



KONKO MISSION BULLETIN

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Identifiable Konko believers

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Several members of the Konko Mission of Wahiawa attended a funeral a few weeks ago. It was a private service with mainly family members and close friends of the deceased. One of the attendees made an interesting remark about the Konkokyo believers who showed up at the funeral. She said to one of the church members that Konko believers seem to be different in a positive aspect from the rest of the people who were at the funeral. There was something clearly distinct about them and so wanted to know the reason.

I am not exactly sure what kind of an impression she held, but I believe they identified something unique about the believers of the Konko faith, such as a positive attitude, modesty and readiness to respond in appreciation and so forth. This is something we can celebrate as Konko believers because we might have evolved to be identified as Konko believers while we have not been much aware of ourselves, but can be identified by people who are not familiar with the Konko faith community. When I heard this remark, I was delighted that there can be someone who appreciates the difference of the Konko believers and those who are not in the faith community.

From time to time, I have shared my thought that we need to evolve to become identifiable Konko believers through our engagement in the practice of faith. It means that even those people who are not directly connected to the Konko faith can see something different, something unique in the way the believers act and talk. The Founder Konko-Sama used the expression of “henjin” or a person who is different from others. If henjin is translated into English, only negatively inclined terms show up in association with this expression. But the same was true even when the Founder Konko Daijin lives. In those days, there were so many people with unique nicknames, such as “Usotsuki-Magosa,” “Ochitsuki-Shunsa,” “Jiiwaru-Zensa” and so forth. While Konko-Sama was nicknamed, “Shinjin-Bunsa” or Pious-Bunji. In a sense, Konko-Sama was a “henjin” or “different” from other villagers in his devotion to religious matters.

This cannot be achieved in a short time. It may take time, may be five to ten years. In accordance with the message of Konko-Sama, the Founder who stated, “Practicing faith is easy. It is people who make it difficult. Even if you have practiced faith from three to five years, you can still become easily

confused. If you continually practice faith for ten years, then you can celebrate with gratitude in your heart” (III Konko Kyoso Gorikai 68).

Ten years of involvement in the practice of faith, coming to attend services, being exposed to many written and spoken messages from the ministers and other believers will help us transform into Konko believers. Konko believers are those people who believe in the teachings of the Founder Konko-Sama and practice those teachings and who can see, think and interpret things that evolve in their lives through their spiritual eyes based on the principle of the Konko faith. If we follow these teachings and actualize them in our daily living, we are on the way to become identifiable Konko believers. What identifiable Konko believers have in common is the readiness to respond to anything with the heart of thanks and appreciation.

In regard to this subject, Konko-Sama stated, “Few have a heart that Kami can accept. Those whose hearts can be accepted by Kami will be blessed with good health, wealth, and wisdom for three generations, resulting in a strong family lineage. Those whose hearts are not accepted by Kami may have wealth as well as wisdom, but will get sick. Those who have wisdom and good health will lose their wealth. If they do not lose their wealth, their beloved children will die, leaving no heirs. Since these people are not aware of Kami’s blessings, they are always lacking one thing or another. If you practice faith and understand Kami’s blessings, you will live a peaceful and stable life. You will have descendants and gain wealth. You will receive divine blessings from year to year, and then from generation to generation” (III Konko Kyoso Gorikai 78).

This message shows transformation of a family into the state of ideal identical Konko faith oriented family. It may take three generations to reach this ideal blessed condition as a family. The reality is just a few among thousands of families have ever evolved into such an ideal state. Some people in other religious faiths responded that it would be almost impossible to follow the teaching.

There is also the concept of “Ikigami” – literally understood that our transformation into the state of godliness or living kami or deity. In the oriental culture, this concept of “Ikigami” or living deity can be achievable. But the concept can hardly be accepted in the Western culture. People would call it blasphemy. This concept of “Ikigami” is a commonly used expression in the Konkokyo faith community and in Japan at large. Somebody who achieved the state of mastery of any field can be casually addressed as “kami-sama”, for example “Ryori-no kami-sama” (God-like chef)

But the concept of “Ikigami” is not commonly used in society at large. In regard to “Ikigami,” Konko Daijin stated as follows:

“Konko Daijin will teach you how to practice faith and become a kami.”

“The people who come here are kamis. (He pointed to the worshippers and said, ‘kami.’) You are all children of Kami. To be an Ikigami is to have kami be born within you. I was the first to receive such divine blessings. You can all receive divine blessings in the same way.”

“If you practice faith and receive divine blessings through someone’s teachings, you should express your appreciation by teaching others in turn. This is the responsibility of a person who practices faith.”

“Save one person, and you will be a kami to that person. Save ten people and you will be a kami to all ten.”

The following is an English translation of an article found in the monthly newsletter of Konko Church of Amagi issued on May 3, 2012. The original script of the story is quoted from “Shion” booklet issued by the Konko Church of Yobuko. The booklet is based on the personal notes taken by the Rev. Yujiro Yamane while he was engaged in his spiritual training under the Rev. Matsutaro Yasutake at the Konko Church of Amagi in Fukuoka.

A Universal Amulet

One day a young woman around 18 to 19 years old came to visit the Konko Church of Amagi for the first time. She was a maid at a big restaurant in town named “Iroha.” She extended her greeting to the Rev. Matsutaro Yasutake at the Toritsugi-Mediation Desk, and requested by saying “Can I have an amulet?” The Rev. Yasutake showing a packet of “goshinmai” sacred rice and said, “You mean this item?” She responded, “Yes. I would like to have one.” She took out an amulet case and tried to put the goshinmai packet in. The Rev. Yasutake asked the woman, “Are you trying to regard the goshinmai packet as an amulet?” She responded, “Yes. That is my intention.” The Rev. Yasutake asked, “When you take a bath, what would you do with the amulet? If you hold the holder with you as you bathe, it will get wet.” She responded, “Of course, I will take it off from my body when I take a bath.” The Rev. Yasutake asked, “When you go to the rest room, what would you do about the amulet?” She responded, “In consideration of the sacred nature of the amulet, I will take it off from my body when I use the bathroom.” The Rev. Yasutake further pressed her by saying, “I see. But can you be sure you would never get injured when you take a bath or encounter a sudden death while using the bathroom? There

once was a person who encountered a serious injury while he was bathing at a public bathhouse. For no apparent reason, the ceiling of the bathhouse collapsed and fell on to the customers in the room. And he was also injured. There is also a healthy looking person who enjoyed his job. While he used the bathroom, he collapsed in the room and died at the scene. You may know many of those stories. You cannot be relieved of any dangers even while you are bathing or using a bathroom. You don’t have to rely on the amulet you keep in your amulet holder. There is a very handy and universal amulet you can carry at all times. Do you want to have one?” She responded, “If there ever is such a thing, I would definitely like to have one.” The Rev. Yasutake related, “It may take some time. Would it be all right for you?” She responded, “I don’t mind the time at all.”

Then the Rev. Yasutake talked about the great nature of Tenchi Kane no Kami for three hours. She became overwhelmed with the stories shared by the Rev. Yasutake. She developed full appreciation of the blessings of Tenchi Kane no Kami.

On her way home, she felt like she became a new person. All the scenes around her, the things she took for granted looked quite different in nature. The messages shared by the minister reverberated repeatedly in her mind. She felt so happy and grateful.

At a dinner party at the restaurant, the customers enjoyed much drinking. They were ready to be served with rice and other side dishes.

When the maid tried to place some rice in the rice bowl for the customers, her right kimono sleeve accidentally got stuck on the kettle place nearby. The boiling hot water in the kettle splashed onto the left hand of the woman. Her hand was throbbing in pain. In responding to the situation, she happened to remember a message given by the Rev. Yasutake. He stated, “In case of emergency, you don’t have to call Tenchi Kane no Kami, just ask help by calling out the name of Konko Daijin. You shall be blessed promptly.” Reflectively, she shouted out, “Konko-Sama!”

When she closely examined the injured hand, she found that the left hand and elbow turned red and experienced a sharp pain as if she was wearing a glove of needles. The excruciating pain affected her whole body.

She responded to follow the instruction given by the Rev. Yasutake. She placed goshinmai over the wound and extended her sincere prayer to Tenchi Kane no Kami. The pain in the hand and arm began to subside and disappear miraculously.

She understood she would never be able to work the following day because of the seriousness of the injury. But the skin on her hand and arm showed little swelling. She really experienced the work of Tenchi Kane no Kami.

Overwhelmed with the wondrous blessed episode of the burn and her encounter with grace of Tenchi Kane no Kami, she made a visit to extend her thanks the following day.

Konko-Sama Says . . .

All living things are given divine blessings. Never forget this grace. Among humans, there isn't even one in a thousand that receives true divine blessings.

(I Ichimura Mitsugoro 1-27-1)

Those who practice faith should feel gratitude even after sitting and resting on a tree stump in the mountains.

(II Unknown 23)

Bulletin Board

50th Anniversary of Wailuku Church

Konko Mission of Wailuku will be commemorating the 50th Anniversary Celebration on Sunday, June 17 at 11:00 a.m. No Sunday Service at Wahiawa Church. The Rev. Michiyoshi Yasutake and his entourage will make a visit to Wahiawa Church on Monday, June 18 in the afternoon. Let's greet them with the spirit of aloha.

Volunteer at Wahiawa General Hospital

We will make a monthly visit to the Wahiawa General Hospital Long-Term Care Facility on Friday, June 8 at 10:00 a.m. Please help us to keep this volunteer activity through your participation and prayers. Many thanks to Mrs. Yone Victor and Keelan Okazaki for sharing their talent at the volunteer activity on Sunday, May 6th. Keelan played the viola and Mrs. Victor danced the hula and did Zeni-daiko. It was a wonderful performance.

H.C.R.P.

The Hawaii Conference of Religions for Peace will hold its regular monthly meeting on Monday, June 4 at the Church of Perfect Liberty at 1:30 p.m.

2nd Ohana Camp

We will hold the Second Ohana Camp scheduled for June 23 and 24 at the Camp Erdman. Deadline is over, but we can still have last minute applicants.

Congratulations!

Andrea Toyofuku graduated from Chaminade University of Honolulu on Monday, May 14, 2012 with a Baccalaureate Degree in Business Management.



Rev. Rodney Yano graduated from San Francisco State University on Sunday, May 20 with a Baccalaureate of Science Degree in Biology, with concentration in Physiology.



Honoring the Mitama Spirits for June

Florence Tamabayashi	6/6/1998
Matsu Suzuki	6/2008
Akio Sekine	6/6/1998
Harry Ching	6/19/2007

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 Kōsaka contributed the insightful articles. The translation is provided by Yasuhiro Yano. (Reference pages 13 and 14)

No. 13

There are people who claim that the Universe works this way and that, but they really don't understand it. If they did, they would be able to stop the rise and fall of tides. (I Kondo Fujimori 9, Kyoten page 278)

This message also refers to the limitations of understanding things take place in the Universe through human oriented reasoning alone.

We have gained rapidly accelerating advancements in knowledge and technological applications in the world in the last few decades. We have achieved a better understanding of elements which used to be beyond our perception in the past and have enjoyed greater benefits for our lives. An ever expanding endeavor for expanding knowledge will never let up in the future.

We know that it would be impossible to gain access to the ultimate knowledge about everything in the Universe. We have learned that the more we learn, the more we will stumble upon unknown elements out there. We learn to appreciate the limitations of ourselves.

Although we have cultivated deeper and wider knowledge about some specialized subjects, we have little understanding about the nature of the whole that includes everything. For example, we have gained broader and deeper scientific knowledge about each organ of the human body, but the collection of the acquired knowledge does not provide any answer to the universal question of the meaning of human existence. No matter how hard we may try to understand the wholeness through the study of all this knowledge, we may not be able to find the answer. The same can be true in understanding Heaven and Earth.

Then how do we respond to this matter? Do we give up pursuing the meaning of Heaven and Earth because we have no way of knowing about it?

The Founder Konko Daijin established full awareness of his own limitation that the work of Heaven and Earth are beyond human power. Upon his encounter with his life-threatening illness at the age of 42, he stated, “Due to my primal ignorance, I didn’t know which direction I was irreverent to” (Konko Daijin Oboegaki 3-5-3). The statement derived from his acknowledgement about the infinite nature of Heaven and Earth as well as his own human-oriented limitations. It is this hidden potential power of full awareness of one’s limitations that yielded the great turnout.

In this sense, if we can truly appreciate the true meaning of the teaching: “There are people who claim that the Universe works this way and that, but they really don’t understand it,” we will be able to yield greater hidden potential power each of us has within, rather than being tightly restrained.

No. 14

Tenchi Kane No Kami has endured since the existence of the Universe, for millions of years. Other kamis come and go. (I Shimamura Hachitaro 1, Kyoten page 326)

The following three teachings from this page refer to the relationship of Tenchi Kane No Kami and other deities.

Any religious faith may rationalize their respective deity or deities they worship in reference to other deities. Some religious faiths reject the existence of any other deities except their own; some religious establishments worship more than

one main deity; some other traditions worship one main deity who has subordinate deities; some religions promote interactive worshipping with other deities besides their own main deity. What tradition does the Konko faith have in this respect?

The main deity we worship in the Konkokyo faith tradition is identified by the following excerpt: “Tenchi Kane No Kami has endured since the existence of the Universe for millions of years.” This statement may imply two definitions about the deity Tenchi Kane No Kami. One is that Tenchi Kane No Kami sustains its existence as long as Heaven and Earth exist. The other shows the permanence of Tenchi Kane No Kami. This is not just an exaggeration, but a mere reflection of the true nature of Tenchi Kane No Kami, which represents “Heaven and Earth.” As long as Heaven and Earth sustain its presence, Tenchi Kane No Kami also sustains His presence. “Heaven and Earth” represents one wholeness, so is Tenchi Kane No Kami.

The permanent and unique nature of Tenchi Kane No Kami does not deny the existence of other deities. On the contrary, the Founder acknowledged the ever increasing number of deities as years progress. The statement does not take light of and ignore other deities.

For some reason, the statement shows deeply ingrained solemnity of Tenchi Kane No Kami, who gives life to the entire Universe. It represents the infinite presence in corresponding to the existence of Heaven and Earth and the unique deity of the entire Universe.
(To be continued.)