# Reading the *Kyōgyōshinshō*: Reading the General Preface㉒

## Ⅰ．Section 5 of the Preface: Shinran’s Commands to Us

### A) A Look at the translations

噫、弘誓の強縁、多生にも値い叵く、真実の浄信、億劫にも獲叵し。遇たま行信を獲ば、遠く宿縁を慶べ。若し也た此の廻、疑網に覆蔽せられば、かえってまた曠劫を径歴せん。誠なるかなや、摂取不捨の真言、超世希有の正法、聞思して遅慮することなかれ。（『聖典』149-150頁）

**DTS:** It is, indeed, a rare event, however many lives one may go through, that one happens to find oneself so happily situated as to be taken up in Amida’s Prayer for universal deliverance! To attain to the pure faith of truth, however many numberless kalpas one may live, is, indeed, the most difficult thing. If not for the most favorable karmic combination in one’s past lives, how could one ever come to cherish a faith in the Pure Land and live it accordingly?

If one should miss this opportunity through being beclouded by a veil of doubt, one may have to wait in vain for another numberless kalpas. There is absolutely no falsehood in the statement, “All will be taken up and none left behind!” The Right Dharma is indeed something wonderful, transcending things of this world! Let us, therefore, feel no hesitancy in listening to it and reflecting on it. (p. 43)

**CWS:** Ah, hard to encounter, even in many lifetimes, is the decisive cause of birth, Amida’s universal Vow! Hard to realize, even in myriads of kalpas, is pure shinjin that is true and real! If you should come to realize this practice and shinjin, rejoice at the conditions from the distant past that have brought it about. But if in this lifetime still you are entangled in a net of doubt, then unavoidably you must pass once more in the stream of birth-and-death through myriads of kalpas. Wholly sincere, indeed, are the words of truth that one is grasped, never to be abandoned, the right dharma, all surpassing and wondrous! Hear and reflect, and let there be no wavering or apprehension. (p. 4)

**Inagaki**: How difficult it is to encounter the strong influence of the Universal Vow, even in many cycles of birth and death! How difficult it is to attain the true pure faith, even in millions of *kalpa*s! If you are fortunate enough to attain practice and faith, you should rejoice at your close relationship with Amida from the distant past. If your mind is still covered with a net of doubt, you will continue to wander about in samsara for myriads of *kalpa*s.

How trustworthy are the words of truth which say that we are embraced in Amida’s Light and never forsaken! How extraordinary and wonderful is the Right Dharma! Hear and reflect; be careful not to hesitate too long. (p. 3-4)

**Yamamoto:** Ah, hard is it in many lives to meet with the Great Way of the Vow! Hard is it in millions of *kalpas* to be blessed with faith true and pure! If it is faith comes to us, let us be thankful for what was made ours by him in our long past lives. If it is we are still in doubt, we shall have again to turn back and repeat the wheel of life for myriads of kalpas. True is His promise which embraces us once for all! Unsurpassed and rarest is the Right Dharma! Let us hear! Let us not tarry!

**試訳:** Oh, it is virtually impossible to directly encounter the powerful karmic condition of the universal vow, even in many lives! It is near impossible to attain true, real, and pure acceptance, even in billions of *kalpa*s. If you happen to attain this movement and acceptance, rejoice over the favorable conditions from the far past that made it possible. If again on this round, you are caught up in a net of doubt, then you will again have to pass through a vast number of *kalpa*s [in delusion]. How trustworthy is the true phrase, “One will be taken up and never abandoned,” and the right dharma that wondrously transcends the world! Listen to and consider it, but do not ruminate haltingly.

### D) Sources and significance of terms in the last two sentences

6) Source for “listen to and consider”

There are also two types of acceptance. First, [acceptance] that arises from listening. Second, acceptance that arises from consideration. This person’s *shinjin* arises from listening, but not from consideration and therefore is referred to as “insufficient acceptance.” There are another two types. First is to accept that enlightenment exists. Second is to accept that someone has attained it. This person’s *shinjin* accepts that enlightenment exists, but does not accept that there is a person who has attained enlightenment, so it is said to be “insufficient acceptance.”

*Nirvana Sutra* quoted in the chapter on *shinjin* in the *Kyōgyōshinshō*, Seiten, 230; TK, 123

T 12:575b28-c3

7) Source for “do not ruminate haltingly”

Even hearing and keeping in mind the names of other Buddhas is this way [i.e., has great benefits, including attaining the stage of non-retrogression]. How much more so for my Amida, with its original vow? Laity of the latter Dharma have grave obstructions and many disparage keeping the name in mind. Therefore I have quoted the words of the sage in detail. Do not let your thoughts ruminate haltingly!

Yuanzhao 元照 (1048-1116) in *Fushuoamituojingyishu* 仏説阿弥陀経義疏, T 37:362b3-5

## Ⅱ．Section 6 of the Preface: Shinran’s Statement on His Reasons and Methods for Writing the *Kyōgyōshinshō*

### A) A Look at the translations

爰に愚禿釈の親鸞、慶ばしいかな。西蕃月支の聖典、東夏日域の師釈に遇い難くして今遇うことを得たり。聞き難くして已に聞くことを得たり。真宗の教行証を敬信して特に如来の恩徳の深きことを知りぬ。斯を以て聞く所を慶び、獲る所を嘆ずるなりと。（『聖典』150頁）

**DTS:** How fortunate it is that I, Shaku no Shinran, but an old, simple-hearted ignoramus, should come across the sacred texts from India and Central Asia and their commentaries by the teachers of China and Japan! It is so difficult to have access to them, and I now have them! It is so rare to listen to this message, and I now have heard it!

I, wishing to live it and to realize it, humbly declare my faith in the true teaching of the Pure Land, and, especially, I wish to acknowledge my indebtedness to the unparalleled favor bestowed upon me by the Tathāgatas. Accordingly, I hereby heartily express my joy over what I have heard and deeply cherish all that I have gained. (p. 43)

**CWS:** How joyous I am, Gutoku Shinran, disciple of Śākyamuni! Rare is it to come upon the sacred scriptures from the westward land of India and the commentaries of the masters of China and Japan, but now I have been able to encounter them. Rare is it to hear them, but already I have been able to hear. Reverently entrusting myself to the teaching, practice and realization that are the true essence of the Pure Land way, I am especially aware of the profundity of the Tathagata’s benevolence. Here I rejoice in what I have heard and extol what I have attained. (p. 4)

**Inagaki H.**: What a joy it is that I, Gutoku Shinran, disciple of Śākyamuni, have had a rare chance to meet with the Pure Land scriptures from India and the commentaries by Chinese and Japanese masters, which are difficult to encounter, and have been able to hear their teachings that we can only rarely hear!

Having respectfully accepted in faith the teaching, practice, and enlightenment of the True Pure Land Way, I deeply acknowledge the Tathāgata Amida’s benevolence. Here I rejoice over what I have heard and marvel at what I have received. (p. 4)

**Yamamoto:** Now blessed am I, this humble Shinran, who of all the holy scriptures of India and the expositions of the masters of China and Japan can hear what is hard to hear. I reverently believe in the Teaching, Practice, and Attainment of Shinshu, and feel deeply the obligations which I owe to the Tathagata. Hereby I rejoice at what I hear and praise what I have obtained.

**試訳:** What joy do I, foolish stubble-headed Shinran, feel here! I have now encountered the sacred scriptures of India and the Kushan Empire and the commentaries by the teachers of China and Japan that are difficult to encounter. I have already heard their message that is difficult to hear. I respect and accept the teaching, practice, and realization of the true centerpiece of Buddhism and particularly recognize the depth of my debt of gratitude to the Tathāgata. Based on this, I rejoice over what I have heard and praise what I have attained.

### B) On the significance of the first two sentences (immediate reason for writing)

1) On the name, “Foolish, stubble-headed Shinran”

2) The broad and specific meanings of “sacred scriptures” and “commentaries”

3) The importance of the phrase “I have already heard”

The fact that history has lost sight any direction to progress toward and that humanity has lost sight of its humanity is the most serious problem of our age. We are in need of a stance in a higher dimension that can lead humanity and history.

Yet reflecting carefully, there is really no need to seek out some new stance. Our predecessors have already determined that the original aspiration is the path that humanity should rely upon and clarified a view of history that sees it as the working out of that aspiration. Shinran, the founder of Shin Buddhism, predicated on the view of history that sees it as the degeneration of the Dharma, which was prevalent at his time, took it as an opportunity to rely upon that original aspiration. For him, the reality of the “world that is impermanent like a burning house,” became an opportunity to “hear at once of the Pure Land, aspire, and seek to be born” (*Gutokushō*). The real form of “the foolish, ordinary being possessed of mental afflictions” became an opportunity to become a “true disciple of the Buddha” who will necessarily transcend and realize great nirvana.” For Shinran, the axis that will lead history and humanity which is writhing in suffering to hope is Amida’s original aspiration and he holds that this is where the true centerpiece of Buddhism which we should rely on (the true foundation for our lives) lies.

Yasutomi Shin’ya 安冨信哉, *Shinran to kiki ishiki: Atarashiki shutai no tanjō* 親鸞と危機意識：

新しき主体の誕生 (Revised, expanded version, Kyoto: Bun’eidō, 2005), 373

### C) On the significance of the third sentence (ultimate reason for writing)

1) “Teaching, practice, and realization” as the content of what is bestowed by the Tathāgata

2) “Respect and acceptance” as multivalent (our action and a gift that occurs within us)

3) The great depth of our debt of gratitude

### D) On the significance of the fourth sentence (method for writing)

1) “What I have heard” as the teaching of the three sutras and seven patriarchs

2) “What I have attained” as the true virtue as bestowed by the Tathāgata’s *ekō* 回向

3) The content of the *Kyōgyōshinshō* as “rejoicing” and “praise”