

NIEL AND SIMANDJUNTAK

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From Israel to Asia— A Theological Leap

Choan-Seng Song

Does God deal directly with “the nations” or is his redemptive activity mediated only through the Church? Choan-Seng Song from Taiwan complains that western theologians “obstinately persist in reflecting on Asian or African cultures and histories from the vantage-point of that messianic hope which is believed to be lodged in the history of the Christian Church . . . and redemption loses its intrinsic meaning for cultures and histories outside the history of Christianity.” Song believes this is “a distortion of the message of the Bible” and he is “convinced that a very big theological blunder has been committed by those theologians who have forced God’s redemption into the history of a nation [Israel] and of the Christian Church, and have consequently institutionalized it.” Contrary to the traditional western understanding of “salvation history,” Song argues that the Old Testament “prophetic tradition consists in a refusal to recognize the history of Israel as identifiable with the totality of God’s acts in the redemption of his creation.” Israel was *not* to be “the nation through which God’s redeeming love would be mediated, *but* to be a symbol of how God would also deal redemptively with other nations.” Therefore, says Song, other nations can learn from the experience of Israel “how their histories can be interpreted redemptively. . . . An Asian nation will thus be enabled to find its place side by side with Israel in God’s salvation.” This “theological leap” from the experience of Israel—“symbolically transported out of its original context to a foreign one”—to the cultures and histories of Asian peoples and nations is consistent, according to Song, with the radical interruption in history of

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"the Word become flesh" and with "the dialectic of salvation revealed to us through the witness in the Bible." Formerly professor of theology and principal of Tainan Theological College in Taiwan, Dr. Song is now associate director of the Commission on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches in Geneva. His book, *Christian Mission in Reconstruction: An Asian Attempt* (Orbis Books, 1977), enlarges on some of the concerns expressed in this essay which first appeared in the March 1976 issue of *Theology*, published bi-monthly in London by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. It is reprinted by permission, with revisions by the author.

1

The usual premise on which history is based is that of continuity. This applies to almost any kind of history, from the geological history of the earth to the history of ideas. It is no less true of personal history: that of a person from cradle to grave. Every object such as a pebble or a tree, every idea such as logos or matter, every race from the bushmen in Australia to the Finns in Scandinavia, has its own history to tell as to how it came into existence; how it happens to be where it is and not somewhere else; what function it has played, and still plays, in the whole complex of changes which has occurred in the entire physical world, or in the world dominated by the human race. The story has to be inherently connected. Once it becomes disjointed, the story-teller becomes incoherent and consequently, unintelligible. The audience has to guess how the story may be continued. The sequence is broken. One is left in suspense until the thread of the story is picked up again and joined together.

History, in plain language, is story. The historian is a story-teller. His task is to put into an intelligent continuity things and events which at first sight seem disjointed and without inner relationship. His task is to trace continuity in discontinuity, to make every effort to fill gaps whenever and wherever they are found. In short, he is responsible for finding a meaning in material of many and varied kinds, thrown together with no apparent connections. In a sense, history can be compared to painting. The

picture on the canvas takes shape, conveys meaning, and inspires human aspiration, from different colors on the palette. Objects which the artist seeks to capture on his canvas, ideas and visions in his mind become related to each other in a coherent way.

History, therefore, does not consist solely of chronological data—facts or statistics. These are of course important, but they have a meaning higher than themselves, namely, the meaning of life, and I must add, of death. Ultimately, our historical activity is directed to the search for such meaning. It is a human determination not to let absurdity have the final word about human existence. But the role of historical activity is not merely negative. It does not exhaust its effort by struggling against the force of absurdity. It seeks to liberate the human mind from bondage to the past and to fulfil the meaning of the present through the vision of the future. It is in this sense that the Bible speaks of salvation in history.

But a strange thing happens. Meaning, which is supposed to give continuity to history, often disrupts that continuity. It stops the flow of history, diverts its course, and introduces new elements into it. The dynamics of history, therefore, do not consist primarily in continuity. Rather it is interruptions that make history an exciting experience. The kind of history that can be predicted, although it is still in the future, belongs already to the past. History then becomes an experience of death in advance. Tyranny gives rise to exactly this kind of history. The power seized and consolidated by a dictatorship steers the history of a people along a carefully marked course towards a predetermined destiny. The historical continuity of a nation under dictatorship can only be broken by a revolution. Revolution assumes the role of introducing new meaning into the life of the people, and of creating a new beginning for the nation. It interrupts history, sometimes peacefully but more often violently. History then gains a new lease of life and resumes its uncertain course.

History in the Bible derives its meaning from God's redemptive acts. Events and experiences taken into the orbit of redemption interrupt the normal course of history. They become the bearers of a meaning which anticipates fulfillment in future. Redemption is the power which enables us to leap into the future

and frees us from slavery to the sinful past and from an absurd fate.

Without exaggeration, therefore, God's redemption can be compared to revolution. It is God's revolution. How violent it can be is illustrated by many an example in the Bible. The event of the exodus is God's revolution in history *par excellence*. It began violently. It cost all the first-born sons in the Egyptian families. It threw the pursuing Egyptian soldiers into the Red Sea. But it continued with the people of Israel. Again and again the violence of God broke in to turn their history upside down. For the people of Israel God's redemption was anything but a peaceful affair. It was more than a nation, any nation, could bear. And so they sought escape in the institutions of religion and monarchy and attempted to contain it in them. But they had to pay dearly for all these attempts. Prophets warned that God's redemption could not be contained in a human establishment. Israel could not institutionalize itself into a history of salvation. The warning was not well heeded. The prophets often found themselves engaged in a war of attrition with their own people.

The most drastic revolutionary act of God's redemption takes place in the person of Jesus Christ on the cross. His execution was carried out by a political institution which had yielded to the pressures of a religious one. This latter clung tenaciously to a historical and ideological continuity. It sought to arrest God's revolution in Christ in order to maintain its continuity. By crucifying Christ, it responded to revolution with human violence. And for a time they seemed to have succeeded. Jesus' cry on the cross seemed to have sealed their victory over God's revolution: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" But there was a fatal miscalculation. The historical continuity they deemed sacred was nevertheless disrupted, God's revolution of redemption was carried forward, beginning "in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1.8).

2

The Christian Church, which has inherited God's salvation in Christ, has not altogether succeeded in avoiding the mistake

of attempting to institutionalize God's revolution. In the course of its development it has tended to regard itself as the institutional heir to the messianic hope of the kingdom of God. This tendency is strongly reflected in ecclesiastical structures, in the crystallization of its faith in creeds and confessions, and in theological formulation of it. Above all, the history which the Christian Church has carved out for itself within world history has come to be identified with the meaning and purpose from which it derived the reason for its existence. The classical example of this is the famous dictum of Cyprian: outside the Church there is no salvation. The Church becomes the custodian of God's redemption. The fact that the Christian Church has played an enormously important role in the formation of western civilization reinforces the identification of the history of the Christian Church with the so-called "history of salvation." The Christian Church in its historical existence becomes the *fons et origo* of God's truth and salvation. It is in this way that western Christian mission was conceived and carried out. People in histories and cultures outside western Christendom were redeemable, in so far as they were salvaged and incorporated into the salvation history represented by the history of Christianity.

Although disillusion with western Christendom has greatly changed people's minds about the identification of its history with the history of salvation, it is true to say that western theology continues to find it difficult to dissociate itself from what may be called the ideologization of faith. Nowadays, it is almost impossible even for western theologians to do theology without taking into account the realities represented by histories and cultures outside the western milieu. But they obstinately persist in reflecting on Asian or African cultures and histories from the vantage-point of that messianic hope which is believed to be lodged in the history of the Christian Church, so that the relations of these cultures and histories to God's redemption become intermediate, and redemption loses its intrinsic meaning for cultures and histories outside the history of Christianity. The universal nature of God's dealing with his creation forfeits its particular and direct application, except within the cultures and histories affected and fostered by Christianity. I cannot but believe that this is a distortion of the message of the Bible.

This habit of doing theology always through the history of the western Christian Church must be called into question. It must be possible above all now, for Asian Christians to engage in theological reflection on the direct relationship of Asia to God's redemption.

First of all, the communities of faith we find in the Bible have a symbolic function derived from their relation to God's purpose of redemption. I have hinted earlier that the great merit of the prophetic tradition consists in a refusal to recognize the history of Israel as identifiable with the totality of God's acts in the redemption of his creation. True, God works within the history of the people of Israel. This is how they read the meaning of the exodus, and of the tumultuous vicissitudes they had to go through. They experienced God's redemption through personal and national crises. But their prophets began to see the hand of God working also outside their limited historical and geographical domains. The people of Israel were singled out, under a divine providence inexplicable to us and even to them, not to present themselves to the rest of the world as the nation through which God's redeeming love would be mediated, *but* to be a symbol of how God would also deal redemptively with other nations. In the light of the experiences unique to Israel, other nations should learn how their histories can be interpreted redemptively. An Asian nation would have its own experiences of exodus, captivity, rebellion against Heaven, the golden calf. It would have its own long trek in the desert of poverty or dehumanization. What a nation goes through begins to take on redemptive meaning against the background of the history of Israel, symbolically transported out of its original context to a foreign one. An Asian nation will thus be enabled to find its place side by side with Israel in God's salvation. The Old Testament has shown how the history of a nation can be experienced and interpreted redemptively. If this is so, the theology which regards Israel and the Christian Church as the only bearers and dispensers of God's saving love must be called into question.

Perhaps it is difficult for theologians steeped in the tradition of what is called "salvation history" to be convinced that this theological leap, or the leap of faith, from Israel to Asia can be

justified biblically. What to me is an existential necessity may seem to be a theological blunder to them. But I am becoming more and more convinced that a very big theological blunder has been committed by those theologians who have forced God's redemption into the history of a nation and of the Christian Church, and have consequently institutionalized it. It is of paramount importance to know how other people can see and experience redemption and hope in the sufferings which descend on them with cruel consistency. They want to know how the chains of sufferings can be broken, and to experience salvation in the present and the future. It is to these people that Asian Christians must address themselves, sharing their longing for liberation. Surely there must be a direct relation between their sufferings and God's saving love manifested in the people of Israel and in Jesus Christ.

Unless we, like the second Isaiah (see Isaiah 44.28 and 45.1-4 about Cyrus), the writer of the Melchizedek legend (Genesis 14.17-20) and Ezekiel (29.19-20), begin to see those alien to our faith as making a contribution to the development of human community, as agents of God, our reading of history will be one-sided and, for that reason, poor and inaccurate. An important corollary is surely this: Christian interpretation of history is not complete unless it is tested and corrected by non-Christian, or even anti-Christian, interpretations of history.

What enables us to look at events and happenings within history from a perspective other than that of the historical continuity represented by the Christian Church? The answer must be found in "the Word become flesh," the Johannine formulation of God's redeeming love in history. If the Word had remained transcendent, if it had not embodied itself in flesh in human history, no interruption of a radical kind would have taken place in the history of Jewish religion. The Word become flesh was a stumbling block to the preservation of continuity in history. And, since it could not be ignored, it had to be done away with. The continuity of the Jewish nation, of Jewish religiosity, could be maintained, in the shrewd calculation of Caiaphas, the high priest, by having Christ executed to placate the Romans, who constituted a political threat to that cherished continuity. The

conversation between the members of the Sanhedrin and Caiaphas thus stands out as an ominous human conspiracy against the divine intervention in human history. "What are we to do? For this man performs many signs." This was the expression of consternation followed immediately by the discovery of a political dilemma. "If we let him go on thus, every one will believe in him and the Romans will come and destroy both our holy place and our nation." Caiaphas gave cunning counsel: "You know nothing at all; you do not understand that it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation should not perish" (John 11.46-50). The stage was thus set for Golgotha. And there it was a gentile Roman soldier who released the blood and water of life. The flesh which the Word had assumed was broken by that Roman soldier's spear.

Paul was freed from the historical continuity of his own nation and its institutional pietism to carry the gospel of the resurrected Christ to the gentiles (Philippians 3.5-7). But he did not stop here. He had to bring the blessings of God's salvation back to Israel from the gentiles. In Romans he labored at this dialectic of God's redemption or, as he calls it, mystery (11.25), expressing it in highly emotive language: "Now I am speaking to you Gentiles; inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, in order to make my fellow Jews jealous, and thus save some of them" (v. 13). His own response to this mystery of God's salvation is doxology—who could help but be doxological when given a glimpse of it? "O the depth of the riches and wisdom and the knowledge of God! . . . For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory for ever. Amen" (vv. 33-36).

It is this saving mystery, to which we can only respond doxologically, that holds history together and constitutes the continuity of meaning and value in what we all have to go through as individuals or community. We all have to scrutinize histories and cultures, that is, movements of peoples and nations, in the light of the dialectic of salvation revealed to us through the witness in the Bible. Human history seen in this light would no longer be a linear movement, borne and sustained by the history of Israel and the history of the Christian church, understood as

the agents through which God's saving grace is mediated to the rest of human history. The disarray of the western churches in this post Christian era is enough to affirm the untenability of such a simplistic design.

3

In light of the above discussion, present-day Asia poses a momentous challenge to Christian theology. Several factors have contributed to the change of attitude in Asia towards Christianity. First, the tide of secularization which has engulfed the West since the Second World War has greatly weakened the spiritual role of the churches in western society to the point of panic and confusion, and this has had negative repercussions in Asia as in Africa. Related to this are various attempts in the West to find in Asian spirituality answers to the spiritual vacuum created by secular culture in western consumer society. Not all these attempts can be considered as serious or conducive to the recovery of western spirituality. However, this recent phenomenon of seeking in Asian faiths and ideologies for the rejuvenation of western spirituality should cause Christian theologians in both East and West to take more seriously the faiths and ideologies which have developed independently of Christianity. Any Christian understanding of revelation and salvation which fails to give adequate account of the ways in which God has worked positively through the indigenous faiths and ideologies in Asia, is woefully inadequate.

Another significant factor—contributing to the irreversible change of attitude in Asia towards western Christianity—came with the resolute rejection of Christianity by China as it became a Communist state. The colossal efforts of western churches for more than a century to incorporate the masses of humanity on the Asian continent into "salvation history" faltered and consequently were shaken to the roots in that event. The fact that more than a quarter of humanity has officially rejected the Christian faith from the West should continue to be a matter of profound soul-searching and discussion. A Christian theology

which goes about its business as if the ideological challenge of China makes little difference is defective and useless. An understanding of Christian mission in terms of evangelizing and converting the pagans and bringing them into the fold of the church is irrelevant in the context of modern China. We are faced with the agonizing question: What does it mean to speak of "the hand of God" at work in China today?

A question such as this causes me to realize that the concepts and standards which have a time-honored place in the traditions of western theology have very limited usefulness in Asia today. One cannot assume the church as the base of theology—as western theology does—when one is doing theology in a multi-religious context or in the context of a political ideology which offers an alternative way of salvation. These conditions alone force theologians in Asia to do theology differently. The question is not what God is doing through the church but what he is doing in the world where the church as we normally understand it is non-existent or too weak to have a significant impact. What does it mean when atheistic Communist regimes continue to expand their frontiers and act as liberators from poverty, starvation, social injustices and human indignity?

One thing is certain: the historical continuity of God's salvation which the churches in the West and their offshoots have sought to represent is interrupted and broken in Asia. It was a violent break with great human sacrifice and cost. But—as I indicated earlier—the God experienced by the people of Israel was often a God of violence. And the cross on which Jesus was crucified is a symbol of violence. Also we recall that the vision of a new heaven and a new earth in the Bible is preceded by violence of cosmic magnitude. Theology has to be done in the midst of violence—both human violence and divine violence. The important difference is that God's violence leads to life and hope, whereas human violence usually leads to despair and death. Be that as it may—theology is born out of violence. Its task is to discern the seed of divine violence in the midst of human violence. Its mission is to enable Christians to turn human violence of despair and death into divine violence of hope and life. It is from this point of departure that Asian theologians must reflect

on the mission of God in Asia today—what he is to the Asian masses, and what he is doing with the poverty and suffering which constantly has Asia in its grip.

Thus a conceptual and propositional theology—which has been characteristic of western theology—can barely touch the heart of Asian humanity. Western theologians must first address themselves to their own situations, and wrestle with the question of how Israel can be existentially related to suffering and hope in the West today. Israel must become their existential experience. The danger of propositional theology lies in its hidden claim to universal validity. Black theology in the United States has forcefully rejected such a claim. The God of a white theologian who has no experience of what it means to be black in a society capitivated by white supremacy is not the God of black people. God for black people must be black. Jesus too must be black. In other words, black people look for a black messiah. Let us recognize that one cannot do theology for those who live, suffer and die in a society with different cultural, socio-political demands and responsibilities. The most one can do is give mutual support and encouragement through sharing of theological experiences and interpretations of human suffering and hope in given situations. Theology of essence—which western theology has tended to be—must be replaced by theology of existence. Theology cannot deal with the question of what God *is*. Its task is to come to grips with what God *does*—and we cannot know what God does apart from events and realities in which we are involved existentially.

Black theology is a theology of existence, as is liberation theology in Latin America. Black theology in the United States cannot be transferred to Europe. It cannot even be exported to Africa. Black theologians in the United States cannot do theology for their black brothers and sisters in Africa, because what the latter have to face is qualitatively different from the former. Likewise, the liberation theology of Latin America cannot be imported by others who live in different socio-political situations. Similarly, the theological task in which Asian Christians are engaged, in the face of aggressive Communist ideology, desperate poverty, suffering, and the continuous religious search of the

resurgent religions in Asia, should not seek relevance beyond Asia. Freedom from external theological interference, the conscious effort to become true to a particular situation, and liberation from the claim to universal validity—these make theology become alive, useful, dynamic and, above all, authentic. An ecumenical theological community must be built on the foundation of situational authenticity. The great missionary principle propounded and practiced by St. Paul applies equally to the doing of theology. He said:

I am a free man and own no master; but I have made myself every man's servant, to win over as many as possible. To Jews I became like a Jew, to win Jews; as they are subject to the Law of Moses, I put myself under that law to win them although I am not myself subject to it. To win Gentiles, who are outside the Law, I made myself like one of them, although I am not in truth outside God's law, being under the law of Christ. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. Indeed, I have become everything in turn to men of every sort, so that in one way or another I may save some (1 Cor. 9:19-22).

If this great Pauline principle had been taken more seriously by theologians as well as missionaries, the impact of the saving love of God in Jesus Christ on Asian peoples and Asian cultures would have been far more profound and decisive.

In the final analysis, the Word has to assume Asian flesh and plunge into the agony and conflict of the mission of salvation in Asia. This flesh will be broken as it was broken on the cross. But when this Asian flesh assumed by the Word is broken, the saving and healing power of God will be released into the struggle of men and women for meaning, hope and life. And Christians outside Asia—especially those under the long history of the church in the West—will be enriched by it. This is the mystery of God's salvation which works both ways between Israel and the nations. We must be open to this divine mystery and make it the alpha and the omega of our Christian commitment and theological reflection.

Pilgrim or Tourist?

Kosuke Koyama

The massive impact of technology on traditional Asian societies "is shaking our basic self-identity because it is disturbing our spiritual relationship with the holy," says Kosuke Koyama, a Japanese theologian on the faculty of Otago University in New Zealand. Making his third appearance in the *Mission Trends* series, Koyama illustrates this with his experience of riding in an elevator barefooted, holding his shoes in his hand, on a visit to the Pagoda of the Sacred Eight Hairs in Rangoon. The "elevator" approach to a "slow" God, says Koyama, symbolizes the problem of relating technology to the holy—it causes a "temporary loss of self-identity," and makes one "neither pilgrim nor tourist." He offers no solutions, only a question—"Can technology be made a creative servant of the person who lives by the grace of the searching God?" A former missionary in Thailand and executive director of the Association of Theological Schools in Southeast Asia, Koyama's latest book is *No Handle on the Pilgrim or Tourist?*—a collection of fifty short theological meditations, published in 1974 in Singapore by the Christian Conference of Asia.

In Rangoon, Burma, the famous Shwe Dagon Pagoda stands on Singuttara Hill. It is an impressive monument. Its perimeter at the base is 1476 feet. Its height is 344 feet. The octagonal base of the Pagoda is surrounded by 64 small pagodas. I have been there a few times. It was built, tradition says, to enshrine the Eight Sacred Hairs of the Buddha which the Bud-

dha himself personally gave to faithful visitors from Rangoon. The gold gilded Pagoda is a marvel to view from nearly as well as from a distance. Visitors are required to remove their shoes and socks at the foot of the hill. ("... put off your shoes from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." Exodus 3:5) The approach itself is already in the sacred territory of the Sacred Eight Hairs. Every barefoot step prepares one to come into the presence of the holy.

This becoming barefoot is not for getting ready to run. It shows respect and humility to the holy object which the devotee is approaching. There is an interesting story in the Hindu tradition. Krishna, an incarnation of Vishnu, stole the clothing of the shepherdesses while they were bathing. The maidens, realizing what happened and where their clothes were, cried for their clothes. Krishna told them that they must come and get them. The maidens, seeing no other way possible, came to Krishna wholly naked to retrieve their clothes. In this seemingly erotic story is hidden the rather impressive religious insight that one must not come to god "covered up." He must come to god "naked."

When I took off my shoes I felt that I was exposed. My modernized and well protected feet found it hard to walk bare over gravel, stones and heated pavement. The acceptance of all this inconvenience, and in particular of the feeling of being exposed, forms the religious sense of humility and respect. Under the hot Rangoon sun I began to trudge up to the hill where the Pagoda stands. It was a slow climb. Every step was a ceremonially slow step. The sweat on my forehead was, as it were, religious sweat. The time I spent walking up to the Pagoda was a holy time. When I arrived at the foot of the Pagoda itself, my mind was prepared to see it right in front of me. I recalled how in Japan the Meiji Emperor Shrine in Tokyo, Ise Imperial Grand Shrine in Mie Prefecture, and a host of others have long approaches to the main shrine, some as long as a mile or more. No bicycles and no automobiles are allowed. Even the emperor himself must walk from a certain point. The holy must be approached slowly and carefully with respect and humility. The holy must not be approached by motorcycle or helicopter. It must be approached by walking.

Walking is the proper speed and the proper posture that can prepare a person to meditate. Thus the universal use of the automobile is, I am afraid, producing a less-meditative mankind! The un-holy (everyday things) may be approached by running or on motorcycle (even if the muffler is broken). But that which is holy must be approached slowly. Such thoughts came to me as I walked up to the Pagoda.

The God that the Bible proclaims reveals himself to be the holy God. He revealed himself to be holy by becoming *slow* for us. The central affirmation of the Bible is that God does not forsake man.

Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you. Isaiah 49:15

For a brief moment I forsook you, but with great compassion I will gather you. In overflowing wrath for a moment I hid my face from you, but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you. Isaiah 54:7, 8

The whole Bible is a commentary on that one passage in the Book of Genesis: "Where are you?" (3:9)—*God in search of man!*

What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost, until he finds it? Luke 15:3, 4

This search is the *holy* search. In his holy search the holy God did not go "on a motorcycle" or by "supersonic" jet. He became *slow*, very slow. The crucifixion of Jesus Christ, the son of God, means that God went so slow that he became "nailed down" in his search of man. What speed can be slower than the dead stop of being "nailed down"? If God revealed in such a way his holy character, people must approach him in the same manner.

On my second trip to Rangoon I found that meantime they

had built an elevator to the top of the hill where the Pagoda stands! Invasion of technology and speed! No longer a slow approach is necessary. Electric energy will put you instantly in front of the Pagoda of the Sacred Eight Hairs in a matter of 15 seconds or so. No steps. No sweat.

At the entrance of the elevator on the ground level, however, there is a sign which says that shoes must be removed before entering the elevator. For the first time in my life I rode an elevator barefooted. My shoes in my hands shouted at me that they must be worn on my feet. While I was feeling the strange sensation of suspension between becoming a pilgrim and becoming a tourist I reached the top. If I had walked up the hill barefoot, I would have been a pilgrim, and if I had kept my shoes on in the elevator I would have been a tourist. But now I was neither pilgrim nor tourist! A strange sensation of temporary loss of self-identity swept over me.

The traditional way of *slow* approach has been disturbed by the massive impact of technology. The whole of Asia is disturbed and disrupted in this way today and perhaps so is the whole world. Technology is shaking our basic self-identity because it is disturbing our spiritual relationship with the holy. Today all kinds of "elevators" are being built in front of the "holy pagodas." Singapore hotel elevators do not give me this problem. A Hong Kong shopping center elevator does not give me this problem. But the Shwe Dagon Pagoda elevator does! The number of "Shwe Dagon Pagoda elevator" situations is increasing today all over the world.

Should we prepare to come into the presence of the holy "on a motorcycle"? Should we train ourselves in a new style of relating ourselves with the holy? Am I old fashioned in speaking of "the *slow* God"? What should be the relationship between technology and our relationship with the holy? Can technology be made a creative servant of the person who lives by the grace of the searching God?

Theological Declaration by Christian Ministers in the Republic of Korea, 1973

Since the declaration of martial law in South Korea on October 17, 1972, Christians—clergy, laity, missionaries—have taken a leading role in the protest against the "absolutization of dictatorship and ruthless political oppression" by President Park Chung Hee. As a result of their prophetic witness, missionaries have been deported, clergy and laity have been arrested, tortured and imprisoned, and students and professors have been dismissed from their universities (any criticism of the government is illegal). To set forth the faith that undergirds their struggle for democracy, and to chart the course of that struggle, a group of Christian ministers in South Korea issued this underground declaration on May 20, 1973. The call for solidarity with their struggle to the churches throughout the U.S.A. since the South Korean government of President Park is supported substantially by United States financial and military aid. The declaration was brought out of Korea secretly and has been circulated widely through various religious news services. It is reprinted here from *Documentation on the Struggle for Democracy in Korea*, edited by the Emergency Christian Conference on Korean Problems, and published through the National Christian Council of Japan in 1975.

We make this declaration in the name of the Christian community in South Korea. However, under the present circumstances, in which one man controls all the powers of the three branches of government and uses military arms and the in-