

Uzo Takami — Opening Words: Blood Drive as a Prayer for Peace

A gathering of institutes affiliated with religious organizations was held, and its theme was “Peace within daily spiritual life.” How to go about thinking and conveying to others about “peace” as we go about living the life of faith. Previously, in 1970, when the peace movement was very active, the Young Men’s Association held a “peace prayer regional young men’s assembly” at all the local chapters. We performed the service and appealed for peace, and as a way to engage in peace, we encouraged blood drive activities. Blood donation can help people regardless of belief, religion, or race. This is very significant, and I believe that this perspective within the Young Men’s Association Headquarters should be highly recognized. As a result, the “assembly” became a catalyst for further activities among the chapters. There have been many changes since then, but the church as a whole has begun to adopt this task as Tenrikyo’s *hinokishin*. Such contribution was highly recognized, and in 1995, it was awarded the “Showa Emperor Commemorative Blood Donor Promotion Award,” the first for any religious organization, and the Shinbansha received the award from the Crown Prince, the honorary vice chairman of the Japanese Red Cross. This year will mark the twentieth year since then, and my wish is for awareness that the church’s blood donation drive began with its daily prayers and engagement for peace.

Mikio Yasui — Short History of Tenrikyo Theology (110) Seizan Manuscripts [1] Transcriptions of Copies of the “Osashizu”

From this issue, I will examine the transcriptions of the copies of the “Osashizu” preserved at the Seizan Branch Church, located in Ise City of Mie Prefecture. Seizan Branch Church belongs to the Shidokai lineage of churches, of Kawaramachi – Koga – Gamo – Seizan. Kin’ai Branch Church, whose Osashizu I examined earlier, is affiliated with Koga; therefore, I thought that the transcripts of the “Osashizu” may overlap at places. However, in the case of Seizan, there are many cases of two or three entries of the Osashizu bound together with a cover page. It is not clear if these were bound at certain intervals or bound in the same manner as the original copy. Moreover, the dates of the transcription is not clear. To such extent, the dating for those of Kin’ai may be more possible. With such thoughts in mind, I will attempt an examination of the copies of the “Osashizu.”

Chuichi Fukaya — Deep Reflections on the Life of Oyasama (29) Secular Law

When we speak of church history, we frequently draw a diagram where “secular law = subordination to state authority = God the Parent’s anger.” But this is not necessarily accurate. The scriptures and anecdotes teach us that “secular law is permitted as a means to spread the Path, as long as one does not stray from the main tenets of faith.”

In the seventy-two years following the war, the issue of “secular law” has no longer become a problem for the Path in Japan today. But, the issue still presents significant challenges in the overseas mission. In order to receive permission for Tenrikyo to proselytize or for missionaries to gain a missionary visa, there is a need to be considerate of laws and religious/cultural environment of any given country.

In order to hasten the spread of the “Final Teachings,” we need to properly understand God the Parent’s true intentions in regard to the “path of secular law.”

Akio Inoue — A Preliminary Study of Tenri Linguistic Theology: The Future Image of “Koto” Worldview (31) Chapter Four: Minakata Kumagusu’s “The Philosophy of *Suiten*” and “Study of Things” [6]

In regard to interpreting the “Truth of Origin,” the late Kazuta Kurauchi, a former chairman of Japan Sociological Society and professor emeritus of Osaka University, who developed his unique philosophy argued that the “Truth of Origin,” which had been previously regarded by academic scholars as a ludicrous folk tale, had strong ties with global philosophical currents and could not be appreciated without reflecting upon it in association with world philosophy. I will introduce a structural interpretation of “standardized” diagrams that he theorized as the grammar of “Truth of Origin,” and make comparisons of Yuhei Matsunaga’s “Truth of Origin” mandala and Buddhist mandala.

Takanori Sato — Creatures That Appear in the “Story of the Origin” (17) “Turtle” as an “Instrument of Joining” [3]

On April 29, 2013, an international collaborative research group, including the Institute of Physical and Chemical Research (RIKEN), decoded the genome of two species of turtles, including the soft-shelled turtle and the green turtle. What is noteworthy is that animals that acquired a unique physical trait such as a shell retained, to a remarkable degree, the fundamental structure—phylogeny—common to vertebrates during its course of evolution. Turtles, as specie, overcame the mass extinction event that took place 250 million years ago, and began its unique evolution. Also, under instructions given by its genes and DNA, it repeated reproduction and continued as a form of life. What made this possible is that it reproduced its offspring through the method of reproduction by its females. In Chapter Three “Truth of Origin” in the Doctrine of Tenrikyo, we are taught the significance of reproduction and birth of the “female organ” through the turtle and the importance of “instrument of skin and joining” as a way to continue life to the future through our descendants.

Koji Fukaya — Milepost Usage of the Ofudesaki (15) Regarding “Cleansing” [6]

“Cleansing of the mind,” whether its means is through “events” or

“words,” is made possible when God the Parent and human minds are in touch. Part XIII verse 22 teaches that “If only your minds are truly accepted by God, I shall sweep away any dust whatever.” What is taught here is that God the Parent and a human mind being in touch is, in itself, “a cleansing of the mind.” Based on such premise, we can argue that “cleansing of the mind” begins with lending an ear to God’s words. Even if those were painful to hear, God may be verbally expressing “severe words” (Mikagura-uta Song X verse 6) prior to showing us “trying” events.

Masanobu Yamada — New Religion’s Missions in Brazil (43) Plurality of Salvation: Church of Perfect Liberty [2]

As confirmed through the example of the conversion to Tenrikyo, prayers for materialistic gains in the present have decreased in PL as well, and there is greater awareness for the acquisition of spiritual transformation such as “kokoro naoshi.” And in each case, there is a call for “awareness of the self.” However, the ideal “self” in PL is a “self” that is in “place of unity of heaven and individual,” and thus, it is an existence that transcends time and place. The reason that PL does not teach about cause-and-effect relationship is that it has an understanding of human being and salvation informed by such view of the “self.”

Michihiro Narita — Mission and Translation: In the Space between Reception and Transformation (1) Introduction

In this series, through the case study of Buddhism, which began in India, I would like to reflect upon the reception and transformation of “a teaching” as it is translated in the process of missionary work. I will touch upon the history of translation of Buddhist scriptures, examine the role and function carried out by Chinese translations of Buddhist texts in the space opened up between reception and transformation of doctrine, and objectively analyze the accomplishments of Buddhism’s cross-cultural mission. Through such study, I would like to deepen my thoughts on the themes and perspectives for translation of our teachings.

Kazukuni Watanabe — Paving the Way Towards Local Community Welfare: Creation of a New Culture of Philanthropy (23) “Joint Finances” of Community Organizations [2]

Among the forms of joint finances in the theory on community organization, there are the streamlining of accounting and financing, socialization of the budget, socialization of the account, and joint fundraising. The first three is related to the call for greater transparency of business management, a pillar among the main objectives of the institutional reforms of the social welfare corporation, which is being carried out right now. There is a view that the call for disclosure of information, as way to secure the transparency of business management, is a form of communication, and there is greater emphasis placed on proactive communication even among efforts to confront social issues and suggest and supports its solutions. Such thought forms the background for a call for new joint finance theory.

Hisao Kuwabara — Messages from Ruins (17) Survey of Ruins in Israel [3] Discovery of Architectural Ruins of Earliest Synagogues

The remains of the earliest synagogue, discovered at the Tel Rekhesh ruin in Israel, date back to the first century AD during the time of the New Testament. Benches were lined next the building walls, and a stone credenza was placed in the middle of the room. These designs are common among the earliest synagogues discovered in other ruins, and indicate the building’s function as a religious facility and a place of assembly. Also, the Tel Rekhesh’s early synagogue, whose building entrance does not face the direction of Jerusalem, is an extremely value case study that demonstrates features traced prior to the second Judaic war of the second century BC. There is considerable call from various quarters for a continued survey and research of the eastern half of the building, which was not investigated during this current survey.

Juri Kaneko — Contemporary Religion and Woman (11) “Religions Participating in Society” and the “Accomplishments” of the Buddhism Monk Families

In the “new public” policies based on neo-liberalism, in regard to women who were marginalized in the labor market, there was an exchange of “recognition” for “redistribution,” which, as a result, led to “new forms of impoverishment for women.” As one facet of religion’s “social contribution,” there have been many forms of assistance to people living in poverty; but the new form of support based on the very detailed “drawing close model,” as found in the “Assistance Act for People in Need” (enacted in 2015), suggests a symbiotic tie with religions. However, as a result, there are factors that may contribute to “new forms of impoverishment of women.” As one means to critically study “religions participating in society” from a gender perspective, we can point to surveys regarding the “accomplishments” of monk families (in cases of Buddhism, for example).

Mari Hatakama — From the Sankokan Museum (8) Kokeshi at the 78th Feature Exhibition: “Folk Toys of the Tohoku District: Remember the Great East Japan Earthquake of 2011”

I will introduce the kokeshi dolls found in the exhibit for “Folk Toys of the Tohoku District: Remember the Great East Japan Earthquake of 2011.” I plan to speak about the history of the kokeshi and its naming as well as strands of its versions. This time, the Togattan (Miyagi) and Tsuchiyu (Fuku-shima) versions will be on exhibit.