

## Reviews

Otis Cary, *A History of Christianity in Japan: Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, and Protestant Missions*. Rutland, Vermont and Tokyo, Japan: Charles E. Tuttle, 1976. Two volumes in one. xiii + 798 pages. Appendix. Indexes. ¥3,800 (US\$ 20.00).

This book was first published in two separate volumes in 1909, precisely fifty years after the beginnings of organized Protestant work in Japan. The present publication is a reprinting of the original, now bound together in a single volume. The reprint has been made at least in part as the result of requests from many libraries which had over the years lost one or both volumes of the original publication. There is, however, an intrinsic quality and value to the book which merits its serious reconsideration even after the many years since its original appearance.

For one thing, in the present state of documentation on the history of Christianity in Japan, Cary's book at some points constitutes an original source, or at least the account closest to the original source available. This is particularly true with reference to the activities of the Orthodox mission and church. Incidentally, Cary was quite aware that the Orthodox mission in Japan was of Russian origin, but in the context of general Protestant knowledge of Eastern Orthodoxy at the time, he felt that the term Greek Orthodox would serve better to denote the whole. Actually, Cary's account of the events of the early years of the Orthodox movement in Japan has yet to be surpassed, to this reviewer's knowledge, even by Japanese historians. One reason is the fact that the Orthodox Church in Japan in recent years has not been as active in scholarly production as it once was. But, most significantly, Cary gives an account of events and data which in some cases are not known from other sources, and he tells the story of Orthodoxy in Japan with a warmth of appreciation and skill in narration which make the tale as interesting as it is significant.

Cary himself confesses that in his narration of Protestant work in Japan he may have given an undue amount of space to treatment of his own mission, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (The Congregational Church). Yet Cary manifests a remarkably irenic spirit, indeed an ecumenical breadth of understand-

ing long before that adjective was widely used in Western Christianity. As he writes in one of his two prefaces, "If we belong to the Church Universal, we must recognise some degree of fellowship with all followers of Christ and must acknowledge their work for Him as a part of that in which we are engaged." Even though he confesses that "certain doctrines and practices of the Roman and Greek Churches seem to me gravely erroneous," his accounts of the personages and work of those churches very rarely betray any bias or prejudice. Indeed, the consistent impression given the reader is one of warm appreciation of the high quality of the work as well as of the dedication of the workers in both those communions. The fact that he said little of the miracles ascribed to Francis Xavier and his successors in Japan was clearly owing more to his own temper of mind and belief than to anti-Catholic bias. It may be worthy to note that this reviewer, in his own *A history of Christianity in Japan* (Eerdmans, 1971), felt that though careful discrimination is needed, the spirituality of the early Roman Catholic workers, both Japanese and foreign, deserves more attention than most academic historians have given it.

Cary saw his role as an historian to lie primarily in the creation of a simple narration of events with a minimum of comment or "philosophising." This means that there is little theological reflection upon, for example, the nature of the Christian mission or upon what lessons, if any, could be learned from the mistakes as well as heroic efforts of both foreign missionaries and Japanese Christians. Given, however, the almost universal mentality among Western Christians of the time, it would be unreasonable to expect from Cary the kind of incisive critical reflection on the Christian world mission that is possible at present, following the two world wars of this century and the passing of the older forms of Western colonialism.

One final point may be made. Cary's narrative focuses on the work of the foreign missionaries and missions, in the case of all three major Christian traditions, and treats with less completeness the activity of Japanese Christians. This procedure was perhaps inevitable at the time, even in the case of a person as knowledgeable in the Japanese language as Cary was. For one thing, much of the basic research which has since been made available through critical biographies of early and subsequent Japanese Christian leaders, such as Uemura Masahisa, Honda Yōichi, Yamamuro Gumpei, Uchimura Kanzō, and Kagawa Toyohiko, had not yet been done in Cary's time. And

no one man was able to do all this. For example, the great work on Uemura and his era, *Uemura Masahisa to sono jidai*, was written by Saba Wataru and published in seven volumes from 1937 to 1944.

All in all, however, the publishers are to be warmly commended for making generally available once more this classic account of the early history of Christianity in Japan.

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