



Think faith to practice faith

By Yasuhiro Yano
Head Minister

In the latest issue of the San Francisco Church newsletter, Universal Mind, my son, Rev. Rodney Yano expressed his thoughts regarding the ideology, "*Shinjin wa shinjin de kangaeru*" which I made in the January issue of Konko Mission Bulletin. He stated, "Think faith to practice faith. Faith is equivalent to learning a new language, such as learning to speak English. In order to learn English, you have to think, speak, and practice in English. It has to be practiced. Just like faith, think faith, speak faith, and maybe just maybe the elements of faith will come to fruition."

The expression of "*Shinjin wa shinjin de kangaeru*" has been an everyday expression at the Konko Church of Amagi when I received religious training. I felt it was fundamental for any Konko believer to try to see, interpret, and accept all things that develop in our faith life through our spiritual eyes. I have been experiencing powerful effects of the concept to cultivate our own faith in Kami and to expand the Konko faith community in Hawaii. My elder brother, the Rev. Seijiro Inagaki of Konko Church of Iwatani in Hiroshima was the one that singled out the most basic element in the practice of faith as I shared my thoughts at the 90th anniversary celebration held at his church last year. I feel so pleased in witnessing some of the church congregation practicing faith while thinking in faith.

Practicing faith, while thinking in faith implies that our minds have been saturated with faith. Without the knowledge and elements of the faith being stored up in mind, there would be no way we can think things out in faith.

I remember a statement once made by my father when I was still a junior high student. The Rev. Hidejiro Hosaka of Konko Church of Kawanoishi in Ehime, told my father, "*Yano-san, Shinjin wa shuuyou dewa naidesukarana*" or "Yano-san, to practice faith does not mean to self discipline." I have been wondering about this statement for all those years, till this age. Now it all feels like the pieces are coming together. I am sure that the Rev. Hosaka was trying to instill the ideology of practicing faith, while thinking in faith to my father.

A typical example of how we can practice faith in this manner can be found in the following episode experienced by the Founder Konko-Sama. 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. I will give you the money. 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.

Upon his return from the excursion, when the Founder Konko-Sama extended his prayer, Kami asked me point blankly, "Did you find the money I mentioned?" In responding to the inquiry, Konko Sama responded by saying, "Today, I was able to enjoy exercising my physical body through extensive walking. I regained excellent blood circulation and feel wonderful. Money cannot buy good health and a refreshed feeling." This can be the typical example of "*Shijin wa shinjin de kangeru*." The receptiveness of Konko-Sama for such seemingly irrational instructions of Kami is a reflection of a solid mutually respecting relationship being cultivated between Konko-Sama and Tenchi Kane no Kami, through the devoted faith of the Founder. It is not one-sided trust, but a mutually developed trusting relationship between Konko-Sama and Tenchi Kane no Kami.

Konko-Sama stated, "There are many who believe in Kami, but there are few Kami trusts." The most attainable condition we can develop through our involvement in the practice of faith is to gain Kami's confidence in the way we pursue the faith. The only way we can develop such trust-building relationship is to live the faith, believe in the teachings of Kami and actualize them in our faith life.

What do we see in the episode? Apparently Kami-Sama tested Konko-Sama if he would get a monetary reward in following the instructions. But actually he gained no monetary reward. If we could be in the same situation, what reactions we would take. We would feel fooled by Kami-Sama, confused and may get upset. These are the average believers' responses to a failed divine promise,

aren't they? In my understanding, when we encounter a situation like this, the majority of us would fail to fulfill Kami-Sama and be instantly disconnected with Kami-Sama.

What if Konko-Sama responded to Kami-Sama in disgust and called Kami a liar? What if he felt deserving of the monetary reward? An ordinary person would no longer practice this kind of fake deity and this faith 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. We should be grateful for this wondrous divine virtue of Ikigami Konko Daijin who has been always connected to Kami-Sama through practicing faith by thinking in faith.

Konko-Sama Says . . .

Think about how birds and animals survive, then you will understand the blessings of Kami-Sama. In winter, they don't put on anything extra, and in summer, they don't take off anything. Kami-Sama raises them without any problems. When cows or other animals give birth, the calf is not warmed by its mother, yet it grows into a large cow. Look at trees. They start from two barely visible leaves and grow into towering trees without any special care. They benefit the world, and people are blessed with wood for heating. If housewives think about this, they will understand the blessings of Kami-Sama. Everyone must understand the divine nature of all things and practice faith. (II Yamamoto Sadajiro 5)

There is nothing you cannot receive through requests. Request through Konko Daijin. You can receive divine blessings for all your requests. (II Shiota Mohachi)

Bulletin Board

Regular Church Services for February 2012

- 1 Wed -Monthly Service for Tenchi Kane no Kami, 7:30 pm
- 5 Sun -Sunday Service at 9 am
- 12 Sun -Monthly Service for Founder at 9 am
- 19 Sun -Monthly Memorial Service at 9 am
- 26 Sun -Sunday Service at 9 am

Volunteer at Wahiawa General Hospital

We will make a monthly visit to the Wahiawa General Hospital Long-Term Care Facility on Friday, February 10 at 10:00 a.m. by means of offering entertainment for the people cared for in the facility. The program is in Japanese.

H.C.R.P. Peace Prayer Observance

The regular meeting will be held on Monday, February 6 at the Palolo Kwannon Temple at 1:30 p.m.

KMH General Meeting

The annual members meeting of Konko Missions in Hawaii will be held on Saturday, February 25 at 1:30 p.m. at the Konko Mission of Honolulu.

Church Picnic at Frankie's Nursery

We will make a visit to Frankie's Nursery where many tropical fruits are grown and sold. We will leave after the Sunday Service on February 26 at around 10:00 a.m. We will have a picnic lunch at the nursery grounds. Onigiri lunch will be prepared by the church. Please come to enjoy this interesting and serene place in Waimanalo.

Garage Sale for Ohana Camp 2012.

Saturday, March 17 from 9 am- 2 pm. No food will be sold. But plenty goods!

Honoring the Mitama Spirits for February

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|------------------------|-----------|
| Thomas Takahashi | 2/9/2005 |
| Ichiro Yano | 2/5/2006 |
| Dennis Fujio Tamashiro | 2/6/1998 |
| Yoshiyuki Momotomi | 2/10/2003 |
| Umi Yasuyo | 2/3/1965 |
| Marilynn Olsen | 2/22/2009 |
| Jiro Oho | 2/14/1937 |
| Elisa Albarran | 2/20/1977 |
| Mildred Chiyoko Oka | 2/12/2004 |
| Suetsuki Toyofuku | 2/24/1995 |

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 followings 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 Matsutaro Kosaka contributed the insightful articles. The translation is provided by Yasuhiro Yano. (Reference pages 2, 3 and 4)

No. 2 Heaven and Earth continue to live. Because Heaven and Earth are alive, all people are able to live. (III Jinkyu Kyogoroku 104)

In the Konkokyo faith tradition, we have emphasized the very vital nature of both Heaven and Earth from long time ago. We are quite familiar with such expressions, “*Tenchi no Megumi*” or the blessings bestowed by Heaven and Earth and “*Tenchi no Dōri*” which means Universal principle of Heaven and Earth.

The concept of “Living nature of Heaven and Earth” and “In Heaven and Earth is the life that nurtures all” found in the Shinzen Haishi Prayer, has began to gain broader acceptance in corresponding to the publication of “Konkokyo Kyoten” or the Konkokyo Scriptures.

This teaching openly stated that both Heaven and Earth have their own lives. For the Founder, it was one of the greatest spiritual awakenings that both Heaven and Earth are alive. Only those people who have lived and resonate with the workings of both Heaven and Earth can develop such a wondrous perception. Those who have been educated in today’s science-oriented environment have hardly been able to perceive Heaven and Earth as being alive. In the scientific communities, they use the term of “*Shizen*” which implies nature, instead of “Tenchi” which means Heaven and Earth. “*Shizen*” or nature implies that all existences and phenomena in the world are inanimate; while “Tenchi” or Heaven and Earth implies that all those existences in the world have lives.

We are alive because there are tiny lives within our own physical bodies. In the same way, Heaven and Earth are alive because there is life within Heaven and Earth. This immeasurably large body we call Heaven and Earth can be referred to as Kami-Sama or Our Divine Parent.

We can be alive only because both Heaven and Earth are alive. The statement also reflects the Founder’s keen sense of insight about the nature of Heaven and Earth. The lives of Heaven and Earth are closely connected to the lives of human beings; and the lives of Heaven and Earth are an integral part of the lives of human beings. We can sustain our lives because we

have the basic needs of survival, such as food, clothes and shelter, plants and all other things in between Heaven and Earth. By extending our thoughts in this manner, we can understand we have been vitally connected to the Divine Parent.

NO. 3 Tenchi Kane No Kami is a kami that has existed since the beginning of time, not any time in-between. The Universe is not a passing fad. Something which is not a fad will not end. It is essential to have a heart like that of the Universe. Even those who don’t practice faith receive Kami’s blessings. (III Konko Kyoso Gorikai 7-1, 2)

Tenchi Kane No Kami has existed since the beginning of time.

When the Founder talked about Kami-Sama, he most likely quoted two elements. One is “Tenchi” or Heaven and Earth, as has been stated in the quoted teaching above; the other is “Parent.”

The main reasons why the Founder referred to “Tenchi” or Heaven and Earth is to show the nature of Kami-Sama as has been shown below; (1) Heaven and Earth represent infinite broadness, (2) the working of Heaven and Earth is precise and stable, (3) the blessings from Heaven and Earth, such as air, water, light, heat and other elements represent inexhaustible and unconditional blessings for all living creatures.

This teaching also shows that Tenchi Kane No Kami has existed since the beginning of time and maintained its universal presence along with Heaven and Earth.

While he was sharing his thoughts with others in such a manner, the Founder seemed to be preoccupied with the reality of human lives. He might be overwhelmed with a thought that human existence has been so limited, compared with the universal scale of Heaven and Earth, and the ever-changing nature of human beings who experience drastic ups and downs in their lives.

We cannot see the true nature of our existence through the human-oriented point of view. The true nature of our existence can be perceived when we position ourselves in the realm of the great existence being reflected by a great ray of light. We can confirm how our hearts can be so limited, self-oriented, strongly discriminatory, susceptible to our immediate needs and wants and ever-changing in comparison to the heart of “*Tenchi Jitsugesu no Kokoro*” which represents having a heart like that of the Heaven and Earth and the Sun and Moon. Their activities remain constant.

We have believed in Kami of Heaven and Earth who stated, “Even if you don’t practice faith, you have already received Kami’s divine blessings” (Ichimura Mitsugoro 2-1). If we are dedicated to get involved in the practice of faith, we have to respond to be devoted with the heart of “*Tenchi Jitsugetsu no Kokoro*”.

No. 4 Kami is the parent of us all. Faith is the same as showing respect to your parents. (III Shinkun 1-5) 5 P. 773

This teaching shows the relationship between Kami and people through the reference to “parents.”

The unfamiliar expression “hontai” is used in the passage. In accordance with a dictionary, the vocabulary means “true existence of body, true character and main element.” The word implies true nature and the most vital nature of an element which are different from figures and phenomenon being perceived through our normal sensory abilities.

Then what could be the true nature of human existence, that is to say the most vital meaning of human existence? The answer is quite simple. We are “Kami no *ujiko*” or “beloved children of Kami”. The true nature of human existence means that we, as beloved children of Kami have been wholly sustained by Divine Love and the most vital meaning of human existence means that we, as beloved children of Kami, have been bestowed with “*wake-mitama*” (literally meaning “shared soul or divine soul”).

“Faith is the same as showing respect to your parents.” What does this imply?

There can be many ways to express our appreciation to our biological parents, such as to help them out; forward comfort without having them worry about us constantly; giving gifts and so forth. But the most fulfilling appreciation to our parents is that we extend our perpetual acknowledgement of parental love that has helped us to evolve what we have been enjoying.

In the same token, there can be many ways we can show our appreciation for the blessings we have enjoyed through the Divine Parent. But the most vital expression of appreciation can be that we acknowledge the true nature of our existence which have been wholly sustained by the Divine Love and try to nurture the growth of our “*wake mitama*” or the shared divine soul bestowed by Kami. This is how we can extend our true appreciation to the Divine Parent.