

Forum II

The Crisis in Japan and the Pain of God

A Report from Japan after the Great East Japan Earthquake

Rev. Makoto Kato
Executive Secretary of Japan Baptist Convention

An Expression of Gratitude

I would like to thank you, Baptist brothers and sisters of the world, for remembering the great disaster that took place in Japan, for praying for us, and for showing the love of Jesus Christ in concrete ways to those who were affected.

This evening, we are honored to have been given such precious time to make a report during this BWA program. Our prayer is that through this small report the name of Jesus Christ will be praised.

3.11 Great Earthquake and Great Tsunami

On March 11th at 2:46 pm, a major earthquake of magnitude 9.0 and a tsunami attacked the entire Pacific coast of Eastern Japan. This just happened to be the first Friday afternoon of this year's Lent Season.

The Japanese people have lived with earthquakes since ancient times. In the Tōhoku Region, just in the past 30 years there have been 6 earthquakes over magnitude 7.0. However, this earthquake was extremely powerful, and the tsunami that was triggered by its magnitude 9.0 force created a huge wall of water, 30 meters high, and attacked the Pacific coastal area.

In the Capital, Tokyo, far removed from the epicenter, we experienced the earthquake as measuring a strong 5 on the Shindo scale. All trains were stopped, and over 200,000 people walked overnight, walking tens of kilometers to return to their homes.

As of July 3rd, it has been reported that 15,527 people have died, 7,102 are missing, and 124,594 have evacuated. Many villages along the shoreline were completely destroyed. Familiar towns, ports, houses, schools, and beloved family and friends were swallowed by the tsunami in a single instant. Though it has already been 4 months since the earthquake, there are many bodies yet to be found. It has been said of many of those that they were pulled into the sea by the undertow of the tsunami.

FUKUSHIMA Nuclear Power Plant Disaster

On top of the damage from the major earthquake and the huge tsunami, there was the even more severe accident at the nuclear power plant in Fukushima. Now the name FUKUSHIMA is known by people all over the world. Meltdowns and hydrogen explosions occurred at 3 nuclear reactors, and large amounts of radiation were released into the sky and sea. Through these nuclear power plant accidents and the dispersed radiation, we caused great distress among you all over the world, for which we of Japan sincerely apologize.

People within a 20 kilometer radius of the nuclear power plant have been forced to evacuate, and people within a 30 km radius cannot return to their homes freely.

Fukushima Prefecture had prospered as an agricultural and dairy farming area, but now, farmers have been forced to abandon their rice and vegetable fields, and dairy farmers to get rid of their precious cows.

From Shelters to Temporary Housing

The 11th next week will mark 4 months since the disaster.

Now, in stricken areas, people are gradually moving from shelters into temporary housing. However, for the people who lost everything in the tsunami, the path to rebuilding is very steep, and will

not be easy. Most of the tsunami stricken areas are small fishing villages, and many of their citizens are elderly. The pain in the hearts of people who lost their beloved friends and relatives is very deep. “Why couldn’t we rescue our family members?” “Why am I the only one who survived, though everyone else died?” Many of them are deeply wounded by a deep sense of guilt.

The Tōhoku Region is especially rich with nature. The population is low and aging, but the amounts of crops produced and fish caught are high. Especially rice: 30% of Japan's rice is produced there. Since long ago, the Tōhoku Region has seen its workforce drain away into, and provided food and electricity for the capital region. In fact, all of the electricity from the Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant is used to support the electricity consumption of the capital region; the people of the Tōhoku Region do not consume any of it. As a result of this accident, the capital region has experienced planned blackouts for some time, and people in the capital region for the first time began to understand the danger and burden that they had forced onto the people of Fukushima with the nuclear power plant.

Christianity in the Tōhoku Region

Christianity reached Japan 400 years ago, and Baptist missionaries first set foot on Japanese soil 150 years ago. And then 120 years ago, Baptist missionaries began ministering in the Tōhoku Region for the first time. Before World War Two, churches were built through the efforts of the American Baptists on the coastal line of the Tōhoku Region (Japan Baptist Union churches), and then after World War Two the Southern Baptists started to plant churches in urban areas of the region. Currently there are 13 Japan Baptist Union churches and 18 Convention churches. Concerning religion, Buddhism is strong, especially in the coastal area, and there are many Buddhist-parishioner households whose attitudes toward faith are therefore resistant to change, making it very difficult for Christianity to spread.

Baptist Relief Work

Some Union and Convention church buildings were damaged by this earthquake and tsunami, but no church members died as a result. However, some transportation networks were cut off, the coastal areas greatly affected by the tsunami were suddenly isolated. Then we learned that they had no gasoline, kerosene, blankets, food, or anything, in spite of the cold, snowy season, so we delivered gasoline, kerosene, blankets, winter clothes, heaters, rice, vegetables, and other relief supplies almost on a daily basis to churches and local people, traveling 400 to 700 kilometers from the capital region to do so.

Churches in stricken areas opened up their facilities to local residents and carefully delivered relief supplies to those people who were unable to receive goods from the public offices.

And now that electricity, gas, and water are slowly recovering, we distribute hot meals to people in the shelters, straighten up tsunami-stricken areas, and in order to repair houses we send volunteer workers to scoop out mud and clean them.

However, rebuilding those stricken coastal areas and people's lives will require decades. The Japan Baptist Convention and the Japan Baptist Mission Board set up a volunteer headquarters in Tōno City. Volunteer teams from America started to work in June, and we would like to work alongside them in their rebuilding efforts, testifying to the love of Christ.

Caring for Children's Hearts

People currently under the effects of radiation are experiencing very severe stress. There are people who fled far, and there are many other people who cannot leave because of their jobs and families. It is fairly common within families that small children and their mothers evacuate to distant places while the fathers stay behind. Families, communities, and the fellowship of churches are being torn apart.

Kōriyama City, where there is a Japan Baptist Convention church, is 60 kilometers from the nuclear power plant, which is not within the area that was required to evacuate. However, the numbers indicate that the amount of radiation there is much higher than normal. The blossoms of flowers and fruits, such as strawberries, are bigger than usual. The effects of the invisible radiation are scary, and we are especially worried about how it will affect children. According to one report, bloody noses have become more common among little children. Currently, it is a hot summer season in Japan, but children have to wear long-sleeve shirts, and masks. The windows in their classrooms at school cannot be opened, so they spend their days drenched in sweat. Since they cannot freely play outside, there are

many children who cry at night. And the mothers of these children also have pain in their hearts. The anxiety about invisible radiation. The anxiety of not knowing how long this situation will last, and not knowing what lies ahead. The hearts of parents also are being torn apart by a pain that threatens to crush them.

In April, children living in shelters who had been forced to evacuate due to radiation were invited to the church in Kōriyama for Easter. One parent, watching the child play among friends all day, said, “this is the first time I’ve seen my child laughing like this since the earthquake.” The next day, that child wrote this in a diary entry at school: “Yesterday, I went to a Christian church for the first time. As I attended the Easter Service for the first time, I learned about the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It was a fun day.” The teacher who read the child’s diary entry wrote a note, saying, “I hope that we in the Tōhoku region also will be resurrected, just like Jesus Christ.” Of course, that teacher is not a Christian. Through a child who went to church for the first time, the hope of Jesus Christ is being expressed, from person to person.

However, life in Kōriyama is subject to a stress so severe that it is beyond imagination.

Reverend and Mrs. Suzuki of Kōriyama Church have a son who is in elementary school named Yūi. The pastor and his wife, with the effects of radiation on the child in mind, considered sending him to live with relatives far away.

However, Yūi shook his head, saying, “I want to stay with my Dad and Mom. I want to worship with everybody in this church. So I’m not going anywhere far away.” But is this really a good decision? The parents, with deep pain in their hearts, are still today serving church people and refugees in the area. Please remember this church in Kōriyama in prayer.

Also, please pray that the hearts of people with such deep stress under the effects of radiation will be protected. Please pray that the little children’s lives will be protected from the danger of radiation contamination.

Working Toward Reconciliation

The Japan Baptist Convention's theme, for ten years starting in 2011, is “working toward reconciliation.”

God reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, not counting people's sins against them, and He has entrusted us with the gospel of reconciliation. And now, what the world needs most is reconciliation between God and us. When we obtain reconciliation with God we will be given healing and hope, and then we will be led toward reconciliation with the rest of creation.

As a result of this great disaster, cracks were formed between God and mankind, among mankind, and between mankind and creation. We will continue to follow Christ, who feels the pain of those cracks as his own, prays intercessory prayers, and gives resurrected life, and we will continue to work toward reconciliation.

Restoration of the area that was affected by the tsunami will require at least 10 years. One wonders how many decades it will take for areas impacted by the effects of radiation contamination to become safe environments for all living things once again.

Our work has just begun. And in the face of this work, churches in Japan are a very small presence.

Particularly in the Tōhoku region, which is the area with the least Christians and churches within Japan. Each church is a little flock.

However, the Lord Jesus Christ said, “Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom.” And “Blessed are the peacemakers.”

May the Church, the body of Christ, be able to share the comfort, encouragement, and hope of Jesus Christ to individuals in this land which has been torn apart in so many ways due to the disaster. May the Church be able to testify to God’s kingdom and His righteousness, and to offer good works as they serve the Lord. Please continue to pray.

Prayers and Offerings from the World

We would like to thank all of our brothers and sisters around the world, especially those from BWAid, for your prayers and offerings as you remember the people affected by the great disaster, and the

work of the Japan Baptists. As of the mid of June, \$475,000 has been collected from abroad, and the total amount collected is \$1,225,000.

The earthquake and tsunami in Indonesia, the tsunami in Thailand, the earthquakes in New Zealand and Haiti, and the accidents on Three Mile Island and in Chernobyl.

We hold those who lost their lives in these disasters, and those who were deeply wounded – physically and emotionally – close to our hearts.

And we are encouraged by the presence of the brothers and sisters who lived only by the gospel of Jesus Christ in such difficult situations.

I pray that Jesus Christ, the Lord of the reconciliation of the world, will bind us together over the walls of nations, ethnicities, and cultures, and that we will work together as brothers and sister for the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

From the bottom of my heart, I thank you again, my Baptist brothers and sisters, for your prayers and support.

A Report from a church in damaged area

Rev. Hanae Igata
Pastor of Nankodai Christ Church
Member of the board

An Expression of Gratitude

I would like to thank you for remembering the stricken areas of Japan, and for your prayers and donations. I am also thankful for this precious time. As the pastor of a church located in a stricken area, I would like to share with you about our situation.

What Happened after the Quake

My name is Hanae Igata. I am the pastor of Nankodai Christ Church in Sendai city, Miyagi Prefecture. The population of Sendai is about 1 million, making it the largest city to be affected by the Great East Japan earthquake.

When the earthquake occurred, I was in the parsonage. At first, it started to shake slowly, so I went to the kitchen to hold the dishes. Then the shaking got stronger, and dishes and cups in a cupboard flew out and broke to pieces. The shaking lasted about three minutes. As soon as it stopped, I went outside. There I saw fallen power lines, and the traffic lights were out, and I felt something huge had happened. In the area where I live, electricity was cut for 5 days, water for ten days, and gas did not recover until a month and a half later. Each day was desperate without electricity, water, and information.

Three Kinds of Damage

There are three kinds of damage in this disaster. Earthquake damage, tsunami damage, and radiation damage. Since damage from the tsunami and radiation is extremely vast, earthquake damage has not been given attention at all, but the earthquake damage spreads all over the affected area, and it is terrible. The aftershock on April 7th was especially big – almost as big as the first one – and a house in my neighborhood collapsed because the foundation was destroyed.

Encouraged and Comforted by Each Sunday Worship Service

We were able to have a worship service two days after the earthquake, together with victims who were already staying at my church. I was in a state of questioning and challenging at that time. Even after three days, the only media we had was the radio. It was broadcasting things like “there are two or three hundred dead bodies floating near the shore of Natori...” I did not know what in the world was going on. I could not imagine why it became such a that terrible situation so close to Sendai. On the other hand, I could easily imagine people thinking “if there is God, why would He allow – or make – this devastation?”

However, right in the middle of the situation, I decided to stop asking why, and be there through focusing on the Lord Jesus of the cross. I decided to believe in Immanuel, a spiritual fact: God be with us even in this terrible situation. That is the God who cried “my God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

That is the God who is with people here who suffered great losses, who lost everything all at once, who are filled with severe hurt and sorrow, who feel they are forsaken. I could do nothing but cling to the Lord of the cross.

We held worship services every Sundays in that state. March was the Passover season. It was very supportive to all of us as we walked our path thinking of the Lord of the cross. And we are very thankful for that.

The Work of Nankodai Church and Support from the JBC

Right after the quake, our church building was used as a shelter. At maximum, we had 22 people, and this went for two months. We supported needy people in our community by delivering rice balls, water, and kerosene. We also opened our shower booth, and made a relaxing space, so that people could come and talk about their own feelings and experiences. To support one shelter of 360 victims, we delivered sweet-bean soup, Zenzai, with help from other Baptist churches in Sendai.

The JBC took very quick action to support churches, and the first aid arrived 6 days after the quake. Ever since, the JBC headquarters has supplied and supported churches and our relief work.

Damages to Church Members' Families

Among our church members, no one died from the tsunami, but some of the members' relatives were killed. One member's brother's house was hit by the tsunami, and the whole 1st floor was washed away. The water went up to the ceiling. He said, if he had been 10 minutes later in reaching the shelter, he would have lost his life. There are a few church members whose cousins and relatives are still missing.

The man I just mentioned was the owner of a motorcycle shop there for 27 years. In this disaster, he lost his house, his job, his workplace, many memories, and even the cemetery where his parents sleep. The damage to all the motorcycles, parts, and the factory, cost him almost 1 billion yen. One day, he told me a story. One of his customers died in the tsunami. He had always had his motorcycle repaired there before the earthquake. His parents came and said, "Our son loved motorcycles and liked you very much. Please start your business here again."

He said, "you know, I will be 60 in a few years, I lost everything here, and we never know when the next tsunami hit this area again.... I would like to fulfill the request of those parents, but I don't know where and with what I can start..." With this in his heart, Mr. Kodama goes to that deserted area almost every day.

Four months after the disaster~ Tears are Widening

The disaster is a very cruel thing. One person described this post-disaster situation as being "torn apart." Through this disaster, people and their circumstances have been torn apart. In Sendai City, the world on one side of a road is clearly different from that on the other side. The dead and the survivors are torn apart. Tears between Stricken areas and unharmed areas. Victims of the earthquake, victims of the tsunami, and those multiply-stricken as a result of the nuclear power plant disaster. The people who still have to stay in shelters and those who were able to move into apartments or temporary housing.

It has been 4 months since the disaster, and the gaps between areas are getting wider. In some areas they still need food, water, and clothing, and they cannot even build temporary housing. On the other hand, there are areas where recovery plans have been made and brought to local administrations. From this point on, this torn-apart situation and the disparities will become much greater. And unfortunately, the powerless people will become even more powerless.

Supporting Life / Bereavement Grief Care

From this point on, while the support is needed for jobs, housing, and the educational environment, we also need care for grief and loss. Thirty thousand people died from this disaster, and 7000 are still missing. There are medical teams, but they themselves say, they are powerless before the dead. What is required of religious leaders now is to share the sadness of the surviving family members through their bereavement, and to walk on their side as they accept that the dead are gone, in order for survivors to live the lives that they have been given.

I would like to introduce an example of our efforts.

1. Remembering the 11th

The Japan Baptist Convention encourages churches to remember the dead and the missing on the 11th of each month (when the disaster occurred). We provide a place to grieve together with the surviving family members and people of the community, and also to communicate to them that we would like to be on their side as they suffer, and to let them know that we have not forgotten their pain.

2. Being on surviving family members' side by providing funerals and charnels.

Churches in Sendai City are working together and have started to take requests for funerals, and to provide places to entomb the ashes of the dead. The coastal areas are mostly buddhist areas, and requests to churches for funerals are rare. However, there are people who lost their houses and graves, and they don't know what to do. There are families who have not been able to perform funerals, and there are families who have had to hold funerals while that relative's body has still not been found. As churches, we would like to respond to that pain as much as possible.

The other day, a married couple contacted me, and we met. This couple lost their only son, who was 33 years old. They had not yet chosen a temple, therefore they had not held a funeral for him. They had not bought a grave. Even if they purchased a grave for him, there would be no one to look after it. They cannot keep his ashes in the temporary housing forever, so they did not know what to do. While the father was speaking calmly, the mother's eyes were filled with tears, but she never broke down. Seeing this made me feel her pain even more deeply. I introduced them to a place where they can put away his bones, and I promised that I will visit with them again.

Currently, the number of suicides is increasing in Japan. In May, the percentage of suicides increased by 20% all over Japan. This tells me that simply surviving does not give us the strength to keep living.

There are many challenges to churches. How can we better be on the side of the people who lose hope – who exist in sadness and loss? How can we prevent suicides and people dying alone? How can we walk with the people who cannot go home because of the radiation? We cannot go on without prayer. We continue to pray and ask for God's mercy, wisdom, and power, to walk on the side of the powerless people.

Please Don't Forget

In a meeting I attended, a message was introduced by a victim in Ishinomaki. "What are we most afraid of? Being forgotten." Also, when I visited a shelter, a director there said, "please don't forget us." Those words are heavy, and engraved on my heart.

I would like to deliver the message to you from the disaster area, "please don't forget". At the same time, I would like to apologize. When disasters happened in China, Indonesia, and Haiti, I gave offerings through the BWAid. However, I had forgotten those people who are still going through difficulties. I am sorry. When I spoke to a minister friend of mine, he said, "We forget. Let us be forgiven by our Lord for that. We sometimes forget. However, let us not forget. Let us remember."

From this point on, the stricken areas and Japan will become more and more chaotic. We must live through these difficulties after the disasters for a long time. Five years from now, ten years from now, twenty years from now: Even if you sometimes forget about this, please remember us and pray together with us.

Nuclear Disaster and the Gospel of Reconciliation A Theological Study on the Disaster

Dr. Hamano Michio

Head of the Japan Baptist Convention's Research & Training Institute for Missions

Greeting

My name is Micho Hamano. I am the Head of the Japan Baptist Convention's Research & Training Institute for Missions. I am grateful for this precious time.

Content of the Speech

I would like to consider the recent disasters from a theological point of view. In particular, I would like us to think together about the nuclear disaster.

A Basis for Theological Differentiation

As was shared by Standing Executive Secretary Kato and Reverend Hanae Igata, currently, as a result of the recent major disasters, all manner of cracks formed between God and mankind, among mankind, and between God, mankind and all of creation. The Japan Baptist Convention has been supporting the stricken areas, with the motto “working toward reconciliation.” In other words, we are trying to bridge these gaps between God and mankind, among mankind, and between God, mankind and all creation, and to reconcile them to each other.

To be more specific, to reconcile God and mankind is to help people to have trust in God again. Many people think, “Why does God allow all of this suffering to befall us?” We must work toward reconciliation between God and mankind.

We must also reconnect people and have them reconcile to one another. We must work on establishing relationships in God. We continue our efforts to support the creation of a world in which people in stricken areas and those in unaffected areas can live together.

We also need to work toward reconciliation between God, mankind, and all creation. I’m referring to the nuclear disaster. Radiation that poured forth from the nuclear power plant is ruining the earth and the sea. Most importantly, the risk that children will develop cancer and leukemia within ten years is rising. The ECRR (European Committee on Radiation Risk) has released their estimates of the number of additional cancer patients over the next fifty years. According to those estimates, within a 100 kilometer radius from the nuclear power plant (where roughly 3.3 million people live), about 200,000 will fall ill (half of them within ten years). Children face 4 times the risk of adults, so by simple calculation, 160,000 children might develop cancer. At present, an important concrete aspect of working toward reconciliation is doing everything possible to put a stop to this.

However, in the interest of time, I will not discuss reconciliation between God and mankind, nor about working toward reconciliation among mankind. Today I would like to put my focus on reconciliation between God, mankind, and all creation.

Reconciliation between God, Mankind and All Creation

– Separation and Reconciliation –

What does it mean to work toward the reconciliation of God, mankind, and all creation?

Radiation released by the nuclear disaster has been tearing apart many things.

Radiation tears apart our bodies. It severs genes, causing cancer and leukemia. Currently, the Japanese government has decided that children can be exposed to up to 20 millisieverts of radiation per year. As a result, 1 in 300 children will develop cancer. This is unacceptable. To change the Japanese government’s mind we need the world’s help.

Radiation tears apart our hearts. “I spend my days in indescribable worry. With so much information flying around, what am I supposed to believe in order to live my life?” These are the words of a person who attended a lecture and consultation held in May by the Japan Baptist Convention, in a church in Fukushima.

Radiation tears apart our communities. It divides the people who evacuated from those who stayed behind.

Radiation tears apart both the rich and the poor: taking advantage of economic disparities, giving away “subsidies” in order to build nuclear power plants in rural areas.

Radiation tears the world apart. The daily stability of the people in metropolitan areas depends on burdening those in rural areas with risk. In addition, Japan has been actively trying to export nuclear reactors to Asia and the Middle East. If Japan tries to export a nuclear reactor to your country, I ask you to please say “no.”

Two Myths that Require Our Judgment

So, in working against this force that tears things apart, reconciliation is necessary. We must reconnect the things that were torn apart. Our hope lies only in the Lord of reconciliation.

Reconciliation means establishing a new relationship in our Lord. And therein judgment takes place, in order to alter distorted relationships.

Now, what requires our judgment? Two idolatries. These could be called 2 myths. One is the Myth of Safety. The other is the Myth of Necessity.

What is the Myth of Safety? It has been said that nuclear power plants are safe. However, this is a lie, and it has once again been made clear that it is a myth that people were led to believe. We should have realized this with the Three Mile Island nuclear disaster in America, and at the Chernobyl nuclear disaster in the old Soviet Union.

The Japan Baptist Convention handed out a document called “An Official Statement Seeking a Nuclear-Free, Arms-Free Society, with Deep Concern for Our Country’s Administration of Nuclear Power,” which was adopted in our annual general assembly in 2008, and we have been insisting that nuclear power plants are dangerous, even prior to this disaster. As is stated therein, nuclear power plants are extremely dangerous. When an accident occurs, the damage reaches across the globe.

Even without accidents, nuclear power plants are extremely dangerous. People who work there are exposed to radiation. Many people are developing cancer and leukemia. In Japan alone, the number of exposed laborers has exceeded 400,000. Many of these people are poor, or foreign nationals. Nuclear power plants stand upon the sacrifice of these people.

In addition, the waste material produced by nuclear power plants is dangerous. Nuclear waste is dangerous unless we keep it buried underground for 1 million years, isolating it from humans. No one can guarantee that this deadly poison will not seep out from underground at some point during that million year span. We must hand down to our children the earth that God entrusted to us without destroying it.

Another thing that requires our judgment is the Myth of Necessity. “Without nuclear power plants we won’t have enough energy.” “Nuclear power plants never release CO₂ or contribute to global warming.” “No other method of generating power could adequately substitute for nuclear power.” “This is why we need nuclear power plants.” These are lies, myths.

“Without nuclear power plants we won’t have enough energy” is a mere myth. We would have sufficient energy even if we stopped all nuclear power plants in Japan. Currently, electric power companies are putting thermal power plants and other types of power plants on hold. If those were put back into use, Japan would have an energy surplus.

“Nuclear power plants never release CO₂ or contribute to global warming” is a lie. Taking uranium mining, processing, transporting and waste management into account, a nuclear power plant itself requires massive amounts of energy, and releases vast amounts of CO₂.

In addition, nuclear power plants warm the ocean. Nuclear power plants generate massive amounts of heat, dumping 2/3rds of that into the ocean. An amount of hot water equivalent to 25% of all of the water in Japan’s rivers has been dumped into Japan’s ocean. This is raising the temperature of the sea surrounding Japan by 7 to 10 degrees Celsius. For this reason, fish and shellfish are dying. And all of this is paving a path toward global warming.

“No other method of generating power could adequately substitute for nuclear power.” This too is a lie. Solar power, geothermal power, wind power, wave power: there are many different ways to use renewable energy. These are simply underdeveloped. Therefore, saying that “nuclear power plants are necessary” is a mere myth.

– Why Promote Nuclear Power Plants? –

Sensible Europeans are already aware of the fact that nuclear power plants are not necessary, but why is the number of nuclear power plants increasing in Japan and some other countries? This is due to the pursuit of economic and military development.

Companies that make nuclear power plants gain tremendous wealth. Operating a nuclear power plant for a day results in a profit of ¥100,000,000 (one hundred million yen), and exporting nuclear reactors to other countries results in huge profits. The nuclear power plant in Fukushima was originally built by the General Electric Company of America. Japan then built more, attempting to turn a profit by selling them to Asian countries. However, “you cannot serve both God and money” (Matthew 6:24).

In addition, if we have nuclear power plants we can easily make nuclear weapons. Plutonium,

which is an ingredient of nuclear weapons, goes bad after several years. It is therefore necessary to continually create new plutonium. A factory that continually produces new plutonium: that is precisely what a nuclear power plant is. Nuclear power plants were introduced into Japan by conservative politicians, and they have always made public statements to the effect that “Japan should be free to have nuclear weapons at any time.” This would result in huge profits for the military industry. However, we must “beat [our] swords into plowshares” (Isaiah 2:4).

Our God of the Bible is not a god of glory, a god of wealth, or a god of glory who oppresses people different from himself with force. We must confess that Jesus Christ, who died on the cross, lived among the poor, and denied violence, is our savior. We must choose a theology of the Pain of God, a theology of the cross over a theology of glory.

Conclusion

I mentioned above that we need to work toward reconciliation between God, mankind, and all of creation. Specifically, I said that we should reject nuclear energy as we stand on the side of the gospel.

This is not only Japan’s problem. There are 435 nuclear power plants in the world, and some of those are built in earthquake-prone areas.

The [World Council of Churches] WCC’s International Ecumenical Peace Convocation (IEPC) was held in Jamaica, and in their official statement, with the accident at the Fukushima nuclear power plant in mind, the following words are recorded: “The nuclear catastrophe of Fukushima has proved once again that we must no longer rely on nuclear power as a source of energy.”

I would like my fellow Baptist friends as well to think about this.

In conclusion I would like to read from Deuteronomy 30:19. “I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live.”

I feel that these are God’s words spoken to us now. We must never choose economic or military development over life. I implore you to please think seriously about that in your country. Also, I ask you to pray for the protection of children’s lives in Fukushima, and I ask for your support.