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A brief history
of the Disciples of Christ and the independent Christian Churches
in Japan

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Introduction

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As you know, the following three groups have emerged out of the Restoration Movement that took place in the U.S.A. in the 19th century.

1. Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) : they are located primarily in the northern part of the U.S.A., are theologically liberal, and actively cooperate with the World Council of Churches (WCC). And now they have their own denominational organization.

2. Christian Churches and Churches of Christ : they are also located primarily in the northern part of the U.S.A. But they are theologically conservative, and oppose all organizations, including missionary societies. And their churches are all independent.

3. Churches of Christ : they are located primarily in the southern part of the U.S.A., are theologically conservative, and oppose all organizations. Furthermore, they do not use musical instruments in worship services, but sing hymns a cappella.

The three groups were originally one and started out as the Disciples of Christ. And each of these three groups is still active even in Japan today.

However, distinguishing the names of these three groups of the Restoration Movement is complicated. It is difficult to understand which group each congregation belongs to from these three names alone. And even if we use “Christian Church” or “Church of Christ”, it is hard to determine which group it belongs to without adding a detailed description.

To avoid such confusion, I am going to use the names of these three groups in this lecture as follows.

Disciples of Christ for Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
independent Christian Churches for Christian Churches and Churches of
Christ

A cappella Churches of Christ for Churches of Christ

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The theme given to me is a brief history of the Disciples of Christ and the independent Christian Churches in Japan.

Before my lecture, please allow me to briefly introduce myself.

I was led to faith and baptized in one of the independent Christian Churches. Osaka Bible Seminary, I studied after graduating from college, and all of the churches I have served as a pastor belong to the independent Christian Churches

But, Ibaraki Christian College (now Ibaraki Christian University), where I studied, was established by the members of a cappella Churches of Christ. When I was a student there, naturally I attended churches which belong to a cappella Churches of Christ.

Furthermore, while working as a pastor in Tokyo, I studied at the graduate school of Tokyo Union Theological Seminary. It is a seminary founded by the United Churches of Christ in Japan (UCCJ) which is a merger of Disciples of Christ with Presbyterians, Methodists, and others. And I was given the opportunity to fellowship with the professors and pastors of Disciples of Christ background in Japan.

The United Churches of Christ in Japan (UCCJ) was formed by a confederation of 33 Protestant denominations on June 24, 1941, under pressure from the military government during war time. It has become the largest Protestant denomination in Japan.

There are two opinions on the UCCJ : one opinion is that the 33 Protestant denominations was forced to join the UCCJ because they could not defy the military government, and another opinion is that they believed it was God's will for them to be united, even if there was pressure from the military government.

The Disciples of Christ in Japan actively cooperated and joined the UCCJ. Many of the independent Christian Churches in Japan obeyed the military government and joined the UCCJ, but two churches (Mabashi Church in Tokyo and Asahi Church in Osaka) refused to join in UCCJ. Asahi Church especially was persecuted heavily

by Japanese military officials. As for a cappella Churches of Christ, there is no record of them joining the UCCJ because they were few in number and had little activity.

Although I have not studied at any schools related to the Restoration Movement in the U.S.A., I am fortunate enough to have fruitful fellowship with the three groups in Japan.

1. The first missions in Japan of the Restoration Movement

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In 1883, the Foreign Christian Missionary Society (FCMS) sent Charels E. Garst and George T. Smith and their families to Japan in 1883. They were the first missionaries sent to Japan of our churches.

After spending seven months in Yokohama studying the Japanese language and searching for a mission field, in 1884 Garst and Smith moved to Akita, the northern part of Japan, at the encouragement of a Baptist missionary. At that time, most missionaries lived in Tokyo or in places where they had special permission to stay, there was no missionary in Akita. That was the reason they chose Akita. They chose a place where other missionaries had not established themselves.

Garst and Smith opened a church and spread the Gospel in Akita, feeding the poor people, nursing for the children, and teaching English. The church they opened is still active today as the Akita Koyo Church (秋田高揚教会) which belongs to the UCCJ.

As for the wife of Smith, her health was not good and died on March 23, 1885, shortly after giving birth to her second daughter. Her second daughter, who had just been born, also passed away less than four weeks later.

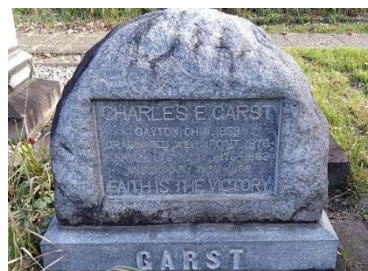


Left : Charles E. Garst
tenure in Japan 1883~1898
died in Tokyo

Right : George T. Smith
tenure in Japan 1883~1892

Smith was a graduate of Bethany College founded by Alexander Campbell and had ten-years' experience as a pastor in the U.S.A.

On the other hand, Garst was a graduate of West Point Military Academy but had no formal theological education. However, he evangelized with great enthusiasm, gave good messages in Japanese, and served especially for the poor farmers with the single tax theory. So, he was called “Tanzei-Taro” (単税太郎). “Tanzei” means “the single tax theory” and “Taro” is a common boy's name in Japan. He became a prominent missionary but was taken to heaven in Tsukiji, Tokyo in 1898 at the age of 48. The photo on the right is his grave in Aoyama Cemetery.



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After Garst and Smith came to Japan, many missionaries were sent by the FCMS. They initially established their headquarters in Akita and expanded their activities in the Tohoku region, including Akita, Fukushima, and Sendai, but later moved their headquarters to Tokyo, where they also worked extensively. Not only the FCMS missionaries but independent missionaries sent by the churches of the Restoration Movement in the U.S.A. also joined this work.

At many fellow missionaries' request, Harvey H. Guy, who earned his PhD at Yale University, founded Seigakuin Bible Seminary in 1903. The seminary had another name, “Drake Bible Seminary”, named after a person who gave a significant donation. And Seigakuin, as an academy, opened English schools, schools for boys, and schools for girls one after another.

However, Seigakuin Bible Seminary merged into Aoyama Gakuin's school of theology after the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923 made it difficult to operate. Aoyama Gakuin's school of theology is one of the roots of Tokyo Union Theological Seminary.

Now Seigakuin Academy is famous as a large school that operates from kindergarten to graduate school, but the seminary no longer exists.

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The 1906 census triggered a north-south split in the Disciples of Christ in the U.S.A. Then, around the 1920s, in the U.S.A. the liberals and conservatives in the Disciples of Christ gradually began to part company. Thus began the three groups of the Restoration Movement.

In light of that, it is very important for us to remember that when Garst and Smith came to Japan in 1883 and when Seigakuin Seminary was established in 1903, there was no clear division among the churches of the Restoration Movement. At that time, whether they were FCMS missionaries or they were independent missionaries, they had various and different opinions on organizations and the use of instrumentals in worship services. However, W. D. Cunningham and other direct-support missionaries often worked with the missionaries of the Disciples of Christ before World War II.

In addition, some early Japanese pastors of the Disciples of Christ in Japan had a fellowship with the missionaries of the Yotsuya Mission founded later by W. D. Cunningham and a cappella churches of Christ missionaries who came later.

2. The subsequent progress of the Disciples of Christ in Japan

The missionaries and Japanese pastors of the Disciples of Christ in Japan built up their organization from the beginning and actively interacted with other denominations.

As Japan proceeded with the war, the military government requested all Protestant denominations to unite as one. The Disciples of Christ in Japan responded positively to this request with the opinion that “This is the reason for our existence, which aims at union with other churches”.

As already mentioned, 33 Protestant denominations joined together and formed the UCCJ in 1941. The Disciples of Christ, with the Congregational Churches, was added to the fourth section of the UCCJ.

Sadly, Mitsuru Tomita (富田満), a Presbyterian pastor and the first head of UCCJ, went to Ise Shrine to worship and to report the establishment of the UCCJ. As you know, some years earlier he had told Korean pastors, including Pastor Joo Kicheol (주기철 목사), that shrine worship was a Japanese custom, not idolatry.

Now they have only 16 churches in the UCCJ, but they have no fellowship among themselves as the churches of the Disciples of Christ in Japan. Just a few of them continue to practice baptism by immersion and to have weekly communion. And their main commitment to remain in the UCCJ, accepting the spirit of unity among the Restoration Movement.

However, I would like to add one last thing on the Disciples of Christ in Japan. Several outstanding theologians emerged from among them. For example, Dr. Hideo Oki (大木英夫), who earned his PhD at Union Theological Seminary in New York City, and Dr. Katsuhiko Kondo (近藤勝彦), who earned his doctorate degree at the University of Heidelberg in Germany. They are very famous in Japanese Churches, as they served as professor and president at Tokyo Union Theological Seminary and wrote many books.

3. The first missionaries of the independent Christian Churches in Japan

Looking back at the mission of the independent Christian Churches in Japan, the first missionaries before the war, who deserve special mention, were M/M William D. Cunningham, who established the Yotsuya Mission, and M/M Milton B. Madden, who were involved in the establishment of Osaka Bible Seminary. Both William D. Cunningham and Milton B. Madden graduated from Bethany College.

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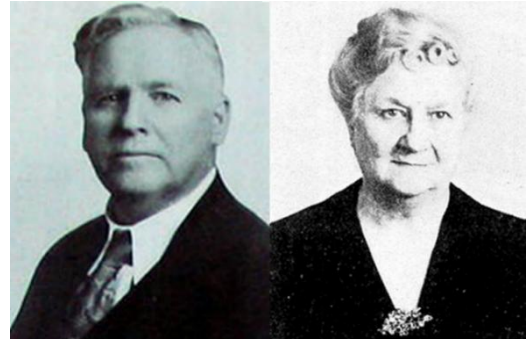
First, let me introduce M/M William D. Cunningham. When Cunningham worked as a pastor, he had a desire to spread the Gospel in Japan and applied to become a missionary sent by the FCMS. A short time later, however, he fell ill and was left paralyzed on the left side of his body. The doctor's diagnosis was pediatric paralysis.

Cunningham still wished to go to Japan as a missionary, but the FCMS ordered him to stay home. He tried to negotiate many times with the FCMS but was finally denied his desire because of his physical disability.

However, Cunningham did not give up, insisting that "God gave me the desire to be a missionary," and enlisted the support of various churches and friends, choosing to become an independent missionary. And, in 1901, He arrived in Japan with his wife, Emily, and a three-year daughter, Eloise.

They were in a more difficult financial situation than the missionaries sent by the FCMS and struggled to evangelize while teaching English at schools.

M/M Cunningham initially worked with the FCMS missionaries. But, in 1903, they began their mission in Yotsuya. A few female missionaries had already been working in Yotsuya, but at the request of a missionary named W.K. Asbill, who had come to Japan with them, M/M Cunningham moved to Yotsuya to work with them.



William and Emily Cunningham

Asbill and the female missionaries were also independent missionaries of the Disciples of Christ, but they later took their stand with the a cappella Churches of Christ.

After moving to Yotsuya, M/M Cunningham's ministry was remarkable. With increased support from the U.S.A., they established a missionary organization called the Yotsuya Mission, invited many missionaries to join them, and actively developed evangelism and planted many churches. In 1922, the mission had 6 churches, 8 out-stations and a training class for ministers conducted in two out-stations.



유재현 목사
해방 후 대한수도원(철원),
임마누엘수도원(삼각산)을
설립하였고,
1950년 8월 15일
공산군에게 피납된 후
행방불명

이인범 목사
1926년 성결교에서 면직된
직후 커닝햄의 동역자로 사역.
1929.11 - 1933.08
동경심천조선기독교회 담임
1933.09 - 1943.09(만 10년)
조선기독교회 포교관리자 취임.
1949.01.03 금산제일교회 부임.
1951년 금산에서 별세

일본 횡빈조선인기독교회 유재현 목사 부임 환영기념(1931년 11월 8일). 성낙소 목사는 이 교회를 1930년 5월에 부임하여 11월부터 1931년 9월 포교관리자로 귀국할 때까지 주임목사로 섬겼다.

In addition, Cunningham not only devoted himself to evangelizing the Korean people in Japan but also sent his fellow missionaries to Seoul. As you know, a Bible school founded by the missionaries of the Yotsuya Mission became Seoul Christian University. The photo on the right is Yokohama Korean Christian Church in 1931.

The Yotsuya Mission established many churches and out-stations, but Cunningham held personnel authority over and paid salaries not only to the Japanese pastors and Sunday school teachers of each church in the Yotsuya Mission, but also to the American missionaries. As he did not build up a Bible college or seminary, he employed preachers, most with other denominational backgrounds, instead. And his method of running the Yotsuya Mission was said to be quite forceful. So, many missionaries, including John Chase in Seoul, rebelled and defected.

Cunningham died quite suddenly in Rochester, Minnesota, June 24, 1936, while on furlough. Though Emily had to carry on her husband's work alone, she was able to recruit M/M Owen Still to assist her.

In late 1940 most missionaries returned to the U.S. A. as the shadow of war began to fall. Emily was deported from Japan in June 1942.

Cunningham's life is summarized in the book "The Flaming Torch".

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Next, let me introduce M/M Milton B. Madden, who actually arrived in Japan earlier than M/M William D. Cunningham.

M/M Madden came to Japan as missionaries sent by the FCMS in September 1895. After studying Japanese in Tokyo for a while, they moved to Fukushima the next year. In 1897, however, he moved to Sendai, and then to Osaka in 1911. Three churches they started while missionaries of the FCMS are still active today and they all belong to the UCCJ.



Milton and Maude Madden

Madden was a short man and could be mistaken for a Japanese. He mastered the language and evangelized tirelessly. And his wife, Maude, was his equal in talent. Few people have written so carefully and beautifully

about Japan as she. she wrote many articles and books. The most famous among them is “In the Land of the Cherry Blossoms”.

M/M Madden left the FCMS in 1914. The reason was the one-sided management and autocratic methods of the FCMS without regard for the circumstances of the missionaries. They had been forced to change their locations many times by the FCMS which they believed it was not in the best interest of the church for missionaries to move so often.

M/M Madden raised support in the U.S.A. and returned to Japan as independent missionaries in 1919, settling in the Temmabashi district of Osaka. They rented property there and began a church and kindergarten. Their new work was then called the “Osaka Christian Mission”.

However, as the property in Temmabashi was damaged by the Muroto Typhoon of 1934, after a time-consuming process, they bought the property in Asahi-ku and opened Asahi Christian Church in 1936.

M/M Madden had a vision of starting a Bible college to train preachers of their own churches and invited M/M Harold Cole to come to Japan for that purpose.

In the spring of 1937, M/M Cole came to Japan. Shortly after their arrival in Osaka in April of that year, Osaka Bible Seminary was opened in the building of Asahi Christian Church. Harold Cole became the president and M/M Madden joined as teachers.



The old building of Asahi Church

Two students from Mabashi Christian Church in Tokyo enrolled. But, as the government’s control increased, the activities of the Osaka Bible Seminary became more difficult. Lectures continued until 1941, but the school was unable to send out any graduates before the war.

Mr. Hiromu Sugano(菅野宏), a devoted Christian led to the Lord by M/M Madden, protected the building of Asahi Christian Church, putting in his name temporarily. And he did not allow the church to merge with the UCCJ. However, the military police came barging into the church several times because of this.

4. The post war time of the independent Christian Churches in Japan

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During the war, before returning to Japan, Emily Cunningham of The Yotsuya Mission recruited three men as her successors in the U.S.A. They were Harold Sims, Andrew Patton, and Stanley Buttray.

The Yotsuya Mission was taken over by the three men. However, they rejected Cunningham's pre-war method of operation and chose to each become independent missionaries while jointly maintaining the Yotsuya Mission together. So, the Yotsuya Mission was no longer in its prewar form after Emily passed away in 1953.

After the war, Masahisa Iijima(飯島正久), who was baptized in Kamiochiai Christian Church before the war, expressed a desire to become a pastor, so the Yotsuya Mission opened Tokyo Bible Seminary for him in 1948. Iijima became the first graduate of the school.

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M/M Madden also recruited three men of the class of Dr. Toyozo Nakarai (半井豊造), professor of the Old Testament and the Hebrew language, at Butler University's school of religion. They were Martin Clark, George Beckman, and Ray Mings.

The three men came to Japan and rebuilt Osaka Bible College after the war and Martin Clark became the second president.

The first graduation ceremony of Osaka Bible Seminary sent four graduates. One of them, Akira Oda(織田昭), later studied at the University of Athens in Greece, where he became the first Japanese graduate. He not only taught the New Testament and Greek at Osaka Bible Seminary for a long time but also published a pocket dictionary of the New Testament Greek.

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After the war, many missionaries came to other areas of Japan in addition to Tokyo and Osaka. Here are some of them.

M/M Mark Maxey went to Kagoshima, worked with other missionaries, and established many churches, also many pastors resulted from their work. Although they lived in a rural town in Kagoshima, they took pride in their work, saying, "This is the center of Japan."

Haran Woodruff landed in Okinawa as a chaplain for the U.S. Army just after the war, saw the dire conditions in Okinawa, and made the decision to work there as a missionary. He and his wife established not only many churches but also Okinawa Bible Seminary(1953-1963). In addition, they earned the respect of the people of Okinawa for helping the poor and raising war orphans.

Conclusion

I will summarize from my perspective what happened to the independent Christian Churches in Japan after the war end.

- A. After the war, American missionaries were very powerful, and Japanese Christians were very weak in comparison. So American missionaries unintentionally taught American culture along with the Bible, but many Japanese Christians accepted it uncritically.
- B. Masahisa Iijima, a first graduate of Tokyo Bible Seminary, studied the Bible under Taijiro Yamamoto (山本泰次郎), a disciple of the non-churchism(無教会主義) organizer Kanzo Uchimura(内村鑑三), before entering the seminary. Non-churchism encourages the study of the Bible itself but is reluctant to evangelize and form churches. Iijima became a strong leader among the independent Christian Churches in Japan and his presence spread non-churchism among the churches. This has weakened the spirit and power of the evangelism of the independent Christian Churches in Japan.
- C. Iijima's influence of non-churchism caused a serious schism among the churches, which has continued for more than 50 years. However, a few of those churches have restored fellowship. Tokyo Bible Seminary was also closed after 10 years because of this problem.



This is Taijiro Yamamoto's meeting in 1958. He sits in the middle center. In this photo, we can see Masahisa Iijima, Akira Oda, other pastors of the independent Christian Churches.

- D. There used to be about 80 churches in the independent Christian Churches in Japan; now there are 68.
- E. The independent Christian Churches are not only weak in evangelism, but also not doing a good job of passing on the faith to their children, so all of the churches are in decline. Few young people aspire to become pastors. Of course, this is a problem of all denominations in Japan.
- F. Though the independent Christian Churches in Japan have no headquarters nor unifying organizations, their hope is, in the fact, that the annual national convention that began in 1948 is still meeting, except for two years because of the Corona disaster, and that Osaka Bible Seminary, as a servant leader of the churches, is still operating.