

# Southeastern News

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## JAPANESE RELUCTANT CONVERTS, YET BORROW FROM CHRISTIANITY, SAYS VETERAN MISSIONARY

WAKE FOREST, N.C. - A veteran Southern Baptist missionary has described the Japanese as reluctant to accept Christianity because it is seen as a foreign religion which is too personal and poses a threat to their personal freedom.

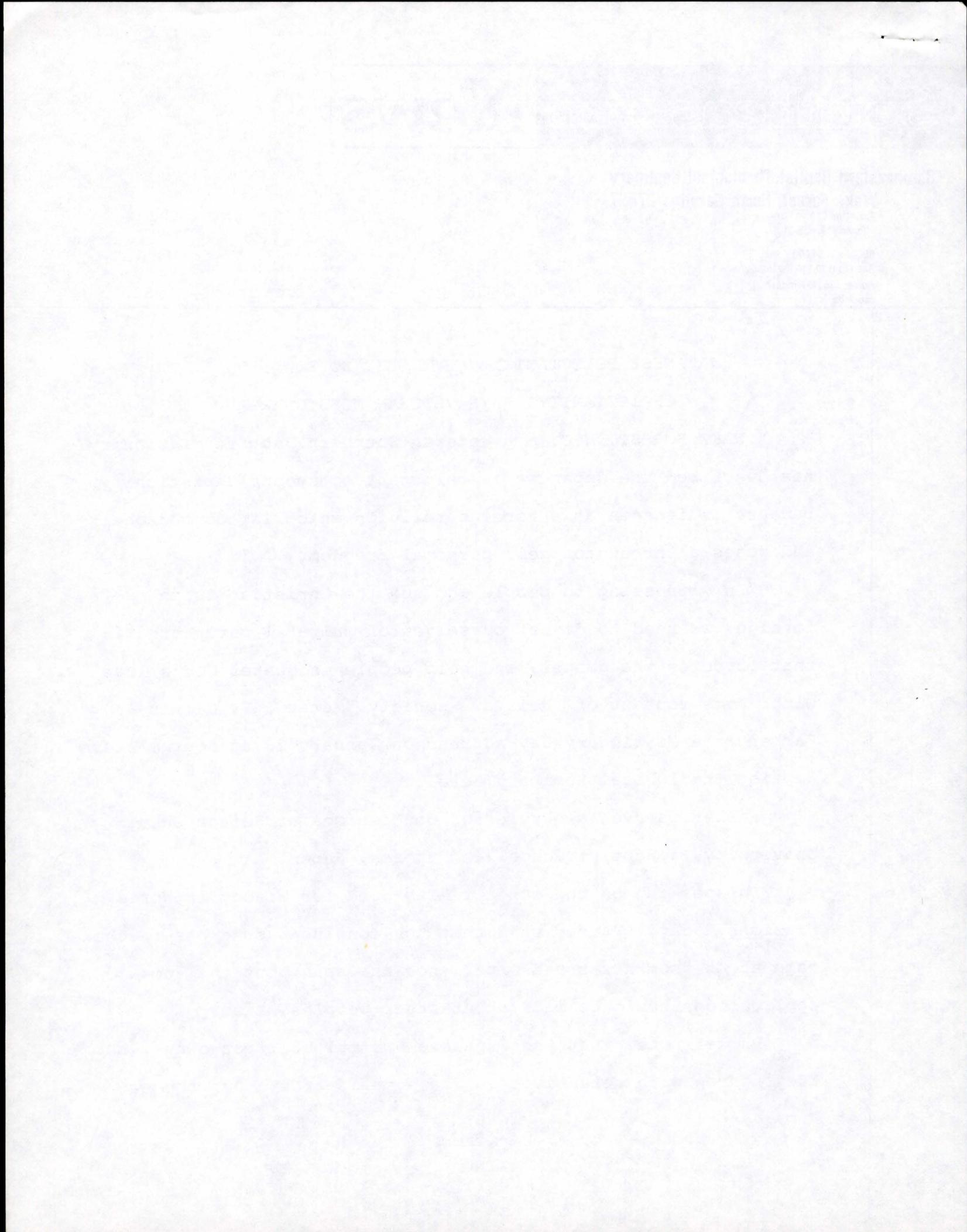
"In witnessing to people who see the Christian faith as foreign, we need to divest ourselves of cultural paraphernalia that obscures the gospel, and help people encounter God's love within the context of their own society," stated F. Calvin Parker in a Missionary Day address on January 26 at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary here.

Parker, serves as Professor of Missions at Seinan Gakuin University, a Baptist School in Fukouka, Japan.

In speaking on the subject "The Need for Wisdom in World Missions Today," Parker said that the conclusions he has reached came about from his broad experience in Japan, but the same applications could be made about other peoples, also.

Parker noted that the Japanese are cultural borrowers, but they borrow with selectivity. The same is true about the

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Japanese view of Christianity. They have been resistant about accepting Christianity, yet Shinto scholars have been so attracted by the Christian idea of God and providence that millions of Japanese think of God in almost Christian terms.

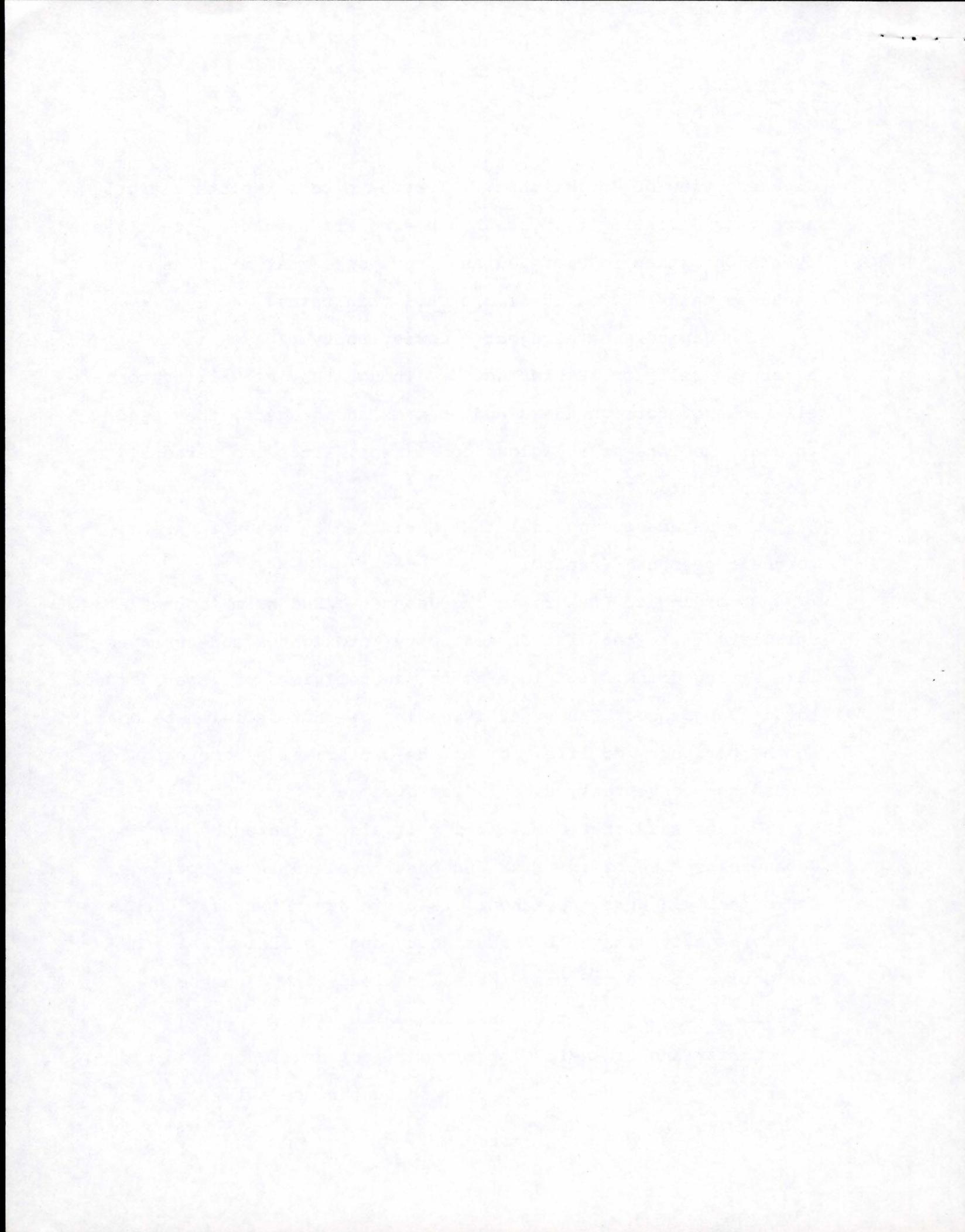
The Japanese have rejected Christianity because it is a foreign religion, Parker said. "Though they're willing to take all kinds of foreign ideas and customs and gadgets, they tend to draw the line at religious commitment. It's too personal, too fundamental."

The Japanese also feel that Christianity poses a threat to their personal freedom.

According to Parker, to the Japanese "Buddhism soothes and stimulates like tea, but Christianity intoxicates and enslaves like strong drink. It alone among the religions of Japan demands total allegiance. The general feeling is that religion belongs in the periphery of life, not at the center; it's something like a handbag--convenient, useful, but optional."

Parker said that Christianity is also rejected by the Japanese because of the risk and cost involved in accepting Christianity. What the schools teach in Japan leaves students with a negative image of Christianity, and the individual and collective conduct of many Christians leads the Japanese to question the worth of the Christian faith.

Christians can help combat the rejection of Japanese and other such people by helping them encounter God's love within



their own society, Parker said.

He continued, "To those who fear the bonds of our faith, our yoke with Christ, we must demonstrate the deep joy and peace that is ours through him (Christ) who really sets us free... To those who doubt the value of the Christian faith, we must demonstrate that it is indeed a pearl of great price, worth taking the risk, whatever the cost. This is best done, I think, by living out the gospel in selfless service to others."

Parker said that "we need more sensitivity to the moral and ethical demands of the gospel; we need a practical demonstration of our faith."

He concluded with the hope that "we be so filled with the wisdom from above and so put it into practice, that they will covet the faith we possess, and take it, whatever the risk, and make it their own, and share it with others."

