
Reformed Church Witness in Japan: A Brief History

John and Etta Hesselink

Let it be known that so long as the sun shall warm the earth, let no Christian be so bold as to come to Japan, and let all know that King Felipe himself, or the Christian Great God of All, if he contravenes this prohibition, shall pay for it with his head.

Edict issued by Tokugawa Temitsu, shogun July 25, 1640

Introduction

In the middle of the seventeenth century, Japan's emerging political leaders instituted a seclusion policy (*Sakoku*) that sealed the nation's borders. Both leaving and entering Japan were forbidden upon pain of death, and all sea-going vessels were destroyed. These extreme measures were taken to counteract the danger to Japan's unity, national polity, identity, and domestic peace posed by the evangelizing activity of Catholic missionaries.

Japan's first contact with Christianity had come in 1549 with the arrival of Francis Xavier and two other Jesuits. They were joined by more missionaries, and for fifty years the Catholic mission enjoyed remarkable growth. The regional lords' (*daimyo*) favorable attitude toward the mission was undoubtedly due to the lure and promise of commercial gain through trade and increased military might by the acquisition of new weapons. However, that there was also authentic soul searching and real conversion became evident when persecution began.

Unfortunately, this so-called "Christian century" coincided with the rise of Japan's three greatest power brokers: Nobunaga, Hideyoshi, and Ieyasu, each of whom shared the vision of a great, unified empire. The first two of them especially were attracted to the erudition of the priests and often entertained them royally. However, after a night of revelry on July 24, 1587, Hideyoshi suddenly denounced them publicly for their "deceitful propaganda of a devilish and subversive creed," thereby winning over some of the feudal aristocracy who posed a serious threat to the unity and safety of the empire. An Edict of Expulsion issued the following day began, "Ours is the Land of the Gods," that is, a sacred land. Although the edict was not immediately enforced, a number of churches were destroyed. Hideyoshi found the Christian doctrine of strict monotheism "unreasonable and wanton" because it endangered the relationship between Japan's sacred sovereign and her people.

After several years of relative calm, opposition to Christianity was crystallized by the interception of a message from a Portuguese ship that implied missionary activity was a prelude to military invasion. With that, three Portuguese Jesuits, six Spanish Franciscans, and fifteen Japanese converts (two of them boys of twelve and fourteen years) were arrested. In January 1596, they were marched eight hundred kilometers to Nagasaki and publicly crucified. The Edict of Expulsion was repeated once again.

Paranoia now gripped the country, and systematic persecution began. An estimated 300,000 people were martyred with a diabolical cruelty rarely surpassed anywhere. Virulent, scholarly anti-Christian tracts and treatises flooded the country, and measures of unparalleled extremity were used to wipe out every vestige of Christian influence. Nevertheless, pockets of hidden Christians (*Kakure Kirishitans*) survived to surface centuries later. As late as 1829, more than twenty hidden Christians were crucified upon discovery. This period is crucial to understand how deeply hatred, misinformation, and fear of the "evil sect" (*Jashū*) were entrenched in Japan's religious, political, and social life when the first Reformed Church in America (RCA) missionaries arrived in 1859.

Japan's inferior military capabilities made the seclusion policy untenable. The ocean, considered a formidable barrier, was becoming a raider's highway. Americans with a strong sense of "manifest destiny" to implant themselves in Asia applied pressure for the opening of Japan. Commodore Perry's expeditions of 1853 and 1854, essentially forcing the Treaty of Kanagawa, established America's right to send the first resident consul general to Japan. Thus ended the nation's 250 years of being hermetically sealed. In the first commercial treaty in 1858, Japan conceded to a most hated provision: American residents who pledged not to excite religious animosity were granted freedom to exercise their religion.

In April 1859, non-Catholic Christianity reached Japan with the arrival in Nagasaki of two missionaries of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States. By November of that year, Samuel R. Brown, Duane B. Simmons, M. D., and Guido F. Verbeck of the (Dutch) Reformed Church in America (RCA) reached Nagasaki via Shanghai after a 187-day trip. Verbeck's Dutch background was helpful because of Japan's ties with the Dutch during its years of isolation.

RCA PIONEER MISSIONARY ENDEAVORS IN KYUSHU

Breaking the Language Barrier

William Elliot Griffis' *Verbeck of Japan* describes the turbulent times confronted by Japan's earliest RCA missionaries. Verbeck and his companions were greeted by ubiquitous signboards proscribing Christianity. With a price on their heads, missionaries were surrounded by spies, traitors, informers, ruffians, and assassins.

If necessary, Verbeck was willing to do God's work in silence or secrecy. The first years were a preparatory period of prayerful waiting in the hope that barriers would be broken, doors opened, and trust established. Language study held top priority. The complexity and difficulty of Japanese forced missionaries to spend long hours compiling grammars and dictionaries. J. C. Hepburn's seminal work on dictionary compilation is legendary, and Albert Oltmans's dictum on Japanese language study remains valid: "Invert your modes of thinking, methods of construction, order of logic, forms of answers to questions—and then you can learn Japanese." Harman Van Slyck Peeke published *How to Pray in Japanese* (1912), as well as a book of hymn notes in Japanese, a dictionary of five thousand Chinese ideographs, and Japanese readers for language students.

Brown, whose years in China had given him a command of the Chinese ideographs used by the Japanese, worked on Bible translation. Because a fire destroyed much of his work, his first Scripture portions were delayed until 1871. James Ballagh's (1861) translation work in the Yokohama area suffered similar delays. By 1879 an ongoing translation committee was formed with Brown as chairman and Verbeck as a member. Although initially held back by fear of persecution, by 1883 some Japanese were actively seeking to join the translation committee.

Guido F. Verbeck

So indelible is Guido Verbeck's stamp on these early years that the history of modern Japan could hardly be written without reference to him. A man of seemingly unlimited gifts, Verbeck was an engineer, teacher, linguist, preacher, educator, statesman, missionary, translator, and scholar. An uncompromising conservative, he won the admiration and trust of many Japanese who became statesmen and counselors to the emperor during the Meiji Restoration of 1868. Incredibly learned and gifted as he was, Verbeck never confused erudition with the gospel. He was an ardent believer in the sufficiency of Christ as the revelation of God's nature and relationship to humankind.

The first "undercover" Bible class began in 1862, when two students asked Verbeck to teach them. Although three more joined the class shortly, it disbanded when the Verbecks fled to Shanghai briefly after the assassination of an Englishman. Japan's increasing civil unrest was exacerbated by the presence of the hated and feared barbarians who brought with them the pernicious "evil sect." When it became incontrovertibly evident that the "outsiders" (*gaijin*) could not be dislodged, Japanese expediency assumed control. Upon invitation in 1864, Verbeck opened an interpreter's school with an enrollment of more than one hundred. His textbooks, unchallenged by the authorities, were the New Testament and the United States Constitution.

To catch up with the outside world, Japan sent hundreds of her most gifted youth to study in the West. Verbeck arranged for more than five hundred young men to go to the United States. Many of them attended Rutgers University, then

a school of the Dutch Reformed Church (RCA). When in 1868, the Meiji Restoration stranded these young *samurai* without government support, Verbeck created much goodwill by helping them. Three of these young men attended Hope College, thanks to the intervention of Hope's president, Philip Phelps, Jr. Two of the students, Kumaji Kimura and Motoichiro Ogimi, went on to New Brunswick Seminary. They returned to Japan and became ordained pastors and renowned scholars.

Anti-Christian sentiment and fear of Christianity's elusive power remained strong among Japan's power brokers. With the restoration of the emperor in 1868, Christianity was banned again. In Urakami, a district near Nagasaki, nearly three thousand hidden Christians were arrested, dressed in red suits, tied up together, and paraded throughout the land. The formal petitions foreign legations lodged against this new wave of persecution were to no avail, and many Christians who refused to renounce their faith lost their lives.

For five years, government restrictions had kept Verbeck within four miles of Nagasaki. In 1870, however, he was invited to Tokyo, the new center of government. Many of the three dozen students who followed him there became leaders in the new day dawning. He was also invited to help found what was to become Japan's most prestigious university, Tokyo University. As an attaché and advisor to the government, he was a consultant for the formation of a new constitution in 1889.

Bans removed

The hidden agenda in many of Verbeck's activities was to pressure the Japanese government to grant religious freedom for the unimpeded propagation of Christianity. The so-called Iwakura Mission to the United States, consisting of many of Verbeck's students, saw firsthand the power and influence of Christianity there. Verbeck's prayers were answered when Tokyo recommended that Japan's ban on Christianity be lifted. Although resistance to and misgivings concerning Christianity continued in much of the general populace, the proscriptive signboards were completely removed.

First fruits: the power of the word

An intriguing story of how early believers providentially came to faith is that of the Murata brothers, Wakasa and Ayabe, sons of a prominent *samurai* from a province neighboring Nagasaki. In 1854, they found a book floating in Nagasaki harbor. When Wakasa learned that it was the forbidden New Testament, he secretly sent to China for a translation. Over a two-year period, he sent personal messengers to Nagasaki, a two-day journey, to ask Verbeck for help with difficult passages. Suddenly, in 1866, the Murata brothers appeared to request baptism. Careful examination convinced Verbeck that the Holy Spirit had fully prepared them for this sacrament that had to be administered in secret. When the authorities did find out, the brothers' books were destroyed, but they escaped

punishment. The next baptisms took place in 1868, when Verbeck baptized a Buddhist priest, a samurai, and his son.

During the last twenty of Verbeck's nearly forty years in Japan, he focused on what he called "real missionary work." He became an indefatigable translator of the Bible, engaged in extensive public preaching tours and missions, lectured in the Union Theological School (seminary) and Meiji Gakuin University, and taught Bible classes. When Verbeck died in 1898, it was said, "He who never rested rests."

Verbeck's influence in Japan reached echelons of power unmatched by any other missionary. Japan granted him, his wife, and their seven children the unprecedented designation of "honorary citizens." In recognition of his unique contribution to Japanese society, he received the prestigious Decoration of Merit from the emperor. For his grave, land was deeded in perpetuity from the Imperial Household Agency. All funeral expenses were paid by the government, and his body was transported by a highly decorated Japanese military retinue.

The call answered: a ministry greatly blessed

Verbeck repeatedly appealed to the RCA mission board for help to meet expanding opportunities. Henry Stout, a Rutgers student who had undoubtedly met Japanese students on campus, answered the call. Following graduation from New Brunswick Seminary, he and his wife sailed to Panama. After an overland trek across the peninsula and two further sea voyages, they arrived in Nagasaki March 10, 1869, thirteen days before Verbeck and his family left for his government position in Tokyo.

Because direct public witnessing was still both illegal and dangerous, the Stouts opened their home to boarders. Teachers came to them surreptitiously for Bible study. On the basis of trust established by Verbeck, the government invited the Stouts to begin a school with no religion in its curriculum. Fifty girls and thirty boys enrolled. In 1873, when the signboards forbidding Christianity were removed, the Stouts began to teach Christian studies openly. Strong community opposition soon forced them to close the school and return to teaching in their home.

Japan's intellectual elite had long considered Christianity to be for the ignorant and weak, but by their outstanding intellect, learning, and moral character Verbeck and Stout disarmed these prejudices. In spite of restrictions, danger, opposition, language limitations, and no Scripture portions in Japanese, the Stouts managed to communicate the love of God. Stout administered his first baptism in 1873. The candidate, a Mr. Segawa, became the most important figure in the establishment of the church on the southern island of Kyushu.

In 1874, Stout bought property on the edge of the foreign concession for a preaching station. More than two hundred Japanese came to the first service for a taste of the "forbidden fruit." Two years later the first Union Church was established with ten adults and two children. Within two years the membership grew to twenty-two.

Stout now trained Segawa and a Mr. Tomegawa in theology and biblical studies. These three then traversed Kyushu, establishing outposts for Christian witness. In 1877, the RCA mission founded a theological school in Tokyo that became the theology department connected with Meiji Gakuin University (1886), a joint venture of RCA and Presbyterian missions. Segawa was sent to Tokyo for formal study, passed all his qualifying exams within a year, and returned with his new wife. She was a graduate of Ferris Girls' School in Yokohama, a pioneer institution for the education of women begun by Mary Kidder, an RCA missionary.

A Japan mission formally established

For the first twenty years, there was no formally organized Japan Mission. During that period, however, churches were established, out-stations functioned, the Bible was translated, schools operated, and the nucleus of a Japanese United Church was formed. Finally, in 1878 a Japan Mission was formally organized. Only when Stout threatened to turn over his thriving work to other boards were his ardent pleas to the RCA board for reinforcements answered. By 1889 only seven of the twenty-six missionaries on the field were in Kyushu. Those in Tokyo seemed to think that the "real" future of Japan lay there in the newly established Meiji government. One missionary even suggested that if funds became limited, the evangelistic ministry of Kyushu be closed! In 1889 the mission was divided into the South Japan Mission and the North Japan Mission because the two sites of RCA mission activity were eight hundred miles apart. Not until 1917 was a single mission reinstated.

Stout embodied and advocated many principles that have governed mission policy in Japan ever since his time. All personnel and long-term planning was to be accountable and responsible to the indigenous emerging church. Not a narrow parochialism, but ecumenical ventures were to be the norm. It was essential that pupils in the mission schools be trained in Japanese scholarship together with core elements of western science, music, and, of course, Christian teaching. Articles and correspondence of missionaries of those days reveal an impressive awareness of the need to avoid westernization of new converts or students under their tutelage.

Steele memorial academy

A large gift from the United States, much of it from Dr. William H. Steele in memory of his son, financed the construction of a school of theology and education whose architect and builder was David Stout. The building now stands in the Glover Garden, a site on a Nagasaki hillside dedicated to the preservation of historic buildings. The academy's pictorial gallery features the early RCA missionaries who contributed significantly to education and the upbuilding of the church in Kyushu. The career and the family of Anthony Walvoord, principal of Steele Academy from 1905-19, are featured prominently.

Beginning in 1891, Motoichiro Ogimi, one of the three young Japanese men befriended by Philip Phelps twenty-five years earlier, was principal of the academy for five years. Although a gifted New Testament scholar, he was an ineffective administrator. Steele Academy was rescued by the arrival of Albertus Pieters, and the combination of the Oltmans, Walvoords, Peekes, Pieters, and Stouts set it on a firm foundation. Of the sixty students trained there, forty became successful pastors. Contributing to their success was the vigorous training by missionary teachers who were outstanding scholars, teachers, and disciplinarians.

Because missionaries are inclined to be strong and opinionated, conflicts sometimes arose. When Stout returned from a three-year health-related furlough, he found that theological education had been suspended at the academy and that the school had lost its accreditation. Stout felt betrayed by Pieters, who was convinced that theological education was no longer wise or feasible in Kyushu. On his part, Pieters spearheaded a call for Stout's resignation. Stout left the mission in 1904 but continued to minister to the few in Nagasaki who remained loyal to him. When he left Japan after forty years of faithful and distinguished service, only two Japanese and one foreigner saw him off. However, in 1911, he returned to help build the Y.M.C.A. With no show of bitterness, he had a joyful reunion with former friends. Stout died only weeks after his return to the United States.

Gordon Laman's doctoral dissertation on Stout characterizes him as a man whose unlimited courage, boldness, and strength of will left an indelible impression on all he met. Always motivated by a high sense of duty, his policies were clear and masterfully defended. Above all, he was humble, affectionate, magnanimous, and eager to entrust his Japanese colleagues with responsibility. Genuinely pious, he inspired and molded people for ministry, ever confident that the Lord's hand was upon him. Without great scholarly gifts, Stout developed the hymnal, translated and promoted the Heidelberg Catechism, and wrote theological studies. A gifted architect and builder, his toughness of body, mind, and spirit sustained him through a lifetime of strenuous service.

RCA PIONEER ENDEAVORS IN YOKOHAMA AND TOKYO

James Hamilton Ballagh

While this missionary activity was going on in Kyushu, comparable evangelistic work was being carried out by equally illustrious pioneer evangelists and educators in the Yokohama-Tokyo area.

James Ballagh's mother had prayed earnestly that one of her children would become a foreign missionary. Her prayer was answered in 1861 when James accepted the Dutch Reformed Church's invitation to go to Japan. Within a month of his marriage to Margaret Tate Kinnear, the young couple embarked on a perilous, six-month journey to Japan.

Margaret's journal, *Glimpses of Old Japan*, is a touching portrayal of their early years on the field. Although only twenty years old when they began their service in an adapted Buddhist temple, she exudes a mature faith, a remarkably keen and observant mind, and an uncomplaining, fearless spirit. In adversity she personalized William Cowper's lines, "The clouds we so much dread, are big with mercy and shall break in blessings on our heads."

Ballagh's difficulty with the Japanese language is legendary. His Japanese colleagues found his sermons and prayers almost impossible to understand, and yet he communicated God's love powerfully. Ballagh is remembered as a man of prayer with an indefatigable zeal for evangelism. His missionary journeys on foot covered hundreds of miles, and took him into isolated towns and inaccessible mountain villages.

The first baptism: founding of the first organized church

Ballagh's first baptism was also the first baptism in Japan. The candidate, Ganryu Yano, his tutor, came to faith while assisting Ballagh in translating the Gospel of John. His beautiful confession of faith, made on his deathbed, moved Margaret to reflect: "Heaven's gate now stands ajar, open even here . . . [I] didn't realize heaven is as near Japan as America . . . I can die [in confidence] here!"

The first church building was erected in the foreign settlement in Yokohama since no Christian services were permitted outside the settlements. It was dubbed "the Sacred Dog Kennel" because of its diminutive size. Here, in response to the petition of a young man, Kinosuke Shinozaki, special prayer meetings were begun by Japanese students. For several months these gatherings experienced increased intensity as the Spirit's work was manifested in full-scale spiritual revivals. As a result, the first organized church in Japan was formed March 10, 1872. Named the Kaigan Church ("The Church by the Bay"), it remains in existence. From among its initial eleven baptized members, the first elder and deacon were ordained in accordance with Reformed/Presbyterian polity. Ballagh's sensitivity to his Japanese colleagues led him to baptize only after an elder or fellow-minister shared the decision to administer the rite. By the church's first anniversary, the membership had doubled, and within eight years membership had grown to 322 communicants.

Desire for non-sectarian Christian unity

The very independent spirit that characterized Japanese believers from the beginning is exhibited in the Kaigan Church's charter:

Our church belongs to no denomination. We believe that all those who stand upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ alone, who hold to the Bible as their standard and believe it and follow it, are all servants of Christ and as such are our brothers. Each member of the body must endeavor to exercise brotherly love

toward believers throughout the world. For this reason we call this body the Public Church of Christ.

Although both the missionaries and Japanese Christians intended to establish a non-sectarian church throughout Japan, neither were ever able to transcend all "western" denominational lines. The Union Church of Christ in Japan (*Nippon Kirisuto Itchi Kyokai*), the first denomination, was organized in October 1877, with nine congregations and a total membership of 623. Among them were thirteen missionaries and twenty-five ministerial candidates. At the organizational meeting, three new churches were organized and the first three candidates were ordained.

While ostensibly eschewing narrow denominationalism, the new communion did not (or could not) escape the worldwide Reformed faith of the missionaries. It adopted as doctrinal standards the Westminster Shorter Catechism and Confession of Faith, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort. The three foreign mission societies originally aligned with the new church (the Presbyterian Church North, the Presbyterian Church of Scotland, and the RCA), later welcomed cooperation from the Cumberland Presbyterian, Presbyterian South, and German Reformed missions.

The vision for a single united Christian witness faltered in the attempt to unite with the Congregational (*Kumiai*) churches in 1887-89. The Reformed/Presbyterian group's insistence on high doctrinal standards and a Presbyterian polity proved to be an insurmountable barrier. By 1900, denominationalism was firmly entrenched in Japan as mainline American mission boards established churches.

Early on, any Christian group supported and nourished to the self-supporting stage by missionary labors in conjunction with national workers/pastors was commended to the care of the indigenous church and its pastors. As a matter of policy missionaries became increasingly subservient. By the late 1890s, ostensibly to avoid government suspicion, missionaries were unceremoniously disbarred from all official standing in the synodical structures.

The drive for independence

These developments resulted from an incremental process in which the Japanese church exerted its independence. In 1876, three Presbyterian/Reformed mission groups had banded together to form the first Council of Missions. When two additional mission groups joined with them ten years later, the name was changed to the Council of the United Missions. It met independently of the Japanese church. How the church and the council should relate to each other proved a perplexing problem. In 1886, they began formal relations to devise joint support for the growing church. However, when the projected phenomenal church growth failed to continue throughout the 1880s, the Japanese church's inability to meet its financial obligations ended the agreement.

In 1897, the issue of cooperation was taken up again, now with the Church of Christ in Japan (*Nippon Kirisuto Kyokai*). That body issued a statement defining the meaning of a "co-operating mission." The RCA's mission board found the definition acceptable, but the missionaries on the field rejected the implied unconditional control of the national church. This stand threatened to separate them and their Japanese colleagues in specific congregations from any relationship with the Church of Christ. In a compromise reached in 1909, the RCA and the Southern Presbyterian Mission were designated "affiliated missions" with a degree of autonomy, while the Presbyterian U.S.A. and the German Missions were called "co-operating missions" because they were more directly under the Church of Christ. Neither the Japanese nor the missionaries were completely happy with either category. Although everyone eventually came under the umbrella of the National Council of Churches, no foreign mission board ever turned over complete control of fiscal matters or personnel decisions to the Japanese church.

Theories of mission policy: place of educational missions

With the arrival of Albertus Pieters in the early 1890s, theological issues with the Japanese church and policy issues with the mission board became more heated. Pieters discussed the basic theory of foreign missions at length in *Mission Problems in Japan* (1912). If the purpose of foreign missions is to establish a church (Church Establishment Theory), when that is realized the mission should become totally subservient to the indigenous church, including the relinquishment of control over overseas funds and missionary personnel. If, however, the work of foreign missions is to evangelize and Christianize a nation (Evangelization and Christianizing Theory), then it is imperative that the mission maintain a separate existence from the indigenous church and retain absolute control of its work until evangelization is completed.

Divided on this basic issue, the missionaries in Japan sought a compromise. Any talk of establishing a church with formal synodical ties to the RCA was resisted by those who maintained that the church in Japan should remain free from any United States ecclesiastical control. (This issue had also surfaced in mission work in China. At that time the RCA mission board had been duly chastised when the China Mission personnel threatened to resign en masse over board policy.)

On the other hand, the RCA missionaries in Japan refused to put themselves under the unconditional control of the national church. Part of the problem was the distinction and tension between the "evangelistic missionaries" and the "educational missionaries." Although the establishment of schools had always been a legitimate part of the missionary enterprise, the general consensus was that the "real" missionary thrust was direct evangelism and the upbuilding of the church. As Christian schools expanded, however, attitudes changed. To their dismay, missionaries were pulled from evangelistic work to serve in schools, where their primary function often seemed to be teaching English. Questions

were raised about whether this was the most judicious use of limited funds and personnel. Furthermore, because the schools were much more closely aligned financially with the founding missions, their ties to the church were at best tangential. Thus, educational missionaries had a different relationship to the Japanese church than the evangelistic missionaries.

As early as 1928 it was recognized that Christian influence in a school diminished in direct proportion to its size. This was especially true in Japan, where Christian teachers were scarce and student bodies overwhelmingly non-Christian. With reservations, the RCA chose both types of missionary involvement, but in terms of budget and personnel, ties with educational institutions dominated. As the schools became self-sufficient, the role of the missionaries diminished to membership on school boards where they apparently had little real power or influence.

The mission did keep a tenacious hold on theological education. In *A Historical Sourcebook of the Japan Mission of the Reformed Church in America (1859-1930)*, Stephen Willis Ryder says the RCA jealously guarded its control over theological education lest doctrinal teaching be diluted or heresy creep in. However, that control ended in 1929, when theological education passed under the jurisdiction of the Church of Christ in Japan.

Women in mission

Prior to World War II, women on the field were granted a "missionary associate" status without voting rights in Japan Mission meetings. Despite this official lower status, their lives and witness earned them strong influence and high esteem within the missionary community, the Japanese church, and Japanese society. In 1870, Mary Kidder, the first single missionary woman assigned to Japan began to work with young women in the Yokohama area. This resulted in the founding of Ferris Seminary (later Ferris Girls School), Japan's premier school for young women. Noted for academic and moral excellence from its inception, Japan's highest officials sent their daughters to Ferris with full confidence. Since 1883, many graduates have had distinguished careers in both teaching and administration. Mary Kidder, who became Mrs. E. R. Miller, was also a hospital worker and a gifted writer. For years she edited *Good Tidings (Yorokobi no Otozure)*, an influential magazine for women and children. The Miller's legacy to Japan was forty years of service at Ferris and a \$40,000 gift.

Other women missionaries literally gave their lives while serving at their posts. Julia Moulton, who built up Ferris's noted music department, died while accompanying a student to a social gathering. Jennie Kuyper, an interim president of Ferris for two years, lost her life in the great Kanto earthquake of September 1, 1923. Immobilized in the rubble, and facing certain death by approaching fire, she urged her rescuers to seek other victims who could be saved. Her tombstone in the Foreign Cemetery beside Ferris is engraved with her testimony to succeeding generations: "Thy Will Be Done." Ferris continues to organize pilgrimages to the site on the anniversary of her death, and until the

recent building of a new facility, the school's chapel was named the Jennie Kuyper Memorial Chapel.

Eugene S. Booth and his wife Emilie served Ferris for forty years. Booth was principal and Emilie opened their home to students and faculty; soldiers, sailors, and transients; and the larger foreign community. The witness of such godly homes, devoted couples, and loving families cannot be overestimated. Many male missionaries have left written tributes to their wives or colleagues who not only maintained inviting homes, but also reared and educated children under difficult circumstances. Missionary wives were also directly involved with education, Bible classes, and work among women in the church.

On the island of Kyushu, Mrs. Stout began educating young women in Nagasaki. Working without reinforcements for eighteen years, the Stouts established Sturges Seminary for girls in 1888. The school was later moved to the main island in Shimonoseki where it became known as Baiko Girls School (*Baiko Jogakuin*). Many single RCA women served this school known for its strong Christian witness, academic excellence, and training in moral values.

Two single women whose missionary service spanned the pre- and postwar eras deserve special mention. Florence Walvoord served at Baiko Girls School from 1922 to 1941. After World War II she again served in Japan from 1947 to 1950 and from 1955 to 1960. This gracious and devout lady had a powerful Christian impact on young women. Helen Zander taught at Ferris from 1928 until 1941. She was a wartime interpreter for the United States government and returned to Japan after the conflict ended.

Albertus Pieters: the unflinching gadfly

Apart from Verbeck, perhaps no other prewar missionary attracted as much attention in non-church circles nor incited as much inner-mission turmoil as Albertus Pieters. Pieters originated "newspaper evangelism" in Kyushu, a novel approach to disseminating the "good news." This approach touched otherwise unreachable thousands and through the correspondence courses with personal follow-up, evangelized many. The active evangelistic center he founded in Fukuoka bears his name.

Pieters was ever the fly in the ointment, a fierce debater who, at the risk of embarrassment or personal danger, willingly exposed his deep-felt convictions to public scrutiny. He had strong convictions about the relationship of a missionary church to the child it begets on foreign soil. The enormous task of "Christianizing" Japan demanded the continuing presence of missionaries who were highly educated, deeply spiritual, intensely evangelistic, and firmly rooted in Christian conviction. This made him particularly wary of any mission policy that would dictate complete and official subordination to the indigenous church. He felt that such subordination precluded him from recruiting young people for mission service in Japan, for there would be no promise of a life-work. The call to evangelism came from God alone and was not to be mediated through a church that in the future might deny the missionary the right to be on the field.

He advocated cultivating the "closest alliance and most cordial harmony with the native church, so far as that may be possible by the exercise of every Christian grace and virtue," but he categorically refused to surrender the right of independent initiative and operation. In one of his more acerbic statements he declares the mission call is to maintain "always a clear vision of its purpose and a keen sense of responsibility to preach Christ to the heathen, in alliance with the native church organization, if it may, without it if it must—subordinate, never" (*Mission Problems in Japan*, 106).

Pieters was a very theologically perceptive and astute individual with a concern for the spiritual health and direction of the indigenous church. After a full year of diligent work, a proposed Constitution of the Church of Christ in Japan had been published in Japanese and English six months prior to adoption. Pieters considered this a "sound and admirable procedure." However, he was unhappy with the revisions of the church's confessional stance at that same synod of 1890. Contrary to the orderly process for the constitution, a new confession had been hurriedly written during a recess between two synod sessions. By adopting with neither study nor debate a standard lacking the distinctly Calvinistic traits present in the earlier confessional standards, Pieters felt the church had tragically cut itself off from its historical development.

Defenders of the new standard claimed that historically, churches always adopted creeds to suit their needs. Pieters vehemently denied that nebulous or amorphous "needs" were legitimate reasons for change. The essence of any Christian creed is its complete and accurate expression of the church's faith. The new creed was objectionable, not because it was heretical, but because it was too limited in what it confessed. Although Verbeck concurred wholeheartedly with Pieters, many other missionaries remained silent, either because they wished to avoid controversy or because they believed they were without influence. Pieters felt that too many failed to grasp the supreme importance of the theological issues at stake.

Pieters' "guns" were fired not only at mission policy, but also at what he considered dangerous trends within the Japanese church and Japanese society. In 1917, he stirred the waters with his article, "A Pure or Hybrid Christianity in Japan." Both Christians and the general public were being caught up in the growing nationalistic rhetoric of a "divine nation," united under a "divine Emperor" with a "sacred and holy universal mission." Pieters was concerned that the Japanese church was waffling on these matters. He feared its continuing attempt to prove that Christians could be loyal Japanese citizens would result in a "bastard Christianity" that accepted a continued connection with the ancient heathen systems and idolatrous rites. Pieters hoped that his clear stand would strengthen wavering pastors.

One of Pieter's more foolhardy forays into the "enemy's camp" (as even some of his fellow missionaries would characterize it) was an article published in Japanese in 1923 that attacked the concept of the Amaterasu myth, the foundation of the belief that as a direct descendent of the Sun Goddess, Japan's

emperors embody actual divinity/deity. In the great furor that ensued, Pieters was called before the local magistrate, where he denied any political motive. Because the Pieters family had to leave the field shortly thereafter for health reasons, it is impossible to say what repercussions might have followed. Even with his departure, the evangelistic center bearing his name was forced to move twice when their landlords came under pressure. Pieters complained that instead of supporting his prophetic stance, his fellow missionaries and Japanese Christian workers buried their heads in the sand. The huge price of compromise, capitulation, and finally, complicity was paid in the ensuing years.

SHINTO AND THE GATHERING STORM

Although the official bias against the dissemination of Christian teaching was lifted in the 1870s, Japan's power brokers engaged in a deliberate and concerted effort to find ways to counter Christian influence. From the beginning of Emperor Meiji's reign in 1868, a cleverly fashioned amalgam of Shinto and the Imperial Institution (called by some a "manufactured religion") became the spiritual basis to fan the flames of nationalism. This reinforcement of the emperor cult successfully galvanized the nation.

Christians welcomed the new constitution of 1889 because it appeared to grant full religious freedom. However, how subjectively it could be (and actually came to be!) read and applied may be judged by Article XXVIII: "Japanese subjects shall, within limits not prejudicial to peace and order, and not antagonistic to their duties as subjects, enjoy freedom of religious belief." The definitive document (complete with mandated rituals) that molded generations of Japanese into a monolithic, chauvinistic nation was something called the Imperial Rescript on Education (I.R.E.), promulgated in 1891. Reverence for this almost creedal statement became the litmus test of a true and loyal Japanese subject. The I.R.E., together with portraits of the emperor and empress, were distributed to all schools, there to be deposited "most reverently."

Up went the god-shelves in fireproof, secured places where the "holy writ" and "sacred portraits" were forthwith housed. On designated holidays, the government mandated a ceremonial reading in the presence of all students and staff. This awesome ritual was reminiscent of the Old Testament command, "Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." Readers had to wear white gloves, and any stumbling over the text could result in dismissal. During the reading in Christian schools, all Christian symbolism had to be covered. Eventually, the ceremony included prayers and sacred offerings and was attended by community dignitaries and Shinto priests. After years of spotty enforcement, by 1931 no exceptions to the edict were allowed.

The official line was that these services were salutation (*Keirei*), not worship (*Reihai*) because after 1899, government regulations had banned all "religious" instruction or activities in schools that desired governmental accreditation. However, Christians found it impossible to swallow such sophistry. The Roman

Catholic hierarchy raised formal objections and the National Council of Churches took an official stand against participation. Challenges to the government's designation of these ceremonies as "non-religious" were to no avail. By 1918, school pilgrimages to local shrines, and instruction based on the voluminous commentaries became mandatory. By the 1930s, additional daily obeisance by bowing in the direction of the Imperial Palace was almost universal. Programs at Ferris and Meiji Gakuin list the ceremony at the beginning of every major school event. Apart from theologians like Pieters, correspondence to the mission board shows that most RCA missionary personnel had lost their critical faculties. Luman J. Shafer, for example, a prominent RCA missionary and former principal at Ferris, was very proud that, on occasion, he had been allowed to perform a ceremony he found most impressive.

Soon after the I.R.E.'s promulgation, Masahira Uemura, a distinguished product of the RCA mission, fearlessly carried on a vitriolic public protest for months with several Tokyo University professors via newspapers and public forums. These exchanges made it abundantly clear that the incompatibility of Christianity and the resurrected imperial cult with its Shinto moorings inevitably placed them on a collision course. But such protest lacked support, even within the Christian community. The final, feeble line of defense crumbled in 1936, when both the Catholic hierarchy and the National Council of Churches formally accepted the nonreligious designation of the Japanese government. Although some churches and individual Christians continued to resist, capitulation was officially complete.

Masahisa Uemura: churchman and theologian

Three famous "bands" of so-called Christian "seekers" in the earliest days of Christian witness produced many illustrious and influential leaders in the Japanese church and society. The "Sapporo Band," emphasizing an individualistic Christian faith, produced the iconoclastic figures of Kanzo Uchimura, the founder of the non-church movement, and Inazo Nitobe, who emphasized an amalgamation of Christianity with applicable indigenous cultural values, e.g., a "Christianized" *Bushido* ("way of the warrior").

The "Kumamoto Band" produced Kozaki and Ebina, men whose intense political and social concern resulted in a type of cultural Protestantism. Uemura, however, had been baptized by Brown and tutored by Ballagh and other Reformed/Presbyterian missionaries in the Yokohama area. They had grounded him in a solid orthodox faith in the context of a strong ecclesiastical tradition. His primary foci were the upbuilding of the church and church discipline, a direct reflection of time-honored Reformed/Presbyterian doctrine and practice.

He carefully circumscribed any talk of "baptizing culture" or "baptizing *Bushido*" by well-defined biblical and theological parameters. With some arrogance, Uemura believed the uniqueness of Japanese Christianity had much to offer the world. Unlike most Christian leaders of his time, however, he was keenly aware of the Japanese Christians' proclivity to compromise with tradition

and with the reactionary nationalistic forces at work in society. His tongue was sharp and his message clear: "Under the pretext of perfecting Christianity, these men are trying to sever asunder the central points of the Christian faith, destroy them, abandon them, alter them arbitrarily, add and reduce, and thus make Christianity utterly incoherent. . . . They have gone astray from true Christian faith; instead they propound nationalistic, social, ethical, or 'Japanese' Christianity, which is nothing but a detestable diversion from the authentic faith."

Uemura is one of the strongest theologically and biblically oriented leaders to come out of RCA mission endeavors. A mentor for significant scholars of the next generation, he published an influential Christian magazine and taught in the theological department of Meiji Gakuin until he was accused of "liberalism." He thereupon resigned and began his own seminary. He strongly advocated the need for an independent church that would be financially and ecclesiastically free from mission domination. He hated "parasitic believers" who thronged around the foreign missionary, for to him, foreign aid "emasculated the vigor of the church."

From 1901 to 1904, his public debate with the Doshisha scholar Ebina over the nature of divine revelation and the deity of Christ caught the attention of the whole church. The other serious debates spawned by these exchanges gave no observable new life or direction to the church. Unfortunately, Uemura's increasing disenchantment with theological activism led him to withdraw from the great battles being waged over "Japanism" and the imperial cult. He died in 1931, just as Japan began in earnest its imperialistic advance into Manchuria and China. For the church, also, this period marked the precipitous and painful descent to a path that led from compromise, through capitulation, to complicity.

Uemura's call to freedom from all foreign influence and entanglements was picked up by other pastors and congregations, so that after the war a number of the former Church of Christ congregations opted for a new independent denomination. Soon, the mantle of succession fell on Masahisa Uemura's daughter, Tamaki, who served her father's large congregation in Tokyo with great distinction until her death in the late 1970s.

That fact raises an interesting anomaly. Japan always has been—and to an amazing degree continues to be—an unapologetically male-oriented society. However, even in a conservative Reformed-oriented denomination like the "New Presbyterian/Reformed Church" (*Shin Nikki*), there were no scruples about the ordination of women. To our knowledge, this was never a hotly debated biblical/theological issue.

Gathering clouds and the church under attack

It is the little rift within the lute,
That by and by will make the music mute,
And ever widening slowly silence all.

(Tennyson, "Merlin and Vivien," from *The Idylls of the King*)

Outright censorship combined with an aggressive governmental "thought manipulation" agenda, police control in the form of intimidation, interrogation, imprisonment, torture, and eventually even a rare execution paralyzed and suffocated society under the rubric of "patriotic education." The church recognized that to oppose the state head-on would be to wrench itself out of the total life of the Japanese community. Almost unnoticed, the Christian community became less abrasive by the dulling of conscience tied to a series of little capitulations. The combination of years of indoctrination, threat of persecution, silencing from above, and fear of criticism from family, friends, and community around them led to creeping paralysis.

The noose continued to tighten on both society and church. By the mid-to-late 1930s, spies were infiltrating Christian gatherings and interrogators dogged the footsteps of all who had contact with foreigners. Eventually, the missionaries felt their presence was both an embarrassment and an endangerment to their colleagues and friends. Out of deference, the missionaries refrained from open condemnation of the syncretistic, idolatrous, and disturbing trends they saw around them. Before the day destined to "go down in infamy," almost all of them had left the field.

By the time World War II broke out, Christians who did resist the government programs and aims certainly suffered for their faith. Students were terrorized into not attending church and Sunday school. Hundreds were interrogated. Children of Christian families were jeered at while at school, and affiliation with Christians put students' enrollment in schools at risk.

A few pastors used the pulpit for a veiled opposition by a subtle choice of biblical texts. Some escaped detection, but others were less fortunate. In 1943, Rinzo Onomura, the pastor of a large Reformed/Presbyterian (Nikki) congregation in Sapporo admitted to police interrogators his opposition to the local shrines. He denied the divinity of the emperor, considered the Amaterasu legend to be but a myth, and, in his belief that all Christians are brothers and sisters, eschewed the idea that the Japanese people were set apart. After an eight-month imprisonment and a three-month trial at which even non-Christians testified in his support, he was released. Other Church of Christ (Nikki) pastors suffered a similar fate.

The greatest resistance came from so-called "fringe" groups, particularly the Holiness church, dozens of whose pastors were imprisoned. Some died in prison and the health of many others suffered irreparable damage. Along with them, the Salvation Army, the Seventh Day Adventists, and the Jehovah Witnesses were ordered to disband when they refused to comply to an "adequate" degree. The mainliners who entered the wartime Kyodan structure disassociated and distanced themselves from these "extremely narrow-minded and ill-advised" dissidents, actively voicing their disapproval. This abandonment of fellow Christians became a central issue in the postwar Kyodan's "Confession of War Guilt," issued belatedly in 1967. In many ways it is a shocking, tragic tale that has never been openly or adequately discussed or acknowledged. Yet, because

of it, much baggage was carried into the postwar era when the churches gained new freedom.

The formation of the Kyodan

A matter with many postwar ramifications is the story of the formation of the Kyodan (the United Church), the "trump card" the Japanese ruling elite played in 1940 to bring the church under its direct control. The Religious Bodies Bill of 1939 granted the government the right to prohibit, suspend, dissolve, and punish offenders and to require all churches to apply for official recognition. The National Council of Churches registered objections, but to no avail. By April of 1940, no one had obtained approval. New provisos or attached "riders" regarding the size of the petitioning bodies disqualified all but ten of the fifty denominations and organizations. Eventually a comprehensive church union (Kyodan) was effected under government coercion, for it had become a matter of join or be dissolved. Because theological bickering and dissent within Christian bodies were viewed as dangerous to national solidarity, they were also silenced. The appointment of a sole chief executive (*Torisha*), responsible only to the government, easily brought the Kyodan under complete control.

The Kyodan was officially formed October 17, 1940, in order to coincide with the commemoration of the 2600th anniversary of the empire's founding by Jimmu Tenno, the "first" emperor of Japan (considered to be a grandson of Amaterasu, the Sun Goddess) in 660 B.C. Twenty thousand people and a choir of fifteen hundred gathered in the Aoyama district of Tokyo to celebrate the founding of "The One Protestant Christian Church in Japan." The ceremony began with worship of the imperial palace emperor from afar (*kyūjō yōhai*). Hymns composed for the occasion glorified him and his relationship to Amaterasu. A unanimous declaration of loyalty, devoid of any Christian content, affirmed the nation's ideology. The evening ended with the delegates going en masse to Meiji Shrine, a formalized sign of acquiescence and servility to the state. The pastors of the Church of Christ in Japan (the Reformed/Presbyterian group) refused to participate in that final event.

The Kyodan formulated a rather truncated confession based on the Apostles' Creed. To satisfy both the constituent groups and the governmental authorities was impossible. Because the articles, "I believe in God the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth" and "From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead," were deemed inadmissible by the government, there was to be no divine creator and no final judgment in the church's confession. The government-appointed chief executive was dispatched to the most sacred shrine of Ise to report officially the formation of the Kyodan to Amaterasu enshrined there. Such was the "auspicious" inauguration of the Kyodan.

After the war, church bureaucrats in the continuing United Church of Christ as well as many of the board secretaries committed to a United Church adamantly contended that government coercion played little or no part in the formation of the wartime Kyodan. They wished everyone to believe that the

Kyodan's formation was the voluntary, glorious culmination of a fifteen-year ecumenical movement under the aegis of the National Council of Churches. For years there had indeed been talk among mainline Protestant denominations of a united church, but the immediate prewar movement toward unity could hardly be construed as a spontaneous theologically informed bonding together by the power of the Holy Spirit. It was clear that the initiative did not come from within the churches. The following outsider's view of the Kyodan's formation is enlightening:

In an authoritarian regime, religion, as a strong spiritual force in society, must not only be controlled by the government for the purpose of regulating those liable to disturb the public peace, but also must be so molded as to become a part of the national polity. . . . Formation of the *Nippon Kirisuto Kyokan* (The United Church of Christ in Japan) marked the most complete subservience of the Protestant movement to the will of the State probably ever recorded in Church history. (A. Hamish Ion, "The Formation of the *Nippon Kirisuto Kyodan* 1941- : A Case Study in Church-State Relations," *British Association for Japanese Studies* 5/1 [1980]:89).

THE POSTWAR PERIOD

The end of World War II brought both new problems and new possibilities for Christian witness in Japan. During the war the church had undergone great spiritual and physical suffering. Some 446 Protestant churches were demolished or damaged, and half of the Christian schools were in ruins. After the war, however, there was surprising interest in and openness to Christianity.

Initial contacts

General MacArthur, the supreme commander of the United States occupation forces, called for 100,000 missionaries to come to Japan, expecting this to result in a massive turning of the Japanese to Christ. Nowhere near that number answered the call, but the RCA was represented among the thousands who did. Even before the first short-term missionaries and prewar missionaries arrived, Luman J. Shafer played a leading role in the reestablishment of ties between the recently formed Kyodan and the related denominations in the United States. On October 23, 1945, four distinguished churchmen representing the Foreign Missions Conference of North America and the National Council of Churches arrived in Japan to initiate discussions with Kyodan leaders. Shafer, one of the four, soon returned as a member of a commission of six prewar missionaries. These North American mission board representatives intended to establish a framework for cooperation between their boards and the Kyodan. Thus, the RCA was in on the ground floor of these discussions.

A new configuration

Although the vast majority of congregations of Reformed/Presbyterian background had decided to remain in the reorganized Kyodan, a significant number of the congregations of the prewar Presbyterian/Reformed Church of Christ (the old *Nihon Kirisuto Kyokai* with which the RCA had been aligned), decided to separate. In 1946, the Anglican Church of Japan, the Salvation Army, and a group calling themselves the Reformed Church of Japan withdrew. They were followed the next year by various Holiness groups, the Baptists, and various Lutherans. In 1951, another group of Reformed/Presbyterian congregations withdrew and called themselves the "New Church of Christ" (*Shin Nikki*) in Japan. The withdrawal of the two Reformed/Presbyterian groups essentially had to do with the idolatry (i.e., cooperation in Shinto rites) of many Kyodan leaders during the war, and the Kyodan's failure to become a truly confessional church.

Whereas the newly organized "Reformed Church of Japan" was very conservative and welcomed the influence of Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia, the *Shin Nikki* was more ecumenical, neo-orthodox, and independent. The latter's "progenitor" to a large degree was Masahisa Uemura who had long eschewed foreign alliances. The Reformed Church in Japan, on the other hand, was supported by the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the conservative wing of the Southern Presbyterian Church, and the Christian Reformed Church.

Although the RCA has never developed formal ties with either of these small but significant Reformed bodies in Japan, there have been cordial informal contacts, particularly with *Shin Nikki*, which often views the RCA as a sister church. A number of its young pastors have received the Master of Theology degree from Western Theological Seminary in Holland, Michigan. Western's John Hesselink taught at its seminary both before and after his departure from Japan, and has lectured at the Reformed Church Seminary in Kobe. A few other RCA missionaries have enjoyed contacts with *Shin Nikki* churches and pastors.

The personnel

The postwar influx of RCA missionaries to Japan was led by Boude C. Moore, a former Southern Presbyterian. This veteran missionary returned in 1945 as the military governor of Yokohama under MacArthur. Moore was a second-generation missionary and his wife, Anna Moore, the granddaughter of Ballagh, was third generation. (Boude and Anna's son Lardiner, fourth generation in the Ballagh line and a missionary of the Southern Presbyterian Church, retired in 2001 after fifty years of service.) Shortly after leaving the military, the Moores returned to the city of Fukuoka, Kyushu, where the RCA had done most of its prewar evangelistic work and church planting. Moore headed the Albertus Pieters Evangelistic Center (which had come to be known as "The New Life Center") until his retirement. Enjoying Lutheran support and

erving the entire island of Kyushu, the center included a bookstore and lending library for pastors and laity. It sponsored noontime worship in the heart of the city and also housed the Japanese version of *Temple Time* (called *New Life Time* in Japanese) with a Japanese Lutheran pastor and Boude Moore as the radio preachers.

Soon thereafter, John DeMaagd and his wife returned to their work in Yokohama. DeMaagd became the RCA representative on the newly formed Council of Cooperation, the liaison between the cooperating individual mission boards and the Kyodan. Prewar missionaries Helen Zander and Jean Oltmans resumed teaching at Ferris Girls School; Belle Bogaard at the girls school in Kobe (of Congregational affiliation); and Florence Walvoord at Baiko Jogakuin, the girls school founded by the RCA in Shimonoseki on the main island of Honshu.

As soon as new missionaries could go to Japan, hundreds of young, usually lay, short-term missionaries (J-3s) arrived. Although most of them were assigned to schools to teach English, they also evangelized by offering English Bible classes on the side. Among the earliest J-3s were Burrell Pennings, Louis Kraay, William Estell, Theodore Flaherty, and Ronald Korver. Among the young women in the next wave were Verlaine Siter-Brown and Elaine Buteyn-Tanis.

After completing their terms, Pennings and Kraay attended Western Seminary and became RCA pastors. Estell, who had traveled the southern island showing Christian films, also returned home to complete his theological training. He then became a career missionary to Taiwan, where he taught at Yushan Seminary for indigenous tribal groups until his untimely death in 1990. Suzanne Brink came to Japan in 1950 as a new missionary. For twenty-seven years she worked out of the city of Kumamoto, Kyushu, as an evangelistic missionary.

Korver and Flaherty returned home for special studies at New York's Biblical Seminary. Korver had met Ruby Barth, his future wife, in Japan; Flaherty met his wife, Mary Watt, at Biblical Seminary. The two couples returned to Japan as lay missionary educators. They not only had long and significant teaching careers at Meiji Gakuin High School and University and the Ferris Girls School (Korver mostly at the Meiji Gakuin Higashi-Murayama High School in western Tokyo and Flaherty at Ferris), but also were very active participants in local churches. In 1982, after almost thirty years in Japan, many of them as principal of Ferris High School, Flaherty died suddenly. The nearly 800 people who attended his funeral in the Jennie Kuyper Memorial chapel were a testimony to the broad impact of his Christian witness within the school, the church, and the community. Mary Flaherty continued to teach at Ferris until 1988. Ruby Korver taught at a Christian women's college and provided leadership for the women's movement in the Kyodan. In retirement, the Korvers retain a home in Japan where they serve the church in significant ways.

The banner years for the arrival of new RCA missionary couples in Japan were 1951-1953. After a year of language study at Yale, Glenn and Phyllis

Bruggers arrived in 1952. Following a second year of language study, they spent twenty-one years in various forms of evangelistic ministry on Kyushu. Glenn eventually succeeded Boude Moore at the New Life Center (*Shinseikan*) in Fukuoka. About the same time two couples who had served briefly in China reoriented themselves and went to Japan when China was closed. Everett and Edith Kleinjans arrived in 1951; Gordon and Bertha Van Wyk in 1953. Kleinjans was a linguistics specialist and, after a brief stint at Meiji Gakuin University, became the vice-president of Japan's International Christian University. The Kleinjans moved to Hawaii in 1966, where Everett served as the chancellor of Honolulu's East-West Center in Honolulu until his retirement. Wholeheartedly committed to Meiji Gakuin University, the Van Wyks spent their entire thirty-two-year career there teaching Bible, English, and American Literature. Their home was a beacon and refuge for students and a pillar of strength for the missionary community. Gordon initiated a very influential student exchange program with Hope College; Bertha spent a number of years teaching English on a very popular Japanese radio program.

In 1953, the Flahertys, John and Etta Hesselink, Russell and Eleanor Norden, and Paul and Marjorie Tanis arrived in Japan as career missionaries. The Tanises stayed one five-year term, but the others were to work and witness there from twenty years (the Hesselinks) to thirty-eight years (the Nordens).

A new wave of thirteen career missionaries to Japan arrived in the 1960s. Gordon and Evon Laman came in 1959 and remain active today. Rudolph and Trina Kuyten arrived the following year, and, in 1962, Agatha Tigelaar came for a seven-year term. Four more missionary couples began their careers in 1963: Thomas and Barbara Harris, George and Joyce Magee, William and Sarah Unzicker, and John and Helene Zwyghuizen. The Unzickers served thirty years, the Kuytens thirty-four, and the Magees may serve forty years or more before retirement.

Several of these missionaries established new patterns for evangelism and church planting in Kyushu. The Lamans and Zwyghuizens began work there, but the Kuytens, Magees, and Unzickers went to the northern island of Hokkaido, where no RCA missionary except Carroll De Forest had ever served before. The most recent RCA missionary to work in Hokkaido is Cornelia Roghair. Beginning as a volunteer teaching English in mission schools for one or two years, she is now a career missionary teaching at a Christian school near Sapporo. Japan's affluence has resulted in a new arrangement: The RCA pays Cornelia's benefits, but the school pays her salary.

Decline and renewal

During the 1970s and 1980s, several factors conspired to diminish the number of new RCA missionaries to Japan. Unprecedented Japanese prosperity made the yen-dollar exchange rate extremely unfavorable for mission boards. Work in Japan became so expensive that most boards reduced drastically the number of missionaries sent after 1970. In the RCA, for example, John and

Marilyn Koedyker, who served from 1977-1987, were the only couple sent during that period.

The so-called mission schools—Meiji Gakuin, Ferris, and Baiko Jogakuin—shared in the new prosperity and, like their counterparts, hired contract teachers from the United States and other countries. The RCA has been and continues to be by far the largest clearinghouse for these contract "volunteer" teachers in both RCA and non-RCA schools. The ability of the schools to pay part of the salaries of missionary teachers made possible a continued missionary presence.

Interest in Japan also waned during this period because many American Christians assumed that material prosperity was also bringing spiritual growth and vitality to the Japanese churches. As a result, "Why," they asked, "do we need to send missionaries to Japan?" The answer, of course, had been given by Pieters years before: God calls the church to the unfinished task of witnessing throughout the world. Nevertheless, many of the other mainline denominations lost their zeal for evangelism, despite the fact that the Japanese church was experiencing little growth.

Internal strife that began in the late 1960s was particularly damaging to the Kyodan. Its leftist element supported massive student uprisings and for many years controlled its administrative structures. Subsequently, several renewal groups have arisen within the Kyodan. Since the largest of these is Presbyterian/Reformed, several RCA missionaries work with its pastors. In 1992, the group invited John Hesselink to give a keynote address at a national assembly in Tokyo and to make a lecture/preaching tour of its churches.

Meanwhile, in an act unique among mission boards related to the Kyodan, the RCA sent three couples to Japan in 1988-95, despite the high cost involved. The first were Tom and Barbara Vande Berg. Barbara taught at Meiji Gakuin High School in West Tokyo and was involved with their world-class bell choir. Following the pattern of ordained RCA missionaries, Tom worked cooperatively with several regional churches in Tokyo and developed an effective prison ministry. Wayne and Miho Jansen arrived in 1992. Wayne was a hospital chaplain in Hamamatsu City while Miho taught in a mission school in nearby Shizuoka. In February 2002 the Jansens moved to Tokyo, where Wayne will succeed Gordon Laman as professor of pastoral theology at Tokyo Union Seminary. Most recently, Abraham and Sayuri Okazaki-Kist, both RCA seminary graduates and gifted musicians, have begun a uniquely creative music ministry within the church.

The rich legacy and the enduring impact

In their often quiet and undramatic ways the postwar RCA missionaries have witnessed to Christ, strengthened the witness of Christian schools and area churches, and proved to be steadfast and loyal servants of Christ in a land dubbed "the graveyard of missionaries." The phrase is apropos because the majority of Japan's postwar career missionaries left, frustrated and discouraged, after one or two terms. By contrast, it is impossible to measure the fruit of the

quiet, faithful, and long-term witness of missionaries like Suzanne Brink, the Unzickers, and the Magees in small churches, remote rural preaching stations, and house churches. Sometimes they worked with difficult and unappreciative pastors. Often they did the tasks that no one else wanted to do. The same is true of the Bruggers, Nordens, and Lamans, especially in their early years. Each of them carried forward the legacy of such prewar evangelistic missionaries in Kyushu as the Hubert Kuypers (1911-1941) and the John Ter Borgs (1922-1941).

Yet, there have also been some exciting success stories. Rudy Kuyten began his evangelistic work with a coffee house ministry in Sapporo that blossomed into the Church of the Twelve Apostles, the largest Kyodan congregation on Hokkaido. During his ministry Rudy baptized more than five hundred people. Or, in the latter half of his career Glenn Bruggers was to take over from Boude Moore the directorship of the New Life Center in Fukuoka. Instead, in a loss for the Japanese church but a gain for the RCA, he was called to be the Asian Area Secretary for the Mission Board in 1974. For fifteen years Glenn brought the invaluable asset of his field experience to that position.

No one knows how many girls became Christians through the teaching and witness of Belle Bogaard, Florence Walvoord, Janet Oltmans, and Helen Zander. Both Janet and Helen were awarded Japan's prestigious Imperial Order of Merit for their lifetime of service to Ferris Girls School. For distinguished service, Helen also received a Cultural Achievement award from the Yokohama Prefectural government. In their latter years on the field, Russell and Eleanore Norden picked up the mantle of all the RCA missionary predecessors and served at Ferris from 1965-1991. Russell taught and served as the college chaplain, and Eleanore was the only foreigner after World War II to be entrusted with the unique responsibility of a homeroom teacher. As such, she supervised the entire educational process for the students under her care. Little wonder that the Nordens' ties with former students remain strong. The Van Wyks, Flahertys, Nordens, and Korvers were certainly equally deserving of governmental recognition for their significant contributions to education in Japan.

In addition to preaching and teaching, RCA missionaries have shared the gospel in specialized ministries of teaching English Bible classes, serving on mission school boards, giving cooking lessons, and directing choirs. Four RCA missionaries have been involved in prison ministry, and for years, Joyce Magee has ministered to seamen in the port city of Tomakomai, Hokkaido.

John Hesselink, Gordon Laman, and most recently Wayne Jansen have been full-time professors at Tokyo Union, Japan's leading theological seminary. Hesselink inspired a boom in Calvin studies in Japan and helped organize the Japan Calvin Translation Society. This society has published a new translation of Calvin's complete New Testament Commentaries, his commentaries on Genesis and the Psalms, many of his Tracts and Treatises, and the *Institutes*. Gordon Laman has pioneered field education at Tokyo Union Seminary by taking students on field trips to neighboring Asian nations. When Wayne Jansen

becomes one of only two American faculty members there, his hospital chaplaincy and counseling experience will be a valuable contribution to the school.

The RCA has also been involved with international English-speaking Protestant churches in Japan. The first one (1872) was organized in Yokohama by Ballagh and Brown. Beginning with eleven members of Yokohama's foreign community, the congregation soon numbered sixty-nine. After years of meeting at various sites, a magnificent gothic edifice was built in 1910, only to be destroyed in the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923. A modest "community house" that served the congregation from 1927 to 1940 was destroyed in the bombing raids of 1945.

The memory of a vital Union (International) Church lived on in the hearts of many. In 1976, the Flahertys, the Nordens, and Helen Zander joined with others to restore worship services. By 1979, regular services were again being held in a restored manse, the only building to survive both disasters. Thanks to the vision and hard work of Eleanore Norden as chairman of the Board, three RCA couples were invited to serve the congregation: John and Ann Piet (1987-1989), Delbert and Trudy Vander Haar (1982-1992), and Eugene and Joyce Vander Well (1992-1994). The fellowship, vigor, and witness of the church flourished under their ministries.

Due to the unwavering determination and hard work of Eleanore Norden, the Piets, and the Vander Haars (along with several Japanese lawyers and staunch supporters of the church) the difficult and complicated process of gaining official governmental recognition for the church as a "religious body" was secured along with legal title to the property. With that accomplished, the congregation is planning to build another sanctuary for this growing ministry.

Eventually, similar churches were founded in the cosmopolitan centers of Kobe and Tokyo. These congregations also attracted Japanese who felt at home with them after extended periods overseas. Other Japanese who came to improve their English became Christians in the process. Gordon and Bertha Van Wyk made significant contributions to the ministry of Tokyo Union Church.

Thus, the RCA, all out of proportion to its size, has contributed to the growth and strengthening of the church in Japan for almost 150 years. Albertus Pieters' call for the importation of men and women who were "highly educated, deeply spiritual, intensely evangelistic, and firmly rooted in Christian conviction," the most costly gift to give but by far the most precious gift to receive, has been wonderfully answered.

Whereas some denominations appear to have given up on Japan for either financial or theological reasons, the RCA's commitment to that powerful but spiritually needy land remains firm. Because of Japan's great resistance to the gospel, that commitment is as important as ever. Even if the age-old question, "Do missions pay?" is even legitimate for Christians, the record of the RCA's mission to Japan speaks for itself. In every generation the Spirit raises up men and women who answer the call to witness to Christ's saving work to the

uttermost parts of the earth. The cycle is ongoing and the mantle has been passed. The "mission churches" founded in the pioneer days of the missionary enterprise have now become "sending churches." To God be the glory!