



GASSHO

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2010

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"Hands together in reverence & gratitude"



TRUE FAITH "TRANSFORMS" THE *BONNOO* IN *BONBU*

(*Shoshin Ge*: lines 27-28; 81-84; 91-92;
93-95; 105; and 118)

by rev. roland k. tatsuguchi

In this issue let us quote passages from the *Shoshin Ge* indicating that human beings are constantly affected and afflicted by their self-centered agendas, desires, cravings, resentments, jealousies and conceits to the very last breath of their lives. The words set in bold point to this underlying nature in human beings whether they be rich or poor, religious or non-religious, "good" or "evil." They are as follows:

When ordinary people
and sages as well as
**those who commit the gravest offenses
and abusers of the Dharma ...**

[Hisao Inagaki. *The Way
of Nembutsu Faith*. p. 33.
(lines 27).]

... the **minds of deluded
and defiled ordinary people, ...**
[*loc. cite.*, p. 94. (lines 81-84)].

Whatever **evils we may commit
throughout our lives,**
[*loc. cite.*, p. 114, (lines 91)].

Shan-tao alone clarified the true intent
of the Buddha Sakyamuni.
Out of compassion for **those
who practice meditation or
non-meditative good
as well as who commit
the five gravest offenses
and the ten transgressions,**

He clarified that the Light
and the Name are the cause
and the condition for birth in
the Pure Land.
[*loc. cite.*, p. 121. (lines 93-95)].

Those with **extremely heavy evil karma**
should only repeat Amida's Name.
[*loc. cite.*, p. 139, (line 105)].

MONTH'S THOUGHT



... To understand realistically and soberly how limited our power is is an essential part of wisdom and maturity; to worship it is masochistic and self-destructive. The one is humility, the other self-humiliation. [Erich Fromm. *Psychoanalysis and Religion*. paperback. p. 52]]



**... innumerable beings,
totally defiled and evil.**

[*loc. cite.*, p. (lines 118)].

Thus, as ordinary mortal beings, we are constantly driven by our animalistic instincts, raw desires, or *bonno*, as well as our proclivities impelled by our pride because we are *bonbu*. These compelling instincts and tendencies distort our thinking and motivations, speech and actions with unwarranted presumptions about ourselves as possessing superior human intelligence, power and control over the things and creatures of the earth. These presumptions, especially in the Semitic religions, are rationalized in

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For Children & Adults
Rev. Tatsuguchi

2nd SUN Aug 8th:

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Dharma Talk
For Children & Adults
Rev. Tatsuguchi

3rd SUN Aug 15th:

9 A.M. Eng. Service
Dharma Talk
For Children & Adults
Rev. Tatsuguchi

4th SUN Aug 22nd:

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Dharma Talk
For Children & Adults
Rev. Tatsuguchi

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"Dharma Talk"
Rev. Tatsuguchi

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terms of God given rights and entitlements. These man-centered presumptions often become damaging and destructive. This is why human beings are *bonbu*, mere "ordinary mortal beings" embroiled in their personal, social and monetary matters centered on plebian and pedestrian concerns.

For these reasons, in the glossary of his *Tannisho*, Taitetsu Unno defines *bonno* as: "self-centeredness, profound and ineradicable, which causes mental, emotional, and physical afflictions" (p. 57). He defines *bonbu* as follows: "the radical ignorance (*avidya*) of humanity, rooted in blind self-centeredness and karmic evils, which makes impossible true freedom and joy in living." (p.59). He defines *karmic evil* (*zaigo, zaiaku*) as "the fathomless ignorance deep within us which regulates our life according to the law of cause and effect." (p. 60).

In his understanding of his own *karmic* past, Shinran Shonin, with full awareness of the orderly, uniform laws of causation, uttered:

Under the influence of our karmic past we human beings will do anything. (T. Unno. *Tannisho*. p. 24.)

This realization is most significant in that most of us are not even aware of our karmic pasts because many of us are only concerned with instant gratifications and not with past or future concerns that seem remote and irrelevant to our lives. So we keep on desecrating things sacred and disparaging spiritual truths that are timeless in our day-to-day lives due to our excessiveness and wastefulness.

Thus, Shinran Shonin noted that regardless of whether one is a monk or a layman, noble or a commoner, rich or poor, male or female, in actuality, we are all *bonbu* full of *bonno*. This is because we, in the final analysis, are all mere human beings:

... who show outwardly how wise, virtuous, and diligent they are, while inwardly cherishing vanity and falsehood. (*op. cite.* p. 25.)

This is exactly why, "To believe that each saying of nembutsu extinguishes evil is to aspire to birth by eliminating evil through one's own efforts." (*op. cite.*,

WORDS OF SHINRAN

... we are full of ignorance and blind passions. Our desires are countless, and anger, wrath, jealousy, and envy are overwhelming, arising without pause; to the very last moment of life they do not cease, or disappear, or exhaust themselves. ... [SBT-Series. *Notes on Once-calling and Many-calling*. p. 48.]

p.27.) This kind of nembutsu recitation is no different from those prayers asking a Supreme Deity for some kind of personal "divine intervention" or for some kind of "miraculous dispensation."

According to Shinran Shonin, petitionary recitations of nembutsu asking for personal advantages is also the Way of "self reliance" (*jiriki*). The majority of us are not morally capable or spiritually endowed to uphold a life of moral discipline or spirituality. "Self-reliance" based on one's moral or spiritual abilities is not the Way of the Pure Land which teaches us instead to simply trust and take complete refuge in Amida Buddha's Great Vow to unconditionally save each and every being without prejudice and favoritism referred to as "Other-Power" (*tariki*). Therefore, reciting and uttering Amida's Sacred Name *Namoh-amida-butsu* brings about the realization that one's self is a person riddled by *karmic* evils and transgressions who has always been, continues to be, and yet will forever be grasped by a mysterious Other Power never to be abandoned until such time one finally attains Buddhahood.

According to Shinran Shonin, a "true, real and sincere awakening of faith" involves the following:

When we entrust ourselves to the Vow that grasps us never to abandon, we shall quickly attain birth – regardless of whether we commit evils for incomprehensible reasons, and end our lives without saying the nembutsu. And when we spontaneously say the nembutsu our trust in Amida becomes stronger and our gratitude to Tathagata deepens as we approach the moment of supreme enlightenment. **To desire to extinguish evil** (on one's own powers and virtues) **is the thought of self-power**, the basic intent of those who hope to achieve right-mindedness at the moment of death. This shows the lack of true entrusting to Other Power. [*ibid.* Bold to show difference between self-power and Other Power nembutsu. () mine for clarification.]

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Thus, "... true entrusting alone is essential. The reason is that the Vow is directed to the being burdened with the weight of karmic evil and burning with the flames of blind passions." (*loc. cite.* p. 3.)

Let us now look deeper into the meaning of *bonbu* who is a person riddled with *bonno*, a person who has, is and yet continues to be the true object of Amida's Unconditional Compassion that never forsakes, abandons or will ever reject him because he, in actuality, is a person of karmic evils. In lines 105-108 of the *Shoshin Ge*, the Pure Land Master Genshin confirms this fact of karmic evil in us all as follows:

Those with extremely heavy evil karma
should only repeat Amida's Name.
I, too, am in his embracement;
Although my evil passions hinder me
from seeing it, His light
of Great Compassion always shines
on me untiringly.

[Hisao Inagaki. *The Way
of Nembutsu Faith.* p. 139]

However, Shinran Shonin notes that:

The nembutsu promised
in the Primal Vow of Amida Buddha
Is difficult for evil people
who have wrong views
and are arrogant to receive
and retain with Joyful Faith;
Of all difficulties, nothing is more difficult than
that.

[*loc. cite.*, p. 53.]

Why is this so?

This is so, according to Rev. Yoshitaka Tamai, because man is *bonbu*, a mere mortal being full of *bonno*. According to Tamai sensei's *Ichinyo* human beings are afflicted by the ten major and twenty secondary *bonno* (See Tamai's article on p. 6). This is why it is so difficult for human beings to "receive" and "retain" this "Joyful Faith" from Amida Buddha with gratitude, reverence, humility and penitence. This is because we, on our own, do not have the power to see how profound our transgressions and evils really are, for they extend back to a beginningless past and extend into an endless future characterized as "ceaseless births and deaths."

Many today think that their lives merely began with their conception in and subsequent birth from their mother's womb. Most people are not aware of how their past *karma* from their countless past lives are affecting and effecting their present lives and will be yet affecting their future lives in the hereafter. Therefore, they are not aware as to how the *karmic* consequences

of their present thoughts, words and actions, likewise, will be affecting their future lives and the lives of others who are yet to be born. So they live for themselves and believe only in the things and pleasures of their present lives.

Man also lives under the illusion that there will always be a tomorrow for him, though daily he sees the fact of others dying. Such a person, as of consequence, also doubts that there is an afterlife after death. This means he is not concerned about the countless lives of those before he was born. They are irrelevant to his life. Nor does he care about those who will be born after his own death. For his own life in the present is the only life he cares about. Such a person is unable to connect with the thoughts and feelings of his deceased ancestral parents and next of kin. Even the deceased of his immediate family are forgotten memories. Both the people in his past and those to be born in the future are "non entities" for him. In this way we are all *bonbu* because we are all deluded by our egos and self that we hold on to dearly from the "cradle" to our "grave." Furthermore, our personal idiosyncrasies, prejudices and biases have no logic, reason, or basis when they are viewed from the perspectives of "timeless time," a transcendental existence without a beginning or an ending, a selfless self in an inseparable togetherness with all things and all beings past, present and future. Such is the goal of Buddhist enlightenment!

Because of our idiosyncrasies, our thoughts become overwhelmed by the pulsating resentments and jealousies that forever keep smoldering in us. Such thoughts and feelings then make us conceal our wrong doings as we glee over the failings of those we dislike, especially those who are repulsive to our moral sensibilities. Such a proclivity leads to negative *karmic* consequences in which our sense of self becomes full of resentments and deviousness that make us even more deluded and irrational, often to an abusive and calloused degree. Thus, we become self-centered persons who feel no regret or remorse in committing the ten major and twenty minor *bonno* [See Y. Tamai article on p. 6]. These can all be reduced to what it is to be breaking the five precepts.

As Pure Land Master Shan'tao noted, this is exactly why *bonbu* need to especially repent and become penitent as they thank and revere Amida Buddha for "her" constant manifestation of Boundless Compassion (blessings of life). Amida is not an Omnipotent Deity that rejects and punishes "evil persons" while commending and rewarding only "good persons." If one is not awakened by Amida's Wisdom and Compassion, he will continue in his fickle and whimsical ways and keep repeating the rounds of ceaseless "births-and-deaths" in the six realms of transmigration. In doing so, he will continue to break the "five precepts" as he mindlessly desecrates the *Dharma*. Then, when sudden

calamities and unexpected misfortune befall him, he becomes despondent and depressed and even desperate to understand as to why such calamities and disasters have fallen upon him. He loses confidence in life and feels sorry for himself as life does not go as he wishes or planned. To avoid such feelings of meaningless dejection and hopeless despair, such a person constantly has need to keep himself busy doing things to avoid facing the hollowness and feelings of emptiness in his deepest self!

Man by nature also has the natural tendency to be lazy, indolent and idle, this is due to his lack of initiative, sense of responsibility and inability to be positively engaged with life in its very vibrancy. Such people are not accountable for the consequences for what they are thinking, feeling, wanting, intending, saying and doing. They quickly become bored and, in their boredom, they are unable to listen patiently until they "hear" the "voiceless voice" of Amida Buddha trying to awaken their slumbering conscience that can clarify their minds, uplift their hearts, and awaken their spirits. This "voiceless voice" is to be found in one's "innermost conscienceness," a place where the SOUNDINGS of DHARMA are not the sounds made by two sticks rubbing or striking against each other. They are the SOUNDS that RESOUND the Truth of Selflessness and its Reality of Togetherness here, there and everywhere throughout the universe.

This is why Sakyamuni Buddha set forth the Four Noble Truths. He advocated that all follow the Noble Eightfold Path. In first walking the Way of Difficult Practices as a Tendai monk, Shinran Shonin came to realize that the "awakening" or what is Amida Buddha's True Light of Selflessness and Real Life of Togetherness is actually experienced first by contemplating Amida and "her" Pure Land. It is only then that our thoughts and thinking become aligned with the Dharma's Selflessness that then fill our words with kindness and our actions with acts of mutuality and reciprocity that brings about a life of Togetherness with others, a life that is at oneness with others and the environment.

Upon realizing this highest point of "meditation" or what is the Right Contemplation of Amida Buddha, Shinran came to realize that it was not man who illuminates his own way through his own good works, merits, virtues and powers of concentration. Shinran Shonin came to realize that it was, in actuality, by first Rightly Contemplating Amida Buddha as the very manifestation of the Dharma's Selflessness and Togetherness that a karma riddled person was enabled to take refuge in "her" Compassion that never forsakes or abandons a person of karmic evils. Only then was he "able" to "Rightly Reflect" upon himself as "a mere mortal full of transgressions and evils" (*zai-aku jin'juu no bombu*), who was in the full embrace of Amida never to be ever abandoned! Thus, Shinran was "enabled" to

SHINRAN'S WASAN

Though refuge I have
taken in the
True Teaching
It's Mind of Truth
hardly found in me.
I am a being
without
full of falsities!
My mind lacks
Clarity or Purity.

Shozomatsu Wasan 94
rkt trans.

further realize how his thoughts of good will and acts of kindness were, in actuality, all riddled by the "three poisons" of selfishness, resentments and sense of self importance. And this was exactly the reason why he had, was, and continued to be grasped by Amida, never to be abandoned and rejected!

[to be continued]

BUDDHIST STORIES & PASSAGES

... everything passes and does not remain still. Even though people are taught and are led to see this fact, very few believe in it. ... [*Larger Sutra*]

QUESTION & ANSWER KORNER

QUESTION: What is faith in Christianity and in Jodo-shinshu?

ANSWER: Faith in Christianity and Shin Buddhism appears to be the same for they involve a surrender of one's self full of transgressions to a higher power.

However, in Christianity (Judaism and Islam also) faith concerns a "surrendering" of one's self and "submission" of one's will to a higher being that "knows all things" (omniscience), a Supreme Being who has "control over all things" (omnipotence). Man in this view is powerless and helpless. This All-knowing and All-powerful Being is seen as a masculine, fatherly Deity (Yahweh, God, or Allah). Thus, it is a cardinal sin to disobey such a Being's Will and commandments. To go against his will is to break his commandments which incurs fear of his punishments.

Faith in Jodoshinshu, by comparison, is to encounter, experience and become "transformed" by a "cosmic significance" that is not "man-centered."

Faith in Amida is not a belief in a personlike Deity who can controvert causation and, therefore, nullify the effects of *karma*. Therefore, the faith as set forth in Jodoshinshu teachings is governed by causality and *karma*. These facts and truths are not the monopoly of any one man, race, culture, creed or established religious institution. For example, "gravity" is a universal law affecting all things. Being illuminated by "genuine faith," in other words enables any person to see sacredness and spirituality not only in man but also in plants, trees, the land, the universe, and so forth.

"Genuine faith" is not something demanded or forced on a person. Nor is it a prescribed strategy of doing "good moral deeds" to avoid some kind of divine punishment. This is clearly indicated by the following words of Shinran Shonin.

When the thought of saying the nembutsu emerges decisively from within, having entrusted ourselves to the inconceivable power of Amida's vow which saves us, enabling us to be born in the Pure Land, in that very moment we receive the ultimate benefit of being grasped never to be abandoned. [Taitetsu Unno. *Tannisho*. I p. 5]

Therefore, Shinran makes it clear that "entrusting one's self to" and "the taking of refuge in" Amida Buddha's Powers of Wisdom and Compassion is based on one's decision to do so. So he said:

... Now, whether you accept the nembutsu, entrusting yourself to it, or reject it, that is your own decision. [*op. cite.*, II p. 7]

To "en-vision" Amida, therefore, is to become "awake" and "aware" that all things and forms of life are sacred and spiritual in the eyes of Amida Buddha. This is why Shinran declared:

"...the evil person who entrusts himself to Other Power is truly the one who attains birth in the Pure Land..." [T. Unno. *Tannisho* III p. 8]

In Christianity, it is blasphemous to consider the possibility that one can become an equal of God. This point is clearly seen in the Genesis story of creation where God forbids Adam to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil [Genesis 2: 16, 17]. However, Eve is bequiled by the serpent (Satan) who gets her to eat of this tree of knowledge. Then she entices Adam to do the same. Then God condemns the serpent and expels both Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden lest they next eat of the tree of life eternal. If they do so they will become like God himself and live for forever [Genesis 3: 22-24]. Because of Adam's

and especially Eve's disobedience, both are condemned to a life of hardship and torment, even more so than Adam [Genesis 3: 16-19].

MAJOR AND SECONDARY *BONNO*

(from Rev. Yoshitaka Tamai's ICHINYO pp. 17-19)

In the Buddhist teaching, what is referred to as *bombu* consists of ten major *bonno* and twenty secondary *bonno*. The first five of the ten major *bonno* are:

1. Greed. 2. Anger. 3. Grumbling.
4. Boastfulness. 5. Doubt.

These *bonno* are the minds with which we are born. When we become adults and are able to reflect on life, the remaining five of the ten major *bonno* appear:

6. Believing our physical bodies are our own.
7. Believing we no longer exist when we die.
8. Believing that if we do not accept the law of cause and effect in the three worlds past, present, and future, we are not responsible for the future. This leads to the wrong belief that the life in this world is all there is.
9. Believing ours is the only correct way of thinking.
10. Not knowing we are captives of superstition, and as a result, believing our "faith" is the best.

We commit various crimes because of these ten major *bonno*. They are the causes of great wars. And then all of us suffer.

The twenty secondary *bonno* are:

1. Quickly erupting in anger. 2. Hatred. 3. Concealing our own evil. 4. Anguish. 5. Jealousy.
 6. Stinginess. 7. Deception. 8. Flattery.
 9. Troubling others and causing them to suffer.
 10. Boastfulness. 11. Not feeling sorrow although we do evil. 12. Not feeling need to repent.
 13. Fickleness. 14. Feeling depressed and dark. 15. Not having confidence in our life.
- This is also the mind that causes us to work because there is nothing else we feel we can do. 16. Laziness or idleness. 17. Boredom or incompleteness. 18. Despair. This is also the mind that doesn't care what happens. 19. Forgetfulness. 20. Not seeing things or considering things properly. This is also the mind that wrongly believes it knows and understands.

The above minds are called the twenty secondary minds. Those who have these major and twenty secondary *bonno*, are called *bombu*. This is what causes us to suffer. This is what makes others suffer. ...

The most dangerous thing is believing that we are enlightened and that we now understand. It is dangerous to consider ourselves a "good person" because we easily fall into the trap of telling others, "That is wrong faith; that is the wrong way." ... Always keep in mind that we are just ordinary persons ... We must become able to truly see ourselves. ... Knowing what we are is the most important thing in life. ...

continued from page 2

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Jeanette Fukumoto, Kiyomu Koyanagi, Dennis Mijo, Setsu Murata, Toshie Murata, Tsuruko Sugiyama