CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

In this concluding chapter I present the results of my research and discuss my findings. I consider Endo’s changing modes of inculturating Christianity in light of Bevans’ and Takeda’s typologies, and I explore the prominent role of koshintō in his understanding of the inculturation process. This leads on to a final discussion of the type of nationalism in his thought.

Solving Problems

As shown in the disposition of my material, I have divided Endo’s literary works into three consecutive stages and looked at his interpretation of Christ in these periods. During the preparatory stage, 1947–1965, he felt the need for inculturation. Contrasts and differences between postwar Japan and the West were emphasised. In the second stage, 1966–1980, his efforts at inculturation centred around the figure of Christ—Christ the maternal and ever-present companion in solidarity with the poor. Japan emerged here as an equal partner of the West, and spiritually she was now seeking Christ on her own terms. In the third period, 1981–1993, Endo turned to an increasingly pneuma-centric mode of inculturation. The scope widened from a focus on Japan and the West to an integration of these within a wider understanding of world cultures and religions.

I have found a close and intimate relationship between Endo’s inculturation efforts and contemporary theological developments, both in Japan and internationally. A close relation to negative theology as well as to Shinto and Buddhist concerns appear in all three of his stages. In the third stage, however, ideas with a western background such as Hick’s religious pluralism and Jung’s concept of the unconscious become evident. As to the character of Endo’s strategies, I employed theoretical frameworks introduced by the American missiologist, Stephen B. Bevans, and the Japanese Church historian, Takeda Kiyoko. However, the debate among Japanese intellectuals on the role of koshintō also seems
relevant to Endo’s struggle with inculturation. I shall now conclude by looking more closely at his methods of inculturation.

*Endo’s Methods of Inculturation*

One of the prominent features of Japanese modern thought is that to become a part of the intelligentsia one must be acquainted with western knowledge and critical of Japanese culture and traditions. Christianity was also received as a religion of the West that separated one off from everyday Japanese culture. So Endo, during the first stage of his literary performance (1947–1965), stressed the Japanese inability to understand western Christian sensibilities. He argued that the Japanese were culturally and historically different and incapable of comprehending and accepting Christianity in the same way as Europeans. He sensed a strong conflict between the two worlds. He experienced what could be called ‘Christ against Japanese culture’. Measured by Takeda’s models, during these years Endo’s inculturation methods might be classified in terms of the Isolating or Confronting types. In terms of the contextual theology introduced by Bevans, Endo came close to the Translation model of inculturation.

Easing his confrontational view of the West, in his second literary stage, Endo looked for points of reconciliation between Japan and Western Christianity. Inspired by the historical phenomenon of *Kakure Kirishitans*, he made use of procedures that fall into two other categories of Takeda: the Absorbed and Apostatized types. Endo’s image of a maternal Christ was absorbed in the Japanese religious/cultural heritage of motherhood; that is to say, the harmonizing power of growth, fertility, and creativity that nurtures and embraces. At the same time he focused on Christian apostates in Japan, vindicating *Kakure Kirishitans* in their human responses of love and hope. God was present even in apostasy.

In Bevans’ terms, Endo’s attempts at interpreting Christ seem basically in accordance with the Anthropological Model. The author tried to find the kernel of a universal Christianity, acceptable in the Japanese context. His interpretation of Jesus as a powerless Christ in solidarity with suffering people partly reflects the influence of Japanese Buddhism—but also conforms to developments in negative theology.

During his last literary stage, Endo produced new, universal and pneumatic accents in his image of Christ. His motherly, *kenotic* and