

From the editor

For this issue let us share Pastor Peter's message, "Pleroma."

Pleroma

Peter

Place yourself in the stillness, in the eternal quietness.
Praise the Holy One, for the Eternity
is being manifested and is embracing you.
Life and death, light and darkness,
all things are consummated in the Holy One.
Place yourself in the transcendental stillness,
in the very presence of our Lord Jesus Christ.

♪ *Confitemini Domino*
quoniam bonus ♪

O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good.

(Psalm 136:1)

Listen to the mysterious tune sounding and resounding in the universe.

My friends, this is the time of Cosmic Worship. It is no longer we the visible ones alone who are worshipping the Lord. The invisible ones who went to the other side are also participating in the heavenly worship.

In the month of August, Japanese people celebrate the

rite of *Obon*, visiting their ancestors' tombs and paying homage to the deceased spirits. As usual, Christian churches condemn the rite as idle worship and evil practice.

Do you know that Catholic Church holds a similar rite? It is All Saints' Day in November 1. The night before is Halloween, which is derived from the "Hollow Eve" in the Middle Ages in the Celtic region. Before Christianity swept the area, they had their native religion to worship the deceased spirits. As Christianity dominated, ancestor worship was abolished. However, people must have wanted to pay homage to the dead spirits once a year, and All Saints' Day was created.

You may dismiss the Japanese rite of *Obon* and the Catholic rite of All Saints' Day as ridiculous superstitions. In fact, some Protestant churches condemn Halloween and forbid children to participate it.

I see it in an entirely different light. To me who believe in the redeeming love of Christ, all these practices are nothing but to appeal our souls' sincere desire to restore Cosmic Worship.

Deceased souls retain their identity even after released from physical bodies. Paul says, "There are celestial bodies and there are terrestrial bodies; but the glory of the celestial is one and the glory of the terrestrial is another." (1 Corinthians 15:40) Spiritual entities continue from the terrestrial dimension to the celestial dimension. Life is in one great continuum.

At the Otsu Retreat in August 2008, I declared the coming of a new era: "Remember this day, August 28, 2008. From this day on, we are to witness the cosmic worship that heaven and earth are becoming one and worshipping the Lord Jesus Christ together."

Suddenly in June of this year, its reality hit us all. It was four years after the first announcement at Otsu. It coincided with the cosmic tune of *Confitemini Domino*. The first group of *Confitemini Domino* versions 1, 2, 3 came in 2004. The second group versions 4, 5, 6 came in 2008. And four years later in 2012, the third group versions 7, 8, 9 and 10 arrived.

I do not know what all these “four-year” intervals mean. However, undoubtedly we are now experiencing the reality of cosmic worship. The dispensation of apocalyptic worship is being unfolded.

For centuries Christian churches have held the doctrine of eternal insecurity for the deceased souls who died without believing in the Lord Jesus. They spend eternity in hell. That’s the punishment for their unbelief.

Granted that there are a number of scriptures which indicate eternal insecurity, I used to have a hard time to comprehend God’s purpose for man and the whole creation. When the curtain was rolled up for the eschatological stage by the *Revelation Praise*, however, I was stunned to recognize nothing but the light and love of the Redeemer. The book of the Revelation shows the most striking contrast between the faithful believers and the non-believers. And yet I saw that the eschatological dispensation is the climax of the redemption, the full realization of Christ’s love for the entire creation. When I realized the full scope of Christ’s redemption, I was convinced of God’s unlimited love.

That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him. (Ephesians 1:10 KJV)

This is *Magna Carta* of the Bible. It is the declaration of

all-inclusive power of Christ's redemption. All scriptures indicating God's merciless judgment against sinful people are the means and instruments to help us see the absolute redemption. All things, including our sins, work together for good.

You may have heard of Universalism, which is a kind of humanism. Every one, righteous or sinful, Muslim or Buddhist, will be saved. But I'm not advocating it. As far as I am concerned, Universalism is cheap humanism, for it is without Christ's redemption. Universalism deliberately ignores the blood of Jesus, which is the core of our salvation.

The time of the grand fulfillment of the redemption is rapidly approaching.

Besides this you know what hour it is, how it is full time now for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we first believed.

(Romans 13:11 RSV)

Christ's salvation will occupy the whole universe in short time.

Knowing it, we worship the Lord together with the heavenly people. We invite the deceased souls to the worship, and together with them rejoice in the Lord God.

Salvation is the Lord's mercy all the way. It has nothing to do with man's work. Then, you may question, why do we have to have faith while living? What kind of merit do we have by believing in Christ? Can we live licentiously here on the earth if we are saved in heaven anyway?

O, foolish! How can you ignore Christ's love and light while experiencing it?

I know that God's mercy extends to those who did not confess Christ's Lordship while on the earth, but it is also

true that they missed the best opportunity to live great life by knowing the Lord while on the earth. They could have had wonderful life full of light and love here on this side of the world. Without Christ, the Bible dares to say, you are dead. Still you have God's mercy on the other side of the world. But what a precious time you would miss here!

Christ's redemption is all-inclusive both in the visible and invisible worlds. Once you are awakened to Christ's salvation, you have eternal life and it is manifested in your life.

Cosmic worship, which we are proclaiming now, is to worship the Lord with the visible and the invisible together. Deceased souls are not vanished. They are waiting for the cosmic worship.

Be still, and see Christ's redemption in its mystery. I have just mentioned Ephesians 1:10 as Magna Carta of the Bible. The verse contains several key words. The most important word is "gather together" ανακεφαλαιόω, which I have elaborated a number of times. Today, let us focus on another word, πληρωμα "*Pleroma*" (play'-ro-mah), which means fulness. Paul mentions "fulness of times."

Greek has a few words to denote time: mainly two words, *chronos* and *kairos*. *Chronos* is spatial time, which runs equally for everyone. The English word, chronology, is derived from it. *Kairos* is meaningful time, which differs according to individuals.

The *time* is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel. (Mark 1:15)

Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, (Act 3:19)

These are only few examples of *kairos* used in the New Testament. When you come to know God, time becomes meaningful. Down in the human history, a majority of people had contact with God without knowing the name of Jesus. And it became the highlight of their life.

Saigyō, a Japanese monk in the Middle Ages, expressed his moving moment when he visited Ise Shrine:

Although I do not know who You are,
I tremble with Your Holiness.
I am deeply moved and tears are rolling down.

I believe that everyone has the same sensibility that detects the divinity (Christ) deep in his heart. It is the moment of *kairos*. And all these *kairos* are summed up in the redeeming act of Christ.

It is the “dispensation of the fulness of times.” In Christ, people down in the history find the true identity of their experiences of the Holy One.

In cosmic worship, we come before the presence of the Lord God, and we have communion also with the deceased souls. We are called from the visible world and the invisible world to worship and praise the Lord, thus fulfilling God’s will to unite all things in Christ.

We are now in God’s *Pleroma*. All things are consummated in God’s *Pleroma*.

J. B. Phillips paraphrases it in his original translation:

For God had allowed us to know the secret of his plan, and it is this: he purposes in his sovereign will that all human history shall be consummated in Christ, that everything that exists in Heaven or earth shall find its perfection and fulfillment in him. (Ephesians 1:9-10)

He must have seen the deep aspect of the redemption, the mystery of *Pleroma*.

For me, the image provoked by *Pleroma* is the *White Dove*.

On the night of December 3, 1987, Mitsuko received the visitation of the Holy Spirit in Fort Lee, New Jersey. A brilliant white dove, whose whiteness could never be described in human language, appeared out of the pitch darkness of the universe, and flew over toward her. As soon as touching her being, it dispersed, and another dove flew over. It repeated endlessly, and Mitsuko heard the most beautiful voice. The music-like sound was quietly floating in the darkness. She could not discern from which corner it was coming, but knew it radiated the life-quickenning power.

Receive the eternal life.

Receive the eternal life.

Receive the eternal life.

Later, she reflected the experience in her book, *The White Dove*:

This happened for two consecutive nights. Although this soundless universe contained nothing except the stars and the dove of the white light, it felt strangely being connected to a mysterious world where there would be no fears or anxieties. This inexplicable universe seemed to have no flow of time either, and yet be certainly connected to something. It was like part of a new music, though there was no sound.

(The White Dove, Volume I p. 39)

The light in the shape of a dove came flying over to

me and dispersed in the serenity. There was no sound, but the light resounded. No passage of time, but I perceived the eternity. I call it the “world where nothing and everything coexist,” for it is too mysterious to describe in any other way. It is sufficient, yet nothing. It is nothing, yet flows without ceasing. It is a moment, yet everlasting. The world given and manifested by God has everything but nothing, and yet everything exists there. It is the world of life. (The White Dove, Volume II p. 18)

You may dismiss her *Pleroma* as having nothing to do with your life, saying it was just Mitsuko’s strange experience.

No, that’s not so. Imagine and place yourself in the same spot, and you will understand the mystery of the universe and the very meaning of life. The *White Dove*, I sincerely believe, is the very foundation of your life. The *White Dove* holds the key of life and death.

Therefore, I earnestly urge you to come to the ultimate place, *Pleroma*, and receive life-renewing power of the Holy Spirit. Turn your eyes from the terrestrial to the celestial, where all things are gathered together in Christ. Joy and sorrow, hope and anxiety, health and sickness, life and death . . . all entities are in harmony and quietly singing the Hymn of the Universe for the Lord God.

♪ Confetimini Domino
quoniam bonus ♪

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Kohitsuji no Mure Christian Church