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The Leprosy Relief Work of Tsunawaki Ryūmyō

A Translation with Introduction by TREVOR MURPHY

Introduction

TSUNAWAKI Ryūmyō 綱脇龍妙 (1876–1970) was a priest of the Nichiren denomination 日蓮宗 of Buddhism in Japan; he founded a private leprosy hospital in Minobu 身延,¹ Yamanashi Prefecture, Japan in 1906. In an effort to introduce Tsunawaki’s life and work to a wider audience, I have here undertaken an English translation of the text of a speech entitled “Religion and Leprosy Relief Work”² given by him to members of the Kansai Economic Club on 23 April 1938.³ In the speech, he provides background information about leprosy patient numbers and the history of leprosy relief work in Japan, explains how it was he came to build a private leprosy hospital and how he was able to finance its running, and gives some details of leprosy treatment at the time; he then gives an account of his own Buddhist faith and concludes with some cautionary comments on the Japanese occupation of Manchuria and the worsening relations and escalating conflict with China.

¹ Minobu is the name of a small town situated in the southern part of Yamanashi Prefecture. It is famous for Minobusan 身延山, the mountain which contains the expansive site of the headquarters of the Nichiren denomination of Buddhism, of which Tsunawaki was a member. “Minobu” is used to refer to the town while “Minobusan” indicates the denomination’s headquarters centered around the magnificent Kuonji 久遠寺 temple.

² Tsunawaki 1976, pp. 135–159.

³ Further details of Tsunawaki’s life and work may also be found on the Japanese/English website <<http://www.geocities.jp/tsunawakiryumyo/>> (20 November 2005).

Tsunawaki's speech begins with a discussion of leprosy patient numbers and that is where I will begin too. How many leprosy patients were there in Japan around the time that Tsunawaki set up his private hospital in 1906? Although Japanese government statistics claim that in 1900 there were 30,359 leprosy sufferers in Japan, it is believed that there were probably many more, perhaps between 50,000 and 70,000. Many left their homes to wander the country or gather in some of the larger Buddhist temples to beg from the pilgrims. It was on a visit to one such temple (headquarters of the Nichiren denomination of Buddhism in Japan, situated in Minobu) in the summer of 1906 that Tsunawaki encountered a large group of leprosy sufferers and resolved to set up a hospital for them. As he points out in the course of this speech, there were in fact six major private leprosy hospitals established in Japan from around the end of the nineteenth century through to the early twentieth century (seven if you include the branch hospital he set up in 1930). These are listed in the following table:

- Kōyama Fukusei Hospital 神山復生病院 (1889-present), founded by Father Germain-Leger Testevuide (1849–1891), Catholic missionary.
- Ihai-en 慰廢園 (1894–1942), founded by Miss Kate M. Youngman (1841–1910), Protestant missionary.
- Kaishun Hospital 回春病院 (1895–1941), founded by Miss Hannah Riddell (1855–1932), Protestant missionary.
- Biwazaki Tairō-in 琵琶崎待勞院 (1898-present), founded by Father Jean-Marie Corre (1850–1911), Catholic missionary.
- Minobu Jinkyō Hospital 身延深敬病院 (1906–1992), founded by Tsunawaki Ryūmyō, Buddhist priest (Nichiren denomination).
- St Barnabas Clinic 聖バルナバ医院 (1917–1941), founded by Miss Mary Helena Cornwall-Legh (1857–1941), Protestant missionary.
- Jinkyō Hospital Kyūshū Branch (1930–1942).

As Tsunawaki further makes clear during this speech, it was these private hospitals that carried out the pioneering leprosy relief work in Japan. Government action commenced with the passing of the Leprosy Prevention Law in 1907 and the first of the public leprosaria was opened in 1909, some twenty years after Kōyama Fukusei Hospital. I feel there is great significance in the fact that these “private” hospitals predate any government activity. The term “private” is perhaps inadequate; these early hospitals were in fact “non-govern-

mental,” “non-profit-distributing” institutions established “voluntarily” on the personal initiative of the founder. They are prototype NGOs/NPOs belonging to the Third Sector (as opposed to the government and commercial sectors); I know one example of the “commercial” kind of hospital in Japan where large sums were paid by leprosy patients for quack remedies. It is striking that during the pre-1907 (late Meiji) period before there was any government action in Japan to help leprosy patients, most of the voluntarily initiated private leprosy hospitals (four out of five) were founded by Christian missionaries from abroad and only one by a Japanese Buddhist priest; certainly most of the “voluntary” activity to help leprosy patients in Japan at this time appears to have been offered by missionaries. Why were there so few Buddhist private leprosy hospitals in late Meiji Japan? I attempted to answer this question in my doctoral thesis.⁴ Below are some comments about that research.

In the first half of the thesis, I investigated external factors (of both an economic and organizational nature) that may have influenced the founders in their decision to set up a private leprosy hospital in Japan. I tested two hypotheses. The first hypothesis, dealing with economic considerations (namely the possibility that the Japanese Buddhist priest Tsunawaki was at some financial disadvantage compared with the Christian missionaries), was as follows: “Difficulty of fund-raising was the key factor preventing Buddhist private leprosy relief work in late Meiji Japan.” I was able to find strong evidence to suggest that, with the exception of the start-up period (from around October 1906 to about 1910), the pre-war finances of Minobu Jinkyō Hospital were relatively stable. I was also able to show that there were Japanese men of influence in the late Meiji period who were prepared to use their position to obtain financial backing for those engaged in or wishing to engage in leprosy relief work. Hannah Riddell, founder of Kaishun Hospital, was, for example, helped by the politician Ōkuma Shigenobu 大隈重信 (1838–1922) and the businessman Shibusawa Eiichi 渋沢栄一 (1840–1931) from around 1905/1906. Tsunawaki himself tells the story of a friend Shibata Ichinō 柴田一能 (1873–1951), who was urged by the educator and thinker Fukuzawa Yukichi 福沢諭吉 (1835–1901) to set up a leprosy home as early as 1900; financial and medical backup was promised by Fukuzawa but Shibata, for various reasons, did not take up the offer. This story of Shibata, together with Tsunawaki’s lamenting that the difficulty of obtaining suitable staff was the main barrier to expansion of his own leprosy work, gives a strong indication that the small

⁴ Murphy 2004.

number of Buddhist (compared to Christian) private leprosy hospitals in late Meiji Japan was not so much a result of relative financial difficulty but was due at least in part to a lack of suitable and willing Japanese personnel to engage in the work. On the basis of the above evidence, I rejected the first hypothesis. The second hypothesis, dealing with organizational considerations (namely the possibility that the Christian missionaries were strongly backed by the missionary society headquarters in their respective home countries and that similar support was unavailable to Tsunawaki), was as follows: “Construction of leprosy hospitals was part of missionary society strategy to spread Christianity in the Far East. The Christian missionaries, sent to Japan to build hospitals with the moral and financial support of their missionary societies, were in a stronger position than any Japanese Buddhist priest.” I examined first the degree to which each founder acted “voluntarily” in setting up their hospital and second the level of financial and moral support each founder received from the religious organization to which they belonged. It became clear that none of the four Christian missionaries was sent to Japan on missionary society orders for the purpose of constructing leprosy hospitals; they were all dispatched for ordinary missionary work and only later, as a result of chance encounters with leprosy patients while in Japan, did they take the initiative to set up their hospitals. Furthermore, none of the four missionaries received any financial support from their missionary societies due to shortage of funds. Regarding moral support, Hannah Riddell was positively discouraged from her hospital work as it was seen to be preventing her from devoting full attention to ordinary missionary activities. The Church Missionary Society, to which she belonged, regarded leprosy work as “an unproductive distraction” and “a waste of funds and human resources.”⁵ The two Catholic priests did at least obtain the blessing of their bishops. As is clear from the text of this 1938 speech to the Kansai Economic Club, Tsunawaki similarly started his leprosy work on his own initiative after a chance meeting with patients; he too initially received no direct financial support from his religious organization (and thereafter only meager assistance) and, although granted permission to construct a leprosy hospital by the Chief Priest (in Japanese *hossu* 法主) of the Nichiren denomination, was initially discouraged from the endeavor. So, having established that all five founders were essentially in the same boat regarding support from the religious organizations to which they respectively belonged and were all acting in a highly “voluntary”

⁵ Boyd 1996, pp. 129–130.

manner in setting up their leprosy hospitals (and not in response to any external pressure from those religious organizations), I rejected the second hypothesis too.

I would thus claim that external factors, both economic (relative differences in the ability of the hospital founders to raise funds) and organizational (relative differences in the “push” exerted on the hospital founders by the religious organizations to which they belonged) cannot adequately explain why there were so few Buddhist (compared to Christian) private leprosy hospitals in late Meiji Japan and may be discounted. Rather, the discovery in the course of investigating the second hypothesis that each of the founders acted in a highly “voluntary” manner in setting up their hospitals, suggests that an analysis of the internal motivation of the founders may better provide answers to this question of the lack of Buddhist leprosy relief work. Accordingly, in the second half of the thesis I undertook a case study to clarify the reasons why Tsunawaki set up his private leprosy hospital, Minobu Jinkyō Hospital, in Minobu in 1906. I then attempted to infer from this why so few of his colleagues in the Japanese Buddhist priesthood attempted any similar social welfare activity.

Here are a few brief comments on what drove Tsunawaki to establish his leprosy hospital. One formative moment for him, described in this 1938 speech, came at the age of eighteen when he discovered the story of “The Never-despising Bodhisattva” (Jōfukyō Bosatsu 常不輕菩薩)⁶ in Chapter

⁶ The following biographical details are clear. Tsunawaki was born Tsunawaki Junsaku 網脇順作 in Fukuoka Prefecture on 24 January 1876. In his early teens, he entertained ideas of studying abroad but he had a weak constitution and it was in 1891, at the age of fifteen, only a few months after commencing an apprenticeship with a soy-sauce producer and pawnbroker for old clothing, that he fell ill. He was diagnosed with pulmonary tuberculosis, given three years to live, but made a miraculous recovery in a matter of months. Junsaku’s father was a devout Nichiren believer and it was in October 1891 that an approach came from Nukina Nichiryō 貫名日良, head priest of Hosshōji 法性寺 temple (Fukuoka Prefecture), asking Junsaku to become a novice priest of the Nichiren denomination. Junsaku abandoned the idea of studying abroad and left home the next day for Hosshōji. The ordination ceremony, marking his entrance into the priesthood and during which he received the name Ryūmyō, took place on 16 January 1892. He then moved with his mentor Nukina to Myōtaiji 妙泰寺 temple in Fukui Prefecture in June 1893. One of Tsunawaki’s duties was to read portions of the Lotus Sutra to parishioners at their homes and he decided, for his own study purposes, to read a different chapter at each house, starting from the beginning. The encounter with Chapter Twenty, “The Never-despising Bodhisattva,” described here, took place at the end of August 1894; Tsunawaki was eighteen years old.

Twenty of the Lotus Sutra; with great “thoroughness,” he took that Bodhisattva as a model for living from that time on; “The Never-despising Bodhisattva” offered the reference behavior on which Tsunawaki’s future actions would be based. He was also greatly influenced by Christianity during his twenties (it is interesting that Ishibashi Tanzan 石橋湛山 (1884–1973),⁷ who invited Tsunawaki to Osaka to make the speech, was also a Nichiren priest greatly influenced by Christian teachings) and the manner in which he would base his actions on the ideal model of “The Never-despising Bodhisattva” is reminiscent of the way a Christian would attempt to emulate the behavior of Christ during everyday life. There is clearly a parallel between the beatings and persecution experienced by this Bodhisattva and the sufferings of Christ leading up to his crucifixion; the former eventually achieves self-understanding and contentment through this process, while the latter allows us to be saved by undergoing the process on our behalf. We learn that the shabbily-dressed beggar priest known as “The Never-despising One” is in fact none other than the historical Buddha Prince Gautama Siddhartha himself and that it is we who were his tormentors; in the same way we are taught to view Christ in the poor and wretched. However, there is perhaps an Eastern element to “The Never-despising Bodhisattva” in that he is a more self-contained unit and less “active” than Christ; Christ is a “doer,” whereas “The Never-despising Bodhisattva” exists to “make other people think.” During his twenties, Tsunawaki was looking for a way of life or style of living that would allow him to express the spirit of this Bodhisattva in the real world; he

⁷ Ishibashi was born in Tokyo but moved almost immediately to Yamanashi Prefecture where he was raised and received his pre-university education. His father, Sugita Nippu 杉田日布 (1855–1930) was a priest of the Nichiren denomination of Buddhism who was later to be appointed the eighty-first Chief Priest of the denomination, holding that office from 1924 until his death in 1930. Ishibashi was himself ordained as a priest of the Nichiren denomination at the age of eighteen. Ishibashi and Tsunawaki have much in common. Both were priests of the Nichiren denomination. Both were influenced by Christianity: in the case of Ishibashi this was indirectly through the Christian teachings of W. S. Clark, first president of the Sapporo 札幌 Agricultural College (via a former pupil of Clark who was the principal of one of the middle schools Ishibashi attended in Yamanashi Prefecture); Tsunawaki, for his part, was so deeply impressed during his twenties by the preaching of Ebina Danjō 海老名弾正 (1856–1937) and other Christian ministers that on two occasions he was on the point of converting to Christianity. Both Ishibashi and Tsunawaki openly expressed their pacifist views at a time when it was risky to do so; during the 1930s, Tsunawaki came under observation by the Special Police Service. And we should note that Ishibashi reports in his autobiographical writings that at the age of eighteen he had dreamed of combining a life as a medical practitioner and priest; this was the path followed by Tsunawaki although he was not a qualified physician.

still had not found that when he visited Minobusan at the age of thirty. He had several choices available to him at that time, namely, succeeding his master Nukina Nichiryō in the running of Myōtaiji temple; his preferred option of directly preaching an anti-war message on the streets of Tokyo based on the spirit of “The Never-despising Bodhisattva”; fulfilling a promise made to a friend to conduct a survey together of a slum district in Tokyo; and, of course, the suddenly presented opportunity to engage in leprosy relief work, and he must have intuitively realized that it was the right time for him to take on the leprosy work and build a hospital for the patients who had gathered in the grounds of Minobusan (he was after all thirty and perhaps beginning to feel frustration at his life of study) and that, even though he favored the street-preaching option, this was unrealistic and not a little dangerous (he had actually attempted it in 1905 but been dissuaded when rioting broke out in September of that year due to public dissatisfaction at the conditions of the Treaty of Portsmouth after Japan’s victory in the Russo-Japanese War) so that the leprosy work (providing a home to a group of people much discriminated against where they would be treated with respect) offered him the best compromise chance to fulfill a life similar to that of “The Never-despising Bodhisattva.”

In my thesis, I concluded that the reason there was so little Buddhist private leprosy relief work in late Meiji Japan was because Tsunawaki was exceptional; very few other Japanese Buddhist priests shared his burning desire to commit their lives “thoroughly” to the pursuit of the Bodhisattva path (“The Never-despising Bodhisattva” offers just one model of behavior; there are in fact numerous Bodhisattvas described in the Buddhist scriptures). However, we should note that Tsunawaki himself did not regard his own actions as exceptional, as the following quotation from a 1938 article makes clear: “People often marvel at the way I show this concern for leprosy, whereas I, if anything, feel equally puzzled at how so many people can be unmoved by a problem of this magnitude and by the distress of these most pitiable of their fellow countrymen. I find particularly regrettable the sudden cold-heartedness shown by many men of religion, among them many Buddhist priests who regularly talk of the great love and mercy of the Buddha.”⁸

⁸ Tsunawaki 1976, p.125.

TRANSLATION

Religion and Leprosy Relief Work

It is the first time for me to make all of your acquaintances. In the course of a conversation with Ishibashi Tanzan on a recent visit to the offices of the Eastern Economic Journal in Tokyo, I was asked whether I might not have occasion to visit Osaka in the near future. It was when I said that I did in fact have some business there that I was asked whether I might not make a speech at the Kansai Economic Club on 23 April. While extremely unaccustomed to such situations, I accepted what is a good opportunity for me to meet all of you and say a few words. As you have just heard in the introduction, I intend to tell you something of what I think about the leprosy problem and religion.

I am sure that all of you probably already know about leprosy but as someone who is engaged in the field as a specialist, I would like to say just a few words about it. As you are aware there does seem to be a lot of leprosy in Japan, to the extent that Japan is regarded as one of the top three leprosy countries in the world; according to an Interior Ministry survey of 31 March 1935, the number of leprosy patients on the Japanese mainland⁹ was 15,773. However that survey is not regarded as being especially accurate and the experience of those of us actually involved in the work leads us to the almost unanimous opinion that there are surely double that number, something of the order of 30,000. And for whatever reason there seems also to be some vagueness in the use of the word “leprosy” with incidences of people’s being viewed by society as having leprosy and being reported to the police as such simply on account of their faces being dirty or strange, or of their hands and feet’s being malformed. If you look into the details of this, you find the most regrettable situation that around ten or even twenty percent of those counted among leprosy patients do not in fact have the disease. It is a truly wretched matter that there are cases of people without leprosy who are reported as leprosy patients,

⁹ Japan’s treaty-designated territory, as of 1910, included the Kuril Islands (from 1875), Taiwan (from 1895), Port Arthur and the southern part of Sakhalin (from 1905), and the Korean Peninsula (from 1910). A period of escalating Japanese military expansion in Asia began in the early 1930s so that, by the time of this speech (April 1938), Japan was additionally in occupation of Manchuria and considerable parts of China. See also notes 27 and 28.

treated as lepers, sent to leprosy hospitals and forced to live out their lives there.

Anyway, it is estimated that there are, say, around 30,000 leprosy patients or thereabouts in Japan; in response to this there are currently about 6,000 people housed in the various national, public and private facilities for the quarantine and accommodation of leprosy patients. The remainder are living at home and at about 10,000 (considering the official statistics) this is a large number. For that reason, the Ministry of Health and Welfare seems to be working hurriedly on the housing of more patients, having devised a plan to quickly raise the numbers accommodated to at least 10,000. However, I think this is no easy matter. That being said, if you look at the situation by prefecture, you find that here and there within Japan leprosy has been almost completely eradicated; patient numbers in Chiba Prefecture have already fallen to around twenty something, next is Toyama Prefecture and next after that is Yamanashi Prefecture where I am operating. At any rate, if continued efforts are devoted to the quarantine and accommodation of patients, we estimate that in the next thirty or fifty years leprosy is sure to be completely eradicated from Japan. Consequently, we wish to make further efforts to increase our achievements in this direction. However, if you compare this with the situation in Korea, you find that while Korea also has something over 10,000 leprosy patients, the quarantine of leprosy there has advanced at a great pace. This is through the added efforts of the Korean Leprosy Prevention Association, established a few years ago, which has achieved truly excellent results in terms of donations to the association both by Koreans and by Japanese residents in Korea. Of course, it goes without saying that the main support was provided by the Government-General (Sōtoku-fu 総督府). There are in fact nearly 5,000 patients housed in one site alone on Sorok Island; in addition, there are three Christian-backed hospitals with capacity for 1,600 to 1,700 patients; despite having a lower total number of patients than the Japanese mainland, the work of quarantine in Korea is proceeding at a quick pace. The Sorok leprosarium just mentioned, along with the Culion leprosarium in the Philippines are the two largest leprosy hospitals in the world. The Japanese mainland must do better in comparison but, in spite of the fact that the Leprosy Prevention Association in Japan seems also to have made considerable efforts to raise funds, relatively little money has been donated and the results are disappointing. Thankfully, the Mitsui Gratitude Society (Mitsui hōon kai 三井報恩会) has in recent years come to lend particular support to the problem of isolating leprosy patients in Japan. Anyway, I would like to leave this matter to

one side for a while and tell you something about the position of the private hospitals within leprosy quarantine work.

The pioneering leprosy relief work in Japan was carried out by the private hospitals which predate the public and national hospitals. You are probably already aware that it was a Frenchman called Testevuide who was the first to take in leprosy patients near Gotenba, Shizuoka Prefecture, in 1890. That became what is now known as Kōyama Fukusei Hospital and is currently under the directorship of Iwashita Sōichi 岩下壮一, son of Iwashita Seishū 岩下清周 who is, I think, still alive and well. Next came Ihai-en, set up in Meguro, Tokyo in 1895; this was initially begun by an American lady, and is now under the directorship of Wada Shūhō 和田秀豊. At almost exactly the same time, the famous Englishwoman Hannah Riddell established Kaishun Hospital in Kumamoto, just in front of the dormitory of the Fifth High School. Next came Tairō-in, built by the Frenchman Corre in 1898 near Honmyōji 本妙寺 temple¹⁰ in Kumamoto and still in operation today. The above four were built by foreigners. I established Jinkyō Hospital in Minobu in 1906. After that, in 1919, the Englishwoman Cornwall-Legh set up St Barnabas Clinic in Kusatsu, Gunma Prefecture. This is still in operation and is currently the private hospital with the largest patient capacity. Legh seems to be back in England now and the clinic is being looked after by Japanese. After that, in 1930, I built a branch of Minobu Jinkyō Hospital in a corner of Ikinomatsubara 生ノ松原, Iki-mura 碓岐村, in the city of Fukuoka. That makes seven private hospitals. But, any one of these seven private hospitals is small in comparison with the American-run leprosy hospitals in Korea, a matter about which we feel considerable shame.

I will now explain briefly how it is I came to build such a hospital in Minobusan. Actually, I had not intended to run a leprosy hospital or anything of that kind. Well, no, it would be untrue to say I had not considered the idea at all, but I had not planned to spend the prime years of my life doing so. There was something else which I wished to stake my life on, namely a religious reform, to somehow or other make religion, especially Buddhism, into a more powerful entity; this was what I was thinking. It was just as I was about to get started on this reform that I paid a visit of homage to Minobusan. When I approached the main gate of the temple I came across a group of forty to fifty leprosy patients; what is more, there were lines of dirty huts, standing con-

¹⁰ Honmyōji is a temple of the Nichiren denomination of Buddhism. Leprosy patients are reported to have gathered there as in Minobusan and Naritasan 成田山. See also note 13.

spicuously in the environs of the main gate; that is where they were living. Surprised, I wondered what this was. When I took a look, I found they were all leprosy patients. Well, strictly speaking, not all leprosy patients; there were also some among them suffering from eye disease who had come on retreat to Minobusan and were living together with them. It was then that a young lad appeared there, a really likeable young lad. I didn't know that he had leprosy so I casually asked him what he was doing in such a place. "I've got leprosy." That's what he said. "Where are you from?" "I'm from Yamagata Prefecture. My father was a Shinto priest but things went wrong and he died three years ago. Then, in the summer, I went hunting for fireflies and got stung by a bee in a thicket. But for some reason the swelling in my face did not go down even after two months had passed and my mother, thinking this was strange, took me to the doctor for a diagnosis. After a detailed examination, the doctor gave a doubtful look and said that I may well have been stung by a bee but that actually this was leprosy and there was no cure for it. On hearing this, my mother became deranged on the spot." (I think it is very possible that the father had died of leprosy; the mother's nerves were badly affected with the anxiety that her child might also have leprosy, so that hearing the doctor's diagnosis was enough to unhinge her). "So, what with my mother's losing her mind and my contracting leprosy, the family was reduced to complete poverty. Finally my elder sister, she's twenty-three years old, took the decision to sell herself into service as a companion at Kaminoyama 上ノ山 hot-spring, allowing her to get a loan of some 200 yen.¹¹ After paying the expenses for our mother to go into hospital, she placed the remaining twenty-six yen in front of me and said, 'You know well, don't you, that I have always loved you. I am deliberately steeling my heart to ask this of you. There's really nothing we can do now that you have this disease; especially with mother's going into hospital and my having to go to the hot-spring, it will be just you at home. I've heard that in Minobusan, there's a place where there are people with your kind of disease. There's no train and it's all of 800 kilometers, they say, but I beg you to please go there on your own,' she said and then began to cry." The young lad, a good-natured child, took this as inevitable and, bidding a tearful farewell to his elder sister and with the twenty-six yen in his pocket, set off from home. Looking at the child say all this was like watching *kabuki* theatre; with hands waving and legs moving he related his story to me with the deepest of emotion. "After leaving home, I would

¹¹ One yen in late Meiji Japan had a current value of about fifty U.S. dollars.

sleep in the fields and lay down in the mountains; at one time I was given permission to sleep under the wooden skirting of a main temple building; at another time a farmer let me make my bed in the corner of a stable; I was teased by children along the way. Still, putting all my faith in the hope that if I could only make it to Minobusan everything would be alright, I finally found my way to this place after more than twenty days. Having arrived here, I discovered to my surprise that there was nowhere to go and have been by the riverside until this day.” (Actually, it is clear that there had previously been some kind of retreat for the leprosy patients, but it had been burnt down by the police and fire service the year before the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905) and after that the patients had no place to gather. I won’t go into the reasons why the retreat was burnt down as it will take time but at any rate the patients lost their place to gather. So, with nowhere to go, the patients, and there were many of them, set up some dirty huts from the riverside to the verge of the road (Fig. 1). It was at that time that I made my visit to Minobusan (in July 1906). The child had come just after the retreat had been burnt down which is why he said he had been sleeping by the riverside until that day.) “Actually, one of the biggest problems is that even if you go to town to buy provisions, they’re reluctant to sell them to you.” (Since a very large number of leprosy patients came to Minobu, the local people did their utmost to drive them out.) “After much imploring you are finally able to buy your provisions. A further problem is that when groups of children in the town see us they all call out “Lepers!” in chorus and throw stones at us. I really just don’t seem to have any feeling of being alive. In my childhood days, I had heard about a place called “hell” and you could really say that we have fallen into a living hell. Minobusan may be a welcome place for believers, but for us, you see, it is the middle of hell.” At that, he began to weep bitterly and in the end fell to the ground there and then with arms and legs flailing wildly. Falling at the side of a potato field he bit the earth; his nose was running and his face became muddied with tears and saliva; his sobbing would not subside. Viewing that scene I felt a pain in my chest, and with some regret at having witnessed a thing that I really shouldn’t have, I nevertheless looked on speechlessly. But, with no sign of an end to the young lad’s tears and seeing that the situation couldn’t go on like this, I eventually said “Let’s get you up then! There’s not much to be done right now, but I’m sure things will turn out OK,” and got him to his feet. A similar story of tragedy could be heard in the neighbouring hut and any number of such tragic accounts as you made your way towards the riverside. Whoever you would ask, there was not one among the total of

almost fifty people who was without a tale of misery to tell. As one who had been brought up as a priest of the Nichiren denomination I was truly shocked at this. Minobusan, headquarters of the denomination to which we Nichiren priests all belong, is certainly a welcome place but what a nerve to let such a thing happen to these brothers and countrymen in their extreme wretchedness. First of all, what are we to make of the fact that such tragedies are being played out not just in Minobusan but throughout the whole of Japan? Is it not shameful that the tens of thousands of leprosy patients in our country have to wander the roads like this or live secretly hidden in the corner of some warehouse or in an attic? These were my thoughts. However, as I mentioned earlier, I had already resolved to undertake some kind of Buddhist reform so that, although a variety of thoughts came to me (concerning the lepers), I still felt that it was on that reform that I must stake my life. In the week or thereabouts that followed of my stay in Minobusan, I paid homage every day at the Mausoleum of Nichiren (1222–1282), reading the sutra (Lotus Sutra) and chanting its sacred title¹² but, rather than achieving any calmness of spirit, I found that, no matter what I tried, I just could not get the leprosy patients out of my head. I knew that I must put them out of my mind but that only made me think about them all the more. I tried chanting the sutra to the accompaniment of drumbeats with the idea that if I beat the drum, I might be able to banish the thought of the leprosy patients from my mind, but I was only to find that, whenever I did this, the voice of Nichiren would be heard from the inside of the miniature shrine in the Mausoleum calling out to me to “do something or other.” I knew that such a thing could not be but found that whenever I ceased beating the drum the voice would also stop. I thought that this must be my nerves but as it would be the same thing every day, I decided that at this rate I wouldn’t be able to stand it in Minobusan; I had planned a month-long retreat but it was after only just over a week that I packed my things and set off on my way back to Tokyo. When I approached the main gate of the temple, I saw the patients’ huts before me once again and said a silent farewell to them in my heart. But when I thought how sad it would be that if I once left this spot these patients might never be saved, the tears kept filling my eyes and my feet would not move a single step. I remained standing there for over

¹² The Japanese word *daimoku* 題目, used here, means “title” and refers to the sacred title of the Lotus Sutra; followers of the Nichiren denomination can often be heard chanting “*Namu-myōhō-rengē-kyō*” 南無妙法蓮華經, which means “I put my faith in the Lotus Sutra”; it is believed that in doing so they are endowed with the Lotus Sutra’s merits.

an hour thinking through the various possibilities; on the one hand “reason” would tell me not to be swayed by such a matter, yet on the other hand “emotion” would call me to do something for these poor fellows; however long I considered the situation, this struggle between my head and my heart would continue and I simply could not reach a settlement. So at the end of it all, there I was standing in the middle of the road in tears and as that wasn’t going to solve the problem, I decided there was nothing for it but to first deal with the patients and then, after a little time, to engage once again in reform of the Buddhist faith; there was no point in trying to do both at the same time. It was this decision that led me finally to stay on in Minobusan and set about the construction of the hospital. Then, just to check things out, I called on the Department of Health of the Interior Ministry to ask them what they thought about the whole thing, explaining how there were these many leprosy patients in Minobusan and how I had thought up this plan to do something about it. They told me that in fact this was a matter of concern for the state too, but that there was no prospect of the government’s being able to do anything about leprosy for the next ten to fifteen years, since there were other things to attend to; but that I should definitely go ahead as it would be truly splendid if influential places like Naritasan¹³ and Minobusan were to take the problem on in the government’s stead. Next, I went to the Religious Affairs Office of the Nichiren denomination to meet the Reverend Toyonaga Nichiryō 豊永日良 (1846–1909) who was at the time serving jointly as Chief Priest of Minobusan and Superintendent Priest of the Religious Affairs Office. I obtained his permission to build a leprosy hospital in the grounds of Minobusan after which I set to work. However, it is worth mentioning that during the meeting he tried strongly to dissuade me from my plan. “That’s the very kind of thing which is easy to say, but not something actually to be done. You look as if you’re still very young. Wouldn’t it be better for you to study for another ten years,” he suggested. But I was firmly resolved. “Well, if that’s the case . . .,” he said and granted his approval. But he made clear that Minobusan was currently engaged in construction work on the main gate at a cost of several hundred thousand yen and that no sooner would that be completed than they would have to sell off about 2,000 hectares of Imperial land, a campaign which might take a further fifteen years or so. “Until that’s over, the head temple

¹³ Naritasan refers to Shinshōji 新勝寺 temple (of the Shingon 真言 denomination of Buddhism) in the city of Narita, Chiba Prefecture. Leprosy patients are reported to have gathered there as in Minobusan.

(Minobusan) cannot give you any financial support at all, so if you're prepared to go it alone, then go ahead." I said that I would of course go it alone and got underway. As it had become a little colder, some of the original forty to fifty patients had moved on to other parts, so that things got started with an initial admission of sixteen patients. It was 12 October 1906. Within a month or two, I had used up all the money I possessed so I thought up a fund-raising scheme called "*Jūman-ichirin-kō*" 十万一厘講 where I would ask people favorably inclined to the hospital's work to donate one *rin* 厘 per day (equivalent to three *sen* 錢 per month, or thirty-six *sen* per year) for a three-year period, in other words a total of one yen and eight *sen* (or one yen for those who made a lump-sum payment).¹⁴ If I could get 100,000 people to become subscribers that would make 100,000 yen. Anyway, I thought I would try to run the hospital in this way and struggled hard in doing so. I finally achieved a subscription level of 10,000 in the third year but it really was a laborious job as these were after all small sums of money. In contrast Miss Riddell of the Kumamoto Kaishun Hospital, who would receive introductions through British government ministers, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and those kinds of circles and who apparently stayed often in the Imperial Hotel (a very expensive hotel in Tokyo) and spent her summers in Nikkō (a popular hill resort) to avoid the heat, seemed to have had relatively little trouble in obtaining large donations. I do of course think she was a fine person and am extremely grateful to her. Anyway for about the first eighteen years, I struggled terribly in the way I have described. However, that being said, amidst the struggle, I did begin to receive a certain amount of financial support from here and there, with some grants and government subsidies becoming available from the Interior Ministry, a small amount of aid received from the head temple Minobusan and further grants bestowed by the Ministry of the Imperial Household. That, taken alongside the donations which I continued to canvass for, allowed me to gradually expand the leprosy work. I must make special mention here of the fact that on 11 November 1930 I was summoned, along with the directors of the other leprosaria, to appear before Her Imperial Highness the Empress Dowager¹⁵ at the Ōmiya 大宮 Imperial Palace and was greatly honored with an Imperial message of encouragement; since then I have been in receipt of an annual Imperial grant of 2,000 yen and various gracious

¹⁴ Ten *rin* = one *sen*, and one hundred *sen* = one yen.

¹⁵ The Empress Dowager Teimei 貞明 was wife of the then-deceased Taishō Emperor Yoshihito 嘉仁 (1879–1926).

Imperial gifts. In 1935 the annual Imperial grant was increased to 2,500 yen. What is more in the autumn of 1933, I was honored with an Imperial poem and three years ago had bestowed on me 150 maple trees raised from seed in the Akasaka Imperial Gardens. I was also honored with visits by Imperial emissaries, including one to the Kyūshū branch hospital the year before last. I feel deeply moved and awestruck at the truly immense compassion of Her Imperial Highness. Anyway, the leprosy work is progressing after a fashion as I have just described but the truth is that, even including the branch hospital, we still only have a mere one hundred patients admitted, a figure I would like to increase by fifty. At the moment both Minobu and Kyūshū are able to hold about seventy-five, so there are facilities for 150.¹⁶ And with a big site at Kyūshū, there's scope for any amount of expansion in the future but for various reasons it doesn't happen. Even now, there is a group of about one hundred leprosy patients gathered within the grounds of Honmyōji temple in Kumamoto, whom they won't admit either to the public hospital or to Kaishun Hospital or Tairō-in, so that the patients are at a loss what to do, the local people are inconvenienced and Honmyōji is of course in a real fix. I am frequently asked whether, if it were at all possible, I could not perhaps somehow set up a branch hospital there too, but it's hard to come by people prepared to struggle on behalf of a leprosy hospital; if I can find someone competent for the job, I'll give it a try. At any rate, for as long as I draw breath, I intend to follow hard at the heels of my superiors in the struggle for the relief and eradication of leprosy in Japan.

I want to make a few brief comments now about the effectiveness of leprosy treatment. Leprosy is often generally said to be incurable¹⁷ but, in my many years of experience, especially these past few years, I have encountered a surprising number of cases where it was cured splendidly. Over the years, I have discharged any number of patients in a state of complete recovery. Only just a short while ago I discharged one young patient, sending him on his way to a steelworks in Nagoya. I examined these people naked and could find not a single abnormality anywhere. I could give special mention to the case some

¹⁶ Interior Ministry statistics for 1936, two years previous to this speech, show that Minobu Jinkyō Hospital and its Kyūshū branch had capacities of sixty-five and forty-two respectively with year-end patient numbers of fifty-five and nineteen respectively.

¹⁷ At the time of this speech (1938), leprosy was still treated mainly by the injection of chaulmoogra oil under the skin. A reliable cure only became available after 1943, when the drug Promin was discovered.

years ago of a young man who was admitted to the hospital aged fourteen and discharged at the age of twenty completely restored to health; he was recruited in the military conscription tests the following year, received his call-up papers last year (1937)¹⁸ and, after undergoing about a month of intense training, was sent to the front somewhere in Northern China. He's been transferred to somewhere around Shanghai now and is, as I said, currently engaged in the war effort. He's twenty-eight now and it's his ninth year out of hospital but there's not a thing wrong with him. He's told me this himself, that he's come through some rough times where he really wasn't able to look after his health at all but that at present there's nothing wrong with him. There have been others who have for example gone to work in a timber plant or who have got married and, if you consider that there hasn't been any recurrence yet in those cases, then, for all that a patient may have had leprosy, I think it would be fair to say that, provided they take good care of their health after being discharged, they will remain completely cured. In much the same way, tuberculosis, otherwise known as "fatigue-induced coughing" (*rōgai* 劳咳), was once said to be incurable (this was in fact virtually the case), but nowadays there are many examples of people with first-stage or even second-stage tuberculosis achieving health. I think that first-stage tuberculosis is easy to cure. The method I adopt is in fact to administer Guaiacol for the tuberculosis and then subject the patient to as much sunlight as possible in which case most people will get well. That is why I am convinced that with the right method leprosy too can be cured easily enough. Needless to say, it is no simple matter for severe cases or cases where the eyebrows have completely fallen out, but I believe that milder cases, up to about the point where the eyebrows have become slightly thinned, can be guided to a state of complete recovery. So, if a certain method can be established in the future in which the leprosy patients themselves are made to feel confident that they will be cured through a combination of treatment and general good health care, it is my belief that most leprosy cases up to about the early second stage can in fact be cured like tuberculosis. That is not something I am saying only to you here and now but something which I said also last year at the Tenth Leprosy Congress in Takamatsu, Kagawa Prefecture. I find it quite intolerable that even mild cases are sent in identical fashion (to severe cases) to one and the same leprosy hospital where they gradually get worse and are made to live out a life of misery. So, in terms of solving the leprosy problem, I think it would be not a bad thing to set up

¹⁸ The year of the China Incident. See note 28.

some separate clinics for early stage leprosy in which the conditions for general health care were ideal; and I further believe that those who have lived in close proximity to leprosy patients, and I'm talking above all here about close relatives of leprosy patients, will, in my experience, certainly not develop leprosy, provided they are given preventive injections and made to take the medicines used for the disease. Since even those with early stage leprosy are curable as mentioned earlier, I think it is not a difficult matter to destroy, through the use of medicines and injections, the leprosy bacilli in carriers or those infected with leprosy but not yet showing any symptoms. I am recommending that to people I know, as far as circumstances allow, and the results seem to be good. It is my conviction that, although it is necessary to hospitalize and treat in cases where leprosy symptoms have already begun to develop, the adoption of a method similar to that which I have described for those people who are infected with (leprosy) bacilli but not yet showing any symptoms, is one quick way to eradicate leprosy from Japan, since it prevents the occurrence of new leprosy cases. This is the view which we have been expressing and I understand that the Japanese Leprosy Prevention Association and others are now recommending the administering of medicine to the families of leprosy patients. That is all I am going to say about leprosy except to note that it is at any rate badly affecting the prestige of the Japanese nation. There is no leprosy at all in many of the European countries, namely Britain, Germany, Netherlands, Belgium, Switzerland, Austria, Denmark, and so on; I understand there is still a little in Russia, France, Spain and Portugal but by and large leprosy has been completely eradicated in Europe. However with, let's say, as many as twenty or thirty thousand patients in Japan and a total of forty or fifty thousand patients if you include Korea and Taiwan, leprosy is both harming Japan's reputation and also, I feel, having a serious impact in matters of national security.¹⁹ With all of your cooperation, I hope to achieve an early resolution to the leprosy problem in Japan.

Well then, it comes now to my thoughts on religion and faith and I must begin by saying that once when I was a young novice priest, I was reading through the Lotus Sutra, which as you know is comprised of twenty-eight chapters, and came across Chapter Twenty about "The Never-despising

¹⁹ Tsunawaki was a pacifist but, at the time of this speech, it was probably prudent, or perhaps even necessary for him to emphasize the importance to the war effort of eradicating leprosy. We should recall also that he focused earlier on a patient who was able to serve at the front after being discharged from the hospital.

Bodhisattva.” In it the following things are written. Long, long ago there was in the world a Buddha called Ionnō 威音王; that Buddha came into this world and spread the message of the Lotus Sutra. Lotus Sutra, Lotus Sutra . . . it’s a grand title but there’s nothing particularly unusual about this sutra; it may be held in special regard nowadays but it actually just tells of the Buddha’s enlightenment. “Buddha” is the name used to describe anybody who has attained spiritual enlightenment; the enlightenment of such a Buddha is otherwise called the Supreme Law (True Dharma) and it is the Lotus Sutra which tells of that Supreme Law or enlightenment (The original title of the Lotus Sutra is the “Sutra of the Lotus of the Supreme Law”). If the message of the Buddha’s enlightenment is spread widely throughout this world then each and every person will become aware of their “self,” with the result that the people of the world will enter a perfect state of Mahāyāna Buddhist enlightenment. Society will in consequence become extremely good; that is to say an ideal world will appear. At the time of the Buddha Ionnō just such an ideal society came into existence. However, by the time that nearly 2,000 years had passed since his death, Buddhism had lapsed to a mere shell, and Buddhist priests, puffed up with pride and concerned only with their own academic studies, had lost all power to give guidance to society. Consequently, secular, that is to say, ordinary society had also gradually become more and more arrogant and grasping; the world had reached such a state that people wondered just what was to become of mankind in the future. However it was at that time, they say, that a Buddhist monk appeared, nobody’s quite sure where from, who would stand at the crossroads and other such places in town, and would join his hands in worshipful prayer, bow and recite the following verse to whomever he happened to come across. “I respect you deeply, not daring to make light of you in any way; the reason is this; if you follow the path of the Bodhisattva, you are (all) certain to become a Buddha.”²⁰ When viewed from the standpoint of a true believer in Buddhism, those words could perhaps be said to have the following meaning: “From the very beginning you are all by your very nature Buddhas, or, to put it another way, *nyorai* 如来.²¹ As to this word *nyorai*, it means someone who has appeared from the world of absolute reality (*shinnyo* 真如), a world where there is complete understanding of the real nature of our everyday experience (*hosshō* 法性). Or, to

²⁰ Tsunawaki derived the name of his hospital, Minobu Jinkyō Hospital, from two Chinese characters of this verse, *jin* 深, meaning “deep(ly)” and *kyō* 敬, meaning “to respect,” which, when paired, have the reading *jinkyō*.

²¹ *Nyorai* has essentially the same meaning as Buddha.

put it more plainly, from the Pure Land (*gokuraku-jōdo* 極樂淨土),²² that may be easier to understand. You have all come from the Pure Land into this world of humankind. You are really to be valued. And so, if you carry out just a few good deeds in the spirit of a Bodhisattva, you will soon become a true Buddha, a perfected being, a person of the very highest character.” This is how he would pray to the people he came across. And it appears that he prayed with some fervor. On such occasions, people would wonder who on earth this idiot monk was with his foolish words and would say to him: “Can’t you see we’re busy with our daily lives and our businesses? We’re not likely to be made to believe in Buddhism by a beggar monk like you.” And they would persecute him harshly, beating him with their fists, hurling sticks at him, striking him with stones and roof tiles; it was pretty inhuman the way they all went at him. But the monk would offer no resistance saying simply that he himself must be in the wrong and would leave the spot and move to somewhere a long way off; once there, he would begin again, as before, to offer worshipful prayers to whomever he came across, even if it happened to be the same person as before; this process (of offering prayers and moving on if persecuted) would be repeated indefinitely. Yet, however much the people in society persecuted the monk, he would just keep on praying to them, so they gave him the nickname “The Never-despising One” and made a laughingstock of him. However, he just took to his task more and more earnestly and continued for several decades with this practice of “paying reverence to his fellow man.” During the course of these many years, he was able to rid himself of his own fundamental badness. Then one day, he was taken seriously ill and it was just when he was on the very point of dying that he heard a voice from the sky reciting a very long piece of Buddhist scripture (it is written that it was twenty quadrillion verses of the Lotus Sutra as preached by *Ionnō-nyorai*) and at once his serious illness was immediately cured. What this means, I think, is that he had probably achieved perfect union with the truth. And, at the same time, he became transformed into a man of the noblest character and also acquired supernatural powers and great oratory skills; he took up his place in society and walked the land in a dignified manner spreading the message of the Supreme Law contained in the Lotus Sutra. That very same monk who had until that time been treated as a madman was now striding the land, with boldness and an awe-inspiring energy, expounding the Buddha’s teachings to

²² *Jōdo* 淨土 (Pure Land) and *gokuraku-jōdo* (Pure Land of the Highest Joy) are used interchangeably in this speech. Therefore, both will be translated here as “Pure Land.”

society, so that everybody, without exception, believed and followed, showing remorse for their bad deeds, and receiving the Buddhist doctrine from him with the utmost sincerity. And so it came to pass that society was reformed and an ideal society of truth and peace was constructed. This is, of course, a sermon given by the historical Buddha, Śākyamuni; there were in fact 1,500 people listening to his account of the origins of “The Never-despising Bodhisattva.” Śākyamuni asked one of those present, a man called Bhadrāpāla: “Who do you think he is, this man they named ‘The Never-despising One’?” On hearing Bhadrāpāla’s reply that he did not know, Śākyamuni said the following: “The man called ‘The Never-despising One’ is none other than I, Śākyamuni. The sole reason that I, Śākyamuni, am here today like this, is because I intently followed through the practice of worshipping and praising my fellow man. It is because of this that I am shining in the world today as a Buddha, as one who has attained enlightenment and come back from the world of absolute truth in order to tell mankind.” Śākyamuni then put a further question to Bhadrāpāla: “Who do you think it was who persecuted me at that time?” and to this too Bhadrāpāla replied that he did not know. “It was the 1,500 people here who did that, you know. It was because you did that to me that you fell into the hell of incessant suffering for an incalculably long time. And yet, on account of receiving my guidance, you find yourselves born once again in this place and are here now to receive my final instruction. You will now all be able to attain complete enlightenment. You cannot readily encounter the true teachings so, in as much as you have heard them from me, I want you to keep them firmly in your hearts and beg you to strive so that all members of society as a whole might live in the same way in this enlightenment and this faith.” This is what is set forth in Chapter Twenty, “The Never-despising Bodhisattva.”

I read this when I was eighteen or nineteen years old and, I don’t know why, but even from that time I was sure it was not just some doctrine belonging to the distant past. When I looked at contemporary society and particularly the current religious situation, I couldn’t help thinking that these teachings and this method were most perfectly suited. To explain what I mean, it may be helpful to remind you of how the Lotus Sutra developed in the Orient once it had been expounded by Śākyamuni. In China much of the groundwork was carried out by Chi-i 智顓 (538–597)²³. However in Japan it was Prince

²³ Chi-i was the founder of the Tian tai 天台 (Jpn. Tendai) denomination of Buddhism in China, basing it on the teachings of the Lotus Sutra.

Shōtoku 聖徳 (574–622)²⁴ who first realized the importance of the Lotus Sutra, preaching as he did that each causal action brings about some resultant effect; he was instrumental in constructing a Japanese civilization based on Buddhism with the Lotus Sutra at its core. Next came Saichō 最澄 (767–822)²⁵ who, at the time that the Emperor Kanmu 桓武 (737–806) was building the Heian 平安 capital, likewise contributed to the establishment of the new civilization through the spirit of the Lotus Sutra. Thirdly, there was Nichiren who appeared during the Kamakura Period (1185–1333); he was convinced that it was only through following the correct course of the Lotus Sutra that the spirit of the Japanese nation could be guided in a healthy direction and spent a life of innumerable difficulties great and small in his efforts to spread that belief. However, I think that now, a full 700 years after the time of Nichiren, it is no longer any good to still continue with that same approach.²⁶ Prince Shōtoku in his time regarded certain aspects of the Lotus Sutra as important; certain other aspects were emphasized by Saichō and Nichiren; but, when it comes to the present day, particularly when you consider the current state of society, I can't help thinking that the fastest way for people to turn to the good is by putting into practice, in a thoroughgoing manner, the teachings of the aforementioned Chapter Twenty of the Lotus Sutra concerning "The Never-despising One," that is to say by living out their Buddhist faith with no holds

²⁴ Prince Shōtoku, second son of the Emperor Yōmei 用明, was appointed Prince in 592. He achieved Imperial support for Buddhism, studied and lectured on the Lotus Sutra and other Buddhist scriptures and constructed seven Buddhist temples during his lifetime. He also proclaimed the famous Seventeen-Article Constitution in 604. He was a popular figure among the Japanese people and widely mourned on his death.

²⁵ Saichō was the founder of the Tendai denomination of Buddhism in Japan. In 785, he built a hermitage on Mt. Hiei 比叡山 and set about a study of the Tendai teachings based on the Lotus Sutra. He obtained Imperial patronage in 794 and was sent to China by decree in 804 to continue his study of the Tendai teachings, returning the following year with religious objects and scriptures for the Imperial Court.

²⁶ "That same approach" refers to *shakubuku* 折伏, the aggressive, conquering style of preaching that was adopted, perhaps necessarily, by Nichiren during his lifetime and became a feature of the Nichiren denomination. The opposite style of preaching is termed *shōju* 攝受 and emphasizes a persuasive promotion of good. Ideally *shakubuku* and *shōju* should be harmoniously balanced. We should recall here that Tsunawaki shared the belief (held by many Buddhists) that religious (and by consequence secular) standards would gradually deteriorate after the historical Buddha's death. He felt that this process of deterioration had advanced even further during the 700 years since Nichiren's time, perhaps rendering "that same approach" (Nichiren's aggressive *shakubuku* preaching style) less appropriate to people's needs.

barred. This means showing a thoroughness in the ready worship of one's fellow man as a Buddha and as a god; and this action of worshipping as a Buddha should not of course be restricted only to "my wife," "my child" or "my parent," but extended also to friends, neighbours and all people without exception. Moreover, we should consider also the following: as I mentioned earlier in this speech we are all by nature *nyorai*, that is to say Buddhas who have come from a state of absolute truth, and it is said that to die means a return to that "Pure Land" of truth; we have come from the "Pure Land" and that is where we will return. But that "Pure Land" of which I speak is not, according to the Lotus Sutra, in some distant place. It's actually right here. Generally, people don't realize this because they view the world of their experiences with a deluded eye; if, however, they look at that same reality with an enlightened eye, they will see that it is really a "Pure Land" of infinite value. It is only because mankind has lost sight of its true nature that it is unable to see this world as the "Pure Land" which it is, preferring instead to be caught up in selfish desires and to be perpetually engaged in all kinds of conflict with one another. I think that, whether we be Japanese or Chinese, we must, through this faith of "The Never-despising One," make a rapid return to the fundamental idea of respect and love for one another and so bring about a solid peace. Even from before the Manchuria Incident,²⁷ I had felt that there was surely no alternative but to bring the people back to a faith similar to my own, in the hope that if the Japanese went to Manchuria they would show respect both for the Chinese and for the Manchurians and would undertake development in Manchuria without any appeal to armed force; I had wanted at any cost to bring the people to a thorough understanding of this faith so that any

²⁷ The "Manchuria Incident" (Manshū jihen 満州事変): Japan's victories in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895 (fought to establish Japanese dominance in the Korean Peninsula; Japan was awarded financial compensation and Taiwan) and the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905 (fought in response to Russia's expansion in Manchuria and aggressive intentions towards Korea) left the huge territory of Manchuria open to it for commercial and industrial expansion. However, by the early 1930s, Japan's interests in Manchuria were seen to be coming under threat again from an increasingly powerful China and Russia. For the previous ten years or so there had been a settled period of Japanese foreign policy during which efforts were made to solve disputes by negotiation, but some high-ranking officers in the Japanese army were becoming impatient with this approach. A bomb was planted and detonated by Japanese on the track of the Japanese-owned South Manchurian Railway on the evening of 18 September 1931. The incident marked a decisive shift away from the previous Japanese policy of international diplomacy combined with economic expansion in Asia towards one of escalating military expansion.

development of the Japanese national interests might be carried out against a peaceful background. However, the Manchuria Incident broke out and we ended up taking (military) action, so that the outcome was different to the one I had hoped for. After that, matters gradually got worse and it was just when I was wondering how on earth things were going to turn out, that the situation came to a head with this latest China Incident.²⁸ It might perhaps be said that Japan now has no choice but to act in the way it is doing. Or that now things have come to such a pass, there's nothing for it but to win the war. However, for all one might say that war seems now in a sense to be the only option, I think that what is required in the future to turn the Orient into an earthly paradise in true partnership with the Chinese is the instilling in all of the Japanese people of a thorough understanding of the faith of "The Never-despising One," so that Japan might not engage in conquering the world by force, rather the Japanese might become a truly kind and gentle people viewed with gratitude by others. Things may be OK for the time being with this China Incident but, unless the Japanese and Chinese people begin to develop a faith of reverent worship towards each other, then surely we will end up having to repeat actions of an increasingly tragic nature in the future. I feel deeply alarmed at such a prospect. As is well expressed in the saying "An inch in heaven is a million miles on earth," it seems that even a small error in beliefs can lead to the most terrible of consequences. If there is some mistaken notion lying at the very heart of the people's faith, then this will naturally invite the kind of outcome we saw in the Manchuria and China Incidents. Nichiren spoke of the Jōkyū Rebellion (*Jōkyū no ran* 承久の乱)²⁹ of 1221 as a complete failure of religion, saying: "Such a thing simply ought not to happen; matters ended up in that way because those involved had fallen into some kind of superstition. . . Japan is the country of Amaterasu-ōmikami 天照大神, the Sun

²⁸ The "China Incident" (Shina jihen 支那事変): Following the Manchuria Incident, a tense situation developed in China too, as Japan's efforts to impose its influence there were met with increasing Chinese resistance. On 7 July 1937, Japanese and Chinese soldiers clashed on the southern outskirts of Peking (Beijing) triggering a large-scale reinforcement of the Japanese military presence in China. This soon escalated due to the outbreak of fighting in Shanghai in August 1937 and the brutal capture of Nanking by the Japanese in December 1937, and the conflict continued until the end of the Pacific War in August 1945.

²⁹ The Jōkyū Rebellion refers to an armed attack carried out in 1221 by the Imperial Court under the leadership of the retired Emperor Gotoba 後鳥羽 (1180–1239) against Yoshitoki 義時 (1163–1224), head of the Hōjō 北条 family and real power behind the Kamakura military government (*bakufu* 幕府). The Emperor was defeated and exiled to the Oki 隠岐 Islands.

Goddess. And the person who is ruler of this country of Japan (the Emperor) is (said to be) able to communicate with her spirit.³⁰ However, the reason things turned out the way they did (in the Jōkyū Rebellion)³¹ is, in the first place, because Amaterasu-ōmikami is a being of truth and justice. The same can be said of the God of War, Hachiman-daibosatsu 八幡大菩薩,³² who allows communion with his spirit on the basis of honesty. So, however much we might be Japanese, if we are in the wrong, we will not win; because our actions will never have the backing of the Sun Goddess or the God of War.” I think that unless the Japanese can be made to give some considerable serious thought to this point, things are not going to turn out well. In short, I think that from now on each and every one of the Japanese people must move forward with a faith based on the practices of “The Never-despising One” as described in Chapter Twenty of the Lotus Sutra. And with that idea, I conclude my comments to you on leprosy and on my own beliefs. It was a poorly-reasoned speech in the extreme but if, later, you are able to give a little further thought to what I have said and consider whether there is any truth or logic in it, I will be most grateful.

³⁰ The Emperor of Japan has traditionally claimed to be a direct descendant of Amaterasu-ōmikami, to be in communion with her and uniquely endowed with her powers, although this god-like status was renounced by the Shōwa Emperor Hirohito 裕仁 (1901–1989) after Japan’s defeat in the Pacific War in 1945. Although a goddess of the traditional Japanese religion Shinto, she has, since the introduction of Buddhism to Japan in the late sixth century, also been integrated as an object of worship within Buddhism although the degree of acceptance has varied with time according to the relative ascendancy of Shinto and Buddhism.

³¹ This section of the text appears to be the reported speech of Nichiren, in which case “the way they did” refers to the military failure of the Emperor Gotoba in the Jōkyū Rebellion of 1221 (through his lack of a just cause). However, the lines of this speech are blurred and Tsunawaki is also clearly referring to what he fears to be a potentially disastrous outcome for Japan if the Manchuria and China Incidents are followed by a continued escalation of Japanese military activity in Asia.

³² Hachiman-daibosatsu (The Great Bodhisattva Hachiman), commonly referred to as the God of War, was originally a widely worshipped god of Shinto. However, it was not until the Nara Period that Hachiman was accorded greater significance and endowed with his current role as “Protector of the Nation.” The conferment on Hachiman of the title Great Bodhisattva by the Imperial Court some time towards the end of the Nara Period gives an indication of the merging process that was taking place in Japan between the traditional Japanese religion Shinto and Buddhism, imported via Korea at the end of the sixth century.

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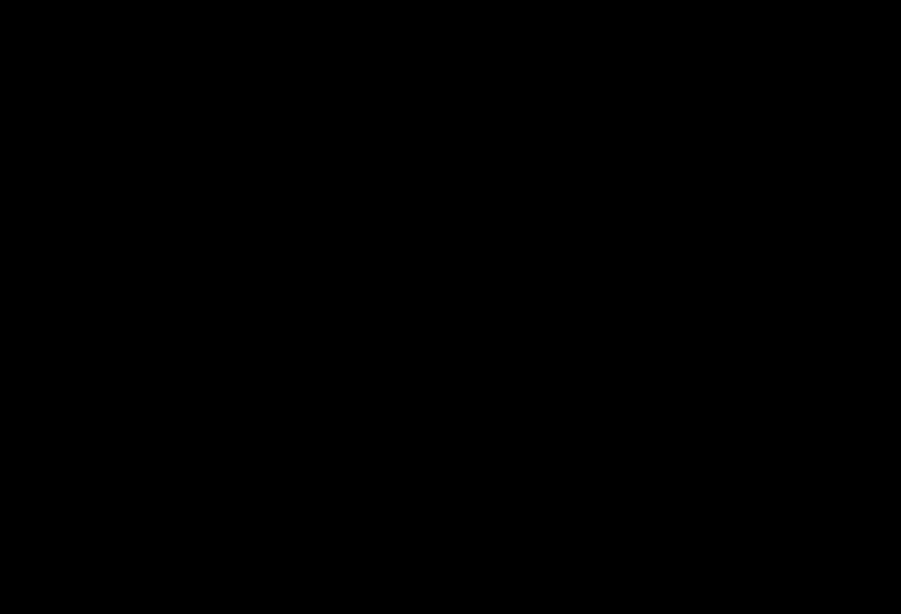


Figure 1. Leprosy sufferers living rough by Minobu River (around 1906).

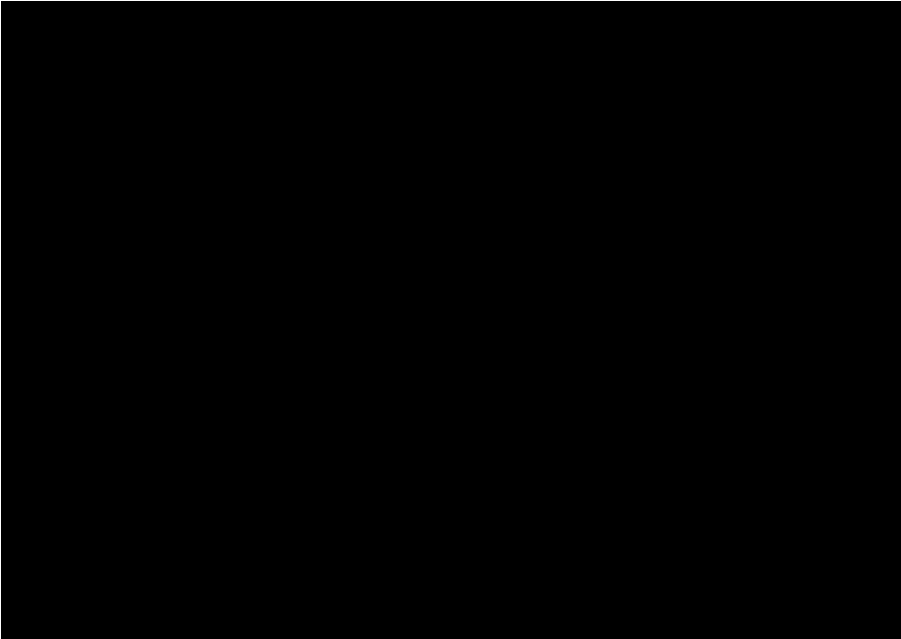


Figure 2. Patients and staff in front of Minobu Jinkyō Hospital (1930).

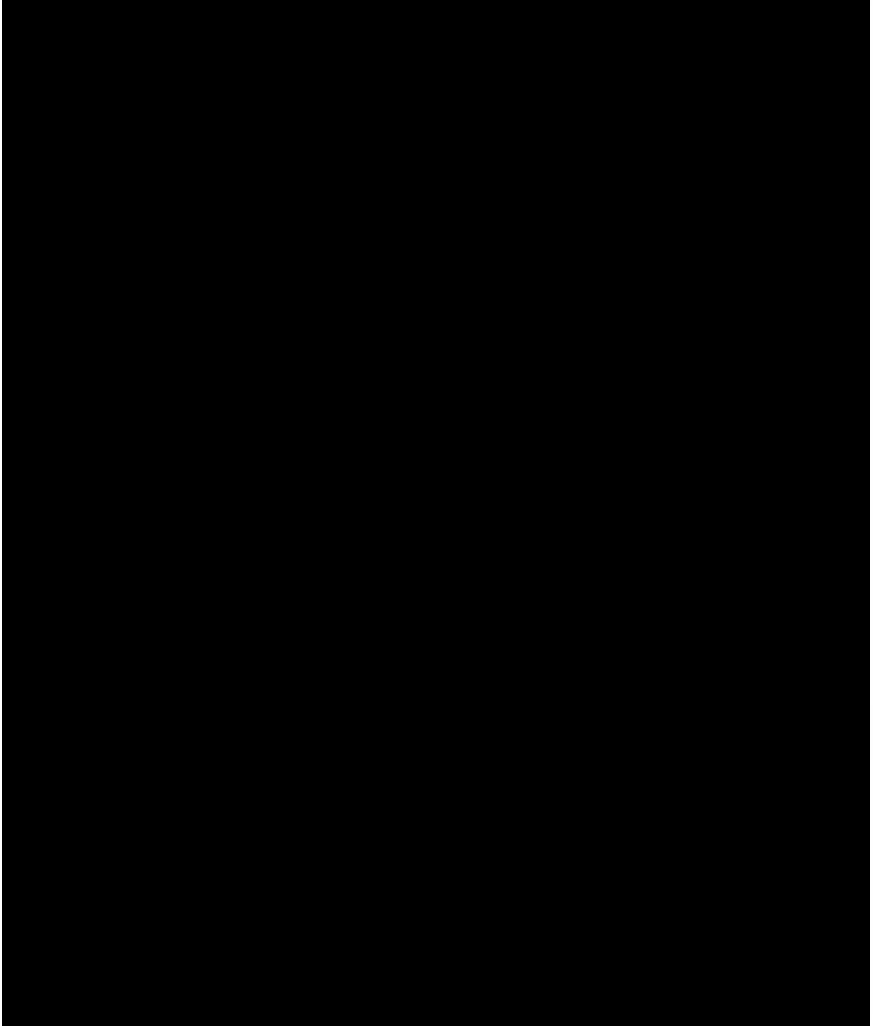
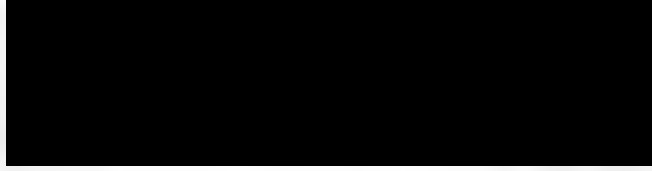


Figure 3. Tsunawaki Ryūmyō in his 80s.