

SHIN RELIGION AS I BELIEVE IT

SHIN Buddhism was revealed by Shinran Shōnin (1173-1262), who founded it on the basis of the teaching of the Larger Sukhavativyūha Sutra. Its system of doctrine is set forth in the four fasciculi of the Kyōgyō-shin-shō which the founder himself has wrought, and this is said to be considerably abstruse. Its rather plain religion, however, may be traced in some more easily accessible works such as the Tannishō (“Refutations of Heterodoxes”), a tract which consists of Shinran’s sayings and his disciple’s comments. Now in this tract we find the following words which we can consider the excellent expression of the quintessence of Shin religion:—“If we believe in the Original Vow of Amida, and say the Nenbutsu, we shall become Buddha”. In the succeeding pages I will endeavour to explain what is the significance of these words and attempt to communicate to the reader what I consider the general principles of Shin religion.

I. “If we believe in the Original Vow of Amida”

A. The Original Vow of Amida

We of this world must have something to rely on—something which is eternally true. The Shin maintains that this true something is Amida’s Vow, except which there is nothing true. Amida is Amitābha Buddha the Awakened One of True Light and Eternal Life. Amida is thus the Eternally True Being, the Knower the All the Truth of the particulars as well as the whole, and is our Light and Life.

The True Light represents the work of wisdom while the Eternal Life signifies the cause of mercy; the one destroys all kinds of our delusions whereas the other alleviates all forms of our sufferings. Now in Amitābha Buddha wisdom and mercy is unified into one whole. From that source comes His Original Vow. And the Vow is the manifestation of His Wisdom-Mercy; His Wisdom being the enlightening working in His Mercy which wishes to save us from sufferings. For this reason it is not that we are to know Amida directly and immediately, but that we are led to become aware of His Mercy-Wisdom wrought upon us when the proclamation of His Original Vow comes home to our heart.

Now, the Original Vow of Amida is "the word" of His sincere wish. It expresses His Will. We who have heard this word proclaimed are sure to be pierced by His Will, and we come to have no doubt about the truthfulness of His Original Vow—this is called "faith" on our part.

What, then, is the word of the Original Vow of Amida, and where is it to be found? It is set forth in the Larger Sukhavativyūha Sutra in the form of the Forty-Eight Vows of Amida. Among them, however, the most important, supreme and sovereign, is the Eighteenth Vow, in which the essence of the whole vow is contained. We may say, therefore, Shin Buddhism is just the Eighteenth Vow realised.

Now, it will require too much space to state to the full of the deep significance of the Buddha's Vow, yet I can summarise its general purport by the help of the following word known as "the Epitome of the Eighteenth Vow".

The Epitome runs thus: "Any one who calls upon My name shall be reborn in My Land", Here we find that two things are said, by which we can learn the general principles of the Original Vow, and through which we can realise His Wisdom-Light and Mercy-Life. The first is, "any one who calls upon my Name"; and the second, "shall be reborn in My Land". I will take up the second in the beginning and make clear what is meant by those words, "shall be reborn in My Land". Our inquiry, then, is, What does the Buddha Land mean to us?

B. What does the Buddha Land mean to us?

The Buddha Land is the world of truth and eternity—the world where "byōdō" and "jakumetsu" prevail. "Byōdō", meaning "equality", is that which the human being has long aspired after but never attained; while "jakumetsu" is the true peace, since it means "serenity of cessation", the state where there is no disturbance whatever. The Buddha has vowed that all sentient beings shall be reborn in His Land of Purity where equality and the true peace prevail.

The Buddha has thoroughly seen into the real nature of the world wherein we sentient beings are living, and knows full well that it can never be otherwise than the stage of discrimination and disturbance. We sentient beings, however, are ignorant of this state of things, and we would not deplore that we are in such a miserable condition; hence, our doom of eternal suffering. It is for this reason that the Buddha who was so much moved by pity for us sentient beings has vowed to make us to be reborn in His Land of equality

and the true peace. The Buddha has thus shown mercy and wisdom in His Vow, and there we are made aware of His sincere wish to save us from suffering and also of His constant activity to relieve us out of delusion.

Now, according to Shin Buddhism, this world is a hopeless world, so long as it remains as it stands. There will neither be peace in its purest form, nor equility in its truest sense. Shin followers do not believe that the real happiness can be attained by merely adjusting the outward conditions of this life. Neither do they admit that our perfection can be achieved merely through the discipline of our inward passions. To discipline our inward passions is the aim of morality. But morality is inevitably entangled in the meshes of outward circumstances of the life, so that it cannot lead us to the thorough-going self-retrospection. This is why men are sometimes tempted to do evil in the name of good or to commit crimes in order to maintain oneself. Moreover, morality is accompanied by thought. Men differ in their opinions about what is right and what is wrong, and this difference in their opinions undermines morality. In Buddhist terminology, this kind of disturbance arising from the difference of opinions is called "ken-joku", defilement by false views: whereas the other kind caused by the passions of love and hatred is called "bonnō-joku", defilement by evil passions. Buddhists believe that ours is the world which is constantly being defiled by these two kinds of defilements.

This being the case, if there is anything capable of enlightening us who are painfully groping in the darkness of ignorance, it must be a Light shining out

of a source which is beyond human wisdom and power. And the source is no other than the world of truth and eternity vowed by Amida in His Original Vow.

C. That on which life rests and to
which death leads.

The first thing here we have to do is both clearly to define and understand the meaning of the expression, "jōdo ni umareru" or "to be reborn in the Pure Land".

Now, according to the Buddhist theory on the destiny of human souls, we human beings who go on accumulating our karma of good and evil, as these are caused by our passions of love and hatred, are eternally doomed to pass from life to death and from death to life, in order to undergo various kinds of sufferings.

Such transmigration being horrible, we sincerely long for the world where no longer any form of birth-and-death exists. The Buddha Land of truth and eternity is just such a desired world. For it is a higher realm, transcending birth-and-death while yet including them.

Now, with this Buddha Land both behind his back and before his eyes, the Shin follower will live and die. He will make the world of truth and eternity the foundation on which his life rests and the goal to which his death leads.

To be reborn in the Pure Land, to which we have referred just above, is to attain the Buddha Land, the goal to which death leads. In other words, it means that we shall come to attain the world of truth and eternity where we suffer birth-and-death no more, and

that this is occasioned in the moment when we die in this world, exhausting the human existence of suffering through the practice of the Nembutsu.

“To be reborn” in this expression, therefore, means not the birth as it is generally understood, but the birth of no-birth or the birth of serene illumination caused by the death of serene cessation. The death of serene cessation, again, never means sheer annihilation. Though there is a sorrow for losing our life, yet there is an exulting joy in becoming one with the Eternal.

Thus, Shin Buddhism makes the Pure Land the goal to which death leads; in this respect, it is considered a teaching of future existence, and is regarded as a doctrine advocating salvation after death. Nevertheless, it should never be forgotten that Shin Buddhism makes the Pure Land the foundation as well on which life rests, and for this reason it has much to do with our actual life. We who long for the Pure Land are constantly realising the Buddha’s Mind and the Buddha’s Land in the midst of our human life. We who long for the Pure Land, though we are groping in the darkness of ignorance, yet are always being blessed with the True Light shining upon this world. This Light is of Mercy; it makes us contented with our present situation of discrimination, since behind our back there is a world of equality. This Light is of Wisdom; it makes us undisturbed in any circumstance of disturbance, since before our eyes there is a realm of the true peace. This Light still makes us repent of our one-sided love, hatred and anger, since Amida’s proclamation of Vow to save us universally reconciles us one another. Herein lies the significance of Shin Buddhism bearing upon our actual life—the

significance the futuristic teachings alone can have, converting the goal to which death leads into the foundation by which life is firmly established.

Now, it is through the power of the Original Vow of Amida that the Pure Land thus becomes the goal to which death leads and the foundation on which life rests; and, again, it is through "any one who calls upon My Name" that this power is realised on us. "Calling upon My Name"—this is the Nembutsu. Our next inquiry then is the subject of the Nembutsu.

II. "If we say the Nembutsu"

A. Practice with our bodies, through which Amida's Vow is realised on us.

We have previously observed how Amida's Vow expresses His Will; and our faith consists in harbouring no doubt in our mind about the truthfulness of Amida's Will when we have heard the word of His Vow.

Faith then is the work of wisdom, since it means our having no doubt in the truth of the Original Vow of Amida; it is again the "nod of heart", since it means our obeisant accepting of His Will of Great Mercy. Hence, faith is said to be "Buddha's Wisdom" as well as "Buddha's Great Compassionate Heart". It is the truthfulness of Amida's Vow manifesting itself in our mind. Like the moon on the water, it is the Buddha's Will shining on our mind constantly to purify us sentient beings, who are always being defiled by the passions of love and hatred.

Faith, however, is just the truthfulness of the

Original Vow of Amida as perceived by our mind, and is not that as realised through our body. If the Original Vow is something not to be realised through our body, it will cease to function on us suffering mortals as the saving power. If the Original Vow is something ever meant to save us, it must realise its saving power on us through some practice with our body. And that practice with our body realising the saving power of the Original Vow on us, is the Nembutsu, the calling upon the Name of the Buddha. If it were not the Nembutsu, even the Mercy and Wisdom of the Buddha could never be realised as our Light and Life; neither could the Pure Land be the foundation on which our life rests and the goal to which our death leads. Consequently, if the Nembutsu were not practised, the Buddha's Original Vow would be rendered powerless; and our faith would be turned into mere thought. It is for this reason that the Buddha declares in His Vow to save those "who call upon My Name." It is thus only through the Nembutsu that the truthfulness of the Original Vow is rendered into a concrete fact.

Now, it is through the teachings of "the holy ones" that the truth of the Original Vow is made known to us. To hear "the good men's words", therefore, is the only way by which we can attain the truth of the Original Vow. This is why Shin Buddhism pays special respect to the tradition of the Nembutsu teachings, the main spring of which is the teaching of Sakyamuni the Awakened One. Nevertheless, if we do not practise the Nembutsu in conformity to these teachings, we shall never be able to become the faithful believer in the Original Vow of Amida. It is through the Nembutsu as direct cause and the holy teachings as indirect cause

that we come to realise the pourport of His Original Vow. Therefore, to believe in the Original Vow of Amida means to become one who parctises the Nembutsu.

The practice of the Nembutsu consists in saying "na-mu-a-mi-da-butsu." "Na-mu" of this phrase means "to direct towards and depend upon." To say "na-mu-a-mi-da-cutsu," therefore, to express our sincere devotion to Amida Buddha, in which we direct towards Amida and depend upon Him. Here we see that the meditation on the Buddha (which is the original meaning of the word Nembutsu) and the calling upon His Name (which is the derived meaning of it) become one. Further, the Nembutsu is the deed in accordance with the Original Vow of Amida, in which He declared to save "those who call upon My Name"; for this reason, the Nembutsu is regarded in Shin Buddhism as "the answer made by us to the merciful calling of Amida"; and, again, it is considered "the work pertaining to the Power of the Original Vow," This means that the Nembutsu is our bodily practice, through which channel Amida's Vow Power can flow into us sentient beings.

B. Nembutsu as the universal deed

The Original Vow, as we have mentioned above, wishes to save all sentient beings without exception; so, the deed that realises the Vow should necessarily be something universally to be practised. It is for this reason that the Nembutsu is made the deed of the Original Vow. It can be practised by "any man," at "any time," and in "any place." In other words, the Buddha has singled out the Nembutsu as the deed of

His Original Vow, just because He wished to carry those who are suffering in this world into the realm of equality and of the true peace by the vehicle of the Nembutsu which all of them can get on. Here in the Nembutsu the absolute truth of universal salvation vowed by Amida in His Original Vow is rendered into a concrete fact.

We now proceed to observe the significance of the universality of the Nembutsu practice.

The first thing we observe is the significance of the Nembutsu that can be practised by any man. Now, it is obvious enough that moral perfection is not the thing to be expected for all men. Even "the same level of moral excellence for all men" is never to be realised; for, men each differ in their own capabilities and their social situations. Obviously too, the achievement of those specially religious disciplines such as meditation and concentration is not to be expected for all men. Even though there are some people who can practise them according to their own capabilities, still they will find it difficult to demonstrate that all men shall be permitted through these practices to enter the realm of equality and of the true peace. In this respect, it is of really great significance that the following is said of the Nembutsu: "In calling upon the Name of the Buddha, no distinction is made between man and women, old and young, high and low, good and evil."

The second thing we observe is the significance of the Nembutsu that can be practised at any time and in any place. Now, it goes without mention that our religious sentiment is awakened by the religious rites. But the religious rites need to be performed in some definite place and on some definite occasion, specially

dedicated to the sacred. It is thus that we sit at the ceremony held in the temple and are removed from the cares of the world, being surrounded by the sacred atmosphere. Nevertheless, it is not restricted to the time when we sit at ceremony in the temple that we are required to awaken the religious sentiment. It is rendered rather more necessary in our ordinary everyday times. When we are harrassed by disorderly thoughts in our loneliness, or, when we suffer from the conflicts of the passions of love and hatred in our intercourse with others—these are precisely the moments when we should practise the Nembutsu and be reminded of the Mercy of the Buddha. In these moments the Nembutsu will prove to be a deed of repentance or that of thanksgiving according to each circumstance. Herein lies the significance of the Nembutsu that can be practised at any time and in any place.

To practise the Nembutsu is to call upon the Name of the Buddha and listen to it quietly in one's heart. To say it much or to utter it loudly is not its purpose. What it aims at is "to achieve intimacy with the Name of the Buddha."

C. The virtue of the Nembutsu that purifies
our karma and the world.

Now let me explain why the realisation of the Power of the Original Vow is to be found in the Nembutsu practice and not in the so-called good works. It is because the Original Vow wishes to save us all beings who are suffering from the attachment of good and evil. In the eyes of Great Mercy, every mother's son is equally to be pitied, whether he is the virtuous or

the wicked, either being unable to get free from the bondage of the passions of love and hatred. It is for this reason that the Original Vow has not claimed moral virtues to be relied on, neither has it demanded evil natures to be dreaded of. It is also for this reason that it has recommended the practice of the Nembutsu without being trammelled in the idea of good and bad. In this connection, the following is one of the most impressive passage in the Tannisho. "In believing this Vow, deeds of morality are not required, because there are no deeds of morality that can surpass the Nembutsu, neither should one be afraid of evil because there is no evils powerful enough to obstruct the way of Amida's Original Vow."

The apparent opposition between the Nembutsu and morality need by no means lead to any moral indifference. The Nembutsu will rather make us have much concern for morality, and help us to fulfil our moral obligations. The Nembutsu, inducing us ever to be remindful of the Buddha's Merciful Vow, gets us free from the attachment of good and evil and delivers us from the bondage of love and hatred. The Nembutsu thus purifies our mind and softens our heart. Herein lies the close connection between the Nembutsu and morality. The Nembutsu may not directly determine us in moral matters, but it will furnish the firm foundations on which moral edifice will be brilliantly established.

Good and evil can only be talked of relatively. Therefore, if they remain as they stand and no reconciliation is made between them, the result will be constant disputes prevailing in the world; men will not cease to quarrel one another, each contending that he is in the right. If self-vindication were carried out

with a vengeance, any evil act would be found not lacking something to justify it. If self-retrospection were made compulsory, each good deed would be found to have its dark side. It is for this reason that the contention, "I am in the right and you are in the wrong," may often be considered a grievously inconsiderate utterance. It is also for this reason that one's tears of repentance for his evil conduct may often be regarded as a virtue softening human heart. This being the case, one who has done some good deed should thank for the fortunate circumstances which enabled him to do so, and be careful not to fall into the error of self-conceit which will take himself alone for the virtuous man; and one who is conscious that he has done some evil deed should repent of his own sinfulness without vindicating himself with some plausible excuses. When we are thus aware of our real conditions, then the Light of Mercy-Wisdom will be realised shining on the virtuous as well as on the wicked. There the virtuous will get free from pride and the wicked from prejudice, and either of them will be made awakened to the sense of brotherly love. And that which causes this is the Nembutsu. By the practice of the Nembutsu the passions of love and hatred are reconciled one another, and the state of disturbance is quietened into the serenity of cessation.

Happiness and misery are said respectively the fruitions of good and evil. Accordingly, in the way as good and evil are reconciled one another through the practice of the Nembutsu, so happiness and misery should be harmonised one another through the same practice of the Nembutsu. Indeed, it is the practice of the Nembutsu in our misery that makes us realise the

boundless depth of Amida's Mercy and also the unfathomable abyss of our own wickedness. It is obvious enough that our spiritual life begins with our experience of suffering, so that it is said that without suffering one would be entirely a "lost soul" who cannot walk in the way of religion. When viewed from this standpoint, one who lives a so-called happy life cannot be said "happy" in the real sense of the word. For he is not given with the occasion to know what the real happiness is. It is the Nembutsu that induces such a person to examine himself in such a way as to repent of his own forgetfulness of the True Light ever shining on him.

In this way the Nembutsu, as the liberator from the attachment of good and evil, induces us to turn to the fulfilment of moral obligations; and, again, as the deliverer from the bondage of happiness and misery, causes us to awaken to the sense of the inner real happiness.

III. "We shall become Buddha"

A. *Ōsō* and *Gensō* (Aspect of going-into and that of coming-back).

The practice of the Nembutsu, as I have repeated to say, is the work to establish life on firm foundations and to attain the goal to which death leads; and, it is through this constitution of the Nembutsu that it can bestow the benign Light upon actual life. In other words, it is just because the Nembutsu will make us attain the Pure Land that it can give us the True Light in this world, and, when this is stated from us

the Nembutsu followers's stand-point, it is just because we are blessed with the Light in our daily life of this world that we become assured of being reborn in the Pure Land. Shin Buddhism describes this state as "jū-shōjōju hisshi-metsudo"—"being established among the order of the steadfast and sure to attain the serenity of cessation."

Now the word "metsudo" (serenity of cessation) is the Chinese equivalent for the Sanskrit word "Nirvana." Being specifically Buddhistic, the idea is considered to be the most difficult to grasp. It means the serenity of cessation of life; hence, it suggests death. It is a kind of death, indeed; nevertheless, the death it suggests is not that suffered by ordinary mortals but that experienced by the truly religious man. In the death of the ordinary mortals the serene cessation of life can never take place, because they are sure to continue their transmigration, as they adhere to the idea of good and evil and also to the principle of happiness and misery. The serenity of cessation is attained only when, good and evil, happiness and misery, are reconciled one another, owing to the Vow through the practice of the Nembutsu.

Buddhists take delight in the "serenity of cessation." It is a kind of death in which human existence is exhausted. But, to die the death exhausting human existence necessarily means to be reborn in the eternally true world. Therefore, to lose "self-hood" in this world is to attain "Buddhahood" in the Pure Land. We are to become one with the Buddha by the death exhausting human existence through the practice of the Nembutsu. Thus becoming one with the Buddha, we ourselves come to participate in Amida's work, and

contribute to the enhancement of the function of His Original Vow. Now, in Shin Buddhism, this process is called "gensō-ekō," representing the aspect of our coming back to this world from the Pure Land; while the other process is called "ōso-ekō," representing the aspect of our going into the Pure Land from this world. Either of these processes is due to the power of the Original Vow; hence, "ekō."

In this way it is in our daily practice of the Nembutsu that we realise that we are being supported by our forefathers who are doing their work of gensō-ekō; and in it also we are reminded how our forefathers got through with their own life of suffering through the same practice of the Nembutsu. Here again we look forward to the future when we, who become with one with the Buddha to participate in His work, shall be able to support those who will come after us by means of our work of gensō-eko. We are expecting this.

In this way, the tradition of the Nembutsu, the source of which is the Pure Land eternal and true, has taken possession of the minds of millions of people in the Orient from generation to generation; and, constituting the core of spiritual life, it will continue to exist as the undercurrent of human history, keeping its course silently but steadily, and exercising its influence on the surface world where all kinds of disturbances and vicissitudes will take place in the form of rise and fall, and peace and war.

B. Jiri and Rita (the work of self-profiting
and that of others-profiting)

To be reborn in the Pure Land through the practice-

of the Nembutsu is to achieve one's own salvation; hence, it is the *jiri* work of profiting one's own self. To do the work of *gensō-ekō* after having become one with the Buddha is to support those who will come after us; hence, it is the *rita* work of profiting others. This being the case, when "we believe in the Original Vow and say the Nembutsu, and attain Buddhahood," we shall have made complete both the *jiri* work and the *rita* work.

The question will naturally arise, what are the mutual relations between one's own self and other selves. As to this, we should remember that on the one hand one's own self is one's own self to all intents and purposes: for, there is no denying the existence of the individual. On the other, however, we must recognize, one's own self is closely related to other selves in such a way as to represent the whole mankind. We are the members of society, each representing the whole mankind. Hence it follows that we each should be responsible for each and every event which takes place in our society. For this reason we feel that, as long as there are in our society some people who commit crimes, we cannot afford to call ourselves virtuous. Social situation is a mirror reflecting our own image. So long as moral decadence actually exists, we cannot say, "I for one am blameless."

Human wisdom, however, sets a limit to the scope of human responsibilities, and tries to make each individual responsible only for his allotted share. In one sense, this is inevitable; for, if it were not arranged in this way, neither politics nor morality would be rendered practicable. And we see here the reason why it should be said that all the mundane matters are only

relative, including all the talks on right and wrong and on good and evil, To us the Nembutsu followers it seems that all these limitations and apportionments of responsibilities are mere compromises set up for convenience' sake. We are convinced that we, each representing the whole mankind, should take the whole responsibilities upon our respective shoulders; and also that one who ought to bear the whole responsibilities should be one's own self which is the individual. Therefore, it comes to this that. where one is awakened to his own self which is the individual, there he comes to answer for the whole mankind.

This being the case, the concrete fact of the salvation of the individual necessarily involves the principle by which the whole mankind can be saved; and the principle capable of saving the whole mankind is evidenced by the concrete fact that the individual is saved. Consequently, it must be said that it is no other than the salvation of the individual which opens the way for the universal salvation of the whole mankind. Nevertheless, the salvation of the individual as it is actuated by the Other Power of the Original Vow of Amida is not to be extended to others by our own efforts. We cannot declare, "*I* have achieved my own salvation, now *I* shall extend it to others." For, we are always living in the world where salvation is essentially impossible except by the Original Vow of Amida. Here lies the reason why we confine ourselves to our own salvation, as long as we are living in this world; and, as to the salvation of the whole mankind, look forward to the future when we come back to this world and do the work of genso-eko.

Further, here is implied that the Nembutsu follower

dares not to take himself for the leader of the world. He is convinced that which can save the world is the tradition of the Nembutsu teachings caused by the Power of the Original Vow of Amida. On this account, the propagation of the doctrine conducted by the Shin follower consists solely in clarifying the purport of the Original Vow and in making oneself and others to hear it. He does not attempt to force others to believe it. Men are saved only when the cause and condition of their salvation are brought to maturity, This being the case, the sense of joy the Nembutsu followers embrace when they welcome a new brother to the same practice of the Nembutsu is all the more great; for, the truly mutual and heartfelt friendship is to be enjoyed only through the agency of that same practice of the Nembutsu. We take it indeed that, except the Original Vow of Amida, there is no universal principle capable of saving all humanity. Nevertheless, we feel that, as to the attestation of this truth, we have no other way than this, that we shall become conscious of its work in our own practice of the Nembutsu. We feel that the fundamental principle of true peace of the world has long been prepared in the Orient; only it is a great regret that Japan has not yet realised this as a fact—still in the present day.

C. The present age and our present situation

Lastly, let me observe how the Shin followers take the present age and men's present situation.

Now, the Shin followers claim their religion to be "the only religion in conformity with the times and men's capacities." In these words, is suggested their

awakeend attitude towards the prevailing conditions of the times. It may be said it is their sense of the times, which will constitute the basis of their world view. We feel, we of the present age can have no hope, both within and without. We have keenly felt this these last ten years. We are living in an age when salvation is quite impossible except by the Original Vow of Amida.

History moves beyond our will. As to the stream of the times, we cannot swim against it, nor can we remain its unconcerned spectators. To swim against it is to lose one's life to no purpose, while to remain its unconcerned spectators is to lose touch with the times. And yet, the power of the times is actually controlling us. We have no other way than follow it. We must say, therefore, if the present situation does not permit us to live like human being, it is inevitable for us to live like an animal. We have no choice. Argumentations are all idle talks.

However, we Nembutsu followers cannot but feel that we are sinful, for it is indeed due to our karma that we are destined to live in an age such as this. And our view of sin consists in proving ourselves blamable. We ourselves are blamable, because we ourselves are through our own karma the makers of all the evils of the times. Here we are convinced that we ought not to take the advantage of the times. Those who do so seize every opportunity afforded by the times and busy themselves in making money and in gaining honours. The so-called ideologies are advocated from the same motive. But these are doings of the men who do not believe in the Eternally True World. We who are awakened to its presence will do

nothing but to obey the dictate of the times and do what we think the best in the circumstances under which we are placed. And this "best" does exist even in the animal-like existence. The practice of the Nembutsu will open the way for us to go serenely. In this sense, it may be said that the Nembutsu followers are given with freedom that knows no obstacle in any age whatever.

But it is due to the fact that they always concentrate their minds on the serenity of cessation even while they are obedient to the dictate of the times, that the Nembutsu followers are thus blessed with the way of freedom. Sakyamuni who had his mind set upon Nirvana, said, "I do not contend with the world, neither do I become defiled by the world." All the systems of thoughts hinge on the attachment of life. But the Buddhist doctrine rests on the serenity of cessation of life. The doctrine of this kind may not directly lay down how society should be; but, if society disregards this kind of doctrine, it will not be able to stand strong and firm. For this reason, I should like to say, with Shinran the founder of Shin Buddhism, "Peace be reigned in the world, and Dharma be diffused."

Daiei Kaneko