

Mutual Understanding and Respect

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Last month, we conducted a survey among our church members. Among the responses, some people asked the following question: "Why is there so much hatred in the world caused by religious differences?" I will try to answer this question today.

There are many religions in the world. You may find many differences among their doctrines, rituals and symbols of worship. Some of them may look mutually exclusive. However, looking more deeply into them, you can see a common ground among them. Our Founder called this universal truth common to all beliefs "Gedatsu."

This ultimate universal truth has been expressed in different ways according to the historical, geographical, and cultural backgrounds of the various religions in the world.

Through the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, we learned that there are diverse traditions and cultures in the world, and that it may be hard to accept and appreciate other traditions and values. But it is quite clear that world peace won't be possible without mutual understanding and respect for other traditions and values.

We should try to pursue the path of mutual understanding and respect for others, no matter how hard it is. How can we find the path then? It is not the path to force people or tempt people with rewards. Remembering the Crusades in the Middle Ages, you can understand this clearly.

Our Founder stated, "It is not the power of thoughts or propaganda to have sincere people spiritually awaken. It is the strength of religious faith that enlightens one to the righteous path."

We should sincerely keep faith in our own religion, and at the same time try to be open to other traditions and values. World peace will be possible only through this path of mutual understanding and respect.

In the Bible, Jesus said, "Your Father in Heaven makes his sun to shine on bad and good people alike, and gives rain to those who do good and to those who do evil."

He also stated, "Why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the log in your own eye? First take the log out of your own eye, and then you will be able to see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye."

We should learn from these words of Jesus Christ. Looking up at the sky, you will see no partition there. The sky is infinite. The universe is one. It is our self-righteousness that builds up invisible walls around us. All conflicts among different races, nations, and religious traditions are caused by our self-righteousness.

Our Founder Gedatsu Kongo did not say that we should force all people to believe the God we believe. He urged us to be aware of the universal truth which is common to all traditions. This awareness will open the way to our mutual understanding and respect, and world peace. Sectarianism and dogma have nothing to do with true religion. True religious faith should be open to all the different values and traditions. This is Gedatsu.

When you show depth in your faith and try to be open to other values and

traditions, you will be liberated from sectarianism and will see the universal truth which is common to all religions. Regardless of any doctrine, ritual, and symbol of worship, your love and sincerity will inspire people who have different religions. This should be the first step toward world peace. This is the ultimate goal of our Gedatsu study.

Love and sincerity is the essence of God. All religions are unified at this point. I believe our Founder established Gedatsu because he wished to urge all people who have different religions to be free from sectarianism and dogmatism, and be aware of this universal truth.

We worship Tenjinchigi as our ultimate God. However, in fact, we pay our respects to and revere the nameless universal truth. Our Founder named this infinite universal truth Tenjinchigi. We have to understand this. Actually God has many names: God, Jehovah, Kami, Allah, Brahma, Nyorai, Universal Buddha, Tathagata, etc. People throughout the world worship this universal truth through different names and images according to their cultures and traditions.

If you deeply understand this, the only thing you should do is actual practice. Our Founder encouraged us to practice Gedatsu. Gedatsu is not hard. But, it's not easy. Your Gedatsu faith must be expressed as your love and sincerity towards all people around you. I believe this is what our Founder tried to explain to us.

This is my understanding of Gedatsu Kongo's thoughts, and my answer to the question in the Gedatsu survey.