

# The Ultimate Consummation of Mahayana Buddhism: From Birth in the Pure Land to the Path to Complete Nirvana

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ALMOST TEN YEARS have passed since I began instructing a seminar in the graduate school at Otani University. Unlike with the undergraduates, when the graduate students prepare their presentations regarding the *Kyōgyōshinshō* 教行信証 by Shinran 親鸞 (1173–1262), they look up pretty much everything there is to be looked up about the passage that they are assigned. They check the differences between the oldest extant manuscripts of the text. They consider why Shinran designates the reading of the classical Chinese that he quotes in the way he does, as well as the content of the passages that he leaves out of quotations and the reasons behind those omissions. These are just a few of the examples of the way in which students wrestle with Shinran's work, considering not just textual issues, but also problems that attempt to get at the core philosophical issues dealt with in the *Kyōgyōshinshō*.

Therefore, I have learned more from the students in my seminars than I have from the study of the *Kyōgyōshinshō* that I have done on my own, and my research into this work has been deepened along with my graduate seminar. However, for some reason, I have come to feel a sense of dissonance with my students' presentations. Although they are able to present various ideas about the way in which certain individual phrases are presented in the *Kyōgyōshinshō*, or the way Shinran changes the passages that he quotes, it seems that they are unable to grasp many aspects of Shinran's thought. I have long been considering why that is so and where the cause of this problem lies.

Recently, I have come to think that perhaps the reason lies in the fact that in preparing their presentations, the majority of the students rely on commentaries on the *Kyōgyōshinshō* that were written in the Edo period by scholars such as Kōgatsuin Jinrei 香月院深励 (1749–1817), or the *Kyōgyōshinshō kōgi* 教行信証講義 by Yamabe Shūgaku 山辺習学 (1882–1944) and Akanuma Chizen 赤沼智善 (1884–1937). The Edo-period works employ interpretive outlines as the basis for their understandings of the *Kyōgyōshinshō*, but whether those outlines are actually appropriate remains open to question, since the majority of them were created with an eye to interpreting the *Kyōgyōshinshō* itself. Completely different ways of thinking about the structure of the text may be possible when considered from the perspective of clarifying Shinran's thought. Since Yamabe and Akanuma's *Kyōgyōshinshō kōgi* was written in the early Taishō period, it does not include the results of the philosophical research begun in the modern period by Soga Ryōjin 曾我量深 (1875–1971). Therefore, it borrows heavily from the outlines of the Edo period, and its content is essentially a rewording of the Edo commentaries in easy-to-understand, modern Japanese. They write:

The interpretations [of the *Kyōgyōshinshō*] into which the professors and scholars of the Edo period poured their hearts and blood are so numerous that if piled up they would make a mountain, yet the jargon is too specialized, the threads of their arguments are too tangled, such that they are useless for making the *Kyōgyōshinshō* vital in the present age. We felt this situation was deeply regrettable, and now we have been given an opportunity and have decided [to right it]. We will take full responsibility. We will accept any chastising. In this way, we resolved to try, to the extent of our limited abilities, together as fellow seekers with the perceptive youths [attending these lectures], to read and fully grasp with both mind and body the *Kyōgyōshinshō*. Here, under the guidance of the *Rokuyōshō* 六要鈔 and setting great store by the research that our predecessors, the [Edo-period] professors, staked their lives on, we have presented just what our small minds were able to savor [from the *Kyōgyōshinshō*].<sup>1</sup>

As one can tell from this passage, their work is a reinterpretation in modern language of the existing commentaries on the *Kyōgyōshinshō*, such as the *Rokuyōshō*, the earliest commentary on the work, which was written by

<sup>1</sup> Yamabe and Akanuma 1951, p. 6.

Shinran's fourth-generation descendant, Zonkaku 存覚 (1290–1373), and works from the Edo period. It goes without saying that these two scholars, who were followers of Kiyozawa Manshi 清沢満之 (1863–1903), conducted their lectures emphasizing the ideas of “experimentation” and religious experience which he held to be important. Rather than expressing the profound principles of religious experience as a doctrinal system, however, they tend to resort to appeals to emotionalism which are inadequate as a rigorous exposition on doctrine.

Of course, since I owe an enormous debt to the *Kyōgyōshinshō kōgi* by these two scholars because of the major role it has played in my research into Shinran's thought, I cannot help but bow down before their great efforts into which they poured their hearts and blood. However, for someone like myself, who has performed research keeping in mind the cautioning words of my teacher that “if we, living as modern men, wish to directly participate in Shinran's Buddhist path, we must not go back to before Kiyozawa Manshi,” it seems that one cannot possibly read the *Kyōgyōshinshō* without taking into account the results of the research that began with Soga. Has not the time come to reread the *Kyōgyōshinshō* based on the fruits of modern doctrinal studies, rather than relying on the pre-modern interpretations?

I believe that the source of the sense of dissonance that I feel listening to my student's presentations based on the Edo-period research lies somewhere in this area.

### *Methodology for Research into Shin Buddhism*

Broadly speaking, there are two traditions in the history of research into the *Kyōgyōshinshō*. The first is the so-called “sectarian studies” (*shūgaku* 宗学) of the Edo period, the results of which are available to us today in records of the lectures of the many scholars of that time. The other is the tradition of the so-called “modern doctrinal studies” which began with Kiyozawa Manshi. The fruits of the research of this newer tradition can be found in the various works left by our predecessors such as Soga Ryōjin and Kaneko Daiei 金子大栄 (1881–1976). However, there is a great difference between the methodologies employed by these two traditions.

In the Edo period, research into Shin Buddhism, and particularly research on the *Kyōgyōshinshō*, was conducted using the *Rokuyōshō* as the source of interpretive guidance employing the methods of reading together (*edoku* 会読) and overcoming contradictions (*etsū* 会通). For instance, Enjōin Senmyō 円乘院宣明 (1749–1821), in the introductory remarks before his word-by-word exposition on the *Kyōgyōshinshō*, remarks:

For those who wish to study the meaning of the *Kyōgyōshinshō*, to read it just as it is written under the guidance of the *Rokuyōshō* is the proper attitude of later scholars [in this tradition]. . . . There is no need to make a special introductory section to discuss the way to read this text. Regarding the essential significance of this work in six fascicles [i.e., the *Kyōgyōshinshō*], there is the *Kyōgyōshinshō tai'i* 教行信証大意 in one fascicle in classical Japanese by Zonkaku. As for the meaning of the passages [in the *Kyōgyōshinshō*], there is the *Rokuyōshō*. My lecture is not an interpretation. Instead, I am simply considering what the text might mean based on the *Rokuyōshō*.<sup>2</sup>

A research method that holds that the proper attitude for later scholars is to rely on the direction of the *Rokuyōshō* necessitates that it was only possible to perform research within the interpretive confines set out by that work. These sectarian studies became intertwined with the doctrinal authority of the sects and even pronounced the judgment of heresy on those who broke outside of those boundaries. Therefore, the *Rokuyōshō* and the works of previous scholars following that text became the authoritative and inviolable premise upon which all new studies were based. Even when I was a graduate student, only after we had entered the doctoral program could we read the *Kyōgyōshinshō*, and even that seminar followed the tradition of using the *Rokuyōshō* as its primary text, instead of the *Kyōgyōshinshō* itself.

Also, Kōgatsuin Jinrei states:

I am only discussing the context of the various commentaries [on the *Kyōgyōshinshō*], particularly the *Rokuyōshō*. As such, this is not an interpretive lecture. Because we are simply reading together, there is no need to discuss issues by way of introduction before moving on to the text itself. Describing the essential meaning of the entire work is too awesome [to attempt].<sup>3</sup>

Here, he clearly states that rather than attempting research into the thought expressed in the *Kyōgyōshinshō* as a whole, he will adopt the method of “reading together” and “overcoming contradictions.” “Reading together” is a phrase that describes one of the research methods of that period, which refers to a style of study in which a lecturer faces a group of questioners and conducts a discussion about a given topic. However, in the Ōtani-ha,

<sup>2</sup> Bukkyō Taikei Kanseikai 1975, vol. 1, pp. 3–4.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

this term was employed to describe one of the types of lectures in the intensive study session (*ango* 安居) which formed the basis of academic pursuits in the sect. That is, along with the primary lecture, the inner lecture, and the supplementary lecture, “reading together” was the name of one part of the *ango* program that was taught by middle-ranking scholars in the sect’s academic hierarchy. Therefore, it is unclear whether Kōgatsuin is here referring to a topic-discussion format or if he is making an expression of humility by stating that he cannot sum up the whole of the *Kyōgyōshinshō* because he is teaching the lowest level of *ango* lecture, rather than the main lecture. However, in either case, he is saying that since it is a fearsome thing to attempt to grasp the heart of the *Kyōgyōshinshō* as a whole, he will try to explain the text using the *Rokuyōshō* as a guide.

On the other hand, *etsū*, or “overcoming contradictions,” is taken from a phrase meaning “connecting the unfamiliar to meet in harmony,” and refers to a methodology of taking up words or phrases in the *Kyōgyōshinshō* that appear to be contradictory and resolving those contradictions by discovering a common meaning between them. Since the teachings of the Buddha were originally preached in accordance with the needs of the various people, times, and societies for which they were given, the way they were taught varies almost infinitely, but since they were all taught with the single purpose of leading people to transcend their lives of delusion and attain nirvana, even teachings that appear to contradict each other must at some level have the same meaning. In the Buddhist tradition, “overcoming contradictions” is the method adopted to clarify that true significance behind the various teachings. However, the hermeneutical focus of the majority of *etsū* of the Edo period was on nothing more than the definition of words or their scriptural source.

Kiyozawa Manshi criticizes the hermeneutical approach to research into Shin Buddhism of the Edo period that emphasized the *Rokuyōshō* and the interpretations of one’s predecessors in the following way:

The standard for deciding correct and incorrect, right and wrong, lies in the clear words of the *Kyōgyōshinshō* itself, not in the interpretations of one’s predecessors. If one necessarily has to await the interpretations of one’s predecessors before he can begin to consider scripture, then one would further need to rely on another’s interpretation even to understand the works of one’s predecessors. And to understand even that interpretation, one would need yet another interpretation. In this way, commentaries upon commentaries will pile up, interpretations will be interpreted, the source will be discarded for the sake of the product, the wellspring will

be forgotten in chasing its streams, and we will move further and further away from the real intent of the scriptures. This is indeed the common malady of Buddhist scholars.<sup>4</sup>

Also, arguing that one must avoid confusing the essential significance of the Shin teachings with the sectarian studies, he says the following regarding the research methods that remained within the framework laid out by the interpretations of previous scholars and the *Rokuyōshō*:

There is a sharp delineation between the essential significance of Shin Buddhism and the [Shin] sectarian studies. One must never conflate the two. The essential significance was established by the founder [i.e., Shinran] while sectarian studies are made up of the exegesis of later scholars. One is the dharma gate to be studied and the other is the words that are the product of that study. Therefore, although the essential significance is settled and unchangeable, there is nothing to prevent the change and development of sectarian studies. The essential significance of our Shin Buddhism is laid out in the six chapters of the *Kyōgyōshinshō*, the sacred text that is the source of the founding teachings of the sect. Could anyone possibly change the words of that text, which shine clearly like the sun and the stars? Sectarian studies investigate that essential significance from an academic perspective, and are all thus never anything more than the personal opinions of later scholars, regardless of their depth or excellence.<sup>5</sup>

After making this clear distinction between the two, he goes on to say:

Attempting to decide whether [an interpretation] is correct using the single track laid out by one's predecessors as the criterion is quite senseless, and further there is no reason for it. The reason that these men remain small, wandering about within this labyrinth [of interpretations], and are unable to enjoy the open field of free inquiry and research to fully bring out the essential significance of the teachings is generally resultant from their misapprehension that conflates the essence of the teaching with sectarian studies. . . . Therefore, sufficient freedom of academic inquiry should

<sup>4</sup> Ōtani Daigaku 2003, vol. 7, p. 116.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 113.

be allowed in the area of sectarian studies and [this field] is definitely not something that should be restricted.<sup>6</sup>

Here, Kiyozawa argues that rather than keeping to the interpretive track laid out by previous scholars, one should attempt to grasp directly the principles of the original vow that Shinran clarified based on the academic method of modernistic free inquiry. In this way, Kiyozawa advocated a return to Shinran by breaking through worldly discrimination and interpretation, and throwing one's entire being into a direct attempt at grasping the supra-worldly truth itself, employing experimentation to realize the Buddhist path Shinran laid out as Shin Buddhism.

*Research into the Kyōgyōshinshō in Modern Doctrinal Studies*

Soga Ryōjin followed the methodology established by Kiyozawa for research into Shin Buddhism and spent his life engaged in philosophical research on the *Kyōgyōshinshō*. Soga inherited from Kiyozawa the problem “Does the Tathāgata liberate me?” as the central issue in his seeking, and eventually gave his answer to this problem in his work, *Chijō no kyūshu* 地上の救主.<sup>7</sup> There, Soga discusses his realization that “the Tathāgata is myself” and his understanding that the mind of true entrusting (*shinjin* 信心) and Dharmakāra Bodhisattva are not two different things, stating that “the Tathāgata becomes me and liberates me” and “‘the Tathāgata becomes me’ refers to the advent of Dharmakāra Bodhisattva.”<sup>8</sup>

This understanding is different from the way that Śākyamuni preached the *Guan wuliangshou jing* 觀無量壽經 (Sutra on the Contemplation of Immeasurable Life, hereafter, *Contemplation Sutra*),<sup>9</sup> where he comes down to the level of human beings and preaches in accordance with our relative way of thinking. The *Contemplation Sutra* describes the salvation of ordinary beings limited by karmic circumstances as being “embraced never to be abandoned.” That faith was later clarified from the aspect of the dharma and from that of the person in the two types of genuine entrusting (*nishu jinshin* 二種深信). Further, the entire Buddhist path came to be preached as one of birth through *nenbutsu*, wherein ordinary beings are reborn in Amida's Pure Land. In this way, the *Contemplation Sutra* was preached in line with the

<sup>6</sup> Ōtani Daigaku 2003, vol. 7, p. 117.

<sup>7</sup> *Soga Ryōjin senshū* 曾我量深選集 (hereafter, SRS), vol. 2, pp. 408–21.

<sup>8</sup> SRS, vol. 2, p. 408.

<sup>9</sup> T no. 365.



relative way of thinking of human beings who see a dualistic relationship between the karmic limitations of ordinary beings and the great compassion of the Tathāgata.

In contrast to this sutra, the *Wuliangshou jing* 無量壽經 (Sutra on Immeasurable Life, hereafter, *Larger Sutra*)<sup>10</sup> preaches that liberation is the fulfillment of the original vow and attempts to exhibit the principles of religious experience that shatter the discriminative, relativistic thinking of human beings. Therefore, the mind of true entrusting that is the fulfillment of the original vow includes the working of the power of the Buddha or the Pure Land, as is expressed in the following passage from the *Wuliangshou jing youpotishe yuanshengji zhu* 無量壽經優婆提舍願生偈註 by Tanluan 曇鸞 (476–542?):

“The fulfillment of the virtue that ensures action is not meaningless” is the power of the original vow of Amida Tathāgata. . . . It relies on the forty-eight vows of Dharmakāra Bodhisattva, the origin, and the unimpeded supernatural powers of the present Amida Tathāgata. Through the vows, the power is completed, and through the power, the vows are fulfilled. The vows were not made in vain, and the power is not inefficacious. Because the power and the vow match each other perfectly and ultimately do not differ, it is called “fulfillment.”<sup>11</sup>

In this way, Tanluan shows that while the mind of entrusting that is founded upon the causal original vow maintains a position different from the power of the Buddha and Pure Land that are resultant of those vows, that resultant power works within the mind of true entrusting. In other words, he is saying that the mind of faith which is the fulfillment of the original vow arises within ordinary human beings, but that mind is not different from the realm of Amida Tathāgata.

Shinran deals with this problem in the *Kyōgyōshinshō* in the questions and answers regarding the one mind and the triple mind in the chapter on faith. There, Shinran explores the principle of the original vow that the entrusting mind of sentient beings is not different from the original vow of the Tathāgata. Soga, founded upon the mind of true entrusting that is the fulfillment of the original vow, states that that mind is the advent of Dharmakāra Bodhisattva, who made the original vow. This methodology of

<sup>10</sup> T no. 360.

<sup>11</sup> Shinshū Shōgyō Zensho Hensanjo 1941, vol. 1, p. 331. Also, T 40: 840a6–16



Soga's is not his original creation but instead was learned from the methodology and foundation of Shinran's *Kyōgyōshinshō* itself.

When Shinran was together with Hōnen 法然 (1133–1212), he made a thorough examination of the Buddhist path of birth through the *nenbutsu* based on the *Contemplation Sutra*. Since he was studying under Hōnen, who said that he “relies solely on master Shandao 善導 [613–681],” it is easy to imagine that Shinran would have studied the *Contemplation Sutra* and Shandao's commentary on it.<sup>12</sup> Since this sutra presents the liberation of suffering ordinary beings in the form of religious experience (conversion), Shinran, who had such a conversion experience through his encounter with Hōnen, surely understood it well. Based on that experience, he must also have been able to readily grasp Shandao's exposition on the two types of genuine entrusting, his parable of the two rivers and the white path, as well as his explication of the six characters of the name of Amida Buddha.

However, most likely during his time in exile, Shinran reexamined this Buddhist path based on the *Larger Sutra*, Vasubandhu's *Wuliangshou jing youpotishe* 無量壽經優婆提舍 (Treatise on the Sutra of Immeasurable Life, hereafter, *Treatise on the Pure Land*),<sup>13</sup> and Tanluan's commentary on that treatise. Through these works, Shinran explored the fact of his religious experience not simply as a personal experience, but in terms of the principle of the original vow. That is, he considered the problem of what the principles of the original vow were that made the experience of conversion possible, regardless of who had it.

In the *Larger Sutra*, the experience of conversion is preached as the eleventh, seventeenth, and eighteenth vows. Shinran respectively applies the names “The Vow of Assuredly Attaining Passing Over,” “The Vow of Calling the Name by Myriad Buddhas,” and “The Vow of Sincere and Entrusting Mind” to these three vows. He writes the name of the eleventh vow in the heading of the chapter on realization, the name for the seventeenth in that of the chapter on practice, and the name for the eighteenth in that on faith. All of these vows and the passages declaring their fulfillment appear in the *Larger Sutra*, which Shinran takes as the heading for the chapter on teaching. From these headings, and the concomitant structure of each of these chapters, it is clear that Shinran wrote the *Kyōgyōshinshō* based on the passage describing the fulfillment of these three vows.

<sup>12</sup> Shandao's commentary is referred to as *Guan wuliangshou jing shu* 觀無量壽經疏 (T no. 1753).

<sup>13</sup> T no. 1524.

Needless to say, the *Kyōgyōshinshō* was written in order to make the true significance of Hōnen's *Senjaku hongan nenbutsu shū* 選択本願念仏集 (Collection of Passages on the *Nenbutsu* Selected in the Original Vow, hereafter, *Senjakushū*)<sup>14</sup> perfectly clear. While the *Senjakushū* gives the reader the mistaken impression that Pure Land Buddhism opposes the Buddhism of the path of sages (*shōdōmon* 聖道門) because Hōnen wrote it based on the fact of his religious experience using the method of “elimination and establishment,” the *Kyōgyōshinshō* shows that Pure Land Buddhism is not actually in opposition to such Buddhism, but instead is the path to the realization of great nirvana. As such, Shinran, based on the teaching of the fulfillment of the original vow, which transcends personal experience, proved that the path of birth through *nenbutsu* which he learned from Hōnen was truly a Mahayana Buddhist path that leads to nirvana. Soga Ryōjin sought to employ this method and foundation that Shinran used in the *Kyōgyōshinshō*.

After Kiyozawa Manshi passed away on 6 June 1903, his followers in the Kōkōdō 浩々洞, his experiment in communal living and religious seeking, ended up being simply intoxicated by his greatness. Repeating his phrase “everything is the great order of the Tathāgatha” as their slogan, they became increasingly intoxicated with a teaching of salvation through grace that centered around the *Contemplation Sutra*. Akegarasu Haya 暁鳥敏 (1877–1954) describes this situation in *Kōsei no zengo* 更生の前後 in the following way:

After our teacher [Kiyozawa] passed away, together with the many friends who had joined [his movement], we made efforts to spread his name, his virtues, and his teachings in the world. In order to reform Japan's spiritual world, to reform Buddhism, we made much ado. And, in five or six years, this resonated throughout Japan, with enough force that the founding of a new sect, a Kiyozawa School, seemed possible.<sup>15</sup>

However, since this sort of faith was not an independent one like Kiyozawa's was, eventually these followers each encountered difficulties that challenged their faith and ultimately the Kōkōdō itself collapsed. Soga, who had returned to his home in Echigo, was able to return to the firm basis of the mind of true entrusting that is the realization of the original vow after going through a spiritual struggle that he referred to as the suffering of “the snow-eating demon” and to publish the collection of essays *Chijō no kyūshu*:

<sup>14</sup> T no. 2608

<sup>15</sup> Akegarasu Haya Zenshū Kankōkai 1958, part 2, vol. 2, p. 7.

*Hōzōbosatsu shutsugen no igi* 地上の救主：法藏菩薩出現の意義 (Savior on Earth: The Significance of the Appearance of Dharmakāra Bodhisattva) in 1913. Further, in the same year, Akegarasu wrote a piece entitled *Kaku shite watakushi wa chōraku shite yuku ka* かくして私は凋落して行く乎 (Will I Decline This Way?), where he declared his break with complete reliance on a philosophy of grace. Akegarasu, who had sought salvation from Amida Buddha in the heaven of the Western Pure Land, found that when he was saved by the Buddha, he was bound by the Buddha, when saved by the gods, he was bound by the gods. Yet when he threw himself down to the ground of absolute doubt in both gods and Buddhas, he was reborn in the working of the original vow that came welling up out of that ground. Like Soga, Akegarasu, too, returned to the teaching of the *Larger Sutra*, confessing to his teacher Kiyozawa that, “Teacher, Haya is the significance of the earth.”

It seems that the struggles of these two teachers mirror Shinran’s deepening of his understanding as he shifted the focus of his studies from the *Contemplation Sutra* to the *Larger Sutra*. Soga, having survived these struggles, not only saw the dawning of a new spiritual world, but also was able to stand on the solid foundation and method clarified in Shinran’s Buddhist path.

#### *Soga Ryōjin’s Understanding of the Kyōgyōshinshō*

Soga understood the *Kyōgyōshinshō* based on the fulfillment of the original vow, and clarified that the entirety of Shinran’s Buddhist path, as is clear in his *Sangyō ōjō monrui* 三經往生文類 (Collection of Passages on the Births [Described] in the Three Sutras), lay in the birth of the *Larger Sutra*, and not the birth of the *Contemplation Sutra* or the birth of the *Amituo jing* 阿彌陀經 (Sutra on Amida, hereafter referred to as *Amida Sutra*).<sup>16</sup> In the *Sangyō ōjō monrui*, the birth of the *Larger Sutra* is described in the following way:

Regarding birth of the *Larger Sutra*: The selected original vow of the Tathāgata, the incomprehensible ocean of the vow, this is called other power. This is none other than attaining the result of the vow of assuredly attaining passing over through the causal vow of birth through the *nenbutsu*. Living in the rank of the truly settled in this life, one will assuredly reach the true land of recompense. Because this is the true cause of the merit transference of Amida Tathāgata, one realizes the enlightenment of unsurpassed nirvana. This is the essential teaching of the *Larger Sutra*. Therefore, it is

<sup>16</sup> T no. 366.

called birth of the *Larger Sutra*. Also, it is called birth that is difficult to conceive.<sup>17</sup>

In order to break down the understanding of birth in the Pure Land that was heavily informed by the image of birth depicted in the *Contemplation Sutra*, Soga took Shinran's understanding of *Larger Sutra* birth and returned it to its Mahayana roots by reinterpreting it as "the attainment of wisdom through the transformation of consciousness" that is preached in the *Cheng weishi lun* 成唯識論.<sup>18</sup>

I had just a little experience in studying the *Cheng weishi lun* when I was young, and that work speaks of "the attainment of wisdom through the transformation of consciousness." "The attainment of wisdom through the transformation of consciousness"—that is, the consciousness (mind) which is defiled and deluded is transformed and the wisdom of enlightenment that is undefiled is attained. This transformation of consciousness and attainment of wisdom is what is meant by this term.<sup>19</sup>

Soga, who began his discourse in this way, goes on to explain that *Larger Sutra* birth refers to the transformation of the "body of transmigration" into a "body that will assuredly reach nirvana." He says that, in that sense, it is the "transformation of consciousness and attainment of wisdom" that is spoken of in the *Cheng weishi lun*. Further, there are four types of wisdom that are attained through this transformation of consciousness. First is the "wisdom of the great, perfect mirror." Second is the "wisdom of the equality of natures." Third, "wisdom of wondrous contemplation," and fourth is the "wisdom of unrestricted activity." Regarding these four types of wisdom, Soga states:

Overall, one can say that "wisdom of the equality of natures" and "wisdom of wondrous contemplation," as well, refer to the enlightenment of the mind. Also, the "wisdom of the great, perfect mirror" and the "wisdom of unrestricted activity" are the enlightenment of mind and body together, of mind and body come together as one. This is realized for the first time, suddenly, in an instant, when one becomes a Buddha. . . . That is, the two wis-

<sup>17</sup> Shinran Shōnin Zenshū Kankōkai 1969, vol. 3, p. 21. Also, T 83: 674c25–675a7.

<sup>18</sup> T no. 1585.

<sup>19</sup> SRS, vol. 12, p. 194.

doms of equality and wondrous contemplation are the wisdom of birth in the Pure Land and then the wisdom of the great, perfect mirror and the wisdom of unrestricted activity are the wisdom of becoming a Buddha.<sup>20</sup>

In this way, Soga divides the wisdom attained through the transformation of consciousness into two, which he refers to as “the enlightenment of the mind” and “the enlightenment of the body,” as well as “the wisdom of birth in the Pure Land” and “the wisdom of becoming a Buddha.” As such, while Shinran refers to birth of the *Larger Sutra*, when returned to a Mahayana perspective, it is “transformation and becoming.” Through these considerations, Soga came to the ground-breaking conclusion that while “birth in the Pure Land is of the mind,” “attainment of buddhahood is of the body.” He describes his understanding in the following way:

In times like ours, I believe it is necessary that at least birth in the Pure Land be realized in the present life. We are taught that the state of the definitely assured is attained in the present life, but that both birth in the Pure Land and becoming a Buddha occur only at the moment of death, that birth and buddhahood occur at the same time—that is, that they are exactly the same. There are two names, but just one reality—since the distant past, Shin doctrinal studies have been settled just this way. However, . . . birth is in the mind. One should understand birth in the Pure Land in this way. Shinran says that “the mind is always in the Pure Land.”<sup>21</sup>

In contrast to the traditional understanding of sectarian studies that birth in the Pure Land was the same as becoming a Buddha, Soga emphasizes birth in the Pure Land in this life, stating that “birth in the Pure Land is of the mind, and attaining buddhahood is of the body.” By “attaining buddhahood is of the body” he means that, since Shinran states that one will definitely attain great nirvana once this body of defiled passions has passed away, *Larger Sutra* birth is the process by which the enlightenment of nirvana is realized in death.

Further, Soga holds that regarding birth of the *Larger Sutra*, to the extent that it is birth, the resultant Pure Land is always of the future. However, this future is not the future of the linear time that we live in our daily lives, but instead the virtues of the Pure Land as a result working in the mind of

<sup>20</sup> SRS, vol. 12, p. 198.

<sup>21</sup> SRS, vol. 12, p. 193.

entrusting that is the fulfillment of the original vow as pure future. That is, as Tanluan says, “Through the vows, the power is completed, and through the power, the vows are fulfilled. . . . Because the power and the vow match each other perfectly and ultimately do not differ, it is called ‘fulfillment,’” the resultant virtues and ornaments of the Pure Land work in the causal faith of the original vow while remaining the future. Soga used the term pure future to emphasize this sort of a multidimensional concept of time.

Therefore, returning to the *Treatise on the Pure Land* and Tanluan’s commentary on it, Soga argues that rather than the term “birth in the Pure Land” which continues to contain the connotations of the birth described in the *Contemplation Sutra* wherein one eventually is born in the Pure Land in the future, the phrase “aspiration for birth in the Pure Land,” which refers to living the virtues of the Pure Land as they open up in the mind of true entrusting, is more appropriate to describe *Larger Sutra* birth. Also, he holds that the most compelling significance of Shinran’s Buddhist path lies in the aspiration for birth in the Pure Land wherein the virtues of the Pure Land are made evident in this world of assured hell-dwelling. Therefore, Soga exhorts us, saying “those who have been liberated by the Pure Land, stand up and support that Pure Land,” and teaches that a Buddhist path which transcends our pretentious egos and where, as Kiyozawa says, “human beings try to be more than human,” can be realized in trying to live the virtues of the Pure Land in this *sahā* world. Thus we might say that Soga, through his inquiry into the *Treatise on the Pure Land* and Tanluan’s commentary on it, was able to clarify that the path Shinran described as birth of the *Larger Sutra* is a path to buddhahood based on the aspiration for birth in the Pure Land, which is a central theme of those two works.

#### *Terakawa Shunshō’s Understanding of the Kyōgyōshinshō*

Since Soga Ryōjin, many of our outstanding predecessors have confirmed repeatedly that the Buddhist path which Shinran made clear is the path to buddhahood in the aspiration for birth in the Pure Land and that the faith in that path is the mind of true entrusting that is the fulfillment of the original vow. Among these various thinkers, some have developed a theory of the *saṃgha* which transcends the modern concept of the individual based on a reinterpretation of the working of the virtues of the Pure Land that come to life in self-reflective entrusting, particularly the virtue of the kindred of the Buddha. Others have suggested that living in the “spirit of Dharmakāra Bodhisattva,” which Soga emphasized, should become the motive force for the Dōbōkai 同朋会 Movement in the Ōtani-ha of Shin Buddhism.

Among all of these efforts, Terakawa Shunshō 寺川俊昭, while being lead by Soga's understanding of the Buddhist path, found that the most fundamental significance of Shinran's Buddhist path lay in the fact that it was the path to great, complete nirvana. Of course, since the Buddhist path of the Pure Land is made possible by the eighteenth vow, "the vow of sincere and entrusting mind," which promises birth in the Pure Land, it goes without saying that its object lies in birth. However, because, as Soga showed, birth in the Pure Land according to the *Larger Sutra* was taught by Shinran to be the process through which one reaches nirvana, Terakawa argues that the fundamental significance of *Larger Sutra* birth is being the path to great and complete nirvana.

In Tanluan's commentary on the *Treatise on the Pure Land*, the relationship between the virtues and ornaments of the Pure Land and nirvana is interpreted as being one of explanation and meaning, that is, the relationship between the dharma-body of expedient means and the dharma-body of the essence of the dharma. He explains that "based on the dharma-body of the essence of the dharma, the dharma-body of expedient means is born, and based on the dharma-body of expedient means, the dharma-body of the essence of the dharma is revealed," showing that the virtues of the Pure Land, as the dharma-body of expedient means, are the working of nirvana itself as the dharma-body of the essence of the dharma. Influenced by this interpretation of Tanluan's, Shinran writes in his *Yuishinshō mon'i* 唯信鈔文意:

The dharma-body has neither form nor color. Therefore, the mind is unable to grasp it, and words are unable to describe it. From this oneness, exhibiting form, taking on the shape of the dharma-body of expedient means, taking on the name Bhikṣu Dharmakāra, and giving rise to inconceivable, great vows, the form that appeared [in this way] was called the Tathāgata of Inexhaustible Light Unhindered in the Ten Directions by Vasubandhu Bodhisattva.<sup>22</sup>

Here, Shinran describes his understanding that Amida Tathāgata is a direct expression of and by nirvana itself. Therefore, it is only natural that the Buddhist path of birth in the Pure Land which consists of living in the mind of true entrusting, the mind that takes refuge in the Tathāgata of Inexhaustible Light Unhindered in the Ten Directions, should lead directly to the realization of nirvana. This is just as Shinran writes in his *Shōshinge* 正信

<sup>22</sup> Shinran Shōnin Zenshū Kankōkai 1969, vol. 3, p. 171. Also, T 83: 702b25–c4.



偈: “One who can give rise to the mind of the single thought moment of joy attains nirvana without severing the passions,”<sup>23</sup> or “when the deluded, defiled, ordinary being gives rise to the mind of true entrusting, he knows perfectly that birth-and-death is nirvana.”<sup>24</sup> However, I believe that there is epoch-making significance in the fact that Shinran’s Buddhist path was clearly ascertained to be the path to great, complete nirvana by Terakawa.

In the first place, the *Kyōgyōshinshō* was Shinran’s attempt to prove that the path of birth in the Pure Land through the *nenbutsu* was, just as it is, the ultimate consummation of Mahayana Buddhism. Since “birth-and-death is nirvana” is the banner of Mahayana Buddhism, one can say there lies a terminus of Shin doctrinal studies, particularly of research into the *Kyōgyōshinshō* in the fact that the fundamental significance of *Larger Sutra* birth was found to be the path to great, complete nirvana. Although I am certain that, of course, the significance of this path will be considered from a variety of perspectives, one can say that the clarification of the crux of Shinran’s teaching as the path to great, complete nirvana and thus the consummation of Mahayana Buddhism by the scholars of modern doctrinal studies beginning with Kiyozawa, has come to an apex in Terakawa’s *Kyōgyōshinshō* research, which has grasped the heart of that work.

#### *The Issues Remaining to Be Faced*

It goes without saying that the chapter on the true Buddha body and land is where Shinran preaches about nirvana in terms of the Buddha body and Buddha land and directly discusses this issue. In their lectures, Yamabe and Akanuma state:

From the distant past, it has been said that the chapter on the true Buddha body and land is an expansion on the chapter on realization, that the chapter on transformed Buddha bodies and lands also developed from the chapter on realization. The chapter on the true Buddha body and land is said to be a development from the chapter on realization and, when viewed from the preceding chapters, in contrast to the preceding four chapters which are concerned with the subject that takes refuge and clarify the causes and results of the birth of sentient beings, [this chapter] shows the body and land that are the object of refuge. In relation

<sup>23</sup> Shinran Shōnin Zenshū Kankōkai 1969, vol. 1, p. 86. Also, T 83: 600a18.

<sup>24</sup> Shinran Shōnin Zenshū Kankōkai 1969, vol. 1, p. 89. Also, T 83: 600b17.

to the following chapter, the chapter on transformed Buddha bodies and lands, through the explication of the contrast between the necessary and the wide [gates], and the true and provisional, the significance of the true and the transformed are clarified. . . . Now, regarding this chapter on the true Buddha body and land, the *Rokuyōshō* teaches that the preceding four chapters are concerned with the subject that takes refuge, while this chapter clarifies the true land that is the object of that refuge, which, we believe, is an appropriate assessment of the general outline.<sup>25</sup>

The various interpretations of the chapter on the true Buddha body and land have, by and large, been essentially this sort of an interpretation. In short, it has been understood to be a development from the chapter on realization, which clarifies the true Buddha land where those who have attained the teaching, practice, faith, and realization described in the preceding chapters actually go when born. It is said that while the chapter on realization contains the profound impression made by our intuition of the virtues of the Pure Land, the chapter on the true Buddha body and land refers to the Buddha land that we are born in, itself. This interpretation of this chapter as showing the true Pure Land into which one is actually born is an interpretation that is based on the understanding of the entirety of Shinran's Buddhist path as one of birth in the Pure Land, but does this interpretation sufficiently grasp the significance of Shinran's description of the true Buddha land as "the realm of nirvana"?

When one has reconsidered the whole of Shinran's Buddhist path as the path to great, complete nirvana the way that Terakawa has, our teaching, practice, faith, and realization are each directly connected to great nirvana. Therefore, all of our teaching, practice, faith, and realization acquires the significance of a path that leads to great nirvana. Apparently attempting to point this out, Yamabe and Akanuma, after noting that since the chapter on practice expresses the dharma of the *nenbutsu*, it is directly related to the chapter on the true Buddha body and land, write:

It seems that simply claiming that the chapter on the true Buddha body and land is a development from the chapter on realization and leaving it at that does not quite capture the full extent of the meaning [of this chapter]. This is why we have said that if one understands the first four chapters of the *Kyōgyōshinshō*, then the source of the chapter on the true Buddha body and land comes

<sup>25</sup> Yamabe and Akanuma 1951, p. 1079.

to be known of itself. We want to look at the chapter on the true Buddha body and land in relation to the chapter on practice.<sup>26</sup>

Here, they focus on the relationship between the chapter on the true Buddha body and land and the chapter on practice, but when one reconsiders Shinran's Buddhist path as the path to great, complete nirvana, this chapter is likely related not just to the one on practice, but to all four of the preceding ones.

Since Pure Land Buddhism is a Buddhist path that is opened up from nirvana, naturally, the true teaching cannot exist except through the two types of merit transference of the Tathāgata, which are the working of nirvana. The reason that the chapter on practice begins with reference to the two types of merit transference is that all of Shin Buddhism is a Buddhist path that is opened up by nirvana.

The chapter on practice teaches that the dharma realized by the *nenbutsu* is the single Buddha vehicle of the vow and takes that as its apex. Naturally, there the working of nirvana is spoken of directly as “transformation and becoming” and “refusal to lodge.” After Shinran's “comment on the ocean of the single vehicle,” passages from Tanluan's commentary—his comment on the virtue that ensures action is not meaningless regarding “transformation and becoming” and his comment on the virtue of the great assembly regarding “refusal to lodge”—are quoted to attest to Shinran's interpretations. In the *Yuishinshō mon'i*, Shinran describes this working of nirvana, stating:

That when one entrusts oneself without two minds to the vow of the Tathāgata, . . . one assuredly realizes the enlightenment of great nirvana [signifies a transformation of] hunters, merchants, and the like, as [dramatic as] rocks, slate, and pebbles becoming gold.<sup>27</sup>

Here, he holds that “transformation and becoming” is the working of great nirvana itself.

In the chapter on faith, Shinran's exploration of the mind of true entrusting is laid out in his questions and answers on the triple mind and the single mind to show that it is not different from the original vow and is therefore directly connected to the realm of nirvana. While the first half of this chapter proves that our mind of true entrusting is directly related to nirvana, the second half is quite different.

<sup>26</sup> Yamabe and Akanuma 1951, p. 1079.

<sup>27</sup> Shinran Shōnin Zenshū Kankōkai 1969, vol. 3, p. 169. Also, T 83: 702a18–24. Here, the phrase “hunters, merchants, and the like,” refers to those thought to be particularly far from the attainment of buddhahood.

In the same way that Shinran speaks continually of absolute powerlessness throughout the questions and answers, when an ordinary human being comes into contact with nirvana through the entrusting mind, they become the “being that alone is excluded.” The latter half of the chapter on faith deals entirely with the problem of exclusion in the original vow, further clarifying the issue of “refusal to lodge” that was brought up in the chapter on practice.

In the chapter on realization, the virtues of the Pure Land which are realized as our attainment are taught to be the profound impression of coming into contact with the realm of nirvana. The second fascicle of Tanluan’s commentary on the *Treatise on the Pure Land* in the comment on the virtue of purity states:

When there is an ordinary human being, full of passions and defilements, and he attains birth in that Pure Land, the karmic bonds of the three realms ultimately do not drag him [back]. This means that without cutting off the passions and defilements, one attains the aspect of nirvana. How is this even conceivable?<sup>28</sup>

This passage, which is quoted in the chapter on realization, clearly shows this relationship.

In this way, since teaching, practice, faith, and realization are all directly related to nirvana, the Buddhist path that Shinran clarified as Shin Buddhism is the ultimate consummation of Mahayana Buddhism. The realization of the two vehicles or the arhats is a sort of realization. Yet, however excellent that realization may be, if it is not directly connected to nirvana, it is not a Mahayana Buddhist path. Therefore, as the chapter that clarifies that our teaching, practice, faith, and realization are all directly related to great nirvana, the chapter on the true Buddha body and land is the axis around which the whole of the *Kyōgyōshinshō* is centered. Because the significance of Shin Buddhism as the path to great, complete nirvana is not sufficiently grasped in an interpretation that simply considers it being about the true Buddha land where we will be born, one must consider the Buddhist path presented by Shinran as multivalent, encompassing both the sense of *Larger Sutra* birth and that of the path to great, complete nirvana.

While expanding his argument based on this chapter on the true Buddha body and land in the chapter on transformed Buddha bodies and lands to an investigation of the relationship between the eighteenth and nineteenth vows, and also that between the eighteenth and twentieth vows, Shinran

<sup>28</sup> Shinshū Shōgyō Zensho Hensanjo 1941, vol. 1, p. 319. Also, T 40: 836c18–21.

carries out a thorough criticism of the human being's relativistic, self-power discrimination. There, there is both the sense of truth and that of expedient means, but the chapter on transformed Buddha bodies and lands has the significance of leading one to the truth of the Mahayana through the employment of expedient means.

In this way, Terakawa's revelation of Shinran's Buddhist path as the path to great, complete nirvana is pregnant with significance for future studies of the *Kyōgyōshinshō* in that it provides a decisive standpoint from which to clarify Shinran's Mahayana path.

From the above facts, I strongly believe that we have reached a point where we need to reread the *Kyōgyōshinshō* once more from the beginning, employing the methodology begun by Kiyozawa Manshi and in light of the results of the work of our predecessors of modern doctrinal studies, from the standpoint of the path to great, complete nirvana.

(Translated by Michael Conway)

#### ABBREVIATIONS

- SRS *Soga Ryōjin senshū* 曾我量深選集. 12 vols. Ed. Soga Ryōjin Senshū Kankōkai 曾我量深選集刊行会. Tokyo: Yayoi Shobō. 1970–72.
- T *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經. 100 vols. Ed. Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 and Watanabe Kaikyoku 渡辺海旭. Tokyo: Taishō Issaikyō Kankōkai. 1924–34.

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