

Creating Unity of Japanese, American and European Missionaries in 1975

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This testimony, written at least 30 years ago, is a candid and honest reflection on the inner challenges encountered by many of the young missionaries who went out in 1975 to nearly 100 of the world's nations. Father sent one Japanese, one American and one German missionary out to pioneer new lands together. But one aspect of that pioneering was not what they had expected. Mr. Aratani's words provide us with valuable guidance that prepares us for when, in the present time, it is our turn to confront cultural and language barriers.

We left from our three home countries believing the same Word of God, and with the desire to serve True Parents. We were full of joy and expectation and determination to save people. However, it was in reality not so easy. Our only way to communicate was to pray (in our several languages) in front of True Parents' picture. It was the way to unite directly centering on God. But the Principle states that a person's mind seeks for joy.

No matter how much we felt that we united centering on God, no one can understand what a hardship it is to do it unless he experiences it firsthand. With no way to speak, there is no way to understand another's mind, heart, knowledge, or experiences. Although the desire to unite and understand each other was strong, the irony of how difficult the situation was, seemed magnified; we faced challenges every day. At the beginning, we did not know if we should witness openly because of political tensions which were mounting. Daily life continued, yet it was far from joyful.

We found a gradual understanding of each other through conversing in English, but on the other side of this an even more difficult problem was awaiting us. It was friction caused by the differences in understanding the words that were spoken, perceiving attitudes of faith, ways of thinking, customs, and so on. Listing them would be an endless task, but as an example, we found there were differences in the most elementary activities of daily life: how to wash dishes, how to clean, and so on.

We tried to understand and accept each other as much as possible, however, it is natural that when frustrations grow, they create even more invisible barriers. Accordingly, it was also hard to plan how to work in our mission. Each of us had different ideas yet could not fully explain our reasons. (I especially found this to be the case.) Furthermore, we had not yet decided who would act as a central figure among us. It was also uncertain who should decide this! Our thoughts on everything revolved and revolved. Questioning. Complicating. Over and over. We were apt to complain over such slight things. When this happened, any kind of relationship we had succeeding in building, began to crumble. I felt so sorry for Heavenly Father.

There is nothing more miserable than experiencing impatience and disappointment in the fact that those who live for the same purpose and are working to achieve it, cannot really join forces. I earnestly asked for God's answer and guidance through prayer and fasting conditions. I felt very uneasy because Satan's power tried to invade and create a gap of heart which all of us felt when we could not unite.

It is extraordinarily difficult to unite three missionaries who have different nationalities, languages, customs, and habits. But we knew that True Father, who came to put an end to the 6,000-year history of darkness, wanted us to be proud of making unity. He wanted us to make possible something which in today's world seems quite impossible. Yet we know through the Bible that nothing is impossible to those who love God. I had such determination to fulfill the goal; I felt I could not give up.

Whenever I thought and pondered what goes on in Father's mind, I could not help but remember the speech he gave to all Japanese missionaries before our departure from Japan. It was not possible for True Father to tell us all that we would face; at that time, we would not have been able to truly understand. It is only tearful experience that crystallized our understanding. I told myself over and over that there is nothing without unity of the three centered on God, and establishing an eternal tradition which would begin and remain as God's history in our nation. It was not so easy to remain calm while trying to set up a clear direction of working in our nation. It was not so easy to control our hearts while being driven to the edge of our limits.

The relationship between the American sister and myself was the most difficult one. When I was silent, she pressed me to talk because she wanted to know what I was thinking about. If I showed a little

uneasiness toward what she said or did, she would become angry and beg to know why I was angry with her. She emphasized that the best method is to express everything openly and honestly. But this is completely against Oriental virtue.



First missionaries and early members Teruo Aratani

Later I came to realize that I should speak a little more openly about what I was feeling, but in my heart, I could not accept her method. There are some things which one cannot express in words at the moment of difficulty. I have been raised under the philosophy that it is often better to wait for some time before talking about how one feels. Countless times I was glared at by eyes full of resentment. She could not understand my point of view. As it was the case with many missionary trinities, in our case, too, there was severe conflict between the American and Japanese missionaries.

I wondered then how unity would be achieved. I knew that there was no way without love and truth, and centering upon God. Accordingly, I could not help but make effort to love and serve with patience. It was a silent world I lived in. I searched for the depth of True Father's mind. I know he faced countless times when he also tried to speak, but could not. I learned that my American sister's heart was a little unstable. Sometimes she would ask questions with honesty and sincerity, but at other times she would express anger. I could see that underneath, my American sister was actually fragile and needed love.

My American sister had visa problems and had to move to and stay in a neighboring country. I also spent almost nine months in other countries because of visa problems, but finally I was able to re-entered my mission country again. At that time, the way of unity started between my German sister and I quite naturally. We built up a solid unity by virtue of her vertical and honest character, but as a foundation, I spoke about the Principle and gave her internal guidance for two or three hours every day for nearly three months. The memory of that time remains in both our minds as one of joy and is a testimony of achieving a victory of unity. It became a foundation for the relationship between us, a relationship more like a parent and child, rather than a brother and sister. And our love for one another continues even today.

On the other hand, I felt pity toward our American sister because she could not obtain a new visa for our mission country, and work together with us. She was forced to stay in another country, therefore, she felt estranged from both of us. However, the German sister and I earnestly tried to bring unity between all of us even through praying for her and writing letters to her. After three years we could once again work together in our mission country. We had another chance to unite substantially.

I took the opportunity to talk with my American sister often, to serve her and give advice to her, but it was still hard for us to cultivate a deep relationship with each other. The relationships between my German sister and I, and my American sister and I were quite all right. Whenever I hurt my American sister's pride, I felt she had resentment toward me. Yet when I endured and continued on, she gradually came to trust me.

Behind the curtain of our daily lives, the invisible strings of God's dispensation are constantly at work. Each of us has to indemnify so many things. Our ancestors, and our personal mistakes, which have become entangled and complicated our lives immeasurably. Since I believed in God's dispensation and

His guidance, I had no recourse but to do my best, and do everything with gratitude. With a humble mind, I obediently tried to indemnify whatever was necessary. I felt I must serve her and talk to her only when my mind was full of love, and then victory over resentment would surely come.



First missionaries and early members in Togo

It was at the end of 1978 that the three of us had to move our mission to another country. Because of our government's policy toward religious activities, witnessing became more and more difficult and dangerous. All of us moved to the same new mission country in which a mission had already been established. There, I saw unity problems between the missionaries, and also learned a valuable lesson about how the problems among missionaries hurt the native members. I realized it is not so easy to eradicate the accusations and anger that the native members had seen fly between missionaries. It was also impossible to erase the words that missionaries had said to the native members and which caused them resentment. The true tradition we should inherit from True Parents is how to care for young members as they experience their spiritual rebirth. If we cannot do this, it is only their resentment and bitterness that remains eternally in the history of the mission.

When I received this inspiration, I chose to serve silently. I had the chance to meet other Japanese missionaries and could see that they felt a certain arrogance and boasted because they came from the Orient, and therefore, felt they knew Principle more deeply than Westerners. But I could not accept such an attitude. I felt that if Japanese missionaries could not express love to Western missionaries in words, they certainly would never be able to dominate them through deeds of love.

Honestly speaking, I was disappointed in Japanese brothers who could not uplift and embrace the Western missionaries. I felt we should stand in the position of parent or elder brother. Many of these Japanese missionaries were former provincial leaders in Japan, or had held other responsible positions. In their positions they guided many members, and back in Japan, I simply respected them. But when we left Japan, the story took on a different light. I feel one must overcome such strong nationalism. One cannot easily judge simply by something he has learned in the past, but rather must broaden his own world. I feel the fundamental standard of a person is his character and the firmness of his heartfelt relationship with God.

Thus even though I had many things that I wanted to teach the native members, knowing the disunity issue, I decided to go the sacrificial way by paying indemnity and being silent.

Ours was part of the path we had to walk to build unity. It was more than difficult. Yet at those most demanding times, I thought of Heavenly Father's heart and how He has been watching humanity for 6,000 years, yet has not able to reach us. Even so, He could not but put the Returning Lord through difficulty and pain, which would ultimately free humankind. I knew that my pain was nothing in comparison.