

**From “Provisional Buddhism” to “True Buddhism”
—Shinran’s Three-Stage Transition—**

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PART ONE

Shinran’s “Three-Stage (or Three-Vow) Transition (*Sangan ten-nyu*)”

I. Introduction

A. About the Three-Stage Transition

B. Outline of My Lectures

II. Three-Stage (or Three-Vow) Transition

A. First Stage: The Stage of the 19th Vow

(19th Vow)

If, when I attain Buddhahood, the sentient beings of the ten quarters—awakening the *bodhi*-mind and cultivate virtues—should awaken aspiration [for birth] sincere mind and desire to be born in my land, and yet I should not appear before them at the moment of death surrounded by a host of sages, may I not attain the supreme enlightenment.

(Collected Works of Shinran, p. 208, with modification by N. Haneda)

The names of the 19th Vow

“The Vow of cultivating virtues”

“The Vow of Buddha’s appearance at death”

“The Vow of Buddha’s appearance and guidance to birth”

“The Vow of Buddha’s coming to receive us”

“The Vow of sincere mind and aspiration [for birth]” (This name is by Shinran.)

1. The 19th Vow

2. The essential gate: a provisional stage of expedient means

3. The import of the *Contemplation Sutra*

4. The falsely settled

5. Birth attained beneath the twin *sala* trees

Shinran's names of the birth in this stage:

- (i) "Birth as described in the 19th Vow"—Birth in the provisional (or transformed) lands
- (ii) "Birth in accordance with the *Contemplation Sutra*"
- (iii) "Birth in the realm of indolence and pride"

(Cf. *Collected Works of Shinran*, pp. 645-48)

B. Second Stage: The Stage of the 20th Vow

(20th Vow)

If, when I attain Buddhahood, the sentient beings of the ten quarters, on hearing my Name, should place their thoughts on my land, plant the root of all virtues [i.e., say the Name], and direct their virtues with sincere mind desiring to be born in my land, and yet not ultimately attain it, may I not attain the supreme enlightenment.

(*Collected Works of Shinran*, p. 229, with modification by N. H.)

The names of the 20th Vow

- "The Vow of planting the root of virtues"
- "The Vow of settlement of birth through placing thoughts [on the Pure Land]"
- "The Vow stating 'If those do not ultimately attain birth'"
- "The Vow of sincere mind and directing virtues"

1. The 20th Vow
2. The true gate (a provisional stage of expedient means)
3. The import of the *Amida Sutra*
4. The unsettled
5. "Birth that is noncomprehensible"

Shinran's names of the birth in this stage:

- (i) "Birth as described in the 20th Vow"—Birth in the provisional (or transformed) land
- (ii) "Birth in accordance with the *Smaller Sutra* (or *Amida Sutra*)"—Birth attained after physical death
- (iii) "Birth in the 'city of doubt' or 'womb-palace'"

(Cf. *Collected Works of Shinran*, pp. 649-52)

C. Third Stage: The Stage of the Truly Settled (or "Ordinary [Shinjin] Persons") Described in the 18th Vow

(18th Vow in the Third Translation during the Wei Dynastic Period)

If, when I attain Buddhahood, the sentient beings of the ten quarters, with sincere mind entrusting, aspiring to be born in my land, and saying the Name perhaps even ten times, should not be born there, may I not attain the supreme enlightenment. Excluded are those who commit the five grave offenses and those who slander the right dharma.

(*Collected Works of Shinran*, p. 80)

(18th Vow in the Fourth Translation during the Tang Dynastic Period)

“If, when I have realized the supreme enlightenment, living beings in other Buddha-lands should hear my Name, I will with sincere mind direct all my roots of good to them. Aspiring to be born in my land, they shall say my Name perhaps even ten times. If they should not be born there, may I not attain enlightenment. Excluded are those who commit evil acts that condemn them to Avici hell and those who slander the right dharma or the sages. (Collected Works of Shinran, p. 80)

The names of the 18th Vow

“The selected Primal Vow”

“The Vow of the threefold mind of the Primal Vow”

“The Vow of shinjin, which is Amida’s directing of virtues for our going forth”

“The Vow of sincere mind and entrusting”

1. The 18th Vow

2. The gate of extensive vow

3. The import of the *Sutra of the Larger Sutra*

4. The truly settled

5. “Birth that is inconceivable”

Shinran’s names of the birth in this stage:

(i) “Birth as described in the 18th Vow”—Birth here and now

(ii) “Birth in accordance with the *Larger Sutra*”

(iii) “Birth in the True (or Fulfilled) Land”—“Transformative birth”

(Cf. *Collected Works of Shinran*, pp. 639-44)

III. The Three-Vow (i.e., 17th, 18th, and 11th) Fulfillment Statement: The Most Important Textual Basis of Shinran’s Teaching, which Describes the Contents of the Third Stage

The Three-Vow Fulfillment Statement

(Fulfillment of the 17th Vow)

The Buddha-tathagatas throughout the ten quarters, countless as the sands of the Ganges, are one in praising [“saying the Name” is implied in this “praising”] the majestic power and the virtues, inconceivably profound, of the Buddha of immeasurable life.

(Fulfillment of the 18th Vow and the 11th Vow)

All sentient beings, as they hear the Name [that is being said by all Buddhas in the ten quarters], realize even one moment of shinjin and joy. Because Amida directs his virtues to them (*eko*) from his sincere mind, they aspire to be born in that land, and then [or immediately] attain birth [in the Pure Land]. They dwell in the stage of nonretrogression.

(*Collected Works of Shinran*, pp. 154, 474-6, with modification by N. Haneda)

**Shinran's View of the Three-Vow (i.e., 17th, 18th, and 11th)
Fulfillment Statement (Cf. *Collected Works of Shinran*, p. 474)**

1. "The Buddha-tathagatas throughout the ten quarters": Shinran considers that these Buddha-tathagatas refer to historical teachers, such as Shakyamuni and seven patriarchs.
2. "Sentient beings": Those who know themselves as "the most evil (or seriously sick)"—those who are ready to hear the Name (or ready to take medicine)
3. "Hearing the Name": Shinran says that only hearing and understanding the meaning of the Name can immediately liberate one.
4. The Name (or *Namu Amida Butsu*, a voice saying, "Come to the Buddha's wisdom!") Shinran says that "Amida Buddha" is a symbol of the Buddha's wisdom.
5. "One moment": Shinran says that "one moment" means "time at its ultimate limit."
6. "Shinjin" (which is synonymous with "hearing the Name"): Shinran says, "Arising of shinjin within a person means the arising of the Buddha's wisdom within the person."
7. "Directing of virtues" (*eko*): Shinran interprets the *eko* here as the Tathagata's (or Amida's) *eko*, not as a practitioner's *eko*
8. Birth in the Pure Land attained here and now: Shinran considers that when one hears the Name and awakens shinjin (or aspiration for birth), one is immediately born in the Pure Land (i.e., the world of Aspiration).
9. "The stage of nonretrogression," i.e., the stage of the truly settled: the start of a new life that is assured of attaining Buddhahood or Nirvana

PART TWO

Shinran's Personal Experience of the Transition

I. Shinran's Description of His Experience of the Transition

Thus, I, Gutoku Shinran, disciple of Shakyamuni, through reverently accepting the exposition of [Vasubandhu,] author of the *Treatise*, and depending on the guidance of Master [Shan-tao], departed everlastingly from the temporary gate of the myriad practices and various good acts and left forever the birth attained beneath the twin *sala* trees. Turning about, I entered the "true" gate of the root of good and the root of virtues, and wholeheartedly awakened the mind leading to the birth that is non-comprehensible.

Nevertheless, I have now decisively departed from the "true" gate of provisional means and, [my self power] overturned, have entered the ocean of the selected Vow. Having swiftly become free of the mind leading to the birth that is noncomprehensible, I am aspiring to attain the

birth that is inconceivable. How truly profound in intent is the Vow that beings ultimately attain birth!

Having entered forever the ocean of the Vow, I now realize deeply the Buddha's benevolence. To respond with gratitude for the supreme virtues, I collected the crucial passages expressing the true essence of the Pure Land way, constantly saying, out of mindfulness, [the Name that is] the inconceivable ocean of virtues. Ever more greatly rejoicing, I humbly receive it. (*Collected Works of Shinran*, p. 240, with modification by N. Haneda)

II. Shinran's Words on the Ignorance of the Distinction between the Provisional and the true

A. Shinran's Words at the End of the Fifth Volume of the *Kyogyoshinsho*

Since there are thousands of differences in the causes of birth in the provisional Buddha-lands, there are thousands of differences in the lands. They are termed "transformed bodies of skillful means" and "transformed lands of skillful means." Being ignorant of the distinction between true and provisional, people misunderstand and lose sight of the Tathagata's vast benevolence.

(*Collected Works of Shinran*, p. 203)

B. His Words at the Beginning of the Sixth Volume of the *Kyogyoshinsho*

Concerning this, we find that even if the multitudes of this defiled world, the sentient beings of corruption and evil, have abandoned the ninety-five wrong (i.e., non-Buddhist) paths and entered the various dharma-gates—imperfect or consummate, accommodated or real—those who are true are extremely difficult to find, and those who are real are exceedingly rare. The false are extremely numerous; the empty are many. For this reason Shakyamuni Buddha guides the ocean of beings by disclosing the store of virtues, and Amida Tathagata, having established the Vows, saves the oceanlike multitude of beings everywhere.

(*Collected Works of Shinran*, p. 207, with modification by N. Haneda)

C. His Words in the *Hymns of the Pure Land*

Attaining Buddhahood through the nembutsu is the true essence of the Shinshu;

The myriad practices and good acts are the provisional gate.

Unless one distinguishes the accommodated and the real, the provisional and the true,

One cannot possibly know the Pure Land that is naturalness (*jinen*).

Sentient beings, having long stayed with an expedient means—the accommodated and provisional teachings of the Path of Sages,

Have been transmigrating in various forms of existence:

So take refuge in the One Vehicle of the compassionate Vow.

(*Collected Works of Shinran*, p. 344, with modification by N. Haneda)

PART THREE

The Three-Stages as a Compassionate Expedient Means by the Two Buddhas (i.e., Amida and Shakyamuni)

I. Compassionate Expedient Means by Amida and Shakyamuni

A. The Two (i.e., 19th and 20th) Vows as a Compassionate Expedient Means by Amida

1. Amida made the 19th Vow to Guide a Person with “100 Percent Reliance on the Self Power” to Move to “50 Percent Reliance on the Self Power and 50 Percent Reliance on the Other Power.”
2. Amida made the 20th Vow to Guide a Person with “50 Percent Reliance on the Self Power and 50 Percent Reliance on the Other Power” to “100 Percent Reliance on the Other Power.”

B. The Two (i.e., *Contemplation* and *Amida*) Sutras as a Compassionate Expedient Means by Shakyamuni

1. Shakyamuni Taught the *Contemplation Sutra* to Explain the Contents of the 19th Vow.
2. Shakyamuni Taught the *Amida Sutra* to Explain the Contents of the 20th Vow.

II. Shinran’s Words about the Compassionate Expedient Means by the Buddhas

A. Shinran’s Gratitude to the Compassionate Expedient Means by Amida and Shakyamuni

Shakyamuni and Amida are our father and our mother,
Full of love and compassion for us;
Guiding us through various skillful means,
They bring us to awaken the supreme shinjin.

(Shinran’s notes on this verse)

Shakyamuni is likened to our father, Amida to our mother.

Awaken (hotsu-ki): *hotsu* means to awaken what has existed from the past; *ki* means to give rise to something new, for the first time.

(CWS, p. 380)

B. The Self-Power “Three Minds” as an Expedient Means to Guide Practicers to the Other Power “Threefold Mind”

Shinran considers the self-power “three minds” described in the 19th and 20th Vows and the Other Power “threefold mind” described in the 18th Vow are different. He believes that Amida Buddha made the 19th and 20th Vows and taught the “three minds” in the two Vows as an expedient means to guide sentient beings to realize the “threefold mind” of the 18th Vow. Shinran talks about this as follows:

Reflecting within myself on the birth through the three minds taught in the *Contemplation Sutra*. I see that this refers to the three minds of self-power that are individually different for each practitioner. They are taught in order to bring each practitioner to take refuge in the threefold shinjin in the *Larger Sutra*, and to enter into the threefold shinjin.

The threefold shinjin is the diamondlike true mind, the ocean of inconceivable shinjin. (CWS, p. 619)

C. Shakyamuni's Twofold (i.e., "Explicit" and "Implicit") Intention in Teaching the Self-Power "Three Minds" in the *Contemplation Sutra*

In the sixth volume of the *Kyogyoshinsho* Shinran raises a question, saying, "Are the three minds taught in the *Larger Sutra* and those taught in the *Contemplation Sutra* the same or different?" Then Shinran answers that Shakyamuni had dual (twofold) intention in teaching the "three minds" in the *Contemplation Sutra*. The twofold intention was "explicit intention" and "implicit (or hidden) intention." Shinran says that as far as his "explicit intention" is concerned, the three minds of the *Contemplation Sutra* and the threefold mind of the *Larger Sutra* were different, but as far as the "implicit intention" is concerned, the three minds and the threefold mind were the same.

Question: Are the three minds taught in the *Larger Sutra* and those taught in the *Contemplation Sutra* the same or different?

Answer: When I consider the *Sutra of Contemplation on the Buddha of Immeasurable Life*, taking into account the interpretation of the commentator [Shan-tao], I find there are an explicit meaning and an implicit, hidden, inner meaning.

"Explicit" refers to presenting the meditative and nonmeditative good acts and setting forth the three levels of practitioners and the three minds. The two forms of good and the three types of meritorious acts, however, are not the true cause of birth in the fulfilled land. Further, the three minds that beings awaken are all minds of self-benefit that are individually different and not the mind that is single, which arises from [Amida's] benefitting of others. They are roots of good with which to long for the Pure Land that [Shakyamuni] Tathagata taught as a distinct provisional means. This is the import of the sutra; it is its "explicit" meaning.

"Implicit" refers to disclosing the Tathagata's universal Vow and revealing the mind that is single, to which [practitioners of the three minds] are led through [Amida's] benefitting of others...

Truly we see from the above that this sutra [i.e., the *Contemplation Sutra*] has an explicit meaning and an implicit, hidden, inner meaning.

I will discuss the sameness and differences of the three minds in the two sutras; this matter must be carefully understood. In their explicit meanings, the *Larger Sutra* and the *Contemplation Sutra* differ; in their implicit meaning, they are one. Reflect on this.

(CWS, p. 212-214, with modification by N.H.)

PART FOUR

The Self-Power “Three Minds” and the Other Power “Threefold Mind”

One of the most important issues that Shinran discusses in his *Kyogyoshinsho* is the issue of the three types of “three minds.” He calls the “three minds” found in the 19th Vow and the “three minds” found in the 20th Vow “the self-power three minds.” He called the “three minds” found in the 18th Vow “the Other Power three minds.” He considered that the issue of the transition from the former to the latter is synonymous with the issue of the transition from “Provisional Buddhism” to “True Buddhism.”

Shinran viewed these three types of “three minds” as a compassionate expedient means by Shakyamuni and Amida, which are designed to guide people from “Provisional Buddhism” to “True Buddhism.”

On the basis of the three types of “three minds” Shinran created the following names for the 19th, 20th, and 18th Vows:

- (i) 19th Vow: “The Vow of Sincere Mind and Awakening Aspiration [for Birth]”
- (ii) 20th Vow: “The Vow of Sincere Mind and Directing Virtues”
- (iii) 18th Vow: “The Vow of Sincere Mind and Entrusting”

Shinran considered these names the most important among several names of the vows. (Cf. *Collected Works of Shinran*, p. 78, p. 206) I will discuss the three types of “three minds” and explain why Shinran considered these three names the most important. (In order to differentiate “self-power three minds” and “the Other Power three minds,” the translator of the *Collected Works of Shinran* calls the former “three minds” and the latter “threefold mind.”)

I. The Self-Power “Three Minds” (Found in the 19th and 20th Vows)

A. The Textual Source of Self-Power “Three Minds”: The *Contemplation Sutra*

[The *Contemplation Sutra* says:]

The Buddha said to Ananda and Vaidehi, “Those born in the Western Land are of nine grades. Those who attain birth on the highest level of the highest grade are sentient beings that resolve to be born in that land, awaken **the three minds**, and so are born there. **What are the three? They are, first, sincere mind, second, deep mind; and third, the mind that awakens aspiration [for birth] and directs virtues.**

(The Three Pure Land Sutras, tr. Hisao Inagaki, p. 110, with modification by N.H. See also CWS, pp. 84-88)

Self-power “three minds”

- (i) Sincere mind
- (ii) Deep mind (“deeply entrusting mind (i.e., shinjin)” according to Shan-tao):
Shinran saw both self-power and Other Power elements in this deep mind.
- (iii) The mind that awakens aspiration [for birth] and directs virtues

B. Self-Power “Three Minds” Found in the 19th Vow (i.e., the Vow of Sincere Mind and Awakening Aspiration [for Birth])

If, when I attain Buddhahood, the sentient beings of the ten quarters—**awakening aspiration [for birth]** and cultivating virtues—should **with sincere mind desire to be born in my land**, and yet I should not appear before them at the moment of death surrounded by a host of sages, may I not attain the supreme enlightenment. (CWS, p. 208, with modification by N.H.)

The self-power “three minds”

- (i) Sincere mind (*shijo-shin*)
- (ii) Awakening aspiration [for birth] (*hotsugan-shin*)
- (iii) Desire to be born in the Pure Land (*yokusho-shin*)

C. Self-Power “Three Minds” Found in the 20th Vow (i.e., the Vow of Sincere Mind and Directing Virtues)

If, when I attain Buddhahood, the sentient beings of the ten quarters, on hearing my Name, should place their thoughts on my land, plant the root of all virtues [i.e., say the Name], and **direct their virtues with sincere mind aspiring to be born in my land**, and yet not ultimately attain it, may I not attain the supreme enlightenment. (CWS, p. 229, with modification by N.H.)

The self-power “three minds”

- (i) Sincere mind (*shijo-shin*)
- (ii) Directing virtues (*eko-shin*)
- (iii) Desire to be born in the Pure Land (*yokusho-shin*)

II. The Other Power “Threefold Mind” (Found in the 18th Vow [i.e., the Vow of Sincere Mind and Entrusting])

If, when I attain Buddhahood, the sentient beings of the ten quarters, **with sincere mind entrusting, aspiring to be born** in my land, and saying the Name perhaps even ten times, should not be born there, may I not attain the supreme enlightenment. Excluded are those who commit the five grave offenses and those who slander the right dharma.

(CWS, p. 80, with modification by N.H.)

The Other Power “threefold mind”

- (i) Sincere mind (*shi-shin*)
- (ii) Entrusting (*shingyo* that is synonymous with *shinjin*)
- (iii) Desire to be born in the Pure Land (*yokusho-shin*)

PART FIVE

Self-Power “Three Minds”

I. Self-Power “Three Minds” Found in the 19th and 20th Vows

Shinran said that when he practiced Buddhism on Mt. Hiei (from age 9 to 29), he was in the first stage of the 19th Vow. When he met his teacher Honen and became his follower at 29, he moved from the first stage to the second stage of the 20th Vow. Then, when he realized that the teaching of the *Larger Sutra* was the authentic Buddhist teaching, he moved to the third stage of the 18th Vow.

A. The Practicers Described in the 19th Vow: The Falsely Settled

The practicers here believe that they can travel the path of self-improvement—the Path of Sages. They think that they can awaken aspiration [for birth] and with their own sincere mind desire to be born in the Pure Land.

This is the Buddhism Shinran took up on Mt. Hiei. He awakened the *bodhi*-mind and engaged in practices that he thought could realize his Buddhahood. But, after having spent 20 years on Mt. Hiei, he realized that his practices were no match for the power of blind passions that he wanted to eliminate.

B. The Practicers Described in the 20th Vow: The Unsettled

The practicers here have become failures on the Path of Sages. When they recognize the depth of their evil and feel themselves totally helpless, they meet a teacher who tells them to say the Name (or nembutsu). Then, with their own “three minds,” they practice the nembutsu, aspiring to be born in the Pure Land after death.

This is precisely what happened to Shinran after he had spent 20 years on his practice on Mt. Hiei. He met Honen, who taught him to say the Name. Then, with his own “three minds,” he practiced the nembutsu, aspiring to be born in the Pure Land.

II. Shinran’s View of the Practicers Described in the 19th and 20th Vows:

A. The Basic Features of the Practicers Described in the 19th and 20th Vow

(Cf. *CWS*, pp. 602-603)

1. Practicers of the 19th Vow—of the “lengthwise departure” teaching (i.e., Hinayana or Hosso) and followers of the “lengthwise transcendence” teaching (i.e., Tendai, Kegon, or Zen). This category includes Pure Land practicers who perform sundry practices.

- (i) The spiritual basis: Self-power (human wisdom, dualistic wisdom)
- (ii) Motivation: Self-benefiting—desiring to leave samsara. They take their motivation for granted; they don’t doubt it. Their main focus is on practice and attainment.
- (iii) Different teachings, practices, and goals depending on the practicers’ abilities and expectations
- (iv) The difficult path: Sundry practices

2. Practicers of the 20th Vow—of the “crosswise departure” teaching (i.e., Jodo-shu, a Pure Land path)

- (i) **The spiritual basis: Self-power (human wisdom, dualistic wisdom) and Amida’s Other Power**
- (ii) **Main motivation: Self-benefiting—longing for the Pure Land. They take their motivation for granted; they don’t doubt it. Their main focus is on practice and attainment.**
- (iii) **Different teachings, practices, and goals depending on the practicers’ abilities and expectations**
- (iv) **The path of easy practice: Exclusive practice of the nembutsu**

B. The Self-Benefiting Orientation of Self-Power “Three Minds”

The two forms of good and the three types of meritorious acts [that the *Contemplation Sutra* teaches], however, are not the true cause of birth in the fulfilled land. Further, the three minds that beings awaken are all **minds of self-benefit** that are individually different and **not the mind that is single [the threefold mind], which arises from [Amida’s] benefitting of others**. They are roots of good with which to long for the Pure Land that [Shakyamuni] Tathagata taught as a distinct provisional means.

(*CWS*, p. 212, with modification by N.H.)

PART SIX

The Other Power “Threefold Mind”

I. Exclusive Emphasis on the Importance of Having the Right Starting Point (i.e., Cause) in Buddhism

Shinran considered that Amida and Shakyamuni prepared the 19th and 20th Vows (or self-power “three minds”) as a compassionate expedient means to guide all sentient beings to the third stage. (Cf. “Part Three”)

Shinran went through the two stages of self-power “three minds” and eventually was guided to the third stage of the Other Power “threefold mind. Before I discuss the third stage, I want to discuss Shinran’s emphasis on the importance of having the right starting point (i.e., cause) in Buddhism. The only crucial issue in Shin Buddhism is whether we have the right starting point or not. It is a good contrast to other Buddhist traditions, such as Shingon and Zen, which focus on practices and attainment of Buddhahood.

Shinran calls the right starting point *shinjin*, *bodhi*-mind, or the Innermost Aspiration (Hongan). He thinks that the reason many people cannot attain the goal of Buddhahood is that they do not start from the right starting point. He says, “Because the cause is pure, the fruition is also pure.” (*CWS*, p. 105, p. 158) By this he means that unless one starts from *shinjin* (i.e., the right cause) one cannot attain true Buddhahood.

A. The Two Types of *Bodhi*-Mind (the Starting Point)

Shinran talks about two types of *bodhi*-mind: self-power *bodhi*-mind and the Other Power *bodhi*-mind. The former is the wrong starting point and the latter the right starting point. He calls the Buddhism that is based on the former “the Path of Sages” and the Buddhism that is based on the latter “Shin (True) Buddhism.”

1. Self-power *bodhi*-mind (or “three minds”): The *bodhi*-mind of the Path of Sages, to which people awaken by themselves
2. Other Power *bodhi*-mind (“threefold mind” or *shinjin*): The *bodhi*-mind of Shin Buddhism to which people awaken through the “supportive power” of the Buddhas.

By citing two verses at the beginning of Shan-tao’s *Commentary on the Contemplation Sutra*, Shinran shows the differences between the two types of starting points (*bodhi*-mind) as follows:

People of the present, both monk and lay,
Individually awaken the supreme mind (i.e., self-power *bodhi*-mind),
But [which is added by Shinran] it is extremely difficult to
 abhor birth-and-death,
 And difficult to aspire to the Buddha-dharma.

Let us together awaken the diamondlike Aspiration (i.e., the
 Other Power *bodhi*-mind)
 And, transcending crosswise, cut off the four currents.
 Upon truly receiving the diamondlike mind—
 According [with the Vow] in that one thought-moment—
 We become persons who consequently attain nirvana.

(*CWS*, p. 106, with modification by N. Haneda)

C. The Impossibility of Awakening the True Cause (*Shinjin* or the Threefold Mind) by Self-Power

An Excerpt from the Preface of the Shin Volume

For the foolish and ignorant who are ever sinking in birth-and-death, the multitudes turning in transmigration, it is not attainment of the unexcelled, incomparable fruit of enlightenment that is difficult; **the genuine difficulty is realizing true and real *shingyo* (or *shinjin*)**. Why? **Because this realization takes place through the Tathagata’s supportive power; because it comes about wholly through the power of great compassion and all-embracing wisdom**. If pure *shinjin* should be realized, the mind will not be inverted; that mind will not be empty. Thereupon that sentient being of extreme evil, profound and immense, will realize the mind of great joy and receive the veneration and love of all the sacred honored ones.

(*CWS*, pp. 79-80, with modification by N.H.)

C. Shinran's Quotes about "the Falsely Settled and the Unsettled Being Unable to Comprehend the Cause (i.e., Shinjin)"

Before Lokeshvararaja Tathagata I have now declared my universal Vows;
I will realize the cause of supreme enlightenment.
 Should I not fulfill these matchless Vows,
 May I not become the incomparable honored one, possessed of the ten powers.

(CWS, p. 14, with modification by N.H.)

All the sentient beings of that land and those to be born there are brought to thorough fulfillment of supreme enlightenment and reach the abode of nirvana. Why is this? **Because those who are falsely settled and unsettled cannot comprehend [the Buddha's intent in] establishing the cause [of supreme enlightenment].**

(CWS, pp. 154, with modification by N.H.)

II. The "Threefold Mind" Found in the 18th Vow and "the 18th Vow Fulfillment Statement"

In his discussion of the threefold mind, Shinran emphasizes that the threefold mind is not the mind of deluded humans, but the mind of Dharmakara (or Amida). Deluded humans cannot awaken it; only the Buddha can realize it in them.

The crucial difference between self-power "three minds" and the Other Power "threefold mind" is that the former is a mind based on "self-benefiting" and the latter is the "others-benefiting" mind of Dharmakara.

The 18th Vow

If, when I attain Buddhahood, the sentient beings of the ten quarters, **with sincere mind entrusting, aspiring** to be born in my land, and saying my Name perhaps even ten times, should not be born there, may I not attain the supreme enlightenment. Excluded are those who commit the five grave offenses and those who slander the right dharma.

(CWS, p. 80 with modification by N.H.)

The Fulfillment of the 18th Vow

All sentient beings, as they hear the Name [that is being said by all Buddhas in the ten quarters], realize even one moment of **shinjin** and joy. Because Amida directs his virtues to them [*eko*] from **his sincere mind, they aspire to be [or are commanded to aspire to be] born in that land**, and then [or immediately] attain birth [in the Pure Land] and dwell in the stage of nonretrogression.

(CWS, pp. 154, 474-6, with modification by N.H.)

A. Sincere Mind (*Shi-shin*)

...all beings, an ocean of multitudes, have since the beginningless past down to this day, this very moment, been evil and defiled, completely lacking the mind of purity. They have been false and deceitful, completely lacking the mind of truth and reality. (See Appendix, p. 16) Thus, when the Tathagata, in profound compassion for the ocean of all sentient beings in pain and affliction, performed bodhisattva practices for inconceivable millions of measureless *kalpas*, there was

not a moment, not an instant, when his practice in the three modes of action was not pure, or lacked this true mind. With this pure, true mind, the Tathagata brought to fulfillment the perfect, unhindered, inconceivable, indescribable and inexplicable supreme virtues. **The Tathagata gives this sincere mind to all living things**, an ocean of beings possessed of blind passions, karmic evil, and false wisdom. **This mind manifests the true mind of benefitting others.** For this reason, it is completely untainted by the hindrance of doubt. This sincere mind takes as its essence the revered Name of supreme virtues.

(CWS, p. 95)

B. Entrusting Mind (*Shingyo* or *Shinjin*)

Next, concerning entrusting, it is the ocean of shinjin, perfect and unhindered, that is the **Tathagata's consummately fulfilled great compassion.** Hence, there is no mixture of doubt. It is therefore called "entrusting." The essence of entrusting is the sincere mind of **benefiting others and directing virtues.**

However, since the beginningless past, the multitudes of beings have been transmigrating in the ocean of ignorance, sinking aimlessly in the cycle of all forms of existence and bound to the cycle of all forms of pain; accordingly, they lack the entrusting that is pure. In the manner of their existence, they have no entrusting that is true and real. Hence, it is difficult for them to encounter the unexcelled virtues, difficult to realize the supreme, pure shinjin. In all small and foolish beings, at all times, thoughts of greed and desire incessantly defile any goodness of heart; thoughts of anger and hatred constantly consume the dharma-treasure. Even if one urgently acts and urgently practice as though sweeping fire from one's head, all these acts must be called "poisoned and sundry good," and "false and deceitful practice." They cannot be called "true and real action." (See Appendix, p. 16) To seek to be born in the land of immeasurable light through such false and poisoned good is completely wrong. Why? Because when the Tathagata was performing bodhisattva practices, there was not a moment—not an instant—when his practice in the three modes of actions was tainted by the hindrance of doubt. **Because this mind is the Tathagata's mind of great compassion,** it necessarily becomes **the truly decisive cause** of attaining the fulfilled land. **The Tathagata, turning with compassion toward the ocean of living beings in pain and affliction, has given unhindered and vast pure shinjin to the ocean of sentient beings.** This is called the "true and real shinjin that is [Amida's] **benefiting of others.**"

(CWS, p. 98)

Good sons! **Great love and great compassion are called Buddha-nature.** Why? Because great love and great compassion always accompany the bodhisattva, just as shadows accompany things. All sentient beings will without fail ultimately realize great love and great compassion. Therefore it is taught, "All sentient beings are possessed of Buddha-nature." **Great love and great compassion are Buddha-nature.** Buddha-nature is Tathagata...

Buddha-nature is great shinjin. Why? Because through shinjin the bodhisattva-mahasattva has acquired all the *paramitas* from charity to wisdom. All sentient beings will without fail ultimately realize great shinjin. Therefore it is taught, "All sentient beings are possessed of Buddha-nature." Great shinjin is none other than Buddha-nature. Buddha-nature is Tathagata.

(CWS, p. 99)

To take refuge, with **the mind that is single**,
 In the Buddha of unhindered light filling the ten quarters
 Is, in the words of Vasubandhu, author of the *Treatise*,
The mind that aspires to attain Buddhahood.

The mind that aspires to attain Buddhahood
Is the mind to save all sentient beings;
The mind to save all sentient beings
Is true and real shinjin, which is Amida's benefiting of others.

Shinjin is the mind that is single;
The mind that is single is the diamondlike mind.
The diamondlike mind is the *bodhi*-mind;
This mind is itself Other Power. (CWS, p. 365, with modification by N.H.)

C. The Mind Desiring for Birth (*Yokusho-shin*)

Finally, “desire for birth” is the **command of the Tathagata calling to and summoning the multitudes of all beings**. That is, true and real entrusting is the essence of desiring for birth. Truly, this [i.e., desire for birth] is not the directing of virtues through the self-power of meditative and nonmeditative practices, whether performed by ordinary people or sages of the Mahayana or the Hinayana. [That is, it is not the mind of directing virtues found in the 19th and 20th Vows.] Therefore, it is called “non-directing.”

However, sentient beings of the countless worlds, floundering in the sea of blind passions and drifting and sinking in the ocean of birth-and-death, lack the true and real mind of directing virtues; they lack the pure mind of directing virtues. For this reason, when the Tathagata was performing bodhisattva practices out of empathy for the ocean of all sentient beings in pain and affliction, in every single moment, every single instant, of his endeavor in the three modes of action, he took **the mind of directing virtues as foremost, and thus fulfilled the mind of great compassion**. Accordingly, the Buddha directs **this others-benefiting, true and real mind desiring for birth** to the ocean of all beings. **Desire for birth is this mind of directing virtues. It is none other than the mind of great compassion**; therefore, it is untainted by the hindrance of doubt.

(CWS, pp. 103-104, with modification by N.H.)

Appendix Two Types of Virtues

I. From T'an-luan's *Commentary on the Pure Land Treatise*

Concerning *the manifestation of true (shin) and real (jitsu) virtues*: there are two kinds of virtues. First, there is virtue that is produced from a defiled mind and that does not accord with dharma-nature. Whether with regard to their cause or to their fruition, the good acts of foolish human beings and devas and the recompense of human beings and devas are all inverted (*tendo*) and empty-false (*kogi*). Hence, they are called unreal (*fulshinliitsu*) virtues. The second kind of

virtue arises from the wisdom and pure deeds of the bodhisattva [Dharmakara] and adorns the Buddha's activity. It is in accord with dharma-nature and culminates in purity. It is not inverted (*tendo*) or empty-false (*kogi*); hence it is termed true (*shin*) and real (*jitsu*) virtues. Why is it not inverted (*tendo*)? Because it is in accord with dharma-nature and in conformity with the twofold truth [i.e., ultimate truth and conventional truth]. Why is it not empty-false (*kogi*)? Because it takes in all beings and brings them into the ultimate purity.

(*CWS*, p. 29, with modification by N.H.)

II. From T'an-luan's *Commentary on the Pure Land Treatise*

With the path of difficult practice, it is seeking noretrogression in this world of five defilements at a time when there is no Buddha that is difficult. This difficulty appears in many ways; I will indicate what is meant by roughly listing several of them.

1. The apparent good practiced in nonbuddhist ways is confused with the dharma of the bodhisattva.
2. The *sravaka*'s concentration on self-benefit diverts a bodhisattva's practice of great compassion.
3. Evildoers lacking self-reflection subvert the excellent virtues of others
4. The results of good acts undertaken with inverted thinking nullify the bodhisattva's pure practice for enlightenment.
5. The path of difficult practice is based solely on self-power and lacks the support of Other Power.

(*CWS*, p. 25, with modification by N.H.)

III. Two Types of Virtues in the Three-Stage Transition

A. Virtues in the First Stage

1. **The name of the 19th Vow: "The Vow of Cultivating Virtues"**
2. **Virtues mentioned in the Vow**

If, when I attain Buddhahood, the sentient beings of the ten quarters—awakening the *bodhi*-mind and **cultivate virtues**—should awaken aspiration [for birth] with sincere mind and desire to be born in my land, and yet I should not appear before them at the moment of death surrounded by a host of sages, may I not attain the supreme enlightenment.

(*Collected Works of Shinran*, p. 208, with modification by N. H.)

B. Virtues in the Second Stage

1. **The name of the 20th Vow: "The Vow of Planting the Root of Virtues"**
2. **Virtues mentioned in the Vow**

If, when I attain Buddhahood, the sentient beings of the ten quarters, on hearing my Name, should place their thoughts on my land, **plant the root of all virtues** [i.e., say the Name], and direct their virtues

with sincere mind desiring to be born in my land, and yet not ultimately attain it, may I not attain the supreme enlightenment.

(Collected Works of Shinran, p. 229, with modification by N. H.)

C. Virtues in the Third Stage

1. The name of the 18th Vow: “The Vow of Shinjin, Which Is Amida’s Directing of Virtues for Going Forth”

2. Virtues mentioned in the “Three-Vow-Fulfillment Statement”

(Fulfillment of the 17th Vow)

The Buddha-tathagatas throughout the ten quarters, countless as the sands of the Ganges, are one in **praising** [“saying the Name” is implied in this “praising”] the majestic power and **the virtues**, inconceivably profound, **of the Buddha of immeasurable life**.

(Fulfillment of the 18th Vow and the 11th Vow)

All sentient beings, as they **hear the Name** [that contains **the virtues that are being praised** by all Buddhas in the ten quarters], realize even one moment of shinjin and joy. Because Amida directs **his virtues** to them (*eko*) from his sincere mind, they aspire to be born in that land, and then [or immediately] attain birth [in the Pure Land]. They dwell in the stage of nonretrogression.

(Collected Works of Shinran, pp. 154, 474-6, with modification by N. H.)