

Center for Feminist Theology and Ministry in Japan

Number 50

March 2011

c/o Kyofu Kaikan
Shinjuku, Tokyo, Japan
home page: <http://cftmj.cocolog-nifty.com>

The 33rd regular seminar (March 8, 2008)

Reading Special Issues on 'Mother's Day' Published in Sunday School Curriculum Magazines

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Introduction

To look back on past events is to look at the present and think about the future. This paper compares how two Sunday school curriculum magazines, *Nichiyō Gakkō* or 'Sunday School' and *Kyōshi no Tomo* or 'For the Sunday School Teacher', make discourses on Mother's Day, until 1945, a year when Japan was defeated in World War II. It will then examine today's challenges on a mother.

The source for this paper's research material, *Nichiyō Gakkō*, was a monthly magazine mainly for Sunday school teachers and pastors published from its September issue in 1914 to its December issue in 1941. Its publisher, The National Sunday School Association (NSSA), which was established in 1907, was an ecumenical organization that most Sunday schools in Japan joined. It is now called the Christian Education Division of National Christian Council in Japan (NCC Education). *Kyōshi no Tomo* is a joint magazine. In 1942 it was a combination of *Nichiyō Gakkō* written by the United Church of Christ in Japan (UCC in Japan and established in 1941) and *Nichiyō Gakkō no Tomo*.

1. Silence on Mother's Day (1914[Taisho 3]-1925[Taisho 14])

Nichiyō Gakkō does not refer to Mother's Day in a special Mother's Day edition and the magazine also does not mention it at all from 1914 to 1925. Wasn't Mother's Day already known to the Japanese during this period? Why then didn't *Nichiyō Gakkō* address it? According to the pamphlet entitled 'Mother's Day Program' written around 1930 and prepared by a member of Zenkoku Hahano-kai, or 'The National Mothers' Association in Japan', Mother's Day originated on the second Sunday of May in the United States in 1913 and in that same year was also first known in

Japan (other books say it originated in 1912). We will explore in detail when and how Mother ' s Day was introduced in Japan.

Mother ' s day was created by Anna Jarvis in 1908 after she held her mother ' s memorial service in a West Virginian church. She then spread the idea across the United States trying to recognize the second Sunday of May as a day to honor one's mother. In 1912 Anna Jarvis sent Mr. Fukuda, the pastor of the Church of Christ in Japan who was traveling from the United States to Japan at the time, a telegram in which she asked him to propagate ' Mother ' s Day. ' After Pastor Fukuda returned to Japan, he asked the advice of Ms. Draper, the head of the Mothers ' department of Kyōfū-kai or ' The Japan Women ' s Christian Temperance Union ' . In 1913, Kyōfū-kai prepared a pamphlet called ' Movement on Mother ' s Day ' which was based on the information for Mother ' s Day that Anna Jarvis had sent from the United States. It was translated by Akitoshi Kawasumi, an officer of the Japanese Sunday School Association and the pamphlet was later distributed to all churches in Japan.

Akitoshi Kawasumi was a Methodist pastor who was also an officer of the NSSA since 1913 as well as a chief editor and publisher of Nichiyō Gakkō in 1915 (or 1914). Because of this distribution, the NSSA knew about Mother ' s Day from the very beginning.

It seems that Mother ' s Day spread throughout Japan after the publication in Nichiyō Gakkō. The Church of Christ in Japan, Japan ' s largest protestant denomination before World War II, to which Pastor Fukuda belonged, started under the new title of Nichiyō Gakkō no Tomo, or ' The Sunday School Association ' and continued writing the magazine for Sunday school curriculum in Japan in April of 1921. Its next and May issue propagated Mother ' s Day further and, in addition to that, stated that the church ought to celebrate Flowers Day/Children ' s Day, an event that started on the second Sunday of June in American Sunday schools in the middle of the 19th century.

Kenji Uesawa was a layperson of the Church of Christ in Japan, a children ' s writer, an educator, and the editor of Kodomo no Tomo or the ' Children ' s Association ' , a magazine of the Fujin no Tomo-sha or the ' Women's Association ' . When Nichiyō Gakkō first dealt with Mother ' s Day in 1926, its chief editor, Kenji Uezawa, mentioned in the issue that " On this day various ceremonies and festivities are held in the home, church, Sunday school, and school. " It is through this quote that we found how Mother ' s Day was spreading throughout Japan at the time. The issue also reported that Naikoku Katei-kai or the ' National Mothers Association ' sold 40 thousand copies of the Mother' s Day booklet and tract and in 1925 sold 60 thousand copies, a considerable number.

(Side note: The president of Naikoku Katei-kai was F. G. Wilson, the wife of Alexander Wilson who was a Methodist Episcopal Church missionary. She contributed in propagating Mother ' s Day by keeping Aoyama Gakuin ' s missionary residence. Around 1934, Haha no Kai or the ' Mothers Association ' had about 7,000 members.)

Considering the circumstances mentioned above, it seems that celebrating Mother ' s Day spread mainly in Sunday schools and among Christians from 1914 to 1925, while Nichiyō Gakkō remained silent about Mother ' s Day during that term.

Here we have a question: Why did Nichiyō Gakkō keep silent during that term even though they already knew about Mother ' s Day? Mother ' s Day must have been a valuable event for the NSSA that emphasized the necessity to make the connection between Sunday school and family. Attracting further interest is that the recommendation for Fushi Shūkan or ' Father-Child Week ' appeared twice in Nichiyō Gakkō in 1918, a year when Kawasumi was its chief editor and publisher.

According to the February issue of Nichiyō Gakkō, Fushi Shūkan, or the so-called ' Father-Child Week ' , was a special week that the YMCA and the churches promoted in the United States for the purpose of creating an opportunity to create a deep bond between a father and his children.

Introducing the American Father-Child Week, Nichiyō Gakkō proposed that Sunday schools make plans in cooperation with the YMCA to encourage a close connection between father and child and to encourage fathers who were drafted in the war to come home. It was difficult for a father and child to have a time together in Japan during these times, even for those fathers who were not soldiers. For example, children would go to school after their father went to work in the morning and children went to bed before their fathers would come home.

The April issue asked its readers to advocate Family Day on May 4th and 5th each year during Tango no Sekku or ' Children ' s Day ' making that time Father-Child Week (May 5th, in 1918 was a Sunday). The Family Day program was held in Tokyo. A ball game, a concert and a dinner were held at the YMCA in Tokyo on May 4th and a special worship service was held in each of the churches on May 5th. Even so, to hold the Father-child Week festival just before Mother ' s Day makes me suspect that fathers were jealous of mothers either without meaning to be and the festival can be seen as an intentional form of sexual harassment.

2 Praising "Mother's Love" (1926[Taisho15]-1938[Showa13])

In 1926, Nichiyō Gakkō broke the silence and addressed Mother's day in its May issue. The title page shows " Madonna del Granduca " , a picture of Madonna with Child by Raffaello Santi, and a poem by Yakichi Sasakura. Continued on the following page is an essay written by Kenji Uesawa followed by ' Red Carnation, ' a sermon discourse for children written by Tenma Nobechi.

These three works share the point of view that a ' Mother ' s Love ' is ' God ' s Love. ' Yakichi Sasakura, who worked for a long time as a pastor in the Yokohama Kaigan Church, performed a poem expressing how a mother ' s love resembles a father ' s after he mentioned both the love and the affection of a mother. Kenji Uesawa declares that " The one who seeks divine love on earth finds

a connecting bridge to the love of mother, which really is the purest, deepest, and most self-sacrificing form of love in this world. ” He saw Mother ’ s Day as an opportunity to remember, thank and adore mothers having an overflowing supply of love.

Furthermore, in a children ’ s sermon prepared by Tenma Nobechi, who was a children ’ s mission worker and the editor-in-chief of Kodomo no Tomo and Fujin no Tomo-sha, ended his service by saying that God loves all of them as a mother loves her child. He quoted Isaiah 66:13, “ As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you. ” He then introduced the story of Maruko, a young boy who goes in search of his mother.

Thus, Nichiyō Gakkō promoted Mother's Day as a combination of God's love and a mother's infinite self-sacrifice and love for her children. Nichiyō Gakkō continued to write about Mother's Day for 12 years until they put an abrupt ending to it in 1939. Their promotion of it had a variety of forms which included: a frontispiece, a foreword, a hymn, a bible study, an essay, a sermon for children and directions for telling it, a teaching plan, an action report and more. Most of the leaders in its publication were men representing each of the Christian denominations in Japan. The following section focuses on each of the points concerning Mother ’ s Day that they mentioned.

Sermon on Mother's Day, "A Prodigal Son's Mother," 1927, by Hatanoshin Yamaga

The parable of the lost prodigal son in Luke 15:11-32 tells us about the love of a mother who was very worried about her son ’ s safety. In fact, she was so worried that she died, though she didn ’ t even appear in the parable. After he talks about the mother ’ s love, Yamaga mentions that “ the profligate son lost his stubbornness because of her death. He wailed, being choked with sorrow before her tomb, ” and the reason why he was a genuine human being was because “ he was under the great influence of his dead mother. ”

Yamaga was not only a Methodist pastor but also well-known as a writer. His works are highly reliable as historical material because they are based on his exact recall and detailed research.

The Foreword: “Respect for Motherhood,” 1928, by Kazuo Kitoku

Kitoku mentions that though he welcomes women who pursue careers in Japanese society, he thinks that women should not fight for a labor movement within a social system filled with male chauvinism. Kitoku points out special characteristics unique to women, as follows: “ A woman might be weak. A wife, however, is strong, and a mother is stronger still. Being animated and refined by a devout spirit, a mother ’ s love burns and dissolves all things and then inspires the substance of them. It is love that one does not stint for another. This love seems to show the superiority of women. ”

Kazuo Kitoku was a Methodist pastor and a leader in religious education. He also served as a professor in the School of Theology at Kanseigakuin University.

“On Cultured Motherhood,” 1930, by Tooru Ebisawa

Ebisawa exclaims, “ Oh, maternity, maternity! We want to shout that to have a pure heart in God, maternity is to give birth and raise – something which no one but that person can experience...A mother is the best shepherd. Maternity is the best substitute for God who loves every child ’ s spirit and flesh. ” He states that a mother needs to acquire knowledge and have experience on culture. He says, for example, that a mother should have the knowledge of hygiene, psychology, housekeeping and more so as not to shame maternity. He also points out that in love and faith, both of which are as valuable as anything, they should take St. Augustine ’ s mother, Monica, as an example. “ We should recognize a wise mother ’ s principles that are both new and meaningful in our modern time infested with Moga and Flapper. ”

Ebisawa was a congregational pastor and worked as the general secretary for the NCC for twenty years from the prewar to the postwar period. He wrote many books about religious education. The reference book for the above explanations can be found in “ Nihon Kirisutokyo Rekishi Daijiten ” or ‘ The Encyclopedia of Japanese Christian History ’ .

“A Variety of Mothers,” 1931, Kenji Uesawa

A Variety of Mothers is a collection of short stories about a true love close to God and a genuine love that, being unselfish, the mother, as a main character, has. One example is the story of a mother who realizes that she needs to have a relationship with her child not through communicating verbally with the child, but by listening to her child ’ s cry and observing its appearance. Another is the story of a mother who lost her hearing because she contracted typhoid fever, which was the result of devotedly nursing her daughter who contracted it first. It is the mother who becomes one with her daughter in body and mind, though it is difficult to be one in body and in mind when you are in fact different beings. The third is the story of a mother who escaped from the rioters ’ violent assault, holding her child close even as bullets hit her arms. One who rejoices that one ’ s child was saved at the cost of their own wounds is truly the mother of that child for the sake of that child. The following is the story of a mother who crosses the Alps, holding her child in her arms. It is the child ’ s mother who protects her child, risking her own life. Another is the story of a mother who gives the ultimate sacrifice. It is the child ’ s mother who dies a martyr, resigning herself to the cause of her child. There are these stories and more.

The Platform: “A Mother Who Expresses God,” May of 1936, by Yoshiki Takasaki

A mother who feels fully responsible for her child does not mind that a worry her child has is also hers and she does not forget to bear her cross for her child, because she loves her child. And the more she feels responsible for her child, the more she seeks God; therefore, there cannot be maternity without her prayers. Maternity has a good influence on her child.

Takasaki gives many examples of different mothers. He tells of his mother who apologized to him for his own failures by having her cheek slapped, saying “ Your failures are my fault. ” He talks of the

mother of his friend who had a great influence on her children in spite of her having been sick in bed for many years. He describes a mother from the same town as him whose child caught a venereal disease because she indulged her child too much, an example of maternity that gives the ultimate physical sacrifice. Takasaki says that “ maternity is something that should strive to the highest level of physiological maternity and through this a mother is like a messenger in Christ. ”

(Yoshiki Takasaki was a UCC of Japan pastor, a Sunday school director and a leader of religious education.)

Mother ' s Day has been an established event in Sunday schools that is celebrated on the second Sunday of May since these Christian leaders supported it in their discourses and writings. It was then extended to the public actively. In Tokyo, Zenkoku Hahano- kai, or the ‘ National Mothers ’ Association ’ , took the lead in the Mother ' s Day March in Ginza in 1930 and in the ‘ Joint Mother ' s Day Conference ’ with marches in the streets of the Tokyo Metropolitan Hibiya Public Hall in 1932 and 1934. These events were mainly supported by Sunday schools, Christian schools and kindergartens. At that time a march would be staged during Sunday school joint meetings. In Hakodate, the joint worship service of Sunday schools was held in Iai Women ' s School every year from 1935 to at least 1941.

It is a noteworthy fact that the goal of the Conference of Mother ' s Day in Hibiya Park in 1932 was to try to guide our thoughts in the right direction by means of thoroughly diffusing the spirit of praise for maternity and the spirit of gratitude for maternity. Its participants marched to the Imperial Palace after it was closed. The Mother ' s Day essay in 1934 that can be found in a pamphlet for the public was written without expressing Christian faith. Instead it promoted Chū - Kō - Jin- Gi no Oshie or 'The Teachings of Loyalty, Filial Piety, Humanity, and Justice'.

Thus, ‘ Praise for Maternity ’ in Sunday school was easily connected with the national polity of the Emperor system in Japan. It is very interesting that 1933 ' s May issue of Nichiyō Gakkō responded with praise, proud that “ a thing which Japanese Christian churches had appealed for many years resounded throughout our Japanese nation ” when ‘ All Kinds of Women ' s Groups in Tokyo ’ established the Empress ' birthday as Chikyū-setu or 'The Everlasting Time of Earth'.

1934 ' s platform “ Both the paternity and maternity of Jesus ” by Tamaki Uemura is unique among a series of writings of ‘ Mother = Praise for Maternity ’ with a seemingly one-sided view. Uemura asserts that both men and women should have maternity if they obey Christ after she mentioned masculine bravery and a mother ' s gentleness in Christ, both of which are “ different but in complete harmony. ” And she insists that both men and women can be strong and gentle ” and “ can possess both maternity and paternity thoroughly and must do so. ” Her remarks sound modern for this era.

3 'Discipline' rather than 'Love': 1939-1945

When the Second Sino-Japanese war broke out in 1937, Nichiyō Gakkō supported the war and used the education provided in Sunday schools as a way to infiltrate and plant ideas into the students' minds. Nichiyō Gakkō serialized the commentary on the textbooks of ...gatsu no Shōgakkō or a certain issue in the magazine entitled 'Elementary School' from the April issue in 1939 and ...gatsu no Shōgakkō Shūshin Kyōzai or a certain issue in the 'Moral Training Textbook in an Elementary School' from the April issue released in 1940 and emphasized cooperating with school education.

The Nichiyō Gakkō May issue in 1940 printed three short essays titled "A Repentance of 'Womanly Education' in Sunday schools". These essays say that Sunday school teachers should have 'Evangelical Dynamism,' and should 'scold the school children with loving severity' and show them how to master a way to God through their practice. Discipline prior to this in the Sunday school educational system was considered to be too 'womanly'. They claimed, for example, that it was too centered on school children's interests, and made it so that a child became meek, or a so-called 'good girl/boy' and reinforced negative humanitarianism. Nichiyō Gakkō showed that we have areas in which to develop regarding the disciplining of the children, and by giving up 'babying,' for example, we should develop their originality greatly and teach them how to accept themselves.

This direction conforms to the 'All Japanese-Mobilized National Spirit and School Education,' a manual prepared by the Science and Culture Ministry of Education in January, 1938. According to the guide, school should be regarded as an occasion to reinforce the national polity ideology in a child's education or in other words should be seen as an occasion to understand the Japanese subject by studying a series of national events. Thus Sunday school changes from a supporting entity that teaches the gospel to an occasion to discipline children. No article on Mother's Day appeared in the May issue in 1939. When the article on Mother's Day reappeared in 1940, a mother's love was described as self-sacrificing love, but nothing connected this love with God's Love.

We can say that a 1940's sermon discourse for school children Oya-gokoro or 'A Parent's Undying Love for their Child' are essays without Christian faith and 1941's Bosei ni Kagakusei wo or 'Adopting Science into Maternity', and Haha toshite Kodomo yori Nozomu koto or 'What a Mother Hopes for her Child' concentrate on how we can train the mind and body of our children as we bring them up. These essays appeared because a mother who brings up a strong soldier rather than one who brings up her child with tender loving care was demanded at that time.

The UCC of Japan was organized in 1941; accordingly, Nichiyō Gakkō was combined with Nichiyō Gakkō no Tomo. The magazine Kyōshi no Tomo was published from January in 1942, while the article of 'Mother's Day' disappeared again.

Fubeno Kansa or 'Thanks to Father and Mother', is a sermon example in an elementary course in Kyōshi no Tomo in May of 1942 that states that we need new resources for Mother's Day: "You must preach 'father' as well as 'mother.' The biblical words, such as the Ten Commandments, say to honor your father and your mother." These teachings from ancient times tell us to do so."

After using the sixth grade moral training textbook to tell the story of Masashige Kusunoki and his mother and the story of a Japanese soldier who was just about to die on the battle front, the sermon finishes by quoting Ephesians 6:1: "Be more dutiful to your father and mother."

In 1944, the Mother's Day worship service was held on Sunday, March 6th, a day close to the Empress's birthday or Chikyū-setu. The sermon on that day was 'The Endurance of Mother.' The self-sacrificing love of mothers has been emphasized for a long time, but does "self-sacrificing love" mean that a mother should be ready to give up her child's life for the Emperor? In 1945, both the February and March issues of Kyōshi no Tomo were published in July and they could not publish the April through August issues until Japan was defeated in World War II.

Conclusion:

The Beginning of the Postwar Years and Today's Challenges

In 1946, a year after Japan was defeated in World War II, the celebration of Mother's Day on the second Sunday of May was reinstated. The following year, the 1947 foreword in the April issue of Kyōshi no Tomo talks about Mother's Day. This was the first time it was explained in detail in the postwar period. The foreword, titled "Have a Mother's Heart," talks about many mothers. It, for example, introduces a mother who was as equally grieved as her child when she heard her crying out and suffering because of the severe pain from an operation. The foreword also tells of the mother who died in childbirth because she rejected abortion as an option and died in order to protect her unborn baby's life. The foreword goes on to say that: "'Japan was defeated in the war...but new life grows even during these times and these are lives which are protected in a mother's heart.' Poet Fanny Crosby (Frances Jane Crosby), losing his eyesight, exclaimed that 'The face of mamma is God's love. This really is salvation.' It is a grieving heart that runs in the blood of a mother. This saves Japan."

Thus praise for a mother's love in connection with God's love began again with a special emphasis on self-sacrificing love. I will save the examination of how Mother's Day has changed in the postwar years for another paper. But here what I want to point out is that this image of a mother is still living sixty years after the war, an image that a mother loves her child in a pure, deep and self-sacrificing way.

Indeed, as we examined it in section 2, a lot of people today still have a basic idea of 'maternity,' which is the same idea that those Christian leaders had in the 1920s and 1930s, but this image is a

result of those times. We should realize that a lot of women are suffering from the idea of 'maternity,' an idea that a mother must love her child in such a binding way. These women cannot love like that and there are a lot of women suffering from the fact that their mothers did not love them like this when they were children.

Praise for a mother's love brings mothers suppression, because it is out of touch with the reality of mother. In turn, when a mother's love is connected with God's love, it becomes even more unrealistic. Moreover, the suppression becomes stronger still when it is connected with a religious belief. In order to destroy this system of suppression, what should we do? Today NCC-Japan promotes the support program designed to meet the needs of mothers without being fictitious, but instead addresses having 'impure, shallow-minded, and selfish love.' I am one of those mothers and it is the challenge that now confronts me as the General Secretary of NCC-Japan Education. I am now taking part in the history of NSSA, who issued the magazine *Nichiyō Gakkō* without myself being free from the fiction of a 'mother's love.'