

Spiritual Renewal at Hokusei Gakuen Women's Junior College

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北星学園女子短期大学における霊的刷新

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要 約

北星学園は、私立のキリスト教学校として、創立時より、その教育の中で、キリスト教信仰に基づく霊的・精神的側面を教育目的の一つとして掲げてきている。

本論は、北星学園の教育目的への取り組みを歴史的に考察しつつ、キリスト教信仰の霊的・精神的特質を論じ、さらに継続的な霊的刷新のために必要な環境づくりを、現在の短期大学を視点において提起するものである。霊的・精神的刷新は、プログラムよりも個人的つながり、義務感からではなく主体的関わり、大衆的というよりも小人数の中で、上部下降型よりも下部上降型によって、そして単に教職員から学生たちへという縦の関係だけではなく、教職員相互・学生相互の横の関係によって進められていく。

霊的な刷新・再新・新生は、百余年にわたる北星学園の歴史の鍵を握ってきたのであり、今後も、学園の教育理念達成のための必要不可欠な要素として認識されねばならないものである。

INTRODUCTION

Hokusei Women's Junior College seeks to provide an education which addresses the needs of the whole person, including the physical, intellectual, social, emotional, and spiritual. As an educational institution, it by its nature lays heavy emphasis on students' intellectual growth. As a Christian organization, it also incorporates a strong spiritual element, operating from the underlying assumption that humans are, above all else, spiritual beings.

Despite this formal philosophical stance, the Hokusei Gakuen school system has seen its history unfold to include staff and students of a wide variety of faiths and lifestyles. As the institution, well into its second century, approaches the year 2000, it faces the need to re-examine both its historical and current commitments to fostering growth in the spiritual realm. Determining which aspects of school life call for reaffirmed commitment, and which do not, may prove useful in setting a course for the future and realizing holistic educational goals.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

PRIOR TO THE SCHOOL'S FOUNDATION

Sarah Smith, founder of Hokusei Gakuen, set the tone and provided the inspiration for sustained renewal in this mission institution. A single Presbyterian missionary from a small town near Elmira, New York, she came to the city of Sapporo at a time little *Christian work of any type existed on the island of Hokkaido. Although educational institutions by and large welcomed men only, she succeeded in establishing in 1887 a school to minister to the educational needs of young women.*

Despite a directive from her mission board to return to America when she began suffering with rheumatism, Smith continued to feel a compelling sense of God's leading to minister to Japanese. Even when her superiors refused to support this vision for women's education and cut off her salary, she went ahead with the plans she believed God had given. Through her support of herself and this work with money from a separate teaching job, a school with a student population of seven was born. From that has grown an educational system which includes a junior high school, three high schools, two junior colleges, and a four-year university.

Of the great number of possible types of spiritual renewal, no doubt many have occurred among the various people at Hokusei. However, Sarah Smith couples spirituality with a religious purpose as she states the school's mission:

The fundamental idea of a school is to . . . fit the pupils for the various duties and responsibilities of active life. The religious and spiritual influence brought to bear on the pupils is the most important thing in the school (Smith, c. 1887, p. 1).

In subsequent decades of school history, those responsible for leading Hokusei viewed spiritual renewal as a reality brought about through a personal knowledge of, commitment to, and ongoing relationship with, Jesus Christ. This Christ did not constitute a mere theological construct or body of moral precepts but a living being, with whom individuals or groups could and should communicate continually in order to find guidance and strength for everyday life.

This view of spiritual reality resulted in a heavy emphasis on Bible study, including several mandatory Bible classes per week and daily worship services, along with Sunday worship attendance at church. Japanese and foreign teachers led special evangelical worship services over a period of several days, for which students and staff met to pray after school each day as a form of preparation for spiritual renewal at Hokusei (Hokusei History Committee, Vol. 2, 1990, p. 70).

For the first several decades, it was not uncommon for missionaries to report twenty to thirty conversions per year (Hokusei History Committee, Vol. 2, 1990, pp. 3-100). Christians at times composed a large portion of the total student body. Forty-eight

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of seventy-two 1929 graduates were baptized Christians, for instance (Hokusei History Committee, Vol. 2, 1990, p. 84). Missionary reports from various years between 1887 and 1940 indicate numbers of student baptisms ranging from three to fifty-five, with over ten almost every year (Hokusei History Committee, Vol. 2, 1990, pp. 3-100).

However, as the events leading to World War II unfolded, opposition intensified toward religious organizations with non-Japanese connections. Under enormous pressure from the government in particular and society in general, Hokusei's leaders yielded and departed from the school's traditional Christ-centered educational values. The principal sent a contingent of Hokusei students to participate in a memorial ceremony honoring war dead at a new Shinto shrine in Nakajima Park (Hokusei Jogakko Board of Directors, 1935, pp. 25-29). The government declared that some of the campus buildings would be used for a neighboring medical school, a national organization, thus preventing new students from entering Hokusei that year and threatening its very existence as a Christian institution.

School leaders restated educational ideals so as to value loyalty to country in such a way as to exclude loyalty to Christ. The government had lilac trees, which Sarah Smith had brought from America and had come to symbolize the school, cut down. Local authorities jailed a local pastor, Rinzo Onomura, whose church had a long-standing relationship of close cooperation with Hokusei, for teaching the Bible's account of creation rather than the Shinto version (Hokusei History Committee, Vol. 2, 1990, p. 95). On both personal and public levels, Christian spirituality had practically, if not totally, disappeared. The need for a renewal of spirit, from a Christian perspective, had never been more achingly obvious.

SINCE THE SCHOOL'S FOUNDATION

When Hokusei opened the women's junior college in 1951, it did so with a renewed commitment to providing Christian-principled education. Funding came largely from Presbyterian churches in America, as the mission board had long since seen fit to support the school system it had once opposed. Contributors to Protestant work in Japan normally funnelled monies through the United Church of Christ in Japan (*Kyodan*). This organization, into which the wartime government had forced all Protestant groups, continued after the war to be the primary route by which donations arrived. As years passed, however, some denominations splintered off and others remained.

One which broke with the *Kyodan* became known as the Association of Christian Churches (*Nihon Kirisuto Kyokai*). It was with this group which one local church with close historical ties to Hokusei was associated: Kita Ichijo Church, whose pastor had spent three months in jail for promoting Christianity at Hokusei (see above). He had come to be considered "the dynamic spirit behind the school" (Hokusei History Committee,

Vol. 2, 1990, p. 96). Yet the Board of Regents, in opting to affiliate Hokusei with the Kyodan (and thus connecting the school system with a more promising source of financial assistance), to some degree separated school life from one of its greatest bases of spiritual support. Accompanying this split came a departure from the long-standing customs of dorm students' attending this church weekly and its pastor speaking at school-wide functions, as well as many other points at which the church and school cooperated.

Taking this course in its development, Hokusei received a great deal of funding from overseas. In this environment, it became advantageous not only spiritually but also economically to maintain a Christian identity. Another departure from Christian education at this point (in contrast to the situation only a few years before) would in fact have served to separate the school from its financial base. Thus emerged the ever-present possibility of maintaining a formal religiosity based far more on expediency than sincere faith. The school proceeded in this direction, with missionaries holding many top leadership positions. Others held different beliefs but cooperated with the school's religious orientation (Miura, 1995).

However, as the post-war Japanese economy gained strength and available mission funding decreased, fewer foreigners took leadership roles and values began to change. Hokusei came to depend increasingly on tuition fees and government funds, relying less on overseas sources to operate. The school now depends financially almost completely on the (non-Christian) government and parents of students, although it has maintained formal affiliation with the Kyodan. Accompanying this economic growth has come a decline in the percentage of Christians on campus. In the junior college's early days, a relatively high number (eighty to ninety percent) of staff members were Christian. The percentage of full-time Christians on staff presently stands at ten to twenty, depending on how one chooses to categorize. This decrease has come largely through the staff's numerical growth to approximately fifty. Also, when Hokusei decided to establish a four-year university in 1962, several Christian teachers departed from the junior college to take new positions there. Since that time the percentage of Christian staff members has never returned to previous levels (Miura, 1995).

A decision to stop using the sending agency which provided missionaries for many years has reduced the non-Japanese Christian staff and led to hiring from the growing number of non-Christian foreigners in Japan. The smaller number of Japanese Christians hired stems from the lack of perception of a need to seek them out, as well as the fact that there are simply few Japanese Christians with attractive professional qualifications. Japanese churches have not grown at a pace which would produce enough qualified Christians to adequately staff many schools of this size. The decline in the ratio of Christian staff members to non-Christian has accompanied another one: in the proportion of Christians

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on staff to students. At the Education Ministry's recommendation that a school register over forty students per class to survive financially, Hokusei embarked on an expansion program which has now raised the student total to approximately one thousand. Christian staff members constitute a smaller and smaller percentage of many Christian educational institutions in Japan, and this one is no exception.

It would appear that, in seeking the security of a solid financial base and attainment of secular educational goals more earnestly than that of a relationship of dependence on Christ, the institution has achieved a degree of economic success, a positive image in the community, and acceptance in the academic world, largely at the expense of spiritual enrichment. This calls into question the extent to which the commitment to Christian education existed in genuine faith, suggesting that financial and other pragmatic concerns may have outweighed spiritual ones, even from the junior college's early days.

Another factor in the spiritual decline appeared particularly in the 1960s. Democracy had entered Japanese society as militarism subsided at the end of World War II. This new structure of society came from the same countries in which Christianity was the predominant religion. Many who espoused Christ's teachings also proclaimed the greatness of democratic principles. Not surprisingly, many Japanese came to equate Christianity with democracy and capitalism. However, during the post-war decades, communist and socialist political organizations wielded considerable power. The 1960s brought an especially blunt challenge to the democratic-capitalist way of life. In rejecting these social ideals and practices, many also closed themselves off from the teachings of Christ. Those attempting to introduce Christianity into Japanese society must bear some degree of responsibility for failing to adequately distinguish faith in Christ from their own cultures and personal political values.

Further negative influence on spirituality at Hokusei came from the heavy-handed approaches some missionaries took in dealing with religious matters. For instance, they required students who did not attend daily worship, to sit quietly in classrooms during the same time, as they would have if attending. Those who attempted to enjoy chatting received sharp reprimands. Even staff members who failed to attend daily worship were subject to the same (Teraoka, 1995). This fostered an atmosphere in which students and staff came to think of faith in Christ not as a liberating, empowering force but — on the contrary — a forbidding, oppressive one. Few found anything attractive enough to interest them in this lifestyle or lead them to associate themselves with it.

These moves toward secularization have impacted campus life and the spiritual climate significantly. Most religious programs have survived, including required Christianity and English Bible classes, daily worship a few times per student per year, and Christian formats for ceremonies (such as entrance and graduation). Others have gone out of existence, such as the daily prayer and Bible study in the morning routine for students who

lived in the school dormitory. Still others, while continuing formally, have had a declining number participate in them. Despite the continuation of the formal expressions of spiritual values, however, the inner personal values and spirituality of staff members — and the students whom they influence — have undergone a great transformation. To the extent that Christian spirituality is an aspect of education which one receives by seeing it modeled and passed on through believers to those seeking it, it is true that something quite different from a passion for Christian holistic education has driven many of the school's affairs. In this sense, the need for renewal has become evident.

As spirituality has moved from being communicated largely via people to largely via programs, the response of non-Christian students and staff has, not surprisingly, also changed. Very few have chosen a spiritual renewal through entering a relationship with Christ. Because there exists no objective measure of numbers of converts or other indicators of spiritual renewal since foreign-funded missionaries left, it is very difficult to be precise as to how many have come to believe in Christ. Also, many of those who do come to believe through their experiences at Hokusei actually make a commitment to Christian faith after graduation at a local church rather than school. Nevertheless, known numbers have not varied greatly from the average of one new believer per year in recent years. In the past several decades, non-Christians have always constituted the vast majority of students. The Christian student population has never been far from the national average of around one percent for many years (Student Affairs Committee, 1973-1993).

More than Hokusei's religious identity, its ability to attract students has rested largely on its tradition and the overall reputation of its education. Only twenty-two to thirty-three percent of those choosing to attend this junior college have said they were interested or very interested in Christianity on student surveys since 1973. Surveys indicate the most common motivations for choosing the school have been its reputation in the community (those indicating this motive range from thirty-eight to fifty-one percent since 1988) and liking the overall atmosphere of Hokusei (ranging from thirty-six to fifty-one percent since 1988). Only a few have come because it is a Christian school: the highest percentage, 5.7, came in 1988 (Student Affairs Committee, 1973-1993).

This changing of the spiritual values of staff and students has contributed to a lack of sense of "ownership" of the vision of Christian education, from which the school originally grew (Drucker, 1990, p. 182). Rules requiring conformity to Christian principles remain, for example that the president must be Christian. However, these generally are policies imposed from above rather than ones emanating from personal conviction and commitment to education based on the person and teachings of Christ. Christian renewal certainly can occur and has continued to in a few lives. It usually has come through personal relationships with Christian teachers or students, participation in school or local church worship services, and discovery of Christ through classroom study. Nevertheless,

these experiences have proven far more the exception than the rule. Large class sizes and teacher-oriented educational techniques have worked against building strong personal relationships. Most of what relationship-building has happened, has occurred between people of different generations or cultures. The "horizontal growth" of people communicating faith, enjoying Christian fellowship, and serving in Christ's name with their peers, has rarely come about. This indicates the magnitude of the need for a renewal in religious education, in order for the institution to follow a strategy in line with its stated goals.

CURRENT APPROACHES TO RENEWAL

To respond to the student needs described above, staff members and students are taking a number of approaches to creating an environment in which renewal can occur. These revolve around three focal points: kerygma, or the Gospel of Christ; koinonia, (Christian fellowship), and diakonia, or service in Christ's name (Larson, 1995). Each pursues the goal of striking a balance between top-down and bottom-up leadership; program-based and person-based education; required and voluntary participation; large-group and small-group activities; and vertical and horizontal (student-to-student, staff-member-to-staff-member) interaction in Christian life on campus.

KERYGMA

The junior college continues requiring students to attend fifteen minute morning worship services, although lowering the designated number to six (a total of ninety minutes) per school year. There currently exists no time during the students' two years at Hokusei at which they receive a direct invitation to accept Christ personally. However, chapel services, along with the Christianity and English Bible classes in the required course curriculum, provide opportunities for students to learn the teachings of the Bible.

One sign of renewal has emerged this school year. Christian students have resumed the custom of giving testimonies or devotional talks at morning worship. Although some had done this type of ministry in the past, several years had lapsed since the last student-led worship. This type of student-to-student proclamation of Christ's teachings creates hope for solid and sustained renewal of faith and life at Hokusei.

Visits to local churches (optional in some classes, required in others) also give occasion for students to hear the Gospel and encounter Christ. Students receive a list of local churches to choose from, attend worship, then write reflection reports for English Bible and Christianity classes. Actually, very few go back after completing the report requirements. However, this approach to evangelism allows for more acquaintance between students and believers than teachers could ever make personally. It provides an opportunity for the words of the Gospel, which students hear in class, to take on a human face.

Many write of being deeply impressed with the warm atmosphere among the people, who really believe what the students have been learning about in class.

A Bible club has given opportunities for relational evangelism, as well. A group in existence for several decades, it has in recent years consisted primarily of non-Christians interested in the Bible or English or both. Anywhere from five to twenty-five students participate in a given week. Most students have expressed interest in primarily English activities with only a brief Bible study time. One group meets and does this during a lunch period using videos, CDs, games, and free discussion. A second group has now formed to study the Bible more seriously in Japanese. In addition to providing an opportunity for fellowship among Christian members, this smaller group also allows non-Christian members a format for spiritual growth through learning Christ's teachings in an environment much more relaxed and personal than a classroom setting. It seeks to learn and build community mainly through explanation and free discussion of Christ's teachings.

English Bible classes (required content-based English classes for first and second year students, meeting ninety minutes weekly), have begun including small group discussion. Students may choose this as one of four options (stories on computer, recorded music, and worksheets being the others) for study in the last approximately thirty minutes of class. Usually from two to eight choose to participate in discussions, and it is often the same people who choose this each week. Students have shown willingness to express individual opinions, tell their own experiences related to the lesson topics, and ask questions about difficult parts of the stories. Varying degrees of group spirit and a sense of community have developed through these discussion sessions, allowing students to encounter the Gospel of Christ in a more student-centered, informal, and personal environment.

The director of religious activities has also begun a weekly meeting for staff members interested in learning about Christianity. Several meet after work hours and discuss issues such as how Christianity is different from traditional Japanese religions and what the basics of the Bible's teachings are. This group represents another approach to presenting the Gospel of Christ relationally rather than as merely a rigid set of rules imposed from above.

KOINONIA

In addition to the casual fellowship among individual Christians, staff Bible study group members, and student Bible Club members, two new groups have formed with the purpose of enriching and renewing unity and awareness of purpose through prayer. One (about five participating weekly) has included members of the Hokusei school system's main offices and the junior college (although it is open to anyone from Hokusei). The other (approximately ten participating on a monthly basis) consists of Christian and

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non-Christian staff at the junior college.

These staff members join together to sing, learn the Bible's teachings, voice concerns, express needs, offer thanks, and ask help for the school as a whole, as well as for individuals or groups within it. Born out of Christian staff members' concern for the diminishing role of spirituality and faith in the life of the school, these meetings provide the occasion to seek renewal and unite not only socially but also in the fellowship of prayer. At a point when the declining number of eighteen-year-olds presents tremendous challenges to junior colleges nationwide, these prayer groups seek to face the future by placing hope not only in more attractive programs and facilities but primarily in God, as the one who founded and continues to have plans for Hokusei.

DIAKONIA

People at Hokusei have for many years involved themselves in service activities ranging from visiting people in prison to recycling stamps. Student Assembly Committee members have recently begun some recycling of drink containers. Bible Club members have joined with them in this, as well as with local church people and students outside the club in collecting used clothing to send to churches and schools in Liberia. Christmas worship each year includes collecting an offering, which students and school workers voluntarily give to a combination of charities. In addition to familiarizing students with the customs of tithes and offerings, this helps instill a sense of awareness of needs and opportunities for volunteer activities and community service.

The school provides a counseling service for students, hiring a professional to come for several hours per week during each semester and be available for students who come for help. While the number of those who have taken advantage of this service is not large, those who have done so indicate it is meeting significant needs in their lives. In addition, teachers each term designate a few hours per week during which students may meet to talk with them in a counseling room, either about personal problems or some other, lighter matter. Actually, relatively few schedule appointments. Those who wish to talk more often come directly to teachers' offices. As a result, much of this type of ministry occurs in non-systematic fashion but not uncommonly provides students with an opportunity to experience renewal personally, if not often in a formal evangelical context.

The Kobe area earthquake of January 1995, which claimed almost 5,500 lives, while not affecting the Sapporo area directly, continues to present opportunities for service in Christ's name. Hokusei's junior college staff combined to make a contribution of approximately ¥400,000 to similarly affiliated Christian schools which received damage. The student government planned and carried out a series of flea market type activities to raise money for several different charities contributing to relief of this disaster. Teachers

and student leaders encouraged students in worship services, classes, and club meetings, to join in helping monetarily either through direct giving (to the Christian schools or charities) or by shopping at the flea market. The school festival each fall also provides opportunities for service, as students sell food, goods, or entertainment at booths they construct. Instead of keeping the proceeds for themselves, some members of student organizations chose to donate the money to disaster relief this year. Others are considering continuing these efforts during the coming years which it will take to fully reconstruct the cities.

CONCLUSION

In light of the junior college's recent history, one could hardly define renewal in this context as going back to the way things once were. This staff and student body, by and large, have never known experientially the type of spiritual regeneration which Hokusei has continued to state as an integral part of its educational goals. Renewal, therefore, if it is in fact to occur on a broad scale, must consist not of a return to the past but a reaching forward to a spiritually-driven, faith-oriented future. The perceived call to renewal comes as a two-fold one: to follow the paths which predecessors have marked out at the leading of God, yet also to further build on the foundation they have laid. In this way Hokusei can pursue the dream of leading all its young women to prepare for their lives ahead by receiving an education based on a relationship with the Source of knowledge himself.

A number of serious challenges confront such a renewal movement. Conceiving of spiritual life as existing in programs (the curriculum and committee activities), rather than one centering on a personal relationship with a Savior existing in the hearts of faculty and students, could prevent such renewal. Considering religious matters to be ones which a handful of professionals can manage in teaching classes and organizing programs, could lead the internal political structure, despite its sincere commitment to education, to effectively impede spiritual growth. Learning, in the deepest sense, would be visualized as something which people can achieve apart from a personal knowledge of and relationship with God. To whatever extent that such conceptions of education are prevalent, a fresh commitment to Christ and his purposes will entail a basic reorienting of the direction in which this institution seeks to go.

If renewal is to become a reality at Hokusei in a manner roughly similar to the ways it typically occurs in other Christian organizations, there will also have to emerge an attitude of repentance (Bonhoeffer, 1954, p. 112). Likely beginning with the remaining Christians' contrition for unwillingness to depend fully on Christ's leadership, humility on the part of believers will prove necessary in order for others to understand what it

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means to receive God's grace. Greater commitment to prayer will also be a primary ingredient in spiritual renewal, opening broader channels of communication with the Source of understanding and creative power. Developing in school life an atmosphere of greater warmth, support, unity, and community, will allow the message of Christ's love, which Hokusei continues to proclaim, to take on more of an air of authenticity and believability.

To these ends, it will likely prove vital to discover ways to communicate the message of Christ's love not only through large groups (required classes and worship), but more personally. This message will probably come not so much from the top down (staff member-to-student), but from student to student, staff member to staff member, and on to other friends and family. In order for Christ's teachings to be communicated horizontally, participation in religious activities will undoubtedly have to move from the level of behavior which school policy requires to a lifestyle which individuals maintain freely and willingly. As this process continues, it will become more natural to create clear opportunities for students to respond to Christ in faith. Some amount of numerical growth of believers will no doubt accompany genuine renewal, along with internal maturity of those already committed to Christ.

Certainly there exists no guarantee that this renewal will ever occur on a scale broader than it already is in the lives of a few individuals and small groups. As the faith to which Hokusei has traditionally adhered cannot have authenticity if one accepts it as a result of manipulation or pressure tactics, renewal depends largely on individual choice. This presents a daunting challenge for those who seek to foster an environment which encourages growth. Yet in placing the ultimate results in the hands of individuals, and of God, lies the possibility of going back to the roots of faith from which this organization originally grew. To the extent that the school does this, it will make strides toward achieving its educational goals and realizing the dreams it perceives God continuing to hold for Hokusei.

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