



A Graduate Seminary Library in the Mission Field

R. NORMAN WHYBRAY

THE PURPOSE OF THIS ARTICLE is to give a description of the library of the Central Theological College, Tokyo, which is the Seminary of the Nippon Seikokai (Anglican Church in Japan), and of the part which it plays in the life of the local church. It is a case study related to the general subject dealt with by R. P. Morris of Yale Divinity School in his paper read before the American Theological Library Association: "The Place of the Library in Christian Theological Education of Southeast Asia."^{1, 2} The present author is not a trained librarian, but has been a member of the faculty of this Seminary for the past eight years.

Whether Japan ought to be included in the designation "South-East Asia" is a matter for argument. Indeed, the very use of this term as anything more than a geographical designation is open to criticism. It is in any case necessary at the outset to indicate some of the specific characteristics of Japanese life which are relevant to libraries and their use.

It cannot be emphasized too strongly that the Japanese are a nation of readers. The ordinary Japanese reads far more than the ordinary American or even than the ordinary Frenchman; and the quality of what he reads is higher. It is doubtful whether anywhere in the world there is a greater knowledge of contemporary literature both of one's own country and (in translation) of the world, than there is in Japan. Books are cheap; bookshops more numerous than in any country which the author has visited; and the ordinary Japanese daily newspapers are of a very high standard, and often publish the best new novels in serial form before they appear in book form. Moreover, immense respect is paid to the artist and the scholar.

The author was formerly professor, Central Theological Seminary, Tokyo, Japan, now at Keble College, Oxford, England.

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One important consequence of this for the church is that theological education must be of a high standard. The responsibility for ensuring this lies principally with the Japanese leaders of the church, for the church in Japan is entirely independent. At the same time the "mother churches" still have a responsibility in the matter, for the Japanese bishops continue to request both money and men from them. In terms of numbers foreign priests are few (25 out of a total of 291) and their status is that of guests; but their influence can be considerable. As far as money is concerned, the Seminary still relies heavily on support from the mother churches, and is likely to continue to do so for some time. However, both the general policy of the Seminary and the administration of its finances, like the affairs of the church at large, are entirely in the hands of its Japanese leaders. The Bishops (all Japanese) form the Board of Trustees. Their authority is not merely formal. It is actual, and the mother churches and their missionaries are careful not to offer any advice unless it is asked for. Their role may therefore be described as auxiliary.

The Seminary at present maintains a high standard of theological training; but it cannot be said that the church as a whole fully measures up to its responsibilities with regard to theological training, or takes sufficiently seriously the intellectual side of its mission. In comparison with other churches in Japan, the Nippon Seikokai has few scholars, and too few of its clergy have intellectual interests. This is by no means wholly their fault, however. This writer has no personal knowledge of the standards maintained by the Seminary before 1952; and the ten years previous to that hardly provided the conditions necessary for an adequate theological education. Moreover even now the shortage of books on theological subjects, either in Japanese or other languages, and the poverty of the clergy, make it almost impossible for a priest, once he has left the Seminary, to continue his theological education or even to remain in touch with currents of theological thought. The practice of sending priests abroad for periods of study is very useful, but cannot solve the problem of the continuation of their study when they return to Japan. For these reasons, the potential role of the Central Theological College Library is very important. If newly graduated men could be persuaded to use it by borrowing books by post, the intellectual level of the clergy would be greatly improved. Unfortunately even our best men, once they begin their parochial duties, seem to become so thoroughly absorbed in them that the library facilities are rarely used by them.

Before coming to a detailed consideration of the library, a brief description of the Seminary may be useful. The training of Japanese clergy goes back to 1877, but the present Seminary dates from 1911. From the first (except for the years 1947 to 1955) it has always had a Japanese dean; and it has always had some foreign faculty members. Like the church itself (which has 41,000 members) it is very small, having at present eighteen students doing the normal three year course. All the students are graduates of Japanese universities. Compared with the proportion in other fields of the church's work, the proportion of foreign staff on the faculty is high. There are three Japanese (the dean, one Japanese professor and one junior tutor) and three foreign professors, priests of the Church of England, the Anglican Church in Canada, and the American Episcopal Church, respectively. All three foreigners have taught at universities or seminaries in their own countries; and the dean and the Japanese professor both have degrees from the General Theological Seminary, New York. All teaching, both by Japanese and foreign professors, is done in Japanese.

In addition to the required university degree, students are expected to have some competence in English, but in practice the majority have very little reading ability in any language other than their own when they enter the Seminary. English classes are part of the curriculum for those who need them. There are, however, always some students who are able to make proper use of the library facilities.

Most of the Seminary's budget comes from overseas, and of this more than half from the American Episcopal Church. The major subjects of the curriculum are the same as in western seminaries. Greek is compulsory for those who do not need to take the English courses, and Hebrew and Aramaic are taught to those who can take these subjects in addition to Greek without an unnecessary burden of work. The content of the courses differs in some details from that of courses in western seminaries—for example in church history, apologetics and pastoral theology—but not radically so. The need to re-orientate the curriculum to some extent having regard to local conditions—for example, the addition of a course in Japanese religions—is recognized by the faculty, but so far it has not been possible to find competent teachers, either Japanese or foreign. The question to what extent the curriculum of a Japanese seminary ought to differ from that of a western one is very wide and cannot be discussed in an article of this length. The present writer feels, however, that it is one which can only be properly discussed by groups of faculty members com-

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posed of Japanese and of foreigners who have been in Japan for a number of years. It is easy to talk about the necessity of having an "indigenous" church, but more difficult to understand what is meant by this phrase and how the principle is to be carried out.

The college buildings and their contents, including all the books in the library, were destroyed by allied bombing during the war. After makeshift buildings had been used for a number of years, the present buildings, with adequate library space, were erected in 1953. For practical purposes, however, the history of the library really begins in 1947. At that time the Seminary was re-constituted as an essential organ of the church after the dislocation of war; and the American and other mother churches immediately understood the necessity of equipping it with a library. The first books were acquired by grants from the Church Periodical Club in New York, an unofficial organ of the Episcopal Church, and since then about half of the accessions have come as a result of grants from that source. With the appointment of S. F. Nishi, an American, as dean in 1950, the C.P.C. made a grant of \$10,000, and with this money the new faculty laid the foundations of the present library, choosing standard works from all the main fields of theological study. However, permission was not given by C.P.C. to purchase Japanese books with their grants, and this restriction remains in force. Apart from this restriction, however, the choice of books has been left to the library. Occasionally gifts of books rather than grants for the purchase of books are received; but on the whole the library has been carefully selected and built by the faculty, and thus contains almost nothing which they do not want. Monies received from England and elsewhere have been spent partly on Japanese and partly on foreign books, and partly on the essential running expenses of the library. The capacity of the stackrooms is approximately 20,000, or about twice the present number of books.

Among the approximately 11,000 books in the library are most of the standard theological works, with a considerable number of important new books being added each year. In 1959 the total number of additions was about 750 of which half were in Japanese. The funds available, however, vary greatly from year to year. Most of the Japanese books are translations, since the number of original works of theology produced in Japanese is very small. Indeed, the purchase of Japanese books is limited only by the output. Of the other books, the great majority are in English. There are also a few hundred books in German, French, and other modern languages, and a fair number of

Hebrew and Greek Bibles, patristic texts and other Latin, Hebrew, and Aramaic texts. In selecting additions to the library, consideration is given to the needs of the students, of the faculty, and of the church as a whole. The library is considered as the possession of the church at large. In the author's opinion this is one of the largest and best selected theological libraries in Japan, and certainly the best in the Nippon Seikokai.

Currently the library subscribes to 45 theological journals and periodicals, mostly monthlies and quarterlies, of which 7 are Japanese, 24 English, 11 American, one Dutch, one Canadian, and one Irish. A balance is attempted between the first rate technical journals (e.g. *Journal of Theological Studies*, *Vetus Testamentum*) and journals with a wider appeal, such as the English *Theology and the Expository Times*; but technical ones predominate. Of the journals, 9 are biblical and biblical-archaeological; 4 church-historical; 4 philosophical; 2 devoted to missions and the theology of missions; 1 on ecclesiastical art; 1 on theological and Christian education; and 24 general and mixed. They are selected apart from any ecclesiastical associations which they may have.

Although the Japanese are, as has been said, great readers, university libraries are not used extensively by the undergraduates. The reason for this is that the concept of education is different from that prevailing in the West. Education is primarily a relationship between teacher and pupil. The teacher is considered to be an authority on his subject, and the pupil has a sense of loyalty to his teacher. Thus, although the western view of education as a training of the mind has had some influence in Japan, both faculties and students continue on the whole to hold to the older view that what is required of the student is that he be thoroughly familiar with his subject as seen through the eyes of the teacher. Independence of approach comes, if at all, only with the research fellowship or the teaching post; and consequently university libraries are used mainly by graduate students and faculty. At this Seminary, however, a deliberate attempt is made to teach the western approach to education at the level of the student. Naturally the language barrier makes it unlikely that most of the students will be able to make a really full use of the library, but it may be said that the staff is relatively successful in teaching the new approach—very successful with the more intelligent students, and at least partially successful with most. This library is used more by the students than are most university libraries in Japan. At present

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there are 250 books recorded as having been borrowed by present students. It must be remembered that very few students can afford to buy their own books.

The treatment of library books leaves much to be desired. The marking of books by notes in the margin and underlining seems to be regarded as normal in Japan, and it is felt that fines ought not to be imposed in view of the penury of most of the students. Great losses of books, both through failure to return books borrowed in the proper way, and through simple theft are encountered.

The library suffers both from the absence of a trained librarian and also from the fact that the present cataloging system (that of the Union Seminary Library, New York) is unsatisfactory. Only the selection of books is done competently. The day-to-day running of the library is in the hands of unskilled part-time staff, and the cataloging is done by members of the faculty in rota. (No member of the faculty can be persuaded to undertake it permanently.) This has resulted in chaos. Books which ought to be together on the shelves are often placed in quite separate parts of the library owing to the inability of the faculty members to interpret the system consistently. Mistakes by the unskilled staff in making out the cards are also numerous.

It may well seem to the reader that the situation described is past remedy. Nevertheless the author feels that if there were a simple manual which took into account the needs of the situation, some improvements could be made.

It is not possible within the compass of this article to make more than a few brief comments on the problems which it raises, each of which could well occupy a whole article or more. One of the questions which arises more than once in Morris' paper referred to above, is that of the desirability or otherwise of western influence in Asian countries. The cultural situation in Japan is far too complex to describe here, but it may on the whole be said that Japan has effected a marriage between the two cultures which is relatively happy. In contrast to the situation in some other Asian countries, the absorption of western ideas has been carried out in Japan over a very long period and always under the conscious direction of an independent Japanese government which has generally been aware both of the need to preserve Japanese culture and at the same time to absorb and adapt enough to enable Japan to take its place in the world as an equal of the great powers. Japanese ways of thought have been changing for a long time, and are still changing; but the original shock to the

system took place almost a century ago, and Japan is not now an area of rapid change. Western ideas are being absorbed in every field of life quite deliberately by an independent, civilized nation; and all Japanese now living have lived their entire lives in a Japan which had already entered this stage. Therefore what are regarded as western inventions are often completely established in Japan as an essential element in Japanese life. Moreover, Japan has long passed the stage of mere imitation, and is already creative in such fields as "western" architecture, literature, and science. Therefore it is not for us to ask what is good for the Japanese. The question is both impertinent and useless. The Japanese can and will decide that for themselves. They will insist on doing so.

It is in this context that the role of the mother churches and of missionaries has to be considered. It would be absurd for western church leaders to talk of an "indigenous" church if they still mean that decisions about "indigenization" will be taken by foreigners. An indigenous church is not one which rejects outside influences, but one which is independent, and consequently free to decide whether it will or not. This is in fact the position of the Nippon Seikokai. The principle has its application in small as well as in large matters. When the author says that the library would like enough funds to become efficient in the western sense, he is speaking not as a foreign missionary but as a member of the faculty. In fact he and his Japanese colleagues agree about this particular matter. But as a foreign missionary he has no right to say what is needed. However, as a member of the faculty he does.

The basic problems of the church in Japan—and they are very serious ones—are problems which ultimately only the Japanese church itself can solve. Thus if evangelism is slow, the Japanese church must improve the quality both of its clergy and its laity. If clergy salaries are inadequate, it must both increase its membership and its sense of stewardship. Towards these ends a seminary such as this is of crucial importance; and the library is one of the main tools used by the seminary. The quality and usefulness of the library will depend on the faculty, and the present policy is to have an international faculty under Japanese leadership. But the foreign faculty members are not here because there are no Japanese capable of doing our jobs. (Scholars are indeed few, but there are enough for this.) We are here because if the Anglican Communion is to be more than a series of isolated national churches, there must be more exchange of personnel.

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The English and American churches need to have Japanese clergy working in their midst as much as the Japanese need to have English and Americans; and all of us also need Chinese, Indians, and Africans. Thus, coming down again to the practical issue of the seminary library, it may be said on the one hand that if all the foreigners resigned from the faculty tomorrow, the College and its library would continue to follow the same policy as now, and books would continue to be well selected; on the other hand this writer is firmly convinced that there is an enrichment of the seminary, and of its library, by the fact that some of the faculty are foreigners; and this is true of the whole church.

Thus if any general conclusion can be drawn from this study of one particular theological library, one may say that its problems cannot be separated from the problems of the church as a whole; and that the first thing which is indispensable in the Japanese situation is absolute Japanese control (which already exists and will never be taken away); and the next thing is the readiness of the churches of the West to offer money, personnel, and advice when, and to the extent to which, they are invited to do so. The author hopes that these things will be asked for in greater quantities, and that when asked for, they will be forthcoming with no strings attached.

References

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2. Allen, Yorke: *A Seminary Survey*. New York, Harper, 1960.