A Konko-kyo Minister's comments

On "Konkō-kyō" by Dr. Delwin Schneider

If one would understand the religious belief of the common people in Japan, one must first of all grasp the actual condition of their life. Generally speaking religion is born out of human life and spreads in that life. Dr. Schneider has put forth considerable effort to express this, but he still gives me an impression of leaving much to be desired. On the one hand, data necessary for understanding the actual condition of the life of the common people in Japan is really scarce, so that it takes considerable time and experience to gain an understanding. On the other hand, Dr. Schneider seems to be preoccupied, from the standpoint of a Christian theologian, with his religious preconceptions and the handling of data.

The common people of Japan, in the first place, are somehow concerned with living, and have sought the Kami and tranquility within this livelihood-centered approach. Therefore, there is, for them, no *apriori* Kami who works upon man. Even where such an expression is used superficially, the fundamental fact is that the worldly experience of the common people has given birth to the Kami and has cut the path of faith. This seems especially difficult for Christians to understand.

Consequently, such a thing as the geneology of the Kami is not an urgent problem for the common people. It is meaningless in this case, especially in regard to Konjin, to inquire into the reality of the Kami as a first premise on the ground of the sameness of Kami's name. What matters is how man has coped with that Kami, and how man has grasped that Kami in his own worldly experience. The passage theistically describing the experience of the founder of Konkō-kyō and that of Nao Deguchi as working from the side of the Kami sounds, therefore, rather nonsensi-

cal in clarifying the belief of the common people in Japan.

Nevertheless, the understanding of the Konkō-kyō doctrine and the effort to grasp Konkō-kyō somehow in its relationship with the religious stream of Japan are worthy of respect. I believe that Konkō-kyō people should, in response to such understanding on the part of Christians, fully utilize this book as a clue to working upon the world of such Christians, to developing the doctrine further, and to opening a way for saving people suffering in such a world. And I further believe that is the way to make the most of Schneider's effort and reciprocate his understanding.

It may be added here that there are many dubious passages in point of translation, and that the fact that many quotations have been revised drastically is academically questionable.

Tokyo Yasushi Hata

Japan's Religious Ferment

By Raymond Hammer (Christian Presence Series)
London: SCM Press Ltd., 1962, pp. 207

Japan's Religious Ferment is an excellent introduction to Japanese religions. Its main limitation is its brevity. Since less than one hundred fifty pages of this handy-size volume are devoted to the text, the discussion of each phase of the subject is necessarily very brief,— too brief in view of the author's knowledge of the field, but eminently satisfactory in view of the audience for which the book was written. Dr. Raymond Hammer, a priest of the Church of England, has been a missionary in Japan of the Church Missionary Society, for the past decade. Morever, he is also a careful scholar who seeks to understand not only the academic side of the religions about which he writes, but also the spirit of the leaders and adherents.

The reader of the volume is made aware at the outset that *Japan's Religious Fermit* is written for Christians, — probably for study

groups composed of young people in the Church of England. The sub-title on the cover is: "Christian Presence Amid Faiths New and Old." Dr. Max Warren in the General Introduction makes it clear that this is a book for Christians and that it is concerned with the fundamental question of Christian attitudes to Japan's traditional and modern faiths. Readers, then, who are negatively predisposed towards a book of this nature should not buy it or read it. It is not intended for them. If, however, they do read it, they will discover how a Christian scholar, who is also a minister, can approach his subject with scholarly detachment, on the one hand, and sympathetic concern, on the other. Dr. Hammer seems to understand what the adherents find in the several faiths and he helps the reader to do the same.

Beginning with an introductory chapter entitled "The Ethos of the laboratory: fundamental attitudes," the author discusses in succeeding chapters Shinto as "The Basic Element" (Chap. II), Buddhism as "The Strong Intruder" (Chap III), and the coalescence of Buddhism and Shinto in "The Transitional Compound" (Chap. IV). In Chapter V the Tokugawa era and Confucianism are treated under "Some Patterns of Behavior: a study in Japanese society and social relationships," and in Chapter VI, A Mingling and a Co-mingling: Japanese and Western culture," the reader is brought up to the Meiji era. Chapter VIII discusses Christianity, which is called the "Non-mixer," Chapter IX presents "The Aftermath of War: the reaction of Shinto and Buddhism," and Chapter X "The New Religions." Finally in Chapter XI, "The Philosopher's Stone," the author gives his own philosophy regarding the Christian and non-Christian faiths. At the end of the volume Appendix I gives statistical data as of 1957, Appendix II gives information on "Religion-State Relations," a brief religious chronology from 552 to 1959, a word list, and some valuable references; and it concludes with a carefully prepared index.

In spite of its limitation in size, *Japan's Religious Ferment* is the best introductory volume available on the total religious situation in

Japan. It is scholarly and, except for a few very minor errors, it is reliable. As an example of the rare errors, the figure 500,000 (p. 96) is too large for the number of Christians in the early 17th century; Catholic scholarship is agreed that the total never exceeded 300,000. And it is incorrect to state that "The Religious Bodies Law . . . gave official recognition to all groups with five thousand members and fifty established churches. Although the Law did give Christianity official recognition along with Buddhism and Shinto, it did not recognize any religious bodies, and in implementing the Law the Ministry of Education declined to recognize more than the Catholic Church and the United Church of Christ in Japan.

W. P. W.

Die Lotus-Lehre und die modernen Religionen in Japan

(The Lotus Doctrine and the Modern Religions of Japan)

by Werner Kohler, Zurich; Atlantis Verlag, 1962, pp. 300.

The author of this new addition to the fast-growing list of works on the New Religions is a professor of the Science of Religion, and of Missiology at the Uuiversity of Heidelberg. Besides being a specialist in the field of religion, he had personal contact with the movements he describes during the years he spent in Japan, teaching at Dōshisha University, Kyoto (Not Tokyo, as erroneously stated on the jacket), and the International Christian University, Tokyo. The author intends to present a general survey of the more important "Modern" religions, to describe their characteristics and to make clear their place in history (p. 13). From a look at the contents it would seem that the author fulfilled his promise.

The first two chapters, one on the characteristics of modern religions in Japan, another on the place of religion in the history of Japan and on religion in Japan today, can be considered as an introduction to the subject. A chapter

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