

Mormonism in Modern Japan

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“SINCE JAPAN AS A NATION has made such remarkable economic and technological progress, why is the church in Japan not also making comparable progress, but in fact is stagnant?” For some years now such a question has arisen among LDS members in the U.S., and particularly among church leaders.¹ Interestingly enough, a similar question periodically arises among Japanese Christians more generally: even 135 years after the opening of the first Protestant mission in Japan (and the Roman Catholic presence goes back much farther), the total number of mainstream Christians amounts to less than 1 percent of the population.² This essay analyzes the current state of the LDS church in Japan, and its prospects for the twenty-first century, from the viewpoint of an active Japanese member.

A NUMERICAL OVERVIEW

Mormonism appeared in Japan almost a century ago, when Apostle Heber J. Grant arrived with three other brethren to open the mission in 1901. Since this was barely a decade after the official abandonment of polygamy, both the Japanese population and the mass media were understandably wary.³ The mission stumbled along with negligible results until it was finally closed in 1924, at which time there were 166 mem-

1. For example, this question was raised at a training meeting for Japanese regional representatives in Salt Lake City in April 1990.

2. The *Christian Yearbook 1994*, published in Japan by the *Kirisuto Shimbunsha* (Christian News Press), reports that there are 1,050,938 Catholic and Protestant Christians in Japan, representing 0.8 percent of the total population. However, if the LDS, Jehovah's Witnesses, and certain fundamentalist sects are added in, the figure nearly doubles.

3. The cautionary tone of newspaper editorials and letters to the editor about the polygamy issue in Mormonism is understandable at this early time, when Japan had just emerged as a modern nation and was anxious to appear fully “civilized” to the West. (See my “Transition in the Reception of the Mormon Church in Japan,” a paper presented at the annual meetings of the Mormon History Association in Park City, Utah, on 20 May 1994.)

bers.⁴ The main causes for this early failure seem to have been rising anti-American feeling in the wake of U.S. foreign and immigration policies; meager language training; and a shortage of scriptures and church literature in Japanese. A different picture emerged when the mission was reopened in 1948, and by 1994 there were more than 100,000 members of record in Japan.⁵

This church membership, as of 1994, was contained in twenty-five stakes, 132 wards, 148 branches, ten missions, and nineteen districts. Some unit of the church can be found in almost any urban area of Japan. In the larger urban and suburban wards attendance at sacrament meeting sometimes reaches 100 or 150.⁶ Worship services are well conducted at both the ward and stake levels. Congregations are orderly and comply readily with instructions from presiding authorities. American visitors would be impressed and pleased, feeling that they are attending the same church in Japan as in the U.S. The infrastructure of the church in Japan is also impressive: a six-story administrative center built in Tokyo in 1977; a temple there in 1980; chapels in almost all large cities; a distribution center; and five LDS institutes (with four others meeting in rented rooms).

However, several problems are not apparent from these favorable numbers. First, the *active* membership of the church is only a fraction of the official membership. As recently as 1992, after forty-five years of post-war missionary effort, only 20,000 members could be counted as active out of a total membership of more than 87,000, or about 23 percent.⁷ Depending on how strict a definition one uses of "active member," the figure could range from 15 percent active,⁸ with a strict definition, to as much as 30 percent. I estimate 25 percent active as a realistic figure for the country in general. This means that three-fourths of church members in Japan are inactive, having nothing to do with the church.⁹

A second problem is the decreasing rates in recent years *both* of baptisms themselves *and* of activity on the parts of new converts. As an illus-

4. See the account in R. Lanier Britsch, "The Closing of the Early Japan Mission," *Brigham Young University Studies* 15 (Winter 1975): 171-90.

5. The following figures illustrate the rapid growth of the church in Japan after World War II. Some are found in the Japanese international version of the *Ensign* (*Seito no Michi*, or the Way of the Saints) 25 (Oct. 1981): 17-27; the later figures come from the Tokyo administrative offices of the church: 1948: 166; 1957: 2,000; 1968: 10,000; 1980: 54,259; 1990: 83,148; and 1994: 107,905.

6. A member of my ward reported finding 150 in attendance at sacrament meeting during a visit to the Kawagoe Ward, Tokyo North Stake, during one Sunday in October 1994.

7. These figures come from knowledgeable, unofficial sources. The 87,000 figure quoted here, incidentally, does not include members with unknown addresses.

8. Koichi Aoyagi, "Conversion and Lesson Plan," in Ryuichi Inoue, ed., *To Increase Retention in the Church* (Tokyo: Privately Published, 1991), 66.

9. This level of inactivity was asserted and discussed by a high councilor during a priesthood leadership meeting of the Hiroshima Stake on 7 January 1995.

tration, although 50,000 people were baptized from 1978 through 1990 (including some children of members), the increase in *active* membership was only 10,000, with virtually *no* growth in Melchizedek priesthood holders. Since 1981, furthermore, attendance at sacrament meetings, priesthood meetings, and Relief Society meetings has all remained fairly level, despite thousands of new convert baptisms. In general, the growth in nominal membership has outstripped the growth in activity by either men or women.¹⁰

This discrepancy between ostensible members and active members is probably attributable largely to the period from September 1978 through the first half of 1982 when the number of baptisms was five times that of any comparable period before or since.¹¹ In a sincere, well-intentioned effort to accelerate and streamline the proselyting program, most Japan missions relaxed somewhat the conditions required for baptism and set unusually high baptismal goals. Many fine members of the church were brought in during this period, but a more general result was an extremely low retention rate. Indeed, 35,000 of the 50,000 baptisms mentioned in the above paragraph occurred during these years. In two church units for which I have first-hand knowledge, it was common during this period for a new convert to stop attending church within the first month, and many did not even show up on the first Sunday after baptism!¹² The result of these premature baptisms was, of course, a terrific increase in the burdens carried by home teachers, visiting teachers, and priesthood leaders to locate and maintain contact with such a large, indifferent, even antagonistic segment of the membership. Even fifteen years after this period, as indicated above, attendance at various meetings has remained level, despite increasing baptisms; many Japanese Saints are still trying to put behind them the unpleasant memories from that time.

Of course numbers do not tell the whole story, and not all wards or branches of the church suffer from low retention rates. There is actually a range of diversity among them. Some are like sturdy trees with deep roots in fertile soil. Others are struggling for viability on stony ground. Some are led by strong and capable young men and women with energy enough both to minister to the needs of Saints and to render humanitarian service to their communities. Others are managed by middle-aged or

10. Again, this information comes from knowledgeable, unofficial sources.

11. Among many Japanese Saints, this is sometimes called the period of *baputesuma ky-osoki*, a term which can be translated as "rash baptism" or "reckless baptism." See my article, "The Reckless Baptism Period in the Early 1980s," *Mormon Forum* 8 (Spring 1992): 12.

12. That the situation was similar throughout Japan is indicated by the *Christian Yearbook*, 1981 through 1984 editions, which show that LDS attendance at church (sacrament meeting) rose from 10,707 in 1980 to 16,853 in 1981 but then declined to 13,678 in 1982 and to 10,384 in 1983.

older leaders who conduct church affairs in a manner that is quiet and composed but also formulaic, repetitious, and unimaginative, as might be true in any country. Obviously a voluntary organization like the church, dependent as it is on lay leadership, cannot thrive on the models and methods of the commercial world. The state of the church in Japan as elsewhere, both at present and in the future, will depend heavily on the faith, talents, leadership abilities, and attitudes of Saints and their leaders. Ideally, the diversity of talents and abilities will enrich the daily and weekly activities of wards and branches and produce a variety of the fruits of faith.

Aside from such internal assets, however, the future of the church also depends on external factors over which members and leaders have no control. One of these might be called the "cavity phenomenon," which refers to the social and demographic "holes" left by the outmigrations of church members from certain settings. On the one hand, in large cities like Tokyo, Osaka, Kobe, and Hiroshima, young couples striving for home ownership are forced by the price of land to relocate in the suburbs. On the other hand, in the more remote northern or western regions of the main island of Honshu, like the one on which I live, young converts and the children of members must leave the area after graduation from school or college to find work. In such areas, church attendance stays between thirty and fifty perpetually. While the suburban areas are the ultimate beneficiaries of these demographic shifts, with their constant infusion of young and spirited members, the spirit does not flourish in the urban and other areas that are emptied out.

Another external factor is in the customary corporate demands made on the time and energy of Japanese men, LDS or not. In the corporate world men are expected to work longer hours, with more overtime and fewer holidays, than workers in most other countries. Resident foreigners from Korea and from the Philippines have often remarked to me about how busy Japanese men seem compared to those in their own countries. This condition saps much of the energy and the time that Japanese priesthood holders might otherwise devote to church service. A related business practice is the "single transfer" arrangement by which men are periodically sent on company business, without their families, to distant cities for extended stays. This is as much a disruption of church life as of family life for these men.

Having reviewed and explained the numerical profile of the church in Japan, I would like to consider now some general cultural factors affecting LDS prospects in this country. First, I will discuss some fundamental characteristics of Japanese culture that influence religious commitment; then I will consider the impact of modernization on Japan and on the church there.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE JAPANESE

There is much in Christianity generally that is difficult for the Japanese to understand. To begin with, the Eastern religious traditions tend to see different religions as complementary, rather than competitive. The idea of exclusive legitimacy, expressed in the LDS claim to being "the only true church," is more understandable in the great Western religions of Christianity, Islam, and Judaism, but it is a puzzle to the Japanese and to much of the rest of Asia. Values in Japan are not understood as absolute but rather relative to the social situation. To many Japanese Latter-day Saints, as to many other Christians in Japan, there is nothing incongruous about membership and activity in the LDS church interspersed with periodic Buddhist and Shinto observances on special occasions like marriages and funerals, or even with the maintenance of a traditional household shrine as the focus of family connectedness to the Japanese heritage.

The existence and nature of God can be grasped without much trouble, given adequate and effective teaching, but the need for a savior is again a difficult concept. The ordinary law-abiding Japanese finds it hard to understand *sin* as a personal transgression against God requiring human redemption through the intervention of a savior. Japanese Saints thus tend to regard faith in Christ as perhaps less important than it would be to converts joining the church in Christian countries, a matter of some concern to the general authorities assigned to Japan in recent years.¹³ Many converts are introduced to such concepts for the first time only when they obtain copies of the scriptures and study with the missionaries, and they might then submit to baptism more from a sense of friendship and obligation to the missionaries than from any real understanding of these fundamentals.

This predicament points to a common distinction in the Japanese mind between *tatema*e and *hon-ne*. The first of these refers to normative conformity at the *behavioral* level, whereas the second refers to one's true *inner* feelings and intentions. Such a distinction might be found in almost any culture, of course, but in Japan it is a pervasive dichotomy used in assessing all kinds of social interaction. The typical convert in Japan enters into church activity through *tatema*e, and many (perhaps most) new members never experience a true conversion at the *hon-ne* level. Those who do not will soon grow weary of the demands placed on church members and their faith will grow cold.

Japanese tend to be an other-directed people. This quality, when combined with a relativistic understanding of values, gives them a deep sen-

13. In this connection, see Miwako Nakamura, "To Endure to the End after Baptism," in Inoue, 48-49.

sitivity to the behavioral expectations of their peers and neighbors. This is perhaps derivative of their history as an insular farming people. They are reluctant to offend or inconvenience their neighbors by standing out as individuals against an apparent consensus. For example, on a Sunday, when required to choose between attending sacrament meeting and going to a school athletic event involving their children, they are likely to be much more influenced by what the other members are going to do than by their own judgment about sabbath observance. Individualism has not developed in Japan as it has in the U.S., so it takes not only *hon-ne* but a great deal of courage to forego the Sunday athletic event, or even just to be one of the "peculiar people."

Those who cannot endure the perpetual cross-pressures typically do not merely drift to the margins but soon disappear into the great bustling crowd of Japanese life. The borderline between the inside and the outside is sharp and impermeable. It circumscribes a small but enduring nucleus of active members, with hardly anyone at the periphery. Even the less active members in generally active families soon drop out completely. Outside of church meetings themselves, the LDS network is simply too sparse to hold those who cannot hold on by themselves.

Another common Japanese trait, docility and respect for order and authority, has presented the church with a dilemma. When the question was raised about why the church in Japan is not growing as it should (see n1, above), five of the regional representatives present consulted among themselves and offered the answer, "We have accepted instructions and endeavored to follow them, but it seems that we are always awaiting instructions from our leaders."¹⁴ The dilemma is that, on the one hand, the church hierarchy, recognizing the limits to what it can do from Salt Lake City, would like Japanese leadership to become more independent, to solve local problems on its own. On the other hand, the hierarchy is perceived by many as reluctant to transfer the authority necessary for meaningful independence.

Two examples illustrate the problem. First, bishoprics and branch presidencies are not given the authority to make final decisions about which potential converts are ready for baptism, even though they have the major responsibility in fellowshipping and retaining new members after their baptisms. If local leaders had more to say about who joins the church in their units, I believe the retention rate would improve, as local leaders would feel that they had more of an investment in the fellowshipping responsibility. Second, if Japanese members were given the editorial responsibility for the international church magazine in Japan, *Seito no Michi*, members might read the entire magazine with the enthusiasm now

14. Ryuichi Inoue, "Conversion of the Japanese," in Inoue, 38.

reserved for the few pages devoted to local news. Periodically the regional representatives in Japan have proposed (so far without success) that they be permitted to meet as a council to deal with various local problems. It seems unlikely that the church in Japan (or probably anywhere else) can thrive without more of this kind of decentralization of authority.¹⁵

MODERNIZATION

In addition to the special cultural traits reviewed above, modernization has introduced certain problems for the church in Japan, as well as for the country as a whole. At first its impact on the church was positive, but lately it has become more negative. Beginning with the Meiji Era in 1868, Japan began to follow its own unique course toward modernization. Guided by the pragmatic motto, "Useful things are preferable," Japanese society began to phase out traditional ways and opened itself to new ideas. The younger generation was thus more free to experiment with Western ways, which might have included, for some, conversion to Mormonism and to other Christian religions. After 1945 the close political and economic partnership between Japan and the U.S. was accompanied by a new popularity for American ways in general. The LDS church in Japan benefitted by this popularity, as is apparent from the steady growth of the church during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. Just as Japan had achieved prosperity by freeing itself from the past, converts to the church came from among those who had also freed themselves from many traditional ways.

As elsewhere, however, modernization has proved a mixed blessing for Japan and for the church there, for it has been accompanied by the demographic disruptions of urbanization and by the social and cultural disruptions of secularization. In particular, atheism, though long known in Japan, is now widespread. National self-confidence born of economic prosperity has reduced the earlier interest in Western religious and other cultural values. The nation has grown smug with self-sufficiency and gourmet diets. Intellectual and moral degeneration are everywhere. The historian Daikichi Irokawa has commented on this decline in moral and

15. One is reminded of the successful movement for *san-zi* (triple-self) and *ai-guo* (patriotism) in Chinese Protestantism, making possible the survival of Christian churches during the Communist rule in China (which, of course, has tended to look on Christianity as synonymous with imperialism and colonialism). *San-zi* is reflected in *zi-zhi* (self-government), *zi-yang* (self-support), and *zi-chuan* (self-proselyting), all without support from any foreign missions. See Ting Guang Xun, "Reflections and Prospects for the Chinese Christian Church," Hiroshi Shishido, trans. and ed., in *What Chinese Christians Believe* (Tokyo: Shinkyo Shuppansha, 1984), 106-32.

intellectual discipline¹⁶; and Seiichi Morimura has warned the younger generation that they are losing themselves, and their interest in life, because of their excessive freedom.¹⁷ Sexual permissiveness too, once imported from the West, has affected youth as well as adults.¹⁸ Japan is now a major producer and consumer of pornography. Thus modernization has brought with it secularization, atheism, and moral degeneration, in both sexual and other regards. In this environment we should not be surprised to see LDS membership and growth level off or missionary success decline.

TOWARD A TRULY JAPANESE VINEYARD

It is not yet clear whether the transplanted stalk of Mormonism has taken root in the exotic soil of Japanese society. It might in time come to look Japanese enough to belong on the landscape, despite some occasional American foliage. The goal, of course, should not be to make the church in Japan a duplicate of the church in America. Yet many Americanisms remain. For example, in the United States it is common for people to travel during the Christmas holiday season to visit relatives and friends. Accordingly, in many (perhaps most) American wards church activities are reduced during the holidays, and only sacrament services are held on Sundays. There are no such Christmas migrations in Japan, however, so there is no reason for Japanese meeting schedules to be truncated. On the contrary, Christmas, with its special programs, would be an ideal time to invite non-members and inactive members to sacrament services and special programs. Rather than following the American pattern, as many Japanese wards and branches do, we should instead have an especially full program during those holidays. Another example is the ward Halloween party, which is a mystifying curiosity to Japanese Saints.

Even Pioneer Day, as celebrated by American Mormons, is not meaningful in Japan. It could be meaningful if Japanese Saints were to honor *their own* LDS "pioneers," rather than those who settled Utah. Such a celebration could commemorate the arrival of the first church leaders in Japan, which occurred in 1901 on 12 August (not 24 July). Besides the American leaders so crucial in the history of the Japanese mission, like Heber J. Grant and Hilton A. Robertson, Saints in Japan could honor

16. Daikichi Irokawa, "How I See Japan," a lecture delivered on the NHK educational television channel, 6 Jan. 1995.

17. Seiichi Morimura, in *ibid.*

18. Recent surveys by both governmental and non-governmental agencies have shown that three out of every four male high school students have seen pornographic videos, and that one out of every seven high school students has had sexual intercourse (*Asahi Shimbun*, 1 and 11 Aug. 1994).

early brethren like Fujiya Nara and Takeo Fujiwara or sisters like Tamano Kumagai, converts from the early mission, who accepted the responsibility to keep the waning flame of Mormonism alive during the difficult years between the closing of the early mission and its reopening after the war; and Tatsui Sato, converted in 1946, chief translator of the LDS scriptures and other literature crucial to the post-war success of the church in Japan.¹⁹

Beyond the superficial issue of adapting American LDS commemorations to the Japanese scene, there is the reverse (and more delicate) issue of embracing certain traditional Japanese observances.²⁰ For example, when a person dies in Japan, it is customary to hold not only a funeral but also a wake, followed by periodic commemorations at one month and again at one year after the death. Japanese bishops do occasionally hold funerals but seldom, if ever, do anything about wakes or the periodic commemorations. Accordingly, the LDS church in Japan is sometimes criticized for its indifference toward the memory of the deceased and for its disregard of sentiments and customs important to Japanese culture. A related and more serious problem is that ancestral tombs are usually located on Buddhist temple grounds, and the remains of a deceased family member cannot repose in the ancestral tomb unless a Buddhist priest officiates at the funeral. The church has its own cemetery in Saitama Prefecture, which might relieve the immediate problem for local LDS families there, but it does nothing to accommodate the feelings of non-LDS family members. This issue is likely to become more serious with the advancing age of the present membership, and it is only one of many such flashpoints of potential conflict in the future.

Of course, there is much in Japanese tradition that not only converges with LDS teachings but also reinforces them, and certainly the convert can bring these ideas and customs with him or her into the church at baptism. Included here would be the well-known Japanese earnestness, modesty, and consideration for the feelings of others (parallel to the Golden Rule of the New Testament), as well as respect for the elderly and for ancestors. Other LDS ideas and practices with strong appeal are genealogy and vicarious work for the dead, the high priority placed on the family as an institution, and patriarchal governance in the family. (This last idea appeals especially to the men, of course, but Japanese women

19. See the account of these early leaders in J. Christopher Conkling, "Members without a Church: Japanese Mormons in Japan from 1924 to 1948," *Brigham Young University Studies* 15 (Winter 1975): 191-214.

20. Elder Ryuichi Inoue, formerly a regional representative in Tokyo, together with other members sharing his concerns, made several studies of this issue and others; these analyses are privately published in *To Increase Retention in the Church*. See citations in nn 8, 13, and 14, above, and his "For the Guidance of LDS Youth."

are becoming more assertive and men are coming to appreciate more the help that women provide, both in the home and in the church.)

While Japanese seem to "delight in exotic things outside" Japan, they tend to "reject things foreign (that attempt) to come deep into their own country."²¹ The restored gospel must be adapted to the Japanese environment in ways that will give it a distinctive Japanese quality without undermining any of its universal core elements. The Book of Mormon (2 Ne. 29:12; Alma 29:8) recognizes the legitimacy of religious truths and records handed down in various cultures, and even today's church leaders have expressed appreciation for the great truths found in all the world's religious traditions.²² Some accommodation will need to be made in the church for certain elements in the Japanese heritage, lest the church continue to be regarded as strictly an American religion. Furthermore, for Mormonism to lose its conspicuously American image, it would be desirable for half or more of its missionaries and mission presidents to come from Japan, and for the proportion of Japanese brethren in the area presidency also to be increased.

PROSPECTS FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

On the basis of recent trends, I would now like to hazard a few prognostications about the LDS future in Japan. First of all, the highly secularized environment in which the church must operate will continue. In this respect Japan and Japanese Saints are sometimes compared unfavorably to Korea, the Philippines, or other Asian countries, but even for these countries the eventual prospect is that increased modernization will bring secularization in its wake. To be sure, national history and cultural traits differ from country to country, but common developments like urbanization, constitutional government, democratization, a market economy, and increased affluence for a growing middle class will eventually lead down essentially the same path followed by Japan. It may well be that as "traditional religions such as Buddhism, Hinduism, and Chris-

21. David Spector, an American residing in Japan as a television commentator, made this observation in an interview, "Japan, a Nation with a Membership System," *Asahi Shimbun*, 1 Jan. 1995.

22. For example, the First Presidency under President Spencer W. Kimball issued the following statement on 15 February 1978: "The great religious leaders of the world, such as Mohammed, Confucius, and the Reformers, as well as philosophers including Socrates, Plato, and others, received a portion of God's light. Moral truths were given to them by God to enlighten whole nations and to bring a higher level of understanding to individuals" (in Spencer J. Palmer, *The Expanding Church* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1978], v). Elder Carlos E. Asay made a statement in the same vein in his "God's Love for Mankind," included by Palmer, ed., in *Mormons and Muslims* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1983), 208; see also Gerald E. Jones, "Respect for Other People's Beliefs," *Ensign* 7 (Oct. 1977): 69-71.

tianity are losing their influence in Asia,"²³ new religions like Mormonism will thrive for a time but then eventually themselves suffer stagnation as they succumb to ripening secularization. Of course, if the nation should be humbled by a serious economic setback, or by some other misfortune like a series of destructive earthquakes,²⁴ the people might turn to more spiritual concerns, as in the typical cycle of the Book of Mormon; but the prospects for this do not seem great.

Without a drastic improvement in the retention of new members and their children, it seems likely that the stagnation of recent years will continue, at least with regard to the main numerical and demographic indicators. Retention will continue to be problematic, especially among the youth.²⁵ Convert baptisms will barely replace the dropouts. Church attendance and activity will continue to suffer from corporate demands made on the men (long hours and temporary transfers) and from the "cavity" phenomenon in the big cities. Most ward and branch meeting-houses are already located on the outskirts of metropolises, so perhaps the outmigrations will not require the closing of any units. External pressures on families will probably increase the divorce rate, which will also undermine efforts to retain the second generation. Converts so far have usually been young, but as church growth slows, the membership will become older.

Yet, although the church in Japan seems now to be in a numerical slump, there are plenty of faithful, dynamic, sincere, and conscientious Saints who have fully assimilated the gospel in the Japanese *hon-ne* manner. Some families have succeeded in producing a second, or even a third, generation faithful to the LDS tradition. Such members, though now relatively few in number, are the hope of the future and must exert themselves to improve both missionary work and retention rates. There are some hopeful signs: Local (Japanese) missionaries now comprise perhaps a third of the total serving in Japan. Many of these are second-generation members, who return to strengthen their wards and branches after their missions. The Boy Scout movement has been part of the church program

23. Tamotsu Aoki, a cultural anthropologist at Osaka University, suggested this process in his televised comments, "Toward a New Civilization: Is a New Civilization Going to be Created in the Quickening and Fast-Growing Asia?" NHK Educational Television Channel, 24 Dec. 1994.

24. In the wake of the Great Hanshin Earthquake which hit Kobe on 17 January 1995, a column in the "Vox Populi, Vox Dei" section of the *Asahi Shimbun*, 26 Jan. 1995, quoted a college student and other sufferers with the following introspective sentiments: "Everyday life, casually led, should not be taken for granted. It is in fact very fragile, so we should be grateful for it."

25. Ryuichi Inoue reports that 69 percent of the young men of record, and 48 percent of the young women, never attended church meetings during 1988 ("For the Guidance of the LDS Youth," privately published, 1989, 2).

in Japan for about twenty-five years. There are now 646 scouts enrolled in nineteen troops or units under church auspices.²⁶ The number of Latter-day Saints on the faculties of Japanese colleges and universities has reached a score. Indeed, a new revision of the LDS scriptures (just published) was accomplished with the important participation of three professors who are specialists in Japanese language and linguistics.

One sign of the strength and vigor of the Japanese LDS community is often overlooked—the growth and activity of the private or “unsponsored” sector. From at least the 1960s on many Japanese Saints have published books dealing partly or wholly with LDS topics, such as autobiographies, collections of testimonies, histories of local units, travelogues, novels, and poetry, numbering more than twenty so far.²⁷ The *Beehive Shuppan*, begun in 1992, in collaboration with Bookcraft in Salt Lake City, translates and publishes LDS books. So far it has published six, including two on Ezra Taft Benson and others written by David O. McKay, Neal A. Maxwell, and Dallin H. Oaks.²⁸ About ten years ago musical compositions on gospel themes began to be marketed on tapes and disks through such private LDS channels. Other private enterprises periodically organize tours to Salt Lake City and to Jerusalem.

In 1988 the independent semi-annual journal *Mormon Forum* was first published and is now edited by me. An LDS electronic network on *Niftyserve (Japan)* was started in 1990 and carries a lively and intense exchange of information and opinions.²⁹ This electronic forum proved especially useful during the Kobe earthquake in January 1995. Limited as such enterprises are, even among the Saints themselves, they all contribute to the social network and the bonds that hold together the LDS community in Japan. They help also to build a separate Japanese Mormon identity—separate both from the rest of the Japanese and from other Mormons. Ultimately, both the growth and the retention rate in the church will benefit.

I conclude with an observation about an analogy between the global U.S.-Japan relationship and that between Americans and Japanese in the church. Throughout the Cold War, Japan, living under the shadow of the United States, was content to leave in American hands the most difficult

26. Asia Scouting Council of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, *The Way of Scouting*, Dec. 1994.

27. For periodic lists of all such privately published works by LDS writers, see *Mormon Forum*, Spring 1990; Fall 1990; Spring 1993; Fall 1994; and Spring 1995; or contact me.

28. The six translated books (all from Bookcraft in Salt Lake City) are: Frederick W. Babel, *On Wings of Faith*, 1972; Elaine Cannon, *Boy of the Land, Man of the Lord*, 1989; Neal A. Maxwell, *A Wonderful Flood of Light*, 1990; David O. McKay, *Secrets of a Happy Life*, 1967; Preston Nibley, *LDS Stories of Faith and Courage*, 1957; and Dallin H. Oaks, *Pure in Heart*, 1988.

29. *Mormon Forum* and the e-network on *Niftyserve (Japan)* are both described briefly in Bryan Waterman, “A Guide to the Mormon Universe: Mormon Organizations and Periodicals,” *Sunstone* 17 (Dec. 1994): 44-65.

issues of foreign relations. With the end of the Cold War, Japan is suddenly required to make more of those decisions in its own right. Similarly, as church leaders in recent years have pressed Japanese Saints to handle their own problems locally, Japanese leaders have often seemed reluctant to think through the problems, make the decisions, and draw up the necessary plans. The time has come for Japanese members and their leaders to be less passive and more assertive; to claim their own identity as Japanese Latter-day Saints; and to realize the roles, responsibilities, and important contributions which must accompany that identity.