



The Answer

真如心法



Q @ A for Shinshu Buddhists

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In this issue, I begin with this question because as I read this answer it forced me to ask myself, "What does a 'change of heart' mean in Shin Buddhism?" This issue is dedicated to trying to begin an answer to this question.

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.

As I have stated at the beginning, 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? Further, if I am being "manipulated" do I realize it or do I simply live my life normally? What do you think? As for me, sometimes I am not sure what to believe. What I believe surfaces in all of us is DOUBT.

The following question is one that I feel needs to be asked. I am going to answer as I understand it. There is no reference, other than what I have experienced and feel about Shin Buddhism. Those areas I quote from Shinran Shonin or others may not have any referable references, but if you ask questions about this, I will seek sources or recant my quote.

What is the role of DOUBT in Shin Buddhism?

Doubt, double-mindedness [utagai, futagokoro]

The direct opposite of complete entrusting to Amida's Primal Vow, which is "to hear the Vow of Tathagata and be without doubt." Doubt, the self-assertion of unenlightened beings, manifests itself as double-mindedness, in opposition to single-mindedness and wholeheartedness; as ignorance regarding the self and the working of Amida; as self-power that attempts birth in the Pure Land through ego-design (calculation or hakarai). These terms are also antonyms of hearing: "To hear is to hear the origin and end of the establishment of the Primal Vow and be without doubt" (Teaching, Practice, and Realization). Doubt does not disappear by human attempts to abandon or destroy it; it vanishes by itself when one truly hears the call of Amida and is grasped by the Primal Vow. As defined by "Collected Works of Shinran, vol. 2, p. 180."

But, what does all that mean for someone like me, one who can't seem to eliminate doubt, what then? What part does doubt play in Jodo Shinshu? How is doubt handled by Jodo Shinshu? As written above, "it vanishes by itself when one truly hears the call of Amida and is grasped by the Primal Vow." For this answer, I am going to just simply share MY understanding of DOUBT in Shin Buddhism. One that is, a work in progress.

I believe that the Teachings of Jodo Shinshu is as a beautiful, flawless, perfect diamond that is given to each of us as we are with no requirements other than to say thank you, and that thank you is Namo Amida Butsu. I believe that the

teaching is perfect, it is the limitation of Humanity (with our ego and righteous need to be unique, innovative, and different coupled with our limited understanding) that causes us to become lost in our own "HAKARAI" or calculations. I believe this is why we can't simply accept that which is True. Because of this, we need to prove our Truth and must persuade others into our perspective, versus just Trusting in the Amida for our salvation. I believe that the Settlement in our lives that the Teachings brings to us, regardless of our understanding and calculations will still save us in spite of ourselves. The Power and Gift that the Amida gives to us is the Gift of Infinite Truth and Compassion beyond our ability to comprehend or understand. Thus, all I do is accept that which is given with a simple thank you my expression of gratitude for saving me, just as I am.

Where is the doubt? It is right in front of me. Doubt never goes away, it just doesn't matter. Shinran Shonin expresses his faith in Honen Shonin when he said that even if he (Honen) leads me to the depths of Hell, I have no regrets. This shows doubt. But having accepted the Truth of Amida's salvation, he (Shinran) realizes that his doubt simply does not matter. What does matter is the settlement he found in his life and the embrace by the Amida whether he asked for it or not.

When you see the Truth of Amida, I liken it to the vast and incomprehensible visions that the Hubble telescope has gifted us, of a universe so vast as to be immeasurable. When I see the images that the Hubble has taken, it is like the face of Amida staring at me saying, "this is Truth, deal with it!" This is SONO MAMA, things as they are. It points back to me saying this is reality, and that reality brings me back to this very moment here on our planet. It make me realize how limited we are as human beings, and yet this world is ours as we live it. This is the gift of compassion, to make us realize that this very moment is the first, last, next and most important moment of our lives. It further shows if we live our lives accordingly, we will have no worries of what the afterlife brings because we will be taken care of by the Truth that Amida brings to all: The activity of Compassion that Saves us as we are. Yet, even if we re-

ject this gift of compassion, the Truth of Amida will never abandon us, only wait for us to open our hearts and minds to the Truth in front of us.

"Doubt, the self-assertion of unenlightened beings, manifests itself as double-mindedness, in opposition to single-mindedness and wholeheartedness; as ignorance regarding the self and the working of Amida; as self-power that attempts birth in the Pure Land through ego-design (calculation or hakarai)." Again, here the words point to a "double-mindedness," I guess it is our attempt to "have our cake and eat it too," or a non committed mind. I submit to you that for us this is the norm. A mind that wants to trust, but has DOUBTS to the truth of the words.

The suffering we create for ourselves is steeped in selfishness (attachments) because we DOUBT. We can not see the Truth that Amida brings to us so that we fight with all our might because we can not make heads nor tails of this revelation. So we find all the intellectual reasons why this Truth can not be, we DOUBT. I have fought these same questions and my final answer is that no matter what you believe, DOUBT will always be there, but it will not matter because of that leap of Faith (entrusting yourself) in the Truth that Amida brings will truly liberate us to live our lives as well as we are able.

I have taught my children to be doubting Thomases, not because I want them to be skeptics, but rather so that they may discover for themselves the wonders of the Amida Buddha (and of life). For there comes a time in ones life that you realize no matter what you do, it is never enough. Only when you let go and accept the embrace of the Amida, are you able to live your life freely and with settlement (receiving Anjin/Shinjin from the Amida) in the greatest matter of the afterlife.

A Son's Response:

Thoughts by Brady Fukumoto (slightly edited): I think a definition of Amida is necessary. Beginning an article with this heavy religious section will make people hesitate to read it.

In general, I think that there is too much packed into this short article. Your passion and knowledge is very evident, but

not something that the average person can necessarily relate to. People don't want to read heavy material like this in their free time, they want quick and easy answers. This is why youtube.com is so popular. There are people who will read deeper, but those people probably already have done their research.

The message is good. There is nothing wrong there, but the problem with sounding too smart is that people will be too intimidated to ask questions. For example, understanding the article requires definite knowledge of both "Amida" and "Namo Amida Butsu" which many people probably don't understand. People won't ask because they think that they should know it and that it'll be seen as a stupid question.

Final Thoughts:

As in all things, I hope this answer/commentary brings forth many questions, because only through sharing and answering of questions are we able to grow in our Faith and understanding of our religion. I reacted very strongly to the answer in "The Change of Heart" and that is why I have dedicated this entire issue to that question. This forum is limited in space and format, but in this case I felt compelled to add my personal perspectives into the mix. Please share your thoughts, feelings, understanding on this matter, I would like to share it with all who read this newsletter. If you would rather address Brady, please do so through our standard contact email address and I will forward it to him intact and without prejudice.

On A Lighter Note.

For all who DOUBT, try this out! In my travels, I came across this item on Ken Blackburn, who holds the Guinness World Record for paper airplane time aloft (27.6 seconds). How did he do it? I am attaching the pattern in a pdf, so if you doubt it, try it out for yourself and find the truth of the matter. Until the next issue, take good care and Happy New Year 2007!



*Namo
Amida
Butsu*