

what in the world is "rice-lightening"? Etymologically the joining of rice (*ina*) and lightening-flash (*hikari*) may have come about because the farmers connected lightening with a good harvest, but why not translate the word as the dictionary does, "lightening," and reverse the image? During a period of fasting, one has finally managed to forget the hunger pains and dozed off to sleep, and then a bolt of thunder wakens you and you see a flash of lightening. All you can think of is you need a glass of water.

It may be that neither of these haiku were translated by the author of this book. Credit is given to Ueda Makoto (*Bashō and His Interpreters*), however, for the following puzzling English rendition of a haiku by the master:

*tsuru naku ya  
sono koe ni bashō  
yarenubeshi*

a crane cries...  
by that voice the bashō  
shall be ripped

Bashō

The reader needs to know not only that a *bashō* is a banana plant, but that Bashō Matsuo took his name from the tree he planted in his garden when he moved to Edo in 1672, where he served as inspector of the public waterworks while pupils came to sit at his feet and write haiku. Yes, he could hear the cry of the crane, but he, Bashō, was not moving (*yarenubeshi*) from this spot!

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### A Biographical Dictionary of Methodist Missionaries to Japan: 1873-1993

John W. Krummel, editor  
Tokyo: Kyo Bun Kwan, 1996. 342pp.  
Introduction, Bibliography, Index

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This bilingual illustrated hardbound dictionary includes entries for 1,534 persons who served in Japan under the United Methodist

Church and its predecessor bodies (Methodist Episcopal, Methodist Episcopal South, Methodist Protestant, Evangelical, and United Brethren churches), the Methodist Church of Canada, the Free Methodist Church, and the Wesleyan Church, U.S.A. It lists not only career missionaries but also short-term missionaries, contract workers, volunteers, visiting scholars, and Methodists who worked in Japan under such agencies as the YMCA, YWCA and WCTU.

Each entry gives basic biographical data and includes information on the individual's unique contributions, publications, honors, etc., as well as references which point the reader to further sources of information.

This dictionary will be of value not only to those interested in church and mission history but also to the student of intercultural exchange, as well as to those investigating other aspects of the modernization of Japan such as education and social work. (This descriptive note is taken from the order form from Cokesbury, U.S. distributors.)

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### A History of Japanese Theology

Yasuyo Furuya, editor and translator  
Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans  
Publishing Co., 1997 161 pp.  
Introduction, Bibliography, Index

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*Reviewed by Thomas Hastings,  
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The present reviewer learned of the existence of this book one cold February afternoon while visiting the religious center of neighboring International Christian University where Rev. Dr. Yasuyo Furuya, the book's editor and translator, was professor and chaplain for thirty-five years until retiring in March 1997. The book was hot off the presses and, sensing my interest, Dr. Furuya graciously loaned me his only copy for review.

As well as being a well-known teacher, theologian, pastor and advocate of ecumenism, he has been a long time friend of many people in the missionary and expatriate community and a regular contributor and supporter of the *Japan Christian Review* and its predecessor, the *Japan Christian Quarterly*.

Drawing together the efforts of a rather diverse group of Japanese theologians, the volume presents an outline of the three successive generations of Japanese theologians and a concluding chapter on the post-1970 theological situation. It is a translation of the Japanese original which appeared some years ago, thus it misses the important contributions of Kuribayashi, Kinukawa and others.

Even with this limitation, the book is the first English history of Japanese theology to be written completely by Japanese scholars. Generally speaking, it provides a helpful introduction to a very complex subject. Readers interested in how the Christian theological debate has taken shape in this country will get a good sense of the general trends, and specialists, who need to dig into the original sources, will find the bibliography alone well worth the price of the book.

In the introduction, the editor addresses the dilemma posed by a volume on Japanese theology: Is there really any such phenomenon worthy of being called theology here? First he weighs the negative responses of Kumano and Ishihara who thought that the Japanese church was not mature enough to give birth to real theology. Then he quotes Karl Lowith, a German philosopher who spent five years in Japan and concluded that Japanese scholars "live on two stories, as it were: a lower, fundamental one, in which they feel and think in the Japanese manner, and an upper one, in which they line up with European knowledge from Plato to Heidegger, and the European teacher wonders: Where is the staircase, to take them from one story to the other"? He then briefly reviews the postwar generation's attempt to

escape from what Ohki termed the so-called "Germanic Captivity" of theology in Japan. Furuya concludes, "In answer to the original question of whether 'Japanese theology' exists or not, this book maintains an open mind," leaving it for readers to judge.

Given the limitations of space, I will offer only a general introduction and a few comments on each chapter. The first chapter by Akio Dohi introduces the four towering figures of Ebina, Uemura, Kozaki and Uchimura. After a brief biographical sketch of each, Dohi describes some of the lively theological debates which were current in the Japanese church of their day, as well as the variety of opinions about what direction Japanese Christianity should take. In what is the most coherent chapter in the book, Dohi gives us a well-rounded portrait of these four individualists who laid the ground work for the Japanese churches and Christian movements.

In the second and longest chapter, Toshio Sato gives a helpful introduction to the writings and thought of the "second generation" disciples of Ebina, Uemura, Kozaki and Uchimura. He categorizes the major theological currents of this era under the headings of Evangelical, Social and Dialectical theologies. One can still find vestiges of all three "types" of theological persuasion in evidence today. However, in the opinion of the present reviewer, Barthian dialectical theology continues to be the dominant force, at least in Protestant circles. While Sato suggests that the "radicalism" of Barth is one reason for his theology's overwhelming reception, one can not help but wonder whether another reason may lie in the historical situation during which this theology found its way onto Japanese soil. Though, in his own context of the rise of national socialism in the 1930s, Barth intended precisely the opposite effect, his absolute distinction between the divine revelation of the Word of God and human religion was surely welcome relief for a minority Japanese church which had to

rationalize its forced ritual obedience to the imperial cult. Sato's short section on "Japanese Christianity" is an illuminating reminder of how easy it is for Christians, given the right circumstances, to confuse their nationalistic and religious aspirations. The remainder of the chapter provides a brief introduction to the significant Protestant, Mukyōkai and Catholic theologians up to the end of World War II.

The third chapter by Seichi Yagi opens with a brief description of the postwar situation, characterizing it as an opportunity for Japanese Christianity to assert its "independence" from the West while maintaining "the purity of Christian faith in a non-Christian milieu." For a book supposedly aimed at a Western readership, among whom Kitamori would likely be among the only two familiar Japanese names (Koyama Kosuke is the other), it is puzzling to find that Yagi gives Kitamori such a limited and dismissive treatment. Further, he gives almost equal treatment to Akaiwa and Odagari who, compared with Kitamori, are minor at best and whose positions reveal more about their own eccentricities than contribute to the theological enterprise.

Next, in the longest section of the chapter, Yagi launches into a rather arcane philosophical discussion of Takizawa on the relationship between Buddhism and Christianity, a discussion which presumably holds more interest for the writer than the reader. After a short section on Noro and existential theology, Yagi concludes this somewhat disjointed chapter with a description of postwar contributions in biblical studies. Even though he mentions, without naming, the "ecstatic speech movement" (*Genshi fukuin*, founded 1948) which grew out of Mukyōkai, it is regrettable that Yagi fails to consider this and other indigenous Christian movements as other attempts of Japanese Christianity to assert its "independence" from the West (i.e., Iesu no Mitama Kyōkai, founded 1941, and Sei Iesu Kai, founded 1949). While

Yagi claims that Christology was the focus of this stage of development in Japanese theology, it is clear from what he says that the main arena for that debate was the academy and not the community of faith.

The final chapter of the book by Masaya Odagaki begins by characterizing the general spirit of the post-1970s era as an attempt to move beyond Barth and Bultmann on the one hand, and modern science's subject-object dualism, on the other. After a short discussion of the problem of framing the question of the knowledge of God after the collapse of the subject-object dichotomy, he suggests a kind of convergence between certain literary and philosophical trends in the West and the Eastern concept of Nothingness. This reviewer has serious problems with Odagaki linking together such divergent thinkers as Derrida, Rorty, Kuhn, Polanyi and Whitehead under his category of *meontology*. For example, contra Odagaki, Kuhn, following the more profound Polanyi, does not in fact "reconsider the legitimacy of scientific knowledge," but rather explores the tacit and fiduciary nature of all human knowing, not by annihilating either subject or object but by revisioning them in terms of a more positive and humane relationality. Odagaki claims that post-1970s Japanese theology "has been strongly influenced by the Zen philosophy of Kitaro Nishida," (especially his notion of the "self-identity of the absolute contradiction"). He continues, "The fact that theology since 1970 has been influenced by Nishida's philosophy means, therefore, that we have now begun to establish an original Japanese theology which has adopted the oriental ideas of Nothing and Field."

The next section, in which he revisits Takizawa and Yagi on the relationship between Christianity and Buddhism, will be of some interest to specialists in this dialogue. Though Odagaki goes on to mention Doi, Muto, himself, Inoue and Endo, we want to conclude by considering what he

says about the editor of the volume, Yasuyo Furuya. Furuya has long been a spokesman for the need of the Japanese church to move beyond its world-denying "Barthianism" as well as a strong voice for ecumenism and interreligious dialogue in a pluralistic age. Like Pannenberg, for instance, he insists that the claims of Christianity must be brought into the public sphere for the needed encounter with other religions and world-views. However, while attempting to interpret Furuya's commitment to Christian uniqueness and universality under the category of Nishida's "self-identity of the Absolute Contradiction," Odagaki completely ignores the fact that Furuya is, at heart, an evangelist/apologist of the gospel. It is hard to understand why Odagaki does not even mention the ecclesiological commitment which undergirds Furuya's theological work. In the Epilogue, Furuya quotes from *Theology of Japan*, a book which he co-authored with Hideo Ohki.

The *Theology of Japan* is made possible by the establishment of theological existence through "conversion," and at the *topos* of theological existence provided by the "event of the resurrection." That *topos* is the "Church." In that sense, the "theology of Japan" is Church theology, who's *Sitz* is the "Church."

This historical grounding provides a much needed balance to Odagaki's rather speculative abstractions.

Though there are still some vestiges of the so-called "German Captivity" of Japanese theology in this book (i.e., the use of obscure academic terms to explain concepts which could be stated more plainly and the fashionable sprinkling of untranslated German words), it is an important witness to the depth and variety of theological reflection which has occurred in Japan since the Meiji period. On the question of whether or not Japanese theology has "come of age" or not, this reviewer wants to sound a note of hes-

itation based on the recent trends as depicted in the book's final chapter. If, as Odagaki claims, Japanese theology is developing its own distinctive character under Nishida's influence, we might wonder how such a theology, which roots its identity in a convergence or integration of Buddhist and Christian mystical notions of Nothing/God, will give new direction and strength to an already overly individualistic Japanese church (cf. Furuya's more recent *Nihon Dendoron*). On the question of whether or not there is any such thing as Japanese theology, we want to conclude with a resounding yes and, in this reviewer's opinion, that theology finds its primary expression in the worship of the churches and, secondarily, in the tomes of academia insofar as they have their taproots in that worshipping community.

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**Someone or Nothing? Nishitani's Religion and Nothingness as Foundation for Christian-Buddhist Dialogue**

Russell H. Bowers, Jr.

Asian Thought and Culture Series, Vol.27.

General editor, Charles Wei-hsun Fu  
New York: Peter Lang, 1995. 251pp.

Hardcover

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Christian-Buddhist dialogue is a thriving enterprise, both academically and in terms of the interaction between faith practitioners in everyday life. The appearance of yet another study which seeks to deal with some of the basic, introductory questions of this dialogue may thus strike one as needlessly repetitious, offering nothing new to an ongoing research task that demands focused attention on more advanced details and issues. The goals and presuppositions of a study as thorough as the one under review here,