



GASSHO

January

2011

Issue No: 01-11

"Hands together in reverence & gratitude"



HAPPY NEW YEAR 2011

MONTH'S THOUGHT



... shame that binds the tongue is a gift from the gods to protect reckless mortals from their own foolishness. ... the person who cannot sense the force fields of the spiritual world, is in danger, like an animal stripped of its protective instincts. ... Lewis Hyde. *Trickster Makes This World: Mischief, Myth, and Art*. p. 157.



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REMINDERS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

SERVICES FOR JANUARY 2011

New Year's Day

Saturday, Jan. 1, 2011
10 a.m. English Service

1st SUN Jan 2nd:

9 A.M. English Service
Dharma Talk
for Children & Adults
Rev. Tatsuguchi

2nd SUN Jan 9th:

9 A.M. English Service
Dharma Talk
for Children & Adults
Rev. Roland Tatsuguchi

3rd SUN Jan 16th:

GOSHOOKI HOONKO SERVICE

9 A.M. English Service

Guest Speaker:
Rev. Shigenori Makino

4th SUN Jan 23rd:

9 A.M. English Service
Dharma Talk
for Children & Adults
Rev. Tatsuguchi

5th SUN Jan 30th:

MONTHLY
FAMILY WORSHIP
for Children & Adults
Rev. Tatsuguchi

Temple (and Elevator) Will be Open

All Day: December 31, 2010 and
January 1, 2011

Please enter from Young Street

WEEKLY ACTIVITIES

KARAOKE CLASS Mon 7 - 9 P.M.

Mr. Nelson Yoshioka

KARATE Tues/Fri 6 - 9 P.M.

Shihan - Walter Nishioka

FUJINKAI SEWING CLUB Wed 9 - 11 A.M.

J. Kobuke/A. Murata

HAWAII EISA CHIMUGUKURU DAIKO

Mr. Van Shimabukuro

Wed/Thur 6.30-8.30

THANK YOU FOR
YOUR GENEROUS DONATIONS!!

In Memory of Shuji & Fumi Mikami

\$ 300.00

In Memory of Bradford Clark

\$ 100.00

Irene Clark

In Memory of Betty Saiki

\$ 50.00

Minnie Saiki

In Memory of Teruo Nakamura

\$ 50.00

Teruko Nakamura

Donation

\$ 50.00

Robert Toyofuku, Clarence Yoshino

Nokotsudo

Kay Matsuda

Continued on page 10

With Deepest Sympathy

Mr. Yoshio Ono 83yr Nov. 30, 2010

The Question of True and False Religion

by rev. roland k. tatsuguchi

My Best wishes for a Happy and Meaningful New Year to you all!

In this first issue of Gassho, I wish to deal with the ideogram *shin-* in the four kanji compound *Jo-do-shin-shu*. The *shin-* in *shin-shu* means "true" and "real." The *-shu* means "spirituality" as well as "religiosity" more than a "religion," especially a "denomination" or a "sect." The kanji *Jo-* and *-do* mean "pure" and "land." So, *Jodo-shinshu* means the "true spirituality and religiosity" that is "awakened" in that instant one trusts and takes refuge in the virtues of Amida Buddha's Wisdom and Compassion constantly shining on us from the Pure Land from the westerly direction.

Thus, the *shin-* in *Jodo-shin-shu* means that "faith" in Amida Buddha Sakyamuni presented in the Larger Sutra as the Truth and Reality constantly manifesting itself as Wisdom's luminations and Compassion's pulsations of True Light and Real Life!

The Sacred Name, therefore, is the very manifestation of Amida's Mind of Selflessness and her Heart of Togetherness. Thus, the *shin-jitsu* in the longer title of the *Kyo-Gyo-Shin-Sho* means the Dharma's Truth of Selflessness and its Reality of Togetherness that is Infinite Light and Immeasurable Life. These characteristics of the Dharma have been manifesting themselves ever since timeless time as *Namoh-amida-butsu*. These virtues of Light and Life are not fiction or falsehoods. The term *-monrui* appended to the longer title *Ken Jodo Shinjitsu Kyo Sho Monrui*, refers to the passages compiled and quoted by Shinran Shonin throughout his work of some six volumes to confirm and verify that when a person trusts and takes refuge in Amida's Primal Vow, in that very instant, he or she is grasped by the Truth of Selflessness and its Reality of Togetherness, never to be abandoned until he or she comes to attain his or her Buddhahood.

In our world of imperfect human beings, it is quite evident that people who belong to the same religion have differing and even conflicting opinions as to what is "right" and "wrong." Especially is this so in the

WORDS OF SHINRAN

Even though some say that they entrust themselves to the power of the Vow, actually they feel that only the good are saved, no matter how great the inconceivable power of the Vow which saves the evil doer. To that extent they doubt the power of the Vow, lack the thought of entrusting to Other Power, and will be born in the borderland. How lamentable this is. T. Unno. *Tannisho*. XVI. pp. 30, 31

perceptions of those who hold hardfast inflexible dogmatic distinctions between what is "good" and "evil." This leads them into hypocrisy, bigotry and even acts of violence. This is because their twisted "interpretations" of "good" and "evil" have made them obsessive about imposing their views in doing away with injustice. Others by contrast, belonging to the same religion, are led selfless acts of good will, kindness, generosity and forgiveness even to give up their own lives for the sake of others. Then there are those, while claiming to be ecumenical in their outlook who harbor subtle hidden presumptions that their religious views are superior to that of others that are seen as inferior.

In such instances, of "one upmanship" an interesting question arises. Is there only one true religion? If this is so, then are all the other religions untrue? Or, are there religions that are true and untrue? If this is so, then take religion would be full of paradoxes, if not contradictions. Are all religions then false? Then, there are others who say this is why there is no need for religion. But is this actually the case?

The Buddha responded to this dilemma with the parables about the "four blind men and the elephant" and the "fingers pointing to the moon" and many others. In the first parable, a blind person cannot grasp hold of the whole elephant. Only the part he has firm hold can he know. Religions in many senses are like this. In the second case, the fingers pointing to the moon are not the actual moon itself. So religions are only fingers merely pointing in the direction of the Truth. Now, there is the problem of fingers pointing to a mere reflection of the moon on the surface of a muddy pond. The reflection of the moon is not the moon itself. Then there are fingers pointing entirely to something else or in the wrong direction.

Therefore, what are the minimal Five Precepts of Buddhism are also found in all the traditional as well as the popular religions. The injunctions "not to kill," "not to steal," "not to lie," "not to commit impure sexual acts," and "not to ingest harmful foods and drinks,"

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these moral sanctions are also found in the various religions based on morals and ethics.

In religions where such moral precepts are seen as the commandments of an Almighty Deity, to break any one of them means punishment and even death. It also means that those who submit to God's authority and obey his directives will be rewarded and prosper, while those who do not will be punished and suffer. Amida Buddha is not such a deity. For Amida does not discriminate between "good" and "evil," for Amida has vowed to save not only "good persons" who think they are "good," but especially the "evil person" who has truly come to see that he is undeniably full of blind passions and vanities, transgressions and desecrations.

According to Sakyamuni Buddha, human beings, regardless of their beliefs or non-beliefs, live between the extremes of "self denial" and "self indulgence." In religions that stress "self denial" those who reject worldly things are seen as good, what those "indulging" in the belly and genital appetites are deemed to be evil. However, Sakyamuni taught that to fall into either of these extremes leads a person to the extremes of asceticism and hedonism.

The question of faith, or what involves one's conscience is not an issue of theological debate but a problem concerning a person's inner moral and spiritual struggle. All major world religions are concerned with this problem. For example, a true Muslim will say that the real jihad is about the inner spiritual struggle and not about waging a "holy war" against infidels. For this very reason, the manifestation and expression of one's beliefs and convictions in conflict with what one is actually saying and doing to others are often at odds with what is actually going on in one's innermost hidden thoughts, feelings and secretive intentions. For, it is in our subconscious and unconscious being that our hidden impulses and compulsions, are repressed while waiting to erupt into our conscious thoughts to disrupt our words and actions in the arena of our human relationships.

This discrepancy was clearly noted by Shinran Shonin as follows:

Outwardly, we pretend
to be intelligent, proper
and dedicated,
While inwardly, in reality,
we are full of resentments,
greediness and untruths.
Thus, our persons are filled
with lies and wickedness!

Shozomatsu Wasan No. 95

rkt trans.

These words of Shinran clearly show that Buddhism has a psychological as well as a moral and spiritual

basis as found in the Eightfold Path. The Path implies that the mind, body and one's spirituality are inseparable to our well being as an integrated person.

The fact of duplicity and pretentiousness in human beings sadly has not really changed over the passing generations of man's known and recorded history in spite of man's amazing achievements. Only now, the consequences of human thought, feeling, intention, speech and action have taken on an ominous global ramification that man might make himself extinct with his own hands. The more science and technology advances, the more human beings seem to be treated as though they were mere robots without a mind, heart and a conscience without feelings and sentimentals.

Therefore, it is crucial to define what "true spirituality" is by contrasting it with what is a "seeming religiosity," or what are "false religions." Virtual reality is not reality, nor is untruth the Truth. The issue is not about religion per se, but about what is "genuine religiosity." We now are living in a world where the Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) have taken the upper hand in the various levels of society and government, especially in the hallowed halls of our educational institutions where the empirical and social sciences now reign supreme. So, it is a curious thing to note that our nation even before 9/11, and well before colonial times, has been rooted in Judeo-Christian perspectives and values. It has especially been influenced by Puritan and Calvinistic values along with the rugged pioneer mentality of adventurers and settlers who had to be self-sufficient, ingenious, and creative.

Surprisingly missing in the hyphenation of Judeo-Christianity is Islamism, though Islam is an offshoot of Judaism through Abraham's son Ishmael sired through his wife Sarah's Egyptian bondswoman Hagar. From the line of Ishmael's descendants arose Mohammed who Muslims claim to be the greatest and last of God's long line of prophets beginning with Abraham. The religious divide and conflict between Judaism, Christianity and Islam is especially seen in the efforts of one group trying to "convert" the other two over to their faith and visa versa. Those who convert over are branded apostates. The present economic, political and ethnic divide between Israelis and Palestinians can be traced to the Torah in the Old Testament, the Christianity of St. Paul in the New Testament, and to the Koran that serve to fuel and validate each their uniqueness and especially their separateness, one from the other two.

Ever since 9/11 mosques have become suspect as places for recruiting and indoctrinating converts to become terrorists and suicide bombers (*muhajadeen* – Muslim "warrior" also a "jihadist"). Mosques and synagogues and churches in the mix have become targets of arson and bombings by extremists and

fanatics on all three sides of the conflict. Obviously, the acts of violence and retaliation are the result of their misreadings and misapplications of their sacred scriptures in a way to justify a "jihad" or a "crusade" as being a "holy war" on idolators, blasphemers and infidels. In the name of their Almighty Deity," the total annihilation of their "enemy" becomes justified. The term "holy war," thereby, is a contradiction because no war that can be "holy" in terms of the inevitable horrific carnage and bloodshed that follows a war, especially in terms of so-called collateral damage.

According to Stephen Sizer, an Anglican pastor, the present conflict between Palestinians and Israelis can be traced to the following Zionist Evangelical presumptions:

1. That Jewry are the Chosen Elect of the Lord God of Israel.
2. Jerusalem must be restored to Jewry as their holy city.
3. The third temple of Jerusalem must be rebuilt and it's priesthood and the rites of offering unblemished red heifers must be reinstated.
4. A final battle – Armageddon – must be fought before the return of Christ.

The ongoing present conflict between Israelis and Palestinians is basically based on these Zionist assumptions. The conflict is living testimony as to how differing readings, and interpretations of sacred scripture leads to divisiveness, conflict and untold violence. These presumptions are based on a belief in an omniscient and omnipotent Supreme Being who can miraculously contravene causation, conditionality and magically intervene upon the facts of karma (see Matt 21:21,22).

Nevertheless, the short history of man's recorded history since well before pre-biblical times up to the present shows that there always has been and will continue to be people who have and yet will continue to believe in "false religions" as well as those, who believe in self-sacrifice and charitableness based on the Truth of Selflessness and virtues of Togetherness. The latter become "awake" as to what is "true religiosity."

We have now entered the second decade of the twenty-first century. President Barak Hussein Obama once lived next door in one of the Punahou Circle Apartments while attending Punahou School. He has been repeatedly vilified by his political opponents and evangelical clergy, both Black and White, in the most demeaning of ways. Our President has been even called a "liar" by a Congressman as he was addressing a joint session of Congress. He also has been caricatured as a primitive African savage as well as a terrorist in Muslim garb. He has been even depicted as a devil with horns on his head. Though he was born an American and is a Christian, there are "birthers" who keep "profiling"

SHINRAN'S WASAN

In seeking as to why
the Tathagata set forth Vows,
The reasons we discover
was not to forsake beings
in pain and remorse.
By endowing them all with
his healing merits and virtues.
His Mind of Great Compassion
was duly consummated.

Shozomatsu Wasan No. 38

rkt trans.

Obama as an African Muslim terrorist who has usurped the White House with a hidden agenda to overthrow our country and turn it into an Islamic nation.

Does this ongoing vilification of Presedent Obama mean that the Christianity of the Deep South in the days of Frederick Douglass (1818 – 1895) is still very much alive in our twenty-first century? The mass media antics, rhetoric, and the rantings the likes of Rush Limbaugh, Glenn Beck and Sean Hannity, as well as the characterizations of Islam as a "religion of violence and evil" by tele-evangelists such as Pat Robertson and Franklin Graham, such debunkings seem to verify that there are still two forms of Christianity as Federick Douglass personally experienced in his days as a slave. Douglass, like President Obama was born of mixed parentage. Obama's father was Black and his mother White. Douglass' father, however, was a White slave owner who impregnated his mother, an Afro-Barbadian slave (as did Abraham impregnate Hagar, Sarah's bondswoman). Both Douglass and Obama are Christians of mixed blood parentage, as is Tiger Woods who, however, says he is a Buddhist.

Later again as a "freed-slave" (again a contradiction in terms), Douglass began to experience an even more subtle form of racial prejudice and social humiliation that was psychological. The slave owners in the South used the Bible to justify their inhumane physical treatment and abuses of their slaves. They saw them as descendants of Cain and especially Noah's son Ham who was cursed and damned because Ham saw his father's nakedness (the reasons as to why are not clear). As a punishment and curse the color of Ham's skin, especially his son Canaan, began turning darker in color, and their descendants turned even darker. Based on these passages in the Bible, Blacks were seen to be no better then domestic animals and were treated as beasts of burden that had to be whipped in order to break their will and make them passive and submissive. And as a freed slave in the North, the racist Whites also used biblical passages to mask their subtle forms of economic discrimination and social rejection of Blacks there.

America today is presently faced with the problem of Americans of Mexican ancestry who see themselves as Hispanics connected to their proud Spanish language and Iberian cultures. America is also faced with the problem of Americans from Middle and South America and the Caribbean islands. Latinos refer to peoples of African origin who speak Spanish or Portuguese often with French mixed in. Latinos are a complex racial mixture as was Douglass' mother who was an Afro-Barbados-American woman of mixed blood parentage. Hispanics and Latinos are now interacting and mixing with other racial groups in the United State.

Therefore, there is the growing problem of miscegenation between Whites, Blacks, Hispanics and Latinos which also brings about the problem of mixing customs, traditions, cultures, sub-cultures, and counter-cultures (acculturation – assimilation). Each ethnic group then mixes its inherited religious beliefs and practices with that of the dominant group's religion, which in the 1500's through the 1800's, was Catholicism in Middle and South America and the Protestantism of Calvinism of Puritans in the American Colonies. Thus elements of folk religion and native local gods became mixed with Catholicism and Protestantism, not to mention elements from the various native American Indian peoples who were being displaced and decimated. Is America now becoming a mixed bag of peoples with blurred ethnicities in which the world religions and traditions are becoming like a cocktail of mixed fruits soon to be "juiced" into a blended new drink of indistinguishable fruit flavors?

Slavery also existed in ancient Greece even before the days Africans were being brought over to Western Europe and later to the Deep South. Homosexuals, lesbians and pedophiles also existed along with the perennial human vices born of the belly and genital appetites. Douglass pointed out that slavery as practiced in the Deep South in his day produced a "false Christianity" because it necessitated a contorted interpretation of the Bible to justify the misuse of slaves. On the other hand, he, as a Christian, recognized that "good deeds" and "responsible moral behavior" defines what is a "true Christian" and, therefore, the basis for a "true Christianity." In his struggles, both within and without, Douglass came to see that the Christian rhetoric of the South especially "bastardized" itself. Such specious unwarranted interpretations and readings of biblical passages end in a useless struggle between what is arbitrarily perceived to be "evil" and "good." In such a process of biblical reaching the meaning of true religion becomes lost, if not damaged.

We see this process of devious reasoning working against what is one's image of self integrity and sense of dignity that eventually ends in feelings of "hollowness" and "emptiness." When the intellect stops rationalizing,

one becomes free, said Shinran Shonin. This is indicated by the following words of Shinran: "... in the nembutsu no self working is true working" (T. Unno. *Tannisho*. X. p. 16). This discovery for a "true religiosity," therefore, was further explained by Shinran as follows:

The saying of nembutsu is neither a religious practice nor a good act. Since it is practiced without my calculation it is "non-practice." ...
loc. cite. VIII. p 13.

Because of this "awakening to one's self working as being incapable of expressing genuine sympathy and understanding," Shinran came to admit and confess:

... in this foolish being filled with blind passion, living in this impermanent world of burning house, all things are empty and vain; therefore, untrue. Only the nembutsu is true, real, and sincere.
loc. cite. Epilogue. p. 36.

Douglass as well saw the discrepancy between a "false Christianity" and "true Christianity" which Shinran Shonin saw as a tension between the falsehoods of one's logic and ones appetites. Shinran realized that it was because the benevolence of Amida's all-embracing Compassion and Wisdom's Light had illuminated the passion and self-vanities in himself that he was grasped by Amida.

The working and activity of this Clear Light of Wisdom and Life of Boundless Compassion can also be seen in King Ashoka's (304 - 232 B.C.) admonition that all proponents of differing philosophical and religious beliefs should come together in felicity and not in confrontation or conflict as follows:

One should not honour only one's own religion and condemn the religions of others, but one should honour others' religions for this or that reason. So doing, one helps one's own religion to grow and renders service to the religions of others too. In acting otherwise one digs the grave of one's own religion and also does harm to other religions. Whosoever honours his own religion and condemns other religions, does so indeed through devotion to his own religion, thinks "I will glorify my own religion. But on the contrary, in so doing he injures his own religion more gravely. So concord is good: Let all listen, and be willing to listen to the doctrines professed by others. Rock Edict, XII. Walpola Rahula. *What The Buddha Taught*. p. 4.

It should be noted that even well before Ashoka's days, there was already a two way overland and sea routes that connected India to ancient Greece and Egypt. Alexander the Great of Macedonia (356 – 332 B.C.) had already invaded the upper areas and coastal regions of northwestern India.

arrive not at the true. *Ibid.*

Then Sakyamuni points to the role of “correct knowing” and “correct understanding” as functions of inner thought processes and not the outcome of one’s tongue or hands as follows:

Those who know true as true and false as false, their abode is right-mindedness – they arrive at the true. *Ibid.*

Clearly, in these straightforward unadorned words of Sakyamuni Buddha there is no evangelical zealotry or a fundamentalist messianic bent to “convert” heathens and infidels over to his way of thinking or religion. To clearly know the facts and to be diligently mindful of the truths of Selflessness and the virtues of Togetherness even before one speaks or acts, this is the Way taught by Sakyamuni Buddha as well as Shinran Shonin.

Therefore, said the Buddha,

The signs of true religions are good will, love, truthfulness, purity, nobility, and goodness.

Best of paths is the Eightfold Path; best of truths are the Four Noble Truths. Best of states is dispassion (meaning being non-judgmental and non-attachment); best of men is the man of vision. *loc. cite.*, p. 155.
()mine.

And concerning the Eternal Buddhas in the ten directions, Sakyamuni said:

All the Buddhas teach the same truth. They point out the Path to those who go astray.

To cease from evil; to cultivate the good; to cleanse our own thoughts; to help others; This is the teaching of the Buddhas. *loc. cite.*, p. 157.

These words undergird what are the teachings, practices and realization that are the goals of a “true religion.” These words of Sakyamuni give credence to Albert Einstein’s assertion that Buddhism is a “cosmic religion.” In other words, what Sakyamuni and Shinran taught are the basis for a universal religion.

This is why I keep repeating that the Dharma (Truth of Selflessness and Togetherness) is not the monopoly of any one person, race, creed, culture, ideology, religion or special geographic site or historical era.” This was the very reason why, when Sakyamuni was about to pass away, he said to his grieving disciples: “Don’t enshrine my cremated remains to worship my remains. Let the Dharma itself alone be your very

So this means that even well before Alexander’s times, traders, travelers, adventurers and religious pilgrims were already going back and forth over these land routes and sea lanes that connected the Far East, Middle East, Near East and Western Europe all the way down the Levant into Egypt. However, when King Ashoka sent his envoys and missionaries to the Near East and even as far into Rome and down to Egypt with the spirit of ecumenism, because of the Semitic peoples’ orientations to their war-like deities who condemned idolatry, these emissaries and missionaries of Ashoka were mistaken for idolators because of their iconographic gifts and were either executed outright or sent back humiliated as heathens and infidels. These were also times when the Hebrews were a nomadic people as their Judaism was evolving into the Christianity of a fortified Vatican Rome. Islamism then later emerges claiming to be a religion based on the claims of Mohammed’s divine revelations as God’s final prophet. Even now, in the Near East Buddhist artifacts throughout the Near and Middle East are still being found to confirm that Buddhist communities in such places as Afghanistan and Pakistan as well as in Greece and Egypt did exist at one time.

According to Sakyamuni Buddha, the origin of true spirituality and real religiosity begins not in the things people say and do. If what people say and do become the primary focus, then said Sakyamuni, the thoughts in the minds and motives hidden in the hearts of people that trigger the very words they say and the very things they do become ignored.

This is why Sakyamuni Buddha said:

All that we are is the result of what we have thought; it is founded on our thoughts; it is made up of our thoughts. Dhammapada No. 1. *Praises of Buddha.* p. 15.

Therefore, said the Buddha,

If a man speaks or acts with a pure thought, happiness follows him, like a shadow that never leaves him. *ibid.*

In these words of Sakyamuni Buddha we find that what we are thinking and feeling are the underlying origins of one’s “true spirituality” or what Shinran Shonin refers to as *shin-shu* and *shin-jin* as already discussed above. So the Five Precepts are based on clearmind and a pure heart. They are not the commandments of some deity.

Therefore, the subsequent words of Sakyamuni concerns what is the nature of “false religions” as follows:

Those who mistake false for true and true for false, their abode is wrong-mindedness – they

Light and your only Guide. Let the Dharma alone be your Island and Eternal Refuge.”

This was also why the Buddha also said: ‘He who understands causality understands the Truth or the Dharma.’ Whether the Buddhas appear or not, said he, the truth of Causality and the facts of Karma remain constant and eternally operative. This actuality of Selflessness and fact of Togetherness is empirical, psychological and metaphysical. This complex fact was simply stated by Sakyamuni as follows:

When this is, that is.
That arising, that arises.
When this is not, that is not.
This ceasing, that ceases

M III p 63.

In other words, the truth and facts of causality, conditionality, relativity, and interdependency characterize what are the ever changing nature of life (*anitya*). Everything is in motion. Impermanency demonstrates the reality that nothing stands alone in and of itself, for all things and conditions in life keep changing, rotating and spiraling from the past, over into the present as they continue to keep rolling into the future.

Furthermore, Sakyamuni Buddha noted that for those who are deeply “engrossed” in their biases and prejudices, such people are constantly being conditioned by their “likes” and “dislikes.” They keep repeating things and habits that have become addictive. So the Buddha said:

It occurred to me that I have discovered this dhamma, profound, difficult to see, difficult to comprehend, peaceful, excellent, beyond the sphere of logic, subtle and to be understood by the wise. These people are devoted to their likes ... deeply engrossed with their likes, and nourished by their likes. For those who are devoted to their likes, engrossed with their likes, and nourished by their likes, this fact, namely, relativity ... or causality ... is difficult to comprehend. M I 167

Therefore, in the days of slavery in the Deep South (as well in North Western Europe], depending on whether you were a slave owner or an abolitionist, biblical passages were being selectively interpreted and applied accordingly. Because of this discrepancy Douglaas began to see the difference between the Christianity of slave owners and the Christianity of abolitionists.

According to the Buddha’s words quoted above, those who base their words and actions on self-serving thoughts and agendas, their consciences are transformed into a “false religiosity.” Even in the

thoughts and intentions of people of good will, if their words and deeds do not truly accord with the Truth of Selflessness and Reality of Togetherness, then whatever they say and do become expressions of their pride and vanity in whatever good they may have done. We see this in Sakyamuni’s criticism of Brahmans justifying their inflexible caste system through their sacred scriptures. The Sramanas (homeless mendicants), therefore, defied the caste system to embrace all levels of people as equals. According to the uniform and orderly laws of causality and conditionality, people who mistake “false for true” do not grasp what is the “truth.” They eventually become degraded by the karmic consequences of their own mistaken perceptions and twisted words and deeds because the very identical principles of causality and karma are at work!

Let us now then look into what Shinran Shonin experienced in his “deepest conscienceness” that was an awakening of “genuine spirituality” which was due to the power and virtues of Amida’s Compassion. His understanding of *shin-shu* or what is a “genuine religiosity” is cryptically stated as follows:

The saying of nembutsu is neither a religious practice nor a good act. Since it is practiced without my calculation, it is “non-practice.” Since it is also not a good created by my calculation, it is “non-good.” Since it is nothing but Other Power, completely separated from self power, it is neither a religious practice nor a good act on the part of the practitioner. T. Unno. *Tannisho* VIII. p. 13.

These words of Shinran Shonin make it very clear of what is faith in Amida from what is faith in God as understood in Catholic or Protestant Christianity, and even in Islam. For one thing, in the spirituality and religiosity of a person who has “entrusted himself” and “taken refuge” in the powers and virtues of Amida’s Sacred Name, there is the unmistakable awareness and realization that:

There is a difference in compassion between the Path of Sages and the Path of Pure Land. The compassion in the Path of Sages is expressed through pity, sympathy and care for all beings, but truly rare is it that one can help another as completely as one desires. Unno. *loc. cite.*, IV p 9.

This passage indicates that in religions based on “self-power,” or based on the doing of good deeds, such a faith is based on the hopes of making themselves worthy of enlightenment or salvation through pure acts and charity.

However, in the faith of Jodoshinshu, a person who has taken refuge in Amida Buddha is made fully awake and undeniably aware that:

In this life no matter how much pity and sympathy we may feel for others, it is impossible to help another as we truly wish; thus our compassion is inconsistent and limited. Only the saying of nembutsu manifests the complete and never enduring compassion which is true, real, and sincere.
ibid.

Therefore, *shinjin*, or true and real faith, in Jodoshinshu refers to the spirituality and religiosity of a person who has been made fully aware of his failings and inability to be truly compassionate as he continues to be illuminated by the Light of Wisdom's Selflessness and its subsequent Reality of All-embracing Togetherness that has embraced him for this very reason never to be abandoned because he is, in reality, a karma riddled being.

So Yuiembo closes the first half of the Tannisho by saying:

The master Shinran said, in the nembutsu no self-working is true working; it is beyond description, explanation, and conceivability
Unno. *loc. cite.* X. p 16.

What do these words of Shinran mean? Their meaning according to Shinran is:

When the thought of saying the nembutsu emerges decisively from within (not without), 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.

Amida's Primal Vow (of Selflessness and Togetherness) does not discriminate between the young and old, good (saint) and evil (sinner); 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 passion.

Thus, in entrusting ourselves to the Primal Vow, no other form of good is necessary, for there is no good that surpasses the nembutsu. And evil need not be feared, for there is no evil which can obstruct the working of Amida's Primal Vow. Unno. *loc. cite.* I. p. 5.
()s mine.

These words of Shinran clearly distinguish the difference between what is faith in Amida Buddha and what is faith in God.

The distinction between true faith and superstitious faith can be found in one of Shinran's *Wasans* as follows:

How truly regrettable it is
that both monk and lay
seek signs and omens
about propitious times
and good luck days!
In doing so, they worship
celestial and folk deities.
They become obsessed
with mysterious rituals
and magical rites!

Shozomatsu Wasan No. 101
rkt trans.

In Jodoshinshu there is no need for such mystical rituals or magical rites. In "false religions" such belief in miracles, signs, omens, or in mystical rituals and magical procedure seems to be the norm.

This distinction of Jodoshinshu "spirituality" in contrast to the "religiosity" in other religions, however, does not mean that one should not be compassionate and do acts of kindness and charity. For being embraced by Amida's Compassion does not mean that we can think anything we want, feel anything we want, desire anything we want, say anything we want, or do as we please in the mistaken presumption or belief that Amida will save us in spite of our karmic misdeeds. According to the laws of causation and facts of karma, there are always mental effects, emotional affects and concrete consequences that follow whatever one has thought, said and done.

This is why Shinran Shonin admonished:

... the person who purposely thinks and does what he should not, saying that it is permissible because of the Buddha's wondrous Vow to save the foolish being, does not truly desire to reject the world, nor does he consciously feel that he himself is a being of karmic evil. Hence, he has no aspiration for the nembutsu nor for the Buddha's Vow; thus, however diligently he engages in nembutsu with such an attitude, it is difficult for him to attain birth in the next life. ... SBTS-Series *Letters of Shinran.* p. 57.

Clearly these words of Shinran reinforces his further words that: "One must seek to cast off the evil of this world and to cease doing wretched deeds, this is what it means to reject the world" (*loc. cite.* No. 16. p. 52).

Like Douglass and King Ashoka, Shinran also agrees that 'people who censure others become themselves filled with blind passion and impurities. For,

says Shinran: "Are they not the sort of people who show outwardly how wise, virtuous and diligent they are, while inwardly cherishing vanity and falsehood?" (Unno. *loc. cite.*, XIII. P. 25.) Let us follow Shinran Shonin's advice. and "Just say the nembutsu and be saved by Amida," for as he says: "Besides this there is nothing else." (*loc. cite.*, II p. 6.)

This is because, we, in reality, are undeniably foolish beings riddled by karmic evils, "... living in this impermanent world of burning house," in which "all things are empty and vain; therefore, untrue. Only the nembutsu is true, real, and sincere." (*loc. cite.*, *Epilogue.* p. 36.)

Once again, Happy New Year to you all. May this year also be a meaningful and joyous one!

BUDDHIST PASSAGE AND STORIES

The fact is there is only one world, not two worlds, one meaningless and the other full of meaning, or one good and the other bad. People only think there are two worlds, due to their discriminating faculty.

If they could rid themselves of these discriminations and keep their minds pure with the light of wisdom, then they would see only one world in which everything is meaningful. BDK. *The Teaching of Buddha* (Engl/Jpnse edition) p. 414.

QUESTION AND ANSWER KORNOR

QUESTION: Is there a difference between the faith as understood in Judeo-Christianity from the faith as prescribed by Shinran Shonin?

ANSWER: Yes. The key difference is seen through Shinran Shonin's definition of what is *hakarai*. *Hakarai* generally means to ponder and contrive a course of action after careful analysis and examination of personal benefits are advantages one can gain. Shinran uses *hakarai* to differentiate what are one's calculations based on self benefits as contrasted with the work and activities of Amida's Selfless Benevolences that unflinchingly transforming one's ingratitude into gratitude and keep impertinence into penitence.

The faith based on *hakarai* entails the self presumption that the good one is doing makes him worthy of enlightenment or salvation. Religions based on such requirements usually entail an underlying fear and uncertainty of being rejected, if not punished with failing to fulfill the requirements or conditions set forth for one's salvation.

Jodoshinshu, by contrast, teaches that attempting to achieve salvation or enlightenment on one's own powers and merit creates a barrier between one's self and Amida becomes impossible for such a person to pass through.

This is why, it is from the side of Amida or Other-Power breaks through to grasp, that a person and in the very instant he takes refuge in Amida to never abandon, condemn or forsake him. Such a person of faith becomes assured of his Buddhahood.

continued from page 2

Autumn Higan 2010

\$ 20.00

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continued on next month

Shinshu Kyokai Mission of Hawaii

General Membership Meeting

Sunday

February 13, 2011

10:30 am at the Social Hall

Please Save this Date and Attend this Important Membership Meeting

Lucky Number Prizes

\$5.00 per person

FREE for

80 yrs. and over

or under 12 yrs