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Protestant Beginnings in Japan

By Winburn T. Thomas 258pp.

A Century of Protestant Christianity in Japan

By Charles W. Iglehart 384pp.

Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1959

It is very appropriate that two books on the history of Japanese Protestantism were published in the year of 1959, when the celebration of the Protestant Centenary was held in Tokyo.

The first book *Protestant Beginnings in Japan* by Dr. W. T. Thomas covers the first three decades, 1859—1889. The author came to Japan as a missionary in 1933 and stayed here about eight years. This book is his Ph. D. dissertation submitted to the faculty of the Graduate School of Yale University. His main purpose in this monograph is to search out the reasons for both the rapid growth of Protestantism in Japan after 1883 and the recession after 1889. Among other things he finds the direct cause of the rapid expansion in the importuning of the Western powers to Japan, and the direct cause of

the recession in Japan's failure in the treaty revision negotiations. I think his analysis is on the whole good, but I cannot say that it is particularly original. Any intelligent Japanese knew this; only he did not say so openly,

My comments upon this book can be condensed into three points. First, it gives Japanese the impression that it is a story of American missionaries. It is written from the point of view of an American missionary for American readers. It never penetrates deep into the background of the whole historical process, so as to disclose what was going on intricately in the mind of Japanese people at that time. It may be too much to ask that such an investigation be made by an American who lived only eight years in Japan. I urgently feel that the time has come when some Japanese ought to write a

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history of Japanese Protestantism in English. Second, the knowledge of the author is on the whole correct, but his view of the field is too much limited to the work of the Congregational Church in Japan. He should have had a wider outlook and studied the movements of other churches as well. When he treats the social welfare activities in Chapter VI, for example, he does not mention St. Luke's Hospital in Tokyo. And in Chapter IV, in writing about Education, he makes the statement that St. Paul's school was conducted jointly by the English and American Episcopal societies after 1889. But to my knowledge, St. Paul's school never had anything to do with any English church societies. Third, it is a minor matter, but since the author gives a list of Japanese words which are useful for those who want to know the history of the Japanese church but do not have any knowledge of the Japanese language, I would like to suggest that he add one more word to his list. That is, *Fujin Dendoshi*, the literal English translation of which will be "women evangelists."

The second book *A Century of Protestant Christianity in Japan* by Dr. Charles W. Iglehart is an excellent book, lucid and interesting to read. The author, who lived in Japan nearly forty years, really knows Japan. This book is, according to the author's own words, offered for non-professional readers as a brief survey of the history of Protestantism in Japan. However, it is extremely valuable especially for those who desire to know the situation of the Japanese church just before and during World War II. This is a dark spot in the history of the Japanese church; and there are many delicate problems hidden beneath, so that it is very difficult for us Japanese to touch this spot. Dr. Iglehart's way of treating this period is cautious and sympathetic, but also accurate. We cannot help but admire his manner of writing. Quite recently I was asked to write an article on church unity during the war period in Japan; but I had a hard time finding any source materials, because almost all of them were gone, I mean burnt up in the air raids. Therefore, this book by Dr. Igle-

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hart was the only source upon which I could rely, while I was writing the article. I hope it will not be impolite, if I take this opportunity to acknowledge this here.

Finally, if I am allowed to give my own reaction after reading these two books, I must confess that almost all the books on the history of Christianity in Japan written by foreigners so far, do not go deep by enough into the trends of theological thought in Japan. So here again I wait patiently for the emergence of a history of Japanese Protestant thought written by a Japanese in English.

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PROTESTANT BEGINNINGS
IN JAPAN

Winburn T. Thomas

Part One: Japan in the Mid-
Nineteenth Century

- I The Religious Situation
- II The Social Situation

Part Two: The First Three Decades

- III Christianity Re-enters Japan
- IV Education
- V Literature

- VI Social Welfare Activities
- VII The Churches and Evangelism
- Part Three: Rapid Growth then Retardation
- VIII Reasons for the Spectacular Growth, 1883—89
- IX Growth Retarded by Resurgent Nationalism
- X Conclusion

A CENTURY OF PROTESTANT
CHRISTIANITY IN JAPAN

Charles W. Iglehart

- I The Old Japan
Soil and Climate for Protestant Christianity
- II Coming into Modern Life
1853—1882
Protestant Beginnings
- III A Growing Modern Nation-
State 1881—1909
The Church in Modern Society
- IV Expansion to Empire 1909—
1937
The Church Under Responsibility
- V Total War, Defeat, Occupa-
tion 1937—1952
The Church Under the Cross
- VI Renewal and Advance 1952—
1959
Japanese Christianity Faces
the Future