Japanese Protestantism.

presently we shall continue by answering the following: to what extent and in what sense has Kitamori been influenced by Barth?

Kitamori had easy access to all major works of Karl Barth including *Kirchlich Dogmatik I/I* already during his years at seminary.¹³³ Additionally, some good introductory works to Barth's theology were then also available. The more one reads Barth's earlier works, the more one notices how much Kitamori has absorbed from these primary and secondary sources. His graduation thesis at the Lutheran seminary in Tokyo gives witness to an extensive reading of Barth's own works.¹³⁴ As to the secondary materials, in addition to two basic introductory works written by Caiman and Kuwada, John McChonnachie's *The Barthian Theology and the Man of Today*, translated in 1934 by Chitose Kishi (an influential leader of Lutheranism in Japan) in collaboration with one other, also seems to have been carefully read by Kitamori.¹³⁵ Such an intensive study of Barth in the formative years, we must

¹³³We mention some of the titles which appear in his graduation theses from the Lutheran seminary: *Das Wort Gottes und Theologie, Zur Lehre vom Heiligen Geist, Die Theologie und Kirche, Die Römerbrief, Credo, Offenbarung, Kirche, Theologie, Evangelium und Gesetz*. In addition to these titles there were several other translations of Barth's writings which we have already mentioned.

¹³⁴Kitamori seems to have been a diligent note-taker in his reading. Though it is not necessary to have documentary substantiation, one comes across ideas and phrases which Kitamori borrows from Barth's writings although he rarely acknowledges them. We have already noted some of them, and will continue to do so when it is significant.

¹³⁵In this rather extensive introduction to the theology of the earlier Barth, there are two expressions which strongly speaks for Kitamori's in-depth reading of this volume. One is "the character of Almighty grace" which "demands the recognition that its [Reconciliation's] Subject is identical in the full sense with the Father" (*The Barthian Theology and the Man of Today* [New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1933], 226; underline is mine). This word "character" has been

suppose, cannot but leave an indelible mark on the young Kitamori's mind and on his theological thinking. His lifelong criticism of Barth may give witness to his Barthianism with a negative signature. In the following we shall see several points of similarity between Kitamori and Barth.¹³⁶

Kitamori's favorite term for describing the Pain of God as the character of divine love (cf. the title of his book next to his *opus magnum*, *The Character of the Gospel*). The second is the non-identity between love in creation and love in reconciliation. McChonachie summarizes Barth's exposition of reconciliation which is found in *KD I/1*, 430-431, which must have been of great significance for Kitamori's conceptualization of the Pain of God. For a better observation we give here the text of the particular summary in Barth's original: "Das Unbegreifliche der Offenbarung als solcher, der Offenbarung als der Versöhnung, die nur von Gott aus Wirklichkeit sein kann, dieses Unbegreifliche ist das Faktum des Sohnes Gottes, der in unserer Mitte, also mitten in unserer Feindschaft gegen Gott, der Herr ist. *Weil diese Liebe Gottes, die in diesem Faktum offenbar wird, nicht identisch sein kann mit der Liebe zu der Welt, die er schaffen wollte und erschaffen hat--zwischen dieser Welt und unserer Welt liegt ja die Sünde und der Tod--weil die in diesem Faktum offenbare Liebe Gottes vielmehr gerade seine Liebe zu der verlorenen Welt des an ihm schuldig gewordenen Menschen ist* (Joh. 3,16), zu der Welt, deren Kontinuität zu jener ursprünglichen uns völlig verborgen ist--darum können wir das Herrsein Gottes hier mit dem Herrsein Gottes dort nicht verwechseln, nicht direkt identifizieren, darum müssen wir dort (im Blick auf die Schöpfung) von einer ersten, hier (im Blick auf die Versöhnung) von einer zweiten Seinsweise Gottes reden" (italics is added). This differentiation in Barth's thought between the love to the world and the love in the Son of God is very close to what Kitamori uses as another expression of the Pain of God. "When we want to grasp the meaning of the Cross of Christ exactly, we have to say the following first," writes Kitamori, "namely, the love of God in Christ is qualitatively different from the love of God without Christ" (*Introduction*, 42). In another context Kitamori also writes: "Even if the expression of 'the Cross' is used, the content of it is nowadays changed into the immediate love [of God without Christ], we therefore use the expression of the 'Pain of God' in order to make the distinction between the love of God in the Cross and the immediate love of God" (*ibid.*, 44). Due to this similarity and Kitamori's intensive reading of this particular volume of *KD*, it is most probable that Kitamori's conceptualization of the Pain of God found its direction in this Barthian idea of a distinction in divine loves, although Kitamori filled this distinction with other ideas.

¹³⁶In the following review of similarities between Kitamori and Barth we have no choice but to proceed in the form of short summary. Our purpose here is to gain a

First, we see Kitamori's dependence on Barth with reference to dogmatic methodology. Although Kitamori is critical of Barth's prolegomena, the motif of Kitamori's reflection on methodology moves within the Barthian motif, namely, how we can be obedient to the totality of the Word of God. Whereas Barth sees that we can do full justice to the Word of God in all its aspects by being open to God's ever-new revelation through His Word, Kitamori argues that this full obedience can be possible only where one has the love of God in Pain.¹³⁷ Given that what Kitamori

general picture of Kitamori's dependence on Barth in his theological thinking. To substantiate Barth's points of view on the issues to be taken up, I mainly rely on secondary literature. To go into a detailed discussion on the primary sources is beyond the scope of this present study.

¹³⁷"Only through the narrow way of 'the Cross alone,'" writes Kitamori, "can we come out to the broad way of obedience to the whole Word of God. No, when we are in the Cross of Christ, we are already obedient to the Word of God, because in the Cross we cannot rule the Word of God at all; in the Cross God is truly the Lord. But as long as one preaches 'man's obedience' to 'the Lordship of God,' man can never hold the Word of God in all eternity, because this kind of relationship between God and man is nothing but a typical idea of justification by the Law" (*Cross*, 5). We observe that the terminology and thought-categories are thoroughly Barthian. But also in terms of content one can doubt whether there is any "material" difference between Kitamori and Barth when we read what Kitamori quotes above from Barth as the basis of his criticism, namely the following passage: "Wir sind ja gar nicht die, die Christi Gebote auch nur hören können, bevor wir durch die Annahme der Sündenvergebung unsere ganze Existenz und alle unsere vergangenen und künftigen Werke in das Gericht und unter die Gnade Gottes haben stellen lassen Das Gesetz, das wir ohne das Evangelium zu hören meinen, ist sicher nicht Gottes Gesetz. Wir werden dann also das Gesetz Gottes sicher nicht erfüllen, nicht weil es uns zu hart und schwer ist, aber weil wir es überhaupt noch nicht kennen. Kennten wir es, so würden wir uns an Christus klammern in welchem es erfüllt ist und eben als solche auf Gnade Angewiesenen und sich Verlassenden das 'sanfte Joch', die 'leichte Last' (Matth. 11, 30) seiner Gebote und Weisungen auf uns nehmen, die zu halten nicht schwer ist! (1. Joh. 5, 3)" (*Credo* [Zollikon: Verlag der Evangelischen Buchverhandlung, 1935], 53). The thesis that obedience to the Word of God or the Law is made possible only by one's being drawn into Christ is maintained materially in the thoughts of both theologians.

problematizes on the issue of prolegomena is irrelevant to Barth, and that Barth's theology is carried out in the framework of divine grace, the difference between them seems to be immaterial. Though Kitamori has a different idea of the ground for the constitution of theology, the motif that theology aims to be obedient to the Word of God belongs to the basic foundation of Barth.

Secondly, we find a formal parallel between the two theologians with respect to the doctrine of the Trinity. We can designate their doctrines of the Trinity as Christologically determined. That is, they formulate the doctrine of the immanent Trinity on the basis of the revelation in Jesus Christ. Barth sees an inner-divine polarity between the Father and the Son in the unity of the Holy Spirit as the structure of divine life¹³⁸; Kitamori attempted, as we have seen, to penetrate to an inner-most essence of God as "God in Pain" through the revelation of the crucified Son and tried to explicate it as the inner-trinitarian movement.¹³⁹ The "quality" of this divine inner-life is different for Kitamori and Barth. In the former the Father and the Son

¹³⁸For Barth's doctrine of "the essential (immanent) Trinity," see Timothy Bradshaw, "Karl Barth on the Trinity: A Family Resemblance," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 39 (1986), 145-164: Bradshaw thematically writes of Barth's view of God's triune being revealed in the Christ event; "In Jesus Christ there is the unveiling of the veiled God and the impartation of that revelation. This dynamic movement corresponds with the trinitarian life of God *in se*, to Son, Father and Spirit, or to form, freedom and historicity" (144; cf. *KD I/1*, 351). The sequence in Barth of "Son [as 'Offenbarung'], Father [as 'Offenbarer'] and Spirit [as 'Offenbarsein']" is adopted by Kitamori in his "prolegomenal" work, *The Lord of The Cross* (21-23). See further Zahrt, 123-125. ; Tomiyasu Kakegawa, "The Immanent Trinity and the Economic Trinity -- in Karl Barth's Kirchliche Dogmatik," *Theological Studies in Japan* 21 (Tokyo: 1982), 15-35.

¹³⁹See 427-429.

are related to each other as wrath against love, which constitutes a tension-filled unity in Pain, whereas in the latter the Father as God's sovereign "freedom" and the Son as His self-limiting "form" constitute a unity filled with tension and movement in the Holy Spirit as His "freedom in form."¹⁴⁰ Still, we notice that there is a striking formal parallel between Kitamori and Barth.

Thirdly, we point out a strong intellectualism in both theologians. In both of their theologies, faith is to be developed into knowledge of salvation or of God Himself; faith demands insight into the truth of salvation.¹⁴¹ In Kitamori, to know that God is in Pain eternally and has forgiven the sinner in His Pain is the essential aspect of salvation,¹⁴² whereas for Barth to know that one is elected in Jesus Christ

¹⁴⁰Bradshaw, 150-151.

¹⁴¹For Barth's intellectualism, see Regin Preter, "Glauben und Erkennen," *Kerygma und Dogma* 2 (1956, 3), 176192: In this article Preter goes through Barth's Anselmian quest for "intellectum" and holds that because of Barth strictly follows the logical necessity of given revelational data, this Swiss dogmatician is able to build a theological system, perhaps the greatest history has ever seen. From his Lutheran viewpoint Preter presents critical arguments against Barth's strong passion for theological "Einsichten" and to his extensive use of the analogy principle which ultimately leads to unscriptural speculation. Preter expresses his concern as follows: "Aber hier [wo es eine Geschlossenheit und Konsequenz gibt fangen die Gegenbemerkungen an. Wie wird es in der Durchführung eben dieses Programms mit der exegetischen Treue gehen? Duldet das echte Hören auf das kontingente, geschichtliche Wort der Offenbarungszeugen, das als Offenbarungszeugnis sich an den *Glauben* wendet, diese energische Wendung zu einer sich auf Boden erhebenden strengen und notwendigen *Erkenntnis*?" (178; emphases are original). This criticism *mutatis mutandis* applies to Kitamori's theological methods as we have seen in the previous chapter.

¹⁴²See 313 above, particularly note 94 there.

from eternity is the thing one needs for salvation.¹⁴³ In both theologians the basis for salvation is made *intellectually* clear through the revelation of Jesus Christ. Related to this intellectualism, both Kitamori and Barth ultimately deny Luther's idea of *deus absconditus*. In Kitamori, the idea of a hidden God is soteriologized; he reduces this idea to the notion that God uses His wrath as a means to show His love and holds that the solution to the wrath of God is to be sought in the Pain of God.¹⁴⁴ Barth denies the idea of a hidden God on the grounds that this complicated idea of the Reformer cannot be maintained in the face of Scripture's simple witness.¹⁴⁵ This denial of *deus*

¹⁴³Although Barth so strongly emphasizes the historical revelation and is considered to be a theologian with his foot in historical revelation, Prenter maintains in another article on Barth, it is important not to be misled by impression: "Barths Betonen der geschichtliche Offenbarung muss im dialectischen Zusammenhang mit seinem betonten Interesse für die immanente Trinität, für die überzeitliche Urgeschichte, für die ewige Erwählung gesehen werden. Für Barth stellt die Offenbarungsgeschichte das Erkenntnismedium für ewige Urgeschichte dar. Gott lässt seinen Sohn in die Fremde hinausziehen, damit wir zu ihm zurückwenden können. Die Inkarnation soll uns ermöglichen, hier in der Zeit zu erkennen, was wir ewig sind. Wir sollen jedoch hier in der Zeit nur insofern errettet werden, als wir erkennen, was wir ewig sind" ("Karl Barths Umbildung der traditionellen Zweinaturlehre in lutherischer Beleuchtung," *Studia Theologica* 11 [1957, 1], 77.

¹⁴⁴*Pain*, 110-112. We shall postpone a detailed discussion on this theme until we come to Kitamori's interpretation of Luther's concept of *deus absconditus* in the light of Luther's own thought.

¹⁴⁵"Es ist bekannt, daß Luther die Erkenntnis der Sünde, den Schrecken vor Gottes Zorn, die Buße, in der Regel auf eine besondere, von der Offenbarung der Gnade Gottes getrennte Gesetzes-, Heiligkeits- und Zornesoffenbarung, ja auf ein besonderes Wesen Gottes in seiner Majestät und Verborgenheit zurückgefohrt hat. Wir folgen Luther darin nicht, weil dieses Schema sich dem scheinbar komplizierteren, in Wahrheit doch viel einfacheren Zeugnis der Schrift gegenüber mit gutem Gewissen nicht aufrecht erhalten läßt" (*KD III/1*, 407; Barth's more determined rejection of Luther's "nominalistischen These" is found in *Ibid.*, 610). Gerhard Ebeling, to whom I owe the quotation above, has a criticism to Barth's rejection of the idea "deus absconditus": "Beunruhigender aber [als die Grenze der Luther-Interpretation Barths] ist eine Frage, die an Barths eigene Theologie richten ist:

absconditus is surely in keeping with both theologians' strong inclination to theological intellectualism."¹⁴⁶

Fourthly, strong objectivism is observable in the theologies of Kitamori and Barth. By objectivism we mean that man's salvation has been accomplished objectively and in a supralapsarian manner by God as the inner-divine event. In Kitamori, the Pain of God is the objective and absolute salvation provided by God's taking His wrath upon Himself, His wrath which is aroused by man's rebellion and which would have to be imposed upon him.¹⁴⁷ Mankind is already in the salvation based upon the Pain of God, independent of the individual's subjective appropriation of it. In Barth's theology, the well-known doctrine of man's eternal election comes to the fore, namely the election of man by God in the Son in which He assumes man's condemnation upon Himself in the Son.¹⁴⁸ For both theologians the historical Cross

Könnte nicht infolge dieser [logisch-analogische] Art von Christozentrik [zum Unterschied von Luthers forensich-antithetischer Christozentrik] der Tendenz Vorschub geleistet sein, daß Gottesverständnis in einer Einlinigkeit und Selbstverständlichkeit auf den Nenner der Gnade zu bringen, die mutatis mutandis an die Theologie der Aufklärung und Albrecht Ritschls erinnert?" ("Karl Barths Ringen mit Luther," *Lutherstudien III* [Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1985], 552).

¹⁴⁶When Kitamori says that "the Cross is the sole loophole through which we can see over *the whole of God*" (*Auto II*, 85; italic is mine), he expresses that God can be known fully through the Cross of Christ. Kitamori, like Barth, does not have a concept of God who transcends human comprehension. The knowledge of God in Pain exhausts the very nature of God.

¹⁴⁷See 307-308 above.

¹⁴⁸Prenter, "Umbildung," 69-71.

of Christ is the realization of the eternal (supralapsarian) salvific will of God.¹⁴⁹ In both systems this presupposes the idea that God foresees the consequences of His creation of man and has reconciled man to Himself before creation. In our own words, all the consequences of His creation of man--man's denial of God and rebellion against Him--have been already "taken care of" in eternity.¹⁵⁰ Thus, redemption has priority to creation, not only noetically but also ontically. Here we observe a strong speculative tendency in both theologians.¹⁵¹ And it is logically consistent that

¹⁴⁹Zahrnt, 141-143: Zahrnt writes about this a-historical feature of Barth's theology as follows: "Zugespitzt können wir sagen: Die göttliche Dreieinigkeit hat in der Ewigkeit ein Drama geschaffen und unter sich, unter ihren drei Personen, uraufgeführt. Nun soll dieses Drama wie im Himmel auch auf Erden gespielt werden. Zu diesem Zweck schafft sie sich die Welt als Bühne und den Menschen als Zuschauer" (142). For Kitamori's view, see 438-444 above.

¹⁵⁰In Barth's thought this eternal reconciliation is conceived as the election of the Son. We read the following passage: "Nun ist ja der erwählte Mensch Jesus dazu bestimmt, zu leiden and sterben Es ist der Gehorsam zum Tode am Kreuz, zu dem der seiner göttlichen Seinsart sich entäußernde Sohn Gottes sich nach Phil. 2, 6f entschliesst und eben *dieser Entschluss* ist der Inhalt des göttlichen Beschlusses im Anfang aller Dinge Das Erwähltsein des Menschen Jesus bedeutet also: Ein Zorn ist entbrannt, ein Urteil wird gesprochen, eine Strafe wird vollzogen, eine Verwerfung findet statt. Vor Ewigkeit her ist es so beschlossen. Vor Ewigkeit her ist Gericht vorgesehen Daß der erwählte Mensch Jesus leiden und sterben muss, bedeutet nun aber nicht mehr und nicht weniger als dies, daß Gott - indem er selber dieser Mensch wird -- sich selbst für den zu seinem Feind gewordenen Menschen verantwortlich und haftbar und dass er die ganze Folge von dessen Tun: seine Verwerfung und seine Tod zu seiner eigenen Sache macht So besteht nun das Wesen der freien Gnade für einen Jeden, den Gott in dem Menschen Jesus erwählte, darin, dass er darum weil in diesem Jesus Gott der Richter selbst seine, des Gerichteten Stelle einnimmt, von seiner Sünde. Schuld und Strafe gänzlich freigesprochen ist" (quoted in: Prenter, "Umbildung, 71 [KD II/2, 130-134]). For Kitamori's view of this supralapsarian idea of reconciliation, see 267-270 above.

¹⁵¹See Prenter's discussion on Barth's emphasis on "Erkenntnis und Einsicht" expressed in the latter's concept of the creation-redemption relationship ("Die Einheit von Schöpfung und Erlösung: Zur Schöpfungslehre Karl Barths," *Theologische Zeitschrift* 2 [1946], 161-182). Here Prenter takes up the problems of consistent

Kitamori and Barth came very close to universalism.¹⁵²

Lastly, we recognize that in Kitamori as well as in Barth divine grace is made triumphant in such a way that the existential struggle between faith and actual experience is in danger of losing its tension. Kitamori repeatedly states that the truth of the Pain of God conquers all the denials and rebellions of man. No sinner can nullify the love of God which is based upon the Pain of God. The love based upon the Pain of God is the love which is never "beaten" by human sin.¹⁵³ This is proclaimed even though a believer feels his denial of God from time to time. In Barth's thought, sin is made ontologically impossible; it has no ontological reality because God eternally denies it in His triumphant grace.¹⁵⁴ Whatever happens in man, the eternal grace of God is unchangeable; what matters is to know this and

rationalization, of dissolution and of the tension between the reality of creation and that of redemption by way of the eternalization of the salvific event in the Son. He writes: "*Wie* Gesetz und Evangelium, *wie* [unser] Kreuz und Dankbarkeit, *wie* Tod und Auferstehung, *wie* Gottes opus alienum und opus proprium, *wie* Schöpfung und Erlösung *eins* ist, wird erst im lumen gratiae einsichtig sein. Die Einheit liest in Gottes Handeln. Für uns, die wir diesseits des Sündefalls und der Auferstehung leben, wird es geraten sein--und so zeigt uns auch die Bibel das Beispiel, die Grenze der supralapsarischen Spekulation und des eschatologischen Schauens nicht zu übertreten" (182).

¹⁵²See note 150 above; also Zahrnt, 136-138.

¹⁵³See 253-256 above; cf. the following word of Barth which we quote from Zahrnt, 137-138: "[‘Nachdem der Eine, Jesus Christus, verworfen ist, ist für die Vielen Verwerfung keine Möglichkeit mehr,'] [mögen sie] wählen, wie sie es tun--sie mögen laufen, soweit sie kommen: die Stellung und das Los der Verworfenen, nach welchem sie in ihrer Torheit die Hände ausstrecken, werden sie bestimmt nicht erlangen Sie können der göttlichen Gnadenwahl wohl Schande bereiten; sie können aber nicht umstoßen und rückgängig machen."

¹⁵⁴See Zahrnt, 144-145.

believe this. In both theologies the existential tension of faith is about to be dissolved into the objective affirmation of divine grace.

We have now sufficiently seen how close Kitamori stands to Barth's general framework of theological thinking. Is then the theology of the Pain of God a Barthian theology? This, of course, depends on what we understand by the "label" Barthianism. Barth's theology has gone through several developmental stages. But if there is some justification in characterizing "Barthianism" with the marks of Christocentric Trinity, intellectualism, soteriological objectivism, universalism, triumphalism, and the idea of "redemption before creation," we can undoubtedly classify Kitamori's theology as a Barthian theology. This Barthian tendency in Kitamori has not been widely recognized.¹⁵⁵ Certainly, in terms of theological content, there is a clear contrast between Kitamori and Barth. We could perhaps put the issue in the following way: Kitamori has been composing a Barthian music of theology; whereas Barth himself has composed his melody in a jovial major key, Kitamori's melody is in a tragic minor key. Barth's God is too high in heaven, whereas Kitamori's God is too deep in the valley of tears. Both are faulted with placing their "Denkschema" prior to the actual reality of man existing in faith and hope which always escapes "neat" systematization. To illustrate this point, we refer to Reinhold Niebuhr who criticized Barth's theological "triumphalism" expressed in the

¹⁵⁵According to Yasuo Furuya Kitamori "highly regards Barth's theology even if he has been criticizing its legalistic exclusiveness" (*Theology of Religion*, [Tokyo: Jordan-sha, 1985], 108). Irrespective of Kitamori's subjective evaluation of Barth, Furuya sees that Kitamori is indebted to Barth. Furuya is one of the few who see the "Barthian" framework of Kitamori's theology.

latter's lecture under the title "Die Unordnung der Welt und der Heilsplan Gottes,"¹⁵⁶ a lecture given at the general conference of the World Council of Churches in Amsterdam in 1948. Niebuhr's criticism runs: "Sie [die Theologie Barths] ist nun in Gefahr, eine Krone ohne Kreuz anzubieten, einen Triumph ohne Kampf, einen Glauben, der die Verworrenheit menschlicher Existenz mehr ignoriert als verwandelt."¹⁵⁷ Given that this criticism of Niebuhr captures the critical aspect of Barth's theology, we could characterize Kitamori's theology by twisting Niebuhr's criticism: "Kitamori's theology is now in danger of offering a cross without a crown, a struggle without a triumph, a faith which rather ignores divine hope given to the change of human existence than encourages the hope."¹⁵⁸ In a sense it seems instructive to note that with different "keys" the two theologies which share the same formal characters give exactly opposite theological profiles, though strikingly similar in structure. The one is said to be seeing man's reality from high above while the

¹⁵⁶Zürich, Evangelische Verlag, 1948.

¹⁵⁷Quoted in Zahrnt, 153.

¹⁵⁸If Barth has tried to overcome the contradictory reality of man's existence by his idea of the eternally triumphant grace which should drive away all the shadows in reality, Kitamori has tried to do the same by accepting it and remaining in it with his idea of God in Pain, being fearful of the trap of happiness. Whereas Barth has made light of the naked painful reality of man, Kitamori has refused to see what we may call the blessing of creation. Our experience of reality in faith is, however, not yet totally redeemed by divine grace nor totally abandoned to sheer nothingness. The world remains God's creation so that there are manifestations of the goodness of the Creator. If we fail to take both aspects in an adequate way, we misinterpret the very message of the Gospel itself. It is my observation of Kitamori's theology that the theology of the Pain of God, if one follows Kitamori's thought consistently to the end, should end up with what I have in the text, for if God is in Pain eternally, what can man expect but pain ultimately?

other from down below; both of the theologies are somehow out of touch with the actual reality of man in the tension of Law and Gospel.

On the basis of our observation above, we can conclude that Kitamori's theological relation to the Reformed tradition is much closer than what is observed at first glance. Calvin and the Reformed tradition have been attractive to Kitamori's own theological disposition. The formation of the Kyodan has led Kitamori to adopt a mediating position between the Reformed tradition and his own Lutheran conviction. But the theology of Barth has been of critical significance to Kitamori, providing him with the general framework of his theology, being the antithesis to the material aspect of Kitamori's vision of God, and thus helping to articulate his own theology of the Pain of God. What does this mean to our understanding of Kitamori's theology as a "Lutheran" theology in Japan?

Kitamori's Theology and Lutheranism

What is Lutheranism?

It has always been taken for granted that the theology of Kitamori belongs to Lutheranism. His friends and critics alike regard Kitamori's basic orientation in theology as Lutheran¹⁵⁹ and in fact, Kitamori himself is never ashamed of confessing that he is a Lutheran. More specifically, it is of particular interest that Kitamori's theology is considered an indigenized Lutheranism.¹⁶⁰ Yet our study so far leads us

¹⁵⁹See 14-15 above.

¹⁶⁰"Lutheranism in kimono," an expression given in Hesselink's article mentioned in note 27 of Chap. 1, may reflect a common understanding of Kitamori's

to raise a crucial question as to whether Kitamori's theology can properly be identified as a Lutheran theology clothed in an indigenous garment.

With this basic question in mind we start our investigation into the character of the relationships between Kitamori's theology and Lutheranism.¹⁶¹ First, it immediately becomes necessary to clarify some basic issues about the theological identity of Lutheranism. With regard to "external" forms such as church polity, order of worship, and even in the form of piety, Lutheranism allows much freedom; in fact, there are various types of Lutheranism in the field: "state church Lutheranism," "free-church Lutheranism," "pietistic Lutheranism," "conservative" Lutheranism, even "liberal" Lutheranism, and perhaps more. What is the *nota* by which one knows a Church, or its theology, as being Lutheran? Needless to say, the concern here is not with a confessional chauvinism but with the very identity of the Gospel itself. Behind this stands a firm conviction, the conviction that Lutheranism has a truly ecumenical concern, namely, aspiration for an evangelical catholic ("ecumenical") Church of

theology; for Kitamori's own conviction of his Lutheran identity, see note 32 of Chap. 1.

¹⁶¹This question bears a controversial nature in itself and would require separate volumes to do justice to the complex problem of the identity of Lutheranism, as we see how demanding answering this question is, for instance, in Werner Elert's *The Structure of Lutheranism* (tr. Walter A. Hansen, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1962). It is neither required nor legitimate for the present study to discuss this question in extenso; what is required is to present an understanding of the identity of Lutheranism, an understanding which is based on clear evidence and is thus pertinent to the scope of this study. The comprehensive work by Elert will be of vital significance for the following discussion explicitly and implicitly.

Christ on the basis of the Gospel, for *una sancta catholica Ecclesia!*¹⁶² Thus, if Lutheranism claims its theological substance to be a universally valid representation of the truth of the Gospel, there must be a definable Lutheran identity. And on the basis of this defined identity, one is in the position of judging whether a particular theology, claiming to be Lutheran, actually preserves an authentic Lutheran concern for the Gospel and further develops this concern in a given context of proclamation, or whether it deviates substantially from Lutheran theology, thus being Lutheran in name only.

What is Lutheranism then? Some would define "Lutheranism" rather loosely to characterize any theological direction more or less influenced by Luther's own thought and Lutheran confessional ideas and ethos. However, Lutheranism defined in this sense is more or less irrelevant for our present purpose, for a much more exact definition is needed. Can we, for instance, define Lutheranism as the doctrinal totality laid down in the Book of Concord? This "definition" of Lutheranism seems to be useful, having a solid anchor in the primary confessional writings of the Lutheran Church. For it would be quite possible to discern the identity of Lutheranism through

¹⁶²This concern for the authentic and substantial unity of the Church is classically expressed by the "pure et recte" in Article VII of the Augsburg Confession. The Lutheran concentration on the purity of the doctrine of the Gospel and the "right" usage of the sacraments is not an ecclesiastical sectarianism but expresses its perspective of true ecumenism. For the fact that the Lutheran confessionalism essentially relates to the indispensable concern for the truth of the Gospel for authentic and fruitful ecumenism, see: Ronald R. Feuerhahn, "Hermann Sasse: Confessionalist and Confessor," in Gerald S. Krispin and Jon D. Vieker, eds., *And Every Tongue Confess*, St. Louis: The Nagel Festschrift Committee, 1990, 14-37.

objective studies of the Book of Concord. But even with a written confessional document such as the Book of Concord, discussions of the identity of Lutheranism do not cease, for an ever-changing historical situation challenges these confessional writings to be interpreted anew for the actualization of their relevance today.¹⁶³

What then is a *tertium* which tests new interpretations of historical confessional writings? Or does Lutheranism more directly mean Luther's own theology which is compiled in the *Weimarora*? This particular understanding of the identity of Lutheranism would be quite natural, for it is Luther who has been most instrumental in the formation of what has been labeled "the Lutheran tradition." This way of defining the Lutheran *nota* however cannot be held as valid without specific qualifications. The Church of Christ cannot be based solely on the experiences, ideas and concepts of an individual. In other words, one human being, however great and profound, cannot be assumed to be an infallible authority on every detail of doctrine, and Luther is no exception in this regard.¹⁶⁴ The theology of Luther as a theology of an individual theologian is not identical with Lutheranism; Lutheranism as the Church's understanding of the Gospel of Christ.

¹⁶³Elert expresses the view that the confessional writings were conditioned by the actual historical situations. In *Structure*, 6, he makes a distinction between the Gospel's innate amorphous "dynamic" and its solidified "forms" in a given historical situation, and sees the body of the confessional writings as one of the "dynamic" forms. This means the meaning and relevance of the confessional writings is to be grasped ever anew in the light of the "dynamic." The "dynamic" is defined by Elert as "the impact of the Gospel" (*der evangelische Ansatz*). This is then his working hypothesis which he tries to validate by morphological studies.

¹⁶⁴Here we recall Luther's own well-known protest to identifying Luther's doctrinal follower's with his own name; see WA 38, 264.

Thus, finding the key to discern the identity of Lutheranism is rather complicated. In this connection it is instructive to observe that in the Book of Concord the confessional theologians often refer to Luther as an authority when delineating true doctrine in controversial areas. These theologians who work under the material principle of the pure doctrine of the Gospel for the "official" Church find firm guidance in Luther. In fact, this example of the confessional fathers provides a natural and legitimate interpretative direction, or a hermeneutic paradigm, for Lutheran theologians of later generations in their work of preserving and actualizing the Lutheran theological concern; they mainly referred to Luther when they were doctrinally and theologically in doubt. Luther is the fountain-head of Evangelical Christianity; it thanks him for the rediscovery of the Gospel. It is true that Luther is not infallible in every detail covered in his writings. Nonetheless, his theological idea and concept function as a kind of doctrinal norm in the Lutheran Church. What do we then understand from the duality of Luther's fallibility on the one hand and his "practical" status as a doctrinal authority on the other? The reason for this duality is to be found in the fact that the Gospel is not Luther's private theological invention; the Gospel has been rediscovered and expounded by him, a man enlivened by this very Gospel. It is this timeless, dynamic Gospel that has used this man as its powerful witness at the end of the Middle Ages. As a powerful witness to the Gospel, Luther, though not infallible in doctrinal and ethical "peripherals," functioned as an authoritative figure in the doctrinal essentials in the Lutheran Churches.

To use familiar terminology, Luther is certainly not *norma normans* but he

is *norma normata* par excellence. It is therefore legitimate for us to equate Luther's own theology in its evangelical substance with "official" Lutheran theology. Lutheran theology follows Luther with the assurance that in this man the Gospel is powerfully expressed in a manner which entitles the Reformer to function as *norma normata*. It is therefore fully legitimate that when examining whether or not a theology is Lutheran, one directly compares the particular theology with the Reformer's theological ideas and concepts.

With this preliminary conclusion concerning Lutheranism's formal identity, we have gained a methodological basis for examining whether or not Kitamori's theology is a Lutheran theology. We have not yet reached a material definition of the identity of Lutheranism, but this will be made clear as the presentation of this section proceeds.

The Basic Traits of Kitamori's Interpretation of Luther's Theology

A prominent theologian can often be a mirror upon which theologians of later generations reflect their respective views. This pattern holds true of the relationship between Luther and Kitamori. Luther is one of the most profound and multifaceted theological thinkers of the Christian Church, and the interpretative works of his theology abound throughout modern history.¹⁶⁵ Kitamori is one Japanese theologian who has attempted to understand Luther, while criticizing the Reformer

¹⁶⁵See for instance Heinrich Bornkamm, *Luther in Spiegel der deutschen Geistesgeschichte* (Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1969).

with his own theological ideas derived from the concept of the Pain of God.

First, we shall delineate the basic traits of Kitamori's interpretation of Luther's theology. On various turns in his theological career, Kitamori expressed his own view of Luther's person and theology.¹⁶⁶ Kitamori deals with the Reformer's inner experience of the fear of death; he speaks of Luther's struggles vis-à-vis the notion of divine wrath, interprets the deserted Monk's agony over the problem of sin and recognition of its nature, and presents the Reformer's discovery of the righteousness of God. Kitamori then analyzes the conceptual structure of Luther's doctrine of justification, and discusses the strength and weakness of the Wittenbergian doctor's theology. As we recall, Kitamori's lifelong interaction with Luther's theology is motivated not only by the fact that he is originally a Lutheran by confession but also by his theological intention (even ambition) which spanned his entire career: to "Lutheranize" the whole of Japanese Protestantism.¹⁶⁷ Kitamori

¹⁶⁶His first publication, *The Lord of the Cross* (1940), contains a short essay on Luther and Lutheranism titled "Lutheranism and Japan," in which he wrote: *sola fide* is the axiom of Protestant Christianity; Luther rediscovered it and made it more explicit than any other Protestant reformer. Kitamori's lecture on a future perspective of Lutheranism held on the occasion of the quarter centenary of Luther's birth is included in *The Character of the Gospel* (1948). In 1951 he published a booklet titled *Martin Luther* (Tokyo: Kobundo, 1951), which, though small in size, contains Kitamori's interpretation of the Reformer in a nutshell. The *Theology of the Reformation* (1956), next to the *Theology of the Pain of God* in academic achievement, deals with Luther's theology in detail: the concept of the righteousness of God, the doctrine of atonement, Christology, the relationship between justification and sanctification, and ecclesiology among others. Kitamori also held an expository lecture on the Reformer's *Freedom of the Christian*, which was published in 1966 under the title the *Problem of Freedom in Love* (Tokyo: Tokai Daigaku Shuppankai, 1965).

¹⁶⁷See above 154-158.

stands as one of a few theologians who have seriously labored toward the goal of bringing the Reformer's theology to fruition in the Japanese Protestant Church.

Although Kitamori never doubts that his theology is confessionally Lutheran, he is never fully satisfied with the Reformer's theology, being quite cautious from the very beginning of his theological career to merely "repeat" verbatim what Luther wrote; in fact, Kitamori is a highly self-conscious theologian. For Kitamori, Luther is not the "final" authority; the Reformer is as liable to criticism as any other theologian.¹⁶⁸ Kitamori's critical attitude toward Luther, declared early in his career, would be legitimate by itself, but may at the same time also suggest that his interpretation involves a premature finalization of his understanding of the wealth and depth of the theological ideas of the Reformer. So far our study suggests this, and if this suggestion can be substantiated, it would be consequential in a proper analysis of Kitamori's Luther-interpretation.

"How can I find a gracious God?" is the question with which Luther had to struggle in the years of his monastic life. With every means at his disposal (sacramental, ascetic, meritorious or satisfactory), Luther never received peace of mind, feeling rather an inescapable divine wrath and condemnation. Kitamori naturally pays attention to this fundamental problem with which the Reformer fought day and night. What actually was the problem? Kitamori, in keeping with his basic concept of sin as "impurity of love" or as love soiled by human egoism, identifies

¹⁶⁸For Kitamori's critical attitude toward Luther, see 9 above in this chapter.

Luther's ultimate problem as a struggle with "purity (or impurity) of love."¹⁶⁹

According to Kitamori, Luther's initial problem upon entering the monastery was the fear of death; this fear of death was in fact, however, Luther's quest for his own inner peace, a "selfish" desire. Therefore, Luther's initial problem had its origin in a self-centered desire for personal peace. Luther sought God, but not for God's own sake but for his own sake, using God as a means to a selfish end.¹⁷⁰

Kitamori admits that it is natural for a man in misery to seek God for help; in fact, holds Kitamori, there is no other way to turn oneself to God except to be driven by the problems of life. It is then his view that even longing for God in misery is tainted by sin; there is no returning to God without sin. Man's motives are always tainted by self-love. Kitamori designates this initial turning of the self to God as "conversion," in distinction from "repentance" or penitence which, in Kitamori's view, is to be understood as "pure" sorrow over one's sin.¹⁷¹ If man had "pure love" toward God, he would be moved more by sorrow over sins committed against

¹⁶⁹*Freedom in Love*, 63; "Luther's recognition of man's love as impure is of world-historical significance, for with this recognition he exposed the problem of man's love," *Martin Luther*, 27: "[In his long struggling for inner peace, Luther eventually recognized his inner motive to love God as an attempt only to secure his own inner tranquility.] Luther then was profoundly shocked, asking whether his tormenting pilgrimage of many years was in vain all, for all of his efforts to love God for the sake of God Himself were in reality not pure but impure, loving God for Luther's own sake. Luther's love of God is a deceptive love," *ibid.* 25.

¹⁷⁰*Freedom in Love*, 62.

¹⁷¹*Reformation*, 37-38.

[A bibliographical note: Those of Kitamori's works which are of primary significance and therefore quoted frequently are abbreviated like the note here. The list of those works is found at the end of the Introduction.]

God than the sorrow over the misery incurred upon self; for sin hurts God whereas misery hurts oneself. Kitamori posits that even in "conversion," man thus betrays the very "impurity of love"¹⁷²; the problem of sin is concerned with the "quality of love" throughout. Invariably the question is whether one's love is "pure" or "impure." Kitamori has concluded that this fundamental problem is also the problem of Martin Luther.¹⁷³ Impure love is the very problem of sinful human beings before God.

In view of this assumption made by Kitamori regarding the problem with which the Reformer struggled, we need to reexamine the issue: is it correct to conclude that Luther's problem can be understood in this way and explained by the idea of "purity of love"? Is this actually an adequate interpretation of Luther's

¹⁷²Martin Luther, 24-27; "Sin is nothing but the deception of love. Even the natural man knows this," *Theology of Dialogue* (Tokyo: Kyobunkan, 19), 148; "The essence of sin, that is, the impurity of [man's] love," *ibid.*, 150, 151.

¹⁷³"For Luther, the focus of the problem [of man's existence] is the problem of the purity of love of God and of his neighbor," (*Theology of the Reformation*, 33). To support his view, Kitamori cites the following from Luther: "Quia homo non potest, nisi que qua sunt, quaerere et se super omnia diligere. Que est summa omnium vitiorum," "Sic enim carnis prudentia sua quaerit tantum et puls timet miseriam suam quam ingloriam Dei," "Non potest homo naturaliter velle deum esse deum. Immo vellet se esse deum et deum non esse deum," "Sic enim discit homo pure Deum amare et colere, dum non propter gratiam et dona, sed propter ipsum solum Deum colit" (quoted in *Ibid.*, 32-33). Even with these sayings it is difficult to characterize the focus of Luther's problem is loving God "purely." Stronger emphasis is placed on man's not letting God be God, which is a more adequate characterization of man's sin before God. For man's relationship with God is more than love; it is rather "velle deum deum esse" and "colere Deum propter ipsum": cf. Luther's exposition of the Fourth Commandment in his Large Catechism where he writes: "Denn es ist viel ein höher Ding ehren denn lieben, als das nicht alleine die Liebe begreift, sondern auch eine Zucht, Demut und Scheue als gegen einer Majestät allda verporgen," (BELK, 587). This applies much more to man's attitude toward God.

problem by which one can properly grasp the evangelical thought of the Reformer?

What is the heart and core of Luther's personal battle and revelatory victory?

Invariably, Luther's problem was how to find a gracious God. Even more strongly in German: *wie kriege ich ein gnädiger Gott?* ("fight for a gracious God"!)

This way of approaching the problem presupposes some other means by which an individual works to make himself acceptable, or justified, before God. Luther tried all available means in vain. He did not find in himself any clues, sacramentally aided or unaided, in "winning" a gracious God. Even in the extremity of ascetic discipline he did not feel an inner peace in his soul, the peace which is a fruit of God's acceptance.

The problem of how to find a gracious God cannot be solved by human achievements, whether or not sacraments are involved. In other words, the problem does not lie in the sphere where the very origin and nature of sin is considered something humanly intelligible and, to some extent, manageable. Luther's problem-consciousness is much deeper; it is an inscrutable self-deification of man, the complementary to man's radical unbelief toward God. This duality of self-deification and unbelief is the very problem of man, the "real essence of sin."¹⁷⁴ The abandonment of this self-deification or the denial of the self then becomes a humble attitude to "let God be God." It is a sovereign God that solves man's problem in

¹⁷⁴See *Structure*, 40; Elert also refers to WA 18, 782, where Luther writes in his *De servo arbitrio*, commenting John 16:8-9: "Hic vides peccatum esse, non credere in Christum. At hoc non utique in cute vel capillis haeret, sed in ipsa ratione et voluntate."

existence by His merciful justification, while destroying man's soteriological calculations made on the basis of human reason. At last, Luther found a gracious God, or rather, found himself accepted by God, in the divine imputation of *institia aliena* to the sinner.¹⁷⁵ From this simple sketch of Luther's pilgrimage to salvation it is not difficult for us to see where the Reformer's real problem lies. The problem is not the "impurity of love" on the part of the sinful (this is merely an ethical consequence of the radical sin of unbelief) but the question of how *God* regards us, the radical sinners of unbelief, as righteous before Him. In Luther's thought, even the presence of a "purity of love" in his heart can not justify man before God; man's justification is solely and absolutely in the merciful will of God.¹⁷⁶

It is true that a sinner, being forgiven and imputed with the righteousness of Christ, begins to love God and his neighbor while struggling with his still lingering

¹⁷⁵As long as the "purity of love" toward God on the part of man is considered as the ultimate goal of salvation, one will inevitably look upon one's own inner quality, even when God is said to love man "unconditionally." Divine acceptance is ultimately dependent on the realization of subjective purity in loving God. It is the imputed righteousness of God that is man's eternal righteousness. In this alien righteousness there is absolute certainty of divine acceptance both here and in eternity.

¹⁷⁶"The righteousness of God will not be or arise in us unless [our] righteousness falls utterly and our own righteousness perishes," quotes Elert Luther, *Structure*, 81. Here we see that God's righteousness and man's righteousness are set in diametrical antithesis. We find similar utterances of Luther in Elert's work, *ibid.* 80-81. Luther emphasizes that we are to be brought to nothing. In the state of corruption this demand of man's self-nullification signifies a total negation of a sinful self, and the fact that Christ is our righteousness becomes even more clear. But even in the state of integrity, hypothetically speaking, Christ is invariably our righteousness. Man can in no way qualify himself for divine justification. Justification of man is God's prerogative; denying this, even with one's own "pure" love, is in reality the core of sin itself.

self-love. Perhaps, love practiced by a forgiven sinner may become "purer and purer." In this sense, "quality of love" is to be included in theological thought. But in view of the righteousness of God given to a sinner through faith, the question of the "purity of love" is soteriologically irrelevant.¹⁷⁷ In Luther's view of alien righteousness, there is no place for love's subjective quality to constitute God's justification of the sinner either negatively or positively; God does not condemn the sinner because his love is impure nor justify him because his love is pure. God accepts the sinner in His absolute sovereignty and grace; this is what distinguishes the Gospel from religion or morality.¹⁷⁸ The inward quality of love is not relevant to the

¹⁷⁷According to Andreas Nygren's *Agape and Eros* (tr. Philip S. Watson, [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953]), the main theological quest in the Mediaeval Era is this: how can the believer, with an ineradicable self-love as the starting point, attain the ability to love God purely. Nygren observes in the whole of Scholastic theology an upward desire of man toward God in his strive for pure love of God, and characterizes this upward-striving to God as ultimately man's egocentric way of relating himself to God (see 638-658). As Nygren rightly points out, this is the scheme of soteriology under which Luther collapsed. Luther's problem was the nature of true penitence, the necessary condition for gaining the infusion of love. And true penitence consists of a genuine regret for sins, *contritio*, which is to be produced out of pure love for God, and not *attritio* which arises from the fear of the punishment of sins. But Luther found it impossible to love God purely. Luther's discovery of the Gospel is exactly the cognition that man's righteousness before God is exclusively righteousness *extra nos*, the righteousness given by God, not the purity of man's love brought forth before or after divine *acceptatio*. This alien righteousness remains in all eternity as man's righteousness, never being replaced by "pure love" which may be given in eschatological fulfilment. The purity of love in Luther's thought is totally contrary to a soteriological concern and repugnant to his understanding of the Gospel. In contrast, one can ask whether Kitamori, with his persistent concern for the restoration of man's purity by loving God, is essentially different from the Scholastic scheme of ascending to God with man's pure love, and this even with his contention that God initially accepts man unconditionally in His Pain, for Scholasticism also never failed in its emphasis of *gratia praeveniens*.

¹⁷⁸See note 203 below.

issues of love in Luther's thought; what actually matters are the external acts which are rooted in a divinely given love, loving actions given to neighbors. Even the actions of love tainted by selfish motives are justified when done in faith.

In fact, as long as an individual sees his problem before God in the sphere of the "purity of love," there can be no way of obtaining a truly comforting certainty of salvation. That Luther found the certainty of salvation outside himself indicates that Luther's ultimate problem was not concerned with the "purity of love" but rather with how to rid himself from this subjectively oriented soteriology. From this observation one may raise a question against Kitamori's own position of the "purity of love" as the basic theological category; as long as this theological category remains, can one become free of a subjective orientation toward salvation? In fact, it will ultimately lead to the soteriological view that the restoration of the "purity of love" is the ultimate goal of the Gospel. The Gospel of divine justification would then be made into something penultimate to the restoration of the "purity of love," and one's attention is also redirected to one's own inner quality. It may be said that this subjectivistic concern is the very sign of legalism which Luther painfully struggled to overcome.

When we again briefly look at Kitamori's idea of love, we see that Kitamori's interpretation of Luther's thought is formulated in light of the former's own theology of the Pain of God. "Love" (more correctly designated "loveism" as

defined in the previous chapter) is the fundamental category of Kitamori's theology.¹⁷⁹ One may even say that in Kitamori's thought the category of "love" corresponds to the category of "being" (*ens*) in Thomistic theology. In fact it is possible to regard Kitamori's theology as a theology built upon the analogy of love. Kitamori has developed his theology on a foundation of "love," the nature and character of which is common to both God and man; he often speaks of God's love in a "human, all too human" manner. In addition to this understanding of love, Kitamori has a specific concept of love's *nota*; an authentic love, worthy of its name, is a love "flowing towards its object naturally and with no impediment like the water running downward."¹⁸⁰ Given that neither divine love (His love now involving pain!) nor

¹⁷⁹"The main concern in doing theology," writes Kitamori, "is not to examine whether a theology is theocentric or anthropocentric. . . but rather to watch whether the understanding, in respective theologies, of 'the love of God' (which involves both God and man) is purely evangelical. Neither Paul nor the Reformers were concerned primarily with the polarity of God and man [as we see in the problem of the early Barthian theology] but they are rather concerned with the question of whether 'the love of God' was understood evangelically or legalistically," *On Love and Hatred* (Tokyo: Kyobunkan, 1958), 186.

¹⁸⁰In discussing "three orders of divine love," Kitamori writes that love in the first order is "characterized as smooth, flowing and intense," love in the second order is pain being no longer smooth and flowing, and love in the third order is a love recovered by the mediation of pain to the love of the first order, "of the smooth, flowing and intense nature" (*Pain*, 118-122). One can see how clearly Kitamori views as love's authentic character: smooth, flowing naturally and intense. This is akin to love which parents "naturally" have toward their children. In another context, Kitamori discusses the character of divine *agape*; he explains *agape* as self-sacrificing love. In order for *agape* to become really self-sacrificing love, he holds, there must be an eros element within *agape*, namely "natural" love. In Kitamori's view, God's pain is acute because He loves the Son so "naturally" (*Literature and God* [Tokyo: Nihon-no Barasha, 1983], 201-205). Under the present fallen condition, "now only Christ is its [the divine love in the first order] object" (*Pain*, 118).

man's love actually possesses this authentic characteristic, love is bound to develop itself dialectically into its own perfection, love worthy of its name. This dialectic of love applied to a forgiven sinner is then equated with his sanctification. Restoration of "pure love," or sanctification, then becomes *terminus ad quem* in the doctrine of justification.

Kitamori employs this category of "love" when he deals with Luther's doctrine of justification by faith alone. He discusses this pivotal doctrine of the Reformation as the doctrine involving a "problem" in the relationship between justification and sanctification. At first glance, it may seem strange for a Lutheran theologian to understand and develop this doctrine in such a direction, but in reality it is quite natural for Kitamori to deal with the issue in this particular way. We again mention his *Theology of the Reformation*, for this work specifically demonstrates our point. In this work, Kitamori deals with justification as a problem, for he sees the relationship between justification and sanctification has not been clarified. Kitamori deals with the problem particularly in reference to the Tridentine's polemics against the doctrine of justification by faith and condemnation of its alleged ethical indifference and incompetence.¹⁸¹ In essence, Kitamori sees Tridentine polemics as

¹⁸¹See 328-332. In another context, Kitamori observes that "a danger of misunderstanding" is very acute in the formula of the Protestant *sola fide*, writing as follows: "Luther's Reformation can be considered primarily as a reformation of 'faith' or purification of 'faith.' From this state of affairs there can understandably arise a suspicion that Luther has made light of other vital truth in the Bible, namely the truth of 'love,'" *Martin Luther*, 49. With the following argumentation, Kitamori tries to put forward his thesis that "sola fide," as contrasted to the Catholic "fides formata caritate," serves the realization of the "purity of love": "[the formula 'sola gratia'] seems to make light of the deeds of love, but in reality it confirms the purity of divine

involving a legitimate theological issue.

According to Kitamori, Luther attacked the Catholic concept of justification because he found in it the unacceptable thesis that justification is not only concerned with remission of sins but "includes" (read, "aims at") sanctification. Kitamori then explains that this Catholic concept of "sanctification signifies change of man's [moral] condition, an actual change in which man gains a higher value of himself."¹⁸²

Justification in this sense, Kitamori holds, inevitably becomes dependent on the (moral) value of those who are to be justified; but this "value-dependent love," which in Catholicism is attributed to God, is not the kind of love by which sinners are saved, because with this "value-dependent love" God would accept or reject sinners according to their ethical quality or value. In other words, this "value-dependent love" is utterly unable to provide certainty of salvation for struggling sinners, since men are never certain of their subjective [moral] value.¹⁸³ Contrary to this Catholic concept of justification, Kitamori says that Luther found the certainty of salvation in the kind of love of God which is not "value-dependent." Kitamori further explains that "God accepting the sinner while forgiving his sins" means that justification is identical with the forgiveness of sin, and this is an understanding of justification predominant "since the Orthodoxy of Protestantism [Lutheranism] [in which justification has been] sharply

love which at the same time "also the fountainhead of purity of the human love" (*Freedom in Love*, 76-77). In this we can see the basic reference point in Kitamori's theology, a point which is actually aligned with that of the Catholic "Fragestellung."

¹⁸²*Theology of Reformation*, 92-93.

¹⁸³*Ibid.*, 93.

distinguished from sanctification."¹⁸⁴ Thus establishing that the theology of Lutheran Reformation identified justification with forgiveness of sins, Kitamori would say two things: first, it is an established fact that the mainstream of Lutheranism considered justification *exclusively* as the forgiveness of sin; second, though fully justified in this exclusive emphasis on the forgiveness of sin, Lutheranism has lost sight of an alien reality which would even negate the exclusive emphasis on forgiveness of sin, namely sanctification. Here Kitamori observes a crucial problem: justification and sanctification stand against one another without being yet reconciled; the Japanese theologian sees that both the forensic declaration of forgiveness and the actual justification are essential, each in itself, but it is also vital for both to be integrated. Sanctification cannot be separated from the doctrine of justification.

Kitamori continues his discussion: Yet, when we examine Luther's own texts, we find that concern that sinners' actual change for the better (sanctification) is not absent from his thought, and therefore, contrary to those interpreters of Luther who follow a strictly forensic line, there have been a number of influential Luther-scholars (Karl Holl among others) who properly emphasize the aspect of sanctification in Luther's concept of justification.¹⁸⁵ In Kitamori's view, the fact that there are two different approaches to interpreting Luther's doctrine of justification indicates that they actually exist side by side in Luther own thought. Since the two interpretative directions have been kept in an irreconcilable either/or rivalry in

¹⁸⁴Ibid.

¹⁸⁵Ibid., 94-95, 97.

Protestant theology, Kitamori believes that it is now necessary for the two-fold meaning of "iustificare," declaratory and effective, to be properly integrated by theological work.¹⁸⁶ "Conceived in this way," explains Kitamori further, "the core issue of Reformation theology ultimately converges upon the relationship between justification and sanctification, upon the problem of assigning sanctification its proper place in salvation."¹⁸⁷

In fact, describing the material principle of the Reformation theology in this way, Kitamori actually gives expression of his concept of justification. For him, justification by faith is not an absolute and independent reality in soteriology; it includes in itself sanctification as its own dialectic opposite.¹⁸⁸ He holds that sanctification, with its claim on the sinner's *actually* becoming righteous, is repugnant to a justification in which the sinner is declared righteous *just as he is* through the

¹⁸⁶Ibid., 137.

¹⁸⁷Ibid., 93.

¹⁸⁸Referring to Walter von Lovenich's observation of Luther's recognition (prompted by the Reformer's own deeper acquaintance with the Johannine writings) of "die dialektische Ergänzungsbedürftigkeit seiner Rechtfertigungslehre," Kitamori specifies the content of dialectic in the doctrine of justification and writes: "'Dialectic' is the logic of mediation by something negative or by something other than the thing being mediated. That the doctrine of justification has its inner dialectic means that the doctrine of justification has, in its own constitution, an element which negates itself. And this element negating the reality of justification is man's own 'good works' or 'love'. . . . This line of interpretation of Luther's doctrine of justification can be properly said to be an understanding of effectual justification," (ibid., 141). Namely, Kitamori wants to see a duality in Luther's doctrine of justification, a duality which consists of pure forensic justification on the one hand and effective justification (sanctification) on the other, negating each other and constituting a dialectic. It is, however, questionable whether Luther really felt the mutually opposing tension between forensic justification and effective justification.

forgiveness of sin. Thus, in Kitamori's thought, there is, in the dialectical relationship between justification and sanctification, a mutual negation. Kitamori sees that this dialectic relation is inherent in justification. Justification is a dialectic reality, and as such, demands its own opposite; nevertheless and at the same time, justification embraces this opposite in itself. With this somewhat intricate exposition of the relationship between justification and sanctification, Kitamori believes that he has done full justice to both the "axiomatic" concern for the remission of sin and the "actual" concern for sanctification. We now discern Kitamori's premise for the discussion of the problem: so far the doctrine of justification has been understood non-dialectically, either as purely forensic or effective. Neither understanding, holds Kitamori, has been able to do justice to the reality of the divine act of justification. In Kitamori's thought, justification without sanctification is meaningless, while sanctification without justification is only crude legalism. Actually, however, Kitamori's idea of dialectic integration of justification and sanctification reveals his own concern, namely for a personal sanctification. This causes us to doubt whether Kitamori is really in a proper position to understand Luther, for Kitamori theologizes with categories different from those utilized by Luther. However, in order to judge the point at issue aright, it is necessary for us now to take a look at what Luther himself considered the vital issue in the Christian doctrine of justification by faith.

Luther's Concept Of Justification by Faith

In the doctrinal tradition of Lutheranism, the forensic understanding of justification has been predominant, notably enhanced by the Lutheran emphasis on a

proper distinction between Law and Gospel. The forensic understanding of justification then primarily signifies the remission of sins. Luther himself emphasizes this particular aspect of justification. "Iustitia sit remissio peccatorum," he says.¹⁸⁹ In fact, it is urgent and essential for the Reformer to emphasize the significance of forgiveness of sins as strongly as he does, because of his acute recognition of radical sinfulness. When conscience is continually tormented by sinfulness, the forgiveness of sins must precede everything and abide in everything for man's existence. The more one becomes aware of the depth of one's sinfulness, the more one knows the liberating power of the divine word of forgiveness. As long as a sinner lives here on earth, he constantly returns to this Archimedian point. There he finds *misericordia Dei propter Christum* and is restored by it. It is therefore not a stage, in the *ordo salutis* for instance, which can be left behind at a given time. In this sense, the fact that Luther often identified justification with the forgiveness of sins is motivated by his recognition of the acute and axiomatic relevance of the forgiveness of sins for Christian existence. In Luther's thought, the very core of the Gospel is the forgiveness of sins.

After establishing the pivotal significance of the identification of justification with the forgiveness of sin, we still need to state that the forgiveness of sins does not stand alone. It is *pars pro toto* for the overwhelming reality of salvation. As Luther says: where there is forgiveness of sin, there is also life and salvation.¹⁹⁰ So in his thought the forgiveness of sin contains in itself the whole spectrum of salvific reality.

¹⁸⁹WA 34, 1, 407, here quoted in Kitamori, *ibid.* 97.

¹⁹⁰See Elert, *Structure*, 319.

Justification is primarily the forgiveness of sins, and from this one can say: it is also the imputation of alien righteousness, the blessed exchange between Christ and His believers; the sinner's participation in God's righteousness here and now; the hope of eschatological fulfillment of the promised righteousness.¹⁹¹ With rich variations of these and other terms Luther describes the blessing of salvation called justification through faith alone for the sake of Christ. This implies in fact that God's grace, shown in His justification of sinners in Christ, is inexhaustible in its wealth; accordingly the description of its salvific wealth richly multiplies. For Luther, justification by faith alone properly summarizes what Christianity is all about. Truly, justification is not one doctrine among others; the Gospel is ultimately justification of the sinner by faith alone for the sake of Christ.

Here, however, we need to examine more closely the relationship between forgiveness of sin and justification so as to properly relate it to our critique of Kitamori's thesis that justification is a dialectic reality involving in itself a negating opposite. Our concern is that this thesis makes justification something penultimate to sanctification. Behind the examination of this relationship is the question of whether or not the concept of justification is more comprehensive than that of the forgiveness of sins.

Needless to, say, two different terms or concepts can never be totally

¹⁹¹For the inexhaustible richness of what the doctrine of justification by faith in Luther's thought implies, such as mentioned here, see Hans Joachim Iwand, *Glaubensgerechtigkeit nach Luthers Lehre* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1941), particularly 55-65.

co-extensive with each other; the same must hold true of the two terms *remissio* and *justificatio*. They are different both conceptually and theologically. This will be self-evident when we more closely review Luther's own description of God's righteousness imparted to sinners. We will now take a brief look at the concepts themselves. We see that the forgiveness of sins by itself means the *removal* of sin's guilt from the sinner, whereas justification is man being *filled* with divine righteousness.¹⁹² The former is salvation considered in a somewhat "negative" sense, whereas the latter is more "positive." In other words, forgiveness of sin centers upon the "negative" reality of human sins, whereas justification denotes God's "positive," constructive work with sinners. The most eloquent witness to the "positive" content of Luther's doctrine of justification would be his own narrative of the discovery of the meaning of *justitia Dei*, a narrative which Luther wrote in 1545 in the preface of his collected Latin works: "There [Romans 1:17] I began to understand that the righteousness of God is that by which the righteous lives by a gift of God, namely by faith. And this is the meaning: the righteousness of God is revealed by the gospel, namely, the passive righteousness with which the merciful God justifies us by

¹⁹²"To those who believe in the name of the Lord all sins are forgiven, and righteousness is imputed to them," quotes Elert as "the salient statement of Luther's doctrine of justification," *Structure*, 75. When we take into consideration what immediately follows in our presentation, the juxtaposition of forgiveness of sins and imputation of righteousness is not simply a conceptual hendiadys; it rather designates two different directions of the meaning of salvation, "negative" and "positive," as we have stated in the text.

faith."¹⁹³ Luther says more concretely: "‘the righteousness of God’ must not be understood as that righteousness by which he [God] is righteous, but as that righteousness by which we are made righteous by him."¹⁹⁴ What is expressed in this understanding of *iustitia Dei* is this: God is the One who gives man what He Himself is. "Just as the name of the Lord is pure, holy, righteous, true, good, and so on," writes Luther, "so does he make the heart like Himself through and through, the heart upon which He touches and which is touched by Him, the process which occurs through faith."¹⁹⁵

This positive concept of justification in Luther’s thought reaches its highest point in his view that it is Christ Himself who is given to the sinner as his righteousness!¹⁹⁶ For Luther it is of fundamental soteriological significance that Christ and the believer become one in faith.¹⁹⁷ Christ is not only the object of his

¹⁹³WA 54:186, here quoted from Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, (tr. Robert C. Schultz, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 117.

¹⁹⁴WA 56:172, here quoted from Althaus, 117.

¹⁹⁵WA 54:186, here quoted from Althaus, *ibid.*

¹⁹⁶For the following viewpoint, in addition to Iwand, Ernst Wolf, "Die Rechtfertigungslehre als Mitte und Grenze reformatorischer Theologie," *Peregrinatio Band II* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1965).

¹⁹⁷"Darum muß der Glaube recht gelehrt werden, daß man durch ihn so mit Christus zusammengeschweißt wird, daß aus dir und ihm sozusagen eine Person wird, die sich nicht trennen läßt, sondern ihm beständig anhängt, als wollte sie sagen: ich bin wie Christus und umgekehrt, als wollte Christus sagen: ich bin wie jener Sünder, der an mir hängt. . . sodaß mich dieser inniger mit Christ verschmelzt, als der Mann mit der Frau verschmolzen ist. So ist der Glaube keine ruhende Qualität, sondern unsagbar Große," WA 40/I, 285, quoted in Iwand, *Gerechtigkeit*, 64.

faith but is the very life that lives in him. He is the believer's very self.¹⁹⁸ So inseparably made one with Christ in faith, the believer can even "claim" that what is Christ's is his and what is his is Christ's; the believers are given "grace, righteousness, life and eternal life," whereas "the Law, sin, and death" became Christ's.¹⁹⁹ The "blessed exchange" takes place between Christ and the believers. The doctrine of justification signifies the Christ-centered salvific event; justification by faith is thus nothing but the Reformation Christology. In other words, Christology and soteriology are intimately interwoven, and this entails the inexhaustible wealth of the Reformation doctrine of justification, the wealth which breaks the framework of the forgiveness of sin (narrowly understood).²⁰⁰ Thus the meaning of justification by

¹⁹⁸"The righteous man himself does not live; but Christ lives in him, because through faith Christ dwells in him and pours his grace into him, through which it comes about that a man is governed not by his own spirit, but by Christ's," WA 2, 502, quoted in Althaus, *Theology of Luther*, 234. See Iwand's explication of this point, *ibid.*

¹⁹⁹WA 40/1, 284, quoted in Iwand, *ibid.*, 58.

²⁰⁰Justification, understood as being allowed to participate in God's righteousness in Christ, has thus a broad perspective. Iwand gives an exposition of Luther's concept of divine righteousness, an exposition which elucidates our point here. After calling attention to the singularly pregnant content of "righteousness" in Luther's thought in connection with Romans 1:17, he writes as follows: "Können wir nicht Luther verstehen, wenn er ganz anderes Wort erwartete: in ihm [dem Evangelium] wird Gottes Barmherzigkeit offenbart, oder seine Liebe, seine Vergebung, seine Milde--aber hier steht, Gerechtigkeit? Gerechtigkeit Gottes soll der Inbegriff seiner neuen Offenbarung in Christo Jesu sein, soll also alles andere in sich begreifen, Liebe, Vergebung, Erbarmen, Barmherzigkeit? Also haben wir doch nicht begriffen, was Evangelium ist oder was Gerechtigkeit ist? Das sind die beiden Pfeiler, auf denen die Rechtfertigung des Menschen vor Gott ruht. Ehe nicht beides zusammenfällt, Evangelium und Gerechtigkeit, ehe wir nicht gerade sie im Evangelium suchen und ehe gerade Gottes Gerechtigkeit für uns zum Inhalt der frohen Botschaft wird, die uns zum Glauben ruft, haben wir das Ganze [der Rechtfertigungslehre Luthers] doch nicht verstanden," *Gerechtigkeit*, 56.

faith alone is certainly not limited to the forgiveness of sin. Rightly understood, the "Hauptartikel" of the Reformation theology represents the immense dimension of salvation: sinners before God are made like Christ and participate in the glory of Christ, in His righteousness, wisdom, holiness and power.

In Luther's thought the "positive" Christological content of justification also indicates the dynamic acts of God's new creation. God re-creates the image of the Son within the sinner. This creative act of God, however, also involves a destruction which brings the pride of the sinner to naught. Thus Luther writes in *Operationes in Psalmos*: "Quis volet iustus fieri, peccator fiat necesse est, qui volet sanus, bonus, rectus, denique deiformis, Christianus Catholicusque fieri, insanus, malus, perversus, denique diabolicus, haereticus, infidelis, Turca fiat, etc."²⁰¹ Though the rhetorical device of hyperbole is used, these words of Luther clearly state that the destruction of the old man is *sine qua non* for the restoration of the original image of God in man.²⁰² Understood in this way, justification encompasses not only redemption of the sinner from divine judgement through forgiveness of sin, but also the creation of a new man out of the old. In other words, the doctrine of justification expresses the reality of an organic and inseparable unity of redemption and new creation. Since this divine act of a new creation and "sanctification" are theological synonyms, it is

²⁰¹WA 5, 195, quoted in Iwand, *ibid.*, 58.

²⁰²"It is God's nature first to destroy and to bring to nothing whatever is in us before he gives us of his own. . . . By this his most blessed counsel, he makes us capable of receiving his gift and his works," WA 56, 375, quoted in Althaus, *Theology of Luther*, 119.

completely legitimate to state that in Luther's thought, quite contrary to the thesis of Kitamori, there is no dialectic tension, a tension in which justification (narrowly understood as the forgiveness of sins) and sanctification allegedly negate each other at one stage in the *ordo salutis*; sanctification is not a dialectic opposite to justification but a very integral part of it.²⁰³ It would therefore be unnecessary for Luther to integrate justification and sanctification theologically; they are originally integrated. The crucial issue for Luther would then be to correctly grasp the divine grace of justification by faith alone.²⁰⁴ Living in the faith of justification, rightly understood, one can never stay in sin gratuitously and never fail to try to live in obedience to the divine will, and yet one can never be concerned about his "accomplishment" in the realm of sanctification.²⁰⁵

Speaking of the "positive" content of justification, we recognize that

²⁰³Describing the need of differentiation between justification as something complete in faith and sanctification as "piecemeal," Elert still emphasizes the fact that they are essentially one whole thing and writes that "Luther used the concept of 'sanctification' as a synonym for justification," *Structure*, 144, and see the quotations of Luther's own words there.

²⁰⁴With this observation I question the validity of Kitamori's contention that Luther's doctrine of justification by faith has a dialectic with contradictory poles of imputative and effective righteousness. According to Kitamori, Luther's doctrine of justification has "at least two mutually contradictory lines of interpretation," and it "may suggest a lack of [logical] transparency in Luther's theology," (*Reformation*, 137). He then takes Iwand, for example, to stand on the imputative line of interpretation. But it is not in keeping with Iwand's actual interpretation of Luther's concept of justification. According to Iwand, Christ, being the righteousness of the justified, is most dynamically effective in the justified, cf. his exposition of the righteousness of God in Luther's thought (*Gerechtigkeit*, 63).

²⁰⁵Luther's famous description in his Preface to Romans points to faith as a dynamic reality: "Faith is a divine work in us which changes us and makes us to be born anew of God, etc.," here quoted from Althaus, *Theology of Luther*, 235.

sanctification is another term for God's new creation or His justifying act upon the sinner. For Luther, however, justification has nothing to do with moral and ethical perfection (conceived of as man's subjective quality) upon which man is judged righteous by God.²⁰⁶ In other words, sanctification is not the *terminus ad quem* of justification; on the contrary, justification is ultimate, having nothing beyond itself. Man's justification is forever grounded in God's absolute mercy toward man, totally apart from any good or bad quality before God, either morally or religiously.²⁰⁷ As such, justification by faith is to be considered as the "Urverhältnis" between God and man. This original form of the relationship between God and man is, as it were, supralapsarian in character.²⁰⁸ We need to note this aspect of justification in Luther's thought, for it is of vital importance for the preservation of the Gospel, and for avoiding the fatal danger of making justification into something soteriologically penultimate.

²⁰⁶Althaus, explicating Luther's understanding of the dying of the old man and the resurrection of the new man, writes that in Luther's thought "Christ's form takes shape within us through a lifelong ongoing event" or in other words a process "moving forward toward perfection" *Theology of Luther*, 245. But this Luther-scholar qualifies the concept "perfection" in Luther's thought as follows: "Luther, however, did not understand this perfection as an ethical high point but as the depths in which a man loses all trust in himself and purely and strongly desires to be completely free from sin and to be completely on with God's will, that is, he is ready and willing to die" *ibid.*

²⁰⁷"Therefore even if it were possible that you could do a work that would fulfill the commandment 'you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, etc.,' still you would not be righteous before God for this reason. . . for the law does not make righteous even if it is completely carried out and fulfilled," WA Tr. 6, 6720, quoted in Althaus, *Theology of Luther*, 121.

²⁰⁸See Althaus' comment made on the basis of Luther's texts, *ibid.*, 236.

It is highly relevant for this present discussion to pay attention to the concept of faith in Luther's doctrine of justification. The concept of faith has a twofold significance; the one is existential and the other epistemological. We include the first aspect of the concept of faith here in this section, whereas the second aspect we shall take up in the next section in connection with Luther's doctrine of *Deus absconditus*.

Faith in Luther's thought primarily means *fiducia*. It is a believing confidence which, against all appearances, rests solely upon the merciful promise of God. In Luther's thought, being already justified by faith is not identical with being justified also in sight. Luther's well-known dicta "peccator in re, justus in spe," "simul justus et peccator," and "semper peccator, semper justus," speak of this state of affairs. The tormenting tension inherent in the "simul" certainly leads sinners to more reliance on God's sovereign mercy for their justification, and it is deeply comforting for them to be reminded of the "original divine relationship" between God and man. Whether in the *status integritatis* or in the *status corruptionis*, man is invariably "justified" by God's mercy alone. In the justification of the "ungodly" by faith alone, God's sovereign mercy in the original relationship is made all the more manifest. It is, then, all the more comforting for us sinners to know by faith that we are to be redeemed from this tormenting tension in the eschatological fulfillment. Justification by faith is an eschatological hope as well. In the end we are saved fully: we are to become like our Savior.²⁰⁹ Luther's concept of justification by faith alone thus

²⁰⁹Commenting on Luther's thought on *deiformitas* which is present not in our "seeing" but in our faith, Iwand has the following to say: "Das Leben, die Gerechtigkeit, die Freiheit, der Friede, die mit ihm [Christus] gekommen sind, sind in

ranges over the total spectrum of salvation revealed and given in Christ. It designates the organic totality of the salvific message given in the Son.

Luther's Concept of *Deus Absconditus*

It has been widely recognized that behind Luther's doctrine of justification by faith stands his idea of God as *Deus absconditus*, or more fully, *Deus absconditus in sua majestate*.²¹⁰ There is an organic relationship between Luther's view of God and his concept of justification. This relationship can be clearly grasped from the fact that justification of a sinner by God is not rationally discernible. As a matter of fact, the doctrine of justification is inseparably related to the doctrine of predestination, predominantly as the expression of God's sovereign will of salvific grace. The reason why a sinner is accepted by God at all is exclusively due to His inscrutable mercy. It is then erroneous to search for any rationale, moral or religious, for man's justification by God. It is God's "arbitrary" will that stands behind man's justification by faith. In justifying man, God wants to be absolutely free and

Wahrheit unsere Gerechtigkeit, Freiheit, Leben und Friede. Noch ist es in ihm 'verborgen', erst mit der Auferstehung wird dieses neue Leben so unser werden wie das alte, todgeweihte Leben jetzt unser' ist" *Gerechtigkeit*, 60.

²¹⁰In his introductory work to Luther's *De servo arbitrio*, Klaus Schwarzwaller summarizes the relationship of *Deus absconditus* and the sinner's salvation: "Gerade mit dem Theologoumenon des Deus in majestate absconditus ist die Gewiheit des Glaubens, die Rechtfertigung sola fide, die Errettung durch Jesus Christus theologisch gesichert," (*Theologia crucis* [Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1970], 185). See also Althaus, *Theology of Luther*, 283.

sovereign; God wants to be a God beyond human scrutinization and comprehension.²¹¹ Just as the origin of man's sin is rationally inscrutable (even though man's guilt is not thereby abandoned), so is the divine justification of the sinner.²¹² That man is justified by divine grace alone is ultimately a confession and praise of "Deum Deum esse."²¹³

As with the concept of *Deus absconditus*, Luther's concept of *theologia crucis* is also closely related to the doctrine of justification. Since it concerns Luther's view of God indirectly, it is necessary for us to take a look at what is implied in this

²¹¹"Gerade im Bekenntnis zum Erlöser wird Gott als *Deus absconditus*, der frei und in uneinsichtiger Willkür und wider jeder Regel sein Werk tut, bekannt und anerkannt," writes Schwarzwäller, *Theologia crucis*, 59.

²¹²See for the inscrutability of the origin of sin, Elert, *Structure*, 31-33, Althaus, *Theology of Luther*, 159-160; cf. Schwarzwäller, *Theologia crucis*, 193-194, where he describes the inscrutability of God's "Haß und Liebe": "Man würde hier alles verzerren, versuchte man nun, von Luther über die Unmöglichkeit eines Ausgleiches belehrt, diesen Haß irgendwie systematisch zu beziehen oder einzuordnen. Man kann ihn nur bekennen, nicht aber erfassen und integrieren. Man kann ihn sowenig ableiten, ergründen, und werten wie Gottes Liebe, die in die Absurdität von Menschenwerdung, Tod und Auferstehung hinein sich konkretisierte, die wider jede Gerechtigkeit den Gottlosen ohne jedes Verdienst und gegen Streben gerecht macht."

²¹³Referring to Luther's view of God as the Creator in all of God's dealing with man, Althaus in *Theology of Luther*, 118-129, has "Justification Means That God is God" as a caption for the section in which he has a lucid exposition of the Reformer's concept of justification by faith alone: God allows man to stand as righteous before Himself only by His own ineffable mercy, and this mode of relationship between God and man is not an accidental "Nothilfe," but the very expression of God being God in His relationship with man; "God wills," writes Althaus, "that under no circumstances is the relationship between himself and men to be determined by the law but solely and absolutely by his free grace received by faith," *ibid.*, 121. God's absolute sovereignty in justifying the sinner also transcends man's rational comprehension. God does not work according to the best of human calculation, but in ways radically offensive to it. Also in this sense, justification by faith alone is beyond man's morality and rationality.

concept of *theologia crucis*. This investigation becomes even more crucial when we remember that Kitamori himself conceives of Luther's *theologia crucis* as nothing but another name for his own theology of the Pain of God. Namely, Kitamori sees God's innermost essence, the Pain of God, revealed in the cross. As a matter of fact, the main theme of the theology of the cross in Kitamori's understanding is "God in pain"; Kitamori is primarily concerned with God Himself, asking, in what situation God finds Himself and what His eternal mode of being is. By comparison, then, what is the actual force in Luther's own theology of the cross?

According to Walter von Lovenich, the theology of the cross is first and foremost a theology of revelation.²¹⁴ Obviously, the theology of the cross has its basis in the revelation of the crucified Christ, but what is it that is revealed in the crucified Christ? As we have seen, Kitamori found in the crucified Christ a God suffering pain eternally. In other words, it is the revelation of God Himself, a revelation of His essence. In Luther's own understanding of the theology of the cross, however, the revelation given in the crucified Christ is primarily not a revelation of God in Himself or His eternal essence. The cross of Christ in Luther's thought has nothing to

²¹⁴Walter von Lovenich lists the following as five "essential" points of Luther's theology of the cross: 1) it is "a theology of revelation," 2) "God's revelation is an indirect, concealed revelation," 3) "God's revelation is recognized not in works but in suffering," 4) this "knowledge of God who is hidden in his revelation is a matter of faith" and 5) this manner of knowing God "is reflected in the practical thought of suffering," *Luther's Theology of the Cross*, tr. Herbert J. A. Bouman (Philadelphia: Augsburg Publishing House, 1976), 22. These points together indicate that Luther's theology of the cross primarily concerns man's salvation, since its foci are revelation and faith, both of which are given to man for his salvation.

do with God's psychology, such as pain caused by the conflicts between love and wrath in His heart;²¹⁵ in such a sense God Himself is rather deeply hidden in this revelation *sub specie contraria*.²¹⁶ For Luther, God is to be acknowledged solely soteriologically, as *Deus iustificans et salvator hominis peccatoris*.²¹⁷ "Gott an sich" is something over us, which does not and should not concern us. Whether God in

²¹⁵Kitamori's notion of the Pain of God strongly psychologizes God in a directly human manner. He thinks that the suffering of pain on the part of God was inevitable in the process of saving sinful humanity despite His wrath. The cross of Christ was then a logical necessity and an inevitable event and thus rationally understandable. But Luther, because of his keen awareness of *Deum Deum esse*, is definitely not in any position to psychologize God's way of providing salvation. In his theology of the Pain of God, Kitamori holds that he has penetrated into the very center of the mystery of God, namely, that God suffers pain because of His love for man the betrayer of His love. And in making this claim, Kitamori maintains that the cross of Christ reveals the innermost nature of God. But Luther, maintaining the impenetrability of God Himself, is far from asserting that he exhaustively knew of God and His way of salvation; God remains God without being fully known by us: "Gott geht in seinem Werk nicht auf, Gott ist nicht seine Offenbarung und sein Heilshandeln, sein Sein und Handeln erschöpfen sich darin nicht. Er ist vielmehr Herr seines Tuns und als dieser in Anbetung zu respektieren und zu verstehen," Schwarzwäller, *Theologia crucis*, 170.

²¹⁶"The theology of the cross as a theology of revelation stands in sharp antithesis to speculation," and "God's revelation is an indirect, concealed revelation," Lovenich, *Theology of Cross*, 22.

²¹⁷WA 40/II, 328, quoted in Ernst Wolf, "Rechtfertigungslehre," *Peregrinatio II*, 12, where Wolf writes: "Gilt für die Scholastik im allgemeinen die Antwort-Gegenstand der Theologie sei der trinitarische Gott--'Gott an sich'--, so heißt es bei Luther in betont schulgerechter Definition: 'Theologiae proprium subiectum est homo peccati reus ac perditus et Deus iustificans ac salvator hominis peccatoris. Quicquid extra hoc subiectum in Theologiae quaeritur aut disputatur, est error et venenum.' Nicht ein metaphysisches Wesen sondern ein konkretes geschichtliches Ereignis, Gottes Heilshandeln mit dem Sündermenschen, ist der 'Gegenstand' der Theologie, und zwar der Theologie als Wissenschaft."

Himself is in pain or not should not concern us even if this were to be the case.²¹⁸

Rather, the revelation of the crucified Christ has to do with man's salvation.²¹⁹ This has two soteriological aspects, judgmental and existential. First, the cross of Christ is the revelation of human sin and its consequences. The cross definitively and totally dethrones human *hybris*, either apparent or disguised,²²⁰ for it is *sine qua non* for man to be imputed with an alien righteousness. It deprives men of any ground upon which to claim their own justification for existence. Thus, the cross is the revelation of divine judgement over human self-righteousness and unbelief. The revelation of the crucified Christ becomes then the revelation of salvation; the Gospel follows the revelation of the Law. Thus understood, the motif behind the theology of the cross in Luther's thought is thoroughly soteriological. Second, the theology of the cross concerns the believer's continuing existence in this world under the cross. The suffering Christ as God incarnate and as true man is the paradigm of human existence

²¹⁸Althaus, *Theology of Luther*, 280-286. Referring to various texts from Luther Althaus writes: "We should not concern ourselves at all with God insofar as he has hidden himself. God does not want us to know that much about him. He does not want us to confront him 'in his own nature and majesty. . . . We should not attempt to penetrate the mystery of his majesty but 'concern ourselves with the God who has become flesh,' with 'the crucified Jesus in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge--even though hidden,'" 280-281.

²¹⁹Schwarzwaller writes summarizing Luther's insistence on the exclusiveness of Christ as the sole knowledge of God the Father: "Kurz begegnet in Christus Gott, so mithin kein Gnadenprinzip, kein Heilsgarant, kein theologisches Objekt, sondern eben: Gott. In Christus *offenbart er - uns unsere Lage*, nicht jedoch 'sich selbst'. Sein selbst bleibt verborgen," *Theoloiga crucis*, 185, emphasis is original.

²²⁰"The cross of Christ," writes Luther, "has condemned everything the world approves of, even wisdom and righteousness," WA 2, 613, quoted in Elert, *Structure*, 85.

in faith, and not dealing with divine suffering as such.²¹

Thus, by only a brief comparison of Luther and Kitamori with respect to the concept of the theology of the cross, two different versions of the same doctrine become readily apparent. While in Luther's thought, the suffering of Christ functions as the basic paradigm of man's salvation, Kitamori thinks of the cross of Christ as the paradigm of God's eternal suffering and His mode of being. From this fact we observe that the "theology of the cross" as a theologoumenon is formal and that totally different theologies can have very different definitions for the "theology of the cross." When a specific theological formulation claims for itself the designation of *theologia crucis*, it becomes crucial to ask what kind of *theologia crucis* is actually being presented.

In this chain of thought (since Kitamori sets the suffering of God in the very focus of his theology), it is essential for us also to ask questions regarding divine suffering, its possibility and nature.

What do Christians, then, think of God's suffering? To clarify the question:

²¹According to Lowenich, Luther's view of the suffering of Christ has nothing to do with God's suffering for the sake of His love toward the unlovable sinner, but rather with the mode of God's revelation only in which man really recognizes the cardinal significance of *Deum Deum esse* and that man's justification comes exclusively from God hidden *sub specie contraria*: "Into such a concealment [under the cross] God enters in order to reveal himself. If there is to be revelation of God, the visible God must become the hidden God. God becomes 'hidden in sufferings,'" *Theology of Cross*, 29. Thus understood, the primary purpose of the suffering of Christ in Luther's thought is to make man's faith possible, while destroying all human possibilities of knowing God by man's "natural" recognition and gaining salvation by his own power. In Luther's theology of the cross, the main emphasis is placed on the hiddenness of God in His revelation and only secondarily on suffering as the mode of that revelation.

Is God really passible? And if so in what sense is He passible? Given that God can suffer, what is the "structure" of God's suffering? How can and should we understand it and speak of it? With these questions in mind, we now deal with this crucial issue of divine suffering. At this point, it is important to note that it is God the Son who has suffered, not God the Father. Patripassianism is a doctrinal error, and the "anathematization" of it is valid also for today, for it preserves the vital soteriological concern, God's unchangeable, absolute blessedness.²² God the Son endured all suffering and death as the *incarnate* God. This qualification of divine suffering is essential. In fact, on the basis of Luther's theological premises expressed in his idea of *Deus absconditus*, it is impermissible--even impossible--to univocally state that God Himself is suffering, much less eternally suffering. Rather, Christ, the Son of God, suffered as the revelation of God's salvific will, and the suffering of Christ on the cross primarily concerns our salvation. Again, we emphasize: the theology of the cross in Luther's thought is primarily of soteriological nature.

It is highly relevant for us to now consider Luther's view of God since, in his thought, divine majesty cannot be put aside in the discussion of things divine, divine suffering included. Perhaps the German adjective "alleinwirksam" is the most pregnant term to describe the characteristics of the God Luther experienced; a God

²²Patripassianism has been condemned because it is the logical consequence of the modalistic concept of the divine Trinity. But the very viewpoint that God is totally absorbed into suffering and death must have been of a vital concern to the mind of the Ancient Church. The tenacious contention of God's impassibility throughout the history of theology suggests this vital concern: God's absolute blessedness. It is then important for us to be careful not to speak of divine suffering carelessly.

who is dynamic, all sovereign, overwhelming and vehement in power. This immense God rules the world. Before this majestic and sovereign God, man is nothing; man is totally passive before this majestic God. This state of affairs can be clearly seen in existential situations in which one does not see any meaning in the world, situations which have provoked various theodicies. However, in Luther's view of the majestic God, human beings have absolutely no right whatsoever to protest against Him even when reason finds ample grounds on which to accuse Him for His design of the world and His activity in history.²²³ Since the idea of divine suffering often tends to be motivated by a desire to justify God in the face of various miseries and apparent contradictions in this world, it is appropriate to clearly state that in Luther's thought there is no room for theodicy.²²⁴ For him, it would be an impermissible blasphemy

²²³"Reverently adoring God in his secret willing and working excludes the possibility that we men might be allowed to argue with God and accuse him of unrighteousness. . . . To our way of thinking, God's act of choosing one and rejecting another, even though he himself works everything in them, seems to be simply unrighteous and arbitrary. But Luther reminds us that we may not judge God's activity by the law and the human standards that determines what is right for us. We must consider the distance between God and man," Althaus, *Theology of Luther*, 282.

²²⁴Observing in Luther's thought that predestination is a constituent element of the doctrine of justification, in which the free will of man is to be denied and God's sovereign and inscrutable activity alone rules, Schwarzwaller writes: "Auf dieser Basis befremdet die Fortsetzung nicht, da es nicht nur keine Theodizee gebe, sondern keinesfalls geben kann. Nicht ohne Ironie stellt ja Luther fest: 'in omnibus alijs Deo concedemus maiestatem diuinam, in solo iudicio negare parati sumus, nec tantisper possumus credere, eum esse iustum.' Dagegen wird auf dem Hintergrund von Rom. 11,33 und entsprechend Jes. 55, 8f darauf insistiert, da Gottes Handeln fur uns uneinsichtig musse, da unser Verstand nicht im entferntesten zu Gottes Weisheit emporreiche, so anders er eben Gott und Herr seiner Kreatur sei; da mithin uber das Anerkennen der Wirklichkeit Gottes hinaus die Moglichkeit seines Handelns gerade nicht nachgezeichnet werden kann," *Theologia crucis*, 98.

to summon God, as it were, to the tribunal of human reason. The God who designed the history of the world is inscrutable to human comprehension. For Luther, He is the all-sovereign, absolute and "alleinwirksam" God.

In view of this overwhelming majesty of God, we underline again the fact that it would hardly be possible for anyone to state without qualification that God suffers pain (as is the case with Kitamori's theological framework) because of an inner divine conflict between wrath and love. In Luther's idea of the "alleinwirksam" God, there is ultimately no room for divine frustration by any alien forces whatsoever; there are no limits to divine omnipotence, or omniscience, or omnipresence. Thus, nothing whatsoever in time and space is unknown to God, including the human fall into sin and the reality of evil; nor is there anything which is able to cause God's frustration "from outside." In view of this immense concept of God, it is impossible and irrelevant to adopt any psychologization or sentimentalization of God's reality; one cannot attribute human emotion to God without necessary qualifications. Truly, the idea of *Deus absconditus in sua majestate* solemnly preempts any human usurpation of rationally scrutinizing God's being as such.

God transcends human judgment and scrutinization. Consequently He transcends man's psychological need or demand for God to be involved in the suffering of the world, the need and demand which often call for theodicy. But this is not the whole story of God in Luther's thought. Luther has an equally strong

emphasis on the "miraculous" immanence of God in the created reality.²²⁵ By means of this emphasis, the possibility for divine suffering arises. In God's *creatio continua*, wonders abound, giving powerful witnesses to the presence of the "alleinwirksam" God in creation.

In Luther's conception, God is thus not simply transcendent nor immanent. Nor does Luther try to rationally smooth over these two "antonymous" states. After all, God's reality (in both His transcendence and immanence conceived of together) is beyond our comprehension. What makes Luther's theology "sachlich" to the given reality is the fact that the Reformer is fully open to God's inscrutable reality and tries only to be "descriptive" about the indefinable being of God. For a further discussion of divine passibility, it is important for us to take note of this "descriptive" attitude of Luther toward divine reality.²²⁶

God's sovereign freedom to break the barriers of humanly set categories of transcendence and immanence manifests itself in the incarnation of the Son; Christ as

²²⁵"Nothing is so small but God is still smaller, nothing is so large but God is still larger, nothing is so short but God is still shorter, nothing so long but God is still longer, nothing is so broad but God is still broader, nothing is so narrow but God is still narrower, etc. He is an inexpressible being, above and beyond all that can be described or imagined," WA 29-339, here quoted in Althaus, *Theology of Luther*, 107.

²²⁶In connection with his discourse on the impossibility, in Luther's thought, of obtaining an objective and static principle in identifying the revealed and hidden God, Schwarzwaller has the following to say which *mutatis mutandis* is quite pertinent to our discussion here: "Da Luther diese Bezuge nicht systematisiert, hat also seinem Grund gerade nicht darin, da Luther 'kein Systematiker' gewesen ware. Er war ein zu guter Systematiker, um sich hierauf einzulassen. Jedes theologische System scheitert als solches an der Gottheit Gottes," *Theologia crucis*, 176.

vere Deus! The Son became incarnate and lived as a human under the limitations of time and space. And the culmination of His incarnate existence was the suffering of death on the cross. God the Son experienced the most painful suffering ever. He suffers it *realiter* and not docetically. In the suffering of the Son, the whole person of Christ as *vere Deus et vere homo* was involved. Overwhelmed by the incarnate and suffering Christ, Luther found irrelevant any scholastic distinction between the Son's humanity and deity which limited His suffering to His humanity. Certainly, the traditional concept of *communicatio idiomatum* helped to expedite the Reformer's theological discourse; it is "borrowed," as it were, to describe the indescribable.²²⁷

God the Son suffered indescribable pain and even the most shameful death. God *realiter* suffered in the incarnate Son. Truly, God suffered! It is, however, quite essential to pay attention to the phrase: "in the incarnate Son," with emphasis on "incarnate." Divine suffering is preceded by the sovereign freedom of God in which God in the person of the Son entered the reality of human history. And in this sovereign freedom God actualized His love in the suffering of the Son. Here it is

²²⁷For various theological and logical problems around Luther's use of the formula *communicatio idiomatum*, see Marc Lienhard, *Luther: Witness to Jesus Christ*, tr. Edwin H. Robertson (Minneapolis, Augsburg Publishing House, 1982), 335-334. After pointing out the inadequateness of describing via the formula "communicatio idiomatum" the paradoxical reality of the person of Jesus Christ even in Luther's thought--for it involves dangers of turning Christology either toward Doceticism or toward Monophysitism, Lienhard notes Luther's own reservation in using such metaphysically burdened formulas and writes: "Luther himself warned against those who wished to enclose the mystery of the hypostatic union within a metaphysical construction. As he says, that mystery is a *res ineffabilis*. Even the angels cannot comprehend it. According to him, a new theological language is required to attempt to express the mystery," 346. See also Althaus' critical question to Luther in *Theology of Luther*, 196.

necessary for us to note that if God suffered in the incarnate Son and the incarnation was an event in history filled with burden and contradiction, divine suffering is then limited within the historical reality to which the actual incarnation has addressed itself.

Incarnation and divine suffering are closely related to each other. We notice in Luther's thought a structural analogy between incarnation and divine passibility. Just as the incarnation was a divine possibility incomprehensible to human reason (How can it be possible for the Creator to become a feeble creature in the manger?), so also for divine suffering on the cross (How can it be possible for the all-blessed Lord to be deprived of this blessedness and to place Himself under the tyrannical power of evil in order that He might suffer?).²²⁸ Likewise we must point out that in these incomprehensibilities God remains God, the eternally blessed, perfect, sovereign God. Just as God remains God even in incarnation, not "exhausting" Himself in it, so also He remains as the perfectly blessed God even in the suffering of the Son, the

²²⁸Luther holds that the deity of Christ, because of the incarnation and of its personal unity with the humanity, enters into the uttermost depth of suffering. However Luther did not teach 'patripassianism,' as modalists did, but 'deipassianism.' He always regarded God's suffering as an incomprehensible mystery. It is a constant stumbling block to reason even the angels cannot fully understand, for it means nothing else than that God is at once completely above and completely below" *ibid.*, 197. The great paradox involved in the inscrutable mystery of the incarnation was also expressed by Iganatius of Antioch in the second century: "There is only one Physician; Very Flesh, yet Spirit too; Uncreated and yet born; God-and-Man in One agreed, Very-Life-in-Death indeed, Fruit of God and Mary's seed; At once impassible and torn By pain and suffering here below; Jesus Christ, whom as our Lord we know" (Letter to the Ephesians 7, in *Early Christina Writings* (tr. Maxwell Staniforth [Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1968]), 77-78. Here we see the profound wonder over the mystery of the incarnation continuously felt through the centuries, a mystery which involves also God's paradoxical impassibility and passibility.

divine blessedness not "exhausting" itself in suffering.²²⁹ Accordingly we should understand divine suffering as subordinate to divine blessedness.

God is impassible and passible. In the face of the divine revelation in the Son we must state both even if the two are contradictory. If in view of the "very good" in God's creation ("tob meod," Gen. 1:31) we deny that suffering possesses an intrinsic value and hope that suffering as a blatant manifestation of disorder in creation eventually is to be overcome, we cannot ascribe suffering, pain and the like to God as essentially inherent in Him. The impassible God is the very foundation of our hope for blessedness. But God in His sovereign freedom became passible because of His unfathomable love toward the lost sinner. His love knows no metaphysical barrier, as it were. God in the person of the Son really suffered pain and death, the utmost depth of human misery. Since the perfectly blessed God suffered the misery we human beings deserve to suffer and was victorious over it, we can live in blessedness even while our lives appear to be a seemingly hopeless pilgrimage. In Luther's thought both aspects are held together without any rationalistic "smoothing over" of the seemingly logical contradictions.²³⁰ To respect this rational "dead-end," and to be

²²⁹See 556-559 in this chapter.

²³⁰Dealing with a seeming *contradictio adiecto* in Luther's theological recognition that *Deus absconditus* is Christologically substantiated and established, Schwarzwäller observes a profound truth in the Reformer's view: "Luther behauptet keineswegs, daß aufgrund des Christusereignisses nun nichts mehr im Zwielficht sei, Gott vielmehr im Sohn völlig offenbar und ohne bedrängendes Geheimnis. Luther schließt vielmehr umgekehrt: Ihm folgt aus dem Christusbekenntnis als dem Bekenntnis zum Deus ipse, daß in Gott vieles verborgen ist. Gerade darum und damit hält er am Evangelium fest: Hier und nur hier ist Gott offenbar, und er ist hier offenbar als der aus grundloser Barmherzigkeit und unableitbar Liebe uns wunderbar

thus humble, is *sine qua non* for evangelical theology; failing in this humility, a theology deteriorates into speculation and is unable to grasp the overwhelming impact of the Gospel.

God's passibility and impassibility together fully express the need for theology to be open to the "antonymous" realities of God.²¹ This need suggests that one pole of the paradox must not be rationally fixed into a static formula upon which man may build a theological system. "Antonymous" poles in theology must not be rationally dissolved but kept open as they are originally revealed in order not to impose any humanly construed scheme upon God's reality and thereby infringe the sovereign freedom of the living God. Luther's allegedly "unsystematic" thinking is a witness to the need for such an openness in theology.

If God is hidden from human rational comprehension, it is through "faith alone" then that man knows of God; faith is the only means to gain the ultimate

rechtfertigende Herr, dem gegenüber es nur glaubendes Vertrauen und demütigen Gehorsam geben kann," *Theologia crucis*, 127.

²¹"Ja die gottheit kan nicht leiden noch sterben / Soltu antworten / Das ist war. Aber dennoch weil Gottheit und menscheit ynn Christo eine Person ist / so gibt die schrifft umb solcher personlicher einickeit willen auch der gottheit / alles was der menscheit widderferet / und widderumb / Und ist auch also ynn der warheit," WA 26:321. In this passage Luther had to launch a fundamental critique to Zwingli's alleosis, and emphasize the divine passibility in the person of the Son. But when the passibility of God is one-sidedly dominant at the cost of this fundamental truth of God's transcendence over the passibility, it is important, from Luther's point of view, that we keep intact the fundamental truth of God's impassibility. In Luther's thought, the fact that God has suffered and died in the Son is the paradox of all paradoxes. This can only be possible only when God's eternal impassibility is presupposed.

"knowledge" of God.²²² By saying this, we now return to the second significance of "faith alone," which was discussed in the previous section. Faith in Luther's understanding is not only *fiducia* in an existential sense but also the sole principle of "knowing" both God and man. In fact, faith as *fiducia* and faith as the sole epistemological principle in theology are one and the same thing. For knowing things divine through revelation presupposes reliance on the faithfulness of God who reveals the truth of His salvific will and of sinful humanity. Faith is the human correlative to divine revelation. It is from this viewpoint that we should understand Luther's persistent critique of human reason. Human reason always "domesticates" divine revelation into something rationally comprehensible, insuring *securitas*. Such an attempt at domestication is tantamount to making God humanly disposable. Once God's salvific revelation is made rationally comprehensible, it is made into the Law.²³³ Thus rational comprehension of revelation and legalism theologically go

²²²Inserting a comment on Luther's well-known definition of faith: "Altera est, Quod fides est rerum non apparentium. Ut ergo fidei locus sit, opus est, ut omnia, quae creduntur, abscondantur, Non autem remotius absconduntur, quam sub contrario objectu, sensu, experientia," Schwarzwaller writes: "Nun wird dargelegt, da und wie . . . Gott stets unter dem Augenschein des Gegenteils sein Werk treibt. Er verbirgt sich hinter Ungerechtigkeit und Zorn, der er doch barmherzig, der er doch der rechtfertigende ist. Der Glaube durchschaut das nicht einfach. Das ist vielmehr sein Wesen, da ohne Ruckversicherung und gegen den Augenschein auf sein Wort hin Gott vertraut und dem Wort dahingehend Glauben schenckt, da er Gott als den iustificans ac salvator hominis peccatoris anerkennt," *Theologia crucis*, 142. See also Lovenich, *Theology of Cross*, 21: "Revelation is there, of course, but in concealment. Revelation addresses itself to faith. In his early years Luther uses the word 'understanding' to designate the perceiving organ of faith. . . ."

²³³"Kurz, diesem erkennbaren, durchsichtigen, nicht verborgenen Gott gegenuber bliebe man unter dem Gezet. *Solange man Gott gedanlich durchdringen und analogien zu seinem Sein und Handeln aufweisen kann, vernimmt man das*

hand in hand.

We have seen that Luther's doctrine of justification by faith alone is organically related to his concept of *Deus absconditus*, signifying God's absolute sovereignty. Luther sees then that the very Gospel of justification is based upon the absolute sovereignty of God. Ultimately in the inscrutability of God and His transcendence, even in His totally unfounded mercy, Luther found the unshakable ground for his own salvation and the salvation of the world.

Kitamori's Theology in the Light of Luther's Theology

"Theology is ultimately concerned with the view of God," writes Kitamori.²³⁴ He is correct in this observation. As a matter of fact, Luther's doctrine of *iustificatio sola fide* is organically related with the Reformer's view of God, *Deus absconditus in sua maiestate*.²³⁵ Now we focus on Kitamori's theology in the light of Luther's theology, especially with regard to the view of God.

A note of procedure is presently required. In the previous chapters we, on

Evangelium als das Gesetz. Denn solange nicht Grundlosigkeit, Unableitbarkeit und Unwiderstehlichkeit des göttlichen Handelns und gerade seines Heilshandeln in aller Schärfe gewahrt sind, sondern noch irgend etwas einsichtig oder ableitbar ist, wird das Einsichtige zur Norm, der man zu genügen hat. . . , " *ibid.*, 137, emphasis is original.

²³⁴See 212 above.

²³⁵Schwarzwaller consistently points out that Luther's doctrine of justification by faith is exclusively based upon his view that it is totally beyond of human comprehension for it is given by God's inscrutable will or His hiddenness, and in this hiddenness "sola fide" finds its anchor. Schwarzwaller then writes: "Gerade mit dem Theologoumenon des Deus in sua maiestate absconditus ist die Gewißheit des Glaubens, die Rechtfertigung sola fide, die Errettung durch Jesus Christus gesichert," *Theologia crucis*, 185.

many occasions, have discussed Kitamori's theology in the light of Luther's theology on a more or less implicit basis. When we now juxtapose Kitamori's theology with Luther's theology, it is inevitable that particular ideas and directions will surface and resurface.

Kitamori holds that it is possible for us to penetrate into the very essence of God intuitively and to bring it under human rational comprehension; in his view, it is even required for us to do so. With an unshakable conviction, he posits that God is eternally and "essentially" in pain. In his attempt to elucidate this position which may seem somewhat peculiar, Kitamori gives various explanations of this concept, writing that the pain of God is shorthand for the love based upon God's pain and assuring his readers that the expression "pain of God" describes a specific character of God's love. On other occasions Kitamori boards on stating that God is in pain physically; he asserts outright that pain as such is the essence of God. Regardless of how one is to interpret Kitamori's oscillating definition of the Pain of God as the essence of God, one thing in Kitamori's theology is clear, namely, one is able to rationally grasp and logically retrace the eternal essence of God. By contrast, Luther hesitates to speculate on the hidden area of the sovereign God.²⁶ In this regard, Kitamori and Luther are

²⁶In his pamphlet *Der verborgen Gott bei Luther* (Berlin, Furche-Verlag, 1928), Fritz Blanke touches Luther's "Keuschheit und Furcht" (Ibid., 10) in the Reformer's "daring" attempt to perceive the hidden counsels of God; even in Luther's daring so there is an important presupposition, namely, God is absolutely sovereign. Presenting Luther's view of God's rule of history through various "masks," Blanke follows Luther in the question a Christian may raise why God uses them in His rule in history and writes: "Es scheint zunächst, als wiese Luther die Frage nach diesem Warum zurück. Er gibt nämlich kurzerhand die Antwort: Gott will es so. Er will nichts ohne unser Arbeiten tun. Er könnte auch ohne so. Er könnte auch ohne

opposites. This difference must have some weighty consequences on both theologies.

In fact, the very concept of the Pain of God is employed by Kitamori to explain rationally why God, who is wrathful against the sinner, can embrace and love him. The whole explanation seems to be conceived in the framework of a "down-to-earth" human psychology. This makes the theology of the Pain of God easily understandable even to ordinary people (especially those living in Japan), people in the sphere of "nature," that is, outside the sphere of divine revelation.²⁷ But this explanation "naturally" and rationally given involves serious consequences which risk making the Gospel too similar to indigenous ideas of salvation. This whole procedure in the mind of Kitamori borders on a psychologization and rationalization of God's hidden mystery.

It is apparent that rationalism and "naturalism" go hand in hand. Reason takes its operational starting point in the things given in "nature." In keeping with this fact, we would reasonably expect that Kitamori's theology involves many of the elements given in "nature." In fact, his concept of the Pain of God involves two

Könige und Fürsten regieren, aber er will es nur durch sie. Gott hat diese Masken einfach geben, sie müssen sein" (ibid., 7).

²⁷In a discussion with Kitamori, a Lutheran pastor, Tuyoshi Okada, says: "Dr Kitamori, you established a theology in which you state that the "Pain" of God unites God's "wrath" and His "love," two contradictory forms of divine emotion. Apart from whether one agrees with your position or not, one can safely say that this theology is easily understandable for the Japanese people. In other words, your theology is quite congenial with the psychic and mental make-up of the Japanese," *Literature and God*, 166.

constitutive elements taken from different spheres in which "naturalism" operates. The one element comes from the sphere of the ordinary life of people; the other from the sphere of metaphysics. On the one hand Kitamori explains the "structure" of the Pain of God with "human, too human" illustrations (for example, from traditional popular dramas in Japan).²³⁸ Just like humans, God suffers from excruciating emotional conflicts within Himself because of His love. On the other hand, in Kitamori's thought, God must metaphysically be the Absolute; God would not be God unless He embraced sinners (His "opposites"!) absolutely; and this absoluteness is demonstrated in "God in Pain," for in His pain God embraces the totally "unembraceable."²³⁹ In the previous places we noted that the influence of the Buddhist-Hegelian concept of the Absolute found in the Kyoto School is apparent in Kitamori's conceptualization of the Pain of God. Thus, the line of demarcation between the revelation given in Christ and ideas taken from the sphere of "nature" is blurred in Kitamori's theology.²⁴⁰ In the concept of the Pain of God there is a direct continuity between revelation and nature, even though Kitamori claims that the idea of "God in Pain" cannot be given but by revelation. It is therefore not unwarranted to

²³⁸See for instance *Pain*, 133-135.

²³⁹Compare this with Luther's acknowledgement of God's absolute sovereignty found in what Elert quotes: "It [Reason] tries again and again to find immanent grounds for excusing His attitude. 'But faith and the spirit judges otherwise: They believe that God is good, even if He were to destroy all men,'" *Structure*, 39.

²⁴⁰"It is our conviction," says Kitamori, "that the pain which is the only concern for Japanese tragedy corresponds most aptly with the pain of God. . . . Thus the Japanese mind, which had seen the deepest heart of his fellowman in pain, will come to see the deepest heart of the Absolute God in pain," *Pain*, 136.

state that Kitamori's theology is a theology which goes in the direction of natural theology.

If theological rationalism (like any other form of rationalism) cannot tolerate any absurd realities repugnant to human intellect, it is only natural for such a theology to be forced to "justify God" in a world filled with unexplainable meaninglessness.²⁴¹ If an individual, through natural perception, cannot discern any meaning at all in the design of this world or in the unfolding of history, he would either deny a God of love and omnipotence, or envisage a God who suffers in solidarity with man in his miseries. The former alternative is obviously self-defeating for faith. The latter, however, would lose sight of God as sovereign and overwhelming.²⁴² Either alternative cannot sustain the Biblical image of God in the face of contradictory reality. Luther's idea of a God hidden to human reason, does justice to God in the Biblical revelation and to the given reality. The theology of the Pain of God, as a theology, goes in the direction of the second alternative: God in this theology stands before man as a suffering God. This theology portrays a passive God. If God eternally suffers pain, this is the inevitable consequence. Then, a question of consequence arises: how can a man who finds himself "in the depths" cry to such a God for help and rescue, a God who is Himself "in the depths"? On the contrary, it is men who are summoned to a "sympathetic" solidarity with a God in suffering! The theology of the Pain of God may provide intellectual and psychological solutions to the

²⁴¹See above in Chap. 5, note 194.

²⁴²Ibid.

problem of suffering and evils (perhaps only for the spiritual elite), but it seems unable to provide the authentic "solution" to provide endurance and hope to those who are in need of redemption from suffering. A quietism is at hand in Kitamori's theology.²⁴³

Thus, the depiction of a passive God inevitably flows from the thesis that God is eternally suffering. As understood and considered by man, suffering God is very naturally passive. And this is exactly what happens in Kitamori's theology. God is on the stage, as it were, like an actor playing the main role of a tragic drama. While men watch him, their hearts are moved by His suffering.²⁴⁴ The theological consequences of this view of God may be multiple in number and serious in nature. For our purpose here we mention only two of them: one pertains to the doctrines of justification, and the other to the doctrine of creation and eschatology.

Dealing with the doctrine of justification, Kitamori equates justification with the forgiveness of sin. Though appearing similar to Luther's focus on the forgiveness of sin, Kitamori actually reduces the scope of justification to one point, namely the belief that justification is the forgiveness of sin narrowly understood. In Luther's thought, as we saw above, the forgiveness of sin is the signature of the multifaceted

²⁴³See 343 above.

²⁴⁴Kitamori's passionate interest in theatrical dramas is well known, see *Pain*, 134-135; "Drama as literature," writes Kitamori, "belongs to the highest artistic expression of the mind of a nation, and at the same time, when presented as drama, fully permeates the people on the street," *ibid.*, 134. We can read the following exclamations: "Listen! [rather, Behold!] Jesus is about to be buried. God's only Son, God himself in the person of his Son is about to be buried," *ibid.*, 101.

salvific reality and therefore has an unlimited perspective. Kitamori, on the contrary, sees in justification no other aspect than the forgiveness of sin. Again we see his reductionism here; it is exactly for this reason that Kitamori sees a problem involved in the doctrine of justification. Why, then, does this difference arise between Kitamori and Luther? As a matter of fact, even the very concept of forgiveness in Kitamori's thought is quite different from that of Luther's. Luther without reservation rejoices over the forgiveness of sin; he found the paradise in the very tidings of the forgiveness of sin. For God does "not remember" the sinner's sins (Is. 43:25). In contrast to this, Kitamori understands the forgiveness of sin as God constantly bearing man's sins upon Himself.²⁴⁵ That God is in pain eternally is nothing but the counterpart of the fact that man constantly sins against God. God's love made known in His pain reminds the sinner that he allows God to suffer incessantly for his sins. This logically results in presenting the sinner from knowing true joy and peace in his heart. How can an individual be joyful when he constantly and incessantly causes the Other to suffer because of his own sins? This dilemma is a tension found in Kitamori's concept of the forgiveness of sin. This tension must be resolved sooner or later for Kitamori's system to remain standing. This means that the doctrine of justification by faith in Kitamori's thought is not the final message of salvation. Justification in this system must be completed by something which is beyond.

That Kitamori's concept of justification by faith is basically insufficient is

²⁴⁵See the parable of a "hand" protecting a traveller in lightning, *Pain*, 126.

confirmed by his own efforts to make up for the resulting lack.²⁴⁶ The main emphasis in Kitamori's theological anthropology transfers to sanctification. Kitamori conceives of sanctification as the "restoration of the purity of love" in the sinner. In his thought this is the final stage of salvation, the stage which is conceived by in his particular logic of love. Ultimately, holds Kitamori, both God's love and man's love must develop into a love filled with natural smoothness and intensity. In his own terminology,²⁴⁷ it is closer to the "eros" described in Andreas Nygren's work. For confirmation of our analysis here, it is helpful for us to recall the theme which was discussed in the previous section. In his analysis of Luther's doctrine of justification, Kitamori approaches the doctrine as something problematic, and he takes this approach particularly in reference to the "problematization" of the doctrine by the Tridentinum. He implicitly offers his solution to the "problem" of justification, a solution allegedly satisfactory to both Lutherans and Catholics.²⁴⁸ Justification is not merely the

²⁴⁶For another aspect of Kitamori's concept of justification, see 323-326 above.

²⁴⁷See above note 22.

²⁴⁸In his *Theology and Creeds*, Kitamori deals with the doctrine of the Trinity and holds that both Luther and Melancton did not take up the doctrine of the Trinity for serious consideration because they thought that the doctrine did not involve controversial issues. In Kitamori's view, the doctrine of the Trinity could solve the crucial point of controversy between the Catholic Church and the reformers, namely the problem of "faith and good works." Kitamori consistently thinks that the problem of the Reformation is the relationship between faith and works. In this flow of thought, Kitamori writes: "If they [Luther and Melancton] had used the doctrine of the Trinity for the substantiation of their soteriology, they would have won the victory for the Gospel without seeing the tragedy of the schism between the Roman Church and their Church, for the doctrinal point in the theology of the Reformation which was offensive to the Catholics was the latter's apprehension that by proclaiming 'sola fide' the Reformers would make it impossible to teach both faith and works," *ibid.*, 11.

forgiveness of sin but a call for sanctification. In so arguing, Kitamori has already been drawn into a problem-category similar to that of Catholicism at the time of the Reformation: how can the place of sanctification be secured in view of an allegedly insufficient doctrine of justification?

A word of clarification on the difference above between Kitamori and Luther is due here. Luther never thought of justification by faith as something insufficient as the message of full salvation. On the contrary, he thought a proper and diligent concentration on this cardinal doctrine would "automatically" take care of the issues of sanctification. A well-known dictum "faith alone, but faith never alone" makes the point in this connection. In distinction from this, Kitamori first reduced the multifaceted reality of justification to the forgiveness of sin in a way particular to him, and then tried to put together "justification" thus understood and "sanctification" conceived as ethical improvement.

Even with regard to his concept of the "restoration of pure love," Kitamori gives the impression that he is oscillating between two conflicting views: on the one hand, Kitamori presents the idea that "pure love" is to be eventually realized, and this is a logical requirement of his idea of love's dialectic; on the other hand, another view asserts itself (again logically) that "pure love" cannot be restored, for if it could God would cease to be in pain and consequently pain would not be the eternal essence of God. Kitamori's theology betrays this oscillation. He claims that his theology is critical of the status quo because the very concept of "pain" involves a tension which is to be resolved by a defeat of the *status quo* ridden with evils. But he emphasizes

that human pain must remain in order to give witness to a God who constantly suffers pain. The net result of his theology in this regard is an *a posteriori* affirmation and explanation of the status quo. Kitamori's theology is thus a passive theology.

In Luther's theology, faith plays a vital role in the doctrine of justification. Faith which trusts in the promise made by a forgiving and justifying God is capable of mighty works. Faith is the very mode of the believer's existence. Faith endures and hopes against all appearances. Faith lives in an intensive tension between God's promise and actual experiences in the world. We can say that faith sustains a believer's life here on earth, because it believes in the almighty God who gave His own Son for man and places *fiducia* in Him. In contrast, faith in Kitamori's theology is intellectualized and reduced to a recognition of a state of salvation objectively established by God in Pain. In Kitamori's thought, faith is not something which believes things unseen; on the contrary, it only acknowledges what is already seen.²⁴⁹

As to the doctrine of justification by faith alone, we have seen that Kitamori has his own concept of justification, one passive in character, a concept fundamentally different from that of Luther.

Now we proceed to give our observation regarding the impact the doctrines of creation and eschatology have in the theology of the Pain of God. We said that a concept of God being eternally in pain entails a passivity on the part of God; He can hardly be offensive in the struggles which are going on in the world, struggles between His will and evil powers. This is contrary to the Biblical witness of God,

²⁴⁹For Kitamori's concept of faith, see 320-323 above.

according to which it is He who ultimately has dominion over the process of history and sovereignly leads it toward the fulfillment of His original intention. The Scriptural image of God as a powerful warrior (which found a mighty echo in Luther's famous hymn) is alien or even repugnant to Kitamori's thought of God. In a word, God in Kitamori's theology is not really concerned with the conquest of sufferings and miseries in the world in its authentic sense; in practical terms God would not be able to do anything but suffer in the face of more powerful onslaughts of evil. Accordingly, as we have seen previously, Kitamori's theology cannot contain a joyful expectation of an *eschaton* as the fulfillment of God's original intention of creation. It is only logical that Kitamori has no room for a theology of creation in which the joyful cry of "indeed it was very good" is the very signature of an indelible "optimism" of faith. By contrast, Luther's trust in God's "Geschichtsmächtigkeit," with all its realism in the estimation of the worldly reality, has never been shaken, and his conviction in this regard has its firm roots in his faith in God the Creator. As a matter of fact, Kitamori's concept of creation is at variance with the joyful signature of creation; creation, in Kitamori's metaphysics of love, is only possible by the pain of God. Suffering is namely a "built-in" feature in this created world from the very beginning; the negative reality is the constitutive ingredient in the universe.²⁵⁰ For this reason it is not difficult at all to understand why Kitamori offers no substantial eschatology; where there is no proper, joyful protology there is no joyful eschatology either. Salvation in Kitamori's thought is the communion of God and man in pain, in

²⁵⁰For Kitamori's idea of creation, see 264-268 above.

a colorless, melancholic moonlight, rather than a joyous "living together" of God and man in the morning sunlight of redemption and resurrection.

Examining Kitamori's thought in the light of Luther's theology, we are now led to conclude that the theology of the Pain of God and the theology of the Reformer are substantially different on the basic doctrinal issues. Therefore, even though Kitamori's theology has been considered as "Japanized" Lutheranism, strictly speaking, this characterization is not adequate for the description of the theology of the Pain of God. Rather, Kitamori's theology is a singular, even syncretistic formulation of Protestant theology. To be sure, the theology of the Pain of God is partially inspired by Luther's theological ideas and concepts such as sin, divine wrath, forgiveness of sins and divine suffering, but it is, in substance, a theology with a deeply "indigenous" orientation, molded by a Japanese sentiment of tragedy and the philosophy of the Kyoto School. After all, the basic orientation of Kitamori in doing theology is substantially different from that of Luther;²⁵¹ while Luther's theology is molded by divine revelation essentially repugnant to the natural sentiment of man, Kitamori's theology is a form of natural theology shaped by man's emotive perception

²⁵¹Interestingly, Kitamori himself indirectly speaks of a difference at the fundamental point, which separates him and Luther. Discussing the psychic "aptitude" or sensitivity of different nations to the appropriation of the Gospel, Kitamori comes to the case of Luther's "aptitude" and writes: "It is true the German mind [as is found in Luther] strikingly differs in character from that of the Greek. But the pain of God does not seem to have aroused the interest of the German mind in the strict sense of the term. Even in the case of Luther's concept of God, we cannot help saying, 'Friend, [yours is] not that melody [of the Gospel]!' Certainly, Luther possessed a sensitivity toward God's grace, but he did not grasp the meaning of grace as God's pain," *Pain*, 133. By saying this, Kitamori confirms our observation in this section of the chapter.

and immediate recognition of given reality.

Summary

Throughout his theological career Kitamori has always felt challenged by the task of bringing together the two major traditions of the Reformation, that is, Reformed and Lutheran. For one thing, Kitamori's ecclesiastical *Sitz im Leben*, which is the Kyodan, has constantly been threatened by the forces of disintegration due to a lack of theological identity. It has therefore been mandatory for Kitamori, *ex officio*, to formulate a synthesis out of the diverse views of major and minor confessional and denominational traditions found within the Kyodan. For him personally, however, due to his conviction of the "axiomatic" significance of Lutheranism for a unified Protestant Church in Japan, it is urgent to explicitly manifest the unity of the two major traditions, Reformed and Lutheran, a unity which, in his view, already exists in a latent form. It has also been his conviction that Lutheranism must be the core of a unified evangelical Protestant Church in Japan. Thus, the manifest integration of Reformed Christianity and Lutheranism is urgent for Kitamori both ecclesiastically and theologically.

Kitamori consistently endeavored to carry out the challenge and mandate with Lutheranism as his theological "axiom." In this chapter, however, we observed that Kitamori's Lutheranism is not substantial. Rather, in Kitamori's theology the Reformed influence is stronger and more substantial than that of Lutheranism. This observation runs counter to a general judgment in Japanese Protestantism which has labeled Kitamori's theology as Lutheranism. We found, however, convincing reasons

which validate our observation. For one thing, the predominant theological matrix of Japanese Protestantism is that of the Reformed. In fact, Kitamori's formative years did not yet see any clear "weaning" of Lutheranism from the antecedent Reformed theology. Though baptized as a Lutheran, Kitamori unconsciously breathed in a Reformed theology and ethos. Naturally, Kitamori reveres Calvin and praises him for his theological clarity and precision. One can hardly find any critical comment against Calvin or his theology in Kitamori.

Among the Reformed influences, it is Karl Barth's theology that has determined Kitamori's theological profile in its formal aspects. Barth's theological method provided Kitamori with the basic scheme for his theology. The Swiss theologian's neo-Scholastic rationalism and his Reformed theocentricism have shaped the formal character of Kitamori's theology. This origin of the formal principle of Kitamori's theology is understandable when we consider the fact that, as a seminary student, Kitamori was under the very strong spell of the rising Barthian theology which flowed into Japan through Reformed channels.

Kitamori, however, became one of the most outspoken critics of Barth's theology in Japan, accusing the latter's theology of blatant legalism. The reason for this antagonism, despite Kitamori's theological affinities with Barth's thoughts, is the Japanese theologian's own unshakable conviction that the Pain of God is the ultimate truth. Kitamori cannot compromise this personal conviction. Barth's radical criticism against establishing any "Grundanschauung" for the field of dogmatics was certainly anathema to Kitamori's then nascent theology.

Though Kitamori has been critical of Barth throughout his career, his critique has not carried substantial weight in the history of Japanese Protestant theology. We saw that Kitamori's criticism of Barth does not go beyond the issues of dogmatic prolegomena, that is, he only criticizes formal issues. Why doesn't Kitamori continue this criticism when it comes to the material aspects of Barth's theology? An answer to this question, would be that materially speaking Kitamori's theology is quite similar to Barth's. The present writer would even posit that Kitamori's theology is a form of Barthian theology set in a melancholic minor key.

In contrast to the conspicuous Reformed influences on Kitamori's theology, the impact of Lutheranism in his thought is limited. Kitamori's interpretation of Luther's thought is insufficient and often inadequate. In explaining this deficiency, we can point out three factors. First, there was not yet a developed theological milieu within Lutheranism in Japan then when Kitamori began to form his theological thought. Second, Kitamori had already attained a well-nigh absolute conviction of the Pain of God as the ultimate truth when he started to study Lutheran theology proper. On the basis of this conviction Kitamori prematurely identified his own theology with that of Luther's. In addition to these two factors, Kitamori busied himself more with digesting the theology of Karl Barth than embarking upon serious Luther-studies.

In fact, on crucial doctrinal points such as the view of God, the understanding of justification by faith and God's rule in the world, Kitamori deviates fundamentally from Luther's theology, often in a diametrically opposite direction. Therefore Kitamori's theology cannot be designated as Lutheranism, regardless of the

certainty of Kitamori's personal identification as a Lutheran. Instead of inheriting the central evangelical concerns pronounced in Luther's thought, Kitamori interpreted Lutheranism in such a way as to fit the ideas and concepts deduced from his own idea of the Pain of God. In reality, Kitamori's theology as a whole only touches the surface of Lutheran theology and then goes its own way, which from a Lutheran point of view is liable to serious criticisms.

Kitamori's theology is deeply influenced by the ideas and method of Karl Barth. Though less substantial, basic Lutheran concepts and ethos are observable in the theology of the Pain of God. In this theology, indigenous spirituality is intimately interwoven with the Protestant traditions by way of the Buddhist philosophy of the Kyoto School. On this observation, it is more accurate to characterize Kitamori's theology as "a Protestant mediating theology with substantial indigenous ingredients" than "a theology essentially Lutheran." In these characteristics lies the strength of Kitamori's theology. And, by the same token, the problems of the theology of the Pain of God are apparent.

CONCLUSION

Kazoh Kitamori's Theology of the Pain of God rightly assumes an important place in religious thought, demanding to be thoroughly examined by students working for the spread of the Gospel in a "non-Christian" country such as Japan. The concept of the Pain of God is challenging and provocative--historically, dogmatically, missiologically, ethically and culturally. The very idea that God Himself suffers pain compels us to reflect anew on what the suffering of God actually signifies dogmatically. What consequences does it have for the understanding of the doctrine of God, of Christ, of salvation and of hope? Further, the genesis of the idea of the Pain of God reflects the basic existential aspects of the Protestant Church in modern Japan; Japanese Protestantism seems to have been assigned the immense burden of bearing upon itself the whole of modern Japan with its political, spiritual, sociological, cultural and even economical aspects; a task totally out of proportion with the numerical strength of the nascent Protestant Church.

Protestant Theology in Japan was destined to meet this challenge. With his idea of God in Pain, Kitamori offered a response to this challenge: God, in the crucified Christ, embraces Japan, a nation which in her own manner and depth shares this fallen reality of humanity. Kitamori's idea of the Pain of God is, however, particularly significant in the study of the Gospel's indigenization. Kitamori identified

the core of the Gospel as God in suffering, and claimed that specific experiences of "pain and suffering" born by the Japanese people through the centuries are most congenial to God's "experience of pain." In Kitamori's view, the quintessence of an indigenous culture and spirituality can be, and is to be, made a positive vehicle by which the Gospel is to be brought into the hearts of a people.

The concept of the Pain of God has proven its capacity of systematic-theological comprehensiveness, and this can also be seen in the study of the ethical practices of the Protestant Church in the historical, political, sociological context of Japan. In the midst of a non-Christian population under the spell of dark powers, the Church is to both bear witness to God's will of salvation, and, identifying herself with God in suffering, embrace the fallen reality of the people. The theology of the Pain of God is a theological attempt to meet the challenge of the Gospel itself and of the specific sphere of the world into which the Gospel is being brought.

As with most prominent and significant theological systems, the theology of the Pain of God has its origin in personal religious experience. Kitamori's visionary experience is that God is suffering pain, and he is fully convinced that "God in pain" is the ultimate truth. Again, as with the experiences of most influential theologians and religious thinkers, Kitamori's vision of God in pain is not an experience right "out of the blue." His "original" vision of God in pain owes much to intellectual acquaintance, spiritual encounter, cultural inheritance, existential pressures, and the contemporary situation. Being fully convinced of "God in pain" as the ultimate truth, Kitamori set out to "build" his own theology of the Pain of God,

digesting Luther's inner experiences and theological terms in his own way, studying the theology of the early Barth meticulously (while criticizing the Swiss theologian vocally), and absorbing much of the Buddhist-Hegelian philosophy of the so-called Kyoto School.

What came out from this process of theological system building was the idea of a God who is *eternally* in pain and the concept of an *all-embracing* God. God in the vision of Kitamori is not a God who judges and rejects; on the contrary, He embraces sinners just as they are, in His eternal suffering. In Kitamori's thought, God who rejects His human creatures because of their sinfulness cannot have any dealing with men under their actual conditions. If salvation is at all possible for sinners, God must be absolutely embracing. Behind this thought one observes that Kitamori recognizes the real depth of the sinful reality of humanity. In his contention, however, this all-embracing God is not a God who allows things to go on as they are; on the contrary, He transforms the present reality into what it ought to be by first embracing things as they are. This contention of Kitamori is indispensable for the justification of his theology of the Pain of God. But despite Kitamori's assurance that the concept of the Pain of God includes in itself the power to transform a presently fallen humanity, the actual implications of this theology have defied the validity of this assurance; even this theology itself became inconsistent on this point in the fact that this theology takes away what it previously has promised to give. For the very idea of an all-embracing God who allegedly provides an absolute certainty of salvation, Kitamori's theology had to pay the price by implying that God is passive in His

dealing with the sinful reality of humanity, sacrificing the idea of God's sovereign lordship over men and the world. This is a costly price to pay, for the integral message of the Gospel of creation, redemption and eschatological fulfillment is reduced to a single idea of God's eternal suffering in "love." Behind the idea of God's eternal suffering and His passivity one senses the presence of the Oriental "mood" of resignation. This of resignation is contrary to the Christian teaching about a God who is all-powerful in the reality of men and the world, even though the actual work of His omnipotence is often humanly indiscernible. The fact that together with the eternalization of the suffering of God, humanity is also involved in the eternal Pain of God. Both logically and practically the eschatological hope of the humanity's final redemption to an eternal peace and bliss (the very *shalom*) is lost in Kitamori's theology; instead, God and men are united in the "communion of pain" now and in eternity. This is a curtailment of the dimensions of the Gospel.

In Kitamori's thought, the concept of the Pain of God has a "logical structure," and this "logical structure" is the formal character of the Pain of God; embracing something which cannot be embraced because of mutually negating opposition. It is this formal character that made it possible for Kitamori to deal with pressing theological, political, religious, cultural and social issues. The concept of the Pain of God is thus methodologically pivotal and universal in its application.

With this paradigm of "embracing the unembraceable," both as the content and the methodology of his theology, Kitamori identified himself with the historical Japan as it headed into the war. For him, the nation, though perhaps erring, was not

an object of critical watching primarily but of intercessory prayers; even cooperation would be appropriate. Throughout his career as a theologian, Kitamori consistently applied this paradigm in the field of politics. To be sure, he insisted that in this embracing, a critical attitude is something "built-in," but the effect was a *de facto* allegiance to the status quo. The same also holds true of his career as a church leader. Consistent with his paradigm, Kitamori interpreted the Kyodan (the united Protestant Church which was brought into existence by government war policies and without any theological consensus) as God-willed. In a series of articles, being consistent with his theology, Kitamori defended the birth of the Kyodan against the negative reactions of those who felt deep uneasiness with such an untheological formation of the Kyodan; Kitamori positively spelled out the Kyodan's God-given assignment as the Church in a "leading" nation. During the first decade after World War II, the same paradigm of "embracing the unembraceable" was also employed when the Kyodan was threatened with disintegration by the same factors that arose at its formation, and an immediate threat of the Kyodan's disintegration was averted. This paradigm of Kitamori, however, failed definitely to prove its tenability as political and ecclesiastical methodology, and his career was terminated by the struggles within the Kyodan, particularly by the campus tragedy of TUTS brought forth in connection with its Declaration of War Responsibilities and with the issues concerning its participation in the "Expo '70."

Prompted by the truth of "embracing the unembraceable," Kitamori energetically engaged himself with dialogues in various directions, with Catholicism,

with Buddhism and other religions, and with philosophical positions and the world of literature. There is little of lasting fruits. After observing this tragic feature of Kitamori's career, one is left with an impression that Kitamori's idea of "embracing the unembraceable" is a contrived idea which is infeasible in reality. With his idea of the Pain of God in its material and formal aspects, Kitamori envisaged bringing the Kyodan fulfillment as a united Protestant Church with the theological substance of "Lutheranism" as its basis. Upon this, Kitamori added a vision of embracing the total spiritual and cultural reality of the nation. But none of these visions were realized. This chain of events arouses suspicion: to be sure Kitamori's theology envisaged embracing all, but did not the reverse actually occur? Is not Kitamori's theology absorbed into the indigenous realities of Japan (or simply remained in them)?

It is of particular interest and concern to evaluate Kitamori's theology as an indigenized Lutheranism in Japan. Speaking in formal terms, by examining a theology which calls itself "Lutheran," one can indirectly observe how Lutheran theological concerns are accepted, digested and developed by a particular theology. Consequently one can judge how the claim of Lutheranism--the authentic representation of the Gospel--has been actualized in a nation geographically distant and culturally disparate from its birth place. Also in this examination, a crucial question is involved: Is Lutheranism confined only in the cultural sphere of its origin or does Lutheranism have a universal address (as the Gospel should), quite apart from the cultural conditions under which it is originated? We have considered Kitamori's theology of the Pain of God in this light. We conclude that the theology of the Pain of God does

not represent Lutheranism in terms of the latter's theological substance: the doctrine of *iustificatio sola fide* with its organically related tripartite doctrines of God, creation and eschatology, and with its theological methodology. The differences between the two theological formulations are often diametrically opposed. The content of the doctrine of justification by faith alone is reinterpreted by Kitamori in such a way as to suit his own theological system. Perhaps it would not be fair to Kitamori to state that the Japanese theologian had very limited substantial theological relations with the Reformer's thought; surely he inherited from Luther the radical concept of human sin, a realistic estimation of the sinful reality of this fallen world, the idea of divine wrath and suffering, and the radical understanding of God's grace. Kitamori, however, cast all of these into the mold of his own concept of the Pain of God. What Kitamori made out of Luther's ideas could well have been made from indigenous religious ideas (found, for instance, in a form of Pure Land Buddhism by Shinran Shonin). It is, then, our observation in this regard that Kitamori's Lutheranism is little more than nominal Lutheranism.

Kitamori never seems to doubt his Lutheranism. And, contrary to the result of this study, the theological community in Japan (including even Lutheran theologians) has never questioned Kitamori's Lutheran identity. These two issues require some elucidations.

Firstly, why did Kitamori substantially deviate from his confessed Lutheranism? The one-phrase answer is the Pain of God. As we have already touched upon, Kitamori's vision of "God in suffering" was seemingly so

overwhelming and so unshakable that the theologian scarcely had opportunity or need to re-examine its truth-content. From the very beginning of his career as a theologian Kitamori held the Pain of God as *the* theological axiom. Certainly, we observe serious logical inconsistencies and even preposterous statements in not a few places in Kitamori's writings. In fact, Kitamori often oscillates even in his definition of the Pain of God. Despite this factual problem, Kitamori's rock-hard conviction has remained intact throughout his career. Kitamori has then absolutized and frozen the idea of the Pain of God; he lets all the other ideas and concepts converge upon this idea. The very problem of Kitamori's theology is right here, the absolutization of the Pain of God. The fact that the Pain of God, "God in suffering," is inherently contingent and negative, self-evidently demonstrates that this negative reality cannot be attributed to God as His eternal essence. The suffering of God can be described as a contingent expression of God's eternal love, but not as the eternal innermost essence of God. This is what turns everything upside down. And it is exactly this that occurred in Kitamori's theology. This absolutization of the Pain of God hindered Kitamori from realizing a fruitful elaboration of Lutheran theology in the Japanese spiritual soil. Not only this, the absolutization of the idea of God's Pain took away possibilities of fruition and development of Kitamori's own theology within Japanese Protestantism.

Secondly, why has the theology of the Pain of God been uncritically accepted as a Lutheran theology in Japan, when one rather easily notices in Kitamori's theology something alien to Luther's theology? There are several reasons for this; we

mention here three in particular. First, Kitamori's frequent use of Luther's name and doctrinal terminology, and particularly his vocal support of Luther's Theology of the Cross (certainly in his interpretation), belied the real focus and thrust of Kitamori's own theology. Second, there have been few thorough examinations of Kitamori's theology by Japanese theologians, that is to say, examinations of it as a Lutheran theology. Kitamori's theological formulation may have been too prosaic to be examined with proper academic rigor. Surely, his theological writings involve ambiguities and elusiveness that are less conducive to a committed study. For Kitamori's own part, there have been no major works since his single *opus magnum*, so that some of the crucial issues in his theology remain unclear. Kitamori's theology thus suffers from the symptoms of a theological monologue. And third, the precision of the *doctrinal* understanding of Lutheranism in Japan is not as strict or as serious as it should have been, even among Luther scholars in Japan. This state of affairs is considered fatal for Kitamori's own theology as well as for Lutheranism in Japan. This also holds true for Kitamori himself. In his youth Kitamori studied Luther's ideas with a limited understanding and prematurely finalized his Luther-interpretation --in a quite "free" manner, and subsequently built his own theological system. A lingering question remains: if Kitamori had a real and substantial dialogue with Luther, would he have produced a much more viable theology, powerful and fruitful in Japanese Protestantism? It is difficult to answer, but with Kitamori's capacity, one may suggest, the affirmative answer would be more reasonable. It is, however, necessary to note that Kitamori's theology has failed to develop itself as a Lutheran

theology in Japan.

We now conclude: Even if Kitamori attempted to Lutheranize Japanese Protestantism with his concept of the Pain of God and thus to bring the Gospel of Christ to the Japanese people, he was not successful in this attempt. This failure is due to the very concept of the Pain of God. Kitamori thought of this concept of the Pain of God as a discovery of the innermost mystery of God through a specific Japanese sensitivity, but it should be rather viewed as a "natural" product of the spiritual and cultural soil of Japan. It is then no wonder that his theology at one time enjoyed popularity and acceptance even among the non-Christian population, for the concept of a suffering God is not repugnant to traditional Japanese sentiment. Making the concept of the Pain of God his theological axiom, Kitamori cast the Gospel--the vital concern of Lutheranism--into the mold of Japanese culture and spirituality, quite contrary to what he intended. What resulted from this is: it is not the Gospel that is now in the process of transforming Japanese spirituality; it is the natural Japanese spirituality that devoured the Gospel and digested it as its own. What Kitamori did throughout his career was little more than an affirmation of the "natural" Japanese spirituality. Kitamori's theology, seen from the Lutheran point of view, has then contributed little to the furtherance of the Gospel of the crucified Lord in the land Kitamori felt called to "evangelize."

Here at the end of this study it is necessary for this writer to offer, at least, a sketch of an alternative to Kitamori's work. Kitamori legitimately brought the reality of divine suffering of the Son to the forefront. The overwhelming intensity of

God's love towards fallen humanity is thus rightly expressed in his theology. But, being tailored to the indigenous, "natural" need, Kitamori's theology cannot retain a crucial factor which judges "naturally given" values and concepts, thus breaking the ground for an authentic acceptance of the Gospel. Lacking this factor, Kitamori's theology cannot pronounce the "revolutionary" cry of the risen Lord: "Behold, I make all things new!" (Rev. 21:5). Salvation is not to find an eternal truth given in "nature," but it is given to men through divine encounter given by God's revelation in the Word.

Lutheran theology, as a theology "normed" by the Gospel, is critical to any form of "natural" theology which tries to lure God down to this world and "use" Him as a principle for solving the enigmas and contradictions of this present world. Any attempt, conscious or unconscious, to incarcerate God in the framework of ideologies (theological or otherwise) is bound to find itself at an impasse, for the reality of the world under the lordship of the inscrutable God cannot be elucidated by human ideology or rational speculation. Rather, it is the task of the theology "normed" by the Gospel to bring the reality of the world under the love of a sovereign and redeeming God and to make the world known as the place of God the Creator's work. In other words, evangelical theology is to bring up a fallen humanity into the sphere of faith, as *fiducia sub specie contraria*, and to let man see his reality in the light of faith. For this task, Luther's doctrine of *Deus absconditus* is of crucial significance; - this doctrine of a hidden God, which leads men to abandon any attempt to rationally elucidate the enigma of human existence in the world and teaches them to "let God be

God," this doctrine alone is capable of giving the unshakable foundation of hope and joy in the midst of a seemingly meaningless and enigmatic reality.

In any evangelical theology, the dimension of God's judgment over things human or His negation of them is essential. Kitamori speaks of negation but it is a negation in the dialectic of ideas. His theology, in effect, does not include the dimension of God's negation of human things. He established a direct continuity between the Gospel and indigenous spirituality. Certainly, indigenous spirituality with its yearning for salvation is indispensable in the "preparation for the Gospel." But this preparation for the Gospel is of formal and negative significance. Formally, a yearning for salvation (with whatever content) is fully "natural" and without which no one seeks the Gospel even "erroneously." And, negatively, whatever salvation human beings naturally long for, it is first to be negated so as to be re-formed by the Gospel into an authentic yearning. The Lutheran paradigm of "killing first and then enlivening" applies here.

In a land such as Japan where immanent deities are legion and the distinction between gods and men are often blurred, it is particularly necessary to make clear the transcendental aspects of God, God sovereign and inscrutable even in His salvific will. Kitamori overemphasized the immanent aspect of God, God's suffering in the Son, at the cost of God's eternal sovereignty and lordship. For this reason Kitamori's theology failed to represent the Lutheran and Biblical witness of God's holy love. God's transcendence and immanence can only be kept in a proper dialectic with a doctrine of God in which God's inscrutable mystery, or God's

Godness, is reverently maintained.

With all this, however, it was Kitamori who first embraced the idea of Lutheran responsibility for an authentic unity of the Church, inspired by Article VII of the Augsburg Confession. Although there have been not a few outstanding Luther-scholars in Japan, again it was Kitamori who tried to indigenize Lutheranism in the Japanese spiritual soil. Directly and indirectly, Kitamori has inspired those people who are concerned with Lutheran issues to think systematically about the possibilities of the actualization of Lutheran relevance in a land where Christianity has had difficulty in taking root. Though having largely failed in its original intention, Kitamori's theology may be seen as a first step to develop an indigenous Lutheran theology in Japan.

"The Luther-Rose, we hope, will blossom in Japan one day," Kitamori wrote recently. One sincerely shares this hope with the author of the *Theology of the Pain of God*. Because of all the criticisms launched against Kazoh Kitamori, this writer feels all the more obliged to follow in the theologian's footsteps, with a fresh look at the vital concerns of Lutheranism, for the actualization of the Gospel; this is, he believes, the very task assigned to him in the country at the end of the earth.

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