APBF Development Consultation
3. Christian development and a rights-based approach
Focus group C. The role of advocacy in the church and development/relief

Nuclear power generating facilities considered as a human rights-related issue

Michio Hamano
Director, Research and Training Institute for Missions

1. A summary of the accident at the nuclear power-generating facility and the resultant damage

   First, an explanation of accidents related to nuclear power generation and the resultant damage. On March 11\textsuperscript{th}, 2011, at the time of the Great East Japan Earthquake and the subsequent tsunami, all reactors at Tokyo Electric Power Company’s Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant that were in operation at the time – reactors 1 through 3 – experienced meltdowns. Hydrogen explosions occurred at reactors 1 and 3, dispersing radioactive material over a wide radius. Huge amounts of radioactive material also spewed from reactor 2, and even now there exists the risk of it reaching critical condition again. The amount of cesium released is equivalent to 168 of the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima. Reactor 4 was also damaged beyond repair, and in the event that an aftershock, or anything else, causes the pool holding spent nuclear fuel rods to topple over, everyone within a 250 km radius, which includes Tokyo, will have to evacuate.

   As a result, a 20 km radius would be rendered uninhabitable, forcing 120,000 people to evacuate, and an additional 60,000 would choose to do so. It is said that children are 3 or 4 times more impacted by radiation than adults, and even now 360,000 children are living in Fukushima Prefecture. Seventy-five percent of the areas in which those children are living should, according to Japanese law, be illegal to enter based on their levels of radiation. And cesium has been detected in the urine of 7\% of these children. In other words, they are experiencing internal exposure, which can lead to cancer and leukemia.

   However, many people still stay there as a result of the Japanese government’s refusal to recognize the people’s right to relocation-related compensation. And though 1 millisievert per year constitutes the allowed limit, Fukushima Medical University now asserts that up to 100 millisieverts per year is safe, claiming also that internal exposure is of no concern; they are not protecting the health of Fukushima’s citizens.

   As a result of all of this, including indirectly related deaths – people who died in the adverse environments of evacuation shelters, for example – it has been reported that at present 573 people have died as a result of the nuclear accident.
That concludes my summary of the nuclear power plant accident and the resultant damage.

Going into further detail, after the accident all other nuclear power facilities in Japan were, for a time, shut down in order to perform routine inspections. And as was known from previous calculations, even with all nuclear power plants switched off, Japan had sufficient electricity. However, before performing inspections to determine whether it was susceptible to the same dangers that caused the Fukushima nuclear accident, Ōi Nuclear Power Plant in Fukui Prefecture was restarted in July of 2012. This in spite of the fact that ordinary citizens continue to hold the largest protest demonstrations since WW2 in front of the Prime Minister’s official residence. The reason is simple: money. Electrical power companies borrow vast sums of money from the banks, which they then use on nuclear power generation, so if nuclear power-generating operations stop, they will go bankrupt.

In addition, Japan is attempting to export nuclear reactors overseas. Active pursuit of exports was put on hold after the Fukushima nuclear accident, but now once again they are trying to export them to Vietnam, Jordan, India, and Turkey. Selling nuclear reactors is profitable. And if a country has a nuclear reactor, they are then able to make nuclear weapons. In other words, there are people who will not try to stop nuclear power plants, no matter how much danger they create for the lives of children, and for all people, and their reasons are money and military affairs. Electrical power companies say that it is to stop global warming, but it is known that nuclear power plants only make global warming worse.

2. Nuclear power generation considered as a human rights issue

In this presentation I would like to examine the issue of nuclear power plants as one of human rights, and examine what the Church should express regarding it.

Why is nuclear power a human-rights issue that the Church should engage? Because nuclear power generation is dependent upon a “system of sacrifice.” In other words, the technology of nuclear power generation is unable to exist without sacrificing someone’s human rights.

As stated above, once a nuclear accident occurs, it causes the sacrifices of a great many people. This nuclear power plant in Fukushima generated electricity for people living in Tokyo and other large cities; the people of Fukushima did not use it at all. People living in Tokyo forced this dangerous facility onto people in a rural area in order to ensure the stability of their own lifestyles. An unjust economic disparity has long existed between larger cities and rural areas, and nuclear power plants have been established through the provision of subsidies to the local governments of those rural areas. This unfair arrangement also has legal foundations; nuclear power plants cannot be built in densely populated areas.

But to be sure, what I want you to understand today is that even when accidents do not occur, nuclear power plants are established on the sacrifices of the people. The technology of nuclear power
generation is still at a level that requires workers to be exposed to radiation. In Japan alone, over 400,000 workers, in exchange for payment, have been exposed to radiation. There are radiation-exposed workers among the members of churches affiliated with the Japan Baptist Convention as well, and there are church members who are currently supporting a court case involving attempts to claim due payment in light of failure to pay Workers’ Compensation.

In addition, people are exposed to radiation during the mining of uranium (the necessary fuel), the transport of nuclear fuel, and in areas where spent nuclear waste is stored. Without massive numbers of people being exposed to radiation, the technology of nuclear power generation cannot be maintained. In places where people live, which are not remote, sealed-off laboratories, this type of technology should not be put into operation.

The same is also true regarding the issue of exporting nuclear reactors. The thought process goes, “it’s fine as long as those being exposed to radiation are not Japanese. As long as we make a profit, it’s fine to expose the people of nations with economies smaller than that of Japan to radiation.” So the exporting of nuclear reactors is also a system of sacrifice, founded on a structure of human-rights suppression.

3. The God of the Bible criticizing sacrificial systems

It is acceptable for the economically weak minority to be sacrificed for the sake of the stable lifestyles of the majority. The Bible does not say so. The peace spoken of in the Bible, that is shalom, refers to “a state of perfection.” Peace for all people. Peace established upon the sacrifice of even one person is not the peace sought by the Church, but is rather a situation toward which the Church should raise a critical voice.

In the gospels as well, the God of the Bible will even leave the ninety-nine sheep to go after just one. If all one-hundred of the sheep do not have peace, it is not the peace of Christ spoken of in the Bible. And in fact Jesus did, in like manner, live together with people who were being sacrificed for the stability of the many – women, foreign workers, the unjustly despised sick, etc. – in effect saying continually to those in positions of authority that theirs was not true peace, that no one needed to be sacrificed, and was consequently nailed to a cross. The son of God, who preached that sacrifices were unnecessary, became a sacrifice himself.

It is written in Paul’s Epistle to the Romans 6:10 that “The death he died, he died to sin once for all.” Jesus Christ, for the sake of humanity, became the sacrifice. And this sacrifice is sufficient. Seeking a sacrifice for the people beyond it only desecrates the cross of Christ.

Therefore it is necessary, in my opinion, for the Christian Church to stand against nuclear power plants.
4. The action being taken by the Japan Baptist Convention’s Great East Japan Disaster Relief Committee

We at the Japan Baptist Convention have always worked in support of people who have been sacrificed in this way, whose human rights have been disparaged, and we have been doing this through our disaster relief work as well.

In response to the Great Disasters, the Japan Baptist Convention created the Great East Japan Disaster Relief Committee, of which I am a member. And I am here today to offer our gratitude to all of you for your donations, on which our activities depend.

To be specific regarding what we have done, basically we have made it our job to help people who need to evacuate to do so, to help those who stay in affected areas to reduce their radiation exposure as much as possible, and to provide the information necessary for deciding whether or not to evacuate.

After the disasters, this work began with, among other things, the accepting of evacuees into the Convention office. Then we delivered Geiger counters and iodine to churches. Then we had experts come to Fukushima, and we held seminars, etc. We also made attempts at decontamination. At the same time, we released declarations criticizing the government for not trying to protect the health of the people of Fukushima, and in protest against the restarting of Ōi Nuclear Power Plant, etc.

Looking ahead, it will likely be necessary for us to point out the responsibility of electrical power companies and the government in support of people’s attempts to claim compensation.

Our present activities include the following:

1. Measuring radiation levels of food, etc.
2. Support for medical screenings
3. The 2-Week Project: In the case of cesium, and with, for example, a child 5 years old or younger, in 2 weeks away from Fukushima 50% can be discharged from their bodies. In addition, children are especially vulnerable to the considerable stress of being restricted from going outside for any significant length of time. We are therefore undertaking this project to allow them to be away from Fukushima, if only for two weeks.
4. The Disaster Preparedness Guide, and the Evacuation Plan: Caution is still necessary concerning the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant. In light of this, we are making a Disaster Preparedness Guide, addressing what types of preparedness are necessary for churches and church members in their homes. In addition, we are writing an Evacuation Plan for use in the case of unexpected emergencies.

5. The Church’s support of victims of human rights violations stemming from the nuclear power plant accident
In December of last year the East Japan Committee agreed upon a statement that serves as the ideal behind all of these activities. That is: “Speaking legally, and medically, any location with 0.6 microsieverts of radiation per hour should be designated as a security-controlled radiation area, and everyone aside from authorized personnel should be forbidden from entering. And this is in fact the standard for nuclear plant workers and other radiation-related professionals, and for the rest of the general population – especially for children, who are 3-4 times more susceptible to the effects of radiation than adults – 1 millisievert per year is the standard that should be adopted, which would mean that entry into any area with more than 0.12 microsieverts per hour should be forbidden. Presently, the levels of radiation in both Fukushima City and Kōriyama City exceed 0.6 microsieverts per hour. We therefore think it is essentially best for people not to live there (pastor’s families are no exception). We as a committee will do what we can to support the people who evacuate from those areas. And we will help those people who for various reasons are unable to evacuate to reduce their radiation exposure as much as possible.” Various specific activity plans have been developed on the basis of this stance.

In order to protect life, we generally advise evacuation. Yet it is extremely difficult to leave a city to which one has grown accustomed over many years, to cast aside one’s home, job, and relationships. We recognize that this also cannot be done without cooperation and support.

As a gesture toward living alongside those who stay, we are developing programs to help reduce exposure levels as much as possible. Cooperation and support are necessary for this as well. We also hope to be able to establish a network to help evacuees stay connected with people who remain in Fukushima.

Divisions among the people of Fukushima have now developed. People who evacuated, people who try to evacuate and are criticized for “running away,” and people who stay behind and are criticized for “taking their children’s lives lightly.” Victims of the same disasters, citizens of the same city, are being forced into conflict with one another.

Therefore relationships based on encouragement, in which people do not criticize the ways that others choose to live their own lives, become necessary. When considering human rights, the concept of deciding how to live one’s own life is surely of great importance. Human rights, in my opinion, consist of the rights and powers given to each individual by God. We are to cooperate with people in such a way that they are able to live their God-given lives. The Church supports those people whose human rights have been disparaged. Cooperation that strengthens independence, independence that strengthens cooperation. It is my opinion that the ideals that we as Baptists have pursued are here being questioned.
This concludes my talk on nuclear power generating facilities as a human rights issue, and how the Church can face this issue. The problems of nuclear power plants are not those of Japan alone. And since this is a human rights issue, I think that there are points of connection between various human rights issues in everyone’s countries and nuclear power plant issues. I would be very grateful if we could search for commonalities, and search together for ways in which we can cooperate as one family of God.