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*St. Shinran
and
His Religion
of
Pure Faith*



Condensed Version

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and
His Religion
of
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CONDENSED
VERSION

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Shinran Shonin

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

ORIGIN OF BUDDHISM

Buddhism, which originated in India in the sixth century B.C., found its way through Central Asia to China in the first century A.D., and it was introduced into Japan by the way of Korea in 552 A.D.

DEVELOPMENTS

Many different denomination-

al sects were formed in Japan as the years passed. It was in the thirteenth century A.D., that the Shin-shu sect was started under the untiring work of Honen Shonin and Shinran Shonin, the latter being credited for laying the foundation of Shinshuism which embodied Faith in Amida Nyorai's Divine Will and the recitation of the Nembutsu.

CHAPTER II

Life of Shinran Shonin

ORPHAN

Shinran, who as a child was known as Matsumaro or Matsuwaka, was born on April 1, 1173. At the age of four, he was put in the care of his learned uncle, Noritsuna. He lost his father soon after and his mother four years later. It was then that he decided to become a priest.

PRIESTHOOD

One day in the spring of 1181, Matsumaro (Shinran) accompanied his uncle Noritsuna to visit the Abbot, Jichin, in Shoren-in temple to ask him to be taken into priesthood that very evening. The Abbot thought that it would be better to postpone the event till the next day. But being very desirous to leave the secular life, Matsumaro expressed his earnestness in the following ode:

"Tis vain to wait until tomorrow:

Life is like the glorious cherry bloom,

Which ere morn might be all gone,

Passing winds as soon might blow it off."

The Abbot deeply impressed, consented to the lad's request and admitted Matsumaro into the Sangha Order. He was given the name Hannon and was later sent to Mount Hiei for intensive study.

A VISION

At the age of nineteen Hannon left Mount Hiei to go on a pilgrimage. He went to the mausoleum of the Prince Shotoku, known as the Constantine of Japanese Buddhism, at Shinaga, in the province of Kawachi.

On the second day when he knelt before the shrine of the

- 2 Prince Shotoku, Hannen saw a vision of the Prince who predicted his death at the end of ten years. Astonished to hear such words, this prompted Hannen to strive to save his soul before the last hours came.

KWANNON ANSWERS

For twenty years Hannen studied diligently and tried to attain Enlightenment through self effort, but failed.

Finally he prayed to Kwannon for a solution to his struggles.

The Kwannon Bosatsu of Rokkakudo in Kyoto appeared in a spiritual form and answered his prayer.

Hannen was instructed to go to Honen Shonin from whom he would be able to find a more simple way to enter Amida's Pure Land.

Thus he descended from Mt. Hiyok to begin his new life as a disciple of the eminent Honen Shonin.

PREDICTION COMES TRUE

In the spring of his twenty-ninth year Hannen met Honen Shonin who preached the "Way of Salvation by Faith in Amida Buddha." This occasion was near the end of the tenth year of the prediction of his death made by the spirit of the Prince Shotoku at the Shinagausuleum. Hannen (Shinran) realized the meaning of the vision for it had referred to his spiritual death and that he was

PRINCE

Shotoku Taishi



Prince Shotoku Taishi (572-622) is credited for setting Buddhism firmly in Japan. He built many temples in Nara and vicinity.

As a scholar, he wrote commentaries on three important Buddhist Sutras: the Pundarika (Japanese Hokekyo), Srimala (Syomangyo), and Vimalakirti (Yuinakyo).

to be reborn under the teaching of Honen Shonin's "Way of Salvation by Faith in Amida Buddha."

ENTERS HONEN'S ORDER

When he was admitted into Honen Shonin's order, he was given

the name, Shakku. He led an ordinary life and was the first member of the Buddhist monastery to marry as well as indulge in eating fish and meat.

EXILE MOVEMENT

Honen's disciples numbered 380. In 1204 the scholars and monks of Mount Hiei decided to prohibit the teaching of the Nembutsu and began a movement to oust the followers of Honen Shonin, including Shakku (Shinran Shonin).

Before going into exile, Honen gave Shakku a copy of his work, "Senchaku-hongwan-nembutsu-shu," --"Analect of the Nembutsu, the Chosen Way, according to the Will of Amida," he had compiled some years ago, at the request of the Prince Kanezane, in order to systemize his teachings.

About this time Shakku, with Honen's consent, changed his name to Zonshin which the Prince Regent Shotoku had conferred upon him in his vision at the mausoleum in Shinaga.

HONEN'S ADDRESS

In 1207 the actual order for the exile of Honen and his disciple was carried out.

Before they were sent, Honen addressed his disciples:

"No exile can distress me, because my long-cherished wish to teach those in the remote country is now about to be realized. I am really grateful for the Imperial favors which thus enable

me to carry out my desire.

"The propagation of True Religion can never be checked by persecution, because all the Buddhas and the spiritual host will combine to protect and guard it. What deeply grieves me is the thought that those who hinder the work of the Nembutsu will have to reap that which they have sown themselves. You will live to see my words come true.

"Those who come to meet are destined to part. Although I am now to part with you, we shall see each other again; if not in this mortal life, I shall meet you in the Pure Land."

INHIBITION FAILS

The exile failed to inhibit the growth of the new religious sect but only to increase the number of followers.

SHINRAN NAME ADOPTED

While in exile in Echigo, Zonshin (Shinran) studied the Sutras written by Vasubandhu (Soshin) who lived in Northwest India late in the fifth century and Douren who had won fame in China early in the sixth century.

He felt deeply indebted to them for their work that he united the last syllables of their respective names in one word and adopted it as his own name--"Shin-ran."

EPIC WORK

On November 17, 1211, Shin-

4 ran and Honen Shonin were recalled from exile, but his teacher, Honen, passed away before he could reunite with him.

While in the province of Hitachi, Shinran wrote six volumes entitled, "Kyo-gyo-sho-monrui"- "Anallects concerning Doctrine, Practice and Attainment" --in which he planned to systemize his teaching in his own ingenious way.

Hence the book is regarded as the Fundamental Text of the Shin-shu sect which Shinran Shonin himself had founded in 1224. This is the year considered as the beginning of the Shin-shu sect.

TO LAND OF BLISS

Nearing his end in this world Shinran Shonin said the following:

"My end draws near, and I am about to go to the Pure Land of Bliss. However, I shall re-incarnate in this world in order to carry on the Holy work to which I have devoted myself.

"Many a death I shall die, but never shall I fail to be reborn even as the waters of Waka-no-ura Bay do ebb but flow again.

"When you enjoy Amida's Grace by yourself, know that there is another spirit with you. Whenever you speak of His Grace with one who shares the Faith with you, remember you are three in company.

"For I, Shinran, shall always be with you."

Shinran Shonin died on November 28, 1262 at the age of 89, and 615 years after, the Emperor Meiji bestowed him the title of "Kenshin Daishi"- "Great Teacher who has revealed the Truth"

SHINRAN'S NAMES

During Shinran Shonin's earthly existence, he was known by numerous names which connected him with the different periods of his life that was spent in learning and spreading the Teachings of the Amida Nyorai.

Born as **Matsumaro** or **Matsuwaka**, Shinran was given the name **Hannen** by the Abbot Jichin when he entered priesthood at the age of nine, and later when he became a student of Honen Shonin he was referred to as **Shakku**.

Zenshin was the name used by Shinran during his years of exile. This was the name conferred upon him by the Prince Shotoku in his vision, for it was then that he completely shed his life of ignorance and was reborn into a new life of Honen's order.

Later in his life he acquired his permanent name of **Shinran** after combining the names of two great men, **Seshin** and **Donran**, whom he admired.

The death of Shinran Shonin at the age of 89 gave him still another title of **Kenshin Daishi** which was bestowed him by the Emperor Meiji as a final tribute to a great religious teacher.

Origin of Amidism

GENERAL BUDDHISM

A very profound theory is embodied in the Teachings of Gautama Buddha, which is to be understood not merely by the intellect or brain power, but must be personally attained by each individual through his own experience.

TWO WAYS

In Mahayana Buddhism there are two methods by which Buddhahood is attained.

One method which usually is studied and practiced by the scholars and monks in every monastery advises one to rectify one's thoughts, words, and actions, and to concentrate one's mind in contemplation, in order to attain spiritual intuition.

He who chooses this way must be sustained by his own exor-

tions, and has no one outside himself on whom to rely for sustaining strength or power.

DOCTRINE PRACTICED

In other words, the Doctrine is to be followed by practice.

What we personally practice is not fruitless, for, according to the Law of Cause and Effect, it raises our soul, the True Self, to the higher grades of Being until one reaches the final goal of Enlightenment which is actually Buddhahood.

Thus, from the practical point of view, Buddhism resolves itself into three items, namely, Doctrine, Practice and Attainment. During the course of years the third phase dropped out because of the difficulty for the mass to attain through practice of the Teachings.

SECOND METHOD

HONEN'S TEACHING

The other method is promulgated by Honen Shonin and Shinran Shonin.

Honen grounded his method as follows:

To be born in the Pure Land of Amida Buddha in the next life and therein attain Enlightenment in fullest glory, one must Trust in Amida with all one's mind and call on His Name in unquestioning Faith.

He who does so will at the

moment of death be carried by Amida to His Paradise of Bliss. As Salvation comes through Faith alone, it is very easy for anyone -- "whosoever will" -- to be thus emancipated from this changeful world.

Honen tried the first method but found it to be too difficult. He went to the temple library and came across a passage in Zendo's book. Zendo was a Chinese monk who made his name at Hsianfu in the seventh cen-

6 tury. The following passage quoted is found in his commentary on Amitayur-dhyana-sutra.

"To call on Amida's Name with one's whole heart, at all times and in all places, and never to give up so doing throughout one's life, this is the true decisive cause of the Rebirth in His Pure Land, for it is in harmony with His Divine Will."

SHINRAN'S NEW RELIGION

In the "Analect" Shinran emphasizes the connection between "Faith and Nembutsu," which is the essence of Honen Shonin's teachings.

What Shinran calls "Doctrine"

CHAPTER IV

Basis of Amidism

THREE SUTRAS

Among the numerous Mahayana sutras, there are three which relate exclusively to Amida Nyorai and His Pure Land, namely "Jodo-sambu-kyo," i. e., the "Three Sutras of the Pure Land Doctrine," on which Honen Shonin and his predecessors based their teachings.

These sutras are (1) the Larger Sukhavati-vyuha, (2) the Amitayaur-dhyana-sutra, (3) the Smaller Sukhavati-vyuha. These three, chosen from among "the rich Storage of Sutras," for a series for the understanding of the "Way of Salvation by Amida's Power," which cannot be completely told save by all the three sutras.

is that "Divine Will of Amida" which has been introduced to human beings through Gautama Buddha's Teachings.

The "Will of Amida" is to take into His Pure Land of Bliss all those who trust Him with their whole hearts. On hearing this good tidings, the soul surrenders itself into His Loving Hands and practices the "Namu-amida-butsu."

This Nembutsu, whose very kernel of Faith, conveys one into the Pure Land of Amida, where one is completely set free from the suffering of Birth and Death, to attain perfect Enlightenment.



Sutra literally means "strings." A canonical book which contains Buddha's Doctrinal Teachings is called Sutra, because it is likened to a string which is passed through various flowers for decorative purposes. The Sutra, likewise passed through Buddha's Doctrinal Teachings, holds them all together.

FIRST SUTRA

Sakyamuni Buddha tells how Amida has fulfilled His Divine Purpose to save all beings equally and without discrimination. He also says that anyone who yields himself to that Power will be emancipated from this transitory world and be born anew in His Pure Land to enjoy everlasting Bliss.

SECOND SUTRA

It gives the full details in the story of Vaidehi.

This message was applied to Vaidehi, the Queen of Magda,

whom Ajatashatru, her unfilial son, imprisoned. Such application was made in order to prove that Amida's Divine Will is intended not for wise men or saints but rather for such inferior and sinful persons as those whom Vaidehi represents. 7

THIRD SUTRA

Lest people might disbelieve Amida's Message, Sakyamuni Buddha verifies its Truth in the third Sutra, by relating how myriads of Buddhas will preach Amida's words in their own other worlds just as he himself does in this present world.

HONEN'S BASIS

FROM ZENDO

Honen Shonin founded his teaching chiefly on the second Sutra emphasizing the practice of the Nembutsu.

Zendo, his spiritual ancestor and a most influential priest in the seventh century A.D. teaching at Choang--present Hsi-anfu--in China, had also taken the same Sutra as the text for his lectures to expound the "Way of Salvation;" but although

this Sutra largely prevailed among the learned priests of various schools, its true meaning was generally misunderstood.

Zendo advocated the Nembutsu which is the essence of the Sutra, and tried thereby to correct the wrong interpretation prevailing at the time. He is said to have been reborn in Japan in the form of Honen in order to preach the Nembutsu among the Japanese.

SHINRAN'S SOURCES

SAMBUKYO

Shinran Shonin endeavored to explain Amida's Message by the first Sutra of "Sambukyo," which is the root of the other two.

Among those who had taught Amida's words before his time, he found two persons worthy of

admiration: one named Vasubandhu also known as Seshin or Tenjin, the other named Donran.

SESHIN'S DISCOURSE

Seshin wrote a discourse on the Larger Sukhavati-vyuha in which he interpreted Amida's

8 Divine Will in a very free manner, that is in the spirit rather than in the letter. At the beginning of the book he owned his Faith in Amida Nyorai as follows:

"O World-honored Sakyamuni! With my whole mind I worship and adore and believe in the Tathagata of Eternal Light radiating unobstructedly through out the Universe! Through this Faith, do I expect to be born into His Land of Bliss.

Seshin considered that the "Way of Salvation" as expounded

CHAPTER V

GROUND WORK

In order to systemize his teachings, Shinran Shonin while in the province of Hitachi wrote his doctrines in six volumes entitled, "Kyo-gyo-sho-monrui--Analects concerning Doctrine, Practice and Attainment.

PASSAGE ON FAITH

Shinran devoted the third volume of his "Analect" to a collection of scriptural passages concerning Faith, which clearly show that the True Way to attain Nirvana is by that simple Faith which trusts and relies on the Divine Will and Marvellous Power of Amida.

MISINTERPRETATION

On the other hand, Honen's followers thought that through the mere repetition of the Nembutsu that

in the first Sutra was, not through the work of one's own, but through the Faith in Amida Nyorai.

DONRAN'S COMMENTARY

Donran wrote a commentary on Seshin's discourse, in which he further developed Seshin's idea, emphasizing the "Absolute Power of Amida" for saving the believing soul.

Thus we see that the "Way of Salvation through Faith" had been advocated by two prominent scholars, Vasubandhu (Seshin) and Donran.

Shinran's Analects

butsu that Power would be accumulated by which they could emancipate themselves, ignoring the fact that Salvation is caused only by the Power and Will of Amida Nyorai.

EXPRESSION OF NEMBUTSU

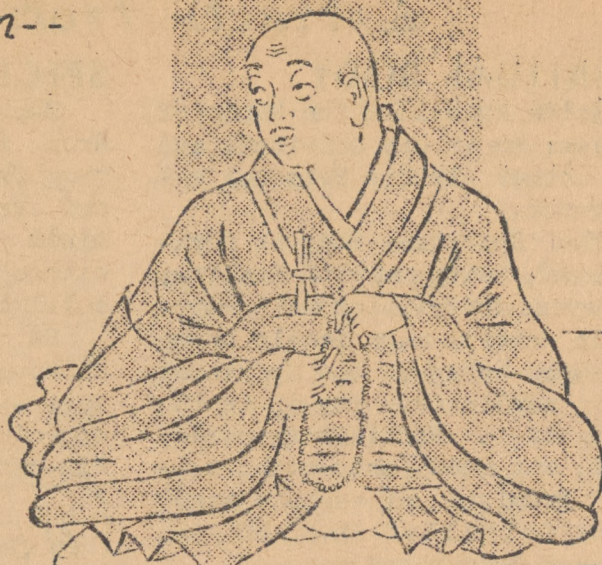
To Shinran the Nembutsu that is to say, the repetition of "Namu-amida-butsu"--is simply an expression of gratitude for the Grace of the All-loving Father, Amida Nyorai. It is not any service rendered in order to obtain Salvation but an act of praise offered, whenever one feels inclined to do so.

This idea, at first sight, seems to contradict or clash with Honen's teaching; but when thoroughly considered, it will

Honen Shonin--

Honen Shonin (1133-1212), as a priest, he called himself Genku, compounded from the names of his two teachers, Genko and Eiku.

Honen, it is said, recited the Nembutsu not less than 60,000 times daily.



be seen to be in perfect agreement with it, because in the kernel of Honen's Nembutsu is imbedded that earnest Faith in Amida without which one can never be saved from the life of suffering.

Honen said: "The staying in the House of Birth and Death is caused by doubt, while entry into the City of Nirvana is due to Faith.

Therefore he taught that the repeating of the Nembutsu was not an act by which one could be saved but an outward expression of Faith itself which was the only means of Salvation.

NEAR TO AMIDA

That person who has Faith and observes the practice of the Nembutsu is always near to

Amida, who sees and listens to Him, and knowing His noble wishes will use Him in any capacity for the carrying out of His great purpose and plan.

Amida Nyorai receives anyone who turns to Him and confesses his sins.

Through the Nembutsu, therefore, anyone, whether man, woman or child, learned or illiterate, can accomplish with certainty the noble desire to attain Buddhahood.

Thus, even in the period of degeneration so far removed from Buddha's own time, the True Religion leaves out none of the three phases of the formula: namely, Doctrine, Amida's Will; Practice, the Nembutsu, and Attainment, Rebirth in the Pure Land.

*Extracts From Shinran's Work***SPIRITUAL BODY**

Amida Nyorai has two kinds of bodies; one is His Spiritual and the other is His Personal embodiment.

The Spiritual Body is formless and, being one with Reality, is beyond description and thought.

In order to make itself known to human beings, the Spiritual Body manifested itself in the form of a Bodhisattva named, Hozo, who made forty-eight solemn Promises of various kinds to be fulfilled when He had reached Buddhahood.

In one of these Promises, Hozo declared that His Light would be Boundless and His Life infinite.

These promises were realized by Hozo, the Bodhisattva; and He became the Buddha, whom Vasubandhu, i.e., Seshin in Japanese, praised as "The Tathagata of Boundless Light radiating unobstructedly in the Universe."

The Personal Body of Amida Nyorai is also called the Body of Reward on account of its being the fulfillment of Divine Promises.

FATHER AND MOTHER

Amida Nyorai declares Himself to be the Father and Mother of all human beings. Therefore we should believe that we, all of us, are His children.

SPECIAL PIETY

Suppose there are seven children in a family and one of them falls ill. Then the father and mother devote their whole minds to the patient although they love all their children equally.

So it is with Amida Nyorai. Although He loves all human beings without discrimination, He especially takes pity on the sin-stricken ones.

Hozo--

Long ago, there was a Bhikkhu named Dharmakara, the future Amida (Japanese, Hozo or Sojizai Butsu; Sanskrit, Lokeshvaraputra).

He made a series of vows to save the human race, the gist of them being that he would not accept Buddhahood, which was due him in virtue of the merits acquired by his unselfish exertions continued through innumerable births, except under certain conditions.

He is considered a being without beginning, end, or limits, and rebirth in His Paradise may be attained anywhere in this world by the awakening of love and faith in him.

TWO GIFTS

There are two gifts which Amida Nyorai bestows: one which relates to our journey to the Land of Bliss, and other which concerns our return to this dense Forest of Birth and Death.

The first gift is bestowed in order to enable us to enter Paradise and be reunited with Him, hence Amida Nyorai endows us with all the merits which He Himself has accumulated to attain Buddhahood.

By the second gift He endows us with a marvellous Power, so that we may aid Him in His own Holy Work by reincarnating ourselves in this world over and over again in order to save our fellow-beings from the suffering of Birth and Death.

FAITHLESS?

One who learns of the Divine Will of Amida Nyorai cannot go through the experience without believing in it. The moment one believes and obeys with all his heart, one is filled by Amida with an abundance of precious Grace.

INVITATION

Upon full reflection it seems to me that Sakyamuni encourages me to go forth from this world and Amida Nyorai invites me to come to Paradise. How could I hesitate when I hear such encouragement and invitation?

I will be obedient to the words of Sakyamuni and Amida

all my life, and at the moment of quitting this sin-stained body, I shall enter the Promised Land and enjoy ever-lasting Bliss.

DISCIPLE MORITSUNA

One of Shinran's disciple was Moritsuna, a warrior under the Minamoto Yoritomo banner.

One day Moritsuna thought, "Being now advanced in age, I wonder how soon I shall reach the end of my life. When I reflect on my deeds during my life in this warlike age, I tremble with fear of the inevitable Judgement in the next life, wondering what may be my doom."

He longed for a teacher who would help him and when he learned of Shinran Shonin, he turned to him for advice.

SHINRAN ADVICES

Shinran listened to Moritsuna with deep sympathy and said:

"Your load of sin is so heavy that by your own effort you can do nothing. You would reap what you yourself have sown but for the Divine Power of Amida.

Yield yourself to His Will, and He will take you into His care and save you from all suffering in the life to come as well as in the present.

"Whenever you may breathe your last in this world, the next moment you will find yourself in the Amida's Land of Bliss. How blessed will that be!

"In gratitude you should

12 praise Him by repeating His Name -- 'Namu-amida-butsu'-- at any time, in any place, or in any wise."

CHAIN SNAPPED

Gautama Buddha arranged eighty-four thousand gates of diverse Teachings by which to enable all human beings to accomplish the destruction of their ignorance and Karma and effort thereof.

But not one of these gateways does surpass the Power of Amida's Holy Name, that is "Namu-amida-butsu," which, once recited, completely snaps the chain of sin even as a sharp sword cuts with a single stroke.

WAY TO SALVATION

Amida, Our Father, leads us unto Salvation by means of His Holy Name. So, when we hear it with our ears and repeat it with our lips, its Boundless Merits penetrates our spirit and becomes the seed of Buddhahood.

RIGHT AIM

On whomsoever hears His Holy Name, believes and rejoices in it, Amida Nyorai bestows His own Infinite Merits. Then since his destination is the Land of Bliss, wherein he will be born, he will never swerve from his aim.

QUALIFIED ONES

Even though the whole world be ablaze, he who passes through

it and hears the Holy Name will thereby be qualified to attain Buddhahood in the next life.

DIVINE FAVOR

Those who repeat Amida's Holy Name will receive in this earthly life the Divine Favor that is immeasurable.

The sin which causes transmigration in the world of Birth and Death will be exterminated and misfortune and untimely death avoided.

PROTECTION

Recite Amida's Holy Name with your trustful heart, for Kwannon and Daiseishi (Avalokiteshvara and Mahasthamapratna Bodhisattvas) will, as the shadow follows the substance, always accompany you with a host of Bodhisattvas to protect you from evil spirits.

Daiseishi--

Daiseishi (Sanskrit, Mahasthamapratna; Chinese, Ta Shi Chih) is said to be the Arhat Maudgalyayana deified. According to the Japanese tradition he was incarnated in Honen. His name alludes to strength.

In art he is represented as attending on Amida with Kwannon and with them he visits the deathbeds of the faithful and welcomes the dying to Paradise.

A VOW

Before His attainment of Buddhahood, Amida Nyorai made a vow that He would receive into Paradise all those who should hear His Holy Name and believe in Him with their whole heart.

So no matter whether they be poor or rich, ignorant or learned, virtuous or sinful, observing or transgressing the Law, those who are transformed by reciting His Holy Name will be changed from the lowest into the highest state of being,

even as a stone is changed into gold. 13

RECEPTION

Whenever a person on this earth determines to recite Amida's Holy Name, there arises in the Happy Land of the West a new stem of Lotus which will receive him on its blossoms, when he, having never ceased to practice the Nembutsu, comes at last, to the close of his days on earth.

CONCERNING FAITH

ATTAINMENT

"Anuttara-samyaku-sambodhi"--the Unsurpassed Perfect Wisdom of Buddha--is attained through Faith. Although there are a great many ways by which to attain it, they are all contained in the Faith of Amida Nyorai.

WHOLEHEARTEDNESS

By Faith is meant the whole-hearted acceptance of the Message by which our ears have heard and the eyes of our soul have seen.

TRUE POSSESSION

He who hears the Vow of Amida to save all beings by virtue of His sole Power and doubts it not, is said to possess True Faith in Him.

ENTER IN PEACE

It is doubt and unbelief which cause one to return over and

over again to the House of Birth and Death; but through Faith we enter into the Peace of the Eternal City called Nirvana.

EMBRACEMENT

To us, Gautama Buddha and Amida Nyorai appear like a father and mother, full of compassion. That we may embrace the priceless Faith, they have taken many and varied means to attract and persuade us.

DIFFICULT

To believe in Amida's Divine Will and practice the Nembutsu is hard for unbelievers, proud souls and evil doers. It is the hardest of all things to do; and nothing is more difficult, indeed.

FALSE FAITH

There are three signs by which we can recognize a false

14 Faith.

First of all, it is insincere and therefore wavering, one moment existing and the next disappearing.

Secondly, it is not wholehearted, for it is undecided.

Thirdly, it does not last all through life, for other thoughts intervene to prevent its continuance.

These three aspects hang together one upon another.

As Faith is not sincere it is undecided; and being undecided, it neither lasts long nor continues steadfast.

Or, as Faith is prevented from continuing, it is not wholehearted; and as it is not wholehearted, it now exists and then disappears.

Contrary to these are the three proofs of True Faith, which justify the practice of the Nembutsu.

REUNION

Having reached the highest rank of Bodhisattva, Maitreya by his own effort attains undissolvable Wisdom; and when his present life in Tusita-dova ends and his next life dawns with glory in this lower world, he will attain Perfect Illumination.

The soul who practices the Nembutsu with an undissolvable heart of Faith, and thereby crosses the Ocean of Birth and Death, will attain, when the last day of his life closes, Great Nirvana, to be reunited

Maitreya--



Maitreya (Japanese, Miroku) is a Bodhisattva next to Bud-dha, in rank. He is believed to reside now in Tusita, a heavenly world, and expected to appear on earth to take the place of Shakyamuni after the lapse of several million years.

with Amida Nyorai.

Therefore the man of Faith is said to resemble Maitreya.

TWO THINGS ESSENTIAL

There are two things that are essential to Faith:

First is to be convinced of our own sinfulness; from the bondage of evil deeds we possess no means of emancipation ourselves.

Second is to throw our helpless soul wholly upon the Divine Power of Amida Nyorai in the firm belief that His Forty-eight Vows were for the express purpose of saving all being who should put their trust in Him without the least doubt of fear. Such souls will be born surely into His Pure Land.

ASK NO QUESTIONS

Ask not, "How could Amida receive me into His Pure Land, seeing that I am so vile and sinful?"

For it is a matter of fact that there is none of us who possesses a complete set of germs of worldly passions, sinful lusts, and evil deeds.

But the compassionate Power of Amida is so infinitely great that He can and will translate us into His Land if only we are willing to entrust ourselves wholly unto Him.

Neither should you say, on the other hand: "I am good hearted enough that I am sure

to be born into the Pure Land." 15

For that Pure Land can never be reached so long as we rely in the least upon our own power of merits.

ERANDA SEED

King Ajatashatru who usurped the throne by starving his father, King Bimbisara, to death in prison and was instructed and converted by Lord Buddha said:

"O Blessed One, I see in the world a poisonous, foul smelling eranda tree grow from an eranda seed; but never have I seen a fragrant chandana tree grow from an eranda seed.

"But now for the first time I see a chandana grow from an eranda seed! What is the eranda seed? It is my own self. What is the chandana tree? It is a Faith rootless but imbedded in my heart. I say rootless, because it was not from the outset that I knew how to revere you, Buddha.

"I did not believe your Teachings; nor did I enter your Order; so there was no possibility of my Faith growing.

"O Blessed One, had I not come to you to receive instruction, I should have suffered dreadful pains in Hell, forever and ever."

PURE LAND

YOUR HOME

My brothers, I advice you, one and all, to turn to Amida

Nyorai with your whole heart and set your faces towards His Pure Land of Bliss.

16 When asked, "Where is your home?" you should answer that it is a seat which, beautifully adorned with jewels, arises out of a Lotus pond in Paradise.

JOURNEY'S END

Come! Let us start for the Pure Land. This evil world is not the place to remain any longer.

In our past lives we have migrated through the six worlds (heavenly gods, men asuras-warrior like gods, animals, pretas--hungry demons, and beings in Hell), passing from one state of existence to another; and nowhere have we found happiness; but it has been only sorrow always.

Therefore we ardently desire to enter the Eternal City of Nirvana, when our present life closes.

NO RANKS

In the Pure Land which Amida Nyorai has founded in fulfillment of His Great Vows, there are no more stages or ranks to be gone through. For those who are born therein attain the full Enlightenment at a bound when their souls are received into that Pure Land.

RAYS OF LIGHT

Each Lotus flower in the Pure Land radiates many thousand myriad rays of Light, and in every ray a Buddha appears. Each Buddha, bright as gold,



sends forth a hundred thousand rays of Light to the worlds in ten different directions, and always preaches the Supreme Law in order to lead all beings along the Way to Buddhahood.

TAKE REFUGE

Take refuge in Amida Nyorai, whose Power can make all beings equal unto Himself.

Souls in the Paradise who are called Shravaksa (one who hears the oral Teachings of Buddha), Bodhisattvas, devas or heavenly gods, and men (according to their former births), are equally bright in Wisdom. And their features are also equal in beauty, with which nothing on earth can be compared.

The reason is that each of them takes Nirvana--Absolute Reality--as his own embodiment, even as Amida Himself does.

NO SUPERSTITION

Those who believe in Amida Nyorai and practice the Nembutsu take refuge in the Buddha, in the Dharma and in the Sangha.

They do not follow any other religious Teachings, nor worship devas or gods.

They neither look for good nor observe ill "luck" on certain days or at certain hours of the day.

WAYS TO FREEDOM

Set yourselves free from all wrong thoughts so that you may comprehend the Right Teachings of Gautama Buddha.

You will then acquire ten kinds of merits.

First of all, you will become a man of gentle spirit and of good heart.

Second, believing in the Law of Karma, you will not commit any kind of crime or sin, even though you may be threatened with death.

Third place, you will reverence the Three Treasures, namely, the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha; but you should never believe in other gods.

Fourthly, with your heart and mind possessed by right thoughts, you will take no account of either good or bad fortune with regards to the year, the month or the day.

In the fifth place, you will not migrate through the

infernal worlds.

But (sixthly) you will become wise and good and be valued by the people of intelligence.

Seventhly, you will not cling to worldly things, but will pursue the Holy Path.

Eighthly, you will free yourselves from the prejudices both of affirmation and negation as regards to the future life, and will believe that all existence depends upon the Law of Causality.

Ninthly, you will be in company with those who hold the Right Faith and observe the Right Practices.

Tenthly, you will be born in Amida Nyorai's Pure Land of Bliss.

SHED OLD SKIN

There was a heliocoid-haired Brahmana called Upasena, who practiced austerities with two hundred and fifty of his disciples.

Having heard that his three uncles, Uruvilva-Kasyapa, Gayakasyapa and Nadi-kasyapa, had gone to the great Shramana, that disciples, and that all of them had been converted, becoming Bhikshus, Upasena was greatly astonished and he besought his three uncles to revoke their conversion.

Seeing that they had their heads tonsured and wore kesa robes, he said: "My dear uncles, you have worshipped Fire and

18 practiced austerities for so many years, but now all will end in nothing. Is it not foolish to throw away your own religion as lightly as a snake sheds its old skin?"

Thus questioned, the three Kasyāpas replied: "Dear nephew, in former years we certainly did worship Fire and practice austerities; but finding that this was not right, we have wholeheartedly renounced our former religion, exactly as a snake does throw off its old skin."

FALSE LEAD

An evidence of the increasing degeneracy of the world is visible in the religious life of both priests and laymen of the present time. They are Buddhists in outward appearance, but in reality followers of false religion.

How sorrowful it is that they look for "lucky days," worship other gods on earth and heaven, indulge in fortune-telling and practice "charms."

DAILY CONDUCT

THREE VICES

Outwardly we should never assume to be either wise, good, refined or pure; because our inner minds are full of deceit. Our souls are simply a compound of greed, anger and deceit; and we try various schemes to deceive our neighbors.

We are ill-disposed by nature and resemble poisonous snakes. Hence, neither our thoughts nor actions can be regarded as sincere or true; for their root is both impure and false.

To enter Amida's Paradise, with thoughts and actions of impure and false nature, it would be quite impossible.

MISUNDERSTANDING

There is a person who acts as he should not act, says what he should not say, and thinks thoughts that he should not

think, although he regards himself as destined to be born into the Pure Land.

This happens because he misunderstands my Teachings.

As we are always under the influence of the Three Poisons, it is unavoidable that through greed we long for worldly things, through anger we become jealous of other's welfare, and through ignorance we think thoughts that we ought not to think.

But it is absurd to offer excuses for the evil deeds which we have wilfully committed, whether by thoughts, words, or deeds, presuming that Amida's Power is not in the least influenced by human evil.

Anyone who fails to realize his own sinfulness as well as the evils of the world, can never properly understand the Divine Purpose of Amida Nyorai

Kwannon--



Kwannon (Sanskrit, Avalokiteshvara), a Goddess of Mercy and Pity, is said to have assumed thirty-three forms, adapted to save the various types of beings.

or His Will.

Therefore it is very much to be doubted whether he will be received into His Pure Land in the next life, even though he practices the Nembutsu like a true believer.

THE VOICE

Even if authority should treat you unjustly and forbid the practice of the Nembutsu, you should all the more throw

your soul upon Amida Nyorai and practice to pray. 19

Let the Nembutsu which you practice for expression of your heart-felt gratitude for the Graces you receive from Amida Nyorai serve also to be a voice raised to pray and implore Him that the whole world may enjoy everlasting peace, and that the Buddha's Teachings may ever be widely spread.

PROVIDENCE

I am distressed to hear that the practice of the Nembutsu is forbidden in the part where you live in, and your environment now seems narrowed, if not altogether intolerable to you.

Probably the Nembutsu has lost its power to flourish at the place. That, however, is not a lamentable thing; because it is not upon those who obstruct its propagation that the Law of Karma will bring on its inevitable consequences.

The spread of the Nembutsu is caused not by human power but by Divine Providence. Therefore you should never try to avail yourselves of the power of any man of high influence to diffuse it in defiance or any malicious authority.

When you find the door closed against spreading the Nembutsu in one place, you had best move onto another without resistance and pray with all your hearts that the persecutors themselves might believe in the Message.

*Maxims Preserved by Disciples***TYPES OF PEOPLE**

Two kinds of people exist in this world: namely, those who place Faith in the Pure Land Doctrine and those who discredit it.

As it is written in the Great Sukhavativyuha Sutra, there are those who in their former lives performed meritorious deeds and now, in this present life, hear the Doctrine of the Pure Land and believe in it; while others who have no previous good record do not believe it, even though they happen to hear it.

HARBOR NO DOUBTS

If, therefore, you are being instructed by a teacher and do not harbor the least doubt about the Doctrine, you may rest assured that the good you wrought in your previous existence has now gloriously matured.

LIGHT-RAYS

The ripening of the good seed sown is caused by the spiritual Light - rays of Amida Nyorai, which unceasingly shine upon you. But for His Light you could never become a believer.

FEAR NO EVIL

I lack no good and fear no evil, because I believe in Amida's Divine Will, which is the

highest good and cannot be obstructed by any evil. Nevertheless, most people think that without good deeds perfectly performed and without their deadly sins atoned for, they could not enter the Pure Land.

NO HEED

They are not quite right. If we can cease to do evil and begin to practice good deeds whole-heartedly, with the desire to be born into the Pure Land, Amida Nyorai has nothing to do with us.

HARD TO PERFORM

How pitiful it is that while various crimes and sins are committed in spite of our efforts to the contrary, good deeds are always so difficult to perform.

PLACE TRUST

Amida Nyorai bestows the Highest Good upon those who give no thought to their own goodness or badness, but turn to Him simply, trustfully with obedient hearts.

CONTRARY

Some people ask, "If bad men are received into the Pure Land, how more so good men?" This thought, however, is contrary to Amida's Divine Will and to

the Teachings of Gautama Buddha.

PEOPLE CONCERNED

It is not the saints but the common people whom Amida Nyorai sought to bless with His Highest Good. Therefore, if the common people failed to enter the Pure Land to be welcomed as His honored guest, His Divine Will and Power would be in vain.

CHIEF OBJECTS

Of the common people, again, not good but bad men are the chief objects of His Saving Power.

CORRECT TO SAY

Therefore, it is correct to say, "Good men are received into the Pure Land; how much more so bad men?"

FELLOW-PILGRIMS

I have no "disciples," because I have nothing of my own to impart to anyone else. What I can tell people is simply about Amida Nyorai who bestows upon man the innumerable merits accumulated by Himself.

So, those who receive my instruction are not my "disciples" but fellow-pilgrims who travel with me, my brothers in Amida's Great Family.

WAY TO PURE LAND

The practice of the Nembutsu is the only way leading to the Pure Land--the Way obstructed by naught.

Why? Because all the good Spirits in heaven and on earth revere and at all times protect those who believe in Amida Nyorai, while every evil spirit flies away before them.

And also crimes and sins have no power to cause any evil effect upon them.

CONDEMNED

Gautama Buddha has said that the Doctrine of the Pure Land may not be believed by everybody; and some persons even reject it with slander.

This saying of Buddha is now verified by the fact that although some people condemn the Doctrine of the Pure Land, I myself believe it with all my heart.

If there were no one to assail it, you would indeed doubt whether the Doctrine of the Pure Land is at all trustworthy.

As some believe it, so others condemn it; but you can rely upon it, and be assured in mind, that your own entrance into the Pure Land will never fall short of accomplishment.

KARMA

Suppose I were to instruct you to kill a thousand men in order that you might be born in the Pure Land.

If everything in human life were to be caused by your own free will, you will commit that homicide as I bade you. But you could not commit such a horrible

22 crime, though hitherto you have always obeyed my instruction.

Why is it? It is because your Karma does not permit you to do so evil a thing. If your Karma were to lead you to kill a thousand men, you would dare do so, however hard you might strive to the contrary.

PUZZLED

My dear Yuien. You ask me the reason why you are not in an ecstasy of joy despite all the great Spiritual happiness to be acquired by the Practice of the Nembutsu, and also why you do not hasten to enter the Pure Land.

I, Shinran, also have ever puzzled over the same questions. It seems to me that our entrance into the Pure Land is assured by the fact that we cannot be in an ecstasy of joy, although we have come upon that great Spiritual Treasure of the Nembutsu.

DEPRESSED

We are always under the power of Illusion which deprives us of what we might enjoy. When, however, we remind ourselves that those who are full of illusions and ever suffer from delusions are chief objects of Amida Nyorai's Pity, we shall rely more and more upon His Divine Will which is so intended in our behalf.

It is also through influence of Illusion that we do not hasten



Sakyamuni Buddha, once Prince Siddhattha of the Sakya clan, found Enlightenment in the Dharma -- the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path.

to enter the Pure Land, but, on the contrary, feel somewhat depressed at the thought of death, when we are ill.

OLD HOUSE

The old House of Suffering wherein we have dwelt throughout our existence is hard to quit, while the Land of Bliss into which we were not born is scarcely longed for.

But when our last hour comes and we depart, we shall surely

find ourselves in the Pure Land; for Amida Nyorai is especially compassionate to those who do not make haste to enter His Pure Land.

Therefore, we should rely more and more firmly upon His Divine Will.

If we are so delighted with the great Spiritual Happiness that we get into an ecstasy, or if we expect to enter the Pure Land at once, then we may doubt whether we are under an Illusion,

which, if so, causes Amida Nyorai to take compassion on us. 23

DIVINE PROMISE

In my opinion, it was for the benefit of my own self that Amida Nyorai meditated for five long "kalpas" during His Bodhi-sattvahood to make His Divine Promise for the Salvation of all beings. How grateful I am that Amida Nyorai has set about His Work to deliver me from the evil Karma from which I suffer!

SHINRAN COMPOSED

A Psalter: 'PRAISE TO AMIDA'

(Note: Shinran Shonin composed a Psalter which is often heard in many Buddhist homes. The opening stanzas are in praise to Amida.)

"Ten 'kalpas' of time have rolled away since Amida attained Buddhahood. He ever sheds His Boundless Light in this dark world for the blind soul

"Take refuge in Amida, the True Illuminator, whose Light of Wisdom is immeasurable. Of all various forms of being, it shines upon, there is none on whom Faith does not dawn.

"Take refuge in Amida, who enlightens all without exception, for His Emancipation Light is boundless. Whomsoever it touches is freed from erring views of affirmation

or negation.

"Take refuge in Amida, the inconceivable One, whose Light resembles clouds and air. As air penetrates all things so His Light pervades the inmost soul; and as clouds moisten all things with rain and dew, so His Light refreshes every being in withering spirits.

"Take refuge in Amida, the Ultimate Reliance, whose Pure Light is set free from the bondage of sin and evil.

"Take refuge in Amida, the One who deserves to be worshipped. His Light shines so brilliantly that He is rightly named 'the King of Light;' for He dispels the darkness of the three infernal worlds and delivers the souls therein from suffering."

Supplementary Versions PURSUE NATURAL LIFE

HUMAN NATURE

Shinran thought "to observe the strict rules of the Order was only possible in the life time of Sakyamuni himself, or during the period immediately following him."

This age being removed so far and his personal influence having waned, a literal observance of those rules is all but impossible for any inferior person like myself.

Human nature, which in me is so deeply ingrained, of necessity craves for family life and for society. To suppress these human instincts and to live aloof from the world seems as unnatural as to remove the eyes and nose from one's face. Natural life is what I ought to pursue."

HONEN'S VERSION

Honen Shonin himself led a celibate and vegetarian life for according to the ancient Buddhist rules, "the Simple Way of Salvation by Faith" which he believed and taught demanded no one to observe the same monastic usage strictly.

He said: "He who trust Amida Myorai with his whole heart and calls on His Name repeatedly will be saved, no matter what may be his condition; whether

he be wise or ignorant, good or bad, rich or poor, young or old, a monk or a layman,--there will be no difference."

FURTHER INSTRUCTION

Honen further taught that--

"The way to get on in this world should be such as you find most convenient for practicing the 'Nembutsu', that is to say, the repetition of Amida's Holy Name. If you find this practice hard in your celibate life you had better get married. If it is inconvenient to do so in matrimony, you had better remain a celibate. If home surroundings hinder your practice, then you should become a pilgrim and wander on from place to place. If you find it difficult to travel about, then you must perforce remain at home.

"Your mode of life should, after all, be such as will enable you to practice the 'Nembutsu'."

HONEN ALSO SAID

If one who eats fish can be reborn in the Pure Land, even a gluttonous person may be. If one who eats no fish can be born there, then a monkey can also attain that birth.

Whether a fish-eater or not,

he who calls on Amida's Name will, I am sure, be born in the Pure Land.

For, truly, Salvation does not depend on the way in which our earthly life is sustained; it results entirely from our Faith and practice thereof.

SHINRAN'S EXPLANATION

One day when Shinran Shonin was eating fish, a little boy persistently asked him why he wore his "kesa" when he was eating fish while others took it off.

Shinran replied: "My boy, your question is well put, and I will try to answer you.

"You see all living creatures instinctively desire to enjoy their lives. So that to kill one and then devour it should be an idea intolerable to any human beings; but how much more so for

the priests whom Gautama Buddha 25 forbade so to do?

"But I am ashamed to confess that I am accustomed to eat both meat and fish after the manner of laymen, and therefore I feel I should do something to benefit those creatures in return for the enjoyment and nourishment which they afford me.

"For that purpose I wear my holy 'kesa' while I dine, in the belief that its mystic power will be exercised upon the creatures which I eat so that they will, while in the course of their transmigration, be uplifted to a plane of life higher for the benefit thus received."

(This story purports to indicate the attitude which we should assume toward the creatures upon which we feed and thereby sustain our lives.)"

NO OTHER WAY

A REPLY

During the vigorous attacks made by Nichiren who denounced the Amidist principles of teaching, Shinran's disciples became much alarmed and they went to Shinran for advice.

Shinran advised his followers:

"You have risked your lives to come and see me from distant places, because you wished to learn the right way to your birth in the Pure Land. If you expect me to teach you any other way than the Nembutsu or any secret doctrine, you are greatly

mistaken. You had then better visit Mt. Hiei or Nara where you would find many scholars of high repute to meet your expectations.

"As for myself, I, Shinran, only believe that Salvation by Amida Nyorai lies in repeating His Holy Name. So was I taught by my good teacher, Honen Shonin.

"Whether the Nembutsu leads to the Pure Land or to Hell, I dare not question or answer myself. But supposing that I am deceived by Honen Shonin, and that I am to go to Hell for

26 saying the Nembutsu, I shall never regret.

"If one who is destined to attain Buddhahood by virtue of his meritorious deeds, should happen to go to Hell, because he repeats the Nembutsu, he would be very much grieved.

"But as for me, Hell is fixed for my abode anyhow, because I am incapable of any noble deed meriting a reward. However, it happens most for-

tunately that, for the inferior person like myself that Nembutsu is provided as the only Way of Salvation; this Teaching has been handed down to me from Amida Nyorai successively through Gautama Buddha, Zendo and Honen.

"Then, how could my teachings be false? Thus do I believe. Now, whether to hold to the Nembutsu or to abandon it, take your own choice."

EQUAL FAITH

SHINRAN DECLARES

During a dispute on the amount of Faith one possessed, Shinran said:

"If I were to declare that my scholarship was as high as that of our teacher, I should be far too conceited and irreverent to him.

"As for the Faith in Amida Nyorai, our teacher has oftentimes said that it is not an outcome of one's own wisdom, but it is bestowed upon us by our All-loving Father.

"My Faith and that of our teacher, therefore, is equally the gift of Amida Nyorai, nowise differing in its essence."

HONEN SUPPORTS

Honen supported Shinran's statement with the following:

"It is in the 'Way of Salvation' through self-effort that Faith differs in one person from another, because one's knowledge on which one's Faith

is based is different in degree from that of others.

"But in the 'Great Way of Salvation through the Divine Power of Amida Nyorai,' all people, good or evil, learned or ignorant, can receive one and the same Faith into their believing souls.

"It is without question that Shinran and myself are equal in Faith. If there is any least difference in Faith, you will never be reborn into that Pure Land which I am destined to enter."

HOLY

Kesa-



TO THE FARMERS

During his pilgrimage through the province of Hitachi, Shinran used to preach to the farmers while they were working.

On one occasion he preached the following discourse:

"My brothers, the rice-seedlings you are now planting will surely produce for you a crop in autumn, if you take care of

them by watering and weeding.

"Even so the Faith in Amida Nyorai planted in your hearts will lead you to the Pure Land, where Enlightenment will manifest itself in full glory. You ought to keep your Faith pure, by rejecting all religious acts not in conformity with the Message, and by simply repeating the Nembutsu with gratitude for His loving-kindness."



OUTDOOR TEMPLE

SET CHURCH

Shinran also expressed his views concerning a set church.

"If I have a temple put up for me to preach in, my words would never go forth throughout the land. Concerned as I am

with other's souls, I must say that wherever the Nembutsu is heard, be it in a nobleman's mansion or in fisherfolk's rush-thatched cottage, there have I my splendid temple in existence."

AMIDA'S POWER ABUSED

IS IT RIGHT?

Abusing of the Amida's Power by some members caused Shinran Shonin to write the following discourse:

"Do you think it right to give a potent drink to the intoxicated, or to take poison willingly because it is taken with an antidote?

"Those who wilfully and consciously commit wrongs

whether in thought, words or deeds, taking advantage of Amida's All-loving Grace; would never be born in His Pure Land, however aloud they might repeat the Nembutsu; because they are neither truly conscious of their own sinfulness nor do they invoke Amida's Power with their whole hearts to set themselves free."

Postlude

In these critical times, the necessity for spiritual elevation has become very evident, especially for the young Buddhists in this country.

Because of the lack of reading materials in English on Buddhisms, particularly of the Shinshu sect, a bold attempt has been made to compile a condensed version of the Rev. Gendo Nakai's book, "Shinran and His Religion of Pure Faith."

The making of this booklet was possible through the kindness of the Rev. Shizuo Kai who loaned us a number of English books on Buddhism and Shinshuism, while the completion was accomplished through the untiring and cooperative efforts of the Rev. Gyodo Kono, Fusako Matsui, Ayako Noguchi and Michiko Kataoka.

If you, the readers, have absorbed even one passage of Shinran Shonin's teachings, the time and effort spent in making this manual would not have been in vain.

--R.A.K.

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