



KONKO MISSION BULLETIN

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Exercising the heart

*By Yasuhiro Yano,
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In the past, I have quoted a particular episode related by the Rev. Matsutaro Yasutake, the founding minister of the Konko Church of Amagi in a booklet titled, "Michi no Shiori" or a short guidebook for the practice of the Konko faith. In the opening page of the booklet, the following is stated, "This booklet is a partial script of the speech presentation in which my grandfather shared what could be identified to be the vital elements of the practice of the Konko faith to the young ministers who were affiliated to the church on February 23, 1948. This time, in commemorating the 25th memorial year of the minister, the booklet is presented to you as a form of 'Shinobi gusa' or an item in remembrance and honor of the deceased." The notation was made by the Rev. Fumio Yasutake, the second Head Minister of Konko Church of Amagi. I believe our church members in Wahiawa have been quite familiar with the episode.

An identical episode is also found in the biography of the Founder, "Kyoso-Sama" authored by the Rev. Shinsei Konko. I would like to quote the story from this book (Volume II pages 57 to 59) for your reference because it is more detailed in the account. According to the author, the Rev. Shinsei Konko, the same pattern of episodes took place on many occasions.

At one occasion, Kami-Sama instructed Konko-Sama, "Early tomorrow morning, get up and travel to Tamashima Town. A sum of 500 yen is placed somewhere on the way. It is yours to keep. Bring the money back home . . ." Konko-Sama made an excursion by preparing a lunch bento box and traveled approximately four-kilometers and reached the town of Tamashima. He looked around the town here and there. But there was no trace of money as mentioned by Kami. At around noon, he enjoyed lunch and asked Kami-Sama, "I looked around the town for the money you mentioned, but I could not find it yet. Shall I return home now?" Kami-Sama instructed him, "Try to look around for the money till the sun sets. I am sure you can find it." It became dark. Konko-Sama asked Kami again, "I cannot find the money. Shall I return home now?" Kami-Sama responded, "Do you have your own money?" Konko-Sama answered, "Yes. I have mine." Kami-Sama responded, "If so, others also may not drop their money. Return home now." Even for those seemingly irrational instructions, Konko-Sama followed faithfully.

What can we learn in this episode? Apparently Kami-Sama tested Konko-Sama if he would find a monetary reward in following the instructions. But actually found no money on the ground. If we are in the same situation, what reactions

would we would take? We would feel fooled by Kami-Sama, confused and may get upset. These are the responses of an average believer to a failed divine promise. In my understanding, when we encounter a situation like this, the majority of us would fail to fulfill Kami-Sama and be instantly disconnected.

What if Konko-Sama responded to Kami-Sama in the same manner as we would respond in disbelief? What if Konko-Sama said, "Kami-Sama you have made promises so many times. I deserve to be rewarded with monetary gain by following your instructions. However, your promises were all invalid. I can no longer practice faith in this fake deity." Had he doubted Kami for even a minute, this religion called Konkokyo would not have come into existence. This sort of negative response would instantly disconnect us from Kami-Sama and there would be no actualization of blessings in this state of mind.

In the original episode quoted by the Rev. Yasutake in the booklet, there was a dialogue between Konko-Sama and Kami-Sama. Upon his return from the excursion in search of money, in corresponding to the extended prayer at the house altar, Kami-Sama point-blankly asked Konko-Sama, "Did you find the money I mentioned?" Konko-Sama responded firmly, "Yes, I did." Then Kami-Sama asked, "How much did you find?" Konko-Sama responded, "I cannot tell you the exact amount." Kami-Sama further questioned, "Why can't you tell the exact amount of money you have picked up?" Konko-Sama responded, "Because of the extensive walking, I got good physical exercise and good blood circulation and have been rewarded with overall good health which cannot be bought with money." Konko-Sama always found ways to bring fulfillment under any circumstances. We should be grateful for this wondrous divine virtue of Ikigami Konko Daijin who has been always connected to Kami-Sama.

Konko-Sama stayed connected to Kami-Sama under any given situation. This is vital and quite difficult to follow in reality. Some people say that this episode was to test the depth of the belief held by Konko-Sama. In my understanding, these random episodes to let the Founder go out in search of items Kami mentioned to pick up can be one of the most difficult tests imposed on him. Konko-Sama always found ways to remain connected with Kami-Sama. Another good example can be the episode of the "waraji straw sandals." Kami-Sama instructed, "Practice training during autumn. When you get up in the morning, change into formal robes, proceed to the worship hall, engage in your daily offering of prayers; upon your completion of prayer offering, let your wife bring breakfast for you; as soon as you finish your breakfast, change into your work-clothes, and walk to the field for work on bare feet."

Bunji followed the instruction faithfully and underwent the training. It was the first time Kami provided a specific instruction for his spiritual training.

In reference to the matter, there is an implication in “Konko Daijin On-Oboegaki” or the memoirs of Konko Daijin that reads, “My wife knows blessings received but has not yet learned to appreciate true blessing of Kami. She just becomes concerned only about other people’s thoughts and responses. But I don’t care about what others say. I faithfully follow the instructions of Kami. I never go against Kami.” Konko-Sama was persistent and constant in this manner of being connected to Kami-Sama regardless of the circumstances.



Konko-Sama Says . . .

Konko-Sama said, “People are endowed with the spirit of Tenchi No Kami-Sama. Nittenshi-Sama blesses our bodies with muscles and bones. Gattenshi-Sama blesses our mouths with moisture, enabling us to speak. However, few have a heart that Tenchi No Kami-Sama can accept.

Those whose hearts can be accepted by Tenchi No Kami-Sama will be blessed with good health, wealth, and wisdom for three generations, resulting in a strong family lineage. This is having your heart accepted by Tenchi No Kami-Sama. Unfortunately, people are unaware of this. Thus Kami-Sama feels pitty for them.

Having great wealth requires the wisdom that must go with it. Those whose hearts are not accepted by Tenchi No Kami-Sama may have the wealth, but not the wisdom. Thus, they will inevitably meet adversity.

Others who have the wealth as well as the wisdom, will get sick even if they do not want to. They won’t be able to go out and work in the village.

Those who have wisdom and good health, will lose their wealth. If they don’t lose their wealth, their main successors will die, leaving not inheritors.

And since those with wisdom and a good family lineage don’t have money, they won’t be asked to fill responsible positions.

These are all evidence of hearts which are not accepted by Tenchi No Kami-Sama. Since these people are not aware of Tenchi No Kami’s blessings, they are always lacking one thing or another.

If you practice faith, understand Kami’s blessings and live a peaceful and stable life, you will have descendants, gain wealth, and be rest assured. Look forward to the future. First you will receive divine blessings from year to year, then from decade to decade, and finally from generation to generation.

Even if a fruit tree blossoms, we don’t know if it will bear fruit or not. If it does bear fruit, the fruit will gradually get bigger. Similarly, with time, the divine blessings you receive will get bigger.

Kami-Sama exists throughout Tenchi, even in mountains, valleys, and river bottoms. So practice faith.” (II Sato Mitsujiro 13)

Bulletin Board

Monthly Services for December 2014

- 1 Mon -Monthly Service for Tenchi Kane No Kami (7:30 pm)
- 7 Sun -Sunday Service (9 am)
- 13 Sat -5th Memorial Services for the late Mrs. Chieno Hirota (9:00 am) & 24th Memorial of the late Mr. Richard Mankichi Hirota
- 14 Sun -Monthly Service for Founder (9:00 am)
- 21 Sun -42nd Memorial Service for Rev. Haruko Takahashi, the founding minister (10 am)
- 28 Sun -End of the Year Service (9 am)
- 30 Tue -New Year’s Mochi Pounding (8:30 am)

January 2015

- 1 Thur -New Year’s Day Service (9:00 am)
New Year’s cuisine will be served.

23rd Annual New Year’s Mochi Pounding

The ever-expanding annual New Year’s Mochi Pounding will be held on Tuesday, December 30. The Preparation to wash and soak sweet mochi rice and other preparations will be done one day before on Monday from 9:00 a.m. The steaming of mochi will begin around 7:30 a.m. and the pounding will start at around 8:30 a.m. and continue to pound over 40 batches of mochi with two traditional mochi mortar made of stainless steel and wooden mallets. The deadline for the order will be December 26. If you can help and enjoy the authentic tradition of mochi making handed down from generation to generation, you are welcome. Curry lunch will be served for volunteers.

This year, we are going to make a mochitsuki demonstration in responding a request from the JCCH or the Japanese Cultural Center of Hawaii, for 3 groups of 12 people at the location on Saturday, December 20, 2014 from 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

Congratulations

Ms. Colette Chikiko Abe (daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Neal Abe) and Mr. Jeffrey Lee, got married on Saturday, November 22nd at the Kahala Resort & Spa. Wish you a happy and prosperous family life.

Wahiawa Church Board of Trustees Meeting

We held the regular board of trustees meeting on Sunday, November 23 after the church service. The church general meeting will be held on Sunday, January 26, 2015 after monthly memorial service

Honoring the Mitama Spirits

December

Hilda Kazuno Yamamoto	12/14/2007
Fumitake Yoshiiwa	12/15/2012
Lillian Tanigawa	12/16/2010
Shizuko Takayama	12/21/2006
Rev. Fumio Yasutake	12/23/1995
Rev. Haruko Takahashi	12/24/1972

If you wish to have a name added to the church Mitama listing or removed, please contact Rev. Yasuhiro Yano.

Insight into the teachings in “Tenchi wa Kataru” or “Voice of the Universe”

The following are excerpts of series of an English translation of “Tenchi wa Kataru—Kanwa-shu” or “Compilation of Insight into the teachings in the Voice of the Universe” which contains 400 selected teachings from the original “Konkokyo Kyoten” or the “Konkokyo Scriptures.” Three authors, namely, the Revs. Mikio Seto, Yasushi Hata and Matsutarō Kōsaka contributed the insightful articles. The translation is provided by Yasuhiro Yano. (Reference pages 99, 100 and 101)

No. 99

You do not need anyone else to practice faith with. You should practice faith on your own. If you need someone else to practice faith with, you will need someone to die with. (III Konko Kyoso Gorikai 26 Kyoten page 782)

Practice faith on your own

The Founder Konko Daijin stated, “Practicing a faith which is forced on you by others is a faith which is not genuine. A faith that is not your own is easily lost. Practice true faith with devotion. People speak of practicing faith together. A stone that cannot be lifted by one person can be lifted by the combined strength of many calling out in unison. Therefore, let all the members of a family join together in practicing faith” (III Konko Kyoso Gorikai 24). He emphasized the importance of getting engaged in practice of faith together with others. Contrary to the statement, the Founder emphasized to get engaged in practice of faith all alone.

The two quoted statements seem to contradict each other. But it is a reflection of the way the Founder dealt with each individual who needed personalized message in bringing out fulfillment of the needs.

The concept of “Practicing faith on your own” is originated to the message, “They say you need someone to practice faith with. But this isn’t so. You can practice faith by yourself. If you needed someone to practice faith with, then you would also need someone to die with. However, no one is willing to die with you. Practicing faith is to live day to day eliminating the impurities in your heart” (I Ichimura Mitsugoro 13). It is the

truth of life that we come into this world through birth and die all alone. Our own birth, living and death cannot be substituted by anybody else. Nobody would die with you no matter how lonely you may feel upon departure. Only agreed upon mutual suicide may accomplish such a wish. Because of the nature of our given life, we should develop the absolute belief expressed in a phrase, “独座大雄峰”(Dokuza dai yuuhou) which was originally stated by 百丈懷海禪師 (Hyakujouekaizenji) over 1,000 years ago. A rough meaning of the phrase is that finding myself sitting alone in this manner can be a wondrous thing in the world.

Even when we make a visit to church, our heart should not be affected by the surrounding elements. If we feel experience comfort or disappointment depending on the number who share the same church functions, our commitment in the practice of faith is of little power. It is important that each believer should get engaged in the practice of faith with the heart of “I will fulfill my own determination in pursuit of faith regardless of the noises expressed by hundreds and thousands of people.”

The Founder encouraged practicing faith together based on the notion that each believer has established a solid belief as has been stated, “Practicing a faith which is forced on you by others is a faith which is not genuine. A faith that is not your own is easily lost. Practice true faith with devotion” (III Konko Kyoso Gorikai 24).

Practicing faith is a personal matter. We should get engaged in the practice of faith sincerely and find out the valid nature of the faith involvement individually, regardless of how other people would respond to the way we practice faith.

No. 100

For faith, daily renewal is most important. Live each day with the same happy heart you have on New Year’s Day. When the sun sets, think that it is the last day of the year. When the sun rises, think that it is New Year’s Day. If you are happy everyday, there will be no discord in the family. (III Konko Kyoso Gorikai 35 Kyoten page 786)

For faith, daily renewal is most important.

The old saying goes, “元日や 昨日の鬼が 礼に来る” that roughly means, “Even those evil people that are despised by all would come to extend their greetings in celebration of New Year’s Day.” That is indeed true. Everybody wishes to start anew upon the arrival of New Year’s Day.

The Founder showed some parallel elements in the old saying and the way we pursue faith. The parallel element is the heart of renewal. The Founder tried to convey that we need to renew our hearts daily and get engaged in the practice of faith in the same manner as we experience on New Year’s Day. The expression “aratamaru” in Japanese sounds like we have to extend our apologies for the wrongful acts and try to reform our hearts to avoid the same mistakes. But the intent of the Founder could be just the notion that we should go forward in aiming better results.

In the world of religious practice, the sky is the limit. We should try to strive as much as we can in pursuit of faith. In regard to the manner how we get engaged in pursuit of faith, the founding minister of the Konko Church of Hita composed two Japanese verses as follows:

“進めかし 進めかし なほ進めかし 道の前途に 果てしなければ” that can be roughly translated into English, “Strive forward in pursuit of faith with full strength since there would be no end in your path.”

“登れかし なほ登れかし 登れかし道のきざはし 限りなければ” that also can be expressed in English, “Strive to climb up with all your might in pursuit of faith since the steps to reach the peak would be infinite distance away.”

The spirituality expressed in those verses represent that this kind of endless and tireless endeavor in pursuit of faith is vital. There would be no resting in pursuit of faith.

It could be impossible to live in that manner. But the Founder showed us there could be a way to live in that manner, that is to exercise the same heart of welcoming New Year’s Day in pursuit of faith daily.

A president of a big company became so moved by the message and share the message to the newly employees at the assembly. He stated, “If each of us exercises daily renewal of heart expressed in the message, and work in happiness, we are to enjoy good human relationships in the working place.”

I recommend the readers to refer to the message shown below and learn to appreciate the deeper meaning of the message. The message reads, “Kondo-san, as Kami-Sama has just said, since New Year’s is to celebrate the whole year, it is truly auspicious. Angry people will be told not to be angry because it is New Year’s. Live each day with the same happy heart you have on New Year’s Day. When the sun sets, think that it’s the last day of the year. It will make your life happy every day, and there will be no discord in your family. Live happily as if each day were New Year’s Day” (I Kondo Fujimori 52).

No. 101

Your lifetime is a training period of faith. (III Konko Kyoso Gorikai 37 Kyoten page 785)

Lifetime faith training

“Shugyo” or religious training is an integral part of any religious practices. They say, “Learn to appreciate the meanings of ‘shugyo’ through your physical engagement in the practice of faith.” Spiritual strength will be gained only through physical work.

Because of this inseparable relationship between the body and the spirit, some religions impose very demanding ascetic “shugyo” trainings. Sometimes they undergo torturous physical trainings only for a limited period of time span in consideration of dangerous nature of the training.

But the Founder who witnessed the extreme ascetic trainings practiced by the Yamabushi priests developed some doubts about the nature of the trainings. The Founder conceived that practicing faith should be ingrained in the daily living of the believers. He questioned about the valid nature of getting engaged in some special training for a limited period of time alone, and completely isolated from the daily living. He could not identify the meaning of the “shugyo” training practice and the faith life of the religion.

The Founder shared his own theory, “While we are alive, no matter how much achievements we enjoy in life and how much we age, every single day throughout of the entire life span should be designated for practicing ‘shugyo’ training.”

The 3rd Spiritual Head of the Konkoko Religious Faith, the late Rev. Setsutane Konko made remarks such as “Every single day is a fresh new day,” “No matter how long I have served for the given work, I have always been mindful that I should be careful in fulfilling my given work.” In this manner, he served as Principal Toritsugi-Mediator for 70 years long. He showed the ultimate example of a believer who demonstrated an ideal faith life.

Following the example demonstrated by the 3rd Konko-Sama, we should also learn to accept any developments in life as given elements for “shugyo” and try to deal with them by exercising the heart of practicing “shugyo” training perpetually. We have spiritual inclination to try to accept any negatively inclined encounters as elements for “shugyo” training, but fail to appreciate any positive encounters as elements of “shugyo” training. There could be some danger in developing self-conceit and failing to keep the heart of practicing “shugyo” training. The Rev. Tokusaburo Hata, the founding minister of Konko Church of Tokyo was quite aware of this aspect of getting engaged in practice of faith and composed a Japanese verse as a reminder for himself and others, “よしあしを 神に任せて 一筋に 祈る心や まことなるらむ” that could be roughly translated into English, “Be ready to accept any consequences for our single-hearted prayer toward Kami as divinely intended shall represents the offering of our truth and sincerity.”