

Three.

The Universe, Heaven and Earth's Bosom

I. The Relationship Between the Universe and Human Beings

1. Human Beings: A Mystery

In this chapter, let us seek to understand what Konko Daijin teaches regarding what the Universe, Heaven and Earth means to us.

Plants and animals, living things other than human beings, do not differentiate their individual lives from the Universe, and are a part of the life of the Universe itself by merging into it. Such life does not live against nor turn away from the Universe. Among all living things, it is only human beings that have a will to live by turning away from or against the Universe. Because of this, human beings could create tools and machines, establish order in society, and produce civilizations -- something which living things other than human beings would not even think of or be able to do, by human standards.

However, humans, as with other living things, work along with the Universe. Like plants and animals, they are born, live, and die. This is a continuous process. On the other hand, emotionally or intellectually, human lives are not based on the Universe. They may turn away from, turn their back on, turn against, or even try to alter the Universe. At this point, there is a contradiction in human lives in relation to the Universe.

This contradictory relationship to the Universe makes human beings pursue magic and religion. Now, let us read the poem, "Antigone" by the Greek poet, Sophocles.

Wonders are many, and none is more wonderful than man.

This power spans the sea, even when it surges white before the gales of the south-wind, and makes a path under swells that threaten to engulf him. Earth, too, the eldest of the gods, the immortal, the unwearied, he wears away to his own ends, turning the soil with the offspring of horses as the plows weave to and fro year after year.

I have always been moved by this poem. The reason for this is that I think even such a long time ago, the author could precisely point out the problem of relationships between the Universe and human beings.

People once regarded Earth to be similar to that of a human birth mother -- regarding her with awe and as holy, and as a mysterious object. This has been a belief of humans even to the present day. Earth has produced all kinds of lives, even accepted dirty things and purified them, produced new lives and then took them back into the

earth. Earth has overwhelmed human beings as a deity who has tremendous power above human life. But humans, even as they are overwhelmed by this perception of Earth, have done many harmful things to the Earth by cultivating it with the use of cows and horses and, nowadays, with tractors, to gain food, "as the plows weave to and fro year after year." Nevertheless, we human beings have been allowed to receive things from the Earth to sustain our lives.

This poem is, on the one hand, a song in praise of humans as they span the surging sea, but on the other hand, it expresses humans' own self-criticism. Like this poem, humans indeed have offended, worried, and hurt the mother of our own lives, and yet we have carried on our lives, from birth to death, as allowed by Mother Earth: that is human life.

In contrast to the way of understanding the relationship between humans, the earth and the Universe as we just discussed, there is a Judeo-Christian way of thinking about this based on the Old Testament. According to the Bible, earth and things that belong to it are the creatures of God, so they are not deities or the embodiments of deities. The Old Testament preaches that humans are also works by and of God, and they are entrusted by God to be given the roles of shepherds, stewards or guardians of the earth. Earth is also regarded as being a creature, and all beings live on it.

By considering that humans were allowed to reign on earth by God, humans developed natural science in later generations. This way of thinking that humans, as stewards, can observe, adjust, and utilize earth and all things including animals and plants, created the concept of a human-centered ruling system of earth. In the end, modern science and technology systems have overwhelmed earth. Consequently, the whole world has been swallowed up by the impact of modern science, not only during the age of Sophocles. Faith in the Earth Mother has existed throughout the history of religion and has continued all over the world. Religious scholars such as Mircea Eliade investigated these beliefs, despite the fact that these scholars were few and limited.

In the world of folk religions in Japan, there are many different faith traditions or deities related to earth. For example, in Japan these are Dokoojin, Kohjin, Suijin, Toshitokujin, Taishogun, and Konjin. Events, ceremonies, and customs evolved from such faiths that were intended to support people's lives. People's feelings of awe regarding deities of earth -- who were holy and whose workings were mysterious -- produced concepts of detesting to impurity and defilement. Those feelings of awe connected deeply to the custom of checking the Days and Directions to avoid affronts to Konjin. Humans were allowed to live on earth, so their modest feelings and acts intending not to pollute, disorder, nor devastate earth used to have deep spiritual meanings long ago. Institutionalized to make more complicated precepts through human history, these feelings and acts were becoming rigid to lay down boundaries in people's lives and senses. The relation between humans and Konjin lost spiritual meaning because it was institutionalized and became the norm. However, Konko Daijin revived and renewed the deep relation between humans and Tenchi Kane No Kami, the Kami of Heaven and Earth.

Konko Daijin taught the origins of the Universe to people, and revived the concept of the relationship to Kami, and the nature of the Universe. He began with the concepts regarding deities, which were bound to the world of folk religions and faith traditions. The era that Konko Daijin lived was also a difficult time when proposing

clues to help people grasp an understanding of the world of deities was a perilous venture.

The Meiji period was a time that modern ideas of science and technology were greatly adopted into Japan. Those ideas aimed to manage, convert, and utilize the Universe for humans. Therefore, the world of folk religions -- although it was formalized and institutionalized -- became a barrier to the adoption of those modern ideas because the prevailing thought involved a world in which people believed in the existence of deities. Thus, the government tried to break down these beliefs in many ways, saying the world of folk religions was the world of superstitions.

As Japan began to open itself up to the world, constructing railroads and building factories were prioritized to gain national power in order to compete with the power of European countries. Considering those times, if work was interrupted by Konjin's Direction of inappropriate days for activity that people customarily avoided, or if people needed to spend time to preserve the small shrines that people worshiped, the railroad construction and construction of buildings would never proceed. So, the Meiji government executed policies intended to destroy superstitious beliefs and banning evil heresies, and at the same time, taught the rational and scientific perspectives to children through school education. As these social trends proliferated, the significance of the world of folk religions gradually faded.

It can be said that the socio-political trends in this age tried to destroy the world of folk religions because it was outdated and interrupted the modernization in Japan. Instead, Konko Daijin criticized these movements from a spiritual point of view, trying to re-introduce the understanding of the relationship between humans and deities into its original form, instead of the institutionalized and formalized form it had become. After Konko Daijin's death, Konkokyo Organization defined his faith as the "overthrowing superstitious beliefs" in terms of adaption to the social modernization movements. It was made into a doctrine by Reverend Norio Sato, and still has a strong influence on our faith. The socio-political trends were destructive criticism from outside of the world of folk religions, but Konko Daijin's criticism was constructive and creative from inside, in order to revive the relation between humans and deities. The basis of these two criticisms were completely different.

2. The Course of Relationships between Humans and the Universe, Heaven and Earth

From what point of view did Konko Daijin criticize people's Konjin faith of the Days & Directions?

In those days, people were awed by the earth deity and were encouraged to avoid times and places which offended Konjin (i.e. Days & Directions.) People were afraid of bad accidents if they violated Konjin's directions. This fear came from a human-centered way of thinking rather than truly realizing the power of Kami (the deity). It was from the perspective of the human ego that people would be in trouble with disaster or hardship. In some regions, people made a shrine within their properties and enshrined Konjin or deities who could impose curses. These acts were also to sustain human life, as well as the protection and safety of their homes.

Konko Daijin criticized such attitudes. People prioritized their personal convenience when considering taboos against Konjin's Days & Directions. They did this to avoid Konjin's rage, not knowing Konjin -- Kami of the Universe -- embodied and actually protected people. Konko Daijin understood this himself and warned that people's selfish and egoistic attitudes were affronts and irreverence to Kami.

As just discussed, the perspectives of Kami of the Universe are able to criticize people's attitudes regarding the practice of customary rituals, which they thought of as faith. It is Kami's eyes looking at people that resulted in Kami's protection of human lives and places they lived.

You may say that when modernized people accused Konjin faith as a superstitious belief, it is the same criticism. By only observing things on earth, they could not notice that they were being observed by Kami. Their attitudes were typical: observing, analyzing everything on earth, and then only using things they can understand. Such attitudes made them lose the understanding and awe of the invisible power protecting us.

According to the quoted poem of Sophocles, people focused on observing and analyzing the sea, wind, and soil to overcome hardships; i.e., how they could overcome the surging sea, or get crops from devastated soil. Thus, their awe of Earth -- the eldest of the gods, the immortal, the unwearied -- who watches and forgives people's acts gradually became irrelevant to their lives.

On August 19 (lunar calendar), 1873 (Meiji 6), Konko Daijin received this divine message and wrote down:

Tenchi Kane No Kami wants to say the following: "Though they live between Heaven and Earth, people are unaware of Kami's blessings. Shrines, temples, and homes stand on Kami's land. Unaware of this, people only examine the Days and Directions and commit irreverences to Kami and encounter hardships due to their accumulated offenses. They are to practice faith and receive divine blessings. Tenchi Kane No Kami has sent Ikigami Konko Daijin to the people to give blessings and teachings and to have them prosper forever. Kami is Kami because of man, and man is man because of Kami. Both continue to uphold each other." (Oboegaki 21-21)

Within the teaching above, "People only examine the Days and Directions and commit irreverence to Kami," the word "examine" means that people consider and see the Directions of all kamis generically called Konjin. However, it did not mean that people respected and cared for kamis, nor did it mean that people visit at times and places where kamis would be. People acknowledged Kami's existence, but they didn't want Kami to bother their construction plans, travels, or farming. So they looked for times and places that Kami would be absent, and tried to accomplish whatever they wanted at those places and times; that is to say, this was their ulterior motive for fulfilling the concept of "examine the Days and Directions."

The theory of Days & Directions originally came from religious cosmology, which explores relationships between people and the Universe, and of Chinese Taoism. The concept of Days & Directions was coalesced by people's thoughts; i.e., human lives came

from spirituality of the universe and cosmos protecting them, and these thoughts have been adjusted and refined through humanity's long history.

Going way back to the Nara Era (710~794), the theory of Days & Directions was imported from China to Japan. In the Edo Era (1603~1868), it became a chief influence in ordinary people's lives, but eventually the theory was transformed to reflect ways to protect people's lives, rather than as it referred to relationships with kamis.

"Everyone tries to deceive Tenchi Kane No Kami-Sama. They wait for Konjin Sama's absence in a certain direction's instructions. They avoid certain days and directions, thinking them to be ominous. They also enclose plots of land with sacred ropes to keep them safe. They use the plot only when the ominous kami is absent. They commit these irreverence and say that Konjin is surely a fearful kami. But Konjin is not a fearful kami. Konjin is Tenchi Kane No Kami-Sama. Kami doesn't always punish." (Gorikai I: SAITO Sojiro 6-1)

If you read *Konkokyo Kyoten (Sacred Scriptures of Konkokyo)*, you will learn concrete rituals and customs that people conducted to avoid Konjin's influence on their lives, and many words from Konko Daijin criticizing these actions. You will also learn from Konkokyo Kyoten how people avoided Konjin's influences and imposition of taboos -- these ignore the origin of human life and workings of protecting lives. The Scriptures reflect acts of people who tried to separate themselves from Heaven and Earth. Following these practices reflected how these were selfish and irreverent acts toward Kami.

Konko Daijin's warnings, rooted on the eyes of Kami, carried this divine message:

"Though they live between Heaven and Earth, people are unaware of Kami's blessings. Shrines, temples, and homes stand on Kami's land. Unaware of this..."

The theory of Days & Directions in those days long ago, may not be so different from the modern ideas of science and technology, in terms of observing things and the workings of Heaven and Earth in a human-centered way. Furthermore, both are acts of adjusting and converting Heaven and Earth only to focus on human lives. There is a difference, if there is an acknowledgement of the workings and existence of Kami.

To continue, I would like to comment on these words of Konko Daijin, "encounter hardships due to their accumulated offenses." We can make various interpretations of "accumulated offenses;" however, let us understand what this means. How long have they been "accumulated?" It was from such a far distant past, when humans had separated from all other living things between Heaven and Earth.

From that beginning, humans have gained wisdom and learned the act of tilling the soil with horses and their offspring, as the plows weave to and fro, year after year. However, with accumulating this act of torture, humans have created cultures and history. In addition, humans have lessened their appreciation toward the Heavens and Earth, which forgives such acts and sustains their lives.

Today, we have environmental problems, such as the destruction of the ozone layers, forests, and rivers. These started from the unique problems of human lives, such

as the human challenge to kamis and the forgetting of kamis' protection. They have already been seen in the innocent and simple pastoral act symbolized in the song:

"Earth, too, the eldest of the gods, the immortal, the unwearied, He
wears away to his own ends, turning the soil with the offspring of
horses as the plows weave to and fro year after year."

Various individuals, groups, and societies have produced many misfortunes or hardships we now face. This is because we do not acknowledge Tenchi Kane No Kami's divine favor. We also avoid Kami, ignore our relationship with Heaven and Earth, and accumulate irreverence to Kami through having lived in a human-centered way. From Konko Daijin's point of view, this is the root of our problems.

I am not saying that Taoism which introduced the Days & Directions, modern technology advancing cultures and civilization, and European ideas are all bad; nor should we ignore them. If we deny these notions, we should return to being animals. Humans have produced cultures, civilizations, and this world amidst Tenchi Kane No Kami's workings, protections, and forgiveness. My point is that humans think they produced everything through their own abilities, something that they also will assume in the future. Human-centered perspectives and actions are acts of irreverence to Kami from the standpoint of the Universe, Heaven and Earth.

In human life and the entire human history, people have accumulated irreverence, which are birthmarks to be passed down and succeeded from generation to generation. Kami, Divine Parent of all living things, dissolves these birthmarks. The working of Konko Daijin's faith is shown in the second half of the divine message:

"They are to practice faith and receive divine blessings. Tenchi Kane No Kami has sent Ikigami Konko Daijin to the people to give blessings and teachings and to have them prosper forever. Kami is Kami because of man, and man is man because of Kami. Both continue to uphold each other."

Let me explain the expressions within this divine message; i.e., "has sent" and "to give blessings and teachings." Initially, I pointed out these phrases. Next, let us consider these words in the context of the following message: "Shrines, temples, and homes stand on Kami's land."

As I mentioned earlier, in Christianity or Islam, the Universe is not Kami (God) itself nor the body of Kami. Generally speaking of "Universe," it is understood to be a creature of God, who is outside of the Universe, and the humans manage and protect it. However, Konko Daijin teaches:

"Tenchi Kane No Kami is Tenchi, the Universe." (Gorikai II: FUKUSHIMA Gihei 10)

"If Tenchi Kane No Kami enters this shrine, the world will become dark. Kami's shrine is the Universe. As for my shrine, this is more than enough." (Gorikai II: KONDO Fujimori 15)

In many other teachings, Konko Daijin teaches about the Universe, Heaven and Earth is Kami, or Kami's body. Living in the Universe is to be surrounded by Kami, or to belong to Kami.

3. The Universe: Provided by Kami

This is mentioned in the next teaching.

"This earth and everything else belong to Kami-Sama. Yet you think that they are yours, and that you can use money to manipulate them as you please without asking Kami-Sama. Therefore, your admonishment was not irrational. Ask Kami-Sama for permission to borrow Kami-Sama's land, and apologize for your past irreverence. Then you will be able to build without any problems." (*Gorikai II: MIURA Sano2-2*)

"A believer from Onomichi saw his cesspool container rise out of the ground. When he inquired about this, he was told, 'Request to be allowed to use the ground for as long as it exists. You will feel at ease.'" (*Gorikai I: KONDO Fujimori 25*)

Kami provided not only houses, but everything which belongs to Kami, in order for humans to live happy lives as Kami's children. In other words, from a human viewpoint, we all borrow Kami's belongings. Also, human bodies and minds originally belong to Kami lent by the Universe. Humans mistakenly think that they are on their own. Tenchi Kane No Kami provided Kami's belongings for humans, Kami's children. By ignoring Kami, only humans have not known or understood this concept.

Konko Daijin goes on to teach us that we should be aware of living our lives ceaselessly borrowing things provided by Tenchi Kane No Kami, and the proper relationship of humility that humans should have towards Tenchi Kane No Kami is based on this awareness. It is through Konko Daijin's faith that we are aware that we borrow not only lands and houses, but everything from Tenchi Kane No Kami, from birth to death, and even after death. Why do we not appreciate and beg Tenchi Kane No Kami for forgiveness to borrow these belongings? This is how the Konko Faith sees the relationship between humans and the Universe.

Kami prepared not only houses but everything which belongs to Kami, in order for humans to live happy lives as Kami's children. In other words, from a human viewpoint, we all borrow Kami's belongings. Also, human bodies and minds are

originally Kami's belongings, borrowings from the Universe. Humans mistakenly think that they are on their own. Tenchi Kane No Kami prepared Kami's belongings for humans, Kami's children. Ignoring Kami, only humans have not known or understood this concept.

Then, Konko Daijin teaches that we should be aware of living our lives with borrowing things prepared by Tenchi Kane No Kami, and the proper relationship of humans to Tenchi Kane No Kami is based on this awareness. It is through Konko Daijin's faith that we are aware that we borrow not only lands and houses, but everything from Tenchi Kane No Kami from birth to death, and even after death. Why do we not appreciate and beg Tenchi Kane No Kami for forgiveness to borrow these belongings? This is how the Konko Faith sees the relationship between humans and the Universe.

In our social interactions, we must respect the concept of "private," following established laws. Private acres, private ownership, and even basic human rights are examples of this concept. If we did not do so, our society would be chaotic. However, it is valid only in the relationships among people, and not applied to relationships between humans and the Universe; in the matter of relationships between humans and the Universe, there is no such thing as "private property" nor is there a need to assert such.

We cannot write our names in the air saying, "This is my air." We cannot secure the nontoxic air or land as our own possessions, saying "I do not produce any harmful things like Freon (chlorofluorocarbon) on earth, so I deserve this air." Every single thing between Heaven and Earth, such as the gentle sunlight on a balcony in midwinter, or a harsh storm in mid-fall; we cannot cite those as our "private" possessions.

In actualizing the relationship between humans and the Universe, we should apologize to Kami for handling borrowed land or even our lives that are borrowed from Kami, carelessly and selfishly. As both individuals and humanity as a whole, we need to live between Heaven and Earth recognizing and acknowledging the relationship of people to things prepared by the Universe, and reform our mindset.

I keenly feel the need to realize Konko Daijin's faith for the world. The European and Islamic thoughts have developed the idea of the Universe as a creature that is an object, and the idea of humans as stewards for it. These ideas have overwhelmed the world, resulting in many instances of severe destruction of nature. Trying for many centuries to be good stewards of the Universe, humans even recently started an ecology movement to preserve the environment, but the anthropocentrism actually has caused more destruction than has helped, and we must stop it.

"Nature protection" seems important in our times; however, the fundamental ideas and resulting acts perceive nature and the Universe as humankind's belongings. From the perspective that the Universe is Kami, I can understand the ecology movements, which attempt to protect nature/Kami, are actually built on human arrogance.

Ecologists insist that we must protect nature for our descendants. These ideas are beautiful and valuable. However, if they are based on the thought that nature and the Universe are humans' possessions, we should criticize them no matter how valuable they may seem. The destruction of nature and the protection of nature are two sides of

the same coin. We must carefully examine how the relationship between humans and the Universe is understood.

KONKO Ieyoshi, the Second Konko-Sama, left these words:

"If you practice faith, you should care for the invisibles. We usually don't take care of them."

This concept of focusing on invisibles is supported by the actual feeling that we are being watched by the invisibles. I suggest that we instill this intention in our hearts, which is the clue to seeking the proper relationship between humans and the Universe. It is also the clue to solving our problems related to the protection and destruction of nature.

II. Human-Centered World, Nin-yo

1. Unknowingly Bestowed Life

Let us examine the term "human-centered world," which I previously showed you it had appeared in certain divine messages. This is important for us to understand Konko Daijin's viewpoint regarding social and world trends.

"Right now, the world is human-centered. All things are done by people's own power, and many people are going against my teachings. Those who do as I say shall become a kami. Long ago, it was a kami-centered world. Now it is a human-centered world. Because of this, I shall teach people to return to a kami-centered world. Difficulties and sufferings are caused by people's own hearts. Whether or not they can live in a peaceful world also depends on their own hearts."(Oboe-cho: 24-25)

This divine message reached Konko Daijin in the early morning of November 24th (lunar calendar), Meiji 13 (1880), according to records. The term "human-centered world" is not used among the general population but in particular, it appears only twice in the Oshirase-goto Oboe-cho: Record of Revelations. Konko Daijin instructed how to read the word: "nin-yo" ("human-centered world").

This divine message indicated the problems of how villagers and worship hall (hiromae) staff work for the shrine construction activities. However, it meant more than that. You can see by the quotations "done by people's own power" and "many people are going against my teachings" in this message, that the "human-centered world" is the world and period in which people prioritize their own conveniences by their own will. It is also the term from Kami's perspective that criticizes people for only seeing visible things and affecting Heaven and Earth, and the Universe by changing these willfully into whatever they want. In other words, a world and society that is filled with human difficulties that is created by people who have forgotten Kami, who are living against the Universe, and who are creating various hardships. Kami's and

Konko Daijin's viewpoints focus on how to transform the world for people, to be a better place.

Konko Daijin seemed to think that transforming our recognition of our own lives was fundamental to transforming this "human-centered world." For now, let us examine Konko Daijin's teachings about human lives, the connection of our body and mind, and the Universe. The next teaching is told by ICHIMURA Mitsugoro (1845~1915).

Planting seeds in a paddy is known as "tane oroshi." Tane oroshi from Kami is when the child, yet unknown by its blessed parents, is given a soul. The body is given by Earth, and the mitama soul is given by Tenchi Kane No Kami-Sama. All the while, the child dwells in the womb of the mother, who is unaware of all this. The child later develops a complete body, and is born. [Gorikai II: ICHIMURA, Mitsugoro: 13)

How are humans born? If I explain this teaching from a biological standpoint, it is not scientific. However, the expressions of "when the child, yet unknown by its blessed parents, is given a soul" and "the child dwells in the womb of the mother, who is unaware of all this," and all words of this teaching show that Konko Daijin turned his thoughts to the invisible world.

He uses the example of "planting seeds in a paddy is known as tane oroshi" to show and convey the idea of an invisible world. I often hear people say, "I got a child," and "I made a child." It makes me wonder if parents give birth by themselves. No, everything is done by the invisible workings of the Universe. Konko Daijin teaches us about the formation of human life in a way for us to easily understand: the child is developed by the invisible power and care from Kami and the Universe, "yet unknown by its blessed parents."

Furthermore, this teaching indicates where people's lives, body and soul separated. "The body is given by Earth" and the Mitama Spirit -- the soul or mind -- is given by Tenchi Kane No Kami, Divine Parent of the Universe. "By Earth" does not mean "by the soil," but "by the Earth Deity." Konko Daijin distinguished between body and soul for us to understand human lives easily. This teaching may be meaningless to members of the field of the science which deals with only the visible things. We should consider and understand this teaching on the basis of spirituality, which looks at things from the invisible world, just as perceiving such a world behind what we can see. How about the following teachings?

When people die, they are reunited with Nittenshi. It is the same for Buddhists and Shintoists. The body dies, but the soul keeps on living. The body, which was taken from the ground, returns to the ground. And the soul, which was bestowed by Heaven, returns to Heaven.

I do not say these things to those who are not single-hearted. I do not claim to have evidence for what I say. Dying is when your body and soul separate. (GII: NANBA Ko: 13.2-3)

Here also, you cannot understand these teachings from a scientific point of view. For example, you would misunderstand the word “Heaven” in the sentence, “And the soul, which was bestowed by Heaven, returns to Heaven.” If you consider “Heaven” as what you can see with your eyes - that is, a physical universe with shining stars, airplanes and satellites - will be a big mistake. It is better that the notion of a night sky with shining stars, created by the souls of loved ones, were part of a fairy tale. But if you consider it as a universe in the Galaxy, you will be wrong.

What does Konko Daijin want to tell us in these quoted teachings? You should associate them with Konko Daijin’s faith as the basis for the words in the teachings. In fact, Tenchi Kane No Kami is synonymous with the word “tenchi (universe),” or as separate words “ten (Heaven),” and “chi (Earth),” or “tsuchi (ground),” expressed by Konko Daijin in the teachings.

In other words, Konko Daijin preaches that by death we go back to the home of human lives, the world of Kami who is working for us all the time. This is expressed in Kami’s words, “reunited with Nittenshi (the Sun Deity),” “returns to Heaven,” or “returns to the ground.” The visible body will disappear by returning to the world of Kami, but the working of human-beings will actually “live through” by being accepted into the world of Kami.

If you understand this literally to mean divided into two -- Heaven separated from the ground -- as in a dichotomy of the human body returns to the ground and the human soul returns to Heaven after death; you will miss the important meaning. In order to teach a profound concept, Konko Daijin implies his true meaning through metaphors to help us understand easily. This appears to be a particular method for teachings in religion, which is very different from the scientific contexts.

You can see this feature in the following teachings, which are told by SATO Mitsujiro (1852~1922).

Tenchi Kane No Kami-Sama watches through the eyes of Heaven and Earth. For as long as you live on Earth, Kami will watch you from Heaven. According to an old saying, Heaven knows, the Earth knows, and you know. Tenchi Kane No Kami-Sama knows all because Heaven sees all. (*GII:SATO Mitsujiro:28.4*)

You may well know that the left eye is Nittenshi and the right eye is Gattenshi. No matter how much you open your eyes, without the radiance of Nittenshi and Gattenshi, you will see nothing. But even with the radiance of Nittenshi and Gattenshi, if your eyes are no more, they will see no light. (*GII: SATO Mitsujiro: 28.5*)

These teachings should not be taken literally, and mistakenly understanding this to mean that Konko Daijin thought the left eye was Nittenshi the Sun, and the right eye was Gattenshi, the moon.

We cannot see things without light, nor can we see the working of the universe although we have eyes. Our eyes work only with light from the universe. But even if we have light from the universe, “if your eyes are no more,” then we see no light; that is, we would be dead. As in this metaphor, you should understand Konko Daijin’s words as

meaning that the working of the human body and the working of the universe are helping each other for the existence of our lives. In other words, “People exist because of Kami, and Kami exists because of people” (Oboegaki 9-3-7, 13-1-7), so that “aiyo kakeyo,” mutual fulfillment, is implied by Konko Daijin here. If you understood these teachings literally, and developed them doctrinally or dogmatically, it would be very problematic for you to grasp Konko Daijin’s faith and people’s relationship with Kami and the universe.

As with this example, Konko Daijin taught us that the fundamental existence of human lives and the necessity of confirming its actuality needs to begin with our relationship to Tenchi no Kami. We can find the basic thoughts of Konko Daijin’s faith and even his doctrine by his words and by looking at their context.

Let us seek more with the teaching told by ISHIHARA Ginzo (1833~1910).

There are people in-between Heaven and Earth. In other words, Heaven is the father, and Earth is the mother. Humans, plants, and other living things live on Earth through the blessings they receive from Heaven. Thus, Heaven is the father, and Earth, the mother. (GI: ISHIHARA Ginzo: 1.1)

If you also take this teaching directly and ask “Do we need to worship Heaven as our father and Earth as our mother?” I must say “You are wrong.” This is a metaphor and you can take them in reverse: Heaven is the mother, and Earth is the father, because Konko Daijin tried to teach that father and mother were undivided important parents.

As you see “Humans, plants, and other living things live on Earth through the blessings they receive from Heaven.” Konko Daijin asks that we awaken. We, the people who do selfish acts turning our backs to the universe, seem unaware that we are in the bosom of Heaven and Earth, the parent of all living things - that is, humans, other animals and plants. Although humans are different from other animals, given the power from Heaven and Earth to build cultures and civilizations, our lives are basically and fundamentally given by the Universal Parent to be allowed to live, in the same way as trees and grasses, fish and birds, and other plants and animals. Konko Daijin continued to teach this to selfish and arrogant humans in his various words and metaphors in order to reach our hearts.

2. The World is Being Disturbed; The Universe is Chaotic

In Chapter 2, I talked about this message: “I, Tenchi Kane No Kami, am disturbed. The world is chaotic.” Konko Daijin received and wrote down another message about a disturbance on October 28th, 1880 (Meiji 13, lunar calendar).

” The land is being disturbed. The whole world is being disturbed, and mountains, rivers, oceans and the universe are all becoming chaotic. I have informed Konko Daijin.”(Oboe-cho: 24-20-3)

The former message about disturbance reached Konko Daijin when an earthquake occurred, but it is not known in our records when and how this notice reached Konko Daijin. Being different from the previous message, it implies the chaos of the universe in addition to the disturbance in the world. It gives us cause to wonder about the relationship between the world and the universe; that is, between society and a nation built by humans and the universe.

I already have explained how we should understand the teaching: People exist because of Kami, and Kami exists because of people.” From the viewpoint of this “mutual fulfillment (Aiyo kakeyo),” we can understand that the negative workings of the disturbance are associated with the universe, Kami’s world and the human world.

The disturbance of the human world violates not only the human world, but also the universe, Kami’s world and Kami’s body. I can say this chaos of the universe means the anger of Kami appears in the human world. The human-centered world was so egocentric as to sever the relation with the universe. That is why Kami reveals how this schism disturbs the workings of the Divine Parent of the Universe. This is discussed in the following words in the Teachings of Konko Daijin, Gorikai:

Earth punishes. See disastrous earthquakes. The ground ripples from deep within. Only the ground moves not, but also the air. Thus, it has been said since long ago, that flying birds shall fall during earthquakes.

Heaven shall not kill they say. This is not true. See torrential rains. It kills. The Sun is blessed they say. But it too punishes. See scorching droughts. It tries to take people's lives in one stroke. (Gorikai I: ICHIMURA Mitsugoro Vol.3: 4.13)

In these teachings, Konko Daijin teaches that “The ground ripples from deep within. Only the ground moves not, but also the air.” Then, the Sun in the sky is said not to kill, however; “it too punishes” people if they harm the relationship with heaven. Thus, floods by “torrential rains” and “scorching droughts” can kill people. You may think that Konko Daijin explains the natural disasters here, but this is not so. You should understand that the relationship between people and the universe -- especially the state of the human world -- as well as the disturbance of the relationship between a human-centered world and the universe, are all explained in the teachings noted earlier by Konko Daijin.

When natural disasters and environmental pollution were in the news as social problems, I came up with these teachings. Recently, there has been considerable discussion about serious problems such as the willful ruin of African lands, destruction of Amazonian forests or pollution of seas in the Southeast Asian countries. These problems are caused by the economical, industrial, and political activities and policies in the world. However, as mentioned previously, they are essentially caused by the human-centered world, in which people forget that they are being allowed to live on the earth as lives of the universe, as children of Kami, the Divine Parent of the Universe. We actually need to consider these problems on a faith level with awe and fear of Kami.

Humans used to live pastoral lives, having cows and horses in fields and collecting branches from a mountain to make a fire with which to cook. In those days, humans started to challenge the universe. Through our history, humans decided to control nature and built a “human-centered world” opposing the universe. The

workings of the universe consequently become chaotic, so that the human world is also negatively affected. This situation is described to Konko Daijin as a warning by the Divine Parent of the Universe.

For example, if a member of your family is disturbed, the family and all of the relatives also would be disturbed. This also happens with humans and the universe. Thus, it is necessary that we teach earnestly and profoundly that humans must transform their problematic attitudes of forgetting and opposing the universe.

I will explain the teachings by Rev. Ieyoshi Konko, the Second Konko-Sama:

”Tenchi No Kami protects us day by day, all the time.

If you want to avoid Kami when you are reforming your house, seek the help of a man who checks the Days and Directions.

Although you can avoid the worst direction for arranging your marriage or reforming your house, it is quite easy for Kami to break your marriage, collapse your house, and take your life away, when your request does not suit Kami’s Wish.

Without permission from Tenchi Kane No Kami, oceans, rivers, mountains and villages all turn to a muddy sea.

Earthquakes, thunderbolts, typhoons, and hurricanes damage the whole world, so that you cannot escape no matter where you run to.

Even a bird flying in the sky may drop. You will never be saved.”

This teaching instructs that checking the Days & Directions is an irreverent act disobeying Kami, which is in line with the teachings of Konko Daijin. It contains very harsh words.

The second Konko-Sama mentions not only Days & Directions but also the result of a human-centered world, in which humans act like masters or shepherds of the universe. He claims that humans have turned their backs to the universe, have opposed, and have challenged the universe, while they are allowed to live in the universe. When this happens, Kami’s Wish and Will are not fulfilled; thus, humans may deserve chaos of the universe, manifesting Kami’s anger. When Kami’s anger makes “oceans, rivers, mountains, and villages all turn to a muddy sea,” then “earthquakes, thunderbolts, typhoons, and hurricanes” disturb the world. This is manifested as an extraordinary natural disaster. It is the chaos of the universe - natural phenomena such as volcanic eruptions and deluges. You may think they do not occur often, but you should consider these more as recurring problems. There is nowhere for humans to escape these occurrences.

Regardless of being influenced by environmental factors, the order and the blessings of the universe cannot be realized by a person who suffers from mental illness or incapacity without being helped by faith, medicine or healers. When heaven and earth collapses, when there are restless storms and thunder and lightning, the peaceful resting place is gone. Heaven and earth show only chaos to people wherever they try to escape. A beautiful flower can transform into a sinister looking vampire; butterflies, birds, and insects -- all living things -- can become objects sucking out the life blood. In this way, around them and within their lives, the universe is in disarray and becomes even more chaotic, the ties supporting their lives gets severed, and the universe is turned upside down.

This is an extreme metaphor, but there is no guarantee that this kind of chaotic situation will not happen in each of our lives, in our society, world, or in the universe. If I say that your own mind will lead to a collapse of your world and the universe, you can understand more or less what I want to tell you in terms of “the universe is chaotic.” It is necessary to reconsider such a situation by expanding our thinking from that of the mind of a person in society, to that of the mind of a person in the world and universe.

On the one hand, Konko Daijin teaches that the Universe is the Divine Parent of our lives, protecting and blessing the world of humans as children of our Divine Parent. On the other hand, if children turn their backs on the Divine Universal Parent and plunge it into a dire situation, how the universe will become should be taught by Konko Daijin. This is related to all these expressions: “The world is being disturbed;” “The universe is chaotic;” “The heaven kills;” “The earth kills;” “The Sun punishes and takes people’s lives in one stroke.” Through Konko Daijin’s words, Kami earnestly tries to tell people that the universe, which we regard as peaceful, could turn upside-down. However, Kami wishes to maintain a strong relationship with people.

In Buddhism, there is a concept of a degenerate age called “masse.” In Konko Daijin’s view, “the disturbed world” would appear if the “human-centered world” covers the whole universe. This warning is apparent in the above teachings. We should keep in mind Konko Daijin’s thought: If the universe turns to chaos, humans cannot live as humans. If we continue to carry out things in a human-centered way, our world would never be saved, even if we request mercy or apologize for our deeds.

III. The Universe, Heaven & Earth, and Nature

1. Enshrined Kami, Not Enshrined Kami

So far, I used the word “Kami” as a synonym for “the Universe, Heaven & Earth.” In order to reveal the reasoning behind this, I would like to share the difference between “Nature” and these other terms.

In the middle of the Meiji era, “nature” was imported as a foreign language word to Japan and then it was translated into Japanese as “自然, Shizen.” The Chinese character “自然” was originally pronounced “Jinen” which meant “to exist naturally as the state of heaven and earth.” For example, Heaven and Earth exist naturally and necessarily, Heaven and Earth never resort to artifice.” When “nature” was being translated to Japanese “Shizen,” “Jinen” which meant “heaven and earth is never changed by human work,” a modified translation became “Shizen.” “Shizen” was substituted for “the place of heaven and earth” and became the common usage. Also “Shizen” began to be understood as “humans using objects which could be changed by human work and remodeling.” Along with that, heaven and earth as a deity or something sacred, became synonymous with “Shizen,” the original meaning was gradually lost, and the meaning of “Shizen” became less apparent.

I would assert that the use of particular words influenced the meaning and, consequently, the understanding of the Universe, Heaven and Earth as explained by Konko Daijin, whose believers often misinterpreted the Universe, Heaven and Earth not as Kami and nature as "Shizen." Therefore, I will once more try to find out the meaning told by Konko Daijin.

For a consideration of this, let us first refer to the idea of a shrine of Kami.

If Tenchi Kane No Kami enters this shrine, the world will become dark. Kami's shrine is the Universe. (Gorikai II:KONDO, Fujimori:15.1)

Tenchi Kane No Kami is Tenchi, the Universe. Kami is not in a shrine. (Gorikai II: FUKUSHIMA Gihei:10-2)

According to traditional Japanese thinking, gods are enshrined in a special area that is separated from our daily lives. We call the area "Yashiro." "Yashiro" was appointed as the best place Kami would have been enshrined -- typically this is deep in a forest, at the top of the mountain, or at the edge of the village.

However, troublesome deities [kamis] came from China to Japan. These deities had no shrines or fixed habitations. They wandered through time and space; they traveled in various directions; they never stopped. In the event that people disturbed the path of the deities by accident, these deities got angry. Furthermore, as they became angrier, they cursed the people who disturbed their paths, including these people's families and also their livestock. As I already mentioned, people called the deities "Konjin" collectively. I think that the rules of the Days & Directions were created for the safety of the daily lives of Japanese people, to avoid antagonizing the deities' locations, as was the case for Chinese people.

But the rules of the Days & Directions were too difficult to follow for ordinary people who did not have enough knowledge to understand the reasoning for the rules. Because of their misunderstanding, people tried to create shrines for deities inside their homes, following a more ancient manner of worship. Actually, these deities did not need to be enshrined because they originally did not settle in those shrines. In feeling great fear of offending deities, people checked calendars and were compelled to ask experts about the Days & Directions. The Deity called "Konjin" often inspired people's feelings of anxiety and apprehensions about these ancient enshrined deities i.e. kamis. Consequently, people believed they could receive the kamis' protection if they followed rules regarding how and when to worship kamis by a fixed time, location and manner.

I have explained several times that Konko Daijin interacted with Konjin and was made to develop his faith, and through this Deity, to find a divinity of the Heaven and Earth called "Tenchi Kane No Kami." The divinities of Konjin are different from those of the ancient Japanese kamis. Konjin is not enshrined, is not settled in a certain spot, or predicted to appear at a certain time or place. The understanding regarding the concept of these divinities greatly influenced and formed a basis for Konko Daijin's developing viewpoint of kamis.

Konko Daijin began to worship Konjin who was not enshrined; therefore, he dispelled the conventional concept of kamis who are enshrined. He perceived a new viewpoint of Kami of the Heavens and Earth, which meant the Heavens and Earth

were Kami's body and working field. This is evidenced in his teachings: "If Tenchi Kane No Kami enters this shrine, the world will become Dark," and "Tenchi Kane No Kami is Tenchi, the Universe." Through Konko Daijin and his family's sufferings, he related with the Kami who did not stay in a single place. He had to face Kami because he could not escape from Kami. Then he was able to determine Kami's workings, which was just like being awakened to the truth.

2. Being Neither Near or Far -- the Universe

If we perceive Kami to be everywhere and throughout time, and we believe we are kept alive by Kami's Workings, we can say that we are able to see Kami even if we are at the construction site of a yet unfinished building, on the roof, or the inside of a subway car. Even if we existed in a particle of concrete, Kami is there; even if we are embedded in the asphalt upon which cars come and go, we are a part of Kami's body. If we believe in the thought that nature equals Heaven and Earth, and Heaven and Earth equals nature, then when we would like to meet Kami, we would have to leave cities which are overflowing with artifacts; in short, we would have to go to a deep mountain glen, or the Galapagos Islands - somewhere remote and isolated.

"Tenchi Kane no Kami is the kami who rules Heaven and Earth. People are born and die within heaven and earth. They cannot live outside of heaven and earth." (Gorikai III: Jinkyu Kyogoroku:138.1)

Expanding on this teaching, even if we are in a rocket or a space shuttle in space, we only live and die as human beings. We are in the Universe, Heaven and Earth. We cannot leave outside of Tenchi Kane No Kami's bosom. The Universe or "between Heaven and Earth" is different from nature, in general -- that is, this would be before the involvement of human hands or beyond human control. This is problematic if we think the Universe taught by Konko Daijin is the same as Nature. Let us consider the words from the Kyoten.

Even though you do not come to worship, Inagi and Otani belong to the same Universe. If you do not pray by yourself and receive divine blessings, it will be too late.

Come to worship while in good health, and receive divine blessings. When you suffer from sickness or misfortune, pray to Tenchi No Kami-Sama and Konko-Sama for help. Pray wherever you are--in the mountains, in rice paddies, on the ocean, on the river, or on the road. You have to receive blessings on the spot. Otherwise, it will be too late to relieve your suffering. This Hiromae is the only thing that is far away. Tenchi Kane No Kami knows no distance. Kami is neither near nor far. (Gorikai I: YAMAMOTO, Sadajiro:2.4-5)

When the father of Yamamoto Sadajiro visited Konko Daijin's worship hall (hiromae) for the first time in 1864, Konko Daijin accurately described Yamamoto's house in Inagi village as if he had gone earlier to see it. The father was very surprised

about how and why Konko Daijin knew about the residence from 20 kilometers away, because Konko Daijin's description was so accurate. Having heard from his father about Konko Daijin's description, Sadajiro asked Konko Daijin how he knew everything although he was from far away. The previous teaching was a part of Konko Daijin's reply. The initial part of the teaching says: "Tenchi Kane No Kami-Sama protects the entire world by watching through Heaven and Earth. We live in between two mirrors. When I close my eyes and pray, I become able to see the surroundings of the person's home." The beginning words "Tenchi No Kami-Sama protects the entire world by watching through Heaven and Earth" connect with the phrases of "Inagi and Otani belong to the same Universe" and "Tenchi Kane No Kami is neither near nor far."

The Konkokyo Research Institute where I worked, stands on the hill and is blessed with a good environment. When I was tired, I would walk around it to be refreshed. There is a thick pine forest near the back of the building. Walking down the hill, there are three ponds surrounding the bamboo trees and woods. When I would leave my office and start to walk outside, I encountered so many different views, one after another. Of course, I was comforted by the songs of seasonal wild birds such as a Japanese nightingale, little cuckoo, bunting, long-tailed tit, woodpecker, pheasant, etc. I also saw a wild rabbit if I was lucky. When I wanted to have a different reaction, I would walk up the steep slope for fifteen minutes and sit at the top of the Ryu-oh hill to enjoy the wonderful view of the Seto Inland Sea.

Seeing the different views around me gives me great comfort. The various scenes and the gradual changes I see as I go step by step, make me feel refreshed. That is nature which we ordinarily meet. There are no identical scenes in nature.

So I think that what is the Universe, the Heaven and Earth, in Konko Daijin's teachings within the phrases "belong to the same Universe" and "Tenchi Kane No Kami is neither near nor far?," is totally different from environments and nature. When Konko Daijin said "the same Universe," the Universe which he saw and experienced is different from nature, which always varies and changes.

I say that if the nature is the visible location by humans, the Universe and the Heaven and Earth is the divine place which Kami sees. In the divine place, we may be permitted to classify nature, cities and countryside, which humans can see and experience. If we classify them in any way, such places belong to the same Universe as Kami's body.

When I explain the meaning of the Universe, it becomes more difficult to understand. Instead of explaining it, we should experience the Universe directly as Konko Daijin said the phrase of "the same Universe." It is possible to explain the Universe. However, now even Konkokyo believers confuse the idea of nature and the sense of the Universe; so we cannot help explaining in order to make clear, the difference between nature and the Universe. Getting sunlight under the green trees, hearing songs of little birds, or quenching a parched throat by a spring in a valley; it is only in such full natural environments that we receive divine blessings. It is only in the imminence of natural destruction can we perceive the irreverence to Kami. If that is the case, our faith becomes more and more uncertain.

Even the hustle and bustle of a city covered with car exhaust fumes, we have to perceive the Universe as Kami's body, and workings here and there. We have to find out and seek the life to keep a suitable relationship with the Universe. If the Universe

which we perceive in the small space of the city is different from the one which we perceive in the beautiful and tender nature, our relationship with the Universe, our view of the Universe and our heartfelt feeling for the Universe must be at odds. When we feel the distinction between the “beautiful Universe” and the “dirty Universe,” we need not believe our own eyes at first. If that is the case, we will not see what Konko Daijin perceived and understood.

3. There Have Never Been Any Fads in the Universe

In addition to giving us his teaching, Konko Daijin said the Universe had no fads and no end. Let us think about his teaching.

"Heaven, as well as Earth, has never stopped its constant activities. The Sun and the Moon move as they always have." (Gorikai I: ICHIMURA, Mitsugoro Vol. 2:5.3)

Those who practice this faith should not vacillate between two faiths or move from one faith to another. There have never been any fads in the Universe. (Gorikai III: Jinkyu Kyogoroku :9.1)

If we consider the Universe as nature, these Konko Daijin teachings might be wrong. Discoveries by astronomy and earth science suggest that in nature, there is a beginning and an end for everything. Earth has its beginning and at the end, it will vanish in space.

Ever since dinosaurs and mammoths had existed, nature changed rapidly or gradually. These creatures had never been allowed permanent survival and conservation of the species. Because human beings live in nature, it may be that the changes in nature will not allow permanent survival. Regarding the Universe in the same way as nature, it will change and will inevitably end.

Considering nature from a broad perspective, it repeats itself in many ways. For example, the sun rises from the east and sets in the west. It could be said that there is no cycle of change. However, considering the huge band of time streaming the history of the universe, our Earth and nature have their inevitable beginnings and endings.

But Konko Daijin taught us in the previous teaching, "There have never been any fads in the Universe." What was "the Universe" expressed by Konko Daijin? In Christianity and Islam, the universe has its beginning and end because their God created it. As for the lives of the created human beings in the created universe, Christians believe that a Covenant was made between God and human beings. According to the Covenant, the lives of human beings would be guaranteed by God. Without a deeper discussion of theology, Christians' faith in the Resurrection creates the Covenant with God for salvation at the end of the world.

On the other hand, the Universe, the Heaven and Earth that Konko Daijin views have no beginning and no end, and it has no death. He taught us human beings are allowed to live in such a Universe. Furthermore, let us examine another teaching in the Konkokyo Kyoten, the Sacred Scripture of Konkokyo as follows:

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: 8.1)

The Universe that Konko Daijin perceived has no end. If what Konko Daijin said about nature is the same as this teaching, we must say contradicts the view of today's science. It might be said that food shortages will spread over the whole earth in the future. We waste petroleum. Because there are limited resources, all will eventually be expended. Food will also eventually be part of the shortages. As a matter of course, nature means limited things, and we have to make a lot of effort to manage such limited resources through population adjustment, birth control and so on.

In his book "The Idea of Nature," R.G. Collingwood said that the energy of nature is only emitted. He compared this energy with "the clock whose spring is coming loose" or "a shooting magazine." The wind-up clock's spring gradually loosens and through the passage of years, it cannot return as it was before. That is the time in which nature is ticking and the time is just the figure of nature, he said. We must regard nature in this way. Then we can protect nature and conserve the environment to a certain degree. But human beings cannot rewind the clock spring which continues to loosen. This may be a reality of nature. Whether human beings waste or save natural resources, the energy of nature is running out steadily; that is the inevitable fate of nature or "a plain figure of nature."

If a figure of nature is such a thing, we have to think as follows; Konko Daijin looked at and perceived a different working from nature's one, and he said as "the Universe has no beginning and no end" or "People and the grains they eat will not disappear."

Ordinarily, any study begins with determining right or wrong; however, faith practice starts at whether there is a belief or not. If anything happens, if our world moves in any direction, there have never been any "fads in the Universe." As we believe to live our lives, I wonder how Konko Daijin would regard problems of population growth, food shortage, or the problem of energy in the modern earth. Konko Daijin stands on his position of faith practice and he would say the same phrases as in "People and the grains they eat will not disappear" and "let us believe in the workings of the Universe." At first, he must strongly teach us that we have to correct our confusion about the relationship between the world of human beings and the Universe.

By regarding Konko Daijin's faith practice to the Universe as such, I cannot help but to truthfully say that Konkokyo's faith practice is quite shaken today. I believe that the more Konkokyo Organization and Konkokyo churches turn their eyes to the problems of our society and to the world, the more they move away from Konko Daijin's single heart to Tenchi Kane No Kami, the Universe. There is the problem that Konkokyo puts the basis of faith practice on the Universe, but Konkokyo unconsciously understands the Universe in relation to nature and human beings.

Of course, we -- all the descendants of Konko Daijin's faith -- pray that we try to stand or have to stand on Konko Daijin's view. But facing environmental problems or the destruction of nature, on some occasions, we place ourselves on the big swells of

common sense and thought. Before giving our eyes of faith practice to the chaos of our lives, we are only satisfied with preserving environments and protecting nature. From a secular viewpoint, environmental preservation activity would get a good evaluation in our society; however, we cannot carry our faith to the Universe consistently by such activity. Konkokyo and all of us followers must deeply give our hearts -- not to nature, which human beings destroy or protect -- but to the Universe which is a body or shrine of Tenchi Kane No Kami. We also must contemplate the attitude of human beings allowed to live in the Universe, and the form/shape/structure and workings of spiritual relationship between the Universe and human beings.

Konkokyo's Declaration summarizes that "Humans are all allowed to live by the Great Universe. We accept and respect all lives of nature, and pledge to manifest an ideal world where nature and people live together." I am deeply concerned that the expression of this declaration does not clarify the difference between the Universe and nature, making us confuse the Universe with nature. There is a common sense saying that it is a duty of modern people to control, moderately use and protect nature, while keeping harmony with nature and passing it down to future generations. This common sense intention looks like justice and thus we cannot dispute it. But Konkokyo must seek the faith, the thought and the doctrine in order to examine the common sense of the secular world, from a view of faith in Tenchi Kane No Kami.

Furthermore, to understand clearly the Universe as taught by Konko Daijin, let us pay attention to many of his teachings that the Universe is likened to a parent, father or mother.

IV.Tenchi Universe (the Universe, Heaven and Earth) is our Parent

1. Experiencing Awe

Feeling the divine presence in the Universe could be traced to worldwide traditions, dating back to ancient times. Recently, this inherited sensitivity seems to run dry. Correlated to this, the sensitivity to value human life seems to be dying out. With this trend, murder cases, such as recent serial infanticides, occur all over the world.

There is a story of Teru, Reverend Sato Norio's wife, regarding this matter. Teru asked a person to buy a pair of sandals for her granddaughter. On the sandals that he bought, a pretty doll was printed. Having the sandals in her hand, Teru asked the person to go back to the store and change it to a different one. The reason was because of the pictures of the doll. Teru wanted her granddaughter raised without having any negative feelings when stepping on the doll pictures every day. Even if they were just drawings, the dolls represent humans. Living in a contemporary society, we are losing our value of how life is fragile, even in a drawing on sandals. We should have a deep concern about cultivating children's sensitivity. Instead, we tend to brush the matter off by saying that it is just a drawing. However, developing such a climate in society could weaken our sensitivity to value our life. It affects human behavior. In such a circumstance, the incidents like serial infanticides could occur.

From a moral and ethical point of view, the matter is only about sandals. No one should be blamed for whatever is drawn on the sandal. From the viewpoint of freedom of expression, we could be blamed for insulting a fine work of art by the craftsman. However, from a religious point of view, we could see that stepping on a doll's picture could lead us to treating our lives lightly. People might believe this idea as nerve-racking. However, we should never forget that the basis of religion is to feel deeply moved. They are workings that we do not sense under normal circumstances.

Konko Daijin looked at Tenchi Universe as Kami. Konko Daijin was not the first person who felt this way in human history. As I discussed earlier, one can say that the long history of religion poured into Konko Daijin's belief system. This belief took form through his expression.

Related to the story about the sandals, I would like to introduce a story of Smohalla in "The Sacred and The Profane" by Mircea Eliade. Smohalla is a Native American and a prophet of Umatilla Tribe. This story was dictated 60 to 70 years ago.

When the American Government encouraged the tribes to farm, a prophet named Smohalla refused to cultivate the land. He responded as follows:

"You ask me to plough the ground! Shall I take a knife and tear my mother's bosom?" he asked MacMurray. "When I die, she will not take me to her bosom to rest. You ask me to dig for stone! Shall I dig under her skin for her bones? When I die, I cannot enter her body to be born again. You ask me to cut grass, make hay, sell it, and be rich like white men. But, how dare I cut off my mother's hair?" He also warned that, "Those who cut up the lands or sign papers for lands will be defrauded of their rights, and they will be punished by God's anger."

According to his belief, Smohalla rejected agriculture. They declined because they could feel that the ground is definitely the mother of humanity. They simply did not see the ground as a place where human lives. The earth was not a space or place that humans could live freely. They believe the ground is the mother goddess that nurtures human life. If we see matters in this way, we could say that Smohalla and Konko Daijin have the same origin. Antigone of Sophocles, as I mentioned earlier, also expressed that humans hurt earth mother by using a plough. The affection to the ground in the poem, and the belief of Smohalla and Konko Daijin are all somehow deeply related.

From this point of view, the importance does not lie on the originality or difference among Konkoku, Native American's belief, and a Greek religion. If we think how to recognize and live our lives related to Tenchi Universe, even if they are ancient or present, Greece or America, and East or West, it is inevitable to say that they are all deeply connected.

However, people nowadays see the ground as real estate or as places to grow food product to gain money. Sadly, Sophocles's poem, Smohalla's words, and Konko Daijin's teachings could be seen as nothing but interruptions for society to progress and develop.

However, an unanswered question remains. Could we be happy? Are we living as human beings? People live their lives through their own will and capability.

Arrogance and selfishness of humanity spread all over the world. People may feel embarrassed and out of date for expressing Tenchi Universe as Father and Mother (or Divine Parent). Now, this is a serious problem. How can we solve this, starting today, and for the future? I believe finding the resolution is a challenge for our faith.

2. Both A Paternal and Maternal Kami

First, I would like to introduce some words of Konko Daijin from the Konkokyo Kyoten, Sacred Scriptures of Konkokyo.

“This is a teaching about Heaven and Earth. There are people in-between Heaven and Earth. In other words, Heaven is the father, and Earth is the mother. Humans, plants, and other living things live on Earth through the blessings they receive from Heaven. Thus, Heaven is the father, and Earth, the mother.” (Gorikai I: ISHIHARA, Ginzo:1.1)

“Konko Sama told me, ‘I will bestow Heaven and Earth as your father and mother. Heaven is your father, and Earth is your mother. Pray singleheartedly.’” (Gorikai I: ICHIMURA, Mitsugoro Vol.2:68.1)

These were what Konko Daijin taught. In these teachings, we have to understand the meaning of “Heaven is the father.” This expression was already made in religious history. Therefore, it leads us to a ready-made idea. In order to realize this established idea and understand this unknown problem hidden behind this, let me briefly introduce a theory regarding this matter. Gerard van der Leeuw, a historian of religion in the Netherlands, explained in the book, “Religion in Essence and Manifestation: A Study in Phenomenology.” His outline is as follows:

When society was based on a matriarchy, people worshiped the power possessed by mothers. They considered this power as a goddess. They especially revered earth as a mother goddess that harvested crops and protected human life. During this period of time, fathers did not have any power in society. Therefore, a father was not recognized as a god. However, as fathers gained power and started to control society, mother goddess retreated, and father was out in public. When a patriarchal society was established, and a father’s power increased, people started to worship constitutional and transcendent Heavenly God. For example, the Christian God appeared as “Our Father in Heaven.” In this way, worldwide religion was born.

As these thoughts developed from traditional theology, a hidden conception, the faith in which father god was superior to mother goddess, spread unclearly but steadily. Recently, several groups of people started putting up an argument against theology placing “father god” or sky father in a superior position. One of them is the feminist movement. Reviewing the religious position of women in theology, belief, religious denomination, and religious organization, they proposed a theology to recover women’s position.

One of the arguments by feminist theology is the meaning of Mary in Christianity. Mary is the mother of Jesus. She conceived Jesus in her womb and gave

birth while she was still a virgin. The traditional theology valued Mary's virginity. However, if we revere virginity because of the virgin birth, we devalue actual women who marry, give birth, and raise children. On the contrary, some people claim that we should see virginity as women's independence. In any case, unless the theology regarding Mary is clarified, traditional theology of "sky father" and Jesus is limited only to men. This is the point of view by feminist theology. The traditional theology has to answer to this question.

In 1981, Antoine Vergote, a professor in the Netherlands, and his group researched the Christian image for "parent" and "God" in ten countries. They used knowledge from a broad field –, they used methods from religious sociology and psychology. They published their report, "The Parental Figures and the Representation of God." The main theme at that time was believers' images of "God the Father" and their difference in each country and culture.

For the characteristics for the mother's image were: patience, warmth, benefactor, caretaker, sympathy, benevolence, closeness, relief, acceptance, nicety, neighborhood, self-sacrifice, sensitiveness, patience, intuitiveness, generosity, and attractive. For father: strength, power, direction, ethicality, regal, initiative, knowledge, authority, action, decision, consistency, cutting up, dynamic, order, rule, strictness, verifier, guardian. Using the above characteristics, they sought to analyze what images actual Christians hold.

I was fascinated with the result. Christians worship "God the Father" daily. However, according to their analysis, mother's characteristics were stronger. Vergote questioned whether it is appropriate for Christians to call "God the Father."

The book questioned whether "Sky father / God the Father," which held a dominant position, really served people's image of God. Having read this book, I wondered how the Konko believers would respond if we had the same kind of survey for Tenchi Kane No Kami. I thought that Tenchi Kane No Kami would be characterized more as a mother. The way Tenchi Kane No Kami is associated with Konko Daijin, who introduced Tenchi Kane No Kami into this world, seems to have a stronger portrayal as a mother. The words he received did not reflect a father's image of dominating with powerful authority, rules and regulations. Examples he received are "Dispel all desires and assist Tenchi Kane No Kami," "This will help Kami and save people," or "People exist because of Kami, and Kami exists because of people." If I use the characteristics listed by Vergote, a mother's image comes to my mind with words such as closeness, neighborhood, patience, and generosity. Konko Daijin expressed in his teaching directly as follows:

"Heaven (Ten) is the father, and earth (Chi) is the mother. Even if you respect your father, it is not true parental respect unless you show respect towards your mother as well. Similarly, even if you are thankful to heaven, you are not truly practicing faith unless you understand the favor of earth."

"Children cannot be raised by men alone. They live and grow because of their mothers' milk. Even though heaven exists, they cannot live without earth. Although people may depend on heaven, if they act irreverently towards the earth, they will have to dig seven graves before heaven." (Gorikai III: Jinkyu Kyogoroku:182.1-2)

Compare Heaven and Earth and think which gives more blessings. Don't say it's Heaven. All your complaints about Heaven are futile. Heaven is the father, and Earth, the mother. Without the father and mother, there can be no child. After a child is born, he can be raised by the mother alone. (Gorikai II: ICHIMURA, Mitsugoro:20.1)

These teachings emphasize a maternal aspect and actions when explaining Tenchi Kane No Kami. In this way, Konko Daijin's Image of God accentuated the divinity that give birth, raise and nurture all living things. He did not lay too much stress on fatherly characteristics. Why was that?

We base our parent-child relationship on mothers. Our fathers shape our rules, regulations, framework, or ideal model in life. However, we imagine our mothers as a parent of life. We realize that we received the gift of life, the origin of our lives, from our mother. We think of our mothers, who care for us, with nostalgic memories. When this feeling is elaborated to the relationship between Tenchi Universe and people, people would naturally associate as the portrayal of mother.

Through Antoine Vergote's analysis for Christians, clearly, believers imagine "mother goddess" in their hearts despite worshipping "God the Father," which has been established theologically for 3000 years. People have called mother goddess, "Father." It seems quite natural when we feel divinity deep within ourselves. Konko Daijin who felt divine life expressed Tenchi Kane No Kami strongly as a mother.

When Nittenshi-Sama gives sunshine, Gattenshi-Sama does not interfere. Also, when Gattenshi-Sama gives rain, it's like a mother giving milk, and Nittenshi-Sama does not interfere. He does not meddle in his wife's maternal activities. (Gorikai II:FUJIWARA, Kazo:4.1)

Let us think about what Konko Daijin taught. Konko Daijin used the word of Gattenshi symbolically to express divine workings and blessings regarding rain, water, menstruation, and childbirth. The word of Nittenshi was used for the divine workings to protect and nurture a gift of life such as "[giving] sunshine."

The quoted passage of Konko Daijin explained two divine characters. The passage explains how the two are related. At the same time, the passage teaches how husband and wife should be. The meaning of this message may be self-explanatory. However, let me add few notes. When Gattenshi tries to rain, Nittenshi does not disturb as a father. On the contrary, when Nittenshi's rays of sunlight touch the ground to nurture, Gattenshi watches the work of God the Father by lying low in the shade. Konko Daijin said, if husband and wife are like the Tenchi Universe, family life will go well.

Konko Daijin used the divine names of "Nittenshi" and "Gattenshi" to express the workings of Heaven in Tenchi Universe. He used Nittenshi as father and Gattenshi as mother. However, when Konko Daijin explained the workings of Heaven and Earth separately, he identified Heaven as father, and Earth as mother. This theory contradicts Heaven as the father and Earth as the mother, while at the same time, Heaven consists of father and mother, as well. However, the words to express the

relationship between divinity and people could not be measured by theoretical consistency. We try to find words to express our encounter with the divinity. We try to explain the encounter which deeply touched and inspired our lives. Therefore, those words do not need reexamination for their variance or contradiction. Our attention should go to the actual feeling, and how we could verbalize those feelings.

Honestly speaking, we cannot help but conclude that we, modern humans, do not have the same sentiment as Konko Daijin or Smohalla. I have to confess that I do not feel “Heaven is father” and “Earth is mother.” I believe “Heaven is father” and “Earth is mother” because of Konko Daijin’s words. We are losing the sensitivity to reality not only in practicing faith but also in our daily lives. We are constantly getting information regarding human’s life by videos, cartoons, drawings, posters, and pictures. However, how much reality of human life could we get out of it? Do we feel indifferent like watching the scenery go by from our train window?

However, the sense of “Heaven is the father, and Earth is the mother” is like the homeland in which we wish to return. Because that place is where our lives belong, and where we could recognize the meaning of our existences. Even if we are far from recognizing the source of life, we need to stay rooted on where our lives belong instead of drifting away like a rootless plant. We must strive for the world of this awareness.

As we live in society with the progression of poor hearts and souls, we should gain the eyes and heart to look at the value of life. We must also help each other gain these eyes and heart. Konko Daijin’s words regarding the relationship of between Kami and humanity are guides to recapture the diminishing sense of reality.

3. Name and Reality of Divinity

We need to understand Kami’s characteristics well. Otherwise, all signs, which were meant to guide us towards the life of realization, will only lead us to confusion. The reason why I am saying this is due to Konko Daijin’s variety of expressions and choices of the divine name. As I mentioned, he explained Kami as if there were two kamis such as “Kami of Heaven” and “Kami of Earth,” or “God the Father” and “mother goddess.”

Konkokyo Kyoten contains varieties of divine names. We think only having the name of Tenchi Kane No Kami is fine. However, there are varieties of names – Kane No Kami, Kimon Kane No Kami, Hi No Kami, Tsuki No Kami, Tenchi Jitsugetsu Konjin and etc. A long divine name has been written in the Konko Daijin Oboegaki memoirs of Konko Daijin:

Nittenshi Gattenshi Sōmi No Mikoto
Kane No Kami Shinriki Myōga No Mikoto
Daishōgun Nokorazu Konjin Tsuchida No Mikoto

Without explanation, modern people might wonder what kind of god Konko Daijin worshiped. They might also think he worshiped many gods.

On top of that, when we read a teaching like, “There are as many Konjins as there are stars in the heavens.” (Gorikai II:OKIDA Kisaburo:11.1), we will be confused without any explanation. There is also a following description in 1882:

“I gave thanks to Ne No Hoshi-Sama (deity of the north star) in the evening of December 7 (January 15), the service day for the deity. [Oboe-cho: 26-26-1]”

Ne No Hoshi is the North Star, but people may interpret this passage as Konko Daijin worshipping the North Star, a different divinity from Tenchi Kane No Kami.

If we see from Konko Daijin’s perspective when he felt Tenchi Kane No Kami, we realize that Konko Daijin tried to refer the deity by using various divine names. He used familiar divine names to explain people about the divine working. What made this possible to Konko Daijin was a characteristic of Tenchi Kane No Kami – inclusiveness and fullness.

Under a political and social trend based on historical and cultural background, Konjin faith was believed to be a superstitious belief after Konko Daijin passed away. To clarify the difference from Konjin belief, the Konko faith determined “Tenchi Kane No Kami” as only the name of Kami with the constitution of Konkokyo. This name was selected because this title was written in Tenchi Kakitsuke, Divine Reminder. Tenchi Kakitsuke was written by the following command, “Write kakitsukes with the following words...” Until newly published Konkokyo Kyoten, Sacred Scriptures of Konkokyo, we tried to avoid using the divine names that Konko Daijin selected.

People might develop the idea that all the different names beside “Tenchi Kane No Kami” were earlier stages of Konko Daijin’s faith or Konko Daijin overcame superstitious beliefs. However, when we try to get closer to the faith that Konko Daijin felt and expressed, we should not neglect various divine names from our faith, propagation, and Konkokyo theology.

Let us think about what we are called in our daily lives. By doing so, we might understand why Konko Daijin used various divine names. My name is Yoshitsugu Fukushima. This name was given by my parents and recorded officially at the local governmental office. However, I am rarely called by this name in my daily life. My parents and brothers call me “Yoshitsugu.” Even when I turned over 50 years old, my two younger sisters still call me “oni’ichan, big brother.” After we had children, my wife calls me “tochan, dad.” Within Konkokyo including the Konkokyo Research Institute, I have been called “shocho, director” or “sensei, reverend.” American friends call me “Yossy.” If I examine all the names I have been called, my true name was used only when officially needed. This is true for everyone.

In this way, even the name “Yoshitsugu Fukushima” could be replaced by other names, depending on the relationship. Depending on the relationship and context, a different name may be used. This is evidence that we are living in a society with an intimate communication. If only Yoshitsugu Fukushima was used by an organization and at home, or by my friends, something would be wrong with the relationship with others. The various ways we are called, including a nickname, tells us how we each work, relate, and live in daily life. Therefore, let us think of the divine name “Tenchi Kane No Kami” as our registered name printed on the passport.

Previous Konkokyo theology believed that Konko Daijin overcame “Konjin.” As I already discussed several times, I explained that Konko Daijin broke through the then existing folk belief regarding Konjin faith. He encountered Tenchi Kane No Kami who

is in Tenchi Universe. From that point of view, using the divine name “Konjin” is an acronym. This idea brings us back to a point before the faith Konko Daijin established.

However, Konkokyo Kyoten, Sacred Scriptures of Konkokyo, was compiled to be loyal to the original writings, by keeping the fine nuances intact. Therefore, it “restages” divine names in the way Konko Daijin and his disciples stated. Keep this in mind and reread Sacred Scriptures. You will find two major expressions by the witnesses’ recollection – “Tenchi No Kami” and “Konjin.” There are these two tendencies in the transmission of the divine name. Then the expression becomes “Tenchi Kane No Kami.” I did not count the exact number of times, but the most frequently used divine name was “Konjin.” If “Konjin” was the most familiar name for Konko Daijin before and after he developed his faith, “Konjin” must have been an inextinguishable divine name for him.

“Tenchi Kane No Kami” was an unfamiliar divine name for Konko Daijin, even if he received this name through revelation. Since he was scolded by and practiced faith in Konjin, his deep sense of feeling made him use the name “Konjin.” The name “Konjin” was more familiar to him. Therefore, he happened to say “Konjin-sama” when he spoke the divine name.

“Kane No O’okami” and “Kane No On Kami” were also used for the divine name “Kane No Kami.” We could imagine that by inserting “No” in between “Kon-jin,” people tried to distinguish Kami from fearful Konjin.

Nittenshi and Gattenshi are written in Konkokyo Kyoten. Konko Daijin replaced the character from 子 to 四 of 日天子 Nittenshi (kami of the sun) and 月天子 Gattenshi (kami of the moon). People during this period used the character 子.

(Associating death with the Kanji character 四 was believed to be ominous.) If we see a pair of deities, we are misunderstanding Konko Daijin’s true intention. They were also the divine names expressing divine workings and characteristics of Tenchi Kane No Kami.

People might misunderstand that Konkokyo is a polytheistic religion since Konko Daijin explained divinity by using various divine names, even if Konkokyo officially believes in a single deity named “Tenchi Kane No Kami.” However, as we have discussed, we have to make sure of the following: the divine name was chosen to express a dynamic relationship between Kami and Konko Daijin, and the relationship kept expanding. Therefore, Kami, that Konko Daijin believed in, was not meant to be multiple deities.

When disciples and worshippers were added to the relationship between Kami and Konko Daijin, the expression of the divine name may have changed to help them to understand. For example, we do not have any awe-inspiring feeling when we hear Nittenshi Gattenshi Sōmi No Mikoto Kane No Kami Shinriki Myōga No Mikoto Daishōgun Nokorazu Konjin Tsuchida No Mikoto. However, people in those days would have lowered their head by hearing this ominous-sounding, long divine name. The following passage is a conversation between Konko Daijin and a worshipper.

"Konko-Sama, are Susano-O No Kami and Kane No Kami-Sama the same?"

"Yes, they are the same."

The person acknowledged, "Now I understand. Thank you" and went home.

[Gorikai I: KONDO, Fujimori:7.1]

According to “Kojiki,” Susano-O No Kami is a younger brother of Tenshokotaijin, Amaterasu. To receive the official recognition from Okayama Prefecture, Konko Daijin’s Hiromae was once named Susano-O Shrine. Therefore, I imagine that this conversation took place during that time period. After overhearing these conversations, SHIRAKAMI Shinkichi (1847~1910) wondered and asked,

“Regarding what you said, are Susano-O No Mikoto and Tenchi Kane No KamiSama the same?” The Founder replied, “Well actually, Tenchi Kane No Kami goes as far as using Susano-O No Kami.” (Gorikai I: KONDO, Fujimori:7.3-4)

In this way, Konko Daijin empathized with the listeners, was aware of each person’s individual spiritual belief system, and used concepts and terms familiar to them. He then taught the listeners about Kami. To those who believe in Susano-O No Kami as a powerful and fearful kami, he used the divine name of Susano-O. Then, he guided them to Tenchi Kane No Kami.

Therefore, we do not have to think that the divine name is absolute. To make an extreme statement, the divine name could be anything as long as the name resonates with the person who entered the faith.

Presently we are not living in a society where we feel Kami’s power by hearing words like Susano-O No Mikoto, Konjin, Nittenshi Gattenshi Sōmi No Mikoto Kane No Kami Shinriki Myōga No Mikoto Daishōgun Nokorazu Konjin Tsuchida No Mikoto. Nonetheless, people cannot fully picture the form of “Tenchi Kane No Kami” by just hearing the name.

For these reasons, I feel that we need to think outside of explaining the divine name, “Tenchi Kane No Kami.” “Tenchi Kane No Kami” is a name determined formally by the constitution of Konkokyo. Konko Daijin taught about the actual kami (deity) instead of the kami’s name. We must remember that Konko Daijin gave and used the divine name to help people understand the relationship and inter-related workings between Kami and people in all situations. Compared to the name “Tenchi Kane No Kami,” various terms Konko Daijin used, such as “the Parent Kami,” “father and mother of humanity,” and “Tenchi No Kami” Konko Daijin, could easily be familiar words to reach people’s hearts. In the English version of Konkokyo Kyoten, Sacred Scriptures of Konkokyo, Tenchi Kane No Kami was translated to “Principle Parent of the Universe”. This translation may help guide many people to recognize the entrance level of understanding Tenchi Kane No Kami.

Even if we use the divine name precisely as determined in the constitution of Konkokyo, the name would only be a nonsensical sign if we could not even begin to guide anyone. To avoid this from happening, and to reach people’s hearts, Konko Daijin probably used the common, familiar terminology for people to understand. This was why he chose various divine names – “Konjin,” “Kimon Konjin,” “Tenchi No Kami,” “Nittenshi Gattenshi,” “father kami mother kami,” “Hi No Kami Tsuki No Kami,” “Parent Kami,” etc. Let us remember that he used various names to convey the true Kami.