



A Missionary



in the

Shadow of

the Sun

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A Missionary in the Shadow of the Sun (1)



Hinokage, Miyazaki, taken by the author from Seiun Bridge (Jan. 14, 2018)

A Missionary in the Shadow of the Sun

(日之影の宣教師)

by Nagamitz Kazuhiro

Chapter I

“Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me.” (Book of Jonah, Chapter 1 verse 2, Old Testament, King James Version)

In the spring of 1994, I was on a bicycle tour in southern part of Kyushu, the south-most one of the four major islands of Japan. I was 41, a company employee, and was on a 12-day vacation. I had flown from Tokyo to Kagoshima, and started the trip alone.

The bicycle was an ATB (all terrain bicycle) with thick tires. My luggage comprised a tent, a sleeping bag, a small portable computer, and cooking utensils including a stove set. I also had a collapsible plastic water tank, with which I could take shower. For this trip I had purchased a boehm flute to play at night, but before the departure I realized it was too heavy to add to the already weighty luggage; so, I took a small soprano ocarina with me instead. This will enable me to enjoy the evenings after supper; it also attracted children and adults toward my tent site during the trip.

There were two purposes that urged me to carry out this tour. One was to visit a family in Kagoshima prefecture to pay honor to a woman of the family, who I had recently belatedly learnt had died a few years earlier and whom I loved and do so until today. A yearly magazine which was distributed from an alumni association of Technology Department of Miyazaki University, from which I graduated, contained a list of graduates, in which her name was prefixed by the word “late”. I had to know the cause of her

death. The other purpose of my trip was to meet a Canadian missionary (hereinafter, pastor) to renew our acquaintanceship for he was about to retire and leave Japan. Neither of these purposes was easy for me to carry out. But the urge was strong in both cases, and I felt it was my duty to pay them a visit.

I invited no one to join me in this trip. A friend or two running alongside me might weaken my determinations. I ought to maintain my mind more or less concentrated on these purposes during the trip. If I were with a by-runner or two, I might make the respective visits shorter than they should be.

Now, this writing about a missionary is a result of my visit to the Canadian pastor, but the latter is not the missionary in question, who is an American, nor had this missionary anything to do with my particular necessity to renew the acquaintanceship with the retiring pastor.

Quite independently of the primary reason for my visit to the pastor, I decided to ask the pastor a question concerning the missionary when I started planning on this trip.

Back in 1975 a conversation was started between the pastor and myself regarding this missionary, but was interrupted by the same missionary. Since then the thus suspended conversation had long been kept suspended and would have been forgotten and lost in oblivion had I not received a visiting card with a photo of him on it from the missionary. The card buried in a drawer of my desk would catch my eye once in a long while and remind me of a missing piece of information – like a piece that would complete an incomplete jigsaw puzzle picture. And this lacking piece would clarify to me the reason for the enigmatic vagueness that I had observed in the American missionary.

After I left Miyazaki to work in a company in Tokyo in 1975, I had met the Canadian pastor and his wife on several occasions in Tokyo and also at several places in Kyushu including Miyazaki City. On all of these occasions I failed to ask the question about the missionary due to my oblivion, and such was the interest I had in regard to the question those days.

Nonetheless, I nurtured the desire of gaining that piece of information, and it grew stronger as time of the pastor's retirement approached. I thought it was appropriate to gain the information from him only by resuming that suspended conversation with the pastor in person. A letter or a telephone call would not be polite to do so. I thought I had to travel to face the pastor in person and remind him of the time-worn conversation and then ask him to restart it from where it was cut – cut by the arrival of the missionary between us.

Therefore, although to finalize this unfinished conversation was not the chief reason for the visit to the pastor, I took it to my heart that it was something to be done during the visit without fail, or I should never have the chance.

Chapter II

Let me call this American missionary Zepeda anonymously. I met him only briefly; so most of the knowledge about him I have is not directly obtained from him, but was collected from the Canadian pastor and a visiting card of his I received from Zepeda in person.

In the years of 1969 through 1975 I was in Miyazaki city as a student of Miyazaki University, majoring in chemistry, and I met the man Zepeda on a Sunday in 1975 in a small Mennonite church in the suburbs of the city.

I was attending the church, which was just across a street from the faculty of Technology Department of the university where I studied. I first came to the church to learn English conversation and I studied in the evening Bible class lead by the Canadian pastor. I was also meeting Mormon missionaries for the same purpose. I became interested in Christianity and I baptized myself in the bathroom of my dormitory. Then I purchased NEW ENGLISH BIBLE (1970) and started translating it into Japanese from the beginning. This continued into my thirties.

I was then sort of redirected by the Canadian pastor and was officially baptized by him in the church at Christmas day of 1975. It so happened that the woman who would become my wife was also baptized on the same day at the same place.

Then, it was on a Sunday in March of 1975, close to my commencement day and only about three months after my being baptized, that I met Zepeda in the church.

I was one of the Sunday school teachers there, and as usual I had arrived there early enough to give the final touch to the preparation of my talk for the children. No one seemed to be in the church building yet.

As was often the case with churches in Japan in those days, the floor was wooden and people went in after changing into slippers from shoes at the entrance. Across a pair of hinged double doors, one of which was almost always kept open, one could enter a spacious hall where religious services were conducted.

There was a lectern at the far end of the hall from the entrance, and behind the lectern was a room, which was shielded by wooden sliding doors from the hall, and the floor of the room was somewhat raised and overlaid with tatami - compacted straw mats. The room was used as a stage for plays such as children's Christmas play, as well as a bed room for visitors to stay overnight, though there were no beds in it. I remember I spent a night there with some men including my father, and I thought it could accommodate five adults or so.

I began walking about in the hall room in slippers as I read the bible verses aloud, when one of the wooden sliding doors was slid-open and a Westerner man stepped down from the raised tatami room. So, it was apparent this person had put up for the night there. He greeted me, and I greeted back, and we shook hands. We talked in English but did not talk much for he only spoke in response to my questions. He told me that he was a missionary from America. He said he was living in Hinokage, a town in Miyazaki prefecture but far north from Miyazaki city.

I felt he was an unusual missionary for he did not talk much.

Although he was friendly and smiling, he seemed not interested in keeping the conversation, which was an unusual thing for a Westerner, let alone for a missionary, I thought. I tried to keep the ball rolling, but after a short conversation he excused himself and went out. I am a shy person myself, but he seemed more so than I. As he was carrying a towel, I thought he went to the neighboring pastor's house where he could use tapped water to do his morning toilet.

Then, the pastor of the church, the Canadian missionary, came in. We greeted each other and talked in English, and naturally I mentioned about the man I had just met. I honestly told him that he didn't talk much for a missionary. Then, the pastor told me that the man had put up in the church, and that he had a problem. And as he was about to tell me what the problem was, he suddenly stopped short with a start and, pointing to the sliding doors, which had been closed, he asked me in whisper, with his eyes wide open, "Is he there now?"

Obviously, he thought he had made a serious mistake of telling me that the man had a problem without first making sure that the man was not in the room, from which his voice could be overheard. "No, he is not there now" I said, relieving him from the fear he had. (Possibly the pastor came back from his morning walk and directly came into the church building, for he did not know that Zepeda had gone into his house.)

Anyway, reassured, the pastor restarted talking about the problem of the American missionary, but again it was interrupted, for now Zepeda himself came back and joined us. So, we three got into a conversation, the content of which I can't recollect now.

In the Sunday morning services, we would sit in a circle, or more precisely a rectangle. Long tables were aligned to form a rectangular ring and the pastor sat alone to the table forming an upper short side of the rectangle; and others were seated along the other three sides thereof. Those who could not find a space by the tables sat on chairs by the walls behind. Hence, we could see fairly every one's face. I sat at a long table on the left-hand

of the pastor, and Zepeda sat on the right-hand side, next to the wife of the pastor, also a Canadian.

During the service, newcomers were introduced to the congregation and they would introduce themselves briefly; there were a few newcomers including Zepeda. Each one introduced themselves and when it was his turn Zepeda just bowed. But as the wife of the pastor prompted him to say something, he briefed only a few words and in a small voice, and the pastor's wife irresistibly slipped out a puff of laughter. I thought this had something to do with the problem he had, which she probably had also been informed of.

After the morning service a general friendship reception was held and as usual a luncheon was held too. And I had a talk with the American again in the reception, but again I don't recollect anything what we talked about. Perhaps it was then that I received his visiting card.

I have never met him since then. Nor did I think much about him - not so much that I forgot to ask the pastor what had been Zepeda's problem after all for a long time despite I met him several times since then.

I graduated and left Miyazaki where I had lived six years and went to Tokyo. And time went by and soon it was only when I happened to see his face on his card in the bottom of a drawer of my desk that I would remember him and regret that after all I had forgotten to ask the pastor about the problem of this enigmatic character.

One day I picked up his card from a drawer and inserted it in my English-language bible (NEW ENGLISH BIBLE (1970)), for I thought if I did so, somehow God would protect him from the problem he had whatever it might be, for to me the Bible has been a holy thing. Since then it has been always kept there – and from a certain time it has been between pages 818 and 819 for a reason I will tell shortly.

Now let me describe the card of Zepeda. (Two photos of it are in the appendix.) The

card is about twice bigger than the regular size visiting card and bears a black-and-white photo of Zepeda printed on it. He in the picture is a white man, about 40 years of age, and wears glasses. He looks shy but is trying to smile. He is not looking at you; he is looking a little toward his right. This gives an impression that he is not a man of an active personality. With his thin eyebrows, he is not very handsome, not at all a macho. He came to Japan alone, so most likely he was single then. Strictly judging from this photo alone, one would suspect he would not have made a successful or popular missionary. And from all that I know, he was not successful, at least not in Japan.

Below the photo is printed his name in italicized form.

Next to his photo on the card is a map of Kyushu, one of the four major islands of Japan. Miyazaki Prefecture is in this island. A hand-written lead line is drawn from a point inside an area defining Miyazaki Prefecture out into the area defining a sea and a word “HINOKAGE” is handwritten at the terminal of the line; so, one would know that the name of the place at the other end of the line is Hinokage. (I knew the name of the town because I had been in Miyazaki for almost six years, but knew nothing about the place.¹) Below the map is a caption “HINOKAGE MACHI MIYAZAKI KEN” (which, translated, is HINOKAGE TOWN, MIYAZAKI PREFECTURE). Above the map and the photo is the caption of “JAPAN FOR CHRIST” in bold letters.

Then, turning the card, the other side is seen to bear only printed words. First, there is a poem consisting of four lines followed by the words “Isaiah 9:2”:

I am in the Land of the Rising Sun
with the Love of the Risen Sun
Reaching people in the Shadow of the Sun
with the power of the Glorified Son.

Isaiah 9:2

But these lines do not match the actual verses of Isaiah 9:2, which reads as follows according to THE NEW ENGLISH BIBLE (1970):

*The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light:
light has dawned upon them,
dwellers in a land as dark as death.*

So, the words on the card were modified significantly from the words in the Bible. If those words are his own I think Zepeda is skilled at composing a poem. Hinokage translated in English is “shadow of the sun,” and Japan is sometimes referred to as Land of the Rising Sun, so that his poem can be interpreted as:

*I am in Japan
with the Love of the Risen Sun
Reaching people in Hinokage
with the power of the Glorified Son.*

So, I think, the verses are suitable to a missionary assigned to the town of the unique name.

Below these, there is his request for prayers:

Please Pray for ---

SOUND MIND – 2 Tim. 1:7

SOULS REMAINING – John 15: 4-8, 16

STRENGTH – Isaiah 40:31, Nehemiah (sic) 8:10

SUPPLY – Phil. 4:19, 3 John 2

STEADFASTNESS – 1 Cor. 15:58, Gal. 6:9

SPEAKING BOLDLY – Eph. 6:18 – 20

(Please refer to the appendix for these verses copied from King James version of Bible.)

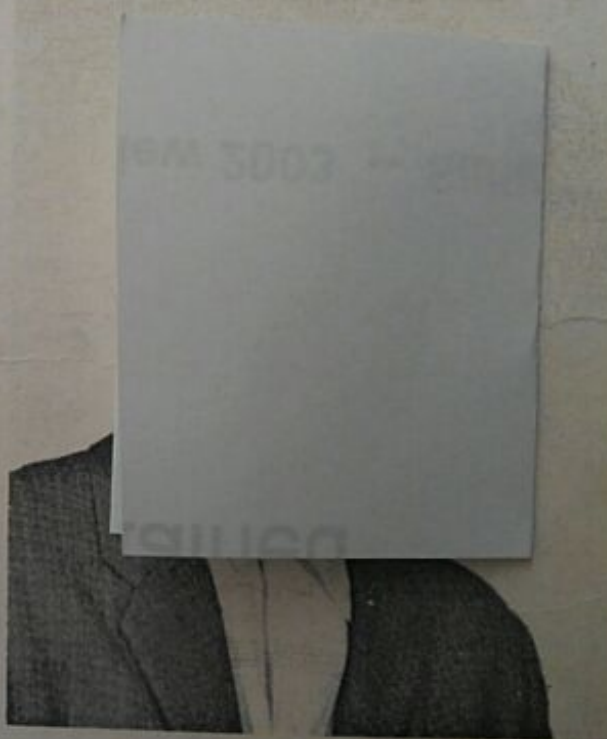
So, from these quotations, what he thought he needed were sound mind, souls remaining, strength, supply, steadfastness and speaking boldly. I can well understand that he needed these things, not only because I know his personality to a degree but also because they apply to every missionary especially those working in a foreign country.

However, I regret I don't remember praying for any of these for Zepeda in answer to his request. Nor do I remember even turning pages of my bible to go to the respective verses he pointed to. Such was the interest I had in him for a long time.

JAPAN FOR CHRIST



HINOKAGE MACHI
MIYAZAKI KEN



I am in the Land of the Rising Sun
with the Love of the Risen Sun
Reaching people in the Shadow of the Sun
with the power of the Glorified Son.

Isaiah 9:2

Please Pray for ---

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STRENGTH – *Isaiah 40:31, Nehemiah 8:10*

SUPPLY – *Phil. 4:19, 3 John 2*

STEADFASTNESS – *1 Cor. 15:58, Gal. 6:9*

SPEAKING BOLDLY – *Eph. 6:18-20*

Chapter III

Now, I decided to visit Takajo, a town in which the pastor lived then, to renew our acquaintanceship, for I did not know if I could ever see him again after his approaching retirement. I set up a bicycle trip plan to visit places that were dear to me in southern Kyushu. I took a relatively long vacation – 12 days beginning from 1994-4-27.

I carried with me an ocarina, an earthenware flute, to make the trip merrier. I brought a small mobile computer to do a piece of work – translation of some patent-related document. I brought a tent and spent nights in parks and unmanned stations, each day going to a public bath for bathing or taking shower using the collapsible plastic water tank. Only one night I spent in home, which was the house resided by the pastor and his wife at Takajo church, in Takajo, Miyazaki Prefecture.

I had phoned the pastor the first night of my trip to inform him that I was journeying then from Kagoshima to Miyazaki and asked if I could come to stay with them over a night. The pastor told me that they were with visitors from Canada and therefore it would be convenient for them if I visited them two days later.

So, it was on the first day of May of 1994 that I went to visit the pastor and his wife at the church in Takajo. It was Saturday afternoon when I arrived there by bicycle. It was a hot day and I had sweated much. Only the pastor was at home. His wife had gone to a church far south from there and was expected to come back in the late afternoon that day. Although they knew that I had stopped going to church, they welcomed me warmly as they always had done.

The pastor and I started and kept on the conversation, informing each other of what old friends would exchange after a long separation. At first, the conversation was not smooth, possibly because of the fact that he had known that I had stopped going to church and also because we had not met for such a long time. This made me feel uneasy and wonder how I should start asking about Zepeda. The pastor brought coke from the refrigerator and it

was very refreshing and cooling. He behaved as if it were his wife rather than himself that I had come to visit, for twice during the conversation he said, “She should be back soon now.”

Our conversation centered on the subject of people we mutually knew. For example, about what has become of Mr. or Mrs. So-and so. This talk about old friends and acquaintances softened the atmosphere and we felt comfortable in talking the news about respective mutual acquaintances. And this recalling of friends or acquaintances brought me to think of a certain woman, several years older than me, to whom I had had a special feeling and even decided to propose, but about whom I had not planned to ask the pastor a question. Now, after talking about several mutual friends and acquaintances, I came to feel that it would be unnatural or awkward if I skipped asking what had become of her.

The relationship between me and the woman was platonic; but she several times visited my room and it came to be known to the pastor and although the pastor did not discuss the situation between her and me he could more likely suspect our relationship in the other way. If, after many years, I ask about her, it would insinuate that I had not been able to undo the feeling toward her; then his suspicion would be strengthened, and I would be considered a betrayer for he was the pastor that baptized me and then married me to my wife, whom I had met at the church. Therefore, I hesitated to ask about her, but then, I thought, if I did not ask about her at all, then, the pastor would all the same increase his suspicion, for, he might think, I seemed trying to keep the relationship secret to him. For it could be a subject about which he longed to hear me confess.

I decided to ask the question about her and that before the pastor’s wife came back. I asked, and the answer was that she, the pastor had heard, had lived with a man in a suburban area north of Miyazaki City for a period of time but had separated lately, and she was living alone in the place. I nodded.

Later during this travel, I would go to the said suburbs and spend the night at the train station (a station next to Miyazaki station) and wished to see her if it be God’s will. She

did not show up. Also, on my way to Miyazaki City I took the way that passed a seaside area where the eldest brother of hers ran a petit-hotel, in which she used to live and which I had visited a couple of times. But the hotel was not there except its incinerator, and a modern port was constructed in the area.

Our conversation about her ended soon not only because we had never entered into details in this subject but also because we feared the topic would ruin the relatively good atmosphere we had gained by then.

A relatively smooth accomplishment of this delicate conversation about the woman encouraged me to ask about Zepeda. It was now, I thought, more natural to bring in this subject about Zepeda we both knew, after going through conversations with regard to quite a few mutual friends and acquaintances, especially the last delicate one.

After reminding him of Zepeda, whom we had a conversation with at the church in Miyazaki city many years ago, I asked the question, and I came to know the problem of the missionary at last.

According to the pastor, Zepeda heard a voice of God, instructing him to go to a town called Hinokage (which means shadow of the sun) in Japan. Accordingly he came to Japan without language or religious trainings, and rented a room or a house in Hinokage, Miyazaki Prefecture. To earn provisions, he started English conversation classes in his home. By and by he lined his room from inside with cloth and paper to shut the outdoor light. Hence his room had scarce sunlight.

It was not clear why he covered his room from inside. It could be because the winter in Hinokage was so cold that he had to apply things to all the gaps and windows to insulate the room from draft? Or, it was also a possibility that he wanted to escape from the eyes of the townspeople. In those days, foreigners were rare in Japan, especially westerners, and they became a focus of attention of curious Japanese. An American businessman whom I met in Tokyo years ago said he used to be harassed by Japanese people's incessant watching of him wherever he went, and only after closing the door of his hotel room

would he be able to feel at ease. So, Zepeda in the countryside where most people had never seen a foreigner must be a constant target of people's glancing to the point that he lost his heart, and hence he had to seal his room from inside, for some towners might have peeped in. Or could it be a symptom of some sort of mental disease that he might have begun to suffer, which is not uncommon among people who live in a foreign country for the first time?

He had come to Hinokage, shadow of the sun, to uncover it to God's glory, but he covered his room up from the sun. As a consequence of this unnatural behavior of his, "he scared his pupils away," quoting the remark of the pastor's wife, who had come home and joined our conversation.

Thus, he lost his pupils - his income source. (I do not know if he was supported by his home church or some institution, but even so the support alone must have been not enough for him to fare well.) He got hungry and one day he was caught as he was shoplifting a cookie in a shop. He was taken to the police office. But he could not speak Japanese and the policemen did not understand English. Therefore, the police called the Canadian pastor in Miyazaki City for help, for the Canadian was well known for his fluent Japanese. The pastor eventually went to Hinokage by car. Zepeda was released, and the pastor took him to his church - where I met him on that Sunday morning.

The pastor and his wife said they were surprised at the huge amount of food he ate in their house, although he was rather a thin person. Such was the hunger he was suffering. I thought this was why the pastor's wife puffed out a laughter irresistively on that Sunday morning when Zepeda spoke his self-introduction briefly in the church after being prompted by her.

I wondered if a shop owner would report to the police when a person shoplifted only a cookie. But it could have been that that was not the first time he saw him do it. Or it could have been that in Hinokage, a town deep in mountains where usually old traditions were treasured and observed more diligently than in cities, the Christianity was yet

considered a paganism and all the laborers under the name of God were constant targets of hatred so that Zepeda was left to nearly starve and was promptly reported to the police when caught shoplifting.

Now I came to know the problem of the missionary Zepeda at last. Then, the pastor gave me further information regarding Zepeda after the incident.

Zepeda was forced to return to US. But it came to pass that he attempted to come to Japan again, only to be interrupted at the immigration office in an airport in Japan (or at some office in an airport in US, I forgot which it was) owing to his criminal record in Hinokage. The pastor had no knowledge of what had become of him thereafter.

I was amazed to hear this, amazed at Zepeda's desperate steadfastness to obey God, amazed at his adamant will to enlighten the people in Hinokage, *the shadow of the sun*. I fail to imagine how he, himself a shadowy person, possessed such power unless it was that God directly had commanded him!

When I returned from the trip, I opened my Bible and moved the card of Zepeda to the part where Isaiah 9:2 is printed, the place where it is written that the people in a land of darkness came to see a great light.

When the lines of Zepeda's words in his card are combined with the lines of Isaiah 9:2 alternately as follows, the result is as if the words of the Isaiah are an echo of Zepeda's powerful calling:

I am in the Land of the Rising Sun
with the Love of the Risen Sun

*The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light:*

Reaching people in the Shadow of the Sun

with the power of the Glorified Son.

light has dawned upon them,

dwellers in a land as dark as death.

The End of Part 1

go to Chapter IV :

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