

Four.

Passage of Time

I Kami's Time vs. Human's Time

1. Daily Time

Let us quote the revelation that we looked at in the last chapter:

The present is the same as the past. The past is the same as the present. Regardless of how many millenniums pass, the world will not change. People and the grains they eat will not disappear. The seeds will keep growing. [Gorikai II:GOKA, Keishun: 8]

Are we experiencing such eternal hours in our daily life?

This morning (9:04am Oct 18, 1989 JST, Oct 17 5:04pm local time), an earthquake with a magnitude 6.9M earthquake occurred in Northern California. We, at Konkokyo Research Institute, received a phone call, and watched a live broadcast on TV for a while from 9:30am. Damage was heavy in the Bay area; the upper deck portion of the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge collapsed; but the worst disaster was the collapse of the two-leveled Cypress Street Viaduct of Interstate 880 in West Oakland. Normally, we use those buildings believing that they are safe and would not be destroyed, but we witnessed what happened today. We are concerned about Konkoku Churches and believers in the area, but we were relieved to hear that there were no damage or injuries, according to the latest reports.

To live means to die. A big company can go bankrupt. Prestigious family name can come to an end. In our daily lives, everything changes. We can live because of this. What if nothing changes? It would be so boring and hard to endure. Imagine if you live only inside a room without interacting with the outside world — it would certainly drive you crazy. Humans cannot bear time without changes.

However, if the changes are radical or frequent, we wish the changes to stop. If changes come one after another, they might seem interesting at the beginning, but we would soon tire - both mentally and physically - of the situation. When you go on a trip, you enjoy the change of environment or lifestyle at first, but not forever. We find unbearable both excessive change and lack of change. This is normal. Therefore, we understand time as something that changes or does not change.

Let us think about how we should consider time and how to live our life in faith. As quoted in the previous revelation, "people and the grains they eat will not disappear." The seeds will keep growing, eternally. In other words, this Kami's time. Whatever happens — wars, earthquakes, who lives or dies — the workings of the Universe, Heaven and Earth -- continues.

In our daily lives, we think that today comes after yesterday and tomorrow comes after today, but this happens as the passage of time where something is always changing. Unexpected thing such as earthquakes occurs suddenly without any notice or warning. Yesterday in San Francisco too, people must have been peacefully enjoying

the day and expecting another peaceful tomorrow. However, due to the sudden change of bridge collapse, building fires, etc., people lost their lives. Even if their lives had been saved, they would have encountered anxieties and suffering. Without warning, a peaceful time is interrupted by the incident, illness, war or earthquake. People often think it is unbearable.

One can understand, therefore, that people have been thinking about how to live with change for a very long time.

As we have been studying, Konko Daijin began his faith as he lived in a world of taboo that originated in Onmyōdō (the Way of Yin and Yang). This practice of examining the Days and Directions (by observing and checking for auspicious days) must have been a way to live in a time of changes. This practice involved avoiding events that could interrupt peaceful life, or making excuses when inconvenient things happen. This must have been a way for human beings to resolve their fears about unexpected threats to their lives and their strong a desire to live in peace yesterday, today and tomorrow. Konko Daijin criticizes this approach from the Universe/Heaven and Earth/Kami's view.

He thought that people were too self-concerned. When they are born, they have no concern about lucky or unlucky days. It concerns them only after birth and before death. They die without concern for lucky or unlucky days. [Gorikai II: AOI, Saki: 3]

From the Universe/Heaven and Earth/Kami's point of view, the time after birth and before death is when people plan, predict or estimate. As they do this, they assume that today comes after yesterday, and tomorrow comes after today. With these assumptions, people do not take into consideration that they could die at any time.

2. Tangible things always break

KONKO Ieyoshi, (Second Konko-Sama) taught us, "Tangible things always break." People tend to forget this in normal daily life. It is natural that tangible things break, but people almost always get lost when they encounter such incidents.

Bridges collapse by earthquake; you do not feel well when you are sick; a company goes bankrupt; houses collapse; lands are burned due to war etc. These are examples of "tangible things always break." If we fail to consider the fact that "tangible things always break," we will panic when the concept become a reality.

The opposite of "tangible" is "intangible." If we become too familiar with "tangible" things, we easily omit "intangible" things. To illustrate this idea, let us consider air. We cannot live even for a moment without it, but we give it very little thought in our daily lives, unless you are a meteorologist or some other such profession.

If we think about this more, "tangible" things exist because of "intangible" things. In order to understand "existence," there has to be "non-existence." For example, a microphone on a table has a round shape. In order to acknowledge this is round shape, we need the square table as a point of comparison. If everything were round, we would not be able to call this round shape. Similarly, "intangible" exists because of "tangible," and we can acknowledge "intangible" because of "tangible." Behind the shape, or around

the shape, “non existence” exists, and shows us the shape. We do not usually think of this.

Then, why do tangible things collapse, cause worries, or vanish? Because “tangible” things are born from an “intangible” world, so they tend to go back to “intangible” world. “Intangible” world is always ready to accept “tangible” things. “Tangible” things tend to separate from “intangible” by standing out as tangible, but it is only allowed within the protection of “intangible” world. There is a paradox in the fact that “I exist” is true and supported by “I do not exist.” This is the relationship between “tangible” and “intangible.” Undoubtedly, it is difficult to live understanding this relationship. In the faith or religious world, we try to seek things that we do not usually see or notice. This is an interesting thing in faith world that focuses on truth..

When your child is sick, you become worried and feel despair. When your child does not obey, you become upset and hit your child. No matter how sick he becomes, do not be concerned. Let him be and have faith for him. He can receive divine blessings. [Gorikai II:TAKAHASHI Tomie:38.1]

Let us think more deeply about this revelation. It is natural that parents worry and attend to their children and pray for their recovery. But this revelation implies that such relationship with the illness does not solve the problem.

On the other hand, “No matter how sick he becomes, don't be concerned.” means that it is fate if he dies. In other words, it is important to understand “tangible” things will eventually become “intangible.” This revelation teaches us that there is an important difference between having awareness of the relationship between “intangible” things and praying for recovery versus not being aware and praying for recovery.

It is very difficult to explain our relationship with the “intangible” world. “Intangible” things do not have shape to begin with. However, words are a means to express shape. Let me try to illustrate what I mean through the following example. When their children are sick, parents only focus on their recovery. But what these parents cannot see is what is sent via their children's illness, and what is realized through this illness. This would be much more important than the parents' worrying. “Let him be and have faith for him” means open your eyes in your heart to this fact.

Indeed, humans tend to focus only on recovery of the illness or rebuilding the collapsed structures. But at the time of difficulties, misfortune, suffering and hardships, let us think of what is meant by “shape,” -- something that we had not considered before, and by reflecting more deeply about this, we will be aware of the relationship between the intangible and tangible.

This basis of “shape” is the “intangible” and this is “Kami.” Events such as children's illness and the collapse of a house are proof that tangible things (such as children or a house) are sent, given, and supported by an intangible Kami. Konko Daijin teaches us that it is important to recognize this concept, and be ready for inevitable events, in order to live in this endlessly changing time.

“Tangible things always break;” this does not refer only to negative things. It is a blessing, a divine blessing and divine favor, that Kami wants us to know is Kami's gift. Humans are given a “tangible” world. The intangible gives us what is tangible, thus all living things have life. People tend not comprehend this; therefore it is Kami's intention to bring us to understanding through the breaking of shapes (the tangible), and showing us that through understanding this situation, we open the way for us to overcome difficulties.

I believe it is through our faith that we are able to express in words what is difficult to realize: how to live in a “tangible” world full of endless changes. In these troublesome times, all of us tend to focus on “tangible” things and to consider our lives as unsustainable without “tangible” things. Reversing such thinking or way of living opens up our eyes to and for faith. In other words, this reversal of thinking is the key to a creative life with “intangible” time -- that is Kami’s time.

II Days in Prayers

1. “Higiri” and Matsuri (Service)

Next, let us think about the time of living with faith through Konko Daijin’s word, “higiri”. “Higiri” indicates the day your request is fulfilled, or the number of days you pray to receive blessings when you face human difficulties like sickness or a serious conflict within a family. We are taught that how to do this:

Set your own due date to receive divine blessings, then give your requests. Ask to receive divine blessings within a week or within a day, or even immediately. If there is no sign of blessings on your due date, request again. If there is still no sign, request again for a third time. You must not give up. Request persistently and watch for divine blessings. [Gorikai II:KONKO, Hagio:13.1]

This is how the word “Higiri” is mentioned in the “Sacred Scriptures of Konkokyo.” This means you set the day when miraculous results will appear. In Konkokyo, we have not emphasized “higiri” so much from a doctrinal and spiritual point of view. This is more or less because we do not really understand what Konko Daijin meant by this word. But more importantly, it is because the origin of the term “higiri” is connected with the prediction of miraculous wonders which ancient professional prayers made through their prayers to deities. Konkokyo strived to help people overcome superstitious beliefs, and a frequent use of the word “higiri” would have resulted in people the mistaken belief that Konkokyo engages in magical or mysterious things.

This restraint in the use of “higiri” is also based upon the idea that some Mediators worried about being blamed by their church members for the lack of predicted outcomes. For example, Mediators worried that people they spoke to about receiving divine blessings within three days but who didn’t, would be disappointed. This is another reason why Konkokyo has not placed emphasis on the word “higiri”.

Actually, what Konko Daijin meant by “higiri” was, in fact, not foretelling the day of blessings nor the miraculous abilities of Mediators. It implies the importance for prayers to have successful results. When it was almost September of the 16th year of Meiji (1883), according to the lunar calendar or October, according to the solar calendar, death was coming close to Konko Daijin. It was difficult for him to continue to do Mediation. Konko Daijin asked FUJII Tsunejiro (1850-1919), his son-in-law, to do Mediation on his behalf. Tsunejiro hesitated at first because of such heavy responsibility, but accepted Konko Daijin’s faith in realizing the idea,

“Just let the words come out of your mouth. Kami will turn whatever you say into divine blessings, so don't worry. [Gorikai II:FUJII Tsunejiro:1.1]”

Thus, Tsunejiro did Mediation sitting at the Mediation seat. At that time, Konko Daijin suggested one thing to Tsunejiro about “higiri”.

“While taking Konko-Sama's place, he told me, ‘Tsunejiro, when presenting people's requests to Kami-Sama, give people a due date of three days and say they will receive divine blessings. Kami will give blessings on that day without fail.’” [Gorikai II:FUJII, Tsunejiro:2]

To illustrate how this concept works, we can examine the following situation. The constitution of Konkokyo stipulates that researchers and assistants of Konkokyo Research Institute must finish writing their research papers and annually submit reports about study activity of the year to Konko-sama. Most of the reports are submitted as papers. The deadline is the middle of February every year. These scholars start writing around December and until the deadline, they try hard to complete their study achievement of the year through documents they work on for almost three months. For researchers who write a paper, the deadline prevents them from producing highly accomplished work. Alternatively, just to submit the research papers of the year to the Spiritual Leader, it is not necessary to set the deadline in the middle of February; consequently, they can submit their reports at any time in the year. However, this makes it harder for researchers to concentrate on finishing the reports. Because of the deadline, they are more motivated to write each night and day and even during their New Year holidays and Sundays, if necessary.

We can say the same thing about common jobs. Because a deadline is set, we try hard to finish required tasks every day until the deadline is met. “Higiri” is, in a sense, a deadline for realization of our wishes. People tend to avoid difficulties, fall into idleness and waste time. So sometimes, it is necessary that we are forced to set a clear deadline. “Higiri” in prayer is needed because this nature of human beings.

Therefore, when we pray for something to kami, we say to ourselves, “I will be given a divine blessing in three days.” Both through our focus and a Mediator, we do “higiri” to concentrate all energies on prayers to Kami and on requested blessings. Of course in general, we can see that prayer, which has special spiritual power, foretells the day and time for fulfillment, such as “you will get over this illness in a week” and “this stock price will rise rapidly tomorrow.” In the way that Konko Daijin used “higiri, we realize its true sense when we practice it as a way to Kami and to concentrate on acting in faith.

To examine it furthermore, let’s quote next expression of Konko Daijin.

“When I told Konko-Sama about my older brother Shingoro's illness, Konko-Sama imparted, ‘Depending on the follower's heart, an illness which the doctor says will take three years to cure, can be cured in ten days. This is true if the follower practices faith. Those who are told by their doctors that it will take a hundred days to cure their illness can be cured in three days. . . . If your sick brother becomes able to drink water within three days, it will be the beginning of divine blessings. Kami will bestow blessings and cure him. . . . If he doesn't receive divine blessings, it will be his fault.’” [Gorikai II:SATO Mitsujiro:24]

For people who have never caught a glimpse of a faith world, it will seem to be irrational, absurd, and impossible to understand what is written here. These people perhaps will criticize this concept by saying that, if this idea were possible, medicine and doctors would be meaningless. But when people live life, especially experiencing human difficulties which expose their life dangers, what life is supported by becomes

apparent. When people concentrate their soul on this important concept, they may develop a completely different impression of life and of time. Have you noticed, for instance, that when you listen to a funny story or you do what you want to without interruption, time often appears to pass faster than the time indicated by a clock? I think everyone has experienced the feeling that something that seemed to take about an hour, actually took several hours.

“Higiri” involves the experience of time. Just setting a due date or deadline is not the crux of this matter. There must be the function of life and of the soul to concentrate time -- something which sometimes is wasted if the focus is only on related hardship, when setting due dates or deadlines. In other words, the important thing is that people believe in divine blessing as suggested in this sentence

“Depending on the follower's heart, an illness which the doctor says will take three years to cure can be cured in ten days. This is true if the follower practices faith. Those who are told by their doctors that it will take a hundred days to cure their illness can be cured in three days.”

Yet if we cannot live in the faith world and if we doubt divine blessings, then the concentration of time you live is only ordinary time. The meaning of the sentence “If he doesn't receive divine blessings, it will be his fault” is this. It is in the delicate relationship between Kami and humans that decides whether or not humans receive divine blessings. Our relationship to Kami, created by living every day praying to Kami, determines whether time is worthwhile or contrarily, useless. Not all “higiri” have short terms such as three days or a week. The length of term is set in relation to the nature of the problem at hand.

Next, I will introduce the message passed down by Sangoro KUNIEDA (1834 -1909).

“When I was distressed by a pain in one eye, I went to Konko-Sama. He told me, ‘Look forward to March fourth of the lunar calendar.’ I thought that my eye would be cured, but it was still painful when that day came. So I went to the Hiromae on the following day and inquired Konko-Sama. He replied, ‘Sangoro, don't practice faith complainingly. Your life was to end on that day like the flowers that fell on that day. However, your life was saved. Without life, your eyes will be of no use. You know the pain of your eye only while you are alive.’ He added, ‘Look forward to May fifth.’ When that day came, my eye had gotten better. Then Konko-Sama said, ‘Look forward to July seventh.’ By that day, the pain was gone. [GII:KUNIEDA, Sangoro:2]

This man, Sangoro KUNIEDA came to believe in Konko Daijin and to obey the teachings of Konko Daijin, though he was blind all his life. Later, while farming, he led many people to the faith as a disciple of Konko Daijin. The following story happened a short while after Sangoro came to believe. Sangoro was told of the day of blessing by Konko Daijin, so he looked forward to that day. But on the designated day for his blessing, his eye pain was not healed. I think Sangoro complained at length about not having his eye pain healed on the anticipated day for his blessing. Perhaps he blamed the lack of power by prayers and what he thought was Konko Daijin's weak ability for miracles. This seems to be a typical response by people who did not receive the divine blessing they desired by the designated date to place blame on and to doubt Kami's power.

To Sangoro, who also blamed unsuccessful prayers, Konko Daijin asserted, "Don't practice faith with complaints..... You know the pain of your eye only while you are alive." This was said to Sangoro to make him reflect on whether his actions and thoughts demonstrated the right attitude for practicing faith, and that he needed to have devotion of faith through his prayers. Then by "higiri" which was designated as every two months, Konko Daijin corrected Sangoro's attitude toward practicing faith of Sangoro and led him forward in the right direction. In this Teaching, it is noted that Sangoro's eye was cured, but I guess for the half of a year during which Sangoro aimed at the day of "higiri," His fulfilling days of devotion brought a foundational change to Sangoro's life.

In general, religions, including Konkokyo, act to pace and enrich daily time that passes unconsciously. Ceremonies that have existed since ancient times are examples of how this happens. At various times, we become tired and lack vitality and as humans within the world and universe, we lose energy. Rituals and ceremonies such as Christmas, New Year's Service, Hanamatsuri (Buddha's Birthday), Niinamesai (The Harvest Festival), and Gion Masturi (The Gion festival celebrated annually in Kyoto) can be understood as events enrich the tired daily life so that people renew and regain vitality.

It is correct to think that when people get sick or experience misfortune, they become tired and confused. Then, it is necessary to divide the time and change the impression of time. To change the impression of time directly means to change the perception of life's rhythm. In order to change the impression of time and rhythm of life, people do "higiri" and practice faith to adjust the time and life in more positive ways.

As we think like this, we can say "higiri" is not only a deadline of task, but it is also indispensable to a life of practicing faith because it concerns setting the service for each person to receive Kami to revive each person's life and perception of time.

2. The front time, The back time

We have inquired about the meaning of "higiri" when people live a time of difficulties. Let us inquire more from another perspective.

Even while practicing faith, one will not only have good fortune. There will be misfortune as well. When one encounters misfortune, consider that this is similar to a hand showing its back side. One must receive divine blessings for it to turn to the front side.*¹

During the Meiji era, Konko Daijin's outreach sometimes conflicted with official government policy. Due to various changes in the Meiji government's religious policies, Konko Daijin's family experienced hardships, as did many villagers and groups of believers. Due to the difficulties and conflicts as his outreach extended, I wonder if there were any quiet days in Konko Daijin's Hiromae.

In ninthth year to tenth year of Meiji(1876-1877), policemen often came to the Hiromae to interrogate and watch Konko Daijin to see that he did not to do some religious acts without permission (Oboe-cho 20•20-24, 21•2). Once, a government office summoned Konko Daijin, so KONKO Hagio reported to the police and was told not to chant prayers and not to do Service, as in the written demand "Do not pray for people's requests. You just talk to people and instruct them, that would be allowed."

¹ According to a Japanese proverb, the back of one's hand signifies misfortune, and the front side signifies good fortune. [Gorikai I:OGIHARA, Sugi:18]

(Oboe-cho:21-3). Not only Konko Daijin's Hiromae but also the Hiromae of Disciples faced the same situation. Konko Daijin advised one disciple to just stand up to.

"Even if people call you names, be patient. Look at Kami, He does not lose His patience even when He is hit by crow or sparrow droppings. Kami says nothing. When becoming Kami's guardian and performing toritsugi, have a heart like Kami's. Even when there is heart-breaking grief, be patient. They call you names without knowing about Kami, so be patient,"[Gorikai II:TAKAHASHI, Tomie:21]

Though there are a few differences in expression, this teaching corresponds perfectly with the following passage from the revelation in June of the 9th year of Meiji (1876).

Konko Daijin, endure even if other people urinate on you. I shall clean you up. Be patient no matter what people say. The Way of the Universe is collapsing. Broaden the Way. Teach the Way, which can help people in trouble. You may tell others that I, Nittenshi-Gattenshi-Konjin, do not care how people treat me. [Oboe-cho: 20-16]

In the words of previous quotation, even when in a difficult situation in which people could not propagate their faith as freely as they wanted to because of police or governmental interference, people should live toward the future, praying for the salvation of a society that needed Kami. Konko Daijin expresses the way to live during such times in the words "even if other people urinate on you," "no matter what people say," "even when there is heart-breaking grief," be patient, endure and persevere. I will refer to the detailed meaning of perseverance ("Shinbou" in Japanese) in a spiritual context later, but you must not interpret that it is a word of Kami who demands people develop their ability to endure and be patient. First of all, there is Kami's own perseverance to open up the Way of Kami and people when Kami sees the tail of coin, a world where "the Way of the Universe is collapsing".

Kami has deep respect for Konko Daijin and his disciples, who actually shared Kami's perseverance in the real world. This regard is implied by Kami's words: "You may tell others that I, Nittenshi-Gattenshi-Konjin, do not care how people treat me" and "I shall clean you up". Furthermore, being Kami's own perseveration means that Kami is living the back time foreseeing the arrival of the front time and standing by.

The time when the back time deepens, in other words, when the difficulties are pressing people more and more, it is hard for people to be patient, but for a perspective of the time of Kami and the Universe, it is an approach of solution for the difficulties at the same time. We can also understand that when the situation of "The Way of the Universe is collapsing" is becoming more serious, it is also when the time for the "The Way of the Universe" to be established is ripe.

Though both collapse and creation or corruption and rebirth exist at the same time, the world that people perceive looks to them as though there is nothing but growing collapse and corruption. The important thing is what is required for us to live appropriately in such a challenging time.

What show the words "have a heart like Kami's" more concretely are the words "Broaden the Way. Teach the Way which can help people in trouble" in this "revelation". This is related to the words in the former quotation, "When you meet misfortune, take it like your hand showing its back side. Receive divine blessings for it to turn to the front

side”. As long as Kami wishes that Kami (the Universe) will appear to people who live in a world with physical, visible stuffs, Kami needs to entrust “Kami’s patience” to people.

As long as Kami commits the wish to people, Kami must urge them to be ripe for their time of “turn to the front side” from the permanent current, because they have a limit of life span and they can hardly go along with “Kami’s own perseverance”. Having “a heart like Kami’s” does not mean that people become Kami oneself, in short, they belong to the field that have no figure. In the world they can see, in other words, the troublesome world, people should express Kami, so it is needed for Kami to urge their time to be ripe. While settling in the time of the Universe, Kami is panting for Konko Daijin and the believers to “Broaden the Way. Teach the Way which can help people in trouble”.

If a house collapses, people should think how rebuild it. However, when the Way of the Universe collapses in movement of society and when the way come not to hold true, the act of faith to express Kami in this world as “Broaden the Way. Teach the Way which can help people in trouble” become much harder than rebuilding a house or so. It can not be attained only with wealth and there is no point in assembling people to work for advance the day of completion. Even Konko Daijin push himself too hard risking his life, there are still something to need for it.

Then, let’s think about a little familiar incident, remembering the Teaching or Reverend TAKAHASHI Tomie which I quoted at section 1 of this Chapter. When a child have a fever, parents try to cope with it like “oh my God! I have to cool his head” “I should call a doctor and ask him to treat” with confusion. But if the fever doesn’t go down in spite of these responses, parents tend to think bad things and misfortune that a child’s fever may not stop going up and may rob him of a life. At this time, it is necessary to change or reverse the way of think. Even is it looks unreasonable and impossible, the reverse thinking as the time of a fever going up is the very time when it is getting near for a fever go down sometime save people from the present perplexity or confusion.

As I said above, “what has it’s figure” are supported by “what has no figure” to keep the shape as it is. It can be said “the Way of the Universe“. Of course people must change the situation that the Way of the Universe is collapsing and broaden the Way. But it is impossible that this is done by only resources and effects by some people because of the property of this problem. If it could be achieved by resources and effects, people could include it for the schedule of a political revolution or an organization reform. However these concerns deeply with the movement of relation between the Universe and life of human, so only resource and intelligence of people can’t change the relation. It looks just like a example of child fever that people are permitted to try to cope with as hard as they can, but finally they should wait for the time.

It may correct to think Kami’s request, “Broaden the Way. Teach the Way which can help people in trouble“ was emitted because this closely concerns a matter that the time when the Way is broad was approaching moment by moment toward the time when the Way collapses. In the former example, it means that the time when child have a fever has a moment of time when the fever goes down behind itself. We can think this Kami’s request of Konko Daijin and the believers means Kami requests of people to believe the moment of the time when “the Way of the Universe” doesn’t collapse and be broadened in human world and to join the movement from the human’s position just like they step on the accelerator.

Whether at a life of one person or at a global place like society or the world, when it is “the back time”, people tend to be possessed with the think that they only go to worse difficulties, misfortunes and tragedy and it is an usual attitude of people when they live in the society in which “the Way of the Universe” collapse. But by the attitude, people make the place of life confused. This is also what the society in which “the Way of

the Universe” collapse. Then at the point, reversing the usual way of live and act in “the back time” is needed.

Even in that time, if people believe the moment of the change to the front time behind now and concentrate on joining it from the human’s position, that is, believe it and adjust their lives to the movement, there is nothing while they can’t bear however how it harsh phenomenally or actually. If a painful and humiliation time like “no matter what people say” or “other people urinate on you” continues, the belief and conviction that the different time from “the back time” is getting near draw the front time and open it.

3. Wait until it’s time

What Konko daijin teaches people about “waiting until it’s time” is based on this belief that at the moment “the back time” appeared, “the front time” is also approaching. First, I’ll quote one passage from “Kyoten”.

Since the cypress roof shingles to be used for the new Hiromae were beginning to decay, I mentioned, "Konko-Sama, you should soon use those shingles for the roof they are decaying." He replied, "If the shingles decay, they will turn into seeds and grow again, so I am leaving them. I am waiting until it's time." [Gorikai II:TSUGA:2]

It’s not sure when this Gorikai was told but considering that there is a sentence as follows in a description of “revelation” at “Oboe-cho” in July 10th in the lunar calendar of Meiji 7 (1874), it would be at a little later than that, I guess.

there was a morning glow, but it quickly disappeared. It started to rain and strong winds blew. The roof of the temporary shed was blown off. Kami-Sama said, "Leave it as is. ... Don't mind if the roof and thatch starts to crumble or rot. Look forward to three years from now." [Oboegaki: 22:6]

This thing would be at the time when people desired to build Hiromae, material had been collected one after another, the head carpenter had been decided, and even a carpenter’s hut had been ready but there was a long time before they start building because of a bad spirit of the head carpenter or so. This Teaching is an Konko Daijin’s reply to suggestion of one believer, TSUGA who look at the situation that while a long time before start building, cypress’s skin piled up for roof has left in the rain at the inside or the outside of the hut. This seems to correspond to the words in “revelation” that “Don’t mind if the roof and thatch starts to crumble or rot. Look forward to three years from now”. Behind the passage of time that the material rot, Konko Daijin felt the time of creation like “they will turn into seeds and grow again” approaching and the belief in the time approaching from behind support the stand that “I am waiting it’s time”.i regard so.

Leave everything to time. Haste causes mistakes. You will stain Kami's way. [Gorikai II:ISHIDA, Tomosuke:10.1]

The words like this are passed down. If only the phenomenal time, in a nutshell, the time people can see is the whole nature of time, intelligence, resource and effort of

people can fill the time, that is, in this case people can set about building and even complete the Hiromae. To gather intelligence, resource, ideas and effort in short time and to be hurry to finish something is said “the impatience” and maybe everyone have experienced that things don’t go well with impatience.

From the viewpoint of what I wrote above that the time when the hardship become harsh is the approach of time to solution the hardship at the same time, impatience means that people don’t believe and ignore the other side of time and are attracted their attention only by approaching of the phenomenal time. For instance, though Kami is approaching with the flow of time which people can’t be aware of, they stop Kami approaching by an impatience act and prevent Kami from appearing. The way to live believing the flow of time which Kami gets on as a car and waiting Kami’s appearance in real world is “waiting until it’s time”.

You should not misunderstand that “waiting until it’s time” is letting thing take its own course lazily. It’s not sure this is a Konko Daijin’s teach but there are words passed down that “I often say “it’s time”, but “it’s time” doesn’t come even if you wait it for a hundred years. We should make it’s time ourselves”. Perhaps “calling over” or “advancing” is more suitable expression than “making”. This is a teaching suggesting how to wait when people “wait until it’s time”. No one and nothing will approach a person who doesn’t have a definite object such as who or what he wait for as wish. People have to be well aware of approach of Kami getting on the time car and concentrate their life on the degree of distance from them to the approaching car.

Well, “waiting until it’s time” is an attitude of faith that people wish to solve or overcome the trouble situation which they face. In the world, to respond to it, a lot of methods are attempted according to the trouble’s property, size, and seriousness like a social reform, a revolution, a bringing under control by military power, a rigged bidding, a political negotiation, a dismissal of the Diet, and a stuff reshuffle. In any case, at the society or the world, it is a common sense that it is good to solve the problem as soon as possible and the more the way is suitable and effective, the more it is valued highly.

For example, over the trouble about official outreach of Konko Daijin Hiromae, there was an act following the common sense like that around Konko Daijin too. About the act, there is a teaching like this.

Regarding the official qualifications for propagation, he said, "Just follow the law. Don't try to evade the government." And added, "Wait till it's time. It will come slowly, but surely." [Gorikai II:KONKO, Hagio:5.2-3]

By the reform of religious system, Konko Daijin lose Shinto priest in Meiji 4 (1871) and after that, he couldn’t have obtained the official permission to propagate in Hiromae.

People who try to obtain these qualifications appeared one by one among the disciples of Konko Daijin to outreach officially.

KONKO Hagio, Konko Daijin’s second son tried every possible means to obtain it given advices from villager, then Meiji 11 (1878) he received his ordination as a priest of the Kamo Shrine in Otani village [Oboe-cho: 22-13-3] and in next year he obtained the qualifications called an assistant Shinto priest. The regulation that people who are engaged in work in a shrine must be Shinto priest was one reason for obtaining it. After that, Reverend SATO Norio and other disciples obtained these qualifications. It seems that Konko Daijin’s advice in above quotation “Just follow the low. Don’t try to evade the government” was aimed at actions of people who related with Hiromae trying to adjust themselves to a national policy and obtain the official permission. We can see the

attitude of Konko Daijin toward Shinto priest at a “revelation” he received in June 25th in the lunar calendar of Meiji 13 (1880).

Don't obtain a license to be a Shinto priest and misleadingly act like one. Don't use charms and don't deliver Shinto sermons. Don't go out to do such things. Teach and talk to people about the Way of faith at the Hiromae and look forward to the future. [Oboe-cho: 24-5-5~6]

For Konko Daijin, even if to obtain Shinto priest make it easy to be permitted propagating officially, because it is a job to tell the way to inspire people as the government like, it couldn't be accepted to distort the way “to preach the Way of the Universe” [Gorikai II:SATO, Norio:14.3] by himself by obtaining Shinto priest. It is a general attitude that people make a compromise, do nemawashi, and try every possible way to solve the problem as soon as they can as long as they live in a society, a nation, and international relationship.

To keep the relation with Kami getting on the time car approaching behind the phenomenal time and to live the way of time to solution for the trouble situation to the end. This is how Konko Daijin has lived in, for instance, the time when he faced the trouble of the official permission to outreach. Though the way to go on in the time like this certainly seems to be slow and to hardly progress from the social common sense, Konko Daijin aimed to tell and show that the way to believe Kami and make sure how near the time with Kami approach is how reliable and firm to overcome the trouble. Waiting until it's time is also, so to speak, to live a trouble situation with Kami and call the time for solution of it over with Kami.

SATO Norio and other leading people move Konkokyo forward to the official permission to independent using Shinto priest as clue. I wonder how Konko Daijin thought the process after his death. When I consider that though the system of Shinto priest was abolished as a national system in Meiji 17 (1884), after that Konkokyo was put within jurisdiction of Head priest of Shintoism and had been made to settle for going under influence of Shinto from the death of Konko Daijin until postwar, I cannot help thinking the depth of the meaning that Konko Daijin refused to take office as Shinto priest to get qualifications to propagate “waiting until it's time”.

4. This very day

Let's think the words “this very day” in “Divine Remainder” [Oboegaki: 21-10, Oboe-cho: 17-11] as a conclusion of this paragraph.

Konko Daijin quoted these words from Service terminology in Bittyu area and he given it a special sense. This is because, even now in the village shrine of Konkocho Otani, people arrange lanterns which have a square wooden flame stuck blank paper at the side of the road to the shrine as the decorations at the eve of festival. And on the lanterns, the words “this very day” is written. I'm not sure when this started, but it seems awfully old customs. It is said this written words show that today is a celebration day and a festival day. Furthermore, a festival day is a day to spend with Kami leaving everyday life, so the indication of lantern “this very day” expresses the day which village diety and people spend on together in general.

Konko Daijin quoted it as a term of the faith keeping the original meaning. In “Divine Remainder”, there is the next sentence, “Kami's blessing begin within hearts grateful and caring, in harmony and joy. Look to Kami always, now and forever. On this very day, pray”. This suggests that people can receive divine blessings by living every

day with a feeling of joy and calm [The harmony means for you to be calm, and the joy is from the joy of life." [Gorikai II:SUNAMI, Sanokichi:8.1]] as it they have at the day of festival spending with Kami.

Requests to Kami-Sama need not be long. Pray for this very day. When you wake up in the morning, give thanks for the past night and pray for that day. In the evening, give thanks for that day and pray for the coming night. Being healthy on this very day is enough. [Gorikai II:TABUCHI, Aizo:3]

As this Teaching suggests, people should welcome Kami, pray for Kami and spend a life with Kami every day, and therefore they are protected by Kami and the divine blessings appear on usual life. Thus, if we think "the very day" as not divided time like only today, or a moment, the real sense of it hides. Days which they spend on without Kami or they don't welcome Kami at are not "the very day".

And next, I think about it relating with "waiting until it's time", it is said that the days when people feel the approach of Kami getting in the time car and live with Kami understanding one another well are also "the very day". It is often argued in religious studies that there are two character time, that is, "sacred" time and "profane" time in the time lived and written by people, but Konko Daijin had wished every day of their life to become the "sacred" time with Kami telling "the very day". When we take it so, it will be said that what is necessary for Konkokyo believers is to wait, to get ready, to make and to express the time which is with Kami daily and to live the "time" like this. To live the time like this and to being given the divine action as the expressions in time which go away leaving nothing, in short, yesterday, today and tomorrow are only a day with no expression, Konko Daijin had told people using the words that are written above, "higiri", "the back time and the front time", "waiting until it's time", and "the very day" as keywords.

If people leave the time, it gets tired and loses expression from its face. Then, they need to welcome Kami there and to leave the time moving with Kami behind them. It makes the time with expression in face which is filled with joy that our lives which have figures live welcoming "what have no figure".

III People's prayer, Kami's prayer

1. Remove restrictions on prayer

The lineage of the family into which Konko Daijin was adopted, was terminated twice in its history, and it was the family called Akazawa (family name changed from Kawate) that took over the ancestors of the demised families and restored the family lineage(Oboegaki:6-9-1~3). During the Tokugawa feudal days when family was the basis of society, people commonly believed that the family which experienced demise of lineage had some grave problem in its background. People thought that there was a reason behind the demise of the family and until the reason of the demise was identified and the cause removed, the family would continue to be afflicted with one trouble after another. People in the village, as well as the family's members, naturally thought that when the son of Konko Daijin died, it might have something to do with the reason for the family demise experienced twice before. In those times, there was a belief that the irreverence committed by ancestors against some kami was the cause of the family's fate, surfacing in later days as death of a child in the family or of its cattle.

There seemed to have been a strong influence of such common belief on the Konko Daijin's thoughts in his practicing the faith in kamis and buddhas after the inheritance of household. Hence, he visited shrines, prayed to deities and visited temples on holidays, all for the safety of the family and aversion of evil spirits and calamities. And In the case of significant events in his life, , he examined the Days and Directions so that he would not offend kamis. Such a religious practice of Konko Daijin was not his spontaneous act, but was done in compliance with the religious traditions and habits of the community in those days. This was not the faith of his own choosing as an individual. However, he gradually grew out of such religious practices as he increasingly directed his faith toward Konjin following his critical illness experience at the age of 42 and after his younger brother, KANDORI Shie'emon's inclination toward the Konjin faith.

We now look at an incident in the fifth year of Ansei (1858) recorded in Konko Daijin Oboegaki or Memoirs of Konko Daijin, when the paddy fields in the village were attacked by rice insects.

That year, around the time the rice plants began to bear grains, harmful rice insects abounded in the paddy fields and began attacking the rice plants. As aforementioned, in those days, oil was used to kill the rice insects in place of chemical insecticides used today. When the rice insects infested the fields, the farmers filled the paddies with water, then spread the oil over the surface of water, swatted the rice insects off the rice plants onto the oil surface. This method was the only one available at time and was commonly implemented everywhere in the country to kill the rice insects.

Except for the paddies which he shared with another farmer, Konko Daijin did not put oil on the paddies, following the instructions from kami(Oboegaki:5-6). Yet he had an extremely good harvest, unlike his fellow farmers who followed the traditional method. As he was living as a village community member, it was inconceivable that he would act in a different way from his fellow villagers before he became devoted to Kami. As his faith became focused on Konjin, he increasingly lived and acted as instructed by Kami, rather than following traditions and common behaviors in the community.

However, around this time in the 5th year of Ansei, Konko Daijin's prayer was characteristically about receiving instructions from kami. In this case, the prayer was directed to the kami who is powerful and exists far away from Konko Daijin. Compared with the faith in his later years, this was somewhat a passive faith; that is to say, he prayed earnestly to kami for the fulfilment of his personal needs. Then, in the 6th year of Ansei (1859), his faith -- though still somewhat passive -- increasingly focused on Kane No Kami. As the years went by, his prayer broadened to include other people's desires for salvation.

From the beginning of Meiji period until his passing, Konko Daijin's prayers drew increasingly closer to Kami. In other words, his praying posture from man to Kami shifted to that of praying from Kami to man, and eventually the two praying postures became superimposed on each other.

Kami's prayer became Konko Daijin's prayer and Konko Daijin's prayer became Kami's prayer. Thus, the two prayers became so close as to be inseparable. The relationship between Kami and Konko Daijin no longer was such that Kami is always the giver of divine instructions and Konko Daijin is always the receiver of kami's instructions. This relationship evolved to the point that the giver is a giver as far as he receives and the receiver is receiver as far as he gives, thus receiving and giving are done from the same base.

Kami-Sama declared, "Ikigami Konko Daijin, you have realized the same virtue as I, Tenchi Kane No Kami." I was filled with awe. Kami-Sama said, "There is

no need to be in awe. People are saved because of you, Konko Daijin. I, Tenchi Kane No Kami, cannot directly help people recover when their eyes go blind or when they are ill. You, Konko Daijin, are able to help with blind eyes, illnesses, troubled lives, and all other problems of people and other living things like birds and animals." (Oboe-cho: 25-27-1~5)

This passage relates to the Revelation which Konko Daijin received from Kami in the 14th year of Meiji (1881). Kami's words beginning with "Tenchi Kane No Kami-sama, said Konko Daijin" relates to the Revelation "Through much patience, you have accumulated divine virtue, and you have become one with the Tenchi Universe. (Oboegaki:18-3-2) Kami expresses his appreciation to Konko Daijin that Konko Daijin's faith expresses what Tenchi Kane No Kami desires. Konko Daijin had a sense of awe for Kami's appreciation. In response, Kami told Konko Daijin that it was not necessary to feel in awe. In fact, owing to Konko Daijin's faith, the way for people's salvation opened. Kami, without form and invisible, cannot help people materially with their sufferings and difficulties. What Kami desires and wishes can now be realized through the person of Konko Daijin. This means that through the prayers and works of Konko Daijin, people's desires and prayers concerning family, even of birds and cattle, various diseases, and all problems will be fulfilled. Thus, Kami tried to make Konko Daijin realize that Konko Daijin's prayers and work were congruent with Kami's.

From the view point of God being almighty and absolute, Tenchi Kane No Kami may be regarded as a weak and powerless Kami. Christianity, which worships almighty God, also needs a mediator between God's world and humans' world; that mediator is regarded as Jesus Christ, one who is of flesh, whose role is to facilitate for the workings of God to appear in humans' world. Though God is said to have created the Universe, Heaven and Earth, he still needs human beings with blood, sweat and tears to work as his representative in resolving human sufferings and difficulties like diseases, agonies, sins and so on. Buddhism has scriptures and laws, but Buddha or Buddhist images are still needed for the laws to be expressed in this world. Through these scriptures, people are led to enlightenment.

In accordance with the teaching of Konko Daijin, man (an entity with form) and Kami (an entity without form) are not separate entities. Kami is Kami because of people, and people are people because of Kami", this relationship is understood to mean that in case either one of the two is missing, the other one is incomplete. In this connection, to introduce the entity without form (Kami) to the entity with form (human world), the human side requires a man who works as a representative of Kami. In reverse, for the human world to be given a true life, a man who materially expresses Kami's works is required by Kami's side as well. In this relationship, it has been realized through the life of Konko Daijin that what man desires and prays for to Kami, and what Kami desires and prays to man are merged as one and the same thing. This relationship works as a mediation of prayers between Kami and man.

In traditional Christian theology, the entity who mediates between God and man is limited only to Jesus Christ, the Son of God with flesh, but in the world of Konko Daijin, all people are children of Kami, so all people have the potential to become and to express Kami's wishes in concrete ways. Kami's declaration "because Konko Daijin is born" implies that due to the faith of Konko Daijin, the way to let people know that all people are endowed with the potential to become Kami has been revealed. In other words, Konko Daijin can be said to be the symbol of true life available to all people. This is manifested in the following words of Konko Daijin about human potentiality;

The people who come here are kami-samas. (He pointed to the worshippers and said "kami.") You are all children of Kami-Sama. 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. [Gorikai I:TOKUNAGA, Kenji:2.3]

That all people are the children of Kami means that all people embrace Kami's wishes and prayer, and thus, all people -- by nature -- have the potential to express Kami. Those who have actualized this potential to express Kami through practicing faith are called the living kami and afforded Divine Title Konko Daijin in the same way as Konko Daijin, who received such divine favor for the first time in history. In fact, there were those among his disciples who achieved this status and were afforded the name Konko or allowed to make it a part of their names.

Saying "Konko Daijin is born" does not refer to the individual Konko Daijin alone but also refers to the way now opened for Konko Daijin to be born among people here and there who can also become Konko Daijin.

People have no choice but to have their own desires and prayers in whatever form in life, no matter whether those desires and prayers are in accord with those of Kami's or not. Those desires and prayers range in scale from large ones such as for world peace down to small ones regarding trivial matters, and people cannot help but pray hoping that everything will go in the right direction. Evidently, people's prayers are often motivated by social customs, just as Konko Daijin's prayers were in his younger days.

For example, people often want their children to achieve good grades at school. But we might need to ask ourselves whether that desire is our genuine parental wish for our children's wellbeing, or whether it is a desire motivated by worldly needs. We might be pushing our children to get high marks just because the educational institutions place high value on the children who achieve high marks, ignoring the true wellbeing of children. Our children are also Kami's children, so we need to pray that they will grow to be the ones who can perform Kami's functions sincerely and wholeheartedly. This should be the basis of our prayers for fulfillment of our children's education. Our desires might be selfish and worldly in the beginning, but it is hoped that such desires will evolve into the ones that motivate prayers for their true happiness as Kami's children. It was this evolving process of deepening prayer that Konko Daijin exemplified through the journey of his faith.

To deepen our understanding of prayer, we look at the following passage of the Divine Call:

There are many people like yourself who have sincere faith in kamis but still have many problems. Help these people by performing toritsugi. [Oboegaki: 9-3-6]

This passage can be interpreted as follows:

We consider "faith" mentioned here as the faith in kamis and buddhas commonly practiced by ordinary people in the community. The Divine Call can be interpreted to mean that there are many people who practice faith, like Konko Daijin used to in his younger days, but these religious people were still afflicted endlessly with misfortune, hardships, suffering, and human's difficulties. Their prayers did not get through to Kami. Kami requested that Konko Daijin show those troubled people the way for their prayers to get through to Kami, which he found through his faith.

In our modern times, there are still those people visiting shrines and temples determinedly to pray for their various problems and issues to be resolved such as related to family safety, safe voyage, health, success of tests and others. Before western culture came flooding into Japan, it was quite common for ordinary people to visit shrines and temples frequently to pray to kamis and buddhas every time there was a problem. People diligently went about their daily lives counting on Kami's and Buddha's protection. But there was no way to know if their prayers would be answered until after they could see the results of their prayers.

Looking back on his journey of faith, Konko Daijin said:

Since the beginning of the world, Kami has never spoken words for people to hear. Wherever people worshipped, their prayers were only one-sided. [Gorikai II:ICHIMURA, Mitsugoro:8]

Lamenting the futility of prayers he experienced earlier, Konko Daijin was trying to convey through these words the joy he felt in being able to receive Kami's response.

People go on pilgrimages to temples. They visit shrines, worship the rising Nittenshi(sun) morning after morning, install and worship the Konjin shrine in the house thus devotedly practicing their faith as best as they can. But their prayers are always one way and go unanswered. They, nevertheless, cannot even afford to give up their faith because of hardships and sufferings that are inflicted on them too often, and therefore, they carry on practicing faith sincerely and diligently. These are the kind of people, who Kami called "the people who have sincere and diligent faith but whose prayers went nowhere" and for whom he felt deep sorrow.

People have faith but they do not see the way to get their prayers across to kamis and buddhas. They pray earnestly to Kami and buddhas but their prayers are one sided and result in no response. Why do the prayers of such people with diligent faith not get through to kamis and buddhas? It can be assumed that the prayers, coming from their innermost selves were transformed into stereotypes of faith and thus those prayers became enervated or warped before reaching kamis. For example, the prayers were often directed to different kamis and buddhas according to the nature of the specific prayer. For instance, there may be a prayer to Gion-sama, that prayer to Jizo-sama, the other one to Konjin-sam, and so on. Such diversified prayers must have been one of the reasons the prayers were weakened. Furthermore, people analyzed the nature of their problems and determined where each problem came from. For example, one may have attributed the lack of a beneficial response from Inugami as that kami had been offended. Or, a person may have surmised that the lack of a beneficial response from prayers to ancestral spirits meant that they were offended, so the person may have left the prayer up to a diviner or priest specializing in different categories of prayers. In this way, that person may be neglecting his duty to pray earnestly with sincerity by himself. Such religious practice at the time could be considered as a reason for losing sight of the way to Kami.

It can be assumed that as people's prayers, coming from people's innermost selves, get stuck in the stereotypes of traditional religious practices a cover -- something like a camera's shutter -- descends upon the prayers and prevents them from being directed to and reaching Kami. Thus the way to Kami does not open, people do not meet Kami, and their problems remain unresolved and often worsen.

3. Pray with sincerity for anything

Praying is an act of life that only humans are able to do. When they encounter adverse conditions in life -- such as diseases or human relations problems -- people acknowledge the existence of these conditions as symptoms of what is lacking or deficient in life and try to correct them. As for animals and plants, their desire to fulfill their needs for water and food may help them to survive; however, they have no need to consider what is lacking or deficient in their lives because they depend on nature and live as part of nature.

Humans recognize the existence of something lacking and deficient in life, which makes them seek to correct the situation and to pray that conditions related to the situation will be corrected. We have already discussed the words "Everything with form gets corrupted." In this context, the corruption of life or whatever is lacking or deficient in human life, causes people to want to correct it and force them to face kamis. By facing kamis, people are made aware of mistakes they make in carrying out their lives. In this sense, the lack of something or some kind of deficiency, which motivates people to pray for assistance, are also to be considered as gifts from Kami. The reason for this recognition relates to the Kami's Declaration "Kami is Kami because of people, and people are people because of Kami." Based on this interrelationship between Kami and people, the perceived lack of something or the deficiency of people is simultaneously those of Kami's. The people's desire to be saved is the reflection of Kami's desire to be saved. My deficiency is Kami's deficiency and my suffering is Kami's suffering.

This recognition leads us to the realization that we are not suffering alone but Kami, as our parent, is also suffering with us; moreover, it is our conviction that Kami ends his suffering to us for the fulfillment of our lives.

In faith, our prayers for fulfillment of our lives are not solitary prayers. Our prayer is the one which is imparted by Parent Kami and, together with Kami, we live through sufferings and pray for a solution to what is lacking or deficient. Through prayers, we are saved together with Kami and brought closer to the fulfilled world for both Kami and ourselves.

We now will discuss these concepts in concrete terms. Let us suppose you have a headache. You may pray earnestly to Kami to heal the headache. Let us think of the reason why you can earnestly pray for this - an important consideration. Our parent Kami is also having a headache. We must clearly visualize in our hearts that our parent Kami, who gave life to us and is caring for and watching over us, is also suffering a headache. Then, our prayer for healing of our own headache becomes the prayer for healing of Kami's headache as well. The important thing is that our prayer for ourselves no longer is for ourselves alone. What we pray for becomes what Kami prays for. We can understand this from the following passage in the Revelation:

Humans living under Nittenshi are Kami's children. If your body harbors pain or illness, working will be difficult. Pray for physical safety, diligence in your work, and abundant grain harvests; pray even for your horses and cows. Pray with sincerity for everything. [Oboegaki: 15-8-1~2]

The previous passage is a part of the Revelation in the 3rd year of Keio(1867). This can be translated to mean that since people are children of Kami, Kami wants people to pray heartily to Kami for whatever they need, for things concerning diseases, family business, crops, children, pregnancy, etc. In short, this is Kami's request specifically for people to pray for anything they want or need.

When prayers are made based on the Kami's call to "pray for anything," there are no longer things as "selfish prayers." Any prayer which may seem to be selfish just to fulfill one's own needs are now converted to Kami's prayers which Kami wants when directed to Kami.

Even if it is a pain in your small finger, you can pray earnestly for healing of it. If it is Kami, who is detached, absolute and existing without regard to people's lives, He may not care much about the prayer for such a trivial matter. But the Kami, which Konko Daijin found, feels even a person's small finger pain as an unbearable pain. That is why Kami requests people with even a small pain in their finger to pray that it be healed. It might be said that Kami has no form and therefore he must not have pain. On the other hand, an entity which does not have a form can take any form.

If we have a small finger pain, our faith makes us to go straight to a communion with Kami resulting in Kami also feeling the same pain. It is now in this context that prayer is made. We come to realize that when someone makes a prayer for healing of a small finger pain, Kami also feels the pain in his own small finger, and through the person's pain, Kami prays for healing of his own small finger pain, and in response to which the person further deepens the prayer.

We sometimes classify prayers as small ones, great ones, narrow ones, broad ones, etc., and are often advised to prioritize the prayers, considering that great and broad prayers are more important than small and narrow ones. However, according to the interrelationship between Kami and people, classification of prayer could mean putting restrictions on people's prayers, contrary to Kami's call to "pray for anything."

Based on the recognition by faith that we pray together with Kami for healing of small finger pain in response to the prayer of Kami, even our small prayer is deepened and broadened by Kami, who suffers the same pain, to include prayers for all humanity suffering pain. In this situation, there should be no difference in scale for prayers -- whether it is for a small finger pain or for world peace. As such, in response to Kami's request for us to pray for anything, we pray earnestly for our own pains and sufferings. We must pray earnestly and send to Kami our prayers for whatever matters -- heart pains, stomach pains, foot pains, family problems, financial problems and all other problems.

It is not world peace or our neighbors, but we, ourselves, in pain and difficulties here and now, that must be saved first. The reason that such prayer will not become selfish or anti-social is because we pray to Tenchi Kane no Kami, who is our Parent Kami and who feels pain and suffering together with us, His children.

When prayers are made to Kami, all characterizations of prayers such as being selfish, non-selfish, social, anti-social, great or small will become irrelevant. When sent to Kami, our prayers are converted to prayers of all peoples in the world. Though it may sound a bit of an exaggeration, my prayer for the healing of my small finger pain becomes a prayer that embraces the world and becomes the prayer for all peoples in the world having the same pain in small finger.

When we observe Konko Daijin's latter years as he started out on his faith journey, we see that his life demonstrates to peoples in the world that even small prayers pertaining to his daily life developed, and were embraced by Kami's prayer, and eventually were integrated into Kami's prayers. In other words, Konko Daijin's life showed people that people's hearts could become shrines of Kami's prayers.