

Reading the *Kyōgyōshinshō*: Reading the General Preface²⁴

I . 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, disciple of Sakyamuni, 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 respectfully 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)

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 安富信哉, *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) “Respectful acceptance” as multivalent (our action and a gift that occurs within us)

3) The profoundly 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”