

Seeking the “City of God”

Ruth M. Grubel

128 years ago, Mary and James Lambuth, their thirty-two year old son, Walter, and his wife Daisy, were informed by their mission board in the U.S. that they would be sent from China, where they had served for many years, to begin new mission work in Kobe, Japan. They decided to take advantage of Kobe's many merits, such as its being a treaty port with good transportation and communication with the outside world. It was also at the center of a new railroad line, and the climate was very pleasant. At that time, Kobe was the fifth largest city in Japan, with a population of over one hundred thousand people.

Most of the Western residents of the foreign concession in Kobe were either involved with the business of trade or with Christian mission work. There was a very closed society of Western businessmen and their families, who tried to duplicate in Kobe the lifestyle of their home countries. However, the missionaries did not fit into that society. Instead, they met with the Japanese citizens of Kobe and the surrounding areas, holding worship services, Bible studies, language classes, and eventually established our school, Kwansai Gakuin. The Lambuths were eager to work with the local people, and wanted to help to nurture young people who could be responsible to create a better future for Japan. Rather than yearning for their home countries, the Lambuths and their colleagues were seeking to do God's work wherever they were sent.

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