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**Facing the History of the Nation:
The Journey of a Japanese Christian Scholar**

Takamitsu Muraoka

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Foreword

I am grateful to Professor Takamitsu Muraoka for his permission to publish his public lecture, delivered in Trinity Theological College on 11th October 2005.

Little has been published on Christian reflection of the Japanese occupation of East Asia in the last century. We hope that the publication of Muraoka's lecture would generate discussion on this important subject, and lead to processes of reconciliation.

I shall leave the readers to discover, in the following pages, the personal journey that led Muraoka to Trinity Theological College this autumn. For five weeks in September and October this year, students in the Master of Theology in Biblical Exegesis and Translation programme of our College benefited from the tutelage of a saintly and scholarly man.

Muraoka was born before the war in Hiroshima, Japan, where he spent a major part of his life. He received his doctorate from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel. He taught in Manchester University (1970-80), in Melbourne University (1980-91), and in Leiden University (1991-2003), where he remains as Professor Emeritus since his retirement in 2003.

I have supplied several footnotes to the lecture, and compiled a select bibliography of literature on the Japanese occupation in Singapore during the Pacific War. A short bibliography of Muraoka's publication is also attached.

This lecture is the first Occasional Paper published by the Centre for the Study of Christianity in Asia.

Michael Poon

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Facing the History of the Nation: The Journey of a Japanese Christian Scholar

Professor Takamitsu Muraoka

My global peregrination over the past forty odd years has been a period of learning, not just as a scholar of the biblical languages. I believe I am first a human being before I am a scholar. Although I am here to teach a particular course for five weeks, I am also learning, not only about Greek and Hebrew. Last Friday, for instance, during the College's 57th anniversary thanksgiving service in the Chapel, I sat next to Dr Tan Kim Huat, from whom I learned what the oblong communion table on the stage signifies to me as a Japanese.¹

I am saddened by the fact that now, only in my retirement, I am getting familiar with the countries of Asia, their peoples, histories and cultures. Some years ago a Korean businessman was sent by his company to live and work in the north of the southern island of Kyushu of Japan. A son of his, called Chon, attended a local Japanese primary school. One autumn day, the teacher of his class announced that the annual sports day of that particular year was going to be celebrated with an international flavour; he told his pupils that they would see lots of flags of various countries of the world fluttering in the school playground. Chon raised his hand and asked, 'Sir, our flag, too?' The teacher assured him at once: 'Of course, of course, Chon.' Later, he walked into the storage room and found many flags of various countries from around the world, but no single Korean flag. He was deeply shocked. Geographically, Korea is the closest neighbour of Japan; from the international airport of Fukuoka in Kyushu to the port city of Pusan in Korea, it is a matter of half an hour's flight. The school teacher called on the parents of his pupils and organised a study group to learn about the history of Korea and its relationships with Japan.

This had been, and still is, to a large extent, typical of the attitude of the average Japanese. Since about 150 years ago, what has driven Japan has been her determination to catch up with the west, especially in terms of the material welfare, science and technology. This has been also the case in her intellectual interests and pursuits. There are far more universities and colleges which offer courses in English, French, and German than those where you can learn Korean or Chinese as a modern living language. The average Japanese suffers from an inferiority complex towards Westerners but has a strong sense of superiority, contempt and disdain towards his or her Asian neighbours. This is, I believe, one of the root causes of the way Japan behaved and dealt with her Asian neighbours during the past century. This is truly amazing when one remembers how deeply Japan is indebted to her immediate neighbours. One of the two major religions of Japan, Buddhism, reached Japan in the sixth century through Korea, and it has been enriched through its frequent interactions with Korean and Chinese Buddhism. Until around that time, we had no means of

¹ During the Japanese occupation of Singapore, Anglican, Presbyterian and Methodist church leaders interned in Changi Prison expressed a desire to establish after the war a union theological college institution to train and equip men and women for Christian ministry in Singapore and Malaya. This led to the formation of Trinity College in 1948. The Communion table was made from the trunk of an old Changi tree.

committing our own language to writing. We adopted the entire writing system of Chinese and adapted it to the linguistic structure of Japanese. Until about 150 years ago, official Japanese documents were written in Chinese, and the educated elite of the land were familiar with the main classics of the Chinese literature.

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I became a Christian through prayerful devotion of an American Baptist missionary who started an English Bible class in a provincial city of Kyushu, where I was a high school student, and was baptised by him in my first year at a university in Tokyo. In 1964, I left Japan to study at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem on an Israeli government scholarship, to be followed a year later by my fiancée then, who had also become a Christian several years earlier. At that time, it had not occurred to either of us that we were to undergo yet another form of baptism to become anabaptists, so to speak. The first baptism took place in a lake by immersion, an authentic Baptist rite. What form our second baptism by fire took in Israel I shall eschew this afternoon. Let me move on to the next station of our *via dolorosa*. Shortly after I was conferred a doctorate in Jerusalem, I was fortunate enough to be appointed to a lectureship in Semitic languages at Manchester University in the United Kingdom where I would teach the following ten years. Throughout that decade, on the second Sunday of November, Remembrance Sunday, when the British soldiers fallen in the last two world wars are commemorated, we were treated, by the courtesy of BBC, year in year out to a famous (or infamous) film *Bridge on the River Kwai*. We also witnessed ugly scenes when the Emperor Hirohito came to visit England on a state visit. Subsequently, when we were in Melbourne, the Emperor died, which occasioned a heated national debate about who, if anybody at all, was to represent Australia at his funeral. Nobody wanted. This was, alas, not to be the last of our bitter dosage of reeducation.

In the summer of 1991, when I arrived in the Netherlands to take up the Hebrew chair at Leiden University, I sensed that there was something in the air. It turned out that a wreath of flowers recently laid by the then prime minister of Japan, Mr Kaifu, at the Indisch Monument in The Hague, had found its way into the waters nearby on the very evening. I was annoyed, to put it mildly, when I could not locate a single mention of the incident in two of the leading Japanese daily papers subscribed to by the Japanese department of my university despite a legion of Japanese journalists who routinely accompany their prime minister on such an official overseas visit.

Each of these three countries to which my academic career has taken me and my family retains, we were to discover, bitter memories of what many of its nationals went through during the Pacific War at the hands of Japanese militaries. The bitterness must have been exacerbated because they had, after all, defeated Japan. Since we knew that we were going to be in this country for a while, my wife and I decided to do something about it and began to read and reflect about the subject. We watched out for any article appearing in the *NRC Handelsblad*, a leading Dutch paper we subscribe to. In February 1996, the paper published a full-page article on a territorial dispute between South Korea and Japan. The style and tone of the article appeared to me slightly undeserving of the journalistic standard one would expect of this major newspaper. The article carried the title: 'Een oorlog tegen Japan zou het mooiste zijn (A war against Japan would be splendid!)'. A letter of protest I sent in

and was subsequently printed resulted in a totally unexpected contact with an elderly Dutch lady who had long battled with her bitter memories of the time she was forced to spend in one of many civilian internment camps set up by the Japanese army in Indonesia during the Pacific War. Through this contact, we got to know many more Dutch returnees from Indonesia. One such was a colleague of mine at Leiden University, who had competed with me for the Hebrew chair. Some had succeeded in overcoming their hard, inner struggle. Some others told us in their typical Dutch candidness about their still burning bitter feelings. In 2000, I, together with my wife and friends, Dutch and Japanese, organised a conference to which we invited about sixty Dutch returnees from Indonesia, their relatives and friends, and about twenty Japanese residents in Holland to face our shared history, particularly that of the three and a half years' Japanese occupation of Indonesia and its aftermath. Next month, we are going to have a ninth conference.

What happened during the laying of the death railway through the jungle of Thailand-Burma and in Indonesia was news to us. We had not been taught about such things at school, though we HAD been taught about the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki and civilian casualties of systematic carpet-bombing of Japanese cities towards the end of the war. Earlier, I mentioned the American film. A film being a film, it has its strengths and limitations. You miss hard figures and statistics. In case many of you, born after the war, are not familiar with what happened then and not very far away from here, in contravention of the then current international treaties, about 61,800 POWs, mostly British and those of the British Commonwealth, were forced to work on the construction of the railway. Due to the dreadfully inadequate nutrition and medical supplies and also due to too frequent physical violences by their taskmasters, about 12,300 of them perished. On the hardest section of the railway, every single sleeper is said to have cost one life.

Earlier this year, I watched on a Dutch TV channel a recently released documentary on this infamous railway. A young Indian civil engineer, profoundly impressed by what seemed to him to be a miraculous feat of engineering and construction, set out to take a close look at it: a 415km long railway laid through the thick jungle of Burma-Thailand in less than a year and with such pitifully scarce, unwilling, unfit human and material resources. However, as he, together with a local guide, retraced the entire route, he was soon overwhelmed with the tragic, dehumanising, barbaric nature of this project. At many points along the route, for instance, he stumbled upon countless human skeletons and bones. There was not a tomb or a humble pile of stones to be found nearby. Those human remains could not have been those of the over 12,000 British, Australian or New Zealand POWs, whose identities are known and who received a proper burial. On the monument recently set up by the bridge over the River Kwai by survivors to commemorate their unfortunate comrades-in-arms, no name which is other than Anglo-Saxon is inscribed. The young Indian visitor learned for the first time that about 200,000 men had been brought there from the neighbouring Asian countries, either by deception or by coercion. Of those 200,000 forced labourers, including not a few countrymen of the Indian engineer himself, 42,000 (according to Japanese sources) or 74,000 (British sources) are estimated to have perished. The documentary showed the young Indian on his journey home, seated in a train with a sunken face, visibly shaking.

Some years before I saw this documentary, however, it had begun to dawn on us that there are some important aspects of our recent national history which call for our serious attention. They concern the relationship between Japan and her Asian neighbours, including some islands in the Pacific Ocean. This does not begin with the breakout of the Pacific War in December 1941. Nor is it confined to the countries and islands invaded and occupied by the Japanese army during the following years. The Sino-Japanese war had started in 1937, one year before I was born. Korea, the entire Korean peninsula, had been annexed to Japan in 1910 and become a colony of hers. Taiwan had become a colony of Japan even earlier. With the exception of a tiny minority of individuals who were quick to see the pragmatic benefit of cooperating with the new colonial masters or occupying forces, the great majority of the population of each country or island suffered in various degrees physically or materially, degraded and humiliated.

To talk of a benign colonial rule, by any power, is a delusion. The damages inflicted by Japan during the first half of the 20th century on this part of Asia were not caused by militaries alone. There were for sure lots of well-meaning, friendly, civil Japanese colonists. There were even humane, respectable or decent Japanese soldiers. The fact remains, however, that they, too, were instruments and cogs of the firm policy of the imperialistic, militaristic expansionism. As a result, we have an enormous amount of written, photographic, oral or material records of wilful destruction of lives, properties, exploitation, violence whether physical or mental. Sadly, a handful of exceptions apart, Japanese Christians of that period cannot claim innocence either.

As my wife and I prepared for our visit this time to Singapore, I studied, in addition to the Hebrew Bible and the Septuagint, several books and articles on the three and half a year's Japanese occupation of Singapore and its neighbouring lands. One such was a partial Japanese translation of Malayan Chinese resistance to Japan 1937-1945: selected source materials based on Colonel Chuang Hui-Tsuan's collection.² I often had to put the book down, feeling that I could not bear to read it on. It is generally known that the Japanese failure to win the war against China led to countless atrocious treatments visited upon overseas Chinese, including many thousands of Singaporean Chinese. Another book by a Japanese historian of the postwar generation (b. 1955), Hayashi Hirofumi, *Trials of war-criminals*, was published by a prestigious Japanese publisher, Iwanami, in 1998.³ The author had conducted a full-scale research into public records and archival documents relating to the war-crimes courts set up by the British and the Australians after the war in this region, and he had also visited many relevant sites in the region and interviewed countless survivors and witnesses. Let me mention only one case brought before a court held in Ipoh in the state of Perak, Malaysia. It concerned a woman of mixed Eurasian origins, who had medical practice together with her husband in Papan in the suburbs of Ipoh. The Japanese 'kempeitai', military police, arrested her on the suspicion that she had been offering medical assistance to local anti-Japanese resistance fighters. I cannot bear to describe here in detail what horrible, revolting and protracted tortures she was subjected to in her cell. When they could not get out of her what they wanted to hear, they brought in a seven-

² *Malayan Chinese Resistance to Japan 1937-1945: Selected Source Materials Based on Colonel Chuang Hui-Tsuan's Collection*, edited by Shu Yun-Tsiao and Chua Ser-Koon (Singapore: Cultural and Historical Publishing House, 1984).

³ Hirofumi Hayashi, *Sabakareta Senso Hanzai: Igrisu No Tainichi Senpan Saiban* (Toyko: Iwanami Shoten, 1998).

year-old daughter of hers, hanging her from the top of a three-metre wooden post and made fire under it. Her mother was tied in front of the fire to another wooden post and whipped repeatedly. The girl tried to cheer her mother up by shouting, 'Mum, I'm OK. Don't you worry about me.' The mother, despite the medical treatment in the U.K. after the war, died in 1949 from the wounds sustained in the cell. The girl received from the British Governor General a personal letter commending her courage. A total of 304 cases involving 919 witnesses were brought before the British war-crimes courts in SE Asia. It is generally agreed, however, that these figures represent only the tip of the iceberg of the war-crimes that had been actually perpetrated. For several reasons, a vast number of potential cases were not pursued.

Confronted with this national history of ours, we asked ourselves: Where do we stand as Japanese nationals and Japanese Christians? In his justly famous speech to the German Parliament on the 40th anniversary of Germany's defeat on 8 May 1945, the then federal president of Germany Richard von Weizsäcker said: 'Most of our German citizens today were either children or not yet born during the war. They cannot confess sins which they did not commit personally. Nobody with ordinary human sensibility could expect you to wear tattered sackcloth and sit in ashes just because you happen to be German.' I agree with Weizsäcker here. When the Pacific War ended I was seven years old. Even if I had waved a Japanese flag during the war to men departing for a front-line, it would be unfair for me to be accused of complicity in our war of aggression. There is a subtle but important difference between admitting sins and confessing sins. The former German President, however, went on to say: 'Our forefathers left us a stupendous legacy. Guilty or not guilty, young or old, we all Germans must accept this past history. We are responsible for what we make of this legacy and how we relate to it. One who closes his eyes to the past becomes also blind to the present. He who refuses to register in memory past acts of inhumanity run the risk of becoming infected again by the same disease.' Here, I also concur with Weizsäcker.

We are dealing here with the weighty, philosophical question of history and memory. The Bible teaches a thing or two about this question, which is not surprising. The God of the Bible is not presented as a metaphysical, speculative or merely theoretical construct. He was the God of Adam and Eve, of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, of David and Solomon, of Ezra and Nehemiah, of Rahab the harlot of Jericho. He interacted with these men and women of flesh and blood in their lives and revealed Himself in history. The case of Rahab shows that He was recognised as such even by a pagan. That was also the case with Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar. In the end, He revealed Himself, truly becoming flesh and dwelling amongst us, revealing Himself to Saul on the way to Damascus. We humans are all historical beings; we were not born out of our own will. For us, there is no present nor future without past.

Some time ago, I read an article in a Japanese Christian magazine, in which the author, a well-known Christian leader in Japan, referred to the monument built by survivors in memory of their colleagues, victims of the Thai-Burma railway. Below their names one can read a short text: 'We forgive you, but we shall never forget.' Our Christian author went on to say: 'How wonderful that we have a forgetful God! Our God not only forgives our sins, but forgets them.' To support his assertion, he mentioned Psalm 103.9. The passage only says 'He shall not remain angry for ever'. There is nothing said about forgetting on the part of God.

Nonetheless, the question whether our God forgets our sins or not bothered me and appeared to me an important one. So I set out following the matter up. Biblical Hebrew has two verbs which can be translated to forget. One of them, *nasha*, occurs only seven times. So we can leave it out of account for the moment. The other one, *shakach*, occurs as many as 102 times, so we shall focus on this. My investigation has turned up a couple of interesting facts.

The verb is often used in a negative imperative, ‘Do not forget’, but only once as a positive imperative, ‘Forget!’, and this at Psalm 45.10. The moral of the passage is that if a Japanese wife cannot get over her homesickness and keeps talking about her mother living thousands of kilometers away, her Singaporean husband would not be amused.

By contrast, the antonym of *shakach*, namely *zakhar* ‘to remember’, is used in the positive imperative as many as 47 times, whereas its negative counterpart is confined to a few cases such as the plea to God in Isaiah 64.8(9): ‘Do not remember our iniquities for ever.’

Furthermore, the verb translated ‘forget’ does not denote temporary loss of memory. It denotes a deliberate act of forgetting, deleting from one’s memory. One might counter by citing the following passages to argue that our God is after all a forgetful God: ‘As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us’ (Ps 104.12); ‘Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea’ (Micah 7.19); ‘Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back’ (Isaiah 38.17). These passages teach us that God keeps the dark pages of our personal history out of sight, rather than that our records have been eliminated with a shredding machine. On the contrary, God Himself declares that He will not forget our sins: ‘Surely I will never forget any of their works’ (Amos 8.7).

Throughout the Scriptures, our God reminds His people of the sins of their forbears. For instance, when leaders of the community in the Babylonian exile approached Ezekiel, asking him to plead with God to get them out of their present predicament, God refused to oblige (Ezekiel 20.1-3). Instead, He commanded the prophet to remind the nation of the past sinful history of their forefathers and point out to them that they were unwilling to learn a lesson from this history and were persisting in following the same path (v. 30).

In the Bible, there are a number of words which are translated as ‘sin’, ‘iniquity’ and suchlike. One such word occurs in the Lord’s Prayer, *opheiletês*. It primarily means debt. When your debt is cancelled by your kind-hearted creditor, your IOU may have a line drawn across, but the records – that you once borrowed a certain amount from a certain person to be repaid by such and such a date with such and such an interest – all those records are not whitened over with a correction liquid. The document will not be torn up, thrown away or burnt, but will be stored in a safe under lock and key, though the creditor will never produce it to harass his former debtor. History will never evaporate into the thin air. The alliteration ‘Forgive and forget’ is not a Biblical teaching. To think so is to be too kind and soft to yourself. It devalues the death of Jesus on the cross which made such a forgiving possible. We cannot surely cheapen

‘the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot’ (1 Peter 1.19).

History, even painful history, needs to be remembered, kept in memory, not only by those who caused such pain, but also by those who suffered it. Some of you probably visited the Anne Frank Museum in Amsterdam. Some years ago, when the Bosnian war was raging, I was there, and on the wall beside the ticket office, someone had pinned a newspaper clipping on the war with a handwritten message, ‘When are we going to learn a lesson from history?’ In the preface to a recently published biography of Anne Frank, its author, Melissa Müller, writes: ‘Since the end of the Second World War, there have been exactly four days when there was no war anywhere on the face of the earth.’

As Christians, we believe that our Bible points to the best possible way to meet this challenge, but one does not have to be a Christian to do so. Our political leaders do not need to be first converted to the Christian faith before they begin to act differently from what they currently do. What is at stake is the universal, fundamental values of human dignity and justice, about the universal longing for peace and harmony.

It is so easy to keep our experiences of past failures and hardships under the carpet, to put the dark history behind us, and forget all. It is no easy task for me, with an officer of the Imperial Army as father, to speak critically and in public of the Pacific War. It must be awfully painful to admit that your husband, father, brother, or son died in a war which cannot be ethically defended. However, unless we learn, and have the courage, to distinguish between persons and deeds, we will not be able to free ourselves from the delusion that ‘those war deads are beckoning us to pay respect at the Yasukuni Shrine’, what the present Japanese premier Koizumi says to justify his visits to the shrine. We would then keep justifying our military aggression and start going down the same familiar path.

Coming back to the earlier quote from Weizsäcker's speech, where does someone like me stand, a Japanese who is of the post-war generation?

Firstly, I fully and honestly admit that during the first half of the last century, my country inflicted an inestimable amount of damage, loss, destruction and suffering of all descriptions, not only on POWs of the allied forces and their civilian population, but also and far more seriously on the lands and peoples of Asia and Pacific islands. I offer no excuses; I can only belatedly express my sincere sense of sympathies for all those countless victims and their relatives and friends.

Secondly, I express my serious concern over the fact that my country, its successive postwar leaders and the great majority of the population, have not yet faced the modern history of Japan honestly and sincerely. For us, sixty years on, the war is not over yet. I feel responsible for this situation. I shall not remain idle or sit back on the side. I am determined to act, not just say things. I know some leading members of a Dutch foundation called *Boete en verzoening* (in English: Penance and Reconciliation). They are engaged in various activities aimed at repairing relationships with groups, peoples and nations who have been wronged by Dutch Christians throughout the centuries: Jews, Muslims, peoples of their former colonies. I

find the name of the foundation instructive: not just reconciliation, but also penance, and penance first. I also believe I must act. But how?

In March 2003, I officially retired from Leiden University. Some friends had suggested that I emigrated to the USA where there is no compulsory retirement, but I did not feel attracted enough to such an idea. My wife and I had prayed quite some time as to how to spend our time after my retirement. In the end, we came to the conclusion that it was God's will for me to devote my time to a continued study of the biblical languages and the ancient translations of the Bible. The idea appealed to me quite a bit: freedom from lectures and administration. Though such a life as a researcher would not bring in very much, it might sound like a dream for a born scholar. Gradually, however, the Lord showed us that, if you tithe your income, you could tithe your time as well, which is equally a free gift from Him. In concrete terms, I decided to spend one tenth of my time, some five weeks every year, as long as I am mentally and physically fit, sharing my knowledge and interests in my fields of specialisation with scholars and students of those countries in Asia which suffered under the Japanese imperialism and militaristic aggression during the first half of the 20th century and teaching those subjects at universities and theological seminaries there as a volunteer, i.e. for no honorarium. In early 2002, I put this idea to the Secretary General of the Korean Bible Society, Dr Young-Jin Min, also a graduate of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, asking him, if he would share my view and objectives, to arrange a teaching programme in Seoul. He took a while, and kindly arranged such a programme. Thus, I taught five weeks in Korea in 2003, and last year we were in Indonesia. This year, I have come to Singapore. Trinity Theological College has graciously acceded to my request to be allowed to teach here. This is my fourth week. Among the seven students of mine, there are four for whom I am a son of their former national arch enemy. I am humbled by the fact that we have been studying in an atmosphere of friendship, mutual respect and peace.

The Dutch-Japanese conferences held in The Netherlands and my trips to Asia are all entirely private initiatives, grassroots activities. The conferences are not subsidised by the Japanese embassy in the Netherlands, though we do regularly send an invitation to the embassy. At some conferences, we had the pleasure of welcoming an embassy staff member. For my trips to Asian countries, I do not receive a yen from the Foreign Ministry in Tokyo or any other government agency. I have not solicited such. I have no intention of doing so. I do not believe that my Government should quietly shunt and delegate its own duties and obligations to its citizens. We do, however, truly appreciate generous gestures of hospitality shown by our hosts and hosting institutions. TTC is providing us free accommodation and board plus other facilities.

I find this task quite daunting, mind-boggling. I feel totally inadequate to it. I do not mean my teaching, but the problem of the imperialistic and militaristic past of my country. Very many of the Japanese public are not even aware of such a problem or do not see this legacy as a problem and try to distort it or wipe it out of existence. However, the story of Jesus feeding more than five thousand people is a source of encouragement to me: the Lord richly blessed the offering so humble and modest, but made willingly and in faith, a mere five loaves and two fish.

On the last day of my teaching in Korea in 2003, I was invited to address a chapel service of the seminary where nearly 2,500 staff and students were present. I could

have spoken in English, but I had explicitly been asked to speak in Japanese. A Japanese student served as interpreter. Up front on the stage, my interpreter and I sat on one side. On the other side of the pulpit were seated my host, Old Testament Professor Kang, and Mrs Kang, who had studied several years in Japan, and read the Scripture for the week. From this seating arrangement one could see that the service was deliberately meant as a worship service with the Japanese and Koreans worshipping together in the presence of God of justice and mercy, and His Son Jesus Christ willing to forgive sins confessed. I told the congregation why we had come to Korea, and told them about a card I had received a day before our departure from The Netherlands. That was my 65th birthday, and I received a birthday card from a Dutch couple in the neighbourhood, on the front of which there was painted a yellow cornfield ripe for harvest. Inside, our friends had inscribed: 'Takamitsu, you've been sowing quite a while. Perhaps it's now time for you to start harvesting?' On the same day, at a worship service of our Japanese church in Amsterdam when our Korean pastor, Rev. Park, preached, I announced our imminent journey and told about this birthday card, adding 'We are not going to Korea as tourists. We are going to harvest what our forefathers sowed in Korea in the first half of the last century.' On the way back home, it occurred to me that we were going to sow a new kind of seed. After having told the congregation at the seminary about this card, I added: 'It seems to me that my wife and I have come to Korea to sow a new kind of seed together with our Korean brothers and sisters in the Lord. Should the Lord grant us another visit to Korea, we would be delighted to harvest together with joy what we have sowed together with tears.' As I said at the time, this service has left in our minds an indelible impression, since the only Japanese who would have mingled in a worship service in a Korean church during the colonial period would have been either a member of the Japanese secret police, military police ('kempei') or a policeman in plain clothes.

We have lived abroad over 41 years. We are sometimes asked whether we already have got a Dutch citizenship. Until a while ago I, who have neglected the fifth of the Decalogue, 'Thou shalt honour thy father and mother', would routinely reply that I would not do that so long as my parents are alive. My mother has recently turned 90. I have three sisters, but I am the only son and the eldest child. You will understand what this entails in a conservative village society of Japan. Now I have an added argument: I am determined to remain Japanese until my country, its leaders, including its symbolical figure-head, and the majority of its citizens resolve squarely and honestly to face this past legacy of ours, deal with it adequately, and begin to translate this resolution into tangible deeds. I beg you to pray with me, for me and for my nation, so that the day will come, in my lifetime, when on an occasion such as this, I can produce my Japanese passport and wave it proudly.

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