

Fujita, Neil S. *Japan's Encounter with Christianity: The Catholic Mission in Pre-Modern Japan*. New York:Paulist Press, 1991. viii + 294 pp. \$13.95.

Neil S. Fujita's *Japan's Encounter with Christianity: The Catholic Mission in Pre-Modern Japan* is a thorough historical review of the Catholic Church's encounter with Japan. Fujita traces this encounter from 1543, when the Portuguese arrived in Kyushu, to the end of the Tokugawa shogunate and the establishment of the Meiji Era in 1867.

In the early years of the Catholic mission to Japan, Francis Xavier and the other padres were misled to believe that Japanese religious beliefs dealing with the one creator God (Dainichi), the Trinity, paradise, hell, last judgment, devils, infant water purification, and last rites were similar to Catholic beliefs. Because of these supposed similarities, missionaries optimistically began to preach that the Japanese should worship Dainichi. However, as their language skills improved, and as they began to better understand the deeper values and meanings of Japanese religious words, the missionaries were forced to switch from saying, "Worship Dainichi" to "Don't worship Dainichi."

The early optimism gave way to a deepening sense that very little was retrievable for Christian purposes in the Japanese religions. Eventually, missionaries decided that the Japanese language would not adequately communicate God's message and therefore introduced over 50 Latin terms to convey Christian concepts and meanings. In spite of these early difficulties, by the time Xavier left Japan after ministering for only two-and-a-half years, there were already 1,000 baptized believers.

Fujita's book does an excellent job of detailing the struggles the Catholic Church went through as Francisco Cabral and others promoted a mission policy and practice reflecting a strong Eurocentric approach characterized by the absolute supremacy of Western Christianity, in which European cultural forms were slavishly followed, little regard was given to local situations and traditions, and it was even suggested that the study of the Japanese language was a waste of time. Fortunately, Cabral's confrontational approach to the Japanese was replaced by a policy of adaptation as promoted by Visitor-General Alessandro Valignano, who oversaw the Japanese mission from 1574 until his death in 1606. Under Valignano, the learning of Japanese was zealously stressed, padres were encouraged to live as the Japanese did, schools were established to train Japanese Christian workers, catechisms were prepared, and the promise was held out that the leadership of the Catholic Church in Japan would eventually be turned over to the Japanese Christians. As a result, the number of believers increased, so that by 1583 there were 200 congregations and 150,000 Christians.

Then came the persecutions. Fujita again provides a comprehensive look at the factors and circumstances which caused the fierce persecutions under

the Tokugawa Bakufu, leading to a quasi-total elimination of most vestiges of Christianity from Japanese culture.

The Epilogue alone is worth the price of the book, for in it Fujita insightfully sums up the reasons for the initial success, as well as later rejection and uprooting, of Christianity from Japanese culture. Fujita suggests that the reason Christianity has been unable to take root in the swamp of Japan is that throughout the history of the Catholic mission to Japan the missionaries were either exclusivists or inclusivists. The exclusivists saw no redeeming value in the Japanese religions and felt that "the Catholic Church was the only vehicle which the true God would use to teach the absolute truth to the world" (271). On the other hand, the inclusivists felt that there was partial truth in the Japanese religions but that Christianity held the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

Fujita suggests that these two approaches failed and suggests a dialogical approach in which missionaries would interact with people of other religions from a perspective that "does not uncritically presuppose one particular religious persuasion to be superior to other religious traditions" (272). Fujita feels that such neutrality is needed to enter into meaningful and sincere dialogue and would also enrich the faith and beliefs of the missionaries as they gain new insights from their encounter with other religious traditions.

That missionaries should shed their ethnocentrism, learn the language and culture of the target people, and adopt their cultural ways is commendable. Some Japanese traditions and practices may, indeed, better illustrate Biblical principles than do Western ones. However, Fujita seems to suggest a dialogical approach to missions apart from a commitment to the importance of revelation and the universality of Biblical principles. Although dialogical approach would be very acceptable to the Japanese, who have long believed that all paths lead to God, would not giving up our belief that Christianity is a revealed religion undermine the whole mission enterprise?

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Garrett, Duane. *Rethinking Genesis: The Sources and Authorship of the First Book of the Pentateuch*. Baker Book House, MI: Grand Rapids, 1991. 273 pp. \$11.95.

In his book *Rethinking Genesis: The Sources and Authorship of the First Book of the Pentateuch*, Duane Garrett follows the trend of many other evangelical scholars engaged in active dialogue with the proponents of the historical-critical method.