

Book Reviews

Straitjacket Society: An Insider's Irreverent View of Bureaucratic Japan

Miyamoto Masao, MD

Forward by Itami Jūzō

Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1994.

197pp. Hardback.

*Reviewed by J. Mark Ramseyer,
The University of Chicago, Chicago*

This book is fun, readable, and cheap. Author-protagonist Miyamoto Masao studied medicine in New York. He liked the city, and stayed several years more to work. As a quintessential yuppie-in-training, however, he did not just do medicine. He also acquired a lover, a nose for Bordeaux and a taste for designer suits. All this in tow, he eventually returned to Japan for a prestigious career at the Ministry of Health and Welfare. Alas, it was a prestigious bust. He wrote the best-seller of which this book is an edited translation, and promptly blew his bureaucratic career. Fact or fiction—he claims this is all fact—it makes for a great read.

As the book opens, Miyamoto is quarantine officer for the port of Kobe. He has no responsibilities, for no one thinks him responsible. Once a fast-track bureaucrat, he has landed in this deadest of the dead-end jobs. From his Kobe desk, he begins his flashback about how all this came to be. As he explains it, the moral is simple: true intellectuals have no place in the Japanese bureaucracy. While abroad, he had learned to cherish his own preferences, to think independently, and to speak freely. A trag-

ic mistake it was, for Japanese bureaucrats cannot deal with men so free-spirited and individualistic. Confronted in him with a man who thought for himself, they shipped him off to their in-house Gulag.

Much of the tale's delight lies in how Miyamoto describes the mindless and tasteless conformity he found in the government. He revels in stories about how bureaucrats stay late night after night, watching television, drinking beer, and waiting for calls from the Diet that may never come. He mocks their low-brow tastes in food and dress. He proudly details the elaborate scheme he invented to take a vacation to which all bureaucrats were legally entitled but which only he dared take. And he graphically recounts their group outings to the *onsen* (hot spring), their drunken dances over dinner, and their fraternity house fascination with pornographic videos. Miyamoto's Diet members are idiots, but his bureaucrats are conformist child prodigies who can run the country but who never came to terms with adolescence.

This book is a great way to kill an afternoon at the beach. Unfortunately, Miyamoto would have it be more. As a professional psychoanalyst and amateur political scientist, he would have us consider it an Important Book. Too bad for him—for it does not support the two hypotheses he most wants to prove: that Japan is a fundamentally conformist society, and that bureaucrats ultimately run Japan. Take each in turn.

CONFORMITY

To explore what the book says about Japanese conformity, consider why Miyamoto

landed in Kobe. As he tells it, the Ministry killed his career because it (and Japan generally) is so brutally conformist. Now, Japan may indeed be conformist and the Ministry brutally so, but how the Ministry treated Miyamoto tells us nothing about the issue. While supposedly working there, Miyamoto wrote and published the elaborately bad-taste polemics he recounts here. Ask yourself whether so classically American an institution as a large corporate law firm would promote a young associate who wrote such essays? Or whether the University of Chicago would tenure a junior professor who did? Or even whether the Presbyterian mission board would retain such a missionary? Others can speak for the Presbyterians, but I am pretty sure Miyamoto would not have lasted long either at a law firm or at the University of Chicago.

In fact, Miyamoto did much more than publicly embarrass the Ministry. He told his (poorly paid) bureaucratic colleagues that back in New York he made ten times as much money. He flaunted Italian suits they could never afford. And he incessantly griped about overtime. When his colleagues killed time during the late-night Diet sessions by drinking beer, he went to a nearby French restaurant and sipped wine. When they planned a weekend at the onsen, he refused to go unless they gave him Monday off. And when they passed him a pin-up magazine on one of the weekend trips, he replied (p. 54):

These photos emphasize sex in a licentious sort of way; if the photographer had let his individuality interact more with the model, they'd be more alive, wouldn't they?

Huh? Back in New York, he claims, his employer would happily have promoted him. Maybe—but to me that is reason enough to stay in Chicago.

Nonetheless, an American law firm probably would not have ostracized Miyamoto the

way the Ministry did, and it is worth asking why. I doubt it is because American lawyers "are accustomed from a very early age to using logic in their dealings with one another and have accordingly mastered techniques of controlling their anger and envy" (p. 42). I suspect it is because they would have fired him. Not having him around, they would have had no reason to ostracize him. Perhaps, in other words, the difference between an American firm and the Japanese Ministry is not the greater American individualism. Perhaps it is the Japanese civil service rules against firings.

BUREAUCRATIC SUPREMACY

Miyamoto would have us believe that bureaucrats are the masters of Japan. "It is no exaggeration to say that the Diet is the highest power of the state in name only," he writes. "In actuality, it is little more than a branch of the bureaucracy" (p. 111). This is not a theory Miyamoto invented. It is a notion observers of Japan routinely advance. To prove the point, however, Miyamoto primarily just notes how bureaucrats draft the laws that legislators pass and script the speeches that legislators make.

Suppose now that Miyamoto were dead wrong. Suppose that the majority party in the Diet firmly controlled the bureaucracy. Then ask whether the legislators in that party would write their own bills and speeches. The answer is probably "no," for if the Diet controlled the bureaucracy, then the majority party could use it as its private staff. Because it ultimately ran the bureaucracy, it would staff it with people whom it trusted and could demand that they write the bills and speeches that it needed. It could even ask them to look routinely for new initiatives that would promote its (the party's) own electoral interests.

In short, a party controlling a legislature would generally control the bureaucracy—and controlling the bureaucracy, would

generally use it exactly the way Miyamoto describes. It would have bureaucrats draft statutes because it stacked the bureaucracy with loyal and capable people. It would have them write speeches for just the same reason. And it would pass the bills they drafted because they drafted the bills it wanted to pass.

Indeed, several passages in this book suggest just this counter-hypothesis. According to Miyamoto, for example, when bureaucrats write a Prime Minister's script, they "cover every angle [they] can think of, knowing that a slip-up could well cost one of [them] a promotion" (p. 40). They treat the other legislators with deference as well, for the "Diet has absolute sway over every member of the government bureaucracy.... For some reason, bureaucrats respond to Diet members with unconditional obedience. Requests for materials cause general pandemonium, disrupting normal operations entirely" (pp. 28–9).

Crucially, however, bureaucrats show this deference only toward the legislators who control their careers: those in the majority party. Those in the minority parties they treat with disdain (p. 29):

A representative of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), for example, who might have sway over office personnel decisions, receives an extraordinarily thorough reply, with page after page of extra information that no one is ever likely to read. At the opposite extreme is the Japan Communist Party (JCP), which gets no more information than the average person could get with a minimum of effort. These are not bureaucrats who independently make policy. These are bureaucrats who answer loyally the bidding of majority legislators.

Miyamoto's story is lots of fun. It is too bad he took himself so seriously, for it could have been even more fun. When he pillories bureaucrats and brags about his elaborate vacation schemes, the book is genuinely

amusing. And one should accept it as just such a book. This is not a book for which the realistic test is whether the author will win the Pulitzer equivalent or a tenured spot at the University of Tokyo. It is a book for which the test is whether it matches a Stephen King for an afternoon on the beach. To be honest, it does not; but it does pass the hours painlessly enough and spares one the nightmares a good King generates. In the end, that is not a bad deal.

Religious Pluralism and Truth: Essays on Cross-Cultural Philosophy of Religion

Thomas Dean, ed.

Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995. xii, 271pp. Hardback
us\$19.95. (pbk.).

*Reviewed by Joseph S. O'Leary,
Sophia University, Tokyo*

Though these essays date from the 1970s and early 1980s, their publication is beautifully timed, for the question of truth is imposing itself more and more as the central one in religious studies. Faced with Aum Shinrikyō, with its misery of madness and crime that carries the mask of religion, even government bureaucrats are being forced to discern true from false religion, and even sociologists are likely to find their value-free observations contaminated by worries about truth. In the more genteel sphere of interreligious ecumenism, the question of truth has proved more troubling than one would have wished. The generous recognition of a parity among the world's great faiths, all of them true in their distinctive styles, has been contested by such thinkers as Paul Griffiths, Gavin D'Costa, Kenneth Surin, Joseph DiNoia and Harold Netland, who insist on the logical incompatibility between the truth-claims of different religions. In these debates a fundamental philosophical

issue is emerging: the question of the nature of truth. This opens onto the discussions of truth in analytic philosophy since Frege and Tarski, which have been particularly intense in recent years, as well as onto the post-structuralist questioning of the very possibility of truth in Foucault and Derrida and the pragmatist skepticism of Rorty.

The present collection offers an easy descent into this maelstrom, mapping out the lines of inquiry in a relatively simple and perspicuous way and providing a historical perspective on how the questions that now haunt us have been insinuated over the past twenty years. The approaches represented can be divided into three types. Some essays aim at hard-nosed logical rationality; others develop more global phenomenological and hermeneutical considerations; and a final group focuses on the interplay of specific historical traditions. Each approach has its characteristic strengths: the first challenges us to clear thinking, the second to generous understanding, the third to engagement in the "loving struggle" between concrete perspectives; this third approach is also, to my mind, the one that is most instructive philosophically. But each approach has its characteristic danger: the first can fall into rationalist insensitivity to the specific texture of religious languages; the second can be disappointingly general; the third can become an encyclopedism in which the traditions studied fail to interact.

LOGICAL RATIONALITY

Among the logically minded, William J. Wainwright defends the importance of propositional truth in religion. He questions whether standards of truth and rationality vary to a great degree from tradition to tradition. Moreover, "even if different traditions employ different standards of truth and rationality, it does not follow that there are no universally valid standards in terms

of which the doctrines and arguments of these traditions can be assessed" (p. 78). He argues that religious doctrines can be formulated as metaphysical theses: "Christian doctrines can be more or less adequately expressed in the concepts and categories of, say, Aristotelian, Platonic, Cartesian or Heideggerian metaphysics" (p. 79). I should say this sentence shows insensitivity to the texture of biblical language.

Joseph A. DiNoia seems to have a rather rigid conception of "the logic of the Christian scheme" that forces him to view other religions as having only partial truth and as surpassed by Christianity:

If, as the Christian scheme seems to teach, the true aim of life is salvation as union with the Trinity, and if membership of the Christian community is the divinely willed means given to attain this aim, then it would not be consistent with central Christian doctrines to ascribe to other religious communities a value equivalent to that ascribed to the Christian community. Thus, although central Christian doctrines affirm the universality of salvation, they also assert that the Christian community has privileged public access to knowledge about this aim of life and the means to attain it (p. 122).

This view raises worries about "other religious persons' prospects of attaining the aim of salvation despite their persistence in patterns of life that seem to point them in other and possibly wrong directions" (p. 124). These headaches could be dissolved by a deconstruction of such notions as "salvation," "the Trinity," and "divine will," homonyms that mask a great diversity of historical conceptions and that in any case point to referents that far transcend the capacities of human speech and conceptualization. The alternative paths of saving truth cut out in other religious traditions may have more than a "preparatory role" (p. 123); they may help Christian discourse

to make better sense by de-absolutizing it and bringing it back into relation to the wider spiritual adventure of humanity. DiNoia's uncritical acceptance of patristic attitudes to the Greco-Roman heritage, and especially to Judaism, is a poor basis for interreligious negotiations today: "The Christian community's teachings about Judaism's providential relationship to it are generalized in this literature to explicate the invalidation, suppression and fulfillment of all the religions of classical antiquity" (p. 129).

GLOBAL INTERPRETATION

On the hermeneutical and phenomenological front, Ninian Smart pleads for a philosophy of world views that will have a humanizing effect as it extends "our understanding of the symbolic phenomenology of everyday life" (p. 30). Mary Ann Stenger offers Gadamer's "fusion of horizons" as a model for cross-cultural understanding. Conrad Hyers sees religions as ways of dealing with the ambiguity of human experience and argues that, given time, each religion will eventually take up almost all the possible positions on any of the fundamental questions, so that the ecumenical problem of unity-in-diversity arises even within a single tradition.

INTERPLAY OF TRADITIONS

The concrete, historical approach is represented by Frederick J. Streng, who argues that "formulations of ultimate reality...are best understood as part of a process which places valuing at the center of experiencing" (p. 206); they are hodological truths, truths of a path, rather than direct ontological statements. He contrasts Tillich's path, which is centered on being, Hellmut Wilhelm's holistic grasp of moving forces within a concrete life-situation (based on the *I Ching*), and Nishitani's "field of emptiness." The three "structures of ultimate transformation" are well described, but Streng has no pro-

posals to make about the possibility of a critical interplay between them. He is content to note "how different formulations function in order to expose and evolve what is real" (p. 222).

In contrast, Ashok K. Gangadean dramatically focuses, in somewhat Einsteinian diction, on the puzzle posed by the incommensurability of religious worlds: "The incommensurability of worlds is synonymous with the relativity of sense and reference. This disclosure of comparative ontology leads to skepticism concerning the possibility of intelligible transformations between worlds" (p. 229). He claims that what is divided at the level of categorial logic is reunited at the higher level of transcategorial meditative thinking, where "the logical atomism of meaning which structures categorial thought in terms of fixed essence and identity as well as rigid designation melts in the light of fluid organic reason" (p. 240). Much of this is the purest metaphysical moonshine: "This logical space turns upon itself in a virtuous circle in which the infinite distance is the point at which one begins: 'here' is 'everywhere,' 'now' is 'everywhen,' and 'I' specifies everything and nothing" (p. 240). The parts of this account that make sense would apply just as well to categorial thought, less rigidly conceived. Gangadean's picture of categorial thought as bound to logical atomism and rigid univocity can be corrected by recourse to the later Wittgenstein or to Derrida. The allegedly transcategorial "poetry of meditative speech" (p. 241) could be mapped quite well in Heideggerian categories. A pluralism informed by Wittgenstein, Derrida and Heidegger allows a fluid dialogal coming and going between different philosophical and religious worlds, and seems to discredit Gangadean's claim that such movement between worlds is possible only in "meditative logical space" in which "the differentiations of diverse worlds are recognized, but now in a context of trans-

categorial unity: there is, indeed, one world" (p. 243).

Raimundo Panikkar, like Gangadean, is aware that though a universal philosophy of religion is not available, "the human spirit seems unable to stop short of a certain unity which appears necessary, indeed vital, to it" (p. 40). But he locates this not in mystical insight but as a transcendent goal always beyond our reach. There is no neutral ground outside of the "dialogical dialogue" between specific traditions, nor can religions be fitted into a dialectical scheme: "among all the human events on earth, the dynamism of religions especially cannot be reduced to dialectical games" (p. 41). He seeks "the passage from a *de facto* plurality to a *de jure* pluralism" (p. 42).

Harold Coward points to certain limits of pluralism: the barriers to dialogue between people proceeding from different visions of the world, the impossibility for any thinker to survey the various religions or to attain a completely objective outlook. These limits throw us back on our finitude, and they also mean that "there is no longer any ground upon which a theologian can make absolute claims for a particular theological position" (p. 57); "all future theologizing in the sense of establishing ultimate claims to knowledge must cease" (p. 58). Troubling for the Christian here is that in the Bible it is God and Christ (not bumptious theologians ignorant of their own finitude) who are represented as making ultimate claims for themselves. Other religions are equally likely to find this curtailment of ultimate claims unacceptable. Can we not have a pluralism that respects the religions' conviction of being vehicles of ultimate truth? Coward grants that "in all religions there is experience of a reality that transcends human conception" and that this "particular experience" may "function in an absolute sense as the validating criterion for our own personal religious experience" (p. 59). But what is the meaning of "absolute" in this sentence?

The word is "used simply to describe the felt nature of commitment to the transcendent through a particular personal experience" (p. 60). If it is only a feeling, it is not absolute; if a valid perception of the absolute is involved, then the finite, instrumental and perspectival status of religions is no barrier to the making of absolute claims.

New Directions in Mission & Evangelization 2: Theological Foundations

James A. Scherer and Stephen B. Bevans, eds
New York: Orbis Books, 1994. 215pp.

Reviewed by John E. Schmidt, Kobe

New Directions in Mission & Evangelization 2: Theological Foundations is the second of the Orbis Books "New Directions" series, which offers collections of previously published articles and papers from a variety of sources dealing with the church's mission in the postmodern world. The intent is to provide students and mission scholars with convenient, inexpensive access to important, current missiological literature. In this I think it succeeds admirably.

This volume focuses on recent efforts to explore the theological foundations for the church's missionary efforts. The essays and statements are grouped into five general categories. Part I, *The Nature of Mission*, deals with the biblical, ecclesiastical, and Christological foundations of mission in today's world. This is the longest, and for me the most thought-provoking section of the book. In it are selections from Orlando Costas, Leslie Newbigin and David J. Bosch, among others representing Anabaptist, Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic communities.

Repeatedly I found this section not only informative but also personally challenging. For example, in "Christian Mission in the

Americas," although it seemed to be one of the more dated selections in the book, Orlando Costas presents a theology of mission, with a forceful discussion of how it relates to the ecumenical mission ventures of North and Latin American churches. In a superb paper entitled "The Vulnerability of Mission," the late David Bosch tackles the issue of theodicy and the missionary significance of the cross. In "Thy Will Be Done," a reprint of a plenary address given at a 1989 conference sponsored by the World Council of Churches' Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, Bishop Anastasios Yannoulatos of Androussa explores the missiological meaning of the prayer "thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." Viewing it not only in the context of the Lord's Prayer, but also in the context of Jesus' own use of these words as he approached the cross, he sets forth a contemporary understanding of mission, and powerfully exhorts us in our personal discipleship, as well. The style of every paper is not as obviously hortatory as these, but each contains elements that will stimulate serious reflection.

Part II traces the historical development of mission theology in various church traditions. Three articles focus on twentieth-century developments in missiological thinking in the evangelical, Roman Catholic and conciliar streams. Focusing on Lausanne, Vatican II and the WCC Assemblies, the authors give an analysis of the dynamic shifts that have occurred in our understanding of mission, especially in the last thirty years. Prominent in each article are the changes occurring in the understanding of the task of evangelism.

The third section focuses more on missionaries themselves. In "Missionary Myth Making," Anthony Gittins examines the "myths"—the explanations and rationalizations—that shaped the self-image of Roman Catholic missionaries before Vatican II. In a similar vein, Stephen Bevans gives us eight

suggested images by which we can understand the role of modern missionaries. The two together contrast the implicit and explicit assumptions that have shaped our understanding of missionaries in the past and may be shaping a new understanding in the present.

Part IV focuses on the discipline of missiology itself. The single essay that makes up this section brings many issues to bear on the struggle to define missiology as an academic discipline. The fifth and final section presents us with two mission statements. The first, "The Whole Gospel from Latin America for All Peoples," is printed from the report of the Third Latin American Congress on Evangelism (1992.) The second is "The Verdun Proclamation," which grew out of the meeting of the Caribbean/African American Dialogue and the Caribbean Council of Churches in 1992.

In any collection as broad as this, there are bound to be authors, publications, organizations and even church conferences and consultations that are unknown to the reader. To help put these selections into context, the editors provide helpful notes that outline the main points presented, give some background on the original venue for the paper, and introduce the author. I found these to be indispensable.

A wide variety of styles are represented in this volume, ranging from easy to read chapters from larger works, the stylized confessional language of church statements and pithy, heavily footnoted essays first published in theological journals. Spelling, punctuation and reference styles differ among the papers, and this reflects a conscious choice of the editors to preserve the stylistic varieties represented in the original sources. The disparity in styles is quite noticeable, but since each paper stands on its own, this presents no problem.

What is more of a problem for me is the absence of any contributions from northeast Asian countries (although Bosch does make

extensive use of Endō and Koyama), or any countries formerly part of the Soviet Communist bloc. In addition, only one contribution was written by a woman. In any collection this brief there will be omissions, but I think a more careful representation in these areas would have made this helpful book even better.

Also, as I read through this book, I was surprised that there are not more obvious areas of disagreement among the positions presented in the selected papers. This may be because, as one of the authors put it, “‘evangelicals’ are becoming more ‘ecumenical’ than ever, while ‘ecumenicals’ are becoming more ‘evangelical’.” However, the absence of any selections with obvious Pentecostal or feminist agendas, for example, makes me wonder how narrow the scope of selection had to be to prepare a slim volume like this.

These are small problems, though, in what I think is a fine help to those who are interested in missiology. Particularly in an era when theology and missiology are being shaped by widely varied churches from six continents, the task of hearing and learning from church and cultural traditions other than our own is a pressing need. Yet the sheer scope of that task can be daunting. I know of no easier way of making a start than by reading *New Directions*.

**Mysticism Buddhist and Christian:
Encounters with Jan van Ruusbroec**

Paul Mommaers and Jan Van Bragt
New York: Crossroad, 1995.

Bibliographical references and index.
302 pp. Cloth US\$29.35.

Reviewed by Christina Tsuchida, Nagoya

The current critical investigation of the leaders of Aum Shinrikyō (Supreme Truth Sect) is offering Japan a teachable moment

for making distinctions between true and false religion. A far more subtle distinction between true mysticism and a natural deviation has been made by Jan van Ruusbroec (1293–1381). This becomes clearer in the modern analysis of Paul Mommaers. Taking this clue into an exploration of Japanese Buddhism based on years and years of study and dialogue in Japan (but expressed in English), Jan Van Bragt finds both faithful and deviant models there as well. Non-mystics themselves, the authors appreciate mysticism, which can lead a willing reader into a challenging reading experience.

Ruusbroec is a foundational writer in Christian tradition, affecting St. John of the Cross and *The Imitation of Christ* (attributed to the one who rearranged it, Thomas a Kempis), among many others. The Flemish priest’s discriminating division of true mysticism from real but wrongly directed mysticism is at once simple and complicated. Both are discussed in Christian and in Buddhist contexts by Van Bragt. Thus the book can serve to introduce Buddhist tradition and some of its Christian counterparts, to guide mystics or their directors or simply to entertain the sort of person who likes to resonate with mystical experiences.

The anti-mystical persons who can say “amen” to Martin Luther’s rejection of mysticism should be dared to read this book through without changing their position (their opinion is noted). Non-mystics can identify with the authors if they are willing to explore a *novum*; mystics do well to follow St. Teresa of Avila in preferring learned persons to merely experienced persons as guides. Not every mystic is as gifted in analysis and expression as Ruusbroec, who was engaged in pastoral work.

The two authors give substantial thinking to issues not only of true and distorted mysticism but also to the dialogue of Christians and Buddhists. The matter of encounter versus identification as the primary mode of relating to Ultimate Reality is broached at the

deepest level in no superficial way, from the authors' two complementary perspectives.

I have met American Protestants who despised St. Bernard of Clairvaux because they considered his bridal mysticism to be sexually oriented. He appears to affirm a culture in stampede toward full sexual expression of love, even outside of marriage—not merely loving the sinners as Christians must, but approving the sins (“situational ethics”). I doubt that these persons closely read St. Bernard’s affirmation that life cannot be sustained by a mere “series of temporary ecstasies,” even if they be mystical ones. Surely they never envisioned the possibility that even the pale memory of mystical experience might arm the sexually poor against the temptations of lustful society. In any case, I fail to see why Luther’s rejection of the bridal mysticism of his spiritual director Johann von Staupitz should be fossilized into a stance opposing all mysticism, even in the Bible. (Many books seek to purge biblical interpretation of any mystical content. See Bernard McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism*, for bibliography on both sides of the issue.)

In the book under review, the mysticism of Ruusbroec and his predecessor Hade-wijch is so well-portrayed that no one could confuse it with one of the possible pitfalls of inadequately directed sexual poverty. Before making the distinction between true and unfortunate mysticism, the problem of the meaning of the self is addressed with current philosophy (including even de-constructionism) as part of the colloquium along with those in the modern world who have had mystical experiences, such as Ruusbroec and the Buddhists of Japanese tradition.

Although Ruusbroec uses the term “natural contemplation” to describe deviant mysticism, the exploration of Buddhism in the light of this concept clearly goes beyond the use of a natural/supernatural distinc-

tion in the study of mysticism by such people as Jacques Maritain, R. C. Zaehner and Jules Monchanin. The new distinction is impossible to summarize without betrayal. There is good reason why the authors postpone elucidating the distinction until the end of the book, when even the non-mystical reader has at least some mental image of what is being discussed.

With this book, the Catholic study of mysticism catches up with Vatican II affirmations. Van Bragt’s experience of dialogue with Buddhist spokespersons in Japan enables him to do more than he might appear to after a superficial reading. Firm as his Christian affirmations are, they have been scoured of bias to such an extent that he can present a valid portrayal of the Buddhism current among official spokespersons in Japan, with a nod toward American Buddhism. Thus, the book is of value to Buddhists of the English-speaking world (who are invited to respond and deepen the discussion) as well as to Christians and to any outsiders who wish to listen in on such a colloquium.

A Vision Betrayed: The Jesuits in Japan and China, 1542–1742

Andrew C. Ross

New York: Orbis Books, 1994. 216 pp.

*Reviewed by Christal Whelan,
Sophia University, Tokyo*

The present work by Andrew Ross, is an engaging study in the field of comparative missiology. The author traces the Jesuit missions in Japan and China over a period of two centuries (1542–1742). Among the nationalities represented by the Jesuits of the era are Italians, Portuguese, Spaniards and Germans. The book mainly deals with the fundamental dichotomy in mission

styles and describes in some detail the consequences of each. The *il modo soave* of the Italians is contrasted with the *conquistadorial* mode of the Portuguese.

By extension, a contemporary sub-theme functions as an undercurrent throughout the study. The author reminds his readers that this conquistadorial mentality is still alive in the late twentieth century in its modern manifestation of "Europeanism," or "the belief that the European experience is the Christian experience and is definitive for all humanity."

Missiology past and present, then, is the vast area the book attempts to encompass. The history of the missions in China and Japan serve as illuminating case studies that demonstrate successes and failures in missionary strategy. The author analyzes these with skill. The case of the brilliant and supremely adaptable Matteo Ricci, who obtained the status of Confucian scholar and an imperial appointment, is presented as the epitome of success. The author then poses the question of why Christianity is so often confused with European culture even by missionaries themselves. The source of missionary success in Japan and China is attributed to the spirit of Italian humanism, and more specifically, to the Catholic humanism that shaped personalities of the caliber of Alessandro Valignano and Matteo Ricci.

What distinguishes this book from earlier highly readable and scholarly studies on the Jesuits—Charles Boxer's *The Christian Century*, Michael Cooper's *Rodrigues The Interpreter* or Jonathan Spence's *The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci*—is its comprehensive scope. The earlier works focused on either Japan or China, but the present work follows Valignano, Visitor to the East, on his missions to Japan and China. As the planner of the inaugural mission of the Society of Jesus to China, only this field was to receive his definitive stamp. In the case of Japan, Francis Xavier inaugurated the mis-

sion, and Valignano was left to work with a missionary style established by his predecessor.

The differences in missiological strategies between Xavier and Valignano become the prototypes of all missionary work to follow, or Portuguese versus Italian. Valignano is the advocate of acculturation and adaptation, a position from which Xavier retreated after the "Dainichi disaster." From then on, Xavier clearly opted to leave key religious terms in the original Latin or Portuguese. The author sees serious implications in this refusal to translate since later refusals to adapt to the local culture will be predicated upon it.

The clash between missionaries adhering to different styles creates much of the tension in the book. These conflicts ultimately lead to the expulsion of the missionaries in Japan and the closing of the country. In China, the intolerance and controversy over "rites" effectively alienated the Chinese literati and led to an imperial edict of expulsion.

At times, *A Vision Betrayed* seems an apologia for the Jesuits, since the author systematically refutes any criticism of this fascinating group of intellectuals. On the other hand, no attempt is made to draw a realistic portrait of the friars. It would be preferable for praise of the Jesuits not to be conducted within a dynamic of scarcity. Indeed, why should praise of the Society of Jesus be at the expense of reducing the Franciscans, Dominicans and Augustinians to mere foils and stereotypes?

This book is highly readable and its theme original. Much of its appeal lies in its comparative approach and attempt to globalize the particular issues raised. The Shimabara Rebellion is compared to the Nat Turner Rebellion of the United States (1831), and various other "people's religions." The aptness of such comparisons may be questionable, but the author's

power to synthesize and search for patterns is admirable.

This book, however, has some serious flaws. First, the editors responsible for the book have done a great disservice to its author. Repetitive and frequent typographical errors abound, as do misspellings of the names of both historical and contemporary people and places. Inconsistencies in book titles and names of organizations are also conspicuous. The Sacra Congregatio de Propaganda is later Congregation of the Propaganda Fide and finally Sacred Congregation for Propagation of the Faith. Other errors that would leave the uninitiated perplexed are borrowed from previous authors. Takayama Hida-no-kami suddenly becomes Dario Takayama, with no explanation. Is this the same person? The cumulative effect of such carelessness undermines the authority of the author, since the reader is left to wonder if on the factual level as well the work is not equally imprecise.

Second, the research for this work is based entirely on secondary sources, the vast majority of which are in English. Thus, assertions such as "most authorities agree..." can carry only relative weight because the works of very few authorities, and all of these Westerners, have even been consulted. With no new primary sources introduced, the present study becomes a hearsay discourse. This is unfortunate methodology for a book that is so openly critical of "Europeanism" in the intellectual sphere.

Furthermore, the author does not seem to distinguish between authoritative and general studies and quotes them all as equal authorities. Jennes' *A History of the Catholic Church in Japan* is an excellent historical handbook, but should it be used in serious polemic? Furthermore, is it really fair to the reader to refer to Neil Fujita, as "a modern Japanese historian"? The biographical data on his book, *Japan's Encounter With Christianity*, describes a professor of religion at an American university, and a

glance at his bibliography reveals no titles in Japanese. It is just this sort of imprecision that accumulates throughout the book and leaves its impression on a critical reader. Despite these shortcomings, *A Vision Betrayed* is highly readable, covers a vast amount of information, and retells a fascinating story.

Frontiers in Asian Christian Theology: Emerging Trends

R. S. Sugirtharajah, ed.

New York: Orbis Books, 1994. 263pp.

Paper.

*Reviewed by Robert L. Ramseyer,
Hiroshima*

This collection of essays by Christian scholars has a clear point of view that the editor, R. S. Sugirtharajah, calls the "new extratextual hermeneutics." By this he means going "beyond the earlier monotextual approach, that puts so much emphasis on the canonical Christian texts, and...[using] literary and nonliterary resources that are common to all the peoples of Asia. It may be a coincidence, but the emergence of greater literary interest in biblical texts, especially among American scholars, has occurred at a time when Asian interpreters' attention was drawn toward literary and nonliterary genres of different religious traditions. The extratextual hermeneutics that is slowly emerging as a distinctive Asian contribution to theological methodology seeks to transcend the textual, historical and religious boundaries of Christian tradition and cultivate a deeper contact with the mysterious ways in which people of all religious persuasions have defined and appropriated humanity and divinity" (p. 3). These writers "also find the overt Christocentrism in [contemporary contextualizing efforts] a hin-

drance: such an uncompromising position cuts Asian Christians off from the wisdom of Asia" (p. 4). "The basic thrust now is not the declaration of the gospel in an Asian style but discerning it afresh in the ongoing broken relationships between different communities and between human beings and the created order. The task is seen not as adapting the Christian gospel in Asian idioms but as reconceptualizing the basic tenets of the Christian faith in the light of Asian realities. The new mood is not to assume the superiority of Christian revelation but to seek life-enhancing potentialities also in the divine manifestations of Asia....They want to refashion and reformulate the gospel....The gospel is seen as one among many divine manifestations" (p. 5).

The editor describes his guidelines for selecting material for this volume as "(1) whether the writings reflect the current cultural, historical, political, and religious realities of Asia; and (2) whether they incorporate Asian symbols, stories, images, ethos, and thought patterns in their theological enterprise" (p. 6).

Nine of the twenty chapters are written by Indians. There are three each from Hong Kong, Korea and Sri Lanka, and one each from Taiwan and Japan. The lone article from Japan is Kuribayashi Teruo's "Recovering Jesus for Outcasts in Japan," originally published in this journal in 1992. The specific chapters deal with a wide variety of topics: (1) the place of oppressed peoples in specific societies (outcasts in Japan, dalits and tribal people in India, women in Korea); (2) the place of the cultural traditions of a people in constructing a Christian theology (Korea, India, Hong Kong); and (3) the place of so-called universals, such as human rights in specific sociocultural contexts. In addition, a number of writers reflect on their own lives as they have tried to understand the Christian faith and be faithful in different cultural settings.

With a few exceptions, most notably Kuribayashi's, there are a number of common assumptions on which most of these articles are based. The first is that Asia is a cultural unit. The editor in his introduction speaks of "resources common to all the peoples of Asia" (p. 3). In some sense that can only be described as mystic; these writers from widely disparate cultural backgrounds feel a common identity in something called "Asia."

Second, culture for these writers—their own culture, excludes any changes that have occurred since their people's initial contact with Europeans. (Most of the writers use the term "European" to include anything related to Western culture.) Their culture is something that developed when their people were in isolation from the rest of the world. Authentic culture stopped developing at that point.

Third, the culture and society that existed up to the time of European contact were good and "the people" lived in happy innocence. The problems found in Asian societies today are, without exception, the result of evils brought in by Europeans. Thus Asian people are innocent victims in no sense responsible for these problems. This understanding leads to strongly nationalistic overtones in most of the presentations.

Fourth, this authentic pristine culture was common to an entire people. Everyone shared in it. All were the same. In this world view there is no place for an individual who is different, and it is clear that "the people" are prior to the individual. Moreover, for some of the writers the identification of a people with a culture would appear to be almost genetic. One seems to inherit a cultural tradition from one's biological ancestors, and to attempt to depart from that tradition constitutes a kind of cultural apostasy or betrayal that results in an unauthentic existence. There is no hint here that at least some people might legitimately like to be freed from their society and its traditions, that

they might prefer some other path, that as individual human beings they might have the right to choose their own path.

This leads to the final assumption. Although these writers speak much about the importance of “the people” speaking for themselves, these same writers assume that they can speak for the people. There would seem to be no possibility that at least some of “the people” might have different opinions or points of view. One writer even speaks for the entire Third World.

While it is not likely that many of the readers of *The Japan Christian Review* will be persuaded by the writers of these essays, this is a volume well worth reading. These writers reveal the very deep sense of hurt of many Asian Christians resulting from the experience of European colonialism and imperialism in their countries, hurt inflicted by people among whom are many who called themselves Christian. This collection is clearly a reaction to that hurt.

In reaction to that hurt, these writers are seeking to recover a sense of pride in what they perceive to be their own cultural roots. While some of us might wish they had gone about this differently and feel that in response to European cultural chauvinism they have developed their own cultural chauvinism, this book should help us all be a bit more humble about our own traditions, including our own cultural understandings of the Christian faith.

Finally, this book deserves to be widely read simply because it represents a significant group of Christian intellectuals whose views are influential in the churches where they live and work. We need to know how they perceive the Christian faith, try to understand their views and be prepared to respond to them.

Japan's “Guest Workers”: Issues and Public Policies

Shimada Haruo

Translated by Roger Northridge

Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press, 1994.

*Reviewed by John Clammer,
Sophia University, Tokyo*

The presence of Japan's “guest workers”—the large and ethnically heterogeneous population of foreign workers who now occupy the smaller towns as well as the large urban conurbations—has in the last few years become an issue of public debate within the country. The strong yen, high wage levels, job opportunities and the high visibility of Japan economically and culturally throughout Asia and beyond have made the country a magnet not only for relatively small numbers of professionals, businessmen and language teachers but also for a very large number of individuals who enter the country as tourists from neighboring Asian countries, South Asia and as far away as the Middle East.

Overstaying the period of their visas, they often remain in Japan as illegal residents for many months or even years until they are caught or voluntarily give themselves up for repatriation. The males among them labor at the building sites, scrap-metal yards, rubber works, auto parts factories, docksides and dry cleaning establishments of Japan; the females staff the bars, nightclubs and massage parlors of the cities.

The sheer size of this community (estimated as high as half a million), their visibility (quite literally in the railway stations, parks and other locations where they gather for fellowship and information sharing) and related problems (provision of health care for uninsured workers who most often do not speak Japanese and of human rights, housing and potentially even education)

have forced the question of their existence and status into the consciousness of the government, press and general public.

Despite its quite visible heterogeneity, the Japanese self-image is still that of a homogeneous society. This being the case, the presence of large numbers of mostly unassimilated foreigners raises both policy questions and longer term questions of identity, including the question of whether Japan should or can assimilate a large non-Japanese community into its society. So far the problem has been approached from a number of angles: by academics concerned with problems of identity and the "uniqueness" of Japanese society and culture, by migration specialists interested either in its demographic impact or in comparative patterns of immigration, such as the Japanese and the German guest worker experience, or by human rights activists concerned both about the status of workers in Japanese society and about the overall responsibilities of Japan in the world economy.

The book under review is by a labor economist whose approach to the issue is by way of policy recommendations and consideration of desirable institutional reforms. By taking such an approach Shimada not only opens up some fresh lines of analysis but also closes off others. On the one hand, he very successfully brings out the possible policy options and confronts the reader with a well argued rationale for his own favored solution, which he locates within a macroeconomic model of probable developments in Japanese society and its place in the world economy. On the other hand, as a comprehensive guide to the foreign worker problem in all its complexity, the book has serious shortcomings. It contains very inadequate analyses of the sociological characteristics of the foreign community, including its ethnic and gender profile, sources and networks of recruitment, patterns of employment, life-style and cultural problems, access to housing and other social

resources, its involvement with the Japanese underworld, its place in the total urban ecology of Japanese towns and cities. It also insufficiently addresses questions that greatly exercise the local Japanese community, including the ascription of rising urban crime rates to foreigners, the fear of AIDS among foreign entertainers and anxiety over coping with non-Japanese neighbors in residential locations.

Stylistically, the book as a whole reads much like a report to some unspecified government committee; and if it is regarded as a policy analysis rather than as a comprehensive account of the foreign worker community in Japan, then its solutions and recommendations are thought-provoking and even provocative. At the core of the book are the details of Shimada's "Work and Learn" proposal for legalizing and regulating the import of foreign labor into Japan. Recent changes in the Immigration Control Law (1990) have permitted businesses to introduce unskilled foreign workers as "trainees." Shimada correctly surmises that in its present form this simply allows industry to bring in workers to do low-grade manual labor while supposedly gaining "work experience" and, in many cases, being paid less than the full wage because they are technically in a learning situation. Nevertheless, he admits that this revision of the law does establish the principle of regulating admission of unskilled labor; hitherto the only legally permitted unskilled laborers were South Americans of Japanese descent, mostly from Brazil and Peru.

Shimada's own recommendations build on this now admitted principle: the creation of a new category of residence status that he terms "work and learn." He outlines in detail how such a scheme might work. His proposals are aimed at regulating the flow of workers, who would acquire intermediate level skills and basic Japanese language while being provided with a fair wage, accommodations and a career path, guid-

ance and support during their stay in Japan as well as with a mechanism for their orderly repatriation at the end of the work training period. In Shimada's view this scheme would overcome the abuses of the present illegal system, provide proper support for workers while in Japan, regulate numbers and substantially contribute to their home countries when these workers return with new skills and experience. The central part of the book (the first part being an overview of the foreign worker situation in Japan) is devoted to a detailed presentation of these recommendations and how they might apply to different industries, the question of bilateral agreements with sending countries, the institutional framework and bureaucratic responsibilities and the relationship of the scheme to Japan's ODA (foreign aid) policies.

It is in the final part of the book that the most theoretically interesting questions are raised. Here Shimada deals with three key questions that the foreign worker issue provokes. The first is that of human rights. Unlike many other Japanese commentators, Shimada interestingly recognizes that international migration is now a global and irreversible movement and that Japan, with its huge economy and immense presence in the international system, is bound to become involved in it. Some workers will even settle permanently in Japan, and in Shimada's view this fact should be squarely faced and, given Japan's aging population and the certainty of future labor shortages, even welcomed. But to accept foreign workers, even on a temporary basis, means guaranteeing their human rights, including legal protection, accident compensation, voting, housing, pension and income support. At the moment, these are far-reaching and radical proposals, despite their rationality and obvious social justice.

The second key question is that of the structural reform of the Japanese economy. A declining and aging population, possibil-

ities of improved efficiency in industry, rationalization of the domestic economy, institutional reform in business, corporations and the public bureaucracy will all force major changes in the way in which the economy functions. In pressing for a system that takes diversity for granted, Shimada is both realistically anticipating the future and providing a manifesto for rallying support for changes that should be occurring even if history were not forcing them on Japan.

The third key question is that of the identity of Japanese society, or as Shimada puts it, "What Kind of Nation Do We Want to Be." Here he argues cogently that Japan has a responsibility to the world in proportion to the benefits that it has gained from that world—markets, raw materials, expansion of Japanese cultural influence. To be or to be perceived in the wider world as a discriminatory nation is hardly desirable. For Shimada, the foreign worker issue is the acid test of how Japanese society will respond: close its doors, practice a refined form of hypocrisy in admitted needed workers while simultaneously discriminating against them or move toward a more open society in which foreigners would enjoy the same rights as Japanese.

The presence of large numbers of foreign workers has irrevocably changed the look of Japan's cities and even parts of the countryside. And the subject is not just an academic one but also requires substantial policy responses. Shimada's book certainly reviews the policy options, and while his own recommendations may be only one possibility among many other potential solutions, he certainly makes a well argued and documented case, if not for his own solution then certainly for something very like it. The foreign worker issue is not just a problem for Japan but also a responsibility and potentially a chance to rethink some deep-seated social attitudes and their embodiment in law and social practices. Shimada's

book is important as a Japanese view of the question; it is quite informative, with comparative perspectives that well reflect the moral vision of restoring dignity to one of Japan's most important human resources, and by extension to Japan itself, as the country formulates its response to a reality that forces it to confront the meaning and authenticity of its much vaunted policy of "internationalization."

The Catholic Church in Korea: Its Origins 1566-1784

Juan Ruiz de Medina, SJ
Translated by John Bridges, SJ
Seoul: Royal Asiatic Society/Seoul Computer Press, 1994. 380pp. Hardcover
US\$24.95.

*Reviewed by Daniel J. Adams,
Hanil Theological University, Chonju*

The origins of the Catholic Church in Korea and the interaction between Korean, Japanese and Chinese Christians in the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries is a story that has yet to be told in its entirety. Juan Ruiz de Medina attempts to tell at least part of this story in *The Catholic Church in Korea: Its Origins 1566-1784*. Originally published in Spanish and Japanese in 1987 and in Korean in 1988, John Bridges and the Korea Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society are to be commended for making this important work available to the English reader. Ruiz de Medina is well-qualified to write on this subject, having spent twenty-seven years in Asia and having served since 1981 as chair of the Far East Section of the Jesuit Historical Institute in Rome. This latter position has given Ruiz de Medina access to the mission archives of the Jesuits and he has drawn extensively from this source in his work.

The book is divided into two main sections: the first is a historical account, and the second is a collection of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century documents related to missionary efforts directed toward Korea and the role of Korean Christians in Japan during this time. Helpful notes are provided for both sections. Also included is a bibliography of European and Japanese sources, plus a few selected Korean sources in Western languages and a helpful index.

Ruiz de Medina organizes his historical account in chronological order around five general themes. Chapters 1 through 5 set the stage with the theme "A Look at Myths and Previous History." He shows that Korean-Japanese contacts go back to at least 300 BCE and that the beginning of a lengthy relationship between the two countries can be traced to the Mongolian invasion of Korea in 1294. The first Western knowledge of Korea came by way of the Portuguese who heard reports of its existence in 1513. Chapters 6 through 14 focus on the theme "The Way to Evangelization." News concerning Korea reached both Lisbon and Rome in 1549, and between 1550 and 1556 the Jesuits in Japan heard of Korea while staying in Yamaguchi. The first Jesuit to set foot on Korean soil was the Spaniard Gregorio de Cespedes, who came with Hideyoshi's invasion fleet on December 28, 1593. Thus the way to evangelization in Korea was by means of invasion and war.

Perhaps the heart of Ruiz de Medina's book is the third theme "First Fruits," which comprises chapters 15 through 23. He gives considerable attention to early Korean converts among the prisoners of war who were taken from Korea to Japan by Hideyoshi's armies. Particular attention is given to the life of Kaun Vicente (Korean name: Kwon), who was baptized in Japan, joined the Jesuits and finally died as a martyr. Ruiz de Medina asserts that the actual date of the founding of the Catholic Church in Korea is December 1592, when a

Christian soldier in Hideyoshi's invading army baptized 200 dying Korean children whose parents had been killed by other Japanese soldiers. Writes Ruiz de Medina: "Theologically speaking it cannot be denied that 1592–1593 was the birthday of the church in Korea—an infant church, if you like, whose hierarchy was overseas, yet a real church, authentic precursor of that born *abroad* in Beijing in 1784, since the 200 children were baptized *inside* Korea" (p.74). It must be kept in mind, however, that these first converts were either victims of war or prisoners of war in a foreign land.

Part four, centered around the theme "A Christian Community in Korea," consisting of chapters 24 through 34, is an account of the Catholic Church in China, Macau and the Philippines and the numerous unsuccessful attempts to enter Korea for the purposes of missionary activity. Aside from three Europeans who entered Korea in 1593 and 1598 in connection with the Hideyoshi invasions, the two other accounts of European contact within Korea are based upon hearsay (1624) and mentioned in a letter (1679). Despite the lack of any hard evidence, there were continuous vague reports in circulation of "a Christian community in Korea." Chapters 35 through 41, on the theme "Renewed Thoughts from Beijing," tell of still other unfulfilled attempts to reach Korea from Beijing. However, there were successful transfers of books and ideas via traders, Korean diplomats and others who traveled between China and Korea. The events chronicled in this part set the stage for the coming of a number of Koreans to Beijing in the late 1770s, culminating in the baptism of Lee Sung-hoon, and the commonly accepted date of the founding of the Catholic Church in Korea in 1784.

Certainly the most valuable section of the book is the English translations of previously unpublished documents relating to missionary efforts toward Korea, the origins and persecutions of the Catholic Church in

Japan and the thinking of the early Jesuit, Dominican and Franciscan missionaries. Each document is catalogued according to author, addressee, the date and place written and the source of the document. Ruiz de Medina intends that these documents support his historical investigations, but they can stand on their own as fascinating accounts of Korean-Japanese relations during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Among the most interesting are documents relating to Hideyoshi's invasions of Korea, the depravity of the Portuguese slave trade in Japanese and Korean children, the persecutions and martyrdom of Christians in Japan and the life and work of Kaun Vicente, the first Korean Jesuit. Accounts of the martyrs serve to remind us twentieth-century Christians of those who gave their lives for the faith and whose names and heroic actions should not be forgotten. Ruiz de Medina has done us all a service by rescuing these men and women from obscurity.

One wishes that the review of *The Catholic Church in Korea: Its Origins 1566–1784* could end on this positive note, but unfortunately one must come to terms with Ruiz de Medina's reason for writing the book. His major thesis is that the Catholic Church in Korea did not begin in 1784, the commonly accepted date by both Korean Catholics and the Vatican, but with the 1592 baptism of the 200 babies who were orphaned by the invading armies of Hideyoshi. Ruiz de Medina further asserts that those ethnic Koreans living in Japan during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were in fact members of the Catholic Church in Korea. There are two problems with this argument. First, while it could be argued that the 200 baptized babies were members of the Catholic Church in Korea sacramentally, it certainly is not enough evidence to support the origin of the Catholic Church in Korea historically. There is little direct evidence that the church survived on Korean soil, and there is no evi-

dence that the church was capable of sustaining and perpetuating itself for the next 192 years. Ruiz de Medina drops hints that there may be Korean documents supporting his thesis, but again, he offers no direct evidence of such documentation other than hearsay on the part of several Korean families "with a Christian tradition of more than three centuries."

The second difficulty with Ruiz de Medina's argument is that the ethnic Koreans in Japan, of whom there were many, were not part of the Catholic Church in Korea but rather Koreans members of the Catholic Church in Japan. This did not make them any less Korean nor any less Catholic, but it does not establish them among the founders and early leaders of the Catholic Church in Korea. One is not certain whether Ruiz de Medina is attempting to assert the role of Japan or the Jesuits or perhaps both in the founding of the Catholic Church in Korea, but virtually all of the historical section of the book concerns activities that take place outside of Korea. While the historical data and supporting documents shed much light on the role of Koreans in the Japanese church and tell a great deal about the Western missionaries and their interest in Korea, the argument for the earlier date of the founding of the Catholic Church in Korea is not sustained.

Ruiz de Medina admits that he does not speak or read Korean and in footnote 22 on page 31 makes the incredible statement that he is unaware of any uniform system for the romanization of the Korean language. Yet the McCune-Reischauer system came into use in 1939, the Yale system in the 1950s and the Korean government Ministry of Education system in 1976. The McCune-Reischauer system of romanization is the standard for most Korean scholars.

This glaring lack of linguistic competency perhaps highlights the area where further research needs to be done if the full story is to be told of Christianity in northeast

Asia in the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries. Someone needs to follow up on Ruiz de Medina's vague hints concerning a Christian community in Korea in the 1600s and those families with a Christian heritage of 300 years. It may very well be the case that the Christian community of the 1600s were members of the crew of the Dutch ship Sparrow Hawk, which ran aground in Korea on August 16, 1653. On September 14, 1666, eight members of the crew escaped in a small fishing boat and made their way to Nagasaki, where word of their exploits almost certainly became known among the Christian community. Hopefully, Korean scholars or Westerners who are as fluent in Korean as Ruiz de Medina is in Japanese will take up the challenge and continue the story that he tells so well in this most controversial and interesting book.

Hamel's Journal and a Description of the Kingdom of Korea 1653-1666

Hendrik Hamel

Translated by Brother Jean-Paul Buys

Seoul: Royal Asiatic Society/Seoul

Computer Press, 1994. 107pp. Paper.

*Reviewed by Daniel J. Adams,
Hanil Theological Seminary, Chonju*

In the seventeenth century the Dutch had well-established trade routes between Batavia, present-day Jakarta; Taiwan, which was under Dutch control from 1624 until 1661 as one their East Indian colonies; and the Japanese port of Nagasaki, where the Dutch had a trading post at Deshima. In the summer of 1653 the Dutch ship Sperwer (Sparrow Hawk) set sail from Batavia for Taiwan with a crew of sixty-five and the newly appointed governor of Taiwan on board. After discharging both the governor and cargo in Taiwan, the Sperwer set out for

Nagasaki, the next port of call. Unfortunately the ship encountered a severe storm and on August 16, 1653, ran aground on the rocky shores of the southernmost Korean island of Cheju. The ship's book-keeper was a young twenty-three-year-old sailor named Hendrik Hamel from the Dutch town of Gorinchem. For the next thirteen years Hamel kept a record of the experiences of the thirty-six who survived the shipwreck. *Hamel's Journal and a Description of the Kingdom of Korea 1653-1666* became the first account of Korea to be written in a Western language.

First published in Dutch in 1668 and in another edition in 1669, the book was translated into French in 1670, German in 1672 and English in 1704. The English translation appeared again in 1918 and 1971. Korean editions were published in the 1930s and in 1954 and from 1961 to 1965 a Japanese translation appeared. The English and Korean editions were in fact based on the French translation that contained numerous inaccuracies and textual errors. This newest translation of Hamel's work was carried out by Brother Jean-Paul Buys, a member of the Taizé Community in Korea. Buys was born of Dutch parents in Indonesia and has lived in Japan for seven years and in Korea for seven years. With the aid of the Dutch Embassy in Seoul, he was able to obtain a copy of the seventeenth century manuscript that was reprinted at The Hague in 1920 and, as he states in his "Translator's Account" at the beginning of the book, "With the aid of a Middle-Dutch dictionary I set about making the first translation of this text into English...."

There is no doubt that Buys' translation will become the definitive edition of Hamel's journal. The text of Hamel's work consists of three parts—the journal itself, questions asked by the governor of Nagasaki along with Hamel's answers and a description of the kingdom of Korea. Hamel was not an educated man, and his journal and description of Korea reflect not only the perspective of a seventeenth-century sailor

but also must be understood within the context of thirteen years of cultural isolation in a totally foreign land. Korea was at that time known as the Hermit Kingdom, and any foreigners who happened to find themselves in Korea were not permitted to leave.

The journal tells of the initial kindness shown by the Koreans, the long trip to Seoul to visit the king, an attempted escape by two of the crew resulting in their imprisonment and eventual deaths, the terrible famine from 1660 to 1662 in which thousands died and the final distribution of the remaining survivors (eleven had died) to three cities in Cholla Province: Namwon, Suncheon and Yosu. Hamel's observation concerning the kindness shown by the governor of Cheju is worth noting. He wrote: "We were taken care of by a heathen in a way that would put many a Christian to shame" (p. 8).

Perhaps the most amazing encounter that Hamel had was a meeting with Jan Janse Weltevrete on October 29, 1653. He too, had been shipwrecked on Korean shores in 1627 and was one of only three survivors. They were brought to Seoul and entered into service at the royal court. Seventeen or eighteen years earlier the other two Dutchmen were killed during a battle against the Manchus and only Weltevrete survived as the lone European in all of Korea. He served as interpreter and liaison between the crew of the *Sperwer* and the king and his court.

Although treated reasonably well by the Koreans, the crewmen were still captives, and they longed to return home to their families. Several attempts at escape failed but finally on September 4, 1666, Hamel and seven other crew members were able to escape in a fishing boat and make their way to Nagasaki. On September 14 they were called before the governor of Nagasaki and questioned concerning their adventures. Among the questions asked by the governor were: "Had any of us ever been to Japan, and how did we know the way?" None of the eight had previously been to Japan but friendly Koreans gave them navigational

directions so that they were able to find their way, first to Gōtō and then to Nagasaki.

At least two of the sailors from the Sperwer have been identified as Christians; one was either a Quaker or Mennonite and the other was a member of the Reformed Church. Hamel himself made frequent references to Divine Providence and in his *Description of the Kingdom of Korea* makes several significant observations concerning religion. In his description of Buddhism he notes: "Many monks believe that long ago all people spoke the same the same language, but when people built a tower to climb into heaven the whole world changed" (p. 61). One wonders just where this story that is so similar to the Tower of Babel came from. Hamel also noticed the so-called Buddhist trinity (actually a Buddha image with two bodhisatvas) and another member of the crew, Mattheus Eibocken, thought "that somehow the shadow of the Holy Trinity was concealed in this" (p. 76, fn. 15). One rather questionable observation of Hamel's was that Buddhist monasteries were often used by nobleman as warehouses and that the monks were much inclined to drinking. Having no way of knowing the accuracy of Hamel's comments, this reviewer can certainly say that such is not the case at Buddhist monasteries today.

In the seventeenth century there was considerable trade between Korea and Japan. Japanese traders from the island of Tsushima established a trading post in the southern Korean city of Pusan. In addition, there was also some contact on the more official governmental level that made use of the Tsushima-Pusan connection. When the government officials in Seoul discovered that Hamel and his seven companions had escaped to Japan they summoned Weltevree, now about seventy-years of age, for questioning. Negotiations began with Japanese officials for the release of the remaining crew members of the Sperwer.

Arrangements were made for them to depart Pusan in July of 1668, but they did not reach Nagasaki until September 16 because of bad weather. After being questioned by the governor of Nagasaki they were allowed to sail for Batavia, where they arrived on April 8, 1669 and were reunited with Hamel. In 1670 they all returned to Holland and their Korean adventure came to a close.

One crew member, however, chose to remain behind in Korea where he had a Korean wife and family. Hamel says nothing in his journal concerning relations with Korean women, and Buys suggests that this omission was intentional considering the fact that many of the men had wives and children back in Holland. Although none ever returned to Korea, several expressed a strong desire to do so if the opportunity were to arise, and this may have been because of second families back in Korea. Even today in Cholla Province one occasionally hears rumors of light-complected Koreans who are said to be the descendants of the crewmen of the Sperwer. Hamel himself died in his hometown on February 12, 1692. He never married.

Hamel's Journal and a Description of the Kingdom of Korea 1653-1666 is a fascinating account not only of Korea itself but also of Korean-Japanese relations of the time and the part that the Dutch played in this relationship. Jean-Paul Buys has provided an excellent translation of Hamel's text along with notes, comments on the text, illustrations, sample pages of various early editions of the book and a listing of Korean words and transliterations as originally written by Hamel. Although an unlearned sailor, Hendrik Hamel has provided us with one man's view of what life was like in northeast Asia in the latter half of the seventeenth century, and he showed remarkable strength of character during what must have been thirteen very difficult years. In this age of globalization we can all profit from a reading of this most interesting book.