

REVIEWS

**A Man for His Times: The Life and Thought of David Bowman Schneder Missionary to Japan 1887-1938**

*By C. William Mensendiek. Sendai, Japan: [Tōhoku Gakuin], 1972. ii, 194 pp., photographs.*

One of the themes selected by some students of religion is that of the nature and extent of Christian missionary influence in Japan. The present work, though written as a historical study by a missionary with a Ph.D. in ethics, can be recommended as a definite contribution to the literature with which students of this theme should be familiar.

Arranging his material chronologically, the author's main chapters are the following: I. The Making of the Missionary, II. The Young Missionary, III. The Missionary College President, and IV. The Elder Missionary Statesman. An unusual and welcome feature of the book is a thirty-three page appendix

about Dr. Schneder's wife Anna, written in spritely style by one of her daughters, Margaret S. Ankeney.

The book succeeds admirably in communicating not only an understanding of the work the Schneders did and how they did it but also some sense of the responses of Japanese people both to them as persons and to their task of "Christianizing the nation," i.e., transforming society in accordance with Christian standards—in this case through building up what is now the university of Tohoku Gakuin. It also locates them in the context of U.S.-Japanese relations of that time.

Readers of this journal may be interested to learn that Dr.

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Schneder, at a time when many missionaries regarded non-Christian religions as enemies to be overcome, was inclined, rather, to see the traditional religions of Japan, particularly Amida Buddhism, as "preparations for the gospel." Dr. Mensendiek puts it this way: "His nature was to appreciate goodness in whatever form it expressed itself, looking not so much at outward labels but at the inner reality. In this respect, he was in the vanguard of his missionary generation, although this spirit did not lead him into dialogue or relationship with religious leaders of non-Christian faiths. In this respect, too, he was quite representative of the Christian missionary movement even until today" (p. 149).

By way of criticism, I felt, in reading this book, that the author presented Dr. and Mrs. Schneder in too heroic a light. They seem too good for this world. One wonders if they ever suffered inner doubts, if

they never trembled on the brink of the abyss, if their feet were made of something other than clay. The author is not entirely uncritical, but the work as a whole seems perilously close to a panegyric. Yet even if this criticism is just, it must be tempered by an acknowledgment that the Schneders portrayed in this book are manifestly people of great depth of character whose lives are well worth recording—and eulogizing.

Dr. Mensendiek has done a superb job of weaving his materials into a coherent and substantial whole. The book would be more useful to scholars, though, if it had been set up to include the normal scholarly apparatus—notes, bibliography, and index. Copies may be ordered from Tōhoku Gakuin Daigaku, Tsuchitōi, Sendai 980 (¥ 1,000 postpaid) or from the United Church Board for World Ministries, 475 Riverside Drive, New York, N. Y. 10027 (\$ 4.00 postpaid). (D.R.)