

DRAFT

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APNTS

IX. Justification, Regeneration, and Adoption

When asked to comment on Article IX of the Articles of Faith of the Church of the Nazarene, I was reluctant to revisit our long-cherished doctrinal teachings. My thinking was, it is already 'taken-for-granted' as doctrine, so why should we revisit it? However, as I reflected on the task, I began to think that maybe the purpose is to find out whether these expressions of faith still communicate to contemporary readers, especially those of the Asia-Pacific societies. Since the world is becoming more and more aware of cultural diversity and the danger of ethnocentrism, it is worth exploring whether or not our Articles of Faith meaningfully express our understanding of the Christian faith in this culturally diverse world. If this is the intent of the exploration then it is a worthy effort indeed.

Inazo Nitobe (d. 1933), a well-known and respected Japanese Christian, said:

Christ's religion itself will be enriched by Oriental interpretations. The temple of Christ has an Eastern gate. The West has not seen the inside of the temple through this gate nor has entered it. We enter the temple built by the 'man of sorrows' through the gate of '*aware*' and '*nasake*.' And what we find in the temple is not 'pleasure' but 'joy,' not 'happiness' but 'blessedness,' not 'knowledge' but 'wisdom,' not 'self assertion' but 'self abandonment.' And at that moment, we will feel we have reached one stage higher in the progress of humanity.¹

I realize this was spoken long ago and that the situation has changed since 1933. The West has seen the inside of the temple through this Eastern gate and tried to understand Oriental interpretations of Christian faith. I agree with Nitobe that Christianity will be immensely enriched by Oriental interpretations. Yet I don't believe "Christ's religion" has been adequately enriched by such interpretations. Nor do I believe that humanity has reached a higher stage because of the enriched interpretations of Asian Christians. But what Nitobe said is prophetic for the churches of Asia and the Pacific. I believe it is the task of Christians in this region to enrich the Christian faith by our interpretations so that humanity will one day reach one stage higher than it has already.

Nitobe has alluded to the 'gate of '*aware*' and '*nasake*', both of which are emotion-laden Japanese words that cannot be adequately translated. '*Aware*' usually means a combination of pity, sorrow, sympathy and compassion. '*Nasake*' usually means a combination of sympathy, compassion, pity, mercy, benevolence, kindness, love and affection. It is obvious that Nitobe thought of Christ as 'the man of sorrows' who knows what human sorrow and grief are and who is filled with compassion and love for suffering persons. But this way of looking at Jesus is not uniquely Eastern; it is universal and can probably be found in every culture. Nitobe thought this aspect of Christ and Christianity has not been fully expressed in the existing theologies, and that an Eastern way of interpreting the Bible can help supply what has perhaps been overlooked.

¹ Inazo Nitobe, "Nitobe Inazo Bunko wo Tazunete"[Visiting the Inazo Nitobe Collection], College News of Tokyo Women's College, Vol. 332, Tokyo Women's College, 1980 quoted by Masahiro Sato, Nitobe Inazo no Shinko to Riso [Faith and Ideals of Inazo Nitobe], Tokyo: Kyobunkan, 1985, p. 83. (translation mine)

I will revisit Article IX in the hope of communicating these long cherished doctrines to contemporary Nazarenes in Asia and the Pacific. Because Articles IX.11 and IX.12 are related to IX. 9 and IX. 10 in many ways, I will focus my attention on Articles IX. 9 and IX.10.

9. We believe that justification is the gracious and judicial act of God by which He grants full pardon of all guilt and complete release from the penalty of sins committed, and acceptance as righteous, to all who believe on Jesus Christ and receive Him as Lord and Savior.

There is no need to comment on all the theories of the atonement in order comment on this article of faith. The argument on the atonement properly belongs to Article VI. I want to comment on two issues. *First*, the whole tenor of this article, and *second* I want to draw upon a Korean theologian's concept of '*han*.'

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The tenor of Article 9 seems to have vestiges of Anselm's (1033-1109) "satisfaction theory" as found in *Cur Deus homo?* associated with it. Such words as 'judicial,' 'pardon' and 'penalty' sound very much like a courtroom. Put simply, Anselm's argument is like this: Sin violates the divine honor and deserves infinite punishment from God. All humans have sinned, and therefore stand under the necessity of making satisfaction to God. If satisfaction is not rendered, then God must punish humans for their sins. But if God were to punish humans as they deserve, He would destroy His handiwork and bring to naught His promises to His creation. Furthermore, humans are morally bankrupt and finite. So humans cannot make infinite satisfaction to God. They owe God a debt that cannot be paid, and yet they cannot be saved without paying the debt. This is where Christ enters the picture. The Son of God became man and died to satisfy the demands of God's honor. Being divine Christ could pay the infinite debt, and being human he could represent humanity. Because Christ was sinless, He was not obliged to die. Owing no debt Himself He achieved the reward of this meritorious act on humankind's behalf.

Such is Anselm's view of the atonement and it has been criticized by many theologians since. A major criticism leveled against the motive for the atonement which appears not to be love, but preservation of God's honor. We can find traces of Anselm's views in the New Testament itself, particularly in the Pauline texts and the Letter to the Hebrews. But the impact of Anselm's doctrine is found not so much in the distortion of God's motive, but in Anselm's logic. This "objective" view of the atonement has been dominant in the history of Christian thought in the West and it has been very influential in the West. It seems that at least in American evangelical Christianity the penal substitution theory has been more influential than Anselm. But it has nevertheless influenced Western theology to be rational and juridical in character. Thus "the atonement is understood as a sort of legal transaction."³ Peter Berger comments on Anselm that he "has cast a long shadow over the development of Christian thought in the West, both in Roman Catholicism and in Protestant orthodoxy (Lutheran as well as Calvinist)."⁴

I think the wording of article IX.9 shows the influence of Anselm, particularly when it is said that "justification is the ...judicial act of God. . . ." I believe this legal tone of the article would be difficult to communicate to an Asian audience. Berger quotes John Meyendorff, who was instrumental in the revival of Orthodox theology in western Europe and in America in the twentieth century. Meyendorff

² Park, Andrew Sung, *The Wounded Heart of God: The Asian Concept of Han and the Christian Doctrine of Sin*, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993.

³ Berger, Peter, *Questions of Faith: A Skeptical Affirmation of Christianity*, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004, p.87.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 89.

says, “Thus, the Christian East has remained a stranger to the juridical conceptions of salvation which have been dominant in the West since medieval times (the doctrines of the ‘merits’ of Jesus Christ and indulgences) and which have so profoundly affected Western spirituality.”⁵ Meyendorff adds that “it is mortality, rather than sin, which the east perceives as the essence of man’s unredeemed condition. The atonement is not a juridical transaction, but the victory of the resurrected Christ over all the flaws in creation brought about by the fall and especially over death.”⁶ I am not convinced that mortality rather than sin is the essence of man’s unredeemed condition. But this is certain: the atonement should not be understood in terms of a juridical transaction, but rather as ontological transformation. Thus in the East “humanity appears more as a victim than as perpetrator of its alienated condition; it merits compassion more than condemnation.”⁷ This is why, if we look at book titles of some Asian theologians, many of them seem to have titles such as ‘Pain of God Theology’ by Kazo Kitamori (Japanese), ‘Compassionate God’ by C.S. Song (Taiwanese), ‘The Wounded Heart of God’ by Andrew Sung Park (Korean), ‘The Suffering God’ by Kosuke Koyama (Japanese).

What seems to be lacking in Article IX.9 is God’s compassion for humanity to redeem it from the bondage to sin and death, namely, the ‘*awaremi*’ of God upon the universal condition of humanity. *Awaremi* is related to ‘*aware*,’ which means pity, compassion, mercy, and charity. The compassion of God is much more understandable for Asians than God as Judge and Ruler in a courtroom who requires a just transaction between Himself and humans. That is the background against which the “Pain of God Theology” by Kitamori⁸ was born.

The Good News was revealed to Kitamori as the pain of God. God in pain resolves human pain through his own pain. Jesus Christ heals our wounds by His own wounds (I Peter 2:24). Salvation is the good news that God embraces our broken human reality. There is no greater miracle than that God embraces our broken reality. Our pain is resolved and our wounds are healed because of God’s embrace. By embracing those who because of their sin do not deserve to be embraced, God himself is broken, wounded and suffer in pain (Eli, eli, *lama, sabachtani*). The love of God expresses the pain of God. Christ considered his own death as the critical step toward fulfilling God’s purpose. Jeremiah saw God’s pain (Jeremiah 31:20) and Paul saw God’s love revealed in the cross of Christ. The God of the Gospels is God as Father who let his Son die, and in this act the Father suffers the pain. This is the ultimate act of God’s love—the Father permitting his beloved Son, His only Son, His only child, to die. The Father and son relationship describes the ultimate meaning of the words, “God suffers in pain.”

This is a brief summary of Kitamori’s “Pain of God Theology”. He writes that modern western theologies have often overlooked this truth, and have presented God as detached from pain. But when God is detached from pain—the ultimate pain of letting His own Son die, the Good News ceases to be good news. No doubt there are theologians in the west who have emphasized this aspect of truth (e.g., Jurgen Moltmann). But perhaps because of the Buddhist background of Kitamori’s Japan, where ‘compassion,’ ‘mercy,’ ‘sorrow,’ ‘grief,’ etc. are strongly emphasized, he could better recognize that such motifs are not adequately emphasized in western theologies. The verse from which Kitamori received enlightenment, Jeremiah 31:20, is much more emphatic in Japanese translations than in the English translations of the Bible. Whereas English versions say, “ ‘Therefore my heart yearns for him; I have great compassion for him,’ declares the Lord” (NIV), the Japanese version is, “My bowels wail for him, and I cannot help but have ‘*awaremi*’ for him” (my translation). The Japanese translation shows the degrees of pain and grief expressed here. The language is far removed from the

⁵ Ibid., p. 93.

⁶ Ibid., p. 93.

⁷ Ibid., p. 151.

⁸ Kitamori, Kazoh, Kami No Itami No Shingaku [Theology of the Pain of God], Tokyo: Shinkyō Shuppansha, 1958. (An English translation is, Theology of the Pain of God, Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1965.)

language of a courtroom where juridical transactions occur. Instead, God is in severe pain because He loves us humans so much so that He had to let His own and only Son die for us. God's pain brings about real healing for our sorrows and sins.

Another perspective I want to bring to my discussion of Article IX.9, justification by faith, comes from The Wounded Heart of God: The Asian Concept of Han and the Christian Doctrine of Sin, by Andrew Sung Park. Park is a Korean theologian.⁹ Park raises questions about the traditional doctrine of justification by faith. He observes,

The doctrine of justification by faith is a necessary part of Christian theology for the wrongdoer, yet it has three shortcomings. First, the doctrine views the matter of justification from the perspective of the wrongdoer. Second, it speaks little if at all to the salvation of the wronged. Third, it focuses solely on our relationship with God, diminishing the significance of our relation with our neighbor.¹⁰

He adds that the doctrine of justification delineates how the wrongdoer can be saved, but omits addressing how the wronged can be saved.¹¹ Traditionally, salvation has meant the healing of sinners from the pain of guilt, fear and death. The '*han*' way of thinking is concerned with healing the victims of sinners.¹² Looking at Article of Faith IX.9, the point that Park makes is clearly seen. Salvation is depicted as pardon of guilt, release from the penalty of sins and so forth. But just as Park points out, nothing is mentioned about the victims of sin. It is easily understood and defended with the biblical reference to 'all men have sinned and fell short of the glory of God,' and by the fact that all individuals stand before God as a sinner without exception. Thus it is seen that the article covers all persons. This is true, but according to Park it is only half true. All persons are sinners in God's sight, but by emphasizing this truth for so long, Christianity has failed to address the other side of the truth, namely, the problem of those who have been sinned-against. Park uses the Korean term '*han*' to describe this condition. He defines '*han*' as follows.

Han can be defined as the critical wound of the heart generated by unjust psychosomatic repression, as well as by social, political, economic, and cultural oppression. It is entrenched in the hearts of the victims of sin and violence, and is expressed through such diverse reactions as sadness, helplessness, hopelessness, resentment, hatred, and the will to revenge.¹³

Park says that no translation can accurately convey the full meaning of '*han*'. This shows the depth of emotions Korean's associate with the term. It also shows how important the '*han*' is for them. It has not been adequately treated in the existing theologies. Park says that "the traditional doctrine of sin has been one-sided, seeing the world from the perspective of the sinner only, [and] failing to take account of the victims of sin and injustice".¹⁴ '*Han*' is the point of encounter between God and humanity. The cross is the place where God experiences human suffering and the place where humans understand God's agony (Isaiah 42:14). Park says that "when the cross of Jesus Christ is seen from the perspective of the oppressed, it signifies God's suffering with them; seen from the perspective of oppressors, the cross means God's suffering because of them."¹⁵ Deeply concerned for

⁹ Park, Andrew Sung, The Wounded Heart of God: The Asian Concept of Han and the Christian Doctrine of Sin, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 95.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid., p.102.

¹³ Ibid., p.10.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 124.

the victims of oppression and sin, Park concludes that the Christian gospel can be good news only if it is *both* absolution for sinners *and* resolution of the *han* of its victims.¹⁶

I think Park's point is something that traditional theology has neglected. The neglect is reflected in Article IX.9 which deals only with guilt and sin, but not with the *han*, namely, the sorrow, grief, sadness, and agony caused by the sin of someone else. Can we justify this silence by simply saying that all persons are sinners in the sight of God? Is the gospel good news only for the sinner and not for the sinned-against? Can we simply say that every individual has sinned in one way or another? Is anyone allowed to stand before God as a sinner only and not as a *han* ridden person? Certainly not. We can stand before God as a guilty person as well as a grief stricken person. The gospel is good news for the guilty as well as the mourner. We need to shed more light on the latter because traditional theology has somehow failed to do so. We need to recapture the Petrine expression, "By his wounds you have been healed." The cross needs to be seen as God identifying with our suffering, pain and wounds in order to heal us and restore us to wholeness. For a long time Asian Christians have been saying that this truth needs to be brought to the fore.

Let me cite an illustration to emphasize the point. Yuko Watanabe, a Japanese girl, was raised in a fearful home. Her father would come home every evening completely drunk and inflict violence upon Yuko's mother. Yuko was so afraid of her father that each night she would not change into night clothes, but rather wore her day clothes at night. She kept her school bag on her shoulder so that she could flee with her mother as soon as her mother took refuge somewhere else. Yuko cannot remember a night in her childhood when she could change into pajamas and sleep without fear. Her parents separated in her teens. After Yuko got married, she began to suffer mental problems. She would wash her hands for a very long time even though her hands were clean. She would wash until her skin began to come off. For hours she would use violent language against her husband, and she continually criticized him without reason. Yuko was diagnosed as schizophrenic. She went to different psychiatrists but found no cure. Finally, she went to see the supposedly best psychiatrist in the country and asked for help. The doctor said her case was a personality problem for which there was no cure. Yuko was crushed with disappointment and went home. She lay without hope and didn't know how to change her situation. Her relationship with her husband was on the verge of collapse.

Then one day Yuko found a Christian church in town where English was taught. She had some interest in English so she entered the church. After a while, the pastor of the church approached her and asked if she might be interested in a counseling session. She explained her medical history and relayed the last words of the famous psychiatrist. She asked the pastor if there was any hope for a cure. The pastor said, "Yes, you can be cured. If the cure means to restore a lost arm or a leg, then there is no cure. But if the cure means that a person can live a more active and wholesome life without restoring an arm or a leg, then there is a cure. I mean this kind of cure." Yuko agreed to begin the counseling sessions and began a long spiritual battle. During the next couple of years she hurled violent words at the pastor, just as she did toward her husband. The pastor knew that the root of the problem was her earlier relationship with her father and the deep trauma that relationship had caused. In Christ's love, the pastor patiently absorbed her violent language. Then he told her about Christ who died on the cross for humanity. He explained that Christ died for her as well. The pastor told her that she could cast her violent language against Christ on the cross who accepts her violence. Christ is the One who can perfectly accept her *han*, bitterness, agony, depression, vexation, sorrow, and pain. He is there on the cross to receive all of this for her. He is there to suffer for her. He can take as much bitterness as she wants to emit from her soul. This was how the pastor introduced Christ to her.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 137

Then Yuko began to make Christ her target of violence. And as she attacked Christ with all kinds of violent and bitter words, she began to experience healing. When the vexation emerged, she attacked Christ who suffered for her. Healing came. Yuko experienced what the Scriptures say, “By his wounds you have been healed” (I Peter 2:24).

Now Yuko regained complete freedom from her childhood trauma and depression, and the consequent schizophrenia. She is now helping others as a professional counselor. She understood her sin after she experienced healing through Christ’s suffering. She came to know the Christ who is “the man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering”(Isaiah 53:3). Yuko understood the God who identifies Himself with our suffering. Would she have been healed had the pastor simply told her to “repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ”? I think not. Sin is a human reality. But “sinned against” is also a reality. Christ certainly died to redeem us from sin. But He also died and suffered for our sinned-against condition. It is the latter that our theology needs to address for millions of persons who are victims of others’ sins. This doesn’t deny our doctrine of justification by grace through faith. But if justification and sanctification are ‘divine therapy’ for humanity as Wesley describes, then our theology also needs to include the second important dimension of redemption.

10. We believe that regeneration, or the new birth, is that gracious work of God whereby the moral nature of the repentant believer is spiritually quickened and given a distinctively spiritual life, capable of faith, love, and obedience.

I would like to comment on two points associated with this Article of Faith, one on repentance, and the other on spiritual life. The doctrine of repentance is already dealt with in the Article of Faith VIII. And the Article of Faith VIII is the proper place to deal with it. But since it appears here again, both in Article of Faith IX.10 and 12, I think it deserves our attention. In both articles the act of repentance is described in terms of a preceding condition for regeneration (Article of Faith IX.10) and for justification, regeneration and adoption (Article of Faith IX. 12). IX.10 says, “the moral nature of the repentant believer is spiritually quickened. . .” and IX. 12 says, “. . . justification [is] obtained upon the condition of faith, preceded by repentance. . . .”

Repentance seems to need some clarification in light of the Asian context. My point of concern here is the emphasis of the order of repentance which precedes justification, regeneration and adoption. We know that Jesus said, “The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news” (Mk. 1:15). We also know the Petrine message which says, “Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out. . .” (Acts. 3:19). These verses seem to indicate that repentance is a prior condition for forgiveness. We also know that “repentance” has multiple meanings, including a “change of mind” and “regret/remorse.” By “repentance” Wesley generally means a true self-knowledge (of oneself as a damned, helpless sinner) produced by the Holy Spirit.¹⁷ Article VIII says, “The Spirit of God gives to all who will repent the gracious help of penitence of heart and hope of mercy. . . .” Both the article and Wesley are in agreement that genuine repentance is brought forth by the Holy Spirit. Dr. Al Truesdale also says, “Repentance is an act of faith the Spirit makes possible.”¹⁸ There is no doubt that it is the work of the Holy Spirit that generates repentance in the heart of a person.

My concern here may or may not be of importance to many. But it seems that our religious experience needs to be revisited in the light of many people in Asia and the Pacific. For instance, I learned not a long ago that there are not a few Christians in this region who testify that they were saved by the love of God and yet it was only later that they came to know that that love of God was

¹⁷ Greathouse, William, from his lecture notes on the Doctrine of Holiness, 1971.

¹⁸ Truesdale, Al, in an unpublished manuscript on “A Charge to Keep: Telling the Story in a Pluralistic World,” 2005.

revealed in the atoning death of Christ on the cross. Those Christians have a clear testimony of salvation and yet the recognition of the fact that the atoning grace of Christ is one with the love of God somehow comes later in their Christian journey. This is an example of our religious experiences which are much more complicated than theologies tend to be too clear cut. Human souls are complicated thing and thus there are variety of experiences that are sometimes too difficult to put them in systematic order. So my concern is that maybe this matter of 'repentance' is another example of religious experience that is too difficult to say in clear cut manner that it precedes justification, regeneration and adoption as the articles seem to be saying.

Let me cite a thinking of Kitamaori on this particular issue.¹⁹ He explains that we begin to understand our sinful state only by the divine light that shines upon our hearts. Just as one cannot see dust in a room unless the ray of sun shine comes into the room, we cannot see our sin unless the light of God shines in our hearts. Self analysis or self examination does not reveal our true self. Encounter with God in some way reveals the true self knowledge about ourselves. Kitamaori quotes Romans 2:4, "Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?" The kindness of God leads us to repentance. Here Paul emphasizes God's kindness, tolerance, patience that leads us to repentance. Genuine confession of our sin occurs only when the loving light of God shines in our hearts. It is a recognition of our shame for having lived for so long without responding to such a gracious God. Faith occurs as a result of such shame. The recognition of the fact that God has been gracious, loving and patient toward such a sinner as I produces faith and believing response to this loving God. Feeling of shame before this loving God is the result of the shining of God's loving light in us. Thus genuine repentance is a result of God's loving light shining in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. Kitamaori cites Martin Luther who said, "Faith first generates the genuine repentance. It is not just an anxiety toward the Lord as Judge, but a burning shame about the fact that we have been living against such a gracious God."²⁰ This feeling of shame for having lived one's life ignoring such a graceful God generates repentance. Thus the loving kindness of God leads us to repentance. Strongly influenced by Luther, Kitamaori concludes that we cannot repent by our own will, but only the grace of God can lead us to repentance.

When looking at Wesley on his understanding of 'repentance,' he generally means by 'repentance' a true self-knowledge (of oneself as a damned, helpless sinner) produced by the Holy Spirit as we saw before. Wesley also means by repentance conviction of sin, producing real desires and sincere resolutions of amendment; and by 'fruits meet for repentance,' forgiving our brother; (Matt. 6:14, 15;) ceasing from evil, doing good; (Luke 3:3,4,9) using the ordinances of God, and in general obeying him according to the measure of grace which we have received."²¹ And in the context of repentance, Wesley says the following, "I allow there is a repentance consequent upon, as well as a repentance previous to, justification."²² Wesley explains, "the repentance consequent upon justification is widely different from that which is antecedent to it. This implies no guilt, no sense of condemnation, no consciousness of the wrath of God. It does not suppose any doubt of the favor of God, or any "fear that hath torment." It is properly a conviction, wrought by the Holy Ghost, of the sin which still remains in our heart; of the carnal mind, which 'does still remain,' "even in them that are regenerate;" although it does no longer reign; it has not now dominion over them."²³ Wesley is differentiating here the repentance that precedes justification and that succeeds it. He is referring to the 'repentance of believers' who are now conscious of the 'tendency of our heart to self-will, ... and, above all, to unbelief, whereby, in a thousand ways, and under a thousand pretences, we are ever departing, more

¹⁹ Kitamaori, Kazo, Zetsumyo no Shinri [Exquisite Truth], Tokyo: Kyobunkan, 2000, pp. 134-147.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 142. (translation mine)

²¹ Wesley, John, Works, VIII, 47.

²² Wesley, John, The Works of John Wesley, Vol. 6, Sermon XLIII. The Scriptural Way of Salvation, p. 40, Michigan: Baker Books, 2002.

²³ Ibid., p. 50.

or less, from the living God.”²⁴ If I understand him correctly, both repentance that precedes justification and that succeeds it are produced by the work of the Holy Spirit.

Kitamori emphasizes the shining of divine light in the hearts of seekers that produces genuine repentance. Wesley explains that both repentance before and after justification are conviction brought forth by the Holy Spirit. What Kitamori and Wesley seem to echo is that repentance is a faith that God takes initiative in our hearts. If this understanding of mine is correct, then perhaps the wording of the Article IX. 10 and IX. 12 need to be modified a little so that these articles would not give an impression that repentance is something that seekers after God need to fulfill as a condition for justification, regeneration and adoption. The wording, in my opinion, needs to reflect the fact that we are brought to repentance by the working of the Holy Spirit. I believe that the emphasis of Kitamori on the loving kindness of God that brings conviction of sin in our hearts does not discord with Wesley’s understanding of repentance. For Wesley writes in the commentary on I John 4:18 that ‘We love him, because he first loved us’—This is the sum of all religion, the genuine model of Christianity. None can say more, Why should any say less?”²⁵ Our repentance, our faith, our love, our new life, all are gift of our God the Father in Christ Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit. This is the point that should be made clearer in the Asian context.

Let me cite an illustration to make a point. After the World War II was over, the majority of the people in Japan were struggling to survive one day at a time. They were poor, hungry, and extremely frustrated because of the lack of food and basic materials for survival. Many town people exchanged their clothes for food from farmers in villages. One boy attempted to help his family by bringing some clothes to farmers to exchange for whatever food he could get from them. He brought a piece of kimono which belonged to his mother with him and visited farm houses to exchange for food. He left his house early in the morning and walked many miles to villages and visited a number of farm houses, but no farmer gave him food for the piece of kimono he brought. The boy walked all day long without eating anything. He was exhausted and deeply disappointed. At last he came to a farmer who examined the kimono piece and gave the boy a handful of beans. The boy put the beans in his bag and covered the bag with both of his hands. He started to walk home carefully protecting the precious beans he could get for his day’s work.

Pretty soon some village rascals came by and surrounded him. They demanded the thing he had in his bag, but the boy refused to do so. The boy was determined to protect his beans even if he died there. Soon a fight started and the boy frantically fought against these village rascals with all his might. But there was no way he could win. He was hit and kicked and pushed around. And finally he fell down into a mud. At the same time his beans were scattered in the mud all over the place. His face and his body were all covered with mud. He immediately stood up and found a stick nearby and began to swish it like mad. The rascals were scared of this half crazy boy and they disappeared quickly. The boy’s heart was pounding fast and angry from top to bottom. When he came to himself, he looked at the scattered beans in the mud. He began to pick up the bean one by one from the mud. He picked up all the beans he could find from the mud and put them back in his bag. The beans were covered with mud. The boy stood up and began to walk home again. But this time, he had his stick in his hand and was ready to hit anyone immediately if his beans were object of their interest. He was still angry and his eyes were as sharp as those of an angry animal. He walked carefully checking to see if anyone was hiding behind bushes or fences.

As he was walking, he noticed an old woman looking at him from a gate of one of the farm houses. The old woman with white hair and bent body was waving her hand to invite the boy to her place. The boy cautiously walked toward her house. The old woman invited the boy inside her house and into the kitchen. She put a mat for him near a hearth made in the floor. The boy sat there not knowing why she was doing this. The old woman went to another room and came back with a rice cake. She sat by the hearth and put the rice cake on the fire to make it soft and warm. Pretty soon the rice cake became swollen and started to make sound of breaking the bubble. The boy had not seen such a white

²⁴ Ibid., p. 50.

²⁵ Wesley, John, Notes, I John 4:18.

rice cake made of good quality rice. And when the rice cake was ready to eat, the old woman said, "Eat." That was all the word she said from the beginning to the end. The boy picked up the warm rice cake in his both hands and began to eat. He had one bite. And then the boy began to sob. The old woman was there simply preparing rice cake for the boy to eat. She was silent. The boy had never felt such a warmth of heart in his entire life. He continued to sob and could not eat the rice cake.²⁶

This story illustrates how a person's heart changes from a 'heart of stone' to a 'heart of flesh.' The boy who experienced the sinful world around him, he himself armed himself with anger and readiness to fight. But the compassion and unselfish love of the old woman melted his cold angry heart and tears of bitterness, shame, remorse, helplessness, gratitude, joy and blessedness started to flow out of his eyes incessantly. The boy's heart was changed by the unselfish love of the old woman for eternity. He realized what was most important in life. He learned what was most powerful in life. He was 'saved' from hatred, bitterness, distrust, and sadness. I believe this is the way God changes our hearts. He changes our hearts by His loving compassion. He melts our heart of stone by His irresistible warmth surrounding us. He shows us His loving compassion with words and without words. And when we experience such love, we feel deeply sorry for what we were and where we were trying to go for our life. We want to follow Him in His love, for we now know that is the true way of life and the only way that leads us to blessedness. That is, to me, the repentance. And I hope such dynamics of love is associated with the wording of 'repentance' in these articles.

One other issue I would like to take up is the spiritual life as described here in article IX.10. The article says, "...and given a distinctively spiritual life, capable of faith, love, and obedience." I do not have a problem with this expression particularly, but it just seems to have Hellenistic influence on this expression which to Asian minds sounds awkward. That is, the spiritual life of a regenerated person sounds as though they are given a capacity to believe, to love and to be obedient. It sounds a bit like Platonic *Idee*, quite conceptual and not relational. The life of faith, love and obedience for Christians is not something that Christians can possess as ability, capability, or attributes. Apart from the relationship with the living Christ, Christians are powerless of faith, love and obedience. "...apart from me you can do nothing." (John 15:5). Here is where it is perhaps better to express the spiritual life of a regenerated person in terms of the relationship with the living Christ. Mieko Kamiya, a well known Japanese psychiatrist who served among the people with leprosy, has written an article on the theme of new birth, regeneration in 1939.²⁷ She describes the characteristics of a regenerated person in the following words. The translations are mine. "The person who used to think that he/she had been living a hard life trying to live truthfully, discovers that it was not the case, but rather the Truth itself has been carrying him/her." "It is a self-generating impulse which irresistibly flows continuously from the river of Life, an overflowing of what has been poured upon him/her, and the natural consequence of the world in which he/she began to live." "The flow of Life has now grasped him/her and he/she is in the flow." "I desire that every person who aspires to live a true life will sooner or later reach to the discovery from the East and from the West. What a joy it is, since I have desperately searched for it in the dusk of my skepticism." What is characteristic in these expressions is the fact that the new life is an outflow of the life of Christ with whom she found intimate interconnectedness. She knows that all her intuition, moral sensitivity and intellect are enhanced by the new vitality that began to fill her heart and overflow from within. "At the bottom of the attitude of Christian faith lies such a simple and joyful response to the working of the love of God, which irresistibly presses upon the souls of human beings." All these expressions of testimony connote that the new life in Christ is a life living in relationship with the living Christ, and apart from Him Christians are lifeless, powerless, helpless, loveless, faithless, and obedienceless (if we can create such word). If that is the case,

²⁶ This story was told by a Japanese actor who shared his boyhood memories of right after the war with TV audience.

²⁷ Kamiya, Mieko, Utuswa no Uta [A Song of a Vessel], Tokyo: Misuzu Shobo, 1939.

perhaps the relational aspect needs to be expressed in this article. Our new birth in Christ will continue to be a new life only when we continue to live in the living relationship with the resurrected Christ. It is not something we possess as a possession or attributes. Our faith, love and obedience are ours to enjoy and bear fruits only in our vital living relation with Christ. This is where Hellenistic nuances need to be contextualized in Asian context which is a relational culture.

Regarding the marks of the new birth, Wesley writes, “Now one who has been ... born of God... who continually receives into his soul the breath of life from God, the gracious influence of His Spirit, and continually renders it back; one who thus believes and loves, who by faith perceives the continual actings of God upon his spirit...not only doth not commit sin, while he thus keepeth himself, but so long as this ‘seed remaineth in him, he cannot sin, because he is born of God.’²⁸ Wesley also says, when we are born of the Spirit “we are renewed by the power of God. We feel ‘the love of God shed abroad in our heart by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us’; producing love to all mankind, and more especially to the children of God.”²⁹ What is significant in these quotations of Wesley is that the new spiritual life of a Christian continues to be a true spiritual life when it is kept in the living relationship with God in Christ just as we continue to breathe our breath to live physically. So Jesus emphasized, “Remain in Me, and I will remain in you.”(John 15:4). Perhaps this is implied in the Article of Faith IX. 10, but the way it is expressed gives different nuances especially to Asian minds. Particularly the word, ‘capable’ gives that nuance which seems to be detached from living relationship with God in Christ.

11. We believe that adoption is that gracious act of God by which the justified and regenerated believer is constituted a son of God.

I do not have any comment here except that the word ‘son’ needs to be an inclusive language, such as ‘a son and a daughter.’

12. We believe that justification, regeneration, and adoption are simultaneous in the experience of seekers after God and are obtained upon the condition of faith, preceded by repentance, and that to this work and state of grace the Holy Spirit bears witness.

In my comment on the article IX. 10, I have already dealt with the matter of repentance extensively. So please refer to my comment there for the discussion of repentance.

²⁸ Wesley, John, Sermon, “The Great Privilege of Those That are Born of God” Sermon XIX, in the Works of John Wesley, Vol. 5-6, Baker Book House Company, Reprinted 2002

²⁹ Wesley, John, Sermon, “The Scriptural Way of Salvation,” (I, 4).