

Editor's Notes

All of the articles for this year's issue of the *Japan Christian Review*, while not related to a single, overarching theme, nevertheless present a variety of challenging perspectives and insights into topics of deep interest to our readers.

The first two articles deal with new religious cults and their attraction for Japanese youth, a topic occasioned by the sarin gas attack in Tokyo's subways in 1995 and the alleged involvement of Aum Shinrikyō in that terrorism. The lead article by Martin Repp explores the "mental landscape" of Japanese youth today, especially as manifested in the world of comic books and animated features, and in the lack of communication between Japan's older and younger generations. Repp then looks at the so-called new-new religions and how they capitalize on the values and worldviews depicted in *manga* and *anime* to draw the younger generation into their orbit of influence. He concludes by posing the challenges faced by all established religions in Japan, the Christian churches in particular, in reaching out to the young and addressing their concerns.

In a similar vein, Inagaki Hisakazu describes the "Aum generation" of Japanese youth. Beginning with a short historical overview of new religious movements in Japan, Inagaki concentrates on the postwar period and its cultural and intellectual features. He divides the era into a "modern" and "postmodern" period and describes the particular characteristics of each along with the distinctive aspects of the youth cultures of the period. In conclusion, he

draws out the implications for Christian thought in Japan.

In the wake of the gas attack on Tokyo's subways, political and legal circles in Japan attempted to respond by revising the Religious Corporations Law to allow for greater government supervision of religion. Mark R. Mullins describes this response in a review article detailing some of the revisions to the 1951 Religious Corporations Law.

From Aum, we turn to an earlier period in twentieth-century Japanese history with J. Nelson Jennings's article on the transition in Japanese theological perspectives during the Taishō period. His transitional theological actor is Takakura Tokutarō and Jennings describes in great detail the relationship between Uemura Masahisa and Takakura, his student and disciple. In the process, he illuminates some fascinating features of Japanese theological thought and their impact on Japanese Protestant Christianity.

David C. Lewis presents an anthropological approach to the moral values and social characteristics of Japanese Christians. As others have before him, Lewis takes exception to the cultural stereotypes of guilt and shame that were offered by Ruth Benedict to explain the moral differences between Japan and the West. Lewis's research indicates that the moral values of Japanese Christians are not significantly different from those of other Japanese, except in a few instances.

The article on interreligious monastic dialogue by William Skudlarek will be of great interest to those readers fascinated by religious dialogue, particularly Buddhist-

Christian dialogue. A Benedictine monk resident in Tokyo, Skudlarek offers his reflections and interpretations of a monastic dialogue conference he attended at Gethsemani Abbey, the home abbey of Thomas Merton. In recapping the major presentations at the conference, Skudlarek highlights the similarities and differences in Buddhist and Roman Catholic monastic traditions and what these traditions have to say to one another and to us today.

Our last article by David L. Swain, former editor of our predecessor journal, the *Japan Christian Quarterly*, updates perspectives on the Hiroshima question. Swain

looks at changing and unchanging perspectives on Hiroshima in the United States and provides some background to understanding the political controversy over the Smithsonian's aborted exhibit on the atomic bombing of Japanese cities in the waning days of World War II. Swain asks us not only to look at *what* we remember, but at *how* we remember and to examine the differences in the Japanese and American modes of remembering.

The 1997 issue concludes with the Book Reviews and our usual feature on Christian Periodical Literature.

Cheryl M. Allam