

The pleasure of a sabbatical

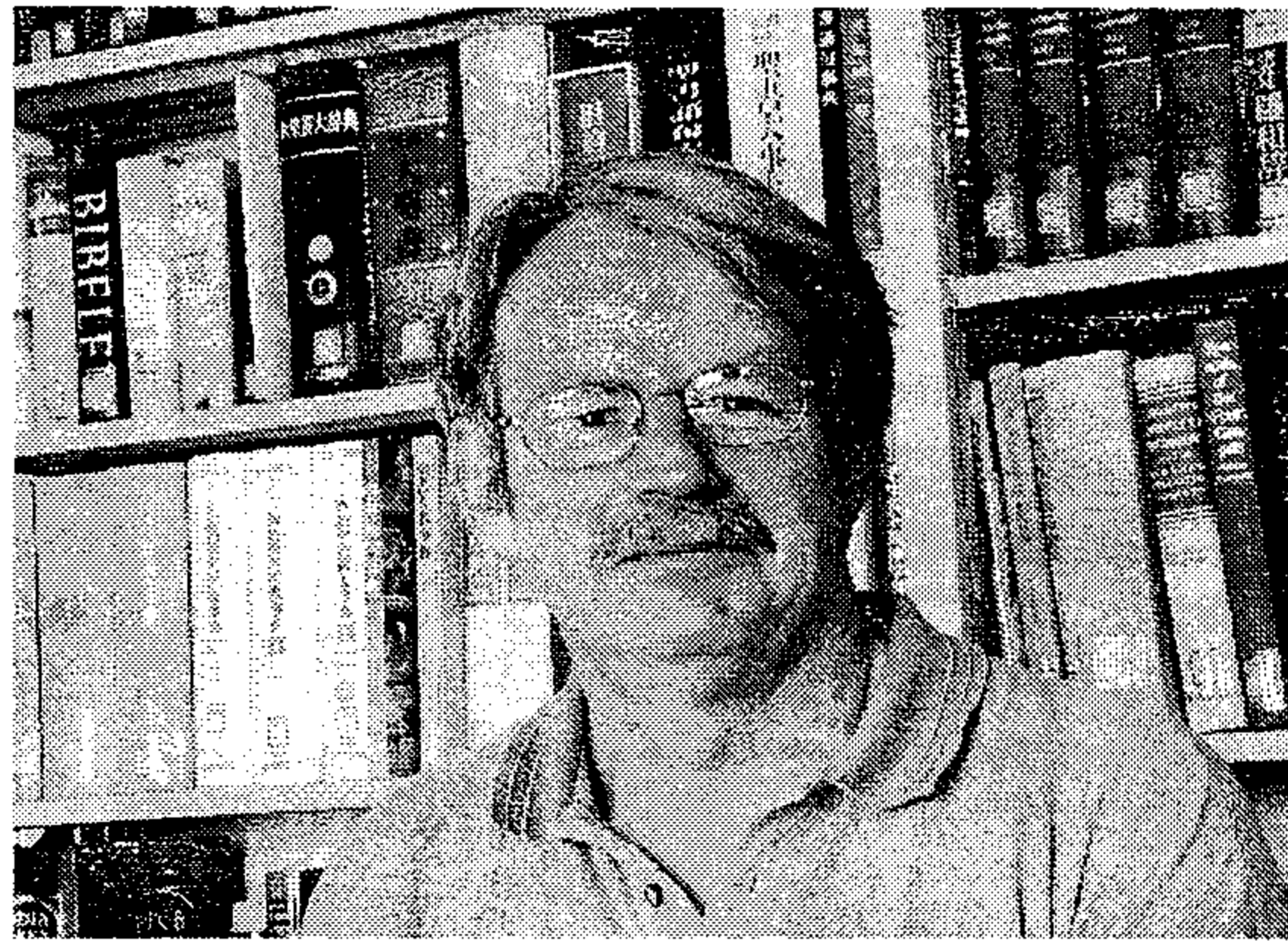
A. Hamish Ion

I am most grateful to the Christian Studies Institute for giving me the wonderful opportunity to be a *kenkyuin* at Meiji Gakuin during my sabbatical from the History Department at the Royal Military College of Canada in Kingston, Ontario. It is, indeed, a joy to be back in Japan. I am here to participate in the Christianity in Japan Handbook Project and to do research for a book that I am writing on American missionaries in Bakumatsu and early Meiji Japan. Meiji Gakuin is an excellent place for me to be because so much work is currently being done here on American missionaries and Japanese Christianity. Its propinquity to so many research archives and libraries is an added bonus. As well as Christian things, I am also deeply involved in doing research on Canadian prisoners of war and internees in Japan during the Pacific War. If there is time, I will continue, simply for fun, my investigations into the history of mountain climbing and skiing in Japan. There is never a shortage of interesting research topics or archives to visit.

Research has its rewards. One of these was in 1974 when Matsudaira Itaro, a Nippon Seikokai clergyman, kindly gave me a copy of a letter from Christians in Nagasaki to members of the Kumamoto Christian Band. Later I showed the letter to Sugii Mutsuro and it opened the way for me to spend a very fruitful year in 1979 at the Jinbun Kagaku Kenkyujo at Doshisha University. The materials that I collected, the *kenkyukai* notes I made and the wise advice I received at Doshisha has had an enormous influence on my approach to the history of Japanese and Korean Christianity. As I continue to learn my craft and develop as a historian the greatest help that Japanese scholars can usually give me is in the form of suggestions about books that I should read. In the past, I have greatly benefited from the excellent connections that the Center of Japanese Studies at Sheffield University in England, where I took my Ph.d, had with leading Japanese academics. They have helped to define what authors I read in terms of modern

Japanese history or political science. If, in doubt, always go with Fujita Shozo. As Japanese Christian history is a specialized area outside the mainstream of modern Japanese history, I have always been much more on my own in terms of whom to read. My stay at Meiji Gakuin is particularly important for it is an opportunity to find out about new research materials, new trends in the writing of Japanese Christian history, and what publications of the new generation of scholars writing on Japanese Christianity are worthwhile. I look to my colleagues at this famous university for help with this.

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