

THE UNIVERSAL ATTITUDE OF KONKŌ DAIJIN

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A study of the life and thought of Kawate Bunjirō 川手文治郎 (1814-1883), known as Konkō Daijin 金光大陣,¹ the founder of the Konkōkyō, allows us to see how universality is part of the heritage of this Japanese denomination. This universal attitude originated in the founder's transcendent faith, a faith expressed in particular, practical circumstances. The distinctive religious genius of the founder is shown in the way transcendence and practicality are held together by his insistence on 誠 *makoto*, sincerity.

Though it is correct to see Konkō faith basically in Shinto terms, Taoist and Confucian concepts also helped to shape the founder's religious understanding and expression. It is fair to see him as the 生神 *ikigami* ("living god") he claimed to be, yet the Taoist background in which he gained his distinctive point of view, and the Confucian terms that enabled his understanding of his experience to grow, show him in syncretistic light. However, this occurred in no abstract or merely theoretical way, but as a living, direct expression of his search for inner and outer well-being.

In order to see how this is so, we must first examine the particular experience that enabled this little-educated farming man to gain his distinctive insight. Popular, conventional beliefs formed the texture of his thinking until that formative experience provided a new perspective. We will then outline the implications of this event, and show how subsequent experiences allowed his insight to develop. Then attention will be turned to describing the universal attitude of Konkō Daijin. We will see that this attitude, founded in his experience of transcendent faith, is broadened

through a series of terms used to name the deity, while yet retaining its pragmatic, concrete character.

FORMATIVE EXPERIENCE

A health crisis set the stage for his own turn toward deep religious insight that was to characterize his career as a religious founder. In April of 1855 Kawate was forty-two years old, an age considered unlucky in Japan. Worse yet, a son, born the previous December, would be considered two years old at the same time, intensifying the risk of bad luck. Though he had gotten the birth-date officially recorded as the current year, so that his infant son would be only one year old officially, and though he had visited important shrines in the area to pray for divine assistance, his traditional beliefs would make him feel unsafe until his forty-second year would be finished.

On April 25 he took to his bed with a throat ailment, unable to speak or to drink. The next day he grew worse and a doctor diagnosed a disease that was ninety-percent fatal. Relatives, including members of his wife's family, gathered in worry, and a prayer service was planned for that evening for his recovery. Prayers were offered to various deities, including one known as Ishizuchi kami, familiar in Shugendō piety.² This deity suddenly possessed his brother-in-law, saying that a house-building project nearly five years earlier had been done in violation of the zodiacal "days and directions" (日柄方角 *higara-hōgaku*) rules.³ Konjin, the great god of vengeance for breaking such rules, was angry with him.

At this point his father-in-law broke in, denying that anyone of the Kawate house had offended Konjin, since the house had been built only after approval had been secured. The deity responded by asking whether it would be all right for Bunjirō to die even if no rules had been broken.

Then Kawate, moved by the loud argument, suddenly found himself able to speak. He broke into the discussion, saying his father-in-law did not know what he was saying, that in making his

plans to build he had originally refused to accept the *hōgaku* specialist's advice not to build and had insisted on being given an alternative plan that would allow him to do what he wanted. In doing so he might have offended Konjin. He realized now that consulting the days and directions system was insufficient preparation for his project, and confessed that he was sorry for the misdeed he may have committed and for any he might commit in the future.

The deity, still speaking through the brother-in-law, then replied that Bunjirō was speaking with due consideration and the father-in-law was in error. The deity questioned him concerning his prayers during the time in January of the New Year, shortly after his son was born, and was satisfied that Kawate had acted in sincerity. "Your faith has enabled Kami's virtue to save you," he was told, from the throat ailment and from other misfortunes of the unlucky forty-second year of life. At this point his health began to improve and by the fifth of May he was able to celebrate his full recovery.

Here we must observe the distinct shift that occurred in Kawate Bunjirō's thinking about the deity Konjin. Formerly his thinking had not been different from the conventional belief: that Konjin is a vengeful spirit who dwells much of the time in the northeast quarter of the compass but who "travels" to other points of the compass on other days. Complicating the system are rules specific to each person based on their age, the zodiacal year of their birth, and on the nature of the enterprise being planned. The rules are known to *hōgaku* specialists who can advise people where Konjin is located at any given time. If any of various taboos guiding the conduct of everyday life is broken, Konjin will be sure to be angry, if he is present in a direction of the compass such that he is aware of the action. Persons consulting the specialist wish to avoid the presence of Konjin in starting some new enterprise.

It is worth noting that each person, no matter where they were, would think of the deity as in a northeasterly (or, on given days, some other) direction from themselves. Konjin was a calendrically-based deity, not resident in any shrine and not considered

to dwell in any one place, but one who might be found anywhere, manifesting himself at any time. One would never know in advance whether some forgotten offence might stir Konjin's anger if one were to risk beginning some venture at a time when he was by the *hōgaku* system considered to be "present." The unpredictability of Konjin's attention, in relation to the terrors of sudden illness and death so common in a time of pre-scientific medicine in the late Edo period, interpreted as an expression of his wrath, made him a fearsome deity. Now, however, Kawate Bunjirō became convinced that Konjin was not vengeful but beneficent, and that he was a respecter of sincerity.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE FORMATIVE EXPERIENCE

A number of implications follow from this experience, forming the direction in which Konkō faith would now develop. We note first that the effect of Kawate's new insight is to shift attention away from rules toward the kami himself. Though the rules had been followed, he was still sick; and then, without any action taken with respect to rules, he experienced a recovery. The sense of being set free from a large number of complicated rules, under the guiding presence of the kami, was in itself a source of considerable satisfaction to the founder.

The shift of attention away from impersonal rules, to which exceptions can always be found or with which casuistic games can be played, to a personal being who knows the inner mind and spirit (心 *kokoro*) of a human being, meant that a more integrative way of focussing thought and activity became possible. A move from literalism to inner responsibility was being made. Whereas Kawate's father-in-law sought to hide behind rules, he himself appealed directly to the kami. Moral issues of a deeper sort could arise than was possible under the older folk religion; a "Copernican revolution" had been achieved.⁴

Second, since Konjin was now understood as not vengeful but beneficent, not an object of fear but a source of benefit, his worshippers could regard him as a source of confidence in daily

living, rather than as an intermittently negative factor to be faced. A move toward a more optimistic spirit had been made.

Third, Konjin could no longer be localized but must be seen as present anywhere at any time. He had already been a god associated with mobility in space, centered in the experiential perspective of each person concerned about him. Now all space would be the scene of Konjin's presence simultaneously, though still constantly centered in that perspective. Any place could provide the location for his beneficent attention and any time be its occasion. The founder's insight about this point was quite strong and it grew in the course of time, as shown by the series of names he assigned to Konjin, marking stages in the growth of his insight. We shall return to this point.

Fourth, Konjin could no longer be regarded as an arbitrary deity but must now be acknowledged as consistent in his respect of sincerity. Formerly, any new misfortune was open to being interpreted as the result of his wrath. Now, since Kawate had been fully sincere in his attitude toward Konjin and Konjin also, in mutual regard, had emerged as a respecter of sincerity, one could by cultivation of this quality be in a predictable relationship with the deity. If a lack of well-being should occur, one could know wherein the variable factor lay: namely, in a deficiency in sincerity in one's self. Now the modalities of an ethical quality provided the matrix for interest in one's well-being and for the meaning that life may have.

It is worth emphasizing that this mutuality grew out of the implicit closeness of kami and humans of traditional Shinto faith. That kami need men to help them be pacified and men need kami in order to be productively harmonized in life's experiences was a long-standing assumption of Japanese religious attitudes. Now, the Konkō founder gave that closeness a specific structure as fidelity, or sincerity. The Konkōkyō principle of あいよかけよ *aiyo kakeyo*, mutual benefit, formulates this idea explicitly.

A fifth point is that the founder's awareness of deity occurred not in a theoretical, speculative or purely mystical context but rather in the context of immediate and specific need. The character of Konjin made itself apparent in the course of the resolu-

tion of an immediate physical problem. His throat ailment was severe and he was convinced he was on the point of death. Specific physical benefit was inseparably connected with the achievement of a constantly true basis of meaning.

A sixth point is that the founder believed completely that the energy making possible his recovery derived from Konjin. The "otherness" of the powerfully acting Konjin was intimately involved in the healing. His sensitivity to the presence of Konjin assumed an ever-larger emphasis in his subsequent experience and provided the basis by which he was guided for the rest of his life. This is true in the context of the principle of mutual dependence, and not in spite of it. His memoirs, written twenty years later, record the great joy he felt in recalling the favor and benefit he had enjoyed in April, 1854.

SUBSEQUENT DEEPENING OF INSIGHT

Several subsequent events provided Kawate occasion for expansion and deepening of the understanding he had achieved in the course of this experience of healing. During the immediately following four years he continued to farm, but some changes were occurring that presaged his entrance into full-time religious activity.

Kawate Bunjirō's insight developed through the influence of his brother Shigeemon, leading to his own developing capacity to receive speech from Konjin, as well as through the recourse of increasing numbers of people to his intercession in their behalf with Kami, and through the illness of his children.

Soon after his encounter with the Ishizuchi deity his natural brother Kandori Shigeemon began to be possessed by Konjin, and in 1856 he helped Shigeemon financially to build a shrine to Konjin in his home. Bunjirō visited his brother's shrine from time to time. In January 1858, Shigeemon communicated instruction to him from Konjin that he might address the kami by the clapping of hands, enabling him to have his own unmediated contact. As a result he now had his own ritual access to the deity whose help he had enjoyed nearly four years earlier. In addition, he was no longer to

depend on Shugendō specialists or on doctors, but he should rely wholeheartedly on Konjin through prayer for all matters including the health of his family.

By August, during the Bon festival, direct verbal messages from Konjin were entering the founder's speech. During 1858 and 1859 he was receiving messages leading him to depart from conventional farming practices, producing better crops than his neighbors were getting. He distinguished clearly between words formed in his mind in that way and words formed through his own initiative, and was convinced Konjin's words gave him information he would not otherwise have. As he reported it sometime later:

One time when I was praying, although I did not intend to speak, the words just seemed to pop out. Still not intending to speak, the words again just popped out. I thought that if the words need to come out so much, they should be allowed. Then the words (of Kami) began to pour out and when the words came out no more, it ended (*The Philosophy of Konkōkyō*, p. 559).

He frequently asked Kami for instruction; sometimes it was forthcoming and sometimes he had to wait. The term お知らせ *oshirase* is applied to the content of these revelatory experiences. During this time he took the initial steps to adapt his own house for use as a shrine.

Along with this increasing influence of Konjin in his life came recourse to his advice by others. The two tendencies developed together and in relation to each other. By the fall of 1859 sufficient numbers of people were coming to see him to make it difficult to do his work in the fields. People would come to him with various personal problems, and he would seek answers and advice from Kami and then pass them on. Not only requests for assistance but also expressions of praise and gratitude were given. The term 取次ぎ *toritsugi* is applied to this work of mediation. It would take place at the shrine to Konjin in his house.

A third set of events concerned the illness of three of his children with smallpox in the early summer of 1859. In fidelity to

his sense of Konjin's beneficence he had recourse to none of the traditional folk rituals or remedies followed at such times of family crisis. He was convinced that prayer to Konjin alone would provide healing, and so it turned out. The only requirement placed on him was that he must have the birthdate of his son recorded accurately, for he had altered it out of superstition five years earlier. Thus an earlier defect of sincere reliance on Konjin was corrected, and, borne out by this experience, his confidence in Kami was strengthened.

In October 1859, he turned over ownership of his land to his eldest son, who was just fifteen and so an adult that year, and entered fulltime religious leadership. This included both an increased schedule of prayers before Konjin and *toritsugi* activity. His following gradually grew during the next decade as more and more people came to him.

A fourth occasion that led to the deepening of his faith took place in early 1873. Government permission to conduct services at his shrine, granted in 1864, was withdrawn as the early Meiji regime sought to adjust its control over the religion of the country. He had been recognized as a Shinto priest since February 1867. Now, in January 1873, he and all other Shinto priests were to cease acting in this capacity. A month later, on February 17, he was ordered by the village headman, acting in compliance with general orders from the government, to clear away the furnishings of his shrine. He complied with this order. For a period of about a month he did not attend the Kami publicly, and people who came to his house were advised to practice their faith at home. On March 20 he was advised by the headman that it would be all right to ignore the government order, since lenience in enforcement was allowable. However, the headman asked him to practice his faith discreetly. He refused to resume his practice on this conditional basis. But, a day later, thirty-one days after ceasing, he did resume his practice. Though he had obeyed all government orders, he was satisfied that his fundamental duty was to Kami before it was to the government and that he had acted in sincerity before Kami.

Out of this period of alternating repression and permission was framed, on April 11, 1873, an admonition addressed to those in the habit of visiting his 広前 *hiromae* (house shrine). It is called the *Tenchi kakitsuke*, and reads:

Though Ikigami Konkō Daijin
 To Tenchi Kane no Kami
 Pray with heart and soul.
 The divine favor depends upon your own heart.
 On this very day pray (Konkō-chō 1973, p. 7).

Copies of this instruction, forged out of the freshly tested faith of Konkō Daijin, were handed out to believers who visited his *hiromae*. It is still the basic admonition displayed in Konkōkyō households, functioning as a public profession of faith.

KONKŌ DAIJIN'S UNIVERSAL ATTITUDE

We are now in position to present a general picture of the universal attitude of Konkō Daijin. Of first importance is the priority for him of the inner sense of the presence of Konjin. Second, his thinking about how to name Konjin grew remarkably, and we must trace this growth. However, thirdly, the intimate relation of the deity to concrete, personal life remained a constant factor.

Inner Sense of the Transcendent Konjin

It is very clear from scriptural utterances⁵ that an inner sense of Konjin's presence was important to the founder. Several quotations will let us see the nature of his spirituality:

As you look back on the past, you should understand that all things have occurred in your life due to the divine favor. If you have faith, the invisible favor you received is greater than the visible one. The unknown divine favor is greater than the

known one. A true believer is one with such faith (*Gorikae* p. 53).

To have true faith open your spiritual eye to gain inner understanding rather than depending on your physical eye in which you gain only the external view (*Shinjin no kokoroe*, p. 8).

Let your practice of your faith be internal rather than external (*Memoirs*, p. 8).

Have faith. To have faith is to keep Kami in your mind. Although you are in the midst of divine virtue, unless you have faith, you cannot receive the divine favor. . . . (*Gorikae*, p. 21).

A single word from Kami is priceless. It possesses the potential to bring about divine virtue. Such property is invaluable. It is of utmost importance to develop receptiveness for Kami in your heart. Total devotion toward Kami means a heart without doubt (*Gorikae*, p. 34).

The transcendent factor in Konkō Daijin's piety is the source of his consistency. Sincerity is of paramount importance in his inward disposition of mind and spirit. This term is a common place in Japanese culture, but in his understanding it is a quality with a transcendent reference: namely, constant receptivity to the initiatives of Kami.⁶ It consists in a habitual constancy, in an attitude of receptivity for and expression through daily acts of the beneficence of Kami at all times. This is a quality that the founder first began to develop when he understood that healing rather than illness and death would come to him from Konjin.

It is a quality that must be cultivated and cannot be taken for granted. He urged individual followers to make good use of the favor they had received and to strengthen the constancy of their attention to Kami. For instance, those who after returning home after worship act only to please themselves have only a shallow

sincerity (*Gorikae*, p. 34) and need to put forth effort to remain in an attitude of receptivity to Kami constantly in all that they do.⁷

One of the metaphors the founder employed to make this point is especially worth noting:

Have a plum blossom faith rather than a cherry blossom faith.
The cherry blossom falls easily; the plum blossom, having
withstood winter's adversity, endures longer (*Gorikae*, p. 29).

The leader of Konkōkyō deliberately shifted the piety of his group away from the cult of transience favored by the aristocratic tradition of Japan. Qualities of patience, caution, and consistency were fostered by this faith, and they were rooted in transcendent sensitivity to deity.

Though the religion of Konkō Daijin emphasizes ethical qualities it does not place priority on their cultivation. A key term, "divine favor" (神の恩恵 *kami no okage*), refers to the experience of the actual inner presence of the deity apart from the consequences of that presence. As Schneider has shown, citing a Konkōkyō theologian, the term implies empowerment rather than intentionality (1962, p. 154). Thus, "There is a difference between a good and honest person and a person who has received divine favor with his faith" (*Gorikae*, p. 27). Ethical qualities as part of real well-being derive from sincerity as a constant attending to the transcending presence of Kami.

As a result, a criterion is supplied by which external qualities or actions may be judged worth keeping or not. The practice of austerities (in the tradition of the mountain ascetics of Shugendō) is unnecessary (*Gorikae*, p. 39), and the mere giving of an offering without the proper motive is not pleasing to Kami (*Gorikae*, pp. 15, 33). Repeating prayers without an attitude of receptivity to Kami in one's mind is the same thing as telling a lie. Superstitious folk practices are to be avoided. For instance, women who traditionally wore a stomach band as a magic charm during a pregnancy should do so no longer but rather "wear a belt of faith around your heart" (*Memoirs*, p. 11, *Shinjin no kokoroe*, p. 39). The same comment applies to the amulets (お守り *omamori*) used everywhere

in Japan: "an invisible amulet in your heart can never be tarnished" (*Shinjin no kokoroe*, p. 29).

Rather than pay attention to superstition one should pay attention to one's work. Work is a way of nurturing one's faith, and, furthermore, leads to the prosperity that gladdens Kami (*Gorikae*, pp. 39, 40, 78, 3). Both productive labor and ethical cultivation are outcomes of reliance on Kami.

The patience which is part of sincerity was for Konkō Daijin sustained through a sense of Konjin's constant presence. Divine favor does lead to divine benefit, to increased health, family harmony and prosperity, but it need not do so in a direct, simplistic way. Sometimes it is necessary to wait. For one thing, illness and affliction are traceable to a lack of full sincerity of heart, and one needs to make inner sincerity completely pure by cultivating faith. Without complete purity, a person is like a well not completely cleaned out: as a result the water in it will also not be pure and its benefit will be incomplete. Only the heart that is fully sincere is ready to receive full health and prosperity (*Gorikae*, p. 28). In the meantime, one may know that Kami is completely trustworthy. By resting in this faith and strengthening one's sincerity one may be at ease in one's body and prosperous in one's circumstances. Most of those who came to him for mediation initially did so because of concern about illness, but his effort was to lead them toward deeper thinking.⁸

Even for the heartfelt believer, however, not everything may turn out to immediate preference. Therefore it is essential to place reliance on Kami directly and not be subjectively dependent on external circumstances. One must remain aware of the limitations of one's knowledge (*Shinjin no kokoroe*, p. 19), and in a humble spirit go into each day without insistence on preset conditions. "Live with the feeling in your heart that each day is New Year's Day" (*Gorikae*, p. 35); "Those who have faith must not be surprised at whatever may occur in the future" (*Gorikae*, p. 52). When his own daughter Kura was ill he was not sure that she would recover, but even at that point he found cause for gratitude in that he had the experience of receiving instructions concerning her from Kami. When his son Ishinoji was critically ill in the fall

of 1867 he regarded it as a consequence of selfishness (lack of attentiveness to Kami) in the household, and continued to attend to his duties to Kami in the shrine. It was not that he did not care for his son, but rather it was a matter of remaining clear about the nature of the problem:

When your child is sick, do not become confused because of your parental love for the child. Discipline yourself and leave him alone as you would when he will not obey you. Pray to Kami for the child, and the divine favor will be forthcoming (*Gorikae*, p. 48).

The most healthful attitude, one that is constantly fresh, is that in which there is complete receptivity of spirit to the initiatives of Kami; that is, complete sincerity. When this attitude is present Kami and the person acting together may be in optimum health. When it is weak or absent one needs first to purify one's sincerity, so that well-being in one's material and social circumstances may be induced. Pure sincerity includes the ability to wait for the fulfillment of divine benefit.

Even death may be fully accepted. One cannot be without divine favor even after death, when one will become one with Kami (*Gorikae*, pp. 43, 44). Misfortunes will always happen, and there comes a time in a person's life when strength to live has been exhausted (*Konkō Daijin*, p. 41). But one will take misfortunes amiss only if one's faith has ceased to grow (*Gorikae*, p. 42). Hence, as is the case from the beginning of his faith in 1854, the key point is one of attitude, of the centrality of complete sincerity.⁹

His actions during the time when the government ordered suspension of his shrine activities show how his sense of transcendent reference guided him in daily conduct. He had in 1864 ceased taking the traditional Japanese hot bath. (He kept his body clean during this time by washing, but avoided the physical relaxation of the hot bath). Now he was given instructions from Kami to have a hot bath "with the same feeling as a newborn child having its first bath." Being shorn of his *hiromae* and of his practice

there for a time had given him a fresh experience of direct reliance on Kami. It was like a new birth; he even changed his birthday to the day in March when he received this revelation.

Thus we see in various ways that the founder had developed a strong spirituality that guided him in practical decision-making. He could maintain a single consistent attitude in all circumstances. We shall see that this spirituality was relational, that the benefit experienced (whether purely inner or also outer) was always a mutual one. "Know that you do not only belong to yourself, but also to Kami" (*Memoirs*, p. 12, *Shinjin no kokoro*, p. 38).

The Development of his Kami-Concept

Before considering this mutuality principle we must first trace the growth of his concept of Kami.

Before April, 1854 Kawate was a respecter of all the deities he found relevant to himself, both kami and buddhas. After his turning point he was guided personally by his relationship to Konjin, while maintaining a tolerant attitude towards other people's kami-beliefs. As Konjin's chief disciple he did not deny the value to other people, up to a point, of their prayer to other deities. When his own children had smallpox he encouraged them to pray to the smallpox kami. He was for a time tolerant of followers' recourse to the deities of the days and directions, though he grew increasingly willing to criticize such recourse as impoliteness to Kami. Actually, his piety retained a cultic context in calendrical observances throughout his career. In this way he retained a point of contact with other people, many of whom were simple members of rural society.

Nevertheless, he was clearly aware of the need to maintain a single transcendent point of reference. Having a single mind and single Kami are essential (*Gorikae*, p. 36). In pursuit of this concern, his ability to encompass other people's thinking and experience within the framework of his own relation to his Kami grew noticeably. His centeredness on Kami as a living presence enabled him to find terms in which to guide other people toward universal understanding.

At first he deferred to other kami. He was told through his brother Shigeemon in January 1858, that his Kami was one who had given him the special privilege of being answered by whatever other kami he might call upon.

In September of that year, however, occurred a further stage in his centering on Konjin. His memoir reports an occasion when Amaterasu was asked by Konjin (referred to as Kane no Kami) to give Bunji to him as his first disciple. Amaterasu gave this permission, though Bunji's son was to perform worship to her when he grew old enough. The exact status of this event and of his account of it is open to interpretation, but his acceptance at that time of the superior status of the principal kami of Japan to Konjin is clear enough. From this time on no prayer by Kawate to any other deity than Konjin or in any other deity's shrine is reported. Later, as we will see, the Sun Deity was subsumed under a broader conception of Konjin; at this time the superiority of Amaterasu was still accepted tacitly.

His development toward an understanding that encompassed Amaterasu took place through the assignment of alternative names for Konjin. The use of alternate names for the same person or the same kami is no cause for surprise in Japan, where it is used to bring out different aspects of the person's character in relation to varying contexts. As the context of Konkō Daijin's thinking grew more universal, he used names for Kami that expressed this widening understanding.

From the beginning of his relation to his brother Shigeemon's Konjin shrine, the name Kane no Kami was used as an alternate reading of the name of Kami. The *kanji* given as "kon" 金 in Konjin's name perhaps refers to the calendrical system, to metal as one of its five elements. At any rate, now under the impress of the experience of Kawate (and his brother), the character was given a more meaningful reading. "Kane" 金 suggests metal, especially gold, and also the quality of shining, hence shedding light or illumination. Since light benefits, "Benefitting Kami" is a not inaccurate paraphrase. By enabling freedom from subservience to many rules and preset conditions, the mind is shined upon by Kami, and given an elevated, illumined feeling. In its elevatedness the

mind may reconceive information and see it in a broader, less egoistic context.¹⁰

Another implication of "Kane" is given by its probable relation to the verb 兼ねる "*kaneru*," meaning to unite or add to by laying something alongside another. This point is brought out by D.C. Holtom, citing an unnamed Konkōkyō source.¹¹ However, one must be careful, as the Reverend Hata Yasushi has warned, not to approach the question of the nature of Kami ontologically and theoretically, as is the Western and Christian wont: "What matters is how man has coped with that Kami, and how man has grasped that Kami in his own worldly experience."¹² It is better to think of union as a quality of the mind's (*kokoro*) function, on the part of someone sincerely receptive to Kami as inwardly apprehended. Sincerity is the organizing principle by which the unity of all is perceived. We must return to this point.

A distinct advance in universality was made when the name 天地 *Tenchi*, "Heaven-Earth," began to be used. The "Divine Call" of November 1859, by which he devoted himself full time to religious leadership contains this term, and its implications were drawn out subsequently. Konkō Daijin spoke subsequently of a group of three deities: the deity of the sun, the deity of the moon, and Kane no Kami, identified with Konjin located in the northeast to southwest axis of calendrical space. Tenchi no Kami (or Tenchi Kane no Kami) is composed of all three of these deities.

Thus, Kami considered as Konjin, as known by those who use the calendrical system, may also be considered as Tenchi (Heaven-Earth) Kane no Kami. In this broadened perspective Kami then may with elevated mind be perceived as inclusive of the sun deity and the moon deity. The real source of all that is blessed by the sun and by the moon in human affairs is thus the Kami revealed in the experience of Konkō Daijin. All other kami, such as the calendrical deities and Susano-no-ō-no-mikoto of the Izumo shrine, also fit in as parts of this inclusive perspective.¹³

It is appropriate to recall at this point that the term "Tenchi" derives ultimately from the Confucian tradition, wherein the Emperor serves as the representative of the presence of Heaven in the cosmos. As such he would mediate society's relation to heaven

and to earth. Indeed, the Tokugawa regime placed much reliance on Confucian thinking in its guidance of Japanese society. Here, however, the practice of *toritsugi* on the part of persons in close inner relation to Kami would provide the mediation that unifies experience and facilitates the common well-being. The focus of Konkō concern, the context in which its living concerns lie, is in the immediate circumstances of life rather than in such national political interests.

Nevertheless, the benefit provided by Kami occurs everywhere under heaven and on earth. That is to say,

Tenchi Kane no Kami is one. Kami might be worshipped anywhere as well as in the service hall of Konkō Daijin. When men say that they have received the divine favor in one place, but not in another, it means that the efforts on the part of mediators have made the difference in the divine manifestation (*Gorikae*, p. 92).

The point is that the capacity of Kami to be at any given place is expressed through the mediative activity of persons whose sincerity has made Kami manifest through them at that place and time. Wherever under heaven or on earth this activity may take place, Kami may also be known.

In one sense, then, the universal presence of Kami expressed as divine benefit (rather than simply as inner divine favor) has to do with the widespread presence of mediators of faith practicing *toritsugi* for all comers. Such presence is indispensable to universality. But there is another more fundamental sense in which Kami is universally present: as an expression of a quality in perception, as heightened sensitivity to his capacity to benefit without fail.

There is a reciprocal relation between the omnipresence of Kami and the awareness of Kami on the part of individual persons. On the one hand,

Although one is not aware of the presence of Kami, one exists in His very presence. Whether you are fertilizing a field or

walking along a pathway, the divine presence of Tenchi Kane no Kami fills the whole world (*Gorikae*, p. 6).

On the other hand, one becomes affected by this presence as one becomes aware of it. The omnipresent divine virtue (神の徳 *kami no toku*) then becomes effective as divine favor (神のお陰 *kami no okage*). Divine virtue is everywhere, as Tenchi Kane no Kami is as broad as the universe; that is, the possibility of divine favor is everywhere. Wherever humans seek and are found by Kami, the divine favor may be realized in their experience:

Although you are in the midst of divine virtue, unless you have faith, you cannot receive the divine favor. Even though the lamp is full of oil, without a wick, it will not light. Unless it lights, the night is dark. Without faith the world remains dark (*Gorikae*, p. 21).

As the opening passage of "Konkō Daijin's Understanding" puts it:

Now hear the sound of the opening of the Great Universe and be awakened (*Gorikae*, p. 1).

And again,

Your faith should not be narrow. It should be broad. Think of the world with a broad mind, for the world exists in your mind (*Gorikae*, p. 9).

The mind elevated in sincere faith toward Kami has a breadth and a universality as great as the heaven and earth itself, incapable of being surprised by anything at all. It is not limited in the specific experiences it can entertain; its limits are coextensive with the furthest limits life in the world renders possible. The opening of the Great Universe is the opening of the mind to divine favor so that divine virtue and divine blessing may be realized anywhere. The great universe is called 大天地 *daitenchi* and man is called the small universe (小天地 *shōtenchi*): "Both government and deities

have their roots in your soul, so you should not endanger your soul" (*The Philosophy of Konkōkyō*, p. 177). The mind or small universe corresponds with all that may occur in the large universe. The opened mind is a fully universal mind.

Several titles were given to Kawate Bunjirō in revelations from Kami, paralleling the advances in the name of the kami. In 1858-9 he was first allowed to call himself by the name of kami himself: Konshi Daimyōjin. In November 1864, he was allowed to call himself Konkō Daigongen, one who is a great manifestation of shining truth. Three years later, as he recorded in his Memoir, he was accorded the function of kami: "Konkō Daigongen, from this time you will be used as a kami." From then on he referred to himself as Konkō Daijin, the Great Shining One; or as Ikigami Konkō Daijin, the Great Shining One, the Living Kami. This occurred eleven years after Kami had first asked for service from him, and at the time that the three-fold name began to be revealed through him.¹⁴

Kawate became such a person as a result of his initial experience in 1854 and as a result of his constant subsequent cultivation of his awareness of Konjin. His constant concentration in prayer was prerequisite to achieving the status of living kami. This is clarified from an incident concerning a leader of *toritsugi*, Ikeda Tomisuke, who consulted him concerning his inability to concentrate. "How was your concentration before?" he asked. The founder said in reply, "It [inability to concentrate] also happened to me. When this does not occur any more, you will be a kami" (*The Philosophy of Konkōkyō*, p. 89).

In fact, Kami may be born in the heart of anyone in the world (*Gorikae*, pp. 18, 51). In principle, Konkō Daijin is only the one who initiated the way to Kami, although his teachings are indispensable to others in achieving that result. Since he led the way in making knowledge of Konjin possible, prayers were sometimes addressed to him, Konkō Daijin. He permitted this, but said it would be better to address prayers directly to Tenchi no Kami (*The Philosophy of Konkōkyō*, p. 883).

Emphasis on Practical Benefit

However, it is important to note the manner of the relationship of man and Kami. The mutuality principle (*aiyo takeyo*) is one of the fundamentals of Konkōkyō. Kami and man are dependent on one another and need each other. In some revelations we see Tenchi Kane no Kami expressing himself grateful to Konkō Daijin for being his revealer, and for the help he will give to Kami in the future.

Equal status of Kami and man, even of Konkō Daijin, is not implied. A parental metaphor expresses the basic relationship. As he put it in the Memoir, the relationship is that of parent and child:

Kami exists through man and man exists through Kami. This is the same as the relationship between child and parent. Parents seek aid in their children, while children seek aid for their parents. In addition, the children seek aid in their parents, while parents seeks aid for their children. This relationship, like the heaven and earth, enables both to seek aid through *aiyo takeyo* (*Memoirs*, p. 52).

According to the mutuality principle, Kami is gladdened when human beings achieve full well-being in wealth, strong character and health (*Gorikae*, p. 78). In this result Kami finds his fulfillment; he is pleased with nothing else than this. In this result mankind is also fulfilled; mankind also needs nothing else than this. The key to achieving it is sincere relation to Kami, resulting in ability to avoid all selfishness, to be sensitive to others' suffering, patient and free from resentment, and happy in productive labor.¹⁵

When such sincerity is present one is "at the core of the universe." Schneider suggests that in this quality of sincerity is found ". . . the unifying center and cause and principle [*hataraki*] of the universe," operative everywhere "in flowers and trees," "in music and color" and "also at work in man" (1962, p. 118).

Here again we must exercise caution. As we have seen, the divine virtue of Kami is indeed present everywhere but it is of no effect unless it is apprehended as the consequence of divine favor

(*Gorikae*, p. 21). In fact, its reference is as a quality in human experience. A person who has received it can take it with him after death; one's ancestors possess it after death, if they gained it in life. Recollection of the precedent furnished by them is helpful to a believer. Konkō Daijin said that after death he would be free to go wherever he might be called (*Gorikae*, p. 19). Yet even then sincerity remains a human (though divinized as kami) quality rather than an abstract metaphysical principle, and it must be appropriated through the practice of faith in each person's life in order to become effective. The 働き *hataraki* or cosmic principle is the way human beings should live their lives. It is that about life that "makes it work" when sincerity links people productively with others and with nature, as people awaken to the divine virtue of Tenchi Kane no Kami.

We may clarify this point by referring to the "earthiness" of Konkōkyō. Its thinking and its practice stay close to pragmatic experience. The founder remarked on one occasion about the difference between Konkōkyō and Kurozumikyō, his neighbor in Okayama: "Kurozumi Munetada speaks of heavenly things while I speak of earthly things. Because Kurozumi and I are present, the world is able to exist in peace" (*The Philosophy of Konkōkyō*, p. 134). Of course, both religions are complete systems, but his good humored, neighborly comment draws attention to a continuing feature of Konkōkyō.

Fukushima Yoshitsugu makes the same point in an incisive way. In an address to the Annual Meeting of the Konkōkyō Churches of America in August 1983, he refers to a passage in the *Memoirs* where the founder puts his teaching in universal perspective.¹⁶ The founder made a small drawing of two mountains and a valley between. One mountain refers to India and the other to China, the valley to Japan; by extension they refer to the world as a whole. As water flows naturally downward, so all the trouble in the world flows down to Japan, to the *hiromae* of the founder. There, all the troubles of all the people of the world may be brought for *toritsugi*, and Kami, who is Tenchi Kane no Kami, will through the assistance of the mediator present the possibility of divine favor in each individual who has come.

This is to happen everywhere in the world. Fukushima makes the point that *hiromae* occurs anywhere, not just in the founder's village.

The pragmatic nature of this way of religious practice is prominent. It has its starting point in whatever anyone finds "ought not to be" in their own experience; and its goal is the optimum well-being of each person under the limits of nature.

SUMMARY

We may sum up the universality of Konkō Daijin first by noting its pragmatic character. He originated a practice oriented toward assisting anyone in the midst of whatever they find inhibiting their well-being. Not only physical and social conditions find alteration in this practice, but even more significantly, the attitude each person brings to those troubles shifts from preoccupation with immediate circumstances to amelioration of those circumstances in the light of an all-encompassing divine presence. Mediation to this end in any circumstance that may arise is the heart of the Konkō way of orienting one's self in the world, and the basis of its worldview.

A second point is that the experience of being released from prior convention remains a constant feature in the founder's experience and teaching. It is a fundamental feature of his perspective-changing experience of 1854, and his later teachings built on it. The constant freshness of Kami's favor is in itself a source of strength, and it may lead to fresh insight and fresh solutions guided by the founder's teaching and force of example.

Third, Konkō Daijin provided a set of terms to describe his own experience of Kami in a way that was applicable in general terms. His own experience of Kami guided him in his career, and he was able to use traditional terminology to express that experience in a way universally relevant. He altered that terminology in a way consistent with his experience of divine favor.

Finally, most important among the terms given meaning from his distinctive experience was sincerity, *makoto*. The firmness of

faith and of personal character resulting from constant fidelity to the presence of Kami and to the benefit Kami desired for all with whom he came in contact provided a solid principle through which he related effectively with people. Such an attitude could be carried anywhere, since it was essentially not bound by specific space and time.

The founder's broad attitude is the locus in which Konkō universality originates. His faithful attendance to the inner presence of Kami and his constant faithfulness to hearing the needs and thanksgivings of those who came to him have provided the basic direction of Konkōkyō life. Sincerity provides a source of stability open both to transcendent power and to practical ameliorations. It is a principle that supports an attitude of constancy in circumstances that may be as various as the human beings in the world are various.

NOTES

1. "Konkō Daijin" is the religious title of Kawate Bunjirō. In Japan he is often known by the family name Akazawa, which he adopted at the request of his dying foster father. For clarity's sake, however, I will use the name "Kawate" throughout, with apologies to the Reverend Matsuda Yoshikazu of the Konkōkyō headquarters staff who clarified this point for me. The more intimate "Bunjirō" will be used only when the context requires.

Sources for this study are materials in the archives of the Research Institute at the headquarters of Konkōkyō at Konkō-chō in Okayama Prefecture. I was able to examine *Konkō Daijin's Memoirs*, transl. Tsuyuki Makoto (translation completed July 11, 1975; typescript), an account by the founder, composed during 1874 to 1876; and *The Philosophy of Konkōkyō*, compiled by the Reverend Fukushima Yoshitsugu and Tsuyuki Makoto, transl. Tsuyuki Makoto (typescript), the bulk of which is reminiscences of the founder collected from early followers. See also Konkō Churches of America 1981, based closely on the *Memoirs* and Konkō-chō 1973. Plans are afoot for publication of these materials in English.

Schneider 1962 provides the fullest account in English. See

also Holtom 1933 and McFarland 1962.

I am grateful for helpful conversations with the Reverend Fukushima Yoshitsugu, the Reverend Fujio Setsuaki, and the Reverend Matsuda Yoshikazu, and for the assistance of the Reverend Satō Yutaka. Of course, I do not hold them responsible for the interpretations of the founder's work here presented.

No critical biography of Konkō Daijin has yet been produced. This study is intended as a contribution to the formation of criteria by which a critical study of the religious contribution of Kawate Bunjirō, known as Konkō Daijin, can be carried out.

2. Ishizuchi mountain was a regional headquarters of Shugendō, a syncretistic healing cult present throughout Japan. See Earhart 1970, p. 33. No representative of that cult was present on this occasion, however.
3. See the account of the Japanese calendrical system in Hastings 1908-27, volume 3, pp. 1145-7. See also Beardsley 1959. Research for this book centered on a village only a few miles from Konkō-chō. See also Norbeck 1955. Takashima is also only a few miles from Konkō-chō. The calendrical system is an aspect of the ancient "Taoist" *onmyōdō* system introduced from China over a thousand years earlier.
4. The phrase has been used to refer to Luther, describing his shift in religious consciousness out of which the Protestant Reformation came, as well as to Kant. See the discussion by Watson 1947. The analogy to Luther is not perfect, depending on what interpretation of the reference to Copernicus is followed. However, a shift into god-orientedness, freeing the person of faith from subservience to rules and initiating a transformed mode of life, is true of both. Both entered, at least in principle, into a modern world view as presaged by Copernicus' affirmations. Both attained flexibility toward the received world-view of their respective cultures. Japanese assumptions about the interdependence of all produce results quite different from Luther's much more individualistic experience, however analogous the experience is in the aspect here being singled out.
5. The scriptural materials are: "The Divine Call to Konkō Daijin and his Family" of November 15, 1859; "The Divine Doctrine for the Believers" (*Tenchi kakitsuke*) of April 11, 1873; "The Divine Instructions," consisting of 20 "General Principles of

the Religion" (*Michi oshie no taiko*) and 50 "Instructions Concerning the Faith" (*Shinjin no kokoroe*), compiled in 1900; and a group of 100 short quotations compiled in 1913, called "Konkō Daijin's Understanding" (*Gorikae*). They are translated by members of the Konkōkyō headquarters staff and published as *The Sacred Scriptures of Konkokyo* in 1973. Schneider 1962 also furnishes a translation, pp. 81-101. Comparison between the two is useful. He also gives a set of twelve prohibitions not given in the official publication. There is thus a total of 182 sayings of the founder in the corpus. See also Hammer 1961.

6. He thus differs from contemporary Confucian scholars using the term in a more secular sense. See Laube 1975, pp.100-157.
7. "When a woman harvests vegetables with a heart that worships the soil, the divine favor will be with her. When you cook and eat them, show thanks toward Kami and they will always agree with you" (*Gorikae*, p. 32. See also p. 68).
8. Analysis of a list of persons coming to him for mediation shows that of those whose reasons are known over 70% came because of their own or family members' physical illness. Other reasons people gave were mental illness, poverty, death of a family member, fear of Konjin, wish to begin a house-building project without divine retribution, giving thanks for recovery from illness, and interest in knowing more about Konkō Daijin.
9. Western students of Konkōkyō should be not misled by possible prior conceptions of a factor in the world recalcitrant to "grace" or divine transformative initiative. Konkō Daijin, in common with most Japanese, assumes nothing like a Satan or a dualistically conceived perpetual adversary of good. It is assumed nature is essentially benign, and spontaneously tends toward harmonization of all with all.
10. Konkō Daijin's account of his life gives testimony to such experience. See *Memoirs*, p. 66. In his account of his crucial experience of 1854 he drew a circle, in the midst of an excursus in the text, expressing his joy at remembering the support given him by Kami at that time. Interpretation of this circle has engaged the attention of Konkōkyō theologians.
11. Holtom 1933, p. 288, and 1965, p. 260. See also McFarland 1967, p. 244 ff.
12. Schneider 1963, pp. 358-9. Schneider recognized this point but

- did not apply it consistently.
13. It is scarcely necessary to emphasize, as Konkō Daijin does not, that the deity of the sun is Amaterasu-ō-mikami, patron kami of the Emperor and of Japan. His religion is rooted in human need and the enhancement of life, not first of all in political or national considerations. Thus, while reference to the Emperor is not lacking in the sayings of the founder promulgated as scripture in 1900 and 1913, their absence in the official English text does not alter the basic point of view of the religion. See *Memoirs*, p. 12, *Shinjin ni kokoroe*, p. 31 in the two translations.
 14. *Memoirs*, pp. 39, 53, 60. On the "ikigami" designation in Japanese religion, see Blacker 1975 and Shimazono 1979, pp. 389-412.
 15. Schneider 1962, p. 82 on "Prohibitions."
 16. Fukushima Yoshitsugu, (untitled lecture), Konkō Churches of North America Annual Conference, Yosemite National Park, August, 1983. [typescript, 23 pp.]

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