BOOKS RECEIVED

JAPAN: CONTINUATION OF THE GOSPEL-HISTORY.

Kimura-Andres, Hannelore, MUKYOKAI, Fortsetzung der Evangeliums-Geschichte
Erlander Monographien aus Mission und Oekumene. Band 1,
(ISBN 3 87214 301 8)

This is a valuable and stimulating study on Mukiokai i.e. the 'non-church'
or 'churchless Christianity' (as its members prefer to call it), initiated
by Uchimura Kanzo (1861-1930) in the wake of Japan's opening to the
world, and characterized by a refusal of church-institution, dogmas and
sacraments. The author is in a privileged position of having access to the
Japanese writings of Uchimura and his followers with the help of her
Japanese husband. The study is valuable because it uses all available
sources and a research framework which not only traces the process of
Uchimura's way towards Mukiokai, but includes also the development of
Mukiokai in its first, second and third generation followers. This leads to
fresh insights into Uchimura's conversion history ('In Sapporo Uchimura
came to Christianity, in Amherst he became a Christian', p.115) and into the
real 'Anliegen' of Mukiokai. It should be understood not so much as
Japanese Christianity, but as a second reformation, a re-reformation of
Christianity itself towards its centre: the liberating power of the cross
of Christ, in opposition to the secularized and law-bound Western form of
Christianity. Mukiokai therefore should not be defined primarily by
negations (non-church, no sacraments, no dogmas), but by laying bare the
central foundation of christian life: 'crucifixianity' (p.280), and by
experiencing Mukiokai as continuation of the Gospel-history (= subtitle)
and a Mukiokai meeting as 'Ecclesia of the Bible' (p.255). Although the name
Mukiokai means 'non-church', Mukiokai in its self-understanding does,
however, not mean 'without a church' but rather 'not as the really existing
church', which is considered an aberration from what Christ intended (pp.
279-80).

The author concludes that Mukiokai in its historical development up till
now did not become a new church, neither an anti-church nor Japanised
Christianity, because keeping the Bible and faith in the cross as its
centre. The author does however not ignore the dangers for Mukiokai of
becoming an elitist and (group-)individualist Christianity. Notwithstanding
her determination not to offer 'eine lueckenlose geschichtliche
Auseinandersetzung von Fakten' (p.23) she could have provided the reader
with some more easily accessible information about e.g. the dates of birth
and death of Uchimura and some indication about the numerical strength of
Mukiokai (p.360 note 2 would have given an opportunity for it). Another
point is a repetition by the author of some of her discoveries e.g. that
not Sapporo but Amherst was the decisive kairos for Uchimura's conversion
(passim).

In sum: this study is a very sensitive and penetrating presentation of
Uchimura's conversion and the self-understanding of Mukiokai in progress;
it leads to a stimulating confrontation with a non-conventional
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F.J. Verstraelen
This is a valuable and stimulating study on Mukyokai, i.e., the 'non-church' or 'churchless Christianity' (as its members prefer to call it), initiated by Uchimura Kanzō [1861-1930] in the wake of Japan's opening to the world, and characterized by a refusal of church-institution, dogmas and sacraments. The author is in a privileged position of having access to the Japanese writings of Uchimura and his followers with the help of her Japanese husband. The study is valuable because it uses all available sources and a research framework which not only traces the process of Uchimura's way towards Mukyokai, but includes also the development of Mukyokai in its first, second and third generation followers. This leads to fresh insights into Uchimura's conversion history: 'In Sapporo Uchimura came to Christianity, in Amherst he became a Christian', p. 115 and into the real. 'Anliegen' of Mukyokai. It should be understood not so much as Japanese Christianity, but as a second reformation, a re-reformation of Christianity itself towards its centre: the liberating power of the cross of Christ, in opposition to the secularized and law-bound Western form of Christianity. Mukyokai therefore should not be defined primarily by negations [non-church, no sacraments, no dogmas], but by laying bare the central foundation of Christian life: 'crucifixianity' (p. 280), and by experiencing Mukyokai as continuation of the Gospel-history (= subtitle) and a Mukyokai meeting as 'Ecclesia of the Bible' (p. 255). Although the name Mukyokai means 'non-church', Kukyokai in its self-understanding does, however, not mean 'without a church' but rather 'not as the really existing church', which is considered an aberration from what Christ intended (pp. 279-80).

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Verlag der Ev.-Luth. Mission, Erlangen, GFR


ORBIS BOOKS, Maryknoll, New York 10545, USA


International Reformed Center 'John Knox'. 27, chemin des Crêts-de-Pregny, CH-1218 Grand-Saconnex, Geneva, Switzerland


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