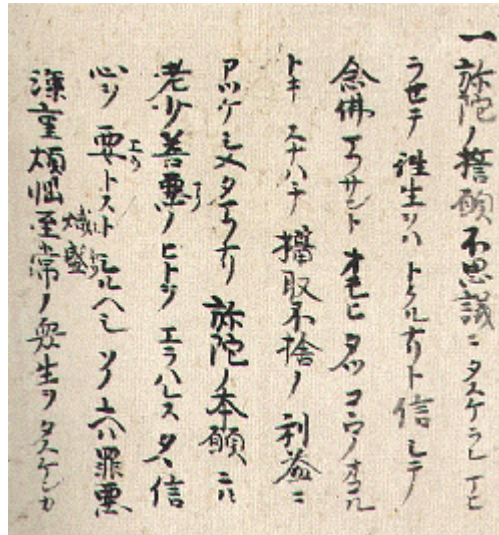


The Tannisho



This work contains the sayings of Shinran (1173-1263), the founder of Jodo Shinshu or Shin Buddhism, which claims the largest following in Japanese Buddhism. Compiled several decades after his death by a disciple named Yui-en, this work consists of 18 sections. The first ten sections are the words of Shinran as remembered by Yui-en, and the next eight, preceded by a special preface, contains points of controversy current among the followers of Shinran. The prologue and epilogue to the 18 sections were written by Yui-en about whom little is known historically.

The *Tannisho* is one of the most widely read works in Japanese Buddhism, known not only as a religious but literary classic. It is impossible to translate such a work into English adequately and fully, but I have attempted to transmit some sense of its flowing style, religious content, and spiritual flavor. Among those who have guided me in my enterprise, I should like to gratefully acknowledge the comments and suggestions offered by two late teachers, Yoshifumi Ueda and Masao Hanada, whose words remain a constant source of inspiration.

Taitetsu Unno
Northampton, Massachusetts
January 1, 1996

Prologue

In reflecting upon my foolish thoughts and thinking of the past and present, I deeply regret that there are views deviating from the true entrusting (*shinjin*) which was taught orally by our late master, and I fear that doubts and confusions

may arise among the followers who come after us. Unless we rely upon a good teacher with whom our karmic destinies are fortunately bound, how can we possibly enter the gate of effortless practice? Do not violate the fundamentals of Other Power by imposing upon it your own interpretations.

Thus have I committed to writing some words of the late Shinran, which still ring clearly in my ears. My sole purpose is to dispel the clouds of doubt in the minds of the practitioners with the same aspiration.

{Section:}

I

When the thought of saying the Nembutsu erupts from deep within, having entrusted ourselves to the inconceivable power of Amida's vow which saves us, enabling us to be born in the Pure Land, we receive at that very moment the ultimate benefit of being grasped never to be abandoned.

Amida's Primal Vow does not discriminate between the young and old, good and evil - true entrusting alone is essential. The reason is that the Vow is directed to the person burdened with the weight of karmic evil and burning with the flames of blind passion.

Thus, in entrusting ourselves to the Primal Vow, no other form of good is necessary, for there is no good that surpasses the Nembutsu. And evil need not be feared, for there is no evil, which can obstruct the working of Amida's Primal Vow.

II

I believe that the reason you have come here, crossing over more than ten provinces at the risk of your lives, is solely to ascertain the path that leads to birth in the Pure Land. But if you suspect that I know ways other than the Nembutsu to attain birth, or that I am versed in the scriptures connected with them, you are greatly mistaken. If that be the case, there are many eminent scholars in the monasteries of Nara and Mt. Hiei, so you should go see them and ask them in detail about the way to attain birth in the Pure Land.

As for myself, Shinran, I simply take to heart the words of my dear teacher, Honen, "Just say the Nembutsu and be saved by Amida," and entrust myself to the Primal Vow. Besides this, there is nothing else.

I really do not know whether the Nembutsu may be the cause for my birth in the Pure Land, or the act that shall condemn me to hell. But I have nothing to regret, even if I should have been deceived by my teacher, and, saying the Nembutsu, fall into hell. The reason is that if I were capable of realizing Buddhahood by other religious practices and yet fell into hell for saying the Nembutsu I might have dire regrets for having been deceived. But since I am absolutely incapable of any religious practice, hell is my only home.

If Amida's Primal Vow is true, Shakyamuni's teaching cannot be false. If the Buddha's teaching is true, Shantao's commentaries cannot be false. If Shantao's commentaries are true, how can Honen's words be empty of meaning? If Honen's words are true, what I, Shinran, say cannot be meaningless. In brief, such is the true entrusting of this foolish one. Now, whether you accept the Nembutsu, entrusting yourself to it, or reject it, that is your own decision.

III

Even the good person attains birth in the Pure Land, how much more so the evil person.

But the people of the world constantly say, even the evil person attains birth, how much more so the good person. Although this appears to be sound at first glance, it goes against the intention of the Primal Vow of Other Power. The reason is that since the person of self-power, being conscious of doing good, lacks the thought of entrusting the self completely to Other Power, he or she is not the focus of the Primal Vow of Amida. But when self-power is turned over and entrusting to Other Power occurs, the person attains birth in the land of True Fulfillment.

The Primal Vow was established out of deep compassion for us who cannot become freed from the bondage of birth-and-death through any religious practice, due to the abundance of blind passion. Since its basic intention is to effect the enlightenment of such an evil one, the evil person who is led to true entrusting by Other Power is the person who attains birth in the Pure Land. Thus, even the good person attains birth, how much more so the evil person!

IV

There is a difference in compassion between the Path of Sages and the Path of Pure Land. The compassion in the Path of Sages is expressed through pity,

sympathy, and care for all beings, but rare is it that one can help another as completely as one desires.

The compassion in the Path of Pure Land is to quickly attain Buddhahood, saying the Nembutsu, and with the true heart of compassion and love save all beings completely as we desire.

In this life no matter how much pity and sympathy we may feel for others, it is impossible to help another as we truly wish; thus our compassion is inconsistent and limited. Only the saying of Nembutsu manifests the complete and never ending compassion, which is true, real, and sincere.

V

I, Shinran, have never even once uttered the Nembutsu for the sake of my father and mother. The reason is that all beings have been fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, in the timeless process of birth-and-death. When I attain Buddhahood in the next birth, each and everyone will be saved.

If it were a good accomplished by my own powers, then I could transfer the accumulated merits of Nembutsu to save my father and mother. But since such is not the case, when we become free from self-power and quickly attain the enlightenment of the Pure Land, we will save those bound closest to us through transcendental powers, no matter how deeply they are immersed in the karmic sufferings of the six realms and four modes of birth.

VI

It is utterly unthinkable that among the followers of single-hearted Nembutsu practice there are arguments about "my disciples" and "other's disciples."

As for myself, Shinran, I do not have a single disciple. If I could make others say the Nembutsu through my own devices, they would be my disciples. But how arrogant it is to claim as disciples those who live the Nembutsu through the sole working of Amida's compassion.

If the karmic condition for us is to come together, we shall be together; but if the karmic condition for us is to be separated, we shall be separated. How absurd it is that some people assert that if one goes against a teacher and says the Nembutsu under another, that person cannot attain birth in the Pure Land. Are

they saying that they will take back the entrusting, which is a gift from Amida as if it belonged to them? Impossible is it that such a thing should happen.

When we live according to the truth of "made to become so by itself," we shall know gratitude to the Buddha and to our teachers.

VII

In the practice of Nembutsu the person opens up the great path of unobstructed freedom. The reason is that the gods of heaven and earth bow before the practitioner of true entrusting, and those of the world of demons and rival ways cannot obstruct such a person. The consequences of karmic evil cannot bear fruit, nor does any form of good equal the Nembutsu. Thus, it is called the great path of unobstructed freedom.

VIII

The saying of Nembutsu is neither a religious practice nor a good act. Since it is practiced without any calculation, it is "non-practice." Since it is also not a good created by my calculation, it is "non-good." Since it is nothing but Other Power, completely free of self-power, it is neither a religious practice nor a good act on the part of the practitioner.

IX

"Although I say the Nembutsu, I rarely experience joyful happiness nor do I have the desire to immediately go to the Pure Land. What should be done about this?" I asked. Then he responded, "I, Shinran, have been having the same question also, and now you, Yui-en, have the same thought."

"When I carefully consider the matter, my birth in the Pure Land is settled without doubt for the very reason that I do not rejoice about that which I should be bursting with joy. It is the working of blind passion, which suppresses the heart that would rejoice and prevents its fullest expression. All this the Buddha already knew and called us foolish beings filled with blind passion. Thus, when we realize that the compassionate Vow of Other Power is for beings like ourselves, the Vow becomes even more reliable and dependable."

"The working of blind passion also causes us not to want to go to the Pure land and makes us feel uneasy worrying about death when we become even slightly ill. Impossible it seems to leave this old house of agitation where we have wandered aimlessly since the beginning of time, nor can we long for the Pure Land of peace, which we have yet to know. This is due to blind passion so truly powerful and overwhelming. But no matter how reluctant we may be, when our life in this world comes to an end, beyond our control, then for the first time we go to the land of Fulfillment. Those who do not want to go immediately are the special concern of true compassion. For this very reason the Vow of true compassion is completely dependable, and our birth in the Pure Land is absolutely certain."

"If our hearts were filled with joyful happiness and we desired to go swiftly to the Pure Land, we might be misled to think that perhaps we are free of blind passion."

X

The Master Shinran said, "In the Nembutsu no self-working is true-working; it is beyond description, explanation, and conception."

Special Preface

While the master was still living, those who journeyed together with great difficulty to the distant capital with the same aspiration and who, unified in true entrusting, set their hearts on the coming land of Fulfillment, all listened at the same time to his real thoughts. But now I hear that among the countless young and old people who live the Nembutsu, following after them, there are some who frequently express erroneous views never taught by our master. Such groundless views call for careful discussion, which follows.

XI

In meeting unlettered people who say the Nembutsu some people disturb them with such questions as, "Do you say the Nembutsu by entrusting yourself to the inconceivable power of the Vow or to the inconceivable power of the Name?" They fail to clarify the two forms of inconceivable powers and their respective significance. Thus, they confuse the people. We must turn our attention to this matter and carefully consider the connection between the two.

By virtue of the inconceivable power of the Vow, Amida Buddha devised the Name easy to uphold and pronounce and, thereby, promised to take in all who

say the Name. Thus, when we entrust ourselves to the inconceivable power of Amida's compassionate vow which saves us to deliver us from birth-and-death and when we realize that the saying of Nembutsu occurs because of Tathágata's working, we are in accord with the Primal Vow and will be born in the land of Fulfillment, since our own calculation is not involved.

When we entrust ourselves completely to the inconceivable power of the Primal Vow as the heart of the matter, then the inconceivable power of the Name is also naturally found together with it. The inconceivable powers of the Vow and of the Name are therefore one, the slightest difference between the two being nonexistent.

Next, the person who inserts his or her own calculations into the consideration of good and evil, believing that the former helps and the latter hinders birth in the Pure Land, fails to entrust the self to the inconceivable power of the Vow. Rather, such a person strives with effort to achieve birth, claiming the Nembutsu uttered as one's own practice. The person also fails to entrust the self to the inconceivable power of the Name.

However, even though the person fails to entrust the self, he or she will be born in the borderland, the realm of indolence, the castle of doubt, or the palace of womb to be eventually born in the land of Fulfillment by virtue of the Vow, which vowed that unless all beings are saved, Amida will not have attained Buddhahood. All this is due to the inconceivable power of the Name. Since this is also due to the inconceivable power of the Vow, the Vow and the Name are one and the same.

XII

Some people say that those who do not read and study the sutras and commentaries cannot be ascertained of birth in the Pure Land. This view is hardly worthy of serious consideration.

All the sutras, which reveal the essentials of the truth of Other Power simply state: By saying the Nembutsu, entrusting oneself to the Primal Vow, one attains Buddhahood. What further knowledge is required for birth in the Pure Land? Truly, those who are still confused about this should by all means study hard to realize the purpose of the Primal Vow. If the true meaning of the sacred texts is not clearly understood, even though one reads and studies, it is to be pitied.

Since the Name is devised to be easily said by the unlettered who cannot even grasp the basic meaning of the sutras and commentaries, such utterance is called

easy practice. Learning is required in the Path of Sages; therefore, it is called difficult practice. Some people mistakenly pursue knowledge for the sake of fame and profit - their birth in the next life is doubtful, so states an attesting passage.

Today, the people of single-hearted Nembutsu and those of the Path of Sages engage in argument, claiming that one school is superior and the other inferior. Thus, enemies of dharma appear and slandering of dharma becomes rampant. But does this not slander and destroy one's own teaching?

Even if all the other schools together proclaim, "The Nembutsu is for foolish beings; its teaching is shallow and vulgar," you should not object. And instead simply reply, "We are taught that foolish beings of inferior capacity like ourselves, unlettered and ignorant, will be saved by entrusting ourselves to Amida. As we accept this and entrust ourselves, it is the supreme dharma for us, regardless of how vulgar it may seem to people of superior capacity. No matter how superb other teachings may be, if they are beyond our grasp and mastery, we cannot uphold them. Since it is the basic intention of the Buddhas that we shall all together go beyond birth-and-death, you should not hinder us." In this way, if we have no rancor, who would want to hurt us? An attesting passage also states, "Where there are arguments, various kinds of blind passion are awakened; the wise should avoid them."

The late master also said, "The Buddha predicted that there will be people who shall entrust themselves to this dharma, as well as those who shall slander it. I have already been made to entrust myself to the dharma, while there are those who slander it - by this we know that the Buddha's words are true. In fact, we should realize that our birth is even more firmly settled. If, contrary to this, no one denounced the Nembutsu, we might wonder why even though there are believers, there are no slanderers. But this, of course, does not mean that the teaching should become the object of slander. The Buddha taught this because he knew that both believers and slanderers would exist. It was to dispel any doubts that might arise among us.

Is the only purpose of knowledge to defend against criticism and to engage in arguments and debates? If a person studies properly, he or she will come to see more clearly the intention of the Buddha and realize the boundlessness of true compassion. Such a student will teach those who are unsure of birth in the Pure Land because of their defiled nature that the Primal vow does not discriminate between the good and evil, the pure and impure. Only then will knowledge be meaningful.

People who insist that knowledge is essential for the religious life frighten those who live the Nembutsu according to the Primal Vow. Such pedagogues are demons who obstruct the dharma, and they are despised enemies of the Buddha. They not only lack the true entrusting to Other Power but wrongly mislead other people. They should stand in fear lest they go against the teaching of our late master. And they should be filled with remorse for going against the Primal Vow.

XIII

Some people say that those who do not fear committing evil because of the inconceivable power of Amida's Vow are guilty of taking pride in the Primal Vow and, therefore, will not attain birth. This betrays doubt in the Primal Vow and shows a lack of understanding of good and evil as the product of past karma.

Good thoughts arise in our minds due to the effect of past good, and we are made to think and do evil because of the working of karmic evil. The late master said, "We should know that even as trifling a thing as the speck of dust on the tip of a rabbit's hair or a sheep's fleece is the product of past evil karma." At another time he asked me. "Would you agree to anything I say, Yui-en?"

"Of course, I will," I replied.

"Are you sure that you won't disobey me?," he repeated, and when I again agreed, he continued, "Go, then and kill a thousand people and your birth in the Pure Land is settled."

"Even though that is your order," I protested, "and even with the capacity for evil within me, I cannot kill even a single person."

"Then why did you just say that you would not disobey what I, Shinran, said?" And then he went on, "By this we know that if we could act according to our thoughts, we could kill a thousand people for the sake of birth in the Pure Land if so required. We do not kill, not because our thoughts are good but because we do not have the karma to kill even a single person. Yet, even though we do not want to injure anyone, we may be led to kill a hundred or a thousand people."

The gist of this statement is that when we think good thoughts, we think we are good; and when we think evil thoughts, we think we are evil, not realizing fully that it is not these thoughts but the inconceivable power of the Vow that makes our salvation possible.

Once there was a man who fell into wrong views proclaiming that he would intentionally do evil as a way of attaining birth, since the Vow is directed to those who are evil. Thus saying, he committed many evil deeds. When Shinran heard about this, he admonished in a letter, "Do not take poison just because there is an antidote." He made this point to correct such erroneous views, but not at all to say that evil is an obstacle to attaining birth.

Shinran, moreover, said, "If upholding the precepts and maintaining the disciplines are required for true entrusting, how could we ever hope to go beyond birth-and-death? It is only by encountering the Primal Vow that such hopeless beings like ourselves are shown to be prideful and haughty. And yet evil cannot be committed unless it is already within us."

Again, he said, "People who make a living by casting nets or fishing in the seas and rivers, those who sustain themselves by hunting wild life and catching birds in the moors and mountains, and people who pass their lives by trading and cultivating fields are all alike." According to Shinran, "Under the influence of our karmic past we human beings will do anything."

And yet, in recent years people put on the guise of striving on the Nembutsu path. They claim that only good people should say the Nembutsu. Or they post restrictions at gathering places, proclaiming that those who commit certain acts are prohibited from entering. Are these not the sort of people who show outwardly how wise, virtuous, and diligent they are, while inwardly cherishing vanity and falsehood?

Karmic evil committed because of taking pride in the Vow is also an effect of past karma. Thus, leave everything good and evil to the working of karma and single-heartedly entrust yourself to the Primal Vow. Such is the way of Other Power. In *Essentials of Faith Alone* it is said, "To what extent does one know the power of Amida's compassion when a person believes that salvation is impossible because of karmic evil?" For the very reason that we are guilty of taking pride in the Primal Vow, the true entrusting as the gift of Other Power is settled.

We can be free of taking pride in the Primal Vow only after we entrust ourselves to the Primal Vow, having extinguished karmic evil and blind passion. But if blind passion were extinguished, one is already a Buddha; and for a Buddha the Vow realized through five kalpas of profound thought would be useless.

Since the people who censure others for taking pride in the Primal Vow themselves are filled with blind passion and impurities, aren't they also guilty of taking pride in the Primal Vow? If so, what is the evil that takes pride in the

Primal Vow and what is the evil that does not take pride in the Primal Vow? Indeed, all this debate reveals shallowness and immaturity.

XIV

Some people say that one should believe that heavy evils of eight billion kalpas can be extinguished in the single utterance of Nembutsu. This view refers to an evil person, guilty of ten vices and five transgressions, who has never said the Nembutsu throughout life but who for the first time at the moment of death is told by a good teacher: 'Nembutsu uttered once shall extinguish the evils accumulated in eight billion kalpas, and Nembutsu uttered ten times shall extinguish the evils accumulated in eighty billion kalpas, thus leading to birth in the Pure Land.'

Is the single utterance or ten utterances meant to suggest the relative weights of ten vices and five transgressions, if so, this refers to the utility value of Nembutsu in extinguishing evil. This is far different from our understanding. The reason is that in the awakening of one thought-moment, having been illuminated by Amida's light, we are endowed with true entrusting which is firm as a diamond; thus, we are already included in the stage of the truly settled. When our life comes to an end, all the blind passions and evil hindrances are immediately transformed into the realization of the "wisdom of non- origination."

Realizing that without this compassionate Vow, wretched and evil beings such as ourselves can never go beyond birth-and-death, we should know that all the Nembutsu said throughout our lifetime simply expresses our gratitude to the benevolence and virtues of Tathágata's compassion.

To believe that each saying of Nembutsu extinguishes evil is to seek birth in the Pure Land by eliminating evil thoughts through one's own efforts. If that is the case, since every thought we think in life binds us to birth-and-death, we must say the Nembutsu until the final moment, continuously and consistently, without ever attaining birth. But since karmic consequences are decisive, we may end our life because of unforeseen accidents or we may be tormented by illness without ever attaining right-mindedness. Saying the Nembutsu in such a state would be, indeed, most difficult. How are we to extinguish evil in such a state? If evil cannot be extinguished, then is attaining birth impossible?

When we entrust ourselves to the Vow that grasps us never to abandon us, we shall quickly attain birth, regardless of whether we commit evils for unknown reasons and even end our lives without saying the Nembutsu. And when we say the Nembutsu spontaneously, our trust in Amida becomes stronger and our

gratitude to Tathágata becomes deeper as we approach the moment of supreme enlightenment. To desire to extinguish evil is the thought of self-power, the intention of those who hope to achieve right-mindedness at the moment of death. This shows the lack of true entrusting, which is made possible by the working of Other Power.

XV

Some people say that one can attain enlightenment in this very body filled with blind passion. This is completely out of the question.

The doctrine of attaining Buddhahood in this very body is the essential teaching of Shingon Esoterism, the ultimate attainment of the three esoteric practices. And the purifying of the six sense organs is the doctrine of the One Vehicle teaching of the Lotus Sutra, the attainment of the four blissful practices. These are all difficult practices performed by superior religious adepts and enlightenment realized through perfecting meditative practices. In contrast, the enlightenment that unfolds in the next birth is the essence of the Pure Land way of Other Power, the true entrusting that is settled and final. This is the effortless practice undertaken by inferior religious practitioners in which the distinction between good and evil is non-existent.

Since it is unthinkable difficult to sunder blind passion and evil hindrances in this present life, the virtuous monks of Shingon and Tendai disciplinary practices also pray for enlightenment in the life to come. How much more so for ordinary people like ourselves! Although the upholding of precepts and attainment of wisdom are lacking, when we have crossed the painful ocean of birth-and-death on the vessel of Amida's Vow, reaching the Other Shore of the land of Fulfillment, the dark clouds of blind passion immediately vanish and the moon of enlightenment, dharma-as-it-is, appears instantaneously. Having become united with the Unhindered Light that illuminates the ten quarters, we bring benefits to all beings. This is true enlightenment.

Do those who believe in attaining enlightenment in this very body reveal themselves in various forms of enlightenment, as did the historical Shakyamuni? Do they possess the thirty-two features and eighty characteristics of an enlightened being? Do they benefit sentient beings by expounding the Buddha Dharma? This is what constitutes enlightenment in this life. Shinran writes:

When true entrusting, firm as a diamond,
Is settled, at that very instant

Amida's light grasps us and protects us,
And we forever transcend birth-and-death.

This means that when true entrusting is realized, Amida grasps us never to abandon us, and we no longer transmigrate through the six realms. When we understand this fully, how can we confuse it with the enlightenment in this life? How sad that such a misunderstanding exists. As the late master said, "In the true teaching of Pure Land I have been taught that in this life we entrust ourselves to the Primal Vow and in the Pure Land attain supreme enlightenment."

XVI

Some people say that if a practitioner of true entrusting should unexpectedly become angry, act wantonly, or argue with others, they should by all means undergo turning-of-mind. Does this mean that we should sunder evil and practice good?

In the person of single-hearted Nembutsu the turning-of-mind occurs only once. The turning-of-mind refers to this: transformation of those ignorant of the Primal Vow of Other Power who, being granted Amida's wisdom and realizing the impossibility of everyday mind attaining birth, abandon the old mind and entrust the self to the Primal Vow.

If it is necessary to undergo the turning-of-mind, day and night, about every deed in order to attain birth, we may die before doing so, or before nurturing tenderness and forbearance, since our lives may come to an end between the inhaling and exhaling of breath. Then the Primal Vow, which grasps us never to abandon us would have no meaning.

Even though some may claim to entrust themselves to the Primal Vow, they actually feel that only the good are saved, no matter how great the inconceivable power of the Vow to save evil doers. To that extent they are doubting the power of the Vow, lacking the thought of entrusting themselves to the Vow, and will be born in the borderland. How lamentable this is!

Once true entrusting is settled, we realize that our birth is due to the working of Amida and not to our calculations. Even though we may do evil, even more should we think about the power of the Vow. Then, tenderness and forbearance will appear by virtue of "made to become so by itself."

In all matters regarding birth it is not necessary to contrive or design but always remember and become absorbed in the deep and profound compassion of Amida. Then we shall be able to say the Nembutsu spontaneously, "made to become so by itself." When I do not contrive or calculate, I am "made to become so by itself." This is none other than the working of Other Power. And yet to my regret I hear some people talking knowingly about being "made to become so by itself" as if it were something special. How deplorable this is!

XVII

Some people say that those born in the borderland will eventually fall into hell. What attesting passage makes this claim?

This is asserted by those who claim to be scholars and that is truly deplorable. How are they reading the sutras, commentaries, and teachings? I have been taught that people who lack true entrusting, doubting the Primal Vow, are born in the borderland, where they atone for evil karma and ultimately attain enlightenment in the land of Fulfillment.

Since true entrusting is very rare, many people go to the temporary land... And yet to contend that they are ultimately hopeless is to accuse the Buddha of falsehood.

XVIII

Some people say that the amount of offerings made to the Buddha Dharma will determine the size, great or small that we will become as Buddhas.

First of all, is it possible to determine the size of a Buddha, whether great or small? Even though the size of Buddha in the Pure Land is described in the sutra, it is the manifestation of Dharmakaya-as-compassion, appearing for the sake of human beings. When one attains supreme enlightenment and realizes Dharmakaya-as-it-is, how can size be discussed, since such shapes as long or short, square or round, do not exist; and color is also transcended, whether it be blue, yellow, red, white, or black?

Some say that they see the transformed Buddha when uttering the Nembutsu. Could they have based their view on such statements as the following and applied it here, "In loud utterance one sees a huge Buddha and in quiet utterance one sees a small Buddha"?

Furthermore, although offerings can be part of the practice of selfless giving, no matter how many valuables we present to the Buddha or give to our teachers, the act is meaningless if true entrusting is absent. If one is made to give the self up to Other Power and true entrusting is complete, even though one does not present even a single sheet of paper or even half a coin to the Buddha Dharma, he or she is in accord with the intention of the Primal Vow.

Are people intimidating their fellow practitioners, using the teaching as a pretext, to fulfill their own selfish needs?

Epilogue

I feel that the preceding views all arise due to differences in the understanding of true entrusting. According to our late master Shinran, it was the same at the time of his teacher, Honen. Among his disciples, there were only a few people who truly entrusted themselves to Amida. This was once a cause of debate between Shinran and fellow disciples. When he claimed, "Shinran's entrusting and Honen's entrusting are identical," Seikan, Nenbutsu, and others strongly refuted this, saying, "How can you claim that our master's entrusting and your entrusting are identical!" To this Shinran replied, "Our master's wisdom and knowledge are truly profound and to say that our entrusting to Amida are identical is preposterous. But as far as true entrusting, leading to birth in the Pure Land is concerned, no difference exists at all. Both are the same." Still they continued to press Shinran, challenging him by saying, "How can that be possible?"

They finally decided to settle the argument once and for all by going to Honen, relating the details. When Honen listened to their respective views, he said, "The true entrusting of Honen is a gift granted by the Tathágata, and the true entrusting of Shinran is also a gift from the Tathágata. Thus, they are the same. People whose entrusting is different will probably not go to the same Pure Land as I"

Such was the case in earlier times, and today it seems that among the followers of single-hearted Nembutsu there are some who do not share the same entrusting as that of Shinran. Although I may sound repetitious, I want to put all this down in writing.

Since my life, like a dewdrop, still hangs onto this body, which may be likened to withered grass, I am able to hear the doubts of my fellow practitioners and tell them what I have learned from my teacher. But I fear and lament that after my eyes close and life comes to an end, there may arise chaos because of divergent interpretations.

When you are confused by different views, such as the above, you should carefully read the scriptures approved and used by our late master. Among scriptures generally you will find a mixture of teachings, which are true and real and which are accommodating and tentative. The master's basic instruction was for us to choose the real, abandoning those accommodating the desires of the people, and select the real, rejecting the tentatively presented. Be very careful to see such differences among the scriptures. I have listed a few statements that attest to true entrusting, including them here for easy reference.

The master constantly said, "When I ponder on the compassionate Vow of Amida, established through five kalpas of profound thought, it was for myself, Shinran, alone. Because I am a being burdened so heavily with karma, I feel even more deeply grateful to the Primal Vow which is made to decisively save me."

As I now reflect upon these words, they are no different from the saying of Shantao: "Truly know that this self is a foolish being of karmic evil, repeating birth-and-death since beginning-less aeons ago, forever drowning and wandering without ever knowing the path of liberation." How grateful I am that Shinran expressed this in his own person to make us deeply realize that we do not know the depth of karmic evil and that we do not know the height of Tathágata's benevolence, both of which cause us to live in utter confusion.

In reality, all of us, including myself, talk only about what is good and evil without thinking of the Tathágata's compassion. Our master once said, "I do not know what the two, good and evil, really mean. I could say that I know what good is, if I knew good as thoroughly and completely as the Tathágata. And I could say I know what evil is, if I knew evil as thoroughly and completely as the Tathágata. But in this impermanent world, like a burning house, all things are empty and vain, therefore, untrue. Only the Nembutsu is true, real, and sincere.

Among the lies we say to each other, one is truly to be lamented. This occurs when some people who, in talking about the Nembutsu, discuss true entrusting among themselves or try to explain it to others, and in order to silence people or stop further inquiry they even ascribe words to Shinran which were never spoken by him. How deplorable and regrettable this is! You should carefully think about this and reflect on it.

Although the above are not all my own words, they may at times sound a bit strange, because I am not too well versed in the sutras and commentaries. Also, I have yet to clearly perceive the depth of the teaching. But I have tried my best to recall some fragments, perhaps one one-hundredth, of what the late Shinran taught and have put them down in writing. How sad it is, if those who are

fortunate enough to say the Nembutsu are not immediately born in the land of Fulfillment but must continue residing in the borderland.

In tears I have dipped my brush in ink and have written this in the hope that conflicting views of true entrusting will not prevail among fellow practitioners of Nembutsu gathered together in a single room. Thus, I have called this *Tannisho: Lamenting the Deviations*. It should not be shown to outsiders.

How To Read The Tannisho

By Dr. Taitetsu Unno

The teaching of Shinran, transmitted as Jodo Shinshu (known as Shin Buddhism in the West), brings the depth of the Buddha Dharma to people in simple, clear language. Appearing from the heart of true compassion, it responds to the spiritual needs of everyone - not only the privileged, select few who can afford the time and resources to pursue religious practices, either full-time or part-time. As the working of great compassion, it assures everyone the liberation from the darkness of ignorance and the attainment of supreme enlightenment.

But this fact can be truly appreciated only in so far as one goes beyond the objective and rational approach. The objective approach seeks an answer based upon the subject-object framework. Such questions as "What is Shin Buddhism?" or "What is Amida Buddha?" separates the subject, the questioner, from any meaningful answer that may be forthcoming. The teaching remains unrelated to one's burning questions and deepest concerns. Consequently, the Buddha Dharma has no vital relevance to one's everyday life. The rational approach is based on a purely intellectual comprehension, which excludes or suppresses the needs of the heart; the unconscious, instinctual and somatic self is completely disregarded. Since the Buddha Dharma addresses the whole person, it satisfies the deepest intellectual, emotional and volitional needs of the total self.

In the experience of Shinran the Buddha Dharma is realized intimately as the Buddha of Immeasurable Light and Immeasurable Life, the Buddha Amida. Thus, Amida is referred to in endearing terms, such as Oyasama, meaning my dear father, my dear mother. Immeasurable Light illuminates the fundamental human condition and awakens us to our limited, imperfect and mortal selves. It shows us why our life is characterized by insecurity and disrupted by greed, anger and folly. When this is felt deeply, we have already been touched by the Light of true compassion; the working of Light, warm and compassionate, proceeds to transform existential unease into profound gratitude for this life. This working is simultaneous with that of Immeasurable Life that pervades all

beings, awakening each of us to ultimate reality here and now, not in some uncertain future. Our limited life-unto-death is but another manifestation of Immeasurable Life that has no beginning and no end. Immeasurable Light and Immeasurable Life enable us to become our truly human selves.

This truth is brought to vivid reality in the saying of Nembutsu - "Namu-Amida-butsu" - which is the deep wish, called the Primal Vow of Amida, touching each of us, so that we may be liberated from self-delusion. The saying of Nembutsu affirms that this limited self, "Namu" - imperfect, fallible and mortal self - is sustained by "Amida-butsu," unlimited, boundless Light and Life. The Nembutsu, "Namu Amida-butsu," as an unified experience, coming from the depth of life itself, grasps us and transforms us, enabling us to awaken to ultimate reality. Here it must be realized that in Buddhist understanding neither the "self" nor the "Buddha" is a fixed, static object; rather, each is a fluid aspect of dynamic reality that is constantly becoming. Because nothing is fixed or final, the limited, imperfect self, just as it is, can be transformed into a being of supreme enlightenment. Such is the wonder of Buddhism.

This dynamic process, made real and concrete by the Nembutsu, works in different ways at various junctures in one's life. Awakening to Namu Amida-butsu solves difficulties in human relationships, ameliorates hardships and sufferings, provides wise counsel when confronted with difficult choices, inspires timely and compassionate action, transforms sorrow into joy, and gives us the power to see and criticize false social constructs. Living the Nembutsu with full awareness of human limitedness leads us not to denigrate but to celebrate life within the boundless wisdom and compassion of Amida Buddha.

Such in brief is Shinran's basic teaching, a rich tapestry woven from so-called Pure Land scriptures and original insights developed within Mahayana Buddhism, which arose in the first century B.C.E. in India. Later transmitted to the vast reaches of the Asian continent, today it is now touching the shores of the Western world. Among the array of Mahayana scriptures, three classic texts were selected as foundational to the Pure Land tradition: *Larger Sutra of Immeasurable Life (Daimuryoju-kyo)*, *Smaller Sutra of Immeasurable Life (Amida-kyo)*, and *Meditation Sutra (Kanmuryoju-kyo)*.

Among them, the most important is the Larger Sutra which reveals the mythic history of Amida Buddha fulfilling 48 major vows, all designed to meet the specific needs of people - psychological, emotional, physical and spiritual (mythic here refers to that which is true and real beyond ordinary understanding). Among them the crucial one is the 18th Vow, which culminates in the forging of the Nembutsu as the ultimate gift to humankind. It is a priceless gift, for anyone who is touched by it becomes transformed and achieves supreme

enlightenment. The Nembutsu enables us to lead a natural, spontaneous life in direct contrast to our normal life, filled with self-centered calculations and anxieties. The light of true compassion reveals them for what they are, nullifying their negative consequences. But an immense struggle is involved in realizing the spontaneous life of Nembutsu, a struggle which some of us may undergo as the "transformation through the three vows." As conceived by Shinran, it refers to the progressive levels of religious life contained in the 19th, 20th, and 18th vows.

As mature human beings, we all aspire to the ethical life. The stage of the 19th vow encourages good conduct, moral rectitude, religious piety and adherence to scripture. But when one is made to realize that even the highest good may be tainted by egoistic concerns and that religious piety may simply be self-serving, one is ready to move into the world of the 20th vow. Here reliance on self-generated power is abandoned, and one embraces the sole practice of Nembutsu as the working of Other Power. All other religious disciplines, such as observing monastic vows, meditative endeavors, and various religious rituals, are regarded as superfluous. Recitative Nembutsu alone is considered to be meaningful and productive. But even such a practice can unconsciously fall into the trap of merit accumulation based on self-power. It then becomes another form of ego-assertion that obstructs the working of Other Power. As a result, a person is subject to unease and anxiety.

The true Nembutsu comes to life in the 18th vow, when unlimited life realizes itself in a person, and that person embodies the universe of the 18th vow. That is, a limited being becomes liberated from entrapment in self-delusion and manifests life that is most natural and spontaneous. Although the passage from the 20th vow to the 18th vow is closed to the designs of self-power, the compassion of the Buddha reaches down into the world of the 20th vow to touch all beings. The Primal Vow, thus, affirms the limited self as inseparable from unlimited life at every moment of life; and when our karmic life becomes exhausted, we become one with boundless life in all its richness and manifestations.

In sum, the transformation through the ethical stage (19th vow) to the self-generated religious stage (20th vow) and finally to the truly accomplished stage (18th vow) shows the evolution of spirituality which continues as an ever deepening awareness of the finite (human beings) sustained by the infinite (Amida Buddha). At the core of this transformation is the penetrating insight into the delusions of the ego-self, born from the unfathomable darkness of ignorance, and brought to full realization through the working of the Primal Vow. The focus is on the unlimited and boundless compassion of Amida Buddha - not the deluded self, which touches every phase of human life. Having described the

essentials of Shinran's teaching, we now turn to highlight its significant features, which make it a unique expression of the Buddha Dharma.

The primary question for Shinran is the efficacy of religious practice. It is easy to pursue practices of various kinds, but rare is it to obtain the desired results. None of the existing paths that Shinran attempted led to ultimate fulfillment. He recognized the bankruptcy of practice both within himself and without in monastic institutions. In his words, "The Primal Vow is established for those of us who cannot become freed from the bondage of birth-and-death through any religious practice, due to the abundance of blind passion" (*Tannisho III*). Two points require elaboration in this admission: first, the radical rejection of existing forms of religious practice, based on twenty years of dedicated disciplines in the Tendai Buddhist tradition; and second, the admission of massive blind passion which could not be overcome through any existing religious practice.

The first realization in Shinran's case was compounded by the socio-historical sense of *mappo* that the end-time of history spelled the doom of institutional Buddhism and everything connected with it. For him religious practice was a matter of life and death, a matter of total commitment to the monastic life, including renunciation of all family ties, adherence to strict precepts, including celibacy, and the goal was nothing less than Buddhahood. In spite of his conscientious dedication, however, the practices he pursued did not produce any fruitful result, and institutional Buddhism could not provide any support, for the whole world itself was disintegrating and collapsing.

The bankruptcy of practice led to the second, much more powerful, realization: the depth of blind passion which permeates every human thought, speech and action, all testifying to the undeniable fact of human limitedness. According to Buddhist reflection, passion is an instinctual, emotive force arising from the unconscious and deeply rooted in the body. When it becomes intertwined with egocentric human calculations, it becomes distorted and causes havoc in our lives. Thus, as long as human existence means having a body, a person is forever bound to all kinds of limitations and bondages. This is the infinite finitude of *samsāra*.

Since traditional forms of religious practice, such as meditative or contemplative disciplines, normally fail to reach the deep core of blind passion, Shinran focused on the practice of *monpo*, "deep hearing of the Dharma." Deep hearing leads to a twofold awakening: appreciating the boundless compassion of Amida, and simultaneously seeing into the bottomless depth of blind passion. The compiler of the *Tannisho* went even further when he acknowledged the lack of thoroughgoing penetration into both kinds of awareness:

How grateful I am that Shinran expressed this in his own person to make us deeply realize that we do not know the depth of karmic evil and that we do not know the height of Tathágata's benevolence, both of which cause us to live in utter confusion (Epilogue).

Deep hearing, then, is not just an auditory sensation, involving the ear, but a matter of the whole person. "Deep hearing of the Dharma" means embodying the Buddha Dharma, an experiential awakening of the total self, conscious and unconscious, mind and body.

A synonym of hearing the Dharma, *monpo*, is an unusual expression, *monko*, or "hearing the Light." This phrase suggests that authentic hearing brings to light the hidden karmic self of blind passion rooted in the body. This is the reason that Daiei Kaneko, a leading spokesman of contemporary Shin Buddhism, urges, "Receive material gifts with your heart and receive the Buddha Dharma with your body" It is with this body that the Buddha Dharma is truly realized.

Deep hearing, synonymous with true awakening, is made possible by the working of the Buddha or Tathágata. According to Shinran, "The Tathágata is Light. Light is none other than wisdom; wisdom takes the form of light. But wisdom is, in fact, formless; therefore, this Tathágata is the Buddha of inconceivable light. This Tathágata fills the countless worlds in the ten quarters, and so is called the Buddha of Boundless Light" (*Notes on Once-calling and Many-calling*, p. 46). When a person is thus touched by Light, an awareness beyond conceptual understanding occurs; Shinran calls it the wisdom that is drawn out of the foolish being by the power of true compassion. In his formulation,

A sutra states that Avalokitesvara reveals itself as the deity of the sun and dispels the darkness of ignorance in all beings; and Mahasthamaprapta appears as the deity of the moon and illuminates the long night of birth-and-death. Together they bring forth wisdom in all beings (*Notes on the Essentials of Faith Alone*, pp. 31-32).

The symbolism of Light reveals not only the working of wisdom but also of compassion. In the Buddhist tradition compassion is all embracing, nonjudgmental, warm and nurturing. All-embracing compassion means that everyone is saved equally, but special concern and love are shown to those who recognize their weakness, powerlessness and foolishness as limited beings. As such, it is not judgmental, for no one is regarded as dispensable and everyone receives nurturing for supreme enlightenment. Even the lowliest in the eyes of

society can attain the highest awakening, due to the transformation wrought by true compassion. The warmth of compassion melts evil to transform it into good, making possible the flowering of each person's fullest potential. This process is known as *jinen*, "made to become so by itself and for itself." As explained by Shinran,

"To be made to become so" means that without the practitioner's calculation in any way whatsoever, all the past, present, and future evil karma are transformed into the highest good. To be transformed means that evil karma, without being nullified or eradicated, is made into the highest good, just as all river waters, upon entering the great ocean, immediately become ocean water (*Notes*, pp. 32-33).

An even more graphic metaphor for transformation states: "When we entrust ourselves to the Tathágata's Primal Vow, we who are like bits of tiles and pebbles are transmuted into gold" (*Notes*, pp. 40-41). Historically speaking, at the time of Shinran those "who are like bits of tiles and pebbles" included the disenfranchised in medieval Japan: people who violated life to make a living, hunters, fisher-folk, peasants, and so on; those who preyed on others, such as peddlers and merchants; monks and nuns who had violated the precepts; and women of all classes. Shinran identifies with such people considered as "bad" in the eyes of privileged society and excluded from entering the Buddhist path. The compassion of Buddha, however, all the more focuses on such abandoned people and eventually "transmutes them into gold," into human beings of true and real worth.

Such an understanding forms the basis of the paradoxical claim by Shinran that "Even the good person is saved, how much more so the evildoer" (*Tannisho III*). This should not be read as a negation of ethical life, or as a license to do evil, but as a penetrating recognition of human reality at its depth - limited, imperfect and mortal - yet sustained and protected by Immeasurable Light and Immeasurable Life. This simultaneous appreciation - finite existence and infinite reality, related to each other in double exposure - is traditionally expressed in the phrase, *Ki-ho ittai* - the unity (*ittai*) of the limited, finite self (*Ki*) and unlimited dharmic reality (*ho*).

In everyday life whenever we experience our human limitation in outbursts of anger, jealousy, hatred, lust and fear, it is the Buddha Dharma that reveals their true reality to us, making them transparent and showing us the unlimited life that flows below them. When this experience is verbalized, the spontaneous saying of *Namu Amida-butsu* occurs. The awakening to the limited self (*Namu*)

is made possible by the working of unlimited life and light (*Amida-butsu*). Shinran expresses this in a deeply personal way: "When I ponder on the Primal Vow of Amida, established through five kalpas of profound thought, I realize that it is for myself, Shinran, alone" (*Tannisho* Epilogue). Here Shinran is not speaking as an unreflecting, egocentric being but is affirming the single one, irreplaceable and unique, who lives interrelated and interconnected with all beings. As such, each self is affirmed as manifesting ultimate significance and worth.

The Nembutsu is the Sacred Name (*myogo*), the source of spirituality and focus of devotional life. The central image in Shin Buddhist worship is not the image of the historical Buddha, nor the sculpted or painted figure of Amida Buddha; rather, it is "Namu Amida-butsu." Fundamentally, the Sacred Name is the self-articulation of basic reality, expressing itself in language that makes it accessible to anyone who has the ability to hear deeply. Since the Sacred Name is neither a concept to be understood nor a proposition to be figured out, anyone, at anytime, under any circumstance can call on the Name.

In living "Namu Amida-butsu" there is no dogma to uphold, no religious authority to follow, and no special teacher or guru to revere. It is in this spirit that Shinran, who, in spite of having hundreds of known followers, proclaimed, "As for myself, Shinran, I do not have a single disciple" (*Tannisho* VI). Behind this disclaimer is also the affirmation of the interconnectedness of all life as expressed in his proclamation: "All beings have been mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers in the timeless process of birth-and-death" (*Tannisho* V). He calls all those who walk the path of Buddha Dharma, "fellow seekers, fellow practitioners."

This interconnectedness with life, however, extends not only to humans but to all beings, both animate and inanimate. Based upon the central Mahayana philosophy of interdependence and interpenetration, Shinran writes:

The Tathágata 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 Dharmakaya-as-compassion (Amida Buddha), this entrusting is none other than Buddha-nature (*Notes*, p. 42).

The Tathágata or Buddha as fundamental reality pervades everything in countless worlds, providing the source of life and creativity. This source fuels the energy in nature, so that plants, trees and land fully realize their potentials. The

same source enables human beings to become liberated from their ego-self by virtue of Immeasurable Life and Light and thus become truly human. This is none other than Buddha-nature actualized in a person and attaining its fullest flowering.

GLOSSARY

Amida Buddha - Literally, the Buddha of Immeasurable Life (*amitayus*, symbolizing compassion) and Immeasurable Light (*Amitabha*, symbolizing wisdom). Amida is not some kind of being but a dynamic salvific activity which leads a person to supreme enlightenment through Light, the radiance of true wisdom (*Prajna*), illuminating the darkest recesses of self and the world to transform negative karma into positive karma by the power of compassion (*karuna*).

Attesting Passage - Recorded sayings and passages from the writings of Shinran, which attest to the truth of a given interpretation.

Birth (ojo) - Abbreviation for "going to be born in the Pure Land" which is understood by Shinran in a twofold sense: 1) instantaneous awakening, here and now, occurs with *shinjin* or true entrusting; and 2) attaining of Buddhahood at the moment of death when one sheds all karmic limitations and becomes one with Immeasurable Life and Light to begin the salvific work in samsára to liberate all beings.

Blind Passion (bonno) - Deep-rooted and ineradicable self-centeredness contained in the unconscious which is one with the body, causing mental, emotional, and physical afflictions, which no amount of self-powered practice can overcome.

Borderland - Synonymous with such phrases as the castle of doubt, palace of womb, and realm of indolence, the person of self-power is born temporarily in the borderland before eventually attaining birth in the Pure Land.

Dharma - A key term in Buddhism which has two connotations: 1) reality as it is, synonymous with such-ness, thus-ness, thing-ness, and so forth; and 2) the teaching expressing this reality, as in Buddha Dharma.

Dharmakaya-as-compassion - The body of reality manifested as compassion in order to help suffering beings transform negative karma into positive karma.

Distant Capital - Kyoto, the ancient capital of Japan, where Shinran spent the last decades of his life. His followers in Kanto, north of present-day Tokyo,

traveled by foot to this faraway capital to receive guidance concerning questions regarding his teachings.

Effortless Practice - The Nembutsu is effortless practice, since it is free of self-centered calculations. While no special effort, such as renunciation, celibacy, meditative practice, and so forth are required, an immense inner struggle occurs before achieving the life of spontaneity, naturalness and gratitude in the Nembutsu.

Five Transgressions - Killing father, mother, monk, injuring the Buddha, and creating schisms in the Sangha (Hinayana Buddhism); vandalizing temples, statues, and scriptures, slandering the teaching, obstructing religious practices, violating the five precepts and committing ten evils (Mahayana Buddhism).

Foolish Being (bonbu) - Descriptive of human beings bound to aimless, samsaric life by radical ignorance and blind passion. Unable to attain deliverance by any religious practice, the foolish being all the more becomes the primary object of the Primal Vow.

Four Blissful Practices - Proper behavior in body, mind, and speech and the vow to lead all beings to freedom.

Four Modes of Birth - Life produced from the womb, from egg, from micro-organism, and from metamorphosis.

Grasped Never to be Abandoned - True compassion, which affirms each person in a non-dichotomous relationship, such that there is no one who is forsaken or rejected.

Honen (1133-1212) - A revolutionary figure who founded an independent Pure Land (Jodo) school in 1175 and was the teacher of Shinran, founder of Shin Buddhism.

Inconceivable (fushigi, fukashigi) - That which is beyond conceptual or rational understanding but brought to full awareness in a foolish being by the power of true compassion.

Karmic Evil - The fundamental human condition of fathomless ignorance which restricts our freedom; it is the primary object of the Primal Vow which reaches its depth and effects its transformation from the negative to positive.

Land of Fulfillment, True Fulfillment (hodo) - The Pure Land of Amida Buddha, which was created by fulfilling the 48 vows. Also called the Land of

Immeasurable Light, it symbolizes wisdom which illuminates the darkest recesses of human existence.

Lotus Sutra - A major scripture of Mahayana Buddhism containing countless examples of liberative techniques (*upaya*) used by the Buddha to deliver all beings.

Made to become so by itself (jinen) - A term favored by Shinran having several connotations: 1) transformation by the power of true compassion, 2) natural process of a person inevitably achieving supreme enlightenment, and 3) formless Buddhahood itself.

Mt. Hiei - Major monastic center of the Tendai School, which produced the leading reformers of 13th century Japan, including Honen, Shinran, Dogen, Nichiren and others.

Name (myogo) - The self-articulation of reality entering the world of human consciousness, as *Namu-Amida-butsu*. Also referred to as the Name in six letters or six syllables.

Nara - Ancient capital of Japan during the Nara Period (710-784 C.E.); the center of the six schools of early Japanese Buddhism.

Nembutsu - The term is used variously in the Buddhist tradition. Originally, it meant contemplation on the Buddha, but in Pure Land Buddhism, it is used as follows: 1) recitation of the Name as the beckoning call from Amida Buddha, 2) self-articulation of reality informing human consciousness, and 3) fundamental cause of supreme enlightenment for a foolish being.

One Thought-moment (Ichinen) - The instant when one awakens to the working of the Primal Vow, having been grasped never to be abandoned. That thought-moment is the instant of the self-realization of reality when the timeless breaks through time. Since this is concretely realized in the saying of Nembutsu, recitative Nembutsu is referred to as the one-thought moment of practice.

One Vehicle - A key term in the Lotus Sutra, which seeks to unify the diverse Buddhist paths into a single Vehicle. Shinran inherits this usage, but adds a Pure Land modifier and proclaims the Primal Vow of One Vehicle.

Other Power - The working of Amida's Primal Vow beyond the normal categories of subject and object, manifesting compassion, which is the dynamic manifestation of *sunyata* (emptiness).

Path Of Pure Land - The Pure Land tradition, Open to all people regardless of class, gender, religiosity, etc., contrasted to the Path of Sages, which is for the privileged few connected with the monastic institutions.

Practitioner (gyoja) - The person who practices the Buddhist teaching in the midst of daily responsibilities earning a living, raising a family, meeting social obligations, etc. Everyday life is the *dojo*, the training arena for wisdom and compassion.

Primal Vow (hongan) - The transcendental wish and prayer of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life and Light to bring all beings to supreme enlightenment, including the power to effect its successful realization in the midst of samsaric life.

Saichi (1851-1933) - An unlettered Shin devotee, who made a living making geta or wooden clogs. He left thousands of religious poems of unparalleled insights.

Self-power - The calculative mind of unenlightened beings who mistakenly believe in their ability to achieve supreme enlightenment. Relying on this delusion, the more they strive on the path, the more they sink into samsára.

Self-working - A form of calculative thinking based on self-power designs, hindering the working of the Primal Vow to effect transformation leading to supreme enlightenment.

Shan-tao (613-681) - One of the seven patriarchs of Shin Buddhism whose impact on Honen led to the establishment of an independent Pure Land School in 1175.

Shingon Esoterism - One of the major forms of Japanese Buddhism, centered on Mt. Koya, during the rise of the Pure Land School in the 13th century.

Six Realms of Existence - The realms of hell, hungry ghosts, beasts, fighting demons, human beings, and heavenly beings, describing the different cycles of samsára.

T'an-luan (476-542) - The third patriarch of Shin Buddhism who made a major impact on the thought of Shinran.

Tathágata - Literally, "thus-come" from the world of enlightenment to effect the salvation of all beings. Synonym of the Buddha, used in compound form as Amida Tathágata (Amida Nyorai).

Ten Evils - Killing, stealing, adultery, lying, using harsh words, slandering, idle talk, greed, anger, and wrong views.

The Essentials of Faith Alone (Yuishinsho) - A tract written by Seikaku (1165-1235), a leading disciple of Honen. Shinran wrote a detailed explanation of key passages in his *Notes on Essentials of Faith Alone*.

Thirty-two Features and Eighty Characteristics - Ancient belief held in India that a superior being, such as a Buddha or World-conqueror, possesses special qualities, which distinguished them from ordinary people.

Three Esoteric Practices - The Shingon training in body, mind, and speech that correspond with the cosmic Buddha's body, mind, and speech, attesting to the realization of supreme enlightenment. A secret training method, transmitted from master to disciple, hence, called esoteric.

True Entrusting (shinjin) - The core experience of Shin Buddhism in which a relative, finite being is made to entrust the self to Immeasurable Life and Light through the power of true compassion. Since it is not the calculative, self-power mind of sentient beings but the working of Other Power, it is indestructible; hence, it is likened to a diamond.

Wisdom of Non-origination - Wisdom that sees reality as-it-is, devoid of an abiding essence and frequently referred to as *sunyata* (emptiness). As such, it does not appear or disappear in the conventional sense as seen by a deluded mind. This reality as-it-is is summed up in the phrase, "non-origination."