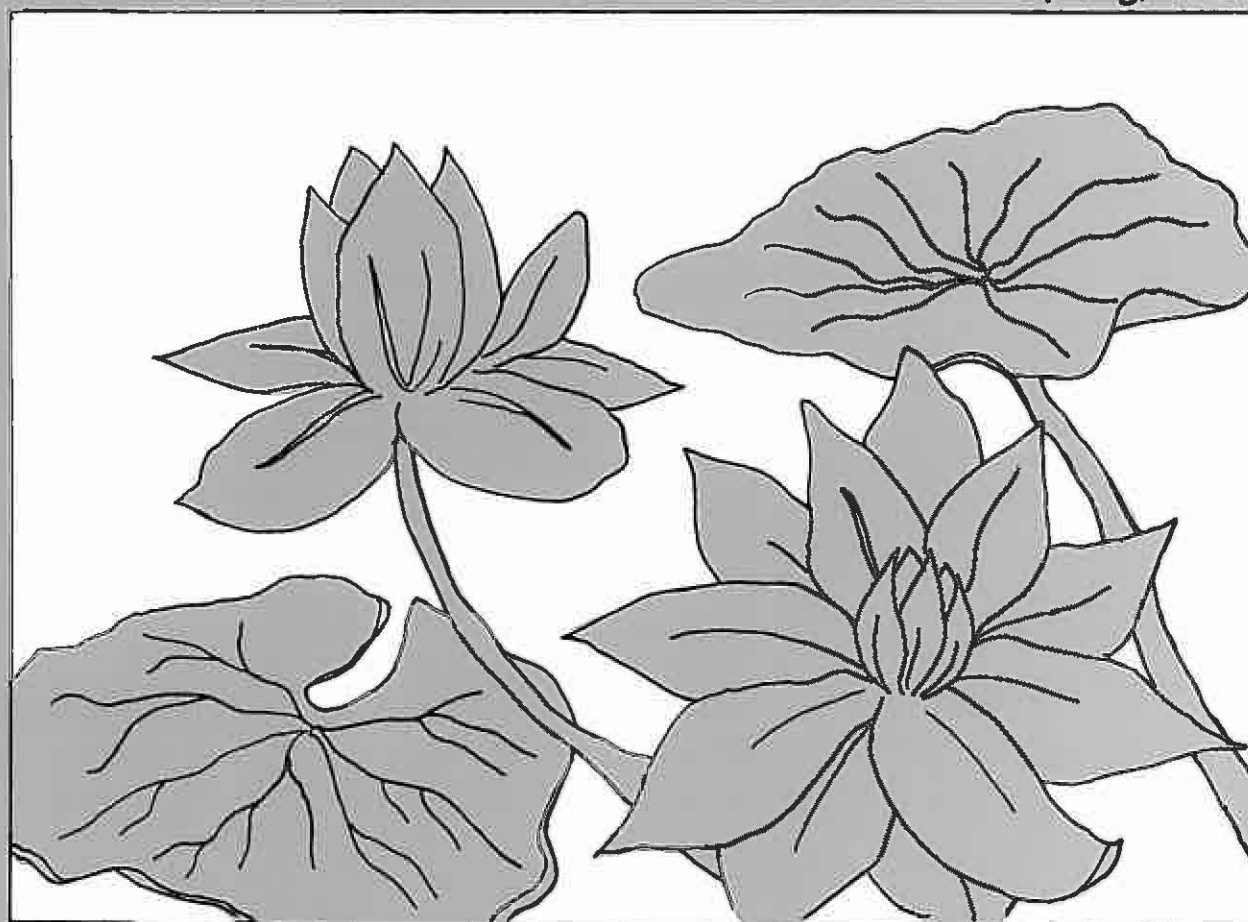


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# Salvation for the Wicked: Comments on Chapter 13 of the Tannisho

by Kakue Miyaji

## SHINRAN'S EXPRESSION

Among the many characteristics of Jodo Shinshu Buddhism, Amida Buddha's Salvation for the Wicked is the most remarkable. This characteristic emerged from the understanding that the religion, by its very nature, stands aloof from, i.e. transcends, morality. Amida's Grand Vow, itself Grand Compassion, embraces all sentient beings without distinction of good and evil, forsaking none, and thereby transcends the stage of moral values and ethical conduct.

This unique idea is expressed throughout the *Kyogyoshinsho* written by the Master Shinran (1173-2363), founder of Jodo Shinshu Buddhism. In the volume of Faith (*Shin-kan*), for example, he confesses his own deplorable condition:

*I now truly realize! How wretched I am! Ran, the stupid bald-headed one, deeply submerged in the wide ocean of desires and cravings, confusingly lost among the mountains of worldly fame and interests, has no aspirations for being counted among the elite of the definitely assured group and feels no pleasure in approaching the really true Enlightenment. How deplorable!*<sup>1</sup>

After this serious revelation Shinran quotes a now familiar passage from the *Mahayana Nirvana Sutra*:

*It (Amida Buddha's Compassion) is like the case of a family of seven children in which one is sick. The parental affection does not show any discrimination, but naturally turns toward the sick child.*<sup>2</sup>

One can also read in the volume of Practice (*Gyo-kan*) of the *Kyogyoshinsho* the Chinese master Jimin's verses as quoted in the master Hosshō's *Jodo-go-e-hoji-san*:

*He (Amida Buddha) will come and greet all those who, hearing His Name, think of Him.*

And,

*No discrimination against violators of the precepts or great sinners.*<sup>3</sup>

The Master Shinran believed that the words, "the sick child," "violate of the precepts," and, "great sinner," all corresponded to his own deplorable condition. He clearly expressed this idea in his own words in the *Tannisho*, written by his disciple Yui-en-bo (1222-1289?).

*Know that in Amida's Grand Vow there is no distinction of young and old, good and evil, that the Faith-mind alone is essential, for it is the Vow to save all sentient beings who are heavily burdened with sin and consumed with tormenting cravings. In order to establish the faith in Amida's Vow no other virtue is necessary for there is no goodness that surpasses nembutsu. Evils are not to be feared, because no evil can hinder the fulfilling of Amida's Grand Vow.*<sup>4</sup>

And,

*It is because of Amida's Compassion toward us who are filled with tormenting cravings and unable to liberate ourselves from the bondage of birth-and-death through any other religious practice that Amida made His Grand Vow. Since the real intent of Amida's Grand Vow is to bring the transgressor to Buddhahood, the transgressor who acquiesces in Amida's Will is foremostly destined for Birth in the Pure Land. In this sense, the Master said: "Even the virtuous can attain Birth in the Pure Land, how much more so the wicked."*<sup>5</sup>

I will comment more fully on the idea of Amida's Salvation for the Wicked in my discussion of Chapter 13 of the *Tannisho* wherein the most important Buddhist idea of *karma* (skt. *Karman*) is stated by the Master Shinran.

## NOTES:

1. Dr. D. T. Suzuki, *The Kyogyoshinsho*, p. 140 f. cf. A. Bloom, *Shinran's Gospel of Pure Land*, p. 29.

In most cases I have followed the authoritative precedent translation but occasionally I have made revisions to express my own viewpoint. When this occurs an asterisk (\*) will be placed as notification

of this change.

2. The Mahayana Nirvana Sutra, Chinese Tr. Northern ed. vol. 20; Southern ed. vol. 18. Dr. D. T. Suzuki op. cit. p. 151.
3. Dr. D. T. Suzuki op. cit. p. 47.
4. Tan-ni-shō, *Otaniha* translation published for the commemoration of the 700th Anniversary of the death of the Master Shinran, 1962 ed. p. 2.\*
5. Ibid. p. 6 f.\*

## TWO KINDS OF HETERODOXY

There are two common unorthodox views held by some followers of Jodo Shinshu Buddhism. One is the heterodoxy of *zo-aku-muge* (造悪無碍), and the other is the heterodoxy of *senju-kenzen* (専修賢善).

*Zo-aku-muge*, which literally means "no hindrance despite evil-committing," is a kind of hedonism or instinctivism. In the *Tannisho* this is rejected by the Master Shinran as well as his disciple Yui-en-bo.

*It was said at the time (when Master Shinran was alive) that since the Vow is meant to save those who have committed evil, evil must be pursued as a matter of course to attain Birth in the Pure Land. When ugly rumors about the misconduct of these false followers reached the ears of Master Shinran, he wrote in a letter: "One should not relish taking poison simply because an antidote is at hand."*<sup>1</sup>

One can also read the Master Shinran's admonition of hedonistic views in his letters, e.g. the *Matto-sho*,<sup>2</sup> the *Goshosoku*,<sup>3</sup> etc.

The heterodoxy of *senju-kenzen*, on the other hand, literally meaning "concentrating Practice with Wisdom and Goodness," is a kind of rigorism or asceticism which is also rejected by the Master Shinran, and Yui-en-bo, in every section of the *Tannisho*.<sup>4</sup>

Those who strive to accumulate merit through their own efforts are not in accord with Amida's Grand Will since they lack absolute, pure faith in its power. Because the faith of *nembutsu* is not self-effort, nor is it moral goodness, it is beyond all ego-centered efforts. (Vf. *Tannisho*, Chapter 3, 8). The Master Shinran rejected hypocrisy and disliked a show of rigorism, goodness or knowledgeability that inwardly cherished falsehoods. He firmly believed that, in truth, he was nothing but an ignorant being filled with sin and evil, transmigrating endlessly with no chance of self-liberation, and that Amida Buddha's Power alone could save him.

Master Shinran and Yui-en-bo admonished us not to fall into these two holes of hedonism and rigorism. Shinran stood on a level transcending both extremes. In this sense, we can say that Jodo Shinshu Buddhism stands on the prin-

ciples of *majjhima-patipada* (Middle Path 中道) which makes us sublate (or *aufheben*) these two bases through mutual denial of both.<sup>5</sup> As we know, this denial (or *aufhebung*) does not mean mere annihilation. Rather, it makes these two bases sublimed and heightened, giving them higher significance in an integrated dimension through their reconciliation. In general Buddhism this denial is called *sunnata* (skt. *sunyata* 空) or *annatan* (skt. *anatman* 無我), and in Jodo Shinshu Buddhism it is interpreted as "leaving to *tariki* (他力)" i.e. "abstaining from *jiriki* (自力)," or "giving up the obstinate trust in our selfishness."<sup>6</sup>

I think one can acknowledge that Jodo Shinshu does not merely deny morality, as it rejects the heterodoxy of *zo-aku-muge*, and does not merely affirm morality, as it rejects the heterodoxy of *senju-kenzen* which shows itself as a rigorous moral or ascetic practice. This last point is particularly important to the understanding of the remarkable characteristic of Amida Buddha's Salvation for the Wicked.

I believe one can correctly acknowledge the real intent of this doctrine by thoroughly understanding Chapter 13 of the *Tannisho*.

## NOTES:

1. Tan-ni-sho, *Otaniha* ed. op. cit. p. 31.\*
2. Shinran-shonin-Zenshu, *Kanko-kai* ed. (Hereafter referred to as RSZ), *Matto-sho*, p. 113 f.
3. Ibid., *Gosho-soku-shu*, op. cit. p. 134 f.
4. I presume the major opposing stand of the *Tannisho* was the heterodoxy of *senju-kenzen*, which was held in those days mainly in the district of Kanto. Perhaps Zenran, son of the Master Shonin, had encouraged the rising of the heterodoxy. See K. Miyaji, *Tanni-sho* and Zenran's Heterodoxy, *Takada-gaku-hō*, 57-1966; On Zenran's Heterodoxy, *Kyoto-jyoshi-daigaku-kiyo*, 10, 11-1955; *Indogaku-Bukkyo-gaku-Kenkyu* 4, 1-1956.
5. On "Middle Path," see Mv. I, 6 p. 7-14; SN. 56, 11 vol. 5. p. 420-424; *Udāna* 6, 8 p. 71-72, etc.
6. "Anattan" is one of the most essential principles of early Buddhism, as is "Sunnata" of Mahayana Buddhism. Both should be meant not only as objective principles but also as practical ones. That is to say, in Buddhism, to acknowledge the principle of "Anattan" means to become egoless, absorbed, leaving to the "Dhamma" or Buddha. These principles correspond to the principle of "tariki" in Jodo Shinshu Buddhism. The Master Rennyo (蓮如), eighth Abbot of the Hongwanji Buddhist Temple, stated: "Buddhism teaches us that there exists no 'Ego.' There are few who believe they are wicked. Those who don't believe so are to be blamed by Master Shinran. As the Master (Shinran) admonished us to believe in 'tariki,' the thought of 'Ego' should never exist in the faith of 'tariki.'" (Rennyo-shōnin-Goichidai-Kikigaki, no. 80, *Shinshu-syōgyō*-



*zensho Kōkyō-sho-in ed., hereafter referred to as SSZ., III, p. 552). "There are few who believe they are wicked. Surely they are to be blamed by Master Shinran. Therefore, unless each, one-by-one, changes his thought of 'Ego,' he will sink into the depth of Hell for eons of time. This is caused by his ignorance of the real essence of Buddhism." (ibid. no. 58, p. 547).*

## CHAPTER 13 OF THE TANNISHO

I. Some insist that those who are unafraid of evil, out of trust in the Marvelous Saving Power of Amida's Grand Vow, cannot be born in the True Land since their trust is a form of boasting.

II. A. 1. This insistence not only casts doubt on the Grand Vow, 2. but also reveals a total ignorance of the Karmic (or historically, socially conditioned) character of (our presumption of) "good" or "evil." B. 1. a. a. The so-called "goodness" we cherish in our heart is the outcome of our Karmic presumption of "good," just as the "evil" we foster is the result of our Karmic presumption of "evil." In this connection the late Master Shinran told me: "Evils as insignificant as even a speck of dust on the tip of a rabbit's hair or a sheep's fleece are presumed by our Karmic valuation; this you should know."

b. On another occasion he asked me: "Do you believe in me and everything I tell you?" "Yes, Master!" I answered. Again he asked: "Well now, are you certain you won't disobey me?" "Yes, I am certain," I answered respectfully. Whereupon he said: "Could you murder a thousand men? If so, I definitely assure you of birth in the Pure Land." To this I answered: "I respect what you say, but I cannot presume to murder even a single man (for birth in the Pure Land)." Master Shinran continued: "Why, then, did you just say you would not disobey what I, Shinran, told you? Now you see, if your presumption of 'good' is absolute or unmovable you might murder even a thousand men believing in my words that by doing so you could attain birth in the Pure Land. But because this time (different than before), you have no 'karmic' (or voluntary) condition (to presume these words as 'good') you would not kill even a single person. That is why you would not kill; not because your mind (or presumption) is constantly 'good.' Therefore, even though here and now you would not kill, you might nevertheless kill hundreds or thousands of people (at a different time when you presumed it as 'good' according to your historical or social conditions)." By saying this the Master means that whereas we think we are saved by our (self-presumed) "Goodness" and obstructed by our (self-presumed) "Evil," in reality, (transcending these presumptions) we can be saved only by Amida's Marvelous Grand Vow.

b. It was said at the time (when Master Shinran was alive) that as the Vow is meant to save those who have committed evil, evil may be pursued as a matter of course to attain Birth in the Pure Land. When ugly rumors about the misconduct of these false followers reached the ears of Master

Shinran, he wrote in a letter: "One should not relish taking poison simply because an antidote is at hand." He wrote in this way to destroy such misinterpretations. However, it was not to imply that (even in the sense of "religion") evil is quite a hindrance to birth in the Pure Land.

2. a. How is it possible to attain firm faith in the Grand Vow, thereby transcending birth-and-death, merely through observance of the precepts? We can boast (ほこる), we wretched beings, only when fully absorbed in His Grand Compassion. In any event, we cannot do evil unless karmically impelled to presume it as "good" or "necessary." Then those who live by fishing, hunting, trading and farming would do so likewise out of the Karmic impellment of presuming it as "good" or "necessary." "When impelled by certain conditions of your presumption, you would do any act accordingly," said the Master.

After Shinran's death, so-called believers, insisting that only the virtuous should be allowed to call *nembutsu*, arbitrarily established standards of conduct governing membership in the congregation, publicly posted them, and declared that all who violate them should be barred from meetings of the congregation. Such interlopers make a show of being serious, good and wise, yet inwardly cherish falsehoods.

b. Evils committed in the boastfulness of the Grand Vow are Karmically conditioned. To rely upon Amida's Power means to leave "good" and "evil" to their (common-mundane presumption with) Karmic conditions and surrender wholeheartedly to the Grand Compassion. The *Yuishin-sho* states: "Why when you don't know how powerful Amida is do you suppose you cannot be saved despite all your sins?"

The very one who could possibly boast of immunity from the consequences of wrongdoing due to trust in Amida's Saving Power of His Grand Vow can be qualified to be the very one who has established firm faith in Amida's Grand Power.

III. A. Some are wont to think that a boastful mind would not arise once bad actions or evil passions were rooted out by our own Self-power, enabling faith in the Grand Vow to be established. But if we could root out all tormenting cravings we could become a Buddha through our own efforts. And if we could become a Buddha through our own efforts, Amida's Grand Vow, which grew out of his meditation for five kalpa, would have been in vain.

B. Those who admonish others not to boast of relying on Amida's Grand Compassion, because such boasting arises from conceit, are themselves filled with tormenting cravings and defilements. For in presuming to admonish others not to boast about the Grand Vow, they are in effect themselves boasting. After all, how different is the boasting of those who say that because of Amida's Grand Vow they can do evil with impunity from the boasting of those admonitors who are proud of not boasting?

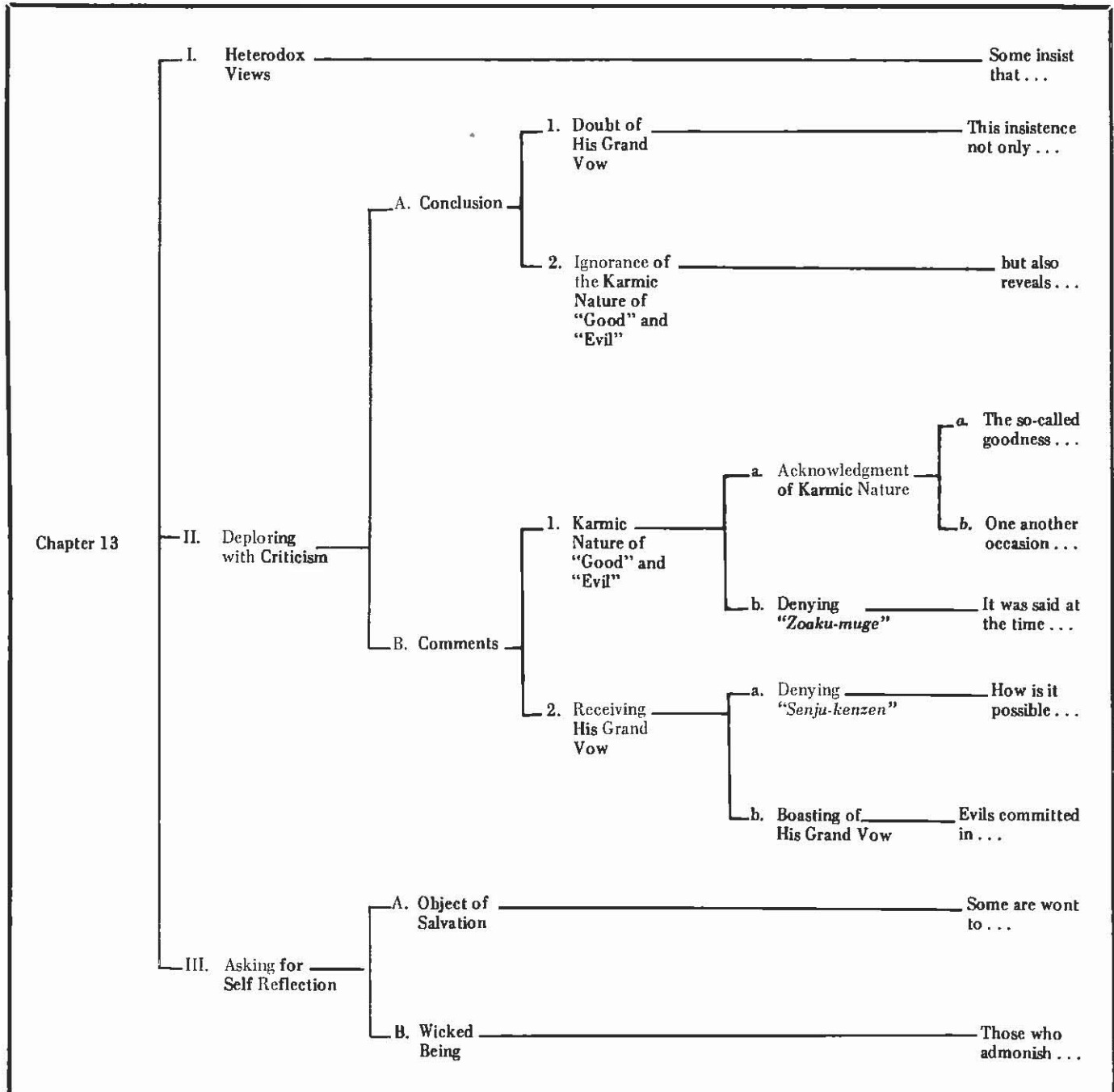
### NOTE:

*We have many translations of the Tannisho into*

foreign languages, due to its religious depth, yet there is no perfectly reliable one available. Particularly with Chapter 13 we find so wide a difference between translations that each translator may be depending on his individual understanding. And so I have tried my own translation while still following closely the Otaniha translation, [1962 ed. See p. 3, Note (4)].

## CONSTRUCTION CHART OF CHAPTER 13

This chart is an original trial work. However, it may be enough to show the logicity of this Chapter and its construction.



## PRESUMPTION OF "GOOD" AND "EVIL"

I. The heterodox assertion which is the object of the author's criticism is as follows:

*Those who are unafraid of evil out of trust in the Marvelous Saving Power of Amida's Grand Vow cannot be born in the True Land, since their trust is a form of boasting.*

It is clear that this insistence is a kind of *senju-kenzen* as it stands on the idea that evils must be annihilated and good deeds practiced to attain Birth in the Pure Land.<sup>1</sup>

II. A. Against this ethical, moral insistence the author first shows the conclusion of his criticism:

- 1) *This insistence not only casts doubt on the Grand Vow,*
- 2) *but also reveals a total ignorance of the Karmic (or historically, socially conditioned) character of (our presumption of) "good" or "evil."*

Our presumption (or valuation) of "good" or "evil" emerges from our historical or social conditions. He states this truth as "the Karmic character of our presumption of 'good' or 'evil'." According to the Master Shinran's view, our valuation of "good" or "evil" is nothing but the presumption conditioned by our own individual experiences. Here we can see his strong criticism of the idea of "good" or "evil," which is the essence of morals or ethics. Thus he criticized and rejected the teaching of *Shodo-mon*, which was a kind of moral asceticism: "Well," he declared, "It is mutable, changeable, not absolutely definite by all means." Master Shinran's criticism on this point is typically presented in his words written in the "Recapitulation" section of this book:

*Good, evil—I know absolutely nothing about this. If*

*I could know what Amida really thought "good," I could say I knew "good," and if I could know what Amida really thought of "evil," I could say I knew "evil." But because we are filled with all kinds of tormenting cravings in the world that is evanescent, like a house on fire, everything we do, everything that exists, is vain and deceptive, only the Nembutsu (or Pure Religious Faith) is real and true.<sup>2</sup>*

*Those unlettered people who know of no "good" or "evil"*

*are but of serious heart,  
yet I myself vainly pose as wiseacre clever at  
knowing of*

*"good" and "evil."*

*I am unable to know what is*

*"right" or "wrong," "just" or "evil";*

*I have no claim even for little love and compassion  
yet I am willing just for fame and gain  
to pose as Teacher.<sup>3</sup>*

### NOTES:

1. *The Tannisho is constructed with two main parts, which have, respectively, one preface or prologue, and one recapitulation. The former part (Chapters 1-10) includes Master Shinran's oral teachings directly heard by Yui-en-bo, one of his disciples. The latter part (Chapters 11-18) is Yui-en-bo's intent to clarify his Master's teachings by correcting some heterodoxical assertions which were then held primarily in the district of Kanto among the devotees of his day. Most of these assertions belonged to the heterodoxy of senju-kenzen. Cf. p. 5, Note (4).*

2. Tan-ni-sho, *Otaniha ed. op. cit. p. 53.*

3. *Shinran's Shozo-matsu-wasan (RSZ p. 224).*



# Development of Chinese Pure Land Buddhism (Part I)

by Shinko Mochizuki

translated by Leo Pruden

ABOUT THE AUTHOR,  
PROFESSOR SHINKŌ MOCHIZUKI  
(1869-1948)

Born in Niigata Prefecture on October 28th, 1869 as Shōjiro Matsubara, the scholar later known as Professor Shinkō Mochizuki received his first ordination in 1880 and at that time received the religious name of Shinkō ("Blessed with Faith"). In 1883, he entered the Jōdo-shū daigakkō in Kyoto, and in September of 1886, he entered the Jōdo-shū honkō, in Tokyo. He graduated from this latter school in July of 1895.

In 1893, the young Shinkō Matsubara was adopted, through marriage, into the family of one Arinari Mochizuki, and henceforth was known, until his death, as Shinkō Mochizuki.

In 1899 Mochizuki completed a ten-year private study of the Tendai teachings, conducted in the city of Kyoto and on Mt. Hiei. In this same year Mochizuki began his teaching career at the Jōdo-shū kōtō-gakkō, in Kyoto.

Shinkō Mochizuki first came to the notice of the Buddhist academic world with the publication, in 1906, of his edition of the Hōnen-shōnin zenshū (The Complete Works of St. Hōnen). This was followed by his editing and publishing the Jōdo-shū zenshō (The Complete Works of the Pure Land Tradition), which appeared in the period 1911 to 1914. He then began his work on the monumental Bukkyō-daijiten (Encyclopaedia of Buddhism) whose seven volumes spanned the period from 1906 to 1937: a work that took approximately thirty years to complete!

In 1909 Mochizuki published the Bukkyō-dainempyō (A Buddhist Yearbook), and this was followed by his editing of the Dai-Nippon Bukkyō zenshō (The Complete Works of Japanese Buddhism) whose 150 volumes appeared in the period 1912 to 1922.

In addition to his editing and publishing these major reference works, Professor Shinkō Mochizuki was also reknown for his work in Pure Land Buddhism. A collection of some sixty-six of his articles dealing with Pure Land Buddhism appeared in 1922 under the title Jōdo-kyō no kenkyū (Studies in Pure Land Teachings). This was followed in 1930 by his Jōdo-kyō no kigen narabi hattatsu (The Origins and the Development of the Pure Land Teachings), and in 1942, by his Shina Jōdo-kyōri-shi (A Doctrinal

History of Chinese Pure Land Buddhism); this work was reprinted in 1964 with the revised Japanese title Chūgoku Jōdo-kyōri-shi).

In his later years, Professor Mochizuki was elected to membership in the Japan Academy (Nippon gakushi'in), and was also eventually elected to the abbotship of the Chion'in monastery, Kyoto, and thus became the chief abbot (kanchō) of Jodo-shu.

Professor Shinkō Mochizuki died at the age of eighty on the 13th of July, 1948.

The following is a partial translation of Mochizuki's Preface to his Chūgoku Jōdo-kyōri-shi.

This present book is the systematization of the notes of lectures that I gave on numerous occasions at Taishō University. As these notes are now being printed in book form, this book will be entitled *Shina Jōdo-kyōri shi* (A Doctrinal History of Chinese Pure Land Buddhism), which title points to the fact that the major concern of this work is the development and the changes that the Pure Land doctrines have undergone in China.

However, religious doctrines are accompanied by faith, and this in turn carries within itself an impetus to dissemination and expansion, so while we are relating the changes and the developments that the Pure Land doctrines have undergone, we are at the same time narrating the historical facts of the faith's growth and expansion.

Buddhism in China has almost two thousand years of history behind it; moreover, China is vast in geographic extent, and the religious phenomena that have arisen within it from the time of its origins to the present-day are numberless. Needless to say, it would be almost impossible to study these phenomena one by one, and I believe that it would not be an easy task even to bring together the data involved in such a history, regardless of the criteria adopted. In the present work, I have attempted to bring together as much relevant historical data as possible, and have tried, to the best of my abilities, to delineate the antecedents and the later ramifications of any given doctrinal theory in my exposition of that theory. However, when the final editing of this work was finished, I discovered several places where further revision was called for, and I am filled with remorse that in this respect the work remains incomplete. I sincerely



look to the corrections and the amendations which later generations of scholars will provide.

Shinkō Mochizuki

March 1942

*This work now begins with the First Chapter, A General Survey, in which Mochizuki reviews the subject matter of this work, discusses the first introduction of the Buddha-dharma to Chinese soil (omitted here), and then gives a general survey of the high points of the Pure Land faith over the centuries, from its first appearance in China up to the 20th century.*

## CHAPTER I

### A General Survey

The Pure Land teachings (*ching-t'u chiao*) form a separate tradition within Mahāyāna Buddhism. In these teachings, the devotee believes in the existence of a large number of various Buddhas, and in their heavens, or Pure Lands; through this faith the devotee obtains, in this life, the protection of these Buddhas and, he desires to be reborn into one of these Pure Lands after his death. All of the various Mahāyāna scriptures and commentaries speak of Buddhas "in all of the ten directions, as numberless as the grains of sand in the Ganges River," and each one of these Buddhas lives in his own individual Pure Land, and here he continues to preach and to teach to a multitude of the faithful who have obtained rebirth in this land. However, there are very few scriptures which speak of any other of these Buddhas or of their Pure Lands in great detail. It is only the Buddhas Amitābha (O-mi-t'o Fo), Akṣobhya (O-shu Fo), and Bhaiṣajyaguru (Yao-shih Fo) who have separate, independent scriptures devoted to describing them and their Pure Lands.

And, of these Buddhas, an extremely large number of scriptures are devoted exclusively to Amitābha, either in describing in fine detail his making of vows and his cultivation of religious practices while he was yet a Bodhisattva, or in describing the adornments and the physical features of his Pure Land, the Western Land of Sukhāvātī (*chi-lo*, "possessing extreme happiness"). The large number of scriptural texts devoted to Amitābha and Sukhāvātī attest to the fact that, from the very earliest period, the Pure Land of the Buddha Amitābha was regarded as the best of all the Pure Lands of the Buddhas. As a result, then, the belief in Amitābha's Pure Land grew in India, and in such Indian works as Nāgārjuna's *Daśabhūmi-vibhāsa* (*Shih-chu pi-p'o-she*), in Sthiramati's *Ratna-gotra vibhaga* (*Chiu-ching i-ch'eng Pao-hsing lun*), and in Vasubandhu's *Amitāyus Sūtra Upadeśa* (*Wu-liang-shou ching Yü-p'o-t'i-she*), the authors expressed their vows to be reborn into Sukhāvātī; and such scriptural texts as the *Ta-p'ei-ching* (volume two), the first volume of the *Ta-fa k'u ching*, the *Wen-chu shih-li fa-yuan ching*, and the sixth volume of the *Ta fang-teng Wu-hsiang ching* record that a variety of personages, such as

the bhikṣu Jivaka (Chi-p'o-chia), the young man Leśya (Li-ch'e) "whom all the world delights in seeing," the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī, and "Queen Increase" (*ts'eng-ch'ang nü-wang*) all vowed to be reborn in Amitābha's Pure Land. When the Pure Land faith spread to China, it attracted many tens of millions of devotees, both clerics and laity, and the faith eventually spread to all the countries of the Far East, where it became the major faith of a vast majority of the populations of these lands. It is for this reason, then, that when we speak of the Pure Land teachings, this phrase can refer to the teaching that every Buddha has a Pure Land, but, in light of the above, we shall employ this phrase in the sense of belief in the Buddha Amitābha, and the rest of this work will concern itself with narrating the history of the dissemination of belief in Amitābha.

The first appearance of what was to develop into Pure Land teachings was the translation in 179, during the reign of the Later Han Dynasty Emperor Ling, of the *Pratyutpanna-samādhi sūtra* (Ch: *P'an-shou san-mei ching*) by Lokakṣema. This translation was soon followed by the work of Wu Chih-ch'ien and the Western Chin Dynasty monk Chu Fa-huo, who translated the *Ta O-mi-t'o ching* and the *Ping-teng-ch'üeh ching*; by Kumārajīva (of the Yao-Ch'in Dynasty) and Pao-yun (of the Liu-Sung Dynasty) and Punyayaśas (Liu-Sung Dynasty), who translated the *O-mi-t'o ching*, the *Shih-chu pi-p'o-she lun*, the *Wu-liang-shou ching*, and the *Kuan Wu-liang-shou ching*. In this way, different texts appeared one after the other, and found greater numbers of devotees within the ranks of both the clergy and the laity.

The first person recorded to be seeking rebirth in the Western Pure Land was Ts'e, Duke of Ch'ueh (Ch'ueh Kung-ts'e, a person of the Western Chin Dynasty), and from this time onward larger and larger numbers of persons are described as longing for rebirth. The most renowned of such persons was the Eastern Chin Dynasty scholar-monk, Hui-yuan. With Hui-yuan, the Pure Land doctrines found their first eminent master, and the later Pure Land lineages in China regarded him as their first patriarchal master. It is with him that the Pure Land movement begins to be a significant religious movement.

Hui-yuan founded the White Lotus Society (*Pai-lien she*) on the southern Chinese mountain, Mt. Lu (Lu-shan). This society was a meditation group whose members would meditate on the form of the Buddha Amitābha in an attempt to realize the Nien-fo san-mei (the Buddha-anuṣṁrti-samādhi), a samādhi based primarily on the above-mentioned *P'an-shou san-mei ching*. If a devotee was able to see the form of the Buddha, this was a guarantee that he would eventually be reborn in the Pure Land. It is this meditational emphasis that came to be normative in Chinese Buddhism and, until the Kamakura period in Japan, that form of the Pure Land teachings which was stressed in Japanese Tendai.

From the period of the Liu-Sung Dynasty onward, the Pure Land faith spread widely throughout China: lectures on the *Wu-liang-shou ching* came to be frequently offered, and many images of the Buddha Amitābha were constructed. Bodhiruci translated Vasubandhu's *Amitāyus sūtra Upadeśa*

in the reign of the Emperor Hsuan-wu of the Northern Wei Dynasty. Soon thereafter, T'an-luan composed a commentary on it, and in this commentary adopted the theory of the division of the Buddhādharma into an easy path and a difficult path (first taught in the *Daśabhūmi-vibhāṣa*). T'an-luan also stressed the power of Amitābha's fundamental or original vows (the so-called "other-power"), a teaching which came to be stressed by subsequent writers in the "exclusivist" tradition of Pure Land thought. In northern China, in the area of Ping-chou, many followers of the Pure Land doctrines are likewise recorded.

Serious textual studies of the various Pure Land scriptures began in the Chou and Sui Dynasties, and this period also saw the composition of many commentaries on both the *Wu-liang-shou ching* and the *Kuan Wu-liang-shou ching* by such famous monks of other Buddhist traditions as Ching-ying Hui-yuan, Ling-yu, Chi-tsang, and Fa-ch'ang. Other masters composed works or essays on various problems of Pure Land teachings, masters such as Chih-i (the founder of the T'ien-t'ai Tradition), Tai-chi, Chih-yen (of the Hua-yen Tradition), and Chia-ts'ai, works in which the precise nature of the Buddha's body (*kāya*) and the nature of his Pure Land were discussed. At this time, too, the *Ti-lun* (the *Daśabhūmi-vyākhyā*) was a popular object of study, and many scholar-monks whose primary orientation was this text appear to have been deeply interested in Pure Land doctrines, and to have counted themselves as Pure Land followers.

There also developed an early Yogācāra Tradition centered around the study of the *She-lun* (Asaṅga's *Mahāyāna-saṃgraha*), and a number of masters from this tradition came to hold views that the Pure Land teaching of the *Kuan Wu-liang shou ching* that ordinary persons (*prthagjana*) could attain rebirth was a teaching "whose purport lay in a specific period of time" (*pieh-shih-i*). That is, the basic teachings of the Pure Land scriptures were an expedient teaching, designed to lead the simple to faith in the Buddha and to further development of their religious consciousness, which would lead them to Yogācāra philosophy or, in any case, out of purely Pure Land teachings. Because of the sophistication of this Yogācāra teaching, and because this school of thought placed the Pure Land teachings in a subservient, but still meaningful, relationship to the rest of Buddhism, the Pure Land movement underwent an intellectual decline for a number of decades.

In the T'ang Dynasty the Pure Land movement saw the appearance of the monks Tao-ch'ō and Shan-tao. Both of these men became the inheritors of the tradition of T'an-luan, and in their writings stressed the power of the fundamental vows of Amitābha. These men were also the first to introduce the concept of *mo-fa* (Japanese: *mappō*) into Chinese Pure Land thought. The theory of *mo-fa* divides Buddhist religious history into two, or three, periods: the first period is that of the True Dharma, the second period is that of the Counterfeit Dharma, and these two are then followed by the period that sees the total Extinction (*mo*) of the Dharma (*fa*). In their writings they taught that the Pure Land teachings were the teachings specifically designed by the Buddha to fit these historical conditions. Shan-tao most especially

spelled out the Pure Land doctrines in the mold originally set by T'an-luan and Tao-ch'ō, and his exegesis, presented in his commentary on the *Kuan Wu-liang-shou ching* (his *Kuan Wu-liang-shou ching Shu*), set a standard that was widely read and followed by many subsequent generations of Chinese Pure Land thinkers. In this work, Shan-tao refuted the theories of a number of other masters, and laid a firm foundation for subsequent Pure Land thought. In Japan, Shan-tao and his *Kuan Wu-liang-shou ching Shu* became very popular, due to the emphasis placed on them by Hōnen and by Hōnen's disciples. To the Japanese, Shan-tao came to be by far the single most important Chinese Pure Land writer.

Contemporary with Shan-tao were such masters as Chih-shou, Ching-mai, Hui-ching, Yuan-ts'e, Tao-hui, Tao-yin, and Huai-kan, all of whom were active in the capital city of Ch'ang-an. Each of these masters wrote commentaries on the *O-mi-t'o ching* and the *Kuan Wu-liang-shou ching*. Also quite important were the Korean scholar-monks of Silla, the masters Chajang, Wŏnhyō, Ŭisang, Bōpwi, Hyōn'il, Kyōnghŭng, Ŭijōk, Taehyōn, and Dunryun. Each of these masters wrote commentaries, or carried out studies in the various Pure Land scriptures. It was clearly at this period—the early years of the T'ang Dynasty—that Pure Land studies reached a high watermark in the Far East, due in large measure to the influence of the flourishing state of Buddhist studies in general.

The monk Hui-jih returned to China from his sojourn in India during the K'ai-yuan period (713-741) of the T'ang Dynasty, and at roughly this same time the emerging Ch'an school began an attack on the Pure Land teachings. They taught that the Pure Land teachings were fit only for the ignorant, for they were an *upāya*, or expedient teaching, designed to lead ignorant persons to something higher, and were ultimately "a lie and a delusion." This attack generated a furious counterattack from the ranks of the Pure Land followers, which led to the gradual formation of a separate sect of Pure Land teachings within China. Pure Land scholars became self-conscious of their tradition in the ensuing debate with the Ch'an school. The Pure Land polemic was continued by such monks as Ch'eng-yuan, Fa-chao, and Fei-hsi, who held theories which appeared to reconcile Ch'an with Pure Land thought. These masters held that the Nien-fo san-mei constituted an unsurpassed, most profound and marvelous meditation teaching (*ch'an-men*) but, in general, Pure Land masters heaped much abuse in their writings upon the heads of the followers of the Ch'an Tradition. Within the Ch'an ranks, too, there appeared monks who appear to have reconciled these two traditions.

The monk Hsuan-shih, a disciple of the Fifth Patriarch of the Ch'an Tradition, proclaimed the existence of a new tradition, the Nan-shan Nien-fo-men Ch'an-tsung, "the South Mountain Meditation Tradition of the Nien-fo Teachings." One of the disciples of the Sixth Ch'an Patriarch, Hui-neng, one Nan-yang Hui-chung, also taught the simultaneous cultivation of "practice and understanding," practice being understood as Nien-fo recitation, and understanding being the insight gained through Ch'an.



A second-generation disciple of the Ch'an master Fa-yen, Yung-ming Yen-shou, taught the principle of the mutual perfection of the truth of emptiness (in Ch'an), and of existence (in the Pure Land teaching). He taught that only an understanding of these two could bring about awakening. These masters, coming largely out of Ch'an ranks but also having their counterparts within the ranks of Pure Land masters, were instrumental in teaching widely the necessity of the dual cultivation of both meditation (Ch'an) and the recitation of the Name of Amitābha (Pure Land practice). Eventually, this tradition of joint cultivation came to assume the proportions of a separate sectarian trend within the Far Eastern Mahāyāna.

The Sung Dynasty saw the appearance of a number of monks who were known for their cultivation of the Pure Land teachings, such monks as T'ien-i I-huai, Hui-lin Tsung-pen, Ku-su Shou-na, Ch'ang-lu Tsung-i, Huang-lang Ssu-hsin, and Chen-ko Ch'ing-liao. This period also saw, for the first time, the appearance of laymen who became renowned for their joint cultivation of Pure Land and Ch'an practices, laymen such as Yang Chieh, Wang Ku, Chiang-kung Wang, Wang Chen, and Wang Jih-hsiu. The fame of these laymen strengthened this tendency towards joint Ch'an-Pure Land cultivation.

The T'ien-t'ai Tradition also produced a number of believers in Pure Land teachings, as well as a number of scholarly monks who worked in exegesis, among whom were the Sung Dynasty monks Hsing-ching, Ch'eng-yü, I-t'ung, Yuan-ch'ing, Wen-pi, Tsun-shih, Chih-li, Chih-yuan, Jen-yueh, Ts'ung-i, Ts'e-ying, and Tsung-hsiao. All of these masters either composed commentaries on the *Kuan Wu liang shou ching* and/or the *O-mi-t'o ching*, or wrote works explaining various aspects of the Pure Land teachings. Chih-li's *Kuan-ching Shu Miao-tsung ch'ao* is the most famous of these works, and its salient doctrinal feature, the teaching of visualizing the Buddha Amitābha with respect to one's own mind, came to be emphasized within T'ien-t'ai circles, contributing much to the development of a doctrinal basis for the joint cultivation of Ch'an and Pure Land practices, and also contributing to the fusion of Ch'an and Pure Land theories within Chinese Buddhism as a whole.

Shortly thereafter, there appeared the monk Yuan-chao of Yü-k'ang, who was noted for his studies and writings on the Vinaya Tradition or Lü-tsung. Later in his life he devoted himself to propagating the Pure Land teachings. He composed a commentary on the *Kuan Wu-liang-shou ching*, and in his own way set up a variant lineage and school within the broader Pure Land Tradition. His disciples, Yung-ch'in and Chieh-tu, also wrote commentaries, and contributed to popularizing the philosophical views of their master. During the Southern Sung Dynasty, the Japanese monk Shunjō introduced the writings of Yuan-chao to Japan where, however, their circulation was initially limited. All of the above events contributed to the development of Pure Land thought in the Sung Dynasty.

At this same time, Chinese Buddhism also saw the rise of Pure Land lay societies (*chieh-she*), or lay organizations established to promote Pure Land belief and practice among their members. Such groups became especially strong in

South China, and the names of the major leaders of such groups are known to us; indeed, a large number of the most renowned scholar-monks of their day organized such groups, masters such as Hsing-ch'ang, Tsun-shih, Chih-li, Pen-ju, Ling-chao, Tsung-i, and Tao-shen. All of these masters organized laymen and clerics into societies for the purpose of cultivating Nien-fo practices. In almost all of these cases, the organizers considered themselves to be reviving the tradition of Hui-yuan's White Lotus Society on Mt. Lu, and also looked to the precedents of such societies in the life of Shan-tao and Fa-chao, who were also reputed to have formed such organizations.

At the beginning of the Southern Sung Dynasty, the master Tz'u-chao Tzu-yuan founded an organization now actually termed the White Lotus Tradition (*Pai-lien tsung*). In its teachings and organization, the traditions to which this group hearkened back were written down by the monk P'u-tu of the same Mt. Lu in a major compendium of this sect's teachings, the *Lien-tsung pao-chien*. In this work we find large amounts of popular superstition and degenerate customs mixed with Buddhist doctrines. The work was banned on several occasions but, after each banning, the resentment of the masses became enflamed, leading to popular rebellions and local uprisings. The sect was often termed, in official documents, the *Pai-lien-chiao fei*, the White Lotus Teaching Rebels.

With the founding of the Yuan Dynasty, the tendency toward the joint cultivation of Ch'an and Pure Land became even more pronounced. Several renowned Ch'an masters became noted for their devotion to the Pure Land faith: such masters as Chung-feng Ming-pen, T'ien-ju Wei-ts'e, Ch'u-shih Fan-ch'i, and Tuan-yün Chih-ch'e. Within the T'ien-t'ai Tradition, a number of well-known monks wrote works in praise of the Pure Land teachings, such as Chan-t'ang Hsing-ch'eng, Yü-k'ang Meng-jun, Yin-chiang Miao-hsieh, and Yün-wo Shan-chu.

The Ming Dynasty (1368-1627) was a period characterized by large numbers of monks who taught the practice of the joint cultivation of Ch'an and the Pure Land teachings. Among such masters were Ch'u-shan Shao-ch'i, K'ung-ku Ching-lung, Ku-yin Ching-chin, I-yuan Tsung-pen, Yün-chi Chu-hung, Tz'u-po Chen-k'o, Han-shan Teh-ch'ing, Po-shan Yuan-lai, Chan-jan Yuan-ch'eng, Ku-shan Yuan-hsien, and Wei-hsiang Tao-p'ei. The most eminent of these was the master Chu-hung. During the Lung-ch'ing period (1567-1572), he went into retreat at an auspicious site in the Yun-chi Mountains in the area of Hang-chou, and there he cultivated the Nien-fo san-mei. He composed a commentary on the *O-mi-t'o ching*, and several works extolling the joint cultivation of Ch'an and Pure Land teachings. His influence spread widely and gradually influenced all of Chinese Buddhism.

At this time, the T'ien-t'ai Tradition also produced some eminent scholar-monks who wrote books elucidating Pure Land teachings from the standpoint of T'ien-t'ai thought. Among such masters were Wu-ai P'u-chih, Yen-ching

(continued on page 13)



# The Role of Buddhist Temples in Japanese-American Communities in the U.S.A.

by Masami Nakagaki

The various activities of Japanese Buddhism in America, especially Jodo Shinshu Buddhism, were officially started with the establishment of the Buddhist Church of San Francisco in 1898. In the years following, many temples were established including the Sacramento Buddhist Church in 1899, the Fresno Buddhist Church in 1900, the Seattle Buddhist Church in 1901, the San Jose Buddhist Church in 1902, the Buddhist Church of Oregon in 1903, the Oakland Buddhist Church in 1904, and the Los Angeles and Hanford Churches in 1905. While not part of the Buddhist Churches of America, the Vancouver Buddhist Church was established in the same year. In 1906 the Watsonville Buddhist Temple came into being, followed by Stockton Buddhist Temple in 1907, the Guadalupe Buddhist Church in 1908, and the Bakersfield and Vacaville Churches in 1909.

Within the decade from 1900, Buddhist churches and temples were established at a tremendous rate in the major cities along the west coast of mainland United States. The following decades saw further growth with the establishment of the Salt Lake Buddhist Temple in 1913, the Tri-State Buddhist Temple in 1916, and by 1930 there were a total of thirty-five churches and temples in the Japanese-American communities in the United States mainland.

These facilities served the people extremely well, functioning as centers for religious, cultural, educational and social, as well as community-wide, activities. To illustrate, I wish to refer to the activities of the late Reverend Jōen Ashikaga, an outstanding pioneer minister. Accounts show that the Reverend Ashikaga had come to San Jose by the spring of 1902, at the latest, when he was twenty-five years old. At first he is said to have lived in the home of a Caucasian family, washing dishes and doing other menial jobs that were available. In time he rented a room and managed things on his own. By August 28 of that year he had established a temple in that district. His activities, which were offered to the Japanese immigrants working the orchards and who had come alone or were bachelors, included religious education and propagation as well as personal guidance and counseling, social activities promoting fellowship and recreation, and extended to cultural activities as well. For the young immigrant workers the Buddhist Church served as the only community center available. It was also one of the most valuable and useful social facilities, where the problems shared by the immigrants could be discussed in the Japanese language.

This situation is brought out in Reverend Ashikaga's memoirs, *Ichiju no kage* (*Shade Under a Tree*):

*It was about one in the afternoon when I arrived at Los Gatos by train from San Jose. I then hired a wagon to take me up onto the mountain roads for fourteen miles. Here I was to receive, and attend to, the body of a Japanese immigrant who was killed in an accident while engaged in logging activities.*

*I recall it was a cold day in winter. It was past 4:00 p.m. when we were able to officiate a simple funeral rite at the spot, with around thirty other Japanese living there present. When I returned to Los Gatos it was already past 10:00 p.m. It was too late to return to San Jose as the last train had left. I had no choice but to put up for the night at a small hotel run by a Chinese innkeeper. The cost of hiring the wagon and the hotel lodging were so high that I had no means to have breakfast or, needless to say, the train fare back to San Jose. I was perplexed and had to make up my mind to walk all the way back to San Jose.<sup>1</sup>*

The words in this short passage clearly bring out the difficult conditions with which the pioneering ministers had to encounter and cope. By employing any available means such as trains, horse carriages and even on foot, it must have been very difficult to call on the Japanese immigrants working and living up in the mountains. These immigrants were not seeking political asylum, nor were they pursuing religious freedom. In fact, it was difficult for them to consider America to be their permanent land as they had come merely to earn their wages on a temporary basis. Moreover, since it was the goal of the immigrants to become the successful ones and return to their homeland with flying colors, America was as before, from the very beginning, a foreign country; a place of temporary residence and the place to work and accumulate their earnings.

Except for a very few, the majority of them had never considered establishing permanent residences or raising a family on American soil. True, they had language difficulties, but their desire to return to their homeland as successful persons remained with them. The stronger this desire, the more difficult it became for them to lay down their roots.

The more they were marked as "aliens never to be naturalized" the more they tended to form Japanese tradition-oriented communities. The formation of common behavioral patterns was important to them based on the ethnic solidarity of the same blood, language, culture and race. Social cohesion, too, was enforced (enhanced) by a collectivity oriented society which formed the Japanese tradition-oriented rural community system. Along with these internal factors at work there were other exterior factors which included the matter of Japanese exclusion and the limitations set forth in the scope of their activities such as the professions they were permitted to pursue. It is clear that it was difficult to expect the Japanese workers in America to enjoy the same rights and social benefits as their American counterparts. They were inclined to establish closer ties with Japan and they established Japanese (citizens') associations, *Kenjin-kai* associations, Buddhist temples and churches for Japanese members, and moved in the direction of establishing non-assimilative and non-Americanized racially-exclusive oriented organizations.

In regard to their business activities, they had small self-owned enterprises such as grocery stores, laundries, restaurants, confectioneries, drug stores, photo studios, jewelry stores, dry goods stores, shoe repair shops, small hotels and apartments, floral shops, barber and beauty shops, service stations, dress making shops, etc. These were conducted as small family businesses, catering only to the Japanese population and located within the Japanese communities, and were the factors which gave rise to the Japanese "towns" in the cities of San Francisco, Seattle, Tacoma, Portland, Watsonville, San Jose, Fresno and Los Angeles, serving primarily the Japanese laborers in the nearby farming areas. It should be mentioned here that wherever the Japanese congregated they built their own Buddhist churches.

Taking San Jose as an example, in the accounts in the *Historical Outline of Buddhist Propagation in America* compiled by the Headquarters of the Buddhist Churches of America in 1936, we find that;

*By 1902 the Japanese population in the Santa Clara County where San Jose is located grew to several hundred, and especially during the harvest season it increased to about 3,000. These conditions gave rise to Japanese towns and the establishment of Buddhist temples.*

The Reverend Jōen Ashikaga, mentioned previously, had devoted himself to propagation and education in the San Jose area and laid the foundation for the San Jose Betsuin Temple. In the spring of 1906, the year of the San Francisco earthquake, Reverend Ashikaga was able to meet with the Reverend Zuigi Ashikaga. By the end of May of that year he was assigned to the Hawaii Betsuin Temple in Honolulu primarily through the strong request of his brother-in-law, Bishop Yemyo Imamura of the Hawaii Hongwanji Mission. In August of the same year Reverend Honen Takahashi, who was assigned by the headquarters in

Kyoto as the first minister to the San Jose temple, had recorded the difficult situation of that time in the magazine *America* (1907 issue, Vol. II, No. 2, p. 34) as follows:

*During the five years since the establishment of the temple, despite the fact that there were sincere and devoted ministers assigned, and primarily because of the short periods of their assignments, they were not able to take the initiative in their work. However, today there has been an increase in the number of Japanese immigrants, indeed up to 6,000. Since my assignment to the San Jose Temple the Japanese immigrants have shown an upsurge of interest and determination and have already adopted a resolution to build their temple. To realize this, a drive to raise funds through donations was started not only by visiting the homes of Japanese immigrants residing 20 to 30 miles around the city of San Jose and visiting nearby counties and villages, but also extended to those who worked the peach, apple, and grape orchards and the radish and potato farms.*

*In the course of such visitations I observed the living conditions of the immigrants and found them to be appalling. The immigrants lived in huts like pig pens and were paid wages of one or two dollars a day. They saved their meager earnings and sent them to their families in Japan, to be rewarded with letters of thanks from home which they always carried with them, and continued to work and toil, day in and day out.*

This vivid account brings out the truth regarding the most unfavorable working conditions they were subjected to including low wages, heavy labor, and long working hours. It also shows us how the immigrants had saved their wages by denying personal needs, how they had remitted to their families what they had saved, and what they had endured in bringing their own temple to reality.

Another view of the difficult situations existing at that time is found in the death records of the temples. The case of the Sacramento Buddhist Temple is given below.

According to the *North American Daily Newspaper Annual of 1972*, a survey was made of the 298 *issei* residing in the Sacramento area. Included in the first five listings is the birthplace of the *issei* (first generation Japanese) according to *ken* (prefectures).

Hiroshima	- 78 persons representing	26.0%
Yamaguchi	- 44 persons representing	15.0%
Wakayama	- 40 persons representing	13.0%
Kumamoto	- 22 persons representing	7.0%
Aichi	- 18 persons representing	6.0%

In addition to the above, other prefectures were listed in the order of Okayama, Kochi, Fukushima and Fukuoka.<sup>2</sup> It would seem that the death record of the Sacramento Buddhist Temple in 1900 would reflect the trend of the Japanese population in regard to the birthplace of the



deceased, for they show that the number of deaths according to the various prefecture persons were recorded as Kumamoto 6, Hiroshima 5, Aichi 4, Wakayama 3, Yamaguchi 1, and Fukuoka 1. Because of the relocation of the Japanese population before and after World War II, it is true that there was constant shifting from place to place within the immigrant population. It is evident, nevertheless, that from the beginnings of the Japanese immigrant history in America the immigrants from the prefectures of Kumamoto, Yamaguchi, Wakayama and Aichi had already settled in this area.

The death records of these immigrants also reveal the causes of death in detail. Here are a few examples:

- a. *On January 26, 1899, he was shot to death by a robber at East Park camp.*
- b. *On March 24, 1900, he fell to his death from a tree while working at the farm.*
- c. *He died of tuberculosis at the Japanese boarding house in Sacramento.*
- d. *He died of beri-beri at the age of 34 at Woodland Japanese camp.*
- e. *He died of high fever at age 21 in Vacaville district.*
- f. *She died of stomach illness at age 3. She was the first daughter.*
- g. *He died of over-work at age 22 in Yolo County.*

Through these accounts we can clearly see how the early immigrants had worked themselves to death under extreme conditions, how the workers in the orchards and railroads succumbed to the high-fever sickness, and also how some had died by beri-beri and tuberculosis attributable to malnutrition and exhaustion. In many cases the period of their stay in America was very short and it is most lamentable to think that young men in their 20's and 30's could not realize their dream of returning to Japan "with flying banners." Along with other conditions causing these deaths, the inadequacy of medicine and medical care cannot be overlooked. Accounts also show that in the case of the death of a bachelor, two or three immigrants from the same district or village would get together and have a funeral officiated, and sometimes funerals were held by acquaintances and friends. At other times prefectural organizations such as the Aichi Club or the Japanese Citizens League extended their assistance, at which time the Buddhist ministers cooperated to their fullest. These are actual examples which bring out the high degree of social cohesion, solidarity, and mutual aid of the Japanese community. This, in turn, shows the important role the Buddhist temple had assumed in formulating a well controlled and orderly Japanese community.

As indicated above, it is apparent that already a *nisei* child, three years of age, had passed away, which establishes that by 1900 there were Japanese families already settled here. At that time not only were the medical facilities and medical care unorganized, but the family life in the labor camps was far from ideal. Bringing up a family under these conditions must have been quite unfavorable. The death records of the period from 1900 to 1910 represent the time

when the birth of *nisei* children showed a marked increase in infant and child mortality. Some of the former died just two days after birth and others survived for less than a month. At that time the midwives and doctors were few in number and thus there were cases when a baby was delivered by the husband (*kai-suke*), who had no knowledge about childbirth. Or due to the hard labor before birth the delivery became very difficult and oftentimes the recovery from childbirth was slow and incomplete. Symptoms of infant and childhood diseases went undetected, coupled with the lack of doctor and nursing care, and all these conditions not only pinpoint infrequent and inferior medical care, living standards and culture in general, but at the same time show us that there were no services offered in terms of social welfare.

The workers of this period had no recourse but to act basically in accordance with the principle of self help and could not expect any assistance or services in terms of social security or welfare. The assistance offered by friends, pioneers, and people from the same prefecture, or mutual aid and helping patterns, were based on human feelings of affection and sympathy, temporary and by various degree, and inevitably developed the feeling of indebtedness between the providers and receivers.

Be that as it may, there still were community-wide organized charity organizations and the bulk of the services, in this sense assistance, labor, condolence and encouragement, and consultation and counseling were usually offered by the members of the Christian and Buddhist temples on a mutual basis. However, if an example of a community-wide organized charity organization were to be considered it may well be the California Japanese Benevolent Society which was established in San Francisco in 1901, with the Japanese Consulate General being the center of the activities. In following the conditions evolving around this movement we can see that as the Japanese population in America increased, the services offered by the Society also expanded into help for the ill and included medical care for the members of poverty-stricken families, even to the formalities required for their return to Japan, the care and upbringing of orphans, emergency care in the event of calamities, even funeral arrangements for the poor and other social needs which kept increasing and developing.

To achieve this the Japanese Benevolent Society got its start with a fund of \$2,400.00 which was raised by the efforts of the ministers, housewives and other women of staff members (especially of the Japanese Consulate General, Yokohama Specie Bank, Mitsui Bussan and Toyo Kisen) of Japanese organizations. The activities were continued by the volunteer services of these special organizations and a community-wide participation could not be expected. What should be especially mentioned is the fact that the members of the Benevolent Society, composed of the Buddhist ministers and others affiliated with the temple, devoted themselves, with the cooperation of ministers and fathers of the Christian churches, to acquiring land and building the Japanese Community Cemetery at Colma in San Mateo County and erecting a monument dedicated to all who had

passed away. The Benevolent Society still continues its functions and manages the cemetery to this day.

As the above has indicated, it is clear now that in those days when the social security system and social welfare were not yet organized, the Buddhist temples were not facilities solely for religious rituals and activities. They had grown along with the growth of the Japanese community as effectual centers of social welfare and provided tranquility and peace of mind to the pioneering immigrants from Japan. Moreover, even after the members of the Japanese community changed from immigrants to Japanese-Americans, the Buddhist temples still remained as the center of communication for them, providing the ideal setting for getting together and exchanging ideas, and above all, serving as the place to hear and practice the Buddha-Dharma, and thus

achieving community solidarity.

#### FOOTNOTES:

1. Nishimoto, Sosuke, "San Jose Buddhist Church and Rev. Jyoen Ashikaga," in *Hojyo Ejitzu Kanreki Kinen Bunshū*, Hikari wo kiku, 1971. Kyoto: Nagata bunshodo, p. 117.
2. Number of listed names represents the heads of families. Therefore, these 298 names represent 298 families. Also, this list does not include nisei families. Horinouchi, Isao, *Americanized Buddhism: A Sociological Analysis of a Protestantized Japanese Religion*, Ph.D. Dissertation at U.C. Davis, 1973, p. 407.

## DEVELOPMENT OF CHINESE PURE LAND BUDDHISM

(Part I)

(continued from page 9)

Tao-yen, Chü-an Ta-yu, Yuan-hsi Ch'uan-teng, Ling-yueh Chih-hsü, and Ku-hsi Ch'eng-shih. The most eminent of these was the master Chih-hsü, who advocated the theory that "the Three Learnings have One [Common] Origin," and who also stressed the necessity of upholding all three traditions—Ch'an, Pure Land, and Vinaya—as an exclusive reliance on any one of them would lead to the decay of Buddhism as a whole. Nevertheless, Chih-hsü believed that the most essential of these Three Learnings was the Pure Land Tradition. Contemporary with these masters were the laymen Yuan Hung-tao and Chuang Kuang-huan, who also composed works extolling the Pure Land teachings.

During the Ch'ing Dynasty (1616-1911), the Pure Land teachings came to be advocated by an ever larger number of laymen. Active during the K'ang-hsi period were the laymen Chou K'o-fu, Yü Hsing-min, and Chou Meng-yen, who all wrote works encouraging the practice of Pure Land devotions. During the Ch'ien-lung period (1736-1795), the laymen P'eng Chao-sheng and P'eng Hsi-su compiled biographies of persons who had attained rebirth in Sukhāvāti. P'eng Chao-sheng composed an especially large number of works praising Pure Land teachings, and worked for the wider dissemination of these doctrines.

Toward the end of the K'ang-hsi period (1662-1722), the monk Shih-hsien Ssu-ch'i, emulating the work of Chu-hung, organized a Pure Land society (*lien-she*) in Hang-chou. The influence of this society spread widely, and Ssu-ch'i came to be called "Yen-shou come again" (*Yung-ming tsai-lai*), and became the object of much popular affection and veneration. This period also saw the activities

of the monks Hsing-ts'e, Hsü-fa, Ming-heng, Ming-teh, Ch'i-neng, Fo-an, Shih-ch'eng, and Chi-hsing. These monks were active in the K'ang-hsi and Ch'ien-lung periods in their cultivation of the Pure Land teachings. At a slightly later period the monks Shui-chang and Hu-t'ing continued the compilation of biographies of persons who had attained rebirth in the Pure Land. At a slightly later date, the monks Ta-mo and Wu-k'ai, and the laymen Chang Shih-ch'eng and Chen i-Yuan, wrote works extolling Pure Land practices.

From the time of the Sung Dynasty onward, Pure Land teachings especially flourished in southern China. But with the founding of the Ch'ing Dynasty, the capital of China was moved to the north to the city of Yen-ching (renamed Pei-ching, "the northern capital"; present-day Peking). At this court, the Tantric Buddhism of Tibet and Mongolia was especially honored, and so it happened that during this dynasty Pure Land doctrines and practices were largely limited to southern China. From the Ming Dynasty onward, Chinese Buddhism appears to have lost some of its vitality and much of its originality and creative genius, and this was evident too in the case of Pure Land literature. Much of the published Pure Land literature consisted of nothing more than excerpts from the writings and thoughts of the great masters of the past.

With the establishment of the Republic, Chinese Buddhism underwent a slight revival, but with the advent of the Second World War and the subsequent socialist revolution on the Chinese mainland, much Buddhist work came to a halt, to be only slightly revived in the last two decades on the island of Taiwan, in Hong Kong, and in certain Southeast Asian centers.



# Study on the Latter Part of the Tannisho: Chapter XIV

by Shojo Oi

The *Tannisho* is a recorded account of dialogues and discussions interacted between the Master Shinran and his disciples. The recorder's chore was taken over by the disciple Yui-en, one of the leading followers of Shinran's Sangha.

The first part of the *Tannisho* (Chapters 1 through 10) records dialogues regarding the essential teachings of Jodo Shin Shu. In the first ten chapters, the matter of pure trust and faith in the Vow of Amida is emphasized. In this part, the basis of the latter part is laid down by scrutinizing the important matter of faith (*shinjin*). Standing on this groundwork, the latter part goes into the critical matter of studying the nature of faith (deep trust) in the Main Vow of Amida Buddha.

The title of this book, *Tannisho*, can be explained into three parts: "Tan" literally meaning lamenting, "ni" or "i" meaning differences in the interpretation and acceptance of the teachings, and "sho" meaning a compilation of the passages. In view of this the real purpose of this book was more in the latter part, for in the special preface preceding these ensuing chapters the matter of unorthodox views and interpretations are discussed by the Master and his disciples.

For the second issue of the *Pacific World Journal* the text and author's appreciation on Chapter XIV are presented. Also in this issue, Professor Kakue Miyaji presents his views on Chapter XIII which will appear in three installments.

## CHAPTER XIV

The point emphasized in this chapter is that at the very moment of our acceptance of Amida's Primal Vow we are totally embraced and thus reside at the level of the rightly established state. Birth in Jodo, therefore, is settled. This chapter also reiterates the important stand of Jodo Shin Shu wherein the calling of the Buddha's Name is done of one's deep gratitude and with no intention of attempting atonement for evil actions. In traditional Jodo Shin Shu expressions this utterance of the Buddha's Name, done with the awareness of deep gratitude, is an awareness of being embraced by the wisdom and compassion of Amida Buddha.

*There are some who say that with one utterance of the Buddha's Name, one's grave sins of eight billion kalpa are eradicated.*

This seems to be related to the passage which applies to the following situation: A sinful person who had led a life of ten evils and five deadly sins, and who never uttered the *Nembutsu* in all his life, meets with the truthful friend (teacher) for the first time at the last few moments before his demise. In accordance with the guidance of the teacher, this person calls the Buddha's Name just once and realizes birth in Jodo with the sins of eight billion kalpa extinguished. It is further said that by ten utterances the grave sins of ten times eight billion kalpa are extinguished.

*It should be noted that this passage says "one calling," "ten callings," etc., with the intent to show us the serious nature of the ten evil actions and the five deadly sins. It brings out the benefits in the extinction of one's sins. This view is far short of what we believe.*

These passages were compiled to shatter the belief existing at the time that man's evil can be eradicated by the oral recitation of the *Nembutsu*. The compiler, the priest Yui-en-bo, had to make a special emphasis in upholding the basic teaching of Jodo Shin Shu wherein absolute trust (faith) is the cause of Birth and the calling is not the cause but the expression of one's deep awareness of gratitude.

*The reason is that, at the very moment, when the one thought of faith arises in us, because Amida's light shines upon us, we are endowed with the Diamond Faith and reside at the Rightly Established State. Then when the time for our demise comes all of our passions and evil hindrances are turned into virtues and we are enlightened to the Truth of Birthlessness. Without the Compassionate Vow, how can we paltry sinners ever be freed from the repetition of Birth-and-Death? Thus thinking, we should bear in mind that the Nembutsu we utter is done only for the acknowledgement of our indebtedness to the Tathagata's Great Compassion and express deep gratitude for Amida's Benevolence.*

This section again establishes that in Jodo Shin Shu the believer is totally embraced by Amida's compassion at the moment of trust in the Primal Vow and once this is estab-



lished birth is to be realized regardless of place or time. The need to put one's trust in Amida's Vow is also reemphasized.

In this regard it should be noted that in Shin Shu the Buddhist term *mu-sho-nin* [無生忍 (full awareness of non-birth and non-death)] has two meanings: One points to the rightly established state while in this existence and the other is to realize that all is *sunyata* (空), and thus realize Buddhahood. Both meanings apply here. Nevertheless, this state can only come about when one entrusts one's self to the Primal Vow.

Upon seriously reflecting into his inner self the author realizes that but for the Power of the Primal Vow there can be no way to achieve enlightenment. This thought, as in many instances, turns into deep gratitude and appreciation.

One important point is the matter of *Nembutsu* and *Ōjo* in Shin Shu Buddhism. Historically, the practice of the *Nembutsu* by the Master Zendo in China was faithfully adhered to by Hōnen Shonin in Japan. The term applied has been called *Nembutsu Ōjo*, meaning to realize *Ōjo* by the practice of the *Nembutsu*. Our founder, Shinran, is also considered to have followed this tradition. It is interesting to note that one of the pillars of Shin Shu faith is *Shinjin Shōin*, meaning the proper (right) cause of *Ōjo* is *shinjin* (pure faith in Amida's Vow). However, when this same religious attitude is restated it becomes *Nembutsu Ōjo*, meaning realizing *Ōjo* by the practice of *Nembutsu*. This attitude was misinterpreted and molded into the attitude of *Shomyō Shōin*, meaning the utterance of the Name is the proper cause. This later became the most serious heretical view regarding Shin Shu faith. Needless to state, the masters in China and Japan who stressed the importance of practicing the *Nembutsu* (*Nembutsu suru*) had presupposed pure faith as the basic condition and did not pinpoint *shinjin* as did our founder, Shinran.

Another point of great importance is that the Shin Shu attitude of deep gratitude is once again emphasized here. This is in regard to the passage: "Thus thinking, we should bear in mind that the *Nembutsu* we utter . . .," which stresses the importance of deep gratitude and, even more, sets the tone for one's attitude in so doing. Unlike the other passages which were in the form of instructions regarding Shin Shu doctrine, this specific section takes on a definitely different attitude which states in essence; "This is the way it is to be understood and appreciated." To restate, it is instructing the reader to understand that the utterance of the Name is to be considered an act of response, in deep gratitude, and brings out the importance of the follower having the right mental attitude in regard to the utterance of the Name. The emphasis is not on what is important but, rather, on how one is to appreciate and respond to this.

In considering this aspect of the achievements of the masters of Jodo Shin Shu, it is generally stated that whereas the Master Kakunyo was primarily concerned with stressing the teachings of Shin Shu (e.g. his *Kudensho* and *Godensho*), the Master Rennyo was constantly stressing more the sincere response of the believer (the person of *shinjin*) through deep gratitude as brought out in the eighty passages of his *Gobunsho* (*Epistles*). This same attitude is the unique

characteristic of Chapter 14, through which the author, Yui-en-bo, emphasizes the believer's attitude in response to the teachings.

It is important to note that the Master Rennyo left a complete transcript (copy) of the entire *Tannisho*. This complete version is considered the most authoritative of all transcripts made by the many masters of the *Tannisho* and is preserved at our Kyoto *Honzan* (Headquarters). Rennyo cherished the *Tannisho* and stated, at the very end of the transcript, the following words:

*It should be noted that this book is regarded as the most important of our Jodo Shin Shu tradition. This book should not be made accessible without discretion to those who have not yet been exposed to our faith.*

*To believe that when the Nembutsu is uttered it will erase our sins is in essence like extinguishing our sins as well as the ill effects of our bad karma and then realize Birth. If this is the case, Birth is possible only by uttering the Nembutsu continuously up to the moment of death, since every thought we may conceive as we live becomes a bondage tying us down to samsara. In the meantime, because the karmic effect is determined, we may die without abiding in the right thought for Ōjo as we experience an unexpected accident or be tortured by life's agonies, and pains of sickness. In such cases it would be quite difficult to utter the Nembutsu. How then can sins committed up at that time be eradicated? If our sins are not extinguished our Birth would be impossible!*

This section brings out the truth that it is impossible to eradicate the effects of our sins and evil actions. The words, "because the karmic effect is determined, we may die without abiding in the right thought," mean that since all our thoughts are those of unenlightened beings, as indicated here, if and when the effects of our impure deeds are to be eradicated we must be practicing the *Nembutsu* continuously, at all times. This is an impossibility for all of us (today). Moreover, our karmic effects are limited. With life having so many unpredictables for us we may not be able to achieve what we hope to do even though we may think in our minds to do that which is good and pure. When sickness strikes, and while in pain and agony, it becomes impossible to concentrate one's mind and utter the Name. Then what becomes of the person (persons) involved since the evil deeds and the karma therein have not been eradicated? Does it mean that this person will not realize birth in the Pure Land?

This is where the *Tannisho* clearly points out the way of salvation by the Power of Amida's Vow. If a person is able to accept the Power of Amida Buddha, as presented in the 18th Vow, he will be entrusting himself totally into the hands of Amida's Vow. Once having done this, even if he were to commit impure deeds because of his human limitations, and even if he might never call the Name of Amida Buddha, he would realize birth without fail.

The last point indicated in this chapter is the state of mind with which a person does the *Nembutsu*. One state could possibly be as a prayer where an individual does the *Nembutsu* at the brink of death. The other could be the response of one who believes that now the end of one's human life is close at hand, and birth is in the hands of Buddha, the Name of Buddha will be uttered of a deep feeling of gratitude. This is a *Nembutsu* typical of the *Nembutsu* based on deep gratitude.

Many of our pioneers and masters agree that these passages refer to the 16th meditation of the *Meditation Sutra*:

*Let him be continually thinking of Buddha until he has completed ten times the thought, repeating the Name, "Adoration to Buddha Amitayus." On the strength of his uttering the Buddha's Name, he will, at each repetition, expiate the sins which involve him in births and deaths during eighty million kalpa.*<sup>1</sup>

In the course of interpreting these words of the *Meditation Sutra* it was erroneously interpreted to mean that by the calling of the Name one's evils and sins would be eradicated, thus indicating the importance of calling (uttering) the Name. Incidentally, the situation in the *Meditation Sutra* refers to the wicked person who had committed the five deadly sins and who would be instructed by a good friend at the few moments before the former's demise to think on the Buddha and utter the Buddha's Name. Once again the important point in Jodo Shin Shu is that the utterance of the Name is done only in deep gratitude.

As indicated before, in the translated passage, that portion is clarifying the position that trying to eradicate the effects of evil actions by uttering the Name is an impossible proposition for an ordinary person. If a person were to devote himself to doing this it would inevitably mean that by uttering the *Nembutsu* a person would be eradicating the effects of his impure actions by himself. And if this were the case it would, in itself, become extremely difficult simply because as unenlightened beings our minds tend to flip from one thought to another, knowing no state of peace and quietude. Moreover, these flip-flop thoughts are all linked to our bondage to birth-and-death.

*If we entrust ourselves to the Vow which "embraces all and forsakes none," we shall instantly attain Birth, even though we may, under unexpected circumstances, commit sins or die without uttering the Nembutsu. Moreover, granted we may utter the Nembutsu for the last time, we are only expressing our gratitude to Amida, trusting Him all the more as the time for our Enlightenment draws near. To think of extinguishing our sins is the mind of self-power. This is the intent of those who pray for the "right thought at the time of death," which is the indication that trust in the Other-power of Buddha is lacking.*

This section discusses the two instances when *Nembutsu* is uttered at the time of one's demise. One is of pure gratitude and the other is of the right thought aspiring for birth by the utterance.

The last paragraph is directed to those who may at the last moment of their lives wish to do the *Nembutsu* with the intent of eradicating the adverse effects of their karma by intentionally saying the Buddha's Name. This is not pure faith in the Power of Amida's Vow, and will not enable one to realize birth by the Power of Amida's Vow. This is *Nembutsu* based on self-power consciousness and is considered valueless as far as realizing birth in Jodo by Amida's Power is concerned.

#### NOTES:

1. Shinshu Seiten, BCA, 1979. p. 46.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:

*Of the many translations of this text known to exist, the Tannisho of the Ryukoku Translation Series was adopted.*

*Writer's deep appreciation is expressed for the guidance and instructions by the Late Dr. Shojitsu Ohara, Dr. Junjo Ohye, Dr. Eryu Mikogami, the professors of the Shugakuin and Graduate School of Ryukoku University, Kyoto, Japan.*



# Shinran and the Parable of the Burning House

by Shojo Oi

## DO WE NEED BUDDHA'S GUIDANCE?

At the close of a hard day we may sincerely ask ourselves, "Was today a good day for me?" or, "Was this day, gone forever, quite meaningful?" In answering these questions we will have many answers as each of us differs from the other. It is the role of the all embracing one to remind us that while today was perhaps a good day, it was not good enough for us to feel it was filled with worthy achievements.

At this point it becomes necessary to explain why this day may not have been as we would have wanted and why it could have been better had we really known how to make it more meaningful.

## BUDDHA'S GUIDANCE

To illustrate this, the Buddha laid down many parables. I will relay the most famous one: "The Parable of the Burning House." This is one of seven famous parables employed by the Buddha in one of His well known sermons and it appears in the Soothill translation of the *Lotus of the Wonderful Law* sutra. In this particular parable the teachings of the Buddha not only bring out the impermanence of human life but also show us what we are to do once we understand this.

*Sariputra! Suppose, in a (certain) kingdom, city or town, there is a great elder, old and worn, of boundless wealth, and possessing many fields, houses, slaves, and servants. His house is spacious and large, but it has only one door, and many people dwell in it, one hundred, two hundred, or even five hundred in number. Its halls and chambers are decayed and old, its walls crumbling down, the bases of its pillars rotten, the beams and roof-trees toppling and dangerous. On every side, at the same moment, fire suddenly starts and the house is in conflagration. The boys of the elder, say ten, twenty, or even thirty, are in the dwelling. The elder, on seeing this conflagration spring up on every side, is greatly startled and reflects thus: "Though I am able to get safely out of the gate of this burning house, yet my boys in the burning house are*

*pleasurably absorbed in amusements without apprehension, knowledge, surprise, or fear. Though the fire is pressing upon them and pain and suffering are instant, they do not mind or fear and have no impulse to escape."*

*Sariputra! This elder ponders thus: "I am strong in my body and arms. Shall I get them out of the house by means of a flower-vessel, or a bench, or a table?" Again he ponders: "This house has only one gate, which moreover is narrow and small. My children play; perchance they will fall into the fire and be burnt. I must speak to them on this dreadful matter, (warning them) that they would be injured by the fire." Having reflected thus, according to his thoughts, he calls to his children: "Come out quickly, all of you!"*

*Though their father, in his pity, lures and admonishes with kind words, yet the children, joyfully absorbed in their play, are unwilling to believe him and have neither surprise nor fear, nor any mind to escape; moreover, they do not know what is the fire he means, or what the house, and what he means by being lost, but only run hither and thither in play, no more than glancing at their father. Then the elder reflects thus: "This house is burning in a great conflagration. If I and my children do not get out at once, we shall certainly be burnt up by it. Let me now, by some expedient means, cause my children to escape this disaster." Knowing that to which each of his children is predisposed, and all the various attractive playthings and curiosities to which their natures will joyfully respond, the father tells them saying: "Here are rare and precious things for your amusement—if you do not come and get them you will be sorry for it afterwards. So many goat-carts, deer-carts, and bullock-carts are now outside the gate to play with. All of you come quickly out of this burning house, and I will give you whatever you want." Thereupon the children, hearing of the attractive playthings mentioned by their father, and because they suit their wishes, every one eagerly, each pushing the other, and racing one against another, comes rushing out of the burning house.*

*Then the elder, seeing his children have safely*

escaped and are all in the square, sits down in the open, no longer embarrassed, but with a mind at ease and ecstatic with joy. Then each of the children says to the father: "Father! Please now give us those playthings you promised us, goat-carts, deer-carts, and bullock-carts!" Sariputra! Then the elder gives to his children equally each a great cart, lofty and spacious, adorned with all the precious things, surrounded with railed seats, hung with bells on its four sides, and covered with curtains, splendidly decorated also with various rare and precious things, draped with strings of precious stones, hung with garlands of flowers, thickly spread with beautiful mats, and supplied with rosy pillows. It is yoked with white bullocks of pure white skin, of handsome appearance, and of great muscular power, which walk with even steps, and with the speed of the wind, and also has many servants and followers to guard them.

Wherefore? Because, were I to give them to the whole nation, these things of mine would not run short—how much less so to my children! Meanwhile each of the children rides on his great cart, having received that which he had never before had and never expected to have.

## IMPLICATIONS

The burning house is a symbolic expression of the ever-changing nature of human life. Just as the children refused to heed the warning of the father signalling impending danger, likewise, we tend to take things lightly; perhaps because we feel we already know about these things, or because we are too occupied with more immediate matters, or because we don't care about what may never happen to us or even occur at all. What could possibly happen and what actually happens may not be the same thing, since what truly happens is the result of our karma and all our actions up to the present moment. We can know what our karma directs only after it has happened. Perhaps this is better, for the agony of waiting for impending tragedy is sometimes unbearable.

The great elder in this case is, of course, the Compassionate Buddha. Just as the elder had many children whom he loved without partiality, we are all children of the Buddha. However, because we oftentimes fail to heed the words of the Buddha, He employs many kinds of expedencies to awaken us to the impending dangers in human life. In this parable the Buddha induced the children to come out of the burning house by offering wonderful playthings which the children had desired in the past.

In many of the commentaries on this parable, including the one written by Prince Shotoku during the Asuka Era, the three kinds of carts driven by the goat, the deer, and the ox represent the teachings of the Buddha, aimed at the two levels of *arhat* (*śrāvaka* and *pratyekabuddha*) and the *bodhisattva*. Attracted by the playthings they readily understood, the children came rushing out of the burning

house. This, too, is a symbolic expression of the way many people are attracted by the more understandable teachings of the Buddha and thus seek refuge in Him.

The three carts represent different levels by which man may attain. They are called the more understandable teachings, which lead man to a high level of life. However, these so-called understandable teachings may not enable man to reach the highest goal of Buddhahood. This is the reason the great elder had given his sons the best of ways leading to the highest goal; the goal of Buddhahood.

In the eyes of the Buddha these so-called readily understandable teachings are actually themselves expedencies and although they have worth they are not of the highest value. The teachings of the highest value are represented by the beautiful cart drawn by the white bullock which the great elder gave his children, over and above what they had expected.

In the example given us by the Buddha we find many implications. First, it has taught us the basic nature of life; that of impermanence, and the unexpected pitfalls which lie ahead. We may not be afraid of them simply because we cannot identify each of them, one by one. We may call this indifference or even ignorance of what lies ahead. Being in this hazy or unclear state was explained as *a-vidya*, or not-clearness, and this has always been translated as "mumyo" in Japanese sermons. The second implication is that, of the many teachings left us by the Buddha, there are some which serve to lead man into the way, while others not only lead into the way but enable one to reach the highest goal of Nirvana or Buddhahood.

The three carts, representative of these teachings which are all good and meaningful, are still not perfect and are difficult to follow. The last cart given to the children once they were out of danger, and which was driven by a white bullock, represents the highest level of attainment. The highest attainment is to reach the realm equal to that of Buddha.

## SHINRAN SHONIN AND THE PARABLE

Some students of Shin Shu doctrine, at the outset of their pursuit, often express their concern over a situation which has not been addressed adequately over the years. This situation centers around the Mahayana sutras our founder cited in his Main Book (*Kyo-gyo-shin-sho*) and the point in question is this: Why is there hardly any reference made in the Main Book, be it quotations from the sutra itself or passages from commentaries, to the *Lotus (Saddharma-Pundarika) Sutra*?

I too, was somewhat intrigued by this matter at one time and inquired of two of our Masters of Shin Shu Doctrine. At the beginning there were no definite answers to be found but, thanks to years spent in the study of Shinran's teachings and under the Masters' guidance, it became clear that there was no need to consider or seek an answer to this

(continued on page 21)



# Loneliness



by Ken Yamaguchi

In all my life I had never experienced what I could really call loneliness until that day I was to depart for Japan to begin my studies for the ministry. All my feelings were of eagerness to get started on the "road" to learning, and all was excitement. As I boarded the plane and turned to take a last look at my family and friends who had come to see me off I could not control my emotions or maintain my composure. I just broke down and cried. All my fellow passengers thought it very strange that a big and husky (or should I just say fat) man would be acting like a cry baby. No one could understand and feel the loneliness I was experiencing leaving my loved ones behind.

Once on the plane I found myself sitting next to a young mother with a small daughter about three years old and also an infant about seven months old. The mother was on her way back to Japan to visit her folks and as she was having a difficult time taking care of both children I found myself carrying the infant throughout the entire trip. It reached a point where everyone began to assume that it was my baby and they were probably wondering how I happened to have such a young wife. Needless to say, I completely forgot about my loneliness throughout the rest of the flight.

The plane was late getting into Haneda Airport. Although my cousin had come to pick me up at the scheduled time he thought I had missed my plane and so returned home. When I finally got through customs inspection with my eight huge pieces of baggage and found no one waiting for me, a heavy feeling of despondency fell over me and I was just about ready to throw my hands up and say, "I quit!" Not being acquainted with the Japanese phone system I was almost in a state of tears at not being able to make phone connections. A kind Japanese gentleman, noticing my desperation, offered to help me and I was finally able to contact my cousin who then came again to pick me up. It seemed as if I waited for more than three hours and when I finally saw him driving up the happiness I experienced was something inexpressible in words.

After a few days' visit with my cousin and his family I boarded the *Shinkansen* bullet train and arrived in Kyoto. Three gentlemen from the foreign department of the Nishi Hongwanji were at the station to meet and welcome me. I was taken to Wakoryo, a dormitory for all foreign students studying for the American missionary program, and introduced to everyone residing there. Fortunately for me I

had already known Jim Yanagihara and he went out of his way to make me feel comfortable. He did everything he could, but when nightfall came he couldn't very well sleep with me and so I experienced my first night of loneliness in my own room. I tried to forget my loneliness and recited the *Nembutsu* for a long time, but it had very little effect for such is the way of self-powered *Nembutsu*. The night was long and lonely, but I finally cried myself to sleep after a few hours. The same thing happened the second night; I found myself again crying with unbearable loneliness. It reached a point where I could no longer stand it and I got up at 1:00 a.m. and called long distance (collect) to my family. My wife thought something had happened to me and with a very worried voice asked me what was the matter. I said I was so lonely. I wanted to hear her voice and the children's voices. She became very angry, a rare thing for her, and she scolded me for my weakness. That was the first time in my life I was happy being scolded. At the same time it made me realize many things.

In the past I had taken so much for granted. I had thought that the good life I had in the past was because of my own efforts, that it was solely up to me to make my own happiness. How mistaken I was, for I came to realize that it is only because of all the loved ones surrounding me and embracing me that I was able to enjoy a good life. My wonderful family, teachers, friends, and all the things in life to which I am exposed are the sources of my happiness and contentment. I thought of the poem, "*Gorin matsu no gosho*," recited by Shinran Shonin:

*Waga toshi kiwamari-te, Anyo jodo ni genki-su to  
Yuutomo, Waka-no ura-wa no kata o nami no, Yo-se  
kake, yo-se ka-ke, ka-e-ran ni onaji. Hitori i-te yoroko-  
ba-ba, Futari to omo-u beshi, Futari i-te yoroko-ba-ba,  
mitari to omo-u beshi. Sono hitori wa Shinran nari.*

Translated, it says,

*Though I, my life having run its course, return to the  
Pureland of eternal rest, come back shall I to earth  
again and again, even as the waves of Wakano-ura Bay.  
When alone you rejoice in the sacred Teachings,  
believe that there are two, and when there are two to  
rejoice, believe that there are three, and that other*

shall be Shinran.

This poem constantly reminds me that I am never alone whether in joy or in sorrow.

I later received a letter from my wife and my daughters, who at that time were 10 and 8 years old. In the letter, my daughters wrote,

Dear Daddy,

We all miss you very much. Every night when Mommy is in her own bedroom we peek in there and she has tears in her eyes and she is crying. We are counting the days and look forward to the day when we can be with you again real soon . . .

I realized how selfish it was of me to be taking pity on myself and thinking that I was the only one suffering with loneliness. I began to concentrate on my studies and with the help of wonderful teachers and fellow students who went out of their way to help me I was able to bear with the loneliness during the ensuing months.

All things and actions are in relationship with each other, tied together like cords interconnected to form a fishing net, all inseparable. My illusions which blind me from this reality continue to bring me experiences of anxiety. Shinran Shonin taught us that those who believe in Amida Buddha's Supreme Vow and place their whole trust in Him, or surrender themselves completely to His Wisdom and Compassion though they remain unchanged in all forms, are actually endowed with the seeds of Buddhahood. As seeds germinate when planted in the soil, so the merits contained in the faithful heart are manifest in full glory when the believer is reborn in the Pureland to become one with Amida Buddha, who is boundless in Light and Life.

The question often asked is, "Where is this Amida Buddha?" In the *Amida-kyo* (*Smaller Sukhavati Vyuhā Sutra*), near the beginning, is a description of a land 100,000 billion worlds away called the Pureland, where Amida Buddha resides. In the *Kan-Muryo-Jukyo* (*Meditation Sutra on the Eternal Buddha*), the Buddha relates where one can experience the truth of the reality of Amida's Pureland right here and now. Two conflicting statements seem to be made. However, when things are seen in their proper perspective beyond the sense of time and space, the reality of both statements becomes more clear.

Human beings tend to look at things about life in relative terms; everything in relation to the "ME." Therefore, the vision of the Pureland being way out there in the infinite distance and time is easier to accept. We make comparisons between ourselves and all things outside us, and we tend to be concerned about the things outside us. We make outward gestures of concern for other people and things while, in reality, the true concern is for ourselves at the sacrifice of other people and things.

There is a story about a priest of a church who had great compassion for the unfortunate thief who had to steal from others to support himself. The priest sympathized with the thief, saying, "The poor soul, society has it against

him and he doesn't stand a chance in trying to make an honest living. We should try to help him out as much as we can."

One day this thief, who had been befriended by the priest and taken into the comforts of the church, took advantage of his opportunity and stole everything he could get his hands on. He escaped into the night, leaving a note of thanks to the kindly priest. There was a sudden change of attitude in the priest from one of compassion to one of uncontrollable anger and he immediately took steps to capture the thief to punish him. The moral of this story is that it is easy to understand the actions of, and sympathize with, the thief as long as the victim is not my "self."

We frequently compliment others' good fortunes outwardly but the complimenting is not 100 percent pure, for deep inside there is a tinge of jealousy in others' successes. For example, we hear of someone having the good fortune to come into a big inheritance, or having just won a big jackpot, and we start looking for some reason to criticize something about that person. We may complain that he is a stingy "so-and-so" because he doesn't donate to the church, etc. Oftentimes, I hear about someone winning first prize at a church bazaar and the first comment is usually, "Well, I guess we can expect half of the winnings to be donated back to the church." A guilt complex is created in the winner such that he is almost forced to donate some money. He won the raffle fair and square yet he is afraid he is going to be looked upon as a cheapskate, and so reluctantly parts with some of his legitimate winnings.

It is easy to sympathize with others' misfortune and at the same time it is so easy to pass it off and forget with a comment or thought like, "Well, maybe he deserved it." On the other hand it is difficult to understand when others don't show any sympathy if we happen to have some misfortune of our own. When watching a television program we are often affected emotionally, but when the same thing happens in our own real life we don't react with the same feelings.

There is a story about a couple preparing to cook a fish on the backyard patio. They were arguing about whether the fish should be fried or barbecued. The next-door neighbor was peeking over the fence and criticizing the way the couple were fighting with each other. Another neighbor, living next door to that "peeping tom," was looking through a small hole in his *shoji* door and saying, "Look at that nosy neighbor poking his nose into other people's business!" Not for a moment did he realize he was doing the same thing himself!

We are so busy poking our noses into other people's affairs, feeling sympathy for the imperfections of others, and feeling jealousy toward others, for example, that we hardly have time to look within ourselves. This is why we are unable to see Amida Buddha.

If, and when, we can begin to see this real "self," our own real self, and realize how cruel and dirty it is, then the "I" should be able, theoretically, to correct the "self" and clean up the "self." If we do this, we are then a Buddha.

However, the sad truth is that even though I realize



how important and soiled my heart and mind are, I cannot help but continue to be the same way. It is beyond my capacity to change. I begin to realize this total helplessness more and more, while at the same time experiencing the

absolute energy of Amida Buddha and His Wisdom and Compassion, and I cannot help but place my whole self in total reliance upon Him. This, I believe, is the essence of "ONENESS WITH AMIDA BUDDHA."

## SHINRAN AND THE PARABLE OF THE BURNING HOUSE

(continued from page 18)

question.

In short, the system of Shinran's conviction regarding the instructions and principles originate in the Buddha's sermons as relayed to Shinran through the Masters before him. They were all believers in the *Nembutsu* way and were well versed in the Buddha's instructions based on the three basic sutras. This is one reason why other major Mahayana sutras are not necessarily emphasized by most of the Masters. Shinran inherited and faithfully adhered to this tradition.

Despite our founder not citing any passage from the *Lotus Sutra* in his major writings, the basic ideas and concepts developed in the sutra are adopted. One example is the idea of the burning house which, in the *Lotus Sutra*, symbolizes the human world of *dukkha* (suffering). This expression appears many times and for our purpose a few examples are given here.

In Volume II of the *Shin-Shu Sho-Gyo Zen-Sho* (sacred books of Shin Shu), on the matter of Pure Faith, Shinran refers to the example of "The White Path and the Two Rivers" presented by the Master Zendo in China:

*To apply the situation in the form of a parable, by the eastern bank is meant the saha world of the burning house and by the western bank is meant the Treasure-land of Bliss.*

(SSZ II, 56-8)

Also in Volume II, on the true (but hidden) teachings of the three basic sutras, and referring to the *Anrakushu* by the Master Doshaku of China, we find the following passage:

*Although it has not been a period of time of 10,000 kalpas, all along, I have never been able to be freed from the agony of the burning house.*

(SSZ II, 153-7)

Doshaku, Master of Genchuji Temple, again said:

*Now those who sincerely follow the way to purity do so with an earnest mind and continuity, then having endured over a kalpa, for the first time realize the level of non-retrogression. Sentient beings of the present may be said to be of "such light-faith-minded, as it were hair and feathers." To them we may apply names such as bodhisattva-in-name-only, the bodhisattva of unsettled mind, or one outside of Buddhist traditions. These people have not been relieved of the sufferings of the burning house.*

Along with the concept of the burning house, another attempt Shinran made in establishing the Shin Shu flavor of the Buddhist concept was the *ekayana* or one-level principle of attainment. In this regard, Shinran expressed this concept as *ichijo-kai* (一乗海) or the sea of one vehicle attainment. In regard to the "sea of one vehicle attainment" the one vehicle is meant to be the Mahayana tradition in Buddhism and by Mahayana tradition is meant Buddha-yana of One Buddha vehicle. Thus, those who achieve the level of Mahayana tradition attain the level of *amuttara-sam-yak-sambodhi*. By this is meant the realm of Nirvana, the ultimate (highest) Dharmakaya. Those who achieve this realm are those who have realized completely the essence of the realm of *ekayana*, the one-vehicle level. There is no other level of Tathagata than this as the Tathagata is Dharmakaya.

The significance of the one vehicle in regard to attainment is that the level or plane of one's attainment is of the highest level as well as being of the same ultimate qualitative value. This gives Shinran's conviction a unique position through which "absolute *tariki*" (power of Amida Buddha's Vow) is brought into focus. This also becomes the basis of strong conviction on the part of Shinran regarding non-retrogression while in this existence, meaning even before one realizes *Ōjo*. These convictions of our founder are firmly rooted in the power of the Buddha's Vow. Thus, for our founder, *tariki* is no other power than the power of Amida Buddha's Primal (18th) Vow.

# Zettai Tariki



by Akira Hata

In Pure Land teachings we hear a lot about "*tariki*," which is usually translated as "other power." *Tariki* is said to be the very basis of our Jodo Shinshu religion. Without *tariki* we would be lost and never able to attain enlightenment. Given this importance, I would like to delve into Jodo Shinshu, focusing on this idea of *tariki*, and use the term "*tariki*" interchangeably with its translation, "other power."

The term "*tariki*," or "other power," is opposite that of the Japanese term "*jiriki*," or "self power." It was first stated by the third patriarch, Donran Daishi, in his *Ojoronchu*. He wrote that the path of difficult practice is hard to follow because one uses only self power and not other power, while within the path of easy practice the Buddha's Vow power is there for us to use in attaining birth and reaching the level of the Rightly Established State. Donran used both terms, *jiriki* and *tariki*, and from then on they were used often by Pure Land teachers. Our founder, Shinran Shonin, also used them extensively and in his *Kyogyoshinsho* stated: "The other power is the power of Tathagata's Original Vow."

The power, or force, in the other power emanates from the Original Vow, or as in Japanese, "*hongan*." We are most familiar with the term as we are followers of the *Nishi Hongwanji* sect. "*Hongwanji*" here refers to the temple of the *hongan*, or Original Vow, and is therefore basic to us. It is in this sense that *tariki* is not properly used alone but is always tied to *hongan* and hence is known as "*tariki-hongan*," "the other power," or, "Buddha's saving power emanating from the Original Vow." The Original Vow refers to the 18th of the 48 Vows of Dharmakara Bodhisattva who became Amida Buddha.

Shinran brought the idea of *tariki* to its highest culmination when he stated his *nembutsu* teaching is not merely *tariki*, but is "*zettai-tariki*," which when translated is "absolute other power." In regard to salvation, "absolute *tariki*" means there are no conditions whatsoever imposed on the follower. It is not necessary to do this or that as the effort of salvation is all on the side of Amida Buddha's vow. This is something that is uniquely Shinran Shonin and it cannot be found in any other religion or sect.

In *tariki*, it is by the power of the Buddha that we are saved and are able to attain enlightenment. In *jiriki*, we are those who attain realization through the effort of our own power or strength. This is the path of difficult practice and is the "Teaching of the Sages Path."

The teaching of *tariki* focuses on the Pure Land Path, where we attain Birth in the Pure Land to attain enlightenment. Just off hand these two explanations are very clear-cut and seem to pose very little problem, but if we delve into the interpretations a little deeper the situation becomes much more difficult.

In September of 1980, I went on a two night, three day, back-packing trip with my daughter Tissa. We drove up to the shores of Convict Lake near Mammoth and slept at the campground there. About five a.m. we ate and then broke camp. We packed our back-packs and drove to the lake's parking area. From there we started to hike around the north side of the lake. The path was fairly easy, as it was nearly level, with an altitude of 7,500 feet elevation. Huge cliffs and peaks with pine, fir and scrub brush comprised the scenery. It was here, on the opening day of the trout season, that there was an earthquake of 5.7 magnitude and a tremendous amount of rock and sand slid down from the sheer cliffs. Consequently, we crossed many rock slides that obliterated the narrow paths. This is sometimes called "rock-hopping."

The early morning, the vim, zest, vigor and the inspiring scenery made us feel on top of the world. As we neared the other side of the lake the path started to swing away and we really started to go uphill. With time passing the sun got hotter, the body more tired, the back-pack heavier. Hiking now seemed much more of an effort. After a lot of hiking and rock-hopping we finally reached a grassy meadow at the first fork of Convict Creek. We rested there and ate an early lunch. We then changed shoes, forded the stream, and walked in this magnificent valley. With the elevation now at 8,500 feet it was much harder to breathe. We were going to 9,500 feet. It was really rough going. What a climb! At one point I got sick and had a headache. Altitude sickness. I got out my sleeping bag and crawled into it and slept for nearly an hour. I was then much better.

That night we camped right near the mountain pass. It seemed as if we had come about twenty miles. The following morning we were treated to one of nature's great spectacles; an earthquake (of 5.2 on the Richter Scale, we were to learn later). The shaking caused a minor landslide and we saw sand, dust and rocks come down a sheer cliff, looking like a waterfall. The feeling was that of awe at seeing nature's power at work. I was so moved that the *nembutsu* came out

from my lips.

When we say *jiriki*, or self power, I think of this back-packing trip which seemed like mountain climbing in spots. As our third patriarch, Donran Daishi, has stated, it was like going over a long arduous mountain road. At one stage every step was torture. But when we examine my back-packing, did I really do it alone? In a sense I did, but actually I was aided by many things tangible and intangible. My socks and shoes were most important. The clothes I wore protected me from the elements. The pack frame I had enabled me to carry many things. The food I brought with me helped with my hunger. The water out of the river slaked my thirst. The car and gas enabled me to drive both ways. The weather and the sun were most favorable. Many persons had also made the mountain path on which I hiked. In thinking of all these things we could hardly say that the hike was "self power." Did I do this all by myself? I would have to say, "No. Emphatically, no!" I was, in fact, assisted by many things. So even my so-called *jiriki* had a lot of *tariki* in it when we examine it more closely.

Last March, 1982, I was invited to speak at the Honolulu Betsuin for their Spring *Ohigan*. I was most happy to accept and looked forward to it with some anticipation. I corresponded with *Fuku-rinban* Ama and made preparations. Finally the day came to depart. My wife drove me to the airport and I boarded a World Airlines plane. My seat was next to the aisle, and as there was no one in the next seat, for which I was deeply grateful, I could stretch out a little. The ride itself took about 5½ hours and I had to turn back my watch two hours. I leisurely ate the lunch given me and looked at my sermons again and relaxed a bit. Then we were over the Hawaiian Islands. It was raining as I exited the plane. Typically Hawaii. Happily, *Rinban* Nagao and his son were waiting for me at the airport. We exchanged pleasantries as I waited for my baggage. I was scheduled to speak five times over the weekend.

Thinking of that plane ride I thought, "Why, that is just like *tariki*, the other power." *Okage sama de*, all I had to do was get on the plane and it did all the work without any effort at all on my part. How very easy it was. In looking at it more closely, though, I realized even though the plane did most of the work, I had to do many things that were self power. I had to buy a ticket. I had to work for the money. My wife drove me to the airport. I had to check my baggage. I had to check in and then go to my seat. I ate lunch. So interwoven with the *tariki* ride were many things of self power.

What we come to see is what we call "*jiriki*," and what we call "*tariki*" has many elements of the other interwoven with it. This is the kind of *jiriki* and *tariki* that was spoken of by the Pure Land teachers before Shinran Shonin. In general, the *jiriki* teachings were not all *jiriki*, but in the final essence relied on the Buddha for assistance to attain enlightenment. In the Pure Land teachings one had to utter the *nembutsu*, rely on the Buddha, and practice a certain amount of virtue and discipline. One had to start with an earnest *jiriki* spirit. To this condition, the Buddha's power was added. These two came together to result in birth in

the Pure Land. All one can say is the Pure Land teaching had a greater amount of *tariki* in it while the Path of the Sages' teaching had a greater amount of *jiriki* in it. A greater amount of OTHER POWER, however, implies that there still are certain conditions to be met, so it was not pure *tariki*. It was Shinran Shonin who started to read between the lines and find deeper meaning in the *Amida Sutra* than was apparent to those before him. He stated that the intent of the Buddha and the Great Compassionate Vow were most important, and brought out the idea of ABSOLUTE *TARIKI*. Absolute, pure *tariki* means salvation without any conditions to be met by the person.

One wrong interpretation of absolute *tariki* is that the Buddha will save us just as we are, even if we make no effort, do nothing, stand idly by. This kind of interpretation was also taken by the general public to be *TARIKI HONGAN*. Their interpretation said that the answer would come from someplace, without us doing anything. However, if we just stand idly by and never lift a finger it is apparent we will never find salvation.

Another interpretation of ABSOLUTE *TARIKI* is that reliance on the Buddha is necessary. The phrase, "reliance," in Japanese is "*tanomu*." If one relies, then there will be salvation. If one does not rely (*tanomu*), then there will be no salvation. This is salvation by the Buddha's power but it is not ABSOLUTE *TARIKI* as it inserts a condition, a demand on the person. If it is not, then what is true ABSOLUTE *TARIKI*? It is a salvation power in which the workings are all on the side of the Buddha.

We are those who come to realize the great depths of our own sinfulness. It is as Shinran Shonin states in Chapter Two of the *Tannisho*: "But since I am incapable of any practice whatsoever, hell would definitely be my dwelling anyway."

The compassion of Amida Buddha's *hongan* must save even this kind of person. Amida's will of great determination is in His vow that wishes somehow to save us and is working on us twenty-four hours a day. As I become aware of His compassion, the *nembutsu* comes from my lips. It is Amida's *hongan*, His compassion, that vowed it must somehow save us. It is not a salvation that tells us that we must practice this or that, however easy that practice may be. If the vow did lay down some kind of condition, then it would not be applicable for we sinners bound for hell. In this absolute saving power of Amida, Shinran Shonin has stated: "*TARIKI* can be expressed as the Power of the Vow of Amida Buddha."



# “Reikon” and “Soul”

by Kyogyo Miura

As a preface, the terms “*reikon*” and “soul” are rarely found in Jodo Shinshu publications, such as the *Shinshu Seiten*, which was published by the Buddhist Churches of America in 1978, because the concepts of *reikon* and soul are definitely not Shinshu-istic.

Jodo Shinshu is a very radical teaching that never relies on superstitious doctrines or concepts such as *reikon* or soul. It is a very realistic teaching, so realistic that Shinshu influence totally erased the original superstitious cults in some areas of the northern part of Japan. Cultural anthropologists would have a difficult time finding original folk culture in that region.<sup>1</sup> However, it seems *reikon* and soul are very common words and concepts, and many people, even Shinshu members, use them. Clarification, therefore, is needed.

As an introduction, I would like to quote a common question upon which to contemplate: “What happens after one dies?” Usually in common belief, no matter in the East or West, people assume an immortal part of man as having permanent individual existence, or they think immaterial essence or substance the actuating cause of the individual life, just as an animating principle, and they call this “*reikon*” or “soul,” or “atman,” which gives life to a body.<sup>2</sup> They think when one’s life ends the body dies and the *reikon* or soul, or “remains,” reincarnates according to the judgment made by a supreme being. Therefore, people at funerals often pray, “May his soul rest in peace (or in heaven).” In Japan they used to say, “Soldier’s soul rests in Yasukuni Shrine” (and some soul may have gotten lost and now rests in the shadow of grass-blades!).

Contrary to this, the Buddhist teaching is known as a no-soul school. It shares with Indian materialists the denial of a soul and the denial of a God in the sense of an eternal person who can willfully create, destroy, punish, reward, and judge man, but it diverges from them in recognizing Karma and Nirvana<sup>3</sup> as Buddhism teaches that nothing is eternal. In fact, since everything is in a state of constant change, there cannot be any permanent unifying factor like a *reikon* or soul.<sup>4</sup> For this reason Sakyamuni Buddha really didn’t bother to answer questions such as, “What happens after one dies?” or, “Where does one go when one dies?”

Now, proceeding to the main subject, one thing has to be clarified: If Buddhism denies the eternal substance of *reikon* or soul what is the individual essence that receives salvation or redemption (*sukui* or *shinjin*), in Shin

Buddhism? This question precisely means, “What is the ‘I’ or ‘Self,’” or, “How did this ‘I’ come into this life?” In thinking about these questions there is a popular Buddhist saying: “If one wants to know his past, observe his effects in the present life. If one desires to know his future, observe his causes in the present.”<sup>5</sup> In Buddhism, as this saying indicates, since all things arise interdependently through innumerable causes and conditions in the past and present, this “I” was born with causes and conditions, too.<sup>6</sup> The *Jobungi* states, “When one desired to be born, (the ‘I’ came) into life with one’s karma-consciousness as the internal cause, and with pure blood of the father and mother as the physical condition.” The internal cause of karma-consciousness continues, as the basis of one’s self carrying all his past karmas along,<sup>7</sup> and this karma-consciousness never constitutes an animating factor like *reikon* or soul. It is all a putting together of karma and is like various kinds of magnetic signals on a recording tape. When the karma-consciousness meets the physical condition of conception, the “I” begins to exist. This relation between karma and condition is as if the result of sound was reproduced by the cause of magnetic signals, through a tape recorder as the condition. This is how the “I” came into this life.

The next question is, “What is this ‘I’ or ‘Self?’” People tend to presume illusory concepts of “I” regarding this question, particularly in three aspects: the physical, intellectual, and social. The following points are examples of the Buddhist view:

Firstly, the physical body is just a container of life. This container is borrowed and is not one’s property. If the body were really one’s own, one should be able to possess it forever. Thus, one borrows the body at birth and uses it until he dies.

Secondly, intelligence is also something one borrows. One’s knowledge, for example, is obtained after his birth. That means one learns his mother tongue from the people who surround him, he understands things and he obtains knowledge. But whatever he acquires, when he dies, he is never able to take with him. Some people, even before they die, get too old to remember things! This proves that intelligence is a borrowed thing and not one’s real nature.

Lastly, the social aspect is the self which tries to identify with social values. This includes financial capacity, social



prestige, possession of property, family life and its members, etc. No matter what it is, no one is able to possess it forever, as we have seen in the first two examples.

All these aspects show that none can be the property of the "I," nor part of the "I." This proves they are just things borrowed at one's birth. When one retracts the external and internal factors of the "I," the remaining is the "I" which is a compound of karma and conditions, and is called karma-consciousness as a whole, and is the result of ignorance. Ignorance is the result of evil or blind passions and refers generally to troubled mental activity caused by a deluded mind and body. The primary ones comprise evil impulses that lie at the foundation of every tormenting thought and desire. They are: 1. desire to have, 2. anger, 3. folly, 4. self-conceit, 5. false views, and 6. doubt.<sup>8</sup> Even though a person, after birth, never learns these impulses, they can emerge by themselves. This proves the karma-consciousness of ignorance and evil passions is the true nature and the real "I."<sup>9</sup>

The main question, "What is the individual essence that receives salvation, or *sukui*, in Shin Buddhism?", finally has to be answered. In Buddhism, the "I" is proved to be the karma-consciousness of ignorance and evil passions, and if this "I" that borrows external aspects dies without security, there is no peace forever. Ignorance is the basis of all evil passions and is the greatest hindrance to the attainment of Supreme Enlightenment.<sup>10</sup> Since this "I" is the karma-consciousness of ignorance and evil passions, it is hardest for the "I" to achieve Enlightenment.

In Jodo Shinshu, Amida Buddha, who established the Original Vow with which He declared His Compassion and Wisdom, describes in essence: If this "I" of insecurity can't be saved, may I not attain the Highest Enlightenment.<sup>11</sup> Amida's Original Vow can be understood as follows:

The "I" is expressed as "*Namu*." "To attain" means attainment in terms of becoming a Buddha and is expressed as "*Butsu*." And "the Highest Enlightenment," of which the essence is eternal Life and Light symbolizing His Compassion and Wisdom, is expressed as "*Amida*." Thus, the Name of the Buddha, "*Namu Amida Butsu*," can be interpreted as the "I" of insecurity, able to become one with the Life of Amida.<sup>12</sup> A further interpretation is "*Namu* is 'Ki'," which is the Faith of sentient beings in Amida Buddha. Next, the meaning of "Amida Buddha" is "*Hō*," which is Amida Tathagata's Saving Power of sentient beings. Therefore, it can be called "*Namu Amida Butsu* of oneness of Saving Power and Reliance."<sup>13</sup> *Namu Amida Butsu*, the Name, shows that the object of Amida Buddha's salvation is none other than the "I" of ignorance and evil passions. Shinran Shonin, founder of Jodo Shinshu, described this in the *Kyogyoshinsho*.

*I truly know that without the merciful father of the virtuous Name, there would be no cause for Birth, and without the compassionate mother of Light, there would be no condition for Birth. Even if the cause and the condition are united, without the karma-consciousness of Faith, there would be no reaching*

*the Land of Light. The karma-consciousness of True Faith is the internal cause, and the father of Name and mother of Light are the external conditions. When the internal cause and the external conditions are united, one realizes the True Body of the Recompensed Land (Amida's Pure Land).<sup>14</sup>*

In Jodo Shinshu, the object of Amida's salvation, or *sukui*, is the "I" of karma-consciousness, and with the Compassion and Wisdom of Amida this karma-consciousness of ignorance and evil passions is transformed into that of True Faith. This makes it possible for the "I" to attain the Right Established State of Mind which is equivalent to the True Enlightenment. Shinran Shonin thus wrote in the *Shoshinge*:

*If the single thought of joy is awakened in one's mind,<sup>15</sup> one attains Nirvana even without destroying the evil passions. Both the wise and the ordinary—even the grave offenders and slanderers of the Dharma—are all equally converted, just as all the waters flow into the ocean and gain one (the same) taste.<sup>16</sup>*

This indicates no matter what state the "I" is in Amida's working converts the ignorance and evil passions into a seed of attaining Enlightenment and, "Even without destroying the evil passions" means this can happen even while one is still alive.

As a conclusion, if any teaching was for a visualized substance like *reikon* or soul, one could easily solve the problem in this world and surely the answer would be mundane. In Jodo Shinshu, everything that can be visualized, whether material or immaterial, is just a borrowed thing and is temporary. The "I" which is a compound of karma and conditions can be defined as the karma-consciousness of ignorance and evil passions. The ignorance and evil passions originated from the view that there really is an eternal substance known as *reikon*, or ego-soul.<sup>17</sup>

As there is no such individual essence as *reikon* or soul, and rather than pursuing this idea of *reikon* and soul, *nembutsu* is Amida Buddha's Wisdom that makes one realize a borrowed thing as exactly a borrowed thing and that makes one aware of the real and true "I" of karma-consciousness. The *nembutsu* proves to anyone a superb way to transform the suffering that derives from ignorance and evil passions deep within and lead him to the Highest Enlightenment right at this very moment and space.

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# Myokonin Osono



by Jim Yanagihara

In the village of Tahara in Mikawa (present day Aichi prefecture) lived a woman, Osono, whose life exemplified a true disciple of the Buddha—a *myokonin*. She was the daughter of Yagi Gakueimon, a farmer and fisherman, and during her youth she was physically strong and very aggressive as well as very stubborn and arrogant. Being physically strong, she often helped her father in the fields doing various tasks which were normally done by young men.

After growing up, she married. Her married life, however, was both short and tragic. Her first child, a son, died at birth. Her second child, a daughter, lived until the age of three when she was bitten by a dog and died. After the death of her daughter her husband sent her back to her parents . . . a divorce.<sup>1</sup>

Due to these tragic events in her life she experienced a period of depression which made her reflect deeply within. During this time, due to the urging of her father, she consented to remarry. She then married a devout *nembutsu* follower, Suzuki Gentsu, who was instrumental in guiding Osono to the teaching of *nembutsu*. Through immersion in the spring (*onsen*) of the water of absolute *tariki* her life changed to that of being gentle and humble. This life of *tariki* can be seen in the words uttered by Osono; "Everything seen and heard is the Buddha-dharma." The relevance of this utterance is expressed in the following incident.

While visiting a fellow-follower of the Way, Osono noticed the maid of the house preparing a pot of broth which she placed upon the stove. Into the pot of broth the maid placed some dumplings. Observing this, Osono said,

*From the heat of the stove the pot, as well as the contents within, will begin to heat. The dumplings, unaware, are being cooked. Slowly the dumplings begin to heat and then at the right moment when the dumplings are nice and soft, the pot is removed from the heat of the stove. We sentient beings are like the dumplings; unaware of being bathed in the warm rays of Amida's Light, and ultimately being saved by the Name, Namu Amida Butsu.<sup>2</sup>*

This profound awareness of Osono's is not the working of her intellect, but the working of *tariki*: a life which is identified with the illumination by *tariki*. This is the life of a *myokonin*.

In the village of Noda in Mikawa, there lived a *nembutsu* devotee named Wahei. Osono was often a guest at Wahei's home, where others gathered to discuss the Teachings.

On one occasion, after lunch, Osono went to the kitchen to get herself a cup of tea. There in the kitchen was Wahei's wife, who said to Osono, "Osono-san, whenever you come to visit us many people gather and talk about the Teachings, especially about *shinjin*, with great enthusiasm. However, I am so involved with worldly things and I don't care to hear about the afterlife." Hearing this, Osono replied,

*That's right! That's right! Is it that way with you, too? I feel the same way. I always talk about the Teachings, but I really don't like Buddhism. To be honest with you, I really hate matters in reference to afterlife and I'm extremely fond of things in this world. But, you know, the joyful thing is that Amida Nyorai likes me who hates the afterlife and instead likes this world. Amida Nyorai makes it so that this me who likes this world and hates the afterlife is born first into the Pure Land. More than anything, I'm overjoyed in this. This is what we all gather to talk about every time I come to visit.<sup>3</sup>*

One cold wintery day Osono and a group of devotees were traveling through Shiga prefecture on their way to Kyoto to attend a special service at the Hongwanji. As the group was crossing a bridge over a frozen river they saw some children, off to the east, building a snowman. As soon as Osono saw the snowman she rushed over to it, placing a mat she was carrying in front of the snowman, and sat down with her hands together in *gassho*, bowing to the snowman. The fellow devotees were surprised at seeing what Osono was doing. One of the devotees jokingly asked, "Osono-san, why is the snowman the object of your gratitude?" Without looking up Osono answered,

*This snowman reveals to me the form of my shinjin, therefore I am grateful. The snowman will melt as the rays of the sun shine upon it. Just like my shinjin, the rays of Amida's compassion shine upon and guide me*

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# The Buddha's Sons: In Favor of Orthodoxy

by Elson B. Snow

*Unless there is a powerful overriding value in disregarding an author's intention (i.e., original meaning), we who interpret as a vocation should not disregard it.*

—E. D. Hirsch, Jr., *The Aims of Interpretation*

There is a disadvantage in being a “cradle Buddhist,” for this identification brings pressure for social conformity and practically demands reformation of family allegiance and changes in religious affiliation. The convert, on the other hand, is no better off. Although he does not like the conversion label he has some enthusiasm for doctrine and feels forced in making personal interpretations at the dismay of his religious teachers and at the detriment of tradition. Our educational institutions in the United States would benefit by recognizing these forced differences and contrary religious attitudes.

However, there is a more important problem in interpretation than those distinctions made by a “family Buddhist” and a “*hakujin* Buddhist.” This distinction crosses the line of Buddhist by birth and Buddhist by adoption. The widespread opinion that systematic religious thinking has been outdated long ago, actually, is a popular notion and threatens every major world religion. It assumes all religious institutions are bankrupt and “modern science” is the new knowledge of truth. This unworthy attitude is apparent in our own Pure Land Buddhist environment as we hear in the backbiting comment, “Hongwanji, today, is a victim of Tokugawa Buddhism.” These critics are saying that we are hopelessly at odds with our secular age unless we reinterpret our orthodoxy and restate a set of beliefs committed to 20th century rationality. Some of our Buddhist leaders would propose joining with recent Protestant movements for demythologizing our texts, or at least adopting some form of ethical behavior consistent with secular morality. There are several accommodations recommended by these supporters, but the suggestions are all some form of inferiority and pessimistic feeling toward religious faith compared with scientific philosophy. Zen Buddhism in the United States during its popular post-war period nearly succumbed to a strategy of reducing its tradition to psychologism, which would have been an irreversible error that disallows any opportunity to survive. The dilemmas posed by these critics would not occur were they able to grasp the real aims and methods of science and appreciate differences between con-

ventional and traditional ethics and how religious literature transmits its message with no need for mathematical unity or speculative psychology of any kind.

Modern reformation of Mahayana Buddhism is resisted by its firm anchorage in meditative texts. Although this did not prevent beatnik poets from using some of its imagery, luckily American hippies and flower children of the fifties and sixties did not discover Pure Land literature for their psychedelic trips and mind-altering experiments. Sources for their use are in abundance in the Christian tradition, but their anti-fundamentalism prevented assimilation of these forms. Pure Land thought has not gone unnoticed by professional psychology, but these speculations have not gone far and they are a dismal failure for the authentic practice of religion. Frithjof Schuon, addressing a 1961 congress in Japan, supports the “irreplaceable legacies” of traditional religion:

*Today two dangers are threatening religion: from the outside, its destruction—were it only as a result of its general desertion—and from the inside, its falsification. The latter, with its pseudointellectual pretensions and its fallacious professions of “reform,” is immeasurably more harmful than all the “superstition” and “corruption” of which, rightly or wrongly, the representatives of the traditional patrimonies have been accused; this heritage is absolutely irreplaceable, and in the face of it men as such are of no account. Tradition is abandoned, not because people are no longer capable of understanding its language, but because they do not wish to understand it, for this language is made to be understood till the end of the world; tradition is falsified by reducing it to flatness on the plea of making it more acceptable to “our time,” as if one could—or should—accommodate truth to error. Admittedly, a need to reply to new questions and new forms of ignorance can always arise. One can and must explain the sacred doctrine, but not at the expense of that which gives its reason for existing, that is to say, not at the expense of its truth and effectiveness. There could be no question, for instance, of adding to the Mahayana or of replacing it by a new vehicle, such as would necessarily be of purely human invention; for the Mahayana—or shall we say Buddhism?—is*

*infinitely sufficient for those who will give themselves  
the trouble to look higher than their own heads.*

There was a time we complained of a language barrier; we meant that our Japanese speakers had little expertise in English. Moreover, we complained of the lack of Jodo Shinshu literature in our native tongue, the English language. There is no longer a deficiency of our native Japanese teachers, but a language deficiency of Buddhists born in English-speaking countries. Previously we suffered from social and political deprivation and today we lack personal development in our religion and lack courage in acquiring cultural knowledge of Pure Land Buddhism. The work ahead of us should consist of translating a long list of doctrinal literature, and our temples' libraries should have shelves filled with standard commentaries made by reliable American students of Jodo Shinshu. The responsibility for this gap belongs to overseas Buddhists like ourselves, and not necessarily as an obligation of Hongwanji sponsorship.

A popular myth among *nisei* is that Buddhism had to develop very slowly in the first few centuries in China before taking root. Its slow development in the United States is not to be taken seriously for the dharma also must take time to establish itself in the English language. We do not have space here to discuss all the reasons why this is a false analogy, but it is certain that such a belief is perilous to our aspiration as American Buddhists. This attitude can even spell defeat for historical Buddhism in the world. On the other hand, Jodo Shinshu is especially suited to preserve the whole of Mahayana for the benefit of all generations, crossing over several linguistic communities. It is simply that our contemporary world is fraught with external and internal dangers for Buddhism. Some of this hostility, political and intellectual, is generated from sympathizers who are not at all dedicated to its internal success. Our carelessness as students in pursuing easy questions and easy solutions is disastrous for authentic spirituality and the very existence of Buddhism as a major world religion. We must not allow the dharma to become a cult and eventually dissolve in the sands of historical time.

The advocacy of religious conservatism has nothing to do with political illiberalism or social enlightenment. When the Japanese first recognized the figures of dharma guardians, protectors of the temples, it was not done through superstitious impulse, but of real insight into the ephemeral nature of mental and material objects. Our greatest need in the Shinshu tradition in America is the simplicity of commitment to doctrinal understanding and its study; it is our students today who must serve as protective *naga* kings. We can be proud of our annual Pacific Seminar sponsored by BCA for the last 25 years. The Seminar has served us quite well; it has not served as "*angyo*," a more classical approach to doctrine, and neither has the Institute of Buddhist Studies functioned purely as a sectarian academy. We are in need of more doctrinal exposure, not less. As for the treatment of our sutras and commentaries, we have been lightly introduced to them and we must struggle to make these studies more readily available. It is unwise to ignore popular religious

education, but to ignore the serious side of historical doctrine is fatal. The BCA program of the six aspects of *shinjin* has the advantage of imparting essential Jodo Shinshu on all levels, reminiscent of Rennyo's literary success of the *Gobunsho*, yet we are still in need of Hongwanji's presence and help to foster adequate Shin scholarship among American laity and clergy.

I sincerely believe it is a gross mistake to make light of our academic need, and that reductionist methods of interpreting historical ideology is an illusionary and precarious undertaking. I am reminded of the "Jefferson's Bible" where all the inconsistencies and supernaturalities of the gospels are deleted from the King James version. I have unsuccessfully looked for a copy of this unique deistical handiwork, but we can be sure that its demythologization process served Christianity none at all. I would not like to see the *Meditation Sutra (kangyo)* blue-penciled in this manner. What would be the result? What would be eliminated and what retained? What would be its interpretation? Relativistic interpretation or a modern fabrication is a useless task. It is more fruitful for us to know our tradition, and to know it as a viable system of imparting the highest truth for mankind. A belief that we cannot benefit from an uncut version is sheer nonsense. It is possible to know the original intent of our sacred literature. Historical knowledge of any degree of objectivity is useful, but for those who choose to ignore hagiology and doctrine will leave the world empty handed and with no spiritual descendants.

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## "REIKON" AND "SOUL"

(continued from page 25)

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13. See Shinshu Seiten, BCA, "Gobunsho," p. 271.
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## MYOKONIN OSONO

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*and the more I listen to the Teachings, my shinjin melts away, nothing remains, everything disappears. For this, I am truly grateful to the snowman.*<sup>4</sup>

Once, when Osono was walking on the road of a village in Ise she was saying the *nembutsu*. A man walking nearby heard her and said, "There goes the old lady mouthing empty *nembutsu*." Osono heard what the man had said and rushed back to him saying, "Thank you for saying that, thank you! You just don't know where you'll find a good friend." The man, startled by what Osono was saying, turned to her and said, "You don't have to get mad!" To this Osono replied:

*No, no, I'm not mad. I came to thank you. If the nembutsu that comes out of the mouth of this old lady turns into merit and I'm to be saved by that, what am I supposed to do??? I'm truly grateful for this empty nembutsu that comes out of me after I've been saved. I'm really grateful to you for letting me know; I'm really grateful to you for letting me know.*<sup>5</sup>

Years later, when Osono was on her deathbed, a devotee came to see her and asked, "Can you explain your understanding of the Buddha-dharma to me?" Osono answered, "I don't have any understanding to explain, just that during my lifetime I have come to realize that any understanding is beyond me."

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