

# Happiness and Darkness of an Information Age Theology for an information age

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## **Abstracts**

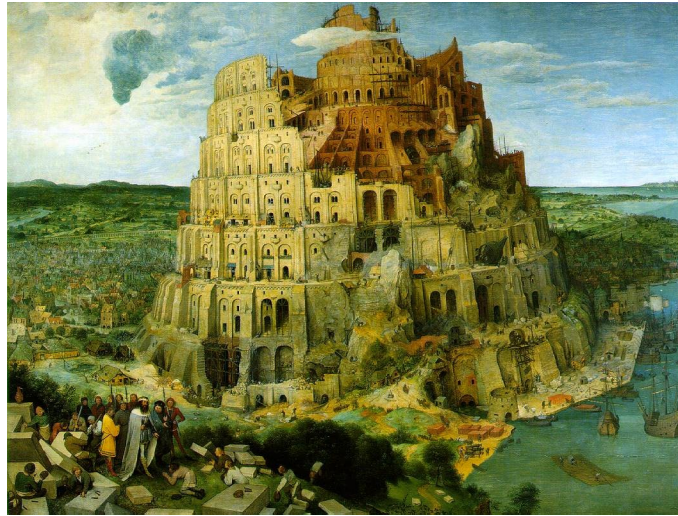
*Christian faith has the perspective which perceives the happiness and darkness of an information age. I would like to propose an information ethics based on three Cs: content, control and context. The contextual approach situates the information revolution in a truthful communication of friendship which provides an alternative global image against capitalistic colonialism. Today, the concept of the social entrepreneur is a non-violent and servant leader. Mr. Ohhara Magosaburo who was the Christian president of Kurashiki Spinning Company had an idea of management that Japanese social scientists called Christian Humanism. Scientific Management is a model of virtue ethics for the social entrepreneur. The concept of the social entrepreneur is a new and old concept of calling what Max Weber described as Protestant Ethics. Church, Christian Universities, Christian Hospitals and so on have to revitalize their mission in this information age.*

It is my great pleasure to present my essay about information ethics at this workshop. I am a professor of the Graduate school of International Management and a University Chaplain of Aoyama Gakuin. Theological Ethics is my special field where my mentor and friend is Dr. Stanley Hauerwas. I translated his books, *The Peaceable Kingdom*, *Christian among Virtues*, *Resident Aliens* and so on. Before I met Hauerwas, I wrote some books, *The Theology about H. Richard Niebuhr* and *The Narrative Theology and Christian Ethics* etc. My presentation is about information ethics from the theological perspectives. My title is “A Theology for an Information age”

## **Christian Perspective**

My Grandmother, who had worked as a teacher in high-school and junior college supported by the Japanese Church, asked me as follows when I entered Tokyo Union Theological Seminary. “Do you know “Εν αρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος” ? It surprised me a lot. It was the Greek words of the Bible for “In the beginning the Word already existed; the Word with God, and the Word was God.”(John1:1 Today’s English Version). These are very important words about the hopeful root of human life and the world.

In addition, the Bible has the narrative of the Tower of Babel in conjunction with the human word, too. It points out the problems that we human beings have in confusing communications in the world.



<http://www.salvastyle.com/>

I think it is the Christian perspective for the information ethics.

Generally a "vague" concept circulates with crude words called "the information revolution", "the ubiquitous society" and "the networked society" in comparison with an Agricultural Revolution, the Industrial Revolution and now, the Energy Revolution. Netiquette (net etiquette), a computer ethics, a vague concept such as information ethics begins to circulate, although this is already a little late. We have already many information technologies in our global village. Personal computer, cell phone, digital camera, Internet and so on are there.

Many educational commentators in Japan say that high school students who watch TV and play media games for more than three hours a day might have some psychological and physical troubles. The shift from face-to-face communication to on-screen communication means a change from recognizing the voice and gestures via the senses of sound and sight to recognizing texts without them. Sometime, we lose a direct person-to-person contact. But we enjoy the information revolution which brings democratization to knowledge and society.

This year on January 3rd, I went to a New Year's concert of the Tokyo Symphony Orchestra. At that time, they did not have any conductor but only a young concertmaster who acted as host. We enjoyed that concert and Orchestra members also seemed to enjoy playing in a relaxing way. "Oh," I thought, "where is the authority?" "Um, the authority is only the Muse: the beautiful music." So, we ask today, "Where is the authority in media space?" "Um, the authority is only the Truth: Logos."

Last year, in our country we enjoyed many whistle-blowing events where the Internet was used and this made companies awaken to corporate social responsibility (CSR). The information

revolution steadily develops a democracy in many sectors of society. However, we now experience the widening gap between the techno-poor and the techno-rich in society and the global village.

### **Information Ethics**

I would like to propose information ethics based on three Cs: content, control and context. The first task is to protect the vulnerable, such as children, minorities and elderly persons, from violent contents. The power of media should be used to induce the truth. The second task is a delicate and complex one. We should not control marginal groups from positions of decision-making within media enterprises. Rather we should watch the powerful media monopolies of the global media conglomerates. Everyone has the right to access data about global phenomena. I think that teaching people how media products are made and how to interpret them critically allows individuals to take control of media products and tools so that they can more effectively pursue the truthful data rather than accept passively those of media firms.

I would like to emphasize the third task: context. The information revolution has a strong cultural impact on global residents. Let me say that the media space is a battle field between media and culture industries driven by the market and the foretaste of the peaceable kingdom provisioned by an agape community. We should use caution against the media ecology of contemporary capitalism. Therefore, the contextual approach situates the information revolution in a truthful communication of friendship between persons, creatures, and God in Christ. This makes an alternative global image against capitalistic colonialism.

We are educators who have to form character in the next generation so they will have the courage to speak freely about truth in the global context.

### **Meanings of Globalization**

Hans Holbein painted “the Ambassadors” which nowadays is hanging in the National Gallery in London. Two wealthy, self-confident men stand looking out of the picture. They are clothed in all the trappings of luxury and power. On the left is Jean de Dinteville, French ambassador to England at the age of only 29, his gown lined with ermine, a gold medallion round his neck, his doublet of satin, a finely chased gold baton, his sign of office, in his right hand.

Across the table is Georges de Selve, bishop at the age of 25, future ambassador to Venice. On the table on which they rest their elbows are the appurtenances of Renaissance learning and culture. A lute, flutes, a Lutheran hymn book, a guide to arithmetic, a sextant, compasses and two globes, one for the earth and the other for the heavens. The year is 1533. But Hans Holbein did not forget to paint the picture of a skull symbolized by a skull that means “memento mori.” This is the warning to the globalization of greed.



<http://www2.edu.ipa.go.jp/gz/kiyaku.html>

As time went on, Jonathan Swift wrote the book entitled *Gulliver's Travels*, which is famous in our country. He made an ironic remark about human greed. In his book, he explained the essence of human desires as follows, "if you pay, you can get anything in the land of yahoo (good tasting food, a beautiful house...) and you always injure each other to get money." So the task of humankind is to task the positioning and sublime the greed.

Adam Smith tried to use self-interest to make the common good through the invisible hand of who was the stoic god. This attempt has greed in store for the economic growth of society.

We Christians should overcome violent greed and change our greed to charity. In our information age, we have a democratic system which is made by the balance with the market place, government and the public square. But this system does not assure the conscience people should have in a society.

### **The Bible in Media Space**

The media space is the place where many languages, texts, images, symbols and stories infiltrate freely. And we cannot control that space. In other words, it may be said that the media space is a free space to do information about reality and virtual reality. And both come and go freely.

Therefore it is important to bring up "conscience" and "character" to navigate us in a complicated media space. So the moral formation which forms the conscience of human beings in this sense will be important in our times and in the future. However, our world becomes a so-called post-modern society. By theological analysis, there are two problems in this society. At first, our age is the time when we are aware that self-understanding is not given directly to human consciousness. In other

words, we discover the fact that our consciousness is formed by words, stories, traditions and cultures as Floyd and Nietzsche say.

Secondly the theme in the most-modern society will recognize the need to overcome violence. It is a delicate analysis to point out that there is a violent device in a work of reason as Michel Foucault insists. In other words, violence tends to conquer nature or sex differences in a work of technological reason. This is called "an ethics of the post-modern". In Theology or Christian ethics which is aware of such an "ethic of the post-modern", we should develop "the ethic of the story" and "the ethic of the encounter" with a new meaning. Narrative ethics has a story with a vision that orients morals, which a pure rational act cannot do. When we make the true story our story, we form a wonderful character. We should think about this for the media ages.

Thirdly, we should pay attention to the ethics of the encounter with a new meaning, as Karl Barth, Abraham Hessel and Emmanuel Levinas state. I say that a human being sets a trap unconsciously, for another person in his operation. In contrast, according to Levinas, the encounter with another person should have the priority over any kind of story or any kind of language. By the way, it forms Christian conscience to understand the Bible as a media navigator. This conscience will show the direction and find out problems in this media age. It may be said that the direction that the Christian conscience shows is the clear intention and responsibility to live peacefully with Jesus Christ.

My focal image of the Biblical truth is the Eucharist. Jesus Christ is the absolute other whom we should meet. And the vision of "the peace of Christ" is the impact that we shall obey his true story. It is the moral reality coming across from the outside of our consciousness. The truth of Jesus Christ is the powerful love of God who denies individualism in capitalistic society. In other words, we break the shell from our story, and are given the new reality called the invitation to love God who invites us to love our neighbor. We meet Jesus Christ and have a true character in resemblance with Him.

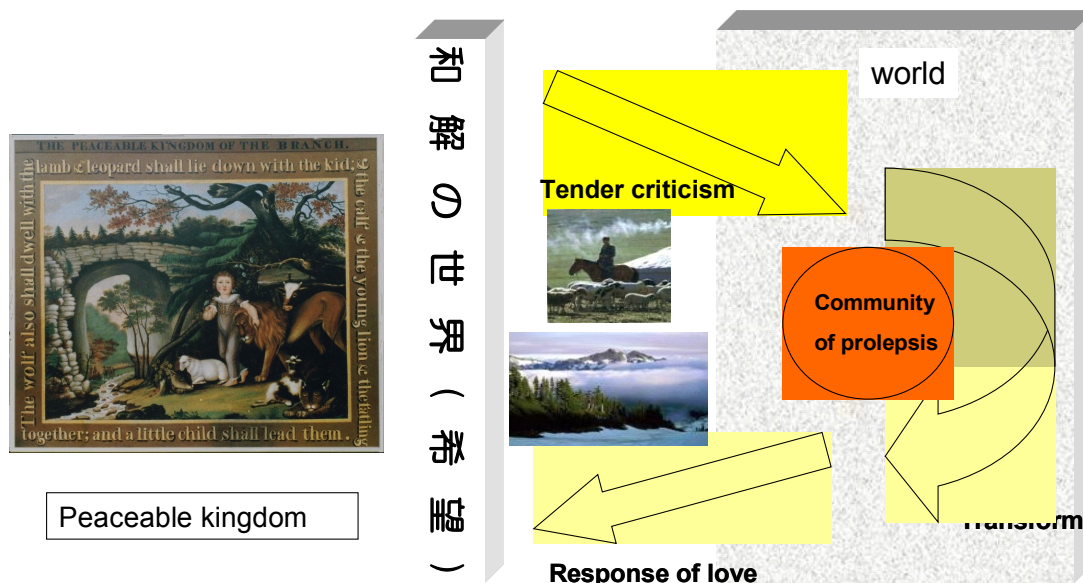
Our habituation of following Jesus is made from our attending worship and participation in the witness of practice in servant leadership. Jesus declared, "I am the way, the truth and the life." So we believe, he is the navigator to the living truth that has eschatological cosmology. When a natural person is invited to the hope, the vision, the purpose and the repentance, she or he becomes a new creation in Jesus Christ. If a natural person does not have any purpose but only greed, he or she has a corrupted civilization.

I have just said that Christology has eschatological cosmology. The kingdom of God throws the critical words into the world. But these words are gentle because they are coming from the peaceable kingdom. Jesus the navigator transforms people in the world into the response of love and care by his words, his crucifixion and resurrection. His navigation uses the lure of agape which forms a community of the prolepsis with friendship and service. This dynamic Christological Cosmology

includes ecological sensitivity coming from the easterner and the sense of stewardship from the westerner.

Jesus Christ forms the new community of prolepsis whose members are the creative minorities of non-violence and service leadership. My focal image of the Bible is the holy table Jesus Christ hosts. Around the table we share the happiness and the sorrow of each other. This image refuses a possessive individualism, a closed individualism and a competitive individualism.

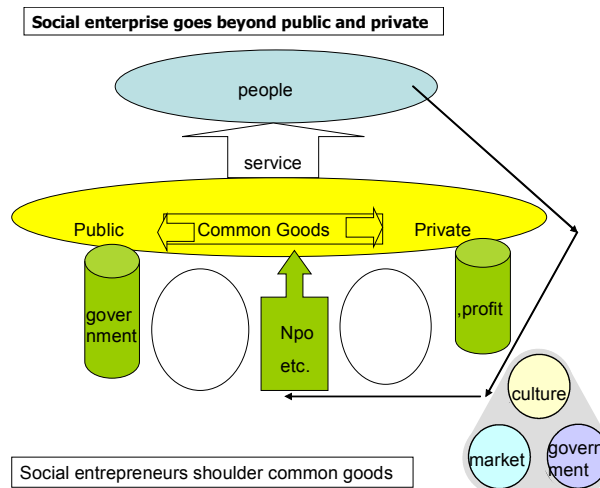
## Imaging the prolepsis of Peace: Hope



### Social Entrepreneur

Today a concept of the social entrepreneur is non-violent and servant leadership. This concept is a new and old concept of calling what Max Weber had described as a Protestant Ethics. This is a coinage from wellbeing and business. Dr. Gregory Jones, the dean of Duke Divinity School, writes that social entrepreneur is a reminder of the Methodist's mission power in the magazine "Christian Century". This is the business model of the 21st century.

"Ashoka" a NPO is known by Japanese people because Muhammad Yunus backed up by Bill Drayton has been given the Nobel Prize in 2006. The Japanese government considers that the social entrepreneurs bears the common good which lacks in contemporary Japanese society, but social entrepreneurs will come from the moral education for which Christian schools have the responsibility.



I would like to insist that society has three sectors made by different values. Goods we need are from the market sector, the human rights of people are from the government sector, and the moral and mission for future societal needs come from the cultural sector.

I would like to quote from Dr. Greg. Jones' words, the dean of Duke Divinity School. He said in the Christian Century (07.11.27) that "We need a stronger sense of mission, one that leads us to take risks in the service of the gospel, risks such as starting new churches and creating new institutions even as we seek to preserve and revitalize those created by our forbearers." He is thinking about the social entrepreneur which is now secularized in the USA where the post-Christendom age has begun. He notices the five roles of the social entrepreneur. The first is adapting a mission to create and sustain social value. The second is pursuing new opportunities to serve that mission. The third is reengaging in a process of continuous innovation, adaptation and learning. The fourth is acting boldly without being limited by resources currently in hand. The fifth is exhibiting heightened accountability to the constituencies served and for the outcomes created.

The matter comes up again, the holy table is the symbolic action of agape and the eirene of God. This has a power to create the new community, providing a creative minority for the next age, the na-no age.

Japanese painter, Takako Hirono, gives caution for abusing the technologies. There is a non-profit organization for helping Asian children located near our university. Its leader is Ms Murata Sayaka who was shocked at the poverty and child abuse she encountered when she visited Cambodia at 20 years of age. So after her graduation, she set up the institution with her two friends. Her venture is helping the unfortunate children in Cambodia to learn I.T. technology in order to get a job from Japan. They have a small school in Phnom Penh for the children from the orphanage. Last year they

started another project to help mothers in the rural areas get job training. Ms Murata often visits the business persons' meetings to invite their participation in the project.

I suggest the Japanese Christian University take the role as the go-between among the rich and the poor for the social venture in Asia and Africa. Our Christian Culture has a bridge between the western and the eastern, and a bridge between the north and the south because we have the tradition of the creative minority of the social venture in Japan.

### **Friendship of an agape community**

For example, Mr. Ishii Juji set up the first orphanage in Japan supported by Mr. Ohhara Magosaburo who was the Christian president of Kurashiki Spinning Company. Social Scientists define his idea of management as Christian Humanism and Scientific Management. Especially, I point out that he had three Christian friends supporting his spirit and activities: that is teamwork, community and friendship.

When he assumed the presidency of that company, he openly proclaimed the idea of stewardship. He said "If I get the fortune, it is not for me but for the world. It is given not to me but to the world. So I should work for the will of God, using the money given to me for the world." And he promised Kurashiki city would be the eastern Jerusalem. It is a wonderful city filled with friendship motivated by religious vision.

Let me say, Mr. Ohhara used his life and the spinning company for the kingdom of God. For instance, he had a responsibility of caring and service to spinning girls as a personnel manager during his presidency. And he has the responsibility as the founder of the hospital. And the Ohhara Museum has a painting of El Greco. During World War II, therefore, the Allied Forces against Japan kept away from bombing the city of the Kurashiki because it has that wonderful artwork.

I would like to emphasize that his all activities are navigated by the Bible. For his motto comes from the words of I Timothy 6:17-19. "Command those who are rich in the things of this life not to be proud, but to place their hope, not in such an uncertain thing as riches, but in God, who generously gives us everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share with others. In this way they will store up for themselves a treasure which will be a solid foundation for the future. And then they will be able to win the life which is true life. (I Timothy 6:17-19).

The small community has the power to start an alternative culture different from global capitalism or global colonialism. This is the small community of agape where people are educated by each other to servant leadership. Servant leadership has many elements as follows:

1. You can listen to what the person says properly.
2. You can sympathize with others.



3. If there are troubled persons, you can heal them.
4. You can appeal what you notice.
5. You have persuasive power to appeal for some big mission and aim.
6. You can conceptualize your dream properly.
7. You are far-sighted.
8. You have a role as the steward is possible.
9. You have a role in the growth of people
10. You make community vivid

I would like to quote from Dr. Greg. Jones' words again. He said in the Christian Century (07.17/27) that "We need a stronger sense of mission, one that leads us to take risks in the service of the gospel, risks such as starting new churches and creating new institutions even as we seek to preserve and revitalize those created by our forebears."

The friendship in an agape community is: For Christ who was crucified is our friend, we, Christians would not avoid wounded or unfortunate people but share their pain. So Churches, Christian Universities, Christian Hospitals and so on have to revitalize their mission in this information age.

## Conclusion

In the next Nano age, I hope the small and powerful community will change the tendency of history. "Small is beautiful" is the motto of the peaceable kingdom which already economist E. F. Schumacher quoted from the Bible "Instead, be concerned above everything else with the Kingdom of God." This vision uses the truth to change the course of the history.

*Yoshinobu Tobo was born in Japan and received his degrees from the economic department of Aoyama Gakuin University and the Tokyo Union Theological Seminary. He was associate minister of Ginza Church (the United Church of Christ in Japan) between 1970 and 1975, minister of Kyoudou Midorigaoka Church between 1976 and 1982. He has been University chaplain and Professor of Aoyama Gakuin University since 1983. He held the position of visiting scholar at Duke Divinity School and has been the Executive Director of the Japan Society of Christian Studies since 2002. He has published books in the area of theology (The Theology of H. Richard Niebuhr, Narrative Theology and Christian Ethics, and The Kingdom of God and Economics Ethics, among others, and translated the works of H. Richard Niebuhr and Stanley Hauerwas.)*