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Doi Masatoshi. *Search for meaning through interfaith dialogue*. Tokyo: Kyo Bun Kwan, 1976. 202 pp. Notes. ¥ 3,000 (US \$10).

Doi Masatoshi has been professor of systematic theology and history of Christian thought at Doshisha University School of Theology (Kyoto) since 1956 and concurrently director of the NCC Center for

the Study of Japanese Religions since 1965. He is active in Catholic-Protestant ecumenism, and as regards the interfaith dialogue taking place in Japan, he is certainly one of the main animators and probably the most effective organizer. It is from this existential background—as a member of a small Christian minority trying to spread the gospel in the midst of religious giants with rich indigenous traditions, and as a theologian reflecting on this experience within a thoroughly Protestant tradition—that the present work arose and should be seen.

In his *Protestant theologies in modern Japan* (1965), Charles H. Germany situates Professor Doi's work in a present-day concern among Japanese theologians to make theology relevant to the Japanese situation and especially to the Christian convert. He points out that this trend is sometimes referred to as "theology of mission," going on to say that "the search for theology which gives meaning to existence, to historical reality, is resulting for them in a theology of mission, a theology which seeks to communicate the gospel to modern man in modern society in such a way as to give meaning to his life" (p. 217).

The present volume offers, in part 1, "The theology of meaning: An introduction to the theology of mission," a translation of a short monograph originally published in Japanese in 1963, and in part 2, a collection of miscellaneous writings whose origins are not always indicated but which find their unity in a central concern: interfaith dialogue.

At the very beginning of part 1 the author says, "The purpose of the current essay is to communicate the truth of the Bible more deeply to modern man by utilizing the concept of meaning as the primary concept of systematic theology" (p. 11). It is, therefore, clear from the beginning that Professor Doi does not limit his concern to a theology of mission as one, subordinate branch of theology, but envisages the whole of theology as centered, ultimately, in the concept of meaning. In that vein he delimits his concept of meaning in relation to "the main concepts of modern theology; namely, the various ideas of value, truth, personal encounter, the word of God, and being" (p. 30).

This is not the place to investigate the extent to which this concept could prove fruitful for other branches of theology, not least because the author shows us his notion at work only in the field where its inspiration undoubtedly lies: mission, indigenization, and interfaith dialogue. Professor Doi wants "an apologetic theology ... pertinent

to our boundary situation" (p. 80). "The gospel must enter into a correlation with the Japanese consciousness of meaning..." (p. 48). He therefore rejects several (German Protestant) theologies. Wanting to avoid the pitfalls of liberal theology with its subordination of God to man's interpretation, he rejects the concept of "value" as carrying too anthropocentric and pragmatic a connotation—and likewise every shade of purely rationalistic truth. He also takes a stand, however, against the Barthian school that long dominated the Japanese theological scene. Though affirming an intention "to uphold the supremacy of the transcendental element over against the existential" (p. 29), he stresses the "correlation of revelation and faith," "the subject's existential participation in the ultimately meaningful event..." (p. 35). There is no such thing as "naked revelation." Revelation is only "consummated" in connection with "the existential subject's consciousness of meaning" (p. 28).

This correlation is, admittedly, a highly dialectical one (p. 48), but its reality enables us to reject all one-sided objectivism and dogmatism and to give man his rightful place in God's salvific plan. When, moreover, sufficient stress is laid on the social and cultural conditioning of man, the legitimacy of and necessity for the "incarnation" of revelation into the different concrete circumstances of man is vindicated, and Kraemer's dilemma (acts of revelation *or* religious experiences and ideas) is overcome.

If, in the foregoing, the concept of meaning represents the "subject's receptiveness" to objective revelation, it also manifests another dimension: the objectifiable, communicable side of revelation. Following Buber, revelation is often presented as an absolutely unique event, and "personal encounter" as the only concept which "explains" it. Here our author insists on "the universal validity of revelation's content of meaning" (p. 66): revelation is a "meaningful event" (p. 29), "an event which possesses a definite structure of meaning" (p. 26). Thus it does not exclude ontology and can become the object of a science of theology as well as of dialogue with other religions.

Having thus laid the groundwork for a theology of mission, the author offers us, in part 2, twelve mutually independent essays. They range over theoretical considerations, factual accounts, and practical hints, but find their unity in their common concern: the Christian mission in Japan and its attitude toward Japan's indigenous culture and

religions. To quote a few titles of the essays I personally found most stimulating: "The nature of encounter between Christianity and other religions as witnessed on the Japanese scene" (pp. 71-81), "The indigenization of Christianity in Japan" (pp. 111-125), "Interfaith dialogue: Methodological reflections" (pp. 126-135), and "Religion and nature" (pp. 182-192). I cannot think of summarizing them all here. Instead, I shall concentrate on some of their major ideas. Though I am in perfect agreement with their general trend, I prefer, for the sake of further dialogue, to lift up for discussion a few "items with which I find fault."

Differences of opinion between Professor Doi and myself result, for the most part, from differences in background. As a Catholic student of philosophy and religion, my general impression is the following: Professor Doi very ably points out the direction Christian theology must take (and the extremes it should avoid) in order to be able to enter into dialogue with the great Japanese religions and to engage in indigenization without compromising the uniqueness of revelation. Christianity is not to divorce soteriology from the doctrine of creation, not to detach the human subject completely from nature, not to exalt the personal quality of revelation and faith to the point of excluding not only the social dimension of human life but also all ontology. And I rejoice in the fact that in all these points Professor Doi's ideas come very near the "traditional" Catholic position. I venture to submit, however, that greater familiarity with what could be called the medieval Christian tradition would permit the author to find more similarities between Christianity and traditional Japanese ideas and to walk with more assurance the path he wants to pursue as a Japanese. For if Protestant theologies have the advantage of linking up with modern ideologies, it seems to me equally true that the modern history of Western ideas is, in many respects, a very one-sided development and one that does not always represent the real *Lebensgefühl* of "the man in the (Western) street"—and that, moreover, the outlook of medieval (and to some extent of modern) Western man is in many respects much nearer that of the Japanese.

What I am primarily referring to is, of course, the exorbitant exaltation of the "subject" in modern philosophy and the concomitant depreciation of nature and being. Consequently, though I am aware that there certainly are differences in Eastern and Western views of nature, and though I agree with the author that "it must be admitted

that Christian theology has never developed an adequate doctrine of nature, and it is an urgent task for Christianity in the East to develop a well-rounded theology of nature" (p. 182), I would like to contest the all-too-facile opposition Professor Doi (and most of his countrymen) pose between the Western and Japanese attitudes toward nature. The statement that "in western civilization nature is something to be conquered by reason" (p. 123) by itself is simply not true because it is only a partial truth. It would, for example, be child's play to find, for the quotations from Japanese poems given on p. 189 to illustrate the Japanese sense of familiarity with nature, matching quotations from Dutch literature not only from medieval and modern times but also from the present day.

I also find the following assertions questionable to say the least: "Man and nature were given special categories for the first time in the hierarchical comprehension of beings in the Christian middle ages" (p. 186). Is this not a convenient forgetting of Plato's theories, toned down but nevertheless reflected in Aristotle's distinctions among *anima vegetativa-sensitiva-intellectiva*, and especially of the Neoplatonic speculations to which medieval hierarchical comprehension is clearly indebted? Again, "here [that is, in the Christian middle ages], nature is completely stripped of its religious veil" (p. 186). I submit that what Professor Doi says later on about the Christian view of nature (pp. 189-192) is a much more fitting description of the medieval view of nature, as in the statement, "turning to the relationship between man and nature, there is not only the relationship of the ruler and the ruled but also the relationship of solidarity" (p. 190).

Medieval theology may not have sufficiently elaborated its view of nature, but it certainly offers a rich and delicately balanced perspective. The following two texts are suggestive in this regard. "In the different parts of the universe each creature exists for its own act and perfection; *secondly*, the less noble creatures exist for the sake of the nobler creatures—what is below man exists for the sake of man. But *further*, all creatures exist for the perfection of the whole universe. And still *further*, the whole universe with all its parts is ordered towards God as its end, insofar as in them through some imitation the divine goodness is represented to the glory of God. It should not be forgotten, however, that on top of this the reason-endowed creatures have God as their end in a special way— God whom they can reach by their actions, knowing and loving" (St. Thomas, *S. Th.*, Ia, q. LXX,

a.2.res.). St. Bonaventure calls nature the house God built for man and says, "All the parts of the universe must mutually adapt, and the dwelling and the dweller must be in harmony: to man created good a good and peaceful world corresponds; when man falls, also the world must deteriorate;... and when man is consummated, the world comes to rest" (*Breviloquium*, p. 7, c. 4, n. 3).

I would like, in the second place, to comment on the chapter "The indigenization of Christianity in Japan," which is especially thought-provoking and boldly asks three fundamental questions: (1) "Is it possible to develop a Japanese-Christian pattern of respect for the deceased without falling into animism?" (p. 123). (2) "Can a closer relationship between Christianity and nature be developed... without falling into pantheism?" (p. 124). (3) "Can a Japanese symbolism be introduced... without falling into idolatry?" (p. 124).

Christian theologians should certainly take up these questions in the near future, and the first problem to be tackled seems to me the following: are these questions the right ones? In other words, are the juxtapositions implied in Professor Doi's formulation justified? In my opinion, older Christian traditions can, again, shed much light here. Lack of space, however, permits me to make only a few, necessarily superficial remarks. In this chapter, as elsewhere, the author is inclined to place the beginning of Christianity (and of indigenization) in 1859 (pp. 112, 118 et passim). Some venerable ancestors might not like that. Again, when he speaks (most interestingly) about "analogies between the representative types of Christian piety and the religious background of Japan" (pp. 119-120), Professor Doi mentions only Buddhist and Protestant types. Shinto and Catholic piety are left out in the cold.

My "critical invitations to further dialogue," however, should not give the reader the wrong impression. This book is a very important contribution to interfaith dialogue, partly because it has been provided with a balanced theological foundation but even more because it is not a desk job but a product of participation in the "battlefield of reconciliation." To indicate all the ideas I found particularly refreshing would lead me too far afield. Let me mention only a few. The remark made by Professor Doi in connection with Hendrik Kraemer's work should be taken to heart by all theologians: "I am inclined to believe that a theology of religion alone cannot do justice to the reality of other religions. It needs objective knowledge of other religions as

a corrective ..." (p. 76). Important also is the remark: "If a religion is a unique formation centering around commitment or experience unique to itself, then, religious dialogue must be that between those believers who are fully committed to their own religions"—an encounter in which scientists of religion can play only a mediating role (p. 131).

We can only hope that in the years to come Professor Doi will share more of the fruits of his unique experience and theological reflection with the English-reading world.

As a postscript, I should like to make few remarks about the translation. In Dr. A. L. Nations, Professor Doi found an unusually competent translator. Even the best of translators, however, like the proverbial monkey that sometimes falls from the tree, occasionally slips up. Readers will be well advised to be on guard at a few points: (1) On p. 16, the order between the ultimately meaningful event and the consciousness of the event should be *irreversible* (*tentōsubekarazaru*) and not: not irreversible.

(2) On p. 19, Professor Doi might find it impossible to avoid *value judgments* in theology, but he is free not to make use of the *concept of value* (*kachi no gainen*).

(3) On p. 33, Husserl's *noema* cannot be translated *mind* (and Professor Doi himself does not translate it).

(4) On p. 37, it is not Professor Doi who says that theology is *the* "self-transcendent" element in the existence of the Church. The Japanese text admits of an interpretation whereby, for example, prophetism would be seen as *the* element of self-transcendence.

(5) On p. 43, the translator seems to locate the importance of church history in its being the scene of the theological enterprise, but Professor Doi merely makes the point that church history is extremely important for the theological enterprise.

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