

## Reading the *Kyōgyōshinshō*: Reading the General Preface⑫

### 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、悪重く鄣り多きもの、特に如来の發遣を仰ぎ、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

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

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 Regarding "Unconventionally transcending [birth and death] and severing the four streams": In "unconventionally transcending," "unconventional" is the opposite of conventionally transcending

and conventionally leaving behind [birth and death]. “Transcending” is the opposite of roundabout and indirect. “Conventionally transcending [birth and death]” is the true teaching of the Mahayana. “Conventionally leaving behind [birth and death]” is the provisional, expedient teaching of the Mahayana, the roundabout, indirect teaching of the two and three vehicles. “Unconventionally transcending [birth and death]” is the true teaching of the fulfillment of the vow where the singular reality is realized in its perfection. It is the true centerpiece of all Buddhism (*shinshū* 真宗). Also, there is “unconventionally leaving behind [birth and death],” which is the teaching of the three groups and the nine grades of practitioners, as well as of meditative and nonmeditative goods. It is the roundabout, indirect good that leads to the provisional land and the land of otiosity. In the pure, fulfilled land of the great vow, there is no reference to grades, levels, steps, or stages. One swiftly and immediately transcends and attains the unsurpassed, right, true enlightenment for the span of an instantaneous thought-moment. Therefore, [Shandao] says, “unconventionally transcending.”

In the chapter on *shinjin*, *Seiten*, p. 243, TK, p. 141

3) On the teachings as an “ocean of wondrous qualities (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

4) Shinran on the nature of “wondrous qualities”

In this way, these realizations are all the great benefit of the pure realm of peace and nourishment, the supreme, difficult to conceive virtues of the Buddha’s aspiration.

In the chapter on practice, *Seiten*, p. 198; TK, p. 78

The *Nirvana Sutra* states, “Good men, the real truth is referred to as Mahayana. What is not the Mahayana is not called the real truth. Good men, the real truth is the preaching of the Buddha. It is

not the preaching of Mārā. Since the preaching of Mārā is not the preaching of the Buddha, it is not referred to as the real truth. Good men, the real truth is one single path, that is pure and entirely lacks an alternative.” Further it states, “How does the bodhisattva accept and accord with the singular reality? The bodhisattva fully understands that all sentient beings are made to rely on one single path. One single path is the Mahayana. The myriad Buddhas and bodhisattvas break this up into three for the sake of sentient beings. . . .

The *Flower Garland Sutra* states, “Mañjuśrī’s Dharma is just this way. The Dharma king is solely a single Dharma. All unobstructed people leave birth and death from one single path. The bodies of all myriad Buddhas are just this one Dharma body. It is one mind and one wisdom. The strength and fearlessness are also this way.”

In the chapter on practice, *Seiten*, p. 197; TK, p. 76-78 Enlightenment (the path) is the unobstructed path. A sutra states, “The unobstructed ones in the ten direction leave birth and death from one single path. The single path is the single, unobstructed path. Unobstructed means recognizing that birth and death is itself nirvana. Entry into the dharma gate of non-duality such as this is the form of the unobstructed.

Tanluan’s *Jingtu lunzhu* 淨土論註, quoted in the chapter on practice, *Seiten*, p. 194; TK, p. 72  
SSZ, vol. 1, 346

Regarding “the form of true and real virtue,” there are two types of virtue. The first arises from a defiled mind and does not accord with Dharma nature. What is called the myriad good acts of ordinary people, humans and devas and the resultant fruits of the acts of humans and devas, whether it is cause or effect, are all upside down and all vainly false. Therefore they are referred to as unreal virtues. The second occurs from the wisdom and pure karma of the bodhisattva and ornaments (gives shape to) the activity of the Buddha. Based on Dharma nature, it has entered into the form of purity. This Dharma is not upside down, nor is it vainly false. It is referred to as true and real virtue. In what way is it not upside down? Because it accords with the two truths based on Dharma nature. In what way is it not vainly false? Because it encompasses sentient beings and brings them into ultimate purity.

Tanluan’s *Jingtu lunzhu* 淨土論註, quoted in the chapter on practice, *Seiten*, p. 170; TK, p. 37  
SSZ, vol. 1, 284-285

The path is the straight path of the singular reality of the original aspiration, the great, unsurpassed path of great, complete nirvana.

In the chapter on *shinjin*, *Seiten*, p. 234; TK, p. 130

#### **D) On the significance of the third sentence**

1) On our deluded way of being

2) On the rarity of Shinran’s use of the imperative and its significance here

3) Sources for “respect the urging of the Tathāgata,” “this excellent, direct path,” and “serve”

Further, since the Buddha’s hidden intent is both broad and profound, it is difficult to gain clarity about the gates of the teachings. Even the three types of wise ones and the ten sages are not able to understand it through their considerations, so how possibly could one like myself, so easily influenced and having not yet stepped on the bodhisattva path, dare to claim to understand their gist. Respectfully considering, Śākyamuni urges us from this side and Amida welcomes us from that country. Called from there and sent from here, how could we not go in that direction? One should just with an earnest mind, serve the Dharma and, taking the end of one’s life as a limit, abandon this defiled body, thereby immediately realizing the constant contentment of Dharma nature there.

Shandao 善導, “Xuanyifen” 玄義分, *Guanjingshu* 觀經疏, SSZ 1: 443

One respectfully receives Śākyamuni’s urging, where he teaches on to turn to the western direction. Also, based on the calling of the compassionate mind of Amida, one now accepts and follows in the intent of the two honored ones, without concerning oneself with the two rivers of fire and water, not forgetting thought after thought, riding on the path of the power of that aspiration, such that having abandoned one’s life, one can be born in that country, encounter the Buddha, and experience limitless joy.

Shandao 善導, “Sanshanyi” 散善義, *Guanjingshu* 觀經疏, SSZ 1: 443

4) What should be the guiding force of our lives?