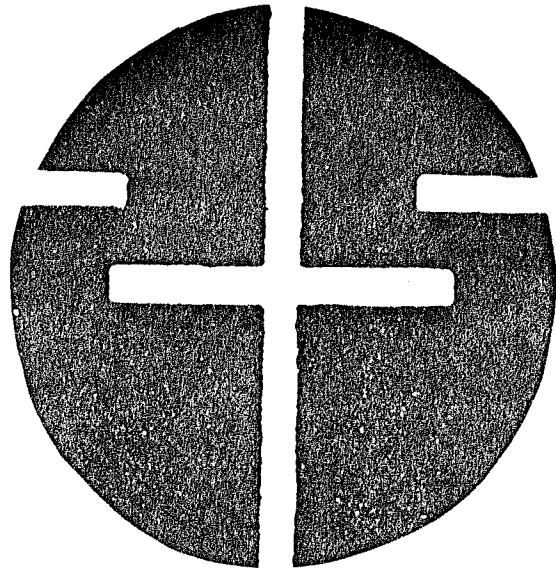


Book II - Clark, David
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The History of the
Wisconsin Synod
in Japan

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Introduction

Throughout the world the country of Japan is known as "the land of the rising sun." This well-known poetic phrase is derived from the meaning of the word "Japan," which literally translated is "the source of the sun." It is a very fitting description for this island country nestled in the western waters of the mighty Pacific Ocean. When dawn breaks each morning in the Far East it is Japan that receives the first light of day. For the continental lands to the west of Japan, such as Korea, China, and a portion of the U.S.S.R. it appears each morning that the sun rises out of the elongated island country of Japan. So for the Asian standing on his continent it would seem that Japan is the source from which the sun comes each morning, breaking the darkness of night and bringing the light of day. The country of Japan has indeed been fitly described as "the land of the rising sun."

The country of Japan may appear to be the source of the bright light of day to the Asian continent, but in reality Japan is a country living in the deepest shades of darkness. But the country's darkness is not because of the lack of electric lights or gas flames--there are plenty of those. Nor is it a country living in darkness because it doesn't benefit from the shine of the sun, or the beam of the moon, or the light of the stars. No, the country of Japan is living in darkness because, for the most part, it does not have the Light of the World--Jesus Christ, the true Son of the true God, the Savior of all mankind. The majority of Japan's one hundred million-plus people do not know Jesus Christ as their Lord, as their Savior, as the One who brings men from the darkness of sin to the light of life. Japan is a country living in the worst kind of darkness; they are living without the light of the Gospel.

More than twenty-five years ago the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS), then known as the Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States, felt the urgency and the tremendous need to bring the message of the Risen Son to the land of the rising sun. In the early 1950's the WELS began to lay the groundwork for establishing a mission field in Japan. Thirty years have since those first ideas of starting a mission in Japan were discussed. In those thirty years the WELS work in Japan has undergone many advances and some setbacks, human changes and spiritual growth--numerous events have taken place in the WELS Japan Mission. There is always the need to record these numerous events for future mission work as well as providing a record of the work already completed. In the early 1980's the Synod's Board For World Missions recognized this need and requested that each individual Foreign Mission Board of the WELS write a history of their respective mission. The Japan Mission Board was of course included; given the responsibility of formally recording the numerous events which have taken place in the Japanese mission field in the past thirty years since its inception. The purpose of this formally written history is two-fold. First of all, it is to provide a formal written document for the history of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. Secondly, it is to be an aid to prospective missionaries of the Japan field to familiarize them ahead of time with the work in the Japanese mission.

Through the responsibility of the Japan Mission Board, this project was offered to the Church History Department of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. The project would then be undertaken by students of the Senior class as opportunity to fulfill class requirements which necessitated the writing of an original work in the field of American Lutheranism. The offer to undertake this project was accepted with the decision of the history of the Japanese mission would be written in two parts. This plan had to be changed due to the amount of material and resources available. It was simply too broad a topic to be handled in two parts.

The early beginnings of the mission through the year 1957 was covered in the first book by the Senior class of 1982. The years 1957 through 1971 was covered by a subsequent class in 1983. Three men from the class of 1985 completed the project by covering the years 1972 through 1982. The contents of each book are readily suggested by the outlines for each provided at the beginning of each book. The prefaces include remarks by the authors regarding sources and style.

Perhaps a word is in order regarding the style of the nine writers who compiled the three books. The writers of part one have elected to first cover the general history of Christianity in Japan, then the religious and social climate of the Japanese people, and finally the first WELS mission in Japan and its outcome. Thus the writers adopted an historical - topical - historical format.

The writers of book 2 chose a thematic outline. The themes are general and within each is the chronology together with interesting 'highlights' on persons and events. It should be noted also that these men have included much information from WELS Synodical Proceedings and point by point elucidations drawn from decisions of various boards of the Japan church.

Book three employs a rather different approach. Its three parts are arranged chronologically, topically and biographically. The writers used this style to facilitate study of given areas and persons. As the number of persons, places and events increases, digestion of names, facts, dates and events becomes more difficult. It is hoped that the division by these groups will prove useful for both the interested reader and the missionary to-be.

As seasoned writers will readily attest, there are pitfalls and shortfalls to producing material in a combined effort. These, the not-so-seasoned writers of "Praising His Grace" are aware of the same shortcomings. Nevertheless it is our prayer that the reader will bear with these shortcomings and let the history of the Japan Mission speak for itself. It is a chapter of testimony on God's grace that gives real reason for "Praising His Grace!"

BOOK I

1543 - 1957

(1982)

Written by:

Bruce H. Becker

Mark R. Freier

Mark P. Henke

1982

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Part I

CHRISTIAN DEVELOPMENTS IN JAPAN, 1543 - 1950

Chapter One

History of Christianity in Japan, 1543 - 1930

Early Beginnings

Until the middle of the sixteenth century Japan was pretty well isolated from the western world. It was not until 1543 that Europeans set foot on the islands of Japan. Those first Westerners were a group of Portuguese traders heading for the Chinese coast who were blown off course by a typhoon and ended up shipwrecked on one of Japan's southern islands. On that day those Portuguese traders brought to the islands Japan's first taste of Western language, goods, culture, and invariably the Christian religion also. Although the Portuguese traders were not dedicated to the spreading of Christianity, history tells us that the Christian faith and practice was shared with some of the Japanese people even before the first missionaries arrived.

About six years after the Portuguese traders had first visited the islands of Japan, the first missionaries arrived on the scene. Francis Xavier and his companions arrived in the late summer of 1549 to begin Christian mission work in Japan under the auspices of the Jesuit Order. Xavier and his successors enjoyed several decades of warm reception and rapid growth in the Christian Church. By 1600 there were an estimated three hundred thousand Christians living in Japan. But the rapid growth and warm reception did not last very long. Forty years after Xavier had arrived in Japan the ruling authority of the country passed edicts which banned Christianity from the country, ordered all Jesuits to be expelled, and commanded that all Japanese Christians recant on pain of death or exile. Although these edicts were not immediately enforced, ten years later action was taken in Nagasaki where twenty-six Christians were crucified. For the next thirty years persecutions of Christians continued. By 1614 active Christianity was all but annihilated. With the persecution and expulsion of Christians from Japan also came the result that Japan began to drift back into total isolationism. Twenty-five years down the road Japan would completely close its doors to the outside world. Those doors would remain closed for over two hundred years.

From Isolationism To War

The doors of isolationism were slowly pushed open by Commodore Matthew Perry in the summer of 1853 and by early 1854 Perry had negotiated a treaty which opened two ports to American

trade. Perry is not to be considered as the sole reason why Japan's two hundred year policy of isolationism was reversed. Perry might be called the immediate cause, being at the right place at the right time using the right approach. Japan itself was changing. Within that period of two centuries the country had undergone many changes; political changes as well as the change in social and religious ideologies. Japan, by itself in the mid-1800's, was ready to tolerate (although not ready to accept) Christianity and Western culture. In 1859 the first missionaries were allowed back into Japan. These missionaries, however, did not receive the same immediate growth and warm reception that Xavier had enjoyed three hundred years earlier. The Christian missionaries were hated by some, were regarded with great suspicion by many, and were closely watched by all. Their lives were in danger at all times, their work was difficult, and their progress was slow. The Japanese, for many years, had restricted the missionaries work to the areas of Yokohama and Nagasaki. Often the missionaries, for fear of life, had to take refuge in the Buddhist temples where they enjoyed safety, but where they were also under the suspicious, watchful eye of the Buddhist priests, restricting their work and hampering their evangelism efforts.

When the doors of isolationism were cracked open it was not only the Roman Catholics who slipped in on Japan. Other denominations also sent men into this virgin field; Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Dutch Reformed, and Reformed churches were the leaders of Protestantism in Japan. Their accomplishments in the next twenty-five years were highlighted by the building of schools and universities and by the great advances made in the area of linguistics--translations, lexicons, and Bible dictionaries. Their advances in educational facilities and language work were tremendous although the number of new Christians was not impressive. It must be remembered that for two and a half decades after Perry arrived there was still a strong feeling of anti-Christianity among the Japanese people and that the anti-Christian edicts were still in force.

The anti-Christian edicts did not last forever. In early 1873 the government of Japan removed the edicts against the Christians. With their removal came a tremendous surge of new missionaries. Within a year the number of missionaries in Japan almost doubled. Other Protestant denominations, such as the Methodists, joined in the mission work. The following decades became a period of rapid growth for Christianity. The removal of the edicts paved the way for this growth but there were other factors which contributed to it. First of all, the field of work was expanded. Formerly the missionaries were restricted in where they could go and where meetings and services could be held. Now those restrictions were gone and the field to be worked was greatly increased. Secondly, there was a breakdown of the power and the authority of the traditional Japanese religions. Buddhism is no longer a required faith; Shintoism was no longer even considered a religion; and Confucianism became nothing more than a philosophy. With this breakdown of the indigenous religions,

religions, Christianity had a much better climate to work in. And thirdly, the Japanese converts began to take over many of the responsibilities of evangelism which had previously only been handled by the foreign missionaries. The Christian church in Japan began to show amazing progress. Within twenty years the number of missionaries had tripled, the number of churches increased six-fold, and church membership went from four thousand to thirty thousand. By 1890 Christianity was making a significant impression on the country of Japan.

In the relatively short period of time that Christianity was in Japan we have seen it have its share of ups and downs. We will see those ups and downs continue on into the twentieth century. But before we continue the rollercoaster ride it is necessary to examine what kind of Christianity was being peddled in Japan at that time. As Christianity spread throughout Japan toward the end of the nineteenth century several features developed which are significant; non-denominationalism and the influx of liberal theology resulting eventually in syncretism, which we will consider now, and rationalism which will be taken up shortly.

From the very beginning the Japanese Christians did not like the idea of denominationalism. It was considered a Western problem which they did not want troubling them. In order to make this concession to the Japanese, some of the first churches in the post-isolation period did not take on names which marked them as being from a particular denomination. Instead, they simply called their church the "Church of Christ," or the "Christian Church in Japan." It was the feeling of the Japanese that there should be no little denominational groups, which, in their smallness and weakness, are unable to stand on their own two feet, when they could all join together--joining their resources and people--to exert a significant influence on the non-Christian community. The Japanese Christians were strong advocates for non-denominationalism which we might call unionism. Although in future years there would be some church bodies which remained opposed to such unionistic practices, the general and widespread trend of doing mission work was through joint, non-denominational efforts. These unionistic practices would have their effect on the WELS as it began its work in Japan several decades later.

The second feature of Japanese Christianity worth noting is the influx of liberal theology. It might be thought that since most of the missionaries in Japan were from America, Japan might have been spared for a few more years from wiles of liberal theology rising out of Europe. However, that was not the case. In the early 1900's two German missionaries, Spinner and Schmiedel, by means of a monthly magazine ironically called "The Truth," introduced for the first time in Japan elements of negative higher criticism. Not only did they expound their personal views by denying verbal and divine inspiration of the Scriptures, but also ran roughshod over the conservative theology of the American missionaries by belittling their doctrines. To add to this problem of negative criticism came the Unitarian

Church with its spineless doctrines and Christ-less views. Liberal theology had a devastating impact on orthodox Christianity in Japan. Many who were once strong Bible-believing, Gospel-witnessing people joined rank with the liberal theologians of that time.

The third feature of Japanese Christianity which is of utmost importance in the understanding of the Japan situation is the nationalism. As we have mentioned previously, Christianity, by 1890, was making significant impressions on the country and people of Japan. To put it in terms of a rollercoaster ride, in 1890 Christianity was at one of the highest crests. As far as the Japanese government was concerned it was about time that Christianity took a long ride down. The government began to institute an up-graded nationalism program. Japan had always been known as a country with a great deal of nationalistic spirit; it is something that every country needs in order to prosper. But now Japan began a program of nationalism which had never before been equaled and which would eventually climax during the Second World War. At the heart of this nationalism program was an Imperial Rescript issued by the government in 1890. The Rescript declared in very clear and precise terms that the Christian view of God and morality was strictly rejected. Instead, all the Japanese were to consider the emperor, not God, or any other god, as their head. The emperor was to be considered their god (head) because he was the direct descendant of Jimmer Tenno, the first god-emperor of Japan. The opening words of the Rescript reminded the Japanese of their close connection with the ancestral gods of Shinto who demanded that all people should give obeisance not only to the emperor, but even to a picture of the emperor. The Rescript was to read in ceremonial fashion on every public holiday in every school. While the Rescript was read to the students they would bow their heads in humble submission. The effect that this simple ceremony had on those students would not be fully realized until those same students as adults in the 1930's and 40's would show their loyalty and submission to the emperor as he led Japan's massive military machine into World War II.

With the spirit of nationalism growing, Christianity, as well as much of the traditional Japanese religions, got pushed aside. During this period Christianity suffered tremendously and almost came to an abrupt standstill. When Japan became involved in the Sino-Japanese War and when it went to war with Russia ten years later Christianity suffered blow after blow because of spreading nationalism, ecstatic patriotism, and growing militarism. The former progressive nature of Christianity was hard to find, at least for a while.

The rollercoasting Christianity took an uphill turn between 1912 and 1926 when the political climate in Japan began to moderate. Democratic views and ideas began to pervade the Japanese society which in turn allowed Christianity to make significant progress. By this time other church bodies were added to the growing number of them in Japan. Among them was

represented Lutheranism in the form of the United Lutheran Church in America. This fourteen year period of growth was highlighted by worldwide evangelism efforts which resulted in nationwide conferences devoted to cooperative campaigns of evangelism. Five thousand evangelism meetings were held in all parts of the country with more than three quarters of a million in attendance. Millions of tracts dealing with various subjects of Christianity were distributed in the Tokyo area alone. During this active period it is estimated that membership in Christian churches increased from 79,000 to 110,000. With another period of rapid growth begun, it appeared as if Christianity was really going to make headway this time. But as is well known, war had been brewed throughout the world--most of the world was fighting the war to end all wars. And in Japan things were also starting to heat up militarily. For Christianity in Japan that meant nothing but trouble.

Chapter Two

History of Christianity in Japan 1930 - 1950

By 1931 Japan had shown the world that it was a military power to be reckoned with. They had badly beaten their bigger neighbor during the Sino-Japanese War in 1895; they had stripped Russia of her naval fleet in 1905; five years later they annexed Korea and established control there; and finally during World War I they made a number of excessive demands from China. During this period of Japanese aggression the United States was really the only Western nation which offered any resistance, even though that resistance was minimal. But what does this have to do with Christianity in Japan? Well, it must be remembered that the majority of the Christian missionaries in Japan were from the United States. When the Americans, as a country, began opposing Japan's aggressive behavior, it was the American missionaries, as individuals who were opposed by the Japanese. The missionaries were guilty by association. The Christian missionaries became suspect and when they went back to the States on furlough during this time, they were not permitted to return. Christianity, an entity in itself, was still considered a foreign product and quite naturally began to suffer also. Japan's military and political structures were indeed having a sobering effect on the Christian community.

That sobering effect was evidenced in the increased practice of shrine attendance and emperor worship. Emperor worship, which found its roots in the Imperial Rescript of 1890, was strictly enforced in the 1930's. The Japanese government however, considered emperor worship to be nothing more than patriotism in action and considered attendance at the Shinto shrines not to be religiously oriented. Although in the 1920's and the early 1930's the federation of Christian churches spoke out against the practice of emperor worship and insisted that attendance at a Shinto shrine constituted religious worship, by 1936, under extreme pressure from Japan's militaristic regime, the National Council of Churches reversed its former position and now stated that they too accepted the government's definition that attendance at a Shinto shrine was non-religious.

Christianity began to be affected in another way also. In 1939 the Japanese government passed a law which handcuffed Christian missionaries and forced them to make sacrifices in Christian principles. It was known as the "Religious Bodies Law" which brought all religion under the control of the state. According to the law all Christian churches were forced to come together and form a "kyodan," which was the term for a religious association or party. This was a political move on the part of the Japanese government to organize all the many little Protestant denominations under one large Protestant body which could for obvious reasons be controlled more easily. (Later during the war the Shintoists, Buddhist, and all Christians--Catholic and Protestant were forced into one body under the "Japan Wartime Religious-Patriotic Association.") A convention of all Protestants was planned for October 17, 1940 at which the various denominations were ready to announce their willingness to form a kyodan. What happened at that convention was a compromise of Christian doctrine and practice as we look at it from our historical perspective. The convention opened with an act of obeissance towards the imperial palace and immediately following, a hymn was sung by the assembly honoring the emperor as a descendant of the Sun Goddess. After the convention had finished its main business and was nearing its close, the delegates, as a body, went to the Meiji Shrine where they announced their decision of forming a kyodan to the spirits of the dead emperors. Such compromises of Christian doctrine and practice would appear unseemly for a group of "conservative" Christians, but it must be remembered that the delegates at this convention were first of all not all "conservative", and secondly, we dare not forget the immense pressure applied by the Japanese government upon these delegates. Nevertheless, there still remains a significant compromise of Christian doctrine and practice.

The kyodan, which became known as the United Church of Christ in Japan, began with its first meeting in June 1941, where the assembly was organized into 11 blocs consisting of 32 participating groups. When the kyodan met for second time in November, 1942, the bloc system was abolished and the Japanese government siezed control of all its activities. Not everyone was willing though, to sacrifice all their Christian principles (or even some of them), or to give into the anti-Christian demands of the Japanese government. Actually there were three types of groups of Christians. First, there were those who sacrificed all convictions in order to remain at peace with the government. Secondly, there were those who compromised only what they were absolutely forced to. And finally there were those, like the Salvation Army and Seventh Day Adventists (although not Christian in practice) and the Episcopalians and Holiness Church, who refused to cooperate with the government or the kyodan. Those who could be listed under the third group were quickly disposed of by the Japanese officials--either disbanded, put in prison, or forced to take their church underground. In the early 1940's it appeared as if a modern form of the "anti-Christian Edicts" of 1587 had been resurrected in opposition to Christianity in Japan.

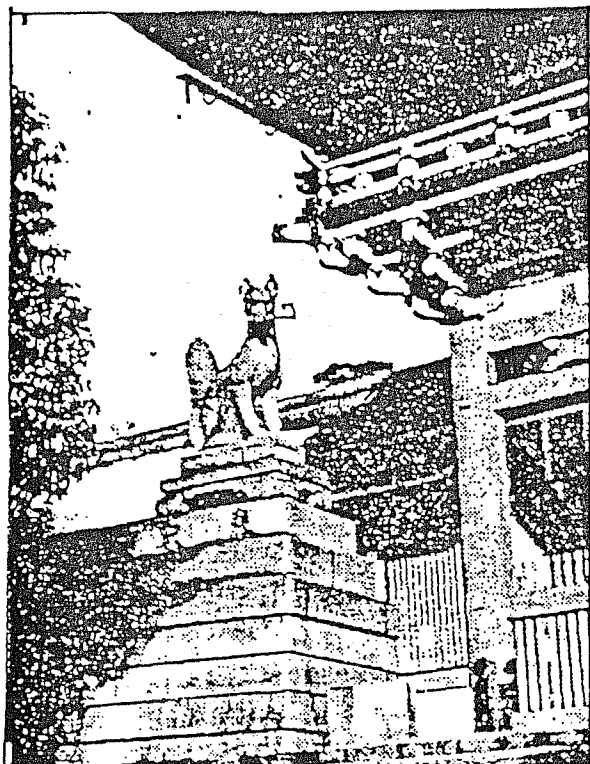
With World War II came repeated efforts by the Japanese to build up their military machine by way of the emperor's god-like influence and in doing so to put down the Christian religion. The Christian missionaries continued to have services throughout the duration of the War, but as time passed pressures mounted against the church. Some of the pastors were taken away from their congregations and assigned to work in the factories. Members of the city congregations lost members quickly when women and children were evacuated from the cities. The church services themselves also underwent some changes. Emperor worship, which originally was only required by schools, was now introduced into the church. All church services were required to open with five minutes of obeisance in the direction of the imperial palace and praying for the war dead. Many hymns were changed or no longer allowed to be sung; all hymns referring to Christ as Lord or King were forbidden. Two of those put on the black list are the familiar "Onward Christian Soldiers" and "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God." The hymns that were forbidden were replaced by hymns honoring the virtues of the emperor and identifying the military expansion of Japan with the spread of the Kingdom of God. The Japanese government also used the printed materials of the church, such as Sunday School materials, to spread government propaganda throughout the church. Throughout World War II the Christian churches of Japan suffered at the hands of the Japanese government. However, when World War II came to an end, the suffering ended too.

Shortly after the Second World War had come to an end Japan was like a fertile field just begging to be planted. The Japanese people, upon seeing their entire empire collapse before their very eyes, became quite disillusioned. The trust and the hope and the confidence that they had put in their emperor-god was shattered to pieces like a broken clay pot. That became painfully evident to the Japanese people when the emperor declared officially and publicly that he really wasn't the man-god that he claimed to be. The Japanese were beaten and broken; they were crushed militarily, politically, economically, and spiritually. The Allied Forces were to take care of the first three areas. Christianity would attempt, with much success, to take care of the fourth one, namely Japan's spiritual condition.

When the Christian missionaries returned to Japan after the war the Japanese people were very receptive to the message of the Gospel. Crowds of people were ready and eager to hear what the true God had to say to them in His Word. It was at this time in Japan's rollercoaster history of Christianity that more missionaries poured in, more missions were started by more and more church bodies than at any other time. Among those many missionaries and many new missions the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod was soon to be found. The fertile land of Japan was begging to hear some good news and longing to see a light that would lead them from their paths of darkness, depression, and destruction. In the early 1950's the WELS felt the urgency and saw the tremendous opportunity to bring the message of the Risen Son to the Land of the Rising Sun. In the early 1950's the WELS began its work.

Part II

Japanese Religion and Traits



FUSHIMI O-INARI-SAN

Worship of the Rice Goddess and her messenger the Fox.

In reality

the fox has become a deity in the thinking of the worshippers.

example of these types of differences is evident in the relationship of an individual to his family, friends, and country. A missionary in a foreign land, will need to know about the many cultural differences; some, he needs to know about in order to carry out the work of sharing his faith. A missionary going to Japan needs especially to know about the religious condition of the people --what are their beliefs? How much effect does the religion of the people have on their way of life?; etc. The questions are many and the answers are complicated when it comes to the Japanese religion and its effect on Japanese life. But one answer is clear: the relationship between Japanese religion and their daily life is interwoven and closely knit.

Before a missionary can actually begin any significant work in a foreign field, whether that work be among people living near the skyscrapers of downtown Tokyo, or among the people living in the grass huts of Central Africa, he must first begin to cross a bridge--a bridge crossing the culture gap. There is a cultural gap of some extent between every country in the world. In some instances that cultural gap is rather narrow and insignificant while in other instances it is extensive. The cultural gap between the United States and Japan might very well lean in the direction of being an extensive cultural gap. There are obvious cultural differences between the two countries-- language, social customs, way of life such as: types of clothing and eating customs, and of course the religious life. But in addition to these obvious and major cultural differences there are some which, although they are more subtle, are of importance as well. An

In the second part of this paper we wish to examine some of the basic cultural differences involving mission work in Japan. First, let us consider briefly a list of statements explaining and summarizing the three major religions of Japan: Shintoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. Secondly, we wish to examine some of the more significant traits of the Japanese people. We will see that these traits of the Japanese stem from the doctrines and philosophies which have been handed down for centuries from the religious community. We will also note that the religions and traits of the Japanese people make it very difficult for Christians to bring the message of the Risen Son to this land of the Rising Sun.

Shintoism

Origins

- the word Shinto = "the way of the gods"
- the only religion indigenous to Japan
- no founder, no specific moment of origin, very ancient
- handed down for many centuries by word of mouth until the 8th century, A.D.
- two principle sources of information:
 - Kojiki = "the record of the ancient matters" 712 A.D.
 - Nihon Shoki = "the chronicles of Japan" 720 A.D.
- the sum of a great collection of folkways, traditions, myths writings and attitudes

Nature of the Religion

- Kami = gods - found everywhere and in everything, especially in nature
- none of the gods clearly defined or identified with images
- "animism in its most civilized and sophisticated form"
- nature religion - worship of the sun goddess, Amaterasu;
 - worship of the sacred mountain, Fujiyama
- natural processes of greatest importance: birth, growth, life; decay, death, sterility, etc., are to be guarded against; planting and harvesting festivals especially joyous.
- the Shintoist is extremely patriotic; his worship is for the emperor; if a Shintoist dies for his country, he believes his spirit continues to fight for his country.
- no dividing line between the divine and human; a person's religion and his life have entered into each other; religion is not added on to a person's life the same wonderful forces which work in nature also work in man; man and nature are actually one.
- Shinto teaches an involved story of creation, actually a special creation of Japan; Shinto claims that the emperor is a descendant of Amaterasu and the Japanese people are of divine origin.
- no sense of sin; moral evil does not exist; sins spoken of are only mistakes in life.
- Shintoism has to do only with this life, it has never been concerned with a life after death; it is a religion of love, thanksgiving, and an appreciation for nature's

beauty; it is a happy religion; death and burial are considered the province of the Buddhist priest, not the Shinto priest; the Shinto priest attends to happy occasions like weddings.

Outward Form of the Religion

- four main forms of Shintoism: (Shrine and Sect-the two main divisions)

Imperial House Shinto
Shrine Shinto

Sect Shinto
Folk Shinto

- Shrines kept simple and blending with nature; built in honor of the dead; the spirit of Amaterasu believed enshrined at Ise, making that Shintoism's most revered shrine; Emperor Meiji's Shrine in Tokyo another highly revered shrine.
- no regular day of worship; worship consists of giving a gift, of prayer, and of clapping of hands.
- ritual purity the heart of Shinto ceremonial; purification with water and the sacred sakaki branches (yew tree).
- with the arrival of Buddhism the shrines were made somewhat more ornate, consisting usually of four parts:
 - 1) the Haiden = hall of worship
 - 2) the Heiden = hall of offerings (an eight-legged table)
 - 3) the Hondon = inner sanctuary (containing only some sacred object such as a precious jewel, a sword, or a mirror, objects such as those Amaterasu left behind)
 - 4) the Torii = oriental archway (passing through it takes one from the secular to the sacred)
- Shinto altars frequently found in the houses of Shinto believers.



Daikoku

Ebisu is frequently associated with Daikoku, who, at least in such company, is most often identified with O-kuni-nushi (or O-namuchi) in Shinto worship. Daikoku is then represented as a fat, prosperous-looking man, sitting on two big rice-balls, carrying a bag of precious things on his back and holding a hammer (*tsuchi*) in his right hand; below him one can generally see a mouse nibbling at one of the rice-balls.

Buddhism

Origins

- founded by Siddhartha Gautama, 563 B.C.; originated as a Hindu reform movement advocating the practice of meditation as

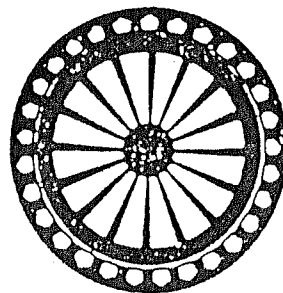
- a means of attaining enlightenment.
- Buddha = "the Enlightened One"
- came to Japan by way of Korea in 538 A.D.
- two classifications of Buddhism; Theravada and Mahayana; Japanese Buddhism a development of both; many developments!
- Buddha himself wrote nothing; Buddhist scripture developed later.

Nature of the Religion

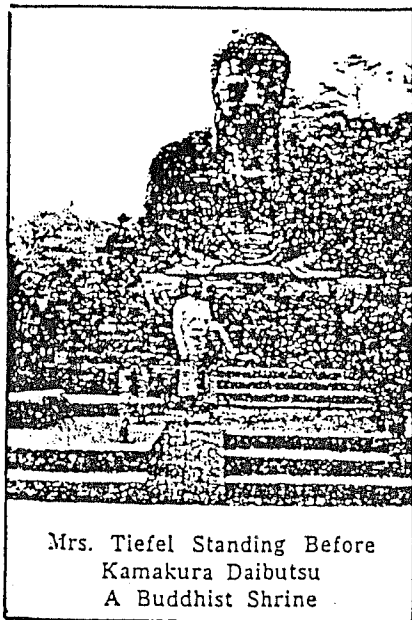
- The Essence of Buddhism is three-fold:
 - 1) to cease from evil;
 - 2) to do good;
 - 3) to purify the heart.
- The Four Noble Truths:
 - 1) suffering is universal
 - 2) the cause of suffering is desire
 - 3) the elimination of desire is the cure for suffering;
 - 4) a practical technique for elimination of desire is to be found on The Noble Eightfold Path.
- The Noble Eightfold Path
 - 1) right views, or knowledge
 - 2) right intentions or aspirations
 - 3) right speech
 - 4) right conduct
 - 5) right livelihood
 - 6) right effort
 - 7) right mindfulness
 - 8) right meditation
- four significant terms in Buddhism:
 - 1) Oharma = the pursuit of The Four Noble Truths, The Noble Eightfold Path, and The Essence of Buddhism.
 - 2) Sangha = the formal fellowship of Buddhist disciples.
 - 3) Karma = the moral causation by which all the acts of men have their good or bad effects in some future period or existence.
 - 4) Nirvana = the state of "thusness" = a state of desirelessness and impersonal ultimate reality, the ultimate goal of all man.
- originally no godhead; Buddha didn't want any divinity for himself or for others; thought of himself as greater than any god.
- evolution of the religion to the point of other Buddhas.
- much meditation; truth found only in one's experience.
- "believe whatever satisfies your reason."
- no proselytizing; no fanaticism; no intolerance; very syncretistic.
- at death the five component parts of man fall apart:
 - 1) the physical
 - 2) the sensations and feelings
 - 3) perception
 - 4) volition or predisposition
 - 5) consciousness

Then the Karma, the sum of all the good and bad results of the past life, enters into another five components and lives on as another individual; there is no permanent self or soul.

The symbol of Buddhism is essentially a wheel with sixteen spokes or, from another viewpoint, a disk with as many emanating rays. Seen as a wheel it represents the basic Hindu belief in reincarnation, or cyclic time, from which escape is promised by following Buddha's Four Noble Truths multiplied by the sacred number four. The same wheel also typifies the movement of Buddhism through the world, advancing the wisdom of Buddha to all nations. Taken as a disk, it symbolizes the sun which sheds its light over all mankind, comparable to the radiation everywhere of the brightness of the Enlightened One.



Nature and Outward Form of the Religion in Japan - Zen Buddhism



Mrs. Tiefel Standing Before
Kamakura Daibutsu
A Buddhist Shrine

- humans have the power within themselves to discover the universal Buddha-nature, when they come to understand the true character of their own nature, they will be enlightened.
- achieve one's own salvation; no one can achieve it for them.
- absolute truth can't be expressed in words; little use for books, scripture, writing.
- neither good works, nor faith, nor prayer can substitute for meditation.
- meditation is preliminary to enlightenment; when one becomes enlightened he is no longer of the world even though he looks like an ordinary person.
- Buddhism takes care of funerals and memorial services.

Confucianism

Origins

- named after Kung Fu Tzu, Confucius, 6th century B.C.
- Mencius was Confucius' greatest disciple.
- Confucius "canon" The Four Books And The Five Classics.
The Analects = best known of the four books;
Confucius' sayings.

Nature of Confucianism

- neither a "religion," nor a system of philosophy, rather a way of life.
- no creed, no priesthood, no ecclesiastical organization, no divine revelation.
- no belief in life after death.
- Relationship to one's fellowman is the most important matter.
Living in society the best way of life; only the abnormal do not do so; reverance for ancestors of extreme importance.
- The Five Constant Virtues of the "Superior Man:"
 - 1) right attitude
 - 2) right process
 - 3) right knowledge
 - 4) right persistance
 - 5) right moral code

- The Constant Virtues should result in the Five Cardinal Qualities.

- 1) self-respect
- 2) magnanimity
- 3) sincerity
- 4) earnestness
- 5) benevolence



The symbol of Chinese Universism is *Tai-ki* (Primal Beginning) and represents the essential features of Confucian thought. Inside the figure in contrasting black and white are represented the two conflicting forces, the light *yang* and the dark *yin* separated from the beginning. The white dot in the dark (often blue) half of the circle and the dark dot in the white (often red) half of the circle signify that both forces are always near one another and should work together harmoniously. Harmony is expressed by the flowing curvature of the contrasting fields. Around the circle are eight trigrams from the *Yi King* (*Book of Changes*). They consist of continuous or strong lines (—) and of broken or weak lines (---) in the different possible basic arrangements. Strong lines symbolize the male force *yang*, while the weak lines stand for the female force *yin*. Human existence consists in the give and take of these forces, which the *Book of Changes* explains in mysterious terms known only to the initiates.

When one considers the three major religions of Japan, even as briefly as we have done, one notices that there are some basic characteristics which pervade all three religions. It is noteworthy that not one of the religions is concerned with man's sin, not one expresses any fear of any punishment of sin, and neither do they offer any hope (any real hope) for this life or especially for the life to come. Instead Shintoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism are interested only in the affairs of this life. These religions all stress the qualities which men should strive for and how those qualities should be put into action once they are attained. The Japanese religions are not very much interested in man's relationship to a supreme God, but rather the interest and the stress is on man's relationship with others of his family, his community, and his state. With this heavy stress of the Japanese religions on human relations there are traits of the Japanese which over the centuries have been highly developed. These traits are essential in understanding the Japanese people.

Formalism and Propriety

Since the Japanese people have a tremendous respect for the natural feelings for other men it isn't difficult to understand

how their respect came to be expressed in strict rules of propriety. It is well-known, even among Westerners, that the Japanese people have greetings that are highly elaborate, such as bowing to one another. Perhaps not as well-known is the fact that the Japanese language has a unique complexity of honorifics--words or expressions which confer honor or respect. Confucianism, with its "Five Constant Virtues" and "Five Cardinal Qualities," has also played a respective role in the development of such proprieties. Buddhism, especially Zen Buddhism, has also contributed to the stress on propriety. The formalism and propriety found in Japan has been developed by and intertwined with the people's religion resulting in a trait which permeates their very action.

The Individual and Group Interests

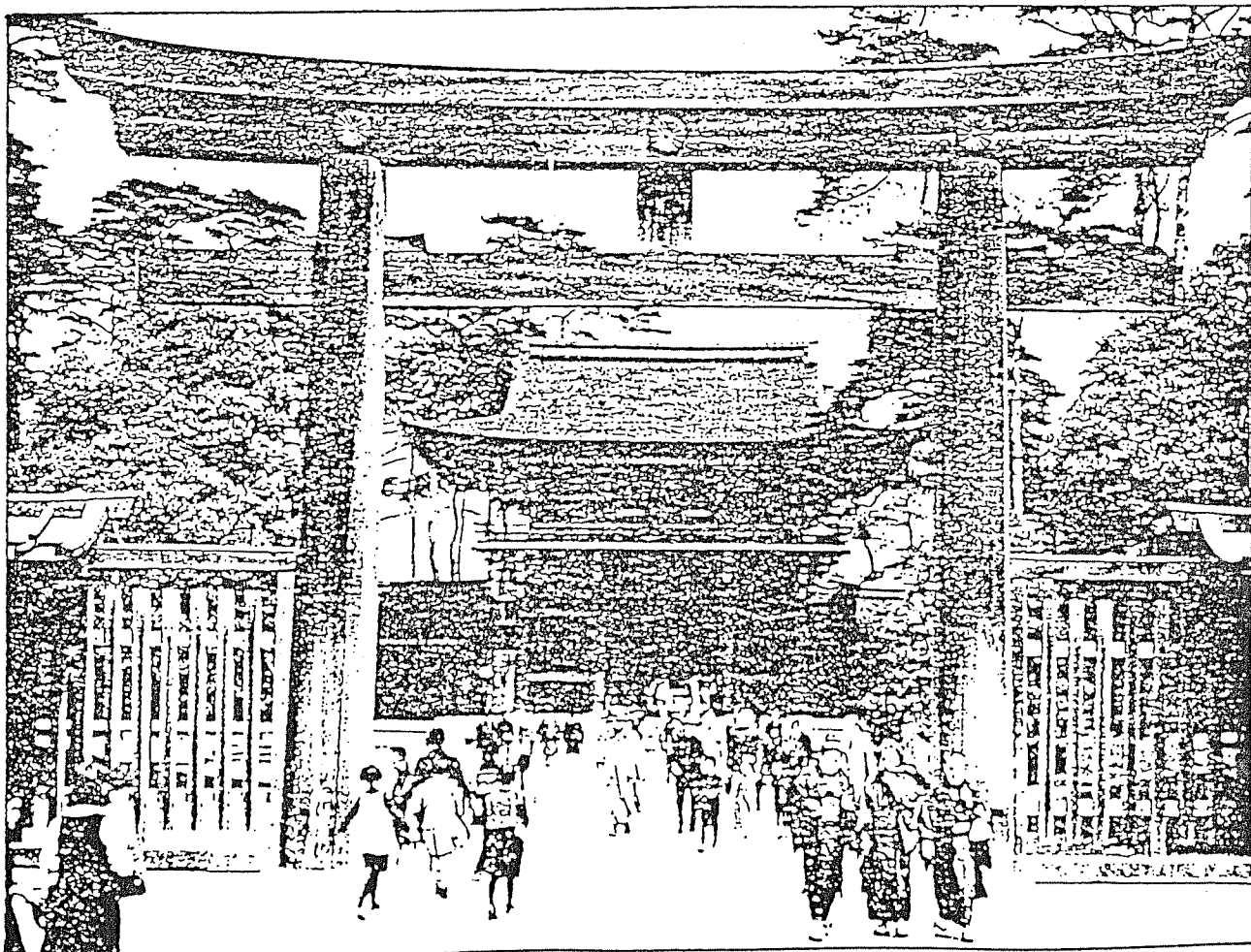
The definition and aspects of an "individual" as we know them in our Western culture are not found in Japanese culture. There is really no "individual" to speak of in Japan, at least not in the way Westerners understand the term. For centuries there has always been an emphasis on the corporate unit of society rather than upon the individual as an independent entity; it is an emphasis laid on "we" and not "I." (so is it also true that there is little conscious distinction between "I" and "you." In the original development of Buddhistic thought there was a distinction made between the egos of different individuals. That Buddhistic thought never developed in Japan because of the overriding emphasis on society and not on the individual). In the relationship of one Japanese to another there has been a lack of awareness of the individual as an independent actor on the stage of Japanese life. This lack of individual awareness has also resulted in a reluctance to face the objectivity of existing fact. Almost everything, including the objective fact, is not determined by the individual, but by the group as a whole. Any individual in Japanese life who wishes to carry out actions without taking the concerns of the others into account or if there is assertiveness on the part of an individual, these are regarded as a threat to the family and community.

The Hierarchical Structure of Society

Closely related to and stemming from the concept of the individual subordinate group interests is the hierarchical structure. With the welfare of the individual subordinate to that of the social group, man is regarded chiefly in his relation to others. This involves self-dedication and self-sacrifice in the interest of the group. The grandest virtue of a Japanese is the sacrifice of one's self of his family, community, or for the emperor who is the head of this familistic nation. The individual is at the base of the hierarchical structure, the immediate family follows the individual, then kinship, etc. until the top of the structure is reached, that being the emperor. This hierarchical structure has governed Japanese culture for centuries; it finds its roots in the basic concepts of Shintoism. But although the structure is ancient the principles don't govern

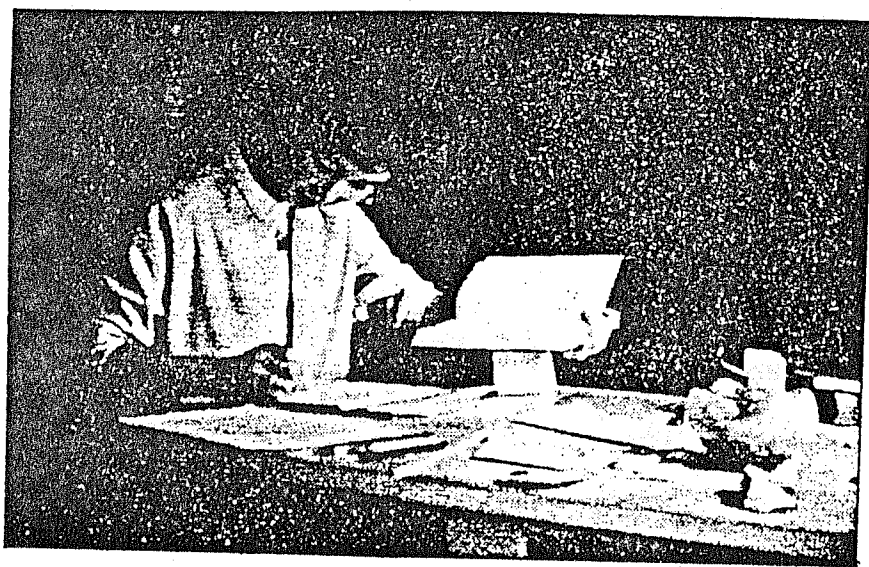
only social aspects, but also political, business, and professional life. The hierarchical structure effects every aspect of the individual Japanese life.

However, in such a social structure truth and objective fact--as we have mentioned previously--comes under consideration. In this type of situation the judging of what is good and evil is not determined in terms of ethical or moral standards, but in terms of what is good or bad for the social hierarchical structure--"is it good for the family?; for the community?; for the emperor?" It is quite evident then to see why Christianity has such a difficult time in Japanese culture. If a Japanese is asked: "what is truth?" his response might be: "whatever is best." In fact, a desire to seek the truth, even in a religious setting, may be regarded as evil if it is contrary to the interest of the group. A traditional Japanese has difficulty understanding the Christian concept of man being subject to the Almighty God and that man is responsible to God for his actions. The Japanese people for centuries have grown up with the idea that man is responsible to his fellowman and social community--never perceiving that he is responsible to God. The individual is being subordinate to group interests as he lives in a demanding hierarchical structure is a thorn in the flesh when it comes to preaching the Gospel in Japan.



Meiji Shrine Gardens
Tokyo, Japan

There are many more interesting and peculiar traits of the Japanese culture, some of which we will discuss later. The ones that have been mentioned emphasize the relationship of religion and everyday life, and to show the struggle that has to take place within the Japanese individual who by God's grace has become a servant of the true God. The Japanese people live in a culture that does away with sin, sin's guilt, the fear of punishment of sin, and any hope that their sin would be forgiven. When an individual lives in that kind of a culture it is difficult for him to understand why he needs someone to take away the sin he doesn't know he has. It is also a difficult task for the missionaries who attempt to bring the message of sin and grace to the Japanese. The missionary not only has to deal with a difficult language, but must also deal with these difficult cultural aspects of the people. All of these many difficulties the WELS was about to face as it planned to do mission work among the Japanese people in the early 1950's. But the WELS was about to face more than difficulties-in Japan. It was about to receive a wonderful privilege, a God-given responsibility, and the unspeakable joys of bringing the message of the Risen Son to a land of spiritual darkness.



STUDENT HELPING WITH TRANSLATION OF OUR
SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHERS' MANUAL

Part III

THE "FIRST" WELS MISSION IN JAPAN:

FEBRUARY, 1952 - FEBRUARY, 1957

Chapter One

Entering the Open Door

With the surrender of the Japanese, World War II came to an end in the Pacific and the door to Japan was once again opened. Quite obviously, the door was opened for the Allied military forces to enter and begin a period of occupation. The door was also opened to allow the Allied governments to enter and dismantle the hierarchical political structure and to set up one more favorable to Western ideals. And of course it was opened to allow Christian missionaries to once again enter the country to do their work. Some might claim that the only reason that Japan's doors were once again opened was because of the bombs and bullets of the Allied forces. That may be true when one is dealing with the occupational control of territory or the political struggle between nations, but that is not how doors are opened to do mission work. Wars and land conquests in themselves don't bring about opportunities to do mission work - it is the Lord God Almighty who does that. It was the Lord who opened the doors of Japan to Christianity once again. And it was the Lord who opened the doors for the WELS to enter and begin its work.

The WELS, however, did not enter the door immediately after World War II ended. Six years passed before the WELS sent its first worker into the Japanese field. During those six years the WELS received repeated encouragement from the Lord to enter the field in Japan. The Lord used various ways of getting the message out that there was work to be done in the Land of the Rising Sun. First of all, the United States government, through the voice of General MacArthur, strongly encouraged and heartily welcomed as many Christian missionaries as wanted to come. (Although General McArthur's encouragement was not centered in bringing about eternal benefits, his words were a warm invitation). Secondly, the Synodical Conference, especially the Missouri Synod who had begun its work in Japan in 1949, began to make urgent appeals for the WELS to enter the Japanese field. Thirdly, it was an obvious fact that many WELS members, serving in the military, were stationed in Japan and in need of spiritual care. With encouragements like these the WELS began to realize that there was a need and a wonderful opportunity for doing work in Japan. Serious consideration of sending a man to serve the Far East began.

Prior to the 1951 WELS Synod Convention, the General Mission Board met to discuss the matter of doing mission work in Japan.

After a great deal of discussion they formulated a recommendation which would be presented to a Convention committee when it met in the summer of 1951. That recommendation from the General Mission Board was as follows (in part):

Since the Lord has opened the door to the Wisconsin Synod for missionwork..in Japan; Since we have received urgent appeals to enter...into Japan by brethren of the Synodical Conference; since the relationship between our government and (theirs) is good and tends to favor the beginning of mission work at this time; and since no other barriers present themselves; Therefore, we recommend that Synod begin this work in cooperation with the Spiritual Welfare Commission in serving our men in the armed services there and in Korea.

When the Synod Convention opened, Committee No. 8 was given the responsibility of handling the request to do mission work in Japan. The recommendation that this committee was to make to the floor of the convention indicated that they thought it better if the Japan mission efforts would for the present time, remain in the arms of the Spiritual Welfare Commission instead of making it an authorized mission field. The recommendation that was made by Committee No. 8 was altered by the convention when it got the floor and resulted in the following:

We recommend that the General Mission Board ask the Lutheran Spiritual Welfare Commission to place a man in Tokyo,

- a) to care for our service men
- b) to investigate the mission opportunities in Japan (as altered by the convention)

With the alteration made by the convention the recommendation of Committee No. 8 was adopted by the Synod. With that adoption the work in Japan had its official beginning!

For some time the WELS had been receiving appeals to come to Japan - a widespread appeal from the United States government to all Christian churches; specific appeals from the Synodical Conference; and it also had individual appeals from WELS servicemen. One such appeal came from Corporal Donald Timm who was stationed in Yokohama:

I have by the grace of God a Lutheran Mission of the Missouri Synod close to where I regularly attend church. I have worshipped with these Japanese converts here and sat at the Lord's Table with them. These members are very serious in the Divine Service. They will in time, I am sure, lead many others to our Savior. The Lutheran missionaries in Japan, however, are all too few...millions (of Japanese) are without a religion, they know not which way to turn and what paths to follow...I feel it is up to us Christians of the Wisconsin Synod to open our hearts to these people who have not God's Word to comfort and guide them in all truth. Should we not take advantage of the fact that our missionaries are allowed in Japan and that millions have lost their false religion and are now without any? Should we not preach to them the Gospel

of Jesus, the only name also among the Japanese whereby they must be saved? Shall we not take our victory to mean that the Lord wants us to proclaim the Gospel in Japan? Let us all take this to heart in the Wisconsin Synod and pray and give generously for the preaching of the Gospel here...

Corporal Timm's letter was an ardent prayer - a prayer that his fellow members in the WELS might send a missionary to preach the Gospel among the Japanese people. His letter was an appeal to the Synod that they might consider doing mission work in Japan. As it turned out, Corporal Timm's fervent prayer was answered the day before he wrote the letter. Pastor Fred Tiefel received the Call to Japan from the Lutheran Spiritual Welfare Commission. The date was October 20, 1951. It was the day Corporal Timm's prayer was answered.

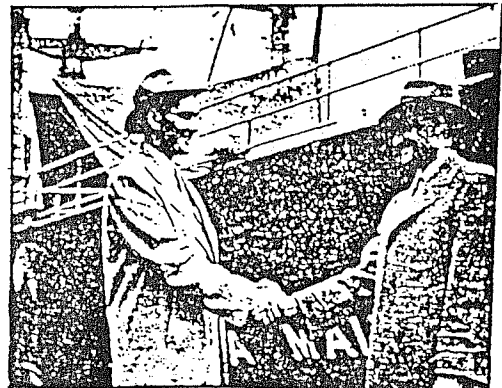


FIRST MISSIONARY TO JAPAN
Pastor F. Tiefel

Pastor Tiefel, who was serving in Spokane, Washington at the time, accepted the call of the Lutheran Spiritual Welfare Commission to do exploratory work in the interest of our servicemen and women stationed in Japan-Korea area and to also investigate opportunities for the opening of mission stations for the Board of Missions. Before Pastor Tiefel could leave for Japan, however, considerable preparation for his difficult assignment was necessary, such as obtaining governmental clearance papers, military permits, inoculations,

equipment of a four-wheel drive jeep for field work, preliminary steps for the study of the Japanese language, and various other preparations, but by the middle of February, 1952, Pastor Fred Tiefel was ready to go. He set sail on February 16, aboard the S.S. India Mail from Portland, Oregon heading for the port city of Yokohama, Japan. The WELS had sent its first missionary to Japan.

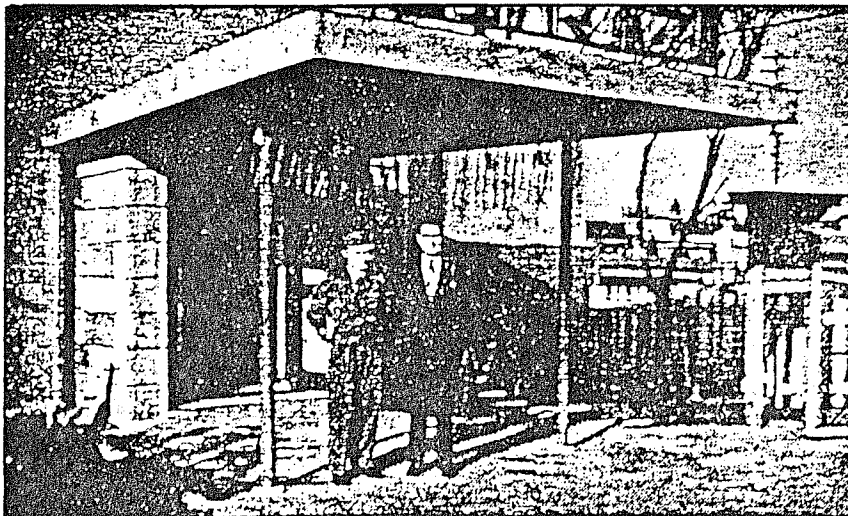
Pastor Tiefel arrived in Yokohama about the time that Communist riots were shaking the streets and severe earthquakes were quaking through the entire island. No doubt these were a reminder to Pastor Tiefel that his work must be done now before the night comes when no man can work. Pastor Tiefel, after arriving in Yokohama, set up his headquarters in the Yokonama Hotel. He lived and worked from there for about a year until a home was eventually rented. This rental of a home was necessitated by the arrival of Mrs. Tiefel, who joined her



Rev. F. Tiefel (left) about to board
the S. S. India Mail for Japan

husband in March, 1953, as well as the need for more adequate quarters that the work required. In the spring of that same year Tiefel was asked to return to the States in time for the 1953 Synod Convention so that he could personally give a report on the work so far accomplished.

The seventeen months that Tiefel spent in Japan on his first tour were devoted to doing mission work among the Japanese. Tiefel was able to carry out his primary assignment of caring for and visiting WELS service personnel without exacting a great deal of time. When he got to Japan, Tiefel made a survey of the Lutheran Spiritual Commission's needs in the area. Throughout the seventeen months he carried on private pastoral work, contact work, and private administration of the Sacrament. In regard to mission possibilities he made another survey of the mission work currently being carried out by protestant missionaries and where it was being done. This survey would aid the WELS in determining where work should be done. Pastor Tiefel also had many requests by students for instruction in God's Word. In a period of fourteen months he instructed fourteen Japanese students on a regular basis. Because of limited time and energy he had to refuse similar requests for instruction. One final item that Tiefel accomplished during this time was some language study and the beginning of a translation of the Gausewitz Catechism.



IN FRONT OF YOKOHAMA — Pastor F. Tiefel, right and service man

Tiefel demonstrated in his periodic reports to the Lutheran Spiritual Welfare Commission that there was a vast field of mission work in the Tokyo-Yokohama area. The Spiritual Welfare Commission responded to these encouraging reports by recommending to the General Mission Board that Pastor Tiefel be considered as a foreign missionary and function under the supervision of the General Mission Board. The General Mission Board warmly accepted the recommendation and brought the matter to the 1953 Synod Convention. When the convention ended in August, Pastor Tiefel was called as missionary and Japan was designated as WELS mission field. By God's grace the WELS had entered the open door.



Missionary F. Tiefel Holding
The Head of a Buddha-Jizo

Chapter Two

The Son Becomes Brighter

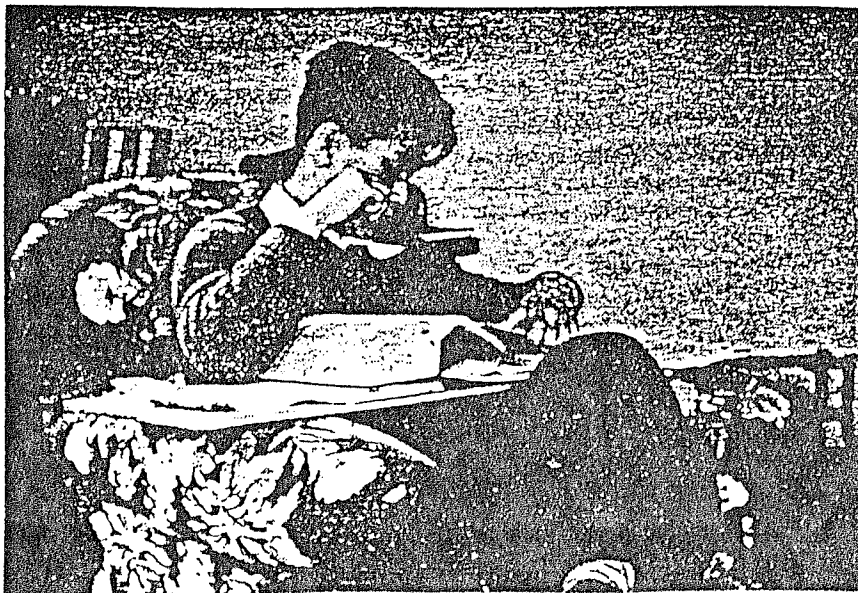
When the Synod, at the 1953 convention, authorized Pastor Tiefel as a full-fledged missionary and Japan as a WELS Mission Field, it also recommended and authorized another item. Not only did the Synod recommend that one missionary go to Japan, it gave authorization for two to be sent! The second missionary was to be called as soon as possible to aid Pastor in his work in the Tokyo-Yokohama area. When the second missionary would arrive one of the men was to remain in Yokohama and the other man was to expand the work into Tokyo. The fact that Japan was now a WELS Mission Field resulted in another matter. All foreign mission fields were to be under the direct control of an executive committee so such a committee, consisting of Pastor W.F. Dorn - chairman, Pastor Wm. Lindloff, and Mr. Martin Bode, was established. The committee began meeting almost immediately after the convention closed in order to get organized and to resolve certain matters pertinent to Pastor Tiefel's return to Japan.

Pastor Tiefel returned to Japan shortly after his commissioning which took place on August 21, 1953 in Caledonia, Minnesota. He returned to Japan filled with zeal to return to the work which he had only briefly begun. For the next three years Pastor Tiefel would devote his energy to preaching and

teaching Japanese as well as trying to learn their language.

There are two factors in regard to language which make the missionaries work very difficult. The first one is obvious - learning the language itself. Most people who have had association with the Japanese language say that it is one of the most difficult languages to learn. Very few will disagree with that statement because of the complexity of the written characters, known as Kanji. It takes years of intensive study to manage only the basics of Japanese and it takes a lifetime to master. Until the language is learned a missionary must depend upon interpreters. Pastor Tiefel used an interpreter almost exclusively his first year. But there are difficulties connected with that also. It was hard to find an interpreter who could convey the Christian truths accurately. Not only did the interpreter need to convey subject matter honestly, but he also needed an exact knowledge of the Scriptures coupled with Christian humility. Such men were hard to find.

The second factor in regard to language which caused difficulty was the connotation or association that religious terms had when they were translated into Japanese. The terms in the Japanese Bible translated are frequently misleading because of their Buddhist or Shinto usage. For example - the word sometimes used to translate the word "Spirit" is "mitama" is a Shinto term designating a spirit-manifestation. Such a "spirit" is regarded by the Japanese to be either residing in the Grand Shrine of Ise, in the "divine" nature of the emperor, or even in many lesser places such as the individual shrines. It is difficult to explain a term like "Spirit" to the Japanese people when they have always associated the term with something else. When one multiplies the difficulty involved with just one term by all the many religious terms one can see why the language causes so much difficulty for the American missionary.



STUDENT TRANSLATING BIBLE OUTLINE

Much of Pastor Tiefel's next three years would be devoted to the study of the Japanese language. In connection with this Tiefel began preparing and translating sound Lutheran instructional material. One of the major projects was the translation of the Gausewitz Catechism. After it was translated Pastor Tiefel and members of his Bible classes sat down to revise and improve the Japanese translation. Since Bible study was a major portion of his mission work Pastor Tiefel began preparing and printing much Bible class instruction material for adults and began translating the Northwestern Sunday School material for the children. When these materials would be finished the prospect of doing more outreach would be realized. Perhaps one of the most precious far-reaching projects was the indexing of Biblical terms and words correctly translated into Japanese. Within just two years Pastor Tiefel had assembled over 3000 terms and words. In the area of language much hard, solid work had been accomplished in a relatively short period of time.

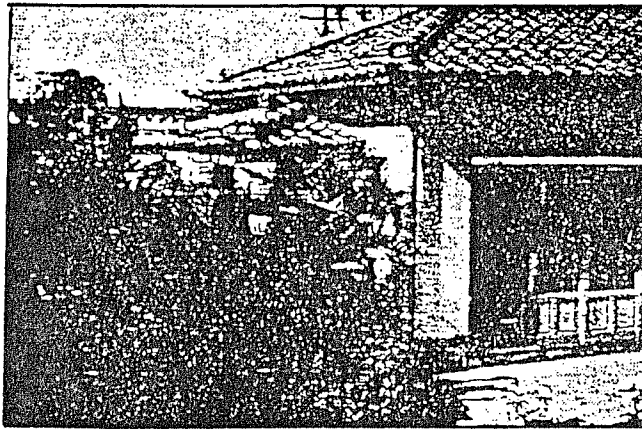
In addition to preparing the material for dissemination of the Word, the Word was regularly being proclaimed. However it was not proclaimed in the way we, as Americans, might expect. Proclamation of the Word was done through Bible classes and Sunday School - not through church services. In fact, Pastor Tiefel did not have a regular service until January, 1955. That was over a year after he returned to Japan. Up until 1955 Pastor Tiefel conducted Bible classes in Tokyo and Yokohama in which twenty-three students were enrolled. On January 23, 1955, three of these Bible class students were confirmed after three years of instruction. It was an exciting and joyous day for the Lord had richly blessed the work in Japan!

When Pastor Tiefel began worship services in January, 1955, they too were different than we Americans might expect. Pastor Tiefel, for the first few weeks, preached in English and had a student interpreting in Japanese. But after several weeks Pastor Tiefel installed Mr. Oshima, one of the recently confirmed young men, to preach the prepared sermon in Japanese. Pastor Tiefel would write the sermon and Mr. Oshima would translate it. Then after Pastor Tiefel had critically reviewed the translation Mr. Oshima would memorize and deliver the sermon. Another one of the recently confirmed, Mr. Shigeta, helped out by conducting the liturgical part of the service in the Japanese language. The service was made complete by a young Japanese lady who served as the organist. So the service in the church in Japan was a bit unusual but very satisfactory and much better for the mission than having it conducted in English and then interpreted. The two dozen students who regularly attended these services were very dedicated to their Lord. The two men, Mr. Oshima and Mr. Shigeta, as well as the young lady, donated their time and their talents for the work of the Lord. The Lord truly blessed the efforts of our mission in Japan - the message of the Risen Son was burning brightly in the hearts of two dozen Japanese students.



Shigeta San
Delivers Pastor Tiefel's Sermons

The Japanese mission was blessed in yet another way. Pastor Tiefel was able to find some excellent property for a reasonable price. The Synod was able to purchase a house for Tiefel's family built by a Chinese contractor who specialized in building chomes that could accomodate Westerners living in the Orient. Later, the Synod purchased another western-style house which was adjacent to the first house (the houses were known as No. 1 and No. 2). A room was constructed over the garage that would later serve as a printing room. On this property all the worship services and classes were held. It was certainly much more welcoming and warm than the Yokohama Hotel where Pastor Tiefel had begun his work.



Our Mission House in Tokyo

Many of our servicemen have been comforted here by the Word and the Sacrament. Usually a home-cooked meal goes with the visit to our contact pastor for our Spiritual Welfare Commission.

From September, 1953 to late 1956, Pastor Tiefel served the WELS mission with great zeal and dedication. His language work was impressive, the materials he printed were invaluable, and the preaching of the Gospel had, by God's grace, a warm reception. Things in Japan were looking good. There was, however, one matter that was not so optimistic: the call for the

second missionary had not been accepted. The board for the Japan Mission had called ten men during the period between Tiefel's return to Japan and the spring of 1956. All ten men declined the call. God, in His wisdom, had not yet supplied Japan with a second missionary. In the spring of 1956 the Executive Committee went to the Seminary through the Calling Committee to ask for a graduate. When the calls had finally been assigned Richard Seeger had accepted the call to become the second missionary to Japan. It looked then as if the Japan mission would really get off the ground. Pastor Tiefel would then have someone with whom he could share and expand the field in Japan. It was a day to look forward to - a day when Pastor Seeger would go to Japan and join in the work with Pastor Tiefel. That day would never come.

Chapter Three

The End of Mission - 1957

The WELS in Controversy

It is a well-known historical fact that the 1950's were a time of strife and controversy between the WELS and the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LCMS). This controversy centered in the area of church fellowship. It is a long and complicated controversy and since it has been written about quite extensively in other contexts in other contexts it is not necessary to unfold that entire story here. There are, however, certain aspects of that controversy which need to be repeated and emphasized in order to understand the situation that developed in the WELS Japan mission prior to and including the year 1957.

For many years prior to the middle 1950's the WELS had shown great concern over the deterioration of fellowship principles of the LCMS. Already back in the 1930's Missouri, with the "Brief Statement," had begun to compromise her fellowship principles. Those compromises became more obvious in the 1940's when Missouri began to work with the American Lutheran Church (ALC) in the area of military chaplaincy. Shortly thereafter Missouri changed its views on scouting - another example of compromise. By 1950, the deterioration of former principles had advanced to the point where the LCMS and the ALC had issued the "Common Confession, Part I." These changing developments in the doctrinal position of Missouri caused great anxiety among the people of the WELS. Throughout the 1950's the WELS attempted to bring Missouri back to the doctrinal position she had once shared with the WELS. Those attempts did not succeed; the anxiety turned to strife, strife turned to controversy, and the WELS

broke fellowship with the LCMS in 1961.

The controversy between the WELS and Missouri also resulted in an internal conflict between members of the WELS. Again, this controversy is long and complicated, but it was at the very heart of the problem that developed in Japan. This internal conflict centered on the exegesis of Romans 16:17 and its application to the situation involving the LCMS. The pastors and members of the WELS were basically divided into two groups. The majority group felt that, on the basis of Scripture, the WELS must continue to admonish the LCMS until it was obvious that the LCMS had become a persistent errorist and showed no possibility of returning from her more liberal position. This group maintained that the decision to break fellowship with the LCMS had to be made in light of sound Christian judgment. The other group, the minority, felt that on the basis of Romans 16:17 the WELS should sever fellowship with the LCMS immediately upon the realization that there was disagreement in doctrine. This group maintained that if fellowship were not broken with Missouri the WELS would be acting contrary to the Word of God. This conflict was much more involved and complicated than we have shown. A great deal of time could be spent in evaluating the exegesis of Romans 16:17 by both groups, in examining their points of disagreement, and in drawing conclusions as to who was right. We will, however, be satisfied with realizing that there was a conflict within the WELS itself. There were two answers given to the question: "When should the WELS break with the LCMS?"

In the 1953 Synod Convention the Synod drew up a statement reflecting the position of the WELS over against the LCMS. It was known as the "in statu confessionis." The WELS declared itself "in a state of confession." This meant that the WELS was restricting fellowship with Missouri and remaining in fellowship only for the expressed purpose of trying to reverse Missouri's fellowship trends with the ALC. When the 1955 WELS Convention convened, the question of remaining in fellowship with Missouri was once again in the forefront. However, the 1955 Convention, held in Saginaw, Michigan, could not fairly address itself to that question in the hope of getting a definite answer. The reason was that the LCMS met once every three years for a Synod-wide convention. They had met in 1953 prior to the WELS Convention and would not meet again until 1956. That meant that the LCMS did not have the opportunity to discuss in full synod session the WELS position over against Missouri. The WELS recessed the 1955 Convention until Missouri held its 1956 Convention. When the WELS reconvened in 1956 they were to evaluate the response of the LCMS to the WELS "in statu confessionis."

The 1956 LCMS convention showed some signs of returning to a more conservative position. They declined to join a unionistic Lutheran federation and shelved the "Common Confession." In light of these encouraging signs, the WELS postponed any vote concerning a break in fellowship. The 1956 Convention closed with no definite action against Missouri.

By the time the 1957 WELS Convention convened in New Ulm the minority group of pastors and members opposed to continuing fellowship with LCMS were beginning to speak loudly. Many of them were unable, for conscience sake, to tolerate the continued fellowship. Their voices were heard through the memorials to the Synod Convention. In fact there were so many memorials protesting the continued fellowship that a special Protest Committee had to be appointed to handle them. The majority group had taken much action before the convention and after the convention decided that it would not yet sever ties with Missouri. The minority group took further action. It accused the WELS of sinful disobedience to the Word of God as found in Romans 16:17 and afterward several of the men resigned in protest to majority actions. These men who resigned later became the founders of the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC). There was, however, one pastor who resigned in protest from the WELS before the 1957 Synod Convention ever began. His name was Pastor Fred Tiefel.

The WELS Door To Japan Is Shut

While pastors and laymen of the WELS were struggling with the LCMS fellowship problem in the States, Pastor Tiefel and his small congregation of Japanese believers were dealing with it in their own part of the world. Already in 1955 Pastor Tiefel began to express some views in his letters, his correspondence with the Japanese Board, and by his actions, that proved a rift was developing between Synod's majority and himself. In 1955 he urged the Board for the Japanese Mission to delay the calling of a second missionary to Japan until the intersynodical controversy had been cleared up. This request indicated that Tiefel did not support the Synod's handling of the fellowship question for two reasons. First of all, Tiefel and the Japanese congregation had for the previous two years been urgently requesting the second missionary to come and help with the tremendous amount of work that was open for the WELS. Now the request suddenly came from Tiefel that no one be sent. Secondly, if there was a controversy going on it would be beneficial to have all the support in the form of a second missionary as we will see more clearly later. Tiefel, in his correspondence to the Board was demonstrating his lack of support for the action taken by the Synod.

Pastor Tiefel also demonstrated his criticism of the Synod's continuing discussions with Missouri through his personal letters to relatives and friends. His remarks were so critical and widespread that the Japan Mission Board requested that he to speak to all concerned regarding the writing of such matters to relatives and friends which in the end would not be properly understood and as a result be harmful especially to the welfare of the Japan mission. These remarks did indeed have quite an effect, not only on the people living back in the States, but also on the Japanese congregation. The Japanese Christians came to support Tiefel's views throughout the entire controversy and even beyond.

Pastor Tiefel's position in regard to the Synod's action with Missouri became even more obvious in the fall of 1956. On October 14, 1956, Pastor Richard Seeger was commissioned as the WELS' second missionary to Japan upon graduation from the Seminary in the spring of 1956. Throughout the summer he took classes in the Japanese language and made other preparations for going to Japan. By October he was ready and eager to go. Although Pastor Seeger was called and commissioned in 1956 he did not leave for Japan until the spring of 1957. The sole reason for his delay was the refusal of Pastor Tiefel to accept him as a fellow-worker as long as the WELS continued its discussion with Missouri. But by that time the LCMS Convention seemed to indicate that it was returning to its former doctrinal position. Now Tiefel insisted that the WELS had been in error by remaining in fellowship as long as they did.

The already strained relation between Tiefel and the Synod worsened at the close of 1956. The Japan Mission Board received a letter from the Japanese congregation that was signed by chairman Mr. Hirosuka Oshima and Mr. Fukuo Shigeta. It included an evaluation of the letter from Pastor Tiefel. Both the letter and evaluation dealt with two major matters. The first involved the second missionary's call. The main thrust of the first letter was a refusal to accept the second missionary into fellowship. The refusal to accept Seeger was an interference with the matter of a divine call by Tiefel and his congregation. The second point indicated that the Japan congregation and their their Pastor rejected the position taken by the Synod at Watertown Convention in 1956. Because of the tremendous amount of concern expressed over this letter and evaluation the Japan Mission Board felt that a meeting between Tiefel and the Board was imperative. That meeting was set for January 30 and 31, 1957 in Milwaukee.

To give Pastor Tiefel the benefit of discussing this matter with a wider audience than the Japan Mission Board, the following were present at the January 30th meeting: President O.J. Naumann, President M.J. Witt, President A. Halboth, the Executive Committee of the Board for Foreign and Heathen Missions, the Executive Committee from Japan, the Executive Secretary for the Indian Mission, a representative of the Negro Mission Board, and Missionary Seeger. At this time the Executive Committee for Japan had a new chairman. Pastor Harry Shiley had replaced Pastor W.F. Dorn who had resigned due to ill health. The meeting was slated for the last two days of January but since it was not finished by the evening of the 31st it was continued a week later.

The discussion in the first two days of meeting was three-fold. First, Tiefel charged the WELS with sinful disobedience to the message of Romans 16:17,18 by its 1956 resolution. Secondly, Tiefel stated that his Japanese people agreed with him and supported him. And thirdly, he tendered resignation of his call as WELS' missionary to Japan on the 31st. The Board tried

ferverently to make clear the Synod's position and actions throughout these two days of meetings. When Tiefel submitted his resignation the Board urged him to reconsider for a week and advised him to confer with brethren in whom he had confidence. Tiefel agreed to reconsider the matter for a week and withdrew his resignation.

The following week, in the February 6, 1957 session, Pastor Fred Tiefel not only resigned his call as the WELS missionary to Japan, but also withdrew from fellowship with the WELS. This series of events was viewed by the Japan Mission Board as a Synodical matter and therefore it did not act on Tiefel's resignation immediately. The Board felt that it would be better to present the matter to the Synod Convention in Milwaukee later that year. This would also give the Board additional time to continue discussing the matter with Pastor Tiefel in hope of reaching the desired results of reconciliation.

The plans were made for the trio's trip to Japan. A date and time for meeting was set with Pastor Tiefel and the Japanese Christians. They planned to meet on April 26, 1957, at 10:00 am. The three men, President Naumann, Pastor Hoenecke, and Pastor Shiley, arrived in Tokyo on April 24 and checked into the Nikkatsu Hotel. The following day, April 25, Pastor Shiley called Pastor Tiefel by phone to confirm the appointment. Pastor Tiefel stated that he was unable to meet with the three men because he had to make a hospital call. He also said that he thought he had made his position clear to the Board in his latest letter (He quoted II John 5,6,9,10,11 in this letter: "If there come any unto you, and bring not his doctrine, receive him not into your house, etc."). Pastor Shiley replied that he would like to at least view the property that belonged to the WELS. Pastor Tiefel answered that he would only deal with the Board of Trustees regarding the property and that he would not let the Mission Board into his house. Pastor Shiley then reminded Pastor Tiefel that President Naumann was a member of the Board of Trustees and that he would like to see the property. President Naumann then spoke with Tiefel concerning the property but while he was still talking, Tiefel hung up on him. It was the last time that Tiefel would discuss anything with anyone who was a member of the WELS.

The three man committee tried the next day to get in contact with Tiefel. They took a cab to the WELS property - two houses perched above the street behind a high brick wall in a very expensive university-district (University of Tokyo) area of Tokyo and not among the ordinary people. The cab driver, George, upon seeing Tiefel's place of residence, could only offer the comment, "Very important person live here!" The gate to the property was locked and, after ringing the bell for five or six minutes, the three men returned to the hotel without receiving any kind of response. All attempts to be reconciled with Tiefel had failed.

The story, however, does not end here. There were more tragic and unfortunate circumstances to follow. When Tiefel resigned as missionary to Japan and withdrew from fellowship, the WELS mission door to Japan was shut tight and shut completely.

Everything that the WELS had started in Japan was lost! It didn't just lose a missionary, it lost everything. When the three man committee had spoken with Tiefel on the 26th of April they attempted not only to regain rightful possession of the property but also to at least receive copies of all the materials that had been produced in Japanese at the cost to the WELS. Tiefel refused even copies of material. Pastor Tiefel felt that the property in Japan and all the materials produced for Japan did not belong to the "current" WELS. Tiefel maintained that he had been called to serve as missionary to Japan by a Bible-believing, true church and the mission work that he was doing was in behalf of those Bible-believing true believers. He felt that the "current" WELS did not fit that description and maintained as a result that the property and materials did not belong to the "current" WELS. He would not turn anything over to a sinfully disobedient church. And he never did.

In their July 30 meeting the Japan Mission Board passed the following resolutions in an attempt to clear up the Japan problem with Pastor Tiefel:

Resolved, 1. That the Japan Mission Board immediately accept the resignation of Pastor Fred Tiefel as our missionary in Japan and that this announcement be made public at once; and that he be replaced at the earliest date possible.

Resolved, 2. That the proper authorities of Synod take steps immediately to notify the Japanese Government that Pastor Fred Tiefel no longer represents our Synod and that we are no longer responsible for him.

Resolved, 3. That we request the Board of Trustees with the cooperation of the General Board for Foreign and Heathen Missions to take immediate steps to repossess our mission property in Japan.

Resolved, 4. We recommend to the August convention of Synod, that we in the near future expand our work in Japan by calling other men in the field.

Resolutions 1, 2, and 4 would eventually be carried out, but Resolution 3 would never result in the repossession of the million dollar Japan holdings. The WELS could never repossess the property because they had never legally possessed it in the first place. According to Japanese law of the time a church body, such as the WELS, could not legally possess property unless it had been incorporated. Such incorporation was possible only for churches that had at least three pastors or missionaries in the country. The WELS, obviously, had not yet reached that point. So the WELS property in Japan was not legally owned by the WELS. It was owned by Tiefel. Since Tiefel had no intention of returning the property graciously, the WELS had no hope of ever repossessing the property through legal channels.

Regarding the materials that Tiefel had produced in Japan, the Board was told that if they wanted copies, they would have to wait until they became available for purchase on the open market. The matter involving the property and the materials had come to a

tragic and unfortunate conclusion for the WELS.

As we look back on the events of late 1956 and the first half of 1957 it becomes clear why we have called the years up to 1957 "the 'first' WELS mission in Japan." It had a definite beginning and a definite end. It began with Pastor Tiefel's work in 1952 and ended with his resignation in 1957. From the time Tiefel resigned on February 6, 1957, until the end of April of the same year the WELS was without a mission in the entire country of Japan. For when the WELS lost her missionary she also lost the mission.

An Evaluation

The question will invariably be asked in the future as it has been in the past: "Why did Pastor Fred Tiefel do the things he did?" There is a simple answer to that question: he followed his conscience. We must admire a man for following his conscience - especially in the face of nearly unanimous disagreement....even if we ourselves do not agree with his position and actions. That is the simple answer. But we wish to consider briefly some of the circumstances and situations which influenced Fred Tiefel's views and decisions. First we will consider two major situations and then several individual circumstances.

Perhaps the greatest contributing factors to the development of Tiefel's views were the things he saw as a missionary in Japan. We would be overlooking a great deal if we failed to consider the religious climate of Christianity in Japan. With but few exceptions, nowhere else in the world, could one find a more unionistic and syncretistic Christianity than exists in Japan. In a previous chapter we discussed the formation of the "kyodan" in 1941 and the effect it had on Christianity in Japan. The concept of the Kyodan - a unionistic association of churches - was still prevalent to a great extent after the war. It was present when Tiefel arrived and the LC-MS was involved in unionistic practices. The extent to which the LC-MS was involved in unionism was much greater in Japan than in the United States. What Tiefel saw in Japan was the LC-MS engaging in intolerable unionistic practices and he assumed that the Missouri practices in Japan were the similar to those practiced in the States. The fact that Tiefel was in Japan necessarily restricted his perspective of the entire controversial situation between the WELS and the LC-MS.

Another factor related to the above involves Tiefel's association with pastors of the Pacific-Northwest District. Throughout the LC-MS districts there were varying degrees of unionism. The WELS was dealing with Missouri on a synod-wide scale and not just on a local basis. In the Pacific-Northwest the WELS pastors noted a larger degree of unionism in Missouri than in other parts of the country. It was with pastors of the Pacific-Northwest District that Tiefel carried on most of his correspondence. And it was from them that he received a great

deal of support. After all, they were witnessing the same things Tiefel saw, but on a smaller scale.

There were several other individual circumstances which undoubtedly added coals to the fire of Tiefel's discontent. First of all, because of chairman Dorn's ill-health he was unable to stay in as close of communication with Tiefel as would have been desirable. This lack of communication caused a divergence between the Japan Mission Board and Pastor Tiefel. Secondly, the meeting between Tiefel and the Board during the final days of January, 1957 failed to produce a harmonious settlement. Thirdly, there was a misunderstanding concerning the purpose of the Board's visit in April, 1957. As we have mentioned previously this visit was considered by some to have been made only as a direct result of Tiefel's resignation and withdrawal of fellowship. The last circumstance of noteworthy significance and perhaps a crucial occurrence was an unfortunate error in copies of the Japan Mission Board's minutes of its January 17, 1957, meeting. The way the minutes appeared in print strengthened Pastor Tiefel's feeling that the majority stand of the Synod was being forced upon him and his Japanese Christians. (The minutes appeared in print as: "...our mission must be fully on the Synod stand..." They should have read: "...our mission must be fully informed on the Synod stand..."). Tiefel read the minutes containing the error just days before he decided to resign. These four circumstances contributed in varying degrees to the discontent and subsequent resignation of Pastor Fred Tiefel. Perhaps if one or all of these circumstances could have been avoided, eliminated, or clarified it might have been possible to avoid the hapless outcome.

It would be unduly generous quite misleading if we claimed that the circumstances surrounding Pastor Tiefel's discontent were legitimate excuses for his actions. Some of his actions cannot be condoned. The record of letters and conversations indicate that the manner in which he dealt with his brothers of the WELS often lacked charity and order. orderly way. Nor was it proper the way Pastor Tiefel circularized societies of WELS congregations and gave them an improper and incomplete picture of the case at hand. This was done in his personal letters to relatives and friends. But our purpose here is not to draw rigid and binding conclusions as to who was right and who was wrong - both sides have to share the responsibility. It is sad enough just to have the knowledge that for five years the WELS, by God's grace, had been bringing the Good News of the Risen Son to the Land of the Rising Sun and then have to admit that the WELS mission in Japan had come to an abrupt end. However, that abrupt end, by God's grace, would last only for a moment.

The History of Christianity in Japan

MAJOR EVENTS AFFECTING CHRISTIANITY IN JAPAN TO 1950

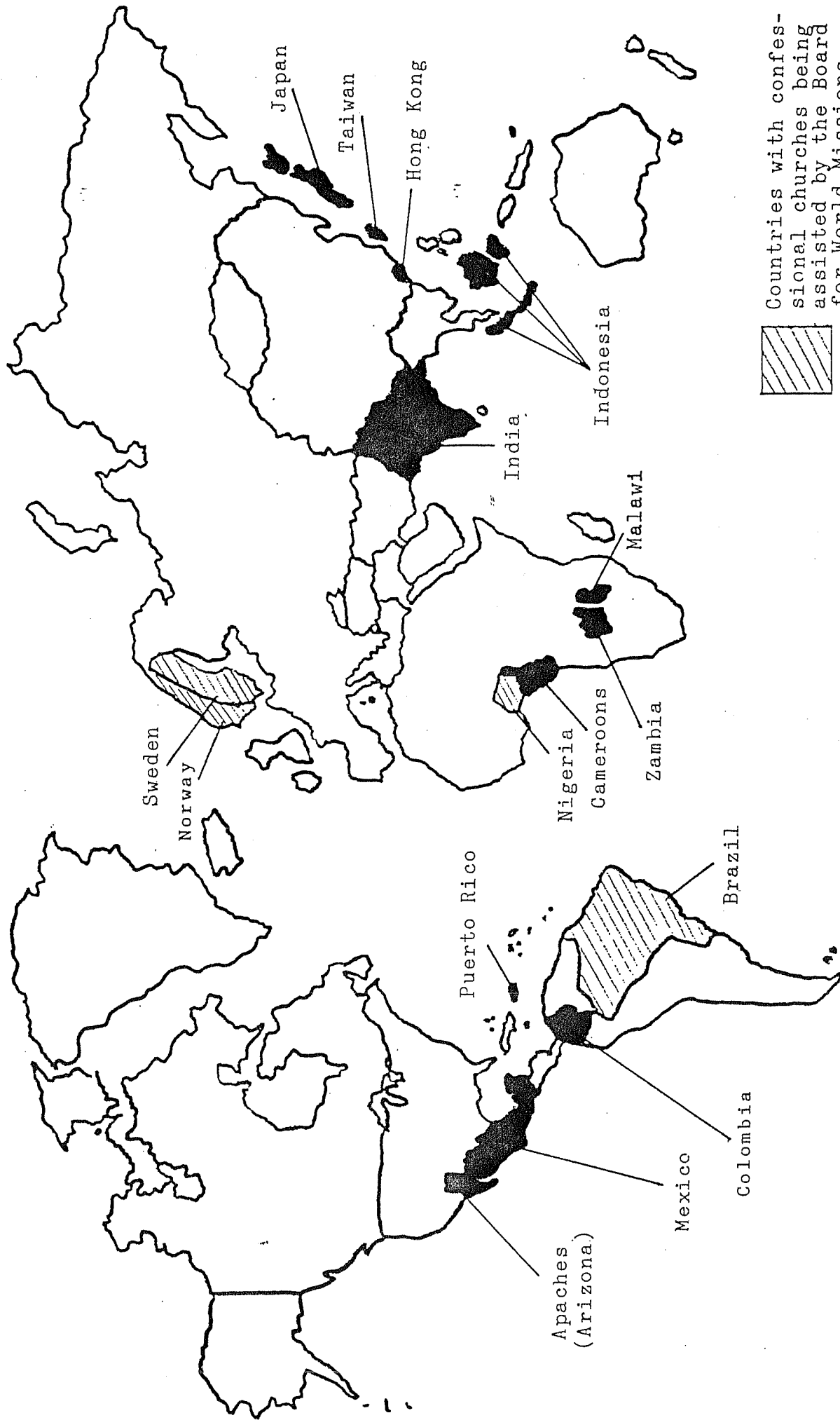
- 1549 Christianity formally introduced to Japan with the arrival of Jesuit Francis Xavier and companions in Kagoshima.
- 1587 Edict issued banning Christianity and expelling the Jesuits.
- 1597 Twenty-six Christians martyred at Nagasaki.
- 1614 Suppression of Christianity formally begun.
- 1637 Christian revolt at Shimabara.
- 1639 Beginning of Japan's two centuries of seclusion.
- 1854 Treaty with Perry; Japan emerges from seclusion.
- 1859 Christianity reintroduced by Protestant and Roman Catholic missionaries.
- 1873 Removal of public notices proscribing Christianity.
- 1890 Imperial Rescript on education.
- 1939 Religious Organizations Law.
- 1941 Formation of the United Church of Christ in Japan (Kyodan)
- 1945 Allied occupation; Religious Organizations Law abrogated.
- 1947 Lutheran churches withdraw from the Japan Christian Church.
- 1948 Imperial Rescript on education invalid.

The History of Christianity in Japan

HISTORICAL NOTES ON LUTHERAN ACTIVITY IN JAPAN TO 1950

- 1892 United Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the South send first missionaries to Japan.
- 1893 April 2 - First service held at Saga, Kyushu.
- 1898 Organization of Lutheran churches into one body; formation of the Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church.
- 1900 June 2 - First convention held at Saga.
- 1903 Statistics indicate four congregations, 114 members.
- 1909 September 27 - Seminary begun in Kumamoto.
- 1923 Twenty-two congregations; 2,045 members; 10 Japanese pastors.
- 1923 September 1 - Bethany House and Old Folk's Home established for the sufferers of the Kanto area earthquake.
- 1925 September 10 - Seminary moved to Tokyo.
- 1928 Reorganization of Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church.
- 1941 All church bodies forced into one Christian church body (Kyodan).
- 1947 Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church withdraws from the Japan Christian Church.
Japan Evangelical Church at this time consisted of:
United Lutheran Church in America
United Evangelical Lutheran Church
Augustana Lutheran Church
Evangelical Lutheran Church
- 1949 Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod sends first missionary.

WISCONSIN EV. LUTHERAN WORLD MISSIONS



Countries with confessional churches being assisted by the Board for World Missions

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Aug 19, 1953	Jul 14, 1955
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