August 2013


Hope College

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Abstract

Graduate of Hope College, Western Theological Seminary, and Yale University. Studies in History, American Literature, Bible, and American intellectual history. Missionary to China (1946-1950) until expelled by the communists. Missionary to Japan (1953-1985) as well as professor at Meiji Gakuin University. Trustee of Meiji Gakuin, the American School in Japan, International Christian University, and Tokyo Union Church. Director of the Meiji Gakuin-Hope College student exchange program, and trustee of Tennessee Meiji Gakuin High School (USA).

Accession No: H98-1346  
Provenance: Gordon J. Van Wyk  
Donor: Bertha Van Wyk  
Photographs: 3,705 images (Boxes 1-10); additional in Oversized  
Processed by: David Andrews, April 2001

Biography

Gordon J. Van Wyk was born in Maurice, Iowa, on August 4, 1919, the son of the Reverend and Mrs. John C. Van Wyk, who had been an RCA missionary couple in Arcot, India. He graduated from Hope College in 1941, and shortly after studied Chinese at the California College in China (on the UC-Berkeley campus). Van Wyk earned a bachelor of Divinity degree from the Western Theological Seminary in 1944, and an MA in American colonial history from Yale University. He pursued further graduate work in Japanese Studies at the University of Michigan (1951-1952), in American intellectual history at the University of Chicago (1958-1959), and in American Literature at the University of Wisconsin (1969-1970). Hope College awarded Van Wyk an honorary doctorate in Humane Letters (LHD) in 1980.

Accompanied by his wife, Bertha (née Vis, also a Hope graduate), Van Wyk was a teacher and RCA missionary to Asia, first in Foochow, China, where he taught Western History at Fukien Christian University from 1946 to 1950. After being expelled by the communist regime, Van Wyk from 1953 to 1985 taught Bible, American Literature and History at RCA-affiliated Meiji Gakuin University (MGU) in Tokyo, Japan. There, Van Wyk was instrumental in developing Hope College’s relationship with Meiji Gakuin, which included a student exchange program (Program for International Cooperation in Education) begun in 1965 and directed by Van Wyk until his retirement. As MGU Librarian, Van Wyk also organized the MGU library according to Western classification. He was a member of the boards of trustees of Meiji Gakuin, the American School in Japan, International Christian University, and Tokyo Union Church.

Van Wyk was also a member of the Reformed Church’s General Program Council. After retiring from the missionary service, Van Wyk was a board member of Tennessee Meiji Gakuin High School, an exchange school located in Sweetwater, Tennessee. Van Wyk held visiting professorships at Northwestern College (1974-1975), Hope College (1980), and the Princeton...

Scope and Content

The Gordon Van Wyk collection contains correspondence, biographical information, sermons and articles by Van Wyk, documentation of Van Wyk’s RCA involvements, and records of his missionary work in China and Japan. The Japan materials record Van Wyk’s extensive international work for Meiji Gakuin University, and his ties to Christian organizations in Japan and Asia. These materials also contain a multitude of photographs of MGU and its students, and of other subjects from missionaries to churches.

Also represented is Van Wyk’s interest in the religious faith of communist China, and his notes, papers, lectures and sermons on issues of theology, modes of worship, and intellectual history as represented in literature.

File folder titling closely follows Van Wyk’s office file titles. One oversized item (An MGU yearbook) is stored alongside the boxed collection.

Container List

Box 1

American School in Japan
Personnel, 1962-1979 (27 images)
Salary Correspondence and Memoranda, 1970, 1976-1978

Articles
Bertha Van Wyk, “Thirty Years,” 1984
“Big Questions and Little Answers,” 1960
“Calvinism and the Covenants in Puritan New England,” 1971
Career Postings, 1944, 1951, 1969
“Carl Lotus Becker and the Climate of Optimism,” 1958
“China Thirty Years Later,” ca. 1980
“Christianity in Japan,” 1955
“Communication in International Education,” 1966
Durbin, “How it All Began,” 1986
“Fertile Field for a New Church,” 1943
“Global Education for Global Citizens,” 1984
Gordon J. Van Wyk: A Thumbnail Sketch,” 1984
“Spiritual Perils of Foreigners in Japan,” n.d.
Hesselink, “Issues and Developments in Moral Theology,” 1992
“The Japanese Church and Expo ’70,” 1970
“The Meiji Gakuin That Was, That Is, That is to Be,” 1984
“Missions and Nationalism,” 1952
“On American History.” 1960
“The One and the Group.” 1968
“The Pessimistic Tradition in America,” 1962
Review of The Challenge of Japan’s Internationalization, 1984-1985
Review of *Martin Luther and the Bondage of Will*, n.d.
Review of *On Being Reformed*, 1984
“Satan’s Title Role in the Works of Melville,” 1978
“Tomio Muto: The Lord’s Propagandist,” 1972
“The Vocation of a Missionary Educator,” 1985-1986

Association of Christian Universities and Colleges in Asia (ACUCA), 1975-1976, 1979-1984 (23 images)

**The Bible**
The Apocrypha, 1908, 1994, n.d.
General Epistles, 1956, n.d.
Inspiration, 1938-1976
The Life of Christ, 1940-1993
Minor Prophets, 1943-1968, n.d.
The Old Testament, 1955-1980 (2 folders)
Old Testament History, 1939-1982
The Psalms, 1956-1985
The Writings (Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs), 1982-1983

Box 2

Biographical, 1936-1986

China
Ancient Chinese Culture, 1956-1989
Articles
“Chinese Christian Leaders,” 1949
“Letters from David Abeel,” 1992
Christian Hymns, 1982, 1986
The Church in China, 1974, 1977-1989
The Church in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Philippines, 1951-1989, n.d. (16 images)
Foochow Expense Records, 1949, n.d.
Foreign Students in the USA, 1952, 1985, n.d.
Hong Kong Maps, n.d.
Off-Mainland Press, 1956-1989
Persecutions and Exit from China, 1927, 1948-1951, n.d.
Post-Communist Politics, 1947-1983
Questionnaire, “An Inquiry Concerning the Experience of Missionaries in
Communist China,” 1952
Reports
  JCWS Refugee Operations, 1955
  On Foochow, 1982, 1987
  World Student Christian Federation, 1969
United Board for Higher Education in Asia, 1946-1984 (3 images)
Christian Education Overseas, 1946-1989
The Church in China
  Amoy Mission
    Correspondence, 1940-1964
    Personnel, 1948-1975
Articles on Communist Takeover, 1951-1952
The Church in Red China, 1947-1975, n.d.
Christian Education after Mao Tse-tung, 1985-1988
Fukien Christian University
  Correspondence and Notes, 1946-1950
  Reports, 1945-1957
Newsletters
  “The China Colleges,” 1951-1952
  “Overseas Newsletter,” 1951
Post-War Christianity Reports, 1944-1952 (2 folders)
Pre-Revolutionary Schools and Colleges, 1944, 1946-1950, n.d.
Reformation Translation Fellowship, Annual Reports, 1950-1956
Correspondence
  Akagawa, Yataka, 1954-1985
  Alto Reformed Church, 1954-1987
  California Churches, 1951-1992 (18 images)
  Canadian Churches, 1984-1985 (2 images)

Box 3

Correspondence (cont.)

4
Dubuque, Iowa, Churches and Universities, 1968-1989 (2 images)
Family, 1949-1986
Family Newsletters, 1946-1989
Family Newsletters to China and Japan, 1982, 1985
Florida Churches, 1985, 1987
Former RCA Missionaries to Japan, 1963, 1975-1990 (8 images)
Holland, Michigan, Missionaries, 1974-1992 (37 images)
Indiana and Illinois Churches, 1975-1987 (2 images)
Iowa, South Dakota and Minnesota Churches, 1952-1959, 1970-1986 (4 images)
Meiji Gakuin University Students, 1957-1989 (2 folders) (8 images)
Morrison, Illinois, Churches, 1958-1985 (3 images)
Orange City, Iowa, Churches, 1986-1988, 1992 (3 images)
Pella, Iowa, Area Churches, 1983, 1985-1986 (4 images)
Personal Newsletters, 1946-1983 (6 images)
RCA, 1951-1970 (2 folders)
RCA Board of World Missions, 1962-1987
RCA General Program Council, 1970-1985
RCA Missionaries Outside of Japan, 1967-1989 (6 images)
RCA Missionaries to Japan, 1985-1988 (1 image)
Takanawa Church, 1965-1987
Tokyo Union Church-related, 1954-1988, n.d. (3 images)
Washington (state) Churches, 1943-1985 (21 images)
Wisconsin Churches, 1974-1987 (4 images)

Course Materials
“The Christian Church in Japan” (American Theological Seminary), 1986
Japan-related Courses, 1974, 1980
“On Being a Missionary Today,” 1990

East-West Center, Hawaii, 1974, 1976
Funeral Service for Arie R. Brouwer, 1993
Hope College

Correspondence
Admissions, 1963-1980
Faculty, 1981-1982, 1984, 1989 (1 image)
Degrees and Awards, 1941, 1980
Great Lakes College Association, 1961, 1975 (2 images)
International Programs, 1964-1986

Box 4

Hope College (cont.)
Meiji Gakuin Students at Hope, 1967-1992
Reunions and Emersonian Fraternity, 1937-1989

Japan
Articles
“Calvinism and the Covenants in Puritan New England,” 1971
“The Four No’s of Education,” 1970
“If Seeing is Believing…,” 1971
“Matsumoto Toru Sensei to Watashi,” 1971
“Times Conscientiously Devotes Itself to 2-way Traffic of Ideas,” 1972
“Toru Matsumoto and I,” 1979
Association of Foreign Teachers in Japan, 1955-1985
Aoyama Gakuin University, 1976, 1982, n.d.
Christian Home and Family Life, n.d.
Christian Organizations and Youth, 1959-1968
Christian Teachers’ Association, n.d.
Christian Universities
Indonesia, 1980, 1983
Korea, 1980, 1983-1984 (1 image)
Taiwan, 1956, 1980, 1982-1984 (8 images)
Christianity in Japan
Articles, 1950-1989 (2 folders)
Notes, 1962-1987, n.d. (2 folders)
Culture, 1956, 1962, 1972-1975
COC-related Schools Council, 1951-1984 (2 folders)
Digest from Japan Christian Press, 1956-1959
Dissenting Churches, 1962, 1974
Early Japanese Christianity, n.d.
Educational Standards, 1957-1985 (2 folders) (76 images)
Fellowship of Christian Missionaries, 1947-1984
Hymns in Japanese, n.d.
International Christian University, 1958-1985
Japan Christian Activity News, 1954-1979 (6 folders)

Box 5

Japan (cont.)

Japan Christian Quarterly and Yearbook, 1956-1981
Japan Harvest, 1956-1969 (3 folders)
Japanese Theology, n.d.
Japanese Universities with International Programs, 1966-1979 (1 image)
Kami-Osaki Property, 1975, 1980-1982 (1 image)
The Kyodan
 Articles and Reports, 1976-1978
 History, 1966-1976
 “Kyodan Newsletter,” 1967-1994 (15 folders)
 Organization, 1961-1985
 Problems, 1954-1985 (2 folders)
 Proclamations, 1954-1985
 Kyoto Educational Experiment Project (KEEP), 1956-1977, n.d. (259 images)
 Literature Committee, 1951-1952, 1954
 Missionaries in Japan, 1958-1985 (22 images)
 NHK Radio, 1954, 1963
 Pamphlet, “Education in Japan,” 1976
 Political Demonstrations, 1951-1969
Box 6

Japan (cont.)


Reports

- IBC: COC Findings, 1958, 1963
- “The Role of Christian Schools,” 1960

Role of Missionaries in Japan, 1953-1976 (3 folders)


Shinagawa Church, 1967, 1971, 1974, 1982 (61 images)

Seminaries, 1949-1989

Separatist Fundamentalism, 1975-1977


Student Christian Movement, 1968

Student Radicalism, 1968-1974 (2 folders)

Tokyo Union Church

- Activities, Membership and Budgets, 1954-1985 (10 images)
- And the Community, 1958-1973
- Annual Reports, 1983-1985
- Assistant Pastors, 1967-1984 (5 images)
- Bulletins and Clippings, 1973, 1982-1990 (2 images)
- History, 1951-1982 (85 images)
- Ministry, 1954-1984 (17 images)
- Pastoral Search, 1967-1980


Toru Matsumoto, 1951-1979

UCC Summer Evangelism Project, 1964-1965

United Nations University, 1972-1975 (3 images)

Waseda University, 1963, 1969 (6 images)


World Home Bible League, 1957-1975 (145 images)

YMCA, 1980, n.d. (23 images)

Japanese Bible Classes (Ando, Takanawa, Meiji Gakuin), 1954-1985

Japanese-International Foreign Study Agencies, 1962-1979

Lectures

Hesselink, “Central College and the Reformed Church,” 1992
“Japan Between Two Extremes,” 1978
Meiji Gakuin University
All-Japan Open Discussion, 1972-1973
Application for Toyota Grant, 1978

Articles
Bisaza, “Neurolinguistics: What is It?” 1963
“Christian Education Should Make a Difference,” 1978
“Communication in International Education,” 1965
“Discussion with Prof. Van Wyk,” 1972
“God’s Hand at Work,” 1954
“The International Dimensions of Dr. Tatsuo Wakabayashi,” 1983
“Japanese Students in an American College,” 1966
“Meiji Gakuin Newsheet,” 1953
“Music Education, and Evangelism,” 1978
“New Foundations for Japan,” 1959
“Our Twentieth Anniversary,” 1984
“The Personalized Gift,” 1979
“Random Jottings after Five Years,” 1958
“The Reformed and Missions,” 1978
“A School with a Mission,” 1984

Untitled (MGU and Hope as Mission Schools), 1965
“We, the People,” 1969
“What is a Mission School?” n.d.
“What Will You Do With Your Education?” 1959
“Whose School is This?” parts 1 and 2, 1972
Yokose, “Mr. Van Wyk and his Red Pen,” n.d.

Book, Language, Literature and the Christian Scholar: A Festschrift In Honor of Professor and Mrs. Gordon Van Wyk, 1984

Brochures, 1954-1987, n.d. (2 folders) (769 images)
Building Plans, 1959, 1964, n.d. (7 images)

Box 7

Meiji Gakuin University (cont.)
Bulletins, 1966-1987 (3 folders)
Business Dealings with Gordon Van Wyk, 1951-1985
Central College, Pella Iowa, 1964, 1973, 1985 (83 images)
Christian, Church, and Missionary Schools, 1942-1984 (2 folders) (4 images)
Contract Teachers, 1961, 1971, 1975
Correspondence
- Watanabe, Hideo, 1989-1990 (1 image)

Course Materials
- Bibliography: Early American Literature, n.d.


English Department
- Promotional Articles, 1967-1968, 1977

Faculty of International Studies, 1984, n.d.

Farewell Parties, 1984-1986

Foreigners and MGU (Deceased), 1951-1985
Former Foreign Missionaries, 1959-1986 (6 images)

Founding Fathers’ History, 1955-1983 (52 images)
Fulbright Scholarships, 1975, 1982, n.d. (8 images)

Fund and Grant Information, 1972, 1977-1979 (2 images)
“Great Men” of the University,” 1958-1986 (31 images)

Henry Schaafsma, 1957-1963, 1965 (5 images)

Histories
- “Meiji Gakuin Semi-Centennial,” 1927

Hope College
- Japan Tour/MGU Centennial, 1977
- *Hope College Memoirs*, 1965-1984 (10 folders)

Box 8

Meiji Gakuin University (cont.)
- Interview, “The Spirit of the Founders of America,” 1976
- Kyokiu Dimei Particular Schools, 1955-1978 (184 images)
- Memoranda, 1981-1994
- MESA English Study Association, 1963-1980
Muto, Tomio, 1932, 1952-1984 (5 images)
Northwestern College, 1964, 1985 (37 images)
Personal Correspondence, 1954-1985, n.d.
Presentations
“The Historical Dimensions of Literature,” 1983
“Job or Vocation,” 1984
Promotional Writings by Van Wyk, 1956-1984
Publicity, 1950-1986, n.d. (635 images)
Publicity Photographs, n.d. (82 images)
RCA Dealings, 1958-1978
Reports
“Fraternal Relations with Christian Schools in the USA,” 1964
“Preparing Students for Study Abroad,” ca. 1965
“The Role of the Missionary in the School,” 1963
Sugimoto, “A Study of Christian Colleges in the USA,” 1983
Untitled (The Role of Christian Schools in Japan), 1960
Senior Seminar Photo Album, 1985 (67 images)
The Shirokane Tsushin Newspaper, 1985-1992 (2 folders)
Southeast Asia Program, 1966, 1968, 1974-1979, 1984
Student Troubles, 1960-1974 (11 images)
Toyohiko Kagawa, 1961-1962, 1988 (63 images)
United Presbyterian Church Relations, 1977-1978
University History, 1948-1981 (31 images)
University Information, 1953-1985 (105 images)
Missionaries
Bible Societies in the US and Japan, 1975
Christian Reformed Church, 1960-1979, n.d.
Furloughing Conferences, 1964, 1969, 1985
In Memoriam: Japanese Missionaries, 1954-1985 (10 images)
Japanese Language School Committee
Box 9

Missionaries (cont.)
Recruitment and Education, 1958-1987
World Vision Tokyo Crusade, 1959-1962
Movements
American Church History, 1941-1976, n.d. (2 folders)
Missionary Vocation, 1974, 1988-1990
National Council of Churches/Ecumenical Movement, 1944-1986
Notes
Article for Hope Alumni Newspaper, n.d.
Hendricks, “Personality Assessment and Conflict Management in an American
Baptist Church,” 1987
Papers
“Angels and the Old Testament,” ca. 1944
“Calvin’s Concept of the Word of God,” 1944
“The Church and Constituted Authority Today,” 1939
“The Criteria of Canonicity,” 1943
“From a Door to a Sphere,” 1945
“How We Can Know the Will of God,” 1941
“Journalistic Responsibility in the Fukien Voice,” 1948
“Missions and Nationalism,” 1951
“The Place and Function of Biblical Theology,” 1943
“Rationalism, Hermeneutics, and Christianity,” 1942
“The Reasoned and Experienced Trinity,” 1942
Review of Latourette, The American Record in the Far East, 1945-1951, 1959
Three Book Outlines, ca. 1942
“Wordsworth’s Faith in Invention,” ca. 1939
Parents
Pre-Furlough Vocational Counseling Program, 1973
Presbyterian Church, 1992

Presentations
“The Disciple and Other Disciples,” 1963
“Integrating Christian Values in the Curriculum,” 1980
“Learning to Learn from Each Other,” 1984-1985
“On the Unity of the Church,” 1970

Program, All-Bach Organ Recital, 1985

RCA
Appalachian Missions, 1962-1985 (49 images)
Archives, 1975-1994
Church History, 1946, 1948, 1971, 1976 (45 images)
Church Information, 1970-1993 (64 images)
Council of Protestant Colleges and Universities, 1966, 1969 (2 images)
Furlough Speaking Appointments, 1956-1986
General Program Council Minutes and Documents, 1953-1985 (2 folders)
New Brunswick Theological Seminary, 1941-1986 (13 images)
RCA Speaking Assignments, 1985-1986
Treasury Accounts, 1970-1986 (RESTRICTED, Box 13)

Reference Material
Article, Reynolds, “The Ten Best Ways Not to Choose a College,” 1986

Reports
“The Hope College Summer Session in American Studies for Japanese Students,” 1965
“A Missionary’s Reaction to the Festival,” 1970
“Partnership in Mission Revision,” 1983
“The Role of the Missionary in the School,” 1963

Box 10

Sermons
“Christians and Missions,” 1951
Educational, 1953-1992 (2 folders)
Japan, 1959-1985
Nassau Presbyterian Church, 1985
On the Missionary Vocation, 1945-1985
“Reconciliation,” n.d.
Reference Material, 1964-1989
“A School Set on a Hill,” (Meiji Gakuin), 1985
“The Sermon on the Mount,” 1975

Tennessee Meiji Gakuin High School
Balance Sheets, 1988-1992 (RESTRICTED, Box 13)
Budget Report, 1994 (RESTRICTED, Box 13)
Bylaws, ca. 1988
Commencement Materials, 1995
Employment Manual, 1994
Ephemera, Articles and Photographs, 1977-1995 (2 folders) (18 images)
Expense Records, 1990, 1993-1994 (RESTRICTED, Box 13)
Labor Policies, 1994
Meeting Minutes, Documents, Notes, 1988-1993, 1995
Memoranda, 1989-1995 (2 folders)
Reports, 1993
Tennessee State Maps and Information, n.d.
Yearbook, 1985 (See Oversized below)

Theology
American Puritanism, 1954-1994
Baptism, 1969-1996
Calvinism, 1943-1986

Box 11

Theology (cont.)
Campaign Against *The Last Temptation of Christ*, 1988
Church History to Reformation, 1942-1960, n.d.
Election and Predestination, 1958, 1994
Existentialism (Brunner), Dialectical Theology, Neo-Orthodoxy, 1953-1987, n.d.
“God is Dead,” 1965-1966, 1980
Heaven and Hell, n.d.
Man and Sin, 1942, 1945, n.d.
Mental Health, 1963-1965
Philosophy, n.d.
Philosophy of Religion and Revelation, 1936, 1938, n.d.
Predestination and Free Will, 1941, 1961
Protestantism, 1952
Total Depravity, n.d.
Worship
Church and Denominations, 1943-1967
Liturgy and Symbols, 1944, 1951, 1971
Lutheran-Reformed Convocation, 1987
Preachers, 1944-1979, n.d.

Box 12 (Oversize)
Meiji Gakuin University Yearbook, 1985 (Several hundred images)

Box 13 (RESTRICTED)
RCA, Treasury Accounts, 1970-1986 (RESTRICTED)
Tennessee Meiji Gakuin High School
Balance Sheets, 1988-1992 \textit{(RESTRICTED)}
Budget Report, 1994 \textit{(RESTRICTED)}