

# THE MEANING OF SALVATION IN THE DOCTRINE OF PURE LAND BUDDHISM

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It goes without saying that, for all its profound philosophical systems, Buddhism is essentially a doctrine of liberation. In Buddhism, no salvation is conceivable except the liberation through Enlightenment from the bondage of ignorance and suffering. But does this apply equally to the doctrine of Pure Land Buddhism (the Shin and other Pure Land schools of Buddhism) in which faith in Amida (Amitabha Buddha) has prime importance, or is Pure Land Buddhism virtually a soteriological religion, despite its Buddhist background?

In this article, I, as a Buddhist thinker, shall attempt to make clear the meaning of salvation in the doctrine of Pure Land Buddhism.

## 1. *Suffering*

Semantically, the term “salvation” means the liberation or emancipation of one from the predicament into which he is fallen. This is equally true of the Japanese term *sukui* or *kyūsai*.<sup>1</sup> In other words, “salvation” semantically presupposes some predicament, whatever it may be. What, then, is the human situation which Buddhism envisages as the predicament from which man should be liberated? The Buddhist answer to this question is widely known: “The suffering of life.” But the term “suffering of life” is vague and indefinite in meaning. It needs further definition and clarification. What does it specifically mean? To make its meaning clear, we should turn our eyes to human life as an ever flowing duration or continuum.

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<sup>1</sup> 救濟 *Kyūsai* is a compound of the Chinese characters, 救 which means “to keep one from harm,” and 濟 which means “to ferry one across.”

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One thing to be noted of our life is that it flows on, ever alternating between “doing” and “undergoing.” This alternation between doing and undergoing, however, is by no means a lawless, orderless movement. It is ruled by a kind of law, so to speak, a law of inter-causation or mutual conditioning. We do, and our “doing” inevitably makes its influence felt on our way of feeling, sensing and thinking, directly as well as indirectly (—through its effects on our environment). Our way of feeling, sensing and thinking thus influenced then inevitably conditions the further steps of our doing.

It is true that an awareness of this law has been expressed very early in mythology and folklore, and later in religion, philosophy and psychology. It is, indeed, one aspect of wisdom that underlies the process of human civilization. Broadly speaking, however, the bearers of this wisdom have been those who have naïvely affirmed life with its impulses, cravings and desires, and have sought to gratify life’s wants ever better; that is, they applied their awareness of this law for the better enjoyment of life. Life itself was never radically questioned. They remained strangers to the tragic sense of life and to the negation of life. Their wisdom had something analogous to the “wisdom of instinct,” as Fabre called it.

Buddhism started with a keen sense of the painfulness of life and sought in all seriousness to penetrate to the nature and origination of the suffering of life. It declared that no human experience could be free from suffering. In other words, the life as we actually live it is, after all, suffering. This declaration may sound bold and too pessimistic. However, it should be remembered that the declaration is made from the viewpoint of Enlightenment, from a penetrating insight into the origination of suffering.

Buddhism teaches that all sufferings of life originate in delusion (*kleśa*). Intellectually, delusion is ignorance (*avidyā*), that is, the ignorance of the emptiness (*śūnyatā*) or suchness (*tathātā*) of things and events. Emotionally, delusion is primarily a thirsty craving (*trṣṇā*). Possessed by delusion, we are irresistibly involved in matters of love and hate, gain and loss, honor and dishonor, aggression and defence, in short, in things and events of the world. The result is

that we suffer.

The process of our life alternating between doing and undergoing referred to above is thus seen by Buddhism as a vicious circle under the spell of delusion between doing (*karma*) and suffering. Delusion causes us to do deluded things in our actual life; the deluded things done cause us to suffer; and the suffering tends to cause us to become more and more deluded, and so on endlessly. The law that rules over this process is the law of karmic causation.

The origination of suffering as stated above makes the nature of suffering clear. In Buddhism, suffering primarily means the painful uneasiness or anxiety of being deluded. As such, suffering is pregnant with an urge, even if subconscious or semi-conscious, to break through delusion. It is precisely in this sense that suffering is declared to be universal in human life. Some one might be conscious of such suffering, but very feebly and only in the exceptional moments of affliction or depression. Another might have no experience of it. Nevertheless, no one is exempt from such suffering, as long as he is human. In other words, everyone is potentially a sufferer.

## 2. *Our Inner Togetherness*

One thing should be remembered in connection with the problem of suffering: everyone of us human beings is deeply interrelated with fellow beings in an *inner togetherness*. It can hardly be doubted that we are so born as to be sensitive of our inner togetherness. Do we not implicitly mean this when we use the term "we"? In this sense, our inner togetherness may be called "we-ness." As long as our fellow beings are unhappy, none of us can remain aloof from them. We can not but share the unhappiness with them. Because of the inner togetherness of man, sympathy can be awakened within us.

The consciousness of the inner togetherness of man finds its fullest and sublimest expressions in the sphere of religion. Mahayana Buddhism is especially emphatic about the principle of "seeking for emancipation from suffering together with fellow beings." In the

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*Vimalakīrtinirdeśa* we read, “I (*Vimalakīrti*) suffer, because my fellow beings suffer.” This is precisely what the term compassion (*karuṇā*) means. The Mahayana principle of “together with fellow beings” may naturally lead to the vision of the Dharma: The Dharma through which I am truly saved from suffering must be the same Dharma through which all my fellow beings are equally saved, that is, the Dharma that is *adequate* to all the human beings. But what, then, is meant by the term “adequate”?

We actually live in a world in which we find ourselves bound to others by family, neighborhood, occupational, religious, political and other countless ties. Our life situation is largely conditioned by these ties. Above all the family tie has a fundamental importance in conditioning our life situation. Most men and women are actually living a home life. No one doubts that home life is the normal way of living. The life of the homeless one, secluded from family and society, however sublime its purpose may be, is exceptional. Most people make much of their home and family, and are ready to accept all the cares accompanying their home life. They believe that man is so born as to live and love home life for all its cares and troubles. It is true that home life is exposed to the danger of disintegration in the highly industrialized society of today. Nevertheless, the home does not seem to have lost its primary importance in human life.

However, it is definitely in the home as well as in social life that we experience the full strength of delusion over us. The foliage of delusion is exuberant on the soil of home and social life. The delusive passions such as attachment, hatred, anger, fear, jealousy, enmity, perverseness and aggressiveness become intensified in the tensions of human relationships. It is undoubtedly such delusive passions and their results that afflict us. Suffering is thus inevitable for us beings in the world. To suffer because of being submerged in the world—this is precisely our existential situation.

The Chinese Buddhist master, Shan-tao,<sup>1</sup> undoubtedly had this existential situation in mind when he wrote as follows:

<sup>1</sup> 善導. J., Zendo (613–681), an eminent Chinese Buddhist master, especially important in the Pure Land traditions of Buddhism in China and Japan.

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I am actually an ordinary, sinful being who has been, from time immemorial, sunken in and carried down by the current of birth-and-death. Any hope to be helped out of this current has been wholly denied to me.<sup>1</sup>

Some commentary may be needed on those words. By the term "I" Shan-tao definitely means the we-ness or inner togetherness referred to above. He represents here all the human beings in the world. Otherwise, this sentence is not meaningful. The "sinfulness" mentioned here does not refer to any personal sin, but to the sinfulness of the delusion of human existence itself. The phrase "from time immemorial" may be taken to express how long the delusive circle between karma and suffering has been repeated up to the present. In short, this passage expresses a penetrating insight into the existential situation in which man is inevitably bound to suffering, and as such still has a vital meaning for the present day world.

The doctrine of Pure Land Buddhism has appeared as the Dharma that is truly adequate to such an existential situation of man, the Dharma through which alone we can be saved as we are in the world, that is, without deserting home or social life.

### 3. *The Dharma adequate to all ordinary beings*

The doctrine of Pure Land Buddhism has a long history of transmission throughout India, China and Japan. Among the masters who transmitted the doctrine, Tan-luan<sup>2</sup> and the above-cited Shan-tao were exceedingly influential over their own times and over posterity. But the fundamental significance of the Pure Land doctrine as the Dharma truly adequate to all ordinary beings was for the first time positively established by the Japanese master, Honen,<sup>3</sup> who

<sup>1</sup> Shan-tao, 觀經疏 *A Commentary on the Meditation Sutra*, Vol. 4: Exposition of the goods that are meant for the practically minded, (not the contemplatively disposed), to practice.

<sup>2</sup> 曇鸞 (476-542), an eminent Chinese Buddhist master, especially important in the Pure Land traditions of Buddhism in China and Japan. His main work is 往生論註 *A Commentary on Vasubandhu's Treatise on the Pure Land*.

<sup>3</sup> 法然 (1133-1212), founder of the Pure Land (Jōdo) school of Buddhism in Japan and teacher to Shinran. His main work is 選擇集 *the Senjakushū*.

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resolutely declared the independence of the Pure Land doctrine from all other Buddhist schools. The depth of Honen's faith which remained as yet unexpressed by himself was subsequently fully grasped and given a profound and most thoroughgoing expression by Shinran.<sup>1</sup> The mark that distinguishes both these masters is their decided preference of "our" salvation to "my" emancipation. They firmly stood on the ground of the inner togetherness of man.

In his childhood, Honen was exhorted by his dying father, who was murdered by his jealous competitor, to become a Buddhist monk and quest for the Dharma through which is emptied every discrimination between friend and foe, love and hate, and through which true peace is attained. He followed his father's dying will and became a monk of the Tendai sect of Buddhism. His elaborate study of the sutras and śāstras as well as his rigorous disciplinary practices for many years in the monastery on Mt. Hiei were exclusively devoted to the purpose of attaining that Dharma. But all his efforts brought him no light. This is no wonder, considering that the Buddhist quest which had been traditionally undertaken in the monastery was fundamentally directed to the personal emancipation of each monk, while Honen's quest was exclusively for the salvation of all human beings in the world. Had his chief concern been personal emancipation, he would have believed that he was steadily marching on the right path to the goal.

The sinfulness of man was continually a problem that confronted Honen. The popular belief of the day that sinfulness can be expiated by the virtue of leaving home and becoming a Buddhist monk was unacceptable to him. Sinfulness was nothing other than the deludedness because of which man endlessly alternates between evil karma and suffering, thus afflicting others as well as himself. As such it was definitely a problem of man, not a mere personal problem. The personal solution of this problem might be conceivable, of course, and in fact a great number of Buddhist monks have sought a solution of this sort. The sense of our inner togetherness, however, makes

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<sup>1</sup> 親鸞 (1173-1262), founder of the Shin (Jōdo Shin) school of Buddhism. The most important of his numerous works is 教行信證 the *Kyō-gyō-shin-shō*.

this sort of solution less meaningful. Unless “we” can be saved, what is the meaning of “my” emancipation? Honen thus exclusively sought the Dharma through which all the human beings can be equally saved, and at last he discovered this Dharma in the Pure Land doctrine.

In this connection, a reference may be given to the critical view that faith in the Pure Land is dominantly motivated by the desire for happiness or enjoyment after death. As regards the deteriorated and secularized form of the Pure Land cult which is observable among the masses, this criticism is irrefutable. Regarding the genuine form of faith in the Pure Land, however, it is completely wrong. As stated above, in Pure Land Buddhism and, accordingly, in the genuine faith in the Pure Land, the prime concern is the salvation of all of us human beings from the predicament of suffering. This concern is really furthest from the ego-centric desire for happiness and enjoyment. The spirit of Mahayana Buddhism which emphasizes “seeking Enlightenment together with all fellow beings” is most vitally and thoroughly embodied in Pure Land Buddhism.

#### *4. The Pure Land and the Original Vow*

In the first section I made a reference to suchness, stating that suchness is emptiness, and vice versa. In other words, suchness is the reality of things and events. Beyond suchness no Ultimate Reality is conceivable. It is primarily because of ignorance that we remain blind to suchness and are attached to the illusory images and views of things and events.

It is, however, the common faith of all Buddhists that suchness is attainable for everyone. In this respect, the Pure Land Buddhists are no exception. But the Pure Land Buddhists have something unique in their view of suchness. For they believe that while suchness is attainable in principle for everyone, one would never be able to embody suchness in one’s own personality as long as one remains in the world. To remain in the world means not to be liberated from the power of delusion. With this thought, they paid keen attention

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to the dynamic aspect of suchness. What, then, is the dynamic aspect of suchness?

In the first place, guided by the sutras relating to the Pure Land, they learned to comprehend suchness in terms of land, namely, as the Pure Land. As the land of suchness which illumines, empties and purifies our delusion, the Pure Land is the land of Wisdom (*jñāna*, as flowing out of *prajñā*). Shinran defined it as the land of infinite light (Wisdom). Suchness now appears as the land of infinite light. Illumined by light of the Pure Land, we come to know the delusiveness of this world. Such is the basic conception of the Pure Land. But the dynamic aspect of suchness can not be fully expressed by the idea of the Pure Land alone.

Secondly, the Pure Land masters further learned to comprehend the dynamic character of suchness in terms of personality, namely, as the Original Vow of Amida Tathagata. The term "*tathāgata*" means "the one who emerges out of suchness." "*Amida*" (derived from *amitāyus-amitābha*) means "infinite." As such Amida Tathagata symbolizes the dynamic operation of suchness which is expressed as infinite compassion and Wisdom, even though he appears as an individual Buddha in the sutras relating to him. According to the *Larger Sutra of Eternal Life*, out of the sincerest desire of delivering all beings from suffering Amida took an incomparably excellent vow when he was in the original, disciplinary stage as a Bodhisattva (*Dharmākara* by name), which he has already fulfilled. This vow is called the Original Vow. The Original Vow is thus Amida's fullest self-expression and, accordingly, the sublimest self-expression of suchness in terms of tathagatahood or bodhisattvahood.

The *Larger Sutra* shows that the Original Vow is differentiated into forty eight items. They are interrelated with each other in a subtle way. They can not be discussed fully in this paper, but for the present the following should be remembered as the essentials of the Original Vow:

- 1) It is vowed that Amida's Name should appear as embodying all the virtues or efficiencies that have any bearing whatever on the salvation or deliverance of all human beings, and, when the Name appears, it should

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sound throughout the lands in ten directions.<sup>1</sup>

2) It is vowed that anyone who, hearing Amida's Name praised, awakens faith in Amida's Sincerity and keeps Amida's Name with him, should be assuredly reborn in the Pure Land.

3) It is vowed that the Pure Land should be completed as the land in which all the reborn ones should attain nirvana.

We notice from the descriptions above that two important things are vowed in the Original Vow regarding the problem of our salvation: One is the rebirth in the Pure Land; the other is the awakening of faith in Amida's Sincerity.

The rebirth in the Pure Land that is held to take place after death has been the central concern of most Pure Land masters as well as followers for a long time. It was really inconceivable for them to attain Enlightenment in this life. The Buddhist monastic disciplines were so difficult to accomplish. They wished to attain Enlightenment after death in the Pure Land, relying on Amida's Original Vow. As a general tendency, faith in Amida's Original Vow was regarded merely as a requisite to the rebirth. They hardly realized the profound significance of the awakening of faith. It is, indeed, Shinran who for the first time realized this in its full significance. He was revolutionary in shifting the prime importance, hitherto attached to the problem of rebirth or Enlightenment, to the problem of the awakening of faith. Faith is essential; once true faith is awakened and established, the rebirth in the Pure Land will take place as a natural result. For Shinran, the awakening of faith in Amida's Sincerity really meant salvation.

### 5. *The Awakening of Faith in Amida's Sincerity*

Shinran coped in all seriousness and tenacity with the problem

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<sup>1</sup> In the tradition of Pure Land Buddhism, the term "Name" as applied to Amida Tathagata is something much more than name in the usual sense of the term. According to the tradition, Amida's Name stores all of his virtues or efficiencies and, when uttered, the virtues are actualized in the utterer himself. How to interpret the actualization of the virtues has been a problem for the nembutsu-adherents to tackle existentially.

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of faith. He suffered long in his search for pure faith. Any form of faith, so long as it remains an expression of the will to believe, can never be pure. It is branded with a self-willed character. It is mixed and defiled with calculation, self-interest, suppressed doubt, etc. Pure faith must be something cleared of all these defilement and mixture. As such genuine faith is most difficult to attain, because it could not take place without some otherness coming from beyond and working upon us. How, then, does pure faith in Amida become possible for us?

Influenced by Shan-tao's *Commentary on the Meditation Sutra*, Shinran came to hit upon the "Sincerity" of Amida. He learned to see all that Amida did—and does—as the expression of Amida's Sincerity. The Original Vow itself is the loftiest, sublimest expression of his Sincerity. Suchness has now appeared as Sincerity in the tathagatahood of Amida. Ever disclosing himself in the sound of his Name, Amida the All-Sincere One untiringly works upon us. He turns himself over us. His Sincerity radiates itself as boundless illumination and compassion. Precisely as a genuine response called forth by his Sincerity, the awakening of faith in Amida's Original Vow takes place in us, when the time is fully ripe.

In the awakening of faith, we experience a breaking through at the root of the delusion. We realize how delusive, insincere and sinful we have been. Our self-complacency breaks down this moment. We are emptied through and through. At the same moment, however, we find ourselves decisively taken in by Amida's Sincerity. We for the first time attain true restfulness, because the deepest root of our existential anxiety or suffering, namely, ignorance, is cut through for ever. It is still true that the foliage of actual sufferings does not perish; so long as we remain in the world, there is no escaping them. We have to undergo them. But they no longer disturb the fundamental restfulness and serenity. Further, in this experience of awakening we find ourselves firmly standing on the way which leads straight to the Pure Land. It is the way of *nembutsu* or going with Amida's Name.

What, then, is the *nembutsu*? It is definitely *our* act, *our* practice, which has been chosen by Amida for *us* to do in the Original

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Vow. Regarding the nembutsu as our act, Honen declares as follows:

By nembutsu I do not mean the practice of contemplating as engaged in by the sages of China and our country. Nor is it the recitation of the Buddha's name practiced as the result of understanding the meaning of the term "nen (thinking)." It is just to recite "Namu-Amida-Butsu" without doubting that this will issue in rebirth in the Pure Land.<sup>1</sup>

Both the contemplative form of nembutsu and the vocal form of nembutsu as resulting from some special understanding are rejected by Honen, because they are after all, distortions into special forms of nembutsu capable of being practiced only by the gifted ones. None of these practices can be *our* act as originally intended by Amida. The nembutsu intended by Amida himself as our act, Honen concludes, consists of reciting "Namu-Amida-Butsu," that is, calling Amida's Name, out of faith in his Original Vow. As such, the nembutsu originates in Amida's Sincerity itself. Its significance is clear: it is meant to be that which everyone of us can easily practice. It is precisely that which enables us to go straight along the way of "no hindrance." Shinran, too, when he developed a profound comprehension of nembutsu, took the same position as Honen.

### 6. *The maturing of the time for the awakening of faith*

Our next problem is: How do we come to be awakened to Amida's Sincerity and surrender ourselves to it? How does the time become mature and full for the awakening of faith? From the viewpoint of practice, I would like to emphasize that the time is matured for faith through—and only through—the nembutsu.

According to Manshi Kiyozawa, it is not that we believe in the Tathagata because of his existence but the Tathagata exists because of our faith in him.<sup>2</sup> This is basically true of the relation-

<sup>1</sup> Honen, 一枚起請文 *the One Sheet Document*.

<sup>2</sup> Manshi Kiyozawa (1863–1903), an eminent Buddhist leader in Japan in Meiji Era. As for his thought, refer to S. Yamabe (ed.), *Selected Essays of Manshi Kiyozawa* (tr. by K. Tajima & F. Shacklock), 1936.

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ship between the Tathagata's existence and the practice of nembutsu : It is not that we practice the nembutsu because of the Tathagata's existence ; the Tathagata exists because of our practice of nembutsu.

In the last analysis, nembutsu, and nothing but nembutsu, makes us realize what the Tathagata is in reality. It is true that we are attracted to the nembutsu by hearing of Amida Tathagata, but it is even more true that Amida's Sincerity becomes really understandable and appreciable to us through the nembutsu. It is more than probable that it was from this insight that Amida himself specifically chose, in his Original Vow, the Nembutsu as *our* practice. In this sense, I would prefer to say: "In the beginning, the nembutsu was."

In the process of the life of nembutsu, time is matured for the awakening of faith. At the outset, however, nembutsu expresses our urgent need for salvation from suffering. Under the pressure of existential suffering, we cry, so to speak, for salvation while calling the Name of Amida. But there is no hope of this need being satisfied from without by, say, some savior god. The need is not the kind of need which can be satisfied in such a way. What we can do in this situation is, in so far as we are existentially inclined to the teaching of nembutsu, patiently to seek to realize the deepest meaning of the teaching, while intently practicing the nembutsu.

A revolution takes place in our nembutsu-mindedness itself when the time is ripe. The nembutsu is no more a mere expression of our desire for salvation this moment ; it now appears as the very vehicle through which Amida's Sincerity of awakening and receiving us becomes fully audible and understandable. We who have been calling Amida's Name for salvation now turn out to be the ones who, all the while, have been called by Amida to awake and take refuge in him. The well-known definition of religion by Schleiermacher as the "feeling (or consciousness) of absolute dependence" becomes acceptable to the Pure Land Buddhists, too, on the ground of this revolutionary experience. Shinran himself has written: "The Tathagata has already taken his Vow and turned over the Act

(that is, the nembutsu completed by himself) to us for our Act.”<sup>1</sup>

As mentioned in the previous section, so long as we still live in the world, the actual sufferings of life do not cease to press upon us even after we are awakened to Amida’s Sincerity. But we do not now desperately grope for the liberation from suffering. We are always with Amida’s Name, that is, with nembutsu, wherever we may be or wherever we may go. We never call Amida’s Name without returning at that same moment to the fundamental restfulness and serenity of being saved by Amida’s Sincerity. This return to the original experience of the awakening of faith refreshes us and enables us to brace ourselves for natural but courageous living. We are thus, through nembutsu, enabled to pass the impassable current of sufferings in every moment. To be enabled to pass the impassable—this is precisely what salvation means in the Pure Land doctrine. This life of nembutsu is designated as the way that leads straight to the Pure Land.

7. *The fruits which faith bears in actual life*

What fruits does faith in the Pure Land bear in actual life? Does it introduce something novel into life?

As already observed, Pure Land Buddhism has disclosed itself as the Dharma which is truly adequate to *our* existential situation. From this fact it naturally follows that the Pure Land doctrine makes its adherents all the more sensitive of the inner togetherness and interrelatedness of human beings. Once we are awakened to the Original Vow that has been vowed for all beings, we can no more look on others’ follies or evil deeds with coldness; we can no more look on other’s suffering with indifference. In a similar situation or under similar conditions, each of us might have done the same thing. We are all “ordinary beings,” as Prince Shotoku has declared. With this thought we are emptied of all unreasonable contempt for evil-

<sup>1</sup> Shinran, *Kyō-gyō-shin-shō* (The collection of passages relating the true and real teaching, practice, faith and attainment of the Pure Land), Vol. 2: The collection of passages relating to the practice that is true and real.

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doers and actors of folly. Arrogance now gives place to *humility*. What we can do is, first of all, to pray heartily that all our fellow beings, including the persons in question, might awaken to Amida's boundless Sincerity and boundless compassion, as expressed in the Original Vow; then we must do all that we can do to help bring about this awakening.

It is the experience of the awakening of faith which, emptying and purifying us of delusive thoughts and emotions, enables us to live in accordance with suchness, that is, to live naturally. This life of naturalness is lived in and through the practice of nembutsu. The humility just mentioned is one aspect of the life of naturalness. Another aspect of this life is *tenderness* or tender-heartedness. The boundless compassion of Amida, when we awaken to it and accept it, melts away to tenderness our deep-seated obstinacy and self-complacency. We are thus enabled to confront every problem openly, flexibly and unprejudicedly.

This reminds us that in Buddhism any wrath whatsoever is rejected as sin. Even if the wrath is an emphatic expression of the justice of God, that makes no difference to Buddhism. Wrath is a violent, destructive emotion. It must be melted and transformed into tenderness by the boundless compassion of Amida.

In its expression in human relationships, tenderness may bear something in common with tolerance. This something should not, however, be confused with the toleration which is based on the temporary, political suppression of the impulse to justify oneself and blame the other. The tolerance on the part of the nembutsu-adherents is essentially rooted in repentance and humility for the fact that the same evil (which is "tolerated") is finally characteristic of us all. Further, the selflessness of repentance and humility exerts an immense influence upon others. It naturally calms others and induces them to reflect upon themselves. It thus helps to purify others. The repentance and humility spring from faith in Amida's boundless Sincerity and are renewed every moment through the nembutsu. It is in this sense that the nembutsu is called the "purifying act." The nembutsu purifies not only the nembutsu-adherents

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themselves but also those who come into contact with them.

In this connection, a reference may be made to Shinran's assertion that "the nembutsu is the way of no-hindrance."<sup>1</sup> A careless reading might suggest to the reader that Shinran is here emphasizing the overwhelming supernatural power of the nembutsu to clear away every hindrance and obstacle blocking the nembutsu-adherent's way to the Pure Land. But this is a sheer misunderstanding. The word "no-hindrance" should be interpreted never in terms of *power* but always in terms of *spirituality*. Shinran's statement should be interpreted as follows: The nembutsu-adherent naturally confronts with tenderness and humility every problem that comes about. The tenderness and humility themselves make for no-hindrance. Consequently, Shinran's idea of no-hindrance bears no color of license or antinomianism.

All of the above has a vital bearing on the problem of morality. What, then, is the basic attitude of the nembutsu-adherent to the problem of morality? They all pay due respect to the importance of morality. It is a pity, however, that we can never do good in the complete sense of the term, considering the fact that our impulse to justify ourselves and to blame others is finally characteristic of us all. This fact shows how deep we have been submerged in the current of birth-and-death, as deplored by Shan-tao. Therefore, we need by every means to listen to, to awaken to, and thus to be purified by the Original Vow.

Not out of the consciousness of moral obligation or duty, but immediately out of the humility which arises from being awakened to Amida's Sincerity, the nembutsu-adherent seeks to attain a warm reconciliation and communion with others. It has often been the case with excellent nembutsu-adherents that the humility, tenderness and gratefulness to Amida which shine out of their personality, quite naturally influence others around them and thus bring about genuine peace in their local community. Is not such virtue surely what morality envisages as its ideal? Bearing this in mind, Shinran says, "There

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<sup>1</sup> 歎異鈔 *Tannisho* ("A tract deploring heresies of faith", compiled by Yuien, one of Shinran's direct disciples), Section 7.

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is no good that surpasses the nembutsu.”<sup>1</sup>

World peace is our urgent, serious problem. It goes without saying that it can never be brought about by any temporizing measures. Political toleration or appeasement will not avail much. The foundation of peace must be firmly laid in the depth of human nature. In this situation, the doctrine of Pure Land Buddhism may well be rediscovered as a valuable source for bringing peace. I do not mean that the awakening to the Original Vow of Amida Tathagata is a panacea for all the problems of man. However, it should never be overlooked that Pure Land Buddhism has long been, and continues to be in the present, the Dharma that is adequate to the existential situation of all ordinary beings, and, further, that it has borne to the nembutsu adherents above described spiritual fruits, all of which have great importance for the problem of peace.

(English adaptation by Hiroshi Sakamoto)

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<sup>1</sup> *Tannisho*, Section 1.