

大阪商業大学学術情報リポジトリ

Christ the City and the Way of Tea

メタデータ	言語: Japanese 出版者: 大阪商業大学商経学会 公開日: 2023-09-11 キーワード (Ja): キーワード (En): 作成者: 角川, 周治郎, SUMIKAWA, Shujiro メールアドレス: 所属:
URL	https://ouc.repo.nii.ac.jp/records/2000314

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.



Christ the City and the Way of Tea

Shujiro Sumikawa

Why am I into tea? What prompts me to do tea almost daily? Or what is it that I experience when I do tea? The answer: in tea I experience love. Whether I do tea alone or with guests, I am with those whom I love, and also with others beyond my immediate love, and with Christ. But why is that whole matter so significant? What purpose does Christ, or love for that matter, serve? What “meaning” does Christ or love have for me? The answer? Nothing. “Christ” in tea serves nothing, means nothing. That is why, paradoxically, tea is so “precious” to me. Love is precious because it is wholly use-less or meaning-less. And tea is one unique way of experiencing just that. Tea, we might say, is a “meaningless happening” in which love’s “meaninglessness” or “uselessness” is experienced, implicitly or explicitly. That experiencing, as we shall see later, is what is called “wabi” in tea. And that is where Christianity and tea meet.

I should like to start this paper with a particular image of God. That image is discussed in the writings of Charles Williams, an original Christian thinker and writer, not popularly known but deeply appreciated in his own circles, during the first half of the 20th century. Williams allegedly loved London, and he had a reason. The city, or any city for that matter, is for him the closest image that man can have of God. Why? For him God created, and still creates, the world “in his own image”; what governs life is the very mode of the Trinity. The Father is in the Son, and the Son in the Father. Likewise with the Holy Spirit. The three Persons of the Trinity dwell in one another. And that is true with us also. We are created to dwell in one another, to be inherently interrelated. No one lives from himself or for himself; we live from others and for others. We are ontologically all connected. There is no other way to live, like it or not. That is the spiritual law of creation. That law runs through all the ladders of existence, from the way a tiny seed grows into a big tree to a loving couple absorbed in romance to complicated international relationships.

In Williams’ words, all created beings exist in an infinite web of “exchange and substitution”. We are constantly engaged in some sort of exchange, be it in daily work or in profound spiritual dialogues. No nature or human community can function even for one moment without some acts of exchange occurring somewhere. The life of a city or town or village is based on that, which includes acts of substitution as well. We substitute ourselves for some-

one else, often not being conscious of it. I may carry someone's suitcase for the person; or I might even die for somebody under necessary circumstances. Thus life is exchange and substitution. In that sense all created beings are relative, in the sense that all are interrelated. No one single being can be self-subsisting.

A city, in particular, is where such fundamental modes of life are most prominently carried out and expressed, where exchange and substitution constantly take place most expressively. A city's inexplicably intricate and complex web of exchange encompasses our whole urban reality, from commerce to the innermost depth of our heart. Commerce, or commercial exchange, is one of the basic frameworks of a city. To quote Williams: "The medium of that exchange, with us, is money Our social system exists by an unformed agreement that one person shall do one job while another does another. Money is the means by which those jobs are brought into relation. It is, usually, the medium in which particular contracts are formed. And contract, or agreement, is the social fact of 'living by each other'." Such is actually the basis for our happiness, as it is none other than our living from others, in whatever style, that brings about joy and meaning in our life.

But wait. Is life, urban or not, all happy and joyful? Isn't there enough sorrow or tragedy that always threatens, or at times destroys, life? Of course there is. Life's tragedy is felt everywhere, and most poignantly so in urban life. Life in a city is blessed with human warmth and joy, but also cursed with alienation and bitter conflicts. Why so? Because of the operation of "hell" in us, of "the Infamy" as Williams calls it. Or "the self" that Christ tells us to deny daily and follow him.

How does the Infamy, or the self, operate? By flatly contradicting and rejecting the very law of life. By convincing myself that I can be satisfied with myself. I am all that matters; I live from myself and for myself. The self surreptitiously declares: I am absolute. In every man except in Christ, Williams observes, there is a tiny but persistent illusion that "I am sufficient for me." Human life everywhere is carried on with that lurking antagonism against "life from others," against the very basics of life. Life is thus torn apart from within. We crave love, while destroying it. The original unity of creation is thus lost. The life of a city most poignantly exposes that self-contradiction in our existence. Sweet intimacy and desolate loneliness are both painfully experienced in a city.

And that can find expression in a lot wider and more public context, too. A recent issue of the TIME magazine has an essay entitled "A world Divided." It states: The theme of early April's meeting of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, was "connectivity". During the meeting they agreed to work toward a South Asian community that has a "smooth flow of goods, services, peoples, technologies, knowledge, capital, culture and ideas

. . . .” Yet even as the agreement was being drafted, bureaucrat underlings back home were contemplating new ways to separate themselves from neighboring countries---not through trade barriers or diplomatic hurdles, but with actual, physical walls. . . It’s as if countries have decided, “I’m happy to do business with you, but just don’t come near me.” And the magazine concludes: “Walls are more than just concrete and barbed wire. They are corrosive symbols of social and economic rifts and iniquities, divisions that eventually must be healed.”

The Infamy thus assaults the all-inclusive nature of creation, bringing in acts of exclusion and denial everywhere, from the above walls to a tiny secret desire in our heart to exclude someone from our life if we could. The old self is always there in us, keeping us from fully experiencing inclusiveness and acceptance. But if we determinedly go against including in favor of excluding, the original blessing of creation is indeed lost; we are doomed. True, something just might have to be excluded or denied sometime somewhere. But it is not in our power or right to do that; the right to exclude is reserved only to God. We, on our part, should always be ready to include and accept. Of course that is easier said than done. As Williams argues: “To be in a distressing and painful condition because of others is a thing we all naturally resent . . . Yet until we are willing to accept the mere fact without resentment we can hardly be said to admit that other people exist. . . They may be wicked and we good or vice versa; that is a question of moral judgment, and therefore another question. The main fact is that we are compelled to admit their decision, and to admit that our lives, and often our deaths, depend on that.” Our sin lies in our desire to limit exchange, or co-inhering, to a particular pattern, in our preferring to have the web of exchange in our way, as directed only in our favor. And that means not accepting others as existing in their own right or mode.

Faith, then, is seen as the movement toward union with the original Union, as the way of rebuilding the city. And that rebuilding comes through Christ’s redemptive act. Christ sustains, revives, the city by redeeming it. Because Christ IS the archetypal City. He is Christ the City. How does he redeem it? By covering the entire city on earth with his own righteousness. By returning evil with good. The actual city is fallen, eventually doomed to spiritual, as well as physical, death. Christ substitutes himself for us, taking that consequence upon himself. He suffers and dies for us, or more precisely, “from” us. In exchange we receive Him the City, a city made anew and restored. In Resurrected Christ even death is no longer absolute; it is overcome and made relative in the original blessing of infinite exchange and substitution. But the renewed city is not unrelated to the old city. It still has scars of the old city, but the scars now shine in renewed glory, just as the scars on the body of resurrected Christ do. In that sense Christ the City bears the double image of Luther’s “simul justus et peccator”; just and sinful at the same time. Urban culture is blessed in new light, while remaining old.

The above paragraph may give us the impression that salvation is a happy-go-lucky state of affairs, neatly schemed and wonderfully achieved by the Almighty. Or that the old city is triumphantly and smoothly overcome in or by Christ's redemptive act. Many of us are tempted to see Christian salvation as something obviously glorious and therefore immediately desirable. Nothing, however, would be farther from the truth than such understanding of salvation. In Williams' words salvation is "a terrible good" for us. It is terrible because it strikes us as anything but good. There is nothing good about Christ on the cross, or Christ Crucified; the whole thing is simply terrible. Terrible as there is in it neither power nor meaning. Christ Crucified is devoid of any power or meaning; he is absolutely powerless and meaningless. And this is exactly where the church can easily err. True, she would say, Christ on the cross may seem powerless and devoid of any meaning. But then, in the light of his resurrection, his crucifixion becomes an event full of divine power and meaning. It is part of divine salvation, and as such, gloriously imbued with salvific meaning and power. Is that, however, what St. Paul means when he says, "I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified"? Now Paul Hessert maintains in his book *Christ & The End of Meaning* that it is not, and I for one fully agree. Christ's resurrection occurs, not so power and meaning may be ascribed to Christianity, but, on the contrary, to establish once and for all that Christianity was, is, and will be meaning-less. To make certain that Christ Crucified remain terrible, and to ensure that salvation be found precisely in him as such.

Culture, Hessert argues, always seeks meaning and power. In his words, "to have meaning is to have direction and purpose: we call this 'understanding life'. To have power is to be able to effect change." Nothing then is in a way more valuable to culture than religion. Religion claims to provide mankind with ultimate direction and purpose, with the deepest way of "understanding life" and with needed power for us to live accordingly. So religion is often expected to give us the ultimate answer for life's "meaning." As a religion popular Christianity also has that claim. It starts with Christ Crucified all right, but it regards him in that state just as a "phase," a necessary process he had to go through in order for him to become our Savior. Jesus of Nazareth, who did mighty and miraculous acts among people, is now on the cross, abject and abandoned. No power, no meaning to be found there. That, however, is solely because of us. It is we who are in fact that way due to our sinfulness. So Christ takes all that upon himself on the cross. In exchange he gives us his own righteousness, his own good, full of divine love and glory. So Christianity gives meaning and power back to us through suffering Christ; the gospel is good even if initially it may look terrible. Is that what Williams tries to convey by "a terrible good"? Not at all. Christ's salvific act is terrible precisely because there is no such hidden agenda. If the cross of Christ seems meaningless, it IS meaningless. "Others he saved; himself He cannot save." Why that's absurd; if he saved others why can't he save himself? He can't because that's just the way he is. Because that's

how heaven is: no one is to live for and from himself. Christ lives “from” us; that’s how he co-inheres. Christ Crucified IS Christ the City. The kingdom of God is fully revealed there, meaningless and powerless. Co-inherence is a terrible good, never an easy thing for us to accept. Far from giving us any easy comfort and security it shatters them. It takes away from us all the illusion of the world, leaving us directionless and purposeless. There is no “meaning” behind or beyond Christ Crucified. If anything Christ Crucified is its own meaning, and its own joy.

Luther’s “simul justus” then takes on a different nuance. “Righteous and sinful” traditionally portrays a Christian as, on one hand, imbued with meaning and power in the eyes of God while, on the other, remaining spiritually aimless and incapacitated in himself. But to be full of meaning may actually be synonymous with being sinful, whereas absence of meaning may point to righteousness. Why so? Because we seek power and meaning only to fortify our self, and self-fortification is achieved at the expense of others. That is how the above Infamy works in us, going against the Trinity and creation.

Deeply related to Christ the City, as devoid of meaning, is the way of tea. The way of tea, or ceremonial tea, was established in the 16th century by Rikyu, a resident of Sakai, a then thriving commercial city near Osaka. What tea means, in a nutshell, is a four-hour long gathering of a host and his guests, over a bowl of tea following a light meal. It is done in accordance with a set of traditional forms and rules handed down through generations. What does such an apparently mere social gathering have to do with Christ the City? For that we must delve into the most central concept in tea, namely that of wabi. Tea is frequently called wabi-tea. But in what way is tea so characteristically wabi?

One modern critic observes: in tea humble simplicity surpasses gorgeous elegance. Up to the time of Rikyu and his predecessors tea gatherings were focused on appreciation of fine utensils, those mainly imported from China. They were usually held in a wide room in an aristocrat’s residence, luxurious and elegant, with an open view of nature outside. What the pioneers of wabi-tea did was to make the tea space a lot smaller and, more importantly, enclosed, so in a way severed from immediate nature. Moreover, the interior of that space held nothing of urban elegance but only crude-looking walls and primitive doors. The basic color was dark brown or gray. It was more like the inside of a typical farm house. Most significantly, they created such a space right in the midst of the city, in their preeminently urban environment. Furthermore, the tea utensils used in that space were aesthetically far from, or even almost the opposite to, what had been considered as most refined and beautiful. They struck one as crude or earthy, and perhaps even tasteless. Many tea bowls, for instance, were originally just plain rice bowls used by common people in Korea, only adopted for tea in due course. Rikyu characteristically used a variety of common items found in everyday life

of people, such as a wooden water bucket or a fish basket of bamboo. He even favored plain black bowls, of crude clay, for tea, which was hitherto unheard of in tea aristocratically done.

What was the point of all this? Were those in wabi-tea trying to establish some new aesthetics? No, tea's *raison d'être* was predominantly spiritual. It was, in a word, to transcend urban problems, to overcome our egotism and our alienation from others. True, the pioneers themselves perhaps did not have any such conscious programs. On many occasions they were probably just simply enjoying tea. But, looking back, it is manifest that the underlying current was their concern with the human condition. *Sen no Rikyu no Wabi to wa Nanika (What is Rikyu's Wabi?)* written by Kozu Asao, a revolutionary study of Rikyu, makes it quite clear that the primary motive for his wabi-tea was not aesthetic. Rikyu pursued wabi-tea, not because he found humble-looking spaces or plain items more beautiful than what the aristocrats had been enjoying, but primarily because he wanted to relativize all aesthetic values in tea. Through placing earthiness over urban elegance he overturned the aesthetic scale of his time, so that no tea space nor any item in the tea room might stand out as something special, as superior to other spaces or items. Nothing was allowed to draw attention to itself. It is true that in due course wabi began to assume its own beauty, but at least that was not the primary driving force in tea.

What did all that aesthetic relativizing by Rikyu mean? It meant that Rikyu was actually overturning all the social values cunningly underlying the aesthetic ones. Those who had beautiful objects were naturally socially higher than those who didn't. Then a line would naturally be drawn between haves and have-nots. What if, however, the question of beauty should become only secondary or even nil? Then in a way all the vital social values such as rank, position, wealth would go by the board. And that is exactly what happened, or was to happen, in a tea space. In tea one's social status, class, family heritage, etc. were all made relative, i.e. as such insignificant. Everyone was regarded, and treated, as equal to everyone else. Once in a tea space one was stripped naked, as it were; a warrior was literally not allowed to join tea with his sword on. Even the lord of the region was at times asked to take the last seat at tea, which was something unheard of before. How revolutionary, and how threatening to the establishment, that whole approach was is attested to by the fact that three tea masters, including Rikyu himself, were forced to kill themselves by those in power. For Rikyu the substance of tea was the host and the guests, not the utensils. The personal element was the most crucial. Utensils had to recede so as to bring personal communion to the fore. That is what the way of tea is, or should be, even today. Aesthetics is indispensable for creating a suitable ambience for tea, but what really matters is people.

What matters is people, good. But why wabi? Why is that so crucial a concept in tea? The

word “wabi” seems to have its root in “wabishii (forlorn or lonely)” and “wabiru (apologize).” In what way, then, is tea “forlorn” and what is it that tea is “apologetic” for? Recently I came across a film about a young couple in love. In one scene one of the lovers, after some difficulty in his relationship, grumbles to a friend, “I think love is useless.” To that the friend responds, “That’s why love is delightful. Isn’t love such a joy precisely because it is meaningless?” That innocent line in the movie was like epiphany to me, for it suddenly opened my eyes to what wabi is. Wabi is absence, or privation, of meaning. Of course to call love meaningless isn’t the same as calling it sheer nonsense. Love’s true “meaning” lies in its being meaning-less. The same holds true of wabi. The privation of meaning does not make it utterly nonsensical. No, wabi’s true “meaning” lies in its being beyond any useful meaning or practical worth. What it boils down to is that tea’s wabi is nothing “practical” or “utilitarian.”

A recent dialogue I had with Kim Hono, a potter of unusual talent and a friend, made me acutely aware of that. Kim, a person of genuine tea spirit though himself no practitioner, had commented in our previous conversation that tea for him was hospitality. So I called again to ask him to elaborate on that. What is it about tea’s hospitality that differs from, say, offering a cup of coffee to someone or inviting people over for dinner? Kim answered, “It is like children playing. Children’s play serves no purpose; it has no meaning beyond itself. Tea is like that. It is an adults’ way of playing with others.” Indeed, I felt. Sure children’s play has lots of meaning and use, given a larger cultural context, like character-building, etc. But playing as such has nothing to do with such meaning. The meaning, if any, is only ascribed to it from outside. It is like Lucy of Peanuts when she, on a field trip to an art museum in one episode, says to the other kids, “Let’s try not to have fun. This is supposed to be educational.” Tea is “forlorn” as it is held in a milieu beyond our familiar world of meaning and purpose; it is “apologetic” since it provides us with no self-assuring meaning or use. Many critics hitherto have described wabi as a feeling of contentment, as being happy with what little we have. Or even as positively appreciating such lack of ours and finding peace in our mind. That allegedly is the reason for typical tea utensils or spaces all looking humble and unrefined. Fine, but again why is wabi in that sense so central in tea? The answer is: what wabi “lacks” is the very framework of culture, the very pillars of the world, namely meaning and power. As I see it, all the humble settings of tea are nothing but a reflection of that fundamental lack or privation.

Take those raku bowls by so-called Chojiro, for instance. Did Rikyu start using such bowls on the ground that they were uniquely beautiful? No, on the contrary. He used them because, by the standards of his time, they offered nothing in terms of cultural values, aesthetic or otherwise. No use or meaning could ever be ascribed to such unappealing bowls. The same was true of his humble tea spaces. They, being so humble in appearance and feeling,

carried no particular meaning to those who saw them. Thus the ostensibly meaningless utensils and tea huts of Rikyu carried his message that tea is people, that it is love, in the end. That is, simply of no virtue in society's or culture's eyes. And that very meaninglessness constituted the true meaning of tea for Rikyu and his immediate successors.

Let me illustrate what I mean by "meaningless." Kazuko Watanabe, chairman of the board of a Catholic university, reflects, in a book on her own Christian life: "I may have beautiful flowers in my office. A guest, coming in, may admire them. I then find myself saying that the flowers were given by so-and-so. Now why do I say a thing like that, when nobody is asking you from where or how the flowers are there?" She says such a thing because the flowers, in themselves, are meaningless to her, despite their beauty. Or rather, exactly because they are beautiful their beauty has to have a meaning, a value, a use to her. And that meaning lies in her remark about their being a gift from someone (most likely of some social status!). The flowers are now given direction and purpose in her life, ultimately to bolster her sense of self-importance. Even such an almost trivial scene in daily life reveals our hopeless nature. We crave meaning, and through meaning, power. Now love is the flower of tea, and tea does all it can to keep the flower stripped of all meaning. Why? Because meaning destroys love. The moment I say, "Oh, those flowers were a gift to me by a close friend of mine, Aren't they wonderful?" the beauty of the flowers is lost. Tea is a movement away from meaning, and that "movement away" is wabi.

Tea then is preeminently a spiritual experience; it invites us into a world beyond our mundane values. Into, in a word, a world of love where meaning disappears. The very first pioneer in wabi-tea was Shuko, of whom we in fact seem to know very little, and Rikyu apparently greatly admired him. A letter by Shuko to a disciple of his, known as Letter of Heart, refers to self-conceit or pride as the most undesirable in tea. That alone shows how, from the start of tea, the personal dimension was so crucial. What fosters self-conceit and pride? None other than meaning and power, the very ways of the secular spirit. Tea, if mingled with self-conceit, is no tea at all. That, by the way, is why so-called big gatherings of tea, currently so popular and widely held, are no real tea. Far from being devoid of meaning, they are pregnant with meaning, in the sense that they are in fact "tea events" and "tea demonstrations." Kohei Hata, in his book entitled *Cha no Michi Sutarubeshi (The Way of Tea Shall Perish)*, condemns most of what goes on in the present day world of tea as a fake. It tactfully appears to be tea while in fact it's not. Whenever and wherever rank, status, social honor, etc. are involved meaning and power inevitably underlie. Hata criticizes current tea, not from any antagonism against tea, but from his ardent love of it. He wants tea to return to Rikyu. That return, he maintains, will be achieved through our holding a lot more of small and intimate tea gatherings, free of any control or regulation by the established schools of tea. For that to happen, though, our already brainwashed attitude toward what tea should

be like must be vigorously re-examined and probed into, like our taking sitting seiza, wearing kimono, use of charcoal, or having a traditional tea space almost for granted as necessary conditions for any worthy tea to take place.

But Shuko, toward the end of the above letter, paradoxically states that self-conceit or pride is indispensable for tea. Given his simple but stern words against any inflated self in tea, isn't it contradictory for him to refer to self-inflation as needed for tea? Precisely. And that is where Shuko's, and Rikyu's for that matter, ingenious insight into human nature lies. Granted that wabi-tea is by definition devoid of meaning, for tea to emerge and be actualized in our life it needs our secular energy: meaning and power. For we are not saints. It is like we need popular Christianity as an established religion, in order for us to renounce it. The core of the gospel is Christ Crucified, meaningless and powerless; but in order for Him to be proclaimed as such we need an organized church. And any organization has to conjure up meaning and power to function. So with tea. Tea needs meaning in order to ultimately become meaning-less. Thus it resorts to such "meaningful" slogans as "wa kei sei jaku" "ichi-go ichi-e" and "ichi-za konryu." Tea is all too often naively presented as a suitable way to overcome our egotism and self-alienation, to save urban spirituality from its corruption. That is, we are to overcome it by placing ourselves where humility or humbleness takes the better of us. Where the acts of exchange and substitution among the host and the guests embrace us with humility. There we share and experience the moment of tea as if it were "once in a lifetime," casting our ego aside for once. In tea we live from, or dwell in, one another, if only momentarily. A virtual heaven emerges in tea. All that sounds great and grand, but that's not wabi-tea. That is only our cultural aspiration, full of idealistic meaning, disguised as tea. Tea is love, and love knows no such aspiration. Love remains useless, meaningless, like children playing. How else would we explain Rikyu's putting so much weight on whom to invite to tea? We are to invite only those with whom we feel like playing. Otherwise all sorts of meaning, social and even spiritual, would spoil tea, killing wabi. Or rather, wabi is perhaps in that very realization of ours of tea's innate tension, or self-strife, between meaningfulness and meaninglessness. We need all kinds of meaning to get to non-meaning. Why, we not only spend hours and hours in preparation so "meaningfully," selecting our guests, tea utensils, food and sweets, but also willingly go through the gathering, supposedly held in "meaningful" tea culture, lasting nearly for four hours. All that just to serve or share a bowl of tea with others!

I once invited Dr. and Mrs. Kjell Nordstokke, then visiting Kobe from Norway, to tea at my place. Dr. Nordstokke had done research on the question of hospitality worldwide. In a book on hospitality he defines church as a place of hospitality. Hence his particular interest in tea as the classic way of hospitality in Japan. After the tea Dr. Nordstokke remarked, with feeling, "What a profoundly Christian experience that was!" He had never been a guest at any

intimate tea. That observation of his made a deep impression on me. It clinched or summed up the whole matter: Christianity and tea are concentric. In wabi both come together. Traditionally tea's spirit is ascribed to Zen, focusing on our unity with nature. From the Christian perspective, however, tea's personal spirituality has a far wider basis. It has its roots in the very fact of creation and its spiritual law: no one should live from or for himself. Tea is a spiritual movement back to that inherent law of the created world. To put it differently, it is simply a way to truly delight in creation. It delights, not in our self, but in co-inhering with others. It does so, however, still bearing the scars of our old ego, hence the above tension between "meaningful" tea and "meaningless" tea of wabi. And wabi is always in the danger of becoming fixed and sterile. Take so-called wabi settings of tea, for instance. They purportedly express or enhance the meaninglessness, uselessness, of tea. Once certain milieus or items are made into model expressions of wabi, however, there arises the inevitable temptation to preserve them as something perennial. Wabi then becomes all too precious and rare, only to be found in the sanctum sanctorum of tea school headquarters or in private residences of some renowned tea families. The Konnichi-an of Urasenke or Chojiro's raku bowls are but a few instances of wabi thus eternalized. They are only fossils of wabi, for now "wabi" there is full of precious meaning, all too reverently and stiflingly upheld by tradition!

Seiichi Hatano, in his philosophy of religion, argues that religion enables us to transcend our narrow cultural self, solely bent on self-realization, and to truly encounter others. In what he calls cultural life we are all self-enclosed, and our self is made absolute. We are there simply closed to others. Religion, by placing individuals before "God", liberates us from that illusory, absolutized, self. Our self is relativised before God, and we stand naked, stripped of the facade of cultural and social values. We become reborn as meaning-less. It is then that love becomes possible; we are made human again. For Hatano, religion finds its clearest expression in the Christian concept of love as agape. And in agape reality takes on a different appearance. The New Testament is full of love's paradoxes. More joy in heaven over one repentant sinner than over all righteous men; trivial, insignificant people, unnoticed and rejected, often made more precious in God's eye than anything else. True strength hidden in the weak; real wealth in the poor; divine glory in the darkness of the Cross, so on so forth. Is all this not in essence wabi? The Christian understanding of Christ the City encompasses wabi-tea. Sure tea and the gospel are not the same, but are the two all that different in practice? Wabi may well be one face of that unfathomable reality called God. It may be for this reason that tea can grip those who live in Christianity too. What this may lead us to is a realization that tea, then, can not be all that unique to Japanese culture, that it is something more universal, rooted in human nature. But then the whole way of putting it like this may be wabi. As Shuko allegedly remarked in essence: wabi is like tying a fine horse at the door of a hut. That "hut," at the gate of which tea, a fine horse, is tied, does not have to be just Japan. Not any more so than Zen should be its sole rider.