

Tannisho - A Record in Lament of Divergences

Preface

As I humbly reflect on the past [when the late Master was alive] and the present in my foolish mind, I cannot but lament the divergences from the true shinjin that he conveyed by speaking to us directly, and I fear there are doubts and confusions in the way followers receive and transmit the teaching. For how is entrance into the single gate of easy practice possible unless we happily come to rely on a true teacher whom conditions bring us to encounter? Let there be not the slightest distortion of the teaching of Other Power with words of an understanding based only on personal views.

Here, then, I set down in small part the words spoken by the late Shinran Shōnin that remain deep in my mind, solely to disperse the doubts of fellow practitioners.

1

“Saved by the inconceivable working of Amida’s Vow, I shall realize birth in the Pure Land”: the moment you entrust yourself thus to the Vow, so that the mind set upon saying the nembutsu arises within you, you are immediately brought to share in the benefit of being grasped by Amida, never to be abandoned.

Know that the Primal Vow of Amida makes no distinction between people young and old, good and evil; only shinjin is essential. For it is the Vow to save the person whose karmic evil is deep and grave and whose blind passions abound.

Thus, for those who entrust themselves to the Primal Vow, no good acts are required, because no good surpasses the nembutsu. Nor need they despair of the evil they commit, for no evil can obstruct the working of Amida’s Primal Vow.

Thus were his words.

2

Each of you has come to see me, crossing the borders of more than ten provinces at the risk of your life, solely with the intent of asking about the path to birth in the land of bliss. But if you imagine in me some special knowledge of a path to birth other than the nembutsu or of scriptural writings that teach it, you are greatly mistaken. If that is the case, since there are many eminent scholars in the southern capital of Nara or on Mount Hiei to the north, you would do better to meet with them and inquire fully about the essentials for birth.

As for me, I simply accept and entrust myself to what my revered teacher told me, “just say the nembutsu and be saved by Amida”; nothing else is involved.

I have no idea whether the nembutsu is truly the seed for my being born in the Pure Land or whether it is the karmic act for which I must fall into hell. Should I have been deceived by Master Hōnen and, saying the nembutsu, were to fall into hell, even then I would have no regrets.

The reason is, if I could attain Buddhahood by endeavoring in other practices, but said the nembutsu and so fell into hell, then I would feel regret at having been deceived. But I am incapable of any other practice, so hell is decidedly my abode whatever I do.

If Amida's Primal Vow is true, Śākyamuni's teaching cannot be false. If the Buddha's teaching is true, Shan-tao's commentaries cannot be false. If Shan-tao's commentaries are true, can Hōnen's words be lies? If Hōnen's words are true, then surely what I say cannot be empty.

Such, in the end, is how this foolish person entrusts himself [to the Vow]. Beyond this, whether you take up and accept the nembutsu or whether you abandon it is for each of you to determine.

Thus were his words.

3

Even a good person attains birth in the Pure Land, so it goes without saying that an evil person will.

Though it is so, people commonly say, "Even an evil person attains birth, so it goes without saying that a good person will." This statement may seem well-founded at first, but it runs counter to the intent of the Primal Vow, which is Other Power. This is because people who rely on doing good through their self-power fail to entrust themselves wholeheartedly to Other Power and therefore are not in accord with Amida's Primal Vow, but when they overturn the mind of self-power and entrust themselves to Other Power, they will attain birth in the true and real fulfilled land.

It is impossible for us, who are possessed of blind passions, to free ourselves from birth-and-death through any practice whatever. Sorrowing at this, Amida made the Vow, the essential intent of which is the evil person's attainment of Buddhahood. Hence, evil persons who entrust themselves to Other Power are precisely the ones who possess the true cause of birth.

Accordingly he said, "Even the good person is born in the Pure Land, so without question is the person who is evil."

4

Concerning compassion, there is a difference between the Path of Sages and the Pure Land Path.

Compassion in the Path of Sages is to pity, commiserate with, and care for beings. It is extremely difficult, however, to accomplish the saving of others just as one wishes.

Compassion in the Pure Land Path should be understood as first attaining Buddhahood quickly through saying the nembutsu and, with the mind of great love and great compassion, freely benefiting sentient beings as one wishes.

However much love and pity we may feel in our present lives, it is hard to save others as we wish; hence, such compassion remains unfulfilled. Only the saying of the nembutsu, then, is the mind of great compassion that is thoroughgoing.

Thus were his words.

5

As for me, Shinran, I have never said the nembutsu even once for the repose of my departed father and mother. For all sentient beings, without exception, have been our parents and brothers and sisters in the course of countless lives in many states of existence. On attaining Buddhahood after this present life, we can save every one of them.

Were saying the nembutsu indeed a good act in which I strove through my own powers, then I might direct the merit thus gained toward saving my father and other. But this is not the case.

If, however, simply abandoning self-power, we quickly attain enlightenment in the Pure Land, we will be able to save, by means of transcendent powers, first those with whom we have close karmic relations, whatever karmic suffering they may have sunk to in the six realms through the four modes of birth.

Thus were his words.

6

It appears that disputes have arisen among followers of the sole practice of nembutsu, who argue that “these are my disciples” or “those are someone else’s disciples.” This is utterly senseless.

For myself, I do not have even a single disciple. For if I brought people to say the nembutsu through my own efforts, then they might be my disciples. But it is indeed preposterous to call persons “my disciples” when they say the nembutsu having received the working of Amida.

We come together when conditions bring us to meet and part when conditions separate us. In spite of this, some assert that those who say the nembutsu having turned from one teacher to follow another cannot attain birth. This is absurd. Are they saying that they will take back the shinjin given by Amida as if it belonged to them? Such a claim should never be made.

If one comes to be in accord with the spontaneous working of the Vow (*jinen*), one will awaken to the benevolence of the Buddha and of one's teacher.

Thus were his words.

7

The nembutsu is the single path free of hindrances. Why is this? To practitioners who have realized shinjin, the gods of the heavens and earth bow in homage, and maras and nonbuddhists present no obstruction. No evil act can bring about karmic results, nor can any good act equal the nembutsu.

Thus were his words.

8

The nembutsu, for its practitioners, is not a practice or a good act. Since it is not performed out of one's own designs, it is not a practice. Since it is not good done through one's own calculation, it is not a good act. Because it arises wholly from Other Power and is free of self-power, it is not a practice or a good act.

Thus were his words.

9

"Although I say the nembutsu, the feeling of dancing with joy is faint within me, and I have no thought of wanting to go to the Pure Land quickly. How should it be [for a person of nembutsu]?"

When I asked the Master this, he answered, "I, too, have had this question, and the same thought occurs to you, Yuien-bō!

"When I reflect deeply on it, by the very fact that I do not rejoice at what should fill me with such joy that I dance in the air and dance on earth, I realize all the more that my birth is completely settled. What suppresses the heart that should rejoice and keeps one from rejoicing is the action of blind passions. Nevertheless, the Buddha, knowing this beforehand, called us 'foolish beings possessed of blind passions'; thus, becoming aware that the compassionate Bow of Other Power is indeed for the sake of ourselves, who are such beings, we find it all the more trustworthy.

"Further, having no thought of wanting to go to the Pure Land quickly, we thing forlornly that we may die even when we become slightly ill; this also is the action of blind passions. It is hard for us to abandon this old home of pain, where we have been transmigrating for innumerable kalpas down to the present, and we feel no longing for the Pure Land of peace, where we have yet to be born. Truly, how powerful our blind passions are! But though we feel reluctant to part from this world, at the moment our karmic bonds to this Sahā world run out and helplessly we

die, we shall go to that land. Amida pities especially the person who has no thought of wanting to go to the Pure Land quickly. Reflecting on this, we feel the great Vow of great compassion to be all the more trustworthy and realize that our birth is settled.

“If we had the feeling of dancing with joy and wished to go to the Pure Land quickly, we might wonder if we weren’t free of blind passions.”

Thus were his words.

10

Concerning the nembutsu, no working is true working. For it is beyond description, explanation, and conceptual understanding.

Thus the Master stated.

[On Departures from the Teaching of Shinran]

In the past when our Master Shinran was alive, fellow practitioners — having endeavored in the journey to the distant capital with the same aspiration and having set their hearts on birth in the fulfilled land to come with one and the same shinjin — listened to his understanding together at the same time. Nevertheless, I have heard that among the people, young and old, in numbers past knowing, who say the nembutsu following those practitioners, there are at present many who set forth divergent views not taught by the Master. These groundless assertions will be fully clarified below.

11

On the matter of confusing practitioners of the nembutsu who are ignorant of even a single letter by challenging them, “To which do you entrust yourself in saying the nembutsu — the inconceivable working of the Vow or that of the Name? without clarifying fully these two kinds of inconceivable working.

We must carefully consider this matter and teach a correct understanding of it.

Through the inconceivable working of the Vow, Amida Buddha devised the Name easy to keep and easy to say, and promised to receive and grasp those who say this Name. To begin with, then, it is through Amida’s design that we come to say the nembutsu with the belief that, saved by the inconceivable working of the Tathagata’s great Vow of great compassion, we will part from birth-and-death. This being realized, our calculation is not in the least involved, and so, in accord with the Primal Vow, we will be born in the true fulfilled land.

That is, when we entrust ourselves to the inconceivable working of the Vow, taking it as essential, the inconceivable working of the Name is also included; the inconceivable working of the Vow and that of the Name are one, with no distinction whatever.

Next, people who discriminate good and evil acts and consider them aids or hindrances to birth, interposing their own calculation, do not entrust themselves to the inconceivable working of the Vow and, striving to do acts that will result in birth with their own designs, they make the nembutsu they say their own practice. People with such an attitude do not entrust themselves to the inconceivable working of the Name either. Even though they lack the mind of entrusting, they will be born in the borderland, the land of sloth, the castle of doubt, or the womb palace, and in the end will attain birth in the fulfilled land by virtue of the “Vow that beings ultimately attain birth.” This is the inconceivable power of the Name. Since it is also none other than the inconceivable working of the Vow, the two are wholly one.

12

On the assertion that for practicers who do not read the sutras and commentaries and engage in study, birth is not settled.

This statement must be declared hardly worth mentioning.

All the sacred writings that clarify the significance of the truth and reality of Other Power state that one who entrusts oneself to the Primal Vow and says the nembutsu attains Buddhahood. Apart from this, what leaning is essential for birth?

Indeed, the person confused about this should by all means engage in study and understand the significance of the Primal Vow. But nothing is more to be pitied than failure to understand the fundamental intent of the sacred teachings even though one reads and studies the sutras and commentaries.

The Name is meant to be easy to say for the person unfamiliar with even a single character and ignorant of the lines of discourse in the sutras and commentaries; hence it is called “easy practice.” It is the Path of Sages that takes leaning to be essential; it is called “difficult practice.” As for those who engage in study with wrong intentions, dwelling in thoughts of fame and profit, is there not the authoritative passage: “I wonder if their birth in the next life is really settled”?

At present, people of the sole practice of the nembutsu and those of the Path of Sages initiate disputes over the teaching, each claiming their own way to be superior and those of others inferior; as they do so, enemies of the dharma emerge and slander of the dharma is committed. Does this not finally result in abusing and bringing destruction to the teaching they themselves follow?

Suppose that all other schools joined together in declaring, “The nembutsu is for the sake of worthless people; that teaching is shallow and vulgar.” Even then, without the slightest argument, one should simply reply, “When foolish beings of inferior capacity like ourselves, persons ignorant of even a single letter, entrust themselves to the Vow, they are saved. Since we accept and entrust ourselves to this teaching, for us it is the supreme dharma, though for those of superior capacity it might seem utterly base. Even though other teachings may be

excellent, since they are beyond our capacity they are difficult for us to put into practice. The fundamental intent of the Buddhas is nothing but freedom from birth-and-death for all, ourselves and others included, so you should not obstruct our practice of the nembutsu.” If one responds without rancor thus, what person will do one harm? Moreover, there is an authoritative passage that states, “Where disputation takes place, blind passions arise. The wise keep their distance.”

Further, the late Master said:

Śākyamuni taught that there would be both people who entrust themselves to this teaching and people who abuse it. By the fact that I have entrusted myself fully to it and there are others who abuse it, I realize that the Buddha’s words are indeed true. Hence, I realize all the more clearly that my birth is indeed firmly settled. If there were none who abused this teaching, then surely we would wonder why there are those who entrust but none who abuse it. This is not to say that the nembutsu necessarily must be slandered; I merely speak of the fact that the Buddha, knowing beforehand that there would be both those who trust and those who slander, taught this so that people would have no doubts.

Thus were his words.

These days, however, people seem to engage in learning to put a stop to criticism by others, making ready to devote themselves wholly to debate and argument. If one studies, more and more one realizes Amida’s fundamental intent and grows in awareness of the immensity of the compassionate Vow, so that one can explain, to those who anxiously wonder how birth is possible for wretched people like themselves, that the Primal Vow does not discriminate as to whether one’s mind is good or evil, pure or defiled. Only then is there meaning in being a scholar. But to intimidate a person who happens to say the nembutsu in accordance with the Primal Vow without any forethought — insisting that one must have learning — is the act of a demon obstructing the dharma, of a foe of the Buddha. Not only do such people themselves lack shinjin of Other Power, but further they confuse others with mistaken thoughts.

One should cautiously fear that one may be going against the late Master’s intent. Further one should grieve if one is not in accord with Amida’s Primal Vow.

13

On the assertion: People who are unafraid of committing evil because of the inconceivable working of the Primal Vow are in fact impudently presuming upon the Vow and therefore will not attain birth.

This is a statement of one who doubts the Primal Vow and fails to understand the influence of good and evil karma of past lives.

Good thoughts arise in us through the prompting of good karma from the past, and evil comes to be thought and performed through the working of evil karma. The late Master said, “Know that every evil act done — even as slight as a particle on the tip of a strand of rabbit’s fur or sheep’s wool — has its cause in past karma.”

Further, the Master once asked, “Yuien-bō, do you accept all that I say?”

“Yes, I do,” I answered.

“Then will you not deviate from whatever I tell you?” he repeated.

I humbly affirmed this. Thereupon he said, “Now, I want you to kill a thousand people. If you do, you will definitely attain birth.”

I responded, “Though you instruct me thus, I’m afraid it is not in my power to kill even one person.”

“Then why did you say that you would follow whatever I told you?”

He continued, “By this you should realize that if we could always act as we wished, then when I told you to kill a thousand people in order to attain birth, you should have immediately done so. But since you lack the karmic cause inducing you to kill even a single person, you do not kill. It is not that you do not kill because your heart is good. In the same way, a person may wish not to harm anyone and yet end up killing a hundred or a thousand people.” Thus he spoke of how we believe that if our hearts are good, then it is good for birth, and if our hearts are evil, it is bad for birth, failing to realize that it is by the inconceivable working of the Vow that we are saved.

There was, in those days, a person who had fallen into wrong views. He asserted that since the Vow was made to save the person who had committed evil, one should purposely do evil as an act for attaining birth. As rumors of misdeeds gradually spread, Shinran wrote in a letter, “do not take a liking to poison just because there is an antidote.” This was in order to put an end to that wrong understanding. It by no means implies that evil can obstruct one’s attainment of birth.

He also said, “If it were only by observing precepts and upholding rules that we could entrust ourselves to the Primal Vow, how could we ever gain freedom from birth-and-death?” Even such wretched beings as ourselves, on encountering the Primal Vow, come indeed to “presume” upon it. But even so, how could we commit evil acts without any karmic cause in ourselves?

The Master further stated:

For those who make their living drawing nets or fishing in the seas and rivers, and those who sustain their lives hunting beasts or taking fowl in the fields and mountains, and

those who pass their lives conducting trade or cultivating fields and paddies, it is all the same. If the karmic cause so prompts us, we will commit any kind of act.

These days, however, one finds people making a show of themselves as “seekers for the afterlife,” posting notices at nembutsu practice halls saying that those who have committed such and such acts may not enter, as though only good persons should say the nembutsu. Are not people who do this indeed “outwardly expressing signs of wisdom, goodness, or diligence, while inwardly embracing falsity”?

Even the evil we commit while “presuming” upon the Vow occurs through the prompting of past karma. Thus, Other Power lies in entrusting ourselves wholly to the Primal Vow while leaving both good and evil to karmic recompense. The *Essentials of Faith Alone* states:

Do you know what power Amida possesses, when you say that because you are a being of karmic evil you cannot be saved?

Since you have even a heart that presumes upon the Primal Vow, the mind of entrusting yourself to Other Power becomes all the more firmly settled.

If you entrusted yourself to the Primal Vow only after completely ridding yourself of karmic evil and blind passions, then there would be no need for presuming upon the Vow. But to rid yourself of blind passions is to become a Buddha, and for one who is already a Buddha, the Vow that arose from five kalpas of profound thought would be to no purpose.

People who admonish others against presuming upon the Primal Vow themselves appear to be possessed of blind passions and defilements. Does not this condition itself imply presuming upon the Vow? What kind of evil is meant by “presuming upon the Vow” and what kind not? Rather, is not this entire line of argument the product of immature thinking?

14

On the assertion: You should believe that the grave karmic evil binding you to birth-and-death for eight billion kalpas is eradicated through a single utterance of the Name.

It is asserted [based on the *Contemplation Sutra*] that there are persons of the ten transgressions and five grave offenses who, although they have passed their lives without saying the nembutsu, at the time of death, urged by the instruction of a good teacher, come to say it for the first time. In one utterance, eight billion kalpas of karmic evil are eradicated, or in ten utterances, ten times eight billion kalpas of grave karmic evil are eradicated, and thus they attain birth. It appears that one utterance and ten utterances are thought in order to make us know the gravity of the ten transgressions and five grave offenses. Those who assert the above, however, speak only of the benefit of eradicating evil. This falls far short of the teaching that we have accepted. For by virtue of being shone upon by Amida’s light, we receive diamondlike

shinjin when the one thought-moment of entrusting arises within us; hence, already in that instant Amida takes us into the stage of the truly settled, and when our lives end, all our blind passions and obstructions of evil being transformed, we are brought to realize insight into the nonorigination of all existence. Thus, the nembutsu that we say throughout a lifetime with the thought, "If it were not for this compassionate Vow, how could such wretched evildoers as ourselves gain emancipation from birth-and-death?" should be recognized as entirely the expression of our gratitude for the benevolence and our thankfulness for the virtuous working of the Tathagata's great compassion.

To believe that each time you say the Name your karmic evil is eradicated is nothing but to strive to attain birth by eliminating your karmic evil through your own efforts. In that case, you can attain birth only by being diligent in the nembutsu to the very point of death, for every single thought you have throughout the course of your life is a fetter binding you to birth-to-death. But since our karmic recompense restricts us, we may, meeting with various unforeseen accidents or being tormented by the pain of sickness, reach the end of our lives without dwelling in right-mindedness; in such circumstances, saying the Name is difficult. How then is the karmic evil committed in that final interval to be eradicated? If it is not eliminated, is not birth unattainable?

If we entrust ourselves to Amida's Vow that grasps and never abandons us, then even though, through unforeseen circumstances, we commit an evil act and die without saying the nembutsu at the very end, we will immediately realize birth in the Pure Land. Moreover, even if we do say the Name at the point of death, it will be nothing other than our expression of gratitude for Amida's benevolence, entrusting ourselves to the Buddha more and more as the very time of enlightenment draws near.

The desire to eradicate one's karmic evil through saying the Name arises from the heart of self-power; it is the basic intent of people who pray to be in a state of right-mindedness when their lives end. It therefore reveals an absence of shinjin that is Other Power.

15

On the assertion that one attains enlightenment even while maintaining this bodily existence full of blind passions.

This statement is completely absurd. The attainment of Buddhahood with this very body is the essence of the Shingon esoteric teaching; it is the realization achieved through the three kinds of mystic acts. The purification of the six sense organs is the One Vehicle teaching of the *Lotus Sutra*; it is the virtue acquired through the four practices of repose. These are both ways of difficult practice to be followed by those of superior capacity; they lead to the enlightenment realized through fulfilling contemplative practice. Attaining enlightenment is the coming life is the essence of the Pure Land teaching of Other Power; it is the principle actualized through the

settlement of shinjin. This is the way of easy practice to be followed by those of inferior capacity; it is the teaching that makes no distinction between the good and the evil.

Since it is extremely difficult to free oneself from blind passions and the hindrances of karmic evil in this life, even the virtuous monks who practice the Shingon and Tendai teachings pray for enlightenment in the next life. In our case, what more need be said? We lack both the observance of precepts and the comprehension of wisdom, but when, by allowing ourselves to be carried on the ship of Amida's Vow, we have crossed this ocean of suffering that is birth-and-death and attained the shore of the Pure Land, the dark clouds of blind passions will swiftly clear and the moon of enlightenment, true reality, will immediately appear. Becoming one with the unhindered light filling the ten quarters, we will benefit all sentient beings. It is at that moment that we attain enlightenment.

Do those who speak of realizing enlightenment while in this bodily existence manifest various accommodated bodies, possess the Buddha's thirty-two features and eighty marks, and preach the dharma to benefit beings like Śākyamuni? It is this that is meant by realizing enlightenment in this life. It is stated in a hymn:

When the time comes

**For shinjin, indestructible as diamond, to become settled,
Amida grasps and protects us with compassionate light,
So that we part forever from birth-and-death.**

This means that at the moment shinjin becomes settled, we are grasped, never to be abandoned, and therefore we will not transmigrate further in the six courses. Only then do we part forever from birth-and-death. Should such awareness be confusedly termed "attaining enlightenment"? It is regrettable that such misunderstanding should arise.

The late Master said,

According to the true essence of the Pure Land way, one entrusts oneself to the Primal Vow in this life and realized enlightenment in the Pure Land; this is the teaching I received.

16

On the assertion that whenever practitioners of shinjin happen to become angry, or commit some misdeed, or dispute with fellow practitioners, they must without fail go through a change of heart.

This appears to reflect an attitude of seeking to attain birth by desisting from evil and performing good.

For the person of wholehearted single practice of the nembutsu, change of heart occurs only once. People who have in ordinary life been ignorant of the true essence of the Primal Vow, which is Other Power, come to realize, through receiving Amida's wisdom, that they cannot

attain birth with the thoughts and feelings they have harbored up to then, so they abandon their former heart and mind and entrust themselves to the Primal Vow. This is what is meant by “change of heart.”

Suppose that attainment of birth were possible only by going through changes of heart day and night with every incident that occurred. In that case — human life being such that it ends even before breath exhaled can be drawn in again — if we were to die without going through a change of heart and without abiding in a state of gentleheartedness and forbearance, would not Amida’s Vow that grasps and never abandons us be rendered meaningless?

Some claim with their lips that they entrust themselves to the power of the Vow and yet harbor in their hearts the thought that, even though the Vow to save the evil person is said to be beyond conceptual understanding, after all it saves the good in particular; thus, doubting the power of the Vow, they lack the mind of entrusting themselves to Other Power, and are destined for birth in the borderland. How lamentable this is!

If shinjin has become settled, birth will be brought about by Amida’s design, so there must be no calculating on our part. Even when we are evil, if we revere the power of the Vow all the more deeply, gentleheartedness and forbearance will surely arise in us through its spontaneous working (*jinen*). With everything we do, as far as birth is concerned, we should constantly and fervently call to mind Amida’s immense benevolence without any thought of being wise. Then the nembutsu will indeed emerge; this is *jinen*. Our not calculating is called *jinen*. It is itself Other Power.

It seems, however, that there are people who knowingly declare that *jinen* has a different meaning. This is deplorable.

17

On the assertion that a person born into the borderland will in the end fall into hell.

In what authoritative passage do we find such a statement? It is deplorable that this is being maintained by people who pretend to be scholars. How are they reading the sutras, treatises, and other sacred writings?

I was taught that practitioners who lack shinjin are born in the borderland because of their doubt concerning the Primal Vow, and that, after the evil of doubt has been expiated, they realize enlightenment in the fulfilled land.

Since practitioners of shinjin are few, many are guided to the transformed land. To declare, despite this, that birth there will ultimately end in vain would be to accuse Śākyamuni Buddha of lying.

18

On the assertion that the size we becomes as Buddhas depends on the amount of our donations to the sangha.

This is totally absurd and nonsensical. To begin with, is it not impossible to determine the size of a Buddha? Although the height of Amida, the Master of the teaching in the Pure Land of peace, is stated [in sutras], this refers to a form of the fulfilled body of compassionate means. A Buddha, having been awakened to the enlightenment of dharma-nature, has no form, long or short, square or round, and no color, blue, yellow, red, white, or black; how then can the size be determined?

It is stated [in sutras] that in saying the nembutsu, one beholds a transformed Buddha. Concerning this, it is written [in scriptures] that with a great nembutsu one sees a great Buddha and with a small nembutsu one sees a small Buddha. Perhaps the above assertion has been wrongly linked to this idea.

Further, it may be possible to say that making offerings is the practice of the paramita of charity. But however precious a treasure one may offer before the Buddha or give to a teacher, it is meaningless if one lacks shinjin. And even though one may not make a donation of even a single sheet of paper or half a penny to the sangha, if one yields one's heart to Other Power and one's shinjin is deep, one is in accord with the essential intent of the Vow.

Is it not after all that those people seek to intimidate their fellow practitioners, using the Buddha's teaching as a pretext and being moved by mundane desires?

[*Postscript*]

Every one of the assertions discussed above appears to arise out of divergences from shinjin. As the late Master once related, in Master Hōnen's day, among his many disciples there were few who were of the same shinjin as Hōnen, and because of this, Shinran became involved in a debate with some fellow practitioners. It happened in this way.

Shinran remarked, "My shinjin and the Master's are one."

Seikan-bō, Nembutsu-bō, and others among his fellow practitioners strongly argued, "How can your shinjin be the same as the Master's?"

Shinran responded, "The Master possesses vast wisdom and learning, so I would be mistaken if I claimed to be the same in those respects, but in shinjin that is the cause of birth, there is no difference whatever. The Master's shinjin and mine are one and the same."

The others remained skeptical, however, asking how that could be. So finally they all decided that the argument should be brought before Hōnen to determine which side was right.

When they presented the details of the matter, Master Hōnen said, “My shinjin has been given by Amida; so has that of Zenshin-bō [Shinran]. Therefore they are one and the same. A person with a different shinjin will surely not go to the Pure Land to which I will go.”

Thus, it seems likely that among people of the wholehearted, single practice now also, there are those not one in shinjin with Shinran.

Although all of the above are repetitions of the same words, I record them here. While the dew of life barely clings to the withered leaf of grass that I am, I can lend an ear to the uncertainties of the people who accompany me along the way and relate to them what Master Shinran said. But I lament that after my eyes close, there will almost certainly be confusion concerning the teaching. When you are confused by people who discuss such views as those noted above, carefully read the sacred writings that accord with the late Master’s thought and that he himself used to read. In the scriptures in general, the true and real and the accommodated and provisional are mixed. That we abandon the accommodated and take up the real, set aside the provisional and adopt the true is the Master’s fundamental intent. You must under no circumstances misread the sacred writings. I have selected several important authoritative passages and appended them to this volume as a standard.

The Master would often say,

When I consider deeply the Vow of Amida, which arose from the kalpas of profound thought, I realize that it was entirely for the sake of myself alone! Then how I am filled with gratitude for the Primal Vow, in which Amida resolved to save me, though I am burdened with such heavy karma.

Reflecting now once more on this expression of Shinran’s inmost thoughts, I find that it does not differ in the least from those precious words of Shan-tao:

Know yourself to be a foolish being of karmic evil caught in birth-and-death, ever sinking and ever wandering in transmigration from innumerable kalpas in the past, with never a condition that would lead to emancipation.

Thus, how grateful I feel for Shinran’s words, in which he gives himself as an example in order to make us realize we are in delusion, knowing nothing at all of the depths of our karmic evil or the vastness of Amida’s benevolence.

In truth, myself and others discuss only good and evil, leaving Amida’s benevolence out of consideration. Among Master Shinran’s words were:

I know nothing at all of good or evil. For if I would know thoroughly, as Amida Tathagata knows, that an act was good, then I would know good. If I could know thoroughly, as the Tathagata knows, that an act was evil, then I would know evil. But with a foolish being full of blind passions, in this fleeting world — this burning house — all matters without exception are empty and false, totally without truth and sincerity. The nembutsu alone is true and real.

Indeed, I myself and others speak only falsehoods to each other. In this, there is a truly regrettable thing. When, regarding our saying of the nembutsu, we discuss the nature of shinjin or explain it to people, we ascribe to Shinran even words he never spoke in order to silence others and to settle controversies with our own opinions. This is indeed saddening and deplorable. This matter should be carefully pondered and understood.

These are by no means my own words, but since I do not know the lines of discourse in the sutras and commentaries and cannot understand or discern the profundity of the scriptural writings, undoubtedly they seem foolish. Nevertheless, recalling a hundredth part — only a fragment — of what the late Shinran said, I write it down. How sad it would be to abide in the borderland instead of being born directly into the fulfilled land, even though one has the fortune of saying the nembutsu. That there be no differing of shinjin among the fellow practitioners, I take my brush with tears in my eyes and record this. Let the title be *Tannishō — A Record in Lament of Divergences* [from *True Shinjin*].

It should not be shown about indiscriminately.

[*A Note on the Persecution of the Nembutsu*
Appended to Manuscript Copies of Tannishō]

It was while the former emperor Gotoba was in power that Master Hōnen established and spread the nembutsu school based on the Primal Vow of Other Power. Then monks of Kōfuku-ji, accusing Hōnen of being an enemy of the dharma, presented a petition to the court to the effect that there was lawless conduct among his disciples. Because of these groundless rumors, the following persons were found guilty of crimes:

Master Hōnen and seven of his disciples were exiled, and four other disciples were executed.

The Master was banished to a place called Hata in Tosa province and, stripped of ordination, given a secular name: the male Fujii no Motohiko; he was seventy-six years old.

Shinran was exiled to Echigo province. His secular name was Fujii no Yoshizane; he was thirty-five.

[Among the others exiled:] Jōmon-bō, to Bingo province; Chōsai Zenkō-bō, to Hōki province; Kōkaku-bō, to Izu province; Gyōkū Hōhon-bō, to Sado province.

It was also determined that Kōsai Jōkaku-bō and Zenne-bō both receive banishment, but the former abbot of Mudō-ji temple took them under his custody.

The persons sentenced to banishment were the eight listed above.

Those sentenced to death:

- | | |
|---------------------|--------------|
| 1.Saii Zenshaku-bō; | 2.Shōgan-bō; |
| 3.Jūren-bō; | 4.Anraku-bō. |

These were the sentences passed down by Dharma-seal Sonchō of the second court rank.

Shinran was deprived of his status as priest and given a secular name. Hence, he was neither monk nor layman. Because of this, he took as his own surname the word Toku (stubble-haired). For this, he applied to the court and obtained permission. This petition is still preserved in the Office of Records.

After his exile, he signed his name Gutoku Shinran.

[*Renno's Note*]

*This sacred writing is an important scripture in our tradition.
It should not be indiscriminately shown
to any who lack past karmic good.*

SHAKU RENNYO