



The Answer

信 願 正 行



Q @ A for Shinshu Buddhists

VOLUME 01 No. 04

DECEMBER 2006

FOR QUESTIONS, COMMENTS OR CONTRIBUTIONS, PLEASE CONTACT: fukumotodsgn@earthlink.net or sensei@vhbt.org

What is the Jodo Shinshu Creed?

The Jodo Shinshu creed is called the RYOGEMON (attributed to Rennyo Shonin, 1415-1499). This translated version is by Hisao Inagaki, Professor Emeritus, Ryukoku University. Born in Kobe, Nov. 1929; graduated from Kobe City University of Foreign Languages (B.A.), Ryukoku University (M.A.), and School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London (Ph.D., 1968):

"Having abandoned the mind of self-power to perform various practices and miscellaneous acts, I have entrusted myself to Amida Tathagata with singleness of heart recognizing that he has resolved my crucial after-life problem once and for all.

I understand that at the moment such entrusting Faith arises in me, my deliverance from Samsara is settled with the assurance of birth in the Pure Land, and joyfully accept that recitation of the Nembutsu which follows is to express my indebtedness to Amida.

How grateful I am that I have come to this understanding through the benevolence of the founder, Shinran Shonin, who appeared in this country and of the masters of the succeeding generations who have guided me with deep compassion!

From now on, I will abide by the rules of conduct all my life."

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FROM *NEMBUTSU: THE WAY OF SPIRITUAL FULFILMENT*. THE FOLLOWING EXCERPTS AND QUESTIONS WILL BE SOURCED FROM THE AFORE MENTIONED BOOKLET.

What does a "Change of Heart" mean in Shin Buddhism?

When faith in Amida has been awakened, we will realize that our life flows harmoniously with Amida, endlessly and timelessly. There occurs a change in our attitude towards all things. Rather than everything being centered around ourselves, our lives become centered around Amida.

We become nothing and everything is in the Other Power ~ Amida's power. We realize that Amida is making us reflect. This is all higher consciousness, higher awareness changing our whole attitude towards life.

Our former way of thinking that "I am doing," changes completely to the realization that "I am being allowed to do whatever it is that I am doing."

Similarly, "I live" becomes "Amida makes me live."/"I think" becomes "Amida makes me think."/"I act" becomes "Amida makes me act."/"I speak" becomes "Amida makes me speak."

Amida becomes the focal point in our lives. We begin to live with a deep reverence for all things. We

begin to live with a deep reverence for all things. We begin to appreciate the world as Amida sees it; and through this appreciation, our lives become activated to the benefit of others. Through complete faith in the Other Power, we who were nothing become everything.

I have questions regarding some of the points made by the answer to this question. How can the Amida allow me to do anything? How does the Amida make me live, think, act, speak? Does this absolve me of responsibility for my actions because the Amida has deemed to control my actions? If you have these same questions and others, please contact me and I will add your comments and thoughts, along with my own, in the next issue of the Answer, issue 5.

Why do we need to be "Good" if Amida saves me just as I am?

Some people have said, "Amida saves me whether I am good or bad, so why should I bother to be good if my salvation is already assured?"

Even in Shinran's time, there was a belief among some disciples that because Amida was all loving and because of his absolute power to save all beings equally, one might live just as he or she wished. They thought that Amida did not care how they acted because he would save everyone anyway.

Although Shinshu teaches that ethical action is not necessary for salvation, Shinran emphasizes the value of good deeds. We must strive to act ethically in response to Amida's compassion. In gratitude to him, we must have responsibility towards others and ourselves. By helping others discover and follow the Buddha's teaching, by doing whatever we can to make our social life Buddhist, we serve Amida. When we keep our faith in Buddha strong, follow his teachings always, and sincerely say the Nembutsu, then we make Amida happy. Right actions must be practiced for its own sake, not for the sake of reward. Those deeds we do spontaneously, without desire, is real goodness.

The importance of daily goodness is brought out in the following parable:

Once a Buddhist disciple named Mahanama asked Sakyamuni Buddha, "Since we live such a hectic life, we can't foresee by what accident we may die. At such time we probably would not be of mind to say the Nembutsu. If that should happen, wouldn't there be a possibility that we may fall into hell?" The Buddha then answered, "Just as a tree which has always been leaning towards the west falls towards the west, a person, who has faith in his heart all the time, will be born into the Buddha's world no matter how he may die."

Shinran Shonin stated that just because you have the Antidote (the Nembutsu) that doesn't mean that you should take the poison. If you look at the metaphor and see what happens when you take poison, I believe that you will suffer. Even if you take the "antidote" you may never fully recover, you may be sick for an extended period and you have disrupted not only your life but also of those who love and care for you. Plus, is this the action of one who has truly entrusted in the Amida, or one who expresses gratitude in the

gift of salvation? I don't think so.

What is reciting the Nembutsu in Gratitude?

Nembutsu is an expression of gratitude, arising from our sense of humility, and the awareness of Amida's Boundless Love for us. In fact, the Nembutsu, when it is heard from our lips, manifests a profound affirmation of his Faith and Salvation, and our humble gratitude. And thereafter, almost by habit we begin repeating the Nembutsu, grateful of the nearness of Amida whose Grace is everywhere visible.

Shinran's teaching is that we ought to be humbly grateful for our good fortune. We ought to be grateful to the house we live in, to the food we eat, to the clothes we wear, to the roads we use, even to the piece of paper we read daily.

We ought to be grateful to the flowers that give us beauty, and to the sounds of the music which pleases us.

Our gratitude arises from the realization that it is by these things that we live and advance. "No man lives unto himself alone." Everyone and everything lives only in relation to other things. Even our salvation is not of our own making. This realization gives rise to a profound sense of humility.

This sense of humility and dependence upon the Buddha and the world is a result of awakening to faith. Spontaneously, from the depth of our hearts, we pronounce the Name of the Buddha, "Namo Amida Butsu," in gratitude.

All through our lives, the Nembutsu reminds us of our gratefulness, and when death should come we are not regretful or fearful of the end. To the person of the Nembutsu, life is eternal. How else can it be, when Amida is eternal, his Infinite Love forever, and his Infinite Light is universally everywhere.

NON SEQUITUR with apologies to WILEY

