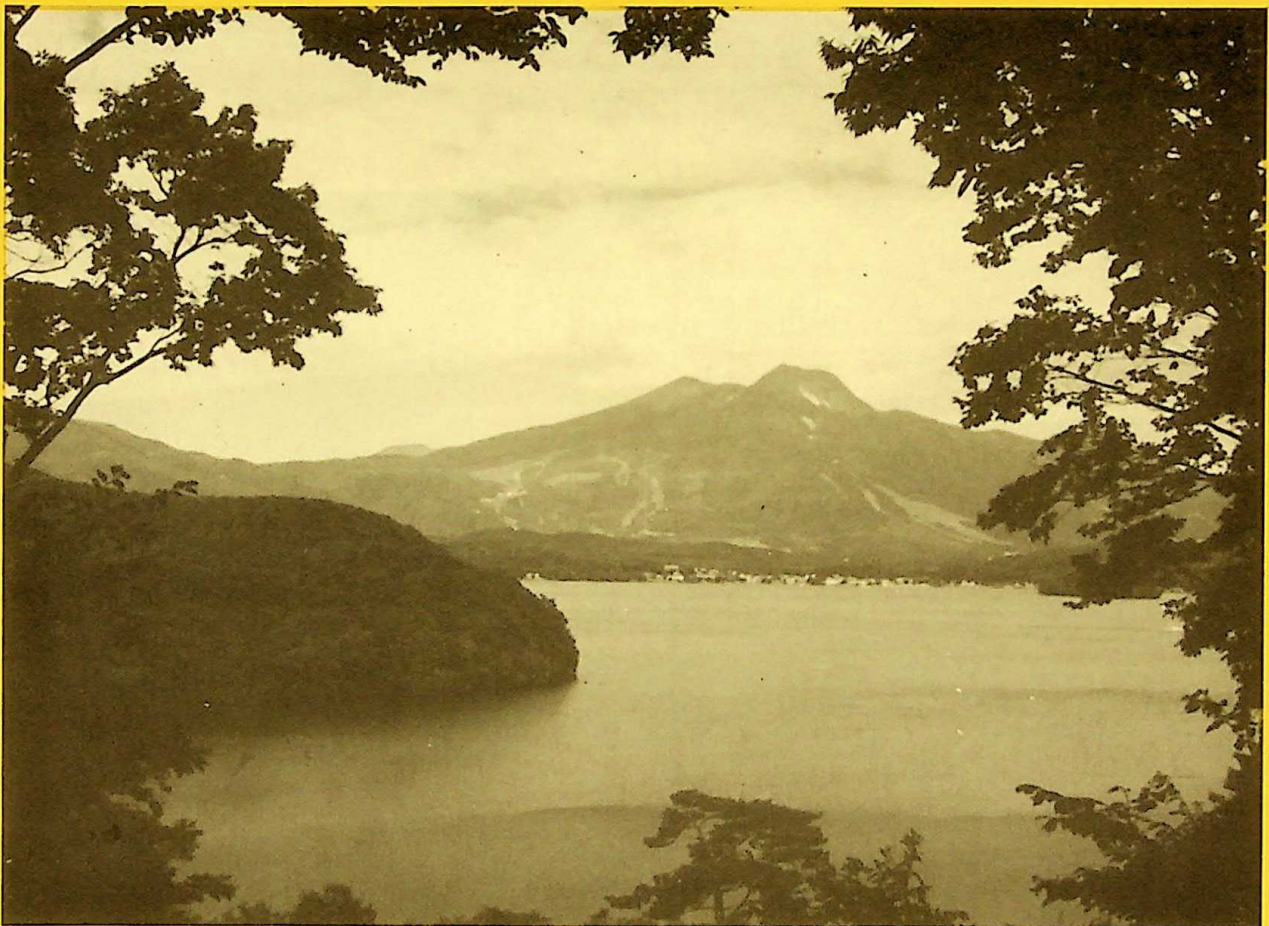


Volume 40, Number 1, 1990

JAPAN HARVEST

The Magazine for Today's Japan Missionary



Road-blocks to Church Growth

The Official Organ of the Japan Evangelical Missionary Association

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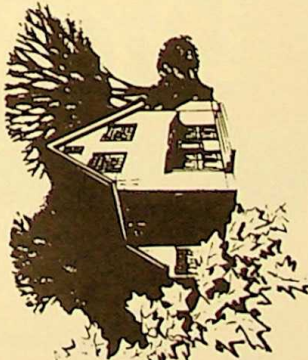
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	10:30 - 10:50 Fellowship Time Tea and Coffee	Prayer in Small Groups Fellowship Time Tea and Coffee	Prayer in Small Groups Fellowship Time Tea and Coffee	10:30 - 11:50 Worship Service
	10:50 - 11:50 Seminar Hour	Seminar Hour	Seminar Hour	Dr. Lawrence
Let us pray for renewal as we begin this Conference!	Recreation and Fellowship	JEMA International Picnic 12:30 at KCC	Ladies' Tea 2:00 - 4:00	Recreation and Fellowship
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The Magazine For Today's Japan Missionary

Volume 40, Number 1, 1990

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Cover Photo: Nojiriko in Summer
Credit: Siegfried Buss

The JAPAN HARVEST is the official publication of the Japan Evangelical Missionary Association, a non-profit organization which publishes the Japan Harvest four times a year. Its purpose is to promote primarily the cause of the evangelical church and mission in Japan, and secondarily the ministry and activities of the association.

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JEMA President's Page

A few weeks ago while riding the train back to Tokyo from a conference, I struck up a conversation with the person sitting next to me. He was a young businessman who worked for one of Japan's giant electronics firms, and was on his way home from an extended business trip. He looked like the typical, young "salary-man" he was - calm, assured, on the way up. As we chatted, I wondered what I really had to offer to someone like him - someone who was so obviously on the road to success.

As we talked, though, I was surprised to learn that some close relatives of his were members of the Catholic church. On finding that I was a missionary, he was interested to hear what differences there were between Catholics and Protestants. In the course of explaining this to him, he said that he knew a missionary family who lived in a town not far from him. He had studied English with this missionary, and had been to their home. These folks are well known to us (individual members of JEMA), and I asked him whether he had ever been to church or studied the Bible as a result of his association with them. But no, he regretted to say, he had not.

As he explained that he lived in a company dormitory in a small town, he handed me his name card. I did a double-take when I looked at his address and discovered that he lives in the same town where keen Christians from one of our churches have moved, and where a new church is now being formed through their vision and initiative. These Christian folks are well known in the town, and so I was not surprised to find that my new friend knew who they were. In fact, one of our missionaries who lives in a nearby town has been going periodically to help at this new church, and I have already been able to pass on this man's name card to her.

It was great being able to share my faith with a complete stranger, knowing that this was not a shot in the dark, but rather part of a network of contacts and links that had so obviously been ordered by the Holy Spirit. Included in the network were the missionary family, myself, the Christians in his small town, and even the missionary who would be taking his name and address to the new church the next time she went. It occurred to me that as I sat in my comfortable seat on the train, doing nothing more than just sharing with the person that happened to be sitting next to me, I was part of a team of missionaries, Japanese Christians, and churches which were cooperating (without knowing it) in reaching this one man with the truth of the gospel!

People are on the move all across Japan these days. A significant percentage of the country moves each year as people are transferred to new job locations. In other cases, husbands work away from home for certain parts of the year. During the three main vacation periods of the year, most of the nation, it seems, hits the road. Entire cities within cities are being built to accommodate the thousands moving into the large metropolitan areas - and even these cannot cope with the demand. The missionary population is also on the move. We are taking more frequent trips back and forth between home and field - and shifting to new locations within the country with greater frequency. More and more short-term workers are arriving to take their places among us. They are familiar faces to us just now, but they will soon be gone and be replaced by others.

In the face of all this fluidity, the day is long gone when any one of us, operating from one location, can get the job done on our own. More than ever, we need each other. JEMA is working on developing more efficient networks between us, both on the individual and organizational level, in order that together we may more effectively reach this country for Jesus Christ. Your comments and suggestions are welcome.

Barry Potter

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Roadblocks to Church Growth

by Stan Dyer

Stan will leave Japan this summer in order to begin a home assignment with his mission. Japan Harvest readers look forward to future contributions by Stan to the magazine he has served so well.

If the Gospel is the Power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes and if the Omnipotent God has included Japan in His cosmic plan of redemption, why is church growth in this nation historically so slow?

Recently I traveled two hours out of Tokyo to a rather progressive city in Ibaraki Prefecture. The local church where I preached that morning had been established thirty-five years ago. It had adequate land, good buildings and favorable location. The pastor, a seminary graduate, had been appointed to this city almost from the founding of the local congregation. The church operated a flourishing kindergarten that had influenced hundreds of homes of the community. But when I stood before the congregation, less than fifteen adults sat before me. The scene was depressing and discouraging. This church possibly represents many such small congregations across Japan. I wanted to empathize with this pastor as he struggled to minister in a seemingly unresponsive community.



Dr. Stan Dyer

After the worship service I asked him, "In your opinion, why is church growth so slow in Japan?"

To my query, he answered, "The people just don't come to church."

I returned to Tokyo with a very burdened heart. "But why do people not come to church," I wondered? Did the answer lie in the cultural climate or the ecclesiastical climate? Are the roadblocks to church growth found in the culture or in the church?

A few weeks later I visited a new town in Saitama Prefecture. This church had been pioneered only 3 or 4 years ago. Already over fifty worshippers crowd into its tiny home sanctuary. Occasionally more than ninety children are packed into the building for junior services. Why is there such a difference in rates of growth? What are the elements of opposition that hinder the growth of Japanese churches? Can missionaries take corrective measures with such elements for more dramatic positive increase in evangelistic outreach across Japan? These are some basic questions that I wish to consider here.

Workers in Japan's harvest need to look again at a few major potential road blocks to grow during the New Testament era. These difficulties then could be related to similar problems in current ministry in this country. From this comparison the pastor or missionary might develop some practical principles that might point to a more effective ministry across Japan.

Much has been written recently about cultural receptivity or resistance to the Christian message. In

1986, Dr. Paul Clark contributed a scholarly and appropriate article in the *JAPAN HARVEST*, "Understanding the Resistance of Japan to Christianity." Japanese culture is extremely complex and often misunderstood by the expatriots. Despite current modernization, ancient Folk-Shinto-Amaterasu roots lodge deep in the thought pattern and ceremony of the people. For effective contextualization of the Christian message such historiographic patterns and religious traditions need to be comprehended by Christians in this nation.

However, correct cultural understanding can never supercede correct ecclesiology. It is the deep conviction of this writer that the church of the New Testament Age, with its blemishes and shortcomings, could be considered a model for evangelism for any culture in any age. God has divinely arranged events and ministries in that early age that could become teaching tools for His workers of every succeeding generation. A careful consideration of first century internal and external difficulties could become instructional, if related to Japan evangelism today.

1. Political culture and persecution.

The church of the first century faced increasing persecution and martyrdom from government leaders. However it would seem that the historian Luke tended to downplay the role of politics in the oppression of the church. He wanted to show his friend, the Roman officer Theophilus, that Christianity was not a political threat to the empire. It was a spir-

itual force that could build the moral fiber of anyone from the slaves in the marketplace to the powerful senators in Rome. Paul, a Roman citizen, was burdened for the whole vast Roman empire. Seldom, if ever, did he campaign against the political skuldugery that was so prevalent among Roman leaders. Persecution did come, but it was not precipitated by activist rallies against evils of state and government.

It must be remembered that the Roman empire was evil to the core. Seldom in history had such a great political empire been corrupted to such depths as the Roman state. Tiberius (A.D. 14-37), the reigning emperor at the time of Christ, may have been mentally disturbed and was rumored to have lived much of his earlier years in senile debauchery.

Caligula, his successor, was a slave of his wild caprices and uncontrolled passions." ¹ Finally "Nero (54-68), the last of the Julio-Claudian line, has been handed down to posterity as the incarnation of monstrous vice and fantastic luxury."² He is considered the first major political persecutor of the Christian Church.

Although the Roman culture has been cited for its *pax Romana*, the great boon to early missionaries, local governments usually opposed the new faith. The emperor faced three major problems in governing the vast empire. The city mobs were constantly restless and unmanageable. The barbarians in conquered lands were unloyal to the system. Finally the power of the Roman generals often threatened the leadership of the empire.

Into this tottering political framework came the life-changing message of the Carpenter from Galilee. The political corruption, vice and debauchery could have mounted a severe threat to the pure message of the Cross. The despised Roman outposts of Judea seemed to be an inappropriate location for the Divine drama of the incarnation. But God had planned that in humble Bethlehem His Son would be born, and in

Judaism's capital He would die. This death would come at the consent if not the direct mandate of the Roman King Herod. The military conquests of the mighty Roman legions seemed totally to outclass the insignificance of Christian belief. The humility preached by Jesus' followers cut across the basic tenets of Roman power. The purity of the Christian life-style challenged the gross immorality of the day. The Christian symbol was a cross, not an eagle or a sword. The doctrine of the cross was for so many Romans an utterly foolish concept. The political worldview could well have been a serious roadblock to the growth of the infant church.

Furthermore, the Christians were accused of homicide, cannibalism and even arson. The conflagration that ravaged Rome on July 18, 64 could very well have been the result of Nero's wanton life-style. But the Emperor found a scapegoat in Christianity, accusing the Christians of setting fire to the city. Even in the distant provinces the Christians were hounded, beaten, imprisoned and martyred. Under the capital, the famous Catacombs contained the remains of ten generations of Christians. In these tunnels, more than 400 miles in length, the bones are entombed of some three million martyrs who accepted death rather than apostasy. With such governmental disapproval and harassment the church found strength and courage. The first three centuries of Christendom witnessed masses of converts across the vast Roman empire. By the end of this period, Rome itself could have been twenty percent Christian.

The Church in Japan has experienced several periods of political pressure and severe persecution. During the two and a half centuries immediately preceding the Meiji Restoration (1590-1854) Christianity was officially banned.

By 1590 Hideyoshi had brought the nation to a political unity. But later Ieyasu and Iemitsu lashed an intense opposition against the

Christian Church. The remarkable successes of Xavier and the Jesuits were almost completely eliminated. Shusaku Endo in his well-known historical novel *Silence* explains the ignominious pressure and political hatred unleashed against the church of that period.

The persecution under the Roman leadership of the first three centuries only motivated the church to greater witness and courage. The opposition faced by Japan in those dark pre-Meiji years almost obliterated the cause of Christ. What made the difference? The early church experienced an internal dynamic accompanied by a strong faith in an Almighty God. Its redemptive doctrine remained rooted in the knowledge that Christ had come in the flesh and for the sins of the world had been crucified. This same Christ has risen in victory from the dead. The gathered believers in Jerusalem had experienced a powerful infilling of the promised Paraclete. The church was imbued by an unswerving mandate to preach the boundless mercies of Christ both with powerful witness and holy living. The 18th and 19th century Japanese Church had allowed its doctrine to be confused and its faith to be weakened. When the church became weak inside it could not withstand the powers of government outside. Such political edicts became serious roadblocks to the effective growth of the church.

2. The Imperial Cult

The growth of emperor worship in the ancient Roman world marked the transition from republican government to imperial rule. In the East the subjects commonly acclaimed a divine role for their kings. Antiochus, the arch-enemy of the Jews, adopted the title of Ephiaphes, or "God manifest," and minted Roman coins with his own image pressed in a halo representing the god Zeus. When Roman armies overthrew

these nations, it was simple to convey such worship to the Roman Emperor. As graphically described in the Shakespearian drama, Julius Caesar was enticed into claims of divinity. Later, Augustus was certainly worshipped as a god by his subjects. This imperial cult was regulated by officials in the distant Roman provinces. "Refusal to worship the Emperor could have fatal consequences, particularly under Gaius, Nero or Domitian who took their divinity seriously."³ Following Nero's tragic demise, the jostling for control across the vast Roman Empire required a new divine image. Furthermore, hereditary succession, either by descent or adoption, was attempted by the Caesars to legitimize their divinity and to promote their continuity.

The First Century Christians, though seldom violently opposed to Roman rule, could never bow in worship before the altar of the Caesars. Both Caesar and Christ

claimed world domination. The Christians travelled the Roman roads, sailed the Roman galleys, and enjoyed the *Pax Romana*. But their allegiance focused on Christ as King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Ephesus, the center of the Roman province in Asia Minor received St. Paul's famous pastoral epistle. In this letter the apostle stated clearly that Christ had been raised from the dead and was seated in the heavenly place, "High above all government and authority, power and lordship, and every name that is named, not only in this but also in the future world."⁴

Paul later wrote about this same Christ who "ascended far above all the heavens to fill the universe."⁵ Such a high Christology was seen as a direct confrontation to the Imperial cult. The Christians in such worship were considered politically disloyal and dangerous to the empire. The severe persecution against the Christians that swept across the empire could have greatly stunted the growth of the infant church. But

it did not! The painful blows that fell upon the believers only fanned the sparks of faith into burning flames throughout the provinces and beyond.

By contrast, the persecution that was leveled against the Japanese church of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as mentioned above, almost decimated its existence. The difference could never be found in the intensity of the persecution or the nature of the surrounding culture. The only explanation must be found in the burning faith, strong doctrine and vibrant holy lives of the Christians themselves.

3. Roman Religion

Rome's second Etruscan king, Numa Pompilius, codified the laws and religious lore of the early Roman world. Thus the most ancient elements of Roman religion have been called "the religion of Numa." According to pre-

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Julian calendar fragments, the year began with a sowing festival in March. This month also represented a time for the polishing of war trumpets for battle. Since war was an annual event, the cavalry horses were drilled in early spring as the soldiers invoked Mars, the god of battle for safety and victory for Rome's armies. During April the Romans sacrificed pregnant swine upon their altars to guarantee agricultural fertility. Other special prayers were raised for the growing crops, especially to ward off plant diseases and insect damage. Early agricultural religion became the most fundamental bases for Roman religious lore and practice.

The common pagan beliefs of Roman society could have become a major threat to the Christian faith and a roadblock to its growth. But it did not! Paul never actively campaigned against the Roman religions as a focus of his evangelistic preaching. Instead, he proclaimed the power of God

in Jesus Christ that could nullify the might of pagan superstition. The Christ who had met him on the Damascus Road had called him to proclaim a faith that was greater than the religion of Numa. This same Christ had mandated Paul to turn men from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God. No external religious system could effectively stand in the way of the mighty movement of Christian faith. Roman religion was never a serious roadblock to first century church growth.

However the Japanese Christian so frequently points to the deeply rooted Buddhist/Shinto tradition as a major hindrance to growth. A recent Hayama Missionary Seminar booklet reported the results of a survey conducted among the leaders of the major protestant missions in Japan. The question was asked, "What in your opinion is the greatest hindrance to church growth in Japan?" The missionary community overwhelmingly felt that material-

ism, coupled with a deep pagan culture web, would be the strongest factor to hinder the progress of the gospel. Thirty-four percent of all leaders cited the religious culture as the greatest factor in lack of growth.⁶ Could this really be a gross overstatement and simple rationalization?

4. Roman Society

The social context into which the early Christians entered was one of decadence and materialism. The emperors had increased their budget for Rome's military might as well as for her public services. Augustus led the way in liberal expenditures for great roads, waterways and bridges. The prosperity of the empire can hardly be exaggerated as great wealth flowed into the coffers of the nation's leaders. Trade guilds developed in every city as commerce and industry strengthened the economic stability of the empire.

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Such trade guilds became sporting clubs that fostered social interaction among members of each respective occupation. The meetings for the trade guild usually assembled in the temple of the god of each respective trade. Feasting, live entertainment, and idol worship became vital elements in such meetings. The temple prostitutes provided the main attraction for the members of each guild.

No Christian could associate with such worldly entertainment or indulge in such immoral activity. The ethical character of the lives of the new believers stood in stark contrast to the sordid culture of the day. Such social pressure could have become a serious roadblock to the advance of the kingdom. The gross materialism of Roman luxury could have slowed the growth of the new faith. But it didn't! The preaching of the pure gospel confronted the licentiousness and materialism of that age and lifted mankind into

a holier lifestyle. Could not such a message still confront the social affluence and decadent luxury of present day Japanese culture?

5. Real Roadblocks to Japanese Church Growth

The political, religious, social and imperial conditions of first century Rome may not be so dissimilar to those of Japan today. Prosperity from industrial genius has never fully robbed Japan of its Shinto/Amaterasu folk cult. The towering skyscrapers can never ensconce the superstition which still hounds the average Japanese. Shrines are still crowded at the beginning of the year. High school students still flock to Nikko, Kyoto or Kamakura. Shinto priests are still called to building locations for purifying rites before the beginning of construction. Mysticism, tradition, ancestral worship and superstition cloud the social affairs of Japanese life.

The church has looked with apprehension at such visible evidence of Shinto resurgence and feared for its life. Missionaries bemoan the fact that Japanese culture is basically pagan and stoutly resistant to the Christian faith. Church leaders believe that Shinto faith and political fancy can slow the aggressive outreach of the Church. Recently a book was published in Japanese about the enthronement ceremonies (Daijosai) that will take place in November through which the new emperor will be invested with a divine spirit. Christians seem fearful of the loss of democracy and an apparent revival of folk religions. But can any culture really withstand the power of the gospel if that message is effectively communicated in the power of the Spirit? Can any world system deter the growth of the Christian religion if God's men communicate God's message through God's method? Could the nature of the church inside be the greatest roadblock to its own spiritual

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and numerical development ?

Recently a poll was taken of seminary students, pastors and teachers relating to the real issues involving slow church growth in Japan. Of the 104 responses received, seventy-nine related to internal problems while only twenty-five pointed to external factors.

External reasons cited included the problem of tennoism, idol worship, and Japanese ceremonial religion. Social materialism, family solidarity and pagan tradition were mentioned by several. Financial satisfaction in business and leisure, according to one response, tends to eliminate the need for faith or religious belief. Japanese affluence has, in effect, produced a nation of atheists. Another claimed that the so-called New Religions have attempted to fill Japan's religious void thus robbing the church of its opportunities.

However, the majority of the responses pointed to a lack within the church itself. Could the Christology and ecclesiology of the Japanese Church result in major roadblocks that choke its own life and render its message ineffective and insipid? Ron Jenson believes that "Church growth depends on health. All living things grow unless disease impedes growth." ⁷ The diagnosis of such disease in the Japanese church may begin a new process of spiritual treatment and resurgence of health.

According to the above mentioned poll, a major roadblock to Japanese church growth is its self image. The church is seen by the outside world as dark, secretive, pessimistic and negative. Many Christians show little effervescent joy in their daily lifestyle. Denominational competition drowns out the sincerity of real purpose in evangelistic endeavors. Has the Church in Japan become introspective, listless and visionless? Possibly the church cannot grow because it has no faith for growth.

The disease of poor self image must be erased before the church can triumphantly possess this cul-

ture for Christ.

The second major roadblock to growth, according to the poll, focused on the pastor's abilities and character. The imperial structure that is frequently cited in Japanese culture is allowed to infiltrate the church. As a result its total mobilization and motivation is lost. The pastor and missionary must be a mover of men, a discipler of the believers as well as a minister to the multitudes. Does the church experience too much organization but too little organic life? Does the pastor talk about evangelism without evangelizing? Does he expound great sermons about the Bible without communicating Biblical knowledge? One response wrote about "believers who do not know what they believe, evangelists who do not know how to evangelize, and pastors who cannot truly pastor." It would seem that the pastor holds a major key to spiritual progress and numerical growth.

The third roadblock to church growth as cited in the survey centered in the body life of the church community. Ample time and opportunity for refreshing fellowship seemed lacking. Often mere schedules of church functions could dampen the spontaneity of the *Koinonia* of the worshippers. A lack of deep soul-searching intercession hinders the outpouring of God's Spirit on both the internal church activities and the pagan culture outside. Christian compassion must enter the secret place of prayer and weep for hurting, lonely humanity. Prayer, mighty prevailing prayer, can break down Shinto/Bhuddist barriers and open sin-cruised hearts to the Gospel.

Finally the poll stated that the church's lack of solid teaching could stunt its growth and deny its members to fuel with which they can become ambassadors for their Lord. "The Bible is not read much in our homes or studied in our churches," one student wrote.

(continued on page 26)

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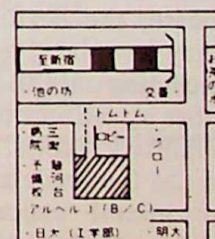
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Tienanmen One Year After: a Christian Perspective

by Laverne Snider

Mainland China, embracing one fifth of the world's population, longs for a better tomorrow. The remaining four fifths of the world also desires a better tomorrow for China's 1 billion, 120 million population, a future void of yesterday's dark, cultural revolution, oppression, and the present bitter experiences following the June 4, 1989 Tienanmen Square incident.

Since the Nationalist government's downfall in 1949, citizens of China have been promised repeatedly a better tomorrow by the communist government. From 1972 on, a rapid series of events took place within China itself and in its relationship with the outside world which gave Chinese citizens some promise of hope. But the youth of China, those under 30 years of age and comprising 65% of China's population, were gaining an awareness of the possibility of a much better life for their nation. They were becoming impatient with the government's seeming unwillingness to usher China into the new day which they envisioned. Longing for change and determination to bring it about, engendered what the world soon came to know as the student-led democracy movement.

Then came the Tienanmen Square massacre. According to one estimate, the death toll of June 4 may have been as high as 7000 including 1000 soldiers killed either by citizens or during the intra military clashes. Civilian deaths in the hundreds also took place in several major cities. With strict control of the news

media since June 4, the public has certainly not been accurately and fully informed of the number of persons who have been detained, imprisoned and executed since that date. The government's intent in such rigid information control is at least twofold: the restoration of order and the projection of a positive China image to the world.

Will there be a better tomorrow for China? Opinions vary. With the present curtailment of freedom in China and the constant harassment of its citizens it is relatively easy to be pessimistic. On the other hand, one may choose to be optimistic. Supporting evidence can be cited for the holding of either position. The truth of the matter is, there is sufficient reason for feelings of both despair and hope.

China's present leaders, solidly leftist after the purge of Shao Ziyang who was charged with fraternizing with the short-lived democracy movement, are intent on eradicating counter revolutionaries, re-indoctrinating the nation on the virtues of communism and on convincing the outside world that China is peaceful and progressive. It is also quite clear that the Chinese Communist Party intends to stubbornly resist any movement towards the breakdown of the communist system which is currently taking place in Eastern Europe including the Soviet Union itself.

The Christian church is experiencing a new wave of persecution, both in the government recognized Three Self Patriotic

Movement churches and in the burgeoning non registered house church movement. Christians, as others, are presently required to participate in political indoctrination classes and particularly to study and confirm Deng Ziaoping's speech justifying the National People's Army action and the communist party platform.

Prior to the June 4 incident, leaders of the Three Self Patriotic Movement churches expressed their support for the democracy movement. However, following the incident they were strangely silent, that is, until the silence was broken with the September issue of Tien Feng, the official organ of the Chinese Christian Council which pledged full support for the communist party. Christian pastors have been ordered by the government to provide information on believers who supported the democracy movement. With the present strict enforcement of the Identity Card Law, many itinerant evangelists are experiencing difficulty in traveling freely around the country. In fact, over the past few months many Christian pastors have been arrested; Bibles and other Christian literature are being confiscated. Some China watchers predict a persecution of the church no less severe than that of the culture revolution years.

Now, on the brighter side. Tienanmen Square has been cleared of all the debris following the June 4 carnage. Government sponsored celebrations have been held on the same location which

only months previously was the site of hope and hatred, of intense pain, and eventually, of death. But China's citizens can never forget that they were betrayed. The People's Liberation Army, supposedly a protector of the people, had ruthlessly turned against the people with its tanks and guns. Nor could they dismiss from their minds the fact that the communist party during the early days of the democracy movement was somewhat sympathetic but had so quickly turned on the movement with a vengeance. The end result was disillusionment with Marxism, a breakdown of trust in spite of confession of loyalty and cooperation (forced under government pressure), and a flight of persons in various walks of life from communist ideology and rulership. The political situation in China, while appearing somewhat stable at the present time, will undoubtedly erupt again. No one can accurately predict when. Though Chinese party leaders are presently intent on maintaining their absolute control over China, inevitably change will take place, especially in light of the unrelenting political reforms stimulated largely by Russia's Michael Gorbachev and which are taking place throughout the communist world.

The student-led democracy movement received wide acclaim across China and around the world. China longs for democracy and will press towards it over the next few years, eventually succeeding. The movement for democracy would probably not have been impeded to the extent it has since June 4 last year if the demonstrations had not become excessive and eventually violent. It was the violence which gave the government leaders justifications for reprisals.

The Christian church of China will continue to survive and prosper in terms of quality of life and numerical increase of believers regardless of the difficulties

which may lie ahead. Who could have predicted that since the communist takeover in 1949 and the harsh treatment of Christians in the decades since that time that the number of Christians would increase from one million to an estimated 50 million? The principal reasons for such phenomenal growth are: Christians learned to triumph through suffering, have experienced miracles arising out of their vibrant faith in God, and were exuberant and bold in their witness for Christ. Christians in the China of tomorrow will be equally resilient and will stand firmly for Christ, come what may.

A most encouraging phenomenon today is that although the government of China constantly tries to curtail Christian activities in the nation, Christians outside China are sought for and welcomed to China to assist in China's unrelenting drive to modernize the nation. Why? The reason is that the excellent life style and the high moral standards of Christians provide desirable models for China's youth. Though invited to China for this lofty purpose, Christians are expected to "cool" their evangelistic activities among the people.

Christians world-wide are urged to pray for China — its government and its citizens that there may indeed be a brighter tomorrow for China. We must also pray for Hong Kong and Macao which are scheduled for reversion to China in 1997 and 1998.

Taiwan, too, we must not forget, especially since mainland China intends to ultimately gain control of this province of China, and if it is necessary, by force. Residents of Hong Kong, especially, are fearful of what the future may hold for them as evidenced by the large numbers who have already emigrated and the flow to other countries continues unabated as the year 1997 looms on the horizon. Pray for Christians who leave and more especially for

those who will not or cannot leave, that for all Chinese Christians, their faith will be strong and their Christian testimony vibrant and compelling like that of their Christian brothers and sisters in mainland China.

Robert Morrison, first Protestant missionary to China, upon arrival in Guangzhou (Canton) when asked by a foreign merchant, "Do you expect to make any impact on China?" replied, "No, but I expect God will." God continues to make an impact on China today in response to the great volume of prayer support arising daily from the hearts of Chinese Christians and Christians worldwide who love this great nation and its people.

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REACHING JAPAN'S ELDERLY FOR CHRIST

by Dale Bidwell

Surprising insights from the JEMA Seminar, May 14, 1990

Can Japan's plus 70 group be won for Christ? When we came to Japan 12 years ago this was considered perhaps the hardest group to evangelize. The prevalent thinking was that *otoshiyori* were too deeply indoctrinated in Buddhism/Shintoism for too long to be able to change.

Dorothy Peters, for one, does not accept this theory. As she visits the elderly in Yamanashi Ken she finds that her visit often sparks a memory of a previous encounter with missionaries, the Bible, a tract, etc. Seeds planted years earlier now come to fruition as she goes to the elderly with God's Word and Love.

Rev. Takahashi and Mrs. Takamoto of the Hamadayama Christian Church told of their church's visitation ministry at a local nursing home.

Mrs. Takamoto was inspired to minister to the elderly when her own aged mother received Christ. Now at Hamadayama Church the *Fujinkai* has largely taken over the nursing home ministry and makes up a weekly visitation schedule. According to Mrs. Takamoto and assistant pastor Takahashi, any Christian can visit in secular nursing homes if the following procedures are observed: (1) Begin by visiting someone you know. (2) Write your name plus that per-

son's name in the register. (3) Go to *communicate* with that person--listening, finding out about needs. Most elderly suffer from having no one to interact with. (4) Minister the Word and pray with that person in a quiet manner. The staff will object to a general evangelistic meeting. (5) If more than one person lives in the room, meet everyone before leaving. Later, you and/or members of your church can return to minister to them too. People who are visited regularly by the church become the envy of other patients. This opens the door for an expanding ministry. (6) Christians in the home are free to organize a Christian meeting to which the pastor may be invited. (7) Make a book in large print with important Scripture verses. For the aged, this works better than reading long passages. The same may be done with hymns - using only a few well-known hymns over and over works best. (8) In many cases, taped singing and messages may also be used.

Praise God! People are coming to Christ through this ministry.

Katsuo Kishita, director of Nozominomon (Gate of Hope), a Christian nursing home in Futsu Shi, told of the rapid aging of Japanese society, the result of low birthrates. People in Japan now live longer than in any other country. The image of *rojin* homes among the Japanese is very low. But the fact is that people in such homes are healthier and live fuller lives, primarily because of various social programs and not being permitted to sleep all the time. Those who live at home with their own families have a growing sense of worthlessness because they can no longer help around the house. Modern appliances are often a conundrum. Suicides and double suicides are increasing in this age group. Longer life spans have become a mixed blessing. At Nozominomon this syndrome is checked by a loving staff and volunteers who hold Christian values. Half the elderly receive Christ after coming to the home!

A surprising number of elderly want to study English according to several seminar participants. When we started Silver Club last February we offered two recreation choices: crafts and English. So far everyone wants to study English - we had to release the crafts teacher. The recreation time is followed by a 20 minute Christian video (many LifeLine programs are appropriate for the aged) or Bible Study. We close Silver Club with a light lunch from the local *onigiri* shop for which we charge ¥300.

The possibility of the elderly coming to Christ increases dramatically if a son or a daughter believes. One seminar participant said, "I ask our Christian people to introduce me to their aged parents and grandparents."

After this introduction friendships usually grow quickly and natural opportunities for sharing Christ follow.

Ann Underland of Caring, Inc. told how her New Jersey church began a day care program for elderly. The program has spread to several other area churches and now has a budget of several million dollars. One elderly man in the community was found in a permanent fetal position due to depression. Caring Christians found him, brought him regularly to the day care center. Now, even ten years older, he is cheerful and mentally sharp. (We met him on video tape!) Such centers allow working families to continue caring for elderly parents at home. Chapel programs bring the Good News into their lives. In Japan, the Yao Free Church is planning to emulate Caring's program. Hopefully, Yao will then serve as a model for other churches to follow.

How should we follow up such a seminar to insure continued concern for *otoshiyori dendo*? Various suggestions were put forward: (1) Ask JEA to establish a Commission on the elderly (2) Regular columns in Japan Harvest featuring ministries to the elderly (3) A network for those who minister to the elderly.

But most productive, I believe,



Rev. Dale Bidwell

would be for each of us to prayerfully examine our ministry and determine where we have opportunities to reach out to the aged with Christ's love. Bringing our concern to our local church and denominational boards could also bear fruit.

One of Christ's last acts before dying on the cross was to provide for the care of his aging mother Mary. To John he said, "Behold thy mother." To us who bear the Good News in this land with its millions of precious aged, is He not saying, "Behold Japan's elderly. Tell them now for the night cometh when no man can work."

Editor's Note: With Dale Bidwell going on furlough this summer, the Chairmanship of the Prayer and Evangelism Commission passes to Richard Kropp.

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Dr. William Lawrence

Vision or Vacuum?

by Dr. William Lawrence

Dr. Lawrence, 1990 JEMA Karuizawa Summer Conference speaker, is Executive Director of the Center for Christian Leadership, and is also Professor of Pastoral Ministries at Dallas Theological Seminary.

To most, the Beatles' song "Eleanor Rigby" concerns the futility of loneliness. But there is another theme in that song, the theme of the church's futility to make a difference in the world. Father McKenzie darns his socks at night when no one is there. What does he care? Father McKenzie works on a sermon no one will hear. No one comes near. The message is clear: the church is just as much a loser as Eleanor Rigby.

Now the Beatles, hardly theological authorities, are against the church and all we stand for. But they represent the average person's opinion that the church is an irrelevant institution which holds no interest for him.

Why is this? Certainly, many are blind, but there may be another reason. Can it be that the church contributes to this thinking because it so lacks vision that for many it has become a vacuum, a place empty of purpose and impact?

The church needs vision, but instead it is often generic, marked by a bland kind of sameness around the world. Vision delivers us from blandness, and we now look at five elements of effective vision that turn us from sameness to distinctiveness.

First, vision understands the biblical command. Jesus' command is clear: make disciples of the nations. Therefore, the church must have a whole nation vision of what it is to do and cannot be satisfied with anything less than achieving a penetrating impact. Christian vision de-

mands obedience to the biblical command, even when it is not succeeding.

Second, vision understands the cultural resistance. The church may be a vacuum at times, but it never exists in a vacuum. All around there is a culture that opposes it, often in very strong ways. Culture seeks worldwide to be self-protective. The Chinese language is a far more effective barrier to outsiders than the great wall of China ever was. The Japanese understand this truth as well as anybody and use their culture as a powerful shield of protection. Certainly, their refusal to stand out individually as well as the difficulty of their language effectively blocks out Christianity. The willingness to be different, to be a witness ("martyr"), is at the heart of our faith, and it is the only way the church has ever grown. Until this cultural resistance is overcome Christianity will never penetrate Japan, and anyone working in this country is well aware of this.

Third, vision understands the resource requirements. In missions there are four kinds of resources: physical, personal, financial, and spiritual, i.e., buildings, people, money, and the Holy Spirit. Although we say the Spirit's power is our most important resource, we often seem to be more aware of our problems than of His impact. Those with vision see the problems and take all the resources seriously, but they are marked by intense spiritual discipline, strong dissatisfaction with disobedience, and an unwillingness to allow explanations to become excuses. Certainly, the reasons why missions is not making the desired impact in Japan or anywhere else must be considered seriously, but they cannot become excuses that keep us

from obeying God. To turn a vacuum into vision, there must be people who look at the barriers and resources realistically and who know that the resource of the Holy Spirit is the only one that overcomes the barriers.

Fourth, vision understands personal commitment. The only people who ever see the mirage of vision become the reality of accomplishment are those who make the personal commitment to pursue it with all their energy. These people totally abandon themselves to achieving the aim, no matter what the cost to them. I have found in my own life that age and circumstances blunt my commitment, so I must consistently renew my dedication or run the risk of seeing it overcome by the veneer of Christian excuses which simply cover up my failure to obey God's command.

Fifth, vision understands organizational elements. Vision is not accomplished automatically, but through careful planning which begins with an awareness of need, then dares to dream of meeting that need, next moves to the pursuing of a purpose, and from there to specific strategies and goals that will implement the vision. This demands organization, structure designed around the vision and its aims. Such structure may require reorganization, a change from the ineffective old to a more effective new. Even though we profess to be committed, we often resist change out of fear and concern for our own comfort. Unless we turn from such self-centeredness, we will never see our vision fulfilled.

(continued on page 26)

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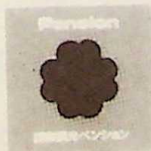
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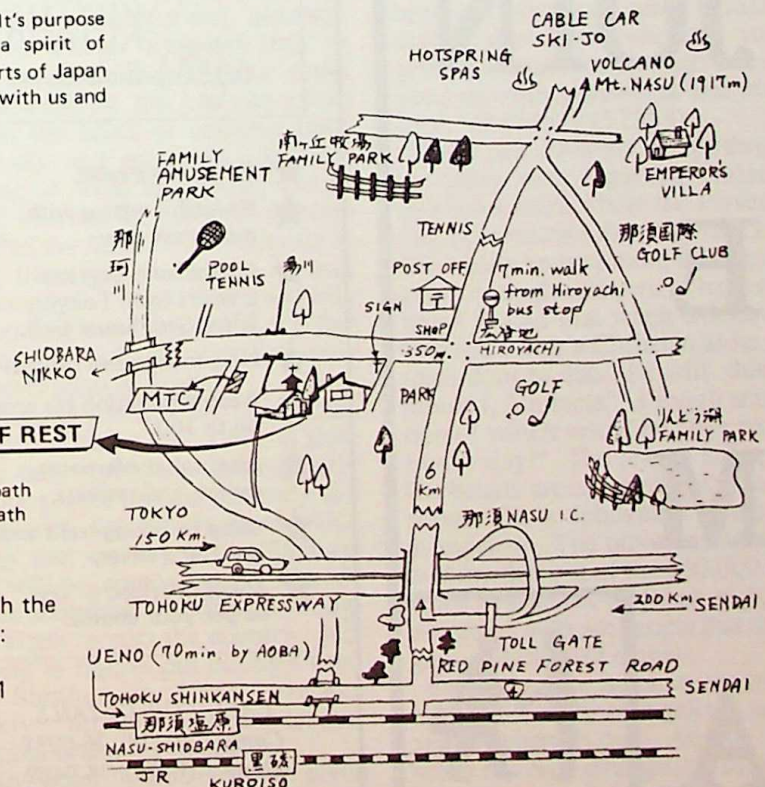
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He is Author of a number of books and publications including: A Christology For Our Day; Rediscovering the New Testament; Conservative Baptist Distinctives; The Living Bible – Not Just another Version; Handbook to the Bible.

As a Conference speaker he has spoken at: Moody Founders Week, New York A.A.J.E. Prophetic Conference, Winona Lake Bible Conference, Muskoka Bible Conference, Hephzibah House Bible Conference, Rumney Bible Conference, and several others.

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The Current Cult Problem in Japan ... and What We Can Do About It.

By William Wood

Mr. Wood leads Word of Truth Ministries, Japan. He also serves on JEA's Commission for Social Concern.

*"But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons."
(1 Timothy 4:1, NAS)*

I believe this scripture to be a prophecy that is finding specific fulfillment in the days in which we now live. Our world, as never before, is being flooded with a barrage of false gospels and doctrines of demons. Satan, aware of the fact that his time is limited, is out doing his best to deceive honest, truth-seeking people. Cult groups, especially in Japan, are experiencing unprecedented growth.

Recently I had an opportunity to obtain a copy of the Jehovah's Witnesses 1990 Yearbook. According to the figures listed in their yearbook, Jehovah's Witnesses in Japan during 1989 grew at a rate of 7%, giving them a total of 133,846 baptized believers in Japan. That means there are 133,846 J.W. evangelists at work everyday spreading the poison of Watchtower doctrine all across Japan. Last year Jehovah's Witnesses in Japan spent a total of 65,946,087 hours doing door to door evangelism. That works out to 41 hours per evangelist per month. Jehovah's Witnesses, in order to devote more

time to evangelism, will quit their jobs. They will give up a chance at getting college education. They will forgo marriage. They will abandon plans of having a family.

Needless to say, the Jehovah's Witnesses, being as zealous as they are, are creating innumerable problems for the cause of the gospel in Japan. They sow seeds of spiritual confusion among Christians. They steal potential converts. They give the unsaved a false and distorted view of Christianity, making future evangelism a very difficult task.

About two and half years ago, I went to a small town in Gifu Prefecture to visit a young man who had been saved out of the Watchtower as a result of reading one of our books.

It was amazing to hear of how God had reached down and touched this young man's heart, and at the same time had given him a burden to preach the true gospel in his area. (He is now in his third year of Bible School.) However, I was also deeply troubled to discover that, although there was a large "Kingdom Hall" in his town, there was only one small church, a church that was non-active and on the brink of collapse both physically and spiritually. And, according to what my young friend shared with me, the people in the area regarded the Jehovah's Witnesses as being the express essence of true Christianity. I have found that this is becoming more and more of a fact not only in Gifu, but also in countless other areas of Japan.

As already stated, J.W. evangelists in Japan number 133,000, but this figure does not include approximately 250,000 people that are currently studying with the Watchtower. This means that on any given Sunday, there will be approximately 400,000 people attending meetings at "Kingdom Halls" across the country. According to figures put out by Christian Shinbun in Japan, average weekly attendance at Protestant churches is about 250,000.

Many other figures could be given on other cult groups as well, but the

main thing I want to touch upon in this article is, what can we do about the cult situation in Japan?

In my seminars across the country, I point to Stephen in the book of Acts as the individual that we need to try and imitate if we are going to do anything about the cult problem. In particular, there are three things in his life and ministry that are absolutely essential in dealing with the cults.

1. His knowledge of the Scriptures
2. His evangelistic zeal and vision
3. His God-given wisdom

First of all, Japanese Christians have to become people who know their Bibles. It's not enough to know what we believe, we need to know why we believe, and be familiar enough with God's Word to be able to show people Scriptures that support our faith.

"But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence." (1 Peter 3:15 NAS)

In our cult seminars, we go through the Bible with Japanese Christians and show them where the verses are that demonstrate the deity of Christ, His bodily resurrection, salvation by grace through faith, etc. I have often heard it said that when a Jehovah's Witness meets a Christian as he goes from door to door, he will think to himself, "shimeta", a rough translation of which would be "I've got it! Lucky day!" The reason is because Christians are apparently the easiest people for a Jehovah's Witness to evangelize. The other day someone told me that out of the 130,000 Jehovah's Witnesses in Japan today, an estimated 40% are people that used to go to a Protestant church.

Secondly, like Stephen, we need to have a vision for evangelism, and the zeal to carry it out. And by that I mean not only evangelism of the unsaved in general, but also evangelism



of people involved in the cults. For too long the Japanese church has been running from the Jehovah's Witnesses and other cults. On the bottom of tracts and church bulletins, you will inevitably find the words, "This church has nothing to do with the Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, etc." And they mean that literally. Many pastors teach their people to avoid the J.W.'s like the plague. I consider this to be one of the main reasons why the cults have made such huge inroads into Japan. Some pastors don't like me for this, but I encourage Japanese believers to witness and share their faith with people in the cults. If we don't give them the true gospel, who will? It is my firm belief that there are many honest seekers after truth among the Mormons, J.W.'s, or any cult group.

In my seminars that I conduct across the country, I encourage Christians not to argue about doctrinal issues with Jehovah's Witnesses, but to ask them questions about the Watchtower organization that will cause them to begin to think for themselves. Jehovah's Witnesses are victims of a kind of brainwashing, which some psychologists refer to as "mind control." "Mind control" is a state in which an individual is no longer able to think or reason for himself. Such a person is incapable of making any kind of decision on his own, becoming completely submitted to the organization. He becomes, quite literally, a slave or a robot that exists solely to carry out the orders of the group that he belongs to. People in the cults are totally convinced that their group is the only organization in the world today that is proclaiming the truth. They will accept whatever the organization tells them, but will oftentimes refuse to listen to anyone outside of the organization. The key to reaching people in this kind of state is to ask questions that will get them to begin thinking on their own. In the case of Jehovah's Witnesses I suggest to Christians that they ask questions about the prophecies of the Watchtower, or about major doctrinal changes that they have made over the years. These questions are designed to force Jehovah's Witnesses to think for themselves and ponder the possibility that the Watchtower may not be God's sole channel of truth after all.

Finally, in dealing with the cult problem in Japan, we need, like Stephen, God's wisdom. The Bible says that the people that tried to op-

pose Stephen's ministry were unable to cope with the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking. Stephen, by the wisdom of God within him, answered any and all questions that were directed at him. Today, too, Christians have to answer the questions of people entangled in the cults. "If Jesus was God, why didn't He pray to Himself instead of the Father?"

That is one example of a question that a cultist will ask.

Another reason why we need God's wisdom is to discern whether or not a cultist is really seeking after truth or not. It goes without saying that any individual involved in the cults that has closed his or her heart to the gospel and will not listen to anything you say, is beyond help. It is best to just commit such a person to the Lord and break off all contact with him, because he will only waste your time. I am, of course, not suggesting here that we shun people like the Jehovah's Witnesses. What I am saying is that we need to share the gospel with all cultists, but, if you discern that they have no interest whatsoever, it is better to just go on and try and find someone who is seeking, and

spend time with them.

I, along with many others, am deeply concerned about the activity of the cults in Japan. It is my conviction that if we do not immediately take concrete steps to deal with the cult problem, the evangelical church in Japan will suffer irreparable damage, and we will see thousands upon thousands of souls lost for all eternity - souls that might have been won to Christ had they not been deceived by a false gospel.

May God strengthen each one of us and enable us to "contend earnestly for the faith!" (Jude 3)



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What Are Retired Missionaries Doing?

by Tom Miter

Retired Japan Missionary Bob Mueller at age 69 continues a remarkable ministry as Circle City Hospital Chaplain in Corona, California. He was featured recently in the local newspaper. (Tom Miter is a pastor at Crossroads Christian Church.)

This column usually is about a local church and pastor. This month's story is somewhat different. Bob Mueller is a pastor, to be sure. It is his congregation that differs from those you have previously read about here. The majority of Bob's congregation do not get out of bed on Sunday morning. Bob's "flock" is always changing, because as they get well they leave and return to a church of their choice. Bob Mueller is the Chaplain at Circle City Hospital.

Bob is in his seventh year of service at the hospital. He celebrated the completion of his sixth year on Feb. 14. I asked him about that date and he told me, "Valentine's Day was chosen purposely because this was to be a ministry of love."

Bob and his wife, Ruth, were missionaries to Japan for 32 years from 1951 to 1983. In Japan, Bob got his first experience in hospital ministry. During the Vietnam War, many wounded soldiers were airlifted to the military base at Yokota, Japan where the Muellers were doing missionary work. The military chaplains asked Bob to help them with the in-



flux of new patients. So he voluntarily spent one and a half years ministering to wounded G.I.s. While continuing his other work, Bob spent three hours each evening tending to the emotional and spiritual needs of patients. That helped prepare him for what he now does full-time.

Bob belongs to Hospital Chaplains Ministry of America (HCMA), and he must raise his own funds. He takes no salary from Circle City Hospital, but is remunerated by gifts and donations made in his name to HCMA. At the hospital, he is considered a "volunteer," but the staff I interviewed considers him a vital part of the hospital.

Linda Pearson, patient representative, noted: "Bob is an integral part of Circle City Hospital as the liaison between the hospital, the patient, and the family. Bob helps fulfill spiritual needs of patients on a daily basis. He is always available and on call when a crisis develops. He also does follow-up after a patient has left the hospital. On several occasions Bob has formed such a special bond with a patient or employee that they have called him to officiate at a wedding or funeral. Bob is available for the employees, as well as for our patients. It is so comforting to know he and I are a team meeting the needs of people."

Nurse Betty Baum told me, "I find Bob compassionate, warm, and calming to the patients. When they are very sick he is an emotional support to them and their families. He is very dependable, always available, and responds fast when we need. Bob expresses the love of God to people, but he is not pushy about the faith. And he always leaves patients with good and appropriate literature. When not here, he is missed."

Nurse Jo Tanner commented, "Returning patients often ask for Bob

right away. Japanese patients get real excited to speak with him in their native tongue. He has even interpreted for the staff at times.

He's available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. He will sit with a confused patient for long periods of time, even if they don't understand him. Often he helps eliminate their confusion. He treats everyone with respect and dignity. He is always cheerful. It seems as though he never has a down day."

In the Emergency Room, I was told, "Bob comes whenever we call him, and he sometimes sits with family members and helps calm them; this frees the E.R. personnel to tend to important medical needs. He is a big help to us and nice to have around. He has even seen to it that family members get home from the hospital when they have no other way."

What also makes Chaplain Mueller special is his expressive love for his wife, Ruth. They celebrated their 46th wedding anniversary Dec. 6. But they also celebrate the sixth day of every month. So he will tell people in years and months how long they have been a "team." Bob always refers to Ruth as "my sweetheart," and it comes across as genuine as his message of God's great love for all men and women. Bob says he and Ruth spend time every morning reading the Bible and praying together. He adds, "A spiritual relationship with your wife is the basis on which you are able to have a ministry."

I personally have benefited from Bob's caring ways. I remember

(continued on page 26)

Daijosai and the Church

Comment and survey results - "The Christian Shimbun"

This coming November the "Daijosai" ceremony will be held throughout Japan. It is a ritual ceremony for the new Emperor. Though it is a private ceremony of the Imperial Family and is not open to the public, the Japanese Government has budgeted 80 billion yen for the event. In fact, "the Rite of announcing the date of the Daijosai Ceremony" was already carried out on January 23 of this year at the Three Halls of the Imperial Court to inform the gods of Shintoism that the Daijosai Ceremony would be held on November 22 and 23.

Forty eight personages such as Prime Minister Kaifu and the administrative, legislative, and judicial heads, and the representatives of the local government participated in the capacity of representing the public.

The Three Halls of the Imperial Court consist of "Kashikodokoro," dedicated to Amaterasuomikami, the founding god of the empire; "Kooreiden," dedicated to the successive emperors and imperial families; and "Shinden," or sanctuary dedicated to all the gods and goddesses. Therefore the Daijosai ceremony has already started. Those who represent Japan may bow openly to the Japanese gods at the official events of the nation throughout the year. Twenty-eight related ceremonies of the enthronement are planned during the remainder of the year. Japan, whose appearance is ultra modern and advanced in technology, is on the other hand, the most enigmatic nation in the world.

Daijosai is the Shinto ritual ceremony of the Imperial Family. It is not a simple ritual; it is understood that the deification of the Emperor will occur through this ceremony. So this ceremony takes on a highly religious character. If Daijosai is a religious ceremony then we must deal with it from a religious perspective. Under Japan's democratic constitution (Constitution 20, article 89) this ceremony cannot be carried out as a national event. However the Japanese Government has decided to celebrate "Daijosai" together with the "Enthronement Ceremony" as national events.

The Ceremony of Enthronement de-

clares officially the enthronement of the new Emperor, and "Daijosai" is the highest religious service through which the new Emperor succeeds the spirits of the Emperor from their ancestors. The Ceremony of Enthronement will be held as a national event and the "Daijosai" Ceremony will be held as the official event of the Imperial Household.

The "Chrisitan Shimbun" did a survey among Christians in Hokkaido, Tokyo, Osaka, Kyoto and 20 other prefectures. 280 out of 1200 replied to the survey. The period of the survey was February 15 to March 16 of this year. A brief review of the results is as follows.

Ages of respondents:

under 30 - 17.9% 40's - 28.6%
50's - 31.4% 60+ - 21.8%

Evangelical (Fukuinha) - 190

Main Stream (Shuryuha) - 90

Sentiment towards Emperor:

Familiarity 26.4%

Antipathy 28.9%

Possible to evangelize Imperial

Family 46.1%

Suspend "Daijosai" Ceremony

59.6%

76% of the respondents disagree with the Enthronement Ceremony of the Emperor because it contains Shinto ritual under the guise of traditional ceremony. 60% wish for the suspension of the "Daijosai" Ceremony.

This is in stark contrast to the sentiments of the general population. According to a survey by the "Yomiuri Shimbun" 77% of the Japanese favor having the Ceremony of Enthronement, though 65% wish it were not being held on so lavish a scale.

The tremendous expenses to be financed by the nation for the "Daijosai" should have been re-examined in light of the principle of the separation of religion and politics. The date and manner of the Enthronement Ceremony should have also been studied as there are two aspects to the Emperor: the symbol of the nation, and the Priest of Shintoism.

Those who favor the Enthronement Ceremony believe that the ceremony should be very low key as the Japanese Constitution acknowledges the Emperor

as the symbol of the nation.

Among those who feel "familiarity" towards the present Emperor, 45% are in favor of the ceremony and 57% are against having it. Geographically speaking, 53% in Okinawa and 46% in the Chubu area that is near Ise Shrine expressed the view that the ceremony need not be held.

Sentiment towards the Emperor Among Christians:

Antipathy - 29% Neutral - 28%

Familiarity - 26%

Yomiuri Shimbun survey:

Familiarity - 53%

Respect - 16%

"Gengo" Calendar:

78% of the Christians feel uneasy about using the "Gengo" Calendar (the calendar based on the reign of the Emperor). According to the Yomiuri Shimbun survey, 3/4 of the general population favors the use of the "Gengo" Calendar.

Evangelization of Japan and the Imperial Family:

Christians still constitute less than 1% of the population of Japan. According to the Christian Shimbun survey, 41% of the Christians state that this state of affairs has a direct relation to the Imperial system of Japan. Another 31% said that there is at least some relation between the Imperial system and the number of Christians in Japan. Therefore, 72% of the Christians feel that the Imperial system affects the evangelization of Japan.

53% of the respondents feel that even if the Emperor were considered strictly as the symbol of the nation, it would still effect idolatry.

Concerning the possibility of the evangelization of the Imperial family, more than 50% of those under 40 think it is possible. Some feel that as the present Emperor had good contact with Christianity in his youth, and since Empress Michiko may play a favorable role towards Christianity, there will be an openness in the Imperial family for evangelization. There are those who feel that there is no chance for evangelizing the Imperial family due to their integration with Shintoism.

Wise Social Behavior

by Barry L. Ross

(Biblical Wisdom, Study 4)

The individual's duty. A basic teaching of the Old Testament wisdom literature appears to be that the "duty" of an individual in the Israelite community was (1) to lead his life in the "fear of the Lord" and (2) to reject "evil" and choose the "good." But, what is "good" and "evil"?

According to wisdom teaching, *good* is behavior that results in *benefit* to the community. *Evil* is behavior that results in *harm* to the community. From this definition, then, good and evil either build up or destroy such things as community property, happiness, reputation, and welfare of children. Good and evil, therefore, were always something *public*, never something private nor merely internal. Thus, the "good" man or woman is the one who can discern between what is constructive or destructive for the community. And on the basis of that discernment, he / she always behaves *constructively*.

The Righteous Person. Every person, in whatever culture, ancient or modern, is surrounded by some specific form of ethical community life that provides the person with long established

examples and values. These examples and values, to a large degree, determine and guide the behavior of the individual in his/her community. In our previous study ("The Wisdom Allegory") we suggested that the "strange woman" of Proverbs 2:16-22 is one who does not follow the "laws" of her town. Having rejected the long established examples and values of her community, she follows her own "laws." Her "lawless" behavior is destructive to her community. Her behavior leads others, especially "naive" young men, to death (Prov. 2:18; 7:27; 8:18).

The good man who behaved correctly, that is, who lived up to what the Israelite community expected of him, was called a "righteous one." In other words, a person was judged to be either righteous or evil by the extent to which he/she fulfilled the expectations of the community. Such positive response to the community's expectations was called "wisdom."

A person was a "righteous one" who was "in harmony" with his community. And since the Israelite community was to be governed by God's expectations (laws), to be in harmony with one's community was to be in harmony with God's order. Psalm 15:2 informs us that one of the qualifications for dwelling in the community of God's people on His "holy hill" (v.1) was to "work righteousness."

One of the Bible's prime examples of one who "worked righteousness" is Job, who declared in 29:14, "I put on righteousness [*tsedeq*], and it clothed me; my justice was like

a robe and a turban." (Compare Ps. 132:9; Is. 11:5; 59:17; 61:10 where "righteousness" is metaphorically depicted as clothing.) In his own words, Job describes some of his "works" of righteousness: "I delivered the poor who cried for help and the orphan who had no helper" (19:12); "I was eyes to the blind and feet to the lame" (29:15); "I was father [=provider] to the needy" (29:16). Such was the righteous "clothing" of Job's life.

Deuteronomy 24:10-13 describes the law governing the taking of a "pledge" as a promise that a loan will be repaid. Verse 13 informs us that it is a work of righteousness to return a poor man's pledged cloak to him before sundown. Why? Because in the desert climate of the Old Testament world it can become very cold at nighttime. Thus the poor man needs his cloak for sleeping in. It would be an act of *un-righteousness* for me to deprive him of the warmth of his cloak.

The overview of Scripture, then, is that "working righteousness" is acting for the good of my fellowman. In fact, this is how God has acted toward me! Therefore, to act as God would act was to be "in harmony" with one's community. To be in harmony was to be righteous. And, to be in harmony it seems, assured one of prosperity and honor. Hence, *good conduct*, on the one hand, and *prosperity*, on the other, came to be viewed as two sides of the same coin. And while generally this equation proved to be true, it was not always true. Job, himself, wrestles with this problem, as does one of Israel's Temple-singers, Asaph, in Psalm 73. Both have



Barry Ross

kept their hands clean and hearts pure, yet they suffer!

(Here, perhaps a digression is in order). This view, that good conduct brings prosperity gave rise to two erroneous "doctrines" in Israel:

1. That goodness *always* produced prosperity. How, then was one to explain the sufferings and tragedies that from time to time fall upon the righteous person? Job's three friends could explain it only with an opposite equation: that sin brings punishment. This equation, too, generally proves to be true, but not always true. Job's three friends could only conclude that Job was hiding unconfessed sin in his heart, because they viewed *all* tragedy as punishment for sin. Yet Job, who also shared the belief in this erroneous doctrine, could only say in bewilderment, "My heart does not reproach any of my days" (27:6).

2. That if a person is outwardly prosperous, then he *must* also be righteous. In the Judaism

of New Testament times, the Jewish Pharisees taught that Heaven (that is, the Kingdom of God) was for the righteous. Now, if material prosperity were indeed a sign of righteousness, then the obvious conclusion was that *only the rich could enter Heaven*. If one were poor, then surely he must be evil, or else he would be rich. If the evil cannot enter Heaven, then the obvious conclusion was that *the poor cannot enter Heaven*. Jesus reacted strongly against this teaching, declaring, "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the Kingdom of God" (Lk. 6:20; compare also Jesus' teaching to His disciples in Mark 10:17-30).

Some characteristics of a Righteous Person.

Slow to anger. Proverbs informs us that "a man who is slow to anger has great understanding" (14:29); that "he who is slow to anger calms a quarrel" (15:18); that "he who is slow to anger is better than a warrior" (16:32).

The Hebrew idiom for "slow to anger" is literally "long nosed." How does "long nosed" come to mean "slow to anger"? The most common Hebrew way of expressing "anger" is to say that one's "nose burns." Burning implies redness, that is, when the Israelite became angry, his nose became red. Perhaps the idiom implies that the longer one's nose, the longer it takes to become red. Therefore, a "long nosed" person is "slow to anger."

Proverbs also contrasts the "long nosed" person with the "quick tempered" (lit., "short of spirit") who "displays folly" (14:29). In 14:17 the "quick tempered" (here, "short nosed") "does foolish things"

For those of you whose noses may be longer than your fellows and don't quite fit the standard pattern of noses, I have good news. You are perhaps more like God than your "short nosed" fellows, for Psalm 103:8 describes God as being "compassionate and gracious, slow to anger

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[*long nosed*], abounding in love” (compare also Ps. 145:8; Neh. 9:17; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2; Nah. 1:3).

Caution. Proverbs informs us that one “who makes haste with his feet sins” (19:2), and shows from experience that “the plans of the diligent lead surely to advantage, but everyone who is hasty come surely to poverty” (2:15). Caution is urged in the choice of one’s companions: “Do not associate with a man given to anger. . .Lest you learn his ways, and find a snare for yourself” (22:24–25). Caution is advised when in the presence of one of higher status than oneself: “Do not claim honor in the presence of the king. . .For it is better that it be said to you, “Come up here,” than that you should be put lower in the presence of the prince” (25:6–7; compare Jesus’ application of this concept in Luke 14:7–11). Other proverbs show that caution in one’s actions is considered one of the marks of a “good,” that is,

righteous man. Overzealous enthusiasm, everything hasty, anything acquired quickly, hasty speech, a useless argument, unnecessary argument: all these are to be avoided!

Inner calm. Inner calmness produces health for both me and those with whom I interact. One proverb suggests that “a tranquil heart is life to the body, but passion is rottenness to the bones” (14:30), while another says that “a joyful heart makes a cheerful face, but in sadness of heart the spirit is broken” (15:13). Out of such a tranquil and joyful heart will come “pleasant words,” and such pleasant words are a “honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones (16:24). And still, “a joyful heart causes good healing, but a broken spirit dries up the bones” (17:22).

Humility. Proverbs often suggests that humility is a prerequisite for receiving honor: “Before honor comes humility” (15:33); “Before destruction the

heart of a man is haughty, but humility goes before honor” (18:12); “The reward of humility and the fear of the Lord are riches, honor and life (22:4); “A man’s pride will bring him low, but a humble spirit will obtain honor (29:23).

Honor. I noted above that humility brings honor. But not only humility, but all kinds of “goodness” that one does “in harmony” with his community results in honor from one’s fellows. Again, Job is a prime example here. Job 29:2,7–11 (in Job’s words) gives an excellent description of a man who is honored by his community. The reasons for this community honor are given in verses 12–17 (noted earlier in this study). Of course, Job has now *lost* this community honor. Everyone believes he has sinned or else God would not be punishing him so (with loss of wealth, children, health). And since “sin” was measured primarily in terms of causing *dis*-harmony in one’s

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community, surely Job has caused such disharmony and is no longer worthy of honor. It is on this very point that Job builds his legal defence of his innocence: he insists that he has *not* caused community disharmony. His defence consists of a series of "if" questions: "If I have walked with falsehood...." (v.5); "If my step has turned from the way...." (v.7); "If my heart has been enticed by a woman...." (v.9); "If I have despised the claim of my male or female slaves....(v.13); "If I have kept the poor from their desire...the widow...the orphan...." (vv.16-17); "If I have seen anyone perish for lack of clothing...." (v.19); "If I have lifted my hand against the orphan...." (v.12); "If I have put my confidence in gold...." (v.24); "If I have looked at [=worshipped] the sun when it shone...." (v.26); "Have I rejoiced at the extinction of my enemy...." (v.29); "Have I covered my transgression like Adam...." (v.33). He ends his defence with this cry: "If my land cries out against me...." (vv.38-40). And when examined closely by his accusers, the only verdict possible can be acquittal of the charge of "disharmony."

Conclusion. I suggested earlier in this study that correct (that is, good, wise) social behavior is the ability to discern between actions that are constructive or destructive for one's community. But correct social behavior is not merely a matter of discernment of the correct action, and then acting upon that discernment. Sometimes correct "action" requires *no action at all*. This involves *the element of faith*. Proverbs 20:22 admonishes: "Do not say, 'I will repay evil.'" That is, the correct choice of behavior in the case of having been wronged by another person is to *not* repay with evil action. My evil *re-action* will only double the disharmony already brought into the community by the other person's evil action. Rather, this same proverb urges, "Wait for

the Lord, and he will save you" (compare here Paul's use of this Old Testament concept in Romans 12:17-19 and Peter's in 1 Peter 2:23).

In choosing to refrain from an evil *re-action*, I am expressing my faith that *all order is controlled by the Lord*. It is this kind of faith that lies behind the proverb, "A man's discretion makes him slow to anger, and it is his glory to overcome a transgression" (19:11). The wise man knows that ultimately *the Lord* will restore order when others have caused disorder, and this gives him patience to "wait upon the Lord." Sometimes this faith requires one to accept that the Lord may not "restore order" even until after one's death. This depth of faith is what lies behind Job's affirmation, "And as for me, I know that my Redeemer [=vindicator or defender] lives, and at last He will take his stand on the earth" (Job 19:24). Or when he cries from the depths of his soul, "If a man dies, will he live again?" and responds with, "All the days of my struggle I will wait, until my change comes" (Job 14:14).



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Stan Dyer wrote an excellent article called "New Testament "Evangel" in Japanese Context" in Japan Harvest (Vol.39/3). Though I am by no means as educated, nor have the way with words that he does, nevertheless, I think perhaps something can be added to the section of his article on the cultural meaning of the evangel. May I preface these remarks as being from an MK who has lived in Japan over 25 years, 11 of those as a church-planting missionary in Kochi, on the island of Shikoku. Thus, I am an "amateur" not a professional in the language.

It is true, perhaps, that the word 福音 (Fukuin) is rather unintelligible to the average Japanese. But, how about the English word "Gospel"? To many, it means a type of music with very little connection to the Bible or its message (many popular singers in the U.S. get their start in "Gospel" and then move on!). I don't think that because a word is used in a different way from our usage, we should shun that word. What needs to happen is proper explanation of our specific meaning of the word.

Though not being a Greek scholar by any means, let me share a thought. The *αγαπη* (agape) was a word before the New Testament writers began to use it. But their usage of the word (as that which describes God's attitude of love in giving us His Son to die for us, etc.) was so vastly different that W.E. Vine in his Expository Dictionary says that "inquiry into its use,

whether in Greek literature or in the Septuagint throws but little light upon its distinctive meaning in the New Testament." Might that, then, not be the case with 福音 (Fukuin) as well? We must give the word meaning!

福音 (Fukuin) as a word in Japanese is actually a "non-word" as it has no meaning in daily life (my word processor doesn't even have it!). I do not know of anyone who thinks of a word as the sum of its particular radicals and roots. The radicals, rather, give us a framework by which we can tell in what general area a word belongs (I'm speaking of the present, not how it was looked upon in the past). To most people, the word 福音 (Fukuin) gives vague connotation of 良い知らせ (Yoi Shirase -Good News) which is a good start (as that is what "Gospel" means in English). We, then, must explain the fuller meaning of the word in light of Scriptural teaching.

I understand Mr. Dyer's concern for the proper contextualization of the true Gospel, but is that not a matter of the evangelist making what he says understandable to his hearers? Personally, a much more problematic word is the usage of 神 (Kami) to mean the God who created the heavens and the earth and yet He loved each one of us so much He died for us. Since the word 神 (Kami) is used daily in Japan to mean a small localized deity who cannot do but one or two specific things in protecting a household

or locality (in Kochi, many homes have 2 神棚 god-shelves in the kitchen, one for the 神 (Kami) of water and one for the 神 of fire), it seems a poor word for expressing our God. I personally would like to see another word replace it (for instance, 天守 or 天主, the Guardian or Lord of Heaven. Of course, that could be confusing, too, depending on what the hearer thinks of when I say "heaven," but not nearly as confusing to the average Japanese as putting God on the same plane as a crocodile (which is worshipped at Kompira Shrine in Kagawa Ken) or a giant tree (like one worshipped here in Kochi). I do not foresee such a change in the offering, though. Thus, even though it really doesn't fit, I am left with contextualizing the word 神 (Kami) in such a way that those who listen to me realize beyond a shadow of a doubt that I am talking about the ONE, TRUE GOD.

As to the word 伝道, even the dictionary gives it a mainly Christian meaning! The average Japanese often uses the word to describe the missionary activity of such people as Albert Schweitzer, David Livingstone, etc. Thus, though using this word 伝道 (Dendo) to describe our Christian type of evangelism is perhaps not understood to the fullest, it nevertheless can be understood on the surface level (the way most non-Christians understand Christian concepts). It can thus be considered to be a word which can be used effec-

tively with little misunderstanding. Its derivative 伝道所 (Dendosho -preaching point), however, is perhaps not so easily understood. How can one have a place (所) to "go around telling people over a wide area about Jesus Christ?" It seems to be a contradiction in terms to many Japanese, which is one reason why we try to use the word 教会 (church) from the outset of any ministry we start.

I do not mean to detract from Mr. Dyer's article. My humble desire, though, is that our preaching of the true Gospel will become more and more relevant to the Japanese and where they are at the moment. May God guide and direct us all as we speak His Word in a language other than our mother tongue.

Roadblocks to Church Growth

(Continued from page 9)

The church lacks proper follow-up teachings for interested non-believers or new Christians. Solid doctrinal instruction about repentance, the Second Coming and Spiritual gifts are often lacking. Believers are not fed on the meat of the Word. Some churches show an alarming lack of proper Christian Education activities and vision. Tradition has so clogged the vibrant life of the church that new methods are avoided. Old hymns are often tainted with Western Christianity. Japanese indigenous music must be introduced into the life of the Japanese church.

The Roman world of the first century could hardly be considered advantageous to the rapid spread of the Christian faith. Every element in that ancient culture could have been seen as a major roadblock to growth of faith. But the church disregarded the nega-

Vision or Vacuum?

(Continued from page 14)

But we must not misunderstand visionaries. They are not magnetic people who can get others to go for broke because of the force of their personalities. God has made very few people like this. Many think of visionaries either as charismatic or arrogant; neither is the case. True visionaries are realists who are committed to accomplish Christ's commission knowing the barriers they face, both in the culture around them and in the flesh within them. True visionaries have the commitment to do what God wants, even when it seems more than supernatural. It is not arrogant self-confidence that marks a visionary, but humble Spirit-dependence.

The church faces a choice: vision or vacuum. What a dream come true it would be if the church made such an impact in Japan that pop music would tell of its relevance as a sanctuary for the lonely and hurting.

tive pagan possibilities and exploded across the entire Roman Empire. Similar cultural characteristics face the modern missionary in Japan. No external religious rite or pagan power can detain the church or stunt its growth. The church will grow. The church does grow as it is empowered from within and obedient to the God-given mandate as expressed in His holy Word. As believers in the message of the Cross, let us fully diagnose the current diseases that plague our lifestyle. Let us prayerfully seek for Divine healing of our spiritual sicknesses. May the roadblocks to church growth be torn away by the mighty working of the Spirit of God. Then let us humbly believe Him for His powerful ministry through His Church in the villages and cities of this great nation of Japan!

What are Retired Missionaries Doing?

(Continued from page 19)

meeting him when he first arrived at Circle City Hospital. I often visit the Crossroads people who are hospitalized. One day when I was emotionally low, I was on my way to see a patient. As Bob and I met in the hallway, he sensed my mood; he took me to a small waiting room where we talked and prayed together. He encouraged me, and I was better able to minister to the patient I was there to visit.

As a pastor, I appreciate having someone at the hospital I can work with; together we are a team helping meet the spiritual needs of patients. At most of the area hospitals, I am friends with the chaplain. Bob Mculler is a friend and a chaplain. I thank God for him.

Endnotes

1. Encyclopedia Britannica, Vol.19: p.503
2. ibid
3. Michael Green. Evangelism in the Early Church. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. 1970 p.42
4. Ephesians 1:21 (Berkeley Version-assigned to Zondervan Publishing Co. 1958)
5. Ephesians 4:10 (Berkeley Version)
6. Hayama Missionary Seminar Report. 1984 "Prospects for God's work in the next Quarter Century," by Stanley R. Dyer. p.4
7. Ron Jenson. Dynamics of Church Growth. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House. 1981 p.54.



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