

## Reading the *Kyōgyōshinshō*: Reading the General Preface<sup>⑩</sup>

### I . Section 4 of the Preface: About Our Relationship to that “Activity and Acceptance”

#### A) A Look at the translations

本文：爾れば、凡小修し易き真教、愚鈍往き易き捷徑なり。大聖一代の教、是の徳海に如く無し。穢を捨て浄を忻い、行に迷い信に惑い、心昏く識寡なく、悪重く難り多きもの、特に如来の発遣を仰ぎ、必ず最勝の直道に歸して、専らこの行に奉え、唯だ斯の信を崇めよ。

**DTS:** This being so, this teaching is the true one which is easy to practice for all of us who are small and helpless; it is the shortest passage to walk for us who are stupid and ignorant. Nothing surpasses this teaching of the Great Sage, which was given by him while on earth and which is indeed the ocean of merit.

Let those who, aspiring for purity, wish to give up defilements, let those who are at a loss as to the right practice and the right faith, let those whose minds are darkened and whose understanding is deficient, let those who are troubled with evils and hindrances weighing heavily on them—let them all be reverently mindful of Śākyamuni’s command to come to the Pure Land, let them be sure of taking refuge in the most excellent path of truth, and let them devote themselves exclusively to living it and piously embrace this faith only.

**CWS:** This, then, is the true teaching easy to practice for small, foolish beings; it is the straight way easy to traverse for the dull and ignorant. Among all the teachings the Great Sage preached in his lifetime, none surpasses this ocean of virtues. Let the one who seeks to abandon the defiled and aspire for the pure; who is confused in practice and vacillating in faith; whose mind is dark and whose understanding deficient; whose evils are heavy and whose karmic obstructions manifold—let such persons embrace above all the Tathagata’s exhortations, take refuge without fail in the most excellent direct path, devote themselves solely to this practice, and revere only this shinjin.

**Inagaki:** This is indeed the true teaching which is easy to practice even for ordinary, inferior people and is the shortest way that is easy to follow for dull and stupid people. Of all the lifetime teachings of the Great Sage, nothing surpasses this oceanlike virtue. Those who wish to leave this defiled world of samsara and aspire to the Pure Land, those who are confused about religious practices and faiths, those who are dark in mind and lacking in wisdom, and those who are burdened with heavy evil karma and many hindrances

should, by all means, esteem the Tathāgata Śākyamuni’s exhortation and follow the supreme direct path to enlightenment; they should exclusively hold fast to this practice and only uphold faith.

**Yamamoto:** Therefore this is the true religion that all *common mortals and petty persons* can easily practice and this is the shortest way that the ignorant can take. Of all the teachings of the ‘Great Sage’, nothing can equal this sea of virtue. O thou who desirest to abandon this world of filth and seek birth in the Land of Purity, thou who art lost in practices and in faiths, thou whose mind is beclouded and lacks light, whose sins weigh, and who are garbed in hindrances! Now that especially thou art shown the Way by Shakyamuni Buddha, take at all costs to this best and direct Way and exclusively follow this *Practice* and revere but this *Faith!*

試訳: Since this is the case, it is the true teaching easy for base, ordinary people to cultivate, the shortcut easy for the ignorant and dull to take. In the teachings delivered in the course of the life of the great sage, none compare with this ocean of wondrous qualities. Those who wish to abandon the defiled and aspire to the pure, lost in practice and confused in faith, with dull minds and a paucity of insight, heavy evil and many obstructions, should in particular respect this urging of the Tathāgata and necessarily return to this most excellent, direct path, exclusively serving this practice and just respecting this acceptance and understanding.

## B) Sources for the first two sentences

### 1) Source for “easy to cultivate”

What is truly great is that the ultimate principle of the true Dharma, which is oneness itself, teaches sentient beings and benefits others. Since the aspirations differ, our Śākyamuni responds to beings in this defiled world and Amida appears in the Pure Land. Although the directions differ in purity and defilement, the benefits are entirely the same. As to the easy to cultivate and the easy to realize, it is truly just the gate of the teachings of the Pure Land. Thus, that western direction is uniquely wondrous and it is difficult for anything to compare to that land. Further, it is ornamented with lotuses of the myriad treasures and what takes up people distinguished in the nine grades is the name of the Buddha.

Fazhao 法照 (746-838) in *Wuhuishizhan* 五会法事讚, quoted in the chapter on practice, *Seiten*, p. 178; TK, pp. 49-50; T no. 1983, 47:475c12-16

### 2) Source for “shortcut”

The General Administrator Zhang Lun says, “The name of the Buddha is easy to uphold and the Pure Land is easy to go to. In the eighty-four thousand Dharma gates, none compare with this shortcut. One should just give up this bit of time to lie in bed during the clear dawn and attain the eternal, indestructible sustenance. In terms of the strength that ones uses, this is very little, yet in terms of the benefits gained, it is such that they cannot be exhausted. What other suffering could sentient beings possibly have that would make them give this up themselves and not engage in it. Ah, it is a phantom in a dream, not true at all. One’s life is quite fragile and difficult to maintain. In the span of a breath, that is one’s coming to be born. If one once loses one’s human body, one will not return for myriad *kalpas*. If one is not enlightened at this time, then what can the Buddha do for sentient beings. I hope that you all deeply consider impermanence and do not vainly leave over regrets. Zhang Lun, the householder of Pure Contentment, encouraging those with a connection.

Quoted in *Lebangwenlie* 樂邦文類, quoted in the chapter on practice, *Seiten*, p. 183;  
TK, pp. 57-58; T 47:179a

3) Source for “ocean of wondrous qualities”

Further, it states, “One should rely on the six types of wondrous qualities in the *Xindeguanjing* 心地觀經. First, the unsurpassed great field of wondrous qualities. Second, unsurpassed great benevolence. Third, being honored among sentient beings without legs, with two legs, and with many legs. Fourth, being difficult to encounter, like the flower of the *udumbara*. Fifth, being the only Buddha appearing in a trichiliocosm. Sixth, having completely perfected both worldly and spiritual wondrous qualities. The significance is based on these sorts of six types of wondrous qualities. [The Buddha] is always able to benefit all sentient beings.”

Based on these six types of wondrous qualities, Genshin states, “First, one should think that because all have already attained Buddhahood in one calling of “Namu Butsu,” I bow before and follow the direction of the field of unsurpassed wondrous qualities. Second, one should think that because he looks upon sentient beings with compassionate eyes, seeing them as equal and as a single child, I bow before and follow the direction of the ultimate mother of great compassion. Third, one should think that because the myriad masters of the ten directions all revere the honored one Amida, I bow before and follow the direction of the unsurpassed honored one among those with two feet. Fourth, one should think that because but once being able to hear the name of the Buddha is more rare than an *udumbara* flower, I bow before and follow the direction of the one who is most difficult to encounter. Fifth, one should think that because in a hundred *kotis* of worlds, two honored ones do not appear together, I bow before and follow the direction of the rare, great Dharma king. Sixth, one should think that because the ocean of wondrous qualities of

the Buddha, Dharma, and assembly are the same and of one substance through past, present, and future, I bow before and follow the direction of the honored one of myriad, all-pervading virtues.

*Ōjō yōshū* 往生要集 by Genshin 源信 (942-1017), quoted in the chapter on practice, *Seiten*, pp. 188-89; TK, pp. 65-66; SSZ 1: 780-81

### C) On the significance of the first two sentences

1) The significance of this teaching as being “easy to cultivate” and “easy to take”

Further, it states, “Also, as in the *Muliansuowenjing* 目連所問經 (Sutra on the Questions by Maudgalyāyana) ‘The Buddha told Maudgalyāyana, “For example, [it is] like the drift wood that floats in the long currents of the various rivers. The preceding [ones] do not consider the subsequent [ones]. The [ones that come] after do not consider the preceding. All come together in the oceans. The world is also this way. Although with wealth and respect, one is completely free in obtaining luxuries and pleasures, each and every one cannot avoid birth, aging, sickness, and death. Just because [one] does not believe in a sutra of the Buddha, in a later world, one becomes a human being again, but will be in very dire circumstances and not able to attain birth in the countries of the thousand Buddhas. For this reason, I teach that the country of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life is easy to go to and easy to adopt, but that people cannot be born there through cultivating practices. Instead, such people end up serving the ninety-five types of heterodox paths. I teach that these people should be called people without eyes, people without ears.’””

*Anleji* 安樂集 by Daochuo 道綽 (562-645), quoted in the chapter on practice, *Seiten*, pp. 173; TK, pp. 41-42; SSZ 1: 411-12

The *śrāvakas* and bodhisattvas of the country of immeasurable life have indescribable virtue and wisdom. Also, that country is wondrous, with peace and contentment, and pure, just in this way. Why don't you try to do good, think of the natural attainment of enlightenment, and fully realize the lack of both rank and limit. You should each try to make efforts and seek this for yourselves. You ought necessarily transcend, cut off, become able to go, and be born in the country of peace and nourishing. Unconventionally severing the five evil modes of existence, the evil ways of being are closed off spontaneously. One advances toward enlightenment without limitation. It is easy to go, yet no one is there. That country does not conflict. It is where one is drawn by nature.

From fascicle 2 of the *Larger Sutra*, SSZ 1:31

2) Shinran's doctrinal classification system and the teachings of the original vow as the centerpiece of Buddhism

The path of sages refers to the consummate teachings of the Mahayana such as the School of the Buddha's Mind, the Shingon School, the Lotus School, the Flower Garland School, the School of

the Three Treatises, etc., which were taught by one who has already become a Buddha in order to encourage our minds. The School of the Buddha Mind is the Zen School that has become popular today. It also refers to the teachings of expedients, the Hinayana, and the like, such as the Hossō School, the Jōjitsu School, and the Kusha School, etc. These are all the path of sages. Expedient teachings are called expedient because Buddhas and bodhisattvas who have already become Buddhas encourage us, provisionally taking on a variety of different forms. There is also no-thought and thought in the Pure Land School. “Thought” refers to the significance of the non-meditative good practices. “No-thought” refers to the significance of the meditative good practices. No-thought in the Pure Land School is not similar to no-thought in the path of sages. Also, within the no-thought of the path of sages, there is also thought. This should be considered carefully. In the Pure Land School, there is true and provisional. True refers to the selected original vow. Provisional refers to the meditative and non-meditative good practices. The selected original vow is the True Pure Land School. The meditative and non-meditative good practices are a provisional, expedient gate. The True Pure Land School is the consummation of the Mahayana. The provisional, expedient gate also contains the teachings of the true and expedient of the Mahayana and the Hinayana. It is the one hundred and ten teachers of Śākyamuni. This can be found in the *Flower Garland Sutra*.

*Mattōshō* 末燈鈔, *Seiten*, p. 601; TSZ 3 (“Shokan-hen” 書簡篇): 61-62; see CWS 1:524-525  
3) On the teachings as an “ocean of virtues”

The virtues therefore are to be understood as those dispositions which will not only sustain practices and enable us to achieve the goods internal to practices, but which will also sustain us in the relevant kind of quest for the good, by enabling us to overcome the harms, dangers, temptations and distractions which we encounter, and which will furnish us with increasing self-knowledge and increasing knowledge of the good.

Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), 204  
What matters at this stage is the construction of local forms of community within which civility and the intellectual and moral life can be sustained through the new dark ages which are already upon us. And if the tradition of the virtues was able to survive the horrors of the last dark ages, we are not entirely without grounds for hope. This time however the barbarians are not waiting beyond the frontiers; they have already been governing us for quite some time. And it is our lack of consciousness of this that constitutes part of our predicament. We are not waiting for a Godot, but for another – doubtless very different – St Benedict.

Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), 245