



Divine acceptance

By Yasuhiro Yano

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It could be very personal, but both my wife and I have reached the age of 72 in good health, good relations, and a sustainable financial situation for all those years of our life in Hawaii. When I was young, people in their 50s, 60s, and 70s looked so old. In blessedness, I don't see myself in that image of getting old. A few days before my birthday, I just happened to open my desk drawer a few days ago, I again witnessed a slip of a handwritten message from Edna since she was 7 or 8 years old. It could be the best birthday card I could ever get in my life. For my entertainment, I would like to reissue the same message I contributed to the monthly newsletter of our church three years ago.

The following episode took place about 10 to 11 years ago. While my wife, Reiko, has been searching for an official document that would prove she has been a resident of this address for the last 35 years, she incidentally found a memo slip written by our daughter, Edna, when she was about 7 or 8 years old. The note was written in Japanese. She might have scribbled down her demands for me since the title of the note is addressed "To Ootoosan" or "To Dad." The title of the memo was "Ootoosan shitewa ikenaikoto" or a list of "Things that Dad is not allowed to do."

Anyway, the list of Edna's prayers for me goes as follows:

1. りこんをしてはいけません - "Do not get a divorce."
2. こんこうきょうのごしんじんをやめてはいけません - "Do not give up the practice of the Konko faith."
3. けんかをふきかけてはいけません - "Do not get into fights with mom."
4. しんではいけません - "Do not die."
5. でていってはいけません - "Do not abandon the family."

Both my wife and I burst into laughter as we read this pleasant surprise. We had no idea under what situation Edna jotted down this message to me. I had no idea that this letter existed. This is a very powerful prayer for me. But I understand she tried to secure her own life. She

found those elements a father should be the foundation of her secured and happy life. The reason is simple and clear as we examine the message. In the first message, 「りこんをしてはいけません」 - Do not get divorced. If we had ever gotten divorced, her life would have been devastated even at that age of 7 or 8 or even at the current age. In blessedness, we have been able to keep our marital relationship in a stable manner. In her second message, "こんこうきょうのごしんじんをやめてはいけません" - Do not give up the practice of the Konko faith. This is quite amazing. She used the expression "ごしんじんをやめてはいけません." At the age of 7 or 8, Edna already understood and was able to appreciate the peaceful nature of the Konko faith in family life. In a sense, she appreciated the blessed elements of the faith. This is quite natural because ever since our children were born, they were saturated in the Konkokyo faith life.

Ever since they were born, my wife has taken our three children to the Ohiromae (worship hall) for the daily prayer services. They also accompanied us to attend the monthly church service at the Honolulu Church all the way up to their graduation from high school. We took them to participate in any and most of the church functions in the Konko Missions in Hawaii. In her third message: けんかをふきかけてはいけません Do not fight with your wife. I do not think I have ever tried to get into fights with my wife, but I might have offended my wife without my knowledge from time to time. In Edna's 4th message: しんではいけません Do not die. Our entire family has enjoyed good health all the way to this stage in life. Being able to sustain our lives is the greatest blessing we can celebrate. But if parents are abusive and cause troubles to the family, children might grow up with anger and hatred. No. 5: でていってはいけません Do not abandon the family. Some parents abandon their family. This is the reality of life.

When I extended my thoughts for the list of things that I am not allowed to do, according to my daughter, I found an amusing thought that can be universally appreciated. The reality is that many people in society fail to fulfill one or two elements on Edna's prayer list. But the truth is, we simply cannot enjoy the fulfillment of all the elements mentioned on our own power alone.

I have no concrete idea how I could have enjoyed the fulfillment of all those elements so far. We have enjoyed

good health, good relations, and have been blessed with three children who have evolved to become Konko ministers and have gotten engaged in ministry. I can attribute what we have enjoyed to the virtuous power of the Konko faith engagement. I can attribute the blessings I have enjoyed to the work of Toritsugi-Mediation of Konko-Sama in generations and the line of Toritsugi-Mediation. It could be the accumulated virtuous resource my parents and the family ancestors have contributed through their faith life. I could attribute the blessings I receive to all of you who have extended your prayers for us. But I simply put that source of blessing in the expression of "*Okage-samade*" or "*Kami-Sama no Okagede*," which includes all the elements I have mentioned.

The 4th Konko Sama, the late Rev. Kagamitaro Konko, used the expression "*sewaninaru subeteni reivo in kokoro heima umidasu kokoro to iwan*" or the heart of trying to extend thanks for any and all those elements which can be integral and helpful in life will help contribute to keeping peace.

He shared the concept of "*Inochi no shin no hataraki*" or the core function of any living things upon our way to move to Hawaii for our missionary work. He quoted a tree, for example.

The following is my interpretation of his message. When a baby is born, we exchange greetings by saying *Omedetou gozaimasu* and *arigatou gozaimasu* among the people involved. When the child grows up and becomes one year old, they also exchange greetings of celebration by saying, "*Omedeto gozaimasu*," and *arigato gozaimasu* in return. When the child begins to enroll in school, they also repeat the same tradition of exchanging greetings of celebration. When the child graduates from school, they also congratulate the child.

And we try to keep exchanging greetings of celebration till we die, as long as there are no elements that may prevent that tradition. When we encounter a time when we can no longer exchange celebratory remarks, life will encounter hardship.

The same vital function can also be identified in all living things. For example, look at the tree in the yard. A tree continues to grow through the life-sustaining function given to it. It is a given condition that the root system takes up needed water and nutrients in the soil, and the leaves also create food for the body through the blessing of sunlight. Everything works in the given condition. If there is no sunlight, there would be no tree. If there is no water, there would be no tree. The land, the soil, the water, the air, and the sunlight are all given conditions for sustaining a tree. We identify them as blessings of Kami.

If a tree stops taking up water and nutrients from the soil, the tree may wilt down and die. The same is true if the leaves and roots stop creating food for the body, the tree would die as well. The function of the roots and the leaves can be likened to the function of expressing our thoughts of joy, thankfulness, appreciation, or whatever expressions we use in celebrating the state of blessedness.

Konko-Sama also showed us a simple formula to see if we have been in line with the heart of Kami and walking the right path for happiness and prosperity. The formula is to see if we have the heart of gratitude for any elements in our daily life. The message is very strong, and you must find the power of the message on your own through your practice of faith. This is the meaning of "*shinjin suru/sasete itadaku*" or to practice faith.

Konko-Sama said...

Konko Daijin said, "People have often wondered why a man who is honest, doesn't do anything bad to others, and is like a kami or Buddha, is often afflicted with many misfortunes. This is because he has somehow shown irreverence to Kami.

[*GIII: Jinkyu Kyogoroku/ed. Kataoka, Jiro:105.1*]

2 No matter how honest and good he is, he is apt to commit irreverence to Kami if he does not practice faith. There is a difference between having a good personality and showing reverence to Kami." [*GIII:Jinkyu Kyogoroku/ed. Kataoka, Jiro:105.2*]

3 No matter how good he is, if he doesn't practice faith, he will not receive divine blessings. [*GIII: Jinkyu Kyogoroku/ed. Kataoka, Jiro:105.3*]



Honoring the Mitama Spirits

July

Shimeno Iwasa	7/1/1966
May Shima	7/30/2004
Masao Yoshihara	7/12/2002
Yasuo Hayashida	7/5/1998
Miyamoto Asa Iratsume	7/23/1933
Rev. Yoshie Yoshino	7/21/2005
Randy Yamamoto	7/5/2014
Robert Walker	7/15/2015
Wesly Katsumi Ooyama	7/4/1981
Masae Baba	7/20/1987
Joseph, dog of Kaoru Makiguchi	7/13/2016
Mary Elizabeth Valmoja	7/13/2022

Bulletin Board

Church Services for July 2023

- 1 Sat -KMH Bech Clean-up and BBQ event at Haleiwa Ali'i Beach Park (10 am to 2 pm)
- 2 Sun -Monthly Svc. for Tenchi Kane No Kami 7:30 pm
- 9 Sun -Monthly Svc for Ikigami Konko Daijin (9 am)
- 16 Sun -Sunday Service (9 am)
- 23 Sun -Monthly Memorial Service (9 am)

August 2023

- 1 Tue - Monthly Service for Tenchi Kane No Kami (9 am)
- 2 Sun -Sunday Service at 9 am, followed by KMH Rotary Hanashikai on ZOOM, Wailuku to host from 10:30 am.

●Monthly Volunteer Activity at St. Francis

The next activity will be on Fri, July 7 @ 10:30 am

●KMH Kyoten Study Group via Zoom

The main reference book will be "Voice of the Universe."

Join us: July 5 & 19 (Wed. from 5 pm to 6 pm)

ZOOM ID: 815 2952 9465 **PASS:** 914385

●KMH CEOC Meeting

ZOOM on Friday, July 21, 2023 (3 pm)



The Life of the Founder

金光教祖の生涯 瀬戸三喜雄 金光教学研究所 紀要別冊教学叢書 2

The following is an English translation of a book titled, "Konko Kyoso no Shougai" or "The Life of the Founder Konko Daijin" authored by the Rev. Mikio Seto, and was published by Konkokyo Theological Research Center. The publication was made in 1980. There are many biographies about the life of the Founder Konko Daijin. I would like to introduce this article for your reference in your pursuit of faith. An English translation was provided by Rev. Yasuhiro Yano. (Page 102 to 106) (continued from the previous issue)

Communications with Kami

It was the end of July, and the farmers were preparing their main tools for harvesting the rice crop. Bunji went to Naguchi, Honjo Village, to see a grain mortar maker about his mortar, which was in disrepair. The mortar was used to remove the hull from the rice grain. It was a round mortar, about 60 to 70 centimeters in size, made of bamboo planks with blades of oak wood placed around the bowl and secured with clay. The craftsman responded, "I will come to your house next month for the

construction of the mortar." On August 13th (September 19th, according to the Gregorian calendar), Bunji inquired of Kami about his intent to visit the Abe family in Yamori (current Kurashiki City), who had invited him to attend the Yamori Village Festival. Kami instructed him, "Don't go today. The mortar maker will come." Bunji prepared for the craftsman's visit but he didn't show up at the expected time. The distance between their houses was about 4 kilometers, so it shouldn't have taken much travel time. This was Bunji's first time constructing a mortar, and he grew a bit tired of waiting for the visitor. Around 10 am, the craftsman finally arrived and finished his work in one day. Bunji was convinced of the certainty of Kami's instructions, and he believed that things would proceed smoothly if he faithfully followed those instructions. He felt that a new perspective for his future life would prevail from this point forward.

A message about the cholera epidemic

In September, Hikosuke Kandori, who lived in Bunji's birthplace, received news of his marriage to Moto, who was the daughter of Seizo Obata in Kukui (current Kurashiki City). Moto had a child from her previous marriage. Many of Bunji's siblings had experienced unfortunate events in their lives for various reasons, and Hikosuke was no exception. Bunji, who enjoyed a more prosperous economic life in the village community, arranged the marriage for Hikosuke. He accompanied Hikosuke to the Obata family's home, bringing necessary household items and gifts for the family. Bunji hosted the reception for Hikosuke's integration into the family, where family members, relatives, and other guests gathered. As they were about to enjoy the food, Kami gave Bunji an unexpected instruction, saying, "Mix the vinegar well in the side dish of vinegared sashimi and pickled vegetables that accompany the sake." Kami told Bunji, "Vinegar that is not mixed well can cause food poisoning, which may develop into cholera" (Oboegaki 5-8-3).

Bunji experienced an unusual instruction from Kami, which was not at the altar room. It could have been considered rude and unpleasant for the host to disrupt the festive mood by disturbing the presented feast in front of the guests. Bunji could have ignored the embarrassing instruction from Kami, but he didn't care about potential negative responses from the guests and promptly responded to the situation. He extended his apologies and used a pair of chopsticks to mix each guest's vinegared sashimi and pickled vegetables.

In May of 1858, a cholera epidemic spread in the region. It started in Kyushu and spread to the western regions, including Osaka, Kyoto, and all the way to Edo (Tokyo).

By July, the epidemic had reached its peak, and it was estimated that several tens of thousands of people had died. Those infected with the disease suffered severe symptoms and often died within a few days. In the Kyushu area, they referred to the epidemic as "*teppo*," meaning guns. In the Sanyo area, it was called "*korori*" (instant death). In Osaka, people feared the epidemic and referred to it as "*3-day korori*" (dying within three days).

Bunji instinctively understood that the food presented to the guests could potentially cause cholera. However, his fear could also be baseless. Despite potential embarrassment and gossip from others, Bunji convinced himself to take action and follow the instructions from Kami. If he were an ordinary person, he might hesitate to take such an embarrassing action in front of the guests and disregard the message given by Kami. But the divine instruction dispelled such ordinary embarrassment, and he faithfully followed it. Kami may have tested him to take action and experience a new world unfolding thereafter.

The following morning, on September 16th, after Bunji asked Kami about his plans for the day, Kami responded, "In the morning, both your wife and son should separate the rice from the plants." Kami told Bunji, "There are over five bushels of old, unhulled rice. In the morning, thresh all this unhulled rice" (Oboegaki, 5-9-1). Kami further added, "Since the mortar has just been repaired, turning it would be difficult. Therefore, I will lend you a hand" (Oboegaki, 5-9-2).

Bunji informed his adoptive mother, "I will have someone helping me today, so please prepare lunch early." He attempted to use the mortar alone. Since the mortar had been renewed, the sharp blades of oak were tightly engaged in the mortar. Normally, it would require two people to operate the mortar. His wife and son were assigned to other tasks, so Bunji was the only one operating the mortar. Strangely enough, Bunji found it easy to operate the mortar and even enjoyed turning it while singing songs. Later, Kami interjected, "Now, try turning it by yourself." Bunji suddenly felt short of breath, couldn't sing anymore, and was unable to turn it by himself.

His adoptive mother came to see Bunji's work and asked him quizzically, "This morning, you said you had someone helping you, but no one has come." She thought there would be someone assisting Bunji in turning the mortar. Bunji hesitated to reveal that Kami had helped him, so he simply mentioned that "someone would help me." She wouldn't be able to comprehend that Kami had assisted him.

Bunji was able to finish grinding the five bushels of rice in the morning. After lunch, three family members went to pick cotton in the field. The yield of cotton was unstable and speculative, depending on various factors. Bunji managed a considerable cotton field because the commodity could be easily exchanged for currency. For some reason, picking cotton went smoothly and efficiently. His wife wondered, "How were we able to do everything so quickly today?" (Oboegaki 5-9-8).

In this manner, Bunji was able to carry out his farm work smoothly without any troubles due to his faithful attitude towards Kami and his willingness to follow instructions. Later in his life, he recalled, "Once, while I was grinding the mortar, Kami told me to dance, so I danced. Then when Kami told me to sing, I sang. Also, while I was drying barley outside on a sunny day, Kami told me to bring it in because it would rain. After doing so, it began to rain heavily. In any case, practice faith without doubting Kami, and act like a fool if you must" (Gorikai II, Ikeda Tomisuke 3). Bunji tried not to be concerned about people's gossip, never sought to take advantage of others, and never engaged in speculative behavior. He always adhered to his own conviction and faithfully followed Kami's instructions, as stated, "In any case, practice faith without doubting Kami, and act like a fool if you must."

The rice plants seemed to be in jeopardy due to the rampant spread of rice insects just as they were ready to be harvested. This year, the spread of rice insects caused substantial damage to the region. According to records kept at a temple in the area, "In autumn, rice insects spread and damaged the rice plants, causing great suffering for the people." Some farmers were defeated by sadness and complained, "I applied oil to the paddies three times, but it didn't work at all. I could hardly harvest even one bushel of rice."

On the other hand, Bunji enjoyed a good harvest. They said the rice in Bunji's fields was far better than anyone else's in the region. Bunji and Sansaku Furukawa used the same rice seeds in neighboring locations, but the difference in plant growth was evident. There were rumors that Bunji might be using a different type of rice. The growth of Bunji's rice was so remarkable that they were amazed by the difference. The rice plants in the field where he followed Kami's instruction not to use oil looked far better than the plants in other paddies where oil was used.