

JAPAN MISSION.¹

MISSION COMMENCED IN 1886.

Bishop A. W. Wilson has Episcopal Supervision.

FIRST REPORT.

The inception of the Japan Mission of the M. E. Church, South, dates from May 6, 1885, when, upon the first day of the Thirty-ninth Annual Meeting of the Board of Missions, the following resolution was offered by Bishop Keener, adopted by the Board, and spread upon the Minutes:

"Resolved, That we establish a mission in Japan, and that we appropriate therefor[e] the sum of \$3,000."

In September of the same year, Rev. J. W. Lambuth, D. D., by request from home, made an extended tour of inspection both upon the coast and into the remote interior. In October he returned to China greatly pleased, and made a most favorable report to the Board.

APPOINTMENT OF MISSIONARIES.

A Letter from Bishop McTyeire, in charge of China Mission, dated Nashville, April 20, 1886, and received in Shanghai May 20, appointed J. W. Lambuth, W. R. Lambuth, and O. A. Dukes to Japan. Other letters from both Secretary and Treasurer came in confirmation, and definitely indicated July 1 as the date from which the above China missionaries would be considered members of the Japan Mission.

Associations linked with an environment upon the China field of from two to thirty-two years' standing were not easily broken; but by

the 25th of July Dr. Dukes and Dr. J. W. and Mrs. Lambuth had landed in Kobe, Japan; and though they ate their first meal on shore in their hands, spent their first night on tables, they nevertheless rejoiced that God had called them even unto the isles of the sea to herald the matchless claims of the gospel of salvation in Christ Jesus. These dates and facts are now matters of history, and it is well to preserve them.

BISHOP WILSON'S VISIT.

Being in charge of a hospital in Peking, and unable at the moment to secure a substitute, I could not immediately move my family to Japan, so came alone to meet Bishop Wilson; and, finding him and Rev. Collins Denny in Yokohama, returned with them to Kobe. Here, upon the evening of the 17th of September, just *thirty-two years* from the landing of my father and mother in Shanghai, China, we held the inauguration meeting of the Japan Mission, Bishop Wilson presiding. It was an occasion long to be remembered by us all. The words of our leader, freighted with rich, ripe thought, his prayers, the experience of others, and the benedictions of both the Bishop and Brother Denny, warm and fresh from the home-land, quickened our zeal and augmented our faith. The Bishop saw and heard a great deal in Japan, and was greatly pleased with the field, but did not outline any definite plan of operations, thinking it wise to leave us to formulate our plans, and organize our work after we had more time to take in the situation.

On the 23[r]d of September I returned to China with Bishop Wilson and Brother Denny, proceeded with them to Peking, and there finding a substitute in Dr. Crews, who had just been driven out of West China by the Chung-king riot, left again with my family for Japan, reaching

Kobe upon the 24th of November.

FIRST QUARTERLY CONFERENCE.

In the meantime, October 2, the first Quarterly Conference had been held, and was signaled by the baptism of Mr. Suzeeki [Suzuki], who had a few days previously indicated his desire for baptism by handing my father a remarkable letter—remarkable for its admirable statement of the grounds for his faith, and for his expressed determination to preach the gospel. This young man had been under my father's instruction in Shanghai for eight months, and came with him as interpreter. The baptism of this our first convert in Japan, with such marked signs of a work of grace in his heart, and at such an early date, has been accepted by us as a token of God's favor, and of a rich harvest in the near future. He is now studying theology. Let him have the prayers of the Church! It was decided at this meeting to open a reading-room for the students of the Normal, Commercial, Medical, and High Schools of Kobe. The Island of Awaji was to be visited regularly, and monthly visits made to Hiroshima, 200 miles west of us on the Inland Sea. At this point, a city of 80,000 inhabitants, Mr. Sunamoto, a converted pilot, was laboring zealously among his friends. He had been converted in San Francisco under Dr. Gibson, and had for several years been supporting himself there, the meanwhile attending night-school to get a better knowledge of Christianity. He became so concerned about his kinsfolk in Japan that he left America for a few months at his own expense to tell them the story of the cross. Five inquirers were reported by J. W. Lambuth as the outcome of one month's work done by this earnest, unlettered man. His mother, a brother, an uncle, and a cousin were of the number. A literary man

who taught a school of 160 pupils was searching the Scriptures, and a Buddhist priest at the head of a school of 250 pupils asked eagerly for a Testament in the Chinese character. Buddhistic works being in that language, he read the *character*, and preferred it. This certainly was encouraging.

CHURCH CONFERENCE.

The first Church Conference of the Kobe Methodist Church met December 3, 1886, at the house of J. W. Lambuth, and brought out other interesting facts. 1. We numbered six European members, one Chinese, and one Japanese. 2. The baby of a Russian had been baptized. 3. Two marriages had been solemnized—the one that of Dr. O. A. Dukes and Miss M. Bennett, the other Dr. W. H. Park and Miss Nora Lambuth. 4. The reading-room had been opened nightly, and was well attended. *Five* members of the Bible class had already handed in their names as inquirers. 5. Rev. W. B. Palmore had passed through on his tour around the world, and contributed \$100 annually to secure pure, sound literature for these young men who find so much of atheism and agnosticism upon the shelves of Japanese libraries and book-stores. It was determined therefore to call the reading-room Palmore Institute. Brother Palmore is also sending books from home for the library. Rev. W. R. McDonald, of the Memphis Conference, had also donated a liberal sum—\$125 annually for two years—which is to be devoted to the same object. Already 101 volumes have been contributed, and it is hoped many more will be sent through the mail by our good friends at home. 6. Our Sunday-school averages 20. A Sunday-school for Chinese, of whom there are several hundred in Kobe, was to be opened immediately, especially

as there was a Christian young lady, of Chinese parentage, in Kobe who was anxious to work for her own people. 7. It was determined, too, that upon the following Sunday a weekly collection should begin for the purchase of a lot for a church. 8. The ladies were all working hard, Mrs. Dukes rendering invaluable aid in the reading-room, especially in the absence of the gentlemen. Mrs. J. W. Lambuth had already gathered around her the nucleus of a school. She finds greater access to the women here than in China, and a very intelligent appreciation of any instruction one can give. Married women are banding themselves together to study English, foreign customs, and the Bible. *Sixty women* from the best circles in Kobe have united for such study, and voluntarily requested their teacher to extend the time of Bible-reading from fifteen minutes to half an hour—and this *in two weeks* from the time they began their study of Christianity. One of my patients, a wealthy Japanese naval officer, called upon me this morning (February 7), and, in reply to my inquiries in regard to this class of women, corroborated what I have said, and added that his wife had become deeply interested, and he himself had been studying the Bible with her. We need women from home to help us in a work which it is not difficult to see will soon reach dimensions which we will be utterly unable to compass.

THE SECOND QUARTERLY CONFERENCE,

held December 31st, showed a decided advance along the line. The whole length of the Inland Sea had been visited twice. The number of inquirers had increased at Hiroshima from *five* to *twenty-seven*. Among these was a well-to-do physician, several medical students, an officer, two school-teachers, a Shinto priest, and several more

relations of the Christian pilot. He himself had been indefatigable. Expecting to return to California in March, he had made the most of his time. One trip made by this man to an island village, while Dr. Dukes and I were at Hiroshima, was at night in an open boat and in the teeth of a wintry gale. There he told the story of the cross, and returned during the same weather, nearly frozen, but bright, hopeful, and enthusiastic. His health has suffered in consequence of repeated exposure, and he contemplates an early return to his American friends. Why should we not have a mission home in San Francisco, where these friendly islanders might find a welcome, and from which reflex influences might continually flow, like the benign waters of the Gulf Stream, warming the shores of this Empire? The Methodist Episcopal Church is alive to the importance of this agency, and has a successful work in San Francisco among both Japanese and Chinese. The Japanese are peculiarly open to approach. Already over one hundred and thirty out of nine hundred and odd in that city are professing Christians. They look upon Americans as their personal friends and well-wishers. They have told me so a dozen times in the last two months. There is no objection as yet to their immigration. They go principally to study our institutions, business methods, etc. They are going over in large numbers yearly. Five went with a friend of ours last month; *twenty-five* go with Mr. Sunamoto in March or April. We hope Brother Ransom, with his experience in Brazil, may initiate a work among these people, and see to it that every one comes under Christian influence.

During this quarter, moreover, one European member was received by certificate; the work in Kobe strengthened; the interior to the north of us visited and three circuits mapped out—Lake Biwa,

Kobe, and Hiroshima Circuits respectively; and manned by O. A. Dukes, W. R. Lambuth, and J. W. Lambuth in the same order.

At the ensuing mission meeting, held January 3, 1887, Dr. Dukes was elected Treasurer and Dr. J. W. Lambuth Secretary. It was determined that our mission year should begin the 1st of October and end the 30th of September; annual meetings to be held the *third* week in October. This will permit our visiting Bishop to reach Japan after the cholera season, spend two weeks on the field, hold the annual meeting, and reach China in seasonable time for a November Conference. Estimates for 1887-8 were considered at this meeting, J. W. Lambuth was requested to act as mission historian, and it was resolved that we enter into fraternal relations with the M. E. Church in Japan, and patronize their Book Concern in Tokio. It will be noted from what has been said that we are endeavoring to the best of our ability to bring our mission into line with Methodism at home. It is *persistent, intelligent, and systematic itineration*, that is needed in Japan. If this is true, Methodism is certainly well adapted to the work, and we must do our share.

LOCATION.

We have definitely fixed upon² Kobe as the center of our base line. 1. It is the center of our legitimate field. The M. E. Church occupies 200 miles³ to the north of us, and 300 to the south. 2. It is the center of a railway line rapidly being pushed⁴ to completion. 3. It is the most healthful seaport, for all seasons, of any in Japan. 4. It commands the Inland Sea, all coasting vessels making this a depot. 5. Being a treaty port in almost weekly communication with America, China, and England, we have advantages here which could not be secured

inland. Even the right of residence itself, outside of treaty ports,⁵ is debarred⁶ us until the revised treaty is ratified, unless we are engaged by a native company to teach. 6. Resting as it does upon the southern slope of a lofty range of hills,⁷ and reaching down along the shore of Osaka Bay; situated almost midway between the extremes of a long coast range where arctic winters and torrid summers reign; with commanding sites and broad, well-graded streets, what wonder is it that 80,000 people⁸ have already made their homes in Kobe, and others, like ourselves, are anxious to secure a foothold?

PLAN OF OPERATIONS.

Our plan, as far as elaborated, is as follows: 1. To occupy Kobe strongly as a center and supply station. 2. To establish a base line running through this city north-east and south-west—this line to pass twenty miles to the north-east by rail through Osaka, the *third* city in the Empire, with a population of 300,000; thence⁹ through Kyoto—forty-seven miles from Kobe—the western capital, for *twelve centuries* the sacred seat of the secluded Mikado, and still the great strong-hold of Buddhism and Shintuism [Shintoism]; but now holds¹⁰ as well the most vigorous Christian college in Japan, besides numerous institutions of learning, both public and private. There is no surer method of dissipating the ignorance and superstition enshrined upon those elaborately templed hills of sacred Kyoto than by permitting the presence of those simple whitewashed buildings thronged with students of Christianity and science which dot the plain below. From Kobe we too can strike the entering wedge which shall rend this city of 250,000 people—the second in the Empire—to the core. Eleven miles further, and we reach Lake Biwa, fifty miles

long, around which extends our Lake Biwa Circuit.

Upon the other hand, south-west from Kobe our line will run along the northern shore of the Inland Sea, passing through five provinces and tapping the Hiroshima Circuit at Hiroshima, two hundred miles from here. From thence it will continue one hundred miles in the same direction, passing through Yamaguchi, the capital of Suwo¹¹ Province, and find its terminus at land's end—the most western extremity of the main island, or Honshiu.¹² Here at the Straits of Shimonoseki, only a mile wide, we expect to shake hands with our Methodist brethren who are occupying the island of Kiushiu. At present we are working this line from Kobe by the aid of interpreters. As soon as feasible we want men from home stationed upon the north-east at Osaka, Kyoto, and on Lake Biwa; and upon the south-west at Onomichi, Hiroshima, Yamaguchi, and Shimonoseki. These south-western points are all important commercial centers, and command the hundreds of islands and thousands of villages which occupy the Inland Sea. The population of Japan, by reason of the inaccessibility of its mountainous interior, is largely confined to a narrow zone, which fringes the coast line, and on account of the bleak winds upon the bleaker northern coast, which bear¹³ the brunt of Siberian winters, there has been a steady gravitation of the people to the southern slope of this great volcanic roof. Here is our field, and singularly enough occupied, as yet, at but one point by resident missionaries. We are late upon the field! Let us occupy vigorously what has been so providentially¹⁴ left open to us! We call for at least two men each year for this inviting field!¹⁵

THE OUTLOOK

in Japan is most inspiring! No country in the world has passed through such a complete revolution of ideas in the short space of fifteen years. The nineteenth century has been grafted, without an intervening nexus, immediately upon the age of fe[u]dalism, and the astonishing result has been peace, and even prosperity. These people may be open to the charge of being changeable and impressible, and are undoubtedly childish; but we must remember the above leap of 300 years. Nor are they either fickle, shallow, or weak in intellect. Great wisdom has characterized the councils of the nation. Education is compulsory, and the best systems of America and Germany have been adopted. The Code Napoleon of France is their guide in law. The native currency, which seven years ago was discounted *seventy per cent.*, has been brought up to par—a masterly feat in finance when we consider the enormous outlay incident to a new régime. A Constitution will be granted the people in 1890—a marvelous concession on the part of an Emperor who has been worshiped as the Son of Heaven; the one hundred and twenty-second in direct descent from the Jimmu Tenno, who, according to tradition, was but the *fourth* [*fifth*] remove[d] from the Sun Goddess; and the more marvelous that this concession is voluntarily and cheerfully made. No other people are at present so open to impressions for good or evil. Japan is in a national state of suspension, or quiescence—that state just preceding the stage of crystallization. The entrance of Christianity of a vigorous type at this opportune moment may decide the future of this country. Americans are considered their best friends, and missionaries are held in high esteem by both people and officials, and favorable mention of their presence and labors is frequently made

in the daily papers by the ablest thinkers of the day. Missionaries are even *sought for* by the trustees of public and private schools! Shintuism [Shintoism] is starving out, and Buddhism is changing tactics continually—in fact, making its last fight. Native agency is a powerful factor in mission work, and self-support an accomplished fact in more than one mission! The revised treaty will settle the extraterritoriality question, and permit foreigners free access to the interior without passports. Nearly *five hundred* a month are being added to the Church, and 4,800 people in two hundred different places are reading the Bible daily in unison—several hundred of these being as yet unconverted, and some even priests of an idolatrous religion! What will be the outcome of all this? If Christians do their duty, it will be, *Japan for Christ!*

WALTER R. LAMBUTH,

Kobe, Japan, Feb. 9, 1887.

Superintendent of Japan Mission.

No field occupied by our Church has opened with greater promise than Japan. Our mission is in the hands of men who have the advantage of long experience in Oriental mission work. The above report should stir the heart of every preacher and member throughout our Church. God points to an open door in Japan. Shall we enter and occupy?

Editor's Notes

- 1 *Forty-first Annual Report of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, May 1, 1887, pp. 99-104.* Two parts, "Location" and "Plan of Operations," are quoted in *Walter Russell Lambuth,*

Prophet and Pioneer, written by W. W. Pinson in 1924. When comparing the original report (Japanese translation, pp. 86-96) and the quotations, I found differences of expression in 14 places. So I wrote Pinson's version in the footnotes and asked Dr. Ruth M. Grubel, the 15th chancellor of Kwansei Gakuin, to comment on each discrepancy. [Yuko Ikeda]

- 2 "settled on" (*Pinson*, p.81). The meaning of the two words in this context is very similar, but Pinson may have thought (consciously or unconsciously) that "settled" was more appropriate to describe future plans. [Ruth M. Grubel]
- 3 "occupies territory two hundred miles" (*Pinson*, p. 82). Pinson may have added "territory" for clarification, but it is only implied in Lambuth's sentence. [Grubel]
- 4 "a railroad line being pushed" (*Pinson*, p. 82). Pinson probably just failed to copy the word "rapidly," because there seems to be no reason for him to leave it out of his quotation. [Grubel]
- 5 "port," (*Pinson*, p. 82). In this context, "ports" is the correct word, and Pinson must simply have failed to add the "s" at the end of the word. [Grubel]
- 6 "denied" (*Pinson*, p. 82). The term "debarred," which Lambuth uses to describe foreigners being prohibited from living outside of the treaty ports, is similar in meaning to "denied," the word used by Pinson. It is difficult to know if Pinson's replacement was made intentionally, or if it was a mistake in transcription. [Grubel]
- 7 "a lofty range of hills and on the southern slope," (*Pinson*, p. 82). Lambuth's version is much smoother. In fact, "and on the southern slope," in Pinson's version seems to be out of place. He may have transcribed it incorrectly, but the meaning is basically the same as Lambuth's. [Grubel]
- 8 "250,000 people" (*Pinson*, p.82). According to Yuko Ikeda's research, Lambuth's figure seems much closer to the Kobe population of 80,446 on December 31, 1886. 250,000 must have been a mistake by Pinson. It is closer to the population of Kyoto at the end of 1886 (236,874). [Grubel]
- 9 "hence" (*Pinson*, p. 82). In this case, Dr. Lambuth's term is correct

(thence, meaning “from there”), while “hence,” used by Pinson means “therefore,” although the dictionary mentions archaic uses of “hence” that may be closer to the meaning of “thence.” In any case, I think that Pinson simply made a mistake in transcribing the original Lambuth report. [Grubel]

- 10 “But which now holds” (*Pinson*, p. 82). Adding “which,” as in Pinson’s version, makes the sentence easier to understand, but I assume that the meanings of the two versions are the same. I cannot guess whether Pinson intended to change the sentence, or did so unconsciously. [Grubel]
- 11 “Sunō” (*Pinson*, p. 83). I think that this is simply a mistake in Pinson’s transcription. It is understandable if Pinson were using a hand-written document because “w” and “n” can look similar, depending upon the handwriting style. As you know, “Suwo” is the correct pronunciation of the place being described. [Grubel]
- 12 “of Honshu.” (*Pinson*, p. 83). It appears that Lambuth is providing the translation for 本州, while Pinson is providing the name of the main island. This is why Lambuth uses “or,” and Pinson uses “of.” I am not sure why Pinson uses a different spelling (the one used most often today), but Lambuth’s use of “Honshiu” is consistent with his romanization of 九州 as well (Kiushiu). Again, I can only imagine that Pinson made a mistake in transcribing the original Lambuth report. There is no significant difference in the meaning of the two versions. [Grubel]
- 13 “bears” (*Pinson*, p. 83). If this verb means “to endure,” it is used with the subject, “the bleaker northern coast,” which is singular, so “bears” would be grammatically correct. However, Lambuth may have used the verb to mean “to move or transport,” regarding the subject “the bleak winds,” which is plural, so “bear” would be correct. Pinson may simply have assumed a different meaning for “bear,” and corrected what he thought was a mistake in the original document. [Grubel]
- 14 “what so providentially has been” (*Pinson*, p. 83). The meanings of these two versions are basically the same. Stylistically, it is a question

of where the adverb (“providentially”) should come in relation to the verb (“has been left open”), and from my understanding, Lambuth’s version is the preferred style - placing the adverb between parts of the compound verb. Again, I guess that Pinson simply made a mistake in transcribing from the original. [Grubel]

- 15 “for this program!” (*Pinson*, p. 83). In my opinion, Lambuth’s version of this sentence is a request to the Board of Missions to fund a minimum of two missionaries. It is concluded with a passionate description of the need in; “this inviting field!” In contrast, Pinson’s version is more like a job announcement for a government project (“this program”). Lambuth’s words imply that he is trying to persuade the Board of the importance of the work in Japan, but knows that there are limited resources, so he tries to emphasize the positive potential in dispatching. I do not think that Pinson had any reason to change the meaning reflected in the original Lambuth document, but he may just have been less careful about transcribing this section. [Grubel]