

ルーテル福音キリスト教会神学校

L.E.C.C. Seminary

By Roger W. Falk

First of all, Brother Harold Johne has asked me to give his greetings to his friends and acquaintances in this group. As most of you already know, he accepted a Call to Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary and is no longer with the Japan Mission. As a result I have been appointed to fill his position of Seminary Administrator for our Japanese Church. Although I had been on the Education Committee of the Lutheran Evangelical Christian Church (LECC) for nine years, I had no actual experience in the administration of our Theological Training Program. My area of responsibility was primarily the training of Sunday School teachers.

Having been thrust so suddenly into a new position, and at the beginning of a new school year at that, I have had to do a lot of study and research. The preparation of this paper is just one aspect of the preparation I am involved in at the present time.

Exegetical Theology

I. Where We Were

Our Theological Training Program began back in 1967. Our first students traveled from missionary to missionary, studying those subjects which were the "forte" of each man. In those years we did not have a separate preparatory course, and the training program was administered from the Church Headquarters in Mito City, Ibaraki Prefecture. Areas covered were Genesis, Psalms, Isaiah 40-66, Galatians, Ephesians, Romans, and Acts (see chart at the end of paper for Comparative Study), for a total of 22 semester hours. Teachers were T. Yamada, N. Meier, K. Habben, and R. Igarashi.

Pastor Harold Johne arrived in Japan in August of 1969. After two years of language training, he moved to Tsuchiura, Ibaraki Prefecture, and began there-organization of our Theological Training Program. In September, 1981, we offered the following exegetical courses:

Pre-Seminary:

John's Gospel (3 hrs.)

Acts (1 hr.)

I Corinthians (2 hrs.)

Pre-Seminary was a one year course at this time.

Seminary I:

Galatians (6 hrs.)

Genesis 1:1-25:11 (6 hrs.)

Selected Psalms (2 hrs.)

Revelation (1 hr.)

Seminary II:

Ephesians (3 hrs.)

Seminary III:

Romans (8 hrs.)

Isaiah (4 hrs.)

Total hours Pre-Sem = 6

Sem I 15

Sem II 3

Sem III 12

II. Where We Are

Beginning with the opening of our Seminary Year in April of this year, we have introduced a two year preparatory course to our program. In the first year we offer Galatians (4 hrs.) using the Japanese (and English) Scriptures and Luther's Commentary in Japanese translation (actually there are two translations into Japanese).

This is because the student is also beginning his study of the Greek language in the first year. Incidentally, the Greek course is being taught by a Japanese national, and this should make him all the more competent in Greek. The same man has also taken a correspondence course in Biblical Hebrew, and continues to study Hebrew, so he should eventually work out very well in teaching Old Testament exegesis as well.

In the second year we are offering John's Gospel (3 hrs.), I Corinthians (2 hrs.) and a continuation of Galatians (2 hrs.), using the Greek text as the basis for the study. In the second year the student also begins his study of Hebrew in preparation for Old Testament Exegesis in the Seminary division.

It goes without saying that some changes will be made now that our Pre Sem Course is a two year course. Under consideration is the addition of Revelation to the Exegetical offerings in the Senior Year. The reasoning behind this is simple: the majority of Protestants in Japan are non-Lutheran. You know what that means--millennialism is rampant in Japanese Christianity (and it appeals to the materialistic spirit of the Japanese people). Our pastors need to "be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of this hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (I Peter 3:15) also in the matter of Eschatology!

An adjunct to the Exegetical Courses offered in our T.T.P. is the annual 2 ½ day Pastor's Seminar. So far the greater portion of each seminar has involved exegetical study, although some Isagogics and Homiletics have also been involved. The portions of Scripture covered and the years are:

Letters of Peter—1979

Isaiah—1980

Daniel, Ezekiel, & Revelation—1981 or 82

John & Revelation—1983

Pastoral Letters—1984

Acts—1985

Probably there will not be a Seminar this year because of the situation where two men have left the field, only one is being replaced, and the re-arrangement of working schedules in order to operate the seminary program.

III. Where We Should Be

In view of what we have just presented, I think it may be safely said that our course offerings are equivalent to that of Northwestern College and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, at least on paper. Our T.T.P. is already beyond the initial planning stage in all areas. What is still needed is the full implementation of what we have on paper. I think here is where we run into some of the weaknesses we have experienced, and still do experience in our T.T.P.

The Japanese educational system is extremely competitive and intense. The school year begins in April and ends in March, with about six weeks summer vacation, two to three weeks Now Year's vacation, plus one or two weeks vacation between school years, and 11 holidays. Classes are 5 1/2 days a week, and children often go to after-hours cram schools. Emphasis is always on passing the entrance exams of a top notch school so as to have a better chance of advancing to a better school, college, or university upon graduation, and of course, obtaining life-time employment with a prestigious firm as the ultimate goal. In the area of religion, the Japanese people also expect their pastors to be well-educated. They will not respect them unless they are well-educated.

The Japanese standard of living is one of the highest in the world today, in spite of some of the negative comments you may have heard. (Although there are a number of factors involved, my cost of living allowance is almost equal to my monthly salary!) Entering our seminary involves no economic gain, and usually a considerable loss for the student.

Our pre-sem students range from high school graduates to college graduates. The students usually do not have a very long connection with the church, nor a very deep knowledge of the Scriptures. They come out of a very heathen and materialistic society, and sometimes from families who oppose Christianity. These are some of the reasons why our exegetical courses are not always able to go into the depth of detail that we would like. But this is also reason to strive for the accomplishment of our goals.

Another factor, especially for the expatriate teacher, is language. We are limited in vocabulary and the finer nuances of the Japanese language, simply because we are of a different culture. Preparation of texts and

materials in Japanese is very difficult. The expatriates for the most part write in English (although a few of us do our sermon preparation almost totally in Japanese). We have very few people who are able to translate these materials into Japanese. The translating itself is quite difficult. And the end result is a Japanese that is quite obviously a translation (and therefore, "foreign").

Some Concluding Thoughts

From the beginning we have tried to follow the Synod's educational program at Northwestern College and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. That program has worked well for our Synod, and we are familiar with it. But changes can and will be made as we adapt that program to our needs in Japan.

We try to stress a love for learning—getting directly at the Word to see what the Holy Spirit is teaching us. We want to make it a happy learning experience for the student!

At the same time, our exegetical studies should be practical, not only for analysis of the text, but also to see how one would preach on that text of Scripture. What would you say in your sermon if this were your text? Aside from preaching, how can or should this portion of Scripture be applied to everyday life? To the people of the L.E.C.C., and the entire life of the church?

We also want to give the student a grasp of the entire book or letter. In the past this has meant that frequently the student would be asked to read the entire book in Japanese to begin with, in order to get the student to think about the entire book, so it takes on meaning as a whole for him. Sometimes the student has also been asked to read through a second time, making his own outline of the book.

Our ultimate goal is to have our pastors live in the Scriptures, and continue to be students of the Scriptures all their lives, and that this will not only benefit them, but that the spiritual benefits will pass on to the people to whom he preaches and whom he teaches.

In addition to the above, finally have the national pastors take over the exegetical program. As mentioned earlier, we have a national teaching Greek. He will also be teaching Beginning Hebrew in the second year. It is a lot to expect of one man, but we are moving in the right direction—we are making progress!

SEMINARY CURRICULA -- COMPARATIVE STUDY

Subject	Semester Hours				Subject
	Mequon (N.C.)	Mito	Tsuchiura	Pre-Sem	
Exegesis					
Genesis 1-3	2	1)		
" 4-11:26	2)	2)		
" 11:27-25:11	3))6		
Psalms	6	2	2		
Isaiah 40-66	6	3	3		
Galatians	6	4	6		
Ephesians	4	2	3)	(2	John's Ev.
Romans	6	6	6)	(2	I Cor
Acts		2	2	2	
TOTAL	35 (9)	22	28	6	

I assume the (N.C.) above indicates Northwestern College. It should also be noted that the Pre-Sem figures listed above are for the one year course, and do not reflect the two year program which was begun in April of 1986.