Preparation for Mission in Japan

June 11, 1873 will mark the one hundredth anniversary of the arrival of the first Methodist missionaries in Japan. They were sent by the Methodist Episcopal Church. Later that month two couples from the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Canada reached Yokohama.¹ The Evangelical Association of North America began its work in 1876, the Methodist Protestant Church sent a missionary in 1880, and the Methodist Episcopal Church, South began its mission in 1886. The Church of the United Brethren in Christ did not arrive until 1895.²

Protestant missionaries first arrived in Japan in 1859. Why were the Methodists late entering this field? Except for Thomas Coke none of the early leaders of the Methodist movement felt any compelling call to carry the Gospel outside the bounds of Christendom. Their primary concern was the redemption of so-called Christian society. For Wesley this was the revitalization of Christianity in the British Isles, with a nod in the direction of the British colonies in North America. For Asbury this was the spread of scriptural holiness among the English-speaking settlers in the young American republic with a grudging release of minimal resources for work in Canada and the Caribbean.

For Otterbein, Boehm, and Albright this was the evangelization of the German-Americans. For William Black and others like him in Canada the immediate concern was preaching the Methodist message in the largely non-churched and neglected settlements of that vast land. The task at hand was one which demanded all the resources available. Before these American pioneers for Christ could respond to the call to go to the corners of the earth they had to conquer the spiritual wilderness at hand. In the meantime the vision of Coke was never lost and when the time came the Methodists were ready to carry the message of God's free grace in univers-

¹ In 1874 this church united with the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Eastern British America and the Methodist New Connexion Church in Canada to form the Methodist Church of Canada. The union was further enlarged in 1884 with the addition of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Canada, the Primitive Methodist Church in Canada, and the Bible Christian Church, taking the name the Methodist Church.

² This study is limited to the six groups indicated, all of whom have through their successor bodies continued in fraternal relationship with the United Church of Christ in Japan (Kyodan) which Methodists participated in forming in 1941. There are, however, other Methodistic groups which have worked in Japan, and continue today outside the Kyodan, such as the Free Methodist Church, the Church of the Nazarene, several Holiness churches, and the Salvation Army.
sal redemption and sanctification around the globe and to Japan. The last decade of the eighteenth and the first decade of the nineteenth century were ones of unprecedented interest in missionary expansion and organization in both Great Britain and North America. American Methodism, however, lagged behind other denominations in its participation in foreign missions. This was in part because it was a newcomer on the scene and, consequently, numerically a relatively small movement. Moreover, the bulk of its membership was drawn from the less affluent and privileged elements of society. Nevertheless, during the nineteenth century the Methodist groups grew in number and wealth and by the middle of the century formed a large-scale middle class movement, the largest denominational group in the country. Even after Methodist missionary societies began to be formed their efforts were limited by a variety of factors which will become clear in the following review of the origin and development of the missionary societies of the six groups.

The Missionary Society of the M. E. Church, founded in 1819, was recognized as an official agency in 1820 and had a long history of work in foreign lands before entering Japan in 1873. The Woman's Foreign Missionary Society of this church, founded in 1869 and officially recognized by the General Conference in 1872, entered Japan in 1874. The founders of the M. E. Church Missionary Society were concerned that the church was losing its missionary spirit. Most of them had had some experience as missionaries either in Canada or among the Indians and many of them had known Thomas Coke. The Society grew slowly. Its first work outside North America was in Liberia in 1833. In 1835 work was begun in South America; China was entered in 1847, Germany in 1849, and India in 1856. This Society had to overcome opposition within the church, financial and administrative problems, and difficulties finding men qualified for foreign service. Nevertheless, during the years from its founding until its entry into Japan it accumulated a vast amount of practical knowledge and experience which served as a solid foundation for its work here.

Robert Samuel Maclay, a missionary in China, was most directly

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3 Wade Crawford Barclay's History of Methodist Missions, 3 vols. (New York: Board of Missions of The Methodist Church, 1949, 1950, 1957) is still unsurpassed as mission history. The fundamental missionary character and message of Methodism is well explicated in his introductory essay, "The Wesleyan Heritage" (pp. xv-xli, vol. 1).

4 The story of the birth and development of this Society is told in detail in Barclay. Pertinent articles in The History of American Methodism, 3 vols., edited by Emory Stevens Bucke (New York: Abingdon Press, 1964), also give a general survey of the development of missions in the M. E. Church, M. P. Church, and M. E. Church, South.
influential in the establishment of the Japan Mission. His interest was first drawn to Japan on August 9, 1853, by Commodore Matthew C. Perry, who that day had returned with his fleet from Japan to Hong Kong. Before Maclay returned to the United States for furlough in 1871 he wrote a letter, December 16, 1870, to the Society urging the beginning of missionary work in Japan. During his furlough Maclay made strong appeals through the church papers for funds for a mission in Japan and at the annual meeting of the Missionary Society, November 30, 1872, he gave an impassioned address urging the Society to take action. It took the first step by appropriating $25,000 for a Japan Mission, and Bishop Jesse T. Peck appointed Maclay superintendent of the new mission. 5

Canadian Methodism's missionary society was organized in 1824 in the Upper Canada Annual Conference of the M. E. Church as an auxiliary of the New York-based Missionary Society, and became in 1833 an auxiliary of the British Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society. It continued to be the agency for mission concern throughout the complicated history of Canadian Methodism. 6 Canadian Methodism had some peculiarities in its own situation which help to account for its late entry into foreign missions. These are largely related to the political history of the country. Also the fact that Canadian Methodism had roots in both British and American Methodism was for many years a complicating factor in its growth. The Methodist societies in the Maritime Provinces were organized as missionary districts under the British Conference from the early 1800's until 1855 when they were granted a measure of autonomy and organized into an annual conference. The American church had granted autonomy to its one annual conference (Upper Canada) in 1828. Subsequently, this conference united with the British missions in 1833 and organized as the Wesleyan Methodist Church in British North America. It was under the direction of the British Conference until 1855. Without doubt this long period as a "mission" field retarded the growth of foreign mission interest. It is not without significance that it was not until after the Methodists had achieved a measure of ecclesiastical autonomy (1855) and the nation a measure of political independence (1867) that foreign missions developed.

6 Cf. Barclay, vol. 1, p. 16 ff., for an account of the beginnings of Methodism in Canada. Also the two works of Alexander Sutherland, Methodism in Canada (London: C. H. Kelly, 1903) and The Methodist Church and Missions in Canada and Newfoundland (Toronto: Department of Missionary Literature of the Methodist Church, Canada, 1906) tell the story of the development of the church and its missions. Also see George H. Cornish, ed., Cyclopaedia of Methodism in Canada (Toronto: Methodist Book and Publishing House, 1881).
The first overseas mission work of any Canadian church was that of the Wesleyan Methodist Church. Sutherland points out that the main motive for overseas work was the quickening of missionary zeal and the deepening of the spiritual life of the church at home. Nevertheless, there was some hesitation.

The wisdom of the step was doubted by some who thought the home work was sufficiently extensive to absorb the energies and liberality of the entire church. The home missionaries were struggling along on very inadequate stipends; many Indian bands were still unreached; the calls from new settlements were loud and frequent.

The Society committed itself to a mission in Japan in 1872 and set about the recruitment of missionaries with great care, being determined to do nothing that would jeopardize the success of the mission. Both men chosen were experienced pastors, one of them from the denomination's most prestigious church, and the other having just equipped himself for foreign service by earning a medical degree. The needs of the Japan Mission led directly to the organization of the Woman's Missionary Society in 1881. The Canadian church did not enter any other foreign field until 1892 when it began work in China.

Japan was also the first foreign field for the Methodist Protestants. They had at their first General Conference in 1834 created a Board of Foreign Missions. In 1851 a missionary was appointed to China but declined and the project was abandoned. In the early years of the M. P. Church the annual conferences took collections for the American Colonization Society which was associated with the establishment of Liberia. In the 1870's there was a rebirth of missionary concern in the church. A local woman's missionary society in Baltimore contributed to foreign missions through the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society of the M. E. Church from 1872 to 1878. Methodist Protestant women in Pittsburgh about this time began contributing to the American Mission Home, a school founded in 1871 in Yokohama by the Woman's Union Missionary Society of America for Heathen Lands. Contributions from M. P. Sunday schools were sent through the Woman's Union Missionary Society to provide scholarships for its schools in India and Japan.
It seems that M. P. women also supported the Society work in India. Within a few years M. P. contributions were supporting scholarships for seventeen girls in the home in Yokohama. At this time Elizabeth M. Guthrie (1838-1880) was serving at the Yokohama home. She had been sent originally by the Society to India in 1868 but became ill and started home, reaching Japan in September, 1872, where she stopped at the Society home to rest and recover her health. She became involved in the work there and stayed until 1878, being particularly interested in the work with Eurasian children. Miss Guthrie returned to the United States in 1878 and in January, 1879, came into contact with the M. P. women. As a result they determined to establish their own missionary society and sought her aid in organizing it. The Woman's Foreign Missionary Society was founded February 14, 1879, in Pittsburgh. Miss Guthrie was appointed their first missionary to Japan and was to be supported jointly by the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society and the Board of Foreign Missions. She died suddenly of pneumonia in San Francisco on her way back to Japan, May 15, 1880. Miss Harriet G. Brittain, a former co-worker in India, was then appointed to go and establish the mission. The General Conference of 1880 in May in Pittsburgh, recognized the Society as an official agency of the church, organized a revitalized mission organ to be known as the Board of Home and Foreign Missions, gave its attention to an address delivered by Miss Brittain, and honored Miss Guthrie with an official Conference funeral (June 7) in the First Methodist Protestant Church in Pittsburgh. The M. P. Church Mission in Japan was thus based on a long period of cultivation of missionary concern throughout the church and a period of giving specifically for work in Japan.

The Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, begun in 1845 and officially established by the General Conference in 1846, had experience in China before entering Japan. The Woman's Foreign Missionary Society of this church, although founded in 1878, did not become officially involved in Japan until 1886. The Civil War was a major factor delaying M. E. Church, South entry into Japan. Even before the war the M. E. Church, South had difficulty financing its work in China. By the end of the war it was $60,200 in debt for the China Mission. After the war the church was preoccupied with reestablishing itself in the face of the

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12 Miller, op. cit., p. 15; Methodist Protestant Missionary, September, 1879, p. 1.
physical destruction and the spiritual demoralization which was the aftermath of the conflict. However, by 1871 it was able to begin work in Mexico and in 1876 entered Brazil. In 1876 an episcopal visitation by Bishop Enoch M. Marvin to China, as well as his tour of Japan, provided stimulus for missionary enthusiasm and support for foreign work and doubtless also suggested the possibility of entering Japan. Certainly the M. E. Church missionaries he met in Japan encouraged Bishop Marvin to establish an M. E. Church, South mission in this country.

As a matter of fact, Marvin had himself in 1858 been named by the Board as superintendent to establish work in Japan. He declined. The Rev. W. J. Sullivan was then appointed, but just as he was about to set out for the field the War Between the States broke out. When the M. E. Church, South did enter Japan in 1886, it was largely as a result of the interest of the J. W. Lambuth family, missionaries in China.

In 1876 Mrs. Lambuth corresponded with the Board in Nashville urging the establishment of work in Japan. Finally on May 6, 1885, the Board resolved to establish a mission and appropriated $3,000 for that purpose. In the fall of 1885 J. W. Lambuth was sent on a tour of inspection during which he discovered that the area of Japan around the Inland Sea was open, there being no other Methodist work there. The M. E. Church missionaries made it clear to him that they were eager to have the M. E. Church, South come in to occupy this territory. It is worth noting that the first missionaries sent by both the M. E. Church and the M. E. Church, South to Japan had had experience in China and had been directly responsible for awakening their boards to the opportunities in Japan.

The “German Methodists” shared with the groups described above many of the reasons for their tardiness in entering foreign work. However, there were additional reasons related in part to their origin as ethnic movements. The German element on the American scene was economically depressed for many years, and at a disadvantage socially because of the cultural prejudices of the

16 S. E. Hager, “The Japan Mission of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South,” Japan Christian Yearbook, 1941, p. 161. This annual survey was published from 1903 to 1941 and from 1950 to 1970 under a variety of titles.
17 Mrs. Lambuth was also instrumental in promoting the organization of the M. E. Church, South’s Woman’s Foreign Missionary Society. In the early 1870’s she had written from China appealing for an unmarried woman to help in a girls’ school. In 1877 a woman responded and this stimulated the organization of the Woman’s Foreign Missionary Society in 1878. In Japan the Board itself for many years sent out single women to supervise work with women and children until 1915 when these missionaries and their work were turned over to the Woman’s Society, by then known as the Women’s Department of Foreign Missions.
predominant English-speaking society. For years they were preoccupied with the mission at home, reaching the German settlements on the expanding frontier in Canada as well as in the United States, and with carrying their Methodist message back to the fatherland in Europe.

The first missionary society of the Evangelical Association was organized in the Eastern Conference in Orwigsburg, Pennsylvania in 1838. This provided stimulus for the organization of the General Missionary Society of the Association in 1839, which was in the same year recognized as the official missionary agency of the denomination by the General Conference. The main spirit behind the establishment of the Society was W. W. Orwig, who traced his first interest in missions to a number of issues of the Basler Missions Magazine which he happened to read. However, there were some who opposed missions, particularly missions to the "heathen."

They were of the opinion that since the old brethren or the first preachers and members of the Association, had not recommended this cause, and as God had owned and blessed the Association, being without such measures and institutions, the introduction of each and every one of these measures was but a step toward "Babel".

The first overseas work was begun in Germany in 1850. War, financial problems, and the demands of the frontier missions compelled the postponement of any other foreign work until the mission in Japan was begun. Eller writes that during the earlier years of the Society's activity the motivation for missions was to rescue dying souls from the terrors of hell but that by the end of the century a more modern position was being expressed.

... the final question was not whether heathendom, living in sin would be condemned to hell, or whether it would be excused because of its ignorance. The decisive question was "can we be saved if the heathen perish without the light which it is in our power to give them?" 20

On October 19, 1875, the General Conference in session in the Fourth Street Church, Philadelphia, approved the opening of a mission in Japan but only after a very "animated and earnest discussion."

That afternoon as the debate began generating more heat and less light, Rev. C. F. Deininger rose and proposed that the entire confer-

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19 Orwig quoted by Albright, op. cit., 201 ff.
20 Eller, op. cit., p. 132.
ence go to prayer to solicit God's guidance in the matter. After an extended period of silent prayer in which vexed and argumentative spirits composed themselves before the Eternal God, Bishop Esher opened his full heart in uplifting prayer. Thereafter the conference rose to sing, and about ten minutes after four o'clock a witness reported, "after singing, while the enthusiasm rose higher and higher and many wept freely, the whole assembly rose in unanimous endorsement of the resolution..." 21

After adopting the resolution the conference broke into the Doxology, singing it both in German and in English. Other foreign work was not established until the China Mission was begun in 1900. The Woman's Missionary Association came into being in 1884 as a result of interest engendered by the work in Japan.

The Parent Missionary Society of the United Brethren was organized by the 1841 General Conference. The Society proved ineffective and was in 1853 reorganized as the Home, Frontier, and Foreign Missionary Society with one of its main purposes being to send missionaries to non-Christian lands. 22 Instrumental in this was the strong missionary spirit among the students and faculty of Otterbein University which was stimulated by the interest of the Rev. John C. Bright, a member of the Board of Trustees of the school. 23 The Board of Managers of the Society adopted as its primary object, "To give the gospel of Jesus to all men in all countries in its unmixed and original purity," and emphasized the importance of Christian education and literature and the necessity to aim at self-support and self-extension in the work. 24 In 1855 the first missionaries were sent to Sierra Leone. The only other Methodist group that had any experience in Africa before entering Japan was the M. E. Church which had work in Liberia, like Sierra Leone first colonized by freed slaves. This remained throughout the years the main mission field of the United Brethren Church. In 1869 a mission was begun in Germany. The General Conference of 1873 authorized a mission to Japan, but this was not implemented until 1895.

The war between China and Japan (1894-1895) had called attention to these countries, and the new treaties between Japan and the foreign powers seemed to indicate that the doors were more fully open to mission work than before. Japan was attractive to the

21 Ibid., p. 198.
24 Ibid., p. 40.
United Brethren Church because of its “progressiveness” and because there was a desire for a mission field where the problems would be different from those encountered in the tropics of Sierra Leone. Moreover, the United Brethren Church had at hand a promising Japanese man among their membership who urged them to enter Japan and who seemed qualified to lead this new effort.

All of the groups under study were impelled to mission by the very nature of the Gospel. Particular factors related to their entry into Japan have been mentioned above. There were more general ones that also help explain their foreign mission work. They were not unaffected by the mood of expansionism which developed in North America in the nineteenth century. This was related to an increasing awareness of the rest of the world and to a developing economy which made possible the financing of foreign missions. Moreover, Methodist involvement in mission in Japan coincided with Western Imperialism and the American sense of “manifest destiny.” The fantastic technological and scientific developments in the West during the nineteenth century were believed to be the result of its Christian culture. American Christians assumed that the only way to share these humanitarian benefits was through their religion. Nor should we overlook the denominational rivalry that was so intense at that time. It was no doubt also a factor goading Methodists to increased foreign mission effort.

Setting for Mission in Japan

During the last half of the nineteenth century Japan underwent a social upheaval of unprecedented proportions. After two hundred years of isolation the doors of the nation were forced open, resulting in a period of political instability leading to the rebellion that toppled the government of the Shogun and restored the Emperor in 1868. For a number of years after the Restoration, two parties, the Westernizers and the anti-Westernizers, contended for supremacy in the new government. However, by 1873 the Westernizers were in control and for the next sixteen years all things Western, including Christianity, enjoyed a large measure of popularity. In 1889 a wave of reaction broke and continued until the end of the century adversely affecting the Christian movement.

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25 Drury, op. cit., p. 605.
28 Theodore L. Agnew, “Reflections on the Woman’s Foreign Missionary Movement in Late 19th Century Methodism,” *Methodist History* (January 1968), pp. 3-16, is a helpful discussion of concrete manifestations of these factors.
It is impossible to understand the universal fear and distrust which the first Protestant missionaries to Japan met without recalling the earlier experience of Christianity in Japan. In 1542 the first Europeans, Portuguese merchants, reached Japan. They were followed in 1549 by Francis Xavier, who founded what was to be for half a century one of the most promising Jesuit missions. However, Christianity came to be suspected of subversion by an increasingly xenophobic government and the first edicts against the foreign religion were published in 1587 and followed by sporadic persecution. After 1614 the persecution was intensified. Foreign missionaries and native Christians were deported, tortured, and martyred. The climax came in 1638 when Christians and other discontented agrarian elements rebelled in an armed uprising at Shimabara in Kyushu, resulting in the slaughter of 37,000 of their number. Following this Japan was closed to the outside world except for a trickle of foreign intercourse permitted with the Chinese and the Dutch. From this time a systematic and thorough campaign was conducted by the government to stamp out the remnants of Christianity in the country and to fill the common people with fear and hatred of the religion. This fear and hatred were still alive in 1859. However, it is one of the miracles of Christian history that communities of Christians in outlying areas of Kyushu, continued in secret to practice their faith through the centuries of isolation.

Although American Protestants had been interested in Japan since early in the century, the first period of Christianity in modern Japan begins with the arrival of six missionaries in 1859 and culminates with the founding of the first Japanese Christian church and the first General Convention of Protestant Missionaries in 1872. This was before the arrival of the Methodists. This period has been called a time of preparation and promise. The period from 1873 to 1882 has been called the period of progressive realization and that from 1883 to 1889 the period of performance. From 1889 to the end of the century was a period of reaction.

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During the period of preparation (1859-1872), only thirty-one missionaries (counting wives) came to Japan and not all of them stayed. Their efforts were severely limited by the social disorder of the period, the popular prejudice against Christianity, and government policy. They were circumscribed on every side, permitted to live only in the open ports of Kanagawa (later Yokohama), Nagasaki, Hakodate, and later Edo (Tokyo), Niigata, Hyogo (Kobe), and Osaka. They could not travel freely outside these ports and were forbidden to engage in any direct evangelism. Christianity was still a proscribed religion and on public boards in every city and town the people were warned, "The evil sect called Christian is strictly prohibited. Suspected persons should be reported to the proper officers, and rewards will be given." Moreover, because of the social and civil unrest both before and after the Meiji Restoration, samurai in groups or individually roamed the countryside and cities endangering life with their swords. The situation has been described as "... as perilous as in any frontier town in the American West of the same period." 31

The nature of the political revolution which took place in 1868 (the Meiji Restoration) was crucial for the development of the nation and the church in modern times. The country had been ruled for hundreds of years by a samurai (warrior) aristocracy. The central government of the Shogun (the military dictator and de facto ruler of the country) sat in Tokyo and oversaw the various feudal domains, each of which was headed by its own daimyo (lord) and governed by him and his body of samurai retainers. The toppling of the Shogunate and the restoration of the Emperor did not bring to political or social power the lower classes but rather was a displacement of one group of samurai by another. What is remarkable, however, is that these revolutionary warriors set about liquidating the very system which had provided them with their positions of privilege. They met the challenge of Western power by a thorough destruction of the feudal system and by a daring course of modernization. 32 The samurai of the domains which supported the Restoration benefited from the opportunities available to the victors. The samurai who had supported the Shogun were at a disadvantage. They suffered from the loss of their stipends, exclusion from political life, and a decline in social position, and as a consequence, experienced much personal frustration and in some cases resentment against the new government. Literate, well-educated, born and trained for leadership, they were at a loss. It was

31 Drummond, op. cit., p. 156.
these dispossessed samurai who formed the core of converts and the bulk of leadership of Protestant Christianity well into the twentieth century. Conversion to Christianity was a means by which such samurai could come to terms with their disrupted world and find a course of action contributing to the national welfare. Many of them became not only Christians but also leaders in educational, journalistic, and other intellectual activities, as well as in the political popular rights movement. During the Meiji period (1867-1912) nearly one-third of the converts were from this class although they comprised less than six percent of the total population. In 1892 it was found that seventy-five percent of the Christians in Tokyo were of samurai origin. The native leadership of the Methodist movement throughout its history in Japan was of samurai background from the first bishop of the Japan Methodist Church, Yoichi Honda, to its last bishop at the time of its entrance into the United Church of Christ in Japan in 1941.

By 1872 there had been only ten baptisms. However, a turning point came that year. As a result of an extended series of prayer meetings held among the missionaries and other foreign residents in Yokohama and attended by some Japanese students, a Pentecost occurred. Nine students, all samurai, were baptized on March 10, and with two older Christian Japanese men organized the first native church in Japan. On September 20, a sister church was founded in Tokyo. September 20-25, the Presbyterian, Reformed, and Congregational missionaries (fourteen men and their wives and four single women) and the Japanese elders of the two churches held the first General Convention of Protestant Missionaries in Japan, in Yokohama. They launched a New Testament translation project (in which Robert S. Maclay, M. E. Church missionary, was to have a part), and affirmed their unity in mission. The New Testament translation was completed in 1879 and an Old Testament translation was published in 1888. Unity was never realized.

By the time the Methodists came in 1873, the edge of hostility to Christianity had been turned, increasing numbers of Japanese were seeking out the missionaries for instruction, Christian literature was being distributed, medical dispensary work was underway, Christian schools had been founded, and two indigenous churches had been formed.

The year 1873 marked the beginning of a new era. On February

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33 Irwin Scheiner, *Christian Converts and Social Protest in Meiji Japan* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1970) is an important contribution to understanding the significance of the samurai in the Christian movement.

34 The life of Honda is a classic example of the response of the dispossessed samurai to his situation and is well told in the biography, *Honda Yoichi*, by Takemi Kega (Tokyo: Aoyama Gakuin, 1968). It has not been translated into English.
15, the edict against Christianity was ordered removed from the public notice boards, indicating tacit acceptance by the government of freedom of religion. This was further demonstrated by the freeing of a large body of imprisoned Roman Catholics. These were the Hidden Christians who had made themselves known to the Catholic missionaries in Nagasaki in 1865. The Imperial government launched a campaign of persecution against them in 1869, exiling over 3,000 to prisons in remote parts of the country. It was their suffering that called the religious intolerance of the Japanese to the attention of the world and resulted in pressure from the foreign powers on the government to grant religious freedom. This had been impressed on the Iwakura Mission which returned to Japan on September 13, 1873, after a two-year tour of America and Europe begun December 23, 1871. This was the first embassy sent abroad by the Imperial government and its purpose had been in part to seek revision of the humiliating treaties the Shogun's government had accepted, granting the foreign powers rights of extraterritoriality and the privilege of setting their own tariffs. This was to be a pervasive diplomatic concern throughout this century and had profound implications for the Christian movement. It was evident to the Iwakura Mission that Japan would have to Westernize before the foreign powers would be ready to treat it as an equal. Thus by 1873 progressive elements in the government had prevailed and the country was henceforth more open to Western science, culture, and religion. The year was also marked by the coming of twenty-nine missionaries, among whom were fourteen Methodists. In 1872 there had been seven missionary organizations at work. In 1873 four more, including the Canadian Methodist and the Methodist Episcopal groups, joined. By 1880 there were eighteen missions with 226 missionaries (counting wives) at work, including the Evangelical Association and the Methodist Protestants.

The period from 1873 to 1883 was to be one of steady progress. By the end of 1882 there were nearly 5,000 Protestants in Japan. It was a period which saw new freedom for Christian work, a better reception among the general populace, the beginning of public preaching, the founding of a number of Christian schools, an increasing emphasis on education for women, the beginnings of systematic training of native ministers and women evangelists (called Bible women), and the emergence of Japanese leadership. Foreigners were still restricted to the open ports and unable to travel except by special passports granted for "health" and "scientific research" for a limited time and definite locality. Residence in cities in the interior was possible only if a foreigner was employed by a Japanese, and a number of missionaries gained this privilege. The
first Methodist work outside the open ports was through this device, the missionaries being employed as teachers for schools operated by Japanese in the interior. The Canadian Methodists made superb use of this opportunity.

The Christian influence was also present during this period in government schools. Not only were a number of missionaries employed in these schools but also the government brought many teachers on short contracts to establish or develop schools and some of these teachers had strong Christian influence. Protestant Christianity in Japan can well be said to have begun among the samurai students who gathered around missionary teachers either in the port cities or in clan or government schools in the interior. The significance of these Christian bands has been much discussed but usually without due attention to their relationship to Japanese Methodism. The first such group in point of time was the Yokohama band gathered around two Reformed missionaries in the early 1870's. This group gave birth to several Christian leaders, including Yoichi Honda, the first bishop of the Japan Methodist Church. Another band was that in Kumamoto, which contributed to the growth of Congregationalism. The Sapporo band was the result of the work of William S. Clark, president of the Massachusetts Agricultural College (Amherst), who was employed in 1876 by the national government for a period of only eight months to set up an agricultural school in Sapporo, the capital of the northern island, Hokkaido. Clark, a layman, called on the services of M. C. Harris, a M. E. Church missionary. Harris's influence on this group was important and continuing. Most significant for Methodist history was the Hirosaki band which was the result of the work of Yoichi Honda and John Ing, a M. E. Church missionary.

The third period of Protestant history in Japan (1883-1889), during which the M. E. Church, South began its work, was one of spectacular growth for the churches with an increase to over 30,000 members from the 5,000 recorded for 1882. By 1889 there were twenty-six different foreign mission agencies, including the M. E. Church, South, at work. The year 1883 was marked by two important national conventions, the second General Convention of Protestant Missionaries, in April in Osaka, and a convention of the Japanese churches in May. Maclay of the M. E. Church Mission was one of the three chairmen of the missionary convention.

A spiritual awakening which swept the country broke out in 1883 and continued until the end of the decade. It was in part the consequence of public meetings begun in 1881. A central figure in this in Tokyo was C. S. Eby of the Canadian Methodist Church Mission. The revival and growth of the churches was to a large extent the result of the self-sacrificing zeal of the converts them-
selves. This zeal also expressed itself in educational, political, social reform, and philanthropic efforts. Honda and Sen Tsuda of the M. E. Church are good examples of such involvement. These efforts were at one and the same time undergirded by an intoxicating sense of liberation from their feudal past and by the moral earnestness that they had learned in that Confucian past.

Although there were a number of physicians among the early missionaries, including MacDonald of the Methodist Church of Canada and Krecker of the Evangelical Association, the need for this type of service did not last long thanks to the efforts of the government. However, the concern for the totality of man's life was expressed in movements for personal and social transformation during this period. Personal transformation through abstinence from tobacco and alcohol, keeping the Lord's Day, monogamy and sexual purity, became characteristic of Japanese Protestantism. The temperance and anti-prostitution movements begun during this period came to the forefront in the late 1890's. Methodist Protestant missionaries were active in both movements. Christianity was particularly identified during this period with liberal political movements. Honda of the M. E. Church was prominent in the popular rights movement.

Denominational diversity continued but there were efforts toward union and cooperation in which the Methodists participated. Cooperative efforts included Bible translation, compilation of a union hymnal, preparation of Christian literature, holding of mass meetings for the public and inspirational conferences for believers. Church union was successful only with denominational families but not among the Methodists. On the other hand, there was a large measure of cooperation among the Methodists. Their geographical spread was such as to avoid overlapping with the exception of Tokyo and a few other places where the needs were extensive enough to justify it.

It became clear during the 1880's that Christianity in Japan was a predominately urban middle class movement. The urban aspect was largely a result of the restrictions of the missionaries to the open ports, the convergence of former samurai on the ports and cities, the relatively liberal atmosphere of the cities, and the location of Christian educational centers in these cities. The middle class character of Protestantism in Japan can be accounted for by the samurai background of its converts, the large percentage of persons who joined the church via the Christian schools, and its political and social involvement during the 1880's which tended to

15 The various Reformed and Presbyterian groups successfully united their work into one church, as did the Congregationalists. The several Anglican and Episcopal missions organized one church in 1887.
attract it to the new professional elements such as lawyers, doctors, and teachers.

In 1889 the Congregational churches had over 10,000 members and the Presbyterian-Reformed churches nearly that number. Methodists were third with around 5,000 members, the Anglican-Episcopal group followed with 4,000, and the Baptists with 1,000. It would seem that the two largest groups experienced greater growth because they concentrated their resources, because they adopted indigenous names, and because they gave a larger role to Japanese. Also those groups which emphasized educational work benefited. The Episcopalians had been perhaps the most inept in concentrating their resources, although the Methodists also had a tendency to spread themselves thin with their vision of encompassing the Empire. The Baptists refused to get involved in education for many years. The Methodists, Episcopalians, and Baptists, instead of adopting indigenous names for their churches, attempted to either translate or transliterate their foreign denominational names. The attitude of the sending agencies was another factor. The American Board (Congregationalist) was remarkable for the freedom it gave its missionaries to adopt strategy in terms of the needs of the field. Most of the Methodist groups had to wait for a bishop to visit to make major decisions. The M. P. Woman's Foreign Missionary Society, as well as its Board, insisted on making all decisions relating to the mission work even down to the details of the placement of chimneys in new buildings. One author has suggested that “the hierarchical polity of the Methodist and Episcopal churches . . . handicapped these denominations during the years 1883-1889.” 36

In 1889 a period of intense reaction against the West and Christianity began and lasted for the rest of the century. The United Brethren mission began during this period. Reasons for this turn in popular feeling were the continued refusal of the Western powers to revise the discriminatory treaties, the heightened nationalism engendered by the promulgation of the first Constitution in 1889, the convening of the First National Diet in 1890, and the promulgation of the Imperial Rescript on Education. The Rescript on Education was in particular a manifestation of the shift in the attitude of the oligarchy which surrounded the Emperor and held power in the nation. The young revolutionaries of 1868 had become reactionary old men. The Rescript was a blow against democratic ideals and Christianity, exalting as it did the Imperial myths of the past as the basis for the development of modern Japan. Nevertheless, Japan’s military victories over China in 1895 and over Russia in 1905, strengthened her self-confidence and gained for her prestige

36 Thomas, op. cit., p. 75.
among the Western powers. The discriminatory treaties were revised in the 1890's and by the end of the century the crest of the wave of reaction had passed. By 1911 Christianity was well enough accepted that the government invited Christians to share with Shinto and Buddhism in the “Three Religions Conference,” taking the seat of the defunct Confucian cult as a recognized religion. By this time, three of the Methodist missions, the M. E. Church, Methodist Church of Canada, and M. E. Church, South, had united their work into the indigenous Japan Methodist Church (1907). The story of the developments leading to that, however, go beyond the limits of this paper.

(The beginnings of the six Methodist Missions in Japan will be treated more fully in Part Two of this study, which will appear in the April number of Methodist History. —Ed.)