

Gedatsu Teaching 5
By Seiken Okano (Gedatsu Kongo)

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Translation by Rev. H. Taki

I have repeatedly stated that Gedatsu is highly sacred. Nothing can be achieved without practicing Gedatsu. Its truth is absolute and cannot be expressed in words. It can be understood only through self-awareness and self-realization.

(1) You should fully understand that knowledge is only necessary to know that knowledge is unnecessary. By observing the realities of our current society, you know that this is true.

(2) The advancements of modern civilization and human knowledge are beyond the imaginings of our forebears. One would have thought that these advancements would have eliminated man's worries and troubles, and that a paradise on earth would have been realized – with people enjoying their days in comfort. In fact, the opposite is true. A state of uneasiness has reached its peak today.

(3) As civilization advances with greater scientific knowledge, more people, rich and poor, suffer and agonize. Though material needs are satisfied, there is no peace of mind. Where is the luster of life, the brightness of spirituality? I cannot but lament the pitiful state of people's spirituality.

(4) The advancement of civilization is the manifestation of human desires. The accumulation of knowledge dims spiritual radiance – thereby expanding egoism and escalating desires. Knowledge gives birth to civilization, and civilization, in turn, creates additional cravings. Human desires are boundless. And because civilization has no limits, regardless to what extent it may go, desire does not help desire. Today, as knowledge increases, spiritual radiance grows dimmer. As civilization progresses, life's uncertainties only intensify.

(5) People admire only knowledge and do not seek enlightenment. Although there are people rich in spirituality, most of them are absorbed in extensive reading of foreign and domestic classics and writing about them. They spend no time seeking spiritual enlightenment. Therefore, they spend a lifetime in doubt.

*Excessive knowledge confuses people as to life's purpose.
If you seek Gedatsu, there is no need to search for knowledge.
If you make no demands and have no attachments, you can learn a lot.
If you make no demands, you will have no confusions in your mind.
If you have no attachments, you will have peace of mind.
To perceive this truth is Gedatsu.*



Gedatsu Kongo lectures at the dedication ceremony of the Matsumoto Dojo in Nagano Prefecture, Japan, on June 18, 1935. With the exception of Tokyo, this Dojo was the first church branch established in the provincial area.

Commentary on Gedatsu Teaching 5

By Rev. H. Taki

This is Gedatsu Kongo's criticism of modern civilization. Comparing modern man's intellectual wealth with his spiritual poverty, he stated that, the more civilization advances with scientific knowledge, the more people suffer and agonize. His words urge us to ponder the fundamental nature of civilization. We have to reconsider the meaning of true happiness.

Academic knowledge, intellect are limited

First, Gedatsu Kongo stated, "You should fully understand that knowledge is only necessary to know that knowledge is unnecessary." These words may shock you, because we usually believe knowledge is indispensable for man. Modern people seek higher education and compete to acquire more knowledge. But Gedatsu Kongo questioned modern man's belief in knowledge. He stated that knowledge is only necessary to understand the limit of human intelligence.

Man's quest for more convenience and comfort has resulted in the present civilization. All the developments and progress of civilization might have assured greater happiness as well. But this is not true. People are suffering even greater today. This tells us that modern man's view about happiness and civilization should be seriously reconsidered.

On this point, Gedatsu Kongo stated: "The advancement of civilization is the manifestation of human desires. The accumulation of knowledge dims spiritual radiance – thereby expanding egoism and escalating desires. Knowledge gives birth to civilization, and civilization, in turn, creates additional cravings. Human desires are boundless. As civilization progresses, life's uncertainties only intensify."

These words clearly illustrate the nature of modern civilization.

Man's future depends on cultivating his spirituality

What is the way out of this egotistical civilization then? Gedatsu Kongo responded by stating that as long as man trusts his intellect only and ignores spirituality, the future of man and this planet is hopeless. However, if man truly recognizes the significance of spirituality and lives according to his spiritual nature, he may free himself from egoism and live in harmony with the universe.

Spirituality is not cultivated by intellectual education. It is cultivated only by religious faith and practice.

Without developing his spirituality, man cannot attain true peace of mind and happiness. Together with spirituality, man's knowledge can work to realize true happiness. The future of man depends on the development of man's spirituality. Gedatsu is the path to cultivate this spirituality within us through daily practice of appreciation and gratitude.