

## Editor's Notes

The 1993 theme of “Women, Religion and Society” introduces our readers to several Japanese women authors—Christian and others—who offer various perspectives on several questions concerning women in religion. The topic is a contentious and emotion-laden one in diverse religious traditions for it touches upon many dimensions of faith-filled life: doctrinal and institutional, moral and political, metaphorical and imaginative. The concerns of religiously committed women are many but they are not and should not be limited to women alone. They demand the attention, energy and commitment of all peoples of faith.

Our authors are representative of Evangelical, Buddhist, Shinto and Roman Catholic traditions. Their insights and analyses are varied yet provocative, and they all contribute to a deeper understanding of the global nature of the concerns of women in religion. It is our hope that by providing a forum for Japanese perspectives on this issue, the global discourse may be furthered.

The first article by Minato Akiko outlines the history of the women's movement in Japan. Contrasting the women's liberation movement found in Western countries with the women's independence movement of Japan, Minato highlights the developmental differences between Western and Japanese feminism. She identifies some of the cultural and social barriers to full realization of women's independence and, after examining the influence of Christian feminism on the independence movement, Minato

describes the status of Japanese Christian women today.

Ōgoshi Aiko reexamines the thought of Shinran, one of the most influential figures of Japanese Buddhism, with regard to women in her article on women and sexism in Japanese Buddhism. Commonly portrayed as the man who made salvation for women possible within Buddhism, the Shinran of Ōgoshi's study emerges as a sexually conflicted religious teacher. Shinran's image of woman condemns her to being the object of sexual desire as the means of obtaining salvation.

Okano Haruko examines the image, role and position of women in Shinto and finds that a progressive disownment of the power of women led to their exclusion from religious life and the loss of their autonomy.

The article by Horiguchi Ikiko on the metaphorical language used for God moves us beyond much of the polemical debate swirling around Christian God-language and situates that language in the fundamental nature of metaphor. Horiguchi examines both the masculine and feminine metaphors for God found in the Christian scriptures and argues that the masculine needs to be counterbalanced by the feminine if Christians are to have a more holistic understanding of the divine. She argues further that spatial and temporal metaphors as found in scripture are also needed for this more holistic portrayal of God.

Morimura Nobuko interprets the Genesis story of Tamar and Judah from a feminist perspective. By focusing on Tamar and what she stood to gain or lose by her dangerously

unorthodox actions, Morimura criticizes the male-centered paradigm which condemns Tamar's seeming promiscuity but absolves Judah's selfishly unjust behavior. Against the fabric and fiber of Tamar's story, we are able to reassess the situation of many such women even today who are driven to desperate choices in order to secure life.

Our last major article by Ikegami Yoshimasa examines a specific case of inculturation in Okinawa. Using the case-study of an evangelical Protestant church founded in Okinawa, Ikegami explores how a specific church has reorganized its systems of religious meaning in a search for the solutions to the tensions evident in the interaction of indigenous Okinawan shamanism and an emerging industrial society.

In a review of Christian institutions in Japan, Hallam C. Shorrock offers a loving look at International Christian University, its history, goals and challenges.

Our "Perspectives" department has two articles. The first by Clark Offner presents one pastor's view of the challenge of interreligious

dialogue and how he and his congregation are striving to respond to it in a positive fashion. A second article by James W. Heisig offers an intriguing view on ecological approaches and problems in Japan.

Book Reviews and Notes, a review of current Christian periodical literature, the Christian Year in Review, and current denominational statistics make up our regular features. In addition, we are providing in this issue a thematic index to the *Japan Christian Quarterly* since 1955.

Sadly, we begin our 1993 issue with a tribute to Douglas P. Mikell, late managing editor of both the *Japan Christian Quarterly* and the *Japan Christian Review*. Doug died very suddenly in January 1993 and leaves all of us—wife, daughter, family, friends and colleagues—mourning his loss and missing his presence and insight. David L. Swain, former editor, colleague and friend, pays moving tribute to the meaning of Doug's life and work.

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