

“Relying Upon” or “Taking Refuge” as a Genuinely Human Activity¹

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I

Religious people, in the course of our human history, have participated in community, that is, they have established cohesive social organizations based on shared commitments to one another, to their own parents and children, as well as to the parents and children of others. Religious people live in space and time that are undergirded with meaning, a weighty fact the full ramifications of which are difficult to imagine. For a religious person, one's own life is not like a solitary cipher tumbling in a chaotic eruption of disconnected events with no sense of inheritance from the past and no

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If there is such a problem in our world today one might note that one's sense of what constitutes a problem or difficulty (*nan* 難) might be relative and that a great deal depends upon how the alleged problem is given focus.

Consider the following:

More difficult even than trust in the teachings of Śākyamuni's lifetime
Is the true entrusting of the universal Vow;
[*gugan no shingyō nao katashi*]
The sutra teaches that it is ‘the most difficult of alldifficulties,’
That ‘nothing surpasses this difficulty.’

Hymns of the Pure Land: A translation of Shinran's Jōdowasan, “Shin Buddhism Translation Series,” Yoshifumi Ueda General Editor (Kyoto: Hongwanji International Center, 1991), p. 61.

I want to acknowledge with cheerfulness and with gratefulness the hospitality extended to me by the President of Otani University, by Professor Minoru Tada and other colleagues and staff of Otani University, especially the Shin Buddhist Comprehensive Research Institute under the direction of Professor Akihiko Fujita, and particularly Professor Seiki Miyashita, Assistant Director of the Institute. It was in this setting of scholarly exchange and camaraderie that this paper was written.

purpose for the future.

Religious persons have found a point of orientation that provides insight into the meaning of life (which is more than merely a biological process), while simultaneously contributing to psychological stability by disclosing altruistic communal norms that enable one reliably to anticipate and consistently to evaluate human behavior both for the individual and society, and a sense of grounded acceptance, an acceptance of a person that is not provisional, not conditional, not conventional, but unshakably grounded in reality. Happy is one who has this insight, discerns this psychological well-being, and gratefully acknowledges being accepted.

Without an orientation, there is no direction, and where there is no direction a person has no recourse but to measure all things from the perspective of his or her own individual anchorage, where value is bestowed, by an individual projecting private preferences, rather than being discerned as given, as is the experience of persons living in community.

Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834) drew attention to the significance of an immediate awareness of a feeling of absolute dependence in religious living and indicated that this kind of awareness and living represents humanity at its fullest. For Schleiermacher, “in the feeling of absolute dependence, God is actually experienced in the only way open to us, and to be conscious of being absolutely dependent is to be conscious of being in relation to God.”² Schleiermacher’s notion of absolute dependence as being at the core of the religious life has come under criticism over the decades, but, in my judgment, his contribution is still major. To the degree that I say that I am absolutely, ultimately dependent upon another who is alluringly above my capacity to manipulate conceptually, who is consistently behind my ability to think logically, who is supportively beneath my sequence of judgments about what is

² B. A. Gerrish on Friedrich Schleiermacher in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, Mircea Eliade, editor in chief (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987), vol. 13, p. 111. Of numerous engaging observations made by Schleiermacher, one might note the following:

The whole religious life consists of two elements, that man surrender himself to the Universe and allow himself to be influenced by the side of it that is turned towards him is one part, and that he transplant this contact which is one definite feeling, within, and take it up into the inner unity of his life and being, is the other.

Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers* (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1958), p. 58.

proper for my life, who is teleologically beyond the lifespan that is before me, who pervasively and compassionately informs human relationships at their noblest, to that degree am I grounded, established, settled, with insight, with psychological stability and with a realization of acceptance that brings liberation from indolence, freedom from loneliness, and profound gratitude.

This orientation to transcendence that is discerned as absolute dependence or surrender provides a protection from distress, a shelter from the onslaughts of difficulties, provides confidence based on experience, which can be depended upon, relied upon when all else seems awry. There is more to it than this, which might suggest merely an orientation that provides protection. This fundamental orientation in one's life also enables one to place the world into perspective, to have a point on which to stand that is more fundamental than the world itself, a point that gives one a foundation on the basis of which to put limits on the world, to define the world, a point from which to view the world, to find that the world has become intelligible.

II

One could turn to several strands in the religious history of humankind to begin a consideration of what one might call "taking refuge".³ We could do worse than to turn to India, to that great source of multifaceted influences that has significantly shaped our one global history. Quite some time ago important words were said about the notion of refuge (Pāli: *saraṇa*):

Many for refuge go
To mountains and to forests,
To shrines that are groves or trees—
Humans who are threatened by fear.

³The topic of "refuge" as a religious category readily exceeds the limits of this paper. With regard to the Jewish and Christian traditions, one might note there are several Hebrew words that communicate the sense of refuge which resounds throughout the Hebrew Bible. It is very interesting, however, that the notion of "refuge" or "taking refuge" or stressing that God is "one's refuge," although of importance as the Christian tradition developed, does not seem to appear in the Christian Greek New Testament.

On the general and important matter of total surrender and complete submission, human dispositions akin to absolute dependence, one would want to note the force of the Arabic root *SLM*, appearing in *islam*, "submission," and *muslim*, "one who submits," to the will of God.

This is not a refuge secure,
 This refuge is not the highest.
 Having come to this refuge,
 One is not released from all misery.

But who to the Buddha, Dhamma,
 And Saṅgha as refuge has gone,
 Sees with full insight
 The four noble truths;

Misery, the arising of misery,
 And the transcending of misery,
 The noble Eightfold Path
 Leading to the allaying of misery

This, indeed, is a refuge secure.
 This is the highest refuge.
 Having come to this refuge,
 One is released from all misery.⁴

⁴ *The Dhammapada: A New English Translation with the Pali Text and the First English Translation of the Commentary's Explanation of the Verses With Notes Translated from Sinhala Sources and Critical Textual Comments* by John Ross Carter and Mahinda Palihawadana (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), vv. 188–192. The commentary's explanation, *ibid.*, pp. 248–249, although long, is worth noting here.

Mountains, forests: Various persons, threatened by various kinds of fear and wishing to be free of fear or desiring to obtain sons, and so forth, go for 'refuge' to mountain [shrines] here and there....to garden [shrines]....and so forth; to tree [shrines]....and so on....*This is not a refuge:* All such 'refuge' is insecure; it is not the highest [refuge]. And on account of it, not one among beings that are subject to birth, and so forth, is freed from [this] totality of suffering such as birth and the like. *But who:* Having indicated this refuge, which is insecure and not supreme, [the next line] has begun, [with the words] 'But who...' to indicate [what then is] the secure and supreme refuge. This is what it means: the one who, lay person or recluse, *To the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha as refuge has gone:* Has gone to the Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha as the best [refuge], resorting to the 'topic of meditation' known as 'calling to mind [the virtues of] Buddha, Dhamma, and Saṅgha' [in the formulas beginning with 'So is that Blessed One the Worthy Being, the Fully Enlightened One, (endowed with knowledge and noble conduct, the well-gone, knower of the worlds, incomparable trainer of human beings who are amenable to be trained, teacher of men and gods, the Blessed Awakened One.)] and so forth [Well proclaimed by the Blessed One is Dhamma that is visible, timeless, characterized by (the imperatives) 'Come! Look!', leading on, to be known personally by the wise. Well set out (on the Path) is the community of the Blessed One's disciples, directly set out is the community of the Blessed One's disciples, properly set out is the community of the Blessed One's disciples, fully set out is the community of the Blessed One's disciples—that is to say, the four pairs of persons, the eight persons (i. e., those who have attained the four Paths and the four Fruits). This community of the Blessed One's disciples is to be given offerings, is to be welcomed, is to be given gifts, is to be honored, is an incomparable field of merit for the world.], even in this case, the 'seeking of refuge' falls away and is [liable to be] disturbed by such [acts] as worshipping other *titthiyas*,

Right at the center of the South Asian Buddhist experience with this notion of taking refuge was an awareness that the public act is not in itself synonymous with liberation. There can be a level of going for refuge that, although admirable, religious, impressive, is considered customary (*lokiyasaraṇagamana*). But there is another dimension, another level of going for refuge (*lokuttarasaraṇagamana*) which occurs at the moment of the arising of the Path (*maggakhaṇa*)⁵ and is the arising of insight-wisdom (*lokuttarapaññā*) which transcends the world(s), namely, insight into salvific truth. This is that refuge supreme, this refuge cannot be altered either by oneself or by another.⁶

Of considerable significance is the way this general notion of refuge has been readily endorsed by both early Indian Buddhists, including the Theravāda, and the rich theistic movements that have graced the Hindu heritage. These theistic traditions have seen the point of a famous stanza of the *Bhagavad-gītā*, one that has come to be called “the ultimate statement”:

Abandoning all that is expected of you (*dharmas*)
Come unto me as your sole refuge;
I shall release you from all sins,
Do not despair.⁷

and so on. [The stanza] proclaiming solely the refuge that is derived from the Path, in order to show its undisturbability, declares: *Sees with full insight the four noble truths*: The one who has gone for refuge to these [that is, the world-transcending going for refuge because doubt and wrong knowledge with regard to the objects such as the Buddha, etc., are put aside by the knowledge accompanying the Paths. The person endowed with these Paths is one who has gone for refuge by way of this knowledge.] [noble] truths by way of realizing them—this ‘going for refuge’ is secure and supreme. That person is freed from the total misery of the whirl on account of this refuge. Hence it is said: *This, indeed, is a refuge secure.*

⁵ See my “The Arising of *Magga* and *Shinjin*,” *The Pure Land: Journal of Pure Land Buddhism* (New Series) No. 3 (December, 1987), pp. 95–106.

⁶ I have discussed this in “The Notion of Refuge (*Saraṇa*) in the Theravāda Buddhist Tradition,” in *The Threefold Refuge in the Theravāda Buddhist Tradition*, edited by John Ross Carter (Chambersburg, Pennsylvania: Anima Books, 1982), pp. 1–15. This chapter appears, with some minor revisions, in my *On Understanding Buddhists: Essays On The Theravāda Tradition in Sri Lanka* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), pp. 55–70.

⁷ *Bhagavadgītā*: 18:66, has come to be referred to as the *caramaśloka* and called “the last word.” It reads,

*sarvadharmān parityajya mām ekaṃ saraṇam vraja
abam tvā sarvāpāṅebhyo mokṣayiṣyāmi mā śucaḥ*

Srīmadbhagavadgītā śrīśaṅkarabhagavatpādācāryaviracitena bhāṣyena sahita: The Bhagavad-gītā with the Commentary of Śrī Śaṅkarācārya, critically edited by Prof. Dinkar Vishnu Gokhale (Poona, India: Oriental Book Agency, 2nd revised edition, 1950), p. 280.

One of the great theologians in India's past was Rāmānuja (approximately 1017–1137) who contributed to the formation of the Śrīvaiṣṇava movement.⁸ Central in a consideration of refuge in the Śrīvaiṣṇava movement is a text entitled the *Śaraṇāgatigadya*. Although it is not established whether Rāmānuja actually wrote this text,⁹ there is no question that within the Śrīvaiṣṇava heritage the centrality of the text is assured and the authorship by Rāmānuja is affirmed.

Rāmānuja, in those writings clearly established as his, urged that the discipline of loving devotion (*bhaktiyoga*) was the reliable means for attaining the grace of God, and indispensable for this was prostration or surrender (*prapatti*). In the *Śaraṇāgatigadya* the only way open for one is to prostrate oneself, to surrender, because one's evil karma is of such magnitude that one cannot even imagine beginning successfully to engage in any discipline whatsoever, even the discipline of loving devotion.¹⁰

⁸ While keeping our focus on the notion of "refuge," one would want to note, at least, that Rāmānuja also presents an insightful analysis of God's inaccessibility and compassionate manifestation, clearly akin to *bossbin* and *bossbin no bāben*, as T'an-luan and Shinran discerned it. Rāmānuja wrote:

This Nārāyaṇa, the Supreme Person...when He created the entire universe of everything from the god Brahmā to motionless stones, remains with His same essential nature [svēna-rūpeṇa] and is inaccessible even by such means as the meditation and worship of men or of gods like Brahmā.

But being a shoreless ocean of compassion, gracious condescension, forgiving love....while still not losing His own inherent nature and attributes, He has assumed His own bodily form....has descended again and again....has granted them whatever they prayed for....

From Rāmānuja's *Gītābhāṣya*, p. 1, in the edition appearing in P. B. Annagarācārya, ed., *Śrī-Bhagavad-Rāmānuja-Granthamālā*. Complete works in Sanskrit (Kāñcīpuram: Granthamālā Office, 1956) as translated by John Braisted Carman and appearing in his *The Theology of Rāmānuja: An Essay in Interreligious Understanding* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), p. 78.

⁹ Robert C. Lester, in "Rāmānuja and Śrīvaiṣṇavism: The Concept of Prapatti or Śaraṇāgati," *History of Religions* (University of Chicago, Winter, 1966), 5, pp. 266–82, follows Pandit Agnihotrām in arguing that Rāmānuja did not write this work. Carman, *op. cit.*, pp. 63–64, suggests that on the matter of the question of authorship, the evidence is still out.

¹⁰ One is struck by the clarity of an observation, and its similarity to some of the ideas held in Jōdo Shinshū, provided in a commentary:

In fact, the helpless Prapanna [person who has surrendered] is unable to perform the three Yogas on account of his sinful karmas and hence he has to give them up on account of his inability (to do it even in future). These sinful karmas which are enemies of salvation are so heinous in character that he has lost all hopes of being able to perform the Yogas at any time in future.

Sri Bhagavad-Ramanuja's Saranaagati Gadya with English Translation of the Text and its Commentary by Sri Srutaprakaasika Acharya, prepared under the guidance of Abhinava Desika Sri Uttamur Viraraghavacharya Swami by K. Bashyam (Madras: Published by Visishtadavaita Pracharini Sabha, 3rd edition, 1970, 1st, 1959, 2nd, 1964), p. 43.

We catch this theme again in another important text for the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition, the *Śrīraṅgagadya*,

Destitute of bhakti....right knowledge....and all spiritual qualities like goodness and faith....sunk in the endless and hard-to-pass-over ocean of....beginningless sins conducive to knowledge and action which are contrary to that [right knowledge and action]....seeing no other means....I resort to your two lotus-like feet as refuge, O Nārāyaṇa.....”¹¹

The absence of any other means is an acknowledgment that the traditionally institutionalized paths or disciplines leading to salvation are no longer relevant because one is no longer able to launch oneself in those disciplines. What is left for one to do? Vasudha Narayanan puts it this way:

The common denominator of all those who surrender (*prapannas*) is expressed here: one comes for protection and throws oneself at the mercy of the Lord because one does not have the strength to adopt a scripturally sanctioned way (*upāya*) which will procure his [God’s] grace.¹²

Kūraṭṭālvāṇ, a contemporary of Rāmānuja, aware of his own evil deeds, being depleted of any good quality, acknowledged the divine initiative when he uttered:

O Varada ! Even these words of surrender could not have come outside your grace (*prasāda*); therefore, you are gracious (*prasāda*) toward me. Now I live.....¹³

This overwhelming sense of soteriological inadequacy following upon one’s reflections upon oneself—one’s actions, one’s knowledge of one’s inner motives—appears in another vibrant theistic movement in India, the Śaivasiddhānta, particularly in the

¹¹ The translation is by Lester, *op. cit.*, p. 278.

¹² Vasudha Narayanan, “*Karma, Bhaktiyoga, and Grace in the Śrīvaiṣṇava Tradition: Rāmānuja and Kūraṭṭālvāṇ*,” *Of Human Bondage and Divine Grace: A Global Testimony*, edited by John Ross Carter (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1992), p. 65.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 68, and translated by Vasudha Narayanan. The Śrīvaiṣṇava heritage, not long after the death of Rāmānuja, split into two branches. Among several causes for this split, one had to do with a theological issue: the degree of self-agency involved in the granting of divine grace. The so-called Northern school (Vaḍagalai), or “the monkey-hold school,” held that one must at least be actively involved in seeking divine grace, taking the initiative to surrender. The Southern school (Teṅgalai), or “the cat-hold school,” placed emphasis on one’s passive receptivity of divine grace.

writings of the *nāyanmārs*, “precursors” or “leaders,” composers of engaging devotional hymns in the Tamil language celebrating the grace of Śiva.¹⁴

Maheswari Arulchelvam, in speaking about one of the great Tamil poets, Māṇikkavāṇagar, notes his joy that “God, out of his great love and grace, has deigned to accept as his own such an unworthy creature.” “One is filled with ecstasy, with unspeakable joy at God’s graciousness. One cannot thank God enough for his graciousness because God has accepted someone so utterly unworthy of him.....”¹⁵ Māṇikkavāṇagar said:

Him none by hearing know; He knoweth no decay;
He hath no kin; naught asking, heareth all !
While people of the land beheld, here on this earth to me a cur,
He gave a royal seat;
To me, a dog, all things not shown before, He showed;
All things not heard before, He caused to hear;
And guarding me from future ‘birth,’ He made me His.
Such is the wondrous work our Lord hath wrought for me !¹⁶

Men and women who have been a part of the heritage of these two great theistic streams in the grand Hindu tradition would readily concur about the importance of having a fundamental religious orientation, of refuge, of surrender, of a self analysis that sharply circumscribes the soteriological efficacy of one’s own actions.¹⁷

I have mentioned these three significant expressions of

¹⁴ Maheswari M. Arulchelvam writes,

The hymns of the saints are rapturous outpourings of praise, of the power and majesty of God. Words are inadequate to convey all his greatness and his goodness. The devotee often recalls the many gracious acts God has done in times past, giving his love and grace to those who seek him. In the presence of this majestic God the devotee is struck with the feeling of great unworthiness. Māṇikkavāṇagar compares himself to a dog, unworthy, like a dog, in bondage to birth and decay.

Maheswari M. Arulchelvam, “The Gift Immutable,” *Of Human Bondage and Divine Grace: A Global Testimony*, edited by John Ross Carter (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1992), p. 52.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

¹⁶ *Tiruvāṇagam*, xv, 28, in *The Tiruvāṇagam: The Tamil Text of the Fifty-one Poems*, translated by Rev. G. U. Pope (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1900), p. 56, as quoted by M. M. Arulchelvam, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

¹⁷ Professor V. A. Devasenapathi, former director of the S. Radhakrishnan Institute for the Advanced Study of Philosophy of the University of Madras, drew attention to an expression among some of the Tamil Poet-saints: that one seeks to be like an inanimate object when it comes to the granting of God’s grace—absolutely still, without any movement whatsoever. In a conversation in Madras, March 1, 1993.

religiousness in our global religious history—the Theravāda, the Śrīvaiṣṇava and the Śaivasiddhānta—not to suggest a kind of historical development in India that might have led through China into our contemporary experience in Japan today. On the contrary, I mention these three examples because they are a part of our one global religious history and *because they are a part of our contemporary experience in our world today.*

III

We turn now to Shinran, another figure who has illuminated our human religious history.¹⁸ Naturally, one might anticipate our turning to the frequently emphasized notion of Other Power (*tariki* 他力) and the total commitment to this espoused by the Jōdo Shinshū tradition as the prime example of a sense of absolute dependence at the foundation of the religious life. Of course the notion of *shinjin* (信心) is featured majestically in the writings of Shinran, and one would be amiss not to see the interconnectedness of other key religious terms with the core notion of *shinjin*. The general notion of “refuge,” to which we will now turn, is likewise, in the thought of Shinran, involved in that salvific matrix that is *shinjin*.¹⁹

¹⁸ Shinran has not *become* an important figure in our global religious history solely because associations like the International Association of Shin Buddhist Studies have been holding international conferences. It is also the other way around: that persons from all over the world are attending this conference is due to our *finally coming to see* what has always been the case. Shinran has always been an important figure in our global human religious history—we are only just recently beginning to see this.

¹⁹ Several years ago I mentioned a peculiar characteristic running through the writings of Shinran, namely the importance of the notion of *shinjin* and the way many terms become associated with this one central notion. Let me mention again, with some revision, what I said then:

There seems to be a funneling effect; many ideas initially form a cluster to become more fully understood as they tend to be interpreted from the perspective of *shinjin*, become merged in, if not collapsed into, the notion of *shinjin*. Once this process of understanding occurs, there is an “out-pouring” process of seeing how the many terms spread out with heightened nuances into a broadening spectrum of meaning.

See my “*Shinjin*: More than ‘Faith’?” *Annual Memoirs of the Otani University Shin Buddhist Comprehensive Research Institute* (Volume 4, 1986), n. 6., p. 29. This article has been translated by Professor Shinya Yasutomi as “*Shinjin—‘faith’ ijō no mo no o imisuru ka?*,” in *Kaigai ni okeru bukkō kenkyū no bōbō to kadai: The Problematic and Methodologies of Buddhist Studies outside Japan*, edited by The Overseas Buddhist Studies Research Project, Otani University Shin Buddhist Comprehensive Research Institute, 1993, pp. 53–92.

In considering the terms that reflect a sense of “relying upon” or “taking refuge” in the writings of Shinran, we will be exploring one dimension of what several scholars writing in the English medium have noted as an interior dialectic, which exemplifies “a shifting of frames of reference—between two fundamental modes or models of apprehending true reality....,” an “interpersonal” over against a “teleological” dimension.²⁰ I understand this interpersonal dimension as representing also an attitude of personal engagement on the part of Shinran akin to his frequently expressed sense of *on* (恩) with regard to Amida and Śākyamuni and the great predecessors in the Pure Land heritage.²¹

We begin with *kimyō* (歸命). With Shinran there is a clear association between the Sanskrit derived *namu* / *namo* (Skt.: *namo* / *namas*) and the Chinese inherited kanji pronounced in Japanese as *kimyō*.²² And Shinran appropriates the Pure Land heritage discerned as stemming from India through China. Whereas Shinran mentions Nāgārjuna’s reference to having taken refuge in Amida,²³ he glosses Vasubandhu’s phrase, “I take refuge in the Tathagata of unhindered

²⁰ So Dennis Hirota structures an insightful inquiry utilizing terms introduced by Gordon Kaufman. Dennis Hirota, “Breaking the Darkness: Images of Reality in the Shin Buddhist Path,” *Japanese Religions*, 16: 3 (January, 1991), p. 18.

²¹ See my “Towards an Understanding of What is Inconceivable,” *The Eastern Buddhist*, Volume XX, No. 2, Autumn, 1987, pp. 32–52.

²² We see this working both ways, as it were. Briefly glossing Vasubandhu, Shinran notes *kimyō* = *namu*: “Take refuge in the Tathagata of unhindered light filling the ten quarters: Take refuge [*kimyō* 歸命] translates *namu* [南无]. It means to follow the command of the Tathagata.” *Notes on the Inscriptions on Sacred Scrolls: A Translation of Shinran’s Songō shinzō meimon*, “Shin Buddhism Translation Series,” Yoshifumi Ueda, General Editor (Kyoto: Hongwanji International Center, 1981), p. 45, hereafter cited as *NISS*. See *Shinshū shogyō zenshō* (Kyoto: Ōyagi Kōbundō, 1984), II, 584. 11, hereafter cited as *Ssz*. Moreover, we see it phrased the other way around when Shinran provides a gloss on a passage of Shan-tao’s, *namu* = *kimyō*: “Master Shan-tao states: ‘*Namu* means to take refuge [*kimyō*]’” and then continues with a gloss, “*Namu* means ‘to take refuge’ [*kimyō*]. ‘To take refuge’ [*kimyō*] is to respond to the command and follow the call of the two honored ones, Śākyamuni and Amida. Thus Shan-tao explains, *Namu* means to take refuge.” *NISS*, p. 51, *Ssz*, II, 588. 6–7. We see this same gloss provided at *The True Teaching, Practice and Realization of the Pure Land Way: A Translation of Shinran’s Kyōgyōshinshō*, “Shin Buddhist Translation Series,” Yoshifumi Ueda, General Editor, (Kyoto: Hongwanji International Center, 1983), vol. I, p. 109, hereafter cited as *KGSS SBTS*; *Ssz*, II, 21. 13.

It appears that *kimyō* is somewhat of a formal technical term in the writings of Shinran, not very often used. However, it is worthy of note that “Of the seven surviving altar writings bearing Shinran’s calligraphy, five hold the ten-character Name [*ki-myō-jin-jip-pō-mu-ge-kō-nyo-rai*].” *NISS*, “Introduction,” p. 15. It is said that Rennyō developed the practice of using only the name of six characters (*na-mu-a-mi-da-but-su*). *Ibid.*, pp. 15–16.

²³ *NISS*, p. 43; *Ssz*, II, 13. “For this reason I take refuge in Amida: Bodhisattva Nāgārjuna constantly takes refuge [*kimyō*] in Amida Tathagata.”

light” with the words, “It means to follow the command of the Tathagata.”²⁴ Shinran follows Shan-tao (J.: Zendō, 613–681) by acknowledging that refuge “further signifies aspiration for birth and turning over the virtue.”²⁵ and he provides a further gloss: “*Namu* means ‘to take refuge.’²⁶ ‘To take refuge’ is to respond to the command [*chokumei*] and follow the call [*mesbi*] of the two honored ones, Śākyamuni and Amida.”²⁷

One of the more detailed interpretations of *kimyō* that Shinran provides is as follows:

From these passages, we see that the word *namu* means ‘to take refuge.’ In the term ‘to take refuge’ (*kimyo*) *ki* means ‘to arrive at.’ Further, it is used in compounds to mean ‘to yield joyfully to’ (*kietsu*) and ‘to take shelter in’ (*kisai*).²⁸ *Myo* means ‘to act,’ ‘to invite,’ ‘to command,’ ‘to teach,’ ‘path,’ ‘message,’ ‘to devise,’ ‘to summon,’ Thus, *kimyo* is the command of the Primal Vow calling to and summoning us.²⁹

Although Shinran used *kimyō* liberally in the portion of the *Jōdo*

²⁴ NISS., p. 45; Ssz., II, 584. 11. See also “Introduction,” to *The Jōdo Wasan: The Hymns on the Pure Land*, translated and annotated by Ryukyo Fujimoto, Hisao Inagaki, and Leslie S. Kawamura, “Ryukoku Translation Series” (Kyoto: Ryukoku University, 1984 [second edition of the first edition, 1965]), pp. 12–13.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 51; Ssz., II, 588. 5–6.

²⁶ The two Chinese *kanji* [南无] representing the sound *namu/namo* from the Sanskrit *namo/namas*, were not used in the customary fashion of communicating both meaning and sound but merely to preserve the original Sanskrit derived sound. As they stand, the two *kanji* have no independent meaning. This indicates, of course, that we do not have a translation of *namu*, rather a preservation of the sound.

Another remarkable case of this sound preservation in religious contexts, and they are numerous, is the case with the Hebrew derived *amen* in the Christian Church. The Hebrew word was preserved in the Greek New Testament and made its way through European languages into contemporary English. One hears it today in Japanese Christian worship services. *Amen* has literally gone around the world. It is derived from the Hebrew word *’emunā*, representing a verbal affirmation, a manifestation of faith in the Hebrew heritage. In its ritual use, *amen* means “let it be so”.

²⁷ NISS., p. 51; Ssz., II, 588. 5–6.

²⁸ Our translators of this passage provide a note: The same character 説, read both *etsu* and *sai* in these compounds, means ‘to tell,’ ‘to state,’ ‘to declare one’s thoughts’ (Shinran’s note).” KGSS SBTS., p. 111, n. 20.

²⁹ *Ibid.* Ssz., II, 22. 9–10. We are told, “*Kimyō*....: ‘Namas’ in Skt.; the term means ‘taking refuge in’. ‘Kimyō’ means ‘to follow the command’. To follow Amida Buddha’s ‘calling’ is to have faith in His Saving Power.” *The Shōshin Ge: The Gāthā of True Faith in the Nembutsu*, translated and annotated under the direction of Fugen Daien, “Ryukoku Translation Series” (Kyoto: Ryukoku Translation Center, Ryukoku University, 1984 [5th edition of the work first published in 1961]), p. 17, n. 3.

Wasan dealing with praise of Amida Buddha,³⁰ it is difficult to say that it is a term particularly suited to convey the subtleties of his thinking. He more or less inherited the term from his received Pure Land tradition.

Of significance is what he did with it, that is, with the way he found it to form a part of what one might call a “*shinjin* cluster,” to indicate an engaged relationship within non-duality. Often Shinran will utilize a sequential method of association, where, for example, he will say something like A is the same as B, and B is the same as C, and C is D. Shinran, in this way, indicates that to take refuge with the mind that is single (*issbin ni kimyō*) is true and genuine *shinjin*.³¹ We also find *kimyō* used to indicate the orientation to both practice (*gyō*) and *shinjin* that enables beings to be “grasped never to be abandoned.”³² Even though there is surely a tone of formality in the use of *kimyō*, carrying overtones of reverently responding to one’s lord (cf. *chokumei*), one finds semantic frames with other terms suggesting how *kimyō* is associated with ritual worship.³³

Shinran was aware of the old setting of the refuge formula. Consulting passages from rather old texts, he records references to taking refuge (*kie*) in the Buddha³⁴ as well as the standard formula

³⁰ *Kimyō* occurs twenty-one times, as a refrain, in the first fifty *wasan* hymns and only once in the remaining sixty-eight. I have consulted *Hymns of the Pure Land*. In another contribution in Japanese *wasan* style, the *Kōsō wasan*, our word *kimyō* occurs only once. See *Hymns of the Pure Land Masters: A Translation of Shinran’s Kōsō wasan*, “Shin Buddhism Translation Series,” Yoshifumi Ueda, General Editor (Kyoto: Hongwanji International Center, 1992).

³¹ Shinran puts it as follows:

To take refuge, with the mind that is single,
 In the Buddha of unhindered light filling the tenquarters
 Is, in the words of Vasubandhu, author of the *Treatise*,
 The mind that aspires to attain Buddhahood.
 The mind that aspires to attain Buddhahood
 Is the mind to save all sentient beings;
 The mind to save all sentient beings
 Is true and real *shinjin*, which is Amida’s benefiting of others.

Hymns of the Pure Land Masters, *wasans* number 17–18, pp. 14–15.

³² *KGSS SBTS.*, passage #71, I, 137. *Ssz.*, II, 33. 11.

³³ Shinran quotes Genshin’s use of “I take refuge in and worship” (*kimyō rai*: 歸命礼) on six occasions in listing six kinds of virtue. *KGSS SBTS.*, passage #64, I, pp. 134–135; *Ssz.*, II, 32. 5–6

³⁴ From the *Nehan-gyō*, the *Nirvana Sutra*, “If one has taken refuge (*kie*) in the Buddha, one must not further take refuge (*kie*) in various gods.” *KGSS SBTS.*, Vol. IV, passage #82, p. 555. See *Ssz.*, II, 175. 1–2.

for the three gems: refuge (*kimyō*) in the Buddha, refuge (*kimyō*) in Dharma, and refuge (*kimyō*) in the Saṅgha.³⁵

It is not clear whether one is to infer that Shinran had already realized *shinjin* when he turned (*kisu*) to the Primal Vow and put aside sundry practices,³⁶ Perhaps there might be a thread of autobiographical reflection in his observation:

When we reflect upon our cyclic transmigration, we find it difficult, even in the passage of infinite kalpas, to turn to the Buddha's Vow-Power for refuge [*butsuganriki ni kishi*] and enter the sea of absolute dependence. We should indeed lament it and deeply deplore it.³⁷

Surely, as his life became more abundant Shinran sensed the authentically human experiences associated with this matter of taking refuge. He recorded passages indicating a *cohesive attitudinal field*, of bowing to and worshipping, of constantly thinking on Amida, in which the notion of *kimyō* also finds its place.³⁸ Shinran recorded T'an-luan's unambiguous association of taking refuge (*kimyō*) and worship (*raihai* 禮拜)³⁹ T'an-luan (J.: Donran, 476–542) elaborates this notion of “taking refuge” and relates it with the dimension of mindfulness that becomes manifest in the practice of worship.⁴⁰ With considerable insight T'an-luan indicates refuge

³⁵ From the *Hanju zammai kyō* or *Sutra of the Samadhi of All Buddhas' Presence*, KGSS SBTS., passage #83, IV, p. 556. In one of the appendixes, p. 636, this text is noted as “One of the earliest sutras to treat practice centering on Amida.” See *Ssz.*, II, 175. 3. On this passage and the one mentioned in the immediately preceding note, see also *Kyō Gyō Shin Shō* (*Ken Jōdo Shinjitsu Kyōgyōshō Monrui*): *The Teachings, Practice, Faith, and Enlightenment: A Collection of Passages Revealing the True Teaching, Practice, and Enlightenment of Pure Land Buddhism*, under the direction of Mitsuyuki Ishida, translated and annotated by Hisao Inagaki, Kosho Ukawa, Thomas R. Okano, “Ryukoku Translation Series” (Kyoto: Ryukoku Translation Center, Ryukoku University, 1983 [2nd edition of the work first published in 1966]), p. 204, Hereafter cited as KGSS RTS.

³⁶ Reference is to an event in Shinran's life, when he was twenty-nine years old in the year that he became a disciple of Hōnen in 1201. The key phrase in this passage is *hongan ni kisu*, “took refuge in the Primal Vow” KGSS RTS., p. 208.

³⁷ KGSS RTS., p. 196. I have taken the liberty of changing the wording found in the original for *daishinkai* as “Sea of Great Faith” to “sea of absolute dependence”.

³⁸ So he quotes from *Hōgatsu-dōji shomon gyō*, noted as no longer extant, but quoted in Nāgārjuna's *Commentary on the Ten Bodhisattva Stages*, in one of the appendixes, “Names and Titles Cited,” in KGSS SBTS., I, p. 197.

³⁹ From the commentary by T'an-luan (*Jōdo ronchū*) on the first verse in Vasubandhu's *Treatise on the Pure Land*. This has been translated at KGSS SBTS., passage #19, I, 92–97.

⁴⁰ The “five gates of practice” (*gomon no gyō*) or “five gates of meditative or contemplative practice” (*gonemmon gyō*) are worship, praise, aspiration, meditation or contemplation [utterance

(*kimyō*) to be more fundamental. Having referred to the examples of Nāgārjuna and Vasubandhu, T'an-luan continues,

For these reasons, we know that taking refuge manifests itself as worship. Worship itself, however, is only to pay homage and does not necessarily imply taking refuge; rather, taking refuge expresses itself in worship. From this we can infer that taking refuge is central.⁴¹

And T'an-luan concludes his general observation: "The two terms, 'take refuge,' (*kimyō*) and 'worship,' (*raihai*) complement each other, revealing the basic meaning all the more clearly."⁴² It would come as no surprise, therefore, to find "worship" or "bowing down in homage" (as translators might interpret customary ritual bowing in worship) appearing alternating, as it were, with *kimyō* in the *Jōdo wasan*.⁴³ In noting the significance of "taking refuge" and worship, one needs to keep in mind the way the Pure Land heritage has indicated that the key salvific act is not one's doing and occurs when the *nembutsu* becomes uttered. Worship, though at the foundation of the religious life, is, nevertheless, one's own action.

Although the call of Amida and one's response are always central in this *coherent attitudinal field*, in the sense of taking refuge in or relying on, there are other key doctrinal formulations that are given their focal significance, from the devotee's perspective, by their being utilized symbolically to evoke an awareness of that which is worthy of being relied upon or worthy to be an object of one's taking refuge. So one reads of those who "rely (from *ki* 歸) on the "universal Vow" and one learns that one can "Take refuge (*kimyō*) in the Great Mind Sea";⁴⁴ and one is reminded in Shinran's *wasans* of T'an-luan who deeply, sincerely, profoundly took refuge

of the Name], and directing of merit or merit transference. See *KGSS RTS*, n. 4, p. 64.

I am grateful to Dennis Hirota who, in correspondence, dated August 14, 1993, included a segment of a rather literal translation of T'an-luan's *Jōdo ronchū* which helped me spot more readily the context of worship as practice in T'an-luan's passage recorded by Shinran.

⁴¹ *KGSS SBTS*, p. 93. See *Ssz.*, II, 14, 11-15. 1. The word used throughout is *kimyō*.

⁴² *Ibid.* One should note also that Genshin is quoted by Shinran as using the same phrasing *kimyōrai* (歸命礼) at *KGSS SBTS*, I, passage #64, pp. 134-135; *Ssz.*, II, 32, 5-6.

⁴³ As, for example, in *Hymns of the Pure Land* at *wasan* #35, pp. 30-35; #41, pp. 36-37; and #49, pp. 40-41.

⁴⁴ So one notes in *The Jōdo Wasan: The Hymns on the Pure Land*, *wasan* #18, pp. 45-46. One notes also *Hymns of the Pure Land*, pp. 18-19, and *wasan* #18, the force of *ki* as "turning to," and "relying on" the Primal Vow in *bongan guzei ni kiseshimuru*.

in the Pure Land (*jōdo ni fukaku kiseshimeki*).⁴⁵ Moreover, in keeping with the discernment of Tao-ch'ō (562–645), Shinran notes that even while we are being driven by the winds and rains of detrimental behavior all Buddhas urge us to take refuge in the Pure Land (*susumete jōdo ni kiseshimeri*).⁴⁶ Further, these key terms enable one quickly also to see the importance of tradition as a source on which one can rely, indeed, even resort to as a kind of refuge. For example, as one can rely or depend on Amida,⁴⁷ one can “take refuge (*ki*) in the true words of the Great Sage”⁴⁸ So also the *sūtras* can be relied on (*yoru* 依),⁴⁹ and one can rely on (*shinzu besbi*) “the teachings of these venerable masters.”⁵⁰

There is another kindred term, both in meaning and in use, that we might do well to note, namely, *tanomu* (頼), often utilized as an indigenous Japanese expression representing *kimyō* and *kie* (歸依). Although in Shinran's writings one notes the use of *tanomu* applied generally to persons who are committing themselves to religious pursuits, at issue was not whether persons were expressing the human religious activity communicated in the verb *tanomu*, but whether or not this quality of relying upon (*tanomu*) was in self-power (*jiriki o tanomu*) or Other Power (*tariki o tanomu*).⁵¹ Shinran appropriated this human religious quality, *tanomu*, and found it adequately expressive of one's salvific relationship with compassionate reality. He understood Tao-ch'ō to have done this.⁵²

⁴⁵ *Hymns of the Pure Land Masters*, *wasan* # 21, pp. 18–19. We note also reference to Genshin, who took refuge (*kisbi*) “in the Land of Serene Sustenance, *Shosin Ge*, RTS., p. 41; see also KGSS SBTS., I, 166 (Ssz., II, 44. 13c. So also did T'an-luan, *ibid.*, p. 164; Ssz., II, 45. 5a, see *Shosin Ge*, RTS., p. 34.

⁴⁶ *Hymns of the Pure Land Masters*, *wasan* #59, pp. 44–45.

⁴⁷ Shinran quotes Tao-cho's *Passages on the Land of Happiness*, here referring to a *gāthā* on the *Larger Sutra*. KGSS SBTS., I, 100.

⁴⁸ So the KGSS SBTS., I, 160; Ssz., II, 43. 7.

⁴⁹ So KGSS SBTS., I, 163; Ssz., II, 44. 14c. Following Vasubandhu, one can rely (*yoru*) on the *sūtra*. *Ibid.*, I, 95–96; Ssz., II, 115.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, I, 167; Ssz., II, 46. 5c.

⁵¹ *Notes on Once-Calling and Many-Calling: A Translation of Shinran's Ichinen-tanen mon'i*, “Shin Buddhism Translation Series,” Yoshifumi Ueda, General Editor (Kyoto: Hongwanji International Center, 1980), pp. 43–44, hereafter cited as *NOOC*. See also Ssz., II, 613. 15–614. 1. See also *Shōzōmatsu Wasan: Shinran's Hymns on the Last Age*, translated and annotated in The Ryukoku University Translation Center, “Ryukoku Translation Series” (Kyoto: Ryukoku University Press, 1980), n. 2, p. 116.

⁵² Tao-ch'ō is remembered as having entrusted himself in the Other Power of the Primal Vow (*bongan tariki o tanomi tsutsu*). *Hymns of the Pure Land Masters*, *wasan* #56, pp. 42–43. See also *The Kōō Wasan*, “Ryukoku Translation Series” (Kyoto: Ryukoku University, 1974), p. 79.

The relevant meaning of *tanomu* for our purposes is “to entrust [something] to someone” and in Jōdo Shinshū this “something” is one’s life, and this basic sense as well as Shinran’s masterful use of this word provide another example of a *coherent attitudinal field*: there is inter-linkage. For example, the action in the verbal structure, “we should completely entrust ourselves” (*tanomu besbi*) is an action fully consonant with the arising of true, real, honest-authenticity of heart (*shinjitsu shinjin*).⁵³ We see this unambiguously stated with the use of another verb, *makaseru* (任せる: “to entrust.” “trust [a person] with [something]”): “Simply give yourself up to Tathagata’s Vow [*nyorai no seigan ni makase mairase tamōbeku*]; avoid calculating in any way.”⁵⁴

Another important notion within the *coherent attitudinal field* which indicates involvement with one’s heritage and also an existential immediacy in one’s realization of salvific reality is the activity of hearing (*mon / kiku* 聞). Shinran elaborates: “‘To hear’ in the sūtra means that sentient beings hear the origin, cause, and effect of the Buddha’s Vow and do not have doubt in them. This is described as ‘to hear’ [*mon*].”⁵⁵ We read another gloss,

To welcome means that Amida receives us, awaits us. Hearing the inconceivable selected Primal Vow and the holy Name of supreme wisdom without a single doubt is called true and real shinjin; it is also called the diamond-like heart.⁵⁶

⁵³ Shinran makes the centrality of this orientation clear:

Since we have been given this Vow by the Tathagata, we can take any occasion in daily life for saying the Name and need not wait to recite it at the very end of life; we should simply *give ourselves up totally to the entrusting (tanomu besbi)* with sincere mind of the Tathagata. When a person realizes this true and real shinjin (*shinjitsu shinjin*), he enters completely into the compassionate light that grasps, never to abandon, and hence becomes established in the stage of the truly settled.

See NISS., p. 34 and Sz., II, 578. 3–4. Shinran also utilizes the verbal sense of *tanomu* in *namo amida butsu*. *Letters of Shinran: A Translation of Mattōshō*, “Shin Buddhism Translation Series,” Yoshifumi Ueda, Editor (Kyoto: Hongwanji International Center, 1978), p. 29. See Sz., II, 663. 13.

⁵⁴ *Letters*, Letter #10, p. 39. See Sz., II, 671. 8. The verbal derivative of *makaseru* appears also in Letter #9, *ibid.*, p. 37; Sz., II, 670. 5.

⁵⁵ KGSS RTS., p. 119.

⁵⁶ *Notes on ‘Essentials of Faith Alone’: A Translation of Shinran’s Yuishinshō-mon’i*, “Shin Buddhism Translation Series,” Yoshifumi Ueda, General Editor (Kyoto: Hongwanji International Center, 1979), p. 34, hereafter cited as NEFA. On this page, at note 3, the translators write, “We have followed the autograph version in this sentence. Our basic text has: ‘Hearing the revered Name of the inconceivable selected Primal Vow—the shinjin of supreme wisdom—and being without a single doubt is called true and real shinjin.’”

And the point is explicitly made: “*Hear* is a word indicating *shinjin* [*mon wa kikutoiu. shinjin o arawasuminori nari*].”⁵⁷ And the association is maintained in phrases like “When they hear and entrust.”⁵⁸ Shinran himself indicated his joy upon receiving his heritage. He continued:

Rare it is to hear them [scriptures and commentaries], but already I have been able to hear. Reverently entrusting myself to the teaching, practice, and realization that are the true essence of the Pure Land Way, I am especially aware of the profundity of the Tathagata’s benevolence.”⁵⁹

We have seen the cluster forming within this *coherent attitudinal field*—*kimyō*, *kie*, *tanomu*, *makaseru*, and *mon / kiku*—and we know the focal point of coherence is in *shinjin*. Yet there is another integral dimension within this *coherent attitudinal field* that we do well not to overlook; and that is “change of heart” (*eshin* 廻心). This change of heart is not merely changing one’s opinion, disposition, or point of view: it is a changing of the heart; the heart now is other than what it was. We are told by Yuien, in the second part of the *Tannishō*, that this change occurs only once⁶⁰ and that it is closely associated with entrusting to the Primal Vow, to aspiring for the Pure Land,⁶¹ to saying the *nembutsu*.⁶² Just as one was urged not to rely on self-power, so this turning about of mind or change of heart means to put aside the mind of self-power,⁶³ which act is inseparably

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 37. *Sz.*, II, 626. 7. “*Hear* is to entrust oneself’ *NISS.*, p. 35; *Sz.*, II, 578. 15.

⁵⁸ *KGSS SBTS.*, I, 162; *Sz.*, II, 44. 6b. The relationship of hearing and trusting (*kiki shinzuru*) is applicable also to learning and understanding one’s inherited teachings. *NEFA.*, p. 38; *Sz.*, II, 627. 5.

⁵⁹ *KGSS SBTS.*, I, 59.

⁶⁰ If not, perhaps anxiety would plague us until we are finished. But see *Tannishō: A Primer: A record of the words of Shinran set down in lamentation over departures from his teaching*, translated by Dennis Hirota (Kyoto: Ryukoku University, 1982), passage 16, p. 39 (and the text on p. 112):

For the person of wholehearted, single practice of the *nembutsu*, change of heart and mind occurs only once. A person who has been ignorant of the true significance of the Other Power of the Primal Vow comes to realize, through receiving Amida’s wisdom, that he cannot attain birth by means of the thoughts and feelings he has harbored up to then, so he abandons his former heart and mind and entrusts himself to the Primal Vow. This is ‘change of heart.’

⁶¹ On this latter point, see *KGSS SBTS.*, p. 117 and *Sz.*, II, 25. 5.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 118; *Sz.*, II, 25. 8, on analogy of rubble becoming changed into gold.

⁶³ Commenting on Seikaku’s text, Shinran writes, “*Solely making beings turn about* instructs us, Singleheartedly make your heart turn about! *Turn about* means to overturn and discard the mind of self-power.” *NEFA.*, p. 39; *Sz.*, II, 628. 6.

a part of one's entering the ocean of true and real *shinjin*.⁶⁴ This sense of turning about of the heart, of the heart's changing and becoming new, as it were, is very much akin to the Christian Greek New Testament notion of *metanoia* (μετάνοια), a 180 degree change in direction and orientation, carrying with it a sense of remorse, of repentance.

We know the soteriological centrality of the Primal Vow (*hongan* 本願), and we are also aware of the pivotal importance that *shinjin* has in the thinking of Shinran. The “keystone” or “cornerstone” notion, the notion that connects this Primal Vow, to which one is simply to give oneself, with the arising of *shinjin*, which represents salvation in this life, is *ekō* (廻向), the turning toward another that constitutes both the manifestation of compassion in the cosmos and our own true humanity.⁶⁵ But, we are told, sentient beings have neither an honest nor a pure mind for this turning toward another in an act of conveying to that other a transference of merit.⁶⁶ Shinran makes it clear that the Tathāgata's *ekō* brings enlightenment within one's horizon:

If it were not for the Tathāgata's merit-transference,
How could we ever attain realization in the Pure Land.⁶⁷

Just as we have been told that persons should not rely on self-power, so we are reminded again that reciting the *nembutsu* with a sense of self-power does not provide a basis for transferring merit to others.⁶⁸ The name of Amida has been turned over to us (*mida no ekō no mina*).⁶⁹ Moreover, Shinran, following T'an-luan, indicates a twofold activity of inclusive involvement (*ōsō-ekō*, transference

⁶⁴ NISS., p. 72; Ssz., II, 601. 13-14: *mina eshin shite shinjitsu shinjin kai ni kinyū shinureba.*

⁶⁵ “Literally ‘turning toward another’ or ‘redirecting’; often rendered ‘merit-transference.’” and defined under “Directing virtue” in the “Glossary” of *Passages on the Pure Land Way: A Translation of Shinran's Jōdo monrui jushō*, “Shin Buddhism Translation Series,” Yoshifumi Ueda, General Editor (Kyoto: Hongwanji International Center, 1982), p. 79. “Skt. *pariṇāma* meaning ‘alteration’, ‘transformation’. Literally, ‘turning and moving towards’, that is, to transfer merit which one has accumulated to another being for the sake of attaining Buddhahood.” *Shōzōmatsu Wasan*, RTS., note 2, p. 21.

⁶⁶ KGSS RTS., p. 109: “*shinjitsu no ekōshin nashi, shōjō no ekōshin nashi.*”

⁶⁷ *Shōzōmatsu Wasan*, RTS., *wasan* #52, p. 52.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, *wasan* #39, p. 39. In fact, such self-power activity is called *fuekō*, “non-*ekō*.” See *ibid.*, note 1, p. 39. Shinran is recorded to have said that it was beyond his capacity to say the *nembutsu* under his own motivation and to transfer the virtue or direct the merit (*ekō*) to his departed ancestors. *Tannishō*, passage 5, p. 25; *Tanni Shō*, RTS., p. 27.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, *wasan* #97, p. 97.

while going forward, onward, and *gensō-ekō*, transference while returning, drawing near) engendered by Amida is consequently brought within the reach of our awareness (*nyorai nishu no ekō o fukaku shinzuru hito wa*)⁷⁰ through the merit transference of Amida's Vow of wisdom (*mida chigan no ekō*).⁷¹ Hence, we see that Shinran, particularly in his *Sōzōmatsu Wasan*, sets up the dilemma precisely:

With my mind as deceitful as serpents and scorpions, I am
incapable of accomplishing virtuous deeds of self-power.
Unless I rely on the Tathāgata's merit-transference, (*nyorai no ekō
o tanoma de wa*)
I will end without shame or repentance.⁷²

With care, Shinran draws upon the themes he has inherited in his tradition and weaves a fabric with overlapping patterns: the manifestation of the one mind (*issbin*) is a turning over of merit on the part of Amida,⁷³ a merit transference of going on and of returning (*ōgen no ekō*), which meets in *shinjin*, and originates in Other Power (*tariki*).⁷⁴ Ultimately the sole cause for birth is the result of Amida's turning over of this virtue or transferring this merit.⁷⁵ Or, phrased differently, the twin realizations of *nirvāṇa* in the realm of the Vow (*gando*) as well as the awakening of great compassion (*daibi*) are the result of Amida's *ekō*.⁷⁶

Yuien leads us then to our final step in this brief survey of key terms forming a *coherent attitudinal field*, to the undercurrent of the

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, *wasan* #24, p. 24. So also at *Hymns of the Pure Land Masters*, #34, p. 27; *Kōsō Wasan*, p. 56. *Wasans* #35–36 read:

The directing of virtue for our going forth is such
That when Amida's active means toward us reaches fulfillment,
We realize the shinjin and practice of the compassionate Vow;
Then birth-and-death is itself nirvana.
The directing of virtue for our return to this world is such
That we attain the resultant state of benefiting and guiding others;
Immediately reentering the world of beings,
We perform the compassionate activity that is the virtue of Samantabhadra.

Hymns of the Pure Land Masters, pp. 28–29.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, *wasan* #25, p. 25.

⁷² *Ibid.*, *wasan* #99, p. 99.

⁷³ *Shōshin Ge*, RTS., p. 32.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 35. The NISS, p. 70 (*Ssz.*, II, 600. 9–10) notes *mida nyorai ekō no shinjitsu shinjin nari*, “true and real shinjin, which is given by Amida Tathagata”.

⁷⁵ KGSS., RTS., p. 101; p. 143

⁷⁶ *Hymns of the Pure Land Masters*, #20, pp. 16–17; *Kōsō Wasan*, RTC., p. 40.

compassionate cosmos, to *jinen* (自然). We know that we are still involved with poor decisions, egocentric considerations, selfish pursuits, subtle possessiveness, and we know what might be involved in repentance and in change of heart. How are we, Yuien considers, to go on repenting and seeking to change our hearts with each detrimental act we commit. We need, he suggests, to trust the power of the Vow, to yield to its efficacy, and “gentleheartedness and forbearance will surely arise in us through the working of *jinen*.”⁷⁷

We tread lightly when we consider *jinen*, having been told on several occasions that *jinen* “is none other than being free of all calculation,”⁷⁸ and that we are attempting to handle “the mystery of the wisdom of Buddhas (*butsu chi no fushigi*).”⁷⁹ If the entirety of the fifth letter were written by Shinran, we could say that he there located *jinen* as a profound soteriological notion, indicating the involvement formless salvific reality has with human beings. And, further, Amida is the means by which we come to learn of this undergirding salvific naturalness that abides.⁸⁰ Shinran knew that this naturalness, arising from the efficacy of the Primal Vow and the concomitant arising of *shinjin*, could be relied upon without doubt, without calculation, and that it enables one to know with certainty that one is assured of attaining complete *nirvāṇa*.⁸¹ When one is in this supportive undercurrent of salvific naturalness one no longer has to worry about self-working, about whether one is good or bad, about motivation for uttering the *nembutsu*. One is being carried by the efficacy of the Primal Vow “to make us all attain the supreme Buddhahood.”⁸² Regularly we read that the efficacy of the Vow and the certainty of one’s attaining complete enlightenment is established naturally (*jinen*) and that the stage of non-retrogression arises

⁷⁷ *Tannishō: A Primer*, passage #17, p. 40.

⁷⁸ *Tannishō: A Primer*, passage #16, p. 40. See also *NEFA.*, pp. 32–33, “Since there is no contriving in any way to gain such virtues, it is called *jinen*.” *Ssz.*, II, 623. 8 and 11. See also *NISS.*, pp. 38, “*Jinen* means that there is no calculating on the part of the practitioner.” *Ssz.*, II, 581. 4; *NISS.*, p. 51, “*Jinen* means that one does not calculate in any way whatever.” *Ssz.*, II, 588. 13. See also *NISS.*, pp. 35–36. See further, *Letters* #5, p. 29, *Ssz.*, II, 663. 9–11.

⁷⁹ *Letters*, #5, p. 30; *Ssz.*, II, 664. 7–8.

⁸⁰ So *Letters*, #5, p. 30; *Ssz.*, 664. 2–6. It is said that Shinran “realized this formlessness and on the basis of his experience called it ‘*jinen*’....for the first time.” *Letters*, “Introduction,” pp. 14–15.

⁸¹ *Shōshin Ge*, p. 30. See also note 2, this page. See also *Letters*, #5, p. 29; *Ssz.*, II, 663. 7–8.

⁸² *Letters*, #5, pp. 29–30.

of itself.⁸³ And the virtues that are directed by Amida to the person of *shinjin* are not sought, but naturally arise for this person who is grasped never to be abandoned, who is the recipient of the diamond-like mind, free from all calculation.⁸⁴ For Shan-tao's use of *bitsu* (必), "necessarily," Shinran provides a gloss with *jinen*, "naturally": "'One necessarily attains birth.' One is brought to the attainment of birth naturally, by *jinen*."⁸⁵ Again and again one reads of the person within *jinen* that there is no calculation, that one is not seeking anything. Even the "constant mindfulness of the Primal Vow" of such a person arises naturally.⁸⁶ One has entrusted one's life to the efficacy of the Vow and one's birth is settled, naturally.

Shinran explicitly connects the notion of *jinen* with a well-established Buddhist idea, namely, "having the quality of Dharma," when he provides notes on a passage from the *Larger Sūtra*:

Know that these people: people realizing shinjin.

Acquire the great benefit: they will realize the supreme nirvana; hence it is further stated, *and, as such, are furnished with the supreme virtues.* *As such* means immediately; it also means dharmicness [*hōsoku* 法則]. In entrusting ourselves to the Tathagata's Primal Vow and saying the Name once, necessarily, without seeking it, we are made to receive the supreme virtues, and without knowing it, we acquire the great and vast benefit. This is dharmicness, by which one will immediately realize the various facts of enlightenment naturally [*jinen*]. 'Dharmicness' means not brought about in any way by the practitioner's calculation; from the very beginning one shares in the benefit that surpasses conception. It indicates the nature of *jinen*. 'Dharmicness' expresses the natural working (*jinen*) in the life of the person who realizes shinjin and says the Name once.⁸⁷

The soteriological zone covered by the notion of *jinen* is precisely the efficacy of the Primal Vow integrally related to the

⁸³ So *KGSS SBTS.*, pp. 73, 121, 163, 182. See also *NISS.*, pp. 35-37. At *NISS.*, pp. 35-36 we read: "Of itself [*ji*] means that the calculation [*bakarui*] of sentient beings is not involved at all; it being made to become so, one is brought to attainment of the stage of non-retrogression. 'Of itself' expresses *jinen*."

⁸⁴ *NEFA.*, pp. 32-33.

⁸⁵ *NISS.*, p. 38, *Sz.*, II, 581. 3-4; *NISS.*, p. 51, *Sz.*, II, 588. 12-13.

⁸⁶ *NEFA.*, p. 33; *Sz.*, II, 623. 13-14. At *NOOC.*, p. 40, we read: "In entrusting ourselves to the Tathagata's Primal Vow and saying the Name once, necessarily, without seeking it, we are made to receive the supreme virtues, and without knowing it, we acquire the great and vast benefit."

⁸⁷ *NOOC.*, p. 40; *Sz.*, II, 611. 7-11.

person of *shinjin*. If there is absolutely no calculation in *jinen*, if *jinen* is solely the efficacy of the Primal Vow, Other Power, one would not find it inconsistent for Shinran to write a *wasan*, based on Shan-tao's writings, in which he refers to the Pure Land of *jinen* (*jinen no jōdo*)⁸⁸ or to write the following:

Since shinjin arises from the Vow,
We attain Buddhahood through the nembutsu by the [Vow's]
spontaneous working.

The spontaneous working is itself the fulfilled land; Our realization of supreme nirvana is beyond doubt.⁸⁹

And in another *wasan*, based on the teaching of the *Larger Sūtra*, Shinran mentions "the Pure Land that is naturalness (*jinen no jōdo*)," perhaps indicating the utter pervasiveness of the natural soteriological disposition of reality.⁹⁰ Moreover, of course, one infers, a person who has realized authentic, genuine *shinjin* knows this, since such person is born in the genuine fulfilled land.⁹¹

IV

The panel at our conference to which this paper has been assigned is entitled "*Ōjō*: The Problem of Salvation in the Contemporary World". The evidence that is here adduced from four major religious movements—the Theravāda, Śrīvaiṣṇava, Śaivasiddhānta and Jōdo Shinshū—indicates that if there is a problem, the problem is to be found with us, not with the soteriological status of reality. In all the traditions briefly mentioned here there is the testimony

⁸⁸ *Kōsō Wasan*, *wasan* #76, RTS., p. 101; SBTS., pp. 58–59.

⁸⁹ *Hymns of the Pure Land Masters*, *wasan* #82, pp. 62–63. The RTS translation appearing in *Kōsō Wasan*, p. 107, has the last three lines reading:

Becoming a Buddha through the Nembutsu is natural,
And Naturalness itself is the Land of the Fulfilled Vow,—
The Enlightenment of Supreme Nirvāṇa is certain.

⁹⁰ The Greek contribution to our global heritage of a magnificent concept, *logos* (λόγος), by means of which our thoughts, speech, and actions are given orderly purpose, is akin, at points, with the notion of *jinen*, perhaps more so in the Johannine usage of *logos* in the Christian New Testament. And in the testimony of the Theravāda tradition, one would do well to reconsider, in light of *jinen*, the compound *dbammasudbhammā*, "the excellent reliability of salvific truth," which occurs in stock phrases in the Pāli canon (*Samyutta-nikāya*, II, 199, following the *svākḥyāto* [*svākkhāto*] formula, and Theragāthā. I, vv. 24, 220, 270, 286, in association with attaining the threefold knowledge and in fulfilling the *sāsana*).

⁹¹ NEFA., p. 39; Sz., II, 628. 3–4 *shinjitsu shinjin o ureba jitsu bōdo ni umaruto oshietamaeru o jōdo shinshū to suto shiru besbi*.

that salvific reality arises within one in this life and is fully arisen or is fully attained, variously elaborated, upon death. In other words, the testimony of such incipient arising is something like a joyous affirmation: “*YES! for the meantime in which we do our living....*” Yes, reality is known as it really is, one’s limitations and the limitless, the finite in the presence of the infinite, yielding a catalytic creativity in the context of a coherent wholeness. And yet, it seems we are not quite *it*, not quite there, to use spatial terms, inadequately. We can see the world from a new perspective, see the way things really have become as they really are, see ourselves as we truly are (our past, which has shaped us and our future possibilities, our aspirations), and yet we look upon this *from* a perspective: in the person that we are with the Buddha mind.

Of course, I am an outsider with regard to Jōdo Shinshū with linguistic limitations, assuredly, but it seems the issue behind the title of our panel is more particular to the Jōdo Shinshū heritage than to the religious scene in general today. Echoes of past discussions within the Jōdo Shinshū tradition of learning reverberate around the notion of *ōjō*.⁹² It seems to me, however, that in my reading of Shinran, *shinjin is salvation*, ever so, yet our individuality abides and it is this individuality, this *bonbu* particularity with which

⁹²Not only in Shinshū Studies (*shinshūgaku*) is the matter complex, it is not made simpler by common Japanese parlance which utilizes *ōjō* to mean “death” rather than either “to go to be born” or “birth.” There remains for further analysis that testy little linguistic peculiarity, *ōjōsuru*, “to be at one’s wits end,” “to be at a loss.” Further, the problem is not made easier when one notes that the majority of Jōdo Shinshū Buddhists mean by *ōjō* “to go to be born” at the time of death into the Pure Land rather than a birth into a new person of enlightenment which arises with the dawning of *shinjin* in this very life.

Perhaps there might be strands in the Christian New Testament that could speak to this context. Consider references that speak of “eternal life” that is already under way, as it were, in the life of a Christian. John 5:24, “Truly, truly [Greek: ἀμῆν—this form is derived from the Hebrew *’emunā* mentioned above in note 25,] I say to you, the one hearing my word and entrusting (δ...πιστεύων) the one having sent me has life eternal (ἔχει ζωὴν αἰώνιον), and does not come into judgment but has passed over beyond death into this life.” There is also John 6:47, “Truly, truly, I say to you, the one who is entrusting has life eternal.” See also John 6:54; 17:3. In I John 5:11, one reads, “and this is the witness, that God gave us life eternal, and this life is in his Son.” See also I John 5:20.

Now the internal dialectic can be discerned when one takes these so-called Johannine passages and reflects on some of the observations of Paul. Consider I Corinthians 13:12, “Yet we are seeing through a mirror in a riddle (ἐν ἀνύγματι) but then I shall fully know even as I also have been fully known.” Paul writes at Romans 7:15, “I do not understand my own actions. For I practice what I do not wish and what I wish I do not do.” And at 7:18, he continues, “For I know that that which is good (ἀγαθόν) does not dwell in me, that is in my flesh. The will is present in me but to enact what is right is not.”

we are familiar, that generates a dynamic tension delicately adumbrated by Shinran and eloquently elaborated by some contemporary scholars writing for an English-reading public.⁹³ And the activity of such person who has undergone the transformational realization of authentic *shinjin* is not actually the giving of virtue, but the sharing of virtue given by Amida, discerned as “going” and as “returning.” However, upon death, it seems to me, the dialectical tension subsides; one then *is* “going-*and*-returning” (because there is no longer that from which one leaves upon going and that to which one comes upon returning), one then *is* reality, *is* wisdom, *is* compassion, without individuality whatsoever.

It would seem, therefore, that the question whether there is *ōjō*, birth, in this life or upon death, or both in this life and upon death, needs to be approached with considerable circumspection and humility because the person who has realized the answer does not see the point of raising the question and the person who grapples with the question might not know the answer.

To my way of thinking, however, there remains another problem, and this problem seems to be with life in the world—both of old and in the contemporary setting—not with salvation. The evidence we have adduced, with the Theravāda, with the Śrīvaiṣṇava, with the Śaivasiddhānta, and with the writings of Shinran, indicate that a Gospel message is being communicated by each, a resounding Good News, that there is *no problem* insofar as salvation itself is concerned. The problem—and we have known this all along—lies with *us*.

“We live in a time which suffers in the profoundest way from loneliness.....” M. Holmes Harthshorne writes:

It is a world that has no concern for what concerns us most

⁹³I refer to writings by Yoshifumi Ueda, Dennis Hirota, and Michio Tokunaga, to mention but a few. See Ueda, “The Mahāyāna Mode of Thought,” and “The Structure of Shinran’s Thought, appearing as chapters two and four respectively in *Shinran: An Introduction to His Thought*, by Yoshifumi Ueda and Dennis Hirota (Kyoto: Hongwanji International Center, 1989). See Dennis Hirota, in the aforementioned work and in more recent articles, “Breaking the Darkness: Images of Reality in the Shin Buddhist Path,” *op. cit.* See also his engaging study, “Shinran’s View of Language: A Buddhist Hermeneutics of Faith,” *The Eastern Buddhist*, New Series, Vol. XXVI, No. 1 (Spring, 1993), Part One, pp. 50–93; Part Two, forthcoming. See further Michio Tokunaga, “The Dialectic of *Shinjin*,” forthcoming in a work tentatively entitled “Living in the Religious Heritage of Japan: Lectures for American Undergraduates,” edited by John Ross Carter.

deeply: our hopes, our fears, our anxieties, our love, ourselves. In consequence our need of others intensifies; they must take the place of God. And so we try to get others to like us, because what is loneliness but the fate of being cut off from others and from life itself? We are cut off, because we fear that if another person really knew us as we are, he or she could not possibly love us. It is not simply that we are not loved; we are not loveable. This is the deepest anxiety, I think, with respect to loneliness. We know so much about ourselves, whom we do not really like, that the thought that anybody could love me as I am, if he or she knew me as I am, is unsupportable.⁹⁴

This seems to be a fair description of our contemporary scene; loneliness at rush hour. Some might say that there is no exit from this condition. Others might say there are ways to exit. One way is by becoming an aesthete, seeking to fulfill one's culturally sanctioned desires and to become enraptured by one's self-sanctioned values no longer to be bored with one's existence. Another supposed exit would be to construct with but a little bias one's own moral criteria and to live at ease within one's own self-righteousness. Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855), attempting to let persons take note of their being enamored with Christendom in Denmark and their simultaneous failure to discern Jesus Christ, of their non-selfconscious choices of cultural elitism and moral smugness, wrote of only one way out, which “happens only by the grace of God in Jesus Christ. It is not something we do, not a higher rung on the ladder of spiritual achievement, not a higher stage of existence.” Harthshorne explains Kierkegaard's attempt to help his contemporaries see themselves as indeed they were. Kierkegaard, according to Harthshorne, suggested

that the cultivation and increase of the aesthetical elements in life only lead to cynicism and deeper despair....that moral self-righteousness, based on the illusion of being the absolute, leads not to moral integrity but to overweening pride coupled with banality. Thus would Kierkegaard try to nudge the Philistine reader to—to become a Christian? No, that he could not do. One does not become a Christian by reading a book, though one

⁹⁴ M. Holmes Hartshorne, “Of Human Bondage and Divine Grace,” in *Of Human Bondage and Divine Grace: A Global Testimony*, edited by John Ross Carter (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1992), p. 288.

may perhaps take notice. One becomes a Christian only by the grace of God in Christ. Luther's confession lives on in Kierkegaard: salvation is by divine grace through faith in Jesus Christ.⁹⁵

This seems to me to be the point: finding a point of orientation that provides meaning in life, psychological stability, and a sense of grounded acceptance has been the experience of religious men and women around the world. This grounded acceptance arises in one when the reality of one's inadequacies is matched by the reality of one's acceptance. It is upon becoming initially aware of our inadequacies that we build our walls of defensiveness, horde our tid-bit traces of possessiveness (whether regarding things or our distorted sense of our own importance), because we are aware of our inadequacies and we seek to defend ourselves. God's grace, for our theistic neighbors, and the compassionate salvific quality of reality, for those of us who are Buddhists, accept us. This is difficult for us to accept—and there is no small amount of irony in this: we prefer not to accept what enables us to become genuinely human. This is difficult, and this, it seems to me, is the difficulty of salvation in the contemporary world, as it is now and was during the time of Shinran.

⁹⁵ M. Holmes Hartshorne, *Kierkegaard Godly Deceiver: The Nature and Meaning of His Pseudonymous Writings* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), p. 27.