

# Shinran and Human Dignity: Opening An Historic Horizon

by Kenko Futaba

Translated by Kenryu T. Tsuji

## SHINRAN'S CONCEPT OF ŌJŌ (REBIRTH)

What new thought did Shinran introduce to human history? To answer this question we are immediately reminded of his teaching of the salvation of the evil person and his opening of the doors of the Buddha-Dharma to all peoples. However, what we are asking here is: how did his path of salvation and his teaching of rebirth for the common person, who was considered as lowly as rocks, roof tiles and grains of sand, actually affect the behavior of people in the course of history.

Ōjō means to be reborn into the Pure Land, commonly interpreted as the rebirth of a person after his death into the realm of perfect happiness that transcends history. After the middle of the Heian period (794-1185) many books such as "Rebirth into the Pure Land," and "A Chronicle of Rebirth," a book relating the lives of people who desired rebirth, were published. All these books dealt with people who desired rebirth into the Pure Land after death.

It is clear that Shinran taught rebirth into the Pure Land. In his most important treatise, *Teaching, Practice, Faith and Enlightenment*, he wrote that faith was the true cause of rebirth into the Pure Land. In the well known tract *Tannishō* he said,

When we have faith that rebirth into the Pure Land is attained . . . The noble resolution of each of you in crossing the boundaries of more than ten provinces without regard to your life was solely to hear the way of rebirth in the Land of Bliss. You would, however, be greatly mistaken if you suspect me of knowing some other way of rebirth than

Nembutsu or that I possess some other scholarly knowledge.

It is clear, therefore, that Shinran's teaching of rebirth into the Pure Land does have aspects of rebirth after death.

This aspect became more pronounced when Shinran's teaching became known as the way of rebirth into the Pure Land. Rennyo, the eighth descendant of Shinran, greatly increased the number of Shinshu followers by popularizing the teaching. In his letters to them he wrote,

As I deeply contemplate the nature of human existence, I realize that enjoyment of human life is as momentary as the flash of lightning or a drop of morning dew. Even if one were to enjoy the ultimate luxuries of life, such enjoyment lasts only for a period of fifty or a hundred years. If the winds of transiency should blow upon him, he will suffer the pains of illness and eventually pass away. In death one can neither depend on his wife or children nor on his wealth and treasures. One must traverse alone the path over the mountain of death and cross the river of no return. Therefore, what one must seriously seek is the after-life and wholeheartedly trust in Amida Buddha. Embracing a firm faith in Amida Buddha one must be reborn in the Pure Land of Peace.

Rennyo considered the after-life to be of supreme importance and encouraged all to seek rebirth in the Pure Land, for after all, the present life was a

dream, an illusion. Through the years Rennyo's philosophy of rebirth was accepted as Shinran's traditional teaching and was transmitted to the present day. Even today in the proclamation by Kōnyo Shonin we find the following words:

This is the Buddha-Dharma. When we singlemindedly trust in Amida Buddha for our salvation in the after-life, abandoning doubt and all self-centered practices, in that single act of faith we will be embraced by Amida who will never cast us away. Our rebirth is assured now—we will complete our rebirth in the after-life in the western Pure Land and will become free from eternal suffering.

If Shinran's religion of rebirth in the Pure Land was solely for the purpose of finding peace and bliss in the after-life, it could offer no practical meaning for this present life. Therefore, it could give no new direction to human conduct to change the course of history. There are some modern historians who state that Shinran's religion of Other Power rose from the ground of human despair and therefore could do nothing for the real world; nor should it do anything for the world.

I call this grave misconception of Shinran's teaching of rebirth in the after-life "the burial of Shinran." My reason is that I do not think that the main object of Shinran's teaching was simply rebirth in the Land of Bliss. When Shinran taught rebirth in the Pure Land, he proclaimed the attainment of Buddhahood as the ultimate objective, which was for the purpose of saving all sentient beings from suffering through the work of Great Compassion. Therefore, the purpose of rebirth in the Pure Land in the after-life was not for the self-enjoyment of a blissful state but to become a Buddha and return to the world of suffering to exercise Great Compassion for the enlightenment of all sentient beings. At the very beginning of his major work entitled, *Teaching, Practice, Faith and Enlightenment*, Shinran stated, "When I carefully consider Jōdo Shinshū it has two kinds of move-

ment—the phase of going and the phase of returning." When Shinran thought of the Pure Land, he visualized the dynamic world of Buddha's Compassion which did not exist independent from the suffering of sentient beings. The general framework of his teaching was that we attained Buddhahood in the after-life (a state free from the limitations of human existence) and returned to this world. Thus it was clear that the main purpose of rebirth was to return and practice Great Compassion. Shinran's ultimate concern was the exercise of the compassionate power in the present life, which was "empty, vain and false." To disregard this phase of the great return, which was of paramount importance to his teaching, and depicting Shinran as a person living in despair, is alienating him completely from the real world of human life. This is what I mean by "burying Shinran."

What Shinran meant by faith (*shinjin*) was a faith that was a gift granted from the power of the Primal Vow (*Teaching, Practice, Faith and Enlightenment*). Thus faith, the awakening to the true mind of Amida, was given to all sentient beings. To receive this faith was none other than to accept "the benefit of practicing Great Compassion." Shinran said,

The True Buddhahood. The Mind Aspiring for Buddhahood is the Mind to Save Sentient Beings. The Mind to Save Sentient Beings is the Mind which embraces sentient beings to make them attain Birth in the Pure Land of Peace and Bliss . . .

This Mind (Faith) is the Great Bodhi-Mind; this Mind is the Great Compassionate Mind. This Mind arises from the Wisdom of Infinite Light . . .

The Ocean-like Vow being equal, our aspiration is equal. The aspiration being equal, the Great Compassion is equal. The Great Compassion is the right cause for the attainment of Buddha's Enlightenment.

The attainment of faith meant to be endowed

with the great Bodhi mind, which was the power of Great compassion that surrounded all sentient beings and actualized their rebirth into the realm of Buddhahood or the Pure Land. Shinran realized this faith in which he was embraced in Amida's Primal Vow, here and now, and practiced great compassion from this ground of Amida's Primal Vow.

In recent years there have been attempts to extricate the historical and realistic Shinran—who has been buried too long under the traditional teaching of rebirth into the Pure Land in the after-life. Even today this task remains incomplete.

This tradition completely neglected Shinran's Buddhist position of the negation of the self and his criticism of the religious society which revolved around the monastic life. It was this tradition that buried Shinran under the mass of secular morality. The most representative school within this tradition promulgated the idea that Shinran's teaching constituted a belief of rebirth in the Pure Land in the after-life and mere subservience to the prevailing social code of ethics in this life. Renno's interpretation of Shinran was typical of this tradition. What was Shinran's place in history, how did he view society and the world in which he lived? These questions were completely neglected.

In the last century, Manshi Kiyosawa (1863-1903), a priest of the Ōtani denomination of Jōdo Shinshū, rediscovered Shinran. He said that the ultimate religious experience was to become one in this present life with the absolute unlimited being. Here he experienced complete satisfaction and overcame the notion of rebirth in the Pure Land in the after-life. He said that so long as there was spiritual satisfaction, evil, poverty and other social ills posed no problems. The problem with such a person who entrusted himself to an absolute unlimited power and lived solely in the peace that transcended this world, was that he had nothing to contribute to human history. Therefore he had no criticism against the ethico-religious and political system of Shintoism which negated human per-

sonality.

In the so-called period of Taishō democracy there emerged a person known as Naotarō Nonomura. In a book entitled *A Critique of Jōdo Teaching*, he stripped from Shinran's religion the teaching of rebirth into the Pure Land and tried to probe the essence of Jōdo doctrine. Rebirth in the Pure Land, he said, was merely an Indian myth and Shinran only used this verbal symbol to teach the truth of religion. Nonomura further stated that the essence of Shinran's religion was to transform the person gripped by self-attachment and free from this self-attachment. His theory was brilliantly presented but gained neither the support of his contemporaries nor their successors. The Jōdo Shin Buddhist Sangha could not understand him and finally expelled him. Shinran and his doctrine of rebirth in the Pure Land was closely related with the essence of his religion and could never be taken lightly. This relationship has yet to be thoroughly investigated and still remains a question for present day Jōdo Shin followers.

Nonomura made a brilliant critical analysis of the Jōdo teaching. He made an important point by stressing that Shinran's teaching was to release the individual from his self attachment. But he did not go far enough in elaborating on one's mission in history. He stopped at the point of the individual's release from self-attachment which was a transcendental experience, but did not go one step further to criticize the ego-centered power of the state and its institutionalized morality. He did not question Shinto as the state religion but simply accepted the authority of the state and its morality. Therefore, he could not align himself with Shinran's position in criticizing the state and the morality of the times. He also buried Shinran.

The collapse of nationalism after World War II brought on a reexamination of Shinran's position in history. The peculiar viewpoint of present day nationalism sees Japanese Buddhism as a state religion and equates the laws of Buddha to the laws of the nation. Some consider Shinran's Buddhism also a state religion for he was said to have recited

the Nembutsu for the good of the imperial household as well as its subjects. If so, why was Shinran persecuted and treated as a criminal and exiled by the government? Why did Shinran himself defy the government and say, "I disobey both the laws of the Emperor and the laws of the nation, and differ with opinions." (*Teaching, Practice, Faith and Enlightenment*) Why did he resent the injustice of the authorities? These questions remain unanswered by these proponents.

In the postwar period the historian Hattori Yukifusa (1901-1956) attempted to clarify Shinran's place in history by denying the existence of the patriotic Shinran who was buried under the secular and national systems. His thesis prompted much debate among the scholars. Although he made many people aware of Shinran's place in history, the general public did not take notice. Let us now reexamine this important subject in the following pages.

## SHINRAN IN HISTORY

As I have mentioned above, the way of faith as expounded by Shinran was not to seek peace and happiness for oneself in the after-life. It was the way of becoming a Buddha to lead all sentient beings to Buddhahood out of great compassion. Faith (*shinjin*) for Shinran was the realization of the true mind of Buddha which was completely free from all ego-centeredness. This faith was none other than the transcendental wisdom given equally to all sentient beings from the absolute Compassion of the Buddha.

When the Nembutsu originated in man's ego-centeredness, it operated only for the purpose of self-profit. This activity was of course contrary to the Buddha-Dharma and ceased to be Buddhism. The Nembutsu Faith was the manifestation of the mind of great compassion which had the power to sever all ties of self-attachment. The Nembutsu was not a means to gain benefits for oneself. The Nembutsu itself gave ultimate value to human life. In describing the process of the

attainment of faith Shinran wrote that the ego-centered mind was awakened to the true mind of Buddha which was working unceasingly to enlighten all beings.

In Shinran's passage which I quoted above, he stated that the mind of faith given to us by Amida Buddha was a mind of great compassion that leads us to Buddhahood and at the same time leads others to Buddhahood. Thus the Buddha mind that was transferred to Shinran at once gave birth to a new personality which was now committed to fulfill the work of great compassion in the world of suffering. For Shinran, to be surrounded by Buddha's compassion was not to wait for rebirth in the Pure Land in the after-life. The decision to take refuge in the Buddha was in itself a result of the work of Amida's Primal Vow. At the moment he became aware of Amida's Compassion surrounding him, he became identified with this power of compassion and he assumed a new identity which now worked to fulfill the work of Buddha's Compassion. This was what rebirth in the Pure Land meant for Shinran.

The power of Absolute Truth transformed Shinran's ego-centered mind and now made him one with Amida's Primal Vow of Great Compassion. Thus anyone who awakened to Amida's Primal Vow immediately assumed a new personality that was imbued with Amida's compassion and worked for the enlightenment of others.

Such an individual also became more acutely conscious of the depth of his own ego-centeredness. The wisdom of the Primal Vow also was the wisdom that made him clearly see the evil side of his imperfect human existence and awakened in him the never ending desire for its transformation. It became natural for him to confront the problems of his society and the world and to work for its solutions with new religious insights.

What problems then did Shinran face in history? The new Shinran, who was awakened to the Primal Vow of Amida, found a world that was suffering from human injustice. He, therefore, confronted this injustice and worked for the estab-

lishment of equality in human society.

Shinran's master, Hōnen, taught the exclusive practice of Nembutsu which was the way for all people to be born equally into the realm of Buddhahood. Amida's Primal Vow was the power that enlightened all people equally. Because of this truth he encouraged all to recite the Nembutsu. Equality meant that the wise and the ignorant were equal. So were the good and evil. Any discrimination against the ignorant and the evil could not possibly be called equality. Therefore, Amida brought forth the way of Nembutsu that could be easily recited by all. Hōnen proclaimed his teaching in the following words:

The Nembutsu is easy and therefore can be recited by all. Other practices are difficult and cannot be followed by all. Why do we call it the Primal Vow of Amida? Because it offers rebirth to all sentient beings by discarding the difficult way and adopting the easy way.

If building statues and temples were the way to Buddhahood, then there is no hope for the poor. Moreover, the rich are few and the poor are many. If the wise and the talented were the objects of salvation by the Primal Vow, the ignorant would have no hope of rebirth. Moreover the wise are few and the ignorant are many. If only those who listen to and observe the Dharma often were the objects of the primal Vow, there is no hope for those who rarely listen and observe. Moreover, those who often listen to the Dharma are scarce and those who rarely listen are many. If those who uphold the precepts were the object of the Primal Vow, there is no hope for those who break the precepts or those who have no precepts at all. Moreover, those who observe the precepts are few and those who break the precepts are indeed many.

Know, therefore, that it is the same with all other practices. You must never doubt

this. If all the practices listed above were necessary to become the object of the Primal Vow, then those who attain rebirth are few and many are those who cannot attain rebirth. Therefore, Amida Buddha when he was the Bodhisattva Dharmākara in the infinite past was moved by compassion to save all beings equally and did not make the carving of statues and the building of temples prerequisites for rebirth required by the Primal Vow. Amida made the sole practice of the Nembutsu recitation the essence of the Primal Vow.

Hōnen viewed all people as equal and further emphasized that all people attained Buddhahood equally. What significance did this new teaching have on society? It goes without saying that the poor, the ignorant, the undisciplined and the precept breakers all belonged to the lowest strata of society. Those in the position of power and the landowners were never considered evil even when they heavily over-taxed the laborers. Those who did not give up the harvests of their labors to the authorities were considered evil. Not only that, they were punished by the gods and abandoned by the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. The poor and the uneducated who opposed the establishment could receive neither the blessing of the gods nor the salvation offered by the Buddha and the Bodhisattvas. However, if all these common people were saved equally by the Nembutsu they would fear neither the punishment of the gods nor the abandonment by the Buddhas. Thus if all were saved by the Nembutsu, it constituted an extremely dangerous teaching, threatening the power of the authorities by encouraging the practice of evil. Therefore, the imperial court and the newly established Kamakura government had to clamp down harshly on the Nembutsu movement. Jōkei, a typical example of the old Buddhist school, attacked the Nembutsu followers by accusing them of disobeying the gods, disrupting the nation and tearing apart the system that had conveniently equated the

nation's law with the Dharma of the Buddha.

The governing authorities had been using Buddhism and Shintoism as watchdogs to keep the people in check. Now the exclusive practice of Nembutsu gave the people an opportunity to free themselves from the bonds of this servitude, discover their human dignity and strive for its complete fulfillment.

Disobedience to the authorities led to both Honen's and Shinran's exile in 1207. Jōmon, Chōsai, Kōkaku, Hyōku, Kōsai, Shōku were also exiled and Sai'i, Shōgan, Jūren and Anraku were executed. The Nembutsu was banned. Now, Shinran in exile could expend all his energies showing the way of Buddhahood to the poor, the underprivileged, the uneducated and especially those who were considered evil. Shinran gave hope to people who found a new life in the Primal Vow of Amida Buddha because he taught the way of Buddhahood for all the ignorant and evil people. From this ground of universal salvation he criticized a society that tried to establish an exclusive world built on power, knowledge, and wealth.

Shinran wrote, "Lords and vassals who opposed the Dharma and justice bore indignation and resentment (to the Nembutsu teaching)." All persons with faith in the Nembutsu tried to establish a world in which every person would be equal in realizing his humanity. Any government that tried to destroy this world could be none other than enemies of the Dharma and human justice.

What was behind this authority that opposed the Dharma and human justice? As Jōkei said, the power behind this authority was a system that equated the rule of the temporal ruler with the eternal Dharma and the basis of this system was the unification of religion and politics.

From ancient times the supreme authority of the Japanese nation was ordained in this unique system. In the ancient book of *Kojiki* was written, "Our Mikado is the Ruler of all under heaven, and with the one hundred and eighty gods of heaven and earth performs the sacred rites of spring, summer, autumn and winter." Thus the emperor

was the chief officiant of the festivals and his political authority was derived from this religious position. The laws of the country were therefore based upon a system in which religious authority of the emperor was identified also with his political authority. This was a theocratic system.

All the Shinto shrines in the nation came under the jurisdiction of the emperor and his subjects without exception were forced to observe the festivals. In every town and village the people were organized around the shrines to uphold the laws of the land. The people had no freedom and were the instruments of the state. The emperor was sanctified and became a living god. The people were thrown into degradation and their individual freedom was usurped. They were firstly and lastly tools of the state. Praying to the gods meant obedience to the political authorities and the people could not escape this system. Those who did not pray to the gods were punished according to laws of the state and further incurred the wrath of the gods.

This unification of religion and politics (church and state) was revived after the Meiji Restoration. The emperor ruled his subjects as a living god and under his authority a government was organized that had absolute religious and political powers. Any person who did not bow before the emperor or worship the gods was considered disloyal to the crown and was subjected to great pressure. Such oppression occurred even within our recent memory. This kind of oppression has continued through Japanese history from the distant past to the present. Even the modern government is organized under this system. In the middle ages governors were dispatched to strategic locations around the country and these lords governed their domain under this religious-political authority.

The unity of the Buddha's Dharma and the emperor's law was justified under the system of the unification of religion and politics. Such a system was the Buddhist edition of the oneness of church and state.

Buddhism, a universal religion offering enlightenment to all peoples equally, was degraded and became a secular force when it was identified with a political system. This system further caused confusion by not differentiating the Buddha from the Shinto gods. The Buddha was the same as the Shinto gods to be prayed to for selfish needs and the Buddha-Dharma became just an instrument to satisfy one's greed. However, the faithful followers of the Nembutsu refused to yield to this system and worship the gods. Jōkei, therefore, attacked the Nembutsu devotees as disloyal subjects who broke the law. The imperial court and the military rulers suppressed the traditional Buddhist movement and the Nembutsu followers because they feared the disruption of their religious-political authority.

The persecution of the Nembutsu followers became very severe. During the Kenchō period (1249-1256) the governing authorities from the lord of the manors and his administrators down to the village chiefs all persecuted the Nembutsu Sangha which was organized by Shinran during his twenty years in the Kantō area. This happened twenty years after Shinran's return to Kyoto.

The Nembutsu followers were accused by the authorities as immoral people who feared no punishment even when they committed evil. Therefore, it was only natural for the authorities to use this reason to ban the Nembutsu movement. Śākyamuni called such authorities people who had neither the eyes to see the truth nor the ears to hear the voice of the Dharma. These people who wallowed in their power and were intolerant of any other religious faith were people to be pitied. Shinran also said that Nembutsu followers should have compassion on their persecutors and embrace the hope that they, too, might someday awaken to the truth. It was a fervent hope that they would be delivered from the illusion of grandeur based upon a temporal power and realize true human dignity founded on the mind of the Buddha. Shinran saw the fallacy of a system that equated the Buddha and the Bodhisattvas with its gods and taught, "In the

*Nirvana Sutra* it says—those who take refuge in the Buddha will be worshipped by the gods of heaven."

The Nembutsu followers who parted from a social system established by the authoritarian government of the imperial court and the warrior class proceeded to create their own society founded on the principle of equality of all peoples. Thus was opened a new community founded on a principle quite contrary to that of the traditional society that denied human freedom. This was a community that transcended even the instability, divisiveness and suffering of the new Sangha.

Towards the end of the Kenchō era (1256) the persecution of the Nembutsu followers was intensified with greater force. In order to escape from this intolerable condition Shinran's eldest son, Zenran, abandoned the Nembutsu practice that did not pay homage to the Shintō gods and encouraged the followers to submit to the authorities. When Shinran discovered what Zenran was doing, he had no choice but to banish him from his family in 1256. He then advised his followers to move to another area if they could not endure the persecution; there should not be any compromise whatsoever with a system that did not recognize human freedom. Any power structure that trampled on human dignity was absolutely contrary to the Nembutsu way which proclaimed equality of all human beings. To align themselves with this kind of establishment was undermining the historical significance of the Nembutsu.

Shinran's Nembutsu which proclaimed universal enlightenment for all people could not possibly be equated with a religion, whose main purpose was only to satisfy one's greed. For after all, the Nembutsu Sangha stood for the establishment of the equality and the dignity of all human beings. Shinran's burning faith prompted him to free the farmers who suffered from the exploitation of the political-religious government that justified the use of force to achieve their ends. Shinran tried to reform a society, built on an outdated feudal system ruled by an emperor with divine rights and the

subsequent military government ruled by the warrior class, and create a society founded on Truth.

Those who recited and practiced the Nembutsu broke the law of the land and were considered unpardonable evil criminals. In the eyes of the authorities, Shinran and the farmers who followed him had broken the law of Nembutsu prohibition.

The Nembutsu devotees were awakened to their own evil nature by Amida's Light of Wisdom but for the authorities it was another matter. The Nembutsu devotees were evil because they were lawbreakers. However, from the standpoint of Amida Buddha both the Nembutsu devotees who had awakened to their own evil nature and the authorities, who lived under the illusion of their goodness, were to be saved equally. If these authorities could be saved by Amida's Compassion, how much more so the Nembutsu devotees, hence, the ringing words of the *Tannishō*, "Even a good person is saved by Amida Buddha, how much more so the evil person." In teaching the way of salvation for the evil person Shinran offered the people suffering under the yoke of despotism a bright hope for a new free society.

So far we have examined how Shinran's teaching was virtually buried under the heavy notion of salvation in the afterlife and have rediscovered the real purpose of his teaching. His was a powerful message based on the Primal Vow of Amida Buddha, offering enlightenment to all beings equally. Shinran tried to build a society on this basic principle.

Shinran's faith involved a drastic transformation of the self-centered heart that awakened to Amida's Heart of Great Compassion working tirelessly to bring enlightenment to all beings. Thus, in faith the human heart became identified with the Primal Vow of Amida Buddha and human beings became the vehicle of Amida's great compassionate activity. To make all human beings equally realize their true humanity was the work of Amida's Primal Vow. This work only was the true good. On the other hand, any person or system that interfered with this process could only be a false

good. The religious political system of Shinto and the identification of the Buddha-Dharma with the emperor's law advanced by some Buddhist closed the doors to the establishment of equality and dignity of the human person. It was Shinran's unique teaching that offered salvation to all these people considered evil by the establishment.

Any morality that disregards the human person cannot but be, as in Shinran's words, vain, empty and false.

I know neither good nor evil. The reason is that when I know good which appears good in the mind of Amida, only then can I say I know good; and when I know evil which appears evil in the mind of Amida, only then can I say I know evil. This is because we are being possessed of passions and our world is impermanent like a house on fire. All things are vain and empty and are not true in themselves. The Nembutsu alone is true. (*Tannishō*)

The only way in which human beings could truly know good and bad was when they judged good and bad from the standpoint of Amida's mind. Shinran felt that he could judge good and bad only from this position. Shinran categorically denied all other positions and he could not permit the existence of an evil system that trampled on the dignity of the human person and denied him the possibility of fulfilling his true human potential:

One must seek to cast off the evil of this world and to cease doing wretched deeds; this is what it means to reject the world and to live the Nembutsu. (*Mattōshō*)

This was Shinran's moral stance. Shinran stated,

If, therefore, we have faith in the Primal Vow, there is nothing that can surpass the Nembutsu; there is no need for fear of evil because there is no evil that obstructs the power of Amida's Primal Vow." (*Tannishō*)

Since Shinran's morality was based on the transcendental foundation of Amida's Primal Vow, it

was beyond any temporal morality enforced by the government. Thus, nothing surpassed the true good of the Nembutsu that guided all peoples equally to the way to Buddhahood. And there was nothing to be feared, for Shinran's moral standard was based on the Infinite Compassion of Amida Buddha. The supreme purpose of Shinran's morality was to realize the ultimate good of Amida Buddha and to work for the actualization of Amida's Great Compassion.

It has long been thought, however, that Shinran's teaching was simply to follow the prevailing moral standards of the nation and at death be born in the Land of Bliss, finally enjoying the peace and bliss of the Pure Land. This view of Shinran relegated his teaching to the after-life and buried him in the secular morality of the establishment.

The ultimate objective of Shinran's Nembutsu (*shinjin*) was to realize Buddhahood and live

dynamically in the flow of history in harmony with Amida's Primal Vow. Thus, he opened a world where all peoples could live equally in truth. He took issue with any social condition that obstructed the realization of human dignity—the complete fulfillment of the human person in the way of the Buddha.

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Note: This translation by Rev. Kenryu T. Tsuji is the first chapter of a book entitled, *All of Shinran (Shinran no Subete)*, edited by Kenko Futaba, former President of Ryukoku University and currently President of Kyoto Women's College. Professor Futaba's chapter is entitled, "Shinran's Opening of an Historic Horizon." (Shinran no hiraita rekishiteki chihei).