

HŌNEN'S AND SHINRAN'S JUSTIFICATION FOR THEIR DOCTRINE OF SALVATION BY FAITH THROUGH "OTHER POWER"

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This study is concerned with the doctrine of salvation by faith through "other power"¹ in Japanese Pure Land Buddhism, as represented by Hōnen and Shinran, the founders of Jōdo-shū and Jōdo Shin-shū respectively.² This soteriological doctrine is an "unorthodox" doctrine when compared to all other Buddhist schools in India, China, and Japan, which stress self-salvation by the individual's own efforts, power, and merits. How Hōnen and Shinran justified this great change in traditional Buddhist soteriological doctrine is the question this study tries to answer. The thesis is that they justified this change by appeal to a parti-

1. The Japanese word that is translated here is *tariki*, literally, "other power." Within the context of Hōnen's and Shinran's writings, this word has the connotation of "grace," or the total gift of salvation which Amida Buddha gives to man without regard to man's moral condition. For want of a better English equivalent, I have used the word "grace" as synonymous with *tariki* throughout this paper. *Jiriki*, or "self power," was used by Hōnen and Shinran to denote all human effort in the quest for salvation, and is thus roughly equivalent to "salvation by works" in the Christian theological sense.
2. The primary sources used for this paper are: Ishii Kyōdō (ed.), *Hōnen Shōnin Zenshū* (Tōkyō: Risōsha, 1955), and Shinshū Seikyō Hensanjo, *Shinshū Shogyō Zenshū*, 5 vols. (Kyōto: Oyōgi Kobundō and Kokyō Shoin, 1958). References to these titles have been abbreviated *HSZ* and *SSZ* respectively.

cular and quite traditional view of history in Buddhist thought—the view that there are three stages of *dharma* with corresponding, ever recurring periods in the cycle of history. Each stage is a progressive degeneration from the first stage. According to Hōnen and Shinran, all men of their time were living in the third, most degenerate stage of history, called *mappō* in Japanese. The very fact that a man lives in these eviler “latter days of the law” so corrupts his spiritual, mental, and physical capacities that he is totally incapable of saving himself by his own efforts.³ This is because the *dharma* has reached its final state and has “run down,” so that man’s only option is to rely on a power other than himself for salvation, his power being the grace of Amida

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3. Many people who have written about Hōnen’s and Shinran’s doctrine of salvation have used the word “sin” to explain why man is incapable of saving himself. These scholars have usually used “sin” to denote merely immoral activity or sometimes the innate tendency within man to do only evil. The Japanese word that has usually been translated as “sin” is *tsumi*. *Tsumi* was also used by Hōnen and Shinran, but not in the sense of “sin.” *Tsumi* literally means “defilement” or “impurity.” In the general context of Japanese religions, *tsumi* comes upon a man through such things as contact with a corpse, sexual relations at the wrong times, immoral activity, breaking taboos, and so on. One may be generally cleansed of *tsumi* by performing purification rituals. This is certainly the case in Shinto, and it is true for most Buddhist schools. *Tsumi* in no way affects a man’s natural powers, and it certainly does not stem from anything like the “Fall of Man” in Biblical and Western theological traditions. *Tsumi* is something external to man from which man may be easily cleansed by performing the right rituals. In Pure Land tradition, *tsumi* is not the cause of man’s inability to save himself, but it is simply one of the results of being born during the age of *mappō*, in which case no even ritual activity will be of any use. Man’s religious problem stems from being born in a particular age of history and not from anything like “sin.” And since there is no word in Japanese which corresponds to any Judaic-Christian theological meaning of the term, use of this word in relation to Japanese Buddhism, and Hōnen and Shinran in particular, shows a lack of clear understanding of both Japanese Buddhism and Hōnen and Shinran, as well as the Judaic-Christian tradition.

Buddha.

The following sections of this study shall attempt to demonstrate this thesis by a discussion of the content of Hōnen's and Shinran's soteriology, the three-cycle view of history in traditional Mahayana Buddhism, and their use of this Buddhist view of history in justifying their soteriologies to their critics.

I.

Hōnen and Shinran base their soteriological doctrines upon three Indian Pure Land Buddhist sūtras,⁴ *The Larger Sukhāvātī-vyūha* or "The Larger Description of the Land of Bliss" being the most important for them. This document is a discourse delivered by the Buddha on Vulture Peak in answer to his disciple Ananda's questions. The Buddha begins by enumerating eighty past Buddhas. The last Buddha is called Lokeshvarājaya, in whose presence a monk called Dhārmakara, the future Amitābha, made forty-eight vows. The content of these vows is that Dhārmakara would become a Buddha only on the condition that he should be able to help others share in the vast store of merit he would acquire in doing so, thus helping other beings attain Buddhahood. When after countless years he obtained enlightenment, his conditions held good. According to the terms of his vows, he is now lord of a paradise located in the Western quarter of the universe that he created out of the infinite merit he acquired by achieving enlightenment. For Hōnen and Shinran, the most important part

4. These sūtras are: *The Larger Sukhāvātī-vyūha*, *The Smaller Sukhāvātī-vyūha*, and *The Amitāyur-dhyāna-sūtra*. Cf. Max Muller (ed.), *The Sacred Books of the East*. Vol. 49 (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1894). The Japanese titles of these sūtras are *Daimuryōjukyō*, *Amidakyō*, and *Kanmuryōjukyō* respectively. See SSZ, I, for the standard Chinese-Kambun editions of these texts.

of this sūtra is Dhārmakara's eighteenth vow, which states the following:

If, O Blessed One, when I have attained enlightenment, whatever beings in other worlds, having conceived a desire for right, perfect enlightenment, and having heard my name, with favorable intent think upon me, if when the time and moment of death are upon them, I, surrounded by and at the head of my community of mendicants, do not stand before them and keep them from frustration, may I not, on that account, attain unexcelled, right, perfect enlightenment.⁵

It is on the basis of the eighteenth vow that Hōnen defines "faith" as intellectual acceptance of the doctrine that there was a monk called Dhārmakara who obtained enlightenment, who is now called Amida, and who created a paradise in the Western quarter of the universe to which all men may be reborn if they call upon his name in trust. When a man so trusts the vows of Amida, he is "saved," i.e., released from this phenomenal world of ever recurring birth, death, an rebirth. The Japanese word that has been translated as "salvation" is *sukui*, sometimes pronounced *kyūsai*. For Hōnen and Shinran, *sukui* meant rebirth into the Pure Land of Amida at the death of the physical body. Such rebirth both men called *ōjō*.⁶

5. *Ibid.*, p. 173.

6. The literal meaning of this word is "death." When one has obtained *ōjō*, one has "died" to the world of suffering at the death of the physical body. *ōjō* is that special kind of death which brings rebirth into Amida's paradise, which is equivalent to *nirvana* in Shinran's soteriology, but which for Hōnen, following Tendai doctrine, is a secondary place into which one is reborn in a perfect physical, mental, and spiritual condition so that one can perfectly hear, understand, and practise the disciplines leading to enlightenment. In other words, *ōjō* for Hōnen is a secondary stage on the way to *nirvana*. Cf. Kaneko Daiei, "The Meaning of Salvation in the Doctrine of Pure Land Buddhism," *The Eastern Buddhist*, Vol. 1, no. 1 (September 1965), p. 48, and Harper Havelock Coates and Ryūgoku Ishizuka, *Hōnen: The Buddhist Saint* (Kyōto: The Society for the Publication of Sacred Books of the World, 1949), pp. 276—277.

Hōnen drew a very sharp distinction between two kinds of Buddhist soteriology. These two categories are *shōdomon*, the "holy gate" or the "path of sages," and *jōdomon*, or the "pure land gate." These two categories are also called the "difficult path" and the "easy path" respectively.⁷ He defined the "holy gate" as all the traditional schools of Buddhism whose soteriologies are based upon good works and religious exercises such as meditation, scholarship, the ascetic life of monastic discipline, and generally any attempt to realize enlightenment by one's own efforts.⁸ Hōnen defined the "pure land gate" as that soteriological doctrine which did not rely upon traditional Buddhist disciplines of self-effort (*jiriki*), but which totally relied upon a power other than human activity, namely, the power of Amida Buddha (*tariki*).⁹ Hōnen believed that the "pure land gate", or the "easy path," was to be found only in his teachings. He also believed that his doctrines were man's only option in this evil and degenerate "latter days of the law."¹⁰ We must now turn to the specific content of Hōnen's "pure land gate."

For Hōnen, the important thing for a Buddhist was belief and trust in the vows of Amida, especially the eighteenth vow. This he called *anjin*, or "setting of the mind."¹¹ *Anjin* is of two kinds. The first is called *so no anjin*¹² This is the "setting of mind" in which one desires to be reborn in the Pure Land because one is "fed up" with living in the phenomenal world of suffering, death,

7. *Senchakushū*, HSZ, p. 433.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 696.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 681.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 964.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 980.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 981. Also cf. Beatrice Lane Suzuki, *Impressions of Mahayana Buddhism* (Kyōto: The Eastern Buddhist Society, 1940), pp. 68—77.

and decay. But this kind of *anjin* is not enough. A man must also have “particular setting of the mind,” or *betsu no anjin*,¹³ which partakes of three characteristics. First of all, there is *shijoshin*, or “sincerity.” “Sincerity” meant for Hōnen that a devotee must have steadfastness in his devotion to Amida to the degree that nothing that happens to him, good or evil, leads him away from Amida.¹⁴ Second, there must be *jīnshin*, meaning devotion to Amida only, and not to any other *bodhisattva*, Buddha, or divinity.¹⁵ Thirdly, there must be *ekō hotsugan shin*, or the desire to transform the merits which one has earned by leading a morally good life into rebirth into the Pure Land.¹⁶ Thus, *anjin* is a way of placing complete trust in Amida’s vow to save all men, and it is also a way of developing and strengthening this trust.

Hōnen connects another element with *anjin* called *kigo*, or “karma leading to rebirth in the Pure Land,”¹⁷ which in turn involves four disciplines: the recitation and study of *The Larger and Smaller Sukhāvati-vyūda* and *The Amitāyur-dhyānā-sūtra*, meditation upon the blissful existence one will live if reborn into the Pure Land, the exclusive invocation of Amida’s name, called *nembutsu*, and making offerings to Amida only. *Kīgo* is the “starting practice,” or the beginning discipline for those being initiated into Pure Land Buddhism. Hōnen continued *kigo* with *sago*, or “preforming practices,”¹⁸ which in turn involves four disciplines: (1) a man must respect and honor Amida above all things, and he must continually praise the three Pure Land

13. *Senchakushū*, HSZ, p. 454.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 455.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 456.

16. *Ibid.*

17. *Ibid.*, p. 457.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 459.

sūtras for the message of salvation contained therein, (2) a man must be single hearted, i.e., he must not allow his thoughts to be mixed with the teachings and disciplines of other Buddhist schools, (3) a man must continually recite *nembutsu*, and (4) a man must have perseverance in these disciplines. *Sago*, then, is simply the perfection of the "starting practices."

Despite the great detail with which Hōnen discusses the above disciplines, he did not believe that these activities were the essential aspects of his soteriological doctrine.¹⁹ The whole kernel of his doctrine of salvation is contained in the repetition of *nembutsu* in faith. The other disciplines are merely human expressions of gratitude for Amida's grace and saving power. They are not acts which earn merit. *Anjin*, *kigo*, and *sago* are all contained within *nembutsu*. A believer needs nothing else to effect his rebirth into the Pure Land at his death.²⁰ Once believing this, which is what Hōnen meant by faith, a man should call upon this name as many times as possible during his lifetime by repeating over and over again the phrase *Namu amida butsu*, or "Hail to Amida Buddha." This is all that is involved in the *nembutsu*, and this is why Hōnen called his doctrine the "easy path."

It should now be clear that for Hōnen the repetition of *nembutsu* is a *sign* that a man is placing full trust in the saving power of Amida and that he is rejecting his own efforts in the attainment of *ōjō*. At the same time, paradoxically, *nembutsu* and not faith

19. *Ibid.*, p. 749.

20. Cf. Ryūkyō Fujimoto, "Hōnen and His Doctrine of the Pure Land," *Journal of Ryūkyō University*, No. 345 (December, 1950), pp. 24—44, and Masaharu Anesaki, "Hōnen: The Pietist Saint of Japan," *Transactions of the Third International Congress for the History of Religions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1908), pp. 122—128.

is that which effects man's salvation, and it is still a work depending upon human activity. It is something man *must* do before *ōjō* is granted to him. It appears that faith is not a total gift of grace from Amida to man, but is a work of man depending upon "selfpower," or *jiriki*. The fact that Hōnen admonished people to many repetitions of *nembutsu* daily, and the fact that he is said to have repeated it himself seventy thousand times daily would seem to indicate this.²¹ Man has a very important part to play in the soteriological process.

There is, however, a fundamental contradiction in Hōnen's soteriology at this point. Somewhat neglecting the first half of the eighteenth vow, he states that "good works" in the sense of moral activity and religious disciplines have no influence whatsoever in obtaining *ōjō*, since *ōjō* is a total gift to man depending upon *tariki* and not *jiriki*.²² And yet, Hōnen said that man must practice *nembutsu*, and that this is the only human activity which gains *ōjō*.²³ This fundamental contradiction in Hōnen's soteriology is the basic point of departure between him and Shinran.

Shinran accepted all of Hōnen's presuppositions when he converted to Pure Land Buddhism and became Hōnen's favorite disciple, including the distinction between *shōdomon* and *jōdomon* types of Buddhism. Like Hōnen, Shinran maintained that all men are spiritually blind and too weak mentally and physically to attain salvation through any sort of human effort by the very fact that men now live in the age of *mappō*. Therefore, since man's only option is to rely upon Amida's efforts in the process

21. *Ibid.*, p. 691.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 694.

23. Cf. E. Steiniller-Oberlin, *Les Sectes bouddhiques japonaises* (Paris: Les Éditions G. Crès et Cie, 1939), p. 200.

of salvation, he too believed the "pure land gate" to be the only possible way of salvation, since only it depended upon *tariki* and not *jiriki*.²⁴ We must now show how Shinran was more consistent with these presuppositions than was Hōnen.

Shinran taught that man was saved by faith alone. But unlike Hōnen, who defined "faith" as intellectual acceptance of a doctrine, Shinran said that faith was a total gift given by Amida despite man's moral, intellectual, and spiritual condition. Such faith, he maintained, had three elements: (1) the three attitudes presented in the eighteenth vow, (2) the achievement of Buddha Nature, and (3) the inner awareness of one's evil nature and the need for grace.

The attitudes of faith which Shinran believed to be presented in the eighteenth vow are sincere mind, trustfulness, and the desire for rebirth into the Pure Land. Man does not obtain these elements by his own efforts. They are given to man through the grace of Amida Buddha. They are elements of Amida's mind which he makes part of man's mind. Not only are these three attitudes of faith as qualities of Amida's mind given to man, but even the ability to act according to these attitudes of faith are a free gift from Amida.²⁵ "Sincere mind" is the beginning point from which trustfulness and the desire for *ōjō* begin. For Shinran, the chief feature of Amida's vow to save all sentient beings was his infinite sincerity, meaning that Amida *really intends* to save all beings or not accept final *nirvana*. Man's sincerity springs from awareness of Amida's sincerity, this awareness being a total

24. Cf. D. T. Suzuki, *Miscellany on the Shin Teaching of Buddhism* (Kyōto: Shinshū Otaniha Shūmushō, 1949), p. 142.

25. *Kyōgyōshinshō*, SSZ, II, pp. 48—50.

gift of grace. When a man has been given this awareness, he begins to trust Amida and to desire *ōjō*.²⁶

Shinran's interpretation of faith as the achievement of Buddha Nature was his way of dealing with a fundamental metaphysical doctrine of Mahayana Buddhism. By the term "Buddha Nature," he meant the fundamental *psychological* unity between man and Amida in the relationship of faith, when in most Buddhist metaphysical traditions "Buddha Nature" has meant the fundamental *ontological* unity between all particulars in the universe. There are two aspects of Shinran's interpretation of Buddha Nature. In the first place, he said that because man and Amida are separated by an ontological and spiritual gap that can never be bridged in any way by man's efforts, the "unity" between man and Amida comes totally from the side of Amida through the gift of faith as the transfer of the above mentioned qualities of Amida's mind. This means, in the second place, the Buddha Nature is not a metaphysical category intended to show that all things are one reality. It is rather a psychological category describing man's relation to Amida in the relationship of faith,²⁷ and hence is a way of defining faith as "psychological egolessness."

Lastly, faith for Shinran meant the awareness of one's evil nature and the need for grace. Man must accept himself for what he is—a finite human being ridden with passions and desires over which he has no control. Man must become aware of the fact that he is totally incapable of freeing himself from bondage to his passions. This awareness of one's nature and the need for help

26. *Ibid.*, pp. 51—52.

27. *Ibid.*, pp. 137—139.

outside of oneself in the form of grace is not something man comes to realize by himself. Even this double realization is a gift given to man by Amida. At the time when Amida gives man this awareness, man knows at the same time that he is accepted for what he is by Amida's compassion. Then man no longer relies upon his own efforts, because he realizes that this is useless, but solely trusts in Amida's power to give him *ōjō*.²⁸ Thus a man is saved when he has been given the three elements of faith—the three attitudes presented in the eighteenth vow, Buddha Nature, and awareness of the need for grace.

Shinran is clearly more logically consistent than is Hōnen with his presuppositions. Man is saved only because Amida gives a man faith. A man then utters *nembutsu* as an expression of gratitude for this gift, although this is not necessary. However, for Hōnen *nembutsu* is both a necessary human activity for gaining *ōjō* and a way of solidifying one's faith, defined as intellectual acceptance of a doctrine. For Shinran, faith, which is essentially trust in Amida, is the "root cause"²⁹ of *ōjō*.³⁰ As has been indicated, this is the fundamental difference between Hōnen's and Shinran's soteriologies.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 140.

29. *Shinjin ihon. Ibid.*, p. 58.

30. Shinran greatly diverged from the general understanding of faith as intellectual acceptance of a doctrine in Buddhist tradition. Alfred Bloom has pointed out that Shinran read his idea of faith into and not out of his Chinese translation of *The Larger Sukhāvati-vyūha*. He did this by the application of certain principles of Japanese grammar devised for reading Chinese texts. By applying these principles to the Chinese translation of the eighteenth vow, Shinran implied that the text itself said that faith and the mind of Amida are given to man by Amida himself. He thus twisted the text to suit his own religious perspective. By adding the honorific

II.

Buddhism in general has had very little interest in historical change and the meaning of such change. There is, however, one exception to this principle: the scheme of periodization of the gradual degeneration of the Buddha's law or *dhārma* from the time of Gautama's death until the present. This scheme of dividing up the periods of the effectiveness of the Buddha's Law played no significant role in Buddhism except for the Japanese Buddhist schools of the Kamakura Period,³¹ the period in which Hōnen and Shinran lived.

This threefold scheme of periodization is basically as follows: (1) the period of correct doctrine, called *saddhārma* in Sanskrit and *shōbō* in Japanese, lasting for five hundred years after the Buddha's death, (2) the period of counterfeit doctrine, called *pratirūpa-dhārma* in Sanskrit and *zōbō* in Japanese, lasting for the next one thousand years, and (3) the latter days of the law, called *paschima-dhārma* in Sanskrit and *mappō* in Japanese, lasting for the next ten thousand years.

During the period of *shōbō*, monks were able to know the *dhārma* which the Buddha taught, understand it perfectly, and put it into practice through personal discipline, thereby attaining *nirvana*

ending *seshimetamareru* to the term *shishin ekō*, which usually means "to transfer merit," he converted the meaning of the original phrase to an act of someone superior to man, Amida Buddha, transferring undeserved merit to man. The Sanskrit and Chinese texts of this document do not imply this at all. Compare *SSZ*, I, p. 24 and *SSZ*, II, pp. 604—605, and see Alfred Bloom, "Shinran's Philosophy of Salvation by Absolute Other Power," *Contemporary Religions in Japan*, vol. 5, no. 2 (June 1964), pp. 137—142.

31. Cf. Masatoshi Doi, "The Buddhist Interpretation of History," *Studies in Christian Religion*, vol. 30, 1 (July, 1958), p. 62.

by their own efforts. During the period of *zōbō* many monks listened to the correct doctrine, but those who understood it and successfully practised it were very few. During the period of *mappō*, there is no correct *dhārma* taught, and there is no one who would be able to understand it even if it were correctly taught. There is, therefore, no one who attains *nirvana* by his own efforts through the disciplines of Buddhism. During the period of *mappō*, man's physical, mental, and spiritual capacities have been so corrupted by the very fact that he is alive during this age that it is impossible for any man to attain *nirvana* by personal effort and discipline. The assumption here is that the period of history in which one lives determines one's physical, mental, and spiritual capacities.

There are many Mahayana *sūtras* which deal with this scheme of history. The above view is set forth in the *Candra-garbhāvai-pula* and the *Mahamaya Sūtras*.³² Connected with this periodization of the gradual breakdown of the Buddha's *dhārma* is the idea that the Buddha invented various doctrines to match the various conditions of individuals living in all three of these periods. What is appropriate doctrine for one period is not appropriate doctrine for another period, even though all the teachings of the Buddha are equally true. This idea, called "skill in means," (*upāya*), is especially set forth in the *Lotus Sūtra*.³³ Here the Buddha gives assurance that his teachings will be propagated in the "latter days of the law" according to the abilities

32. I have not been able to obtain English or Japanese translations of these *sūtras*. See Coates and Ishizuka, *op. cit.* p. 195.

33. H. Kern (trans.), *The Saddharma-Pundarika-Sūtra* (Vol. XXI of *The Sacred Books of the East*, ed. Max Muller. 50 vols, Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1894), pp. 60—141.

of persons living during this period.

III.

Both Hōnen and Shinran believed that the time in which they lived was the period of *mapphō*, and both men believed that this assumption rested upon clear empirical evidence. They both were active during the latter half of the twelfth century during the time of transition between the sudden collapse of the Kyōto Court of the Heian Period and the beginning of Japanese feudalism of the Kamakura Period. This was a time of great political, social, moral, and religious upheaval. It was a time of constant civil war between the Taira and Minamoto families over which family was to unify Japan under its central political authority. Life was rather cheap. Even the established schools of Pre-Kamakura Buddhism had declined as a cultural influence and religious force among the masses, since they too were involved in the power struggles of the time, primarily for the economic reason of keeping temple lands tax free and politically free of central secular authority. To accomplish this they, like the secular land owners of the time, hired their own armies of mercenaries and trained their monks in the arts of warfare. All aspects of society were breaking down, and this seemed to indicate to the majority of Japanese living during this period that the age of *mapphō* had indeed arrived.³⁴

No previous school of Buddhism in Japan before Hōnen had taught exclusive faith in Amida as the only way to salvation and

34. Cf. Edwin O. Reischauer and John K. Fairbank, *East Asia: The Great Tradition* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1960), pp. 544 ff. and Sir George Sansom, *Japan: A Short Cultural History* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1962), pp. 327 ff. These two works contain excellent accounts of this

the non-value of traditional Buddhist disciplines and doctrines based upon self-effort.³⁵ When Buddhism reached Japan in the sixth century A.D. from China via Korea, Pure Land ideas and practices were important aspects of the schools which were introduced.³⁶ For example, Pure Land practices, including *nembutsu*, formed an important part of Tendai doctrine for monks and laymen alike. For the monk, faith in Amida and austere practices of meditation and asceticism were used as a means to overcome all duality on the grounds that since all things are One because all is Buddha Nature, the truth that leads to *nirvana* is One. Therefore, all the practices and disciplines of Buddhism are equally valuable and are to be used. In other words, the enlightening experience of truth attained by meditation is identical with the truth experienced through faith in Amida. For the layman, who is involved in the concrete problems of human existence and does not have time to become a learned monk,

period of Japanese history. For an excellent description of court life during the Heian Period, see Ivan Morris, *The World of the Shining Prince* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1964).

35. Faith in Amida and the Pure Land was not the creation of medieval Japan. Worship of Amida was derived from Mahayana Buddhism in Northern India in the first century A.D., and was transmitted to China about the year 200, where it became an important aspect of all Buddhist schools, including to some degree Ch'an (Zen).
36. M. W. de Visser points out that in 584 A.D. Soga no Umako received a stone image of Maitreya and erected a temple for it near his estate in Ishikawa. Eleven years later, a Korean priest was sent as tribute and became a teacher of Shōtoku Taishi, and after the latter's death in 621, this priest declared he would die a year later, and at the moment of death meet Shōtoku Taishi in Amida's paradise. This paradise is represented in a famous and beautiful embroidery called the *Tenjūjoku Mandara*. Cf. M. W. de Visser, *Ancient Buddhism in Japan*, I (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1935), p. 322. For the traditional Japanese account of this story, see William George Aston (trans.), *Nihongi* (London: Kegan Paul, 1896), pp. 101—149.

faith was a way of earning rebirth in the Pure Land, and once being reborn there in a state of physical, moral, mental, and spiritual perfection he will hear the doctrine taught by Amida himself, successfully practise it, and then easily attain *nirvana*.³⁷ It must be noted that Hōnen and Shinran were both ordained Tendai priests, and received their early religious training within this tradition on Mount Hiei, the center of Buddhism during their time.

However, the spread of Pure Land teachings in Japan during the Kamakura Period represented a revolutionary change in the religious outlook of the Japanese people. One of these changes was the transformation of the Buddhist clergy in the Pure Land Schools. Amida Buddhism, because of Hōnen and especially Shinran, started a trend away from the traditional concept of a clergy who left the world as celibate followers of monastic discipline towards the concept of a clergy who lived in society a life which differed little from the layman's. Thus the question which many Buddhist scholars and religious leaders raised was not concerned with the teaching of faith in Amida as such, but with Hōnen's and Shinran's teaching which placed *exclusive* importance in faith in Amida to the radical exclusion of all other traditional doctrines and disciplines. The question was how this radical change could be justified. On what religious and philosophical grounds within Buddhism itself could such

37. Masaharu Anesaki, *History of Japanese Religion* (Tōkyō: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1964), pp. 113—122. In the Nara Period three priests named Raikō, Chikō, and Gyōgi, in lectures and art forms, brought Pure Land teachings to the attention of the general public. In the Heian Period, Dengyō, the founder of Japanese Tendai Buddhism, and Jikaku, a famous Tendai patriarch, invoked Amida's name in connection with their special teachings. Cf. Coates and Ishizuka, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

a change in doctrine be considered "orthodox"?

Hōnen and Shinran tried to answer this question by appeal to the fact that all Buddhists of their time accepted the presupposition that the age of *mappō* had arrived. Once more, both men said that in this age, since man's natural capacities were so corrupted, man could not save himself by practising the traditional Buddhist disciplines. Man's only option was faith in Amida. This is clearly seen in Hōnen's use of the terms *shōdomon* and *jōdomon* to distinguish his teachings from all other schools of Buddhism. He justified this distinction on the basis that in the "latter days of the law" only the "pure land gate" could answer man's spiritual needs and bring him release from the pain and suffering of this world.³⁸ Only his teachings were based upon *tariki*, while the other schools of Buddhism were based upon *jiriki*. For Hōnen, this was the problem with the schools of Buddhism of his time. In the age of *mappō*, these schools were asking man to do what he could not do.³⁹ Man might have been able to save himself in the periods of *shōbō* and *zōbō*, but this was not the case now.⁴⁰

Shinran essentially follows Hōnen in the idea that in the age of *mappō* no other teaching is possible except Pure Land doctrine, as taught by him.⁴¹ He differed from Hōnen in that he placed emphasis on faith and not *nembutsu*. Man is saved because Amida gives man faith, and then man utters *nembutsu* as an expression of gratitude for the gift of salvation. But even in this fundamental difference from Hōnen, his justification of his

38. *Senchakushū*, HSZ, pp 451; 749.

39. *Ibid.*, p 451.

40. *Ibid.*, pp. 462—465.

41. *Kyōgyōshinshō*, SSZ, II, pp. 166—168.

soteriology is in no way different. He too believed that no other doctrine except his own was suitable in the “latter days of the law,” since only his teachings totally relied upon *tariki*.

But this is only one-half of the way in which Hōnen and Shinran used the theory of *mappō* as justification of the “orthodoxy” of their soteriologies. We have seen that the *Lotus Sūtra*, the chief authoritative scripture of the Tendai School, teaches that the Buddha invented various disciplines and doctrines which he said would be taught to individuals in each of the three periods of history according to their mental, physical, and spiritual capacities. Connected with this idea is a specific promise made by the Buddha that in the age of *mappō* a form of correct doctrine would be preached that would be appropriate to the times.⁴² Hōnen believed that *nembutsu* as the “easy way” was the teaching promised by the Buddha in the *Lotus Sūtra*, and thus his doctrine is the only appropriate doctrine during the age of *mappō*.⁴³ Likewise, Shinran used the very same justification for the “orthodoxy” of his position that faith only through *tariki* can save a man, and not the “difficult path” of *jiriki*.⁴⁴ He too believed that his soteriological doctrine was the doctrine which the Buddha promised would be taught during the age of *mappō*, so that only his doctrine was suitable to the capacities of people living in this age.⁴⁵

In defending the “orthodoxy” of their position, we have seen that both Hōnen and Shinran appealed to an idea that was

42. H. Kern, *op. cit.*, pp. 60—141, 301—302.

43. *Senchakushū*, HSZ, p. 465.

44. *Kyōgyōshinshō*, SSZ, II, p. 33.

45. It should be noted that Hōnen and Shinran were not the only religious leaders of their day who justified their teachings in this manner. Nichiren,

accepted by all forms of Buddhism in Japan, this being the promises made by Shakyamuni as written in the *Lotus Sūtra*. This idea of the three cycles of history was a basic doctrine in Tendai tradition, and since both Hōnen and Shinran received their training in Buddhist thought within the Tendai tradition, they were using a widely accepted idea in pre-Kamakura Buddhism to undercut these schools and at the same time to justify their own teachings. Once more, they both did it in exactly the same way, which is really not very strange since Shinran was a disciple of Hōnen. Both men taught that the traditional schools of Japanese Buddhism which criticized their "orthodoxy" were in fact themselves "unorthodox," even though they were appropriate to the ages of *shōbō* and *zōbō*.

the founder of Nichiren Buddhism, and a contemporary of Hōnen and Shinran, justified his position in the same way.