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Japan: A Way of Life (Book Review)

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was dominant; this book describes competing Greek attitudes that persisted for well over a millennium. Since the matter is important for the theses of both books, it would be interesting to see the point of difference discussed.

Although the reader might not agree fully with the "market view of reality," found in the second part of the second section, the ideas given are worth digesting and should by no means be rejected without analysis. Concerning technology, when one reads Jacques Ellul he wonders if Ellul's pessimistic views about the inevitability of dehumanizing techniques have no answer. In Chapter 11 it is shown that Ellul can be answered by understanding that man may not be isolated from his technology. Therefore the growth of technique, and consequently technology, is not an unstoppable non-human force. Man can make decisions regarding technology.

The third section includes a discussion of several biblical passages. Men are to help others just because they are to be stewards. Thus rich nations are to help

Japan: A Way of Life, by Arnold H. DeGraaff, Jean Olthuis, and Anne Tuininga. Toronto, Canada: Joy in Learning Curriculum Development and Training Centre, 1980. 324 pages, \$9.95. Reviewed by Larry Reynolds, Professor of Education.

The authors of *Japan: A Way of Life* state that they have designed their book to "help students become involved in an in-depth study of the Japanese culture . . . that they will be helped to discover the cultural values that give meaning to all of Japanese society" (p. 8). While the authors have succeeded in compiling a good resource book for the Christian educator who is going to teach a unit on Japan, the book fails to be the pedagogical help for students that its authors intended.

The weaknesses that I have just suggested make it difficult to write a review that does justice to the effort the authors have made to extend the Lordship of Christ over all areas of the curriculum, in this case geography. Therefore, in the first part of this review I shall cover those pedagogical problems which I feel seriously hinder the effectiveness and curricular impact the book might have; then I shall conclude the review by noting what I feel are the extremely valuable insights the authors have provided the Christian educator who wants to teach geography in a way that truly contrasts with the practices of the secular educator.

A major problem with the book is that the reader is left somewhat confused as to exactly how the book should be used in the classroom. Suggestions for using the book state that students should study certain sections, but how to make those sections available to students is unclear. Because much of the book is written for the teacher, it would not be practical to purchase a copy for each student. The book is, however, copyrighted and nowhere is it stated that the teacher may legally duplicate those sections the student should read

poor nations not because there is necessarily a cause-and-effect relation between the wealth of the rich nations and the poverty of the poor nations, but rather because all men must be stewards. Injustice in the world is the result of sin. The biblical command to seek justice is to be our motivation for action.

The authors do not insist that there is only one allowable Christian program of action. However, in the fourth section they offer thirty guidelines for action which are not necessarily permanent guides but which do indicate the general direction we should take. (Examples: "Our lives as stewards must give testimony to the fact that the achievement of the central purposes of life is not directly proportional to the level of consumption." "Energy conservation is the single most important part of any energy program.")

Because this book presents so many facets of the current environmental discussion from a Christian perspective, this book will be a reference for future students and a benchmark for future workers.

and study. Similar confusion arises when student activities are sometimes addressed to students and sometimes addressed to the teacher with no indication that the "you" in the instructions has changed.

Other flaws mar the book's pedagogical success. The writing in some sections is extremely repetitious, especially in the chapter on the changing role of women in modern Japan (pp. 101-115). The reader is told twice about the life work cycle of a woman (p. 103 and p. 110) and is told three times that women are used as a source of cheap labor (p. 103, p. 110, and p. 112). While one can argue the educational merit of repetition, such repetition is usually acknowledged in some way (e.g., "As stated before. . ."). Organization is also a problem in the book. In the chapter on Japanese religions the reader is given the following introduction to what will be covered:

Over the centuries, the people of Japan have adopted three formal religions. The first is Shintoism, which originated in Japan. The second is Confucianism, which came from China. And the third is Buddhism, which originated in India but reached Japan by way of China.

The chapter then proceeds to cover the three religions in a different order with no explanation given. One could also question having the chapter on the changing role of Japanese women before the chapter on industry and trade since the chapter on women goes into depth on the

use of women in industry. The book also assumes the reader has an understanding of the Japanese monetary system and one wonders whether or not most students will be confused by the references to the yen. The introduction to the book implies that pedagogically the book has been designed for a pre-adolescent audience (pp. 20-21), but there are paragraphs in the sections for student reading and study in which both the Fog Index and Fry Readability Graph indicate a 12th grade reading level. Some of the charts (especially charts 9-12, pp. 221-225) seemed rather sophisticated for a pre-adolescent audience.

In spite of the serious problems and questions that I have raised about *Japan: A Way of Life*, there is still much to recommend the book as a valuable resource to teachers. Any teacher planning to teach a unit on Japan will find the overview of Japan helpful in many ways. That Atsuhiko Bekki of St. Paul's University in Tokyo served as a consultant in the production of this volume impresses the reader that the description of Japan is an accurate one. The description of Japan also impresses the reader as having a special relevance for twentieth century North American culture in that the authors have dealt with the changing role of women, the advent of the nuclear family, the problem of industrial pollution, and the crisis brought about by limited natural resources in the world today.

The bibliography, nicely divided into topical sections as well as divisions for student readings and teacher resources, is impressive, as is the listing of 99 films, many of them available for the cost of mailing and handling. The wide variety of individual and group activities (over 175) allows the teacher to select reading, writing, research, painting, role playing, map work, house designing, and cooking experiences to help students understand the many dimensions of Japanese culture.

Most valuable to the teacher, however, are the insights that the teacher gains for helping students study other cultures. The 29-page introduction provides the reader with an excellent conceptual framework for designing a unit on Japan or any culture foreign to the student. The authors recognize that "the unity of the way of life of a people, rooted in their religious vision of life, requires an integrated, holistic approach to the

study of particular cultures" (p. 22). Their description of Japan and their suggested multi-disciplined student activities both reflect such an integrative approach. The authors also provide the reader with basic principles that should underlie the evaluation of another culture:

- (1) . . . [A]lthough the confessional vision of life and the way of life of a people may be deeply anti-Christian, yet their idolatry is still restrained. Human beings can only work within and with God's creation.
- (2) To the extent that a people acknowledges the order of God's creation, that people is blessed and life unfolds and flourishes, even though they do not honor the Law-giver as their Lord, or praise Him for his blessings (Romans 2:14, 15). . . . The creation is endlessly rich and varied, and God uses all the peoples of the earth, be they willing or unwilling, to bring his creation to its fulfillment.
- (3) . . . [W]hen we attempt to evaluate a culture other than our own, we can do so meaningfully and fairly only if we have come to grips with the dominant view of life in our own culture To the extent that we have uncritically adopted the dominant view of life present in our society, we will tend to misinterpret and be prejudiced against other ways of life, judging them from our own distorted cultural view life (pp. 27-28).

These principles are demonstrated in the authors' description and evaluation of Japan.

Japan: A Way of Life provides a distinctively Christian model for multi-cultural education. Since this book is to be the first in a series of culture studies written for junior high students, I hope that the future volumes (and perhaps a revised edition of this one) will be free of the problems that I have mentioned. The educational vision and perspective reflected in *Japan: A Way of Life* should make a more significant impact on Christian education than the book in its present form will allow.