SILENCE

A Novel

Shūsaku Endō

WITH A FOREWORD BY MARTIN SCORSESE

SOON TO BE A MAJOR MOTION PICTURE

PICADOR MODERN CLASSICS

SHŪSAKU ENDŌ'S
CLASSIC NOVEL OF
ENDURING FAITH IN
DANGEROUS TIMES

"Thought-provoking and moving... Complex and multilayered... [*Silence*] is a great achievement, and I love the book."
—DAVID MITCHELL, author of *The Bone Clocks* and *Cloud Atlas*

TRANSLATED FROM THE JAPANESE
BY WILLIAM JOHNSTON

Shūsaku Endō
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PICADOR MODERN CLASSICS

ISBN 978-1-250-08224-4 $16.00

"*Silence* I regard as a masterpiece,
a lucid and elegant drama."
—*The New York Review of Books*

SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY JAPAN: Two Portuguese Jesuit priests travel to a country hostile to their religion, where feudal lords force the faithful to publicly renounce their beliefs. Eventually captured and forced to watch their Japanese Christian brothers lay down their lives for their faith, the priests bear witness to unimaginable cruelties that test their own beliefs. Shusaku Endo is one of the most celebrated and well-known Japanese fiction writers of the twentieth century, and *Silence* is widely considered to be his great masterpiece.

SHUSAKU ENDO, born in Tokyo in 1923, was raised by his mother and an aunt in Kobe, where he converted to Roman Catholicism at the age of eleven. At Tokyo's Keio University, he majored in French literature, graduating with a BA in 1949, before furthering his studies in French Catholic literature at the University of Lyon in France between 1950 and 1953. Before his death in 1996, Endō was the recipient of a number of outstanding Japanese literary awards: the Akutagawa Prize, Mainichi Cultural Prize, Shincho Prize, and the Tanizaki Prize, and was widely considered the greatest Japanese novelist of his time.

WILLIAM JOHNSTON (1925–2010) was an Irish translator and Jesuit missionary. An authority on fourteenth-century spirituality, he translated several works from the contemplative traditions of both East and West, as well as work by Shūsaku Endō.

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COVER DESIGN BY HENRY SENE YEE

COVER ILLUSTRATION BY YUKO SHIMIZU

PICADOR MODERN CLASSICS

175 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10010

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

FOREWORD

How do you tell the story of Christian faith? The difficulty, the *crisis,* of believing? How do you describe the struggle? There have been many great twentieth-century novelists drawn to the subject—Graham Greene, of course, and François Mauriac, Georges Bernanos and, from his own very particular perspective, Shūsaku Endō.

When I use the word 'particular', I am not referring to the fact that Endō was Japanese. In fact, it seems to me that *Silence,* his greatest novel and one that has become increasingly precious to me as the years have gone by, is precisely about the particular *and* the general. And it is finally about the first overwhelming the second.

Endō himself had great difficulty reconciling his Catholic faith with Japanese culture. So it was not historical research but his own experience that drew him to the stories of the Portuguese missionaries of the seventeenth century who were forced to apostatize. He understood the conflict of faith, the necessity of belief fighting the voice of experience. The voice that always urges the faithful—the *questioning* faithful—to adapt their beliefs to the world they inhabit, their culture. Christianity is based on faith, but if you study its history you see that it's had to adapt itself over

and over again, always with great difficulty, in order that faith might flourish. That's a paradox, and it can be an extremely painful one: on the face of it, believing and questioning are antithetical. Yet I believe that they go hand in hand. One nourishes the other. Questioning may lead to great loneliness, but if it co-exists with faith—true faith, abiding faith—it can end in the most joyful sense of communion. It's this painful, paradoxical passage—from certainty to doubt to loneliness to communion—that Endō understands so well, and renders so clearly, carefully and beautifully in *Silence*.

Sebastian Rodrigues represents what you might call the 'best and the brightest' of the Catholic faith. 'There were once "Men of the Church",' the old Priest of Torcy tells the young, sickly Priest of Ambricourt in Bernanos' *Diary of a Country Priest,* and Rodrigues would most certainly have been one of those men, stalwart, unbending in his will and his resolve, unshakeable in his faith—if he had stayed in Portugal, that is. Instead, he is tested in a very special and especially painful way. He is placed in the middle of another, hostile culture, during a late stage in a protracted effort to rid itself of Christianity. Rodrigues believes, with all his heart, that he will be the hero of a Western story that we all know very well: the Christian allegory. He will be the Christ figure, with his own Gethsemane—a patch of woods—and his own Judas, a miserable wretch named Kichijirō. In fact, this is the fate that befalls his fellow missionary, Father Garrpe.

And then, slowly, masterfully, Endō reverses the tide. 'Why am I being kept alive?' Rodrigues wonders. 'Where is my martyrdom? My *glorious* martyrdom?' His Japanese captors have a keener understanding of Christianity than he realizes, and he is given a different role altogether, although no less meaningful.

Silence is the story of a man who learns—so painfully—that God's love is more mysterious than he knows, that He leaves much more to the ways of men than we realize, and that He is always present . . . even in His silence. For me, it is the story of

one who begins on the path of Christ and who ends replaying the role of Christianity's greatest villain, Judas. He almost literally follows in his footsteps. In so doing, he comes to understand the role of Judas. This is one of the most painful dilemmas in all of Christianity. What was Judas' role? What was expected of him by Christ? What is expected of him by us today? With the discovery of the Gospel of Judas, these questions have become even more pressing. Endō looks at the problem of Judas more directly than any other artist I know. He understood that, in order for Christianity to live, to adapt itself to other cultures and historical moments, it needs not just the figure of Christ but the figure of Judas as well.

I picked up this novel for the first time almost twenty years ago. I've reread it countless times since, and I am now preparing to adapt it as a film. It has given me a kind of sustenance that I have found in only a very few works of art.

I leave you with *Silence* by the great Shūsaku Endō.

Martin Scorsese

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

Shūsaku Endō has been called the Japanese Graham Greene. If this means that he is a Catholic novelist, that his books are problematic and controversial, that his writing is deeply psychological, that he depicts the anguish of faith and the mercy of God—then it is certainly true. For Mr. Endō has now come to the forefront of the Japanese literary world writing about problems which at one time seemed remote from this country: problems of faith and God, of sin and betrayal, of martyrdom and apostasy.

Yet the central problem which has preoccupied Mr. Endō even from his early days is the conflict between East and West, especially in its relationship to Christianity. Assuredly this is no new problem but one which he has inherited from a long line of Japanese writers and intellectuals from the time of Meiji; but Mr. Endō is the first Catholic to put it forward with such force and to draw the clear-cut conclusion that Christianity must adapt itself radically if it is to take root in the 'swamp' of Japan. His most recent novel, *Silence*, deals with the troubled period of Japanese history known as 'the Christian century'—about which a word of introduction may not be out of place.

I

Christianity was brought to Japan by the Basque Francis Xavier, who stepped ashore at Kagoshima in the year 1549 with two Jesuit companions and a Japanese interpreter. Within a few months of his arrival, Xavier had fallen in love with the Japanese whom he called 'the joy of his heart'. 'The people whom we have met so far', he wrote enthusiastically to his companions in Goa, 'are the best who have as yet been discovered, and it seems to me that we shall never find . . . another race to equal the Japanese.' In spite of linguistic difficulties ('We are like statues among them,' he lamented) he brought some hundreds to the Christian faith before departing for China, the conversion of which seemed to him a necessary prelude to that of Japan. Yet Xavier never lost his love of the Japanese; and, in an age that tended to relegate to some kind of inferno everyone outside Christendom, it is refreshing to find him extolling the Japanese for virtues which Christian Europeans did not possess.

The real architect of the Japanese mission, however, was not Xavier but the Italian, Alessandro Valignano, who united Xavier's enthusiasm to a remarkable foresight and tenacity of purpose. By the time of his first visit to Japan in 1579 there was already a flourishing community of some 150,000 Christians, whose sterling qualities and deep faith inspired in Valignano the vision of a totally Christian island in the north of Asia. Obviously, however, such an island must quickly be purged of all excessive foreign barbarian influence; and Valignano, anxious to entrust the infant Church to a local clergy with all possible speed, set about the founding of seminaries, colleges and a novitiate—promptly despatching to Macao Francisco Cabral, who strongly opposed the plan of an indigenous Japanese Church. Soon things began to look up: daimyos in Kyushu embraced the Christian faith, bringing with them a great part of their subjects; and a thriving

Japanese clergy took shape. Clearly Valignano had been building no castles in the air: his dream was that of a sober realist.

It should be noted that the missionary effort was initiated in the Sengoku Period when Japan, torn by strife among the warring daimyos, had no strong central government. The distressful situation of the country, however, was not without advantages for the missionaries who, when persecuted in one fief, could quickly shake the dust off their feet and betake themselves elsewhere. But unification was close at hand; and Japan was soon to be welded into that solid monolith which was eventually to break out over Asia in 1940. The architects of unity (Nobunaga, Hideyoshi and Ieyasu) were all on intimate terms with the Portuguese Jesuits, motivated partly by desire for trade with the black ships from Macao, partly (in the case of Nobunaga and Hideyoshi) by a deep dislike of Buddhism, and partly by the fascination of these cultured foreigners with whom they could converse without fear of betrayal and loss of prestige. Be that as it may, from 1570 until 1614 the missionaries held such a privileged position at the court of the Bakufu that their letters and reports are now the chief source of information for a period of history about which Japanese sources say little. All in all, the optimism of Valignano seemed to have ample justification.

Yet Japan can be a land of schizophrenic change; and just what prompted the xenophobic outburst of Hideyoshi has never been adequately explained. For quite suddenly, on July 24th 1587, while in his cups, he flew into a violent rage and ordered the missionaries to leave the country. 'I am resolved', ran his message, 'that the padres should not stay on Japanese soil. I therefore order that having settled their affairs within twenty days, they must return to their own country.'[1] His anger, however, quickly subsided; most

[1] See C. R. Boxer, *The Christian Century in Japan*, University of California Press, 1951, p. 148.

of the missionaries did not leave the country; and the expulsion decree became a dead letter. So much so that C. R. Boxer can observe that within four short years there was 'a community of more than 200,000 converts increasing daily, and Hideyoshi defying his own prohibition by strolling through the gilded halls of Jurakudai Palace wearing a rosary and Portuguese dress.'[2]

Nevertheless the writing was on the wall; and ten years after the first outburst, Hideyoshi's anger overflowed again. This time it was occasioned by the pilot of a stranded Spanish ship who, in an effort to impress the Japanese, boasted that the greatness of the Spanish Empire was partly due to the missionaries who always prepared the way for the armed forces of the Spanish king. When this news was brought to Hideyoshi he again boiled over and ordered the immediate execution of a group of Christian missionaries. And so twenty-six, Japanese and European, were crucified on a cold winter's morning in February 1597. Today, not far from Nagasaki station, there stands a monument to commemorate the spot where they died.

Yet missionary work somehow continued with the Jesuits apprehensive but still in favour at the royal court; and it was only under Hideyoshi's successor, Ieyasu, the first of the Tokugawas, that the death sentence of the mission became irrevocable. From the beginning, Ieyasu was none too friendly toward Christianity, though he tolerated the missionaries for the sake of the silk trade with Macao. But here things were changing: for the English and the Dutch had arrived. Nor was it long before the role of interpreter and confidant was transferred from the Portuguese Jesuits to the English Will Adams—who lost no time in assuring the Shogun that many European monarchs distrusted these meddlesome priests and expelled them from their kingdoms. Ieyasu evinced the greatest interest in the religious conflict that was

[2] Boxer, p. 153.

rending Europe, questioning the English and the Dutch about it again and again. At the same time his apprehension grew as he observed the unquestioning obedience of his Christian subjects to their foreign guides.

And so finally in 1614 the edict of expulsion was promulgated declaring that 'the Kirishitan band have come to Japan . . . longing to disseminate an evil law, to overthrow true doctrine, so that they may change the government of the country, and obtain possession of the land. This is the germ of a great disaster, and must be crushed.'[3] This was the death blow. It came at a time when there were about 300,000 Christians in Japan (whose total population was about twenty million) in addition to colleges, seminaries, hospitals and a growing local clergy. 'It would be difficult', writes Boxer, 'if not impossible, to find another highly civilized pagan country where Christianity had made such a mark, not merely in numbers but in influence.'[4]

Even now, however, a desperate underground missionary effort was kept alive until, under Ieyasu's successors, the hunt for Christians and priests became so systematically ruthless as to wipe out every visible vestige of Christianity. Especially savage was the third Tokugawa, the neurotic Iemitsu—'neither the infamous brutality of the methods which he used to exterminate the Christians, nor the heroic constancy of the sufferers has ever been surpassed in the long and painful history of martyrdom.'[5]

At first the most common form of execution was burning; and the Englishman, Richard Cocks, describes how he saw 'fifty-five persons of all ages and both sexes burnt alive on the dry bed of the Kamo River in Kyoto (October 1619) and among them little children of five or six years old in their mothers' arms, crying out,

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 318.
[4] *Ibid.*, p. 321.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 337.

"Jesus receive their souls!"'[6] Indeed, the executions began to be something of a religious spectacle, one of which Boxer describes as follows:

> This ordeal was witnessed by 150,000 people, according to some writers, or 30,000 according to other and in all probability more reliable chroniclers. When the faggots were kindled, the martyrs said *sayonara* (farewell) to the onlookers who then began to intone the *Magnificat*, followed by the psalms *Laudate pueri Dominum* and *Laudate Dominum omnes gentes*, while the Japanese judges sat on one side 'in affected majesty and gravity, as in their favorite posture'. Since it had rained heavily the night before, the faggots were wet and the wood burnt slowly; but as long as the martyrdom lasted, the spectators continued to sing hymns and canticles. When death put an end to the victims' suffering, the crowd intoned the *Te Deum Laudamus.*[7]

But the Tokugawa Bakufu was not slow to see that such 'glorious martydoms' were not serving the desired purpose; and bit by bit death was preceded by torture in a tremendous effort to make the martyrs apostatize. Among these tortures was the 'ana-tsurushi', or hanging in the pit, which quickly became the most effective means of inducing apostasy:

> The victim was tightly bound around the body as high as the breast (one hand being left free to give the signal of recantation) and then hung downwards from a gallows into a pit which usually contained excreta and other filth, the top of the pit being level with his knees. In order to give

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 349
[7] *Ibid.*, p. 342–3.

> the blood some vent, the forehead was lightly slashed with a knife. Some of the stronger martyrs lived for more than a week in this position, but the majority did not survive more than a day or two.[8]

A Dutch resident in Japan declared that 'some of those who had hung for two or three days assured me that the pains they endured were wholly insufferable, no fire nor no torture equalling their languor and violence.'[9] Yet one young woman endured this for fourteen days before she expired.

From the beginning of the mission until the year 1632, in spite of crucifixions, burnings, water-torture and the rest, no missionary had apostatized. But such a record could not last; and finally the blow fell. Christovao Ferreira, the Portuguese Provincial, after six hours of agony in the pit gave the signal of apostasy. His defection being so exceptional might seem of little significance; but the fact that he was the acknowledged leader of the mission made the shock a cruel one—all the more so when it became known that he was collaborating with his former persecutors.

The next setback for Christianity was the Shimabara Rebellion. Caused by the merciless taxation and oppression of the magistrate of Nagasaki, it later became a manifestation of Christian faith, the insurgents carrying banners with the inscription, 'Praised be the Most Holy Sacrament', and shouting the names of Jesus and Mary. The uprising was put down with ruthless cruelty, and the Tokugawa Bakufu, convinced that such a rebellion could only have been possible with help from outside, decided once and for all to cut their ties with Portugal and seal off their country from the world.

Nevertheless some missionaries tried to enter. There was Marcello Mastrilli who came partly to make amends for Ferreira and

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 354.
[9] *Ibid.*, p. 354.

of whom Inoue, the Lord of Chikugo, boasted that he died 'an agonizing death, yammering and screaming in the pit.' And finally in 1643 came a group of ten (European, Chinese and Japanese) among whom was Giuseppe Chiara—Mr. Endō's Sebastian Rodrigues. Quickly captured, they all apostatized after long and terrible tortures; though most, perhaps all, later revoked their apostasy. Even the Dutch eyewitnesses were moved to compassion by the awful state of their Papist rivals who 'looked exceedingly pitiful, their eyes and cheeks strangely fallen in; their hands black and blue, and their whole bodies sadly misused and macerated by torture. These, though they had apostatized from the Faith, yet declared publicly to the interpreters that they did not freely apostatize, but the insufferable torments which had been inflicted upon them forced them to it.'[10] Chiara died some forty years after his apostasy, stating that he was still a Christian. As for Christóvão Ferreira, about his subsequent life and death not much is known. His grave can still be seen in a temple in Nagasaki, but the record of his burial was burnt in the atomic holocaust of 1945. Chinese sailors at Macao testified that prior to his death he had revoked his apostasy, dying a martyr's death in that pit which had previously conquered him. But the Dutch residents in Japan say nothing of this; and so his death, as much of his life, must forever remain a mystery.

Yet Christianity's roots had gone too deep to be eradicated. Besides the martyrs (estimated at some five or six thousand for the period 1614–40 alone) thousands of crypto-Christians kept their faith. Through the secret organization described by Mr. Endō, the faith was handed down; baptism was administered; catechism was taught. They gave their names, of course, to their Buddhist temple; they complied with the order to trample on the sacred image; and today at Ueno Museum in Tokyo one can still see those *fumie* rubbed flat and shining by the hundreds of feet

[10] Ibid., p. 393.

that ached with pain (if I may borrow Mr. Endō's phrase) while they trampled on someone whom their hearts loved. Handed down, too, was the tradition that the fathers would return; and in 1865, when Japan was reopened, the crypto-Christians came out from their hiding, asking for the statue of Santa Maria, speaking about Christmas and Lent, recalling the celibacy of the priests.

They are still there in their thousands, in Nagasaki and the offshore islands, clinging tenaciously to a faith that centuries of ruthless vigilance could not stamp out. Some of them are united with the world-wide Church; others are not. In their prayers remain smatterings of the old Portuguese and Latin; they preserve pieces of the soutanes and rosaries and disciplines that belonged to the fathers whom they loved; they retain their devotion to Santa Maria. And it was while living among them that Shūsaku Endō wrote *Silence*.

II

I have outlined the historical background, without which *Silence* might not easily be understood. But now it becomes necessary to add that the interest this novel evoked in Japan was less historical than contemporary. The two foreign apostates were immediately taken as symbols of a Christianity which has failed in Japan because it is so stubbornly Western. 'Father, you were not defeated by me,' says the victorious Inoue. 'You were defeated by this swamp of Japan.' It is precisely the swamp of Japan that cannot absorb the type of Christianity that has been propagated in these islands.

Graham Greene has well pointed out that to interpret novels in this way can lead to dangerous error; and Mr. Endō, too, in the course of discussions on his book, often protested that he was writing literature, not theology. Yet on these occasions many of his remarks showed that he was not indifferent to the theological

implications of what he wrote and one is left with the impression that the novel is in some way the expression of a conflict between his Japanese sensibility and the Hellenistic Christianity that has been given to him. For example, in an interview recorded in the magazine *Kumo* he said:

> I received baptism when I was a child. . . . in other words, my Catholicism was a kind of ready-made suit. . . . I had to decide either to make this ready-made suit fit my body or get rid of it and find another suit that fitted. . . . There were many times when I felt I wanted to get rid of my Catholicism, but I was finally unable to do so. It is not just that I did not throw it off, but that I was unable to throw it off. The reason for this must be that it had become a part of me after all. The fact that it had penetrated me so deeply in my youth was a sign, I thought, that it had, in part at least, become coextensive with me. Still, there was always that feeling in my heart that it was something borrowed, and I began to wonder what my real self was like. This I think is the 'mud swamp' Japanese in me. From the time I first began to write novels even to the present day, this confrontation of my Catholic self with the self that lies underneath has, like an idiot's constant refrain, echoed and reechoed in my work. I felt that I had to find some way to reconcile the two.[11]

'The mud swamp Japanese in me' . . . Japan is a swamp because it sucks up all sorts of ideologies, transforming them into itself and distorting them in the process. It is the spider's web that destroys the butterfly, leaving only the ugly skeleton. Mr. Endō has, on other occasions, referred to the fact that many of the

[11] Translation by F. Mathy; see: Shusaku Endo: Japanese Catholic Novelist, *Thought*, Winter 1967.

so-called Christian intellectuals since Meiji were, in fact, Buddhist or nihilist underneath and ended up by sloughing off their Christianity in time of crisis. This was because the 'mud swamp Japanese' had not allowed them to take into the depths of their being the Christianity that was presented to them. If this Christianity had been less incorrigibly Western, things might have been different. Elsewhere Mr. Endō speaks poignantly of this very struggle in his own heart, calling it the peculiar cross that God has given to the Japanese:

> For a long time I was attracted to a meaningless nihilism and when I finally came to realize the fearfulness of such a void I was struck once again with the grandeur of the Catholic Faith. This problem of the reconciliation of my Catholicism with my Japanese blood . . . has taught me one thing: that is, that the Japanese must absorb Christianity without the support of a Christian tradition or history or legacy or sensibility. Even this attempt is the occasion of much resistance and anguish and pain, still it is impossible to counter by closing one's eyes to the difficulties. No doubt this is the peculiar cross that God has given to the Japanese.[12]

In short, the tree of Hellenized Christianity cannot simply be pulled out of Europe and planted in the swamp of a Japan that has a completely different cultural tradition. If such a thing is done, the fresh young sapling will wither and die.

Yet this does not mean that the Christian cause is doomed. For Christianity has an infinite capacity for adaptation; and somewhere within the great symphony of Catholicism is a strain that fits the Japanese tradition and touches the Japanese heart. A different strain this from that evoked by the cultures of Greece and

[12] Translation by F. Mathy, *Ibid.*

Rome, a strain perhaps so intimately blended with the whole that its gentle note has never yet been heard by the Christian ear. But it is there, and it must be found:

> But after all it seems to me that Catholicism is not a solo, but a symphony. . . . If I have trust in Catholicism, it is because I find in it much more possibility than in any other religion for presenting the full symphony of humanity. The other religions have almost no fullness; they have but solo parts. Only Catholicism can present the full symphony. And unless there is in that symphony a part that corresponds to Japan's mud swamp, it cannot be a true religion. What exactly this part is—that is what I want to find out.[13]

Anyone familiar with modern theology in the West will quickly see that Mr. Endō's thesis is more universal than many of his Japanese readers have suspected. For if Hellenistic Christianity does not fit Japan, neither does it (in the opinion of many) suit the modern West; if the notion of God has to be rethought for Japan (as this novel constantly stresses), so has it to be rethought for the modern West; if the ear of Japan is eager to catch a new strain in the vast symphony, the ear of the West is no less attentive—searching for new chords that will correspond to its awakening sensibilities. All in all, the ideas of Mr. Endō are acutely topical and universal.

III

Finally, in all fairness to existing Japanese Christianity, I must add that Mr. Endō's book and his thesis have been extremely controversial in this country, and one can scarcely take his voice as

[13] Translation by F. Mathy, *Ibid.*

that of Christian Japan. Shortly after the publication of *Silence* I myself was in Nagasaki where I found some indignation among the old Christians, who felt that Mr. Endō had been less than fair to the indomitable courage of their heroic ancestors. Criticism also came from the Protestant Doshisha University where Professor Yanaibara protested vigorously that these two priests had no faith from the beginning. It was not the swamp of Japan that conquered them; it was simply that their sociological faith, nourished in Christian Portugal, evaporated beneath the impact of a pagan culture. 'The martyrs heard the voice of Christ', he wrote in the *Asahi Journal*, 'but for Ferreira and Rodrigues God was silent. Does this not mean that from the beginning those priests had no faith? And for this reason Rodrigues' struggle with God is not depicted.' As for the failure of Christianity, Professor Yanaibara is not convinced:

> Obviously the belief of Ferreira and Inoue that Japan is a swamp which cannot absorb Christianity is not a reason for apostasy. It was because he lost his faith that Ferreira began to think in this way. . . . In that Christian era there were many Japanese who sincerely believed in Christ, and there are many who do so today. No Christian will believe that Christianity cannot take root in Japan. If the Japanese cannot understand Christianity, how has it been possible for Mr. Endō to write such a novel?[14]

Indeed, the very popularity of Mr. Endō's novel would seem to proclaim a Japan not indifferent to Christianity but looking for that form of Christianity that will suit its national character.

Much could be said about the nature of a Japanese Christianity, but I have usurped more space than is normally allotted to a mere translator; so, with a word of thanks to Professor M. Himuro

[14] *Asahi Journal*, 1966, 5, 8.

of Waseda University who helped with the Nagasaki dialect and translated the two documents at the end of the book, I leave the reader in the hands of Shūsaku Endō.

William Johnston
Sophia University, Tokyo

SILENCE

PROLOGUE

News reached the Church in Rome. Christóvão Ferreira, sent to Japan by the Society of Jesus in Portugal, after undergoing the torture of 'the pit' at Nagasaki had apostatized. An experienced missionary held in the highest respect, he had spent thirty-three years in Japan, had occupied the high position of provincial and had been a source of inspiration to priests and faithful alike.

He was a theologian, too, of considerable ability, and in the time of persecution he had secretly made his way into the Kamigata region to pursue his apostolic work. From here the letters he sent to Rome overflowed with a spirit of indomitable courage. It was unthinkable that such a man would betray the faith, however terrible the circumstances in which he was placed. In the Society of Jesus as well as the Church at large, people asked themselves if the whole thing were not just a fictitious report invented by the Dutch or the Japanese.

Not that the Church at Rome was ignorant of the straitened circumstances in which the Japanese mission was situated. Letters from the missionaries had left no room for doubt. From 1587 the regent Hideyoshi, reversing the policy of his predecessor, had initiated a frightful persecution of Christianity. It first began when twenty-six priests and faithful were punished at Nishizaka

in Nagasaki; and following on this Christians all over the country were evicted from their households, tortured and cruelly put to death. The Shogun Tokugawa pursued the same policy, ordering the expulsion of all the missionaries from Japan in the year 1614.

Reports from the missionaries tell of how on the 6th and 7th October of this same year, seventy priests, both Japanese and foreign, were herded together at Kibachi in Kyushu and forced to board five junks bound for Macao and Manila. Then they sailed into exile. It was rainy that day, and the sea was grey and stormy as the ships drenched by the rain made their way out of the harbor, passed beside the promontory and disappeared beyond the horizon.

Flaunting this severe decree of exile, however, thirty-seven priests refused to abandon their flock and secretly remained hiding in Japan. And Ferreira was one of these underground priests. He continued to inform his superiors by letter of the capture of the missionaries and the Christians, and of the punishment to which they were subjected. Today there is still extant a letter he wrote from Nagasaki on March 22nd 1632 to the Visitor Andrew Palmeiro giving an exhaustive description of the conditions of that time:

> In my former letter I informed Your Reverence of the situation of Christianity in this country. And now, I will go on to tell you of what has happened since then. Everything has ended up in new persecution, new repression, new suffering. Let me begin my account with the story of five religious who from the year 1629 were apprehended for their faith. Their names are Bartholomew Gutierrez, Francisco de Jesus, Vicente de San Antonio of the Order of Saint Augustine, Antonio Ishida of our own Society, and a Franciscan, Gabriel de Santa Magdalena.
>
> The magistrate of Nagasaki, Takenaka Uneme, tried to

make them apostatize and to ridicule our holy faith and its adherents, for he hoped in this way to destroy the courage of the faithful. But he quickly realized that words alone would never shake the resolution of these priests; so he was forced to adopt a different course of action; namely, immersion in the hell of boiling water at Unzen.

He gave orders that the five priests be brought to Unzen and tortured until such time as they should renounce their faith. But on no account were they to be put to death. In addition to the five priests, Beatrice da Costa, wife of Antonio da Silva, and her daughter Maria were to be tortured, since they, too, in spite of all attempts at persuasion, had refused to give up their faith.

On December 3rd the party left Nagasaki for Unzen. The two women were carried in litters, while the five men were mounted on horses. And so they bade farewell. Arriving at the port some distance away, their arms and hands were bound, their feet were shackled, and they were put on board a ship and tightly tied to its side.

That evening they reached the harbor of Obama at the foot of Unzen; and the next day they climbed the mountain where the seven, one by one, were thrust into a tiny hut. Day and night they remained there in confinement, their feet shackled and their arms bound, while around them guards kept watch. The road to the mountain, too, was lined with guards; and without formal permission from the officials no one was permitted to pass that way.

The next day the torture began in the following way. One by one the seven were taken apart from the surrounding people, brought to the edge of the seething lake and shown the boiling water casting its spray high into the air—and then they were urged to abandon the teaching of Christ or else they would experience in their very bodies the terrible pain of the boiling water which lay before them.

The cold weather made the steam arising from the bubbling lake look terrible indeed, and the very sight of it would make a strong man faint, were it not for the grace of God. But every one of them, strengthened by God's grace, showed remarkable courage and even asked to be tortured, firmly declaring that they would never abandon their holy faith. Hearing this dauntless reply, the officials tore off the prisoners' clothes, bound them hand and foot to posts, and scooping up the boiling water in ladles, poured it over their naked bodies. These ladles were perforated and full of holes so that this process took a considerable time and the suffering was prolonged.

The heroes of Christ bore this terrible torment without flinching. Only the young Maria, overcome with the excess of her suffering, fell to the ground in agony. 'She has apostatized! She has apostatized!' they cried; and carrying her to the hut they promptly sent her back to Nagasaki. Maria denied that she had wished to apostatize. Indeed, she even pleaded to be tortured with her mother and the rest. But they paid no attention to her prayers.

The other six remained on the mountain for thirty-three days. During that time the priests Antonio and Francisco, as well as Beatrice, were each tortured six times in the boiling water. Father Vicente was tortured four times; Fathers Palmeiro and Gabriel twice. Yet in all this not one of them so much as breathed a groan or a sigh.

Fathers Antonio and Francisco as well as Beatrice da Costa, in particular, undaunted by tortures, threats and pleadings of all kind, displayed a courage worthy of a man. In addition to the torture of the boiling water, she was subjected to the further ignominy of being obliged to stand for hours upon a small rock, exposed to the jeering and insults of the crowd. But even when the frenzy of her persecutors reached its zenith, she did not flinch.

The others, being weak in health, could not be punished too severely since the wish of the magistrate was not to put them to death but to make them apostatize. Indeed, for this reason he went so far as to bring a doctor to the mountain to tend their wounds.

At last, however, Uneme realized that he would never win. On the contrary his followers, seeing the courage of the priests, told him that all the springs in Unzen would run dry before men of such power could be persuaded to change their minds. So he decided to bring them back to Nagasaki. On January 5th he confined Beatrice to a house of ill fame, while the priests he lodged in the local prison. And there they still are.

This whole struggle has had the effect of spreading our doctrine among the multitude and of strengthening the faith of our Christians. All has turned out contrary to the intentions of the tyrant.

Such was Ferreira's letter. The Church at Rome could not believe that this man, however terrible the torture, could be induced to renounce his faith and grovel before the infidel.

In 1635 four priests gathered around Father Rubino in Rome. Their plan was to make their way into a Japan in the throes of persecution in order to carry on an underground missionary apostolate and to atone for the apostasy of Ferreira which had so wounded the honor of the Church.

At first their wild scheme did not win the consent of their Superiors. Though sympathizing with the ardor and apostolic zeal which prompted such a plan, the Church authorities felt reluctant to send any more priests to such a country and to a mission fraught with such peril. On the other hand, this was a country in which from the time of Francis Xavier the good seed had been most abundantly sown: to leave it without leaders and to abandon the Christians to their fate was something unthinkable. Furthermore,

in the Europe of that time the fact that Ferreira had been forced to abandon his faith in this remote country at the periphery of the world was not simply the failure of one individual but a humiliating defeat for the faith itself and for the whole of Europe. Such was the way of thinking that prevailed; and so, after all sorts of troubles and difficulties, Father Rubino and his four companions were finally permitted to set sail.

In addition to this group, however, there were three other priests planning to enter Japan secretly in the same way—but these were Portuguese and their reason was different. They had been Ferreira's students and had studied under him at the ancient monastery of Campolide. For these three men, Francisco Garrpe, Juan de Santa Marta and Sebastian Rodrigues, it was impossible to believe that their much admired teacher Ferreira, faced with the possibility of a glorious martyrdom, had grovelled like a dog before the infidel. And in these sentiments they spoke for the clergy of Portugal.

They would go to Japan; they would investigate the matter with their own eyes. But here, as in Italy, their Superiors were slow to give consent. At length, however, overcome by the ardent importunity of the young men, they agreed to this dangerous mission to Japan. This was in the year 1637.

Consequently, the three young priests set about preparing for their long and arduous journey. It was customary at that time for the Portuguese missionaries who went to the Orient to join the fleet which went from Lisbon to India; and the departure of this Indian fleet was one of the most exciting events of the year in Lisbon. Before the eyes of the three men there arose in vivid colors the spectacle of an Orient which was literally the end of the earth and of a Japan which was its uttermost limit. As one opened the map one saw the shape of Africa, then India, and then the innumerable islands and countries of Asia were all spread out. And then, at the north-east extremity, looking just like a caterpillar, was the tiny shape of Japan. To get to this country one must first

go to Goa in India, then over miles and miles of sea; for a period of weeks and months one must go on and on. From the time of Saint Francis Xavier, Goa had been the gateway to all missionary labor in the East; it had two seminaries where students from all parts of Asia studied and where the European missionaries learned about conditions in the country for which they were bound. Here missionaries sometimes had to wait for six months or even a year for a ship that would take them to the country to which they were destined.

The three priests strove with all their might to learn what they could about conditions in Japan. Fortunately there were many reports sent from Japan by Portuguese missionaries from the time of Luis Frois and these told of how the new Shogun Iemitsu had adopted a policy of repression even more cruel than that of his father or grandfather. Especially in Nagasaki, from the year 1629 the magistrate Takenaka Uneme had inflicted upon the Christians the most inhuman and atrocious sufferings, immersing them in pools of boiling water and urging them to renounce their faith and change their religion. It was said that in one single day the number of victims sometimes reached no less than sixty or seventy. Since it was Ferreira himself who had sent this news there could be no mistake about its reliability. In any case the new missionaries realized that they must have from the beginning the realization and conviction that the end of their arduous journey might bring them up against a fate more terrible than any of the sufferings they had endured on the way.

Sebastian Rodrigues, born in 1610 in the well-known mining town of Tasco, entered religious life at the age of seventeen. Juan de Santa Marta and Francisco Garrpe, both friends of Rodrigues, also studied with him at the seminary of Campolide. From their early days at the minor seminary they had spent their days sitting at their desks in study, and they all had vivid memories of their old teacher Ferreira from whom they had learned theology.

And this same Ferreira was now somewhere in Japan. Had that face with its clear blue eyes and soft radiant light—had it been changed by the hands of the Japanese torturers? This was the question they asked themselves. They could not believe that this face could now be distorted because of insults heaped on it; nor could they believe that Ferreira had turned his back on God and cast away that gentle charity that characterized his every action. Rodrigues and his companions wanted by all means to get to Japan and learn the truth about the fate of Ferreira.

On March 25, 1638, the Indian fleet sailed out from the river Tagus to a salvo of guns from the fortress of Belem. On board the Santa Isabella were the three missionaries who, after receiving a blessing from the Bishop, Joao Dasco, had boarded the commander's ship. As they reached the mouth of the brown river and plunged into the blue noonday sea, they leaned against the side of the ship watching the promontory and the mountain gleaming like gold. There were the red walls of the farm houses. The Church. From the church-tower the tolling of the bell which bade farewell to the departing ships was carried out into the sea.

Now for their journey around Africa to India. Three days after departure they hit up against a terrible storm on the West coast of Africa.

On April 2nd they reached the island of Porto Santo; some time later Madeira; on the 6th they arrived at the Canary Islands where they encountered ceaseless rain pouring down from a sky which contained no breath of wind. In the utterly windless calm, the heat was unbearable. And then, in addition to everything, disease broke out. On the Santa Isabella alone more than one hundred victims lay moaning on the deck and in the bunks below. Rodrigues and his companion together with the crew hastened around tending the sick and helping to bleed them.

July 25th, the feast of Saint James, the ship at last rounded the Cape of Good Hope. On this day a violent wind again arose

so that the mast of the ship was broken and crashed down on the deck with a rending sound. Even the sick and Rodrigues and his companions were summoned up to rescue the foresail from the same peril. But scarcely had they succeeded in their attempt when the ship ran on a rock. If the other ships had not been there to help, the Santa Isabella would probably have sunk there and then.

After the storm the wind again calmed down. The sail lay lifeless; only its pitch black shadow fell upon the faces and bodies of the sick who lay like dead men on the deck. And so the days passed one by one with the glaring heat of the sun beating down upon a sea which had not so much as a swell of the waves.

All these mishaps prolonged the journey so that food and water became scarce; but at last on October 9th they reached their destination: Goa.

After arrival they were able to get more detailed news about Japan than had been possible at home. They were told that since January of the year in which they had set sail, thirty-five thousand Christians had caused an insurrection at Shimabara; and in the ensuing bloody conflict with the forces of the Bakufu the rebels had been butchered to the last man—men and women, young and old, all alike had been slain. As a result of the war, the whole district was so desolate that scarcely a human shadow could be seen, while the remnants of the Christians were being hunted down one by one. The news, however, which gave the greatest shock to Rodrigues and his companions was that as a result of this war Japan had cut all trade relations and intercourse with their country. Portuguese ships were forbidden to enter the harbors of Japan.

It was with the realization that they could not be brought to Japan in a Portuguese ship that the three priests reached Macao. They felt desperate.

The town of Macao, in addition to being the base of Portuguese operations in the Far East, was a base for trade between

China and Japan. Consequently, if they waited here there was the possibility that some stroke of good fortune might help them on their way.

Immediately on arrival they received clear-cut advice from the Visitor Valignano who was in Macao at that time. Missionary work in Japan, he said, was now out of question nor had he any intention of sending missionaries to a country fraught with such dangers. From the time of the outbreak of persecution in Japan, it should be said, the whole administration of the Japanese Province of the Society of Jesus had been entrusted to this Superior, Valignano, who ten years before had founded at Macao a College for the formation of missionaries bound for China and Japan.

In regard to Ferreira whom the three men intended to seek out after arrival in Japan, Valignano gave the following report: From the year 1633 all news from the underground mission had come to an abrupt and drastic end. Dutch sailors returned to Macao from Nagasaki and related that Ferreira had been taken and tortured in the pit. After that the whole matter was obscure and investigation of the true facts was impossible. This was because the Dutch had left on the very day that Ferreira had been suspended in the pit. The only thing that could be said with certainty was that Ferreira had been cross-examined by the newly-appointed magistrate Inoue, the Lord of Chikugo. In any case, the Macao mission could in no way agree to priests travelling to a Japan in such conditions. This was the frank opinion of Valignano.

Today we can read some of the letters of Sebastian Rodrigues in the library of the Portuguese 'Institute for the Historical Study of Foreign Lands'. The first of these begins at the time when he and his companions heard from Valignano about the situation in Japan.