
August 2013

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Papers, 1927-1998. 16.50 linear ft. PARTIALLY RESTRICTED

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.

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   Hesselink, “Issues and Developments in Moral Theology,” 1992
   “The Japanese Church and Expo ’70,” 1970
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   “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
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Book, Language, Literature and the Christian Scholar: A Festschrift In Honor of Professor and Mrs. Gordon Van Wyk, 1984

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