

The Japan Christian Year Book — 1963

Edited by Chūzō Yamada and Robert Northrup
Tokyo: The Christian Literature Society of Japan (Kyō
Bun Kwan), 1963. 436 pp., statistical tables, ¥ 500
(US \$1.70).

The Japan Christian Year Book and its predecessors during the past half-century and more constitute an invaluable body of source material which no library on Christianity in Japan can afford to be without. In the period prior to World War II it was edited by missionaries and main- tained a generally high level of academic and literary excellence. Beginning in 1950, when its publication was revived, and up through 1957, it was edited by a committee of missionaries appointed by the Fellowship of Christian Missionaries, but the quality of the volumes was

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extremely uneven. There were some in the Fellowship who failed see the value of such a volume at all and there was talk of producing only a directory. The 1956 and '57 issues, for example, had only one article each!

This being the case, pressure was brought on the Fellowship to transfer the editorial responsibility to the National Christian Council in 1958 and since that year the volume has been edited by a committee appointed by the Council. Unfortunately, however, the change was not entirely for the best. If it saved the publication from extinction, it was perhaps worthwhile, but the general quality of the work itself has been generally inferior, including the two volumes edited by this reviewer!

The 1963 volume is one of the better issues to appear in recent years. It has some excellent articles by first-class Christian scholars, but it still leaves much to be desired. Its main defect are the absence of a comprehensive survey of Christian movement in Japan, and adequate coverage of the activities of fundamentalist and "evangelical" groups, both Japanese and missionary. Since the volume includes articles on the Roman Catholic Church and the Japan Orthodox Church, it can rightly call itself "The Japan Christian Year Book," but it will never be fully justified in the use of this title until it gives adequate recognition to the work of these other groups, some of which is of outstanding excellence. W.P.W.