

The Structure of the *Kyōgyōshinshō*¹

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INTRODUCTION

IN THE TRADITION OF SHIN BUDDHIST doctrinal studies at Ryukoku University, Shinran's idea of practice and shinjin has been viewed, for the most part, from the perspectives of two schools of thought: the first considers true practice to be the Name that we recite (*shogyō-ha*), whereas for the second, true practice is our act of reciting the Name (*nōgyō-ha*). It could be said that, of these two currents of thought, the former represents the mainstream approach within the Ryukoku tradition. Which of the two do I belong to? If one must belong to either of these two schools of thought, then I would belong to the *shogyō-ha*. This is because in my view all practices that enable sentient beings to attain Buddhahood are present within the power of Amida Buddha's Primal Vow and in the working of the Name, which is the practice of great compassion. In that sense, when I am in dialogue with persons belonging to the mainstream faction regarding the problem of practice and shinjin in Shinran's thought in general, I do not sense very much incompatibility between us.

However, strangely, it is when we interpret specific sections in the *Kyōgyōshinshō*² that we tend to disagree with one another; here, our thinking does not seem to mesh at all. I question a number of points taken by the traditional interpretations of the past. From the opposite perspective, scholars who drink from the traditional streams of Tokugawa-era sectarian studies are completely unable to understand what I am driving at. Why should that be? Up until now, I had been unable to grasp the root of our differences. Recently, however, I have come to believe that the cause lies in the existence of studies of Shin Buddhist doctrine that are based in Rennyo's thought. Without doubt, traditional scholars have interpreted the *Kyōgyōshinshō* through the ideas of Rennyo. I, on the other hand, completely reject that sort of approach. How, then, has the *Kyōgyōshinshō* been read from Rennyo's point of view?

I. THE KYŌGYŌSHINSHŌ AND DOCTRINAL STUDIES BASED IN RENNYO'S THOUGHT

Generally, the kind of Shin Buddhist scholarship that I refer to as “Tokugawa-era sectarian studies” arose out of doctrinal studies based in the thought of Rennyō (1415–1499, eighth head priest of the Hongwanji). The doctrinal studies found in Nishi Hongwanji have inherited (and still continue to accept) such traditional, Tokugawa-era sectarian studies. Hence, today’s Shin Buddhist doctrinal studies would not be able to exist were it not for Rennyō, and so it is only natural that those engaged in such studies would attach great importance to his thought. After all, the Hongwanji institution exists today only because of Rennyō’s influence. Thus, the Hongwanji religious order could never evaluate Rennyō or the ideas that gave birth to the Hongwanji highly enough. Why was Rennyō in such a short period of time able to turn a feeble religious order into the largest religious institution in Japan? A number of factors have been considered. Among them is the point that Rennyō was able to widely explain the thought of Shinran, which was exceedingly difficult to understand, in simple and ordinary words. The “words” he used were his *Gobunshō* (*Letters of Rennyō*).

Renjun (1464–1550), the sixth son of Rennyō, says the following about the production of the *Gobunshō*,

The Master Rennyō constantly read the *Kyōgyōshinshō* and the *Rokuyōshō* from the time that he was young to such an extent that the covers of both texts were in tatters. He later produced his *Ofumi* (*Letters*). In his *Ofumi*, he condensed the teachings of the Master Shinran’s *Kyōgyōshinshō*. One thousand passages were first arranged into one hundred; one hundred passages were then condensed into ten. From those ten passages, he further deduced and selected one very simple expression. He presented [the teaching] in this way so that any ordinary being would be able to hear and immediately understand it, and thereby soon attain faith.³

In his *Gobunshō*, how then did Rennyō comprehend Shinran’s idea of the cause of birth, based on his study of the *Kyōgyōshinshō*? The following represents the overall structure of Rennyō’s idea of the cause of birth, as seen in his *Gobunshō*, with a focus on the relationship between the nembutsu and shinjin.

- (1) The relationship between saying the Name and birth: Persons do not attain birth by single-heartedly saying the nembutsu.

Here, three points regarding the recitation of the nembutsu should be noted:

- (a) One should completely discard all practices other than saying the nembutsu, as well as the mind of self-power.
 - (b) One cannot attain birth simply through the vocalization of the nembutsu, done in the absence of shinjin.
 - (c) A nembutsu that is not recited after the attainment of shinjin is meaningless.
- (2) The relationship between shinjin and birth: Birth depends on shinjin alone, which is very easy to attain. What then is the mind that entrusts? The following three points should be noted:
- (a) To entrust is to believe that one will be born through the power of Amida Buddha's Primal Vow, and not through one's own power.
 - (b) Entrusting means to rely solely, earnestly, and single-heartedly that [Amida] will save one in the afterlife.
 - (c) Entrusting means to entrust everything to Amida Buddha.
- (3) How can one attain shinjin? Here, three points are noted:
- (a) One reflects upon oneself, seeing oneself as an ordinary being of extreme evil, forever foolish and deluded.
 - (b) One believes that Amida Buddha will save this self without fail.
 - (c) This mind arises by single-heartedly hearing the truth of the six-character Name.
- (4) How does *Namu-amida-butsu* relate to us?
- (a) "Namu" is the mind with which sentient beings entrust in Amida Buddha, and earnestly wish to be saved.
 - (b) "Amida-butsu" is the form with which Amida Buddha saves beings.
 - (c) For that reason, when we entrust in and say, "Namu-amida-butsu," at that moment, Amida Buddha, which saves us, and we, who are saved, become of one substance. This constitutes the form of our salvation.
- (5) The relationship between one who has attained shinjin and the nembutsu: "Shinjin is the true cause of birth" and "Saying the

Name is a response in gratitude.”

“Namu-amida-butsu” is said with the mind of joy over being embraced by the power of the Primal Vow. One’s heart naturally feels happiness, appreciation and gratitude. The life of the nembutsu follower is simply to say the nembutsu as a response in gratitude for the Buddha’s benevolence.

We can see that Rennyo grasped the essence of Shinran’s teaching as “shinjin is the true cause of birth” and “saying the Name is a response in gratitude.” In this way, he indeed condensed one thousand passages in the *Kyōgyōshinshō* into a single expression, and presented it in his *Gobunshō* in response to the requests of his followers. Rennyo’s letter, “On the Master Shinran and his tradition,” sets forth his understanding of the essence of Shinran’s thought in the following straight-forward way,

The essential meaning of the teaching of the Master Shinran and his tradition is that *shinjin* is fundamental. The reason is that, when we cast away all miscellaneous practices and single-heartedly take refuge in Amida Buddha, our birth is settled by the Buddha through the inconceivable power of the Vow. It is also explained that this state means that “one enters the ranks of the truly settled in the one thought-moment in which *shinjin* arises.” It should be understood that one’s recitation of the Name after that is the *nembutsu*, which is a response in gratitude for the benevolence of the Tathagata in bringing about the settlement of our birth.

Respectfully⁴

I can accept Rennyo’s understanding of Shinran’s thought as stated in this letter. Furthermore, I marvel at his easy grasp of the entirety of Shinran’s abstruse thought and his ability to express it in simple terms, which were easily understandable by the masses of people during his time. It is precisely because of Rennyo’s teaching that the orthodox doctrinal studies exist today. On these points my opinion does not differ from them in any way. So, where does the problem exist? Traditional scholars immersed in the stream of Tokugawa-era sectarian studies take the stance that, for the reasons given above, we cannot understand Shinran’s thought unless it is through Rennyo’s teaching. Further, when they interpret the *Kyōgyōshinshō*, they take the position that there is no contradiction at all—even down to each individual character or phrase—between that text and the doctrinal studies based in Rennyo’s thought.

Let us now pick out two or three examples of what I am talking about. At the beginning of the Chapter on Practice Shinran presents a passage in which he reveals the essence of great practice.

The great practice is to say the Name of the Tathagata of unhindered light.⁵

When Rennyō's idea of the nembutsu is superimposed onto Shinran's idea of "saying the Name," it comes to mean, not surprisingly, that any act of reciting the nembutsu with thoughts of engaging in sundry and mixed practices through self-power is to be rejected. Next, the mere vocalization of the nembutsu with one's mouth, without any mental involvement, is also to be proscribed. This does not mean, of course, that one recites the nembutsu in order to attain true and real shinjin. Hence, according to this view, as long as "saying the Name" is taken to be an act performed by sentient beings, the act of saying the nembutsu must unavoidably take place following one's attainment of true and real shinjin.

Here, then, "saying the Name" is understood in the following way:

- (1) "Great practice" is the Name itself, which is the perfect fulfillment of the Buddha's essence and is directed to beings by the Buddha. "This is the practice," [in Shan-tao's terms]. This "practice-as-essence," which leads beings to birth, arises within the entrusting mind, which has received the Name. It manifests in the form of "saying the Name."⁶
- (2) In this case, even though this speaks of sentient beings *saying* the Name, it does not do so from the standpoint of their recitation. Instead, it is discussed from the perspective of sentient beings *hearing* the Name (Namu-amida-butsu), which comes out of their mouths as they say the Name.⁷

That is, "saying the Name" refers neither to a self-powered recitation of the Name, nor to some meaningless recitation of the nembutsu. What is emphasized, instead, is how "saying the Name" is identified with the Name itself, which is directed to beings from Amida.

Later in the Chapter on Practice, Shinran presents another passage in which he comments on the effects of saying the Name.

These passages reveal that saying the Name breaks through all the ignorance of sentient beings and fulfills all their aspirations.⁸

How would this passage be interpreted in the doctrinal studies that are based in Rennyō's thought?

- (1) In effect, "saying the Name" means that one recites the Name (Namu-amida-butsu), upon hearing and entrusting oneself to

it. This is able to break through all sentient beings' ignorance of doubt, which is the basis of samsaric existence. It is also able to fulfill all of their aspirations for birth. Shinran here inherits T'an-luan's analysis of the gate of praise in his *Ching-t'u-wang-sheng-lun-chu* (*Commentary on the Treatise on the Pure Land*) in which he states, "The Name of the Tathagata of unhindered light dispels all the ignorance of sentient beings and fulfills all their aspirations."⁹

- (2) How is it that the Name (saying the Name) is able to break through all deluded passions? It is because one's birth is assured when one entrusts in the Name of the Tathagata. Accordingly, it could be said that, from the standpoint of the Name, all sentient beings' deluded passions are eliminated.¹⁰

Both of these commentaries from the *Kyōgyōshinshō* have points in common. Since the latter one overlaps with T'an-luan's commentary on the gate of praise, Shinran here identifies the nembutsu with the act of "saying the Name," accompanied by true and real shinjin. This would also be an acceptable interpretation from the perspective of doctrinal studies based in Rennyō's thought.

Let us now take note of a third *Kyōgyōshinshō* passage, this one from the Chapter on Shinjin,

True and real shinjin is unfailingly accompanied by [saying] the Name. [Saying] the Name, however, is not necessarily accompanied by shinjin that is the power of the Vow.¹¹

This passage, which appears at the conclusion of Shinran's analysis of the three-fold mind, has been interpreted in the following way by traditional studies:

- (1) In true and real shinjin the Name, which one has received, becomes manifested vocally as one's constant recitation of the Name. Thus, shinjin is necessarily accompanied by saying the Name. However, since the act of saying the Name could include self-powered recitation, it cannot necessarily be said that saying the Name is always accompanied by shinjin.¹²
- (2) We must note that the "Name" here means, "saying the Name." Hence, it is said, "accompanied by" does not refer to a simultaneous accompaniment, but to a sequential accompaniment. When Shinran's passage is interpreted in this sense, it is taken

to mean that, for one who has received true and real shinjin that has been directed from the Tathagata, saying the Name will eventually and unfailingly be manifested as one's response in gratitude for the Buddha's benevolence. However, according to this view, true and real shinjin that is directed from the Tathagata might not necessarily be attained, even though one recites the nembutsu.¹³

Kakunyo (1270–1351, third head priest of the Hongwanji) discusses Shinran's passage in his text, *Honganshō* (*Notes on the Primal Vow*),

*True and real shinjin is unfailingly accompanied by [saying] the Name means that, when one is able to hear, from the mouth of a good teacher, of the arising of the Primal Vow, one is embraced by the light of Amida's heart. The Name then naturally comes to be recited, due to the power of that embrace. This is the act of responding in gratitude for the Buddha's benevolence.*¹⁴

Needless to say, Shin Buddhist sectarian studies have accepted this interpretation absolutely to the letter.

The tenor of the argument inherent in this interpretation of the *Kyōgyōshinshō* is that "saying the Name" connotes the principles, "shinjin is the true cause of birth" and "saying the Name is a response in gratitude." The claim here is that this thesis is repeated, not just in the three passages cited above, but also in all sections in the Chapters on Practice and Shinjin that pertain to shinjin and saying the Name. That is to say, [the argument is made that] this idea of the cause of birth, as explained by Rennyo, is discussed repeatedly in the *Kyōgyōshinshō* sections on the "explication of the six-character Name," "twofold analysis of the cause of birth," "analysis of the one utterance as practice," "discussion of the three-fold mind and the mind that is single," and "explication of the one thought-moment of shinjin." If that were so, however, it would be completely unrelated to the flow of thought in Shinran's text.

I seriously question the kind of interpretation of the *Kyōgyōshinshō* made in traditional sectarian studies. In his *Gobunshō*, Rennyo does not offer any commentary on the systematic arguments of the *Kyōgyōshinshō* by following the flow of its passages or offering a literal translation of them. His letters do not comment on any particular sections of Shinran's text. Rather, Rennyo's letters do nothing more than re-interpret the entirety of Shinran's thought from Rennyo's own standpoint. Rennyo then uses his own words to express this simply and in response to the requests of his followers. The significance of Rennyo's doctrine lies in how it re-interpreted and modernized Shinran's thought. The great value of his *Gobunshō*

exists in the fact that the gist and essence of Shinran's thought is correctly and concisely expressed in simple terms.

In the Tokugawa era, commoners, of course, and even priests were not easily able to get their hands on the *Kyōgyōshinshō*. But, even if they had, it would have been extremely difficult for them to understand its content. That is why it was often said that Shinran's thought was correctly understood for the first time through Rennyo's teachings. This was the standpoint of Tokugawa-era sectarian studies. As one might expect, then, careful attention was paid so that their interpretations of the *Kyōgyōshinshō* would not differ from the teachings in Zonkaku's *Rokuyōshō* (*Notes on the Essence of the Six-fascicle Work*) or Rennyo's *Gobunshō*.

However, from the perspective of modern textual analysis, that kind of method for interpreting the *Kyōgyōshinshō* must be revised. Today, it is easy for anyone to get hold of the *Kyōgyōshinshō*. Those receiving educational training at a university can easily read its passages and study its content, without any need to refer to the *Rokuyōshō* or *Gobunshō*. More than anything we must avoid superimposing the ideas of Zonkaku (1290–1373) or Rennyo when engaging in a text-based analysis of Shinran's thought. The reason is that, while Zonkaku and Rennyo were both strongly influenced by Shinran's thought, Shinran received absolutely no influence from them. If we must pass through Zonkaku's or Rennyo's ideas [in order to get to Shinran], then Shinran's ideas would be read according to Zonkaku's or Rennyo's doctrinal interpretations. This would result in a distortion of Shinran's thought itself.

In this sense, my interpretation of the *Kyōgyōshinshō* differs greatly, from a methodological standpoint, from the current studies of the text that have developed out of the doctrinal studies based in Rennyo's thought. I completely accept that "shinjin is the true cause of birth" and "saying the Name is a response in gratitude," as established by Rennyo, capture the fundamental essence of Shinran's thought. However, at the same time, I strive to look at Shinran's idea of the "true cause" of birth, not just as Rennyo perceived it, but also through the entirety of the ideas contained within the *Kyōgyōshinshō*. Therefore, I will attempt, to the extent possible, to interpret the extremely systematic arguments of the *Kyōgyōshinshō* in accordance with the flow of its passages, and seek to clarify the ideas found in each section. This point differs fundamentally from the interpretations of the *Kyōgyōshinshō* in traditional sectarian studies, which looked to find the principles of "shinjin is the true cause of birth" and "saying the Name is a response in gratitude" in each and every section of the text. What, then, is the structure of the *Kyōgyōshinshō*?

II. TRUE BUDDHA AND TRUE LAND: TWO ASPECTS OF AMIDA BUDDHA'S DIRECTING OF VIRTUE

The Chapter on Teaching begins with the passage,

Reverently contemplating the true essence of the Pure Land way, I see that Amida's directing of virtue to sentient beings has two aspects: the aspect for our going forth the Pure Land and the aspect for our return to this world. In the aspect for going forth, there is the true teaching, practice, shinjin, and realization.¹⁵

For Shinran, the "true essence of the Pure Land way" (*Jōdo shinshū*) means the teaching regarding Amida Buddha, which is the true teaching of the Pure Land way. The teaching as to Amida Buddha is formed out of two aspects of directing of virtue¹⁶—the aspect for our going forth to the Pure Land and the aspect for our return to this world. The aspect for our going represents the state of sentient beings who are going to realize birth in the Pure Land. The aspect for our return refers to the state in which sentient beings who have been born in the Pure Land immediately return once again to this defiled world in order to instruct and guide others to birth. These two aspects of directing of virtue, however, do not refer to a directing of virtue by beings; we do not practice it ourselves in order to attain birth and then return to this world. Instead, it refers to the working of Amida Buddha's directing of virtue, which enables beings to be born and return to this world. Amida Buddha's Primal Vow, which takes in and holds beings, constitutes this two-fold directing of virtue itself. Then, what kind of Buddha is Amida? What kind of Pure Land did this Buddha establish? What kind of great compassion does this Buddha practice? In the *Kyōgyōshinshō* these questions are discussed in the Chapter on the True Buddha and Land. However, I would first like to draw our attention toward two of Shinran's Japanese-language works, which address this point directly.

In his work, *Yuishinshō mon'i* (*Notes on 'Essentials of Faith Alone'*), Shinran states in regard to Amida Buddha's Pure Land that, "The land of bliss is the realm of nirvana, the uncreated."¹⁷ He then goes on to state,

Nirvana is called extinction of passions, the uncreated, peaceful happiness, eternal bliss, true reality, dharma-body, dharma-nature, suchness, oneness, and Buddha-nature. Buddha-nature is none other than Tathagata. This Tathagata pervades the countless worlds; it fills the hearts and minds of the ocean of all beings. Thus, plants, trees, and land all attain Buddhahood.

Since it is with this heart and mind of all sentient beings that they entrust themselves to the Vow of the dharma-body as compassionate means, this shinjin is none other than Buddha-nature.¹⁸

Why, then, does the heart and mind that entrusts in the vow of the dharma-body of compassionate means arise in all sentient beings? It is because fundamentally there are two kinds of dharma-body: dharma-body as suchness and dharma-body as compassionate means. Since dharma-body as suchness is without color or form, there exists no point of contact between this Buddha and the hearts and minds of ordinary beings. For that reason, oneness manifested all of its virtues as form in order to save such beings. That form was dharma-body as compassionate means. Oneness took the name of a bodhisattva, “Dharmākara,” and gave rise to the inconceivable, great vows. Taking as primary the vows of immeasurable light and immeasurable life, Amida Buddha fulfilled those vows. Vasubandhu called the form of this Buddha, “Tathagata of unhindered light filling the ten quarters.”

Why, then, did oneness give rise to the great vows and become the Buddha, “Amida”? Shinran addresses this point in his letter “On Jinen-Hōni,” in his *Mattōshō* (*Lamp for the Latter Ages*) when he states,

As the essential purport of the Vow, [Amida] vowed to bring us all to become supreme Buddha.¹⁹

What is the nature of the great compassion with which suchness became Dharmākara Bodhisattva? Its sole purpose was to bring all sentient beings to the attainment of supreme Buddhahood. Supreme Buddha is none other than suchness itself. Thus, in order to bring ordinary beings to know supreme Buddha and attain to suchness, suchness first moved, and manifested itself as the Tathagata named “Amida” (immeasurable light and life) that takes in and holds all sentient beings. For that very reason, from the very beginning the vows of Amida Buddha have not arisen through the practitioner’s calculation. Rather, Shinran states,

Amida’s Vow is, from the very beginning, designed to bring each of us to entrust ourselves to it—saying “Namu-amida-butsu.”²⁰

Accordingly, for the purpose of attaining birth, neither practitioners’ abilities or states of mind, nor our being evil or good are the issue. The sole question that is asked is whether or not practitioners entrust in [the vow, saying,] “Namu-amida-butsu.” Sentient beings who do so will realize supreme Buddha, as the truth of *jinen*. Shinran explains this truth by stating,

Amida Buddha is material that allows us to know the state of *jinen*.²¹

“State” (*yō* in Japanese) has the meaning of condition, aspect, state, or sign. “Material” (*reu* in Japanese) is a reference to data; it means to count on a measure and then infer something through it. In order to make ordinary beings know the truth of *jinen-hōni*, or, the principle of suchness, suchness gave rise to the vows of great compassion (that is, suchness *namu-s*) and became Amida Buddha. That is to say, both the Buddha-body and Buddha-land, which are the dharma-body as compassionate means, are “*Namu-amida-butsu*.” This dharmic-truth, which takes in and holds all sentient beings, constitutes the two aspects of directing of virtue in the true essence of the Pure Land way. This is what Shinran declares at the outset of the Chapter on Teaching. He also discovers the true teaching, which is directed to beings in the aspect for our going forth, within the *Larger Sutra of Immeasurable Life*. This sutra teaches that Amida Buddha established the vows and fulfilled the Name, which is the treasure of virtues that takes in and holds all sentient beings. Thus, this teaching, which expounds “how the Buddha’s Vow arose—its origin and fulfillment,”²² becomes the authentication of the fundamental reason for Śākyamuni’s appearance in the world—to save all beings in this world.

III. THE TEACHING AND PRACTICE DIRECTED TO BEINGS IN THE ASPECT OF GOING

What kind of sutra is the *Sutra of Immeasurable Life*? Shinran expresses the fundamental essence of this sutra with the words,

Thus, to teach the Tathagata’s Primal Vow is the true intent of this sutra; the Name of the Buddha is its essence.²³

The most important point of this sutra lies in its exposition of the Primal Vow of Amida Buddha. The truth of the Buddha’s Name—*Namu-amida-butsu*—is revealed within the entirety of the Primal Vow. Shinran, first of all, searches for the true practice that enables all sentient beings to realize Buddhahood, and he discovers that practice in the Seventeenth Vow. He considers this vow—the “Vow that all the Buddhas say the Name”—to be the “true practice of the Pure Land way” and the “practice selected in the Primal Vow.”²⁴ What, then, is set forth in this vow?

If, when I attain Buddhahood, the countless Buddhas throughout the worlds in the ten quarters do not all praise and say my Name, may I not attain the supreme enlightenment.²⁵

In the Seventeenth Vow Dharmākara vows that, when he becomes a Buddha, all of the immeasurable Buddhas throughout the worlds of the ten directions will praise him and the “majestic power and virtues, inconceivably profound” of his Pure Land, and will recite his Name. If they should not, then he would not attain the supreme enlightenment. What aspect of this vow, we must ask, constitutes the “true practice of the Pure Land way” or the “practice selected in the Primal Vow?” In the opening passage of the Chapter on Practice, Shinran states,

Reverently contemplating Amida’s directing of virtue for our going forth to the Pure Land, I find that there is great practice, there is great shinjin. The great practice is to say the Name of the Tathagata of unhindered light.²⁶

He informs us that great practice, which is directed by the Buddha so that all sentient beings may attain birth in the Pure Land, is to “say the Name of the Tathagata of unhindered light.” Why, then, would this action constitute “great practice?” It is because this practice embodies “all good acts” and possesses “all roots of virtue.” Saying “Namu-amida-butsu” is the sole practice that is “perfect and most rapid” for reaching the realm of enlightenment. For that reason, Shinran explains, saying the Name is the true practice of the Pure Land way, and the Name—Namu-amida-butsu—which is directed to beings from the Tathagata, is the practice selected in the Primal Vow.

By combining Shinran’s commentary on great practice in the Chapter on Practice with the meaning of the Seventeenth Vow, we can see that the “saying of the Name” by all of the countless Buddhas is the true practice of the Pure land way. The Name that they recite is the practice selected in the Primal Vow. What, then, does “all the Buddhas say the Name” mean? It does not mean that all the Buddhas simply engage in a vocalized, yet meaningless recitation of “Namu-amida-butsu.” Rather, it means that all the Buddhas praise the majestic virtues of that Name. With this act, all the Buddhas are also teaching all sentient beings in their Buddha-lands, “For this reason, just as we are saying the Name, you should recite the Name and attain birth in that Buddha’s land!” The totality of that practice can be understood symbolically as “all the Buddhas say the Name.”

Thus, the “saying of the Name” by all the Buddhas constitutes their exposition as to the Buddha of immeasurable life. If so, however, what would be the relationship between teaching and practice? Here, we must examine the passages from the *Larger Sutra* cited in both the Chapter on Teaching and the Chapter on Practice. What is being said here? First, let us take a look at the passage from the *Larger Sutra* cited in the Chapter on Teaching. Strangely, here Śākyamuni does not make one mention of the majestic powers and virtues of Amida Buddha. Instead, the passage does

nothing more than discuss the fact that Śākyamuni radiates with five exquisite and virtuous features, which had never been seen before. Struck by Śākyamuni's inconceivably rare and virtuous appearance, his disciple Ānanda asks him, "Do not you, the present Buddha, also think on all other Buddhas now?"²⁷ He ends with a request, "Since those Buddhas are no doubt supreme Buddhas, please allow us to hear their teaching!" In contrast, the passages cited in the Chapter on Practice present Śākyamuni Buddha's concrete teaching. They address the questions of what the relationship between Amida Buddha, all the Buddhas and sentient beings is; why Amida Buddha makes his Name resound through the worlds of the ten quarters; how all the Buddhas preach the truth of that Name; and what kind of beings truly hear that teaching.

What, then, is meant by the five inconceivably exquisite and virtuous features of Śākyamuni, which is discussed in the Chapter on Teaching? His limitless radiance is a manifestation of the fact that his heart is filled with the highest joy. Śākyamuni's superlative brilliance, which he had never exhibited before now, indicates that he has come into contact with the most superlative Buddhist teaching. In this state, the teaching of Amida Buddha's great compassion, which takes in and holds all sentient beings unconditionally, is now being directed to the heart and mind of Śākyamuni. Shinran understood this truth to be the "teaching," which is directed by Amida Buddha in the aspect for our going forth; this is what Shinran calls the "true essence of the Pure Land way."

This "teaching" would eventually become the *Larger Sutra of Immeasurable Life* as expounded by Śākyamuni. However, at the point of time contained in the Chapter on Teaching it had not yet been spoken by him. Concretely speaking, the *Sutra of Immeasurable Life* mentioned in the Chapter on Teaching does not refer to a sutra that had appeared in this world. Rather, the Chapter states that the purport of Amida Buddha's Vow and the virtues of the Name have all been directed to the heart and mind of Śākyamuni. Śākyamuni himself is now about to expound this teaching, which is the fundamental reason for his appearance in the world. Shinran refers to the entirety of this teaching as the "true teaching" of the Pure Land way, which is directed by Amida in the aspect for our going forth. In his words,

It is indeed the right exposition for which the Tathagata appeared in the world, the wondrous scripture rare and most excellent, the conclusive and ultimate exposition of the One Vehicle."²⁸

In this way, the Chapter on Practice becomes Śākyamuni's concrete exposition of this teaching. Where, then, does the difference between the Chapters on Teaching and Practice lie? The same truth is contained in both teachings. The difference lies in whether it exists within the mind or

whether it becomes manifested outwardly as action. The Chapter on Teaching reveals the “dharma-gladness” of Amida Buddha’s great compassion, which fills the heart and mind of Śākyamuni. The Chapter on Practice, on the other hand, sets forth the explication of that “dharmic-truth.” Thus, it must be said that the one performing the practice throughout the Chapter on Practice is always Śākyamuni himself.²⁹

The passages in the Chapter on Practice progress in a flow from Shinran’s “commentary presenting the essence of great practice,” to the passages cited from the *Larger Sutra*, and then to his “commentary on breaking through and fulfillment through saying the Name.” These are followed by passages cited from the commentaries of the Pure Land masters, beginning with Nāgārjuna. Here, Shinran replaces the relationship between Amida Buddha and Śākyamuni (which the Chapters on Teaching and Practice had clarified) with the relationship between Śākyamuni Buddha and Nāgārjuna. In explaining why Nāgārjuna himself was able to praise the teaching of Amida Buddha, he states that was because the true bodhisattva path cannot exist outside of saying the Name of Amida Buddha and praising Amida’s Primal Vow. This teaching is followed by those of Vasubandhu, T’an-luan, Tao-ch’o, Shan-tao, Genshin and Genkū. Of these masters Shan-tao in particular explicates the meaning of “Namu-amida-butsu,” which is recited. He explains that “namu” means to take refuge, and to aspire and direct merit. “Amida-butsu” indicates the one who takes refuge, and aspires and directs merit; that is to say, it is the “practice” of Amida Buddha itself.

Shinran then interprets this specialized meaning of “namu” in even more detail, based upon his own, unique view. He reveals that, when sentient beings recite, “Namu-amida-butsu,” our hearts and minds are endowed with all of Amida Buddha’s roots of good and virtues. What is important here is that, as long as we do not truly know this truth, our birth will not be settled. Shinran elucidates the notion of settlement of birth through the relationship of light, Name and shinjin. When we hear the truth of the Name (which is great practice), realize shinjin and joy, and say the nembutsu even once, our birth will be settled. Within the Buddha’s teachings nothing surpasses this great benefit. For this reason, Śākyamuni entrusts this eternal teaching of “saying the Name once” to Maitreya [at the close of the *Larger Sutra*].

Why would saying the Name once bring sentient beings to the attainment of Buddhahood? It is because it is due to Other Power—the power of Amida Buddha’s Primal Vow. This single, ultimate teaching of the Buddha is called the “ocean of the one vehicle—the Primal Vow.” This is made clear to us by the teachings of the seven Pure Land masters. Shinran himself, together with those masters, praises and extols the teaching of the nembutsu—the ocean of the one vehicle of the universal Vow—to all persons who will be born. By observing the flow of ideas in the Chapter on

Practice in this way, we have to say that “practice,” as it is revealed here, involves neither a method of practice (“How do persons without shinjin attain it?”) nor a question of the way in which we should recite (“How and with what state of mind should we recite?”). Then, what kind of practice is presented in the Chapter on Practice? It is this: within the true essence of the Pure Land way, every single person, from Śākyamuni to Shinran, has recited “Namu-amida-butsu” in the same way as the exclusive practice; he has praised the virtues of that great practice, and spoken of the truth of this teaching to other people. When persons who have attained shinjin teach the Name to those who have not realized shinjin, this “act” is the “true practice of the Pure Land way” and the “practice selected in the Primal Vow.”

IV. THE SHINJIN AND REALIZATION DIRECTED TO BEINGS IN THE ASPECT OF GOING

As we move from the Chapter on Practice to the Chapter on Shinjin, where does the definitive difference between the two lie? Needless to say, it lies in the difference between the Seventeenth Vow and the Eighteenth Vow. For whom did Amida Buddha establish these two vows? The former is addressed to “all the Buddhas in the ten quarters,” while the latter mentions the “sentient beings of the ten quarters.” The subject of each vow is “all the Buddhas” on the one hand, and, on the other, “sentient beings.” Thus, the practice set forth in the Chapter on Practice is the practice of saying the Name performed by all the Buddhas. The shinjin described in the Chapter on Shinjin is the shinjin that is attained by sentient beings.

Shinran’s detailed commentary shows that the central problem of the Chapter on Shinjin concerns the “person in the stage of the truly settled.” How could sentient beings attain this shinjin? If that point were elucidated in the Chapter on Shinjin, then we would have to say that the central problem of the chapter would focus on the structure of the attainment of shinjin by persons without shinjin. However, Shinran says this in regard to the attainment of shinjin in the special preface to the Chapter on Shinjin,

As I reflect, I find that our attainment of shinjin arises from the heart and mind with which Amida Tathagata selected the Vow, and that the clarification of true mind has been taught for us through the skillful works of compassion of the Great Sage, Śākyamuni.³⁰

Here the “attainment of shinjin” refers to the attainment of shinjin by sentient beings. However, Shinran interprets this to mean that such shinjin arises from the vow-mind selected by the Tathagata. Further, the true mind is realized in our minds because Śākyamuni has clarified this teaching

through his skillful works of compassion. This activity of Amida and Śākyamuni was explained in the Chapter on Practice. Therefore, we can see that the Chapter on Shinjin inquires into sentient beings' attainment of shinjin. That is, it looks into the Vow-mind of the Tathagata, which takes in and holds beings, and poses the question of how beings can attain shinjin, which is directed to us from that Vow-mind.

Amida Buddha promises in the Primal Vow simply to give shinjin—the true cause of our birth—to sentient beings unilaterally. Through his entire life, Śākyamuni Buddha continually preached the truth of this teaching, in order that beings would truly know this vow-mind. Why does the Buddha practice such great compassion? It is because foolish, ordinary beings are transmigrating endlessly in delusion, with no understanding of this truth. In his commentary on great shinjin, Shinran elucidates the relationship between the Tathagata's vow-mind and the minds of sentient beings, by citing passages from the *Larger Sutra*, as well as T'an-luan, Shantao, and Genshin. By tying together the contents of those passages, he explains that true practice and shinjin is entirely fulfilled and directed to beings through the pure vow-mind of Amida Buddha. The three minds—sincere mind, entrusting, and aspiration for birth—were established in the Primal Vow. Vasubandhu received these three minds and aspired singleheartedly to be born in the Pure Land. Hence, the three-fold mind of the Primal Vow and the single-mind of sentient beings becomes the most crucial issue in the Chapter on Shinjin.

Here, two problems arise. The first involves the vow-mind of the Tathagata; the second concerns the attainment of shinjin by sentient beings. The former inquires into the three-fold mind established in the Primal Vow, while the latter looks into the single-mind, which receives those minds. What sort of relationship, then, is there between the three-fold mind and the single-mind? Shinran first interprets the three-fold mind of the Primal Vow from two perspectives: the literal meanings of the terms and the Buddha's intention. In his etymological analysis, Shinran inquires into the linguistic meanings of the terms, "sincere mind, entrusting, and aspiration for birth," which Amida establishes in the Vow. All of these terms, he states, refer to the true, pure mind that is single. Further, the meaning of the term "entrusting" includes the meaning of the terms "sincerity" and "aspiration for birth." Thus, when viewed as being true and pure, and not mixed with the hindrance of doubt, emptiness, or falsity, all three minds naturally become the single-mind of entrusting. Fundamentally, the three minds of the Vow are none other than the single, true and pure mind of the Tathagata, which is absolutely unmixed with the hindrances of doubt and falseness existing in the minds of sentient beings. For Shinran, Vasubandhu's declaration of "the mind that is single" at the beginning of his text, *Sukhāvati-vyūhopadeśa* (*Treatise on the Pure Land*), presents

the essence of the three-fold mind as the single-mind in order to make this truth “easily comprehensible for foolish sentient beings.”³¹

Yet, the Primal Vow could have set forth the single-mind alone. Why, then, does the Vow purposely establish the three-fold mind of sincerity, entrusting, and aspiration for birth? In the structure of salvation, the working of the mind of great compassion must be revealed concretely to foolish sentient beings so that we might be saved. We foolish sentient beings do not possess any true mind that would enable us to attain enlightenment. We are fundamentally unable to bear a mind of pure realization. Foolish, ordinary beings are also completely unable to give rise to the mind that aspires for enlightenment. What, then, could be done so that sentient beings could be taken in and held by great compassion? The true and real mind, the “mind full of truth, reality, and sincerity,”³² and the enlightened “mind of delight, joy, gladness, and happiness”³³—that is, the heart and mind of great compassion, which enables foolish sentient beings, as we are, to realize Buddhahood—can only be fulfilled from the side of the Buddha. That is why the words “sincere mind, entrusting and aspiration for birth” are set forth in Amida Buddha’s Primal Vow. It goes without saying that these three minds are in themselves the single-mind of the Buddha that is true, real, and pure.³⁴

How, then, can beings truly know the three-fold mind established in Amida Buddha’s Primal Vow, which reaches the hearts and minds of sentient beings? Through Śākyamuni’s act of preaching the dharma, sentient beings will eventually be able to attain shinjin, or, trust in Amida’s mind of true entrusting. The *Larger Sutra of Immeasurable Life* explains sentient beings’ attainment of shinjin in this way,

All sentient beings, as they hear the Name, realize even one thought-moment of shinjin and joy, which is directed to them from Amida’s sincere mind.³⁵

Here, Śākyamuni teaches that the Name, which is recited by sentient beings, is Amida Buddha’s vow-mind itself. When sentient beings “hear the Name” the inner truth of that teaching—that is, the truth of the Primal Vow—becomes clear. Shinran reveals the truth of the three-fold mind of the Primal Vow, which he himself heard and in which he entrusted, through his question-and-answers regarding the “three-fold mind and the single-mind.”

Continuing on with Shinran’s discussion of the three-fold mind of the Primal Vow, the *Kyōgyōshinshō* presents an interpretation of the principle of the one thought-moment of hearing and entrusting from the *Larger Sutra* passage, which expresses sentient beings’ attainment of shinjin. How does “hearing” arise? What kind of Buddhist path do such sentient beings follow? The path of practice for beings who attain shinjin is set forth in the

commentaries on the one thought-moment of shinjin and the true disciple of the Buddha in the Chapter on Shinjin.

The section on the true disciple of the Buddha ends with the following passage,

I know truly how grievous it is that I, Gutoku Shinran, am sinking in an immense ocean of desires and attachments and am lost in vast mountains of fame and advantage, so that I rejoice not at all at entering the stage of the truly settled, and feel no happiness at coming nearer the realization of true enlightenment. How ugly it is! How wretched!³⁶

What on earth could this mean? When it became clear to Shinran what being a true disciple of the Buddha really entailed, then for the first time it became apparent to him that he was completely incapable of being a true disciple of the Buddha. Here we are given an image of Shinran as one who accepted exactly what the teaching of the Eighteenth Vow told him; and yet, even as he did, found himself in direct defiance of that teaching. He was the very person who would “commit the five grave offenses” and “slander the right dharma”; thus, he would be the sole person excluded by the Primal Vow. Then, could a path for the salvation of such a person really exist? This point becomes the final issue taken upon in the Chapter on Shinjin, an issue expressed as the “inclusion of those who commit the five grave offenses and slander the right dharma.” Shinran’s position is that beings who are excluded from the Vow are in reality the very persons who have the potential to truly encounter the Primal Vow. Hence, the structure of attaining shinjin in the true essence of the Pure Land way is discussed in terms of the inclusion of those who commit the five grave offenses and slander the right dharma.

What is the relationship between shinjin and realization? The phrase, “the clarification of the true mind”, which appears at the outset of the Chapter on Shinjin, refers to the mind that attains shinjin. However, at the same time, it signifies realization, which is attained by that mind. To attain shinjin is in itself to attain realization. Shinran describes this sense of realization in the beginning of the Chapter on Realization.

To reveal, with reverence, the true realization: It is the wondrous state attained through Amida’s perfect benefiting of others; it is the ultimate fruition of supreme nirvana.³⁷

Shinran then confers “supreme nirvana” with various meanings: “uncreated dharma-body”, “true reality”, “dharma-nature”, “suchness”, and “oneness.” He goes on to state that, in order to bring sentient beings to achieve

realization, Amida Buddha “comes forth from suchness and manifests various bodies—fulfilled, accommodated, and transformed.”³⁸

We normally think that after realization comes nirvana. That is, we believe that one first attains realization and then achieves birth in the true Buddha-land. In our view, the *Kyōgyōshinshō* flows from the Chapter on Realization to the Chapter on the True Buddha and Land. However, that is not how the structure of the *Kyōgyōshinshō* flows. Amida Buddha has already come forth from suchness into this world in order to enable sentient beings to attain true realization. Therefore, it is not that the true Buddha-land lies on the other side of realization. Rather, realization in the aspect for our going forth to be born is directed to beings from the true Buddha-land so that we might be able to become supreme Buddha. For that reason, it must be said that, for sentient beings, our attainment of true realization in itself signifies our becoming the true Buddha.³⁹

What, then, is the form that true realization takes for sentient beings? Shinran states that supreme nirvana has neither color nor form. Such realization, therefore, cannot take form in living beings, and it is necessary to wait until the moment of death. Hence, two forms of realization become apparent. The first is realization attained during the life of nembutsu followers of shinjin. The second is realization that is attained at the instant of death. In this case, the former could be referred to as realization in the aspect of going, while the latter could be called realization in the aspect of returning. Then, what would be the Buddhist path for nembutsu practitioners who have attained realization in the aspect for going forth? What kind of path would be practiced by bodhisattvas in the aspect for returning? The path of bodhisattvas in the aspect of returning is described in detail in the passages cited from T’an-luan’s Commentary in the second half of the Chapter on Realization. However, the path of practice for those who have attained realization in the aspect of going is not, for the most part, discussed concretely in the Chapter on Realization. Why would this be?

Where do we find the discussion of the path of practice for nembutsu practitioners who have attained shinjin? Needless to say, it can be found in the Chapter on Practice and in the commentary on the true disciple of the Buddha in the Chapter on Shinjin. In these sections, Shinran presents the image of nembutsu practitioners who have attained shinjin, praise Amida Buddha, and teach the true and real virtues of the Name to nembutsu followers who have not yet attained shinjin. In other words, the Buddhist path of nembutsu practitioners who have attained realization in the aspect for going is concretely revealed in these sections. Therefore, there was no need for Shinran to provide a detailed description of such persons in the Chapter on Realization.

What, then, is the significance of the path of practice for bodhisattvas in the aspect of the return for those of us who have not yet been born in the Pure Land? Shinran places importance on the commentary on the directing

of virtue in the aspect for our return in the Chapter on Realization. Why would it have been so necessary for Shinran to write about a bodhisattva path that arises after death? It must have been that Shinran himself saw the truth of the aspect for the return in the instant that he attained shinjin and achieved realization in the aspect for his going forth. This means that the truth of the aspect of returning superimposed itself on Shinran, who was in the aspect of going. As a result, it became necessary for him to clarify for himself [what would become] his own eternal practice of directing virtue as a bodhisattva in the aspect of returning. However, if that were all that there was to it, then for him it would simply have been a future concern. One cannot imagine that it would have been an especially important matter in his present existence. So, why would this have been an important and vital Buddhist path for him?

Shinran states the following in regard to nembutsu followers, who have attained shinjin,

Because sentient beings of the nembutsu have perfectly realized the diamondlike mind of crosswise transcendence, they transcend and realize great, complete nirvana on the eve of the moment of death.⁴⁰

“Great, complete nirvana” is a reference to the Buddha of suchness itself. Thus, when sentient beings of the nembutsu “transcend and realize great, complete nirvana at the moment of death” they become the Buddha of suchness. This is what it means to become bodhisattvas in the aspect of returning. As the accommodated and transformed bodies of Amida Buddha, they represent the form taken by the activity of great compassion. Those of us living today have not yet met with the moment of our death. Therefore, even nembutsu followers who have attained shinjin but have not yet arrived at the moment of death can exist only in the aspect of going. For persons who are presently in the aspect of going what exactly is the bodhisattvas’ directing of virtue in the aspect of returning?

Shinran says that true realization in the true essence of the Pure Land way is “the ultimate fruition of supreme nirvana.”⁴¹ He then states that this realization is true reality, dharma-nature, suchness and oneness. He interprets this to mean that, in order to bring sentient beings to the attainment of true realization, “Amida Tathagata comes forth from suchness and manifests various bodies—fulfilled, accommodated, and transformed.” That being so, bodhisattvas in the aspect of the return, who have attained supreme nirvana, exist within the directing of virtue of the great compassion of Amida Buddha, which comes forth from suchness. This might be referred to as the state of nembutsu followers who have attained birth in the Pure Land; together with Amida Buddha, their image shines brilliantly on persons of the nembutsu in this world of the present.

We ordinary beings who live in the present life cannot personally experience any direct contact with the great compassion of Amida Buddha. Neither can we feel such living warmth even in the words of Śākyamuni Buddha's exposition of the *Larger Sutra of Immeasurable Life*. However, we can be deeply moved by the words of Shinran, and can feel living warmth in our teachers and parents, who raised and nurtured us. We can remember the images of those who have taught and guided us. We can also warmly and concretely touch bodhisattvas in the aspect of returning. In this sense, a bodhisattva in the aspect of returning represents the future state of nembutsu followers of today. At the same time, for those of us who are currently alive, it is also the form of persons of the nembutsu who come back from the Pure Land in order to enable us to attain shinjin and to guide us to the fruition of Buddhahood.

Shinran's discussion of the form of bodhisattvas who return once again to this world after having attained birth in the Pure Land, and thereafter "sport in the gardens and forests" takes place in the context of the practices of the five gates of mindfulness. That is, he states that when foolish, ordinary beings worship Amida Buddha, praise the nembutsu, and hear the teachings of the Pure Land, it is all due to the working of the bodhisattvas in the aspect of the return. However, awakening to this truth is realized by persons of the nembutsu who are in the aspect of going. We can see in this way that, while the Chapter on Realization speaks principally about directing of virtue in the aspect for our return, Shinran discusses the totality of realization in terms of our realization in the aspect for our going forth.

CONCLUSION: THE MEANING OF THE NINETEENTH AND TWENTIETH VOWS

What is explicated in the Chapter on the Transformed Buddha-Bodies and Lands? In the instant of the attainment of shinjin, the true teaching, practice, shinjin, and realization of the true essence of the Pure Land way all became clear for Shinran. However, why had he not been able to perceive this truth prior to that very time? It could be said that the reason for that also became clear. This is why both the cause of his delusion prior to his attainment of shinjin and the provisional teachings that can guide beings to that attainment are expounded in the Chapter on the Transformed Buddha-bodies and Lands. Why do sentient beings of this world currently exist in a state of delusion? It is because we have not yet encountered the Buddha-dharma. Here, Shinran raises three sets of questions. First of all, he asks why teachings other than the Buddhist teachings continue to delude persons. This is the point of inquiry in his commentary on non-Buddhist teachings.

Next, he asks why the teachings in the Path of Sages are to be excluded from the acceptable Buddhist teachings. This question requires an inquiry into the nature of the times in which we live. Shinran reveals that it is impossible to perform practices in the Path of Sages in today's world of the last dharma-age. Hence, the Pure Land path is the sole path for the attainment of enlightenment. Shinran then asks why Amida Buddha vowed to establish the practices leading to birth in the Pure Land in the Eighteenth, Nineteenth and Twentieth Vows? Here, Shinran reflects on his own path of practice, and comes to know that it had inevitably traced its way from the Nineteenth Vow, turned toward the Twentieth Vow, and then turned and entered the Eighteenth Vow.⁴²

Why would Amida Buddha's Primal Vow purposely establish the paths of the practices of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Vows in order to lead beings to the attainment of shinjin? Further, why would Śākyamuni intentionally teach us about the Primal Vow in that way? In the Chapter on the Transformed Buddha-bodies and Lands, Shinran elucidates the truth that beings will not directly enter the Eighteenth Vow. Rather, we must take the long way around, through the Nineteenth and Twentieth Vows. The reason is simple: we are normally not able to listen unquestioningly to the teaching of the Eighteenth Vow.

The Eighteenth Vow declares, "Simply say the nembutsu and attain Buddhahood. Entrust in my fundamental aspiration!" However, even if we were told how to entrust in this kind of teaching, we would not normally even attempt to listen to it. This is because, even if we were say the nembutsu, no change would take place in our everyday lives, and our worldly desires would still not be satisfied. Even though we might recite the nembutsu and wish for happiness, neither misery nor benefit would visit us in our ordinary lives as a result. In such circumstances, people are not attracted to this teaching.

In contrast, the teaching of the Nineteenth Vow is alluring. It teaches us that, by practicing the nembutsu single-heartedly, our hearts will become pure, and Amida Buddha will come to welcome us at the moment of death. That is why people feel they should practice the Pure Land path of the Nineteenth Vow. However, no matter how single-heartedly people might practice the nembutsu, they will not readily be able to attain such purity of mind. Instead, they will fall into uncertainty, and suffering and anguish will arise. At that moment, for the first time, persons will cast away all of their own powers, and will desperately rely upon the power of the Primal Vow. They will say the nembutsu in order to ask the Buddha to save them.

The Twentieth Vow conforms to this wish of sentient beings. This Primal Vow declares, "Simply say the nembutsu single-heartedly and ask to be saved. Your wish will eventually be fulfilled!" Because this vow allows beings to recite the nembutsu single-heartedly and wish for a path to the Pure Land, people will inevitably turn from the Nineteenth Vow and

enter the Twentieth Vow. But, in this path of the Twentieth Vow, is salvation really possible? When persons fall into the depths of suffering and anguish, we desperately struggle, and cling to the powers of the gods and Buddhas as we cry out to be saved. However, we can never have any complete confirmation that we will be saved. Therefore, this kind of single-hearted search will cause persons to fall into the abyss of despair. Yet, even as we despair, we will be left with only a single path, upon which we can continue to seek salvation by saying the nembutsu alone.

Here, for the first time, the teaching of the Eighteenth Vow—the exclusive path of salvation, which removes all human conditions—can be realized. Yet, persons gasping in the abyss of despair had, up until now, clung only onto the nembutsu of the Twentieth Vow, and were not able to know the truth of the Eighteenth Vow through our own power. For that very reason, we must seek out the appearance of a good teacher, who could bring beings in despair to an encounter with the Eighteenth Vow. This is because the only thing capable of cutting off our attachment to self-power would be the true teaching that can only come from the “other.”

Looking at it in this way, the true significance of the Nineteenth Vow is that of a Primal Vow that brings sentient beings to aspire single-heartedly for birth in the Pure Land. The purport of the Twentieth Vow is to encourage sentient beings simply to say the nembutsu with single-heartedness. This is the working of great compassion. In this way, Shinran saw both the “implicit” and “explicit” meanings of these two vows; he held that truth exists in each of the vows. Neither of the two vows enables sentient beings to attain birth directly. However, if these vows did not exist, then the path leading to the Eighteenth Vow would never open up for sentient beings. Here we can see the Buddha’s intent in his establishment of the provisional Primal Vows. Because these provisional vows exist, all beings have the potential to encounter the Eighteenth Vow. However, in order to turn from the Twentieth Vow and enter the Eighteenth Vow, the “condition” of the Seventeenth Vow is absolutely necessary. This is because the only person capable of saving beings, who are suffering in the depths of delusion and despair, would a “good teacher,” who can deliver the true teaching.

If we look at it in this way, we realize that the contents of the *Kyōgyōshinshō* do not flow within actual time, in this present life. Shinran met his teacher, Hōnen, and in that instant realized the mind of true shinjin. The *Kyōgyōshinshō*, over which he would later spend many decades, is the logical and systematic discussion of the structure of his mind that attained shinjin.

Why was Shinran able to encounter this teaching of the true essence of the Pure Land way? It was due to the two aspects of Amida Buddha’s directing of virtue. However, in order to enable all sentient beings to become supreme Buddha, Amida appeared out of suchness, became the

bodhisattva Dharmākara, transcendently established the great vows that are beyond conceivability, fulfilled the virtues of immeasurable light and life (becoming Amida Buddha), and directed his Name to the worlds of the ten quarters. That is the truth contained in the salvation established in the Eighteenth Vow, which saves all sentient beings unconditionally. The fundamental reason for Śākyamuni's appearance in the world existed in his response to Amida's Primal Vow. This is because, in order to save all sentient beings, all that Śākyamuni could do was expound the teaching of Amida Buddha's Eighteenth Vow. In actuality, even prior to Śākyamuni's sutra, the contents of his exposition had already been established in Amida Buddha's Primal Vow. This represents the truth inherent in the Seventeenth Vow.

In this way, sentient beings are guided to the attainment of shinjin through the practice of the Seventeenth Vow, that is, through the elucidation of the Eighteenth Vow by a good teacher. The transmission of the teachings following Śākyamuni's death was the result of expositions of the Eighteenth Vow to the persons of the nembutsu without shinjin by the nembutsu practitioners who had been brought to the attainment of shinjin by Śākyamuni Buddha.

The *Kyōgyōshinshō* concludes with the words,

I have collected true words to aid others in their practice for attaining birth, in order that the process be made continuous, without end and without interruption, by which those who have been born first guide those who come later, and those who are born later join those who were born before. This is so that the boundless ocean of birth-and-death be exhausted.⁴³

These words describe the transmission of the true teaching, which Shinran calls the "true essence of the Pure Land way" (*Jōdo shinshū*).

Finally, the following is a graphic illustration of what I have stated above.

Translated by David Matsumoto

THE STRUCTURE OF THE KYŌGYŌSHINSHŌ

“Reverently contemplating the true essence of the Pure Land way, I see that Amida’s directing of virtue to sentient beings has two aspects: the aspect for our going forth to the Pure Land and the aspect for our return to this world. In the aspect for going forth, there is the true teaching, practice, shinjin, and realization.” (Kyōgyōshinshō, Chapter on Teaching, CWS, p. 7)

Pure Land

“The land of bliss is the realm of nirvana, the uncreated.” (Yuishinshō mon’i, CWS, p. 460)

Amida

“Amida Buddha is material that allows us to know the state of jinen.” (“On Jinen-Hōni”)

Dharma-body as suchness

||
oneness

Announces the name Bhikṣu Dharmākara, establishes the great Vows that surpass conceptual understanding, and becomes Amida Buddha.

True Buddha

True Land

Great Vows of

Immeasurable Light

Immeasurable Life

Treasure of Virtues

Fulfillment of the Name

Namu-amida-butsu

How the Buddha’s Vow arose: Its Origin and Fulfillment

Truth contained in the 18th Vow

Teaches sentient beings the truth of the great compassion and Name of Amida Buddha.

(Subject of the 17th Vow)

Great compassion and Name of Amida Buddha (sincere mind; entrusting; desire for birth; saying my Name even ten times) saves all sentient beings.

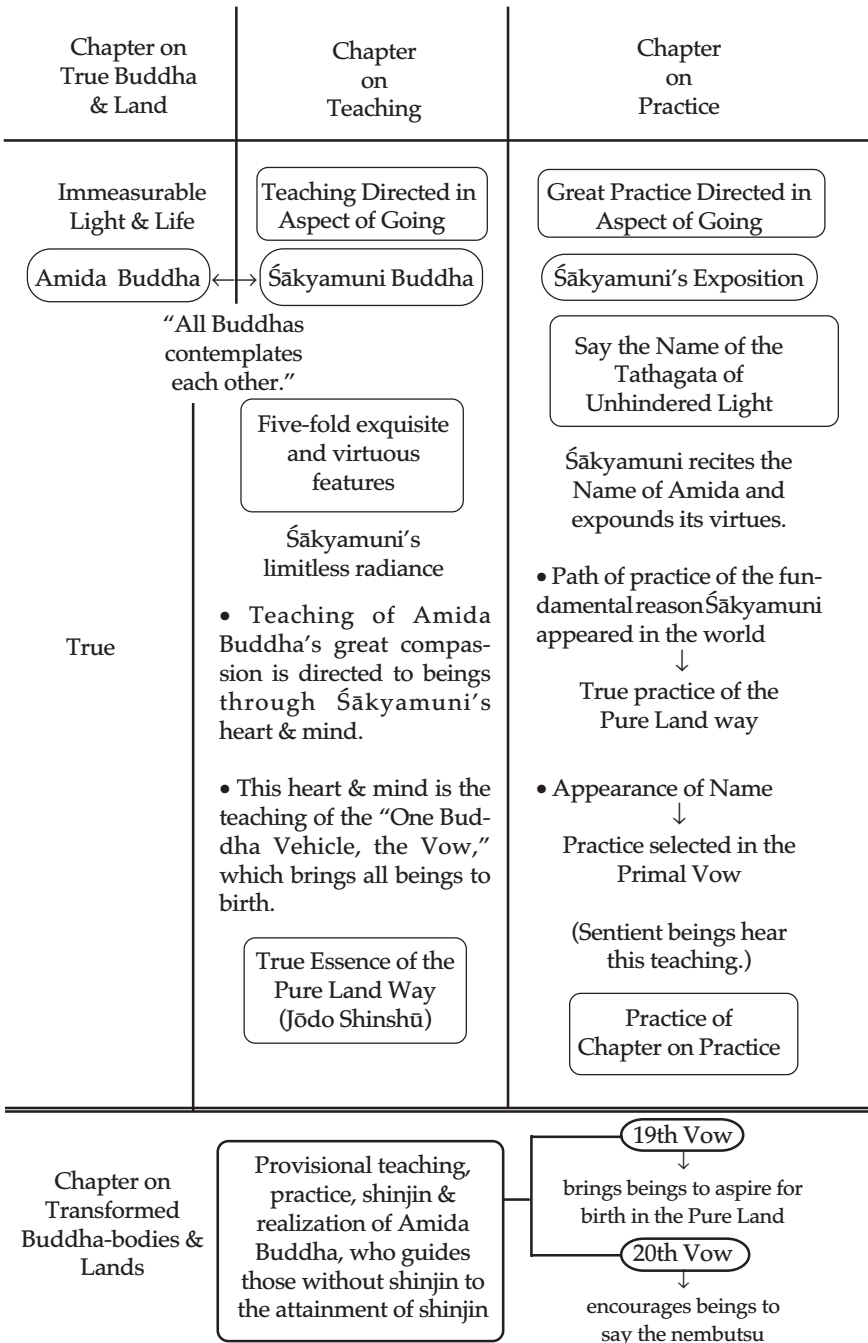
This teaching is the truth contained in the 18th Vow

(Truth contained in the 18th Vow)

Truth contained in the 18th Vow

Hear the teaching of the truth of the great compassion and Name of Amida Buddha.

(Subject of the 18th Vow)



Chapter on Shinjin	Chapter on Realization	Practice of Chapter on Practice
<p data-bbox="153 401 448 470">Great Shinjin Directed in Aspect of Going</p> <p data-bbox="169 487 432 557">Sentient Beings' Attainment of Shinjin</p> <p data-bbox="153 574 448 644">Person in the Stage of the Truly Settled</p> <p data-bbox="135 670 452 843">Through Śākyamuni's exposition, Amida's great shinjin & Name (three minds & ten recitations) are directed to the hearts and minds of sentient beings.</p> <ul data-bbox="135 873 452 930" style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentient beings hear this truth single-heartedly. <p data-bbox="144 960 443 1046">(hear my Name, realize even one thought-moment of shinjin & joy)</p> <p data-bbox="164 1076 423 1190">"Having heard how the Buddha's Vow arose—its origin & fulfillment—together free of doubt."</p> <p data-bbox="181 1220 406 1249">Attainment of Shinjin</p>	<p data-bbox="491 401 768 470">Realization of Necessary Attainment of Nirvana</p> <p data-bbox="521 487 726 557">Sentient Beings' Realization</p> <p data-bbox="474 574 785 644">Practice of Benefiting-Others in the Aspect of Going</p> <p data-bbox="483 670 773 784">In the instant of attaining shinjin, realization is attained within the hearts & minds of sentient beings.</p> <p data-bbox="483 812 773 881">Realization Directed in the Aspect of Going</p> <p data-bbox="477 904 779 986">For the being whose birth is settled, one's birth is no longer a problem.</p> <p data-bbox="523 1017 730 1072">(There is no need to pursue birth.)</p> <p data-bbox="494 1104 762 1159">Transmission of the joy of the nembutsu to others</p> <p data-bbox="532 1185 724 1229">True Realization</p>	<p data-bbox="827 453 968 600">Practice as a Response in Gratitude</p> <p data-bbox="801 618 965 795">↓ Practice directed in aspect of birth by one who has attained shinjin</p> <p data-bbox="801 826 965 940">Teach the truth of the nembutsu to beings without shinjin</p> <p data-bbox="801 1208 965 1263">brings beings to aspire for birth</p>
	<p data-bbox="474 1381 653 1411">(True Pure Land)</p> <p data-bbox="649 1425 973 1494">Practice Directed to Beings in the Aspect of the Return</p>	

NOTES

1. Translator's Note: This article originally appeared under the title, "Kyōgyōshinshō no kōzō," in the journal *Shinshūgaku* 99/100, March 1999. For the most part, the English translations of passages from Shinran's texts have been taken from The Shin Buddhism Translation Series, *The Collected Works of Shinran* (hereinafter *CWS*), (Kyoto: Jōdo Shinshū Hongwanji-ha, 1997). Unless otherwise noted, the text of the article and all other cited passages have been translated into English by David Matsumoto.
2. The complete title of Shinran's text is *Ken jōdo shinjitsu kyōgyōshō monrui* (*A Collection of Passages Revealing the True Teaching, Practice, and Realization of the Pure Land Way*).
3. Renjun was the sixth son of Rennyō. His *Renjunki* (*Renjun's Diary*) contains the section, "Rennyō Shōnin gonyakunen no migiri no koto" (The Master Rennyō's Younger Years). It is formed from ten sections. This is an interpretation of the contents of section five.
4. Rennyō, *Gobunshō* (*Letters of Rennyō*) 5-10, *Shinshū shōgyō zensho* (hereinafter *SSZ*), vol. 3 (Kyoto: Ōyagi Kōbundō, 1941), p. 507; Jitsuen Kakehashi, *Bearer of the Light: the Life and Thought of Rennyō*, IBS Center for Contemporary Shin Buddhist Studies, trans. (Los Angeles: Pure Land Publications, 1998), pp. 29–30.
5. *SSZ*, vol. 2, p. 5; see also *True Teaching, Practice and Realization*, in *CWS*, p. 13.
6. See Umehara Shinryū, *Kyōgyōshinshō shinshaku: Kanjō* (Toyama: Senchōji Bunshodendōbu, 1955), p. 69.
7. See Kiritani Junnin, *Kyōgyōshinshō ni kiku: Jōkan* (Tokyo: Kyōiku Shinchōsha, 1966–80), pp. 153–4.
8. *SSZ*, vol. 2, p. 8; *CWS*, p. 17.
9. T'an-luan, *Ching-t'u-wang-sheng-lun-chu* (*Commentary on the Treatise on the Pure Land*; Jpn. *Ōjō Ronchū*), in *Taishō*, vol. 40, p. 826; *SSZ*, vol. 1, p. 514; cited in Chapter on Shinjin, in *CWS*, p. 82. See also Umehara, pp. 110–1.
10. See Kiritani, p. 173.
11. *SSZ*, vol. 2, p. 68; *CWS*, p. 107.
12. See Umehara Shinryū, *Kyōgyōshinshō shinshaku: Kanchū*, pp. 304–5.
13. See Kiritani Junnin, *Kyōgyōshinshō ni kiku: Chūkan*, p. 183.
14. Kakunyo, *Honganshō* (*Notes on the Primal Vow*), in *SSZ*, vol. 3, p. 56.

15. *SSZ*, vol. 2, p. 2; *CWS*, p. 7.
16. Translator's note: "Directing of virtue" is an English rendering of the term *ekō* (Skt. *pariṇāma*), which in Shinran's thought refers to the compassionate working of Amida Buddha that carries sentient beings to birth and enlightenment. The editors of *The Collected Works of Shinran* likely chose the phrase in order to contrast it with "merit transference," which is a more common translation of *ekō*. Whereas in other forms of Buddhism, one would seek to transfer the merit generated from one's own practice toward one's own or others' attainment, Shinran's thought is founded on the notion that such virtues are directed to beings entirely from the true and real mind of Amida.
17. Shinran, *Yuishinshō mon'i*, (*Notes on 'Essentials of Faith Alone'*), in *SSZ*, vol. 2, p. 630; *CWS*, pp. 460–1.
18. *Ibid.*
19. Shinran, "On Jinen-Hōni," in *Mattōshō (Lamp for the Latter Age)*, in *SSZ*, vol. 2, p. 664; *CWS*, p. 530.
20. *SSZ*, vol. 2, p. 663; *CWS*, p. 530.
21. *SSZ*, vol. 2, p. 663.
22. Chapter on Shinjin, in *SSZ*, vol. 2, p.72; *CWS*, p. 112.
23. Chapter on Teaching, in *SSZ*, vol. 2, p.3; *CWS*, p. 7.
24. Chapter on Practice, in *SSZ*, vol. 2, p. 5; *CWS*, p. 13.
25. Cited in *SSZ*, vol. 2, p. 5; *CWS*, p. 13.
26. *SSZ*, vol. 2, p. 5; *CWS*, p. 13.
27. *SSZ*, vol. 2, p. 3; *CWS* p. 8.
28. *SSZ*, vol. 2, p. 4; *CWS*, p. 10.
29. On this point, the ideas of "shinjin is the true cause of birth" and "saying the Name is a response in gratitude," which we see in doctrinal studies based in Rennyo's thought, have no direct relationship with this notion of "saying the Name." The idea set forth in the Chapter on Practice that, "The great practice is to say the Name of the Tathagata of unhindered light," does not address the questions of how persons without shinjin can say the nembutsu and attain birth, or what kind of nembutsu is recited by persons who have attained shinjin. In this sense of "saying the Name" the issue is not whether or not we have attained shinjin. Rather, it means only that Śākyamuni recites "Namu-amida-butsu" and teaches us that this nembutsu is great practice, which is directed to us from Amida Buddha.
30. *SSZ*, vol. 2, p. 47; *CWS*, p. 77.
31. *SSZ*, vol. 2, p. 59; *CWS*, p. 93.

32. *SSZ*, vol. 2, p. 59; *CWS*, p. 94.

33. *Ibid.*

34. The three-fold mind of the Primal Vow necessarily works to bring itself into oneness with the minds of sentient beings. However, any discussion of the three-fold mind of the Primal Vow involves the issue of salvation by Amida Buddha. In other words, the question will always be that of how this three-fold mind reaches sentient beings. The attainment of shinjin by sentient beings is not directly brought into issue. On this point my thinking differs from that found in sectarian studies, which reiterate Rennyo's interpretation that the problem is one of sentient beings' "settled mind."

35. Shinran's reading of the passage on the fulfillment of the Primal Vow. Chapter on Shinjin, in *SSZ*, vol. 2, p. 49; *CWS*, p. 80.

36. *SSZ*, vol. 2, p. 80; *CWS*, p. 125.

37. *SSZ*, vol. 2, p. 103; *CWS*, p. 153.

38. *Ibid.*

39. Shinran's thinking here is totally consistent with his explanation in his letter "On Jinen-honi." See *Mattōshō* (*Lamp for the Latter Age*), in *SSZ*, vol. 2, p. 663–4; *CWS*, p. 530.

40. *SSZ*, vol. 2, p. 79; *CWS*, p. 123.

41. *SSZ*, vol. 2, p. 103; *CWS*, p. 153.

42. This constitutes the structure of Shinran's thought, and is generally referred to as "turning and entering the three Vows" (*sangan tennyū*). Although it is usually comprehended as the structure of Shinran's attainment of shinjin, I do not view it in that way. Rather, I take it to be the process for realizing the attainment of shinjin. This idea is explained at the conclusion of Shinran's explication of the true gate. See *SSZ*, vol. 2, p. 166; *CWS*, p. 240.

43. Passage from the *An-lo-chi* of Tao-ch'ō. Cited in the Chapter on the Transformed Buddha-bodies and Lands, in *SSZ*, vol. 2, p. 203; *CWS*, p. 291.