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THE "CHURCH ASSEMBLY":
ITS ORIGIN AND ITS OUTREACH IN FORMOSA

By

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A Thesis

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THE "CHURCH ASSEMBLY":
ITS ORIGIN AND ITS OUTREACH IN FORMOSA

INTRODUCTION

A. Statement and Significance of the Problem

The "Church Assembly" is identified as an indigenous Church in China. Its rise was under the guidance of God's own Spirit. He moved on the spirits of several native Christians, and then as a result many groups arose as a testimony to Him.

From the short history of this Church one will notice that this Church was born in prayer. How it was started and what made it spread and grow all over the China mainland, and finally disperse to the island of Formosa, which is now the only free spot of China that the Gospel can be preached liberally, is worth studying. The reader will discover in this study not only the outward growth of this Church, which seems so dynamic and terrific in terms of the number of new converts, but that the basic viewpoint held by this Church is that the Church is the living Body of Christ. This viewpoint gives the church members a unique goal toward which they exercise their spiritual gifts in the Church.

Therefore, even the organization of the local churches as well as the operation of the church's affairs

in general, namely, the propagation of the Gospel, and the maturing of a steadfast faith in the Lord among the members are guided under the same principles found in this basic belief.

The details of how this conviction of the "Church Assembly" works will be studied by the writer.

B. Definition of Terms and Delimitation of the Problem

The Church according to its Biblical sense should be defined as : "This Church comprises all the saved, without reference to time or space. . . . This is the Church universal, the Church of God, the body of Christ."¹ The Church involves all the children of God, in other words, all the believers who have the same life as God himself. When they come together it is the Church. Therefore, it is appropriate that the name of this particular Church be the "Church Assembly."

An explanation is needed of the fact that some people in its early history called this group the "Little Flock." It was because of the use of a hymn book named "The Hymns of the Little Flock" when the Church first held its meetings. People mistook it for the name of the Church. Figuratively speaking, the whole Church in the sight of the Lord is but a small flock of sheep (Luke 12:32); furthermore,

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1. Watchman Nee, Concerning Our Mission. Shanghai, China, Gospel Book Room, 1938, pp. 84-85.

the Lord says in the Gospel of John 10:16 that he brings all sheep together into one flock and they are under one shepherd. Obviously, the flock is the Church. Therefore, "The Hymns of the Little Flock" simply means the collection of hymns sung by the Church.¹ If the Church has to have a name, the "Church Assembly" will do, for it is the gathering of the redeemed of God to worship him. On this basis the "Church Assembly" fellowships with all believers everywhere in the world.²

The term "Exercise in the Body of Christ" means that because each member in the Body needs to grow, adequate and sufficient exercises are necessary to aid the process of growing. Therefore, the Church provides as many opportunities as there may be to serve this purpose so that no member is idle and falls behind. "Body of Christ" and the Church are the same, but the term "Exercise in the Body of Christ" will be used because the writer wants to put the emphasis on the living Body of Christ, since every member of the body must function properly and continuously even as the human body.

The "Established Church" denotes the Christian Church that has already been established in Formosa by the early European missionaries. It is used to distinguish it

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1. Notes taken in a Meeting in Shanghai in 1932, p. 18.
2. Cf. The Ministry of the Word, Taipei, Formosa, Gospel Book Room, July 1, 1951, pp. 18-24.

from the later Church coming into Formosa from the China mainland.

"Christian projects" are not ordinary projects carried on in schools as people usually think of them. They are a part of spiritual training in the Church for every member. They may be said to belong to the realm of the Body Exercise, yet they are operated in a different direction.

The word "Church" spelled with a capital C will be used for the "Church Assembly" in China, which is a part of the universal one. The small letter "church" will be used for the individual local church wherever it is mentioned.

C. Method of Procedure

In this study the first chapter will deal with the origin and the spread of the "Church Assembly" in China and abroad, which includes the origin and early development of this Church. The second chapter deals with inner growth of this Church in Formosa. The writer will explore the elements which cause the growth of this Church in terms of its program and activities.

There is much more that could be mentioned about the "Church Assembly," but the writer will simply present the most important points as the representative features of this Church in this study.

D. Sources of Data

Most of the data which will be used in this study are written in Chinese because there are not many available books or pamphlets written or printed in English. Some of the information is not published, but has been given orally to the writer either by the minister of the "Church Assembly" in New York, Stephen Kaung, or by the correspondence with James Chen, the minister in Hong Kong associated with the "Church Assembly" there. The writer hopes that through contacts with these people and through issues of essential periodicals of the "Church Assembly" put out by the "Church Assembly" in Formosa that this study will be a profitable and valuable one.

CHAPTER I

THE ORIGIN AND SPREAD OF THE "CHURCH ASSEMBLY"

A. Introduction

Christianity has been in China for over 140 years. There are many converts everywhere along the coast or in the mainland of China through the labor of the missionaries and their faithfulness in preaching the Gospel to the Chinese. This is unquestionably the work of God.

Among the Christians in China, there is a group who were guided by the Spirit of God to see the need of having a real spiritual fellowship among themselves. They decided to dedicate themselves to God as channels of his own flowing life, and to worship God in the exact way which the Lord demands them to do. This group started by faith, and through faith they gained confidence in what they were doing, for there were many evidences of God's presence, blessings and guidance. They grew in number and in grace. It is the purpose of this chapter to consider how this Church started, how it grew and spread, and what significant characteristics it developed.

B. The Origin of the "Church Assembly" in China

A study of the beginning of this Church reveals two important facts: It was born in prayer and was an

indigenous movement.

1. Answered Prayer

In 1920 in Pagoda Anchor of Foochow, China, a British missionary prayed constantly for the Chinese people that one day God would stir up the hearts of the native people so that they themselves might be living testimonies of God and that indigenous work might be started among themselves. This missionary was only one of many who kept praying for the Chinese believers and the work of God in China.

The Lord did not take a long time to answer the prayers. A wonderful thing happened. In Foochow two Chinese Christians received a call from God and as full time native missionaries for the Lord started to go to many places to preach the Gospel. These two were S. C. Lee, MD. and Dora Yu.

2. The Beginning of the "Church Assembly"

Dora Yu, one of the two workers, was invited to preach the Gospel among the students at the Trinity College in Foochow. God greatly used her there and many young people were won to Christ. Among them was a young man by the name of Watchman Nee who became one of the founders of the "Church Assembly." (Watchman Nee was born and brought up in a Christian home. His grandfather was a Christian. But because he himself was an exceptionally bright boy and

was always successful, he rejected the Lord and his salvation. One day Dora Yu came to his hometown to preach the Gospel, and his mother was saved. A great change was seen in her, and Watchman began to wonder and ponder this matter. Urged by curiosity, he went to the meeting the next day. There the Spirit took hold of him, and he could do nothing but yield to the Lord.)

During that time, the fire of the Holy Spirit swept over the whole college. Many young people were saved and came together to study the Word of God. An obvious change took place in their lives. Their hearts burned with the love of God for the lost souls and were grieved at the sinful ones in the city. They immediately started to pray about this matter by taking turns day and night without ceasing. By the grace of God and through their prayers wonderful things happened in the college. The best students together with the worst ones were conquered by the Lord one by one. The revival took place throughout the whole college. Still they were not satisfied; they were concerned about the souls outside the college. With this motivation they wrote Bible verses on big sheets of paper and hung the papers on their shoulders. Thus, they walked along the streets where there were many people passing and began to preach the Gospel. They also delivered tracts to them and to the people in the stores.

As a result, many were won for Christ, and soon a place for meetings was needed, for they were still meeting

in the homes of the believers. Then the Lord prepared in a miraculous way an amount of money which was just enough to rent a building for which a down payment of three months' rent was demanded. Meetings were started in that house. The house was empty, and people coming to the meetings had to sit on the cold hard floor or bring their own chairs. Most people brought their own chairs the first time and left them there. The elders were responsible for the chairs, since the people who came to the meetings were not rich. Although they started the Church in such a simple way, they were truly seeking the will of God and were willing to obey him. Thus, God blessed them in return, and they grew in his grace.

C. The Main Characteristics of the "Church Assembly"

When these Christians gathered to read the Word of God, they began to discover the truth in the Scriptures, and doubts arose about certain things that they had observed in the Church in those days. People were so-called Christians, yet they did not walk according to the truth. They frequently used the name of Jesus Christ in doing things, yet they did not regard him as the Lord in their lives. The members of the Church supported it in the matter of finance only; the ministers were the appointed ones to take care of the sacred affairs. The best members in the Church hardly knew the Bible. The more this group studied the Word of God, the more they had guidance from above that it was time to turn back to

him. They felt that God wanted his people to do his will. But who were these people? They prayed and waited before the Lord, and they were sure that God wanted them to be obedient to this light. Though they were weak and few in number, God the mighty Father upheld them. His love and mercy never departed from them.

Gradually, this group of Christians grew in number and in the knowledge of him. Meetings were started and held in many other places besides Foochow with the same insight and guidance. These groups then became local churches.

Certain definite convictions underlie the organization in the local churches, the distinction of the "Church" and the "Work," and the matter of finance. These will be discussed one by one here.

1. Organization of local churches

In the Scripture Matthew 16:18 Jesus first states the word Church by saying, ". . . on this rock I will build my church, and the power of death shall not prevail against it." The word Church is in the singular number which includes all the saved members in the body of Christ all over the world, in the past, the present, or in the future. This is the universal one. But in another place as shown by Acts 14:23, ". . . they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting," Here a hint is given that a number of churches were in existence, one at a place, and the Apostles appointed elders in each

one of them. As Watchman Nee stated:

The Scripture method of founding a church is simply by preaching the Gospel; nothing further is necessary, or even permissible. If people hear the Gospel and receive the Lord as their Savior, then they are a church; there is no need of any further procedure in order to become a church.¹

This church can be plural in number, at which time they are called local churches. To make the term, local church, clearer, a simple definition is: "A local church is a church which comprises all the children of God in a given locality."² If this is true, there must be many local churches all over the world. In what way shall one distinguish them? For they must bear a name as their identification. In order to solve this problem one has to examine the Bible for further light.

In the epistles of Paul every time he begins to speak, he addresses the Christians as: "To all God's beloved in Rome."³ "To the churches of Galatia."⁴ "To the church of God which is at Corinth."⁵ Every time only the name of the place is mentioned. They show the locality of the churches only. Based on this, the conclusion may be drawn that to name the churches after the places where they are is Biblical on one hand, and logical on the other. Otherwise it is of man's tradition and consequently the churches

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1. Nee, op. cit., p. 112.
2. Ibid., p. 113.
3. Romans 1:7a.
4. Galatians 1:2a.
5. 1 Corinthians 1:2a; II Corinthians 1:1b.

fall into the pattern of sects.

The next step is to examine the major factors that are involved in any of the local churches. They are, namely, the minister, the church building, and the church services, respectively.

a. The Minister

According to the New Testament, the early apostles such as Peter, Paul, Barnabas, Timothy, and many others did not stay in one place permanently. This is especially true of Paul who went from one place to another to preach the Gospel and to establish local churches, ordaining the local brethren to rule over the local churches. It was and still is true that the church is in the hands of the elders. The deacons are to care exclusively for the business things in the church. For example, there is the case of the seven men chosen to take care of the daily distribution in the early Church in Jerusalem, to help in the business affairs in order that the disciples could concentrate to pray and preach the Word.¹ Thus, the local churches are governed by the elders, and the elders are appointed among the local brethren.² Since the church is always in the hands of the local brethren, and the work of God is in the hand of the evangelists, there is no conflict between them; hence, it seems that there is no place for a local apostle, for the apostles do not stay in only one place.

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1. Acts 6:1-6.

2. Cf. Nee, op. cit., p. 144.

b. The Church Building

It is important to have a place where Christians can meet to worship. But very often people think that the building itself is the church, and this misunderstanding bars one from entering into the real sense of worship of God. Christians used to think that if they had enough money, they would build a magnificent church in which they could worship God, then they were satisfied. The meeting place to them seemed more important than anything else. But as one turns back to the Bible, especially in the New Testament time, there was no particular emphasis on the church buildings. The Christians used to gather in the homes or in the Temple to meet and to worship.

As the history of the early Church unfolds, it is seen that because the Christians were under persecutions from many directions, especially from the government, they had to meet some place where their persecutors could not find them. Homes proved to be the best places.

There are other advantages in meeting in homes. It gives an atmosphere of free fellowship with one another. If the participants have questions in their hearts, they can just pour them out in the midst of the congregation, and someone may have the answer. They will feel the free movement of the Holy Spirit there, and regard the church

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1. Acts 12:12; Romans 16:5; I Corinthians 16:19; Acts 2:46; I Corinthians 14:23.

affairs as their own. They can hardly separate themselves from the church, for the church is in them. The real close and belonging relationship of the individual and the church is experienced.

Meeting in the homes not only provides for better fellowship but is also an opportunity for preaching the Gospel. At least, the neighbors around may have the chance to hear the Gospel. It is easier to encourage them to come to a home style meeting than to go to the church building; for then they have no excuse to say that the church is too far away or the service is too formal. In other words, it is a strong testimony for that particular home to bear.

c. The Church Service

Most people are influenced by the program of a service; such as they will attend church when someone sings a solo, or a well-trained choir presents a special music program. Otherwise they would rather stay at home listening to the radio or watching the television. By now it is necessary to consider what the church should do when people gather. Should it be just a formal well-planned service with everything in good order but without life-giving power; or should it be a chance for God to reveal himself to his people during their worship?

The meeting should not be led by a special class of consecrated brethren, but rather by the local brethren. The "Church Assembly" believes that the essential part of

of the meeting is not only the preaching which rests on the minister, but is also a chance for the exercise of the whole body of which the minister is but a part. One can easily see if there is the work of the Life-Giver, God, there is real worship and fellowship. If there is only liturgy and outward forms, there is no life but death.

2. The Church and the Work

As seen above, the basic conviction of the "Church Assembly" is that the Church is a living body which involves all believers. The church affairs are to be managed by the local elders; the work of the apostles is to preach the Gospel and to found local churches. Two different things are involved in this statement, namely, the Church and the Work.

Since the Church has been defined as the body of Christ on earth, the assembly of all believers, what then does the Work imply? In brief, the Work is God's own heart concerning his everlasting plan. He reveals his plan only to his chosen servants who will interpret the divine message to the church. Furthermore, because the Work is a revelation,¹ it is powerful and holy in nature.

a. The Distinction between Church and Work

The basic difference between the Church and the Work has been stated, but one needs to go further to discover

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1. Cf. The Ministry of the Word, Dec. 1, 1951, p. 206, 210.

the different fields of activity for the Church and for the Work.

1) The Work belongs to the apostles, whilst the churches belong to the local believers.

2) The apostles are responsible for the Work in any place, and the church is responsible for all the children of God in that particular locality.

3) In the matter of church-fellowship, the apostles regard themselves as the brethren of all the believers in the locality; but as regard to the Work, they are the responsible ones, and maintain a distinction between themselves and the church.

4) As members of the Body of Christ, they meet for mutual edification with the fellow-members in the locality; but as ministering members of the Body, their specific ministry constitutes them a group of workers apart from the church.¹

Someone might raise the question, how does a believer know whether he should be an elder or an apostle? This matter rests on the Call from God to the individual.

b. The Main Dialect of the "Church Assembly"

The dialects in China are very complicated. There are three main regions in China according to the geography, namely, the north, central, and the south. The people speak

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1. Cf. Nee, op. cit., p. 145.

Mandarin, Shanghaiese, and Cantonese respectively. One might not know any of the dialects except his own, but officially speaking, Mandarin is the unifying language in China.

As preachers go from one place to another, from south to north, or vice versa, the most common and convenient language is Mandarin. Especially after World War II, many people had the experience of being in other parts of China and consequently, their ability to understand Mandarin is much improved. The preachers, therefore, use Mandarin as their tool to interpret the Word of God. However, the part of the congregation who have never had the chance to listen to or to learn Mandarin always have an interpreter in addition to the preacher. He is responsible for interpreting the sermon from Mandarin to the local dialect.

3. The Matter of Finance

The problem of finance to a society is a most significant one; so it is to a church. The church needs money to maintain the testimony of God on earth everywhere, but it is amazing that the Bible does not mention that a worker of God should depend on the members for his living, nor that the members of the church in the New Testament time should donate a certain amount of money monthly to the church for tithing. The examples found in the New Testament seem to follow a new principle which is known as giving willingly and freely according to the believers'

ability and their obedience to the divine demand in their hearts. When the Lord sent his disciples to preach the Gospel to the Israelites, he did not let them worry about their clothing nor food, but gave the people a chance to show their love to God and to be messengers of the Gospel. As for the disciples, they had to trust that God would not fail to meet their needs as long as they were faithful in obeying the Lord and doing his will. As for the believers, it was not an obligation to give, but rather a token of total surrender to the Lord, and whatever they gave would be an acceptable sacrifice before God's sight.¹ In other words, this truth applies both to the workers and to the church in the matter of finance.

a. The Financial Needs of the Workers

The preachers and ministers, the servants of God, are called by God to preach the Gospel; therefore, they depend on God not on man. For they are sure the Lord commands those who preach the Gospel to live on the Gospel. This is evident when Jesus sent his disciples to preach the Gospel and told them, "You received without pay, give without pay. Take no gold, nor silver, nor copper in your belts, nor two tunics, nor sandals, nor a staff, for the laborer deserves his food."² The smallest birds and the lilies in

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1. II Corinthians 9:5c-12.
2. Matthew 10:5-15; Mark 6:7-13; Luke 9:1-6.

the field are cared for by the Heavenly Father. He also cares for his faithful servants who labor for the Gospel with their lives, time, and everything. Nee says this of the servants of God: "If a man can trust God, let him go out and work for Him; if not, let him stay at home, for he lacks the first qualification for the work."¹

This is a very serious matter. It deals with the heart of the problems in the church today. To set a definite salary for the minister of a church is good; so he will not have to worry about his own needs nor his family's budget. Everything is settled, but according to Nee, he loses the chance to learn to be completely dependent upon God. Faith to him is superficial. Furthermore, he does not sympathize with the poor members, for he never knows poverty. If a servant of God has nothing from man (not directly from man), he has to pray directly to God for his daily supplies, which include the physical as well as the spiritual needs. Thus, he learns the most precious lesson, namely, faith, and through much prayer to God, he comes to know the will of God more, and through his own experience, he can help those who are in the same condition.²

b. The Financial Needs of the Church

What is true of the servants of God in this

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1. Nee, op. cit., p. 194.
2. It is possible for God to support his servants through some instruments or human hand on earth; but they consider the gift as from God, not man.

respect is also true of the church as a whole. It is not only the servants of God who should pray for their needs by faith; the whole church should also live by faith. It was Jesus Christ who gave the privilege to the Church to preach the Gospel to all nations. He must be responsible for the needs of his own Church, so that they are sufficient in physical and spiritual things.

The key for obtaining this abundant grace from God and Christ Jesus is through faith. The Church reports her needs to God through prayer in faith; the Father will do his part in giving and supplying his children. If any human hands want to interfere with the work of God, or to help God in the wrong way (such as the case of Nadab and Abihu, sons of Aaron who offered unholy fire before the Lord and died before him; and the case of Uzzah who put out his hand to the ark of God and was smitten),¹ God will not be pleased. According to God's will, he wants to have the heart of man. That is, when a man gives his gifts to the Church, he must have a willing heart and be happy that he can express his thankfulness through this gift of his. Jesus Christ did not talk about tithes, but guided the thought of his disciples to the two copper coins of the poor widow.² The gift that Christians give to God is to show their love to him; if one's love is great, he

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1. Leviticus 10:1-2; II Samuel 6:6-7.
2. Mark 12:42-44; Luke 21:1-4.

gives more. It is not a matter of quantity, but rather a matter of quality.

Throughout these thirty years, no record shows that the "Church Assembly" in China has ever asked for funds from anyone or by any means. Apparently all needs have been supplied by God through their prayer and faith in God.

When the free gifts come to the church, there are elders and deacons who have a gift for managing finances, taking charge of the income and the expenditure of the fund. Most of the fund of the "Church Assembly" goes to the following items:

- 1) looking after the poor and unemployed
- 2) supporting the work of the Gospel
- 3) supporting the work of the Gospel Book Room
- 4) supporting the workers who have given up everything to serve God and the church
- 5) for maintainance of the church building and other miscellaneous expenses.

4. The Exercise in the Body of Christ

It has been mentioned in the preceding section that the Church is formed by every individual Christian. Each one of them receives a gift from God. If only a few of the members in the Body are active, and the rest of them are idle, it is not normal at all. For the Scripture says, ". . . and his gifts were that some should be apostles,

some evangelists, some pastors, . . . for building up the body of Christ." ¹ If this is true, how can a few members build up the whole body of Christ? One comes to the conclusion that this building up must include every member in the Body, even the smallest and the weakest.

a. Exercising the Spiritual Gifts

The Lord wants his people to serve him according to their gifts; some would be preachers, some teachers, some care for the poor, and so on. Based on this principle, each member takes part in the work of the church. The most obvious gifts manifested in the church are those of teachers, youth workers, mothers of the young students who are away from home and need care, and hosts and hostesses who take care of guests from other places who are there for a visit. Then there must be the preachers who are full-time workers for God.

When it is time for the church to worship, the teachers will teach, the pianist will play the piano, the director will lead the members in singing, the preacher will deliver God's message, the interpreter will do his job of interpreting, and the ushers will take people to their ² seats. Everyone has something to do in serving God.

At other times, the church members come to take care of the church building, to keep it clean and in good

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1. Ephesians 4:11-12.

2. Cf. The Ministry of the Word, November 1, 1951, pp. 161-170.

order. Nobody gives orders to anybody else, yet everybody works: the elders, deacons, housewives, school teachers, students, and factory workers all co-operate busily. When they wash the floor or the chairs they do it with prayers, asking God that whoever comes in to listen to the Gospel may be saved. This is a picture of harmonious exercise in the Body of Christ. They are building up the church in an unseen way. Working in this way is far more valuable than hiring a janitor to do it, for it has spiritual value and unspeakable joy.

b. The Propagating of the Gospel

It is amazing to see that after the early church members received the Holy Spirit, the first thing they did was to preach the Gospel, testifying that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. As a result a miracle happened where three thousand people were saved to the Lord at one time.¹ Another time five thousand were turned to Jesus Christ.² Therefore one may conclude that preaching the Gospel was the primary business of the Church. By preaching the Gospel, the whole Church exercises her various gifts.

1) The Evangelists

In the church there is no need to have well-known evangelists, for every member is an evangelist himself. They are the testimonies of the Gospel.³ Every year

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1. Acts 2:41.
2. Acts 4:4.
3. Cf. The Ministry of the Word, loc. cit.

when New Year comes, the church gathers to praise and thank God for his mercy and grace throughout the year. It is very natural that each should promise God to bring one or two individuals to him in that particular year. From the first day of the year each would pray for this person until the Lord saved him. No one is under obligation to do this, but because the love of God is so abundant in them, they could not help but love others.

2) The Gospel Meetings

Besides the individual preaching of the Gospel the whole church has weekly Gospel meetings also. There are two kinds of Gospel meetings: one is indoors, held once a week in several different places; the other is an outdoor meeting which is worth mentioning here because it is another way to exercise spiritual gifts.

First of all, the church decides on several localities for a specific meeting, and each week several groups hold services in the same evening. Then all gather to pray for the meeting, for the words and message, for the audience, and for the servants of God. After securing confidence and strength from God, they start by singing hymns and, headed by a Gospel band, they resemble soldiers of God working for the Gospel.

While they are on their way, they give out tracts to the men in stores and to passers-by. As soon as they get to the meeting place, they form a large circle in the

open place. Some start to invite people to come, while others are singing Gospel hymns and still others are praying for the meeting. The places used for such services are usually parks, wharves, markets, and bus terminals where many people gather.¹

As the audiences are usually quite large, the group begins by learning a hymn which is always easy and contains the message of that evening; so that even those who do not know how to read any characters may understand the meaning and be interested. It has happened many times that when the individuals go home from the meeting, the words re-appear in their mind, and they are saved.

After a while, one or two members arise to give simple testimonies and a message in a concrete yet easily understood way to the audiences. Then there is a free time for personal contact with the audience. They question, talk, and finally they pray together. Many are brought to Christ through one meeting or several contacts.

Not only is the church thus preaching the Gospel to sinners; she at the same time is training the young people in the church to be useful instruments in preaching the Gospel, even to hardened hearts.

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1. Cf. The Ministry of the Word, July 1, 1951, p. 32.

D. The Expansion of the "Church Assembly"

The things mentioned above have aided the "Church Assembly" in its growth from Foochow to many parts of China and even abroad. In the year of 1922 Watchman Nee went to Shanghai and gave his testimony to a group of Christians there. That was the first time this message was taken to Shanghai and the foundation laid for further expansion.

1. Within China

After a period of time, Watchman went back to Foochow and wanted to publish a Christian magazine, but lack of funds was a big handicap. Finally he started to write and when he was ready to see the publisher, a lady who was a member of the church and who loved money as her life came and told him of the vision she had had the night before. Now she was willing to give a sum of money to the church to show that she obeyed the Lord and no more loved money. The thirty dollars was really a miracle, for it meant much to her in new insight and obedience, and it just met the need of publishing the first one thousand four hundred copies of the magazine Revival.¹ Through this magazine even more people were brought to Christ by reaching many people all over the country.

The Gospel group went out to preach the Gospel

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1. Cf. Unpublished minutes of a conference in Shanghai, December 4, 1932.

daily, until the whole city of Foochow was shaken; even little children were singing the Gospel hymns.

a. Hanchow and Nanking

The burning fire of the Gospel in Foochow soon passed on to Hanchow. In 1944 Watchman Nee went there and the work of the Lord started. There his co-worker, W. K. Chang, started. When Nee saw everything was all right, he planned to go back to Foochow, but because some obstacles arose, he did not go home but went to Nanking instead. The Lord was with him; it was not long before a local church was started in Nanking.

b. Amoy

In the beginning of 1926 Nee went to Amoy, the island near Foochow. The Gospel was beginning to be established there, the Lord saved many, but a local church was not yet established. Six months later he revisited Amoy and seeing the hunger of the people for the truth, he decided to have ten days of Gospel meetings. When the meetings came to the ninth day, Nee fell sick, and his co-worker, L. T. Wong, took over the work and continued to preach the Gospel. More were saved. They all felt it was time to have a local church, and by the end of 1926 a local church was established.¹

In like manner along the central coast local churches sprang up one by one to stand as a testimony to God.

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1. Stephen Kaung, minister of the "Church Assembly" in N. Y. C., N. Y., Interview, October 19, 1954.

c. Shantung Province

At that time a native missionary named Peace Wong who was a daughter of a high ranking official in the government in Shanghai was called by God to preach the Gospel. The Lord greatly used her in the churches. Once she went up to Shantung to preach the Gospel in a high school, and a famous football player named Witness Lee was won to Christ. Lee is now a servant of God who is greatly used by God in Formosa. As a result, a local church sprang up in Shantung.

d. Manchuria

The Lord prepared a group of Christians in Manchuria who had a desire to know God more. They gathered to study the Word of God. They were not satisfied with the condition of the churches in Manchuria. In the meantime they read the Revival magazine and had the same guidance of the Holy Spirit as Nee. Therefore, they sent a couple of representatives to Shanghai to visit the local church. They had close fellowship with the brethren and followed the guidance of God to start a local church in Manchuria as soon as they returned home.¹

In like manner the local churches in the northern part of China sprang up one by one.

e. Canton

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1. Cf. Stephen Kaung, Interview.

When the Holy Spirit worked in the hearts of the north and of the central parts of China, he also worked in the southern part. The first center was Canton. It happened that a member of the church in Shanghai who was a merchant was sent to Canton as a representative of his drug company. He became the messenger of God's Gospel to the people in Canton. Through his testimony a number of people were saved. He felt led to give more intensive follow-up to strengthen the believers, so he wrote to the brethren in Shanghai. Soon there came other servants of God to Canton who had real fellowship with the Christians there. The Lord also opened the eyes of the believers to see the urgent need for meetings and fellowship. Thus a local church was founded in the year 1936.¹

f. The Northwest

The most difficult place for the Gospel in China was the northwest. The people were very poor. Their life was hard indeed. The church in Shanghai and in Shantung kept praying for the northwest for a long time, until one day they started to do something about it. The Holy Spirit started to work from Shantung: the brethren were burning with the love of God as they saw the need of this large untouched area. They stood up to answer the call of God, but this did not end the story. The Lord was surely demanding

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1. Cf. Stephen Kaung, Interview.

much from them. They felt that only to answer the call of God was not enough. He demanded their money, their land, their houses, and finally their all, and they yielded to God one by one. The brethren came to the elders and apostles yielding their property to God, willing to be poor in order to serve God in the northwest. The church took their gifts and used them as she sent out hundreds of families from the city to the land of poverty. The church in Shantung experienced that which is found in Acts 2:43-47, to have everything in common. Naturally, a great revival took place. All those who were willing to go to the northwest were asked to learn special skills in order to earn their living as they immigrated to the northwest. The road in front of them was very hard, yet they were filled with joy from the Holy Spirit. For them it was a better way to serve their God.

From the years 1948 to 1951 there have been five to six hundred members of the church in Shantung moving from their homes to the northwest for the sake of the Gospel.¹ No one failed to serve the Lord during their hardest days. It has been proved that this way of giving oneself to the Lord for the Gospel is sound and of God. The church in the northwest is strong and constantly growing.

Local churches sprang up gradually in the south

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1. Cf. The Open Door, Hong Kong, the Gospel Book Room, August, 1951, pp. 13-14.

and the northwest for the testimony of God.

2. Abroad

The Lord did not stop his work as mentioned in the previous section but continued his mighty saving power even to the places outside of the China mainland, so that many could come to know him and to serve him.

a. Hong Kong and Macau

Since these two places are so near to the China mainland, the work of the Holy Spirit inevitably passed on to them. In the year of 1937 a so-called Christian named Kwan in Hong Kong had the chance to go to visit the church in north China, especially in Tientsin. She was very impressed by the testimonies there. God made her see what the "Church" is, and how the church should do the will of God to let God be honored and glorified; above all, she herself experienced a new birth in Christ and had close fellowship with him in that trip. From that time on she prayed for a local church in Hong Kong. The Lord answered her prayer in the same year by sending his servants Luke and Wei to Hong Kong from Canton. They started with a series of Gospel meetings in a high school auditorium where many souls were won to Christ. Soon after this a local church was founded in Hong Kong. A number of the household of Kwan turned to God and committed themselves to him.

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1. Cf. Stephen Kaung, Interview.

At about the same time a number of brethren and their families moved to Macau, which has belonged to the Portuguese since the Ching dynasty. Through this group of Christians the Gospel was carried to Macau which is known as the eastern Monte Carlo, a land full of evils and temptations. They first met in a home; then a local church appeared there as a light shining in the dark sea.

b. Manila

After the revival in Foochow, Wong's family moved out to Manila, Philippines. The boy in the family was a medical doctor, and the girl was a mid-wife. The Lord used and blessed them as his messengers of the Gospel. Then another family, the Meeks, arrived there and took part in the work of the Gospel. Very soon a local church was founded in Manila.

In April of 1951 another local church started in Iloilo, Philippines, with about forty members. After a series of Gospel meetings, their meeting place which could seat 300 people was full. Many were drawn to Christ by his own Spirit and loveliness. The church there shows constant growth.¹

c. Malaya and Indonesia

The dispersion of the Gospel not only happened in Manila, it happened in Malaya and Indonesia also.

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1. Cf. The Ministry of the Word, November 1951, p. 172.

A number of Christian families moved out from Foochow to these two places. The church at first was not strong in preaching the Gospel, until God's servant Luke and his whole family went to Singapore in 1937 because of the war between Japan and China. Now the church in Malaya was under the good leadership and care of God's servant and grew in numbers and in other ways.¹

Indonesia has nearly 100,000 Chinese who live there as merchants or farmers, but have never heard of the Gospel. God made use of the war and sent his children there, so that after World War II a local church was established in Indonesia. Now there is more than one local church in that area.

d. Thailand

The local church in Thailand was started almost the same time as the church in Singapore, because God's servant James Chen and his family moved to Bangkok, Thailand, due to the war of Japan and China. Through the ministry of Chen the foundation of the church was laid. A few Christians started to meet on Sunday and gradually they had the breaking of bread at the Lord's table and a fellowship meeting. Although after the war Chen went to Hong Kong to serve the Lord, the local church in Bangkok is still standing, and more new converts have been added to the church.²

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1. Cf. Stephen Kaung, Interview.
2. Cf. Stephen Kaung, Interview.

E. The Spread of the "Church Assembly" to Formosa

The island of Formosa lies off the east coast of China, opposite the Fu-kien province. It is separated from the mainland by the Formosa Channel, which varies in breadth from eighty to two hundred miles.¹ Throughout Chinese history Formosa has had close relationship with China. But as for the Church, the relationship only began in the seventeenth century when the Dutch first went over.

1. The Established Church in Formosa

Religiously speaking the Chinese in Formosa are related to the Chinese on the mainland. They are all idolaters. Not until 1624 was the Gospel of Jesus Christ heard by them through the ministry of the Dutch missionary, George Candidius.² And since then the Christian work has been done among the Formosans by many other groups which will be mentioned hereafter.

a. The Dutch Mission

The Dutch were in South Formosa as early as 1624. They realized that the best policy to colonize the island permanently was to develop the inner resources of the country by education; in order to do this the maintenance of the

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1. George L. Mackay, From Far Formosa. New York, Fleming H. Revell Co., 1895, p. 41.
2. Cf. William Campbell, Sketches from Formosa. London, New York, Marshall Bros. Ltd, 1915, p. 336.

peace and security of the people should be considered first; and the only means of doing this is to make use of the power of religion. Since this had been the motive of the Dutch mission, the missionary works which were carried out in this period were merely that of the development of the economical and commercial enterprises under the supervision of the Dutch East India Company primarily, rather than the genuine mission of the Gospel. However, this was the beginning of the Protestant mission in Formosa.

Fortunately, the first Christian minister designated to Formosa was George Candidius who was most enthusiastic in reaching the native with the Gospel. He arrived in May of 1624 and entered immediately upon those labors which proved so helpful to the furtherance of a wide-spread movement.¹ God used him to bring many of the natives from being slaves of sin into being the first fruits of his kingdom and sons of God.

Candidius' work was continued by Robert Junius who labored for twelve years in establishing churches in every part of the island.² He succeeded in preparing catechisms for teaching the new converts and in translating several portions of the Bible into the language of the aboriginal tribes.³

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1. Cf. loc. cit.
2. Cf. James Johnston, China and Formosa. New York, Fleming H. Revell Co., n. d., p. 165.
3. Cf. Campbell, *ibid.*, p. 337.

Other chaplains were sent, and they seemed to have labored diligently for the conversion of the inhabitants, so that as many as five thousand nine hundred were¹ baptized.

A sudden storm came when Koxinga and his strong army swept Formosa from the China mainland and the Dutch were summoned to surrender by fire and sword. The missionaries were all expelled and Christianity was gone, leaving no trace.

b. The English Presbyterian Mission and the Canadian Presbyterian Mission

Since Formosa had fallen into the hand of Koxinga, whose background was that of a pirate and who knew only ancestral worship, he, as a general later, led the Formosans back to the Chinese traditional superstitions and idol worship. Not until 1863, when James Maxwell was appointed as a medical missionary to Formosa, was the long-abandoned evangelistic work resumed. Maxwell spent eighteen months learning the language in Amoy, China; he crossed the Channel² to Formosa to start working for the Kingdom of God in 1865.

Maxwell was the pioneer missionary of the Presbyterian Church in England. His arrival in Formosa marked a turning point in the history of the Christian Church in

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1. Cf. Johnston, loc. cit.
2. Cf. William Campbell, Handbook of the English Presbyterian Mission in South Formosa. Hastings, F. J. Parson, Ltd., 1910, p. xiii.

Formosa. He was stationed in Takow which he made the headquarters of the Mission.

Toward the end of 1867 Hugh Ritchie and his wife joined the Mission at Takow. William Campbell came to Formosa in 1871. The next year he took a trip around the whole island and planned a complete program for the evangelization of it. In his trip to the north he met George MacKay, the first missionary in north Formosa from the Canadian Presbyterian Mission (whose mission will be mentioned later).¹

Dickson answered the call of God and arrived at Formosa in 1871. He and Maxwell saw the necessity of making an attempt to evangelize the overwhelming large Chinese part of the population. They won twelve young converts in Kagi and made it a sub-center of the Mission.²

In 1875 Barclay began his service in the Formosa Church. He was gifted in teaching and training the young men to be useful servants of God. At first he did the teaching privately. Later the group increased, and a regular systematic training began. Thus, it became the first Theological college in Tainan. Since that day some 240 preachers and ministers have graduated and gone out into the ministry who were under Barclay's principalship.³

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1. Cf. Edward Huang, An Introduction of the History of Christian Missions in Formosa, Unpublished thesis, p. 32.
2. Cf. Campbell, op. cit., p. xiv.
3. Cf. Edward Band, Barclay of Formosa. Gimza, Tokyo, Christian Literature Society, 1936, p. 32.

Barclay also engaged his time in writing, translation work,¹ Bible revision, and dictionary compilation.

There were other missionaries working in the field of Formosa since Maxwell's coming both from England and Scotland. They were scattered around south Formosa: some preaching, some teaching, some ministering in various mission stations and mission hospitals.

In 1872 the Canadian Presbyterian Church began to work in the northern part of the island. The first missionary was George MacKay who was well known in the world of missions, and who was the founder of the first Church in North Formosa which paralleled the Presbyterian Church in South Formosa. MacKay was greatly blessed and used by God in Formosa. He worked particularly hard, walking barefoot¹ with the natives, eating their food, and even accompanying them into the savage districts. Such extraordinary earnestness and sincerity won its way to the hearts of the natives.²

Plagiarism!

The two British Missions divided between them the western side and northern end of the island; the Canadian Presbyterians worked up from the Taikah River round to the northeast town of Soou, and the English Presbyterians came down from the river near Heng-chun at South Cape as well as having two or three little churches on the Pescadores.

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1. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 85.
2. Cf. George Braithwaite, *Japanese Rule in Formosa*. London, New York, Bombay, Calcutta, Longmans, Green & Co., 1907, pp. 293-297.

In addition, both missions had several small stations among Chinese-speaking people.¹

c. The Japanese Mission

Japan attempted to attack Formosa long before it became her colony. At last Japan took Formosa over from China in 1895.² In the mind of the Japanese government this meant only a military settlement. There was no real unification between the government and the people.

Japan soon realized that in order to settle the people, especially the savages in the hill area, the most effective weapon would be approaching them by means of religion. For even the most primitive people are religious minded.

This initiative was taken in the government of Japan by the governor of Formosa.³ Discussions were held as to whether or not the government should use religion as a means of colonization. The conclusion was that the government would not use missions as its political tool for the colonization of the people, since there are both advantages and disadvantages in using it. However, the Christians were encouraged to be missionaries voluntarily. Thus, the Japanese missionaries got a chance to begin their ministry in Formosa.

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1. Cf. William Campbell, Sketches from Formosa, p. 360.
2. Cf. Poultney Bigelow, Japan and Her Colony. London, Edward Arnold & Co., 1923, p. 70.
3. Cf. Huang, *ibid.*, p. 44.

Among the missionaries who took immediate steps to bring the Gospel of Christ to Formosa, these were the most outstanding groups:

1) Missionaries from the Church of Christ in Japan

In 1895 among the Japanese occupation army in Formosa, there was a Christian named Nakamura Keiji who started a missionary work by himself. He had contact with MacKay in North Formosa and ministered primarily among the Japanese service men and civilians who were in North Formosa. He was joined by more missionaries from Japan.

2) Missionaries from the Anglican Church

The same year after the Japanese missionaries reached the island, Bishop E. F. King visited Formosa from England primarily to see the English people there and to make a survey of the place. Having seen the need of missions among the people, he contacted the Anglican mission board in Japan, and Imai was the first minister sent immediately to Formosa to start work from the Anglican board.

3) Missionaries from the Associated Reformed

Presbyterian in 1912

4) Greek Orthodox in 1915

5) Haristos in 1919

6) Crusade in 1925

7) Missionaries from the Holiness Church in 1926

8) Methodists in 1932

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1. Cf. Huang, *ibid.*, pp. 45-46.

d. Other Missions

Since no foreign missionary was allowed to stay on at the time of World War II, they all left Formosa before the war burst out. As a result the mission work was entirely left in the hands of the native churches. As soon as the war was over in 1946, the missions that had worked together in Formosa, along with others that wanted to start a new field there, sent representatives to Formosa immediately. Among them these are the representing ones:

1) English and Canadian Missions

Montgomery and Dickson were the first two missionaries who came to the island in mission work. They brought great joy, comfort, and encouragement to the churches in Formosa. Their survey showed the definite need of help and the need for a new program in order to meet the needs of the new generation on the island.¹

Immediately the needs were reported to both mission boards, the decision was made, and the missionaries returned to the island. Their ministry has been of the following nature: medical relief, reconstruction of the damaged churches, mission schools, evangelism, and revival meetings.

2) Other Denominations

At the end of the war many other agencies followed the national government and the vast host of refugees came

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1. Cf. Huang, *ibid.*, pp. 46-47.

from the mainland to Formosa. In the early summer of 1954 it was reported that there were already about forty of them, mostly American, operating there. These agencies are: the Presbyterian Church in the U. S., the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A., the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, the Seventh-Day Adventists, Assemblies of God, Oriental Missionary Society, Pentecostal Holiness Church, China Inland Mission, Evangelical Alliance Mission, Christian Missions in Many Lands, Church of God Holiness, Association of Baptists for World Evangelism, the General Council of Co-operating Baptist Mission, Augustana Lutheran, Evangelical Lutheran, Evangelical Mission Covenant, Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod, Methodist Church, Free Methodist, Cumberland Presbyterian, Conservative Baptist, Southern Baptist, and Ohio Friends.¹ The Y. M. C. A. has also established work.

Besides these agencies there were a number of Chinese indigenous groups moving over to Formosa from the mainland, among which the "Church Assembly" was one, as will be mentioned in the following sections.

2. The Dispersion of the "Church Assembly"

Just after World War II, the conflict between the National forces and the Chinese Communist forces arose in China. The situation became worse and worse, until December of 1949 the Nationalist government abandoned the

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1. Occasional Bulletin, Vol. V, #7, New York, Missionary Research Library, June 4, 1954, pp. 2-3.

last place, Chengtu, and withdrew from the mainland to Formosa and made Taipei its capital.¹

Following the moving of the Nationalist government, many people moved to Formosa also. Among them many Christians and their families were included. These people actually came from different places of the China mainland; they were mostly middle and high class people, otherwise they could not afford to go to Formosa with all their riches, goods, and men.

Whenever such things as this happen to a country, people have a sense of insecurity, feeling that earthly goods or properties are not the ultimate things of value. Above all, they could not save their lives from sudden calamity. Thus the Gospel is regarded as the only hope and comfort, and is the most welcome news to the people in Formosa. Many who objected to the Gospel of God in the past have turned to him now. Their inner need overcomes² their pride and hatred toward the Gospel. Therefore the church in Formosa is continuously growing, and because they all have good educational backgrounds, as soon as they are converted, they can easily become messengers of God's Gospel. Thus the Gospel of God not only saves the mainlanders, but also the native Formosans. Because Formosa

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1. Cf. Joseph Ballantine, Formosa. Washington D. C., the Brookings Institution, 1952, pp. 78-88.
2. Cf. The Ministry of the Word, July 1, 1951, p. 26.

is near Manila and Malaya, the Church there has a great opportunity to share the grace of God with the Christians in those places. Another advantage is that the dialect that the people speak in those places is more or less like that in Formosa, so there is not much language difficulty for the Gospel. Furthermore, it is the prayer and hope of the Church in Formosa that because Formosa was under the rule of the Japanese before, and many native people know Japanese, they can reach their neighbor Japan easily with the Gospel.¹

3. The Spread of the "Church Assembly" in North Formosa

According to the geographical situation of Formosa, the nearest part of Formosa to the China mainland is the northern part of the island, therefore when the mainlanders came to Formosa, they naturally landed on the northern area. So from here the Gospel spread over the whole island. The following places mentioned are only the leading ones.

a. Taipei

In the year of 1946 a group of five or six Christians gathered to pray in the home of one of them. By the end of the next year the Lord added seven more to them and they started the breaking of bread.²

Until 1948 three Christians from the mainland

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1. Cf. loc. cit.
2. Cf. loc. cit.

went there to preach the Gospel to the people; fifteen were saved and baptized. In the same year more Christians went to Formosa, the church was strengthened and planned to start greater work for the Gospel. Most of them stayed on in Taipei.

The next year a hundred more Christians moved into Taipei, mostly elders and deacons from Shanghai and Nanking; so the church had stronger members and tried to reach further into the country. Watchman Nee had a chance to visit the church in Taipei in that year.

In the same year Witness Lee moved with his family to Taipei and was used greatly. A new meeting place was needed to meet the needs of the great number of new converts, for within that year 505 were saved and added to the church; the total number of members then jumped to more than 900.¹

The church held a series of meetings specially for the new converts to study the Bible and to get acquainted with the truth, meetings which lasted for three months. By the grace of God the church in Taipei has been growing rapidly outwardly and inwardly, so that it has become the center of all the churches in Formosa.

b. Keelung

The local church of Keelung started with only the Lee family and the Ling family in 1948. At first they

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1. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 26-27.

had a family style Gospel meeting where four were won to Christ. They kept on meeting once a week. But more kept coming; the house was too small for them; finally they held the meetings in a school auditorium. At first they had the Gospel meetings only, but after July of 1949 they had the breaking of bread; then a local church was founded. Two hundred fifty members were in the church in 1951, and they built a church to meet the need.¹ God is with them, and they keep on growing even now; the growth is weekly, monthly, and yearly.

c. Ilan

The church at Ilan started with only five persons in the year of 1949. Through the help of two members from the church in Taipei who came to preach the Gospel, twenty-three were added to the church. Two years later their number increased to 120.²

The Lord blessed the church in Ilan no less than other places, for in the year 1951 they got a piece of land and built their own meeting place. Then in the spring of 1952 twenty-seven were baptized and eighty-five were added to the church a week later in the Gospel meetings.³ The church building seemed too small again.

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1. Cf. The Ministry of the Word, November 1, 1951, p. 174.
2. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 171.
3. Cf. *loc. cit.*

d. Hsinchu

At Hsinchu the church started with three believers in 1950. They prayed for the work of God there. The next March they invited some Christians from the Taipei church to help them in preaching the Gospel. They preached the Gospel on every street and every highway, so that the whole city was shaken. In April thirty-one members were added to the church. By the end of 1951 there were 110 members.¹

The next year they had a new place for meeting. During the New Year special Gospel meetings were held and 160 were saved, among them sixty-five were baptized immediately afterwards, and in May another fifty-one were baptized.² The church in Hsinchu is constantly growing in God's grace even now.

4. The Spread of the "Church Assembly" in Central Formosa

After going through the northern part of Formosa, the Gospel swept to Central Formosa without delay, and churches were founded in various centers.

a. Taichung

In the year 1949 there were only four members of the church in Taichung. They came together to pray for the will of God and to study the Word. In answer to their

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1. Cf. The Ministry of the Word, February 1, 1952, p. 331.
2. Cf. The Ministry of the Word, June 1, 1952, p. 510.

testimony more members were added to them so that in August of the same year they had the breaking of bread, in which twenty-eight were present. The members were all willing to serve God in the church; they exercised their gifts in the Body of Christ.¹ By the end of 1951 forty-nine were added to the original 200 in the church.² During the New Year of 1952, eighty-eight were saved, and in April eighty more were baptized into the Lord.³

They needed another place to meet, so the Lord prepared a piece of land for them. Then they built a church there to preach the Gospel. The growth of the church in Taichung has also been continuous.

b. Chiayi

In the hospital of Chiayi a group of ten Christians gathered to pray for the work of God in 1949. Witness Lee was guided to go there from Taipei to preach the Gospel, so that in the spring of the next year, a local church was established in Chiayi. The Lord gave them a new place for meetings where they could exercise their spiritual gifts in the church. Then in 1951 one hundred eighty new members were added to the church. This group paid more attention to the native Formosan people by sometimes preaching the Gospel in their native tongue. They also had Gospel meetings

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1. Cf. The Ministry of the Word, November 1, 1951, p. 172.
2. Cf. The Ministry of the Word, December 1, 1951, p. 213.
3. Cf. The Ministry of the Word, March 1952, p. 381 and May 1, 1952, p. 472.

in the prisons for the prisoners every Sunday afternoon in Chiayi. Seventy prisoners, including those who were serving life sentence, were saved in the first meeting.¹

The Lord provided a meeting place for them, and in the first meeting for baptism 142 were brought in Christ's Body. This happened in the year 1952. The recent reports show that the church in Chiayi is still growing; for example, in February of 1954 seventy-four were baptized unto the Lord.²

c. Hwalein

In September of 1952 a group of believers gathered in a home at Hwalein for praise, prayer, and Bible study every Sunday. But there was no gifted leader in Hwalein. The next year the Lord sent two Liu brothers there and they held Gospel meetings. The result of the first Gospel meeting was that thirty-seven turned to Christ. Later thirty-nine were saved within a short time. The local church had her first breaking of bread with ninety-two present.³ One month later, twenty-one were added to the church. In another month forty-seven were brought to Christ.⁴ Three days of follow-up meetings were held.

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1. Cf. The Ministry of the Word, October 1, 1951, p. 136, and November 1, 1951, p. 174.
2. Cf. The Ministry of the Word, March 1, 1952, p. 381 and April 1, 1954, p. 1445.
3. Cf. The Ministry of the Word, April 1, 1952, p. 425.
4. Cf. The Ministry of the Word, May 1, 1952, p. 472, and July 1, 1952, p. 551.

A place was provided where they could build a church for meeting. More and more believers are continuously being added to the church in Hwalein.

5. The Spread of the "Church Assembly" in South Formosa

Since the Gospel of God has reached the north and central Formosa, it can easily reach the people in the southern part of the island.

a. Tainan

It was the winter of 1949 that some Christians in Tainan started to have prayer together. The next February they had the guidance of the Lord to have the breaking of the bread. Sixteen were present, and the church started. At first the members were not active, their spirits were low and they had no idea of how to preach the Gospel. Therefore, they started to pray for this matter. Not long afterward, the Spirit of God stirred them up to be zealous for the souls of others. The Gospel groups went out to the whole city for seven successive evenings. Every member was full of joy and power to preach the Gospel. At the end of the week 101 souls were won to Christ. The ministry of the Word and the Body-exercise were started. A new spirit was in them. By August 1951 the total membership of the Tainan church was 209.¹ Through the New Year Gospel

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1. Cf. The Ministry of the Word, September 1, 1951, pp. 101-104.

meetings¹ of 1952 the Lord added 172 new converts to the church. In the same year in March, 344 were willing to accept Christ to be their Savior.² Many of the members are very eager to serve the Lord in the church. Certainly the church in Tainan is growing rapidly in the grace of God.

b. Kaoshung

Since several families moved into Kaoshung from the mainland, they came together to pray for the work of God in that place in 1948. The next spring more Christians moved into Kaoshung, so they started the breaking of bread and testimony as a local church. The members of the church were then about sixty. They were zealous for the Gospel of God, so that by April of 1951 there were 567 members in the church of Kaoshung.³

For meeting the need for a church, a new building was built. Then the Lord added seventy-six to the church in the first Gospel meeting held in the new place.⁴ The church in Kaoshung was really seeking the face of the Lord, so that in the New Year of 1952, 471 accepted Christ as their Savior. From that time on, an average of eighty to ninety souls were saved each month in that year. In the

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1. Cf. The Ministry of the Word, February 1, 1952, p. 331, and March 1, 1952, p. 381.
2. Cf. The Ministry of the Word, April 1, 1952, p. 425, and June 1, 1952, p. 511.
3. Cf. The Ministry of the Word, August 1, 1951, pp. 67-68.
4. Cf. The Ministry of the Word, December 1, 1952, p. 213.

year of 1953, 180 were added to the church, and special meetings were held to instruct the new converts in the truth of the Lord.¹ Again in the new year of 1954, 289 accepted Christ into their hearts.² The growth of the church in Kaoshung is rapid and strong indeed.

c. Pingtung

The local church in Pingtung at first involved only three believers. They started to pray with one heart for the work of God among the untouched people in the autumn of 1949. Then more Christians moved in from the mainland, but they could only attend church services in Kaoshung, for there was no place for meeting in Pingtung yet. The next year, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the approval of other Christians in Taipei and Kaoshung, a local church was founded. The first formal meeting included only twelve members. In the next year, 1952, seventy-one members were added to the church, among whom seventy per cent were young people from different colleges near by.³

As the ministry of the church in Pingtung became stronger, they had outside Gospel meetings in the prisons, in the residence of the soldiers' families, and in the streets; inside they were eager to learn to face their sins with severity, and to give themselves completely to

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1. Cf. The Ministry of the Word, April 1, 1953, pp. 918, 922.
2. Cf. The Ministry of the Word, April 1, 1954, p. 1444.
3. Cf. The Ministry of the Word, October 1, 1951, pp. 136-137.

God so that the image of Christ could be manifested through them. They opened special training opportunities for the youth of the church, and hoped that some of them might be great instruments of God. In the new year of 1952 nineteen were saved unto the Lord followed by fifty-six more in the spring of that year.¹ Later in the same year seventy-three were added to the church.² In the years of 1953 and 1954³ there were twenty-four and forty saved respectively. The church in Pingtung is a shining light tower in the dark sea of the Christless world.

d. Taitung

The last local church to be mentioned is that of Taitung. It did not start until the year of 1952. There were a small number of Christians in Taitung, but they were not strong in spirit until one of God's servants named Sun went there in May of the same year and baptized twenty-eight new converts unto the Lord. Then the breaking of bread started. The total number of the church members was forty.⁴ After this a special message was delivered to the church by Sun for three successive days. The foundation of the church was made strong during this time. Therefore in

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1. Cf. The Ministry of the Word, February 1, 1952, p. 331, and March 1, 1952, p. 381.
2. Cf. The Ministry of the Word, May 1, 1952, p. 472, and October 1, 1952, p. 381.
3. Cf. The Ministry of the Word, April 1, 1953, p. 922, and April 1, 1954, p. 1445.
4. Cf. The Ministry of the Word, June 1, 1952, p. 511.

just two months, ten new believers were brought to Christ.¹
By the end of the year twenty-four were baptized in the name
of the Lord.²

The Lord used the opportunity of the new year of 1953 to turn twelve sinners to Christ, and in the following March fifteen were baptized.³ More have been added in recent years. What God has done in the past encourages them to follow him more closely.

F. Summary

In the preceding sections the reader has seen the "Church Assembly" growing like a babe with only a handful of members to a full grown Church with local churches spreading all over China, abroad and even Formosa. This was not a casual result by itself. The "Church Assembly" has its outstanding characteristics which are shown in its organization of the local churches, its distinction and connection between the Work and the Church, its way of managing the finance, and finally its exercise in the Body of Christ. Because of these unique qualities, the "Church Assembly" could grow within China from Foochow up to Manchuria, down to Canton, and later abroad to Malaya,

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1. Cf. The Ministry of the Word, October 1, 1952, p. 672, and November 1, 1952, p. 714.
2. Cf. The Ministry of the Word, January 1, 1953, p. 794.
3. Cf. The Ministry of the Word, April 1, 1953, p. 922.

Thailand, and the Philliping Islands. The Gospel did not stop in these places, it went on to the world's strategic spot, Formosa. As soon as the Gospel reached this island, it rolled on like a fire ball until all of Formosa was burned up, and thousands turned to Christ as Christians.

When many have become followers of Christ, they need to grow in the knowledge of him. This is another point in this study which will be considered and discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER II

THE INNER GROWTH OF THE "CHURCH ASSEMBLY" IN FORMOSA

CHAPTER TWO

THE INNER GROWTH OF THE "CHURCH ASSEMBLY" IN FORMOSA

A. Introduction

There is a saying in China, "It is better not to bear a child, if the mother does not know how to rear him up." This saying is especially true when applied to spiritual matters. Many people have received the Word of God and the Gospel, but how many who are like good soil upon which the Seed of Life grows and bears fruit are found in the Church? It seems that sowing the seed and preparing good soil for it to grow are of equal significance in the Kingdom of God.¹ The "Church Assembly" in Formosa seems to fully realize the importance of this nurture and works with every possible means toward this goal. The efforts of the Church show growth in numbers of new converts, in Biblical knowledge, and in fellowship through the church program. It is the purpose of this chapter to consider the inner growth of the "Church Assembly" in Formosa in regard to the points just mentioned.

B. Growth through the Increase of Converts

The most obvious sign of growth in a church is a change that takes place in her size. More new converts

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1. Matthew 13:3-9; Mark 4:3-9; Luke 8:4-8.

are added to the "Church Assembly" day after day. But in the case of the "Church Assembly" in Formosa, the increase of new members is due to several factors:

1. By Means of Prayer

"Prayer is the ministry of the Church" said Stephen Kaung in one of his sermons over and over again.¹ The whole church echoed unanimously with amens, for it is true that the Church was born of prayer.² By prayer the early Christians gathered in one accord, by prayer they were all strengthened and had courage to face the great persecution, and by prayer they did all things with boldness. It seemed that without praying, they could do nothing. The "Church Assembly" sees the need of prayer as the greatest need of all. Only by prayer can God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In prayer one submits himself to God completely and waits to receive his fulness and blessing from heaven as well as his commission and sending forth.

It is the conviction of the "Church Assembly" that before a local church holds any evangelistic meeting, there must be special prayer meetings held in advance.³ By holding such meetings, there is a two-fold purpose: it prepares the whole church for the tremendous job ahead, and through prayer the Holy Spirit will purify the church

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1. Stephen Kaung, Sermon, October 29, 1955.
2. Acts 1:14a-15.
3. Cf. The Ministry of the Word, February 1, 1952, p. 331.

and give the church power from above to proclaim the mighty Gospel to the unsaved. On the other hand, by prayer the Holy Spirit works in the hearts of the people coming to listen to the Gospel that their hearts too will be well prepared to open and to accept the Word of God.¹

Besides this special kind of prayer which meets the needs of the Gospel meetings, there is another kind of prayer called unceasing prayer. It continues day and night like incense before the Throne.²

A church needs to have such prayer to sustain all to be strong in the Lord, as much as a country needs guards to protect it from the sudden attack of the enemy. If the enemy should come, the guards would notify the authority to get ready for defense. The enemy of the Church is the King of Darkness--the Devil, also known as Satan.³ He tries to deceive the children of God into rebelling against God, and his tricks are so subtle that the Church should wear the whole armour to stand against the wiles of the devil, as it is written by apostle Paul:

For we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the power, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.⁴

It is true that only by prayer and through Christ can the Church win the battle.

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1. Loc. cit.
2. Psalm 141:2; Revelation 5:8; I Thessalonians 5:17.
3. Revelation 20:2.
4. Ephesians 6:12.

2. By Means of Total Surrender to Christ of the Church

A person who has been saved by the redemptive power of Christ belongs to him and is his sheep.¹ However, the Lord has given man a free will to choose between living a worldly life or being a man with new desire to walk after the will of God and to please him.² According to the exhortation of Apostle Paul in the Epistle to the Romans, he primarily makes an appeal to the Christians in Rome to present their bodies as living sacrifice to God.³ In fact, it is only by the mercy of God that man can thus please him. And by so doing, man is accepted by God. Not until man yields his will completely to God can God have free dominion over him. When this true relationship is restored, the heavenly fellowship begins, and man will worship his God spontaneously and simultaneously.

The "Church Assembly" considers that the phrase "presenting one's body as a living sacrifice" involves the meaning of "total surrender to Christ."⁴ When one presents himself completely to God without any hesitation, he is at the same time admitting from that moment on that he is not himself anymore--his offering to God includes his body, his soul, and his spirit. Thus, it is a total surrender of his

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1. John 10:27-29.
2. Ephesians 4:17-24; Colossians 3:5-11.
3. Romans 12:1-2.
4. Cf. The Ministry of the Word, September 1, 1953, p. 1113.

all to God. Also from that moment on God's will becomes his will, and God's way is his way. It seems that there is nothing left of his own thereafter. If he is without God, he is as poor as he could be.¹ Blessed is he who trusts in God and lives by faith, for God has dominion over him.

This kind of sacrifice to God can also be done by the local church as a whole. First, the individuals are willing to present their bodies as living sacrifice to God. As the fire of the Spirit burns in every member's heart, God helps each one to see the need in the Kingdom of God,² until the whole church submits and yields to him.

The result of this total surrender to God is that through a well prepared channel heavenly blessings keep pouring abundantly and amazingly into the church. More sinners turn to Christ consequently and are added to the church.

3. By Means of Gospel Preaching

The previous two elements that help in growth of membership in the "Church Assembly," namely, prayer and total surrender to God, are centered in the spiritual emphasis of the church. It is necessary to be well prepared within the church before going out to win new converts.

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1. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 1114.
2. Cf. *The Open Door*, pp. 9-12.

In fact, unless the church is ready, like the empty oil vessels of the widow, the Lord will not pour new oil into them and they will not get full.¹

As soon as the church is well equipped with spiritual armor, she is ready to declare a battle with Satan and is sure to win, for Jesus Christ the commander-in-chief is with her and will undertake the whole affair of the Gospel meeting.

The "Church Assembly" Gospel meetings are most active and penetrating in Formosa. The Gospel finds its way into every walk of life. As far as location is concerned, the Gospel meetings are held in the church building, in the home of a family, in school, in the army and soldiers' family residence, in the prison, in the factory, in the park, in church clinics, and so forth; as for the organizational groups of the Gospel, there are Gospel groups, Gospel cars, Gospel clinics, Gospel visitation, and Gospel pulpit training.²

The procedure for preaching the Gospel is carefully planned such as : what should have been done before the meeting, and what should be done during the meeting as well as what will be done for follow up. None of these steps is overemphasized or neglected, and none of them is not accompanied with sincere prayers of the church.

Among the local churches all over the island of

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1. II Kings 4:1-7.

2. Cf. The Ministry of the Word, December 1, 1952, pp. 751-752.

Formosa, Taipei was the first established and is a little more mature and advanced in spiritual speaking. Therefore, the preaching of the Gospel in Taipei is the most systematic. The steps in a Gospel program are as follow:

a. Presenting the Gospel

b. If there are any new converts, there will be a beginners class for them to learn the truths of the Gospel message that they have heard but vaguely understand.

c. After a period of time, when they seem to understand the experience of their new birth, the message of baptism will be presented to them, showing them the necessity of being buried now that they are dead to sin. Now they should begin a new walk with Christ in a new resurrected life.¹

d. The next step is to perform the baptismal testimony with reverence and a serious atmosphere, and conclude the meeting with praises and thanksgiving.

e. Then a series of special messages will be delivered to the baptized in order to guide them to go further into the knowledge of the Word, to strengthen their faith, to stand up for the witness of the Lord, and to serve Him in the Body of Christ as other members.²

Actually every meeting during the week in the church is equally important to all the members, but somehow

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1. Romans 6:3-11; Ephesians 4:20-24; Cf. The Ministry of the Word, February 1, 1952, p. 330.
2. Ibid.

the Gospel meeting is regarded unanimously and consequently as the one that the members of the "Church Assembly" must not miss. Probably because this is the chance for the church to reach the unsaved people, so she should try her best in one accord. Yet one feels if God gives him a chance to be his messenger of the Gospel, he finds it is a great reward and joy to see a sinner turn from the road of death to having life in Christ. He would blame himself and feel very badly if anyone missed the chance to attend the Gospel meeting. It was told that once in Taipei while the Gospel groups were ready to go out, a sick member was found in their midst who insisted on going and said, "Even if I am dying, I will use up my last breath to tell others about Jesus, and to run the last mile for the sake of the glorious Gospel."¹

4. By Means of Printed Material

The spread of the Gospel not only depends upon many people participating in this task but also depends much on printed materials. The Gospel Book Room of the "Church Assembly" in Formosa does a distinctive job toward this purpose. Having realized the importance and influence of books and pamphlets to people in a secular world, the Church, too, should try to reach the unsaved people by means of sound

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1. Cf. The Ministry of the Word, June 1, 1952, p. 510.

tracts and printed materials bearing the message of salvation. Each season of the year the Gospel Book Room in Formosa puts forth twelve to twenty new booklets and pamphlets bearing the message about the Son of God in a very inviting way.¹ The members of the church are encouraged to use these booklets as gifts to friends and to those who do not have the time to go to church. The Spirit of the Lord often uses these printed materials to speak to the heart of the readers until they turn to God wholeheartedly.

Along this line, tracts have an important role, and they often do the initial work in opening a way for the Gospel. When the Gospel groups proceed toward the open air meeting, they carry a great amount of tracts with them and distribute them with prayer along the road. People may have all sorts of excuses to not go to church, but seldom refuse to read a little tract politely handed to them. It happens often that the Holy Spirit speaks to the ones who read the tracts, and they finally come to listen to the Gospel and become² believers.

C. Growth through the Program of the "Church Assembly"

The growth of a church is to some degree measured

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1. Cf. The Ministry of the Word, November 1, 1951, p. 175; September 1, 1952, p. 633; December 1, 1952, p. 755; April 1, 1953, p. 923; January 1, 1954, p. 1301, February 1, 1955, p. 1911.
2. Cf. The Ministry of the Word, April 1, 1954, p. 1445.

by the increase of new converts. Growth in size is an encouraging sign of growth in a church, but it is not the only measurement. If it is, the growth is but a superficial one, furthermore, this growth will not develop to its full extent. It needs something else to be the backbone to support the new growth in increase of members. The backbone for the "Church Assembly" in Formosa is the program carried on by the church.

In the program of the "Church Assembly" the details fall into two categories: furthering growth in Biblical knowledge and growth in fellowship. Generally speaking, the former is to build a deeper relationship with God through the studying of the Word, the latter is to build more intimate fellowship with all the members of the church. Yet neither of these should be emphasized more than the other.

1. Growth in Biblical Knowledge

The Bible is a book of wisdom. It reveals God's mind and plan concerning salvation and truth. A Christian cannot remain to live on milk all the time, he has to grow in the knowledge of God. The Bible is the key that leads to a fuller and more mature Christian life. The "Church Assembly" in Formosa has set up different programs to stimulate the members in the pursuit of the Word of God.

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1. Hebrews 5:12b-13.

a. Bible Study

Emphasis on first-hand study of the Bible is stressed by the "Church Assembly." Each new convert is encouraged to find spiritual food directly from the Word of God early every morning. The servants of God do not have to set any rule for Bible study, yet the members are eager to read it daily. The new life within them creates a deep thirst and hunger for the Word of Life. This can be seen in one instance that happened in the church in Chiayi, central Formosa. Among nineteen newly baptized prisoners one fourth of them had read the New Testament four times in two months and could repeat from memory four or five letters from the Epistles by Paul.¹

For the church there is a column in the monthly Christian magazine, The Ministry of the Word, which serves as a guide for Bible Study. The members find the introduction, comments, exegesis, or study notes on certain books of the Bible very helpful while they read them side by side with their Bible, or use them as resource materials. Besides, there is an outline of every book of the Bible published by the Gospel Book Room which also serves as a guide for Bible studying. Yet these guides never take the place of the Bible itself. First-hand study of the Bible is always the number one suggestion to the members of the "Church Assembly."

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1. Cf. The Ministry of the Word, September 1, 1954, p. 1683.

For the younger generation there are both young people's groups and Sunday School in which they study the Word of God, so that they, too, may obtain the nurture in Biblical knowledge while they are so open and easily taught in their young age.

b. The "Bible Training Camp" in Taipei

For more intensified Bible study the church in Taipei has set up a "Bible Training Camp" for those who have answered the call to serve the Lord and for those who are already in the service but need to be strengthened and refreshed after a long period of laboring.

The purpose of having such a project is primarily for training the young college age people how to serve the Lord effectively. ¹ The camp is like a workshop in which they not only learn, take notes, and take examinations over what they have been taught, but they also go out on Sundays to different local churches to practice teach and preach. It is called a camp because all participants live together, eat together, and work together. The daily straight routine has to be observed and obeyed by everyone in the camp. All of them live by strict routine, getting up at 6:00 A. M. and going to bed at 10:00 P. M. Certain things are to be done ² at certain times. Good order is desired anywhere anytime. This gives the idea to the young people that in being

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1. Cf. The Ministry of the Word, January 1, 1954, p. 1291.
2. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 1293-1297.

a servant of God, one should be exact and well trained that he may fulfill the great commission endowed to him.

The first "Bible Training Camp" began in September of 1953, was held in Taipei, and was led by Witness Lee. It lasted for sixteen weeks. One hundred twenty-nine were enrolled while fifty-four were turned down but allowed to audit.¹ Hence twice a year a similar camp is set up for training the new people who desire to serve the Lord as full time workers. The participants include people from the local churches all over Formosa, Manila, Hong Kong, and Christians from Malaya and Indonesia.²

There are eight goals to be achieved by all the participants in the camp, namely, knowing the Bible, knowing the vitality of the new life, knowing the church--representative of divine authority on earth, knowing one's self, how to be a proper Christian, how to do ordinary things properly, how to serve the Lord, how to obey (including to listen clearly, and to put one's obedience into action).³

The program of the "Bible Training Camp" can be divided into five different categories:

1) To Study the Bible Intensively

Since the Bible as the Word of God is the food for a Christian's inner life, one has to spend time to

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1. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 1291.
2. Cf. *loc. cit.*
3. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 1294-1295.

absorb the abundant, precious "bread of life" into his inner being. It is recorded that in the first groups trainees used sixty sessions to study the Epistle to the Ephesians using the Greek resources. Rich spiritual discovery was made. Sometimes a session would last four hours. ¹

2) Exercise in Growth of the Inner Life

The trainees are given a chart of the steps of growth that a Christian should follow, and they are guided by the mature members of the church by praying, discussing, and searching in the light of the Bible. The chart involves sixteen steps such as these: offering oneself to God, dealing with past sins, rejecting the influence of the world, learning the lesson on conscience, obeying the teaching of the indwelling spirit, knowing God's will, dealing with one's flesh, dealing with one's self, dealing with one's natural life (the soul), giving total surrender to the dominion of the Holy Spirit, knowing the Body of Christ, knowing the "authority," knowing resurrection, knowing the spiritual warfare with Satan. Each step would cost the trainee a price before he could learn it. ²

3) Training in Service

The trainees are sent to practice in helping to lead meetings in such ways as: preaching the Gospel, leading the hymn singing, personal talks with newcomers

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1. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 1292.
2. Cf. *loc. cit.*

after the Gospel meeting, Gospel visitation, church visitation, helping to establish new local churches, and church administration practice. All these are done with careful arrangement and under good supervision so that after this training, the participant can be ready to serve God.¹

4) Training in Christian Personality

To become a servant of God one needs to go through a strict training even regarding his personality. This is considered as the hardest part of the program where many self-righteous ones are led to be broken and bankrupt. At this point all words which are improper, exaggerated, crooked, inaccurate, and shadowed are sternly dealt with by one another among the trainees and trainers. A true, accurate, industrious, concentrated, careful, steady, tolerant to hardship, and pleasant Christ-like character is desired to be rooted in all of the trainees.²

5) Training in Cooperative Working

There are different kinds of projects to be worked out by all the participants. For example, one time the trainees are asked to design a place big enough to seat 500 people at a time with facilities for forty boarding guests. Besides this, they have to prepare a baptismal meeting at which 300 will be baptized. Every single detail has to be planned, assigned, and worked out.³ The reason

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1. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 1293
2. Cf. *loc. cit.*
3. Cf. *loc. cit.*

for such a project is that after each Gospel meeting, there are hundreds saved. These people are to be baptized within a period of time. Owing to the size of the groups, the whole church has to cooperate and to form into a working ¹ team.

It is the belief of the leaders of the camp that it will take at least two years for the participants to absorb what has been taught. ² Re-reading of their notes is necessary. Once a year each trainee is asked to hand in a report of his new findings and growth of insight from what he has learned. In daily life he is reminded to deny himself until he is totally broken so that the life of Christ can flow through him.

c. Christian Literature

The Gospel Book Room in Formosa has put forth many valuable writings as road signs showing the members of the church how to be victorious Christians. A Christian has to enlarge his spiritual insight by reading other sound Christian writings besides the Bible. The following series are found among the publications of the Gospel Book Room:

1) Gospel Pulpit: This is the series for beginners in the Lord. The newly saved members find it helpful in spiritual growth by reading it. It also clears the doubts in any basic belief and strengthens the faith of the reader

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1. Cf. The Ministry of the Word, December 1, 1952, p. 752.
2. Cf. The Ministry of the Word, January 1, 1954, p. 1294.

to take the first step in following Christ.

2) Message Concerning a Victorious Life: This series bears messages for a little advanced Christian. He is told that he has to pay a price and to deal with many things in his life which do not please God. This is another step toward a victorious Christian life.

3) The Ministry of the Word: This is a richly packed Christian magazine published by the church. It is issued monthly and carries a variety of messages and information about the church affairs in Formosa. The content involves pulpit sermons, various trainings for the members, guide for Bible study, church history, biography of Christian heroes, news about local churches, individuals' testimonies, and a place for answering readers' questions.

4) Hymnal: The use of hymns in church gathering is most effective, for it creates a desire in the hearts of the worshipers to praise God and to adore him. During these past years, new hymnals have been continuously published by the Gospel Book Room. They are the result of long suffering, persecutions, and facing moments of life and death. They give rich blessing and inspiration to the church.¹

2. Growth in Fellowship

A Christian grows through his reading of the Word of God. He takes the "bread of life" as his daily food

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1. Stephen Kaung, personal interview, January 12, 1956.

to feed his inner life, but he also needs to give because the life within him is a living spring. When it is welling up, it has to spring up and overflow.¹ As the Lord said, "He who believes me, as the scripture has said,² 'Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water.'" The result of this life flowing is called Christian fellowship. Through this fellowship a Christian may be strengthened, his spiritual experience and insight may be enriched, his spiritual growth may be speeded.

In the "Church Assembly" in Formosa there are two kinds of fellowship meetings: formal and informal.

a. Formal Fellowship

During the week there are two meetings which have the nature of a formal fellowship: one is the fellowship meeting, the other is the breaking of bread.

1) Fellowship Meeting

Most local churches choose Saturday evening to hold the fellowship meeting.³ There is no particular person to preside at the meeting, yet one would observe that every hymn sung, every prayer offered, every testimony given is so harmonious that he would be amazed how it could have happened that way. The elders stress that this has something to do with every participant: if everyone is well

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1. John 4:14b.
2. John 7:38.
3. Cf. The Ministry of the Word, September 1, 1951, pp. 104-105.

prepared in spirit and seeks to meet God in the meeting, the presence of God can be real, and the church may fulfill the words of Apostle Paul,

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as you teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, and as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.¹

The church may exercise its gifts in this meeting according to the guiding and manifestation of the Holy Spirit.

2) Breaking of Bread

Although there is no direct command in the Bible that Christians should remember Christ's death and resurrection every Lord's day, the "Church Assembly" finds several indications in the New Testament that the early Christians observed the breaking of bread on the first day of the week. Examples are shown here:

a) Concerning the time of gathering:

"On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being shut where the disciples were"2

"Eight days later, his disciples were again in the house"3

"On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together."4

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1. Colossians 3:16-17; Cf. The Ministry of the Word, September 16, 1952, pp. 237-238.
2. John 20:19.
3. John 20:26.
4. Acts 20:7.

b) Concerning the Purpose of Gathering

"On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread"1

"When you meet together, it is . . . the Lord's Supper that you eat"2

". . . do this in remembrance of me."3

It was said when George Muller, a man greatly used of God in the last century, searched into the Word of God, he found that he should follow the examples of the early Christians in remembering the Lord's death each first day of the week.⁴

However, according to the conviction of the "Church Assembly," the essential point for the breaking of bread is not the matter of time--when to have it, but rather the way--how to observe it and whether or not it becomes a fellowship between God and man, and man and his fellow Christians. The climax of the meeting should lead men to worship and adore the Father. The secret in obtaining this highest and happiest experience in spiritual gatherings depends upon the participants. Unless they have been judged in the light of the Word and been purified by the blood of the Lamb whom they come to remember, they are not acceptable.⁵ On the contrary, they are but eating and drinking their guilt.

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1. Loc. cit.
2. I Corinthians 11:20.
3. I Corinthians 11:24, 25.
4. Cf. The Ministry of the Word, January 1, 1953, p. 793.
5. I Corinthians 11:27-29.

The members of the "Church Assembly" consider the pre-meeting preparation of hearts as the chief element that brings the rich blessing and real presence of God. If one does not live a holy life daily before his God, he cannot expect the abiding presence of God to be with him in the meeting. Because they tremble before God and search their hearts before they attend the breaking of bread, every time the meeting is filled with the Spirit so that all who are present can feel that God is in their midst, and they drink once more from the river of love and fellowship.¹

b. Informal Fellowship

While there is time for the members of the "Church Assembly" to have fellowship in a formal meeting place, there is also a time for them to enjoy fellowship in the Body of Christ at their leisure. This informal fellowship can be found in home visitation and love-feasts.

1) Home Visitation

Since the membership in the "Church Assembly" in Formosa is increasing rapidly, the need of visiting the new and old members is tremendously great, and few ministers can do it alone. It is the concern of the whole church. Usually the responsibility for the arrangement of home visitation in the local church falls upon the leadership of a subdivision called "chia" which literally means a home.²

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1. Cf. The Ministry of the Word, November 1, 1952, p. 714.
2. Cf. The Road of the Church, pp. 23-26; The Ministry of the Word, November 1, 1951, pp. 203-204.

Perhaps it is necessary for the writer to explain the duties covered by the "chia." In the first chapter the writer mentioned that the "Church Assembly" encourages the local churches to hold meetings in homes. To take Taipei for an example, there are seven "chias" at present, and each of them has about four or five hundred members.¹ Each "chia" holds prayer, Gospel study, and fellowship meetings separately so that the members do not have to travel too far to the main church. These meetings are held especially at night. Yet it does not mean that these "chias" are separated units from the main local church at all. The leaders of the "chias" come together to discuss, to plan, and to pray for church affairs weekly.

Home visitation therefore is arranged by the leaders of the "chias." Within a "chia" ten persons form a small unit. One of them will be the leader. He is supposed to take care of these nine persons and pays a visit to them at least once a week. During the visit no secular talk or gossip is desired. It is a time for Christian fellowship and prayer. If there is any greater spiritual or physical need that demands the help of the church, this leader will report to the leaders of the "chia," and the leaders will render help or consult with the elders if it is necessary.²

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1. Cf. The Ministry of the Word, December 1, 1952, p. 752.
2. Stephen Kaung, personal interview, January 12, 1956.

Through the home visitation and fellowship one comes to know his fellow-Christians much better and is more burdened to pray for the particularly needy ones in the church.

2) Love-Feasts

Besides home visiting love-feasts are important channels for fellowship. The members of the "Church Assembly" do not try to make friends by drinking, dancing, or indulging themselves in various kinds of social parties. On the contrary, they hold love-feasts during these occasions:

a) Family Love-Feasts

For fellowship with the Lord's people the members of the "Church Assembly" have love-feasts at homes. But for the sake of the average or poor income members, the church has limited the expense of the love-feast to a level that even the poor families can afford it. Because the emphasis of the love-feast is on fellowship and not worldly enjoyment, one can feel the Presence of God even at the table. The love-feast fulfills the words of King Solomon: "Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a fatted ox and hatred with it."¹ "Better is a dry morsel with quiet,² than a house full of feasting with strife."

After the feast personal testimonies are usually given and prayer requests are made. A short time of prayer

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1. Proverbs 15:17.
2. Proverbs 17:1.

and fellowship takes place. Then the company adjourns¹ with praise and whole-hearted thanksgiving.

b) Baptismal Love-Feasts

There are at least two reasons for having a love-feast after a baptismal meeting in the "Church Assembly": First, because the number of persons being baptized is often over fifty and up to several hundred so that by the time the meeting is over everyone is tired and hungry. They need some food to refresh them. Secondly, all the new converts are introduced to the church after the baptismal meeting, so that they begin to fellowship with the old members as well as among themselves. The love-feast provides a good chance for this purpose. The love-feast is usually provided by the leaders of the "chias" with a number of voluntary cooks and helpers. The meal is simple, but true fellowship and love are tasted. The climax of this sort of fellowship in love is found in the Lord's Table. Genuine praises and thanksgiving are poured out from the new born babes because the joy of salvation is full in their hearts.²

c) Wedding Love-Feasts

A wedding could be a magnificent occasion according to Chinese tradition. But it does not apply to the members of the "Church Assembly" in that way. In fact, what seem more important to them are to find lost souls and to serve

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1. Cf. The Ministry of the Word, July 1, 1954, p. 1580.
2. Cf. The Ministry of the Word, July 1, 1954, pp. 1578-1570; January 1, 1953, p. 994.

in the Body of Christ. The whole church benefits from the individual. Therefore, the wedding in the "Church Assembly" in Formosa becomes a blessing not only to a single couple, but to many others, even to the whole church. During the wedding there are hymn-singing, a short message given by the minister, and laying on of hands on the couple. Very often the couple will stand in front of the church to offer their new home to God in the first day of their union by saying, ". . . but as to me and my house, we will serve the LORD."¹ Then the church will answer with a unanimous "Amen,"² and a love-feast is served to all who are present.

d) Church Yearly Fellowship Love-Feast

It is significant for the local churches to have a yearly fellowship, for in a large local church there are smaller units³ called "chias." People in the first "chia" seldom see people in the second "chia" because the weekly meetings are held separately as mentioned in the previous section. Only in the yearly love-feast do they come together to have fellowship and worship. Here again the writer will take the local church in Taipei for an example. From the records of the church in Taipei in the past few years both the number of participants and spiritual atmosphere of the yearly love-feast have shown much increase.

(1) In 1949 the number that attended the

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1. Joshua 24:15b.
2. Cf. The Ministry of the Word, July 1, 1951, p. 31.
3. Ante, pp. 62-63.

yearly love-feast was little more than five hundred.¹

In order to know each individual better the elders raised ten questions concerning the change which has taken place in their lives since the experience of their new birth.

The result showed that many were delivered from bad habits such as smoking, drinking, gambling, going to movies and shows, indulging oneself in fighting and cursing, and worshipping idols. Some became healed from long illness and some stopped trying to commit suicide after believing² in Christ.

(2) In 1950 the Holy Spirit guided that the love-feast should be restricted to the elders and leaders of all the "chias"³ only. There were one hundred fifty-three present. They had foot washing at the arrival of the participants. The place was filled with brotherly love. Grateful tears, thanksgiving and worship ended the feast. After that, the Holy Spirit guided that the church have a great cleansing which meant all that were defiled were to be destroyed by fire in their midst. After the message was delivered, the whole church saw the light and searched their personal belongings. On the last day of the year a fellowship meeting was held. The church brought all the articles to be destroyed into the middle of the open

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1. Cf. The Ministry of the Word, July 1, 1951, p. 28.
2. Cf. loc. cit.
3. Cf. ibid., p. 30.

courtyard. Each told his reason and testimony why he gave up his thing or things which did not please God. A fire was set on that great heap of dirty books, idols, gambling sets, smoking sets, bad model pictures, and worldly dresses, while the singing of hallelujah was high into the clouds in heaven.¹ A revival took place after this cleansing of the church.

(3) The next year the membership of the Taipei church increased to two thousand eight hundred.² They were so busy preaching the Gospel that they skipped the yearly love-feast. In November of 1952 an enormous love-feast was held which more than two thousand attended. The line³ waiting for the feast was as long as two hundred feet. Because of this great multitude, it was impossible to cook enough for them. Each member was asked to bring his own food. Those who could afford brought more to share with those who were poor. Thus everyone was fed and the whole place was full of joy and fellowship. A situation where "they partook of food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all of the people"⁴ of the early church was experienced by them.⁵

(4) The love-feast of 1953 had two thousand five hundred people present.⁶ It was well organized in that

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1. Cf. loc. cit.
2. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 32.
3. Cf. *The Ministry of the Word*, December 1, 1952, p. 751.
4. Acts 2:46c-47a.
5. Cf. *The Ministry of the Word*, December 1, 1952, p. 753; Austin Sparks, *A Witness and a Testimony*, January 1956, p. 2.
6. Cf. *The Ministry of the Word*, September 1, 1953, p. 1134.

each was served with a box lunch prepared by the church. The feast began with a hymn of praise and climaxed with breaking of bread. It had never happened that so many were worshipping and partaking the Lord's Supper in Taipei before. They were much blessed by God.¹

(5) In 1954 the yearly love-feast was held² in September and had two thousand nine hundred present. They included not only the members of the church in Taipei, but also representatives from different churches all over Formosa. It became a Formosan love-feast. During the feast, personal testimonies and church reports were made. The fellowship was so close that each testimony and prayer seemed to be the result of outflowing life echoed with amens. The climax of the fellowship was reached when breaking of bread began. Every heart was deeply touched by the love of God who was in their midst. The meeting lasted for four hours.³

D. Summary

After one has studied the inner growth of the "Church Assembly" in Formosa in this chapter, one will inevitably think over the growth which was shown first in the increase of new converts. As it has been said, the change of size of a church is a significant sign for growth.

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1. Cf. loc. cit.
2. Cf. The Ministry of the Word, October 1, 1954, p. 1721.
3. Cf. ibid., p. 1722.

In order to proclaim the salvation and to make it effective on the listeners so that they might be saved and added to the church, the members of the "Church Assembly" had first gone through spiritual preparation by praying specifically for the work of the Gospel and by surrendering themselves as living sacrifices to God. They believed unless they submitted totally willingly to God, God would not use them to preach his Gospel. As soon as the unsaved was reached by the spoken Gospel, printed messages of the Gospel were used to re-enforce the work of the Holy Spirit in man's heart.

The inner growth of the "Church Assembly" was also influenced by the program of the church which provided opportunities for the members to grow in Biblical knowledge and in Christian fellowship. The growth in Biblical knowledge was based on first-hand Bible study, and the "Bible Training Camp" and Christian literature were equally important in aiding the growth in the knowledge of the Word of God. As for the growth in fellowship, two particular meetings of the church had their significant role, namely, the fellowship meeting and the breaking of bread. These were formal in nature plus the informal fellowship found in home visiting and love-feasts. By means of all these opportunities of putting their faith into practice, the members of the "Church Assembly" in Formosa show steady growth of their inner life.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

As was seen in the topic of this study, the subject dealt with the "Church Assembly" which was originated in China not more than forty years ago. The church was then exiled to Formosa and showed enormous growth both outwardly and inwardly within a few years.

It is inspiring when one looks back to the origin and spread of the "Church Assembly" in the first chapter of this study. The establishment of the "Church Assembly" was an evidence of an answer to prayer because it was born of prayer. It had its distinctive characteristics as a totally indigenous church operated by the local believers, supported by the free gifts of its own members, and by providing opportunities for every member to serve in the Body of Christ. The spread of the "Church Assembly" in China was a geographical one which was based on Foochow in the middle part of China. It pushed out in a semi-circle movement to the north, the north-west, and south and finally abroad until it reached Formosa across the channel. As soon as the "Church Assembly" was founded in Formosa, it began to spread over the whole island from north to south. It became a new force adding to the present Christian Church in Formosa.

In the second chapter this study focused on the inner growth of the "Church Assembly" in Formosa. After one reads of the growth of this church in Formosa, one might

raise the question as to what caused it to grow so. What was the driving force behind the estimation of figures? The answer was found in the prayer life of the "Church Assembly," and the total surrender of the church to Christ. When the whole church was cleansed and sanctified, God would use the people to preach the Gospel. As a result, new converts were added to the church day after day, but the "Church Assembly" did not stop there. Their members had to reach the measurement of maturity in Christ. The "Church Assembly" set its program toward this goal putting its emphasis on two main categories, namely, enabling growth in Biblical knowledge and growth in fellowship. The former was a process to take in spiritual nutrition for the need of a Christian's inner life, while the latter was an outgrowth of one's inner life. Through both the in-coming--life-taking and out-going--life giving the "Church Assembly" believed that a Christian could be well balanced in his spiritual experience.

Based upon the preceding findings the writer has come to realize that this church has a unique Biblical emphasis, and it could be an example of many indigenous churches which are largely demanded in this age. The reasons to support the writer's point of view are as such:

1. Unfortunately Christianity has for many years often been wrongly interpreted by the Chinese, especially among the educated ones, as a cultural or even political

weapon of the European and American in the East. Christians are often regarded as "slaves of the foreign devils." In these people's minds being a Christian is simply to enjoy the material advantages in the church including better chances for education, better jobs to earn more money which leads to an easier life. The essence of salvation in Christ is totally unknown to them. Furthermore, the way of living of most missionaries in the cities of China is quite luxurious in comparison with the natives, and it arouses jealousy and fret among the non-believers. Having seen the danger of this situation, more and more missionaries yearn for the establishment of indigenous churches and long for the church to be governed by its own people. The "Church Assembly" is a pure, indigenous model of this sort; it satisfies the demand of the Chinese. No wonder it becomes spiritually prosperous.

2. In the first chapter of this study it was discussed that the "Church Assembly" was founded purely on the basis of the Biblical truth. Therefore the local churches are named after the places in which they are found. The administration of the local church follows the pattern found in the early church. The sacraments such as the Lord's Supper, baptism, laying on of hands, and foot-washing are kept with a recreative spirit and empathy by the "Church Assembly." Any truth which is Biblical they obey. Man-made tradition has no influence in this church so far.

This is another reason for its being blessed by God.

3. One of the basic beliefs of the "Church Assembly" is said to be "exercise in the Body of Christ" in which every member is kept active to serve God according to his gift. In so doing the church affairs are no more in the hands of just a few consecrated men and women, but of the whole church. The church becomes a spiritual home for them. Each is deeply concerned about the other's need. They pray for one another and bear one another's burden. This is a picture of the most harmonious group life on earth. No wonder they grow so tremendously in Formosa in these years.

As the writer observes, the "Church Assembly" in Formosa did not intentionally put pressure on other denominations there, but what they have done and are doing is having a tremendous movement on that island. The huge size of the Gospel meetings and the large number of persons being won to Christ broke the record of any denomination in Formosa. The zeal for broadcasting the Gospel of the "Church Assembly" is contagious. From the way the members do it seems the work of the Gospel is their life job, whereas being an engineer, a doctor, a teacher, or whatever it may be is just a side line by which they earn their living. Therefore their zealous attitude toward God's work stirred up the concern of other denominations to preach the Gospel more diligently.

At the present the "Church Assembly" in Formosa

seems to be taking a leading position and has become the center of Christian fellowship among the "Church Assembly" groups of other places in the Far East free world. This is partly because the local church in Taipei is more dominant than other churches elsewhere. Spiritually speaking, it is the model church upon which the other churches look for an example. Christians from other churches used to go to Taipei to get spiritual help and training and then bring the blessings back to where they belong to serve God. Hence, the spiritual blessings that the church in Taipei receives are shared by all churches, partly because of the advantage of the location of Formosa which is not far from Japan in the north with the Philippine Islands and Malaya as its neighbors in the south. Naturally it becomes the center of transportation to those places. In order to take advantages such as these into consideration the "Church Assembly" in Formosa stresses the following two emphases for the future:

1. Within Formosa: In general the newcomers from the mainland or Hong Kong are mostly highly educated people. They are the ones who need the Gospel in time of despair, loss of families and properties. The members of the "Church Assembly" feel that God wants them to be fishers of these men specifically. So their efforts are aiming at this direction. Besides the mainlanders the "Church Assembly" will not neglect the native people in Formosa. For the

church is based on locality. Each church is governed by the local members. Whenever the mainlanders go back to China, the testimony of God will still continue on in Formosa. Therefore the next objective of the "Church Assembly" is to save as many native people as God helps them to.

2. Abroad: Since Formosa had been under the regime of Japan for about half a century, the knowledge of Japanese language is good among the natives. With enough knowledge of Japanese the "Church Assembly" in Formosa hopes to extend its fellowship to Japan with the Christians there and plans to send Gospel teams over to Japan sometime. Likewise, since the natives speak the same dialect as the people in Malaya, the "Church Assembly" plans to reach the people in Malaya with God's Word. At the present these are the two big projects in the prayer and thought of the "Church Assembly" in Formosa. They believe if the Lord wills it, many will be won to Christ in these places just as they were in Formosa.

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