

“*On the Invocation of the Name of Jesus*”

—Invocations of the Name, Christian and Buddhist :  
‘Jesus Prayer’ and ‘Nembutsu’—

Shōjun BANDŌ

In various world religions there are a number of invocations of the Name of Supreme Reality, through which salvation is sought. Among them in the Christian tradition, the ‘Jesus Prayer’ mainly used in the Orthodox Church and the ‘Nembutsu’ used by Pure Land Buddhists are especially notable. As a matter of fact, both are rooted in vastly different historical backgrounds, with the Holy Bible and the Three Pure Land Sutras as their respective canonical sources, with Jesus and Amida as the subjects of their respective invocations, as well as with many other individual characteristics with regard to the forms and implications of their invocations.

Incidentally, strong objection has been put forward in modern times by some Pure Land Buddhists to the Nembutsu invocation being called a prayer at all. However, in light of the fact that the term ‘prayer’ is capable of denoting a wide range of meanings, from ego-centered supplications to selfless prayer in perfect conformity with the Will of God, there would seem to be no reason Nembutsu should not be called a prayer.

The present work consists of a Japanese translation of a short tract entitled “*On the Invocation of the Name of Jesus*” written by an anonymous author, a monk of the Eastern Orthodox Church, as well as annotations on the part of the translator, mainly from the viewpoint of Pure Land Buddhism, contrasting the Jesus Prayer with the Nembutsu invocation.

Of late, the rising tide of the ecumenical movement is visible throughout the world, and a mutual understanding between Christianity

and Buddhism is also steadily developing. Under such circumstances, if this small attempt should prove in any way meaningful for the rapprochement of these two great world religions traditionally regarded merely as being in diametrical opposition, then the translator's hopes for this work will have successfully been fulfilled.