

Nishida's "Gutoku Shinran"

DENNIS HIROTA

Introduction

GUTOKU SHINRAN BELONGS to the earliest period of Nishida's publications. It originally appeared in April, 1911, several months after *A Study of Good* (*Zen no Kenkyū*), in a book produced in observance of the six hundred fiftieth anniversary of the death of Shinran (1173–1263). The volume was titled *Views of the Founder* and included articles by Nanjō Bun'yū, Suzuki Daisetz, and a number of other scholars associated with the Tokyo and Kyoto imperial universities.¹ Nishida was forty years old at the time.

The significance of the essay is concisely indicated in a prefatory note in a selection of Nishida's works edited by Nishitani Keiji: "This article already reveals a penetrating insight into the nature of religion, and at the same time clearly expresses, alongside the deep interest in Zen that we see in his diaries, Nishida's great esteem for Shinran, which he maintained undiminished to the end of his life."² As pointed out here, "Gutoku Shinran" retains importance for its expression of Nishida's understanding both of the nature of religion and of Shinran's thought. On the one hand, in viewing Shinran within the broad context of his understanding of religion, Nishida forcefully illuminates the religious transformation that lies at the heart of Shinran's path. In this way, he provides insight into a side of Shinran's thought that has received little emphasis in traditional Shin scholastic study. On the other hand, in relation to the corpus of Nishida's writings, the essay provides evidence of Nishida's lifelong interest in Shinran's thought and the importance of Shinran to his philosophy of religion. Further, it articulates concerns that find their final exposition in Nishida's last completed work, "The Logic of Place and the Religious Worldview" (*Basho-teki Ronri to Shūkyō-teki Sekaikan*; 1945).

¹ *Shūsokan* 宗祖観, published by the Ōtani Gakushi Kai 大谷学士会 in Meiji 44. Nishida reprinted his essay with a slight revision in his collection *Shisaku to Taiken* in 1915.

² Nishitani Keiji, ed., *Nishida Kitarō*, Gendai Nihon Shisō Taikō 22 (Chikuma Shobō, 1968), p. 441.

"Gutoku" as Expressive of Religious Transformation. Nishida sketches the core of Shinran's path through a consideration of the name Shinran selected for himself when, in a persecution of Hōnen's nembutsu movement, he was stripped of priestly status. Shinran explains his adoption of "Gutoku" 愚禿 ("foolish/stubble-haired") as his name in the postscript to *Teaching, Practice and Realization*:

Scholar-monks of Kōfukuji presented a petition to the retired emperor in the first part of the second month, 1207. The emperor and his ministers, acting against the dharma and violating human rectitude, became enraged and embittered. As a result, Master Genkū (Hōnen) . . . and a number of his followers, without receiving any deliberation of their [alleged] crimes, were summarily sentenced to death or were dispossessed of their monkhood, given [secular] names, and consigned to distant banishment. I was among the latter. Hence, I am now neither a monk nor one in worldly life. For this reason, I have taken the term Toku as my name.³

Thus, Shinran refused the name assigned to replace his monk's name and instead selected as surname Toku, or, with the prefix "foolish," Gutoku.⁴ A note in *Tannishō* states that to do this formally, "he applied to the court and obtained permission. This petition is still preserved in the Office of Records. After his exile ended, he signed his name Gutoku Shinran."⁵

"Toku," literally meaning "bald,"⁶ was used in Buddhist writings as a term for hypocritical monks who assumed the outward appearance of a life devoted

³ *The True Teaching, Practice and Realization of the Pure Land Way: A Translation of Shinran's Kyōgyōshinshō*, vol. IV (Kyoto: Shin Buddhism Translation Series, 1990), pp. 613–614.

⁴ Shinran's use of the term *gu* together with *toku* probably derives in part from Saichō, who in setting forth vows to resolute practice describes himself as "the most foolish (*gu*) among the foolish, the most deluded among the deluded, a defiled and stubble-haired (*toku*) being, the basest Saichō." In *Ganmon* 願文, Andō Toshio and Sonoda Kōyū, eds., *Saichō* (Tokyo: Iwanami, 1974), p. 395.

⁵ A note appended to manuscript copies of *Tannishō* 歎異抄 may have been the direct source of Nishida's reflections. See Dennis Hirota, trans., *Tannishō: A Primer* (Kyoto: Ryūkoku University, 1982), p. 45. There, the names of the four men executed and the eight banished are listed, and the secular name given Shinran to replace his Buddhist name—Fujii no Yoshizane—is also recorded.

⁶ The Japanese reading of the character is *kamuro*, which also was used to refer to the hair of boys cut at shoulder length before it was tied up in a topknot as a sign of manhood.

to the Buddhist path without genuine aspiration or practice.⁷ Shinran's own use of Gutoku, however, holds together two distinct aspects. One is deep self-reflection, with an acute realization of the discrepancy between the ideals of Buddhist practice and the actualities of his own existence. This is seen in a note at the beginning of his work *Gutoku Shō*:

Paying heed to the shin[jin] (true entrusting) of the wise, I bare the heart of Gutoku: Regarding the shin[jin] of the wise, they are inwardly wise (*ken*), outwardly foolish (*gu*); regarding the heart of Gutoku, I am inwardly foolish, outwardly wise.⁸

Here, "Gutoku" is used to express the chasm Shinran perceives between himself and the preceding Pure Land masters, many of whom he regarded as bodhisattvas. Although elsewhere Shinran speaks of his realization of shinjin as the same as that of Hōnen, and indeed asserts the person of shinjin to be the equal of the Buddhas because shinjin itself is the Buddha-mind, we see inherent in his religious realization a profound self-awareness that manifests itself as humility or repentance. This aspect of repentance or awareness of being "foolish" renders any personal claim to wisdom or awakening meaningless.

While this passage focuses on "foolish" (*Gu*) in contrast to "wise," the dichotomy of inner-outer suggested by Toku as a term for lapsed monks (monks in appearance only) provides the structure of Shinran's confessional remarks. Hence "wise" and "foolish" are contrasted on two levels, outer and inner, and their meanings on these two levels are themselves contradictory. It is this tension between two modes of being wise and foolish that Nishida sets forth in the opening portion of his essay:

However great it may be, human wisdom is human wisdom, human virtue human virtue. . . . Yet when a person, once undergoing a complete turnabout, abandons this wisdom and this virtue, he or she can attain new wisdom, take on new virtue, and enter into new life.

⁷ The *Nirvana Sutra*, for example, states: "After my nirvana, in defiled and evil times, the country will fall into ruin and disorder, and looting among themselves, the people will starve. At that time, there will be those who enter monastic life because of widespread famine. Such people will be termed 'the stubble-haired' (*toku*)" (T12, 624a). A similar passage is quoted in the medieval anthology of Buddhist tales, *Collection of Sand and Pebbles* (*Shasekishū*, vol. 4, 2). The conditions of famine and the use of the Dharma as a livelihood were of course present in Shinran's time.

⁸ *Gutoku Shō* 愚禿抄 (Gutoku's Notes, 1255), two fascicles; *Shinshū Shōgyō Zensho* [SSZ], vol. II, 455, 464. It may be noted that "Gutoku" is traditionally considered Shinran's personal expression of humility and use is generally avoided in sectarian institutions; hence, this work is referred to as "Nikanjō" (the two-fascicle work).

Only the person who comes to stand beyond conventional frameworks of value and judgment by having accepted utter condemnation by their standards can grasp the limitations of historically and socially conditioned notions of wisdom and goodness. This is because finally it is attachment to a transcendent self possessing ability to judge absolutely, which such notions assume, that must be discarded. This insight undergirds the logic of place that Nishida went on to develop.

As Shinran's explanation in *Teaching, Practice and Realization* reveals, it is this complex term Toku that is the central element in his use of Gutoku, and he gives as the reason for his choice his status as "neither a monk nor one in worldly life" (*sō ni arazu, zoku ni arazu*). This phrase was associated in particular with the widely known figure Kyōshin (d. 866), whose story was circulated in collections of Buddhist tales and biographies from as early as the *Japanese Records of Attaining Birth in the Land of Bliss* (ca. 983).⁹ According to legend, he had been an accomplished scholar-monk in the Nara temple Kōfukuji, but grew dissatisfied with his practice. Awakening aspiration for the Pure Land, he abandoned his priestly status and monastic life, eventually settling near a village in present Hyōgo prefecture. There he built a thatched hut and took a wife, who bore him a child. Eking out a living as a laborer, he passed thirty years in constant utterance of the nembutsu. One record states:

Kyōshin, who settled in Kako, built no fence to the west: toward the Land of Bliss the gate lay open. Nor, befittingly, did he enshrine an image of worship; he kept no sacred books. In appearance *not a monk nor yet worldly*, he faced the west always, saying the nembutsu, and was like one to whom all else was forgotten.¹⁰

That Shinran had Kyōshin in mind in selecting the name Toku is attested to by Shinran's great-grandson Kakunyo.¹¹ In criticizing followers of Ippen for flaunting their otherworldliness by wearing distinctive robes and austere black surplices (*kesa*), Kakunyo states that Shinran's thinking

⁹ *Nihon Ōjō Gokuraku Ki* 日本往生極樂記, compiled by Yoshishige Yasutane (931–1002). The story of Kyōshin 教信 is framed in an account of the otherwise unknown monk Shōnyō; see Inoue Mitsusada and Ōsone Shōsuke, eds., *Ōjōden, Hokkegenki*, *Nihon Shisō Taikō* 7 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1974), p. 31. This work appears to have influenced the late-Heian anthology *Konjaku Monogatari*, which also includes an account of Kyōshin.

¹⁰ From *Ichigon Hōdan* 一言芳談, in Dennis Hirota, *Plain Words on the Pure Land Way: Sayings of the Wandering Monks of Medieval Japan* (Kyoto: Ryūkoku University, 1989), p. 49.

¹¹ Kakunyo 覚如 (1270–1351), the third head of the Honganji tradition.

was precisely the opposite. He constantly said: "I follow the example of the *shami* Kyōshin." . . . Accordingly, after receiving the imperial sentence of banishment during the suppression of sole practice of the nembutsu, he added the characters "Gutoku" whenever signing his name. In assuming a mode of life in which one is neither monk nor worldly, he was the same as the *shami* Kyōshin. Thus it is said.¹²

In a work referred to by Kakunyo, the term "lay *shami*" (*zaike shami* 在家沙弥) is used to describe Kyōshin, emphasizing his status as one engaged in maintaining home and family, but also dedicated to a life of nembutsu in aspiration for the Pure Land.¹³ The term *shami* (Sk. *śrāmaṇera*) had been used in Japan under Nara period codes to denote state-sponsored novices who abandoned householding life and received initial ordination. They shaved their heads, wore robes, and observed basic precepts, and after some years of practice, might receive the full 250 precepts of a monk. There soon emerged, however, many "self-ordained" (*jido* 自度) *shami* who shaved their heads and took up a life of practice on their own without government authorization. Many did so to gain the exemption from conscription labor accorded regular *shami*. Nevertheless, with the increasing use of ecclesiastical institutions to provide positions of status to offspring of nobility, the unofficial *shami* sometimes appeared more sincere in their devotions than their temple counterparts. This might be the case even when they lived as householders. At the same time, there were also fully ordained monks who chose a reclusive life away from socially powerful temple complexes in order to dedicate themselves to study and practice; hence, it became increasingly difficult to distinguish among the various types of Buddhist practitioners. In the tale literature, however, there gradually developed with increasing clarity an image of the lay *shami* who lived an austere and unpretentious life dedicated to the nembutsu.¹⁴ When Shinran adopted the name Toku, he was not merely expressing humility as it occurs in ordinary life, as the opposite pole of self-confidence, but more importantly asserting the transcendent significance of his mode of existence as "neither monk nor worldly."

¹² *Gaijashō* 改邪抄 ("Correcting Wrong Views," 1337), in *Shinshū Shōgyō Zensho*, vol. III, pp. 67–68. Shinran may have taken Kyōshin as model regarding death also. *Nihon Ōjō Gokuraku Ki* describes how Kyōshin's body was left out in front of his hut to be devoured by a pack of dogs; *Gaijashō*, in another section, quotes Shinran: "When my eyes have closed, put me in the Kamo River and give me to the fish" (SSZ III, p. 81).

¹³ The mid-Heian work *Ten Reasons for Birth [through Nembutsu]* (*Ōjō Jūin* 往生拾因) by Yōkan 永観 (1032–1111); T84, no. 2683.

¹⁴ See *Plain Words on the Pure Land Way*, "Introduction," for a sketch of the Pure Land *hijiri* tradition.

It has been common among historians both in Japan and the West to view the Pure Land paths of Hōnen and Shinran as Buddhism reduced to reverence for the Buddha or to “a simple doctrine of salvation through faith” adapted for the common people. It has further been asserted that the notion of the “last dharma-age” (*mappō*) functioned to instill a pessimism that inclined people to accept this form of Buddhism. In such a view, “Gutoku” might be interpreted as expressing resignation to personal incapacity to accomplish what the Buddhist path originally requires. As we have seen, however, Toku carries a double meaning. On the one hand, Shinran accepts its common use as a term for hypocritical or worldly monks, for he is sharply critical both of his contemporaries (“It is saddening to see the behavior of the monks of the major temples and monastic complexes at present”) and also himself (“I lack even small love and small compassion, and yet, for fame and profit, enjoy teaching others”).¹⁵ In this sense, Toku expresses deep self-reflection. On the other hand, the condition of the dual negation of “neither monk nor worldly,” also expressed by Toku, is not merely one of incapacity:

Although monks are so in name only and keep no precepts,
Now in this defiled world of the last dharma-age
They are the equals of Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana,
And we are urged to pay homage to and revere them.¹⁶

Monks in name only, who fulfill no practices for enlightenment, including observance of precepts, are nevertheless to be revered as persons manifesting true reality. How is it that Shinran takes these two opposing views of monks? What is the distinction between the monks of the major monasteries whose lives are but extensions of the secular world and the monks in name only who marry and keep no precepts, but who are to be revered?

Nishida's achievement in his essay is to clarify precisely such questions, and to show the inadequacy of projecting a merely socially- or historically-framed context onto the self-understanding of Pure Land Buddhists by illuminating both the affirmative edge of Toku and the transformation in awareness underlying its adoption. For Shinran, it is the monks in the established temples who are trapped within their historical setting and who remain adrift within the values and standards of social convention. The concept of *mappō* makes possi-

¹⁵ Note and hymn 116 in *Hymns of the Dharma-Ages: A Translation of Shōzōmatsu Wasan* (Kyoto: Shin Buddhism Translation Series, 1993), pp. 75, 83.

¹⁶ *Hymns of the Dharma-Ages*, hymn 106, p. 73; based on a sutra quoted in *Mappō Tōmyōki*: “If in the last age . . . nominal monks should take wives and have them bear children, still lay supporters should pay homage . . . just as they would to Śāriputra.”

ble not an intellectual fatalism, but an interpretation of one's own existence from beyond such horizons. As we have seen, for Nishida Shinran's name implies "once undergoing a complete turnabout in one's existence" (*honshin ikkai* 翻身一回), that is, abandoning all attachment to the abilities and judgments of the self and "coming back to life after perishing." In Shinran's terms, one "overturns and discards the mind of self-power," and this in itself is the activity of Other Power, or of "being brought to become so" through the spontaneous working of Amida's compassionate Vow (*jinen hōni*). Thus, in entrusting oneself to the Vow and saying the nembutsu, "without seeking it, we are made to receive the supreme virtues."

Let us consider briefly three aspects of the religious turnabout expressed in "Gutoku Shinran."

(1) *The Process of Transformation.* Nishida describes the process of religious transformation in terms that differ from the usual understanding within the Shin tradition: "Every person, no matter who he is, must return to the original body of his own naked self; he must once let go from the cliff's ledge and come back to life after perishing." Nishida's expression here was surely shaped by his experience with Zen practice. From a Shin stance, it might be said that precisely this "letting go from the cliff's ledge" of attachment to the imagined self lies beyond human capacity, and because of this Shinran speaks of being "possessed of blind passions."¹⁷

In a piece written several years before "Gutoku Shinran," however, we find a suggestion of how Nishida might have expressed the self-negation of letting go in terms closer to the sensibility of Shin practice:

Any person, in the face of an event like the death of one's child, is surely assailed by all manner of confusion. Though to no purpose, the heart is tormented by futile thoughts of regret that one should have done this or that. Yet there is no recourse but to resign oneself to destiny. Destiny works not only from without, it also works from within. Behind our faults, an inconceivable power seems to be in control, and thoughts of regret arise because we trusted too much in the powers of the self. In such cases, when we come to know deeply our own powerlessness and, abandoning the self, take refuge in that immense power, the thoughts of regret are transformed, becoming

¹⁷ In Shinran, this inability is also expressed in terms of the linguisticity of human existence. See my article, "Shinran's View of Language: A Buddhist Hermeneutics of Faith," *Eastern Buddhist* 26:1 (Spring 1993), pp. 50-93 and 26:2 (Fall 1993), pp. 91-130.

thoughts of repentance; the heart, as though laying down a heavy burden, itself finds salvation, and further one becomes able to ask forgiveness of the dead. One is able to discern traces of the precious conviction expressed in *Tannishō*, "I have no idea whether the nembutsu is truly the seed for my being born in the Pure Land or whether it is the karmic act for which I must fall into hell." And one is able to touch boundless new life.¹⁸

Nishida is writing here out of his own experience of personal loss, for a friend who has also lost a child. It is clear that he already possesses a deep familiarity with *Tannishō*, but it is not immediately apparent how Shinran's words, "I have no idea whether the nembutsu is truly the seed for my being born in the Pure Land," may offer solace. In the context of a reading of "Gutoku Shinran," however, we see that this quotation corresponds to the central transformation in awareness in which a person, "undergoing a complete turnabout," abandons the valuation and judgments of merely human wisdom and virtue.

Nishida's central theme here is remorse or regret in the face of death and great sorrow, and he finds salvation in a "letting go" in which such remorse is transformed into repentance. Shinran's words, though occasioned by followers who have come seeking reassurance in their practice of the nembutsu, also takes up the theme of regret:

Should I have been deceived by Hōnen Shōnin and, saying the Name, plunge utterly into hell, even then I would have no regrets. The person who could have attained Buddhahood by endeavoring in other practices might regret that he had been deceived if he said the nembutsu and so fell into hell. But I am one for whom any practice is difficult to accomplish, so hell is to be my home whatever I do.¹⁹

While feelings of regret or remorse arise when one judges one's own acts and decisions, thereby taking a stance of attachment to an internalized self that is itself wise and good, such feelings turn into repentance when the self that judges itself is seen to be powerless, a delusional construction. In the arena of ordinary life, every person encounters situations of sorrow and powerlessness that may become occasions for the arising of such awareness of the groundlessness of the self. Nishida speaks of such sorrow (*hiai*) of human existence as the very motive force of philosophy.²⁰

¹⁸ "Kokubungakushi no Jo," NKZ 1, 420.

¹⁹ Section 2, *Tannishō: A Primer*, p. 23.

²⁰ NKZ 6, p. 116.

(2) *Relationships in Transformation.* Nishida characterizes religious transformation as each person's "return to the original body of his or her own naked self." This may be understood as a becoming solitary, in the sense that socially constructed images of the self are allowed to fall away. It is associated with Shinran's "Gutoku" in that it arises only together with a humility in which all pretensions and aspirations that mask the actuality of the self must be once abandoned. Shinran's most penetrating expression of this negation of the imagined self is that quoted by Nishida: "I realize that [Amida's Vow] was entirely for the sake of myself alone."²¹

In "Gutoku Shinran," however, Nishida uses this quotation to elucidate a different aspect of transformation:

However foolish a person, however evil, Amida welcomes him or her into the Pure Land, saying, "It is for you alone that I have broken my body and ground my bones to dust": this is the fundamental significance of Shin Buddhism. It is expressed in Shinran's words in *Tannishō*: "When I consider deeply the Vow of Amida, which arose from five kalpas of profound thought, I realize that it was entirely for the sake of myself alone."²²

We find here that becoming solitary (foolish, evil) is fused with a touching of reality that may be expressed in personal terms. The self-negation of the person as one completely evil—evil in a mode transcending relative judgments—is united with the self-negation of the absolute: "For you alone I have broken my body and ground my bones to dust."

In an illuminating article on Nishida and Pure Land thought, Professor Hase Shōtō points out that except for scattered references, between "Gutoku Shinran" and Nishida's treatment of Shinran in his last essay lies an unexplained but significant silence spanning more than three decades.²³ The reason for it, he asserts, is not a long ebbing of interest, but Nishida's awareness of his inability to treat Shinran's thought within the logic he developed in his middle period based on the place or context of absolute nothingness. According to

²¹ Perhaps the fullest consideration of this aspect of becoming uniquely oneself apart from others and the values and judgments of one's cultural environment in Shinran is given by Nishitani in an analysis of these words. See Nishitani Keiji, "The Problem of Time in Shinran," trans. Dennis Hirota, in *Eastern Buddhist* 11:1 (May 1978), pp. 13–26; the original text, "Shinran ni okeru 'toki' no mondai," is in Nishitani's *Collected Works*, vol. 18 (1990), pp. 211–223.

²² From "Postscript," *Tannishō: A Primer*, p. 43.

²³ Hase Shōtō, "Nishida Tetsugaku to Jōdokyō," in Ōmine Akira, ed., *Nishida Tetsugaku o Manabu Hito no Tame ni* (Kyoto: Sekai Shisō Sha, 1996), pp. 235–260.

Hase, discussion of Shinran became possible only with the articulation in Nishida's final essay of the conception of "inverse correspondence" (*gyaku taiō* 逆対応), in which the person and the absolute enter into relationship through mutual self-negation. Here, the absolute, through self-negation as absolute love, discovers and expresses itself in that which stands as polar opposite, the person of evil. Although Hase does not discuss "Gutoku Shinran" in detail, the outlines of Nishida's thinking are already visible in the early essay.²⁴

(3) *Transformed Existence*. Nishida states that the person who abandons human wisdom and virtue attains new wisdom and virtue, and that "wisdom in religion lies in knowing wisdom itself; virtue in religion lies in enacting virtue itself." Perhaps these conceptions of wisdom and virtue transcending the conventional notions of them also had to await his final essay for full articulation, particularly in the idea of the "stance in the ordinary" (*byōjōtei* 平常底) in which the nonsubstantial self, in self-negation, becomes the self-expression of the absolute. Already in "Gutoku Shinran," however, Nishida makes concrete observations regarding Shinran's character that may clarify his view. He notes that Shinran regarded the harsh conditions of exile as an opportunity to spread the teaching, "looking to dharma alone and not who a person was." Having passed through the collapse of egocentric adherence to conventional values into the humility of his actual existence, Shinran was able to perceive the people around him also as they were, free of the prevalent hierarchies of social status. This stance of freedom or unhinderedness, apprehending the entirety of human frameworks of wisdom and virtue and being enabled thereby to act creatively and compassionately, "looking to dharma alone," is reflect-

²⁴ It may be noted that at almost exactly the same time as "Gutoku Shinran," another very different manifestation of the nature of Shinran's Toku was being provided by myōkōnin Asahara Saichi (1850–1932). At about the age of sixty, Saichi began his extraordinary production of verse expressive of his realization. The simultaneous opposition and oneness of *ki* (person) and *hō* (dharma, Vow) in Saichi's verse of this period also give voice to the double negation (neither monk nor worldly) in Toku: "How miserable, how miserable! / Namu-amida-butsu, namu-amida-butsu! . . . *Ki* and *hō* are one: / Namu-amida-butsu is no other than Saichi himself. / This is indeed Saichi's understanding: / He has flowers in both hands, / Taken away in one way and given as gift in another way" (D. T. Suzuki, trans., in "What is Shin Buddhism?" in *Collected Writings on Shin Buddhism* [Kyoto: Shinshū Ōtaniha, 1973], p. 161). This poem is found in Saichi's notebook no. 18, in D. T. Suzuki, ed., *Myōkōnin Asahara Saichi shū* (1967), p. 294, and in a representative selection of Saichi's poems by Satō Taira, comp., in *Myōkōnin*, Daijō butten: Chūgoku-Nihon hen, Vol. 28 (Tokyo: Chūōkōron, 1987), p. 260.

ed in Nishida's closing image of Shinran as possessed of the equanimity "of mist and wide waters." In Shinran's words, "The person of nembutsu treads the great path free of all obstacles." Perhaps Nishida had such images in mind when he stated in his final work, "Is there not in the spirit of the contemporary age something that seeks, rather than religion of the lord of a myriad hosts, religion of the vow of absolute compassion?"²⁵

In "Gutoku Shinran," Nishida emphasizes that Shinran "himself, *while he was alive*, adopted the name *Gutoku*." Nishida is, I believe, implicitly contrasting "Gutoku" with the honorific name bestowed on Shinran by Emperor Meiji several decades before.²⁶ In this sense Nishida's essay, with the image of human existence as "Gutoku" that it delineates, posed and still poses a challenge to Shin institutions to articulate an authentic vision of Shinran's path. In 1940, at the behest of state authorities, the Nishi Honganji officially agreed to delete from readings and quotation phrases in Shinran's writings, including portions of the passage in *Teaching, Practice and Realization* in which Shinran speaks of the nembutsu persecution, that hinted of disrespect toward the emperor.²⁷ Although the text has been tacitly restored, it is still the imperially conferred name inscribed on a large plaque that occupies today the place above the altar in the worship hall dedicated to Shinran.

²⁵ NKZ 11, 439. In connection with Nishida's characterization of Shinran's path, note also his essay, "To Love and To Know," appended to *A Study of Good*. There he comments: "If the work of a human life is none other than to know and love, then we pass our days laboring out of the entrusting that is Other Power." Nishida also relates scientific knowledge to an "Other Power" (nonegocentric) stance, an idea he repeats in "The Logic of Place and the Religious Worldview." For a consideration of "To Know and To Love" from a Pure Land perspective, see my *Wind in the Pines: Classic Writings of the Way of Tea as a Buddhist Path* (Fremont: Asian Humanities Press, 1995), pp. 112–116.

²⁶ The name Kenshin Daishi 見真大師 was given in 1876.

²⁷ Shigaraki Takamaro, "Shinshū ni okeru Seiten Sakujo Mondai," in *Shinran Taikēi* (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1989), *Rekishihen*, vol. 11, pp. 3–4.

Gutoku Shinran

NISHIDA KITARŌ

ALTHOUGH I WAS BORN into a Shin Buddhist family and my mother is a Shin Buddhist, I myself am not, nor do I know much about the tradition. I have heard, however, that Shinran himself, while he was alive, adopted the name *Gutoku*—"foolish/stubble-haired"—attaching great significance to these two words, and reflecting on this alone, with what knowledge I have, I sense that "Gutoku" not only gives clear expression to Shinran's character, but further that it is a profession of the Shin teaching and a marker pointing to the fundamental nature of religion itself.

Among human beings, some are wise, some foolish; some are virtuous and some not. But however great it may be, human wisdom is human wisdom, human virtue human virtue. It is no different from the angles of a triangle, however long its sides, equaling two right angles. Yet when a person, once undergoing a complete turnabout, abandons this wisdom and this virtue, he or she can attain new wisdom, take on new virtue, and enter into new life. This is the living marrow of religion. This matter of religion has nothing at all to do with what is commonly understood as learning and knowledge. Is it the Copernican theory of the revolving earth that is true or the Ptolemaic theory of the revolving heavens? Here either will do. From the perspective of moral action also, while religiousness may naturally accompany such action, we are again not necessarily able to view them as identical. I have heard that as long as Zen Master Fa-jung secluded himself on the northern crag of Mount Niu-t'ou, a variety of birds bearing flowers in their beaks came to make offerings to him, but after he met the fourth patriarch, they ceased to come.¹ Wisdom in religion lies in knowing wisdom itself;

* This is a translation of NKZ 1, pp. 407-409 (1966).

¹ Fa-jung 法融 (Hōyū, 594-657), first patriarch of the Niu-t'ou branch of Ch'an.

virtue in religion lies in enacting virtue itself. Just as, in investigating the geometric properties of triangles, one small one on the page is enough, so, when concerned with the actualities of the spirit, great and heroic figures and ordinary men and women are one. The truth is, however, that the eye cannot see itself;² the person on a mountain cannot know its entirety; the one adrift within human wisdom and human virtue cannot know that wisdom, that virtue. Every person, no matter who he is, must return to the original body of his own naked self; he must once let go from the cliff's ledge and come back to life after perishing, or he cannot know them. In other words, only the person who has been able to experience deeply what it is to be "foolish/stubble-haired" can know wisdom and virtue. I wonder if Shinran's Gutoku is not "foolish/stubble-haired" with this meaning. Without necessarily speaking of Other Power or of self-power, all religion lies precisely in appreciating what the words "foolish/stubble-haired" mean.

Having said this, however, we must note that while "foolish/stubble-haired" seem not to be limited to the Shin Buddhist path, Shin is religion that has in particular set its sight in this direction, religion that has taken the foolish person and the evil person for its true occasion.³ Christianity, which developed from Judaism, is likewise an other-power religion centered upon love, but within it the concept of

The *Transmission of the Lamp* (*Ching-te ch'uan-teng-lu*, *Keitoku Dentō Roku*) records that while he was living in a cave and practicing meditation on a cliff near the monastery on Mount Niu-t'ou, his attainments were such that birds came to make offerings. After an encounter there with the fourth patriarch Tao-hsin, however, all traces of his realization fell away and birds ceased to come. The version of "Gutoku Shinran" published in *Shūsokan*, in a passage later revised, makes Nishida's point clearly: "Long ago, while one Zen master was taking the trouble to engage in practice, devas made offerings of flowers, but after he attained realization, they stopped making offerings."

² This expression does not occur in Shinran's writings, but a similar expression occurs in another Japanese Pure Land thinker, Ippen; see Dennis Hirota, *No Abode: The Record of Ippen* (Kyoto: Ryūkoku University, 1985), p. 166.

³ Echoes *Tannishō*, 3: "It is impossible for us, filled as we are with blind passions, to free ourselves from birth-and-death. . . . Sorrowing at this, Amida made the Vow, the essential intent of which is the attainment of Buddhahood by the person who is evil. Hence the evil person who entrusts himself to Other Power is precisely the one who possesses the true cause for birth" (*Tannishō: A Primer*, p. 24).

righteousness is still strong and there is a certain disposition to condemn evil. Shin, however, differs from this is being religion of absolute love, absolute Other Power. Like the father who welcomes home his prodigal son in the parable, so, however foolish a person, however evil, Amida welcomes him or her into the Pure Land, saying, "It is for you alone that I have broken my body and ground my bones to dust": this is the fundamental significance of Shin Buddhism. It is expressed in Shinran's words in *Tannishō*:

When I consider deeply the Vow of Amida, which arose from five kalpas of profound thought, I realize that it was entirely for the sake of myself alone.⁴

One final remark. When I consider Shinran further as the founder of a Buddhist path and compare him with Nichiren—who, with spirits riding the heavens, fiercely denounced other schools and vauntingly spoke of the Hōjō clan as rulers of tiny islands⁵—I cannot help but note how extremely different in tenor Shinran's character was. He could say, while entangled in the misfortunes of Hōnen and his disciples and exiled to a corner of the northern provinces, "If I had not been exiled here, how could I have brought the teaching to the people of this isolated countryside,"⁶ looking to dharma alone and not who a person was. Nichiren Shōnin was immovable, standing rocklike amidst screaming winds and flowing clouds and the surge of raging billows; and one may call his a manly temperament. Yet does not the spirit of Shinran Shōnin—of mist and wide waters, with sea breeze quiet, sea moving no wave—also somehow engage us?

⁴ From *Tannishō*, "Postscript."

⁵ Nichiren criticized Shingon, Zen, and other schools, but was particularly virulent in his attacks on Hōnen, asserting that saying the nembutsu led to Avīci hell. Further, he petitioned the Hōjō regents to adopt his teaching, and claimed that they endangered Japan by failing to do so, calling on themselves an enemy (the Mongols) as great as the whole world.

⁶ From Kakunyo's *Godenshō*, SSZ III, p. 641; for an English version, see D. T. Suzuki and Sasaki Gesshō, trans., "The Life of Shinran," in *Collected Writings on Shin Buddhism* (Kyoto: Shinshū Ōtaniha, 1973), pp. 165–190.