

Updates from Ray and Shelley Kwan - please add us to your safe senders list. Thank you!

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**Kwan**  
*Quarterly*



*Updates from Ray and Shelley Kwan*



*A little bit of snow in front of our home*

**"God's Word gives us everything we need to know and to obey Him and bring Him glory. That includes everything we need in order to obey His Great Commission to make disciples among all nations."**

- Andy Johnson, author of *Missions: How the Local Church Goes Global (9Marks)*

# Konnichiwa!

*Dear Family and Friends,*

Like the athletes at the Winter Olympics this year, we began 2018 with a mixture of joyful anticipation and thankfulness to the Lord for the opportunity to represent Him in Japan. Please pray with us that our hearts would continue to trust in the Lord as our strength and shield. Pray also that we would be faithful in the ministries with which He has entrusted us:

## JAPANESE STUDIES

Ray still goes to Japanese conversation classes throughout the city, but his studies are becoming more ministry-oriented, such as listening to Japanese sermons and preparing to teach in Japanese. Shelley and Masanobu continue to read lots of Japanese books, watch children's TV programs, and will begin attending a local Mommy and Me class in May. Please pray that we will keep growing in our knowledge of the Japanese language and culture so that we can encourage believers and effectively communicate with those in our community.

## AMERICAN ENGLISH CLASSES

This year, Ray is teaching three English classes at Hatta Nishi church. Two of the classes are taught predominantly in Japanese and all three



Osaka, Japan

## Highlights



Thanksgiving with Shelley's family.

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include a 10-15 minute Bible lesson in Japanese. Several unbelievers have been attending the Friday night class. Please continue to pray for wisdom and clarity for Ray as he leads the classes; courage for Hatta Nishi members to invite unsaved family, friends, and coworkers; and the salvation of unbelievers who may attend the classes.

### **CHURCH**

Ray preached two sermons in Japan since our last newsletter and is scheduled to preach entirely in Japanese this spring, Lord willing. He is still involved in teaching for the children's ministry and playing the guitar as needed. Shelley enjoys fellowship with the ladies at Hatta Nishi, especially the other moms. Please pray that we would love our Hatta Nishi brothers and sisters wholeheartedly and that we as a church would be holy and pleasing to the Lord in every aspect of our lives.

### **JAPAN BIBLE ACADEMY**

Ray continues to provide administrative support for Japan Bible Academy, a Bible training ministry. Please pray that God would supply Japanese translators for *Biblical Doctrine*, a systematic theology book released in the U.S. last year. If you or a Christian you know may be interested in helping with this project, please contact us!

### **EXTENDED FAMILY AND FRIENDS**

We enjoyed spending time with many family members and friends



Visiting Ray's family in Sacramento.

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Ray preaching at Redeemer's Grace Church in San Diego in November.

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during our time in California at the end of last year! Shelley and Masanobu will be in Los Angeles again from March 6-26 to help support Shelley's family in caregiving for her mother with dementia. Please pray that their time together would be edifying and that everyone would remain healthy and safe.

We are so thankful to the Lord for His abundant goodness, most of all in granting everything we need for life and godliness through knowing His son, Jesus. (2 Peter 1:3) And as always, we appreciate your support of and interest in God's work in Japan!

By His grace,

*Ray, Shelley, and Masanobu Kwan*

#### **PARTNERSHIP AND SUPPORT**

We thank God for your partnership in making disciples in Japan!

For those interested in giving online or using a credit card, here's an easy way for you to do that on the IBC

website: <http://www.ibcbible.org/missions/kwan-missions/>

We appreciate your support!



Annual get-together with friends in Northern CA.

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Ray preaching at Immanuel Bible Church in December.

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## ***Book Review: A History of Japanese Theology***

Yasuo Furuya, Editor and Translator

Published in English in 1997 (originally published in Japanese)

*Reflections by Ray*

When I came across *A History of Japanese Theology*, published by William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, I thought to myself, “I really should read this book.” First of all, I love history. Secondly, I love Japan. Third, it’s by a Christian publisher that I know and respect. So, I gave it a go.

At 146 pages, *A History of Japanese Theology* is not a long book. The reason, as the writers point out, is because the history of Japanese Christian theology is not very long. Christianity officially came to Japan in 1549, but shortly after, the Japanese government banned Christianity for about 300 years. At that point, Japanese Christians were too busy trying to stay alive to develop any kind of theology. It wasn’t until 1871 that freedom of religion was introduced in Japan and Christian theology could develop in Japan.

### **A Selective History**

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I will say right off the bat that there are some notable deficiencies with the book. The biggest one is that the history presented in this book is



Spending time with IBC friends.

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Christmas in Japan.

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very selective. It mainly centers on the activities of one liberal seminary, Union Theological Seminary in New York (UTS). Three out of the five contributors and many of the theologians who were mentioned in the book studied at UTS or a related school. However, I have read in other books that groups like Baptists and Presbyterians also had an impact on theology in Japan. The translation and publication of conservative commentaries and other theological works (many of which are now out of print) is proof of this.

### Four Periods

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Despite the selective nature of the book's content, it was interesting to read about the history that was included in the book. The book divides the history of Japanese theology into four periods: 1) 1868 to 1907, 2) 1907-1945, 3) 1945-1970, and 4) 1970 to the book's present (1989). The divisions are somewhat arbitrary, but the first period begins with the reopening of Japan's borders to foreigners at the start of the Meiji Period. During this period, the first Christian schools were established. The second period begins in 1907 with the handing over of teaching positions to native Japanese teachers and concludes with the end of World War 2. The third period is known as the "Germanic Captivity." Though many American missionaries came in during this period and established churches, Christianity on an intellectual level was more influenced by German theologians. The authors refer to the last period as a break from the "Germanic Captivity" where Japanese theologians



Ray preaching at Hatta Nishi in February.

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Singing at the Hatta Nishi Mochi Party (kid's outreach event) in February.

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[Click to make an online](#)

began to wean themselves away from German theology and develop their own theology.

### A Sad State

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As I read this book, which is the first history of theology in Japan written by Japanese scholars, I couldn't help but feel sad about the state of theology in Japan today. Almost every theologian mentioned in the book had some serious theological hang ups. I would say that most of them were at least to some degree syncretistic (meaning that they thought it was okay to mix Christianity and Buddhism, Shintoism, Confucianism, Nationalism, etc.) and some had very heretical beliefs (for example, a theologian from the first generation, Danjo Ebina, did not believe in the Trinity).

### Concluding Thoughts

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Though this book was good for me to read, I can't really recommend it to the average Christian reader. It's not an easy read. It assumes that you know certain theological terms and concepts and uses them with little explanation. It's also very specific in it's content. I read it to get an idea of why Christianity is the way it is in Japan. It confirmed my suspicion that the main problem in Japanese Christianity is that it's not

[gift now](#)

#### PRAYER REQUESTS:

##### 1. Japanese Language and

**Culture:** That we will keep growing in our knowledge of the Japanese language and culture so that we can encourage believers and effectively communicate with those in our community.

##### 2. English outreach

**classes:** For wisdom and clarity for Ray as he leads classes; courage for Hatta Nishi members to invite unsaved family, friends, and co-workers; and the salvation of unbelievers and sanctification of believers who attend.

##### 3. Family:

That Shelley and Masanobu would rely on God's grace and stay healthy and safe as they travel to L.A. to support Shelley's family in caring for her mother who has dementia.

built on a pure foundation of the Bible, but rather that the foundation is mixed with unbiblical elements such as thinking from other religions. However, if you are not interested in Christianity in Japan at a theological and philosophical level, you would probably be happier spending your time reading something else.

## Did You Know?



Udon noodles are made by stomping on the dough with your feet!

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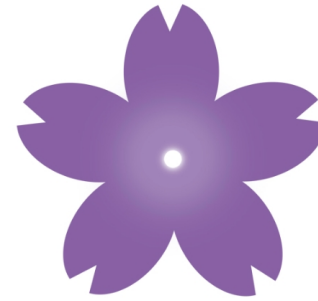


Many Japanese preschools provide transportation for children, often in a colorfully decorated bus.

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