A Research on Shin Buddhist Ethics

A dissertation by

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Presented to
The Faculty of the
Graduate School of Letters
Department of Shin Buddhism
Ryukoku University
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Kyoto, Japan
January 2019

Abstract

Is there such a thing as Shin Buddhist Ethics? What is it that a Shin Buddhist does? Where is the line between Shin ethics and self-power, or *jiriki*? One can argue that Shin Buddhism is not as well known in America as some of the other schools of Buddhism precisely for its perceived lack of "applicability."

For the most part, if there is any research done on Shin ethics, it is almost always on the descriptive and historical development of various Shin religious organizations. Although this is important, there needs to be an investigation into the doctrinal justification for why Shin Buddhist ethics is not only a vital course of study, but that its essential message has much to contribute to the conversation of ethics in general.

Shin ethics in Japan was historically dominated by the concept of the two truths theory (*shinzoku nitai* 真俗二諦), which became a major problem that involved incorporating State Shinto rituals such as emperor worship from the Meiji Period (1868–1912) onward to the close of World War II. As we shall see, the legacy of the two truths theory makes its way into overseas Shin propagation, thus creating a religious identity crisis for Shin Buddhists not just in Japan, but in America as well. It has been about seventy years since the close of the Second World War, but there is yet to be a definitive ethical standard for Shin Buddhists that has since replaced the two truths theory, something that was thought to have ended along with the war itself.

The solution to this problem is the Pragmatic Approach. It consists of the Soteriological foundation, and Individual and Social ethics. The Soteriological foundation is the doctrinal basis of Shin ethics and its contents are "zero-shinjin" and the "three emphatics." From the Soteriological foundation, there are the Individual and Social ethics, which list the practical characteristics of a Shin Buddhist. Finally, the Pragmatic Approach more clearly,

comprehensively, and authentically defines Shin ethics as well as the social and religious identity of the nembutsu practitioner.

My proposal of the Pragmatic Approach not only provides doctrinal basis for Shin ethics, but it also firmly grounds the focus onto what is most central to this teaching: Amida's salvific Vow Power. Finally, Shin Buddhists should also firmly be aware of and make it known to the outside world that we are embraced in infinite wisdom expressed as compassion, and as recipients of that compassion, we should boldly and audaciously then *participate* in it. In other words, we should "approximate" that compassion as best as we can. This understanding is made possible through the Pragmatic Approach. Thus, recitation of the nembutsu as a way of expressing gratitude, or *button hōsha* 仏恩報謝, is also shown in the way we live out our lives.

A note on usage

Japanese scholars are generally written in the order of family name followed by their first name. Their citations in the Bibliography are also found in this order. Non-Japanese scholars are written by first name followed by last name. Their citations are also found in order of their last names. Japanese or Buddhist technical terms will be written in the order of the translation of the term with phrases in quotation marks, followed by romanization in italics and the kanji, unless it is otherwise explained in detail. Two examples are: 1. two truths theory (*shinzoku nitai* 真俗二諦), and 2. "How joyous I am!" (*yorokobashī kana* 慶哉).

"*Tannishō*" and "*Kyōgyōshinshō*" are used instead of their English translations, unless otherwise stated. Names and translations of works that can be found in the *Collected Works of Shinran* will be used. Commonly used Sanskrit and Pali terms such as "vinaya," "sila," "samatha," and "vipassana," are written without their diacritical marks because they have made their way into the English lexicon and do not need further explanation. Historical figures that are introduced for the first time in this paper will have their name Romanized followed by their kanji if given and then their years. For example Shinran Shonin 親鸞聖人 (1173–1263). The honorific terms "聖人, 上人, 菩薩, 和尚, 善師, 大師," will only be used for Shinran once and then dropped for the remainder of the paper.

The words "era" and "period" to signify a historical time frame should be understood as interchangeable terms, although I do tend to use the word "era" for historical episodes that happened in Europe or America, and "period" for those that happened in Japan. Non-English terms introduced for the first time are written in italics. Finally, all translations, whether they are terms, phrases, or sentences are those of the writer unless there is a published translation already

provided. In many cases, I have provided the original Japanese citation in the endnotes for the readers convenience.

Introduction

Is there such a thing as Shin Buddhist Ethics? We may hear of other religious traditions having a set of principles that are based on the religious doctrine that each of its adherents must live by, such as the Ten Commandments. However, Shin Buddhism both in Japan and overseas, seems to be unclear in its ethical principles. Why is that so?

Growing up, I remember going to Sunday services and reciting the "Golden Chain," "Six Paramitas," and "Eightfold Path," and learning about the ways in which the Buddha lived his life to be able to attain enlightenment. I would try to implement these principles in my own life but, who has the time to go through a laundry list of things in order to assess one's own emotions? But I assumed that this was what a Buddhist does, and these teachings were important to a practicer's life. As I got older and learned more about Buddhism, I realized that other schools had a specific practice or way of living, whereas the Shin teaching was relatively silent on these issues. However, I would often get questions about what a Shin Buddhist believes in and does. I myself wondered about these things. It was not until recently that I realized that Shin Buddhism does not have a specific set of behavioral guidelines that its followers must abide by. Yet, we call ourselves Shin Buddhists. What does that mean then? How does a Shin Buddhist live? What is the Shin Buddhist lifestyle?

These are the questions I not only felt but also think is a large reason why, despite the fact that this Buddhist tradition has been in America for so long, Shin gets overlooked or neglected by the general population. But is it really the case that the Shin way of life is ambiguous or is it because no one has taken the time to systematize the concrete lifestyle of a Shin Buddhist? In fact, why is it so hard for us to make this concrete? These questions sparked my interest in pursuing this field of research. The Shin Buddhist way of life, or the way of life of any school of

thought, is actually a study of ethics because it is concerned with how to conduct one's self in a particular situation, which in this case would be life in general. Let us begin with our venture into Shin ethics by looking first at the general definitions of ethics.

Western Philosophy Ethics

According to the *Encyclopedia of Philosophy on Ethics* it explains:

> Ethics is the branch of philosophy that tries to understand a familiar type of evaluation: the moral evaluation of people's character traits, their conduct, and their intuitions. Metaethics is concerned with what such judgments means, what, if anything, they are about, whether they can be true or false, and if so what makes them true or false.[1]

In addition in *Basics of Philosophy* defines "ethics" as follows:

> The word 'ethics' is derived from the Greek 'ethos' (meaning custom or habit). Ethics differs from morals and morality in that ethics denotes the theory of right action and the greater good, while morals indicate their practice. Ethics is not limited to specific acts and defined moral codes, but encompasses the whole of moral ideals and behaviors, a person's philosophy of life. It asks questions like "How should people act?"(Normative or Prescriptive Ethics), "What do people think is right?"(Descriptive Ethics), "How do we take moral knowledge and put it into practice?"(Applied Ethics), and "What does 'right' even mean"(Meta-Ethics). [2]

From these two quotes "ethics" in western philosophy is defined as the moral evaluation of behavioral codes, traits, and principles that humans live by, and identifying everything from what right and wrong is, to what morality itself means and how we can arrive at those judgments.

This paper will address primarily the Shin interpretation of metaethics and assess the descriptive ethical actions of the religious institution known as the Hongwanji, a Shin Buddhist organization. Further, this paper will show the inherent nature of skepticism that Shin Buddhism exhibits towards normative ethics, based on the doctrinal principles clarified by Shinran Shonin 親鸞聖人 (1173–1263). However, in doing so, Shin Buddhism and the Hongwanji lends itself to misinterpretation and criticism as a religion that makes little to no suggestions in terms of applied ethics in social issues throughout history. These are details I

intend to address over the course of this paper. For now, this section will go into the basic definitions of the main forms of normative ethics.

The first is deontological ethics. Deontological ethics explains that there are certain moral principles or rules which we must always follow and never violate, regardless of whether by breaking them, they might actually produce better or more wholesome results. This can be understood simply as recognizing and judging one's duty or obligation to a moral principle regardless of what the outcome may be. Deontology emphasizes the separate importance of each individual person and his/her actions, instead of the value of maximizing the sum of benefits to the individuals involved, which is attributed to another normative theory. In other words, deontology focuses on the action itself as being either good or bad rather than looking at the ends of those actions.

Consequentialism is the theory that judges whether something is right or wrong based on their consequences. An action is morally right if and only if there is no other action that the person could choose in which the outcome has a greater expected value. A common form of consequentialism is utilitarianism, where actions are judged right or wrong based on the greatest amount of happiness or benefit for the majority of people involved. This is quite simply the idea of the "greatest good for the greatest number." In consequentialist moral theory, it is the results that matter, not the means by which we reach them. What matters in determining the rightness or wrongness of actions is the total utility that results, not how it is distributed among individuals.

Deontological theory is agent-relative because a reason for action is dependent upon on the person involved. However, consequentialist theory is agent-neutral in that the only thing that matters is the outcome of a given action, in other words, the objective value is the most

important instead of the agent involved. Another characteristic of consequentialism is that it is teleological, or there is a purpose or goal-oriented motivation to the action.

Another normative theory is virtue ethics. Whereas deontology focuses on the agent's actions and consequentialism focuses on the results of a set of actions, virtue ethics focuses primarily on the character of the agent. What is virtue and how does one become virtuous? This theory is concerned with the individual and not an impersonal point of view that takes into account all individuals at once. The most notable kind of virtue ethics is by Aristotle, or more widely known as virtue ethics. Here the idea of *eudaimonia*, which loosely translates to happiness or human flourishing, is the key to live ethically. In virtue ethics, right action is that which leads to the well-being of the individual. According to Aristotle, the function of the human soul is to live; its virtues are those qualities that enable it to live well. One must continue to develop the skills and mindset in order to become a virtuous person. Honesty, courage and compassion are just some of the many virtues that one must continue to develop. Virtue ethics is not agent-neutral as it recognizes that one's close friends, family and relatives all are directly involved in a person's happiness.[3]

Eastern versus Western Philosophy Ethics

Before we can begin to talk about Shin Buddhist ethics, it is important to take into account some significant differences between eastern and western ideologies in religion and philosophy. Whether current understandings of eastern religious and cultural ethics are a result of Buddhist influence or vice versa, as Buddhism develops over time along with eastern culture, it is helpful to assess some commonly held and sometimes misunderstood points about eastern religion and philosophy.

The most salient of these differences is the amount of emphasis placed on the individual or what western philosophy uses the term, "agent." As we saw above in the discussion of normative ethical theories, a great deal of emphasis is placed on the agent as the volitional subject who decides the proper or improper actions through the use of human reasoning. Whether it be a universal principle that we must abide by; an action that brings about the most desired results for the individuals involved; or the virtuous person acting for his/her well-being; the agent is always at the center of this conversation and the focal point to a given phenomenon's ethical correctness or wrongness.

Although in eastern religion and philosophy the individual is not altogether abandoned, there is nevertheless far less importance placed solely on the individual. Eastern ideology, tends to focus more on the individual's context within a given environment, whether that environment is nature, relation to supernatural or spiritual entities, the workplace, friends, family, or country. Of course, one of the major influences or source of reference for this point is in Confucian ideology. Here, the idea of filial piety is an indispensable cultural value and will find its way across East Asia, remaining a core value for much of Asian culture throughout history. Hence, the individual can never be singled out, especially when considering eastern ideology in religion and philosophy. Instead, it is helpful to presuppose that when considering social situations, the "individual" or "agent," if anything, should be regarded more like a "representative" of a collective group of individuals, regardless of how big or small that group may be. Robert E. Carter, in his book entitled, *Encounter with Enlightenment: A Study of Japanese Ethics*, he states:

> The Japanese approach to moral decision making is not via abstract principles alone, but takes into account the social, contextual, and circumstantial elements in a particular instance, as well. Japanese contextualism is too ingrained for Kantian principled morality to seem at all adequate or accurate.[4]

Carter explains that eastern thought places much emphasis on the social context that the individual is in so much to the point that one's individual duty to uphold moral principles would inherently involve his/her social context.

It is not until we get to Kamakura Buddhism that the issue of the "individual" is provisionally isolated from the collective context in order to carry out a thorough introspection of the self. We will see this particularly in Shinran Shonin's explication of the evil person.

Thus, we begin our discussion of ethics with the western notion of the individual as an autonomous agent that rationally deduces proper behavior according to distinctions between right and wrong. Then we see that eastern ideology on religion and philosophy focuses on a different aspect of how to view the individual and ethics as a whole. Eastern thought in ethics concerns itself with the individual as a "representative" of a particular group, denoting his/her role in a social context at all times.

Problem with normative ethics from a Buddhist perspective

If it is not clear by now, we should note that Buddhism, specifically Shin Buddhism, is critical of the western philosophical notion of the "agent" or individual. Watsuji Tetsurō, one of Japan's foremost modern philosophical thinkers, notes the problem of western philosophical ethics in its inability or lack of special concern for social relationships and its impact on one's ethical behavior. He notes the overemphasis on the individual and on prescriptive behavior as the only focus of ethics.

Similar to this point, Shin Buddhism says that the individual him/herself *is* the actual problem in ethics. Thus, rather than to try and find moral principles that can work in all social problems and regulate proper ethical behavior, or to assess what the ideal or virtuous characteristics are in an ethical person, Shin Buddhism's approach is more metaethical, asking,

"Can humans even do ethics, assuming there is a right and a wrong?" In other words, Shin Buddhism says we give too much credit to the individual being able to carry out proper ethical behavior at all times. Whereas Watsuji argues that western ethics does not accurately take into account the individual's social context, Shin Buddhism argues that the very presupposition of rationality in ethics, where the individual can accurately discern ethical behavior and principles through deductive reasoning, is the very problem in ethics itself.

Western philosophy does not take into account the possibility that the human being is *not able* to think reasonably and objectively. That is, human reasoning will always be tainted by attachments or what Shin Buddhism calls, "blind passions." Therefore, even if the individual was able to decide the most appropriate measures to take in a given moral problem through reasoning, whether that person will always be able to act in accordance to that decision is another problem in its own right. Buddhist ethics thus focuses on two points: 1. Can humans with absolute certainty, come to define good and evil through human reasoning? 2. Can humans definitively act in accordance to the moral principles that they rationally define? The answer to both of these questions is no, according to Shin. Only when this is adequately addressed does Shin ethics come to reveal itself.

Previous research

The question then is what does Shin Buddhist ethics look like? How do we define Shin Buddhist ethics? As mentioned already, scholars have recently tried to compare Buddhist ethics with different western philosophical normative ethics. One of the leading scholars in this area is Damien Keown. Although he is well-known for his contribution in finding similarities between Theravada and early Mahayana Buddhism with virtue ethics, he does make some important

points concerning Buddhism in modern society as well as how it is vulnerable in the west. Concerning Buddhism today he states,

> There is a risk that the authority of monks will be undermined if they are seen to be unable to respond to requests for moral guidance because they are simply uninformed about the issues. Safer, then, not to become involved in these questions at all and to leave them to politicians, economists, and media personnel. But in doing that there is inevitably a price to be paid—the price of irrelevancy.[5]

This is a pattern that has been visible in the history of Japanese Buddhism, particularly after the Edo Period. Perhaps the problem is that most schools of Buddhism find it hard to apply their teachings and guide the public on various social issues because in general, Buddhism distances itself away from secular and political matters. Even Śākyamuni himself, abandoned his future position to the throne, giving up all secular motivations. In the past, Buddhist monasteries sought the patronage of various imperial courts, kings, and other authorities in exchange for spiritual guidance and protection, but this was mostly done through ceremonial rituals as opposed to social action. Keown also claims that it is not the case that Buddhism does not have any engagement with society. Instead, the goal of Buddhism was and still is, to seek solace away from a given community and resolve the problem of one's personal suffering first before all else. Helping others and resolving the ills of society was not the primary concern of Buddhism. Then what about Shin Buddhism, a teaching in which priests and lay alike do not separate themselves from secular society to carry out religious practice? What can Shin Buddhism contribute to the field of Buddhist ethics?

Keown also mentions another problem concerning how Buddhism might be perceived and used in western society. In addition to the never-ending issue of hermeneutics and how to adapt and interpret the teachings to the changing times, he also points out the issue of cultural misappropriation. The following extensive excerpt stipulates this problem well. He states,

> Contemporary western views are "read back" into an Asian tradition. Many westerners, for example, find Buddhism attractive because it seems congenial to their own liberal ideology. Thus,

in contrast to much of what is perceived as negative in Western religion, Buddhism appears to be open-minded, rational, eco-friendly, kind to animals, pacifist, and neither authoritarian nor doctrinaire. The 'voluntary' or 'optional' nature of the Buddhist precepts, for example, is frequently contrasted with the 'Commandments' of Christianity. The essays in this book, however, show that such a conception—which for convenience we might term 'liberal Buddhism'—is really only a construct which depends largely for its existence on Western culture, and, in particular, Christianity. Buddhist sources, as noted above, reveal a much more untidy and at times contradictory picture made up of different strands. To select only those who are in harmony with fashionable trends in Western society is to treat Buddhism superficially, and fail to engage seriously with its views. It is, however, an understandable and common mistake to project the assumption of one's own culture onto another, and to make invisible those parts of it which do not seem to fit well with our own preconceptions. Buddhism in reality is far from monolithic, and even at the level of individual schools one encounters nuanced and divergent points of view. This complexity must be reckoned with in any dialogue with Western ethics.[6]

 In short, Keown is bringing up a significant issue that Shin Buddhism needs to make itself aware of, which is cultural misappropriation. Using Buddhism in such a way to pick and choose what parts are relevant to one's needs and interests and then disregard other critical aspects of the teaching can prove to be problematic, as it distorts the original teaching. Some people might view this as a positive change, but we must question the motivations for such changes. One of the aims of this paper is to clarify the historical background of Shin in the Japanese context for the western reader. This is with the intention of showing the rich history and the sacrifices that were made by former nembutsu adherents to have this teaching available to the people of today. The broader point that I hope to make is that Shin ethics re-emphasizes the point that any social action or engagement is meaningless unless there is first a reflection of whether this places the Buddha-Dharma at the center of its motivations. In other words, Shin ethics is not about social engagement or action *per se*; it is about reflecting on what actions, characteristics, motivations, and ways of perceiving this world will help bring one and others to Amida Buddha's calling voice.

Charles Goodman's claim about Buddhism falling more in line with consequentialism as opposed to virtue ethics is a response to Damien Keown. In one example he explains that the bodhisattva is not allowed to make distinctions between one's own welfare and the welfare of

others, except when these distinctions oppose the natural human tendency and favor others over the self. This comes from the idea that consequentialists will only take into consideration whether the outcome of an action will benefit the most amount of people. Because the bodhisattva acts in much the same way, taking into consideration the salvation of all sentient beings, Buddhism is thus a form of consequentialism. He further argues that virtue ethics takes into account one's own welfare and those close to him/her such as friends and family, which can override one's obligation to moral requirements. In contrast, consequentialism does not allow for this, but it is this strict principle which bodhisattvas abide by according to their vows.[7]

Peter Harvey is another western scholar who has made significant contributions to the field of Buddhist ethics. He explains that there are some significant differences between western philosophy and Buddhist ethics. He states,

> A key aspect of Western ethical systems is that moral prescriptions should be universally applicable to all people who can understand them. Buddhism, though, is generally gradualist in approach, so while it has ethical norms which all should follow from a sense of sympathy with fellow beings (such as not killing living beings), others only apply to those who are ready for them, as their commitment to moral and spiritual training deepens.[8]

One significant difference between Buddhism and western ethics is that the former recognizes that there are some ethical norms that not all humans can do whereas, in the latter, ethical norms apply to all beings who can understand them. Also, in Buddhism, there is room for constant improvement and this religion recognizes that people can and will make mistakes. In western ethics, however, there is no room for mistakes because it presumes that rational beings will act logically at all times.

What is common throughout the approach of comparing western philosophical and Buddhist ethics is that Shin Buddhism is often left out of the dialogue. This is probably because the notion of self-power and salvific Other Power, along with an emphasis on the aspect of devotional faith, makes it difficult to identify key ethical principles in Shin Buddhism. However, there have been

attempts to clarify certain Mahayana ethical principles, and we will explore some of these points below.

Damien Keown explains that Buddhism is similar to virtue ethics first explained by Aristotle. Charles Goodman explains that because of the bodhisattva path, Mahayana Buddhism is more similar to consequentialism. Peter Harvey looks at the various stances Buddhism has taken with social issues today. However, all of these researches look at Theravada or Mahayana schools such as Zen, but not Pure Land Buddhism.

Robert E. Carter discusses Mahayana Buddhism and ethics. In his very informative book, *Encounter with Enlightenment: A Study of Japanese Ethics*, he explores the various eastern philosophical and religious traditions and their view on ethics. What makes his book very insightful is the contrast he draws between eastern and western thought. Carter goes into detail about emptiness and compassion. In one quote he states,

> "I" am an energy center, distinct from other things but inextricably connected with and related to them. In this sense, other things are a part of me, and I am a part of them. We are each other, and it is only rational that I should treat others as I would be treated, because they are me![9]

This quote explains that the self is everything and vice versa. Thus, this serves as the fundamental principle behind Buddhist ethics. However, from a Shin point of view, although the principle of emptiness may support Buddhist ethics, the fact remains that sentient beings are attached to the self, and no amount of religious practice and cultivation will help them rid their ego attachment. That is to say, one's egocentricity will not allow that person to see the self in everyone else and vice versa. The individual will always place the self above all others.

Carter is another example of someone who does not address Shin Buddhism in his research on ethics. As a result, he does not take into account the depth of a sentient being's blind passions, something that Shin doctrine focuses very carefully on. In fact, the problem of egocentricity is precisely what is missing in his analysis of ethics. Carter's research on eastern thought is

insightful, and it points out some of the most salient differences between eastern and western culture and ideology. He not only incorporates Confucian and Daoist thought, but he also talks about Shinto, Mahayana Buddhism (primarily Zen), and finally prominent Japanese philosophers such as Watsuji Tetsuro and Nishida Kitaro. But again, he does not involve Shin Buddhist thought in his discussion.

What Shin ethics brings to the table as I will show, is the importance of the idea of the "evil person" in Shinran's thought, which is also related to the phrase "foolish person with the heavy burden of karmic evil" (*zaiakujinjū no bonbu* 罪悪深重の凡夫). Carter misses out on a crucial topic of eastern ethics. As a result, his discussion of Buddhist ethics, which he uses Zen to represent all of Mahayana Buddhist ethics, focuses only on the theoretical aspects of such principles as compassion, emptiness, and *pratītya samutpāda*. As we have seen, only when the individual awakens to his/her truly *evil* self, which will later be shown to be the human condition, does that person awaken to the world of true compassion. That world of true compassion concretely means the solidarity one feels with all of humankind and sentient beings. Thus, from a Shin perspective, ethics, in general, does not begin with the individual thinking about how to engage with the outside world but rather, it begins with the individual properly understanding the self.

Comprehensive research on Shin ethics is necessary to avoid making broad generalizations about Buddhist ethics such as assuming that it is a monolithic tradition with a static set of ethical principles. One of the aims of this paper will be to clarify Shin ethics by way of drawing the line between ethical behavior that prioritizes self-interest, i.e., doing ethics for enlightenment, versus ethical behavior that is done as a way to repay the Buddha's benevolence, or *button hōsha* 仏恩 報謝. In his book, *Ethics of Enlightenment: Essays and Sermons in Search of a Buddhist Ethic*,

Ronald Y. Nakasone attempts to define Shin ethics to meet the needs of Shin Buddhists living in America. However, his interpretation of Shin doctrine misleads nembutsu adherents into thinking that compassionate activity is a result of one's deliberate intention. He states,

> We each will have the wisdom to perceive the needs of others and the compassion to courageously intervene and assist all who may need our help. By doing the best we can with our gifts to minimize suffering, we establish the Buddha's Pure Land. The Pure Land is established through our little acts of kindness.[10]

Nakasone explains that being on the Buddhist path, one will gain the wisdom to perceive the needs of others and take compassionate action based on that wisdom. In this way, little by little, one helps to establish the Pure Land here and now. However, Nakasone is missing an essential element in his interpretation of Shin Buddhism: *tariki*. To begin with, the Pure Land already exists—it does need sentient beings to establish it. Next, Shinran says humans do not have the capacity to know true good and evil. How is it that we as followers of Shinran know how to minimize suffering in others and ourselves? Another critical problem with Nakasone's interpretation is that there is no mentioning of the sentient being as a karmically evil person. I will argue throughout this paper that without this understanding of the karmically evil self, we cannot have a proper definition of Shin ethics. If this idea of the karmically evil self is missing, then we do not have Jodo Shinshu Buddhism altogether!

Nakasone also believes that the key to Buddhist ethics is the principle of interdependence or *pratītya samutpāda*. Although he is not incorrect in saying this, he leaves out any discussion of the limitations of self-power. He states,

> The interdependence is the basis for the bodhisattva's career and our own commitment to the Dharma. It is the basis for the bodhisattva's and our moral imperative. Since what I do touches all beings, I must act in a way that will benefit all beings. I may choose, of course, to act contrary to the benefit of others but to do so is, from the Buddhist viewpoint, to injure myself and retard my spiritual growth.[11]

Here he argues that interdependence is the basis for acting ethically on the bodhisattva path. It is the moral imperative of the individual to act for the benefit of others. If one does not do so,

he/she inhibits spiritual growth. Nakasone's gross over-simplification of the Shin doctrine is why there is a need to have a comprehensive study of Shin ethics that is geared towards a western audience. His understanding falls victim to the idea of cultural misappropriation in that he takes the principle of interdependency, granted a fundamental concept in Buddhism, and makes that the sole important feature of all of Buddhism, including Shin. In fact, his discussion of the importance of Śakyamuni Buddha over Amida Buddha, two Buddhas who are not to be treated separately in the Shin tradition,[12] shows Nakasone's complete lack of understanding of the Shin teaching.[13] His comment makes it extremely problematic when we are at a time when Shin Buddhism needs to assert itself in the face of the many different religious traditions in the global community.

Nakasone does however unintentionally show us what Shin ethics needs to address. Firstly, Shin ethics must point out why it is not in the realm of self-power. The point of this paper as mentioned in other areas is to show what line we can take Shin ethics up to before it becomes self-power. What this does is that it provides nembutsu adherents with a set of tools that can help them when thinking about how to live in the secular world as nembutsu practicers. The aim of this paper is not to create a list of do's and don'ts in this religion. The goal is to identify what makes a nembutsu practicer as such, and what insights does the Shin teaching provide for its followers. Other points that Shin ethics needs to address is its relationship to Other Power, the human condition as a being of karmic evil, and the role of wisdom and compassion. What I will show is that Shin ethics is not based only on interdependency but rather, on the principle of placing Amida Buddha at the center of one's actions.

One of the main topics that we will need to address is the issue of compassion and how Shin ethics can discuss this. Nakamura Hajime talks about the issue of compassion from general to

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Mahayana Buddhism. He explains that initially, compassion was a problematic issue because the goal of Buddhism was to be free of attachments. He states, "The arhat, one who has completed practice, is not supposed to be attached to anything. Is this not a contradiction to the very idea of compassion? How are we to make sense of this? This is the criticism that non-Buddhists and Early Buddhism adherents make of Mahayana Buddhism."[14] What we see here is that compassion was always an issue, even since early on in Buddhism's history. This problem continues to manifest itself in different ways over the course of history all the way up to Shinran's time and arguably today. Who is compassion for? Who can do compassion? What does compassion do? This is a continuing problem that develops alongside Buddhism throughout its history. We see it today in the relationship between Shin Buddhism and social engagement.

If Shin talks about the issue of compassion in that Amida directs it to all sentient beings, do sentient beings then take part in that compassion by sharing the Dharma with others? How do nembutsu practicers justify social engagement in the name of compassion? Can they? Nakamura goes on to explain that, "Shinran may not have been specific as to what to do ethically or socially, but that is to be taken as his humility and not permission for inaction and indifference to social affairs."[15] As Shin Buddhists today, where the modern and secular society is changing so rapidly that certain religious movements are falling behind unable to keep up, how are we to keep the Shin teaching relevant?

Nakamura claims that Buddhist ethics should be about how to approach the principle of "self and other being the same (*jita funi* 自他不二)." From a Shin perspective this is a something we should strive for, but only with the understanding that the *bonbu* is never able to actualize that principle due to one's incessant egocentricity.

Shimazono Susumu, a well-known scholar in the field of religious studies and general

Buddhism, has done some research in the field of Buddhist ethics. In his book entitled, *Nihon*

Bukkyō no Shakai Rinri: Shōbō Rinen kara Kangaeru, he posits the idea for all schools of

Japanese Buddhism to return to the idea of following the "right Dharma," which means to

observe the *vinaya* or Buddhist precepts. He states,

> The sangha was not there just for those who wanted to do Buddhist practices. It was supposed to ensure the observance of right Dharma in society and ethically lead the community to peace and stability… Historically speaking, the Pure Land school had a big role in negating this idea of "right Dharma."[16]

Shimazono explains that all schools of Buddhism, throughout the history of Japan, except for

the Pure Land school, had the vital role of ensuring that society was acting in accordance to the

right Dharma. That is, Buddhism provided its society with the ethical conscience to live by a

given standard of conduct.

Shimazono gives concrete examples of how close the relationship between Buddhism and

society at large used to be. He talks about the *Konkōmyōkyō*『金光明経』and its significance

since the outset of Buddhism entering Japan. Many monks and the ruling elite read this sutra to

ensure the status quo and the safety of the nation. Also, if the king highly respected the Buddhist

path, then it was widely believed that his country would see a time of stability and peace. The

main idea is that the emperor protected the Dharma and in turn, Buddhism would protect the

state. This is the idea of "right Dharma," which Shimazono argues is the fundamental aspect of

Buddhism that the modern society needs to return to if Buddhism is to stay relevant in the

rapidly changing times.[17]

In particular, Shimazono is critical of the Pure Land school and to some extent Zen as well.

He cites Nakamura Hajime's explanation of the Shin Buddhist teaching that the ignorant person

who awakens to shinjin is embraced in Amida's compassionate activity. There, the foolish

being's mind itself becomes compassion. Shimazono goes onto show that Nakamura says that Shinran did not explain exactly how that abstract notion of compassion translates to social engagement but that nevertheless, Shinran did explain the importance of compassion in social ethics. However, Shimazono expresses that he is unconvinced of how Shinran's idea of compassion translates into social action.[18] He also points out that Nakamura had a bias in giving the Shin and Zen schools exclusive rights over the Mahayana principle of compassion, thereby making them the teachings embodying compassion itself. Shimazono does not feel that the title can be reserved only to these two schools, primarily because their teachings of compassion is far too theoretical and abstract to have any real impact on society today. This paper will also address Shimazono's concern about compassion being too theoretical and not concrete enough to apply to today's society.

Nakasone and Shimazono both overlook the importance of the evil person as a critical component of Shin ethics. Shimazono's opinion is to say that all Buddhist schools must abide by normative ethics by following the Buddhist precepts for both lay and monk, that is the *sila* and *vinaya*. By doing so, one follows the "right Dharma" and protects the Buddha's teachings. He argues that this should be the role of the monk today, as it always has been throughout history. In particular, he is critical of Shin Buddhism in its rejection of what he defines as the "right Dharma." However, his definition of "right Dharma" is far too narrow. According to Kakehashi Jitsuen, he explains "right Dharma" (*shōbō* 正法) as the following:

> The Buddha is one who transcends birth and death. Looking at the issue wholly, the Buddha knows the proper way to live and the proper way to accept death, and he teaches that to us. That teaching is called the Buddha-Dharma. If sentient beings follow this teaching and correctly apprehend life and death, then for the first time they can live with peace of mind. It is with this peace of mind that one can accept and welcome death, which is referred to as "right Dharma."[19]

What we can see from here is that Kakehashi defines "right Dharma" to be the most fundamental principle of Buddhism: how to overcome the issue of death. Right Dharma is not

merely about following Buddhist precepts. Shimazono's definition that Buddhism is only about following the *vinaya* or *sila* fixates and solidifies ethics to a set of do's and don'ts, which might give it a sense of concreteness. But ethics, especially in Mahayana Buddhism and in Shin, is dynamic and compassion is spontaneous. It may seem difficult to identify compassion when it is defined and discussed in this way. However, ethics that is not dynamic means it will never change when in actuality all things are impermanent. Times change and so do ethics. To get to the core of the problem, we have to look at the self, which Shimazono does not do in his book. The true essence of Buddhism is not about following rules. Instead, it is about questioning how we can come to accept our own death and questioning the self as a mode to get to that understanding.

Simply put, when many scholars try to address ethics from a Buddhist point of view, they completely overlook the aspect of the soteriological characteristic of compassion. The true significance of compassion arises only when sentient beings can see that it is first directed to them in order to awaken from the world of delusion. In other words, compassion is the Buddha's work, and that work is manifested in the form of the Buddha-Dharma. The path to emancipation stipulated by the Buddha *is* compassionate activity. Shimazono overlooks the salvific component of compassion, focusing only on practical ways to implement it. However, this is a very focused and narrow aspect of compassion. Based on the definition of the Pragmatic Approach and how it can be used to inform Shin adherents on how to engage with society, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that Shin can and does make claims to social issues but only after first discussing the soteriological aspect of compassion.

Recent scholars of Pure Land Buddhism have attempted to explore Shin ethics by way of shinjin, the central concept in Shinran's thought. Inaba Shūken believes shinjin can inform us of

how to discuss Shin ethics. He explains that ethics and religion struggle against each other, where the former deals in relativity and the latter deals with the transcendence of the relative nature of good and evil. Hence, religion is the only available chance to "negate" the enterprise of ethics. When ethics is once "negated" by religion, the world of ethics is thus changed and revived. In other words, upon the negation of self-power, ethics is revived and carries on new meaning.

Miki Shōkoku is another scholar who argues that shinjin can be used to understand and define Shin ethics. In particular, he uses the "ten benefits in the present life" (*genshō jusshuyaku* 現生十種益) to help explain in concrete terms what shinjin can mean in the nembutsu adherent's life. Miki explains that this section, which is in the Chapter on Shinjin, was Shinran's way of addressing the concerns of the people of his day.

Some of those concerns were how to understand the role and significance of gods, or *kami*, in the Shin teaching, whether praying was appropriate to do for a nembutsu practicer, and how one's behavior or perspective changes from the awakening of shinjin. The answers to these concerns are that nembutsu adherents do not need to pray to gods because it is Amida Buddha and the nembutsu that protects them, furthermore, petitionary prayer is a form of egocentric delusion. Thus, one should avoid petitionary prayer. However, praying as a way to give thanks and respond in gratitude is permissible, and a person of shinjin works to spread the teaching to other people and for the general welfare of society.

Miki is also critical of normative ethics. He argues that Shinran did not have in mind normative ethical claims concerning Shin ethics. He goes on to say Shinran explains that for someone who is unable to know what true good and evil is, how can that person make any normative claims about what other people should do?[20]

Ugo Dessì has done one of the most recent researches on Shin ethics. In his book, he not only lays out the fundamental ethical principles of Shin doctrine, but he also shows what kinds of social engagement the Nishi and Higashi Hongwanji has been involved with since the end of World War II. He also explains a problem that still exists in the Shin tradition. He states, "In fact, if shinjin is considered to be the source of morality and the true access to social life, it is not completely clear what should orient in the secular realm those who are, say, still in search of this religious goal."[21] In other words, if shinjin is the source of ethics, what should people who are unfamiliar with the tradition or are trying to deepen their understanding do? Ugo further explains that one offered suggestion to this problem is that Shin Buddhism is the "religion of path" where Other Power entrusting effects a gradual transformation within the nembutsu adherent.[22] Ugo hits the problem right on its head. If one cannot intentionally will or use self-power to get to shinjin, then what should nembutsu practicers do? How do they know that they are "on the right track"? What purpose or benefit(s) does the nembutsu teaching have for its adherents? This paper hopes to address this issue as we go along in the discussion of Shin ethics.

Based on Ugo Dessì's book entitled *Ethics and Society in Contemporary Shin Buddhism*, I have come up with a rough list of ethical features that he identifies throughout his book (Diagram 1). Some of the points may be an incorrect depiction of his aims, or I may have overlooked other points that he would have wanted to make.

Comparing this list with the one I have come up with in my research, there is one significant difference in our findings. That is, the emphasis of awakening to the human condition, or in other words, again, the problem of the self. Although Ugo's analysis does indirectly mention the problem of the self, his list contains for the most part what are the results upon introspection of the self. That is to say, before even getting into Ugo's devised list, I argue that Shin ethics starts

prior to this. Shin ethics must begin by addressing the self as the main problem. Thus, Ugo's

analysis of Shin ethics overlooks the critical component that makes Shin ethics unique and

original: the soteriological aspect. The self is not an autonomous entity, and Shin begins by

dissecting the individual before getting into ethics. The point here is not to criticize Ugo's work

because this was not the scope of his study. Instead, it is trying to draw a difference between our

two lists of Shin ethical characteristics in order to continue the dialogue in this area of research.

My focus is on the doctrinal definition of ethics, whereby the point is to emphasize that Shin

ethics begins with soteriology; in other words, one must first awaken to the human condition,

which I argue is fundamentally the universal identity of all sentient beings.

Another important Shin scholar who addresses Shin ethics, mainly from the standpoint of

how to discuss Shin Buddhism in the west, is Kenneth K. Tanaka. He talks about the need to

create a more concrete set of behavioral actions that constitute a nembutsu follower and uses the

term "trans-ethical responsibility" to talk about Shin ethics. He explains that the word "trans-"

here means "to transcend" or "to transform" in that the person transcends the ordinary use of the

term ethics, primarily the teleological and deontological approaches, and it transforms one's

perception of the self.[23]

Tanaka claims that Shin ethics from a doctrinal standpoint is not deontological or what he

calls "obligatory" ethics, although the Hongwanji adopted and enforced this method to keep up

its image as a Buddhist organization.[24] He also claims that Shin ethics is not teleological either,

in that the sentient being cannot produce his/her own enlightenment. He states, "This stems from

his [Shinran] unique doctrinal position of absolute Other Power, which expunges any belief in

the human ability to produce enlightenment on its own."[25] He goes onto explain that ethics plays

no role in realizing its soteriological transformation. However, trans-ethical responsibility

provides a solution to the problem of Shin ethics, as it is based on the individual's sense of responsibility. Not only is this voluntary and flexible as opposed to deontological ethics, but it is also not limited by a utilitarian attitude, which is the teleological approach. Trans-ethical responsibility comes from the voluntary nature of the individual, and in this sense, it provides for new motivation and expectations. He states, "The transformative dimension of trans-ethics functions 'to transform' the person to become more involved in the reflective process of a soteriological quest."[26]

Also, Tanaka provides a suggested set of guidelines inspired by the trans-ethical responsibility. Tanaka and other western Shin scholars attempt to create a much more concrete format in by which Shin Buddhists can live. Although Shinran negated any form of self-power methods to attain shinjin or enlightenment for that matter, nevertheless there has been an approach in recent scholarship to try and see from the Shin perspective different ethical guidelines.

In an important book entitled *Pure Land Buddhism*, Tanaka provides a suggested set of guidelines inspired by trans-ethical responsibility (Diagram 2). His guideline hits many of the main points of Shin ethics, but in my opinion, it does not go far enough in connecting these points to fundamental Shin doctrinal principles. Although points one, three, and four do make direct reference to Shin doctrine, the rest are more closely related to general Buddhist points. Of course, this is not to say that these are not valid points. His guideline ties in if anything, the connection between Shin and general Buddhist ethical features. But there can be more commentary on each of his proposed points and their relation to the Shin teachings. Tanaka, like Ugo, does not emphasize enough the soteriological aspect, a key component of Shin ethics. In other words, there is not an explicit explanation pointing to the basis of Shin ethics, which is to

awaken to the human condition. When one awakens to the human condition, one now sees the universal identity of all sentient beings and works towards helping that collective identity. That person does so by helping to share the teaching of Amida's compassionate activity, whereby one participates in it. In short, the suggested list of ethical features that I later propose will address the motivations behind why specific ethical features are essential, namely that they lead sentient beings to reflect on their egocentric lives. This will ultimately turn them to Amida Buddha.

Next, Tanaka says Shin ethics is not teleological or goal-oriented. He and Galen Amstutz both do not regard Shin ethics to be so because the sentient being cannot use self-power to get to enlightenment. I completely agree with this, but the problem with their argument is that they define "teleology" to mean one's *approach* to enlightenment. What their argument ultimately leads to, is the collapse of the dualistic framework between Amida Buddha and the sentient being, and a lack of clear motivation as to why one should be a Shin Buddhist. Their approach is to look at the side of the sentient being and how to live as Shin Buddhists, a valid point in its own right. But my concern is to make more apparent the point that the dualistic framework in Shin discourse has specific implications.

Instead of teleology being about how one gets to enlightenment, it should be used to mean one's path to attaining birth in the Pure Land from an objective standpoint. That is, we do not just take into account the subjective aspect of the practicer. Objectively looking at the soteriological framework between the sentient being and Amida Buddha, the nembutsu practicer moves from the point of delusion to that of non-delusion.

Also, even if we were to look at this from a subjective standpoint, due to ignorance and blind passions, sentient beings will *believe* that they are moving towards the Pure Land. Instead of rejecting this notion as merely self-power, we should recognize and accept that this kind of

conceptualization is an inevitable process of human discriminative thinking. After all, Amida Buddha does pull sentient beings out of the world of delusion and guides them to the Pure Land. As a result, this dualism of sentient being and Amida Buddha provides teleological direction. The goal then is to attain Buddhahood by way of birth in the Pure Land. There is a teleological vector that points the direction from the sentient being to Amida Buddha, which gives nembutsu adherents direction, motivation, and a sense of solidarity and identity with fellow followers as well as all of humanity. The dualistic framework needs to remain intact in order for it to be called Pure Land Buddhism and to show that Amida Buddha's vow-power works to save sentient beings.

What I am trying to show is that even amongst Shin scholars both in Japan and in the West, they do not go far enough in their definition of Shin ethics. There needs to be continued research in this area, which I suspect, remains vastly overlooked either because scholars think they will be misunderstood as promoting the heterodox principle of self-power, or that they genuinely believe that Shinran had absolutely nothing to say about secular matters such as social engagement. However, I believe there is a way to talk about Shin ethics that will further expand interest in this school of Buddhism in the modern world.

Shin ethics must involve the vital aspect of the soteriological component of Amida's compassionate vow-power. The soteriological aspect may seem theoretical at first, but in fact, the doctrinal basis has serious ramifications regarding justifying the nembutsu adherent's social engagement. Japanese Shin scholars tend to stay too close to theoretical speculations of what Shin ethics should entail. On the other hand, non-Japanese scholars do not nearly go far enough in the doctrine to help clarify and justify *why* Shin ethics is a legitimate field of study. This paper will help show why Shin ethics warrants serious attention that requires further research.

What has held back enthusiastic study in Shin ethics is undoubtedly the legacy of the two truths theory, or *shinzoku* nitai 真俗二諦, which is the antagonist to this story. There is an extensive list of research done on the issue of two truths theory in Japan, the damaging and lasting impact it had on the history of Hongwanji both Higashi and Nishi, and some possible solutions on how to steer the course so that this problem does not arise again. Tokunaga Ichidō, Kakehashi Jitsuen, Akamatsu Toshihide, Fukuma Kōchō, Inaba Shūken, Miki Terukuni, Shigaraki Takamarō, Tatsudani Akio, Futaba Kenkō, Kashiwara Yūsen, and Chiba Jōryū are just a few names who have done considerable research in these areas.

However, on how the two truths theory made its way overseas and the extent of its influence is a matter still unclear. Scholars such as Alfred Bloom together with Tokunaga Ichido have made numerous attempts to talk about the problem of the two truths theory, granted their critique is more about the actions of Hongwanji itself and its overall lack of interest in taking on social issues of the day. Bloom does allude to the fact that the slow reaction from the mother organization does negatively impact overseas propagation.[27] Kenneth Tanaka focuses more on social issues of today and the everyday application of Shin Buddhism as opposed to directly rooting out the problem of the two truths theory.[28] Ugo Dessì does refer to the two truths theory by way of explaining how today's Shin scholars are addressing the issue, but again, only in the context of Japan. Galen Amstutz also talks about this problem in the context of the history of Shin Buddhism, again, only in Japan.[29]

The latest research that indeed takes on this issue is by Ama Michihiro, who talks about the presence of *shinzoku nitai* policy in overseas propagation, primarily through the struggles of one of the first bishops of the Honpa Hongwanji Mission of Hawai'i, Emyō Imamura (1867–1932).[30] However, the focus of his book is to talk about the history of Shin Buddhist propagation overseas

and many of its key figures. Although his essential research does specifically explain that the two truths theory was evident in the history of Shin Buddhism in America, he does not attempt to go into the subtle and indirect influences that the two truths theory had. That is to say, the two truths theory was much more than just an ethical policy that encouraged emperor worship and fanatic loyalty to one's country. If we interpret it to a much broader context, the impact of the two truths theory can be far more misleading than it already has been. If kept unchecked and haphazardly relegated as a relic of the past, the two truths theory can make its way back to the fore of ethical policy for Shin religious organizations of the future. Moreover, rather than its direct influences as Ama has already pointed out in his book and that we will discuss below, this paper will argue that the subtle and indirect influences, which will collectively be called the "legacy of the two truths theory," also has serious implications, which I believe, did not end with the close of World War II.

All of the researches that I have mentioned above have been approaches to the issue of Buddhist ethics from some different perspectives. Researchers who do not come from a Shin background have entirely neglected Shin Buddhist doctrine from any discussion of Mahayana Buddhist ethics. Also, researchers with a Shin background who pursue ethics based on its practical applicability, only look at the issue concerning social engagement. They treat Shin ethics as mostly having nothing to do with the soteriological aspect of Amida's compassionate activity.

I will further develop research that has tried to define Shin ethics using shinjin. I will do this by showing that a true apprehension of the human condition by way of hearing the Dharma, leads one to solidarity with humankind, which in turn, opens the gates to Shin ethics. Thus, the fundamental basis of Shin ethics begins with the problem of the self, and this point is something

that makes this field of research not only unique but also something that can contribute to the general subject of ethics.

Purpose of this paper

When we look at various scholars both who are critics and apologists, we consistently see a lack of definition of what Shin ethics is from a doctrinal and social standpoint. From the perspective of those who are outside of the tradition, we see the argument that Shin is much too theoretical and subsequently, passive in its approach to social issues and ethics. From the perspective of those within the tradition, for the most part, we only see an assessment of social actions that Shin organizations have done in the past, mainly in Japan for that matter. In the American or western context, Shin Buddhist ethics is discussed only concerning specific social issues such as LGBTQ rights, or anti-nuclear proliferation. There is yet to be a comprehensive research that looks at the reason why Shin ethics in the west has been slow to develop as well as any systematic process in which to reflect on how best to respond to social issues in general.

As we shall see later, the problem of why Shin ethics does not make itself explicitly defined is because the two truths theory (*shinzoku nitai* 真俗二諦) is seen as a problem that existed only in Japan, but that it mostly did not affect American Shin Buddhism. It is also commonly believed that the two truths theory, even if it did go overseas during the beginning stages of Shin Buddhism's history in the west, ended with the close of World War II. However, is that the case? Today, we would be shocked to see any Shin Buddhists in America swearing their allegiance to the emperor of Japan. But the legacy of the two truths theory is far subtler than this. If the two truths theory ended as official ethical policy for Hongwanji, what took its place? Common sense ethics? Confucian ethics or Judeo-Christian ethics? If that is the case, can that be considered Shin Buddhism?

Which leads to yet another problem: religious identity. What does a Shin Buddhist look like? What is it that a Shin Buddhist does? Many people in the West believe that all Buddhists engage in some form of meditation such as sitting meditation. Is this what a Shin practitioner does as well? Does a Shin Buddhist participate in certain protests that promote a specific cause? Does a nembutsu adherent go on retreats and perform rigorous ritual practices? These questions all point to what I believe to be is the unclearly defined Shin religious identity.

Many problems are presented here, but they all boil down to the following: What does Shin Buddhist ethics look like and what are its parameters? Where is the line between Shin ethics and self-power, or *jiriki*? Recent western Shin scholarship address these points only to a certain extent and certainly nothing that describes the Shin perspective on ethics from a doctrinal standpoint. If we look at recent Japanese Shin scholarship, we see mostly speculation on propositions that never gain any traction over the years. This is most likely due to the fact that there is a cultural stigma in Japan for religious organizations to remain neutral and silent on social issues that can cause trouble and unwanted scrutiny. The reason why this is a problem is that one can argue that Shin Buddhism is not as well known in western countries such as America as some of the other schools of Buddhism precisely for its perceived lack of "applicability."

Another reason why it is necessary to have a coherent and comprehensive pursuit of Shin ethics is that there is yet to be a study that doctrinally defends and promotes not only research in this field, but also systematizes and formulates with useful consistency how to approach this area. For the most part, if there is any research done on Shin ethics, it is almost always on the descriptive and historical development of Shin religious organizations. Even if there were any doctrinal explanations of western Shin ethics, they are almost always the findings of a particular

scholar. Although this is necessary, if we continue the course of having only separate, individual speculations on Shin ethics that is not grounded directly in Shin doctrine itself, then we create the potential for unqualified people to assume control of the conversation of Shin ethics, which is precisely what happened to the Shin religious identity in the early twentieth century. Shin Buddhism in America to this day is still struggling with the pressures to conform to what the outside world wants it to be, one of which is the extreme view of wanting Buddhism to be a free spirit enterprise that condones unconstrained behavior in the guise of religious legitimacy. This school that has a continued history of at least 800 years counting only from the time since Shinran has a religious tradition rich in doctrine and culture. It will be the greatest misfortune to abandon its historical legacy for the sake of superficial, haphazard, and unserious free-spirit individuals trying to conduct a social experiment.

In short, there is yet to be a comprehensive approach to Shin ethics that does away with the two truths theory altogether. The legacy of the two truths theory tries to inhibit the Shin practitioner from establishing one's authentic religious identity, and that is why we see a struggle for Pure Land Buddhists to assert their place in society. There needs to be a greater appeal to Shin's applicability in everyday life as well as the confident affirmation of what a Shin Buddhist actually is. This research will fill the gap in this area. It will show how the two truths theory distorted the Shin Buddhist identity, and it will then proceed to provide the resolution to this problem.

In America, *shinzoku nitai* allows and encourages Shin and its religious organizations to acquiesce to past western scholarship and popular sentiment's understanding of Buddhism in order to define its own religious identity. In this way, the two truths theory defeats the spiritually authentic individual, as it compels that person to rely heavily on outside factors to define one's

own ethical identity. In Shin, a spiritually authentic individual is not a person who simply adheres to social customs that are determined by one's spatial and temporal context, but rather, by awakening to the fundamental current of all life.

Nembutsu followers take part in the greater reality of dynamic wisdom and compassion when they come to true solidarity with humankind, which is also called the spirit of universal fellowship. One realizes this fellowship by awakening to the human condition of their deluded egocentricity and relying on Amida Buddha's salvific activity of Other Power. Shin ethics, therefore, means to place the Buddha-Dharma at the center of one's life, understanding that the dynamic working of Amida Buddha embraces one. When that person awakens to absolute reality, one responds in gratitude and tries to "repay the Buddha's benevolence" (*button hōsha* 仏恩報謝). Nembutsu followers do this by taking part in, or what is called "approximating" (*ritateki* 利他的), compassion by drawing inspiration from Amida Buddha and emulating that activity in this world. Thus, the fundamental principle of Shin ethics is that nembutsu practicers *participate* in compassionate activity by placing Amida at the center of their ethical behavior.

The purpose of this paper will be to prove the following. Shin Buddhist ethical identity is not found in the two truths theory but instead, the Pragmatic Approach. The two truths theory: 1. distorts and inhibits the Shin ethical identity by prioritizing the mundane over the supramundane truth, 2. confuses the teaching of "receiving" as social passivity, and finally, 3. defeats the spiritually authentic individual. These problems are collectively called the "legacy of the two truths theory," which impacts the way Shin Buddhism views and portrays itself to the western world. The legacy of the two truths theory encourages Shin Buddhism to accept and adopt as its ethical identity, only western conceptions of Buddhism rather than the core Shin teaching of soteriology. This then distorts the Shin Buddhist ethical identity, as the legacy of the two truths

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theory forces it to rely on outside sources to define what it is, something we witness in the history of Hongwanji in Japan during World War II. We can also see traces of the influence of the legacy of the two truths theory in how Shin Buddhism in America allows factors outside of its core doctrinal teachings to help shape its own religious identity. I propose that the solution to this problem is the Pragmatic Approach.

The Pragmatic Approach consists of the Soteriological foundation followed by the Individual and Social aspects. The Soteriological foundation is the basis of Shin ethics and further consists of "zero-shinjin" and the "three emphatics." This aspect is the crucial element that uniquely defines Shin Buddhist ethics and previous research has not been able to systematically formulate this foundation. The Individual and Social aspects list the most important practical ethical features of a Shin Buddhist. Finally, the Pragmatic Approach, and not the two truths theory, should be used to define Shin ethics as well as the social and religious identity of the nembutsu practitioner both in America and Japan.

Methodology

The overall structure of this paper is constructed to do two things. The first is to address the historical development of the ethical policy of the two truths theory that Nishi Hongwanji, one of the foremost schools of the Shin tradition, implemented throughout its history. By tracing the development and subsequent problems that it contributes to, I will show how the two truths theory is not a sufficient ethical policy to implement in the modern world. Second, I will propose a new ethical policy which will be called the "Pragmatic Approach," as the new method of Shin ethics that should replace the two truths theory.

Chapters one and two will primarily address the first problem. Chapter one will begin with the introduction of the "legacy of the two truths theory," which are the three problematic features

of the ethical policy that will eventually find its way overseas in Shin missionary propagation. Next, we will focus on the historical development of the two truths theory starting with Shinran Shonin, leading all the way up to the close of World War II. Here I will show how the two truths theory eventually allowed for the distortion of the Shin teaching by advocating for emperor worship and loyalty to the country of Japan, as opposed to the teaching of Amida Buddha's compassionate activity.

In chapter two, this paper will discuss Shin ethics by way of the two truths theory and its implementation in the twentieth century. I will begin by exploring how this system manifested itself in concrete terms in Japan during the Second World War. I will then show that at around the same time across the Pacific Ocean, the two truths theory begins to germinate in Shin Buddhism in America. To get to this point, I will start by explaining how Buddhism enters the western world, what western culture and scholarship wanted from and were interested in Buddhism, as well as how this religion gets utilized. It is also during this time that the first Japanese immigrants come to various parts of America such as Hawai'i, the west coast of the United States, and Canada. These immigrants bring their own form of Buddhist customs and understandings that were different from how the western world portrayed this religion.

This paper will go on to explain that during this crucial time in the development of Shin Buddhism overseas, that the two truths theory manifests in both direct and indirect ways. By direct, it means that the immigrants from Japan, particularly the first generation *Issei*, still have strong ties and identify with this country and its national polity. Especially since the Japanese were treated with harsh conditions of racism and ostracization from the general public, the new immigrants sought solace in identifying with their homeland. By indirect, it means the "legacy of the two truths theory," which is presented at the beginning of chapter one but will go into much

more detail here. Recent scholarship may touch upon some of the direct evidence of the two truths theory found overseas, but there is yet to be any research that explores to what extent this ethical policy influenced American Shin Buddhism and whether the effects are still evident to this day.

Chapters three and four will be the solution to the problem presented in chapters one and two. Here, we will talk in-depth about the "Pragmatic Approach." To begin with, there are three main categories of the soteriological structure of Shin Buddhism. They are: 1. Nonduality between Amida Buddha and the sentient being, 2. Duality, where Amida Buddha directs compassionate activity to sentient beings, and 3. Duality, where the sentient being seeks to understand Amida's embracement of all beings. It is in the third category, where we find a new way to discuss Shin doctrine that can contribute to the field of ethics. Here, the principles of "zero-shinjin," as well as the "three emphatics," are explained as the essential content of the Pragmatic Approach (Diagram 3). "Zero-shinjin" will help to resolve the problem of the nondual/dual dichotomy of Amida Buddha and the sentient being, a topic that Shin scholars still debate over which to emphasize. It will also make clear that the Mahayana principle is the foundation of Shin doctrine, a point many people overlook. The "three emphatics" will help to create religious identity and solidarity for nembutsu practitioners. It will also provide a concrete path that a person can aspire for, which can then be used to explain the significance of the nembutsu teaching to those who are unfamiliar with the tradition. A nembutsu practitioner is one who aspires for sincerity in one's pursuit of life through the awakening of the human condition, joy in the form of the balance between elation and humility, and finally, having hope and the strength to live. This chapter will also show how the Soteriological aspect is the crucial element that uniquely defines Shin Buddhist ethics.

Chapter three discusses the first aspect called the "Soteriological foundation." Chapter four, on the other hand, will discuss the aspects of Individual and Social ethics in Shin. In contrast to chapter three that will discuss the doctrinal basis for the Pragmatic Approach, chapter four will examine the concrete or practical features of this new method. That is, there will be an itemized list of key features of the nembutsu path that will help one when thinking about the proper course of action as a Shin Buddhist. It is important to note that the purpose of this paper is never to create a set list of do's and don'ts that a Shin Buddhist must abide by. Instead, I will posit a list of suggested features that will help one to reflect on what the best course of action to take would be. I will close this chapter by looking at the overall impact that the Pragmatic Approach can have on Shin ethics as well as highlighting some possible problems and concerns that critics may have regarding this new method.

The conclusion will discuss the proposition to move away from the two truths theory as well as adopt a new method of Shin ethics, which is the Pragmatic Approach.

Definition of terms

Before we begin with the main body of this paper, there are a few key terms that need explaining, as this paper will be using them in a way that might be different from what the reader may be used to thinking about that term. The first is "Soteriological foundation," which is a phrase that I have come up with that explains the first of three aspects that make up the Pragmatic Approach. Soteriological ethics discusses the doctrinal foundation for this new approach. By this, it means that from a Shin standpoint, there cannot be any claims to social ethics or engagement unless there is first the proper understanding of the human condition and the reliance on Amida's salvific activity. Amida's compassionate activity directs itself to all

beings, and one must awaken to this true reality before that individual can consider what Shin ethics should be.

Next is the term "teleology." This word is frequently used, and it initially means the way that Kenneth K. Tanaka defines it in his book *Pure Land Buddhism*, where he states, "The teleological approach sees morality as a means for realizing what lies at the end as the ultimate goal. This approach is concerned less with the question of right but more with relationship to the goal."[31] In short, teleology can mean "goal-oriented" as Tanaka puts it, but I will go even further to say that it is simply showing motivational direction. In other words, moving from point A to point B is showing that an individual intends to move from the former to the latter and this is what will be referred to as being "teleological." Tanaka and Galen Amstutz argue that Shin ethics is not teleological because there are no actions that will lead one to enlightenment. However, I argue that teleological should not be discussed in this kind of framework, but rather, as the objective process of the individual who moves from the world of delusion to that of the Pure Land.

Finally, the word "pragmatic" when used in the phrase "Pragmatic Approach," is not referring to any philosophical school of thought such as the one posited by William James in his essay "Will to Believe." I use the term basically in its colloquial sense, where "pragmatic" means to consider things from a realistic and practical way as opposed to a theoretical one. I will then re-define the word in the phrase "Pragmatic Approach" and use it to refer to the practical way in which a Shin Buddhist can live according to the nembutsu teaching.

Chapter One   Historical Development of Shin Ethics as Two Truths Theory in Japan

Introduction

Shin ethics has been developing since its outset up until the present day and an examination into this ongoing phenomenon will shed light on the general patterns that the major Shin Buddhist institutions have exhibited in the past and will likely continue to show in the future. In order to talk about Shin ethics in the west, a comparatively recent event in history, we must first talk about the historical roots of Shin Buddhism in general. This will inevitably bring us to the discussion of the overall history of Shin Buddhism in Japan, which culminates in the country's modern era and the conclusion of World War in the Pacific theater.

As mentioned at the beginning of this dissertation, I will be focusing on the issue of war, which has been well-documented. This cannot be done however, without addressing how the various Shin Buddhist religious organizations, primarily Nishi Hongwanji, went about dealing with societal issues confronting it throughout its history. I am referring to of course, the two truths theory (*shinzoku nitai* 真俗二諦), the go-to policy that Hongwanji historically took when dealing with social affairs. This section will focus on the historical development of the two truths theory, its doctrinal justification, and finally its impact on Hongwanji's history as well as its hidden legacy. This will contribute to our discussion of Shin ethics, as it will bring to the fore instances in which religious doctrine and its application in general society clashed, resulting in periods where Shin Buddhist religious identity was either re-affirmed or called into question.

Problem: between faith and ethics

As with any religious institution there will inevitably be conflicts and tensions between the doctrinal teaching and how it is applied in society. James C. Dobbins in his book entitled, *Jōdo*

Shinshū: Shin Buddhism in Medieval Japan, hits the problem between religious faith and ethics right on its head. He states,

> Shinran's emphasis on faith as the basis for defining heresy and orthodoxy was, in the end, fraught with hazards. The reason is that faith, in the final analysis, is an internal state of mind or a private religious condition. Its connection to externalized forms, such as ethical behavior or even statements of doctrine, is often elusive and hard to define. Thus, it is difficult to establish public and objective criteria for certifying faith's presence in any particular individual. All religions are confronted with this problem to the extent that religious experience is private and personal; but Shinran's idea of faith is particularly problematic, since he saw the evil person as the prime candidate for faith and the principal object of Amida's vow…In this sense, all Shinshu history can be construed to be an attempt to explicate the meaning of faith as manifested in thought and action.[1]

Dobbins argues that determining ethical behavior is difficult because the issue of faith is a personal one. How do we determine if one has accurately and decisively acquired shinjin? Who or what gives someone the authority to determine whether someone has shinjin or not? How does shinjin get manifested in one's life? It is especially hard when Shinran explains that actually the "evil" person is the primary object of Amida's compassionate activity. What is most relevant to our conversation is that the history of Hongwanji itself can be seen as the struggle of how to understand shinjin as manifested in thought and action. In other words, how does one's spiritual faith translate to everyday life, or ethical behavior? These questions posited by Dobbins are relevant to our discussion here.

Arguments have been made that there should be a return to Shinran's writings and to see what kinds of implications or hints he may have left behind for followers to consider. But the problem with this idea is that Shinran did not intend to create an independent and new religious order separate from Honen's nembutsu movement. As a result, Shinran makes no statements as to what a collective Shin religious order should look like, nor does he mention any guidelines for ethical behavior that the religious order should implement.

The incessant problem between religious faith and social ethics becomes significant enough to be an unavoidable issue after Shinran's time. The newly formed Shin Buddhist religious

organization that would later be called "Hongwanji," could not establish its legitimacy amongst the other Buddhist organizations until there was at least a provisional solution to this issue. That provisional solution, which was to hold its place for about the next seven hundred years, was the two truths theory, or *shinzoku nitai*. This not only became the policy that Hongwanji implemented in its dealings with social issues, but it ultimately led to the identity of the Shin Buddhist. The remainder of this paper is an examination of the struggle between faith and ethics.

Background of the legacy of the two truths theory

If we take into account the bifurcation of the "external" (*gesō* 外相) and "internal" (*naisō* 内相) self, "Buddha's law" (*buppō* 仏法) and "king's law" (*ōbō* 王法), and "supramundane" (*shintai* 真諦) and "mundane" (*zokutai* 俗諦) truths, the two truths theory has been in place for the majority of the history of Shin Buddhism since after the time of Shinran. This is not to say that the bifurcation of the two truths itself is a problem. How one acts in public does not necessarily reflect how he/she feels or what one is thinking in private. But the two truths theory did leave a legacy which resulted in the questioning of Shin identity especially after World War II. According to Kakehashi Jitsuen, in the new by-laws of Nishi Hongwanji published in 1946 and took effect the following year, there is absolutely no mentioning of the phrase "two truths theory, or *shinzoku nitai*."[2] As if it was never an issue in the first place, the two truths theory disappeared as quickly as the belief that the emperor was a living god. But was the problem of the two truths theory resolved? What has since filled the void of the two truths theory? One of the purposes of this paper is to focus on whether the effects and characteristics of the two truths theory are still evident in Shin Buddhism outside of Japan. Of course, this is not to suggest that Jōdo Shinshū in such places as America practices *kami* worship. Rather, I want to look at what are the underlying features of the two truths theory that are ultimately flawed and can possibly

result in the same problem that was exhibited in the situation with Japan. The problem that I am referring to here, is the incoherent and inconsistent Shin Buddhist identity by way of ethics.

For Shin Buddhists who live outside of Japan, the phrase "two truths theory" (*shinzoku nitai* 真俗二諦) is almost unheard of, let alone a major problem. There are a number of reasons for this. Firstly, there is no concept of Shinto, emperor, or polytheistic *mikado* system or *kami* veneration. More importantly, particularly in US history, the first amendment of the Constitution guarantees the freedom of religion and thus the "separation of church and state" was already a key feature of the country at its outset. This would inevitably not give rise to the problem of the two truths theory, as the state cannot enforce a particular set of religious beliefs onto its citizens. Hence, the concern in the Western Shin Buddhist context is not whether the secular authority will usurp the Shin doctrine. Rather, it is about how the two truths theory cripples the Shin Buddhist identity and whether its legacy and effects have been properly addressed. I argue that in the context of Shin Buddhism outside of Japan and to some extent in Japan as well, the legacy of the two truths theory has not been adequately diagnosed and properly addressed.

Based on the research I have done on Hongwanji's history and Shin ethics, there are three distinct overall points that sum up why the two truths theory is problematic. The two truths theory confuses, cripples, blurs, obstructs, and distorts the Shin Buddhist identity with regard to social ethics. Laying these points out will ultimately help to get us closer to a possible solution. Here are the three points. The two truths theory:

1. Prioritizes the mundane truth over the supramundane truth.
2. Falsely connects the teaching of "receiving" to social passivity.
3. Defeats the spiritually authentic individual.

All three points clarify a distinct feature of the two truths theory and explain why it is ultimately problematic.

Mundane truth over the supramundane truth

What is perhaps the most obvious but also the most documented feature of the two truths theory is that it prioritizes the "mundane truth" (*zokutai* 俗諦) over the "supramundane truth" (*shintai* 真諦). That is, the two truths theory inevitably serves to undermine or replace the teaching of the Buddha-Dharma with the rule of secular authority. As we saw earlier, Shinran's intent in citing Saicho 最澄 (767–822) in the last chapter of the *Kyōgyōshinshō* was to explain that the Buddha-Dharma was to be regarded as the fundamental guiding force for the individual and not reliance on secular authority. Therefore, the order is to have first and foremost the supramundane truth which then guides and informs mundane truth. Shinran reveres Shōtoku Taishi 聖徳太子 (574–622) precisely for this reason of using the Buddha-Dharma as the beacon in this world of delusion. If anything, there is an order, hierarchy, and priority in the relationship between the supramundane and the mundane.

What the two truths theory does is to place both sides on equal footing. This not only suggests that the two should be treated equally in importance, but it also creates the possibility to place the mundane truth as more important than the supramundane. For example, when Japan embarks on its imperialistic ambitions, the times forced Hongwanji to feel like it had to choose the mundane side over the supramundane, thus forcing it to condone everything from *kami* worship to acts of aggression overseas. More often than not, because the mundane side deals with real-world concerns with practical and achievable goals, motivations, and intentions, this side will be given priority as opposed to the supramundane, which deals with the doctrine that can be viewed as fantastical, arbitrary, not producing real world immediate effects, and abstract. Shinran did not explain the two truths theory to mean two separate truths that are on equal

footing with each other. For him, the Buddha-Dharma was to be the guiding force behind the mundane truth. Making the two truths equal to each other creates the possibility to prioritize the mundane over the supramundane.

Confused teaching of "receiving" as social passivity

Shinran's teaching of "Other Power directing of virtue" (*tariki ekō* 他力回向), or Other Power that is directed to sentient beings, is a teaching of what will be called "receiving." That is, one receives the Dharma and Amida's salvific Vow Power to attain liberation from this world of suffering. The nembutsu and shinjin, or true entrusting, is what Amida Buddha "gives" to the sentient being. The absolute negation of self-power is the absolute affirmation of Other Power. Thus, Shin Buddhism is a teaching of "absolute Other Power" (*zenbun tariki* 全分他力). The two truths theory distorts this by compartmentalizing the personal self to be separate from the social self, something we see in the first point as well. The problem is that this makes it seem as if the teaching of Amida's Other Power has nothing to do with how one deals with the outside world.

Hongwanji has a long tradition of stressing shinjin as one's relationship with Amida Buddha. As we will see with Kakunyo and later with Rennyo distinguishing between the personal/private side and the public/social side, one's belief in the Shin teaching was not to be discussed in public. This was stressed in part, with the intention to divert unwanted attention away from Shin Buddhists who would otherwise be seen as religious fanatics. However, today, this is easily misconstrued as social passivity and eager compliance with the status quo. Shinran's participation in the nembutsu movement, which in his time was seen as a reformative attack on the status quo that sought to disrupt the social order, and his open criticism of the imperial court when it persecuted Honen, are clear indications of his unwillingness to compromise his religious

identity and conviction. He was not persuaded to be unresponsive in the secular or social world because of the teaching that he had taken full refuge in: a teaching of receiving Amida Buddha's Other Power. That is to say, he did not mistake the teaching of absolute Other Power, or *zenbun tariki*, as social passivity. In fact, this teaching is what gave him ground to stand on and be firm in the world of delusion and unpredictability.

De-emphasis on proactive response to social issues

Because the two truths theory leads one to believe that the teaching of "receiving" corresponds to social passivity, that in turn, encourages the individual not to be proactive in responding to social problems. Ugo Dessì's book, *Ethics and Society in Contemporary Shin Buddhism*, gives an in-depth account of how Higashi and Nishi Hongwanji have taken on social issues affecting Japan since the close of World War II. His informative book shows how the Hongwanji took action in various areas such as the *hisabetsu buraku* issue, discrimination against those inflicted with Hansen's disease, anti-war, anti-nuclear proliferation, being against the pilgrimage to Yasukuni Shrine by public officials, and more. For this paper, I would like to focus on the idea that Hongwanji has for the most part, been "reactive" instead of "proactive" in its approach to social issues. This is not in any way to criticize Hongwanji for being reactive when the social context finally required it to make certain decisions. However, there is a problem when Shin Buddhists are discouraged to think about, reflect on, and proactively approach social problems from a Shin Buddhist perspective.

The above-mentioned social stances the Hongwanji has taken are the result of a set of outcomes that have directly impacted Shin Buddhists in Japan. Such examples would be the deaths of countless numbers of men, women, and children during World War II, the dropping of the atomic bombs, the Japanese government's still ambiguous relationship it has with Shinto, and

the discrimination of a set of individuals, many of whom were Shin Buddhists. The Hongwanji has made great strides in these areas and in many ways, are a leading example to other religious organizations. But the religious institution is still concerned mostly with "reacting" to social issues because the surrounding social context from social pressure, prompted it to finally take action.

In addition to this, I argue there needs to be a "proactive" stance, where the Hongwanji and its members reflect on what steps can be taken to prevent further discrimination or behaviors that may be counter to the religious doctrine. Such issues as climate change, abortion, LGBTQ rights, stem-cell research, are areas that may or may not directly impact the Hongwanji or the majority of Shin Buddhists, but are still social issues that the world is dealing with as we speak. Even if Hongwanji does not take an official stance on a certain issue, having a public forum or discussion that provides a venue for open communication about what Shin Buddhism can say in these areas is, in my opinion, taking a stance: one of proactive concern. When Shin Buddhists are told only to "react" to a certain social issue, it ultimately inhibits the potential of the outside world becoming familiar with Shin Buddhism. More importantly, in an age where the abundance of information is having the reverse effect of confusing and frustrating the world, religion and more specifically, Shin Buddhism, needs to take the initiative to provide a coherent process that reflects on how to address social problems, even if they do not directly impact Shin Buddhists. The two truths theory creates the possibility only to be concerned with being "reactive" as opposed to "proactive" in social issues.

Promoted Shin Buddhism as an "other-worldly" religion

Another way in which social passivity can manifest itself is through being considered an "other-worldly" religion. In other words, the two truths theory relegates Shin Buddhism to an

"other-worldly" religion or the religion about the afterlife only. That is to say, the division

between mundane and supramundane truths misleads the individual into thinking that the

mundane truth refers to this world and that the supramundane is about Amida and the Pure Land,

or the "other world." The book *Fifteen Topics of the Two Truths Theory* makes just this claim by

saying that the mundane truth refers to "this world" (*hido* 此土) whereas the supramundane

refers to the "other world" (*shido* 彼土).[3] This would imply that the mundane truth involves a set

of principles that applies only to this world of delusion, while the supramundane truth would

involve a different set of principles that applies only to the afterlife. In the case of Meiji era

Japan, the mundane meant to follow the emperor's decree of *kami* worship, as well as following

Confucian principles. The supramundane truth was to follow the teaching of Shinran, which

taught that those with shinjin would be born in the Pure Land.[4]

The two truths theory also separates the issue of life and death as two distinct and unrelated

events in one's life. Again, this would imply that while alive, sentient beings should follow one

set of guiding principles but should expect a different set of guiding principles after death.

Namely, this would mean to blindly obey all things the secular authority commands because it is

equal to the Buddha-Dharma and speaks for truth. Then, because one lived a righteous life,

he/she would be able to enjoy a blissful one in the Pure Land. The two truths theory arbitrarily

distinguishes life and death as two static events in a person's life.

However, the Jōdo Shinshū teaching explains that life and death are not separable and the

meaning of death is in life, and vice versa. Shinran explicitly explains this in his discussion of

the "stage of the rightly settled" (*genshō shōjōju* 現生正定聚), where the assurance of birth in

the Pure Land occurs while still in life. He shows that when one awakens to the embrace of

Amida's infinite wisdom and compassion in true entrusting, one can accept the fact that one day

he/she will die. Moreover, it is in accepting death, that the person can live to the fullest and best of one's ability. Thus, the significance of death is not in being a static event that will happen at some point in the future, but rather, it is in being a dynamic occurrence that is taking place in conjunction with life at every moment. This prompts the person to seek the meaning of life, which is ultimately found in the embrace of Amida's compassionate working that accepts him/her despite having blind passions. This is one of the significant points of the Jōdo Shinshū tradition, and the teaching of the two truths theory completely undercuts this with the defeat of the spiritually authentic individual.

Defeat of the spiritually authentic individual

The two truths theory also creates the possibility to defeat the spiritually authentic individual by potentially not allowing the person to freely reflect, think about, and express what it means to be a Shin Buddhist. This is not to say that Shin Buddhists have not been able to do this in the history of Hongwanji since the time of Kakunyo. Rather, the two truths theory *creates the possibility* for this problem to occur, and subsequently, it did so during the Meiji era to the end of the Pacific War. *Kami* worship, the observance of Confucian virtues, and blind loyalty to the emperor came to define the identity of the Shin Buddhist concerning social ethics. The teachings of Shinran were entirely overshadowed by elements that had nothing to do with Shin doctrine.[5]

Essentially, religion should bring out the best in an individual. What this means is not that a person will live a pious and righteous life by living by a specific set of ethical principles. Instead, religion should bring forth the full potential of an individual. That is, using the teachings and principles of a given religion, a person comes to find meaning in life; a meaning that is understood authentically by the individual because he/she is the only person living that specific life. Truth then, in its absoluteness, brings meaning to every individual in a dynamically

authentic way. With this awakening to meaning, the individual now understands that his/her authentic life was and is to encounter the all-embracing Buddha-Dharma. The more one lives and experiences the different events, episodes, and ups and downs in life, the more one can understand that he/she is embraced in truth. Then, that person responds in gratitude for being given true meaning in life, which he/she would have otherwise not been able to awaken to. The individual who now lives in gratitude to the all-embracing compassionate activity of Amida Buddha expresses this in a spiritually authentic way. If one lives a life of utter obedience, non-questioning of Shin Buddhist doctrine, apathy and ignorance towards real-world social issues that affect all people, and non-reflection of personal spirituality, then there is no chance to be able to encounter the Buddha-Dharma. This neglect then makes it difficult to live in a spiritually authentic way because one has not encountered the all-embracing compassionate reality.

The two truths theory presupposes a one-size-fits-all path to truth. It assumes that authority, whether the secular or religious institution, is infallible and therefore worthy of unquestioned obedience. This situation creates the possibility for the individual to compromise his/her own path to seek the Buddha-Dharma, which then inhibits that person from awakening to the spiritually authentic self.

The above points are the reasons why the two truths theory is problematic as an ethical system. It ultimately leads to two different sets of principles that are equal in importance and can cause inner-conflict in determining the Shin Buddhist identity. We will see this as we discuss the development of the two truths theory from the time of Kakunyo and Zonkaku to Rennyo and through the modern period. But it does not become a significant problem until the identity crisis in which Hongwanji is forced to choose secular authority over that of Shin doctrine. As a result, Hongwanji will end up supporting State Shinto and *kami* worship, as well as Confucian virtues.

What at first was mere toleration of ancestral worship, Hongwanji is eventually forced to condone and even supplant Shinran's teachings with State Shinto. The modern era brought about an identity crisis for the Shin Buddhist in Japan concerning social ethics. The two truths theory, used throughout the Edo period, was again used as a response to the identity crisis in the new age. It proved futile, creating the collapse of the Shin Buddhist identity. We will eventually examine whether the features of the two truths theory are still lurking in the shadows of Shin Buddhism abroad.

Two truths theory as ethical policy

Many different places in the Tripiṭaka mention the word or topic of the two truths theory. One example is in Nāgārjuna's (150–250) work entitled, *Mūlamādhyamaka kārikā*, or *Chūron*『中論』, translated by Kumārajīva (344–413). Here it states,

> All Buddhas expound the teaching for all sentient beings
> On the basis of the "two truths";
> One is the mundane truth
> And the other, the highest truth.
> If one cannot understand
> And discern the meaning of the "two truths,"
> One cannot understand the true meaning
> At the depth of the Buddha Dharma.
> If not based on the mundane truth,
> The highest truth cannot be obtained.
> If the highest truth is not obtained,
> One cannot attain nirvana.[6]

Tanluan, another of the Seven Pure Land Masters, explains the two truths by defining the "two Dharma-bodies" (*nishu hosshin* 二種法身). He writes,

> The preceding seventeen phrases on the land's adornments, eight phrases on the Tathagata's adornments, and four phrases on the bodhisattvas' adornments are 'the extensive.' That they enter into the phrase, 'one-dharma' is termed 'the brief.' Why is it explained that the extensive and the brief interpenetrate? Because all Buddhas and bodhisattvas have dharma-bodies of two dimensions: dharma-body as suchness and dharma-body as compassionate means. Dharma-body as compassionate means arises from dharma-body as suchness, and dharma-body as suchness emerges out of dharma-body as compassionate means. These two dimensions of dharma-body differ but are not separable; they are one but cannot be regarded as identical. Thus, the extensive and the brief interpenetrate, and together are termed 'dharma.' If bodhisattvas do not realize that

the extensive and the brief interpenetrate, they are incapable of both self-benefit and benefiting others.[7]

Taocho, yet another Pure Land Master, also makes reference to the two truths in his work, the *Passages on the Land of Happiness* 『安楽集』.[8]

In all of the examples above, two truths here refer to the supramundane and mundane truths. Supramundane truth, or absolute reality, is the realm of the uncreated nirvana and has no shape, form, color, or smell. It is unknowable to the ignorant person full of blind passions, or *bonbu*, even though one is embraced within it. That absolute truth manifests as form, or the mundane truth, such as Amida Buddha, Pure Land, and the name Namo Amida Butsu in order for people to awaken to the realm of absolute reality. Hence, it is more accurate to portray this as two *aspects* of truth rather than two *separate* truths, as *shinzoku nitai* later gets misconstrued to be. The two aspects of truth are dependent on one another, are not separate, but at the same time not exactly the same, and one aspect is neither superior or inferior to the other. For clarity, this paper will distinguish this form of two truths as "two aspects of truth," as opposed to the "two truths theory." Nevertheless, we see that *shinzoku nitai* is an essential teaching of Mahayana and Pure Land Buddhism, and its doctrinal basis will further cement the two truths theory as a legitimate social policy that the Hongwanji could implement.

History of the two truths theory up to Shinran

From a historical standpoint, the two truths theory had a more practical meaning. During the tenth and eleventh centuries, Japan was in the Heian period, where the country was divided into large private manors or estates known as *shōen*, controlled and managed by a family of the nobility class, a large Shinto shrine, or a Buddhist temple. In order to maintain financial control and security, temple manors sought tax exemption and the right to deny entry to tax collectors into its jurisdiction in a system known as *fuyu funyū* 不輸不入. With the state granting this

approval, those in power can take comfort in knowing that they have done their part in ensuring the preservation and protection of the Buddha-Dharma. The temple would, in turn, work to pray for and ensure the spiritual stability of the state. Thus, on the one hand, we have the *buppō*, which in this case would be the temple manor, and on the other hand, there is *ōbō*, which is the secular power or in this case, *bakufu* or the imperial court. Again here, the two sides are mutually dependent, both ensuring the stability of one another and coming to each other's aid. The state would provide financial support while the temple would provide spiritual protection. Both Tendai and Shingon schools, the two predominant forms of Buddhism at this time, were heavily involved in this social system of rule.[9]

Spiritual protection was indispensable to the state, as the Heian period saw its fair share of calamities both natural and human-made. There was particular interest in fortune-telling, astrology, Yin-Yang teaching, Daoism, as well as esoteric rituals of Buddhism, or *mikkyō*.[10] Warding off evil spirits and curses, ameliorating begrudging spirits, and appeasing the dead were some of the rituals that interested many of the people at the time.[11] One of the reasons why Saichō (766 or 767–822) placed the Tendai monastery in the nearby mountains of Kyoto was to be able to pray for and ensure the stability and protection of the Heian court.

By the ninth century of the Heian period, the idea of "various manifestations" (*honji suijaku* 本地垂迹), which will be discussed in more detail later, takes hold and the distinction between *kami*, bodhisattvas and buddhas become blurred. Various Buddhist schools observe kami worship. By the time Shinran enters the Buddhist arena in the twelfth century, it was common practice to believe that "*kami* and buddhas were mutual manifestations of each other" (*shinbutsu shūgō* 神仏習合).[12] High-ranking Buddhist priests had no qualms with this practice and Honen's nembutsu movement, along with Shinran, was in part a revolt against the status quo. The status

quo here means the syncretistic relationship Buddhism had with Shintoism and Confucianism. Shinran's push for a reformative Buddhist identity, an exclusive Shin Buddhist identity, would establish an independent and autonomous self that did not define spirituality to be contingent upon secular and political catering.

Shinran and the two truths theory

Shinran refers to *shinzoku nitai* or the relationship between supramundane and mundane truths in a few areas of his works. The most salient is in his citation of Saichō's work, *Lamp for the Last Dharma-Age* (*Mappō Tōmyōki*『末法灯明記』). Here he writes,

> He is a dharma-king that, basing himself on oneness, sets flowing the cultivation of beings.
> He is a benevolent king that, widely reigning over the four seas, sends down the winds of virtue.
> The benevolent king and the dharma-king, in mutual correspondence, give guidance to beings. The supramundane truth and the mundane truth, depending on each other, cause the teaching to spread. Thus, the profound writings are everywhere throughout the land, and the benevolent guidance reaches everywhere under heaven.[13]

Saichō is directly referring to the relationship between the Buddha-Dharma and secular authority, explaining that in its mutual dependency, secular authority should promote the spread of the Buddha-Dharma and give guidance to all beings. Thus, the relationship is one in which the mundane truth is subordinate to the supramundane. This example is the only reference we see where Shinran directly talks about *shinzoku nitai*. In fact, he himself does not directly make the connection between supramundane truth as the Buddha-Dharma, and mundane truth as secular authority.[14] Zonkaku is the one who later makes this connection. Shinran only speaks of *shinzoku nitai* concerning the "two aspects of truth."

Another area in which Shinran talks about secular authority in relation to the Buddha-Dharma is in the *Hymns in Praise of Prince Shōtoku*. Here he writes,

> He composed the Seventeen-article constitution
> As the standard for the imperial law.
> It is the rule for the peace and stability of the state,
> The treasure that makes the country prosperous.[15]

Article Two of the Constitution states:
Deeply revere the Three Treasures!
They are the ultimate refuge for beings of the four modes of birth (manners of arising),
The beam that supports all nations.

What age, and what people, will not take refuge?
If they do not rely on the Three Treasures,
How can the people of this world
Make straight what is twisted and bent?[16]

We should note that Shinran only praised the second and fifth articles of the Seventeen-Article Constitution implemented by Shōtoku Taishi. He explains that when one takes refuge in the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, and lives in accordance to the Buddha-Dharma, there will be peace and stability that will reign throughout the nation. What is significant about these stanzas is that Shinran considered secular authority to be based on the truth of the Buddha-Dharma, which is consistent to his citation of Saichō. Kakehashi points out that Amida's Primal Vow that guarantees the liberation for all beings is the basis for how those in power should rule their countries. Therefore, rulers should make the lives of their citizens better and take the responsibility to ensure that will happen. This is how Shinran understood the relationship between Buddha-Dharma and secular authority. Two truths are not mutually exclusive but rather dependent on each other where the supramundane is the basis of the mundane truth.[17]

Other areas of Shinran's works show how he understood *kami* as well as other teachings such as Confucianism and Daoism. In *Hymns of the Dharma Ages*, he writes, "How lamentable it is that at present / All monks and laypeople of Japan, / While following the Buddhist rules of conduct, / Venerate gods and spirits of the heavens and earth."[18] In the historical context of the syncretic relationship between Shinto and Buddhism, Shinran questions the status quo and why Buddhists see the need in venerating the *kami*. In addition, he cites in the last chapter of *Kyōgyōshinshō* a passage that explains that all devas, nagas, and so on will consider as their teachers and elders "those who are the Buddha's disciples."[19] Clearly, Shinran intends to show

that the *kami* or gods are subordinate to the Buddha-Dharma, or more specifically, Amida Buddha.

Also, he later cites another passage that explains that all non-Buddhist paths such as Confucianism are teachings that concern only the mundane good and do not bring one to true emancipation. Therefore, those who are in the privilege of power and prestige should discard these false teachings and turn to the true teaching, the Buddha-Dharma.[20] Here again, we see Shinran's intent to show the Buddha's teachings to be the absolute truth that brings all beings to liberation. He urges all followers to discard worship of the *kami* or nonbuddhist paths that do not teach about the supramundane truth.

We see that for Shinran, one who has taken refuge in the Buddha Dharma will not pursue any other paths and uses the teachings of the Buddha as the basis for his/her outlook on social issues. Shōtoku Taishi serves as the quintessential example of how a figure of authority should rule his country. For Shinran, one's ethical approach should be centered on the Buddha Dharma and only this. Thus, one's taking of refuge in the supramundane truth, or Buddha Dharma, defines the Shin Buddhist identity.

Kakunyo and the two truths theory

Kakunyo 覚如 (1270–1351), the third head priest of Hongwanji, lived in a time when the organization itself was on the verge of collapse. In the immediate aftermath of Shinran's death, his disciples would go on to create many different religious orders. According to Miki Shōkoku, there were five main concerns for Kakunyo: 1. The rivalry between Hongwanji and Takada school, which at that time was far more powerful than Hongwanji, 2. The thriving success of the Jishū school, 3. The rivalry between Hongwanji and Bukkōji school headed by their influential leader Ryōgen 了源 (1284–1335, or 1295–1336), 4. The political powers at that time including

the mighty Tendai institution on Mt. Hiei, and 5. The era of the struggle between the northern and southern imperial courts.[21] With all of these factors in the historical background, Kakunyo sought to establish within the various schools of Pure Land Buddhism the Hongwanji as the legitimate and rightful successor of Shinran's teachings by way of blood lineage. He also needed to show the external political and religious forces that Hongwanji was a serious and formidable religious organization that was here to stay. One of the ways he approached these problems was to clearly distinguish the Hongwanji organization from the other rivalling Pure Land schools.

As we know, since the time of Shinran and his explanation of the teaching of *akunin shōki* 悪人正機, incidents of antinomianism would occur as a result of misunderstandings. This trend will intermittently re-emerge throughout the history of Shin Buddhism. In fact, Kakunyo mentions the Bukkōji and Jisshū schools' haughtiness towards people of other religious traditions, and the unkempt appearance and outright lack of decency and propriety exhibited by some followers who claim to be part of the Pure Land school.

What made matters more confusing especially to outsiders was the term "*ikkōshu*" which was indiscriminately used by the *bakufu* to refer to all people of the Pure Land tradition. Kakunyo, on more than one occasion, petitioned the government to designate followers of Hongwanji to be a different religious organization not associated with *ikkōshu*. He argued that Ryogen's Bukkōji school and Ippen's 一遍 (1239–1289) Jishū school failed to observe the social customs and laws of the country and appealed to them that followers of the Hongwanji were law-abiding citizens who did not seek to disrupt the social order. He is famous to have said to his followers, "Don't behave like a good person or Buddhist or monk. Don't put on airs or show-off that you are a great person. It is much better that you are accused of being a cow robber."[22] Here he means that

rather than to be arrogant towards others, it is better to be seen as someone of a humble upbringing, lower in status compared to those around one's self.

In the framework of a complex political network with other Pure Land schools, other Buddhist organizations, and the ruling elite, Kakunyo had to carefully navigate the direction of Hongwanji to avoid destruction of his religious organization. This is precisely why we see his willingness to show and appeal to the greater society that Hongwanji was an organization that would cooperate with secular authority and the status quo. In *Treatise Rectifying Heresy*『改邪鈔』, Kakunyo writes,

> "The transcendent Dharma is explained as the five admonishments. One should observe the law of this mundane world, which are the five Confucian virtues of benevolence, justice, propriety, wisdom, and integrity. However, on the inside one should hold within the heart the inconceivable Other Power. The two are mutually dependent of one another."[23]

Two points are relevant to our discussion here. The first is that Kakunyo equates the "five admonishments" (*gokai* 五戒) with the "five Confucian virtues" (*gojō* 五常). The two sets are thought to be how a Shin Buddhist should carry out his/her behavior in society. This categorization would fall under the side of the mundane. On the other hand, Kakunyo urges all followers to keep within their hearts the inconceivable working of Other Power, or shinjin. Here then, he is distinguishing between the "outer" and "inner" self, the former being a person who follows the five admonishments and five Confucian virtues, which is consistent to what all other Buddhist schools and general society agree on as the social norm. Conversely, the "inner" would be to keep in one's heart the mind of shinjin, the sole cause for birth in the Pure Land. This bifurcation between the "outer" and "inner" selves would be the framework of the Shin Buddhist identity that later Zonkaku and Rennyo would adopt in their approach to Shin ethics as well.

Zonkaku and the two truths theory

Although he did not succeed his father Kakunyo in becoming head priest and actually being

disowned by him twice, Zonkaku 存覚 (1290–1373) was in many ways a counter-balancing act

to him and equally influential to the Hongwanji institution's development. While Kakunyo

worked to display the uniqueness of the Shin doctrine and emphasized Shinran's essential

teaching of shinjin, Zonkaku worked within the various schools of Pure Land Buddhism and

emphasized the recitative nembutsu practice. Zonkaku was trained in both *mikkyō* and Tendai's

"eight lectures on the *Lotus Sutra*" (*hokke hakkō* 法華八講). This background leads to the

difference in doctrinal ideology between him and Kakunyo. Zonkaku's academic significance

was extraordinary, and he wrote the first commentary to Shinran's *Kyōgyōshinshō* called the

Rokuyōshō 『六要鈔』. Although their approach to Shin doctrine may have been different,

Kakunyo and Zonkaku both took a similar stance on their views on *kami* and social ethics.[24]

According to Miki, there are five historical reasons why Kakunyo and Zonkaku recognized

the practice of venerating *kami*. He writes:

> 1. When Zonkaku was receiving his training in *mikkyō* and Tendai, there is no doubt that the
> notions of "mutual manifestation of *kami* and buddhas 神仏習合" and "*kami* are reincarnations of
> buddhas and bodhisattvas *honji suijaku* 本地垂迹," were being taught to him.
> 2. There was a growing concern about the expanding influence of the Jishū school, which was
> becoming powerful by establishing its connections with powerful estate holding shrines
> legitimated on the teaching that *kami* promoted the nembutsu practice.
> 3. Zonkaku took a cooperative approach with Mt. Hiei. Honen's nembutsu movement was clearly
> "anti-*kami* worship 神祇不拝." Zonkaku wanted to mitigate any chance of further persecution
> especially during the time when the Ōtani mausoleum was still maturing into a stable religious
> organization. The need for a cooperative relationship with Mt. Hiei led to the inadvertent or
> unavoidable acceptance of the idea of *honji suijaku* 本地垂迹.
> 4. In order to easily propagate to the masses, a series of lecture books were circulated into print.
> Examples of these are Kakunyo's *Shinran Den'ne*『親鸞伝絵』and Zonkaku's *Shoshin
> Hongaishū*『諸神本懐集』. These were all done to meet the needs of the people of the time.
> 5. Despite Honen and Shinran's efforts to reject mysticism and *kami* worship and promote only the
> nembutsu, the general population was still heavily influenced by folk religion and belief in *kami*.
> As a result, Kakunyo and Zonkaku were not able to entirely disregard these customs and adopt
> only the Shin teaching. By doctrinally recognizing local customs and *kami* worship, the Hongwanji
> was able to meet the needs of the masses, which paid off in its eventual acceptance by them.[25]

By explaining the historical context and the fragile nature of Hongwanji while in its infancy, we can see why Kakunyo and Zonkaku both saw the need for accommodating Shin doctrine with the worship of *kami*. Syncretism with Shinto gods was not only the social norm at the time, it was expected from all Buddhist schools and would not be recognized by the authorities unless Hongwanji did so as well. Kakunyo and Zonkaku were well-aware of this point. In his work, *Treatise on Refuting Error and Manifesting the Truth* (*Haja Kenshōshō*『破邪顕正鈔』), Zonkaku states, "Buddha's Law and King's Law are a pair, just like the two wings of a bird; like the two wheels of a carriage. Neither of the two should be missing. Therefore, Buddha's Law is to protect the King's Law and King's Law is to respect Buddha's Law."[26] Instead of making the mundane truth subordinate to the supramundane truth as Shinran does, Zonkaku puts the two truths on equal footing, both having equal weight and mutually relying on each other. He makes a similar statement in the *Rokuyōshō*, wherein his explanation of Saichō's citation in the *Kyōgyōshinshō*, Zonkaku states, "In this work, Saichō explains that the Buddha's Law and the King's Law together, or in other words, the supramundane and mundane truths, are the principle of peace."[27] Here, Zonkaku explicitly makes the supramundane truth, or *shintai* 真諦, to mean the Buddha-Dharma, or *buppō* 仏法, and on the other hand, the mundane truth, or *zokutai* 俗諦, to mean the secular authority, or in this case the king's law, which would be *ōbō* 王法. As a result, this interpretation means that the secular authority is not subordinate to the Buddha-Dharma, but instead, equal in truth to the Buddha's teachings and furthermore, a separate truth that all nembutsu adherents should also abide by. Thus, the doctrinal justification for the two truths theory is born, and this establishes the Hongwanji's policy for social ethics, which in turn, helped to solidify the Shin identity.

Rennyo and the two truths theory

Considered the second founder of Jōdo Shinshū, Rennyo 蓮如 (1415–1499) was the eighth head priest of the Hongwanji. He grew up in a time where civil unrest, culminating in numerous peasant uprisings called *ikkō ikki* 一向一揆, was taking place. From the middle of the fifteenth to almost the end of the sixteenth century and ending with the ten-year battle fought at Ishiyama, the span of about a hundred years saw sporadic periods of public disorder and violent conflicts, particularly in the regions of *kinai* (western Japan), *tōkai* (central Japan), and *hokuriku* (northern Japan). Many of the Hongwanji members led these uprisings. In one example, peasants and merchants in the Kaga province successfully overthrew the local daimyo Togashi Masachika 富樫政親 (circa 1455–1488) in 1488, and the Hongwanji members maintained control of the area for the next one hundred years. Such was the scale of not only the political and economic strength of Jodo Shinshu in that area, but it also serves to show how far along the Hongwanji as a religious organization had come since its early days.

As agricultural technology develops along with the institution of feudalism, the rise of the importance of the nuclear family system with the patriarch as the head of the household becomes essential. This hierarchy expands to the public sphere and respect to one's superiors is seen as a vital cultural value stemming from Confucian and Buddhist principles. This system of a rigid hierarchy is the foundation for the community village. In addition, respect towards one's ancestors and local *kami* that were seen as protectors of the village became an integral part of the villager's life. Each member of the community served a role in the household and the village, contributing to the social identity of the community itself. As a result, villages were now becoming more self-sufficient and self-aware, conscious of their solidarity in local identity.

Rennyo understood this point and felt that if the Hongwanji did not go along with this idea of ancestor and *kami* worship, which is the lifeline of each village, that there would be no future for the Shin organization.[28]

Rennyo in his youth accompanied his father Zonnyo, who was grooming him to be his successor, in teaching Shin Buddhism throughout the different regions of Japan. Through this and most notably his letters of propagation, known later as *Gobunshō* or *Ofumi*, not to mention his charismatic leadership, would be the reasons why Hongwanji membership explodes under Rennyo's tenure. Rennyo, knowing that the Hongwanji's rise to power can just as quickly be taken away as it had been granted, took extra precautions when dealing with the secular authorities.[29] He took a similar stance to what Kakunyo had done in the past, urging his followers to show a humble and obedient external self while at the same time holding a firm faith as the internal self. In one of the letters he states,

> In particular, first of all, take the laws of the state as fundamental and, giving priority to [the principles of] humanity and justice, follow the generally accepted customs; deep within yourself, maintain the settled mind of our tradition; and, outwardly, conduct yourself in such a way that the transmission of the dharma you have received will not be evident to those of other sects and other schools. This distinguishes the person who fully knows our tradition's right teaching, which is true and real.[30]

It is here that Rennyo most notably uses the phrase "laws of the state as fundamental; giving priority to the principles of humanity and justice" (*ōbō ihon, jingi isen* 王法為本、仁義為先), where rather than to hold one's shinjin to be more essential, he promotes the idea that one should first and foremost obey the laws of the government. In another quote he states, "Besides this, he also carefully stipulated that we should observe [the principles of] humanity, justice, propriety, wisdom, and sincerity; that we should [foremost] honor the laws of the state; and that, deep within, we should take Other-Power faith established by the Primal Vow as fundamental."[31] From these quotes, we can see the notion of supporting the idea that the Dharma's law and the

King's law are on equal footing and mutually dependent on each other. Put in another way, we have the external self that upholds the laws of the state and observes proper decorum through Confucian principles, and the internal self that holds shinjin within one's heart.

Unlike Shinran who only focused on shinjin as the sole cause for birth received from Amida Buddha's Other Power, Rennyo followed his predecessor Zonkaku in recognizing the *kami* in the principle of *honji suijaku*. In one of his letters he states,

> Item: By kami manifestations (*shinmei* 神明), we mean that [buddhas and bodhisattvas] appear provisionally as kami to save sentient beings in whatever way possible; they lament that those who lack faith (*shin*) in the Buddha-dharma fall helplessly into hell. Relying on even the slightest of [related past] conditions, they appear provisionally as kami through the compassionate means to lead [sentient beings] at last into the Buddha-dharma.[32]

Here we see that *kami* have an integral role to play in the soteriological framework of the Buddha-Dharma. That is, they are provisional manifestations of the buddhas and bodhisattvas. Undoubtedly here, we see an accommodation to allow for the incorporation of *kami* and an appeal to a broader audience. Rennyo made numerous references to the principle of *honji suijaku* in his letters.[33] What we see here is that the two truths theory becomes the basis for allowing the recognition of the *honji suijaku* principle, even though Shinran was against the idea of *kami* worship altogether. Nevertheless, this method contributed to Rennyo's success and the exponential swelling of the Hongwanji membership as it accommodated the common beliefs of the people at the time.

Despite all of this, Rennyo from a religiously doctrinal standpoint firmly promoted the nembutsu teaching and shinjin as the sole cause for birth in the Pure Land. As a result of this exclusive nembutsu movement that was seen as anti-social and apathetic to secular authority, tensions rise between local daimyo and the villagers, many of whom were members of the Hongwanji sangha.[34] With the threat of war in various areas, Rennyo was forced to administer rules of conduct known as *okite* 掟. This was done preemptively in order to prove to *bakufu* that

Hongwanji itself had nothing to do with the rising resentment towards the ruling elite. In fact, the policy of "laws of the state as fundamental 王法為本" was mostly an effort to alleviate escalating tensions between the two classes and not a matter of doctrinal interpretation. Various factions of the Lotus school or Nichiren groups, who were similarly promoting an exclusive practice, were also seen as religious fanatics from outsiders. Political pressure would prompt them to adopt codes of conduct similar to that of the *okite*.[35] The *okite* is a list of concrete normative behaviors that Shin Buddhists were encouraged to observe with the threat of excommunication if not followed.[36] What is important to note, however, is that not any doctrine such as the three Pure Land sutras, the works of the Seven Pure Land Masters, or Shinran's writings were the basis for these rules. Rennyo himself created these rules to help curb tensions with those in power and avoid being held responsible for the coming civil unrest. More than to reach its concrete aims, *okite* overall did contribute to the collective identity of the Shin sangha at the time.

Another topic that is important to our discussion of the development of Shin ethics is the idea of establishing a sense of collective identity. Rennyo's use of the word *anjin* 安心, which can be translated as "settled mind," and the idea that religious faith should be discussed and re-affirmed within a given group known as *kō* 講 serves as evidence for this. Whereas Shinran's idea of shinjin was within the individual, Rennyo felt that a nembutsu practicer should take part in portraying that devotion in a group setting. The most notable example of such a function would be "Shinran Shonin's memorial service" (*hō'onkō* 報恩講), the most important annual gathering of the sangha to express their gratitude towards Amida's benevolence.[37] Rogers states,

> In stressing the benefit of good from the past, a notion of Shinran never used directly in his writings (possibly because it could be misinterpreted as having self-power connotations), Rennyo was raising his followers' awareness of the Hongwanji's legacy of good karma resulting from

Shinran's teachings, despite the deviations of "the middle period." Consequently, those assembled were made aware that they were being incorporated into a religious body with a rich heritage and a promising future, and that in joining the community, they were not merely accepting responsibility for themselves, but a collective responsibility for the community at large.[38]

Here we see that Rennyo used the notion of "past karmic actions" (*shukugō* 宿業) in order to show that joining the Hongwanji sangha was the result of good karma and therefore a great opportunity and privilege to be part of this group. As we witness the beginning of the expansion and rise to power of Hongwanji, it is evident how the organization's rich heritage would provide a promising future to its adherents and that being a part of this group would have many benefits. A strong emphasis on the group mentality had a significant impact on Shinshu adherents and their religious identity as a collective unit.[39]

Confusing the Shin Buddhist identity

The two truths theory was the Hongwanji's ethical policy that was implemented almost immediately after Shinran's death, as the religious organization was in its infancy. What we have identified here is that the two truths theory came about as a result of two main problems that the Hongwanji faced early on in its development. First, there was the issue of gaining recognition and acceptance as an established religious organization from society in general. Second, is the issue of how to define a Shin Buddhist, in other words, what does a Shin Buddhist look like or do? This is a matter involving Shin doctrine.

Concerning the first problem, the two truths theory was a strategic response to social pressures from other Pure Land and Buddhist schools, as well as secular authorities. By showing the willingness to maintain the status quo of such principles as, "mutual manifestation of *kami* and buddhas" (*shinbutsu shūgō* 神仏習合), and "*kami* are reincarnations of buddhas and bodhisattvas" (*honji suijaku* 本地垂迹), ultimately recognizing the role of *kami* in Shin doctrine, the Hongwanji was able to avoid unwanted criticism from long-established Buddhist traditions

such as Tendai and Shingon. In addition, it was able to gain a certain degree of tolerance from the imperial court and *bakufu*, thus securing its existence at least for the time being.

The second problem, which involves doctrine, is a matter of what a Shin Buddhist looks like or does. As mentioned in the introduction, if shinjin is the sole cause for birth in the Pure Land, how does that translate into daily life? What is the practice of a Shin Buddhist? The problem of identifying the issue of faith in thought and action becomes even more difficult to define in a collective context such as a religious organization. The two truths theory became the patch-work solution to this problem. It sanctioned the use of worldviews and normative behaviors that were external to Shin doctrine, but easily understandable and applicable, in part because most of general society was observing these social customs already. However, in adopting these external methods, the Shin religious organization was still avoiding the deep-rooted problem: how does shinjin manifest itself in daily life? What does a Shin Buddhist look like? To which the answer is that there cannot be a collective normative standard that Hongwanji, or any Shin organization for that matter, can demand of its followers. Thus, continues the conundrum.

Kakunyo attempts to address this by explaining that a Shin Buddhist keeps shinjin within, or "inside," oneself but observes the five admonishments (found in the *Larger Sutra*) and five Confucian virtues on the "outside." Zonkaku employs the two truths theory and defines it as pursuing the Buddha-Dharma on the one hand while following the secular law on the other. Rennyo takes a similar position to Zonkaku. All three leaders end up recognizing the role of *kami* by way of being manifestations of the Buddha as a means to persuade people to listen to the Shin Buddhist teaching. Therefore, the social and ethical position was to say that a Shin Buddhist holds within oneself the importance of shinjin and pursues the Buddha Dharma intently, while on the outside one observes society's customs and beliefs, which consisted of observing Confucian

virtues and if need be, believing in and worshiping *kami*. The glaring problem was that this approach served to undermine Shinran's firm stance of discouraging any practices outside of exclusive nembutsu.

The two truths theory essentially created two separate identities within the individual: 1. The shinjin-based inner self, and 2. The secular (and later, semi-religious subservient) external self. Both identities were mutually exclusive because one can exist without the other—a problem that will become much clearer later. Moreover, as we shall see during the Meiji period, the semi-religious aspect of the external self, clashes with the shinjin-based inner self. Nevertheless, the history of Hongwanji excluding Shinran's time saw the establishment of two separate identities of the Shin Buddhist, where the two sides coexisted alongside each other until its inevitable face-off.

Mid-19th century to the end of WWII and the two truths theory
History leading up to the end of Edo period

The Edo period (1603–1867) saw an extensive length of relative peace where the central governing system, the *bakufu* shogunate, tightly controlled the country, mainly through the policy of the *bakuhan* system. Regarding its relationships with the major religions at the time, the *bakufu* had strict control over their administrative policies but for the most part, did not meddle in their respective day-to-day and religious doctrinal affairs. Regarding Hongwanji, which by this point had split into the Higashi and Nishi, Zonkaku's legacy of *shinzoku nitai* along with Rennyo's policy of *okite* remained enforced. In some areas, the laws of the *han* or domain of a given area incorporated the *okite*. This meant the observance of the Confucian virtues concerning proper behavior in the public sphere.[40]

The Tokugawa shogunate during its reign did not officially instate a national religion such as an exclusive sponsoring of a specific Buddhist school. Instead, it chose to enforce the education

and strict observance of Confucian principles such as the already mentioned five virtues as well as a patriarchal hierarchy with the ruling warrior class at the top and the shogun as its leader. The importance of filial piety, ancestral worship, as well as knowing one's role in society and not disrupting the harmony of it were all seen as cultural values that were to be observed by each citizen. The government was especially supportive of this because it meant obedient citizens who would not attempt to disrupt the social order. Thus, the dominant moral fabric of society was Confucianism and *bakufu* expected all religions, despite its possible doctrinal differences with Confucian theory, to more or less, follow along these social rules.

Bakufu also implemented the *terauke* 寺請制度 system in which all Japanese citizens had to register to a local temple. The temple during this time was effectively a civic center, where all records of births and deaths of the town, village, or city's inhabitants were kept and recorded. Temples also managed periodic censuses. When marrying, the wife had to enter her husband's household which meant that she would be included in her husband's temple registry. This subsequently meant that she would be converted to her spouse's religion, at least on record. Funerals were all conducted by Buddhist temples, and the *terauke* system continued until the closing of the *bakufu* regime. Thus, the temple had an administrative role in the government, and it was not just a place of worship.

Despite this important role, state support was for Confucianism. In fact, by the end of the Edo period, many people including Confucianists were beginning to question the legitimacy and need for Buddhism in society at all. Their main criticisms were that Buddhist temples served no economic benefit to the state as their property is tax-free; the Buddhist teaching does not talk about morality and ethics and therefore, served no practical or worldly value; and finally, Buddhist priests have lost their way and did not live according to what their teaching requires of

them. Because of these reasons, Buddhism had no real value to offer to *bakufu* and society in general. The claims against Buddhism were not so much doctrinal as it was more about its practical usage in general society. The term "*chikokuheitenka* 治国平天下," where world peace would begin first by working on one's own morals, then the family's, then the nation's, and finally under the heavens, was a highly regarded value by Confucianists, who claimed that Buddhism lacked in its teachings.

Buddhism, by the end of the Edo period, had three main concerns: 1. The gradually rising tension with Shintoism, 2. Confucianism and its anti-Buddhist rhetoric, and 3. Political and ideological pressure from western influences such as Christianity.[41] Hongwanji and Shin Buddhism, for the most part, saw itself to be a syncretic partner of Confucianism and Shintoism. While on the one hand, Buddhism handled the supramundane truth, on the other it would follow the principles of the mundane, which in this case was Confucianism as well as tolerance of *kami* as manifestations of buddhas. But by the end of the Edo period, the three factions of Shintoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism increasingly found themselves at odds with each other and soon grew to blame each other for the changing social conditions.[42]

In 1639, under the thirteenth head priest Ryōnyo 良如 (1612–1662) of Nishi Hongwanji, the "Institute of Academics" (*Gakuryō* 学寮) was established, and although it promoted the academic pursuit of Buddhist doctrinal studies, the *bakufu* kept very tight control on the religious affairs and the school itself. No debates with other Buddhist schools were allowed; no opposing views to the orthodox teaching was permitted. However, debates and disputes did arise mainly within the school. In Nishi Hongwanji, three major recorded religious debates took place, the last of them being the *Sangō Wakuran* 三業惑乱 incident, which ended in 1806.[43] Even here,

hopeless to find a resolution between the two opposing sides, which led to some physical altercations, the Hongwanji had to ask the *bakufu* to step in to resolve the issue. The nineteenth head priest Hon'nyo 本如 (1778–1826), after the end of the incident, was forced to close the Hongwanji doors to the public for one hundred days in reflection for its disruption of the social order and its sangha for being in contempt. Hon'nyo later issued a public statement, encouraging the sangha to uphold the state's laws.[44]

Eventually, Hongwanji begins to focus its attention on acquiring power through strategic political maneuvering rather than on doctrinal studies as a whole. Miki explains that there are six reasons why Hongwanji already from around the middle of the Edo period on, laid the groundwork that further cemented the two truths theory into its social policy. The six are as follows:

1. After the split of Hongwanji, both sides were forced to be careful in its dealings with *bakufu* and how the shogunate viewed them.
2. Hongwanji was built at the behest of the shogun, and so it was forced into a position to uphold all of *bakufu*'s wishes.
3. Conditions and attitudes towards Buddhist priests and temples became much stricter. As a result, Hongwanji appealed for its followers to prioritize Rennyo's policy of "laws of the state as fundamental 王法為本."
4. Because *bakufu* supported Confucianism, Shin and all other Buddhist schools had to follow Confucian principles, even though Shinran was explicit in his rejection of its teachings.
5. At times of doctrinal in-fighting, Hongwanji was forced to request the *bakufu* to intervene.
6. Rather than Shinran, Kakunyo, Zonkaku, and Rennyo's ideas and teachings were put into place and emphasized more. Academic doctrinal studies, as opposed to one's religious faith, were emphasized. With the creation of sub-schools within Hongwanji, the rivalry between them led to further in-fighting and dispute.[45]

Here we see that during much of the Edo period, Hongwanji was forced to have a good relationship with the central government. Where a Buddhist school has maintained a relationship with the secular government is nothing new. Indeed, it was customary to do so. But these reasons listed above help to show why Hongwanji opened itself up to recognizing and adopting the two

truths theory. Not only had the "second founder" as well as the leaders before him condoned its usage from a doctrinal standpoint, but the political and social atmosphere that was heading towards an era of drastic change was also slowly forcing Hongwanji to redefine its practical role in society. Supporters of Confucianism were the first to call into question Buddhism's benefit and function in the country. Shin Buddhism had established the use of the two truths theory for quite some time now, and the coming era of change would make them decide whether to retain the status quo or reform their methods to accommodate new change. Here we see the beginning of the growing identity crisis of the Shin Buddhist and the religious organization.

End of Edo period, beginning of Meiji period and the two truths theory
Meiji history

When Commodore Matthew Perry of the United States Navy enters Edo Bay in 1853 and later forces Japan to allow American merchants, who wanted mainly to trade with China, to use their ports, he was doing more than just opening Japan up to the international world. New ideas were introduced to Japan in almost all fields of study including technology, politics, warfare, and religion. Japan's economy went into chaos with the new influx of foreign currency and goods. The *bakuhan* system was no longer proving to be reliable domestically, and the *bakufu*'s capability of being able to deal with the new foreign threat was being called into question. Japan was being pulled into the western powers' economic sphere of influence, and it feared that it would be colonized like many other regions on the Asian continent. To avoid this, Japan began a campaign to abandon its feudal system in favor of a centralized monarchy supported by economic capitalism. The country's economy was unified, and all independent domains or *han* were dissolved.[46] In fact, western ideas and technology were slowly seeping through to Japan prior to the Meiji Restoration by the late Edo period. The scientific method and rationalism

spawned by Europe's enlightenment era created new ways of critical thinking that would be applied to various fields of study.

Japan came up with a three-pronged approach to how they would rapidly modernize their country to be able to compete with the rest of the world: 1. Make the country prosperous with a strong military, 2. Promote industry, and 3. Open itself to westernization. Of course, there were those who opposed opening Japan's doors to foreigners as well. In one example, there was a person by the name of Ii Naosuke 井伊直弼 (1815–1860), who was a minister for the *bakufu* and supported the idea of opening up the borders of Japan to the outside world. The shogunate under his guidance purges all who opposed trade with foreigners in the event known as "Ansei Purge" (*ansei no taigoku* 安政の大獄). Ii was against the idea of "loyalty to the emperor and expulsion of the foreigners" (*kin'nō jō-i* 勤王攘夷), a popular slogan that would become widely used at that time. However, he was later assassinated in front of the imperial gates in an event known as *Sakurada Mongai no Hen* 桜田門外の変.[47] This example is just one of many that exhibit the turbulent times and the radically opposing ideas that were trying to steer the course of Japan.

Solidifying Japanese identity and rallying around a unified cause to make Japan a strong nation, the government saw the imperial household as the fulcrum of society. The emperor was the divine ruler of Japan and a direct descendant of the gods who created the nation. The emperor represented all Shinto shrines. Shinto as a folk religion was converted into State Shinto, thereby making it the government-sponsored "religion" or the spiritual identity of the country, at least in the eyes of secular society. All Japanese citizens were told they were part of one family with the emperor as the head, which justified making mandatory the worship of *kami*, as they were now considered the ancestral lineage of the Japanese people. Thus would be the basis of modern

imperial Japan. Capitalism, imperialism, and State Shinto were to all have a mutually dependent relationship.[48] But what would happen to Buddhism and Shin Buddhists living in Japan? The Japanese society was steering towards phasing out Buddhism, and it did so by trying to eliminate its applicability and hence, the Buddhist identity in social ethics. The new era of modernity forced upon the Japanese Buddhist an identity crisis involving the following disjunctive: should one be Buddhist or Japanese?

Shinto a "non-religion"

At the beginning of the Meiji period, the government began to implement new policies that made State Shinto the official religion of the country. In May of 1871, the Grand Council of State explained that Shinto and all of the shrines were not in the same category as general religion and therefore, a "non-religion." For Jōdo Shinshū Buddhists, this was a much-welcomed official statement of the government, as Shin religious doctrine at that point did not officially recognize the worship of *kami*.[49] But the plan to designate Shinto not as a religion was a clever strategy on the part of the government. Because of its classification as such, the idea of "separation of religion and state," could not be invoked as a way to combat the implementation of State Shinto policies in the public sphere. Now, *all* citizens of Japan, regardless of their religious backgrounds, had to follow State Shinto. The reason being that worship of *kami* was a form of respecting the ancestors who helped to build the nation. Shinto was, in essence, a cultural tradition and not a religion and it was simply trying to honor the nation's ancestors. This was the reasoning that the government used in their efforts to inculcate patriotism in its citizens.

In particular, the government promoted making pilgrimages to local shrines when the nation was hit with a crisis such as a natural disaster like the Great Kantō earthquake in 1923; the Great Depression; various labor movements and strikes in the early part of the twentieth century; and

World War I. When the Meiji emperor fell ill, the government recommended its citizens to pray at their local shrines for his speedy recovery.

When the Emperor Taishō acceded to the throne in 1912, everyone was encouraged to place a woven hemp rope, called a *shimenawa* that is used in Shinto rituals, at the entrance of their homes as a way to commemorate the event.

Many Shin Buddhist scholars during this time wrote commentaries about the relationship between Shinto and Jōdo Shinshū Buddhism. Ōhashi Tetsuei, a Shin minister, explains that even if the government says that Shinto is not a religion, when someone goes to a shrine and prays and worships to the *kami*, that person is being "religious" in every sense of the word. Everyone else then sees this and thinks that Shinto is, in fact, a religion.[50] Tetsuei is trying to show that regardless of how hard the government tries to convince its citizens that Shinto is not a religion, people will consider it as such if they see others praying and worshipping at a shrine. "How is this not religion?" he argues.

Others state that they do not know what they are worshipping and praying to because there are too many *kami* and it is not explicitly written or signified what the central object of reverence at every shrine is. In other claims, ministers wanted the government to clearly distinguish between State Shinto and Shinto as religion because the line between the two was being blurred. In yet another argument, scholars and ministers argued that State Shinto may not be a religion now but that in time it would eventually develop to become one. All of these arguments make one thing clear: the Meiji government was intentionally being ambiguous on the issue of whether Shinto was a religion or not. Its approach was to define State Shinto as a "non-religion" and a cultural tradition where its rituals and principals could be enforced nationwide.[51]

The scientific method, rationality, and human reasoning to question religious doctrine and spirituality became a popular method of researching and teaching about Buddhism. It gave researchers new insight and vigor into pursuing what was generally being seen as an out-of-date religion that was unable to respond to the changing times. In one example, the "Mt. Sumeru Theory" (*shumisensetsu* 須弥山説), which was a commonly held Buddhist cosmological understanding where Mt. Sumeru and not the sun was at the center of the galaxy, was being highly criticized because of its lack of scientific evidence supporting this claim.[52] Supporters of Shintoism, modernists, and Confucianists alike began to criticize Buddhist teachings. Shin scholars among other Buddhists were desperate in their search to defend their doctrine.

Eventually, because it was impossible to prove the existence of Mt. Sumeru scientifically, apologetic scholars in the modern period began to explain it more as a subjective reality that one experiences rather than a physical and objectively tangible location. This method of interpretation, in which one understands the mythological stories not as objective fact but rather, as subjective experience provoking a deeper understanding of life, manifests into the various movements that occurred during the modern period such as Kiyozawa Manshi's (1863–1903) *seishinshugi* 精神主義.

Buddhism in the modern period is for the first time forced to clash with science and rationality. It was also forced to find new ways to explore the spiritual, social, and personal issues that constituted one's identity with the introduction of the western concept of individuality. Finally, it was driven to break free from the stranglehold of religion considered only in the context of politics and proper social behavior or ethics. Buddhism slowly became more a matter of religious faith, it promoted the subjective notion of the Pure Land, and it re-

developed the idea of Buddhism as an autonomous religion. This approach to Buddhist autonomy and subjectivity became characteristic of the modern era, and it was to be a major development since the rise of the Kamakura era new wave of Buddhist schools.[53]

In another example, with the tolerance of Christianity in the Meiji period, Unitarian Christianity and its emphasis on using reasoning to understand the Bible, influenced the way Buddhists studied their own respective traditions. One of the results was to claim that Mahayana Buddhism, because the original historical Buddha Śākyamuni did not expound it, was not true Buddhism but rather a development or an off-shoot of it. Unitarians also emphasized direct social engagement and encouraged comparative religious studies, all efforts that various Buddhist schools have since attempted to take up more directly.

This new method as a way to analyze religion created a division between rationality and ritual. The phrase "Protestant Buddhism" is coined, which connotes the use of reasoning to analyze the Buddhist doctrine and reject ceremonial rituals. Arthur May Knapp (1841–1921), leader of one of the first Unitarian missions to Japan, promoted this way of thinking. He emphasized using reasoning to analyze religion as well as not deify its founders. This kind of thinking had a huge impact not just on Christians in Japan, but also Buddhists of all schools. Again here, this method of research forced Buddhists to figure out new ways to explain their religion logically. Known as "reformative Buddhism" (*bukkyō kairyōron* 仏教改良論), it used reasoning as the basis of analyzing both Christianity and Buddhism and encouraged free thinking towards any religion. This was the direct influence of Unitarian Christianity.[54]

According to Donald S. Lopez, Buddhism can be divided into two categories: 1. Classical Buddhism and 2. Modern Buddhism. In Classical Buddhism, there is an emphasis in ritual, magic, hierarchy, and community. But in Modern Buddhism, there is less emphasis on ritual and

magic and instead, a movement to go back to Śākyamuni and the promotion of Buddhist

principles such as equality, universality, and individualism. The word religion, or "*shūkyō* 宗教,"

is a recent phenomenon as well. In general, there are two categories of religion: practice, or

ritual, and belief. Before the Meiji period, religion tended to be more practice-oriented, but after

the beginning of the Meiji period, "belief" came to be associated more with religion. Hence,

Buddhism, as a religion, became more associated with belief. That is, one's belief and faith

became central to how one identified with a particular religion.[55] For Shin specifically, as a

teaching that already focused more on personal faith rather than ritual practice, the push for

modernism was especially welcome.

From the above examples, we can see how rationality, the scientific method, and using

evidence and reasoning to understand Buddhism from a new perspective became the dominant

method of learning in the modern period. People approached Buddhism no longer as a social

custom and an unquestionable dogmatic doctrine, but rather as a rediscovery of an ancient

method of self-reflection and quest for truth. But this rediscovery of an ancient method of self-

reflection and quest for truth required problematizing, deconstructing, and probing self-identity.

Hence, the Meiji period and the influx of new ideas and techniques set the course for the

deconstruction of what it meant to be Buddhist, which of course includes the Shin Buddhist

identity.

Adjustment of educational policy

Education was also tightly controlled by the new Meiji government as it was seen as a crucial

component in the development of Japan's modernity. With the abolishment of the feudal class

system, all Japanese children were required to undergo primary schooling regulated by a national

central agency. In addition to lessons in reading, writing, arithmetic, and science, children were

also taught basic rules of behavior and etiquette inspired by Confucian principles, as well as

loyalty and obedience to the emperor. Important to note is the absence of any role for Buddhism

and its priests. The Meiji government was slowly trying to phase out any part that Buddhism

would be able to fulfill in the modern Japanese society. One way it did this was to initiate the

campaign of "separation of Shinto and Buddhism" (*shinbutsu bunri* 神仏分離), which occurred

just after the Meiji Restoration in 1868. In 1872, the "Ministry of Doctrine" (*kyōbushō* 教部省),

under the "Great Teaching Institute" (*daikyōin* 大教院), mandated that all Shinto and Buddhist

priests were to be appointed to the position of *kyōdōshoku* 教導職, a government employee who

worked as a teacher, educating children in issues relating to morality. This government

employee, however, had to educate children based on the Confucian principles as well as

subscribe to *kami* veneration and loyalty to the emperor. First, all government employees had to

sign and agree to the following oath known as the *sanjōno kyōsoku* 三条教則:

> 第一条 First Condition
> 一　敬神愛国の旨を体すべき事
> 1.　Respect for the gods and love of country
>
> 第二条 Second Condition
> 一　天理人道を明らかにすべき事
> 2.　The principles of Heaven and the Way of humans
>
> 第三条 Third Condition
> 一　皇上を奉戴し、朝旨を遵守せしむべき事
> 3.　Reverence for the emperor and obedience to the will of the court[56]

It is easy to see the glaring contradiction a person would have to agree to if he/she did not

identify with Shinto and Confucian ideas. In addition to this, all Buddhist priests including Jōdo

Shinshū ministers had to pass a series of tests administered by the Meiji government to be

considered certified preachers of their own tradition. Collectively called the "Eleven Topics"

(*Jūichi Kendai* 十一兼題) tests in the following eleven subjects were as follows:

1. Virtue of *kami*, benevolence of the emperor 神徳皇恩之説
2. Human soul that does not perish 人魂不死之説
3. Creation of the world by *kami* 天神造化之説
4. Separation of the visible and invisible worlds 顕幽分界之説
5. Love of country 愛国之説
6. *Kami* veneration ritual 神祭之説
7. Calming the soul 鎮魂之説
8. Master and vassal 君臣之説
9. Father and son 父子之説
10. Husband and wife 夫婦之説
11. Great purification from evil 大祓之説

 In Nishi Hongwanji (but also similarly Higashi Hongwanji), this was administered as part of the

tokudo ordination, and if a minister wanted to be able to give Dharma sermons outside of one's

temple, he/she would have first to pass these examinations that were completely unrelated to

Jōdo Shinshū doctrine.[57]

Eventually, the forceful implementation of Shinto elements in public education prompted the

objection of many Buddhists. The most prominent of these is Shimaji Mokurai 島地黙雷 (1838–

1911) who went overseas and spent some time studying the different religions and educational

systems of different countries and undoubtedly, was influenced by the ideas of the separation of

Church and State and freedom of religion. He was able to convince Kōnyō 広如 (1798–1871),

the head priest of Nishi Hongwanji, which was arguably one of the largest and most powerful

religious institutions by this time, to refuse to comply with and withdraw its participation in the

daikyōin in 1875. Higashi Hongwanji and other Jōdo Shinshū denominations followed soon

after, which led to the eventual collapse and replacement of the *daikyōin* with another

government agency.[58] What is also worth noting here is the amount of influence that Jōdo

Shinshū Buddhism and its religious organizations had on the government at this point in history.

Their political power and presence in general society were undeniably one of the largest. Not

only was their compliance necessary concerning accomplishing what the Meiji government's

various ambitions were, but Hongwanji was also made the prime target in subjugating the

Buddhist will to imperialistic aims. Hence, both amicable cooperation from the Jōdo Shinshū

sects was necessary, but equally so, the recognition (coerced by the government) by those sects

that the emperor, State Shinto, and imperial Japan were more important than any one school of

Buddhism.

Finally, in 1890 the "Imperial Rescript on Education" (*kyōiku chokugo* 教育勅語)was

implemented, a short document that was read at all public schools and memorized by school

children. It promoted such values as filial piety, advancing the public good, observing morality,

as well as courageously offering oneself to the emperor and being faithful subjects of the

throne.[59] One famous episode regarding this issue is known as the *Uchimura Kanzō Fukei Jiken*

内村鑑三不敬事件 of 1890. Uchimura was a teacher who, while at one of the school-wide

ceremonial readings of the Rescript on Education, did not properly show respect towards the

sacred written document. Fellow colleagues as well as well as his students criticized him and the

incident made public news. Uchimura was later forced to resign from his position from stress-

related illness.

Japan's new government of imperialism, fueled by a growing sense of xenophobia, jingoism,

and racial superiority towards an unwelcoming international community all created the political,

social, and religious climate of the country at the beginning of the twentieth century. Rationality

and education were seen as essential methods to develop and expand the modernization of Japan

as well as re-examine religion, including Buddhism. As a result, Shin Buddhist organizations were forced to comply with educational policies that were mandated by the central government in an effort to appeal to the general public that this religion was still applicable in the modern society. This was difficult to do in a time when the central government was trying to label Buddhism as a relic of history and a marker of how far along Japan has come since its days of feudalism.

Hongwanji and its public policy

After the Boshin War 戊辰戦争 (1868–1869) which marked the end of the feudal era and the Tokugawa shogunate, there remained a period of uncertainty as to whether the imperial household or *bakufu* would control the country. Nishi and Higashi Hongwanji were soon faced with having to make a decision of which side to take. Because Higashi Hongwanji was established with the help of Tokugawa Ieyasu centuries before, it felt a stronger sense of loyalty to *bakufu*. However, Nishi Hongwanji, partly because of its feeling of neglect in the friendly relationship that Higashi had with the shogunate, but more importantly because the majority of the *monto*, or sangha members, lived in areas that were sympathetic to the new imperial government, decided to side with the new movement.

However, five of the major Jōdo Shinshū sects eventually had a meeting to discuss the future of their actions. They agreed that they would have a unified front in their decisions and would side with the emperor. From this point, the organizations made generous donations to the imperial government to establish and maintain a strong relationship with it. In particular, Higashi Hongwanji had to make an extra effort because of its known history with *bakufu*.

As times got even more difficult with the Meiji government's persecution of Buddhism as a whole, Nishi and Higashi Hongwanji, as well as all other schools of Buddhism found themselves

having to accommodate more and more to the demands made by the central government. For example, the imperial government forced Higashi Hongwanji to send missionaries to the Hokkaido region. This was primarily not for the purpose of propagation—although that was the justification for making this demand—but rather, the Hongwanji had to develop, maintain, and essentially create city centers in the rural areas of Hokkaido. This would be an extremely costly project; just sending missionaries to the region alone would have been quite expensive. The development of the region's infrastructure was paid for by Hongwanji and not the government, taking a sizeable amount of the religious organization's finances, which was undoubtedly the Meiji government's intent.

In addition to this, Nishi Hongwanji was also forced to help in covering costs for building bridges in Kyoto, and other infrastructural projects throughout the country. The exorbitant amount of donations and expenditures imposed on both Hongwanji was eventually met with criticism from within the organizations. For example, Shimaji Mokurai appealed to make an effort to stop meeting the over-excessive demands of the government.[60] In general, Buddhism was still met with considerable criticism during this time. But the financial and political support that the Hongwanji desperately offered in order to appeal itself to the central authority did help to mitigate some of the government's direct attacks on Jōdo Shinshū.

Protecting the Dharma through two truths theory

In the context of anti-Buddhist sentiment promoted by Confucianists; the implementation of State Shinto by the Meiji government; the persecution of Buddhism in what is called *haibutsu kishaku* 廃仏毀釈; and the introduction of Christianity and western technologies and ideologies; the Hongwanji responded with the policy of "protecting the Dharma" (*gohōron* 護法論). Under this policy, Hongwanji expanded its efforts to defend Buddhism by publishing material that

justified syncretic interpretations between itself and both Confucianism and Shinto *kami* worship. It also attempted to divert negative attention away from itself by using Christianity as a scapegoat. Finally, it vociferously affirmed Buddhism's loyalty to the imperial household. Thus, *gohōron* became Jōdo Shinshū apologetics—a well thought out and reasoned defense of why Buddhism should not be ousted from modern Japan.

The tumultuous era of social and political unrest destabilized the guarantee of Hongwanji's existence. It was forced to seek pragmatic and realistic measures. As such, rather than promoting doctrine and faith in the religion, scholars and administrators during this time focused more on the security and organization of Hongwanji itself. Kōnyō, as well as the leadership of Nishi Hongwanji, explained that "protecting the Dharma" (*gohōron* 護法論), meant to "repay the nation with loyalty to the emperor" (*kinnō hōkoku* 勤王報国), and this was done through the two truths theory. Thus, the two truths theory had yet another development at this time. Now, it meant that to protect the Dharma (*shintai* 真諦), was precisely to obey imperial rule (*zokutai* 俗諦), thus equating the two truths as opposed to simply maintaining both sides.[61]

Despite this new development, the overall structure and social policy of Hongwanji had not changed since its days of the Edo period. It should be noted, however, that by the time of the conclusion of the Tokugawa reign and into the Meiji era, the "head priest" (*gomonshu* 御門主 or *hosshu* 法主), retained absolute control over the Hongwanji and the sangha.[62] After the golden age of Hongwanji, beginning with Rennyo and spanning a few generations after that, along with the close of the *Sangō Wakuran* Incident, the head priest's control gradually increased over time. Finally, in 1806, with the civil unrest that occurred within Nishi Hongwanji that spilled out onto the streets of the general public, the institution was punished by the government and forced to

deal with the embarrassment and shame that it had brought on itself. The near schism that the incident brought about was enough for Nishi Hongwanji to re-affirm a tight control from the top down. In addition to this, both Higashi and Nishi Hongwanji, Takada, Kibe, and later Kōshō sects of Jōdo Shinshū, agreed to implement a new administrative policy[63] in which essentially all temples became subsidiary to the mother temple.[64] For Nishi and Higashi Hongwanji, that meant their respective headquarters in Kyoto. The purpose of this move was to consolidate the power of the head priest. He was to be considered the *zenjishiki* of all followers; the spiritual as well as the organizational leader of Hongwanji.

When Kōnyō saw the unstable situation that was forthcoming with the new imperial government, he sought to protect the Hongwanji just as Rennyo had done with the rising tensions with Enryakuji and the warrior monks, and the civil unrest of *ikkō ikki*. He felt that the best way to do that was to maintain Rennyo's policy of *ōbō ihon* 王法為本, which he interpreted to mean two truths theory 真俗二諦. One of the works that was undoubtedly circulated and known by Kōnyō at this time was Shōkai's 性海 (1765–1838) book entitled, *Fifteen Topics of the Two Truths Theory* (*Shinzoku nitai Jyūgomon* 『真俗二諦十五門』). As one of the leading scholars at the time, Shōkai's work was widely read and it is said to have influenced both Kōnyō and Myōnyō (1850–1903), the succeeding head priest of Nishi Hongwanji. In one of his final written works, Kōnyō had his son scribe what is later called, "(Kōnyō's) Testament" (*kōnyo ikun*「広如遺訓」). Here, there is expressed appeal for all members of the sangha to follow the two truths theory and be loyal subjects of the emperor. Kōnyō felt this was the only way to ensure that Hongwanji will be able to survive the difficult times of Buddhist persecution. Then, Myōnyō attaches an addendum officially stating that he will carry out his father's wishes of observing the

two truths theory.[65] Thus, we see a collective effort on the part of the Shin Buddhist organizations to side with the imperial government in the hopes of stability and protection of the Dharma. Subsequently, the Shin Buddhist identity was aligning itself with the imperialistic agenda.

Two truths theory in the new era

In the Heian period, the term *buppō*, or Buddha's law, was used to mean Buddhist doctrine and the temple, clergy, and temple manor. On the other hand, *ōbō* or king's law, came to mean the law of the land administered and enforced by the ruling class. It is not until the Edo period that *buppō* was directly associated with supramundane truth *shintai* 真諦, and *ōbō* to mundane truth *zokutai* 俗諦. This phenomenon did not happen in China or India and was uniquely a Japanese development. Shinran went against the traditional Buddhist approach to having good relations with secular authority. He did not think Buddhist ritual and prayer spiritually protected the imperial court or the ruling warrior class. Nor did he try to use political or state power to ensure the security and protection of the temple or the Jōdo Shinshū teaching, even though most other Buddhist schools implemented this policy. Rather, he believed the security of the teaching was solely up to Amida's power and the shinjin of the believer.[66]

Rennyo lived in a turbulent era where the government was unstable and the political climate proved tricky and fickle. Well-aware of this, he did not seek the help of secular authority (*ōbō*) to secure and protect the Buddha's law (*buppō*). Instead, Rennyo emphasized being model citizens, following laws and paying taxes only so that it would not give the powers that be any reason to attack Hongwanji and the nembutsu movement. Rennyo thought of Buddha-Dharma indeed as the central motivation of the nembutsu practicer and not that *ōbō* and *buppō* were on equal footing and mutually dependent.

That all changed in the Edo period, however, and the two sides of the two truths theory became fully recognized as equal parts and mutually dependent. What is important to note is that because Jōdo Shinshū does not participate in petitionary prayer, nor does it engage in apotropaic ritual, its contribution to the general public as well as its practical use, especially for those in power, was questioned. Jōdo Shinshū eventually found themselves on the defensive, forced to explain what their practical use to society was. What they did to repay the benevolence shown to them by the emperor, who allowed them to continue their Buddhist tradition in this country, was to carry out all of *bakufu*'s policies, which involved such things as to exclude Christianity and promote the five Confucian virtues.[67] For example, Erin 慧琳 (1751–1789) an Ōtani-ha scholar, is quoted to have supported and adopted Zonkaku's idea that supramundane truth is *buppō* and mundane truth is *ōbō*, and the two sides were mutually dependent and needed each other just like the wings of a bird or the wheels of a cart. Another person, Sōyō 僧鎔 (1723–1783), a Nishi Hongwanji scholar of the Kuge sub-school, is also quoted to have stated a similar remark. These examples were typical of the Edo scholars who accepted and adopted as is, Zonkaku's understanding of the two truths theory through his commentary on the *Kyōgyōshinshō*.[68] It is safe to say that during most of the Edo period this kind of understanding of the two truths theory, where the two sides were mutually dependent and on equal footing, was presumed to be true without any apprehension whatsoever.

Over time, however, the two truths theory took on another development. The unstable political and social climate drew emphasis on the social practicality of the Shin tradition. In what was to become an influential work at the time, in *Fifteen Topics of the Two Truths Theory*, Shōkai uses the depiction of the Pure Land as an analogy to explain the supramundane and mundane truths. He shows that the supramundane truth corresponds to the Pure Land while the

mundane corresponds to the world of delusion. Then, nembutsu people in the world of delusion should, "train the self in the virtues of justice, duty, loyalty, and obey what the king teaches."[69] Furthermore he writes,

> Concerning the mundane truth, our school of Buddhism does not talk about observing the *vinaya*. For this reason, all of the king's decrees speak in the name of the Buddhist code of conduct. Avoid mistaken views and refrain from evil actions. The Jōdo Shinshū tradition is the appropriate teaching for this age of Mappō and brings us to the abide in the right way.[70]

Because the Shin tradition does not have a specific *vinaya* or code of ethical conduct that all sangha and ministers must follow, Shōkai urges them to obey the laws of the land instead. But what is more important is him showing that one can interpret the mundane to be able to speak for the supramundane truth. Thus, based on this interpretation, in obeying the mundane truth, through blind loyalty to the emperor, one is considered to be following the Buddhist path. This is evidence that supports the claim that the two truths theory opens the possibility to prioritize the mundane truth over the supramundane. In other words, the two truths theory, although in and of itself only puts the suramundane and mundane truths alongside each other to have equal importance—arguably a problem in its own right—the real problem is that it allows for one to believe that the mundane truth is *more important* than the supramundane. With this understanding, one is no longer a student, follower, or seeker on the Jōdo Shinshū path to hear the Buddha-Dharma, but rather, a subject of the secular persuasion who acts in the name of Jōdo Shinshū.

The two truths theory slowly changed to mean that it was none other than the benevolent and wise emperor who allowed Buddhism to flourish in this nation in the first place. Therefore, it was a Buddhist's duty to repay the kindness that his majesty has shown to its people by faithfully and blindly obeying his laws. The success and flourishing of Buddhism were attributed not to the teachings of the Buddha and a tradition's respective teachers, but rather, to the benevolent

emperor himself. Now, the religious doctrine of Shinran is not the primary concern but instead, how the organization can support the imperial agenda becomes central. The two truths theory paved the way for mundane to be equal in meaning, which in turn, supplanted the supramundane truth. Now, the king's law speaks for the Buddha's law.

Larger Sutra as basis for two truths theory

To be able to defend Jōdo Shinshū doctrine to outside criticism, scholars needed to find a way to connect the two truths theory to the tradition's foundational teachings. However, the *okite* and idea of laws of the state as fundamental 王法為本, were designed by Rennyo himself and not grounded directly by any doctrinal texts, not even Shinran's works. As the government and society were rapidly changing, the *okite* rules were no longer seen as relevant and viewed to be outdated.[71] The modern era required a development away from the idea of laws of the state as fundamental 王法為本 to the two truths theory 真俗二諦 and its doctrinal implications. What was the purpose of this development? Given the context of the rising popularity of the ideas such as, "returning to the original teachings of Śākyamuni," rationalism, and demythologizing foundational sacred texts, there was an effort made to find the logical basis for the relevance of Jōdo Shinshū teaching in modern society. This was done by using the *Larger Sutra*'s section of "five evils" (*goakudan* 五悪段).

The section of five evils is towards the end of the second part of *Larger Sutra.* In short, they are to: kill, steal, commit adultery, lie, and consume intoxicants. Also, many scholars around this time consider the five Confucian virtues to be referring to the same thing. That is, not to kill means to act in humaneness, not to steal means to act in righteousness, not to commit adultery means to act in propriety, not to lie means to be trustworthy, and not to consume intoxicants means to be wise (the last two are inverted).

Recent scholarship posited theories that the section of "five evils" was not in the original composition of *Larger Sutra*. For example, this section talks about the heavens and the king's law, themes which are inconsistent with the rest of the text. Researchers argue that this part was later added in China to give concrete and prescriptive social behaviors that matched the standards of moral rules at that time. Also, the section is found in the two earliest versions of the *Larger Sutra*, but not in some of the other versions, showing the section's inconsistency in the extant versions.[72] Shinran himself was well aware of this problem and did not cite this part of the sutra anywhere in his writings. Scholars document this fact in the Edo period.[73]

Despite these concerns, Shōkai cites the section of "five evils" as the basis for the two truths theory and for this reason claims there is textual evidence for its legitimacy. In his work *Fifteen Topics of the Two Truths Theory*, he states,

> The five admonishments [five evils] are the basis for the king's law. Similarly, all buddhas teach the king's law. Hence, in keeping with this principle, our tradition endorses the two truths theory. The reason why is because on the outside it repays the benevolence of this nation, while on the inside it keeps the eternal Dharma law.[74]

> The section on the five evils is in *Larger Sutra*. It teaches that one who has taken refuge in the three treasures should refrain from committing evils.[75]

Here we see Shōkai trying to connect two truths theory to the *Larger Sutra* by saying that the section on five evils explains that people should follow the laws of secular authority. Further, obeying the law of the king is to abide by the law of the Dharma. By developing the two truths theory to be based in the *Larger Sutra*, Shōkai and other scholars of this time wanted to show that obeying the emperor and secular authority was not something that started with Rennyo's *okite*, but that it was part of Jōdo Shinshū doctrine all along. During the end of the Edo period, there was a transition from the implementation of *okite* to the two truths theory grounded in *Larger Sutra*.

Now, obeying the emperor was a fundamental principle to the Shin teaching. This would give Shin Buddhism reason to argue that they have always been and will continue to be a loyal and cooperative faction supporting the imperial household. This was a deliberate and forced interpretation to connect the two truths theory to the *Larger Sutra* and to explain that the section on five evils, despite Shinran not giving any importance to it at all, served a vital function in Shin doctrine. This goes to show the desperation of the situation in the increasing pressure to comply with the government's demands of conformity during the Meiji period. With this justification in place, the Hongwanji moved to promote all imperialistic ambitions.[76] With the mundane now superseding the supramundane truth and subsequently Shinran's teachings, the identity of the Shin Buddhist was now in complete shambles.

Justification to support State Shinto

As time goes on, with the progressing situation of the persecution of Buddhism, along with the rising support for State Shinto as the nation's religion, and intensifying ideology for imperialism, Jōdo Shinshū went from not recognizing *kami* worship to tolerating it as a form of patriotic duty. Gradually, comments that were critical of *kami* worship within Hongwanji started to disappear and replaced with syncretistic interpretations. Sasaki Eun 佐々木慧雲 writes,

"Respecting gods and ancestral worship is actually in Shinran's words and the previous head priests' of Hongwanji. Therefore, we should not reject this ritual." Sugi Shiro 杉紫郎 writes, "It is unknown how Shinran actually felt about the *non-religious* significance of *kami* worship. But based on his lifestyle of eating meat and marrying, which is common to what all other people did at the time, Shinran did not object to the customs of the common folk, one of which was to take part in ancestral worship."[77] These are just a few examples of the many that began to emerge during this period in which scholars justified ways to recognize *kami* worship in their tradition.

Outside of academics, rural areas of the countryside firmly supported ancestral worship. The long tradition that was ingrained in the farming communities all throughout Japan saw the *kami* and souls of their ancestors as protectors of their local domains. Thus, it was almost impossible to separate the cultural aspect from the religious, a blurred line that the Meiji government onwards exploited to push for a national identity with the emperor as its patriarch. Many of these areas had a strong Jōdo Shinshū following, making the situation for the Hongwanji to reject *kami* worship, very difficult to do.

During the Taishō period, the government continued with the Meiji policy that Shinto was a "non-religion." In 1926 (first year of Shōwa), the major religions of Japan, including Buddhism and Christianity, filed a lawsuit claiming that Shinto was, in fact, a religion and demanded the government to clarify this issue once and for all. Then in 1929, through imperial decree, State Shinto was declared once again, a "non-religion." But by this point, Jōdo Shinshū followers gradually came to adopt and accept Shinto ritual as a form of ancestral worship. Teramoto Etatsu 寺本慧達, a Shin scholar who has written on the issue of State Shinto and Jōdo Shinshū, writes,

"The Shinto shrine is to promote faith in the nation. It finds meaning in conveying the long tradition of loyalty in the national spirit. Religion has meaning in that it is for personal spiritual development."[78] As we see in this quote, there is a clear separation where on the one hand there is the recognition of *kami* veneration as a form of ancestral worship, and on the other hand, there is one's personal religious views. The two were not considered incompatible.

In a few other examples, Kawano Hōun 河野法雲, a Shin scholar and minister writes, "Go to a Shinto shrine, kneel down and put your hands together in gassho and say the nembutsu. While one firmly believes in Amida's Primal Vow, he can show respect to the *kami*."[79] Whereas prior to these types of quotes, Jōdo Shinshū scholars were quite passive and reluctant to encourage

nembutsu followers to go to the shrines. Gradually, they were forced to compromise this

position. Another Shin scholar Hiei Gikoku 比叡義国 writes,

> Shin practicers normally seek to develop themselves, but in general society, they become ideal citizens of the country…We should respect the *kami*; this is part of our innate nature [as Japanese people]. The law of the emperor is meant to harmonize the self and the outside world. This is the mutual agreement between *kami* and the people. Believing in Buddha is the same as believing in *kami*. These two are not contradictive.[80]

At its peak, Jōdo Shinshū scholars and ministers alike were not just tolerating *kami* worship;

they were outright propagating it. The Hongwanji went from not recognizing *kami* worship, to

tolerating it, to now propagating and endorsing it as part of what it means to be a Shin Buddhist.

Finally, in 1940 just before the Pacific War, the various organizations of Jōdo Shinshū known as

Shinshū Kakuha no Kyōwakai 真宗各派の協和会, officially agreed that they would recognize

all sacred Shinto principles and paraphernalia, for example the *shimenawa*, which goes to show

the stranglehold the government had on its people.[81] Some efforts were made to slow or stop the

tide of State Shinto but by this point it was too late. Most of the organization was already

condoning *kami* worship in place of Amida's Primal Vow. *Kami* worship became the Shin

Buddhist identity.

Hongwanji wanted State Shinto not to be a religion but rather, a cultural movement praising

the nation's ancestors. The intended belief was that by doing so, this would constitute Shinto

ritual, such as *kami* worship, as religious acts that Jōdo Shinshū Buddhists would not have to

observe. But its push to make Shinto recognized as a non-religion ultimately backfired. The

Hongwanji played right into the hands of the government and in fact, helped to expedite State

Shinto as the *de facto* national religion by recognizing *kami* worship in the Shin Buddhist

identity. In this way, Hongwanji and the many Shin Buddhists unknowingly became one of the

chief supporters of State Shinto. Thus, the Shin Buddhist identity meant nothing other than to

support, promote, encourage, and affirm the Japanese identity: one that claimed to be descendants of *kami*.

conclusion

The two truths theory created what can be condensed into three main reasons that ultimately crippled the Shin Buddhist ethical identity. The two truths theory: 1. prioritizes the mundane over the supramundane truth, 2. misinterprets the teaching of "receiving" as social passivity, and 3. defeats the spiritually authentic individual.

The two truths theory was implemented as the Hongwanji's ethical policy for approximately seven hundred years. Various religious leaders of Hongwanji which include Kakunyo, Zonkaku, and Rennyo all implemented the two truths theory as a way to not only appease external political forces as well as rivaling religious factions, but also to be able to attract and accommodate the concerns of the people throughout Hongwanji's history.

There are a number of important events that happened in Japan's history as well as various developments that occurred in the Hongwanji, particularly at the latter half of the nineteenth century to the early part of the twentieth century, that helped to set the stage for the two truths theory to distort Shin ethics as well as the Shin Buddhist identity. Hongwanji's ethical policy of the two truths theory began to justify a religious agenda and identity that was not grounded in Shin doctrine.

During this time the Meiji government was intentionally being ambiguous on the issue of whether Shinto was a religion or not. Its approach was to define State Shinto as a "non-religion" and a cultural tradition where its rituals and principals could be enforced nationwide. At the same time, there was the introduction of rationalism and the scientific method brought from western standards of research. People approached Buddhism no longer as a social custom and an

unquestionable dogmatic doctrine, but rather as a rediscovery of an ancient method of self-reflection and quest for truth. The Meiji period and the influx of new ideas and techniques set the course for the deconstruction of what it meant to be Buddhist, or more specifically, the Shin Buddhist identity. In addition, rationality and education were seen as essential methods to develop and expand the modernization of Japan as well as re-examine religion, including Buddhism. As a result, Shin Buddhist organizations were forced to comply with educational policies that were mandated by the central government.

Also, the major Shin religious institutions agreed that they would have a unified front in their decisions and would side with the emperor as opposed to the shogunate. From this point, the organizations made generous donations to the imperial government to establish and maintain a strong relationship with it. As times got even more difficult with the Meiji government's persecution of Buddhism as a whole, Nishi and Higashi Hongwanji, as well as all other schools of Buddhism found themselves having to accommodate more and more to the demands set out by the central government.

In the context of anti-Buddhist sentiment promoted by Confucianists; the implementation of State Shinto by the Meiji government; the persecution of Buddhism in what is called *haibutsu kishaku* 廃仏毀釈; and the introduction of Christianity and western technologies and ideologies; the Hongwanji responded with the policy of "protecting the Dharma" (*gohōron* 護法論). Under this policy, Hongwanji expanded its efforts to defend Buddhism by publishing material that justified syncretic interpretations between itself and both Confucianism and Shinto *kami* worship. It also attempted to divert negative attention away from itself by using Christianity as a scapegoat. Finally, it vociferously affirmed Buddhism's loyalty to the imperial household. Thus,

gohōron became Jōdo Shinshū apologetics, a well thought out and reasoned defense of why Buddhism should not be ousted from modern Japan.

The two truths theory over time, slowly changed to mean that it was none other than the benevolent and wise emperor who allowed Buddhism to flourish in this nation in the first place. Therefore, it was a Buddhist's duty to repay the kindness that his majesty has shown to its people by faithfully and blindly obeying his laws. The success and flourishing of Buddhism were attributed not to the teachings of the Buddha and a tradition's respective teachers, but rather, to the benevolent emperor himself.

In order to be able to defend Jōdo Shinshū doctrine to outside criticism, scholars needed to find a way to connect the two truths theory to the tradition's foundational teachings. Given the context of the rising popularity of the ideas such as, "returning to the original teachings of Śākyamuni," rationalism, and demythologizing foundational sacred texts, there was an effort made to find the logical basis for the relevance of Jōdo Shinshū teaching in modern society. This was done by using the *Larger Sutra*'s section of "five evils" (*goakudan* 五悪段).

With the progressing situation of the persecution of Buddhism, along with the rising support for State Shinto as the nation's religion, and intensifying ideology for imperialism, Jōdo Shinshū went from not recognizing *kami* worship to tolerating it as a form of patriotic duty. Gradually, comments that were critical of *kami* worship within Hongwanji started to disappear and replaced with syncretistic interpretations.

Thus, we see different ways in which the historical context of the two truths theory developed as a way to support imperial Japan's agenda rather than a teaching about Amida Buddha's salvific Vow Power. The two truths theory, in the end, created dual identities that were for the most part, quietly coexisting with each other until their clash in the modern era.

Chapter Two Shin Ethics as Two Truths Theory in the Twentieth Century

Introduction

In the last chapter, we discussed the history of the two truths theory, or *shinzoku nitai* 真俗二諦, from Shinran to the major figures of the Hongwanji school. Then we saw it steadily move towards the justification and recognition of the imperial order and State Shinto. Next, we examined concrete examples of how Shin Buddhist principles were exploited to support certain ideologies and campaigns implemented by the imperial government. Finally, we concluded with the three most problematic characteristics, which I call the "legacy of the two truths theory."

But this leads to yet another question. Geographically, how extensive was the influence of the two truths theory? Was it only a problem dealt with in Japan and that it had no influence in overseas Shin Buddhism? After all, the first Shin Buddhists in Hawai'i, America, Canada, Brazil, and Europe were Japanese immigrants. In answering these questions, we can get to the real heart of the matter which is to ask, "Has the two truths theory had any effect on the Shin Buddhist ethical identity in the West"?

It would be almost presumable that when the first group of Shin ministers went to America to propagate, that they would have brought with them the skills, experience, and expertise in proselytization that they learned in Japan. Upon doing a brief overview and search for any materials that talked about this issue, there were only a handful of scholars that have taken this up. Academic journals such as the *Pacific World* and *Eastern Buddhist* did not come up with any titles that were related to this issue. This does not mean my search was exhaustive, but it does show the limited focus on this issue possibly because it is believed that *shinzoku nitai* ended along with the close of World War II. In fact, in the new by-laws of the Hongwanji-ha in Kyoto,

there is absolutely no mentioning of the words "*shinzoku nitai*" anywhere.[1] It is as if the phrase never existed.

In America, *shinzoku nitai* helps to reinforce the portrayal of Buddhism defined by western scholars and enthusiasts. In other words, it allowed Shin Buddhism outside of Japan and its religious organizations to go along with what western scholarship and popular sentiment's understanding of Buddhism was, in order to define its own religious identity. In this way, the two truths theory defeats the spiritually authentic individual, or the Shin Buddhist ethical identity.

Exhibiting two truths theory in Japan
Historical background

In the last chapter, I briefly explored the history of the relationship of the two truths theory with the Hongwanji. I propose that this ethical policy did not pose much of a threat to the Shin Buddhist identity until the transition from the Tokugawa period to the Meiji period, where there was an influx of western ideas and industrial modernity. Ultimately, the two truths theory failed to provide Shin Buddhism and its adherents a reified and strong ethical identity that could resist the tide of the changing times: the rise of Imperial Japan. In this section I will explain some of the policies and actions that Hongwanji carried out during war-time Japan in the modern era. I will then shift focus to show examples of how the three points of failure of the two truths theory manifested in various ways the Hongwanji justified supporting the war effort and Imperial Japan.

Religious "Freedom"

In the Meiji Constitution's Article 28, religious "freedom" was allowed on the condition that it did not interfere with one's duty to the nation.[2] That duty meant to the imperial rule, which adopted State Shinto as its official religion; effectively, there was no religious freedom.[3] Helen Hardacre, in her book *Shinto and the State: 1868-1988*, explains that the long history of the persecution of Christians in Japan and the continued suppression of Christianity in the modern

period, greatly inhibited Japan's relationship with the western powers. This diplomatic

frustration was what motivated the Meiji government to include a provision of religious freedom

when it was drafting the new constitution.[4] From this, we can see that what pushed the

government to recognize religious freedom was not in the principle of allowing its citizens the

right to choose their religious beliefs, but rather, for political and economic reasons.

In a show of good faith that Japan was now a modern nation, it provided at least on paper the

guarantee for each citizen to choose his or her own religion. Hardacre then goes on to state,

"There was a tendency to adopt Protestantism's concept of religion, which privatized religious

belief and behavior and tended to regard social action associated with that belief as subordinate

to subjects' discharge of civic responsibility."[5] Important to note here is the notion of "religion"

being a private matter separate from one's social life and the public sphere, which was based on

the western value of individual autonomy. The Japanese government recognized this definition

of "religion" in order to satisfy the critical eyes of the western nations. It then proceeded to say,

as mentioned before, that Shinto was not a religion but rather a "suprareligion" that traces the

lineage of all Japanese people.

It just so happens that the two truths theory matched the notion of the distinction between the

private versus public spheres, the separation of religion and state, as well as seeing Shinto as a

non-religion. This put Shin Buddhism in a peculiar position of agreeing with both western values

as well as the Japanese governmental policies. It should be noted that there was some resistance

from some Shin Buddhists, particularly Shimaji Mokurai's criticism of the government for

endorsing State Shinto and his push for a stricter separation of religion from state. But

Hongwanji eventually was forced to capitulate to State Shinto and the demands of the central

government.

As the country grows increasingly imperialistic and voices of opposition were quickly silenced, Hongwanji found itself under increasing pressure to completely comply with the wishes of the government. Not only did it adopt State Shinto doctrine and rituals, it also censored certain portions of its sacred texts that were deemed lèse majesté. For example, words such as "imperial mandate" (*chokumei* 勅命) or "Buddha's decree"(*bucchoku* 仏勅), depicting the Buddha's absolute authority in a religious sense and Shinran's utmost reverence towards Amida's salvific activity, were replaced with phrases like, "benevolent order" (*onmei* 恩命), "mandated teaching" (*kyōmei* 教命), and "honored" (*ōsei* おほせ). These new words were supposedly considered milder in tone and allowed the possibility to interpret the emperor's power as a higher authority than that of the Buddha.[6] According to the administrative manager of Nishi Hongwanji at the time Ichida Sūmitsu, he explains that because Shinran respected the imperial household and the idea of "laws of the state as fundamental 王法為本," that these revisions only helped to clarify his true intent.[7]

It should again be noted, that there was considerable opposition within the Hongwanji to the changes made to the sacred texts. In addition, it was only Nishi Hongwanji that made these changes while the other denominations of Shin Buddhism did not follow suit but did keep a close eye on what was happening. Shin Buddhism was not the only religious organization who was under immense pressure to make revisions to their texts that could be construed as disrespectful to the imperial household. Ōmotokyō, Honmichi, and Nichirenshū were also targeted for their ideas and writings that were deemed lèse majesté.[8]

As Imperial Japan begins to expand its territory through a series of military campaigns throughout the Asian continent from the 1890's to the first half of the twentieth century, Hongwanji takes an active approach to help in the war effort. One of the ways it did this was by sending chaplains to the war front. This began in 1894 with the first Sino-Japanese war. The Hongwanji established a division within its headquarters known as *rinjibu*, or Temporary Department, that dispatched chaplains to areas of conflict overseas. Chaplains were sent to China, the Korean Peninsula as well as Taiwan under the Japanese occupation. Thirteen chaplains were dispatched to these areas.

By the Russo-Japanese war in 1904, the number of chaplains rose to one hundred and five, which not only shows Hongwanji's increasing participation in the war effort, but also its growing enthusiasm in its support of the imperial army. This number far outpaced any of the other schools of Buddhism. In total, chaplains were dispatched during the following conflicts:

Sino-Japanese War 日清戦争, 1894
Boxer Rebellion 義和団事件, 1900
Russo-Japanese War 日露戦争, 1904
Dispatch of Troops to Siberia シベリア出兵, 1918
Manchurian Incident 「満州事変」, 1931
Second Sino-Japanese War 日中戦争, 1937
World War II Pacific Theater アジア太平洋戦争, 1941

Chaplains were assigned to do many jobs that over time not only involved actual military combat but also giving Dharma talks and consoling the soldiers. The following is an example that lists the purposes of a chaplain during the Sino-Japanese War:

1. Console the soldiers, spread the intentions of our religious organization, hand out copies of our central object of reverence, and donate related writings.
2. Visit various hospitals, give care and console the patients there.

3. Hold Dharma sessions in appropriate places, provide spiritual comfort for the soldiers, and give talks on proper hygiene and observance of basic moral principles.
4. Give proper cremations or burials along with funeral services for those who have died.
5. Conduct memorial services remembering those who have fallen.
6. Send the bodies or ashes of the fallen soldiers back to their hometowns.[9]

Here we can see the concrete tasks required of a chaplain. With time however, the list expands as we can see in the following. This list was compiled after a meeting between various Buddhist schools was held to discuss the jobs of a chaplain.

1. Conduct funerals for those who died from illness or are killed in action during war (for example, chanting sutras during cremations or burials). Sending and receiving the ashes of the fallen.
2. Give Dharma talks and lectures that raise morale in the soldiers.
3. Console the wounded and sick.
4. Assist and if necessary, engage in battle.
5. Provide the central object of reverence, ojuzu, and sacred writings.
6. Supply goods and commodities that help soldiers to cope with war.
7. Persuade the Chinese people to comply with the war effort.
8. Report the situation of the battlefront and all activities to the head temple.
9. Prepare the establishing of new branch temples.
10. Act as a translator and carry out miscellaneous jobs (such as maintaining correspondence with bereaved families, setting up memorial tombs for those who have passed away in battle, etc.)

Here we can see that chaplains were required to engage in battle if necessary, as well as take on a more proactive role in working with the local people living in the occupied areas or places of conflict. What is significant is that a chaplain must essentially act as a spokesperson for Imperial Japan. Not only does he have to reinforce and encourage the morale of the soldiers who have to risk their lives on foreign soil, but he also works to persuade (*senbu* 宣撫) the locals and convince them that occupation under Japanese rule was right for their people and ultimately led to their nation's prosperity as well. For the soldiers, Dharma talks were given in accordance to the "Imperial Rescript to Soldiers and Sailors" (*gunjin chokuyu* 軍人勅諭), which all military personnel were issued and its contents memorized. In it, there is mention of the five pillars of the

ideal soldier: 1. loyalty 忠節, 2. propriety 礼儀, 3. bravery 武勇, 4. honor 信義, and 5. modesty 質素.[10] All Dharma talks had to lead to the idea of one's duty to Japan rather than the Buddha Dharma.

Another task given to chaplains was to conduct "battlefield funerals," in which chanting of sutras was conducted for fallen soldiers during live combat on the battlefield. One testament writes,

> I was always on the front lines standing alongside the soldiers. I would chant sutras for those who died during battle all while the bullets were whizzing by overhead. This gave my fellow comrades comfort as they went on to pursue the enemy. At any rate, as the only non-combatant chaplain who was suffering alongside the other men, they were happy with me. A chaplain should not think about teaching religion to the soldiers; his job is to chant sutras to those who die honorably and to make himself useful in any way possible.[11]

From this excerpt given by a Shin Buddhist priest, the chaplain was just as much a part of the unit as the other soldiers were. What is also important to note is that his role of teaching religious doctrine to embattled soldiers was not as impactful to them as was chanting sutras for the war-dead on the battlefield. In essence, what the soldiers wanted was someone who understood their experiences first-hand and identified with their struggles. In this way, the Shin minister's account shows that religious ritual played a far more important role than religious homily. In another example, Nakano Ryuō, a Jōdoshū minister, explains,

> The commander of the battalion told me, 'How are your injuries? As a non-combatant soldier, you were injured. Yet, you thought about your comrades and went out onto the front lines with us. I am so happy,' he said with deep appreciation. Tears were running down his face while he firmly shook my hand. Nothing made me happier. I was honored that I came to the battlefield.[12]

As we also see here, the soldiers wanted a chaplain who underwent the same struggles as they did on the battlefield. We see the chaplain's feeling of joy and honor for being recognized for his actions.

Soldiers were forced to deal with the issue of death as something to look forward to and the afterlife would bring lasting happiness. It was common to hear such phrases as, "I'll see you at

Yasukuni and at Kyoto's Ōtani Hombyō," or "Let's meet again at Yasukuni." Even Myōnyo, (1850–1903) the twenty-first head priest of Hongwanji, is recorded to have stated, "Rely on Amida's vow for your afterlife, give your life now readily for his Majesty."[13] In a poetic piece written by one soldier, he states, "For the emperor we attack the fortress of the enemy. I see the Pure Land in drawing my sword. Go forward and die for the emperor! Amida will be waiting for you in the Pure Land."[14] These comments clearly show the commonly held belief of the dualistic relationship between this world and the afterlife, the emperor's domain here and now versus Amida's Pure Land after death, and duty to country that leads to eternal bliss, respectively.

Not only was this dualistic nature—obviously founded on the two truths theory—a common theme, but the nembutsu was also promoted as a way to praise the emperor. In one quote it writes, "When we say Namo Amida Butsu, we should believe that we are revering the Emperor through saying this phrase."[15] This quote like many others serves as evidence showing the forced interpretations of finding a way to connect the Shin doctrine to the imperial household, to prove that the Dharma protects the emperor. The obvious deviation from Shinran's teachings shows just how dire the situation became with regards to Shin Buddhists acquiescing to imperial ideology. But what is also equally important to note is that however way the reader may feel about these comments, what is undeniably true is that they show the desperate need to find a way for one to cope with the all-too-real looming issue of death that can literally happen at any moment for these people.

Many of the soldiers were not ready to lay their lives down in the midst of conflict. Forced to deal with their own deaths as well as those of their friends, many soldiers struggled emotionally and psychologically. Despite being told that their legacy would live on in Yasukuni, many were not convinced of this and even despised the place. Others also felt guilty for having

survived the war themselves when their friends did not, or because they knew they were sending their lower ranking subordinates to their deaths. It is during these times that they mentioned that having a chaplain who chanted sutras was very consoling for them.[16]

In the comforts of our home today where we are in an era of relative peace, we may find the above statements made in those times either absurd or grossly misdirected. But for the people who stated them, the conditions they lived in forced them to desperately seek a way to cope with their situation—even if that meant skewing the doctrine. After all, this was a time when it was not uncommon for the Hongwanji and its members to be threatened with imprisonment or arson of the Hongwanji headquarters, known as *honzan*, if they did not comply with the central government.[17] In addition, in much the same way that important themes can get lost in translation from one language to the next, so too does the desperation of those times can also get lost from that generation to ours today. In this way, I agree with Christopher Ives when he explains that rather than to condemn Zen leaders, or in this case Shin leaders, there needs to be a more careful examination of the ethical choices made at the time.[18] In other words, ethics, from a Buddhist perspective, is never clear-cut and clearly distinguishable between right and wrong, and good and evil—ethics is always gray. It is only when we get to this understanding, when we realize the truly precarious and unstable nature of ethics, that we can then begin to grapple with deciding the right course of action in a particular situation.

Protecting the country, repaying benevolence

As Japan and Hongwanji move into the modern era, the new influx of western ideology and technology brought about new challenges, problems, and demands on the nation and one of its largest religious communities. But for Hongwanji, its response to many of the social issues was still based on the two truths theory. It is only after the end of World War II and the unconditional

surrender of the Japanese imperial forces that Hongwanji repeals its two truths theory, officially ending a near 650-year grip on social policy.

In retrospect, the two truths theory brought about three major problems which were discussed in the last section. The first and arguably the most obvious of the three points is the prioritization of "mundane truth, or *zokutai*," over "supramundane truth, or *shintai*." Again, this is not to say it is inappropriate or ineffectual to look at or discuss the Buddhist perspective of truth in this way. The problem arises when splitting it into two completely separate truths, as opposed to two *aspects* of one truth. When we split it into two *separate* truths, it gives the impression that mundane truth and supramundane truth are on equal footing, that is, both equal in importance. This in turn, creates the possibility to place more emphasis on the mundane truth, especially because of its concreteness and real-life consequences. This is exactly what happened during the late Edo to Meiji periods and on to the end of World War II. Specifically, what Hongwanji exhibited during this time was a full-fledged endorsement of the imperial government through the policy of, "protecting country" (*gokoku* 護国), "repaying his majesty's benevolence" (*hōon* 報恩), and "Asian reconfiguration" (*kōa* 興亜)."

The historical development leading up to the transition of Japan in the early modern period required the help of the country's Buddhist organizations. Christopher Ives, in his book entitled, *Imperial-Way Zen: Ichikawa Hakugen's Critique and Lingering Questions for Buddhist Ethics*, clearly draws out the role of Buddhism, specifically Zen, and how it was to support the imperial government. In his critique against Brian Victoria's book, *Zen at War*, he argues that Victoria's claim that Zen Buddhism helped to create a spiritual psyche that fostered military and imperial fanaticism had actually, more to do with Zen Buddhism's historical symbiotic relationship with the secular government. Ives points out that the connection between Zen and *bushidō*, or the way

of the samurai, was not so much a matter of Zen's principles being particularly accommodating to the warrior way of life. Although there are undeniable connections to be made, a better way to look at the connection between the two is through their historical relationship with one another. The reason why this is important is that what Ives wants to show in his book is not so much the principles of Zen that brought about ultra-nationalistic fanaticism and fearlessness in the face of death. The more salient and relevant argument is Buddhism's history of supporting the government with spiritual protection and in return, being protected and economically supported by the government. As a result, protection of the state meant protection of the Dharma (*gohō gokoku* 護法護国), and vice versa.[19]

I agree with this point because Shin Buddhism in Japan took a similar approach. Hongwanji's policy to support the government was not particularly because its principles were conducive to a warrior-like mentality. The reason for supporting the government was simply a matter of ensuring the institution's existence in the modern era. In fact, I would argue that Shin Buddhism's case, as opposed to Zen, much more clearly supports Ives' claim because its religious doctrine has no connection to the principles of *bushidō* or the secular government. Yet, Hongwanji did enjoy an extended period of government patronage, although not economically because its sangha members mostly financially supported it, but certainly in terms of recognition and protection by the state. If supporting the government in its secular matters meant ensuring the survival of Hongwanji in the years to come, then that is what will happen, especially since the two truths theory sanctioned this move.

Briefly looking at Japan's history, we have the Soga family's support of Buddhism, to Prince Shotoku's implementation of Buddhism in state policy, then to state-sponsorship of Buddhist schools in Nara, and then to the Tendai and Shingon schools' support of the imperial court and

the shogunate with spiritual protection. When it comes to the Kamakura era wave of newly established schools of Buddhism, their initially turbulent relationships with the government eventually settled down within a couple of hundred years. All of these examples help to show that Japanese Buddhism, for the most part, kept a close and mutually supportive relationship with the secular government and those in power. This relationship was to take on new significance as Japan headed into the era of modernization.

Ives then explains that in the early Meiji period, modernization and nationalism were mutually supportive of one another. Modernization provided economic and military strength while nationalism provided the general fabric of society to have a collective motivation for a strong country that could compete on an international scale. But from the turn of the nineteenth century, modernization came to clash with nationalism as urbanization and industrialization came to challenge the well-established traditions and institutions, such as agrarian life and the rural village.[20] Ives further explains that modernization, "subverted the formulation of Japanese identity in terms of a harmonious national family headed by a benevolent, patriarchal emperor. In particular, 'The very process of modernization had brought about fundamental social conflicts, by creating a new urban proletariat.'"[21] In short, modernization and nationalism were no longer running alongside each other, in sync with its motivation to create a strong and unified nation. Suddenly, the new way of doing things and the new way of life was contrasting and contesting the old way of doing things and tradition.

Concerning Buddhism and its institutions, because people began to move away from the rural areas to seek new financial opportunities in the big cities, the number of people coming to the temples dropped drastically, causing problems in the temple finances as well as the number of its followers. Shin Buddhism and Hongwanji were no exceptions. In addition, new religious

organizations were cropping up in the country's metropolises, who were answering the spiritual needs of the new urban working class.[22] Hongwanji now had new challenges it never faced before: a shrinking sangha, increased competition between new wave religions, and a changing society that was trying to shed its old skin of long-established feudal tradition. From this, we can see that Hongwanji had a vested interest in supporting the new imperial government in the hopes that it will somehow secure its existence.

On the other hand, the government also had a problem that it needed help on: controlling the masses to follow a single national polity. In particular, it needed the old established, traditional religions to quell the problem of potential subversion of the central government by an unhappy population. This situation is where Hongwanji saw its opportunity. By persuading the sangha to be loyal citizens of the emperor, it can raise its appeal to the government and be assured state recognition and acceptance in return. Socialism, Communism, and the foreign religion of Christianity became what Buddhism could work to combat because they were deemed counter-productive to the imperial objective. Ives continues to state,

> Buddhist ontology and cosmology to link, for example, the emperor with Amida, and Japan with the Pure Land. In this way, they offered *legitimation* to the imperial system and government policies while granting *legitimacy* to their own religious institutions, which had been reeling from the early Meiji branding of traditional Buddhism as illegitimate, degenerate, and parasitic.[23]

Shin Buddhism was able to ward off unwanted attention, legitimate the government and itself by connecting the emperor to its religious doctrine, thereby ensuring its role in the new age to come. Hongwanji then began to help fuel the push for imperial expansion. It proceeded with continuing the policy of protecting the state as a measure to ensure its own existence. Many examples of how the religious organization justified this can be given. In one excerpt it reads,

> Shinran purified and revealed the idea of protecting the state. Rather than from a concrete utilitarian perspective, from a religious one he maintained a faithful mind, and as a righteous

nembutsu practicer, he implemented the right path as a citizen of this country. For that reason, he gives great importance to the idea of protecting the state as the right Dharma.[24]

Here we see a clear attempt at justifying from a doctrinal standpoint why Shinran was a leading example as a loyal citizen of the country whom the people of the modern age should follow as well.

In another example, Shinran's written works on the *Hymns* as well as the "ten benefits of shinjin" are used to justify loyalty to the emperor. In the article entitled, "Shinshu's Feature of Protecting of the State," written by the Shin priest Umehara Shinryū on November 5th, 1941, he talks about how it was not Rennyo's idea of "laws of the state as fundamental 王法為本" that justifies why Shin Buddhism supports imperialism and protection of the state. Instead, it was Shinran himself who originally supported this idea.

Umehara goes on to talk about how Shinran discusses the four quarter kings, or *shitenno* 四天王. According to the first of the ten benefits known as "*myōshugoji* 冥衆護持, or the benefit of being protected and sustained by unseen powers (more specifically, various bodhisattvas and good deities according to one source[25])," the *shitennno* are the *kami* who protect the nation of Japan. Prince Shōtoku in fact built a temple for them, and Emperor Shōmu made temples for them in various parts of the country as well. Therefore, venerating them is the act of protecting the nation. This veneration gets interwoven with the saying of the Name, or Namo Amida Butsu. The Name is essentially Amida's protecting light. This is how *shitenno* and Amida's working are connected, explains Umehara.

He then goes on to explain another of the ten benefits known as "*tenakujōzen* 転悪成善 or the benefit of karmic evil being transformed into good." In the *Suvarṇaprabhāsa-sutra* 金光明経 it explains that *shitenno* are protectors of the righteous king and his country because he rules by

abiding by the right Dharma. Shinran interprets the right Dharma here as Namo Amida Butsu. Through the "benefit of karmic evil being transformed into good," which is bestowed by the Name, as a result, the seven evils are extinguished, the difficulties of the country are surpassed, and the nation and its people live peacefully, Umehara again explains.[26]

Through this example, we can see an extensive and roundabout way of connecting the *kami* to Shin Buddhism, thus justifying why nembutsu followers should be loyal to the emperor. Not even the core teaching of shinjin was spared from being connected to the idea of secular authority. Thus, we see here an attempt to claim that Shinran was always a loyal and obedient follower of the emperor and that all nembutsu adherents should follow his example.

In a more direct quote, Umehara later states in the same article,

> Hearing and abiding by the Name of the Primal Vow, we do not have to wait for a monk's services nor an intellectual's explanation. As citizens, we should just be quiet and work hard as we say the name. Protect your country by being of service to it while at the workplace. This is the right Dharma of "protecting the state." This is Shinran's great contribution.[27]

Not only do we see an attempt to explain that we should follow Shinran's example of being a loyal servant to the emperor, but it is also important to note the encouragement for one not to speak out against the government and simply be a hard-working person who says the nembutsu.

According to Akamatsu Tesshin, during 1937-1945, while Japan was under a fascist government, Hongwanji adopted the policy of "the movement of repaying the country through one's faith" (*hōkoku shinkō undō* 報国信仰運動). Under this policy, the head temple gave lectures that promoted shinjin, the encouragement of the reconfiguration of East Asia, and repaying the country by improving the economy. It called on all sangha members to be active in their cooperation of the war movement and carrying out of Japan's international ambitions.[28]

Akamatsu then continues to explain that while in a time of relative peace, the issue of "faith" did not produce any significant concrete implementation of public policy by the religious

organization. However, during times of war, the issue of "faith" was used and exploited to promote the goals of the state. What that resulted in was the promotion of "faith" that evoked the feeling of indebtedness and wanting to repay the nation (*hōkoku shinkō undo* 報国信仰運動). The policy involved everything from the ideas of "reconfiguring Asia" to "repaying the nation," with the underlying theme being consistent throughout the war.

Following orders from the top-down was enforced within the religious organizational structure. Hongwanji shared religious doctrine with its sangha members but primarily to persuade its people to mobilize for the war effort. It encouraged people to sacrifice themselves and that it was honorable to have the glory to die for one's country. What was supposed to be about equality, Akamatsu argues Shinran's teaching of shinjin was not passed on correctly. It was perverted and molded with the intention to support the two truths theory and have a close relationship with the central government. This then led to the support for the invasion of the neighboring Asian countries and eventually, Japan's demise.[29] Akamatsu's sobering critique shows how the idea of shinjin was exploited to support the government. Hence, Shinran's teaching of equality was used to justify war.

Another aspect that couples with protecting the state is the idea of repaying the benevolence of the emperor, or indebtedness. In one quote it writes,

> From a Buddhist perspective, our actions must come from the thought of benevolence and how to repay this benevolence that is shown to us. We do it because it is incumbent on us to do so. We do not do it merely because it is our duty to carry it out and that it is the morally correct thing to do. Rather, when we reflect on the benevolence for humanity, it is our religious feeling of wanting to repay this benevolence that becomes the reason why we take action. Actions based on this benevolent wisdom creates a good that, for the first time, is not for the interest of benefitting the self. It is as the Master Zonkaku pointed out, the "basis of universal good.[30]

What we see here is an explanation that what underlies one's sense of duty is the indebtedness he/she feels towards the emperor's benevolence. The emperor is believed to be the provider of a prosperous and peaceful nation, and for Buddhists, the emperor allowed the Buddha Dharma to

flourish in this country. For these reasons, citizens must repay the debt they owe to him by following his command and being loyal citizens. Actions in response to this benevolence are for the greater good and surpass the notion of any self. Finally, what Shin Buddhism is supposed to be referring to as the benevolence of Amida Buddha's Great Compassion is conveniently replaced with that of the benevolence attributed to the emperor. In fact, during this time most articles and references about the issue of benevolence are almost always attributed to the emperor or the intentional convolution between Amida Buddha and the head of state.

In yet another example, we see how Shin doctrine connects to the benevolence of the emperor and not Amida Buddha. Fugen Daien states,

> As subjects who receive to no end the benevolence of the emperor, we should show deep appreciation. We must throw away the self and always work in service to the emperor. Specifically, we are Shin Buddhists who follow the teaching of "shinjin being the true cause for birth and laws of the state as fundamental." From shinjin comes about a pure self-negation that works earnestly to repay the benevolence of our emperor. This in turn, compels us to repay the all-pervading and boundless virtues of the sacred being.[31]

From here we see that shinjin is used as a justification to explain the idea of no self, a topic that will be discussed in more detail later. Here, it is used to show that the person who awakens to this teaching of no-self now works to repay the benevolence of the emperor. In the above examples we can see how due to the two truths theory, Hongwanji implemented two forms of public policy. The first was to protect the state and the second was to create a sense of indebtedness to the emperor. Buddhism, in general, has a long history of supporting the government with spiritual protection and in return, being protected and supported by the government. Shin Buddhism was no exception. Hongwanji also took measures to persuade its sangha to be loyal members of the state by repaying the benevolence of the emperor, not of Amida Buddha.

Promotion of Asian reconfiguration

Another public policy supported by Hongwanji that is related to the above is the idea of supporting the reconfiguration and "development" of East Asia, or *kōa*, which was a way for Japan to extend its sphere of influence. Under the guise of cooperation and the strengthening of an Asian identity in contrast to the West, Japan sought to take control and exploit neighboring territories for its natural resources. In the eyes of Hongwanji, this becomes an opportunity to spread its influence back to where Buddhism had first come from.

In addition to providing moral and emotional support to the troops who were fighting away from home, Hongwanji and many other Buddhist organizations sent missionaries to these areas to proselytize their teachings. On June 20, 1939, the head priest of Hongwanji, Kyōnyo 鏡如 (1876–1948) gives a message on the support of *kōa*. He begins to talk about the unified cooperation of the citizens of Japan and then states, "Outside of Japan, we should strengthen to protect ourselves from the ideas of Communism. Domestically, we should seek to protect and preserve our natural resources. We should strengthen our country's power by fulfilling our goals of this holy war and participate in the development of Asia by supporting our emperor's troops."[32] Here we see a direct reference of the head priest supporting the idea of Asian reconfiguration. In fact, according to one source entitled, *Jōdo Shinshū Hongwanji-ha: Its Missionary History in Asia*, the number of temples throughout the Asian continent, which includes Siberia, Sakhalin, Taiwan, Korean Peninsula, northeast China, China, and the islands in the South Seas, steadily rose from 13 at the turn of the twentieth century to 93 by the end of World War II.[33] Based on this evidence we can assume Hongwanji was proactive in its support of reconfiguration and "development" of Asia.

According to one account, we see how Hongwanji viewed the situation in Asia. It writes,

> We saved our neighboring countries of China and Korea. As a result of the Sino-Japanese War, we proved our ability to defend ourselves from the pressures of China. At the end of the Russo-Japanese War, we broke the fangs of Russia that tried to invade south and we maintained the stability of the Great East Co-Prosperity movement. We participated in the first World War because of our deeply valued relationship with England. We supported the idea of Manchuria as an independent nation. These actions all clearly manifest the will of the emperor. The reason why the imperial army was called out once again is because of the tyrannical Chinese army that is committing acts of atrocities. We intend to support peace and the welfare of the Eastern regions. This is a war out of compassion to eradicate evil.[34]

We see here, a justification for supporting the idea of expanding Japan's sphere of influence throughout the Asian continent. Fighting against China and Russia was all for the intent of "protecting" and expanding the influence of Japan in Asia. Most importantly, Japan was fighting for "peace" and "stability" in the region. It led its followers to believe that this was a war out of "compassion." Thus, we see again as a result of the two truths theory, the justification for war in the name of compassion. Explicitly, the two truths theory enabled the interpretation that supporting the idea of Asian reconfiguration, or *kōa*, was in accordance to the emperor's will and therefore, a truth that must be carried out without question.

"Passive" and "reactive" Shinshū

Based on the two truths theory, Hongwanji enforced a public policy of prioritizing the mundane truth over the supramundane truth. In this section, we will show that the two truths theory also falsely connects the teaching of "receiving" to that of social passivity, which then does not promote self-reflection that results in proactive responses to social issues. In short, because Shin Buddhism gets misconstrued as a religion of social passivity, the religious organization then discouraged active social engagement that may run counter to the goals of the imperial government.

Christopher Ives makes some compelling points on the issue of Zen and war. He writes,

> Contrary to Victoria's presentation of Zen, which parallels Ichikawa's claim that "the Zen of modern Japan was more a Zen that waged war than a Zen that got caught up in war," I would argue that because of institutional self-interest, limited knowledge of the suffering the Japanese military was inflicting on other Asians, a traditional closeness to military leaders, indoctrination through the imperial education system, and by extension a good measure of patriotism as fully

> socialized Japanese citizens, Zen leaders jumped onto, and to some extent were pushed onto, a bandwagon that had been set in motion by other actors. Once aboard, they deployed their charisma, ideological resources, doctrines, ritual systems, and institutional structures both on the home front and in missions abroad to support the imperial system and the war effort.[35]

Here he claims that the leaders of the Zen sect began to beat the war drum not necessarily because they actively wanted to do so, but because they were pressured by many external factors unrelated to its religious doctrine. Institutional self-interest, lack of outside news, closeness with military members, and imperial education all played a role forcing Zen to eventually comply with the war effort. However, once onboard with this movement, they went full-fledged as religious advocates of the emperor. Again here, the same situation is what happened with the Jōdo Shinshū schools. What I have been arguing for and will continue to show evidence regarding this, is that the two truths theory became the doctrinal justification to support the imperial ambitions. More specifically, the theory was the crux that connected the secular authority to the Buddha Dharma, which is otherwise completely unrelated. This is evident when we see the writings during this time.

The first examples are two letters written by Ōtani Kōson, or Myōnyo 明如, the 21st Head Priest of Nishi Hongwanji who lived between 1850-1903.[36] First, it is important to note that in both letters, the discussion involves religious doctrine and how that justifies the support for the emperor and all imperial ambitions overseas. Next, in one of the letters, he states,

> In one thought-moment, with his mind of light Amida embraces sentient beings who have been wandering for a countless period of time in the stream of life-and-death. This moment is also known as the stage of non-retrogression and the phrase, "settled in our assurance for birth while still in this life." When our assurance is settled, throughout our entire lives we feel both shame and gratitude towards the Buddha's benevolence and respond with the continual saying of the Buddha's Name. Then, as stated above, we seek to obey and treat as most essential the imperial law, fully observe the standards of our morals as citizens of this nation, carry out the protection of this country along with the expansion of this organization, and strive for the success of the "exclusive right practice" movement.[37]

Although the excerpt is abbreviated, this part shows what I am most interested in explaining. Most of the letter up until the middle of this excerpt talks about important Shin concepts such as

heizei gōjō and teachings found in *Larger Sutra*. However, the focus suddenly shifts to the idea of "treating as most essential the imperial law, fully observing the standards of our morals as citizens of this nation, and carrying out the protection of this country along with the expansion of this organization." Before this, Myōnyo talks about having both gratitude and shame towards the Buddha's benevolence. This is an obvious sign that the issues of one's loyalty to the emperor and one being a devout nembutsu practitioner are completely separate from each other. Nonetheless, they are brought together in order to falsely portray the idea that the two have an intimate and inextricable relationship at a doctrinal level.

In the second letter, we find a justification to go into Asia to spread Buddhism (a motivating factor for the support of *kōa*) by using the two truths theory as well as *Larger Sutra*. But again, there is an attempt made to appeal to secular loyalty, which is entirely irrelevant to Shin doctrine, where he states, "We should only be focused with whether we have completed our duty to our nation or not."[38] Why does being a Shin Buddhist have anything to do with whether one should be loyal to the emperor or not? The obvious answer is that there is no connection. However, one is forcefully made from a doctrinal standpoint, in order to show that Shin Buddhism is fully supportive of the emperor. He also uses such phrases as, "repay…this nation," "the emperor's virtues," "responding to the great emperor's splendid thoughts," which are attributes usually used to explain Amida Buddha, not the emperor. Generally, in Shin Buddhism, there is much discussion of repaying one's indebtedness to Amida Buddha's benevolence, praising Amida's virtues, and responding in gratitude by saying the Name, Namo Amida Butsu.

Why is there such an exerted effort to connect Shin doctrine to the emperor? It is because Shin Buddhism is a teaching of "receptivity." That is, it is primarily a teaching emphasizing the idea of *receiving* Amida's compassionate activity; or *receiving* the merit transference (*ekō*) of the

Buddha; or *receiving* true reality, the Buddha-Dharma, in the form of nembutsu. With such an emphasis on accepting and taking in the teaching of the Dharma, Shin Buddhism can be misunderstood, both within and without its organizational mode, as a religion which teaches its followers to be passive "push-overs" who succumb to the will of secular authority. Moreover, aside from two truths theory, Shin doctrine makes no reference to public policy, no ethical demands, and no conditions on its followers. It is this component of inclusivism that creates the vacuum for potential manipulation and exploitation by external forces. This is precisely what happened at the turn of the twentieth century when the secular government realized that Shin religious organizations had no doctrinal grounds to impede the imperial agenda. Religious *receptivity* in the eyes of the government meant social passivity on their part; which would be one less domestic concern to worry about. This is reflected in the writings that we see during this period.

Let us look at another example. In a writing published by Nishi Hongwanji in 1944 known as "Jōdo Shinshū as a Religion of the Imperial Nation," the second chapter entitled, "Shinshū as Protectors of the State," is of particular interest. Here the writer spends the first part explaining the Shin phrase, "spontaneous working of the Vow" (*jinen hōni* 自然法爾). This is a term explaining the dynamic working of suchness or things as they are without the calculation of human discriminative thinking. This term has nothing to do with any notion of an emperor or deity. Once the explanation is done however, the writer then immediately proceeds to talk about the magnificence of the emperor and how being in accordance to the working of *jinen hōni* means somehow, to have full trust in and complete obedience to the will of his majesty.[39] What is perhaps most peculiar is when he closes with the statement, "*Jinen hōni* expresses that which surpasses the skilled calculations of the human [mind]. This is referring to the essential feature of

our splendid country's culture."[40] *Jinen hōni* is beyond human reasoning and calculation, and it is supposed to be referring to Amida's compassionate working. But instead, here the writer connects *jinen hōni* to none other than the emperor and this "splendid country." This is evidence to suggest that Shin Buddhism's teaching of receptivity was taken to mean *passivity* because a Buddhist concept was contorted to mean that one should be loyal to the emperor. It also suggests that the Shin religious organization was being forced to *react* in such a way as to cast the emperor in a favorable light no matter what the circumstances. Shin Buddhism was forced not to speak out against the central government and to go along with all of their global ambitions.

Essentially, Hongwanji did not promote public policy in which its adherents could proactively respond to social issues. Instead, the organization promoted for all adherents to be loyal subjects of the emperor. However, it was the government that forced the Hongwanji to comply with its wishes. Ives makes the following claims that are relevant to our discussion. He states,

> …they [Zen leaders] were at the receiving end of immense pressure from the government. If we agree with ethicists that people cannot be held morally responsible for actions they were forced to do or could not avoid doing, we need to take this oppression in early Showa Japan into account. Many Japanese have argued that they really had no choice but to participate in the war, given the coercive power wielded by the thought police of the Home Ministry and the military police (*kenpei*), as well as the threat of incarceration, torture, economic ruin, and social ostracization.[41]

This is not only true of Zen leaders but leaders of the Shin tradition as well. In fact, dissension or criticism of any kind was not tolerated by the central government. This suppression shows that Hongwanji was forced into a position where they had to respond or react to government policy, which almost always meant complete obedience and compliance. Thus, Hongwanji itself ostracized and shunned any individuals who might take a stand and bring unwanted attention to its organization. The institution was now made to be both passive as well as reactive, by way of

complete obedience, to the government's wishes. Any proactive approaches to social issues, especially anything that might be deemed anti-imperialistic, was quickly eradicated.[42]

The two truths theory led to Shin Buddhism being misunderstood as a passive and reactive, as opposed to proactive, form of Buddhism that could be manipulated and exploited to meet the needs of external forces. We see this in the disjointed-ness in the writings during this time, where the interpretation of secular loyalty was forcefully extrapolated from Shinran's teachings. That is, the two truths theory coerces the institution as well as its members to be both passive and reactive to government demands.

Distortion of the view of "this life" and "the afterlife"

A previous section above mentioned one of the problems of the two truths theory in which it relegated Shin Buddhism to an "other-worldly" religion. That is, by implying that there are two separate but equal truths, the mundane and supramundane, there is the portrayal that there are two different sets of principles one should live by in life and later after death. According to this interpretation, while in this life, one should follow the principles administered by the emperor and State Shinto. Therefore, one should be loyal and if need be, give his/her life in service to the country. Also, by living a "righteous" life and having faith in Amida Buddha, one can then be born in the Pure Land and enjoy a life of eternal bliss after death. Thus, Amida Buddha and the Pure Land are things one should look forward to in the afterlife, and they have nothing to do with one's life now.

This life-view that completely separates life and death as two distinct and dualistic worlds is not only counter to the Shin tradition, it vastly affected how war-time Shin Buddhists viewed the issue of death. The following is an excerpt that was published by Nishi Hongwanji in 1942.

> The teaching of *heizei gōjō*, or "right settlement while in this life," and *genshō shōjōju*, or "attaining the stage of the truly settled while in this life," are the two teachings that resolve this issue of death. One transcends the issue of life and death, the problem of death is resolved, and

while in this life one can attain the guarantee of infinite life. This is the precise meaning of *genshō shōjōju*…

Always embraced in the light that grasps us and never abandons us, we can live this life with the understanding that we have surpassed the problem of life and death. Then, when we think about the benevolent country, we now live for the state and treat our individual lives lightly as feathers. We no longer worry about the issue of life and death and live only to work for the state. This is the nembutsu that expresses the right Dharma of protecting the country. That is why the above phrase, "The nembutsu is the single path free of hindrances," has deep meaning. We do not fear death. In fact, upon death we attain the eternal life that will never end. Even though at the moment of death we might have some fear, that amount is not comparable. This understanding is, in fact, *shichisei hōkoku* 七生報国, where we become entirely loyal to our country.[43]

What we see here is an interpretation of the key Shin concepts of *heizei gōjō* and *genshō shōjōju*. However, this entry, which at first explains the textbook definition of these terms, quickly turns to an obvious deviation from its original meaning.

Firstly, these terms are meant to explain that upon awakening shinjin, one realizes that he/she is embraced in Amida Buddha's infinite wisdom and compassion. Because of this, one is now able to live in hope and confidence in knowing that he/she is guaranteed to attain Buddhahood upon death.[44] Note, that there is no mentioning about how one will be fearless in the face of death or that a person of shinjin now selflessly works in the service of the state.

There are many problems with the interpretation of the entry above. First is that the writer explains that upon the awakening of shinjin, the individual will transcend life and death altogether. Thus, that person no longer fears death. However, the reason why a person does not permanently transcend life and death at the moment of shinjin is that he/she is a *bonbu* who is filled with blind passions, and will continue to be so until death. That means that despite the awakening of shinjin, one is still a sentient benig with blind passions and therefore, subject to the attachment of the self. Fear of dying then, does not necessarily go away because of the awakening of shinjin.

Second, the writer also assumes that upon the awakening of shinjin, one will now live for the state and not the individual's own life. In fact, it explains that one's personal life becomes as

"light as a feather," in that a person will no longer *care* if his/her life ends, as long as it is in service to the state. This interpretation is also forced in that it assumes that a person of shinjin will work selflessly for the country. One's own death becomes de-emphasized and something not to worry about while in this life. Conversely, one is encouraged to believe that a nembutsu practicer does not fear his/her own death and that one's own life is worthless without the *greater* life: the state.

When we see this kind of treatment of one's own life and the outright promotion for each person to be in service of the emperor and the state, we can see the danger in relegating Shin Buddhism as a teaching only about the afterlife. Making the Shin doctrine pertaining only to the afterlife means that some teaching or worldview must be put in its place when one lives in this life. That understanding became centered on the emperor and State Shinto. The problem with the two truths theory is that it forces Shin Buddhists to adopt a worldview and religious system that is doctrinally foreign to their own beliefs. It also assumes that Shin Buddhism does not have answers for the problems of this world. In the above example, *heizei gōjō* and *genshō shōjōju*, which in fact are supposed to be two terms that emphasize the importance of life now, are here being used to show that while living, one is ruled by the emperor and the state, while the afterlife is the domain of Amida Buddha and the Pure Land. Once again, we see the distortion of the Shin doctrine that is made possible by the two truths theory.

Distortion of the concept of no self

The final and most pressing problem of the two truths theory is that it defeats the spiritually authentic individual. Religion, which is supposed to give a person the tools to reflect on life and bring out the full potential in him/her, instead was used to manipulate and exploit its followers. The way we see this manifested during the turn of the twentieth century to the end of World War

II is Hongwanji's active condoning of the teaching of no self. This is not the Buddhist teaching of emptiness. Rather, it is a perversion of that teaching by saying that because Buddhism teaches about *sunyata*, then there is inherently no such thing as a substantial self and therefore, no need to be concerned about one's own life. This kind of recklessness in interpretation is easy to condemn as readers of the twenty-first century, where we have seen and thoroughly digested the atrocities of conflicts during this time. However, given the historical context, the extremity in interpretation goes to show both the extent to which Shin Buddhism found itself having to comply with the demands of imperial Japan and the desperation of the times as well.

Written in 1941, Nishi Hongwanji Council published a work entitled, "How to be Mentally Prepared for Service to the Public State." In one part it writes,

> By giving up self-power, Shinran was able to enter the auspicious realm of no self. He was able to get there by giving up the self. Our country today is demanding that we make that a reality in this world we live in now. We must participate in the bidding of the country and to help it by following its commands. Place the state over the individual; the benefit of the country over the benefit of the self; "no self" over self; this is what we must think to ourselves.
> The selfishness of individualism and liberalism is what we must separate ourselves from and eradicate. We must work for society, for the country and we need to be of service to it by ridding our selves. Our family members who were conscripted into the armed forces, we should be more than happy with their many sacrifices and that they are giving themselves to the state.[45]

From this quote, we can see how the writing appeals to the reader by promoting the ideal state of casting aside one's ego self, just as the spiritual leader Shinran was able to do. When one can cast aside the self, he/she can now work for the greater good by being of service to the state. What is dangerous in this quote is the outright suggestion to blindly follow the central government without any thought of reflection and skepticism. What makes matters worse, is the claim that religion is condoning this kind of behavior. It is suggesting that because Shinran put aside his ego self—which is actually incorrect because it is Shinran's mind of self-power that was negated and not his ego self—that all followers of him must do so as well, especially in these trying times.

In another example, the writing explains that one should negate the individual self in favor of a "larger" self, which of course, is referring to the state. It then writes, "This is the spirit to open the country up and unify the world under one roof; all people will work together and benefit each other."[46] This text is referring to the idea of *hakkō ichi'u* 八紘一宇, an attempt at world domination under the control of imperial Japan. It is claimed that under this principle, all countries will work to benefit each other, a notion that is most likely inspired by the bodhisattva principle of "self-benefit and benefitting others" (*jiri rita* 自利利他). Also important to note is the recurring theme of the negation of the personal or individual self for the public and social "larger" identity. In Mahayana Buddhism, this "larger" identity, if anything, would be referring to an altruistic world of compassion, but here it is twisted to mean precisely the empire of Japan.

Of course, Shin Buddhism was not the only tradition to appeal to the idea of no-self through the Buddhist teaching of emptiness. In the book, *Zen at War*, a famous soldier of the imperial army lieutenant colonel Sugimoto Gorō, who incorporated Zen teachings into his outlook on loyalty to the emperor, states the following,

> Zen Master Dogen said, "To study the Buddha Dharma is to study the self. To study the self is to forget the self." To forget the self means to discard both body and mind. To discard beyond discarding, to discard until there is nothing left to discard…This is called reaching the Great Way in which there is no doubt. This is the great Law of the universe. In this way, the great spirit of the highest righteousness and the purest purity manifests itself in the individual. This is the unity of the sovereign and his subjects, the origin of faith in the emperor.[47]

Again here, we see that in discarding the self, one awakens to the Great Way, which Sugimoto connects to the unity of the individual with the emperor's providence. This is how he interprets the words of the Zen Master Dōgen.

From these examples shown, we see the emphasis on the individual to discard the ego-self so that one can work selflessly for the state. But it is important to note that Shinran never said that the ego-self could be negated. In fact, it is in realizing the futility of trying to eradicate one's

attachments to the ego-self, that the person is then able to awaken to Amida's compassion. Thus, the ego and all of its attachments, no longer become *hindrances* to one's understanding that he/she is embraced and will be born in the Pure Land. Nevertheless, the ego and its attachments remain until the moment of death. What this means then, is that despite the arising of shinjin within the individual, that person does not permanently discard the ego self. In fact, it is just the opposite. The person now can live freely as an authentic individual: a person who helplessly maintains his/her own attachments but is not fettered by them. Needless to say, that the person does not abandon the individual self in favor of state identity; it is impossible to discard the individual self for something like a country or state. It is however, possible for an individual to awaken to the embracement of a larger compassionate reality. And in doing so, the person can now live his/her full potential.

Thus, the religious notion "no self" should mean to awaken to the truly "original self," or "authentic self." It is where one can live freely with confidence and hope, and the ability to think what is the most appropriate way to live according to the true compassionate reality, or the Buddha Dharma. This cannot be done without proper reflection, questioning, skepticism, doubt, intuition, and analyzation of the self and the outside world, something that has no room in imperial Japan.

Thus, we see the dangers in the contortion of the teaching of *sunyata* in terms of ethics. We must be careful in thinking that "no self" literally means abandoning the self. This kind of dangerous interpretation becomes possible when the two truths theory is implemented as an ethical policy. Because the two truths theory defeats the spiritually authentic individual, it is problematic and even dangerous given the right set of conditions.

Exhibiting two truths theory in America: historical development of Buddhism in the West
East meets West

In the last section, we looked at the ethical policy of the two truths theory in Japan around the twentieth century. There we saw how Hongwanji used the two truths theory to justify blind obedience to imperial Japan and its ambitions. With this background information, in this section let us focus our attention onto how Buddhism and more specifically Shin, makes its way overseas and what ethical policy it implemented. Before we can talk about the negative impact of the two truths theory on Shin Buddhism in America, we must first address the history of Buddhism in the West and how it was portrayed. Beginning as early as the fifteenth century, European and eventually American colonialism for the intention of economic expansion and influence, becomes interested in the African and Asian continents. Although Asia and Europe were not unfamiliar with each other through exchanges over land through the Silk Road, this new era of colonialism was dominated by the trade routes through sea. Portugal, Netherlands, France, Britain, and eventually America, all countries well developed and experienced in maritime ventures, sought and competed each other over access and dominance in certain regions throughout Asia, particularly in the southeast. Colonial outposts were beginning to prop up in these different areas, exploiting and manipulating lands and people for their raw material and labor. The economic dominance of the western powers over these lands was to have a significant impact on the culture and psyche of the various indigenous regions. This power struggle between the two sides created an antagonistic relationship between them. The dominating half came to define the European countries as the "Occident," or the masculine side in the exploitive relationship that valued rational thought and empiricism as modes to truth. On the other hand, there is the "Orient," or the feminine side of the relationship that valued sentimentalism and reflective thought as its modes to truth.

As the dominant side, western thought came to have exclusive rights in defining and categorizing the outside world. Asia, became defined as the "exotic other," a mystical, metaphysical and esoteric entity in which its content was free and open to the spiritual and subjective mind. The "Orient" came to be the playground that catered to the imagination, such as the sexualization of the exotic Asian, a stereotype that can still be found to this day. The "Occident" was defined as the counterpart; the ethical, empirical, rational, and scientific side that brought dignity and development to the human race. What gave the Occident its moral superiority was its religion, Christianity. As such, Buddhism, along with other worldviews that were predominant in these Asian regions, were considered the degenerative and obsolete religions that were the cause for the underdevelopment of these areas.[48]

Also, despite the various schools of Buddhism that often had little in common with each other in terms of doctrine and ritual, all were relegated as part of the seemingly unified religion which would be called, "Buddhism." Thus, gave rise to the idea that Buddhism was monolithic, or at least should be, under its founder Śākyamuni. The folder that many of us label as "Miscellaneous" and sits in the back of the filing cabinet is essentially the role that Buddhism was to play for anything considered to be "religious" throughout Asia. This historical development will be important to note when we discuss what the western world eventually wanted Buddhism to be and who was in the position of authority to say so.

American history and worldview

Let us consider the historical context of Japan and America towards the latter half of the twentieth century. On one side of the Pacific, Japan was facing political and social turmoil with the closing of the Edo Period and the sudden shift in power to the emperor, ushering in a new era. Meanwhile, America was struggling with its own political strife, which climaxed into a

bloody full-scale Civil War. When the dust settled, a war-battered and tired America was seeking reconciliation and the hope to be able to move on to a new era. With the influx of western thought that provided innovations in industry, technology, and medicine, as well as ideas in philosophy and religion, Japan was seeking to establish its national polity and identity along with international recognition. America, on the other hand, was now seeking economic stability by way of expanding its influence overseas. This is in part, what led to its exchange with Japan and the sudden spark in interest of the two sides in each other for various reasons.

There are three important periods in history that helped to shape the general American outlook on religion and society. The first is the Enlightenment Era, which took place in the eighteenth century in Europe and made its way over to America at roughly the same time. This is the period where there was a strong emphasis on rationality and reasoning in the method of study and development in the social sciences, religion, and philosophy. It is also a time of strong skepticism towards organized and established religious institutions and their doctrine, and a strong belief in individualism and the democratic process as the rule of governance.

Next is the Romantic Era, which takes place around the first half of the nineteenth century. In response to the previous period, this one emphasized an individual's emotion and sentiment expressed through the arts, poetry, music, and architecture. Personal subjectivity and intuition as a way to pursue individual rights and freedom became central features. Thus, the Romantic Era was largely a counter-response to the Enlightenment Era, which emphasized primarily rational and empirical thought.

Which finally brings us to the latter half of the nineteenth century. America was in the Victorian Era at this time, which is between the years of 1837-1901 or the span of Queen Victoria's reign, when it closely shared the views and values of its European counterpart, Britain.

American culture now emphasized such things as industry, sobriety, frugality, domesticity, sentiment, nativism, competitiveness, and order.[49] Concerning the issue of morality, such things as sexual restraint, strict social ethical conduct, and a low tolerance for criminal activity, were also highly valued. Finally, most pertinent to our discussion here, are the hallmark characteristics of Victorian culture, which affected the way Americans viewed—or wanted to view—Buddhism when it entered the western arena. These are the traits that Thomas A. Tweed explains as, "theism, individualism, activism, and optimism."[50] It should be noted, that this is a time just after the devastating Civil War, and America's newfound sense of hope and enthusiasm in life in the things to come, not to mention the morale boost in having abolished once and for all the long-drawn debate of slavery, is the historical background to these new sentiments. Most Americans believed they were fundamentally good and that the world was steadily working towards that which was good. Advances in medicine, technology, and lifestyle were also helping to prove that.[51]

Concerning politics and the economy, with the advancements in science and technology such as effective transportation and electricity, America was fast becoming a booming nation under its Industrial Revolution. A mass influx of immigrants from both the European and Asian continents create city centers giving rise to the urban middle class. While there was corruption between large interest groups such as coal and steel companies and the government, there was a strong belief in economic individualism. Fierce competition in the business world brought about the value of having independence and standing up for one self. This helps to shape the idea of an autonomous individual that asserts his/her own freedom and rights, whether it be in everyday life or matters of spirituality.[52]

All three time periods, in their responses to each other, affected the American psyche and how the western world would portray Buddhism. The Enlightenment Era brought the values of rational thought and empiricism as the proper methodology to the pursuit of truth, whether they be scientific or social. The Romantic Era brought the values of interest in new ways of thought and expression, particularly any alternate worldviews that countered the Judeo-Christian one. This explains the interest in the exotic "Orient," mysticism, and the occult. The Victorian Era cemented the values of observing moral principles, a hopeful outlook on life, and the affirmation of self-improvement and independence. Also, all three eras collectively developed into supporting such values as individualism, activism, optimism, pragmatism, rationalism, sentimentalism, and self-righteousness.

Another important background development that is pertinent to our discussion is the idea of the separation of Church and State. The Enlightenment Era gave rise to modern science and rational empiricism that challenged and undermined the authority of the Christian Church and its doctrine. The rift between science and religion, where one claimed to be founded on empirical findings and the other on personal faith, created the notion that religious affairs should be separated from secular matters, such as civil jurisprudence. America, being at the forefront as one of the first countries to adopt this social experiment, relegated religion to be strictly a personal matter. This led to the idea of "religion," being an individual's spiritual path to freedom, and thus separate from the other components of his/her life. "Religion" was compartmentalized away from all other aspects of one's life, a unique worldview that opposed previous ways of thinking.

Such is the peculiar development that just so happens to agree with the principle of the two truths theory that also separated religion and state, though in different words. After the *ikko*

uprisings in the fifteenth century, later the Edo *bakufu* subjugated all religious organizations to follow its rule under an ironclad. Religious institutions were forced to pursue only doctrinal and academic studies, far removed from being able to participate in any social movements that could stir up trouble for the government. These institutions could not even debate with each other, which also explains the strong sectarian sentiment that exists to this day. In Japan, when the idea of the separation of religion and state by way of freedom of religion stipulated in the Meiji Constitution took effect in 1890, the two truths theory was right there to go along with this new policy. Thus, it should be understandable why the historical background of the idea of the separation of Church and State in America would easily be compatible with the two truths theory.

Despite the history of Christian dominance in Europe and America, the Enlightenment Era that sparked a movement that rivaled the Christian world-view was gaining momentum, and science, philosophy, and non-Christian religions were the modes employed to help in this new venture. Buddhism, as will be explained later, seemed like the perfect fit, as it combined and accommodated all three listed above. There was also a rise in criticism against the once popular John Calvin's idea of predestination that was now deemed not only pessimistic but also fatalistic, and thus not uplifting to the American society that was looking to be active and optimistic.[53] America was opening itself up to new ideas that were not bogged down by a cynical and self-deprecating dogma. It did not want to be told what not to do and what is wrong with itself; it wanted to be encouraged and validated for its hard work and success. Buddhism, whether it doctrinally in fact did so or not, nevertheless was made to be the worldview that affirmed these attitudes.

World's Parliament of Religions of 1893

A significant event that requires noting is the World's Parliament of Religions held in Chicago in September of 1893. This was held in conjunction with the Columbian Exposition, celebrating the four hundredth anniversary of Christopher Columbus' voyage to America.[54] The event invited many people who represented different kinds of religions found throughout the world, and it is here that Buddhism is officially introduced to the general western audience. Optimistically, it attracted the attention of many people across the globe, and it was a chance to meet and encounter the diversity of religions. On the other hand, it can be argued that this event was meant to instill, fortify, and validate western dominance and to place Christianity as the moral, spiritual and rightful teaching for the entire human race of the modern era. God had chosen America as the proper nation to carry out his teachings and he had given the people, "the duty to share the light of the Gospel and the benefits of the civilization," as Judith Snodgrass explains.[55]

Two major figures who are given interest to as helping to introduce Buddhism to the western audience were Anagarika Dharmapala (1864–1933) and Shaku Soen 釈宗演 (c.1856–1919). The two go on to become significant figures in their respective countries and contribute many efforts to help spread Buddhism to different parts of the world. Shaku Soen, a Rinzai Zen priest, through this event meets Paul Carus (1852–1919), and the two set the stage for introducing Japanese Buddhism to America. Of course, Paul Carus later meets one of Shaku Soen's students Daisetsu Teitaro Suzuki 鈴木大拙 (1870–1966). Their long relationship together helps shape Buddhism as most westerners are familiar with it today. D.T. Suzuki was mainly instrumental in helping western scholarship understand and recognize the legitimacy and historical significance of

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Mahayana Buddhism, which before him, was relegated mainly as a distortion of the original teaching.

This Parliament embodied the power struggle between East and West as well as Christian dominance monopolizing universal truth. Because everything was done in English, there were inevitable language barriers when presenting one's religion. Publishers of the many works that came about from this event, such as the organizing committee director itself Reverend Doctor John Henry Barrows (1847–1902), edited speeches and papers that were critical of Christianity and presented them only after close personal discretion. In short, the World's Parliament of Religions in 1893 encapsulates the way religion in the western world even today is frequently discussed: in the framework of western scholarship and interest, and in the context of Christianity.

Buddhism gets pitted against Christianity

Through the formal introduction of Buddhism to the modern western world, there was immediate interest in the new foreign religion. Buddhism's fundamental principles were appealing because they were ethical, logical, and straightforward, immediately applicable for anyone to use in his/her life. There was no talk of a deity, no creation story, and it was based solely on one's merit. If there were any metaphysical or mythological allegories, they were either for didactic purposes or a later development that enveloped local superstitions and hence, deviated from the original teachings of the one Buddha Śākyamuni. On the other hand, it was a mysterious religion and interestingly foreign. The individual must empirically seek out to understand its truth called the "Dharma." Thus, the path to this truth is open to the individual's subjective mind.

Finally, because Buddhism was a way of thinking or a "common sense" approach to life, it did not impinge on or antagonize one's "religious" feelings. In other words, "religion" was now constructed and viewed as a separate aspect apart from the secular side of one's self. Buddhism was only relevant insofar as it was a systematic way of managing the secular side. This was, and still is to a large extent today, why atheists, agnostics, as well as those who are religious were attracted to this new teaching. Buddhism was not a religion, *per se*. It was a philosophy, a way of thinking that can be compatible with any other worldview, be it religion, philosophy, the arts, or science. This new way of thinking was amenable, malleable, tolerant, free-spirited and hence, refreshing to the European and American modern mind.

In short, Buddhism became the counterpart to Christianity. It was non-theistic and open to working with science and rationality. Rather than focusing on the salvation of the self, Buddhism was thought to focus on how to live in the moment here and now and improve the situation of this world. But if Buddhism was going to spread in the West, it would always have to be discussed within the parameters of Christianity. That is, Buddhism would have to answer to the issues pertaining to the soul, the autonomous individual, God's love, heaven and hell, good and evil, and the origins of human kind. These are the questions with which westerners sought answers to; they were the questions presupposed in any religious narrative. Therefore, these issues must be addressed in order for a particular teaching to be called a "religion."

Back in Japan, when news of the events that unfolded at the World's Parliament of Religions in 1893 arrived but also stemming back from the gradual decline of Edo *bakufu*'s reign in the 1850s, Japanese Buddhists were beginning to see the scope of Christian influence on the modern international world. They felt if they did not respond to Christianity, they would not only lose their own country to this outside religion, but Buddhism's very existence would be under threat.

Buddhist advocates such as Inoue Enryo 井上円了(1858–1919), throughout the growing pains of

the Meiji Period, argued for Buddhism's superiority over Christianity and that it was the

"culmination of Western intellectual evolution."[56] Henry Steel Olcott (1832–1907) and Helena

Petrovna Blavatsky (1831–1891), are reported to be one of the first two non-Asian people who

were previously completely unfamiliar to the Buddhist tradition to have converted to it. They

were heralded as the eventual persuasion of the modern era that Buddhism was the future

religion compatible with the ever-changing world.[57] As we saw in the previous chapter, there

was no shortage of Buddhist apologists and anti-Christian sentiment in Japan. As such, both in

Japan and in America, Buddhism and Christianity were pitted against each other as rival

counterparts that represented the religious worldviews of the "Orient" and "Occident,"

respectively. Both religions essentially became each other's punching bag, forcing one to hone

its tactics in attacking the other and finding ways to defend its own way of thinking. In this way,

whether it wanted to or not, Buddhism became the challenging underdog of the dominant force

in the game.

Buddhism and the way it was studied

What also greatly affected the way the western world would come to view Buddhism was

European and American scholarship. Orientalist scholarship focused on language studies, such as

Sanskrit and Pali headed by Oxford, Harvard and other universities beginning in the 19th century.

They also focused on Indian philosophy and ancient Buddhist texts. Comparative studies

between the teachings of Śākyamuni Buddha and Christianity's historical Jesus were also taking

place.[58]

Unitarianism made its way into Japan and their method of study greatly influenced how

modern Buddhists would re-interpret the teachings to match the needs of a changing society and

its interests. Modern scholars were mainly studying Jesus not as the son of God but more as a historical person, and Buddhist studies also adopted the same method of research. This method is known as *genten kaiki* 原点回帰, or "returning to the original Buddha," which will be called fundamental Buddhism here.[59] All aspects of Buddhism that incorporated fantastic tales and legendary imagery were thrown out in favor of texts that were considered more realistic and taught by Śākyamuni himself.

Western scholarship had an obvious bias towards southern Buddhism or Theravada, believing these to be the original teachings that were closest to what the historical Buddha taught. All other forms of Buddhism such as those that developed in the north and east, i.e., Tibetan and Mahayana (which would also include Pure Land Buddhism), were believed to be later developments that adapted to match the needs of the local population and therefore, not the original teachings of the Buddha.

Western scholarship, on the one hand, provided the benefit of introducing Buddhist texts in English and creating a platform in which Buddhism and its principles could be discussed with a western audience. On the other hand, the bias of western scholarship completely neglected a large school of Buddhism rich in history, culture, context, and philosophy. It presumed what was worthy of study and had a monopoly in deciding what aspects of Buddhism were more important than others.[60] Racism and cultural superiority in western scholarship against the East also played a role in denying proper recognition to Asian scholars, who at that time, were probably more qualified to talk about their respective fields of research and expertise.

As a result, Japanese Buddhists and scholars were forced to "prove" their religious legitimacy in the face of western academia and methodology. They argued that eastern Buddhism not only affirmed all things that southern Buddhism claimed to be true, which is what

western scholarship demanded, but also that eastern Buddhism further developed and extended it. In other words, Japanese scholars tried to show that Mahayana Buddhism was far more sophisticated in philosophical discussion to their southern counterparts as well as Christianity, in addition to being compatible with the latest scientific developments of the modern world.[61] This is the way in which Japanese Buddhists and scholars tried to make their case to the international community which was still generally unfamiliar with Buddhism as a whole. As such, Japanese Buddhists and scholars alike were guilty of their own form of racial superiority over that of southern Buddhists and counter-racism towards western scholarship. They further claimed their views as the right and highest form of interpretation of the Buddha's teachings. However way both western and eastern scholars and Buddhists felt about each other, one thing is clear: if a person wanted to study Buddhism in English, one would have to subconsciously presuppose a set of biased understandings established by the western academic elites.

Japanese immigrants in America

Western scholarship was not the only way in which Buddhism made its way to the Americas. Soon after the World's Parliament of Religions taking place at Chicago in 1893, a large influx of Japanese immigrants entered the western part of the United States. Then in 1897, a request was made for the Nishi Hongwanji to dispatch Buddhist ministers to share the Buddha Dharma overseas. Sonoda Shuye 園田宗惠 (1863–1922) and Nishijima Kakuryo 西島覚了 (1873–1942) went to San Francisco in September of 1899 as Buddhist missionaries. Over time, Jodo Shinshu temples were constructed all along the major cities of the west coast.[62]

Although the large Japanese immigrant population requested for Buddhist ministers to be sent so that they would be able to listen to the teachings of the Buddha Dharma, the primary interest for these first-generation immigrants, or *Issei*, to go to America was for economic

opportunity. Tetsuden Kashima explains that the Japanese immigrants were not escaping religious persecution as the early settlers of Europe did when they came to the east coast of America. The Japanese came because there was a chance to gain economic success which they hoped to bring back with them to Japan after working for some time in the fields of mainland America or Hawai'i.[63]

It is also evident that the Meiji government was concentrating its efforts on building its infrastructure in Tokyo, its new capital. As such, economic opportunity in the rural areas of Japan, particularly in the western regions, was seldom available to those involved in agrarian occupations. Places such as Hiroshima, Fukuoka, Kumamoto, and Wakayama, areas that just so happened to be Jodo Shinshu strongholds, were the places in which the most number of immigrants came from. Kashima goes on to explain that because of this, it was not the primary interest of the immigrants to preserve and uphold their traditional organizations and culture *per se*. In fact, flexibility and adaptation were considered more important to be able to survive in the new foreign land.[64]

Nevertheless, Buddhist temples were cropping up in various parts of America where Japanese Americans were living. These temples served not just as a place for hearing the Dharma but also where people can gather for social interaction. Here at the temple, people could speak Japanese without fear of harassment from the outside community. Everyone looked alike and shared in the same struggles of everyday life that can be at times scary and lonesome.[65] In addition, the government passed a series of laws such as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the Asiatic Barred Zone Act of 1917, and the Immigration Act of 1924 (Oriental Exclusion Act), which further exacerbated the Japanese American experience and the identity of being Asian and

living in America. Furthermore, Japanese imperial ambitions occurring throughout the first half

of the twentieth century created suspicion towards the Japanese Americans living in the US.

When the *Issei* immigrants finally came to terms with the fact that they would never be

welcomed into mainstream American society, the temple became even more critical as the only

way to be able to freely participate in a structured society.[66] Eventually, the temple and being a

"Buddhist" even served as a way to affirm Japanese and Japanese American solidarity along with

autonomy from the oppressive white culture that would not accept them into the general fold.

Being Buddhist and going to temple was a way to "stick it to the man." But here again, Buddhist

identity was primarily discussed in relation to white, Christian dominance.

Finally, the attack on Pearl Harbor in December of 1941, which ignited the flames of war in

the Pacific, led President Roosevelt to initiate Executive Order 9066, interning American citizens

of Japanese ancestry to relocation camps. Labeled as "non-aliens" as opposed to being

considered actual US citizens, tens of thousands of Japanese Americans were unconstitutionally

sent to internment camps for the duration of the war, stripping them of their land, property, and

assets. The humiliation and mistreatment damaged the Japanese American identity and pushed

them to further reinforce their solidarity among racial and religious lines. This trauma of

ostracization still reverberates to this day. Galen Amstutz writes the following,

> Postwar American Shin temples became the cultural expression of choice for a declining
> population of conservative middle-class Japanese-Americans who aimed largely to cultivate ethnic
> group security and the memory of victimization by World War II internment camps. Japanese-
> American self-consciousness was fed by the general atmosphere of *nihonjinron*; the elements of
> universalistic proselytizing energy which had been a feature of prewar overseas Shin almost
> disappeared.[67]

 Amstutz explains that Shin temples became the center in which Japanese Americans gathered

for ethnic solidarity and the memory of victimization during World War II. This steered the

course away from active propagation to the greater American audience after the war, something

that was much more evident in the prewar years of Shin Buddhism overseas. This suggests that post-war Shin Buddhism outside Japan, particularly in North America, exhibited the third characteristic trait of the legacy of the two truths theory that is posited in the previous chapter: that there was a de-emphasis in proactive response to social issues. The social issue referred to here is propagation to the broader general public that is not Japanese American. Of course, this paper is not suggesting there was absolutely no proactivity on the part of the Shin Buddhist religious organizations. However, there is substantial evidence to suggest a hesitation or even reluctance to do so due to intense pressures and constraints placed from both within and without the religious organizations.

Exhibiting two truths theory in America: Direct evidence of the two truths theory
Early Shin Buddhism

Around the time of the turn of the twentieth century, early Shin propagation required new methods that adopted and accommodated American culture and worldviews. Sonoda and Nishijima conducted services and held study classes regularly for the Japanese and English-speaking population. Over in Hawai'i, Bishop Emyo Imamura, who was instrumental in the propagation of Shin, worked vigorously to establish Buddhism in America. He sought new ways to universalize Buddhism through developing hymns, English Dharma talks, Sunday school programs, and even structured the inside of temples to be similar to that of Christian churches.[68] He also worked with Earnest Hunt (1878–1967) to try and create a non-sectarian movement of Buddhism that attempted to attract the non-Japanese population as well.[69] Also, many *Nisei* ministers felt the need to emphasize the teachings of Śākyamuni as opposed to that of Shinran, feeling that the American and majority of the *Nisei* generation would not understand the Japanese Buddhist master unless there was first a proper understanding of the general framework of Buddhism.[70]

These tendencies exhibited by the Shin Buddhist organizations and its ministers in various parts of America sought a more universal and pan-sectarian approach to the understanding and spreading of Buddhism by way of emphasizing its historical founder. There are probably many reasons as to why this was the case, but it is reasonable to assume that the idea of "strength in numbers" in terms of banding all Buddhists alike under one flag was the intended goal, especially in the face of the dominant Christian religion. It is also important to note that the general trend in western scholarship towards Buddhism was to emphasize and recognize the historical Buddha as the only legitimate authority on Buddhism. In other words, western academia and its approach to Buddhism became the standard by which to understand this religion and that meant to study Śākyamuni only. Furthermore, this academic approach meant that Buddhism would be scrutinized, critiqued, and observed from an "objective" standpoint in the lens of the scientific method and rationality. Any aspect that fell outside of this scope was relegated as aberrant from the "original" Buddha's teachings. This also meant compartmentalizing one's personal belief as separate from the academic pursuit of understanding the Buddha's teachings. I will call this method the "objectification of Buddhism."

Based on the information above as well as examples that will follow, Shin Buddhist ministers and organizations tended to follow this overall trend of how Buddhism was being perceived and approached by the greater American community. What legitimated this approach to accept and adopt the "objectification of Buddhism" was none other than the two truths theory.

Buddhism and language schools

As mentioned elsewhere, the temple served not just as a religious center but also a cultural one. One of the most important ways it attempted to preserve the cultural heritage of the motherland was to educate the youth in speaking Japanese. Language schools were considered a

vital part of one's temple life, and even many non-religious immigrants also sent their children to Japanese school with the hopes of maintaining ethnic ties. Teaching Japanese did serve a particular purpose in the propagation of Shin. It gave the younger members the language skills required to understand the Buddhist sermons which, during the early years before the war, were predominantly conducted in Japanese. Thus, Japanese language schools were an essential aspect of the American temple and its vitality.

However, culture and religion, though they may have much common ground, are not necessarily the same thing. As we may recall in the previous chapter about the Meiji government purposefully designating State Shinto as not a "religion" but a cultural obligation of the Japanese people, the idea of "culture" and "religion" would clash. As imperial Japan expands its occupation and sphere of influence across eastern Asia, a rise in national sentiment inevitably took place, even amongst the Japanese immigrants. The question then became, "Does the language school promote Japanese nationalism when its students, who are now being born as US citizens, do not necessarily identify with the imperial sentiment"? Also, from a Buddhist standpoint, where does the line between culture and religion lie, especially if the "culture" aspect is promoting the imperial household as divinity itself?

As suspicions grew against the Japanese immigrants and their reasons for living in areas where Japan's sphere of influence could grow, anti-Japanese sentiment sparked legislation against these immigrants. In response, the *Issei*, who are now content with not returning to Japan but staying in the newly established areas, tried to find ways to adapt to American life. In one example, Japanese language textbooks printed after 1915 were notably less nationalistic than the previous editions.[71] Many textbooks prior to the war contained the Imperial Rescript on Education, which the language instructors decided to give a very loose interpretation of,

promoting its general moralistic points instead. Language schools emphasized the curriculum of *shūshin*, or moral education, which the instructors felt were missing in the education that the children were receiving at their regular American schools. These classes taught about filial piety, duty, honesty, perseverance, industry, courtesy, cooperation, and courage, ideas that were for the most part, compatible with American values.[72] Reactions towards these Japanese schools and whether they actively promoted nationalism and emperor worship was mixed.[73] However, one thing was clear: Japanese language schools increasingly found it harder to bridge the gap between Japanese nationalism and living in America.

Overseas Shin temples help in war effort

In general, Japanese American *Issei* and some *nisei* felt a strong need to support their ancestral homeland. When Japan won in the first Sino-Japanese war in 1894-1895, the *Issei* in Hawai'i organized a day-long parade celebrating its victory. Many closed their shops, wore Japanese military garments, and sang songs of praise to the emperor. The same happened after Japan defeated Russia.[74] The *Rafu Shimpo* based in Los Angeles, regularly held poetry contests on Japan's military successes and published them in its paper.[75]

Whatever the religious background, Japanese American immigrants felt a strong sense of pride that their original homeland was establishing itself as a formidable country on the international scale. Riding on this sentiment, Shin ministers included imperialistic elements into their liturgy. They regularly read the Imperial Rescript on Education at Japanese school, carried out rituals that honored Japanese emperors, and observed imperial holidays such as the emperor's birthday.[76] It is also a well-known fact that some Hongwanji overseas missionaries helped the Imperial Army in its campaign throughout Asia. Ama Michihiro writes, "The BMNA [Buddhist Mission of North America] and the Buddhist Mission of Canada (BMC) held

memorial services in 1938 for Japanese imperial soldiers who had died in China and Korea. The BMNA made donations to the headquarters in Japan, and the BMC sent $100 to the military authorities. Such activities demonstrate Issei ministers' tacit support of Japan's imperial government and its war efforts."[77]

If we look at one of the oldest newsletter publications that talked about the latest events and issues pertaining to Shin Buddhism overseas known as "Kyodan Times 教団タイムス," there are a couple of examples that show Buddhist organizations encouraging loyalty to the emperor. In the October 15, 1934 issue, there is a section titled "Resolutions Passed at Ministers Conference," in which it states, "Buddhist Mission of North America shall send a congratulatory telegram to Manchukuo on the Enthronement of the new Emperor." There is another article in Japanese in the same issue in which its headline reads, "Hongwanji's loyalty to the emperor from the End of Edo Period to the Beginning of the Meiji Period: How the Customs of the Two Truths Theory Shines Brilliantly in this Age of Confusion" (*Bakumatsu Ishin Zengo no Hongwanji no Kinnō: Shinzoku nitai no Shūfū wa Konranjidai ni Azayakani Hikaru* 幕末維新前後の本願寺の勤王：真俗二諦の宗風は混乱時代に鮮やかに光る). Here we can see a Shin organization in America publicly affirming its loyalty to the emperor of Japan and following its mother organization. In fact, if we look at the liturgical service books, songs, and compilations used by ministers, there is ample evidence to suggest that the overseas propagation in America was in lockstep with its Japanese counterparts. For example, it was common to find the song "Song on the Four Benevolences" (*Shion no Uta* 四恩の歌), which talks about reflecting on and repaying the benevolence received by one's country, parents, the Buddha, and society. The lyrics are reminiscent of Confucian themes and "country" here, of course would refer to the emperor.

Another song that is commonly found is "Song in Praise of Prince Shōtoku" (*shōtoku taishi hōsanka* 聖徳太子奉讃歌), which is a definite appeal that Shin Buddhism and even Shinran himself greatly respected the imperial lineage as well as the piece entitled, "Song in Praise of Myōnyo Shōnin" (*myōnyo shōnin hōsanka* 明如上人奉讃歌), the present head priest at the time who advocated for loyalty to the emperor.[78] Other examples, would be songs by the titles of "Song of the Citizens" (*kokumin no uta*「国民の歌」), and "The Flag of Japan" (*nihon no hata*「日本の旗」), in which its contents have nothing to do with Shin Buddhism and advocated for patriotism and loyalty.[79]

Furthermore, books containing the sacred doctrinal scriptures such as Shinran's *Kyōgyōshinshō* or the writings of the Seven Pure Land Masters also included a section containing the writings of various emperors such as Meiji, Taishō, and Shōwa, which in retrospect would undoubtedly be considered out of place. Written pieces entitled, "Boshin Edict" (*boshin shōsho* 戊申詔書), "Imperial Rescript on the Enhancement of the National Spirit" (*kokumin seishinsakkō ni kansuru shōsho* 国民精神作興ニ関スル詔書), "Imperial Rescript on the Coronation of the Emperor His Majesty" (*kinjō heika gosokuishiki chokugo* 今上陛下御即位式勅語), "Prince Shotoku's Seventeen Articles of the Constitution" (*shōtoku taishi jyūshichijō kenpō* 聖徳太子十七条憲法), "Verses in Praise" (*raisanmon* 礼讃文)" are included in doctrinal books at this time, suggesting that it should be revered like all other sacred works.[80] Although the last work listed is not written by any specific emperor, it encourages its followers to be loyal to the emperor and supporting the military.

In addition, Eileen Tamura explains, "While it is true that Honolulu Hongwanji members sent money to Japan during the Russo-Japanese war, and Buddhist temples sponsored victory celebrations and held memorial services for Japanese soldiers at the end of the war in 1905, what they did was typical of other immigrant groups. English, German, Greek, Irish, and other immigrants and their descendants also identified with and rallied to support their motherlands."[81] What these examples show is that Shin Buddhist missionaries, its ministers and members alike shared the sentiment that they needed to show support for their ancestral homeland.

The above examples all show that there is much evidence to suggest that the policy of the two truths theory was actively promoted and endorsed by the Buddhist Mission of North America or the Shin Buddhist religious organizations overseas on the American continent, before World War II. This can be considered the direct evidence linking the two truths theory, which by this point in Japan was utilized to promote Japanese nationalism, to Shin Buddhist ethics in America. Whether followers or members of the sangha actually took this to heart and followed through with these policies is beside the point. The argument is that the two truths theory existed in overseas US propagation and it was in fact, the ethical policy of the religious body at the time. Most Shin Buddhist scholars who have done extensive research in this area will agree on this point. But did this ethical policy end with the close of World War II as we might easily assume? Can we still see the influences of *shinzoku nitai* in today's Shin Buddhism outside of Japan?

Exhibiting two truths theory in America: Indirect evidence of the two truths theory
Mundane truth over the supramundane truth

The first problem of the legacy of the two truths theory is the prioritization of the mundane truth over the supramundane. This happens by way of initial mutual equivalency of the two sides as equal parts in a symbiotic relationship that eventually gives way to the mundane because of its perceived practicality in everyday usage. As we saw in the last chapter, in the context of Japan

from the end of the Edo Period to the close of World War II, State Shinto and the ambitions of Imperial Japan took precedence over the spiritual concerns of Shin Buddhists. This is an example of a complete takeover of the mundane over the supramundane. *Ōbō* and *buppō*, respectively usually define the definitions of "mundane" and "supramundane" truths. The first term refers to the rule of law or secular jurisprudence whereas the second term refers to the Buddha's law, the Buddha Dharma or absolute truth. The meaning of "mundane" can be expanded to mean ethics and morality,[82] a school of thought, or a movement involving a group of people.

In the context of Shin Buddhism in America, we can see a similar trend in which the mundane becomes the central focus over the supramundane. Below are five different examples of how this has happened in the past and the possibility of it happening again in the current state of affairs of Shin Buddhism in America. The five examples are: 1. Christianity and Shin (Buddhism), 2. Science and Shin, 3. Ethics and Shin, 4. Ecumenicalism and Shin, and 5. Buddhist Fundamentalism and Shin. This list is not exhaustive but shows the primary examples that will help to prove how the mundane can eclipse the supramundane truth. This will, in turn, show how the legacy of the two truths theory affected, and can still affect, the Shin Buddhist ethical identity today.

Buddhism as the alternative religion to Christianity

As noted above, the Enlightenment Era brought about a new wave of thinking that questioned the previously dominant and unshakeable Christian worldview. As advances in science and technology gave rise to the confidence in human rationality and individualism, many people were no longer convinced of the infallibility of organized religion and its dogmatic truths. They were now looking to new ideas in different parts of the world outside the far reaches of Christianity, in hopes of finding answers to their spiritual questions. It is around this time that

Buddhism enters the world stage. When it was introduced to the world in the late nineteenth century and took hold in America in the early twentieth century, Buddhism was from the start, portrayed as a religion that could stand toe-to-toe with the weakened but still unquestionably dominant Christian religion. Great effort was placed in making and shaping Buddhism to be a viable counterpart to Christianity that discarded all metaphysical and mythological characteristics but still met the spiritual interests of its followers.

As one of the earliest schools of Buddhism to cross the seas into America, Shin Buddhism had to portray itself as such. Not only did it have to contrast itself in the better light against Christianity, but it also had to prove to everyone that it was a legitimate school of Buddhism that fervently attested its loyalty to the historical founder of Buddhism, Śākyamuni. When the Japanese immigrant workers of Hawai'i and on the west coast of America used the temples as a spiritual and social gathering, Buddhism became the target of criticism as the foreign religion that was un-American.[83]

It is in this historical context, that Dorothy Hunt along with the help of her husband Ernest and Emyō Imamura, who was a fervent supporter of the Americanization of Buddhism, wrote and published the book entitled, *Vade Mecum* in 1924. This work was the first of its kind intended as a service book for an English-speaking audience and contained passages that talked about the Buddha's words and various other moral teachings. There are two features of this book that is relevant to our discussion. The first is that most of the passages are non-sectarian and only a couple of passages make any mention of either Shinran Shonin or Amida Buddha. The next is the tone of the passages, which are written in old-style English to suggest its time-tested teachings. It is also written using Christian terminology, which suggests the attempt to portray

Buddhism as a legitimate religion that can stand in opposition to Christianity. Let us look at a few examples.

The first example is entitled "Y.M.B.A. Meetings," or Young Men's Buddhist Association Meetings, intended for a younger audience. A portion of it reads,

> Arise, Arise, all Buddha's soldiers true,
> And take your stand upon the rock of Truth!
> The holy Law by Lord Buddha taught
> Shall evermore endure.
> And all who journey by its light
> Shall reach Nirvana's shore.
> In love we stand, by Truth set free.
> Brothers of Him who found true liberty.
> …
> And ere we part our homage we renew,
> Taking our refuge in our Blessed Lord;
> Then forth we'll go in the Dhamma's might
> To teach the Holy Way;
> To scatter far the gloom of night
> And lead men to Truth's day,
> Till all the earth with one accord
> Shall trust the Dhamma of our Blessed Lord.[84]

What we see here, is typical of the writing style found throughout this book. Words such as "His," "Lord Buddha," "Holy Way," "Blessed Lord," and "Truth set free," are reminiscent of usages found in the Bible, and if we look at today's translations of Shin Buddhist texts, these terms are now purposely avoided. These examples show the contextual framework with which Buddhism had to work within. It had to be explained in relation to Christianity, and apologetics and critics alike had to talk within these terms.

Another example is written by Paul Carus who writes, "Gods and men and angels / All for worship came. / Glory to Lord Buddha, / Glory to His Name."[85] Many Buddhist texts including Shinran himself do talk about how gods and other heavenly beings or bodhisattvas all come to praise the Buddha. Here the reference is directed towards non-Buddhist religions like Christianity. In yet another example it states, "How glorious is Thy Dhamma, / O, Buddha, Blessed Lord. / How wonderful Thy Sangha, / Which spreads Thy word abroad."[86] Again, the

abundance in usages of the terms "glory, "Thy," and "Blessed," all show how the writers felt the need to use similar terms in Christianity to explain the auspiciousness of the Buddha's presence and his teachings.

Of course, it can be argued that because Buddhism is new, there was not sufficient time to allow for the development of its own original lexicon and technical jargon. As that might be true, it is equally so that Christianity was considered the point of reference. Even the Japanese Shin Buddhists, who had hopes of revitalizing interest in its religion, were discussing its teachings in the context of comparative religion and borrowing themes and research methods from outside of the country and Christianity. As far as the Shin Buddhist missionaries were concerned, they were doing the same as their Japanese counterparts, only on foreign soil. Thus, from these examples we can see that from one of the earliest published Buddhist works, the writers borrowed from Christian terminology and themes to help explain its own religion to an unfamiliar audience and what they hoped to be a new religious movement in America.

Drawing the differences between Christianity and Shin Buddhism did not end over time. Even today, Shin Buddhist propagation involves making great efforts to distinguish between such concepts as Amida Buddha and God, grace and Amida's Vow Power, and faith and shinjin. Where Theravadin Buddhists and other schools of Mahayana were able to make clear distinctions between themselves and Christianity, Shin Buddhism had to make an extra effort to set itself apart. Amstutz makes an insightful analysis of the situation which will help in our discussion. He states,

> Ultimately, what Victorian seekers most wanted out of "Buddhism" was a metaphysical monism (a transcendentalist theism) combined with a liberal, individualistic humanistic self-effort theory (not a "grace" theory) and an elitist hostility to religious organizations (antisectarianism). Thus the predetermined interests which Westerners brought to their exploration of Buddhism were incompatible with an appreciation of any of the strengths of the Shin tradition…but in Shin these fine qualities were distastefully combined with a "devotionalism," a mundane pragmaticism, a sense of moral self-criticism, a strong organizational structure, and a sober political seriousness (not to mention a sharp resistance to Western colonization) presented with no saving graces of

special interest in healing, mind control, or the supernatural. In short, Shin seems to present nothing more than a dull substitute for mainstream Christianity rather than the comfortable binary complementation and supplementation of preconceived alternative interests to which Americans were already committed.[87]

   Simply put, Shin Buddhism gets misconstrued as a form of devotional Buddhism that does not speak to the imaginations of what Westerners wanted from this new religion. It offers nothing for what Victorian seekers wanted because Amida was viewed as a deity-like figure who grants the salvation of people, as opposed to a universalistic worldview that centered on human individualism. The strengths of the Shin tradition were precisely the aspects that western seekers of Buddhism were not interested in and therefore it was believed to be a "dull substitute" for mainstream Christianity. Finally, Shin doctrine was not the alternative that Americans were interested in using to fulfill their predetermined interests in Buddhism.

   Although it is not a fair assessment to judge early English Buddhist works as wanting too much to sound like Christianity in an attempt to appeal to its religious legitimacy, it can be claimed that early Buddhism in America was rightly and overtly, cognizant of its status as the underdog. These early works *had* to work within the context of a Christian framework because its audience and writers came from this background or at least were familiar with it. The tendency to compare Buddhism and Christianity today is by now an age-old tradition that traces its roots to the mid-nineteenth century. What I claim is that Buddhism can be portrayed as an alternative religion to Christianity, but that the conversation and definition of it should not stop there. In other words, Buddhism is not *only* a religion in which its role is to stand in contrast to Christianity. An over-emphasis of this aspect is nothing short of misunderstanding the core teaching of Shin and emphasizing only one of its practical usage, which in this case would be to provide an ethical worldview that contrasts the Christian one. This would fall into the category of

the mundane truth, an over-emphasis of which, would fall victim to the legacy of the two truths theory.

Buddhism as a religion compatible with science and rationality

In a short introductory article entitled, "The West Needs Buddhism," written by George W. Wright on Jan 1, 1929, we can get a sense of how Buddhism was being talked about during this time. At the outset, he writes, "Westerners should be attracted to Buddhism because of its striking appeal to reason and common sense, and because it offers a logical and scientific system of ethics and culture that is based on sound philosophical principles."[88] Of course, what Wright points out here is representative of how many people viewed Buddhism then and still view it as such to this day. Initial Buddhist publications also shared in this opinion. *Open Court*, a magazine that published liberal and radical articles on religion, focused on the amicable relationship between science and Buddhism as well as promoting the ideas of religious inclusivism and tolerance, particularly between the years of 1893 and 1907.[89] In fact, the editor of *Open Court* was none other than Paul Carus, whose name has been mentioned before and has made considerable contributions in this area.[90]

Carus later works closely with DT Suzuki but himself was an avid supporter of the idea that Buddhism was the new religion of the future that would support and encourage scientific development with no qualms. He explained Buddha as "the first prophet of the religion of science" and argued that "a conflict between religion and science is impossible in Buddhism."[91] Ignoring any metaphysical discussions, these apologetics of Buddhism who wanted to see it as a philosophical worldview compatible with science, looked to specific texts that were mostly Theravadin, for their sources of inspiration. In response to this, Japanese Buddhists of the Meiji Era including Shin scholars, explained Buddhism using methods of rationality and reason. They

were also trying to combat the charges that (Mahayana) Buddhism was otherworldly, irrational, and irrelevant to the new era.[92]

Shin propagation outside of Japan was no exception. From the establishment early on of Shin organizations all the way to today, there have been numerous studies attempting to look at scientific issues from the standpoint of Buddhism. Issues spanning from reasons for supporting the nuclear non-proliferation of the world's super powers,[93] to discussing the relationship between drugs and Buddhism amidst the boom of the counterculture movement in America,[94] to the latest development in various fields of medicine,[95] there are countless articles and opinions both academic and lay-oriented that attest to the close relationship that Buddhism is viewed to have with science.

If Buddhism can stand hand in hand with science, what then is the problem? My argument is not to claim that the two do not have common ground with each other nor that there are certain doctrinal principles that contradict scientific research. I am concerned more with how Buddhists might get carried away with just how much the two have in common as opposed to focusing on what should be an emphasis on the essence of the Buddhist teaching.

To give an example, Thomas Tweed explains that Paul Carus was so inclined to think that Buddhism and science were compatible, that superstitious beliefs and practices that the religion picked up over the years, should be discarded and not considered "pure." Tweed goes on to write, "Carus envisioned a 'purification' of all existing religions in the flame of science…[He] hoped, then, that by burning off the residue elements that were incompatible with science—and tolerance—a single "cosmological religion" would emerge from the fire. That religion would require no intellectual sacrifice or moral compromise."[96] What we see here is the fine-line in the difference between a "Buddhist scientist" and a "scientific Buddhist." Carus if anything,

envisioned a single cosmological religion—not necessarily Buddhism but that it was the closest thing to what he sought—that propped up the truth that science would reveal. But Buddhism, from the standpoint of the supramundane truth, is not simply about affirming scientific findings, development, nor methodology. In fact, quite the contrary. Buddhism is supposed to be about coming to terms with the limits of human discriminative thinking, or reasoning and rationality altogether. It is in acknowledging the limits of this egotistical enterprise that the world of nonduality emerges. That is, where there is the absolute negation of human discriminative thinking and self-reliance, therein we find the absolute affirmation of the nondual world of true wisdom and compassion. In other words, *tariki* negates *jiriki*.

Again, I am not claiming that Buddhism and science are inherently at odds with each or that there are certain principles that conflict with scientific development. But Shin Buddhism's agreeing with science is not the sole purpose of this religion, a fact which often gets overlooked. The goal of Buddhism is one of spiritual awareness *standing on* the limitations of human rationality. As far as science can come along in this ride there is room for companionship and cooperation. But make no mistake—Buddhism is in the driver's seat. An over-emphasis on Buddhism agreeing with the development in science and human rationality can lead into the same issue that happened in the history of Shin Buddhism, which is the complete negligence of the soteriological aspect of Amida's Primal Vow. This is yet another example of how in the history of Shin Buddhism in America, there was a strong emphasis on the mundane truth. This can potentially become a problem again in the future if we do not properly recognize this issue for what it is now.

By now the reader can see that there is a pattern taking place. "Mundane truths" listed are all systems of ethics, schools of thought, or movements involving a group of people that make certain truth claims pertaining to the secular world. Many people may criticize my loose definition of "mundane truth" as too wide in interpretation and that it can include almost anything. However, that is precisely my point. If it were not for the supramundane truth, or absolute reality of nonduality, then "Buddhism" can be made into anything that a person would want it to be. In one sense, the two truths theory is actually helpful because it recognizes what is supposed to be the essential core of Buddhism. But on the other hand, this separation of the "essence of Buddhism (supramundane)" and "Buddhism's relatability (mundane)" creates the danger of emphasizing what is perceived to be more concrete and practical in everyday usage. For example, if Japanese school is defined as a form of the mundane, there is the possibility of emphasizing the practical usage of that over the essence of Buddhism. If Scouts is defined as the mundane, there is the possibility of emphasizing that over the supramundane truth. However, it is not mundane truth that should define Shin Buddhism but rather, the supramundane. Shin adherents must always keep in mind what is the central part of the teaching, which subsequently, is related to the issue of their very identity.

Morality and ethics can also be considered the side of the mundane. This is because as Shinran points out, good and evil, right and wrong, piety and impiety are all relative to human discriminative thinking and are thus subject to change. Even in the *Hymns* he composed, Shinran reflects on his inability to truly and genuinely feel shameful of his karmic evil.[97]

If we look at the history of how Buddhism was introduced to the international community, it was presented in contrast to Christianity and following along the trend of individualism, self-

reliance, and human rationality inspired by the Enlightenment Era. Buddhism was thought to be and presented as the new spiritual worldview that bypassed all metaphysical and soteriological dialogue and was only concerned with "real-life" issues of society. Even religious ritual that paid tribute to Buddha as a deified figure was not considered "Buddhist" according to early western scholarship. They believed the historical Buddha taught about "common sense" and a system of ethics that changed how one treated others in society and him/herself.[98]

This was at least the growing trend of how to view and understand Buddhism during the nineteenth century, and, which still exists in various forms today. Shin Buddhist propagation of course, had to meet these standards and accommodate early western perceptions of Buddhism. One need not look arduously and find a plethora of material, particularly Dharma school teaching guides, to see how Buddhist principles were used to help guide young practitioners in their daily lives.[99] In one example, in *The Teaching of Buddha, Lord Buddha Speaks to Me*, a Dharma School book, it writes, "Not to do any evil, to cultivate good, to purify one's own mind, this is the teaching of the Buddha."[100] Here we see just one of many examples found throughout this book talking about the importance of morality and how to treat others well.

In terms of liturgical sources, we refer again to *Vade Mecum*. In one passage it explains the battle between good and evil, imagery that is certainly inspired from biblical examples as Shin Buddhism does not talk about good and evil in this way. It writes,

> We are Truth's disciples
> Marching on to Peace
> With the sword of Reason
> Bidding error cease.
> Love's our great commander,
> Ignorance our foe,
> To dispel illusion
> Forward we must go…[101]

The passage continues by depicting the battle between righteousness and ignorance. From the excerpt we can see the dualistic nature of good and evil and how one side will triumph over

another. This is undoubtedly one theme of this book expressing Shin Buddhism as a religion that teaches about morality. These examples show how Shin Buddhist propagation through Dharma school and liturgical material over the years, agreed with how the rest of the western world defined Buddhism in general.

One can argue that the categorization of ethics and morality do not necessarily belong on the side of the mundane, thus proving my analysis incorrect. He/she might claim that because the historical Buddha taught about morality, that this in itself is the supramundane truth. But as mentioned before, Shinran talks about the limitation of human discriminative thinking, of which morality and ethics fall under. Śākyamuni may have talked about ethical principles, but as is explained in *Larger Sutra*, the soteriological aspect of Amida's Vow Power was his main intent and the reason for appearing in this world. Once again, we see that an over-emphasis on mundane truth such as ethics and morality, will only stifle a proper understanding of the essence of Shin Buddhism. With this superficial knowledge, a person can go on to think that Shin Buddhism is *only* about morality, which is exactly what this school is trying to get its followers to go beyond in terms of nondual understanding and awareness.

Buddhism as ecumenical and tolerant of other religions and worldviews

In contrast to many of the world's religions that condemns or judges as evil those persons who do not share the same worldview, Buddhism or at least, what people wanted of this new religion, was a philosophical teaching that would recognize pluralism. One of the ways this was done was to compartmentalize one's personal belief, which will be called the "religious side," from the rational side, which will be called the "secular side," and then associating Buddhism only with the secular side. Thus, a Christian can believe in God (religious side) but still consider him/herself Buddhist as well, because this person defines "Buddhism" not as a religion, but as a

worldview of the secular world. Obviously, the soteriological aspect of Buddhism gets completely ignored here, and the individual only takes into account Buddhism's "practical" uses in everyday life. Thomas A. Tweed makes a statement that helps to elucidate this point further. He writes,

> Buddhist apologists, and probably many of the sympathetic thousands with no public voice, seemed to yearn for a tradition that was different, but not too different. They wanted to dissent— but not too much. Defenders of the tradition, then, rejected some elements of the dominant religion and culture, but they did so within the context of a broader consent.[102]

What we see here is that many people who agreed with the principles of Buddhism did so but only in the context of certain presuppositions they had about religious and cultural issues. That is, Buddhism had to be different, but not so different that the follower could not make heads or tails of the religion. Buddhism's appealing leader Śākyamuni, the idea of personal ethics, self-reliance, and awareness of the here and now, are just a few examples that show the attractive characteristics of this religion that do not necessarily conflict with one's personal "religious" views. In fact, Buddhism spoke to people more as a "culture" or a "way of life" rather than a religion *per se*. Thus came the understanding that Buddhism was a tolerant philosophy that spoke not to the individual's existential salvation, but rather, to an ethical view that allowed one to better assess and live in the empirical world using time-tested principles. Importantly, these ethical principles were not founded on dogmatic truths.

Aside from the approach of looking at Buddhism not as a religion about spiritual salvation but rather as a culture or a system of ethics pertaining to the secular world, this manifested itself in one way as a movement to discard sectarian barriers in the hopes of creating a more unified world religion. Shin Buddhist institutions have made several attempts at this approach. In the 1940s, the Buddhist Brotherhood of America was created by ministers Julius Goldwater, Arthur Takemoto, and Gyōmei Kubose to create a non-sectarian American Buddhism. In Hawai'i,

Ernest Hunt and Bishop Imamura established the Hawaiian branch of the International Buddhist Institute, in the hopes of also creating a non-sectarian movement.[103]

During the internment camps, a United Buddhist church was formed, which included Shingon, Zen, Nichiren, Tendai, Jodo and Shinshu denominations. At the Poston camp, which included Shingon, Nichiren, and Shinshu schools, a compromise had to be reached about what would be recited as the central incantation. The result that the different groups finally agreed on was the phrase "Namo Shaka-muni Butsu."[104]

Movements such as these would occur sporadically throughout the history of Shin Buddhism overseas, particularly in America. One of the main reasons especially voiced by the youth is that the Buddhist teachings are too "Japanese" and that they do not cater to the needs of Japanese Americans and the American way of life.[105] From these examples we can see that the Shin institutions have seen its fair share of non- or pan-sectarian movements. These were ways to create a more diversified, all-encompassing, and ecumenical approach to Buddhism that was not tied down by the constraints of tradition and sectarian orthodoxy.

Promoting tolerance of religious diversity is not only a Shin Buddhist principle, but it is also imperative in creating a peaceful and cooperative society in today's pluralistic world. The concern, however, is pushing the idea of peace and mutual-cooperation through ecumenical efforts to a point where it takes precedence over the central teachings of this school. If the focus becomes peace and tolerance primarily, then Buddhism does in fact become a system of ethics talking only about the secular side and not the religious. In other words, Buddhism is seen as only relevant to the discussion of the mundane truth and not the supramundane, which is precisely what it is trying to get beyond. If we lose sight of the soteriological aspect of Amida's salvific Vow Power, then how is Buddhism anything other than a glorified teaching about the

Golden Rule? Surely, the reader can agree that Shin is more than just a code of ethics, learning how to live peacefully, or any one particular culture. The core of this teaching is to understand the fundamental and dynamic reality of this world, which is called infinite life and light, that which unconditionally embraces all sentient beings. If Shin adherents stop short of this understanding, then they will only have a superficial grasp of this teaching and use what they think Buddhism should be, to fill in the blanks. Ecumenical efforts are important but not at the expense of discarding or neglecting the primary importance of the nembutsu teaching.

Buddhism as a monolithic tradition

Similar to the previous section, Shin has also had to respond to the popular belief that Buddhism was a monolithic tradition. According to Tweed, through the exchanges between the East and West through voyages and Christian missionaries going to Asia, Europeans were well-aware from early on of the fact that the world was religiously diverse. This, combined with sectarian conflict occurring across Europe and Enlightenment Era ideas of individualism and rationality, brought about a movement towards religious reductionism.[106] That is, there was a growing trend towards finding the bare essence of what was common to all religions of the world. Mythological and metaphysical characteristics were de-emphasized; dogma and normative behavior in social and religious settings were downplayed in an effort to find spiritual freedom and tolerance of a diverse spectrum of worldviews. The Enlightenment Era emphasis on empiricism and Romantic Period focus on human subjectivity brought about a new enthusiasm in the will of the individual as opposed to organized religious institutions. Now, the individual had more authority to decide on whether to observe certain religious beliefs and practices personally.[107]

Western scholarship, obsessed with searching for a pristine Buddhism and the origins of this ancient religion, focused on Śākyamuni as the only legitimate authority, as he was the historical founder of this entire tradition. Theravada was selected over Mahayana and Vajrayana because it was believed to be closest to what the original Buddha taught. Sanskrit and Pali languages were studied because they were closest to the language that the founder used. This linguistic field of research gave western scholars a sense of academic superiority over their Asian counterparts, who at the turn of the twentieth century, were still largely unfamiliar with these archaic languages. Finally, in searching for a pristine essence of Buddhism that can trace its roots to an Indo-European core, western scholars could claim authority to and define Buddhism on their terms.[108] It is this reductionist approach, which will be called "fundamental Buddhism," that helped to shape its framework in the West and how it would be researched, perceived, and pursued at that time in history.

In this context, Japanese Buddhists were faced with having to re-examine their religion to match the Western world's definition of it. What became known as *shin bukkyō* in Japan, also known as "Eastern Buddhism," it was presented and re-defined Buddhism as a philosophical, rational, de-mythologized, and socially conscious worldview that would be the religion of the future because of its compatibility with science.[109] Of course, Shin Buddhist propagation in America would follow along in this trend. Bishop Imamura of Hawai'i led the organization in emphasizing the historical Buddha and the ethical principles of his teachings rather than the more abstract, metaphysical aspects of Shin. He was also responsible for establishing the English department at the Honpa Hongwanji Mission in 1921, which focused on propagation to future generations born in an English-speaking society.[110] The focus on using English to talk about the

ethical teachings of the founder Śākyamuni also shows where the focus was not on. Amstutz explains this precisely and states,

> The descriptions of Pure Land traditions among Buddhologists tended to be unsophisticated and simplistic, in line with the prejudice against late "corrupt" Buddhism. Most Westerners have been overwhelmingly shaped by the exotic Shakyamuni myth and its psychological and meditative claims; they have reacted negatively to the sudden and early appearance of Pure Land myth in India; where they have not been openly pejorative, they have been simply puzzled; and treatments of Pure Land "faith" by even the nest of Indian Buddhist scholars have tended to oversimplify and trivialize the "devotional" approach.[111]

The infatuation with the historical Buddha; the rejection and negative reaction towards the notion of the Pure Land being historically traced back to India; the oversimplification of the idea of faith leading to the trivialization of devotional practices found in Buddhism; all show how Shin was swiftly judged negatively early on by western scholarship. In addition, the unfortunate events that took place during World War II served as major setbacks for the active propagation of Shin Buddhism in America and its proper understanding by the outside world.

To mitigate these misunderstandings, there was pressure to submit to the definitions and parameters set by western scholarship about Buddhism. In essence, there was always a strong presence, which only seemed to grow stronger as time went on, of western scholarship and popular sentiment that consistently set the context in which Shin Buddhists had to work within to define their own religious identity. Even today, the average Shin practitioner in America will know more about general Buddhist principles than teachings that are specific to Jodo Shinshu. I would argue that a sangha member could recite by memory the "Golden Chain" read in many Sunday services as opposed to the "Daily Jodo Shinshu Creed," or any of Shinran's writings for that matter. Again, this is not so much a criticism about approaches in Shin propagation as it is a survey of the historical development of Shin in America.

What should be noted, however, is what enabled a willingness to commit to the parameters set by western scholarship. That would be the legacy of the two truths theory. It is this policy that

persuades the Shin religious organization and its sangha to prioritize the mundane to the supramundane truth. In this final example, the mundane truth would refer to fundamental Buddhism, where there would only be an emphasis on the teachings of the historical Buddha, Śākyamuni. An exerted effort to strip away all the unique aspects of the different schools in an effort to "return" to a pristine, monolithic, and ideal "Buddhism" is not only impractical, but impossible. It is like Nietzsche's talk about the mind's creation of the ideal "leaf," where if we were to look at ten leaves in the outside world, not one would look exactly like the ideal "leaf" we picture in our heads. The perfect and ideal "leaf" we cognitively imagine is nothing but a created concept unfeasible in the real world. Similarly, there is no ideal "Buddhism" in terms of a monolithic and original form which existed since the time of Śākyamuni. Western scholarship reinforced by popular culture implanted this notion of an ideal concept that Buddhists along with Shin practicers have since been trying to chase. Rather than to exhaust ourselves in trying to attain this ideal, Shin Buddhists need to maintain focus of their attention on the central message of Śākyamuni, which is the message of the nembutsu teaching.

The above are five examples that clearly show the ways in which the mundane can overtake the supramundane truth. In addition, I have pointed out various ways in which the Shin organizations outside of Japan accommodated western scholarship and popular sentiment's definition of Buddhism. As mentioned above but can be argued here again, one can claim that the teachings of the historical Buddha should fall under the category of the supramundane and not the mundane. However, I am arguing that what gets categorized as the "mundane" here is not necessarily Śākyamuni's teachings themselves but rather, what Western scholarship told Shin Buddhists they should emphasize, which is "fundamental Buddhism."

Again, I am not claiming that Buddhism is not the alternative to Christianity, that it is not compatible with science and rationality, that it is not ethical, not ecumenical, not tolerant of other worldviews, or that there are no common aspects to most schools of Buddhism. Much research on this religion would prove me wrong even if I did try to show this to be the case. However, I am arguing that these characteristics are *the result of* the Buddha Dharma, which from a Shin perspective, is the nembutsu teaching. This means that we should treat these characteristics not as the ends themselves, but the results of what is the central part of the teaching. In other words, any time there is a stance made on a social issue, Shin Buddhists must always be able to know *why* that claim can be justified by the Shin doctrine.

Furthermore, Shin Buddhism and its followers need to be conscious of how the greater outside world of Buddhist apologists and critics alike have, and still do to a large extent, manipulate and presume to know what Buddhism is. This in turn, imposes unwarranted pressures of assimilation to their definitions. In particular, this pertains to Buddhist religious identity. However, this can be resolved if Shin Buddhists take the initiative to take back their religious identity by not allowing popular mainstream opinion to tell them what a "Buddhist" is, does, or should be.

The two truths theory confuses the Shin Buddhist identity and convolutes the understanding of what should be the main emphasis of the Shin teaching. It tells them that the mundane is just as important, if not more important, than the central part of the teaching itself. Just as we saw this happen in the history of Japan most evidently the first half of the twentieth century, we can also see hints of the two truths theory at work in the history of Shin Buddhism in America. If this goes unchecked, the legacy of the two truths theory can again cause serious misunderstandings of this tradition amongst people within and without this tradition.

Two truths theory also encourages Shin adherents to let the mainstream popular notion of what Buddhism is to define their religious experience. As a result, Shin Buddhists are pressured to define Buddhism *only* as a religion that is in contradistinction to Christianity, supplemental to scientific truth, ethical, ecumenical and tolerant, or monolithic. In reality, however, Shin is much more than just these things. The soteriological aspect of Amida's Vow Power provides the individual with spiritual confidence and the understanding to live in gratitude. Then, and only then, does the practitioner live on the nembutsu path and works for the betterment of society by providing another perspective on life other than Christianity, affirming scientific development, being proactive in ethics, working for peace and cooperation with other groups of people, and participating in religious solidarity. Shin Buddhists need to keep the focus on maintaining and upholding the core teaching, in other words the soteriological aspect of nembutsu, when taking part in social issues. This will in turn, clearly define Shin Buddhist religious identity.

Confused the teaching of "receiving" as social passivity

The second problem of the legacy of the two truths theory is that it confuses the teaching of "receiving" as social passivity. This can manifest itself in different ways, two of which will be mentioned here but there may possibly be more. The first is that there is a de-emphasis in a proactive response to social issues. The other method is to promote Shin Buddhism as an "other-worldly" religion. The discussion below will show how the two truths theory affected the history of Shin Buddhism outside of Japan.

If there is one major characteristic that can explain Shin Buddhist theology, it is the emphasis on the teaching of "receiving." That is, the nembutsu practitioner receives the completed virtues of Amida Buddha's accumulated merits, which culminates in the manifestation of absolute truth called the nembutsu. Five kalpas were spent practicing the six paramitas and fulfilling the

established vows, and upon its completion Dharmākara becomes Amida Buddha, guaranteeing the liberation of all sentient beings from the world of delusion and suffering.[112] This great benefit is then transferred to all sentient beings in the form of the Name. Sentient beings need only to awaken to this truth that their liberation has already been established. In awakening to this reality, there arises the mind of absolute entrustment in Amida's salvific Other Power, where the individual responds in gratitude throughout his/her life. There is nothing on the part of the sentient being that one must do as a way to attain enlightenment. Phrases such as "*zenbun/zettai tariki*" or absolute Other Power, are commonly used to depict this principle. In fact, if one still believes in the self's own capability to attain enlightenment and doubts Amida's wisdom, then that person will not awaken true entrustment in Other Power and attain birth in the next life. Thus, Shin is a teaching of completely and utterly "receiving" Amida's great benefit as opposed to the individual working towards attaining enlightenment. Absolute truth is always under the feet of the practitioner and not a far-off goal that one works towards.

What becomes problematic is when this teaching of "receiving" gets translated into concrete practical usage for daily life. Because there is not an itemized set of normative behavior(s) that the nembutsu practicer is required to carry out, there is both the freedom but also the responsibility that becomes incumbent on each individual to decide how to live with this understanding. There are two responses that inevitably occur from this. The first is that because one's salvation is guaranteed, then anyone can do anything while in this life. This accusation has occurred in the history of Christianity as well. In Shin Buddhist history, this is identified as "licensed evil," something that Shinran has even spoken against, as it was a problem that occurred while he was alive as well. The other extreme is that because one receives the great benefit, then there is nothing that the individual is required to do. If after all, the person is

guaranteed liberation and especially, if sentient beings are only able to act according to their egocentricity, then why should anyone try to do good deeds? This issue has also been well documented and addressed throughout the history of Hongwanji and Shin Buddhism.

However, the situation of post-war American Shin Buddhism does not necessarily coincide with the two extremes mentioned above. Rather, the tendency towards passivity is a result of a number of social factors that occurred in history as opposed to any doctrinal debate. Nevertheless, it is important to note that Shin doctrine by way of the two truths theory was used to justify social passivity. The primary social factor that contributed to Shin Buddhists' passivity towards social issues is due to the traumatic events that occurred during World War II. The forced internment of the Japanese Americans ostracized all Shin Buddhists from feeling like they were an important part of the social fabric of America. This inevitably complicated one's social and religious identity. Shin Buddhists responded by rallying around the temple and closed its doors to the Americans, whom they felt were the first ones to cast them out on racial grounds. In addition to this social dynamic, Japanese Americans severed most ties to their ethnic homeland during the war for fear of being persecuted. They did not teach the newly American-born generation how to speak Japanese because they felt the need to assimilate to a country that did not see Asians as being Americans.[113] These factors led to the blockage in Shin Buddhist propagation towards the communities that were not Japanese American.

It is not surprising that upon looking at most of the headlines and front-page articles of *The American Buddhist* or *Wheel of Dharma*, most are about events that took place at a certain temple or a national council meeting that was held in so and so city. In other words, articles from the 50s to the 80s, focused primarily on in-house events and updates of the general organization. One good example, is the frequent status reports of the Institute of Buddhist Studies, an

academic venture that undoubtedly was a large investment on the part of the Buddhist Churches of America and a concern for its sangha. Of course, all visitations made by the head priest and first lady of Nishi Hongwanji were documented as well. There are very few articles that talk about how Shin Buddhism should address certain social issues in America.[114] If there are any, they are few and far between, and certainly there is very little—but not nonexistent—comprehensive material that suggests the entire religious organization was consistently focused on a particular social issue.

News articles are not the only areas which show the general trend that Shin organizations were generally passive on social issues. Dharma school instructional books and material hardly mention anything related to concern for social issues. Although it might seem unreasonable to ask young and impressionable Dharma school children to think about complicated contemporary problems, the contents of these materials nevertheless, do show where the writers wanted to place their focus on when teaching the Buddhist youth. For example, in the 1965 edition of *Buddhism for Youth, Part Two: The Teaching of Buddha*, the table of contents will show issues pertaining to doctrinal matters, nothing on critical thinking of social problems.[115] Another common theme of many of the Dharma school books is the emphasis on either the Eightfold Noble Path or the Six Paramita as a guideline for the youth in spiritual development, moral conduct, self-reflection, or mindfulness of others. A book that is representative of this trend is *Nembutsu: The Way of Spiritual Fulfillment, a BCA Course Outline for Grade Eight*,[116] and *Teacher's Handbook*,[117] a Dharma School teacher's instructional guideline written by the Research Department Seattle Buddhist Church, its published year unmarked. What these examples are concerned with are more introspective in nature rather than on social engagement. These are just a few examples of a wide variety of pamphlets and materials that were researched

which all point to the general trend that up until approximately the late 1980s and early 1990s, there was hardly any mention or emphasis on looking at social issues from a Buddhist perspective and making these statements publicly known.

It is here that we should keep in mind how American and European critics, such as Christian ministers, and supposed apologists alike painted Buddhism early on. Tweed clearly explains how Buddhism was being defined in the following. He states,

> These European authors suggested that the Buddha had denied the existence of a personal creator and rejected the notion of a substantial and immortal self. Human life, the Buddha taught, is suffering; and release is found only in a systematic renunciation of the world, which leads, in turn, to a final escape into the annihilation of nirvana. In short, Buddhism became associated with atheism, nihilism, pessimism, and passivity.[118]

What we see here is what most scholars in this area of research agree on in how Buddhism was being portrayed as a religion that was overall negative in outlook of the physical world. Subsequently, it was believed that Buddhism taught about the futility of working to change one's given situation and therefore, was passive. It is doubtful that Shin Buddhists would have consciously agreed to this kind of description of its religion. However, they were also not making a strong and concerted effort to refute this claim either. Shinran would have vehemently refuted Buddhism to be negative and passive and we know this just by looking at his life's work, going to the Kanto area and actively proselytizing there. The problem is not the doctrine, it is the ethical policy with which to implement the doctrine. The legacy of the two truths theory pressures nembutsu adherents to be passive and agree with past western depictions of Buddhism.

Of course, this is not to claim that Shin Buddhists were unaware of or neglected having concerns and opinions about social issues in America. What I am showing here is that educational material, particularly for the Dharma school youth, was concerned more with accurately educating the youth on the core doctrinal principles or self-reflective guidelines in daily life. The above examples given suggest that in general, the Shin Buddhist organization in

its history after the war up until relatively recently tended to be socially passive. This paper is arguing that not only does the history of Shin in America show that to be the case, but also the documented material points in that direction as well.

De-emphasis on proactive response to social issues

Social passivity can concretely manifest itself in different ways, one of which is a de-emphasis on a proactive response to social issues. Both Nishi and Higashi Hongwanji have been very vocal on many problems about the society of Japan.[119] In America too, Shin Buddhist organizations have taken up specific social issues over the years. Some examples are nuclear non-proliferation, pacifism, environmental awareness, and more recently anti-discrimination particularly against Muslims and the LGBTQ community.[120] However, these problems have one thing in common: they are all *responses* to social ills because they are in some way directly related to the sangha and their concerns. If we take nuclear non-proliferation and pacifism, for example, the Japanese Americans and Japanese who live both in the US and Japan have memories and direct experiences witnessing the horrors and suffering of World War II.[121] Their inclination to be adamant against violence, indiscriminate killing, and to avoid war at all cost is understandable and natural. Concerning environmental awareness, conservation and being mindful of one's environment are basic Buddhist principles that all followers can agree on.[122] Finally, concerning anti-discrimination against minorities like Muslims and LGBTQ groups, the Japanese Americans are well aware of the pain that comes with being scapegoated and ostracized from society as they were once themselves the victims of racism and racist policies not too long ago.[123] Thus, Shin Buddhists and their organizations have indeed responded to specific social issues when they are related to the sangha's past experiences. That is, they have been "reactive" in responding to problems rather than "proactive."

In other words, the two truths theory discourages Shin Buddhist organizations and its followers from taking the initiative to be proactive about social issues and looking at them from a Shin Buddhist perspective. What results, is a sluggish response to social problems, despite inquiries from outside communities. In some ways, the slow response is beneficial because it gives time for the religious organization to "weather the storm" or "feel the situation out." Religious organizations will wait until public sentiment and the tide shifts in a particular direction before taking a stance. This is a safer way to respond to a social issue.

However, it should be noted that this trend has been changing recently. According to my research, since about the late 1980s but more noticeably in the 90s to today, there has been a significant shift in recognizing the importance of how Shin Buddhism should approach social issues and to voice these opinions.[124] Especially in the past ten years, the demand within the Shin sangha to have the clergy and its leadership take a firmer stance on social issues is much more evident. From this time, we can see more articles being published that address concern about social problems. Kenneth Tanaka and Alfred Bloom along with other Shin writers, published academic and lay-oriented materials that focus on how to apply Shin principles to everyday life.[125] The bishops of the various Shin organizations have made public statements criticizing senseless gun violence, discrimination, and the separation of children from their parents at the US border.[126] Also, the Dharma School book entitled, *Iron Chain to Golden Chain: Dharma High School Readings*, written by Tsukasa Matsueda, approaches social problems in this curriculum.[127] What these collectively show is the need and almost a demand on the part of both lay followers as well as outside people who are interested in Shin Buddhism, for the religious organizations to take a stand and voice their opinions on various societal problems.

The argument I am trying to make here is not to say that a reactive approach to social issues is wrong. Nor am I saying that all reactive responses to social issues should be discounted as being lazy and not taking any initiative on the part of the organization and its people. My claim, instead, is to say that the reactive approach to social issues that spawns from the legacy of the two truths theory firmly agrees with past western depictions of Buddhism as a passive religion. Although the image of Buddhists, not just Shin, as socially passive has dramatically changed over the years, it is still part of the history of Buddhism in America, something that needs to be recognized first in order to be changed. The two truths theory pressures Shin Buddhists to adopt social passivism as a characteristic of their religion.

I also claim that a reactive approach should not be the *only* way to respond and that an open line of communication through a venue in which to talk about these things from a Shin perspective is the start that is needed to be proactive. A willingness for dialogue, whether that be just within Shin Buddhists, or involving people of other religious traditions is the necessary first step. Traditionally, this has not been as emphasized within the Shin Buddhist organizations because of the legacy of the two truths theory. This policy forces its sangha to think that secular and religious matters are entirely separate issues and should be dealt with in their respective domains. However, with the growing outside interest of Shin Buddhism, forcibly separating Shin doctrine from social issues and *only* being reactive to them is proving unfruitful for Shin propagation. With an emphasis on encouraging sangha members and ministers to explore new fields of research in the perspective of Shin Buddhist doctrine—not just with general Buddhist principles, which is important in its own right but there is ample research in this area that there can now be a focus on Shin specifically—Shin followers can and should be proactive on social issues.

Nembutsu organizations should provide free and unconstrained brainstorming venues that constructively address contemporary problems. Although Shin Buddhism is a teaching that stresses the importance of "receiving" the truth in the form of nembutsu given by Amida Buddha's compassionate activity, what we do with that awareness is what will create authenticity and define the Shin Buddhist ethical identity.

Promoted Shin Buddhism as an "other-worldly" religion

Another way in which social passivity can manifest itself is when Shin Buddhism is portrayed as "other-worldly." That is, the religion only talks about the benefit that will be received after one dies and goes to the Pure Land. This life on the other hand, is one of suffering and delusion, and thus, there is no hope other than to await the next life and have firm faith in Amida Buddha's salvific compassion. This is the misunderstanding that can take place.

When Japanese immigrants first came over to America, they brought with them the social customs and traditions of that time, which was the culture of the Meiji era. Both Shinto and Buddhist traditions were carried over to the new environment. Weddings and celebrations tended to use Shinto elements while events that involved parting with this life and honoring the memories of past loved ones tended to observe Buddhist rituals and customs.[128] Funerals and memorial services observed on a fixed schedule ensured that the family members would continue to return to the temple and have a strong relationship with it and its residing minister(s).

However, many people outside of the tradition, as well as those who were somewhat familiar with Shin but not devout, believed Buddhism was a religion that dealt only with the world of the dead. Bloom elucidates this misunderstanding when he states, "Shin, with its belief in rebirth in the Pure Land after death, is generally regarded as an otherworldly religion and, like other Buddhist sects, dubbed "Funeral Buddhism." This has not changed much in its transfer to the

West and has contributed to the lack of appeal for young people."[129] We see that because of the emphasis on funerals, memorial services, and belief in the Pure Land, many were not appealed to Shin. If Buddhism deals only with the dead, how and why does it matter in this life? What benefit will it bring in this life? Such questions critiquing the lack of practical benefits was especially evident in an ethnic demographic that was fast becoming unfamiliar with the religious tradition.[130] Many of these people lost or were distanced from filial ties back in Japan that would have connected them with their Buddhist roots.

All Shin ministers overseas, whether Hawaii, Canada, US, Brazil, and Argentina, will conduct funeral and memorial services to this day. It would not be surprising if the criticism of "Funeral Buddhism" would exist as well. How people unfamiliar with the tradition will view this school is somewhat out of the control of Shin apologists. However, Dharma talks given at funerals and memorial services can emphasize the importance of how this religion applies to those living now. For example, the emphasis on the teachings of the "stage of non-retrogression" (*futaiten* 不退転), or "truly settled" (genshō shōjōju 現生正定聚), can combat the

misunderstandings of Shin being only about "other-worldliness." At any rate, what is important to note is that the teaching of "receiving" the nembutsu can be misconstrued as encouraging passivity on the part of the living person and for one to capitulate the audacity of hope in this life and look forward to a brighter future in the next. The two truths theory reinforces the image that Shin is a typical example of "Funeral Buddhism" by encouraging passivity in this life. But, if we look to the true spirit of Shinran's teachings, in understanding that we will be born in the Pure Land in the next life, we can live *now* with strength, confidence, and vigor.

Defeat of the spiritually authentic individual

This brings us to the final point which is essentially the result of the first two parts of the legacy of the two truths theory. That is to say, if the mundane supersedes the supramundane truth and Shin doctrine's teaching of "receiving" is mistaken for passivity, then that will constitute the defeat of the spiritually authentic individual of a Shin Buddhist. However, if we uproot and recognize the legacy of the two truths theory for what it is and understand that its impact still affects what it means to be a Shin Buddhist today, we can then take measures to address this problem adequately. What is proposed to be the solution is the Pragmatic Approach, which I will discuss in much more detail in the following chapters.

A spiritually authentic individual is a sentient being who recognizes the limitation of human reasoning and logic, and that due to one's incessant egocentricity he/she acts mostly in service to accommodate those demands set by a his/her blind passions. However, the spiritually authentic individual now turns him/her self over to Amida's salvific working, or *tariki*, and entrusts in compassionate activity. The moment of the negation of self-power and the affirmation of Other Power, one that the individual has no control over, is the crux that is needed for a spiritually authentic individual. In other words, zero-shinjin is the basis of the spiritually authentic individual, which will be discussed later. Only in the moment of clarity in which the self is made aware of a world in which he/she belongs to along with all other sentient beings, does that person now understand the centrality of this dynamic reality. And this dynamic reality is none other than Amida Buddha's compassionate working. Therefore, it is Amida Buddha that is now the focus of what to live for and what to live within. The shattered pieces of *jiriki* now become the very pieces with which to create an authentic self that is based on *tariki*.

The legacy of the truths theory is problematic because it greatly inhibits this to occur. Rather than placing the central focus on Amida Buddha's compassionate activity, it first places focus on a number of different things, which then leads one to choose only to concentrate on mundane truths ultimately. These mundane truths, in the end, serve only to benefit the individual's (or individuals') egotistical interests. It also encourages one not to reflect on, process, and adopt the Buddha Dharma wholly and sincerely in one's heart, body, and mind. In other words, the two truths theory pushes for the individual to observe and understand an objectified version of Buddhism, completely detached from any spiritual significance and meaning. Like an artifact placed for the pleasure of viewing at a museum, Buddhism becomes an archaic relic of the past, studied only for personal gratification rather than the true spiritual liberation it offers. Two truths theory is the glass case that keeps the individual from being able to touch and personally connect with the teaching. Its legacy encourages the nembutsu adherent to stop just short of being fully engaged in the Buddha Dharma.

Now, instead of talking about the importance of the supramundane truth, Shin Buddhism gets defined by things that do not have anything to do with Amida's salvific Vow of compassion. Instead, Shin gets defined by ideas, teachings, and sets of beliefs that only have "practical" usage such as being: an alternative worldview from Christianity; a religion that is compatible with science; or a religion that should be aligned with certain political viewpoints. We must keep in mind that these are features that western scholarship in the past and popular sentiment that follows behind it, are largely responsible for defining as "Buddhism."

In other words, Shin Buddhism and its ethical identity get defined by things that are inherently outside of, or unrelated to, Amida Buddha's Vow. In this way, the two truths theory defeats the spiritually authentic individual because it encourages the nembutsu adherent to see

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him/her self in the way the outside world *wants* to see a Buddhist. For example, a Buddhist *should* be a person with a shaved head, vegetarian, and always engaged in sitting meditation. A Buddhist *should* be liberal in his/her views on politics. And finally, a Buddhist *should* be always mindful of the world around and working to extinguish all attachments. These are ideas that past western scholarship and present popular sentiment defined Buddhism to be and still does so to this day to a large extent. However, it should be noted that recent scholarship in Buddhist Studies has seen major improvements in this area in terms of recognizing past biases from western scholarship. Nevertheless, popular and mainstream sentiment is still very slow to catch up to western scholarship. Popular and mainstream culture still presuppose many of those past biases. This subsequently influences the Buddhist identity both for its spiritual adherents as well as those outside of the tradition.

A Shin Buddhist must question these things and ask whether that is really what a Buddhist is. If the Buddhist identity has to do with typical images of what a Buddhist is such as having a shaved head or engaging in sitting mediation, it is such only after the complete turning over to Other Power first. Then, and only then, because one finds it to be in accord with Amida's compassionate activity, does someone become a liberal, shaves his/her head, becomes vegetarian, or engages in sitting meditation. Hence, we see that the two truths theory defeats the spiritually authentic individual by pressuring nembutsu followers to forcibly adopt and implement old western definitions of Buddhism without considering whether that is indeed the core teaching of Shin Buddhism or not.

Another result that comes with the defeat of the spiritually authentic individual is the exploitation of Buddhism itself. When no spiritually authentic individual comes about, there is only a person who presumes to know what the Buddha Dharma is and proceeds to freely define

"Buddhism" however one wishes to. Now, with the label of "Buddhism" and the religious legitimacy that comes with it, one can associate any new-age idea to it and define it under the guise of it being an "exotic" teaching of the Orient. This is the danger that the legacy of the two truths theory permits and what Shin Buddhists need to be concerned about. The two truths theory essentially allows for the individual to force Buddhism to accommodate his/her needs rather than for one to pursue the Buddha Dharma itself honestly. Hence, the spiritually authentic individual is defeated where there is only a superficial and misguided individual(s).

What then, does a spiritually authentic individual look like? What constitutes a spiritually authentic individual? Because Shin ethics does not allow for a set of normative behaviors, there is much room for open interpretation of how to define what this would look like. However, what is important to remember is that the spiritually authentic individual always keeps the Buddha Dharma, or Amida's salvific Vow Power, at the center of one's ethical life. That is, one understands that he/she is embraced in the dynamic reality and participates in that compassionate activity by spreading it to others. Indeed, it is impossible for a nembutsu adherent to constantly and consciously live in gratitude for Amida's benevolence due to one's unceasing blind passions that will constantly work to interrupt this feeling. However, the brief moments of selfless gratitude will serve as markers in one's life to recall and reflect on the true dynamic reality, even if the individual must use discriminative conceptual thinking to come to that conclusion logically.

When a person comes to encounter Amida's compassionate activity, which we will technically call "zero-shinjin" in the following chapters, one lives to participate in this dynamic activity. Then the individual asks him/her self, "What would make Amida Buddha happy?" "How would Shinran act in this case?" or "What would Śākyamuni do"? This would be the basic

underlying question that a Shin Buddhist would ask him/her self because all three questions teach about the dynamic reality that grounds all sentient beings. In thinking about this, a spiritually authentic individual will take the responsibility to think of how best to exhibit his/her actions based on the fundamental principle of compassion.

conclusion

In prioritizing the mundane truth over the supramundane, Hongwanji aggressively rallied behind the idea of protecting the country 護国, repaying the emperor's benevolence 報恩, and Asian reconfiguration and expansion 興亜. In addition, because Shin Buddhism emphasizes the teaching of "receiving" and being misunderstood as non-proactive towards social issues, Hongwanji promoted being passive and reactive to the central government's imperial agenda. Furthermore, as Shin Buddhism was misconstrued as being an "other-worldly" religion, Hongwanji only supported a dualistic interpretation of "this life" versus the "afterlife." Finally, by defeating the spiritually authentic individual, Hongwanji promoted selfless-ness and blind obedience to the emperor and the state. The two truths theory is the root problem and creates the possibility to distort the Shin Buddhist ethical identity by making it something far different from what Shinran had in mind.[131]

We saw evidence both direct and indirect that show that the two truths theory made its way into Shin propagation in the United States. From the late nineteenth century up until the end of World War II, there is evidence that strongly suggests that the Shin religious organizations in America implemented or were at least complicit to the two truths theory policy, whether they realized it or not. The direct influence of this policy ends with the war. However, the indirect and subtle influence has not yet been uprooted, let alone resolved. This chapter showed the way in which the two truths theory still affects Shin Buddhism today. The indirect evidence of this

ethical policy called the "legacy of the two truths theory," remains and we know this because of the following reasons.

The two truths theory helps to perpetuate past western scholarship and popular sentiment's definition of what Buddhism is. The legacy of the two truths theory in America does the following: 1. Prioritizes the mundane over the supramundane truth, 2. Confuses the teaching of "receiving" as social passivity, and 3. Defeats the spiritually authentic individual. Concerning the first problem, the two truths theory can potentially prioritize these aspects over the soteriological teaching that is core to Shin. They are Buddhism as: A. the alternative religion to Christianity, B. a religion compatible with science and rationality, C. only a set of moral principles and common sense, D. ecumenical and tolerant of other religions and worldviews, and E. a monolithic tradition.

Concerning the second problem of confusing the teaching of "receiving" as social passivity, Buddhism can be misconstrued as de-emphasizing proactive responses to social issues and promoting Shin as an "other-worldly" religion. Finally, these factors could all contribute to the third problem of the defeat of the spiritually authentic individual, where the nembutsu adherent does not fully absorb and reflect on Amida's compassionate activity. Because the two truths theory pressures the individual not to live grounded in compassionate activity, it uses other teachings, beliefs, and principles such as those defined by western scholarship of Buddhism, to then identify what a Shin Buddhist is supposed to be. We saw this happen in the history of Hongwanji in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This is the problem of the legacy of the two truths theory. It allows factors outside of the central teaching of Amida's compassionate activity to define what a Shin Buddhist is and what his/her religious experience should be.

Chapter Three   Pragmatic Approach as the New Shin Ethics: Its Doctrinal Foundation

Introduction

This brings us to the problem currently facing Shin ethics. Recent research suggests that Shin ethics is either not worth looking into, probably because of the misunderstandings people might have on the issue of self-power, or that it is non-existent and left up to the individual to decide what to do. If compassion is a fundamental aspect of Mahayana Buddhism, then what role does compassion play in Shin ethics other than the salvific activity of Amida Buddha? Can nembutsu adherents participate in compassion?

In answering the above questions, we start by explaining that Shin ethics entirely overlooks the soteriological framework. There are different dimensions to discuss this framework: nonduality, duality as Amida-to-sentient being, and duality as sentient being-to-Amida (*pragmatic approach*). Nembutsu adherents participate in a dynamic, circular movement between the world of delusion and Pure Land. That circularity is depicted in the two vectors of "Amida-to-sentient being" and "sentient being-to-Amida," as well as in nonduality.

Shinran considers himself as a being of karmic evil, an ignorant person full of blind passions who was unable to attain liberation through self-power. How he defines a being of karmic evil is not to say that humans commit solely evil actions, but that one's existence is based on egocentric thinking, which I will call the human condition. However, if sentient beings have a turning of heart, where they realize the true state of their condition and awaken to the understanding that Amida's compassionate vow is the path to liberation, then they reach a settled heart and mind and then work towards sharing that teaching with others.

Sentient beings come to true solidarity with humankind and a spirit of universal fellowship by awakening to the human condition of their deluded egocentricity and relying on Amida Buddha's salvific activity of Other Power. Through "zero-shinjin" and the "three emphatics," nembutsu adherents can better understand the significance of having the nembutsu teaching in their lives. Awakening to the reality of "zero" Shinran emotionally experiences this reality as sincerity, entrusting in the form of joy and shame, and the aspiration to be born in the Pure Land which concretely means having hope and vivacity in this life. Nembutsu adherents can draw inspiration from this and live their lives following Shinran's appreciation of the Dharma.

Sentient being-to-Amida, or the pragmatic approach, was previously seen as a self-power endeavor but it really is one of self-effort, an aspect that has been ignored by traditional Shin Buddhism. However, as ignorant bodhisattvas, nembutsu adherents *believe* that they are heading towards the Pure Land. This dualistic view serves the purpose of giving them inspiration, aspiration, solidarity, community, and identity as nembutsu practicers. Furthermore, the pragmatic approach provides concrete characteristics for Shin ethics, which can generally be categorized as Individual and Social Ethics. Finally, this new approach legitimizes a form of ethics that finds its basis in Mahayana Buddhism.

The purpose of this chapter will be to explain the first of the three aspects of the Pragmatic Approach, known as the Soteriological foundation. This aspect, is the most important of the three, as it is based on the Shin doctrine and systematically formulates the foundation for Shin ethics. This chapter will show that nembutsu followers do take part in the greater reality of dynamic wisdom and compassion by living according to the Shin teaching. Shin ethics, therefore, means to place the Buddha Dharma at the center of one's life, understanding that one is immersed in the dynamic working of Amida Buddha. When one awakens to the absolute

reality, that person responds in gratitude and tries to "repay the Buddha's benevolence" (*button hōsha* 仏恩報謝). Nembutsu followers take part in or "approximate" (*ritateki* 利他的) compassion by drawing inspiration from Amida Buddha and emulating that compassionate activity in this world. Thus, the fundamental principle of Shin ethics is that nembutsu practicers participate in compassionate activity by placing Amida at the center of their ethical behavior.

Nonduality
Wisdom as zero

Our discussion of Shin ethics begins with Soteriological Ethics, which has three dimensions, the first of which is the nondual reality. The nondual reality is known to sentient beings as Amida Buddha and the Pure Land is referred to as the "pure," which is also referred to as nirvana, emptiness, dependent origination or *pratītya samutpāda*, oneness, *jinen*[1], void, zero, or absolute. That is, the realm of Amida Buddha is formless as it transcends all dichotomous notions, whether it is between good and evil, right and wrong, left and right, black and white, and so on. Because it is formless, it can, therefore, take form, which in this case, is Amida Buddha, the Pure Land, and all of the beings therein. It is important to note that the absolute reality or Amida Buddha accepts both good and evil because it transcends both of these things. In *Tannishō* it states, "For those who entrust themselves to the Primal Vow, no good acts are required because no good surpasses the Nembutsu. Nor need they despair of the evil they commit, for no evil can obstruct the working of Amida's Primal Vow."[2] The Primal Vow transcends both moral good and evil. Moreover, the realm of purity is precisely so because it accepts both good and evil.[3]

As mentioned above, there are two ways to discuss Amida's realm: as form and as formlessness, or "dharma-body of compassionate means" and "dharma-body as suchness," respectively. Dharma-body of suchness is formless and nameless; it has no knowable material,

and it transcends the capacity of discriminative thinking whereby sentient beings are not able to apprehend nor understand it. However, this dharma-body makes itself known to us in the form of dharma-body as compassionate means, i.e., the Name of Amida Buddha. The two aspects of dharma-body are hence inseparable. "Equality" refers to this absolute reality embracing and receiving all beings, things, and materials without discrimination and conditions. Therefore, the dharma-body of Amida Buddha is the absolute reality—or ultimate enlightenment— that unconditionally and equally embraces all beings.

Spontaneous and dynamic

The nondual reality that encompasses all diametrically opposed extremes such as good and evil has specific characteristics that will be helpful to know in our discussion of Shin ethics. Nondual reality is dynamic in that while it encompasses all beings and everything else within it, the absolute reality is working to awaken beings to its salvific truth. The salvific truth here means that the absolute reality embraces all beings without leaving anyone behind. Absolute reality has no concept, color, or form,[4] which is why it is made known to us by employing compassionate means, giving it anthropomorphic features, details, and a mythological story. Its intended purpose is to awaken the sentient being to a reality that accepts him/her unconditionally, and that were it not for this embracement from the nondual reality, that person would not have been able to break free from the bonds of suffering and affliction. Thus, awakening to this absolute reality has no direct connection to the issue of good and evil or ethics. That is, both good and evil have in its motivation self-power, an investment in the individual that is the very obstacle in awakening to the absolute reality. As long as there is the affirmation of self-power, one will not awaken to the salvific reality.

Concretely, what this means for the nembutsu adherent is that Shin ethics does not have any clear-cut and mandatory principles to abide by at all times. Because of the absolute dynamic reality, Shin ethics is spontaneous. Although it may seem like a "free pass" for one to be able to do whatever he/she wishes to in life, it actually shifts the burden on each individual to have to define what Shin ethics is for him/her self. This is a much harder task to follow through with, and even harder when imagining how to structure this ideology into an organized religious institution as we shall see much later. Robert E. Carter explains this clearly when he states,

> The originating experience of ethics is to be made our own, making ethics itself familiar. Anything less is to resort to memory rather than to act from realization, and to count on legalistic enforcement and coercion rather than the spontaneous expression of who it is that we now are, as cultivated, practiced, and awakened beings.[5]

In his explanation of the Zen Buddhist ideal, Carter points out that when one awakens to the Mahayana Buddhist principle of emptiness, there is not a set of normative and obligatory principles, precepts, rules, or code of ethics that one must live by. In fact, one spontaneously will know what to do in a given situation, as that person is now a cultivated and awakened being. Although there are significant differences between Shin ethics and what Carter is saying here, it is important to note that from the perspective of enlightenment, Shin and Zen Buddhism agree that there are no set rules or precepts that are prescribed for individuals to follow. Buddhist ethics is a spontaneous expression and not rules that one must follow. There is no omnipotent being mandating a code of conduct that will lead the practicer to enlightenment. Nor are there absolute codes of conduct that all beings must follow because they are rationally arrived at through human reasoning. In fact, the Shin Buddhist ideal is the collapse of the reliance on human reasoning. There is only an omnipresent absolute reality that embraces and not judges all beings.

The dynamic nature of absolute reality makes Shin ethics spontaneous, which in turn makes it an ever-changing phenomenon. Shin ethics allows for paradigm shifts in moral standards because it is not determined by any absolute static reality, but instead, by the collective history of a given set of karmic actions. In much the same way as Buddhism explaining that an individual's present state of conditions is the result of past karmic actions he/she has committed and also been done to him/her, ethics is the result of past karmic actions committed by a collective unit. In short, ethics is determined by karmic action which is the world of delusion, or what Shinran calls "karmic evil." Moreover, as sentient beings can change so too can the ethical standards with which they live by as well.

Duality: Amida to sentient being

While the absolute reality is without concept, color, and form as mentioned earlier, it is at the same time dualistic. This dualistic framework is the hallmark of Pure Land Buddhism, and it is why it cannot be discarded in favor of the emphasis on the teaching of oneness. Simply stated, Amida Buddha has established and completed forty-eight vows, of which the eighteenth vow guarantees the salvation of all beings. The Buddha did this by completing through eons of rigorous practice the six paramitas and what was to become the Name, Namo Amida Butsu, and giving that Name to all sentient beings. Sentient beings need then only to receive and hear this Name. There is no religious practice involved to complete on the part of the individual, to become a Buddha.

The relationship between Amida Buddha and the sentient being is such that Amida Buddha works to grasp all sentient beings; Amida is the focal point of the soteriological process and not the sentient being. Therefore, the teleological vector points from Amida Buddha to the sentient being and not the other way around, thereby making Amida Buddha the subject of the dualistic

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relationship.[6]We will refer to it as the process going from Amida Buddha to the sentient being, or "Amida-to-sentient being," because it is Amida Buddha that directs the working to them.

The realm of Amida Buddha, whether it be form or formless, is considered to be the absolute good[7], for it is the realm of liberation from suffering for all sentient beings. The Pure Land is the place of peace and bliss; all of the pain and affliction due to one's blind passions and attachments cease to exist. This realm is the opposite of evil, which can be identified as this world of suffering or *sahā*, a place where pain and suffering do exist. The difference between the realm of "absolute good" versus the "ethical good" is that "absolute good" is the pure realm that transcends the relative nature of moral good and evil. In this aspect of Amida-to-sentient being, the good is the realm of Amida Buddha and evil is the realm that the sentient being resides in, the *saha* world.

How then does the sentient being have access to the realm of purity? Sentient beings who live in this world of form are not able to access the realm of formlessness directly. However, the realm of formlessness makes itself known to us in form as the Name of Amida Buddha. Thus, by accepting or entrusting oneself to the Name of Amida Buddha, the embodiment of the realm of absolute purity, one will necessarily be able to attain birth in the Pure Land regardless of the karmic good or evil they may have created.

The Name of Amida Buddha, or the nembutsu, then is the actual salvific activity established and fulfilled by Amida Buddha.[8] The great practice of saying the Name of Tathagata is the embodiment of all of the good acts and roots of virtue. This is the act that will bring about birth in the Pure Land for all sentient beings. As Honen explains, the nembutsu is the fundamental act that leads to birth.[9] Thus, true reality takes the form of the Name "Namo Amida Butsu," and that

embodiment of Amida's wisdom and compassion is then given to all sentient beings so that they can receive this absolute truth.

It is also important to note that the Nembutsu is the working of Amida Buddha; in other words, the Name is a dynamic phenomenon constantly working to make itself known to us. Let us look a little more carefully at the definition of the word "virtue." In the English usage of the word, virtue refers to a quality that is considered to be morally good or desirable in a person. However, from a Buddhist perspective "virtue" can mean moral goodness, happiness and fortune, benevolence towards others, and great or immense working.[10] Virtue then refers to both highly esteemed qualities but also that those qualities are dynamically working. Both in the nondualistic and dualistic aspect, absolute reality is dynamically working. If there is a difference to be made, it is in the fact that in the aspect of duality, the dynamic working has a directional vector: Amida Buddha directs salvific working towards us. Hence, the nembutsu is the manifestation of the constant working of Amida Buddha to save all sentient beings.

Absolute reality being both nondual and dual at the same time is the fundamental framework of Pure Land Buddhism. Whereas some Buddhist schools may directly talk about the nondual reality, Shinran saw the indispensable need to speak about oneness in a dualistic way. To explain this, Yamamoto Nobuhiro goes into a detailed discussion about the necessity of the dualistic framework in Pure Land Buddhism by addressing the development from Nagarujuna's teaching on *sunyata* to Shinran's teaching on compassionate means. He argues that the concept of the Pure Land was a natural development from the idea of emptiness. Because all things are empty, it is possible for it to become anything. Emptiness is the negated form of the principle of *pratītya samutpāda*; the two are different aspects of the same truth. Then, concepts and language are employed to try and accurately depict this truth that in actuality, transcends all conceptualization.

However, absolute reality *transcending* conceptualization does not mean that the concepts are somehow false or partially true. The concepts themselves are valid just the same.[11]

When it comes to Shinran, he did not read "compassionate means 仮" as a negative or somehow lower trait and in fact, sought it out in the sacred writings. The reason for this is that he felt this was the only way for an ignorant person filled with blind passions such as himself to be able to receive and understand absolute truth. Because they are ignorant beings, sentient beings cannot awaken to absolute reality. But, secular truth, or compassionate means, pulls them to it.[12] Thus, we see that Shinran remained indeed loyal to Nagarjuna's understanding of the Mahayana principle of emptiness by not overlooking the significance of compassionate means. For Shinran, Amida Buddha's compassion epitomizes absolute reality, which is the Primal Vow and its salvific working towards all sentient beings. As such, we cannot discard the dualistic framework of Amida Buddha and sentient being, as it will mean the very dismantling of Pure Land Buddhism itself.

Dualism: why it is necessary
Good and evil persons

Sentient beings on their own are unable to carry out great compassion because of their existential condition. General Buddhism defines "good" as following the Dharma *way*, benefitting the self, and committing actions that result in pleasure or having fortunate outcomes. "Evil" then, is the opposite of this, where one turns his/her back on the *way*, hurts oneself, and commits actions that bring about pain or unfortunate outcomes.[13] Shinran goes further and lists the seven kinds of evil practicer which are:

1. Those who commit the ten transgressions.
2. Those who commit the four heavy evils.[14]
3. Those who destroy right views.
4. Those who break precepts.

5. Those who commit the five grave offenses.
6. Those who slander the dharma.
7. Those lacking the seed of Buddhahood (*icchantika*).[15]

In other words, "evil" are those who rely on blind passions. On the other hand, those that are considered good are the bodhisattvas, pratyekabuddhas, sravakas, and the heavenly beings and humans who can practice *samatha* and *vipassana*. In addition, the good person can also follow both religious piety as well as worldly morals at the same time. Everything from respecting one's parents, teachers, elders, and following the Confucian principles, to being able to do the thirteen contemplations prescribed in the *Contemplation Sutra* and the three kinds of good[16] are all considered to be part of the "good," or those who are capable of doing it. Ultimately, the good leads to the severing of blind passions; they are actions that lead to enlightenment.[17]

From Shinran's perspective, the "good"—whether this is referring to *purity* or ethical good—is first and foremost the nembutsu or Name, the culminating epitome of the salvific activity of Amida Buddha.[18] Shinran then goes onto explain who is capable of doing "good." Here the "good" would involve those beings who can engage in the religious practice involving nembutsu, and "evil" would involve those beings who are incapable of carrying out those practices and are thus unable to attain enlightenment based on their own powers. This, of course, means that the "good beings" are those who can attain enlightenment based on self-power—which are mainly the bodhisattvas, pratyekabuddhas, and sravakas—and the "evil beings" are those who are unable to do so, whom Shinran refers to as ordinary and foolish beings such as himself.[19] He also explains that he considers himself among the common folk, regarding himself as amongst those who were considered in his time, to be of the low class.[20] Inaba Shūken explains that the "evil person" according to Shinran, is one who truly awakens to the understanding that he/she is evil.[21] Because one is such, Amida Buddha grasps that person all the more. Shinran awakened to the

fact that he was a being of karmic evil because he is not able to carry out self-power practices that will lead him to enlightenment. Because he is not part of the absolute good, he is unable to carry out great compassion to all others.

Human condition
Akuninshōki: sentient being as 'evil'

What Shinran awakened to was that all evil beings such as himself, those unable to attain liberation through self-power, can break free from this world of suffering through Amida's compassionate activity. This means that the basis of compassionate activity in Shin is Amida Buddha's working.

General Buddhism teaches that evil means to go against the way, harm the self and others, and to create causal conditions that result in suffering either now or in the future. It further explains that human beings possess blind passions, or attachments, which are the source of suffering. Through rigorous and continuous practice one can extinguish those passions and thereby attain Buddhahood. Shinran, however, takes a different position and explains that the person is incapable of doing this, and hence sentient beings are shackled by their blind passions. Whether one seeks to do good to attain enlightenment or commit evil actions due to one's ignorance, blind passions drive both "good" and "evil" actions. He refers to this captive state as being "evil."

Shinran explains self-power as those acts in which the practicer, not relying on the power of Amida's Vow and instead entrusting only in him/herself, endeavors to attain enlightenment through one's own ability.[22] In the context of ethics, both the relative good and evil actions are the self-power that Shinran is talking about. Sentient beings do good things because they believe it will help them achieve their intended selfish desires. Conversely, people commit or avoid committing evil when it serves their ego interests best.

This brings us to our discussion of the phrase, "the evil person is the primary objective (of Amida's salvific working)" (*akuninshōki* 悪人正機), found in chapter three of *Tannishō*.[23] Here we see how Shinran explains that the "evil person" such as himself is the individual who is filled with blind passions, who cannot help but act in self-help and self-interest. Yet, it is for this person, who cannot break free from the realm of pain and affliction with his/her self-power, that Amida Buddha established a path for liberation. The "evil" person is the state of existence in which one cannot break free from egocentricity. It is this condition that Amida puts as the primary concern for saving.

While it is important to note that the terms "self-power" and "evil" are not the same, they do have a close relationship. Due to blind passions, sentient beings are in a state of "evil," but it is their steadfast faith in self-power that keeps them bound within their state of delusion.[24] Hence, Shinran explains that the negation of self-power by way of Other Power enables one to attain eventual liberation from the human condition. The human condition is "evil" due to the incessant nature of blind passions; one has possessed them from the beginningless past and will continue to have them for however long he/she lives. However, it is precisely because of Amida's compassionate activity that one can recognize and accept the human condition and then rely on Other Power for liberation.

Five grave offenses

There is, however, more that needs to be said about Shinran's definition of the evil person. In *Lamp for the Latter Ages*, Shinran states, "People who look down on teachers and who speak ill of the masters slander the dharma. Those who speak ill of their parents are guilty of the five grave offenses. We should keep our distance from them."[25] In another letter he states,

> There are reports of wrongdoing even of some among you. I have heard of their slandering the master, holding their true teachers in contempt, and belittling their fellow-practicers—all of which

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is deeply saddening. They are already guilty of slandering the dharma and committing the five grave offenses. Do not associate with them.[26]

Although Shinran did consider himself evil and the object of Amida's salvific activity, he was explicitly clear about what actions he was guilty of and not guilty of. Shinran does draw a difference here between the five grave offenses of general Buddhism and that of Mahayana.

The five grave offenses of general Buddhism are the following: 1. Killing one's father, 2. Killing one's mother, 3. Killing an arhat, 4. Disrupting the harmony of the Buddhist order (sangha) through one's inverted views, and 5. Maliciously causing blood to flow from the body of the Buddha. One who has committed any of these will fall into Avīci hell and suffer immeasurable pain for countless kalpas.

The Mahayana school defines the five grave offenses in a much broader way, incorporating the above list as its fourth offense. The five grave offenses are as follows: 1. Destroying stupas, burning sutra repositories, or plundering the belongings of the Three Treasures; 2. Speaking evil of the teaching of the three vehicles, saying they are not the sacred teachings, obstructing and censuring them, or attempting to hide and obscure them; 3. Beating those who have abandoned home life, whether they observe precepts, have not received precepts, or break precepts; persecuting them, enumerating their faults, confining them, forcing them to return to lay life, putting them to menial labor, exacting taxes from them, or depriving them of life; 4. Killing one's father, harming one's mother, causing blood to flow from the body of the Buddha, disrupting the harmony of the sangha, or killing an arhat; 5. Speaking evil by saying there is no cause and effect and constantly performing the ten transgressions throughout the long night of ignorance.

The ten transgressions discussed in the *Contemplation Sutra* are the following: 1. Killing, 2. Stealing, 3. Committing adultery, 4. Telling lies, 5. Uttering harsh words, 6. Uttering words to cause enmity among others, 7. Engaging in idle talk, 8. Greed, 9. Anger, and 10. Wrong views.

In the fifth grave offense of Mahayana Buddhism, it explains that people are evil if they deny the law of causality and commit the ten transgressions. Shinran then states,

> Human beings are such that, maddened by the passions of greed, we desire to possess; maddened by the passions of anger, we hate that which should not be hated, seeking to go against the law of cause and effect; led astray by the passions of ignorance, we do what should not even be thought.[27]

Here, he explains that sentient beings are afflicted with the three poisons of greed, anger, and ignorance, which are included in the ten transgressions, thereby making him evil by nature. In another area, Shinran again explains himself as an evil person who commits the ten transgressions. He explains,

> We are filled with all manner of greed, anger, perversity, deceit, wickedness, and cunning, and it is difficult to put an end to our evil nature. In this, we are like poisonous snakes or scorpions. Though we perform practices in the three modes of action, they must be called poisoned good acts or false practices.[28]

These are actions that are included in the ten transgressions and Shinran considered himself to have committed them. Blind passions are also extremely difficult to extinguish, and that is why any practice that the sentient being tries to do does not enable for one to attain enlightenment. From these quotes, we can see that Shinran clearly distinguishes what kind of "evil" person he is: one who is guilty of committing the five grave offenses by way of the ten transgressions. He did not consider himself to be a person who slanders the Dharma nor commits the five grave offenses of general Buddhism. In fact, he goes so far as to warn others not to do these things.[29]

Two points need to be noted here. The first is that Shinran's warning for us not to slander the right Dharma and commit the five grave offenses listed in general Buddhism can serve as specific ethical behavior recommended to Nembutsu adherents. Although this does not inhibit one's birth in the Pure Land, it nevertheless does show Shinran suggesting what behavior further

blinds us from awakening to birth in the Pure Land. Hence, the five grave offenses of general Buddhism and the slandering of the Dharma are behavior that directly rejects the truth of the Dharma and we can surmise that Shinran urges us not to do these things.

The second point is that the two kinds of five grave offenses can be interpreted as Shinran making a distinction between the human condition itself as being "evil" in nature versus the actions themselves being evil. The five grave offenses of general Buddhism are referring to the actions that are morally corrupt precisely because they directly and blatantly disparage and deny the truth of the Dharma.

On the other hand, the five grave offenses of Mahayana refer to the human condition itself as being "evil" in nature. The items on this list are very expansive and it is hard to imagine one being able to avoid these actions altogether. For Shinran, this list perfectly portrays the point he wants to make, which is that most actions people take in their daily lives are the result of and are attributable to their attachments and blind passions. Thus, the vicious cycle of blind passions trying to appease blind passions *is* the very deluded nature, which is called the "human condition." In other words, this is not so much a problem of the actions themselves being evil— although they are the product of the delusional state of sentient beings. It is more of a description of the human condition itself; the human condition is "evil" in that one is helpless in his/her liberation from the realm of suffering. Hence, "evil" from Shinran's perspective is primarily about depicting the existential condition of sentient beings, which then result in their respective moral implications. Simply put, we do harmful or morally inappropriate things because of our deluded nature.[30] Foolish beings are those who are afflicted by ignorance and blind passions with never a moment of escape.

The "*icchantika*" is defined as those "with no root of good" (*danzenkon* 断善根) and "whose faith is not complete" (*shin fugusoku* 信不具足). In other words, *icchantika* are those who have severed the root of good to be able to be saved and will not be able to attain Buddhahood regardless of how much practice they may do.[31] In the *Nirvana Sutra*, it states, "'*Issen'* refers to one's faith, and '*dai'* refers to that faith not being complete. For that reason, it is called *issendai* [*icchantika*]."[32] In addition, this person does not believe in the law of causality nor does he/she respect the good or fear the evil. In other words, *icchantika* are those who do not believe in the right Dharma, they do not see the need to pursue the path to enlightenment, and do not have the right causal condition or the capability to be able to attain Buddhahood. They only seek the pleasures of the secular world. Further, they slander the teachings of the Buddha and have no intention for salvation.[33]

According to Sōboku 僧樸 (1719–1762) and Matsushima Zenjō 松島善讓 (1806–1886), two scholars of the Shin tradition, they explain that although the three Pure Land sutras do not mention the word "*issendai*," or "*icchantika*," they are included in the term "slanderers of the Dharma" (*hōbō* 謗法). They show that in the *Nirvana Sutra*, it writes that slanderers of the Dharma, those who commit the five grave offenses, or the four heavy evils, and have no regret or any intention to rectify wrongdoing, are all *icchantika*. This is consistent with the term "those who commit the five grave offenses and slanderers of the Dharma 逆謗," as they are all guilty of the same wrongdoing. But again, as Shantao already explains, if they all have a "turning of heart" (*eshin* 回心), then those guilty of previously committing wrongdoing will go to the Pure Land.[34] *Icchantika* is when the sentient being does not recognize the human condition as

bondage in one's blind passions, nor do they see the need to rely on Amida's salvific activity for liberation. However, Shinran agrees with Shantao and believes that all beings, if they have a "turning of the heart," can attain liberation. Shinran justifies the legitimacy of this claim in the *Larger Sutra*.[35] We see from the above discussion that the evil person is one who commits the five grave offenses by way of the ten transgressions, and who slanders the right Dharma. Overall, Shinran is referring to the evil person as the human condition itself being one of delusion rather than any specific set of actions. As a result, these people are unable to initiate, execute, administer, or spontaneously carry out great compassion. Nevertheless, they are still the recipients of Amida's compassionate activity.

Duality: sentient being to Amida
Pragmatic approach as teleological

In the last section, we addressed the soteriological framework between Amida Buddha and the sentient being from the perspective of Amida Buddha and called it the process of "Amida-to-sentient being." However, there is another teleological vector which has generally been overlooked in Shin Buddhism. This perspective is from the "sentient being-to-Amida" or what I will call the *Pragmatic Approach*. It is also the human perspective approach to the Pure Land. In defining the above terms, the aim is to ultimately lead to a clearer understanding of what the parameters of Shin ethics are, its motivation, and finally its implications to the nembutsu practicer.

Previous research in this area focuses on the topic of teleology. According to Stephen J. Lewis and Galen Amstutz, they explain that Shin Buddhism is non-teleological and non-virtuous. In their article, it states, "If a Buddhist practitioner cannot causally achieve his own ultimate soteriological end, it is impossible to refer to that end as teleological or as ultimately amenable to processes of rational organization, and thus as ethical or virtue-oriented in any normal English

sense of the term."[36] Here they explain that sentient beings cannot will or intend for enlightenment to occur. Hence, we cannot say that the end is teleological because it is impossible to move towards that goal causally.

Generally, for something to be teleological, there must be an end goal such as enlightenment and ethics is supposed to move us towards that end. However, Shin breaks away from this idea. The excerpt explains that because sentient beings cannot achieve that end with self-power, Shin Buddhism cannot be said to be teleological. Lewis and Amstutz are right to a certain degree in their assessment of Shin ethics being non-teleological and non-virtuous. Their argument clearly shows a conscious effort to take into account the subtle and nuanced problem of the relationship between self-power and ethics. It is understandable why they are forthright in their rejection of Shin Buddhism attesting to any specific normative behavior. However, they might be overlooking the simple fact that concretely speaking, people of the secular world, for the most part, act according to the principle of self-power. That is, if one does good things and works hard, he/she will reap the benefits sown. Likewise, evil or ill-will actions and sloth will result in adverse outcomes. This is referred to as "respective retribution" (*shinzaifukushin* 信罪福心) in Shin Buddhism. Simply put, people want to *believe* they are hard-workers and that they are going in the right direction. This is not necessarily self-power, or *jiriki*, but rather, "self-effort." This problem has been previously brushed aside merely as self-power and unrelated to Shin doctrine. But it is this neglect that is crippling the development of Shin Buddhism, particularly in the modern age because Shin is not able to persuasively engage with the outside world and introduce a teaching that negates self-power.

Kenneth K. Tanaka also does not think Shin Buddhism is teleological. He states,

I believe scholars and teachers would be in full agreement with the view that the goal-oriented ethics evidenced in other Buddhist teachings play no role in Shinran's thought. This stems from

his unique doctrinal position of absolute Other Power, which expunges any belief in the human ability to produce enlightenment on its own.[37]

Tanaka points out that the reason why Shin is not goal-oriented or teleological is that the idea of self-power has absolutely no significance in terms of producing enlightenment. He is most certainly correct in saying that human ability or self-power cannot produce enlightenment on its own and for this reason, Shin should not be considered teleological. However, Tanaka, like Lewis and Amstutz, associate teleology only with the goal that it leads to enlightenment. However, is that the only way to look at teleology from a Shin perspective?

I argue that teleology does have a purpose in Shin Buddhism. In other words, we should define teleology differently from how Tanaka, Lewis, and Amstutz do. The reason for doing this is because teleology provides nembutsu adherents with concrete and realistic motivation, direction, identity, community, and solidarity. These things become the goal which nembutsu adherents can live to strive for. But these things are unclear or absent in the above arguments which claim that Shin ethics is not teleological. However, these characteristics are essential for any religious community in any given time frame, particularly in today's modern age where religious identity and motivation are very important. In a world with endless amounts of information, which include content on any religion, and modern technology outpacing the human capacity to be able to control and use it wisely, human beings' sense of identity is quickly changing. Also, our motivations for continuing with human progress and technology call into question the very meaning of human existence. Both of these issues of identity and motivation are inextricably linked, and Shin Buddhism needs to address this problem, regardless of whether this has directly to do with one's salvation or not. The reason why is because in the end, this problem, in fact, does have to do with the issue of soteriology.

I believe it is appropriate to view the process from sentient being-to-Amida, or the

pragmatic approach, as teleological because the goal is in the end to reach spiritual liberation.

The view that Shin Buddhism is not teleological only takes into consideration the soteriological

framework between Amida Buddha and sentient being. It is not pragmatic and concrete enough

for the person who is unfamiliar with the tradition. If we take a step back from the complicated

theoretical discussion, we can see that the purpose of this religion ultimately, is to move from the

defiled to the undefiled, i.e., rid suffering. We can also view it as the teaching that gives us peace

of mind while living amidst the world of uncertainty and impermanence. Both ways of looking at

Shin Buddhism show that there is clear direction taking place.

Ethics or any self-power action will not lead us to enlightenment and in this way it is not

teleological. However, a sentient being nonetheless *believes* he/she is moving towards the world

of the undefiled, and this is enough to warrant recognition of this way of thinking. Lewis and

Amstutz interestingly describe the struggle of the individual's spiritual "progress." They state,

> This pattern was not dissimilar to other Buddhist traditions, for any Buddhist tradition seems to
> have involved an understanding that the majority of individuals are neither enlightened nor
> thoroughgoingly ignorant, but instead are located between these two poles. Buddhas may be
> enlightened and animals may reside in complete ignorance. For the mass between these vague
> boundaries, however, life is an interplay of increasing awareness set against karmic backsliding.[38]

Explained here is that an individual on a spiritual path is in a kind of constant push/pull

between enlightenment and ignorance. Where there might be instances of improvement or

spiritual awareness, there are other instances of "karmic backsliding" or regression due to blind

passions. However, I am going to take this a step further and say that the practicer *believes* this to

be the case. In other words, the practicer *believes* and *expects* that spiritual progress will

ultimately lead to some religious epiphany such as enlightenment. Like any other profession, one

must work hard to attain the many benefits, and religion is no exception. However, as long as

one believes in self-power and relies solely on human discriminative thinking, sentient beings

will use their preconceived notions to try and understand complex abstract ideas. Relying on self-power, things like Amida Buddha, Pure Land, and enlightenment itself, are always going to be conceptual constructs of the ideal made in the human mind. And as such, the sentient being will always be chasing the dream of enlightenment that can never be attained because the ego can never be satisfied. The teaching of Other Power momentarily shatters the belief that one must chase a dream that can never be actualized, but the sentient being's incessant egocentricity will soon again think to itself that it must chase after this dream.

Sentient beings of blind passions live in a world where they operate in karmic retribution and discriminative thinking. This cannot be helped, but that does not mean they should reject it altogether. Recognizing that they must operate in this world of discriminative thinking, they should then think about how to best bring out the discussion of the teaching of Other Power. An overemphasis on Other Power and always rejecting self-power—which more often than not, makes us inadvertently reject "self-effort" along the way—ostracizes society at large which operates primarily on the principle of human endeavor. Shin Buddhism needs to create a balance and mutual understanding between the individual's efforts and Other Power. To do this, Shin Buddhism needs to reject self-power but not self-effort, which then in turn, recognizes that it is a path with direction, or is teleological. Shin Buddhism is teleological in the following two ways:

1. The nembutsu adherent *believes* he/she is moving towards Amida Buddha and the Pure Land.
2. Objectively, sentient beings move from the defiled world to the undefiled world (and back). This is teleological; it is showing direction and motivation. The end goal is for one to be liberated and save all sentient beings from suffering.

Here, it is helpful to use the distinction that Tanaka makes between "self-power" and "self-effort."[39] Self-power refers specifically to the idea that one believes that he/she can attain enlightenment or reach the Pure Land based on one's own accord or actions. It is the belief that

Other Power is either not enough or outright not needed in attaining religious awakening.[40] "Self-effort" on the other hand, is a "sincere effort on the part of the seeker to inquire and understand [the Dharma]."[41] Shinran rejects self-power, but not self-effort. What makes this confusing, however, is that both self-power and self-effort involve the practicer *believing* that he/she is moving to the world of the undefiled. The difference lies in the fact that in self-power one believes in him/herself to be able to attain spiritual liberation, whereas in self-effort there is a motivation and direction to want to learn about why Amida's Primal Vow liberates one. This kind of effort has Other Power working within it. Kiritani Jun'nin states, "For anyone who seeks to move towards the Tathagata, even if it may seem like that person is the one doing the action, in fact, it is not him/her but the Buddha's working of Other Power that is moving that person. This is why it is called "absolute Other Power."[42] Here we see a clear contrast between self-power and self-effort, where within self-effort there is Other Power dynamically working within it.

Simply put, the problem is whether one's motivation places Amida Buddha or the self as the central focal point in one's ethical behavior. If sentient beings act with the motivation to seek Amida Buddha, then it is self-effort. Actions that place the self and one's selfish motivations at the center are self-power. Furthermore, self-effort is teleological because one believes that Amida Buddha embraces and pulls him/her towards the Pure Land, making that person move towards that goal.

In another example, in the *Passages on the Land of Happiness* (*Anrakushū*『安楽集』), Taocho talks about an episode involving Tanluan. Once Tanluan was asked why he performs practices facing the westerly direction when actually, the Pure Land exists everywhere? Tanluan replies by explaining that he is an ordinary person of limited and shallow wisdom and because of

this, he is incapable of understanding that the Pure Land is everywhere other than the west.[43]

Here we can see that the westerly direction gives Tanluan a concrete object of reverence, a motivation, and something to look forward to in life both literally and figuratively. True reality is everywhere, but blind passions and ignorance keep sentient beings from seeing this truth. In much the same way as this example, the dualistic framework that is teleological gives direction to ignorant and ordinary beings. An overemphasis on philosophically or logically (in other words using human discriminative thinking) discussing nonduality, or Amida Buddha and sentient being as one, is problematic precisely because it presumes the sentient being to be able to understand oneness. From a Shin perspective, however, sentient beings are ordinary and ignorant, full of blind passions and therefore, unable to grasp the understanding of nonduality truly.

Because the *pragmatic approach* is teleological, it provides direction, motivation, identity, community, and solidarity as we shall see in the following chapters. But if we do not see Shin ethics as teleological, it is difficult to identify these characteristics within this tradition and furthermore, it would make it very difficult to see why Shin Buddhism is relevant in one's life today.[44]

Why we need the pragmatic approach

Let us review what has been stated up until this point about nonduality and duality. The structure of Shin Buddhist soteriology is generally divided into two strands: nondual and dual. In the nondual side, Amida Buddha and the sentient being are discussed in terms of nondiscriminative wisdom, or oneness. In the field of Shin Buddhist theology, topics of this nature tend to be philosophical, non-denominational, and unorthodox in its approach. It is non-teleological in that there is no direction provided, as Amida Buddha and the sentient being are

explained as one. This is usually discussed in shinjin as the religious experience. Shinjin in this way is nonsubstantial, nondual, and empty or zero. Shinjin is also dynamic in that it is not discussed as something to be attained or conceptualized. It is often associated with subjectivity or from the perspective of the individual.

On the other hand, Shin ethics is also dualistic. In Shin Buddhist theology, topics of this nature tend to refer to Amida Buddha and the Pure Land as static entities. When sentient beings pass away, they are born into the Western Land of Paradise. This method is the traditional and orthodox approach. It is teleological in that Amida Buddha is the subject who initiates and directs salvific working towards all sentient beings. The sentient beings are the recipients and the object of this salvific working. Concerning shinjin, Amida gives this mind of wisdom to all beings.

Furthermore, because shinjin is provided from a giver to the receiver, it is described as a static concept and thus, analyzable. The religious experience of it is de-emphasized in favor of breaking down and itemizing its very content, that is, "sincerity, joy, and aspiration for birth" (*shishin shingyō yokushō* 至心信楽欲生), "two aspects of deep realization" (*nishu jinshin* 二種深信), "shinjin versus doubt" (*shinjin tai hongan giwaku* 信心対本願疑惑), among others. Extensive research has been done on the mechanics of shinjin because it is objectified, discussable, and dissect-able. Both the nondual and dual approaches have their good and bad points, but both methods are nevertheless indispensable in understanding Shin Buddhism. There is, however, one more strand of the structure of Shin soteriology that is often overlooked: sentient being-to-Amida, or the "Pragmatic Approach."

The Pragmatic Approach takes into account the perspective of the individual in his/her path in Shin Buddhism. This strand is considered heterodox because it looks at what the person can

do in terms of moving towards the world of the undefiled. Concerning Shin Buddhist theology, this is not to say that previous scholarship has not attempted at approaching this issue. Indeed, there has been a growing interest in this area, particularly in recent years. For example, Ryukoku University of Kyoto recently launched their new department known as "Practical Shin Buddhist Studies" (*jissen shinshūgaku* 実践真宗学), which incorporates a curriculum that approaches how to think about different ways to apply Shin Buddhism to social issues and society at large. Another approach is the "Vihara Movement" (*bihāhara katsudō* ビハーラ活動), giving care to those with terminal illnesses as well as their families.[45] New movements to try and bridge the gap between general society and an increasingly isolated Shin Buddhist tradition are cropping up here and there.

The Pragmatic Approach is teleological, and it draws a line between self-power and self-effort, where the latter places Amida Buddha at the center of all actions in an attempt to understand the salvific activity of the vow. It gives sentient beings a sense of direction, motivation, identity, community, and solidarity with fellow nembutsu practicers and with humanity itself.

In the Pragmatic Approach, shinjin is discussed as a static concept to be able to provide a way of life, aspiration, and inspiration for living to the fullest. The Pragmatic Approach has largely been relegated to the sidelines because it was misunderstood as self-power or *jiriki*. However, explicitly recognizing the need for this approach will clarify and make concrete what a nembutsu practicer not only is, but it will also show why it is necessary to have the nembutsu teaching in one's life.

Foundation of the Pragmatic Approach: zero-shinjin and the three emphatics
Concerning shinjin

What we have seen up until this point are the two other dimensions of Soteriological Ethics, namely the nondual and dual in terms of Amida-to-sentient being and sentient being-to-Amida. However, there is a third dimension from sentient being-to-Amida, or the pragmatic approach, which we should consider in Shin ethics. After understanding that Amida transfers compassionate working to all sentient beings and therefore they are the recipients of great compassion, then sentient beings become a part of that compassionate reality.

Amidst being caught within the world of birth-and-death, endless suffering, and incessant ignorance, Shinran awakened to the true state of his human condition, and in his total forfeiture of self-power efforts to attain enlightenment, he was turned over to the Power of Amida Buddha. This moment of religious awakening is none other than shinjin or true entrustment. It is here that Shinran is shown the true reality; that the human condition itself is embraced by the infinite wisdom and compassion of Amida Buddha. Thus, the human condition was a necessary step leading to the world of Amida Buddha and the Pure Land. That moment of awakening, when wisdom and compassion make itself known to the sentient being, is called entrustment.

What should be noted is the emphasis placed on the negation of self-power by way of Other Power. The negation of self-power comes from the working of Amida Buddha's Vow Power and not from the person him/herself.[46] Regardless of our calculations, shinjin is the sincere mind of Amida Buddha given to all sentient beings in the form of the calling Name.[47] This new transcendent world is that in which the mind of Amida Buddha and the mind of the sentient being become one, thereby assuring the person that he/she is not alone, will not be abandoned to a world of endless suffering, and is a part of the true reality that universally accepts all. Shinjin then is the moment of absolute and pure altruism in its truest sense. It is an awakening to a reality

that of course, cannot be of any design on the part of the sentient being because the designing is the very problem that kept the person imprisoned in his/her own world of egocentricity.

How true entrustment relates to the issue of ethics requires us to focus on what entrustment is and is not. Shinran specifically explains that entrustment is the right and sole cause for birth in the Pure Land.[48] But self-power is not the mode in which we are to attain shinjin. Shinran states, "Know that it is impossible to be born in the true, fulfilled Pure Land by simply observing precepts, or by self-willed conviction, or by self-cultivated good."[49] Shinran explains that our actions that we think will lead us to the Pure Land, no matter how good they may be in terms of moralistically or strictly adhering to the prescribed religious practices, are not the causes for birth in the Pure Land. The only right cause for birth in the Pure Land is shinjin. Even the recitative nembutsu, if we make it our own in terms of using it for benefiting the self without true entrustment, we will not be born in the land of true recompense (Pure Land).[50]

Simply stated, entrustment or the true cause for birth in the Pure Land has nothing to do with ethics. This has led to many misunderstandings of Shinran's teachings such as the issue of licensed evil.[51] But the point here is to show that because true entrustment is the mind of Amida Buddha that is given to sentient beings, there is no action on their part, whether that be good or evil, that will give rise to this awakening. Shinjin is not an achievement; it is an occurrence, a phenomenon, and a turning of the heart. It happens without one's mandate. Therefore, Shin ethics does not have a direct link to spiritual liberation because it does not have a causal relationship with entrustment. That being said, shinjin has a significant role to play in Shin ethics. Shinjin awakens sentient beings to a reality that embraces everyone, giving rise to the motivation for ethics.

Similar to absolute reality being both nondual and dual, shinjin can also be discussed as a nondual religious experience or a static conceptualization. However, both aspects are needed when discussing Shin ethics. Shinjin is the religious experience of awakening to the world of Amida Buddha. If we look at the general framework of this soteriological process, shinjin is the collapse of the world of duality while maintaining the dualistic relationship between the sentient being and Amida Buddha. However, ethics deals only in the world of dualism because it is a social phenomenon that presupposes a subject and an object. When we consider the relationship between shinjin and Shin ethics, the nondual aspect of shinjin is either overlooked or all but forgotten. What we are left with is only half the story of shinjin, which in turn, molds shinjin into a *constructed* concept.

To explain this in another way, when shinjin is discussed in the context of ethics, a world of duality, it becomes considered only in terms of an interaction between A and B. This is not to say that discussing shinjin in terms of dualism is incorrect; it is necessary in its own right. In fact, sentient beings verify the teachings amongst themselves using concepts. Thus, it is an indispensable tool to discuss the teachings. But if they *only* discuss and concern themselves with shinjin in dualistic terms, they run the risk of relegating shinjin to a mere constructed concept.

"Constructed concept," then, means that sentient beings filter concepts through their preconceived notions of what that concept should be about. In other words, humans perceive those concepts through the scope of their tainted karmic lens, whereby each individual's karmic conditions create slightly differing or sometimes outright wholly opposing definitions of those concepts.

This becomes problematic if we emphasize shinjin only as a constructed concept because it implies a number of things which I will call "conceptual distortions on shinjin." They are: 1. shinjin is graspable by human reasoning and rationality. 2. shinjin is no longer the right cause for birth but rather the *condition*[52] which we must meet in order to attain birth, and 3. it misleads followers into believing that shinjin can be attained through ethical behavior. When Shin followers try to think what is the proper way to act in accordance to shinjin, since the ideal concept of shinjin is distorted, their subsequent actions based on it will inevitably be distorted as well. Here, shinjin, which in this case is conceptually constructed by human reasoning, is subject to the law of karma. As such, sentient beings' karmic conditions in the past will affect not only what they think shinjin is, but also what they think they should do as a result of shinjin.

It is important to note that shinjin, because it is the mind of Amida Buddha, originates in the world of *jinen*, or absolute working. If one becomes attached to the conceptualization of absolute reality, that person loses the true significance of the dynamic working of that reality. Hence, Shinran is pointing out that although it is necessary to talk about true reality or *jinen* in terms of concepts, one has to be careful not to lose sight of the significance of what he/she is talking about by placing calculative thoughts onto them. The significance that one is trying to convey and understand is the dynamic salvific activity, which in the discussion right now is referring to shinjin.

Each individual's karmic conditions in the past will affect not only what he/she thinks shinjin is, but also how one thinks it should inform his/her ethical behavior. Shin scholars may call it the same "adamantine shinjin," but that has nothing to do with how they may individually react to it and what they may do with it. What a person may think he/she should do as a result of shinjin may not be what another person next to him/her may think one should do as a result of shinjin.

Yet, the other person and the individual will both claim they are in accordance to shinjin. This difference occurs because of their karmic actions in the past. These are some of the distortions that happen as a result of sentient beings' constructed conceptualization of shinjin, which explain why it is difficult to use shinjin to inform us of a systematic organization of prescriptive claims to ethics in Shin Buddhism.

Problem with shinjin as only a religious experience

In the previous section, we discussed how an overemphasis of shinjin only as a concept could be problematic in understanding its true significance. But equally so, an overemphasis of shinjin as a nondual religious experience also has its problems as well. First, an overemphasis of nonduality and oneness can lead to misunderstandings that we can attain Buddhahood in this life or that we can realize nirvana here and now.[53] This is problematic because it would make the individual a living, breathing Buddha, one who is supposed to have severed all blind passions.

Another possible problem is the difficulty in communicating one's understanding of key Shin Buddhist concepts. In fact, the concepts themselves having now been ostracized, make it impossible to discuss such issues as Pure Land, Amida Buddha, self, and so on. These abstract and complex ideas are conceptualized precisely for the purposes of being discussed, communicated, taught, and shared amongst fellow followers. An overemphasis of nonduality and oneness, in an attempt to clarify the issue, actually creates the problem of oversimplifying the relationship between Amida Buddha and the sentient being. What this can lead to then, is drastically different understandings of say, shinjin, which in turn can cause confusions of equating it with the notion of faith. In the West, where there is a strong non-Buddhist influence, it is important to have a focused and detailed understanding of shinjin so as to maintain its uniqueness, which also allows for future comparative studies. Hence, we can see the concern

regarding an overemphasis on nonduality: an oversimplification of reality that bypasses necessary conceptual discourse needed to correctly identify subtle nuances in the teaching.

Related to the previous point, a subjective religious experience might look different from person to person. As such, if there are aspects of their subjective experience that were not discussed in Shinran's explanation of shinjin, or they pick and choose what they agree with, then this serves to undermine and reject Shinran's teachings overall.

Yet another problem is the issue of doubt. Overemphasizing nonduality de-emphasizes the importance of the negation of doubt (towards Amida's Primal Vow). Shinjin is the absolute negation of self-power, or doubt. By explaining that Amida and the individual become one, this can lead to the very problem that shinjin is supposed to solve: belief in self-power. If one believes that he/she is now a Buddha or inherently has Buddha nature, then this overlooks the significance of the negation of one's self-power. An overemphasis on nonduality gives rise to the problem that doubt will not be properly addressed.

This brings us to our final point, which is related to the aforementioned problems. An overemphasis on the nondual nature of self and Amida Buddha essentially diminishes the salvific component of the soteriological framework. Pure Land Buddhism has and always will be about the salvation of the ignorant sentient being who would otherwise be caught in endless suffering and affliction. If one believes he/she becomes buddha, then what need is there for Amida's salvific? The problem with overemphasizing nonduality without explaining it in its proper context is that it does away with the idea that one *receives* the nembutsu and shinjin from Other Power, which would in turn expunge any feeling of deep gratitude and appreciation for the Buddha's benevolence. If the notion of *tariki* is done away with, not only does the framework of Pure Land Buddhism collapse, any "religious experience" that an individual explains, I would

argue, would merely be his/her empirical religious experience and not something that can be shared and understood amongst other people. Shin Buddhism's religious experience, or shinjin, must originally come from outside of the individual in order for it to be "Other Power." Thus, the dualistic framework must be kept intact in order for Pure Land Buddhism to survive, and more importantly, for one to be truly grateful for encountering the teaching that is indeed "difficult to hear."

Zero shinjin

An overemphasis of shinjin as a nondual religious experience on the one hand and a dualistic static concept on the other, both only give part of the story of Shinran's explanation of shinjin. It would be most appropriate and effective to explain them in both ways equally, balancing between the two sides. The simple solution would be just to explain both sides all of the time. But another way to explain this is to have a term, phrase, or idea that explains this relationship between nondual and dual, succinctly. I posit the term "zero-shinjin" to do this. The "zero" refers to the nondual, nonsubstantial, and non-discriminative wisdom of Amida Buddha. Other interchangeable terms are "pure," "absolute," "transcendent," and "*sunyata*" or "emptiness." Sentient beings do not have access to absolute reality were it not for the compassionate means of Amida's salvific Vow Power. I choose the word "zero" because "emptiness" connotes a nihilistic meaning, whereas "zero" is neither positive nor negative; it transcends all diametrically opposed discrimination. Further, if we look at the Thirty-fourth Vow of the *Larger Sutra*, it states,

> If, when I attain Buddahood, the sentient beings throughout the countless and inconceivable Buddha-worlds in the ten quarters, having heard my name, should not attain the bodhisattva's insight into the nonorigination of all existence and all the profound dharanis, may I not attain the perfect enlightenment.[54]

Upon hearing the Buddha's name, which can be understood as the arising of shinjin, one attains insight into nonorigination. This means that upon the arising of shinjin, one understands that

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there is a reality greater than the one he/she was previously aware of, the world of *sunyata* or zero. Although one does not become *sunyata* upon the arising of shinjin, it does show that one now knows that there is a path to salvation and liberation from suffering. That path is none other than entrustment in Amida's salvific Vow Power. We can see here the justification for understanding shinjin to be in its fundamental form: zero.

Next, "shinjin" in the phrase "zero-shinjin" refers to the dualistic or static religious experience, which is how one receives the compassion of Amida's non-discriminative wisdom. If we look at the Chapter on Shinjin in the *Kyōgyōshinshō*, Shinran breaks up shinjin according to the Eighteenth Vow of the *Larger Sutra*: sincere mind, entrusting, and aspiration for birth.[55] Although this is important to note, it is nevertheless, an objective explanation of the content of shinjin. That is, one receives the mind of wisdom from Amida Buddha and in this way, the exchange of shinjin takes place in a dualistic framework. In addition to this, Shinran subjectively explains this religious experience, namely through "the three emphatics" (*sansai* 三哉). The three emphatics is an idea made popular by Kiritani Jun'nin although it is widely known by most Shin scholars. This is referring to the three areas in which Shinran rarely but explicitly expresses strong emotion in the *Kyōgyōshinshō*, which for the most part is an academic work mostly consisting of citations from other Pure Land texts. These three areas are: "Wholly sincere, indeed!" (*seisai* 誠哉)"; "How joyous I am! (*keisai* 慶哉)"; and "How grievous it is! (*hisai* 悲哉)," found in the Preface, Chapter on Shinjin, and Chapter on Transformed Buddha-Bodies and Lands.[56]

The reason why we approach shinjin from Shinran's subjective experience is because it is here that we find concrete evidence of how Shinran appreciates the religious experience he awakens to. Rather than starting from the theoretical side of Shin soteriology, we can use these

emotional depictions as a reference point because nembutsu adherents can possibly relate more easily to the humanistic side of Shinran's explanation. In other words, in the context of zero or *sunyata*, Pure Land Buddhism interprets it to be shinjin, which concretely speaking, is the three emphatics in addition to the feeling of hope for the ordinary foolish person, or *bonbu* 凡夫. This will prove to be helpful when explaining Shin Buddhism to people who are not familiar with the teaching. Understanding Shinran's emotions from shinjin will also help inform us of what sentient beings can aspire to, know what benefits there are in seeking Shin Buddhism, and finally, have a concrete path that can guide people in their way of life as nembutsu practicers. Sentient beings can use Shinran's description of his emotional state as a source of inspiration of what to look forward to as they follow the nembutsu teaching, as Shinran himself did.

Three Emphatics

The three emphatics matches up with the three minds of the Eighteenth Vow in the following way: Sincere mind is matched with "Wholly sincere, indeed!" (*makotonaru kana* 誠哉); Entrusting is matched with "How joyous I am!" (*yorokobashī kana* 慶哉) and "How grievous it is!" (*kanashiki kana* 悲哉), and finally, Aspiration for birth or the result that occurs is "hope" and the "desire to be born in the Pure Land" (*ganshō ōjō* 願生往生). Put more simply, sincere mind is honesty; entrusting is both joy and shame together; aspiration for birth is the hope or the desire to be born in the Pure Land. The relationship between the three minds of the Eighteenth Vow and the three emphatics is important to note as it not only shows the contrast of the giving mind of Amida Buddha and the receiving mind of the sentient being, it also contrasts objective doctrine and subjective experience. Despite the fact that the three minds are the one mind of Amida Buddha, in no place does Shinran say that people cannot use these three minds as a

source of inspiration for the way they lead their lives. That is, the three minds of Amida can inform people of what they can try to emulate and adopt in their lives.

One may argue that the "two aspects of deep realization 二種深信" already explains the religious experience of shinjin and that this endeavor is not necessary. But the two aspects of deep realization explain only the actual arising of shinjin itself. What it does not do is address the concerns of the people who are unfamiliar with the tradition, those who have serious questions and doubts about this path, or those who are uncertain of whether they have shinjin or not. The three emphatics not only includes the two aspects of deep realization, but as I will explain later, it addresses the problem of how to connect Shin soteriology to the everyday life of the modern nembutsu adherent, or Shin ethics.

A question that may arise is why do we have to associate "zero" or *sunyata* to shinjin? In recent scholarship of academic Shin studies, we see a tendency to try and understand Shin Buddhism in the context of the greater Mahayana tradition. This is undoubtedly an effort to not only open up possible dialogue and find common ground with other Mahayana schools, but it is also an attempt to loosen the constraints of Shin doctrinal orthodoxy and look at Shinran's teachings in new and innovative ways.

What we have been seeing in recent propagational and scholarly efforts, are attempts to look passed sectarian differences predominant in Japanese Buddhism in order to create a new American or western Shin Buddhist identity. One way this has been done is to emphasize such ideas as oneness, emptiness, *pratītya samutpāda*, the idea of "what goes around comes around" that is presumed to be what karma is only about, sitting meditation, impermanence, etc. Although seeing passed sectarian lines is important at certain times, it should not be done at the expense of compromising Shin doctrine. What this means in terms of our discussion here is that the

Mahayana principle of *sunyata* is undeniably included in the Shin teaching and it is precisely why Nagarjuna is considered the first of the Seven Masters. However, according to Shin doctrine, *sunyata* is not directly accessible to the ignorant sentient being of blind passions. Shinran makes it clear that Dharma-body as suchness is *only* accessible through Dharma-body as compassionate means, in other words Amida Buddha.[57] Sentient beings' access to zero then, is only found in shinjin and the nembutsu. The mind of Amida Buddha that is wisdom is none other than absolute reality itself. Thus, the basis of shinjin is *sunyata*.

Associating *sunyata* to shinjin is simply bringing to the fore what is already presumed to be understood in traditional Shin doctrine, but often not mentioned. But this point needs to be explicitly made clear, especially in the context of bringing Shin Buddhism to a relatively new audience: the West. What needs mentioning is that the mind of non-discriminative wisdom of Amida Buddha is obviously the transcendent absolute reality, or *sunyata*. The nondual aspect of shinjin is expressed in the word "zero" and the dualistic aspect of shinjin is expressed in the word "shinjin (or true entrusting)" because it is here where we find the exchange between Amida Buddha and the sentient being. When Amida gives the mind of non-discriminative wisdom to sentient beings, they receive wisdom but it arises within them as shinjin, the content of which is sincere mind, entrusting, and aspiration for birth. Furthermore, these three minds when explained in the scope of Shinran's emotional state, translates to sincerity, joy, shame, and hope or the desire to be born in the Pure Land.

In today's world of Buddhism, the word "*sunyata*" or "emptiness" is automatically associated with the Zen or Chan schools. Some critics might read my argument to say that the phrase "zero-shinjin" is an attempt to understand Shin from a Zen perspective. But Zen and Chan do not have exclusive rights to the principle of emptiness or *sunyata*, a principle that is common

to all Mahayana schools. If anything, we are connecting shinjin to one of its often neglected original roots.

Tokunaga Ichido explains that in the Shōshinge where it talks about Nagarjuna appearing in this world to "crush the views of being and nonbeing," Shinran is praising the Pure Land Master for teaching about *sunyata*. The reason for this is that Nagarjuna clarified that non-discriminative wisdom transcends both affirmation and negation. As mentioned before, Nagarjuna criticized the idea of having "substantial nature" (*jishō* 自性), an idea that was popular in his time. This idea supported the claim that dependent co-origination taught that there was actually a substantial nature to all things in this world. In addition, Nagarjuna clarified that *sunyata* was not a nihilistic portrayal of the phenomenal world but rather, a transcendence altogether of that world. It is this non-discriminative mind of wisdom that is given to all beings in shinjin and therefore, the fundamental basis of shinjin is "zero."[58]

In addition, if we look at *Hymns of the Pure Land*, in the fifth verse it states, "The liberating wheel of light is without bound; / Each person it touches, it is taught, / Is freed from attachments to being and nonbeing, / So take refuge in Amida, the enlightenment of nondiscrimination."[59] Awakening to a world of non-discriminative wisdom, the sentient being is shown the world of light that embraces all things. Amida's working is no longer an object of belief in a dualistic sense. Amida embraces us within the wisdom of light. *Sunyata*, the transcendent "zero," is thus rooted in shinjin.

Based on this discussion, zero-shinjin is not saying anything new *per se*. It is simply a refocusing of the significance of shinjin in the context of Mahayana Buddhism and at the same time, this doctrinal evidence serves to influence Shin ethics because it provides a concrete way of life for nembutsu adherents, as I will show. When we refocus shinjin in this way, it provides a

new path in the field of Shin ethics, a topic that has long been either sidelined or only indirectly addressed until recently.

Sincerity and "Wholly sincere, indeed"

Of the three minds of Amida we begin with sincerity. Shinran explains the sincere mind by stating, "with this pure, true mind, the Tathagata brought to fulfillment the perfect, unhindered, inconceivable, indescribable and inexplicable supreme virtues." Furthermore, "the sincere mind takes as its essence the revered Name of supreme virtues."[60] The Tathagata out of compassion for all suffering sentient beings, sincerely and earnestly completes the practice of the inconceivable virtues which becomes the Name. As we see in his explanation of the actual word *shishin* 至心, Shinran says that it is the seed of truth, reality and sincerity.[61] The sincere mind is the pure mind of Amida Buddha.

When it comes to ethics in general, sincerity, genuineness, honesty and truth are often presupposed and as a result, not emphasized enough. Robert E. Carter in his book entitled, *Encounter with Enlightenment: A Study of Japanese Ethics*, states,

> Whether one reads Chinese texts or Japanese texts, Confucianism, Taoism, Chinese Buddhism, or any of the Japanese traditions, sincerity is always front and center. In the West, however, sincerity is not a major virtue, not at the present does it play a significant role in ethical theorizing. Sincerity means that one's words will become deeds, that one is intrinsically trustworthy, or has genuine integrity of character, and so on. The twentieth-century Japanese philosopher Watsuji Tetsuro writes of *makoto* as being the root of truthfulness, honesty, and trustworthiness, all of which qualities are necessary for anything resembling dependable and worthwhile social interactions…Sincerity demands one's entire commitment, a putting of one's heart, mind, soul, and body into one's commitment to whatever it is that one does.[62]

In his discussion of East Asian philosophy, Carter points out that eastern cultures and religions all emphasize to a great extent sincerity because it leads from will to action, it shows trustworthiness and genuine integrity of character, and it is the root of truthfulness. Sincerity is a fundamental virtue that is essential in social relationships. Although Carter is not referring

specifically to Shin Buddhism, his insight on a core East Asian virtue is perfectly in line with Amida's mind of sincerity and Shin ethics.

To begin with, Carter points out that sincerity means that, "one's words will become deeds." We can see this with Amida Buddha as he established and then fulfilled those vows he established through arduous kalpas of practice. Specifically, what I am referring to is the fundamental principle of "complete fulfillment of Vow and Practice" (*gangyō gusoku* 願行具足), the two indispensable parts that need to be fulfilled in order for a bodhisattva to complete the process of becoming a buddha. For Amida Buddha, the salvific Name is what he fulfills and then gives to all beings.

Next, the mind of Amida Buddha being sincere has a social aspect, which is that Amida wants to provide the absolute truth and a path to liberation for all of those beings afflicted in suffering and are unable to free themselves from the bonds of blind passions. The social aspect of ethics, which takes into account one's relationships with other people, is an important aspect of eastern philosophy and ideology. Carter points out later in his book that, "the Western concept is a formula for selfishness, social isolation, alienation and the total abrogation of one's social interconnectedness, and with it, one's sense of social responsibility."[63] His point here is to draw the difference between western and eastern (Confucianism in this case) philosophy, but the difference also applies to western philosophy and Shin just as well. This is the western philosophical idea of the irreducibility of the "individual" even when considering one's social standing with others, or in other words, one's social context in ethics. However, I argue that in considering ethics, an individual cannot isolate the self from his/her social context when thinking about the ethically appropriate course of action.

Ethics always involves one's social context, an extremely important point in Asian cultures even to this day. A simple example involves the *senpai-kōhai* system (seniority system) exhibited in almost all facets of Japanese society. Although this is not a completely foreign concept in western cultures, it is undoubtedly much less emphasized and enforced only in certain social contexts. Here, one's social context *is* a part his/her personal identity, whereas in western philosophy, the agent alone is always his/her own personal identity. This makes a significant difference when we consider how to view Shin ethics in a western context.

Ethics in eastern cultures and religions will always involve not only individual identity but a collective one as well, as they are not considered separate from each other. Furthermore, because there is a collective identity that one identifies him/her self with, there is an inherent obligation and responsibility to not only fulfill one's role within that collective identity, but also to uphold, protect, and maintain that identity as well. This can be seen with commonly used words such as *giri* 義理 or *gimu* 義務, which roughly translate to "duty and obligation." In the Shin context, Amida Buddha vows that the collective unit of all sentient beings will be saved from pain and affliction. Thus, sincerity has the significance of meaning that all beings must be saved because Amida has made it his obligation to do so.

There is another quality that arises from sincerity, which is spontaneity. In his book *Consequences of Compassion: An Interpretation and Defense of Buddhist Ethics*, Charles Goodman explains the spontaneous nature of the bodhisattva's compassionate activity.[64] Goodman shows that for a bodhisattva there is no longer any selfish desires. A bodhisattva will always act out of great compassion spontaneously knowing exactly what to do to help sentient beings. In the context of Shin, it is Amida Buddha that acts in great compassion to save all

sentient beings. The mind of sincerity is spontaneous and it acts dynamically, moving towards

sentient beings and grasping them.

The next question would be, "Can sentient beings have a genuine mind and act

spontaneously in great compassion towards all beings?" For Shinran that answer is a resounding

no. We see in the *Hymns of the Dharma-Ages: Gutoku's Hymns of Lament and Reflection*,

Shinran states,

> Although I am without shame and self-reproach And lack a mind of truth and sincerity, Because the Name is directed by Amida, Its virtues fill the ten quarters.
>
> Lacking even small love and small compassion, I cannot hope to benefit sentient beings. Were it not for the ship of Amida's Vow, How could I cross the ocean of painful existence? [65]

Upon deep self-reflection, Shinran understands that even the best of intentions will not amount

to truth and sincerity. Because his nature is always tainted with the mind of egocentricity, he will

never be able to truly altruistically help other sentient beings. He then explains that it is only

Amida's Vow that can possibly help all sentient beings, which includes himself. In his efforts to

spread the nembutsu teaching, Shinran realizes his limitations in his ability to completely save

others. Inoue Zenkō points out that Shinran was trying to show his view of humanity in talking

about not having *bodhicitta*. Shinran also wanted to show that even if he earnestly tried, he could

not come up with even a little bit of compassion that is genuine or the sincerity to be truly

shameful of his egocentric human condition. Shinran emphasizes the importance of *bodhicitta* in

shinjin and that true lamentation of the self, as well as sincere compassion for all beings, comes

from the wisdom of Amida's Vow.[66]

It is when this sincere mind is given to the sentient being, whereby that person awakens to

the fact that he/she can never be truly genuine and sincere in one's actions, that the person taps

into the truth of humanity. Kiritani Jun'nin points out that the paradox of knowing that we cannot

ever be objectively moral *is what* actually makes us moral. He goes on to say that we are saved

when we realize that we are not worthy of saving. Thus, we become moral when we realize we do not have the capacity to be truly moral. Paradoxically, this incapability awakens within us a true sense of solidarity with all other beings.[67] What Inoue and Kiritani point to is the fundamental starting point of Shin ethics. That is to say, ethics begins with introspection, which is initiated in its truest sense by Other Power. Then, when one finally understands that the essential problem *is* the self, there is the unfolding of Shin ethics. Sincerity provides sentient beings with the understanding of the limits of human compassion and to turn one's life over to Amida's great compassion.

Entrusting and "How joyous I am"

The second mind is entrusting which is usually considered the most central part of shinjin itself. Here Shinran explains entrusting both as joy in awakening to Amida's Primal Vow that grasps and liberates all sentient beings from suffering and as shame and lamentation in one's human condition as a foolish being of karmic evil caught in endless migration of birth-and-death. This dual aspect of entrusting is of course depicted in the "two aspects of deep realization" (*nishu jinshin* 二種深信). Entrusting corresponds to the word *shingyō* 信楽 in which, "*shin* 信 means truth, reality, sincerity, fullness, ultimacy, accomplishment, reliance, reverence, discernment, distinctness, clarity, faithfulness; and *gyō* 楽 means aspiration, wish, desire, exultation, delight, joy, gladness, [and] happiness."[68] Because entrusting arises from absolute truth, one awakens to a moment of clarity, where he/she feels joy and happiness.

Shinran most clearly expresses his joy in the chapter on Transformed Buddha-Bodies and Lands where he states,

> How joyous I am, my heart and mind being rooted in the Buddha-ground of the universal Vow,
> and my thoughts and feelings flowing within the dharma-ocean, which is beyond comprehension!
> I am deeply aware of the Tathagata's immense compassion, and I sincerely revere the benevolent
> care behind the masters' teaching activity. My joy grows ever fuller, my gratitude and

indebtedness ever more compelling. Therefore, I have selected [passages express-ing] the core of the Pure Land way and gathered here its essentials. Mindful solely of the profundity of the Buddha's benevolence, I pay no heed to the derision of others. May those who see and hear this work be brought—either through the cause of reverently embracing the teaching or through the condition of [others'] doubt and slander of it—to manifest shinjin within the power of the Vow and reveal the incomparable fruit of enlightenment in the land of peace.[69]

Awakening to the great compassion of Amida's Vow Power, Shinran expresses his absolute joy that arises within him from the religious experience of shinjin. Realizing that there is a path to liberation found not in his own self-power, but rather, through Amida's Other Power, Shinran is now grounded and settled in peace of mind. This is also evident in the Preface of the *Kyōgyōshinshō*, in which Shinran feels joy in receiving the benevolence of Amida's salvific Vow Power.[70] The mind of Amida's wisdom and compassion gives rise to entrustment, in which the person feels utter joy in knowing that there is a path to liberation in which one was previously unaware of. This brings the individual to now live with Amida's compassionate activity as the central motivation of life.

Entrusting and "How grievous it is"

Entrusting is not only joy but also shame and lamentation. The grounding of joy is the understanding of one's human condition: that he/she is a person of blind passions, who is in an existence of karmic evil with never a chance for emancipation. Although this aspect is not mentioned in the term *shingyō* 信楽, according to Shantao, the three minds of the *Larger Sutra* correspond to the three minds mentioned in the *Contemplation Sutra*, of which, the second mind is the deep mind (*jinshin* 深心).[71] The deep mind is further divided into two aspects known as the "two aspects of deep realization" (*nishu jinshin* 二種深信). This is in the Chapter on Shinjin where it states:

One is to believe deeply and decidedly that you are a foolish being of karmic evil caught in birth-and-death, ever sinking and ever wandering in transmigration from innumerable kalpas in the past, with never a condition that would lead to emancipation. The second is to believe deeply and

> decidedly that Amida Buddha's Forty-eight Vows grasp sentient beings, and that allowing yourself to be carried by the power of the Vow without any doubt or apprehension, you will attain birth.[72]

True shame or lamentation corresponds to the first aspect and it arises when one realizes that he/she is not able to truly help one's self as well as any other sentient being. For brevity and clarity, we will use the term "shame" collectively, although other associable terms can be lamentation, self-reproach, regret, self-reflection, and sadness, but *not* repentance.[73] The individual laments the fact that even with the best of intentions, one will always act out of selfish motivations and further, one *cannot help but* to act egocentrically in order to ensure, preserve, protect, and expand the ego self. Ethically, one creates an arbitrary distinction between good and evil based on what he/she believes to be objective moral standards, but are really just contingent upon that person's discriminative and biased thinking. Discriminative and biased thinking is based on none other than egocentricity and selfish motivations. Shinran states in the *Hymns of the Dharma-Ages*,

> While persons ignorant of even the characters for "good" and "evil" All possess a sincere mind, I make a display of knowing the words "good" and "evil"; This is an expression of complete falsity.

> I am such that I do not know right and wrong And cannot distinguish false and true; I lack even small love and small compassion, And yet, for fame and profit, enjoy teaching others.[74]

Keenly aware of his true nature, we see here Shinran's strong self-admonishment and sincerity. What is more important for our discussion right now is that Shinran's true sincerity only arises when he understands that his own nature will not permit such sincerity. Admitting that despite the fact that he cannot truly know good from evil but that he presumes to do so in the face of others, Shinran's honesty brings out his deep understanding of his own true nature, which in turn, brings forth his humanness. Shinran's sincere honesty and shame, however, are based on the reliance of Other Power.

The role of ethical evil then has a particular significance in Shin Buddhism. Evil does not subject one to eternal damnation in a realm of endless suffering. Although one's karmic actions will yield its according results and in this sense, one is advised to avoid committing evil actions, evil does not necessarily bar one from being able to awaken to the Dharma and attain liberation. No one can escape the truth of karmic retribution, but good and evil both do not inhibit nor promote one's ability to be born in the Pure Land and hence attain emancipation from endless suffering. Inoue Zenkō explains,

> Shame is on the other hand, very important in Shinran's thinking. Shame makes one aware of his karmic evil. Evil action can be a causal connection to awaken to the Dharma. In this way, evil does not necessarily make one turn his/her back on the Dharma. It is not the action that is the problem, but how we find meaning in those actions...Shame does not involve just the person him/her self, it involves how one socially interacts with others. By showing that shame has this social aspect, one awakens all the more to the egocentric self. Shame has this very important feature that involves one's social interactions with others.[75]

There are three critical ethical points we can gather from this quote. Where it explains that we must "find meaning in the actions" that may be good or evil, Shin ethics is saying that the sentient being must question, seek, reflect, and what I will call "problematize" one's existence. One needs to call into question whether the actions that the person commits are justified and righteous. This will lead to reflecting on the self in the scope of the Dharma and awaken to its truth. The second point is where it states in the quote above that, "evil does not necessarily make one turn his/her back on the Dharma." Here we see how Shin does not teach that evil actions necessarily make one invalid from being able to attain salvific liberation. Finally, where it says that shame has a social component, this means that true shame awakens within us a sense of solidarity with all other sentient beings. It should be noted however, that one does not seek the Dharma in order to understand how to be shameful or joyous, but rather, that from relying wholly on the Dharma, do these emotional states naturally arise within the person.

In true entrusting, there must be both joy and shame together in a set. When one awakens to the human condition with no hope for emancipation, that person then entirely relies on and entrusts him/her self to Amida's Primal Vow that will bring one to be born in the Pure Land. How this concretely arises within the person is shown in the following explanation. Kakehashi Jitsuen says,

> Indeed this ignorant existence of ours is something to be ashamed of, but that does not mean there is no joy. That is, both shame and joy are both mixed in together in one's emotional state. It is likened to revering the light while at the same time being wrapped in darkness. Blind passions and karmic obstructions will remain in the shadows of the nembutsu practicer until his/her death; it is not the case that suddenly there is clarity like the brightness of mid-day. But in this life where we are given the opportunity to approach the Pure Land and think about its meaning, the source of what makes us ignorant is severed. It is a life in which while we bear darkness on our backs, we nevertheless approach the light.[76]

Joy and shame come hand-in-hand in the arising of true entrusting. Kakehashi is pointing out that true entrusting is both the feeling of utter joy while at the same time being grounded in humble self-reflection. Thus in shinjin, one cannot talk only about joy, happiness, serenity, or any of the associated positive attributes. Nor can there be only a discussion of shame, self-loathing, self-deprecating, and stern and abrasive self-criticism. There must be a balance between both of these extremes, which gives rise to a natural peace, calmness, equanimity, and serenity of the mind and heart.

Significance of shame and its ethical implication

We can see Shinran's discussion of shame in the *Kyōgyōshinshō* where he writes,

> I know truly how grievous it is that I, Gutoku Shinran, am sinking in an immense ocean of desires and attachments and am lost in vast mountains of fame and advantage, so that I rejoice not at all at entering the stage of the truly settled, and feel no happiness at coming nearer the realization of true enlightenment. How ugly it is! How wretched![77]

Admitting that he does not feel happy nor does he have the desire to rejoice even though he knows that Amida's Primal Vow embraces him and will bring him to the be born in the Pure Land, Shinran expresses his shame in himself. Again, in the Chapter on Transformed Buddha-

Bodies and Lands, he laments that sentient beings doubt the Buddha's wisdom and through self-power practices, they try to no avail to escape this world of delusion.[78] Shinran's brutally honest self-reflection, coupled with his utter joy that he talks about in other places of the *Kyōgyōshinshō*, are the result of true entrusting in the Buddha's Primal Vow. Having shame in awakening to one's human condition but also joy in awakening to Amida's salvific vow, one awakens to the greater reality of compassionate activity taking place.

What this means in concrete terms is that in any act of goodwill, whether it is helping the poor and sick or fighting for equal rights, the nembutsu follower must remember that there will always be an element of egocentricity and self-investment involved in any action taken. Therefore, one can and should do good acts, but *only* with the understanding that because of the precarious nature of ethics and its relativity, that the "good feeling one gets" when doing pious deeds is the moment that person *tells* him/her self to feel good about that act. Whether something is objectively good/bad, we can never really know for sure. A nembutsu adherent knows not to trust this "good" feeling blindly. This second-guessing of the self actually results in humility and modesty in one's actions.

On the other hand, in any act of intentional and forceful self-loathing, self-hatred, or self-deprecation to the point where one is emotionally and psychologically hurting him/herself is also a misunderstanding of shame in Shinran's thought, as it does not take into account the joy and sincerity that comes from entrusting in Amida's Primal Vow. Kakehashi further explains that,

> A nembutsu practicer does not live a life drowning in the depths of darkness and sadness. On the other hand, he/she does not live everyday perked up in giddy joy and brightness constantly day-in and day-out. As one continues to listen to the Dharma, that person becomes ever more familiar with the fathomless abyss of his/her blind passions, grows ever more ashamed of those blind passions, then venerates and reveres the compassionate vow that works to save such an ignorant person. It is within this awakening that there arises within one an abundance of quietness and calmness immersed in serene joy. This is precisely what is meant by the phrase "shame and joy continuously flow through one after another." [79]

Here we can see that the alternating of joy and shame is in the person of shinjin. This is made possible by the true and sincere mind of Amida Buddha given to all beings. Shame is just as important as joy in shinjin as it works to ground the person's egocentricity—this is not a source of negativity or self-loathing. Thus, joy and shame together are how Shinran emotionally expresses his true entrusting in Amida's compassionate activity. Other Power changes an individual by redirecting the central focus on one's life not on the egocentric self, but rather, on Amida's compassionate activity.

Aspiration for birth and hope

The third mind is the aspiration for birth. Shinran explains that, "Aspiration for birth is the mind of wish, desire, awakening, and awareness; the mind of accomplishment, fulfillment, performance, and establishment. It is the mind of great compassion directing itself to beings."[80] This is the mind of aspiration that is given to all beings from Amida Buddha. Thus, upon shinjin, one awakens the aspiration that he/she will not only go to the Pure Land, but that such a world of clarity that was previously unknown to him/her, is now known. The third mind of aspiration is arguably where the teleological and dualistic aspect of shinjin is most clearly visible. Here we see a definite trajectory being drawn out between the world of the defiled and the undefiled. This is the path provided by Amida Buddha who embraces all sentient beings and pulls them towards the Pure Land. Because this framework is explicitly clear, we can see a particular direction for the nembutsu adherents, motivation, and a reason to be part of this religious tradition.

Furthermore, it gives sentient beings something to look forward to in the future, to have hope for, and ultimately, something to live for in this life. We see this when Shinran discusses the stage of the truly settled in which he says, "When a person becomes established in this state, he or she becomes one who will necessarily attain the supreme great nirvana."[81] In another area in

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the margins of the notes, Shinran writes the words, "the body that will certainly attain birth in the Pure Land" (*ōjō subeki mi to sadamaru nari* ワウジヤウスベキミトサダマルナリ) next to the main text that reads, "to become established in the stage of the truly settled" (*shōjōju no kurai ni tsuki sadamaru* 正定聚のくらゐにつきさだまる).[82] Here we see that one will become a Buddha in the future at the end of one's life, and that the individual is guaranteed this truth while still in this life. The is the meaning of the stage of the truly settled, or shinjin.

There is another point that needs mentioning. As explained in the section on zero-shinjin, sincere mind corresponds to "Wholly sincere, indeed! 誠哉"; entrusting corresponds to "How joyous I am! 慶哉" and "How grievous it is! 悲哉"; and aspiration for birth corresponds to "hope" and the "desire to be born in the Pure Land 願生往生." Hence, the sincere mind is sincerity; entrusting is both joy and shame together; and aspiration for birth is the hope or desire to be born in the Pure Land. The three emphatics mentioned do not correspond to the third mind of Amida, which is the aspiration for birth. However, there is the term "natural outcome" (*gibetsu* 義別) which can apply to this situation. Naitō Chikō in his book entitled, *Anjin Rondai wo Manabu*, a work that explores the doctrinal orthodoxy of the Shin tradition, talks about this term in the following way: "Aspiration for birth in the Pure Land is the natural outcome of true entrusting. Aspiration is fundamentally included in true entrusting, but here it is separated and brought to the fore [for explanation and clarification]. When there is true entrusting, doubt towards Amida's salvific Primal Vow is negated and one is assured of birth in the Pure Land."[83] True entrusting includes aspiration for birth, but here aspiration is separated as a "natural outcome" of true entrusting in order to explain what happens to one who awakens shinjin.

Let us return to our discussion of the three emphatics and three minds. I claim that the feeling of "hope" is the "natural outcome" of the sum of sincerity, joy, and shame, or in other words, the three emphatics. As explained earlier, aspiration is a natural outcome of true entrusting. Here, hope is the natural outcome of sincerity, joy, and shame. Because one awakens to his/her human condition and relies on Amida's Primal Vow, that person now awakens to a world of absolute truth that embraces him/her. With this awakening to true entrusting, the person now has the hope to live for something, the strength to live in this life, and something to look forward to at the end of one's life.[84] Awakening shinjin and being in the stage of the truly settled happens in this life. Herein lies the motivation to be able to live with hope and strength. Amida's compassionate activity becomes the fundamental current for one to live, where the person no longer places the self, but rather, the Buddha Dharma at the center of his/her world.

conclusion

The Pragmatic Approach is a method in which to pursue the field of Shin ethics. It can be broken down into three main aspects: Soteriological foundation, Individual ethics, and Social ethics. This chapter focused on the Soteriological foundation, as it is the doctrinal basis for the Pragmatic Approach and hence, the most important aspect. Shinran defines "evil" as the human condition in which all sentient beings are caught and bound within because of their blind passions. However, it is because of this that the sentient being is the very object of Amida's salvific activity. This awakening to Amida's compassion is then realized in the moment of shinjin and is the basis of Shin ethics.

In terms of Shin ethics, shinjin can be analyzed in the following way: "zero-shinjin" and the "three emphatics."[85] Shinjin has both nondual and dual characteristics. Also, Shinran's worldview changed after the awakening to the world of Other Power. These are reflected in the

three emphatics and are characteristics that both nembutsu adherents, as well as those unfamiliar with the tradition, can aspire for and be inspired by as Shin practitioners. This is the doctrinal basis for the Pragmatic Approach, and it will further provide practical characteristics of a Shin Buddhist, which we will examine in the next chapter.

Chapter Four   Pragmatic Approach as the New Shin Ethics: Its Practical Features

Introduction

In the last chapter, we discussed the doctrinal basis of the Pragmatic Approach. In this final chapter, we will talk about its practical features. This aspect can be further broken down into two main categories: Individual and Social ethics. The final section will talk about the overall understanding of Shin ethics, which will look at the underlying motivation as well as some possible concerns that critics may have of this new approach. The characteristics below are not intended to be a laundry list of do's and don'ts but rather, tools that can be used to help inform and guide one when thinking about the appropriate course of action in a given situation.

Individual ethics

The following is an itemized list of Shin ethical characteristics for each person which will be called Individual Ethics. This pertains to ethical features that are predominant in the Shin teaching although it should be noted that it is not an exhaustive list. In addition, this list is not requisite in attaining birth in the Pure Land; they should not be considered prescriptive but rather descriptive in its explanation.

These ethical features are the result of looking at Shinran's writings and various recent scholars' commentaries on the issue of Shin ethics through the scope of the three minds and three emphatics. They can largely be divided into five groups: 1. concerning self, 2. beyond self, 3. interchange, 4. metamorphosis, and 5. equanimity. Listed characteristics within each of these categories are not in any particular order.

Ethical features may arguably overlap in certain areas and perhaps in some instances, features may seem to contradict each other. However, an attempt at a comprehensive list does clarify to a great extent key ethical features that are generally agreed upon in the tradition.

Concerning self
Individual as the Problem

Individual ethics begins with problematizing the self. That is, the nembutsu adherent must see that a spiritual path to find peace of mind for the self and others begins by looking at the individual first. In Mahayana Buddhism, there is an emphasis on the idea of oneness and dependent co-origination. Although it does not disagree with these teachings, Shin brings up the issue of how the individual is able to understand those Buddhist concepts personally. Shin asks, "As egocentric beings, can we really understand such things as oneness and *sunyata* at the depths of our hearts?" The answer to which is no. Robert E. Carter explains that the Zen understanding of enlightenment is that there is no more distinction between self and other, or any other diametrically opposed entities.[1] All selfish and evil tendencies have been eradicated as well. The Shin understanding of enlightenment is exactly the same. But the difference lies in the fact that in Shin, sentient beings cannot separate themselves from discriminative and dualistic thinking or at least if they did momentarily, they would always return back to the original state as *bonbu* or the egocentric person. That is, sentient beings cannot ever be completely and permanently nondual. Shinran was always keen on seeing the soteriological framework from the perspective of the sentient being and not from true reality. That is to say, he saw absolute reality in relation to the sentient being, and that is why he always emphasized the salvific aspect of wisdom and compassion. Again here, the Shin approach is to always return to the problem of the individual and how the sentient being is unable to see the reality that embraces everyone.

Understanding the self as the problem has ethical ramifications. As pointed out earlier, Shin ethics begins with the proper understanding of the human condition. Kiritani explains this by showing that if one who does not know what evil is, nor is aware that one's actions are evil or to what extent they may be evil, then his/her actions will always be negative towards society. But one who is aware of just how evil his/her actions are because he/she has been led to see one's true nature, whether conscious of it or not, then that person will gradually grow to reject doing evil and be wary of it in the future. There is a clear difference between these two people.[2] What Kiritani is showing here is the Shin spirit of problematizing the self. When one is led by listening to the Dharma and becomes aware of the human condition, that person understands to recognize evil for what it is and then gradually refrains from committing those evil actions.

We see evidence that pertains to this in Shinran's *Hymns of the Dharma-Ages*. He states, "Persons who enter Amida's directing of virtue to beings/ And realize the mind that seeks to attain Buddhahood/ Completely abandon their self-power directing of merit, / Thus benefiting sentient beings boundlessly."[3] Shinran expresses the futility of his self-power efforts despite having the feeling of wanting to help other beings. Instead of doing this, he explains that in awakening to Amida's directing of virtue, one will greatly benefit all other beings boundlessly. This is because one awakens to the human condition and the entrusting of Amida's salvific vow, thereby showing that there is a path other than self-power that is available to all sentient beings.

Problematizing the self is based on the mind of sincerity of Amida Buddha's three minds. In an excerpt explaining the sincere mind by Shantao, Shinran reads it to say, "We should not express outwardly signs of wisdom, goodness, or diligence for inwardly we are possessed of falsity."[4] The original reading of this portion explains that one's actions and the intentions behind those actions should be consistent, so one should practice at being inwardly sincere.

Shinran however, reads this to say that because sentient beings are inwardly false, that they should not put on airs and make it seem like they are people of wisdom, goodness, and diligence. Again here, we see Shinran's explication of the human condition being one of karmic evil and having no real sincerity, a condition that cannot be helped unless there is Amida's compassionate vow. Thus, the problem should always be focused on the individual self. Problematizing the self will ultimately show one that he/she is incapable of having great compassion due to that person's insincere nature of egocentricity.

Rejection of self-power not self-effort

Shinran was clear about the difference between self-power and self-effort. As explained earlier, self-power is the reliance on one's own ability to attain enlightenment and subsequently, that person does not rely on Amida's Other Power. Self-effort is the pursuit to understand why Amida's salvific Vow Power grasps and embraces an ignorant person full of blind passions. Self-effort, if anything, is the journey on the bodhisattva path of Other Power whereas self-power is the rejection of any such path existing.

It is also important to note that certain concrete implications are being made about a nembutsu adherent's behavior. As stated in the section explaining religious tolerance through the flexibility of mind, Shinran is very explicit of what the nembutsu path of Other Power means. In *Notes on Once-Calling and Many-Calling* he states the following, "*Other teachings* applies to those who incline toward the Path of Sages or nonbuddhist ways, endeavor in other practices, think on other Buddhas, observe lucky days and auspicious occasions, and belong to nonbuddhist ways; they rely wholly on self-power."[5] As a nembutsu follower who chooses to rely on Other Power, one should discard all non-Buddhist paths and Buddhist teachings of self-power. One should not rely on any other Buddhas other than Amida.

Furthermore, Shinran is explicit about not taking refuge or observing "lucky days and auspicious occasions," which are superstitious beliefs based on luck and the supernatural. Although it does not say whether Shinran recognized this to exist or not, he clearly explains that we should not rely on these things for our liberation from suffering. Therefore, we can see the justification for the nembutsu adherent not to participate in believing in luck, lucky charms, talisman, *omamori*, tarot cards and reading, fortune-telling, the Chinese and Greek Zodiac system, astrology, witchcraft, petitionary prayer, or spells as ways to liberation from birth-and-death. Shinran is very clear about believing in the law of causality or karma. Although he does not deny the existence of the supernatural such as gods and deities, he does disregard them as having nothing to do with one's spiritual path to salvation.

Another concrete implication made about the behavior of a nembutsu adherent is to try and avoid the five grave offenses and slandering of the right Dharma. This discussion was made earlier about the difference between five grave offenses of general Buddhism and that of Mahayana. One who has committed any of these will fall into Avīci hell and suffer immeasurable pain for countless kalpas. Shinran writes that we should stay away from people who commit these five grave offenses or who slander the right Dharma. He did however, consider himself an evil person because he was guilty of the ten transgressions listed in the Mahayana version of the five grave offenses.[6]

The reason why this is important to note is that Shinran makes a concrete suggestion as to how to live one's life—although it would be hard to imagine how to kill an arhat today. Nevertheless, there is a line being drawn here and that is not to belittle and turn one's back on the Buddha Dharma, the fundamental motive of Shin ethics. As explained earlier, Tanluan shows that the five grave offenses are a result of slandering the Dharma, not to mention it is the

exclusion clause of the 18ᵗʰ Vow itself. This is undoubtedly suggested ethical behavior for all nembutsu adherents. Although it should be noted with great emphasis that all beings who are guilty of doing these acts, which all sentient beings are guilty of at some point in their lives, are not barred from Amida's embrace and can still be born in the Pure Land. However, nembutsu adherents and people of shinjin do know that they should avoid committing the five grave offenses and slandering of the right Dharma. In daily behavior, Shinran is suggesting that nembutsu adherents place the Buddha Dharma at the center of their lives and act in a way that most efficiently spreads the Buddha's teachings.

Bonbu on the bodhisattva path

Another ethical point that does not get mentioned much is the idea that nembutsu adherents are on the bodhisattva path. This ethical feature is based on the mind of aspiration for birth. Although it is important to note that there are different kinds of bodhisattvas, namely between those that are on the path to becoming Buddhas but are *bonbu* in this life (*jūin gōka* 従因向果), and Mahasattva Bodhisattvas who are already Buddhas but take the form of bodhisattvas in order to teach about the principle of causality to sentient beings (*jūka gōin* 従果向因).[7] Sentient beings who receive the mind of shinjin also receive the mind that aspires for enlightenment and Buddhahood, or *bodhicitta*.[8] Up until Shinran and Honen, it was widely assumed to be true that one must awaken *bodhicitta* within him/her self before embarking on the path to becoming a Buddha. In fact, it was Myoe who heavily criticized Honen's Pure Land school for nullifying the need for *bodhicitta*. Shinran rebuts Myoe's criticism by arguing that *bodhicitta* is in none other than shinjin itself.

Next, if we look at how Shinran discusses the issue of "being the same as" (*onaji* 同じ) and "being equal to" (*hitoshi* 等し), we can see that Shinran does consider people of shinjin to be

those who are on the bodhisattva path. This is discussed in letter three of *Lamp for the Latter Ages*, where Shinran explains that the terms "truly settled" and "equal to enlightenment" mean the same thing.[9] This is also the same stage as that of Maitreya, who will be attaining Buddhahood. Tokunaga Ichido explains that a person of shinjin is regarded as being in the same stage as Maitreya in terms of one's status of being assured to attain Buddhahood at the moment of birth in the Pure Land. Shinran used the word "*hitoshi* 等し" in order to equate a person of shinjin to a Buddha, in that the person is guaranteed to become a Buddha upon the end of his/her life. In contrast, Shinran applied the word "*onaji* 同じ" to one's status of being the same as Maitreya Bodhisattva.

Tokunaga goes on to explain that Shinran was very clear in making this distinction in order to show that there are two sides to this discussion. From the perspective of the sentient beings of shinjin, they are the same as Maitreya ("*onaji* 同じ"), beings who are now bodhisattvas who, after one lifetime, are destined to become Buddhas. On the other hand, from the perspective of the Buddha, sentient beings of shinjin are equal to the Buddha ("*hitoshi* 等し"), meaning that although one still has a physical body now and hence a being living in the world of delusion, they will assuredly attain Buddhahood upon the end of their lives.[10] On the issue of the phrase "immediately attain birth" (*sokutoku ōjō* 即得往生) Tokunaga states,

> In other words, one is embraced by the light from the Pure Land which transcends both time and space. In this sense, one can be said to be none other than a being in the Pure Land. However, if viewed from one's actual state as a human being with one's physical existence which causes all kinds of defiled actions, one can never be called a Buddha or a being in the Pure land.[11]

This not only supports an earlier claim about the absolute need to emphasize both the dual and nondual aspects of Pure Land Buddhism, but it also shows that from the perspective of the Buddha—a perspective that sentient beings cannot presume to understand—sentient beings of

shinjin are in the Pure Land. However, from the perspective of the sentient being who is bound within the megalomaniac ego, one is not a Buddha, but in this life is guaranteed to become one in the future at the end of that person's life.

Shinran was revolutionary in that he interpreted the "stage of the rightly settled 正定聚" to mean that one attains that stage not while in the Pure Land which was previously thought, but rather, upon the awakening of shinjin in one's current life. Also, the stage of the rightly settled necessarily makes one on the bodhisattva path to becoming a Buddha. Tokunaga states, "That a person of 'shinjin-nembutsu' is on the Mahayana Bodhisattva path may have an important implication for exploring Shin ethics."[12] Again here, we see a that sentient beings of shinjin who are on the nembutsu path, are in fact on the Mahayana bodhisattva path that gives them a teleological direction towards eventual buddhahood. In the end, there is a fine line between a person that does not think he/she is a *bonbu*, and a person that in fact knows he/she is *bonbu*. That difference is that as an ignorant bodhisattva on the nembutsu path, the individual sees that all sentient beings are *bonbu*, and this universal identity creates a spirit of cooperation based on Amida's compassionate activity. The self-aware *bonbu* now tries to live according to Amida's compassionate activity, always being mindful of this truth.

Beyond self
Awakening to a greater reality

Another ethical feature that is based on the mind of aspiration for birth in Amida is that the sentient being awakens to a greater reality outside of the one he/she previously knew of. In other words, one's worldview changes in a way so as to see the profundity of the life force that the person is embraced within.

In order to explain this in proper context, it is necessary to take a step back and look at eastern philosophy in order to understand what is meant by "a greater reality." Robert Carter explains this very clearly when he states,

> As with the Far East generally…human nature is seen to be an extension of the nature of the universe itself. To follow nature is to be in accordance with one's own nature, and to follow one's own nature is to be in accordance with the rhythms of nature, the world, and the cosmos as a whole.[13]

In general, the goal in eastern philosophy is to understand that human nature is an extension of the universe itself. That is, one awakens to the understanding that he/she is one part of a true reality that can have different names in eastern thinking such as the universe, cosmos, heavens, and Pure Land. Acting in accordance to this true reality then is to be in line with one's true nature, as that true nature is not a compartmentalized and autonomous individual separate from the collective whole. In the case of Mahayana, that reality is called *sunyata*, as mentioned earlier. For Shin, access to that true reality is done only through conceptualization, which Buddhists refer to as compassionate means; it is a form of language understandable to human reasoning. Thus, the dualistic framework laid out in Pure Land Buddhism was established precisely in order for sentient beings to understand their existential situation and the path out of it. The reason why Amida's working is considered "salvific" is because sentient beings would have otherwise been inaccessible to this true reality due to the smoke screen called blind passions, which keeps them from seeing that true reality.

To take this a step further, when we put this eastern philosophical understanding in the context of ethics, the issue is not so much whether sentient beings are being good by doing a certain set of actions; nor are they being evil because they do a different set of actions, thereby securing either their salvation or damnation, respectively. Instead, the issue is much more about whether these sets of actions lead one to understand the way this world actually is or do they lead

one into more confusion and away from the truth of reality. Carter puts this interestingly by stating, "Estrangement from the whole, or centrifugal movement, is the root cause of evil, and identification with the whole, or centripetal movement, is the good."[14] In other words, actions that lead one to deny, reject, ridicule, and slander the truth that all sentient beings are, in fact, a part of the greater reality are considered evil. On the other hand, actions that lead one to try and understand, pursue, seek, embrace, accept, and entrust that one is a part of the greater reality are considered good. In addition, actions that place the individual as central above all else, and understandings that promote the egocentric self as an autonomous, self-righteous, absolute, good, and reasonable can be considered evil in the eyes of Shin. In contrast, actions that place the Dharma, Amida Buddha, the greater reality, the entire universe and its harmonious interdependency at the center and of foremost importance are to be considered the good.[15] As we have seen, Shinran himself was extremely antagonistic of the secular powers that tried to diminish the nembutsu movement. This was because the government inhibited the spread of the teaching of true reality as well as the fact that it prioritized secular matters over the nembutsu.

In the spirit of universal fellowship with all nembutsu practicers as well as with those outside of the tradition, Shin is in full agreement with this eastern understanding of true reality. However, whether a *bonbu* can actually attain awakening with body and mind to the idea that he/she is fundamentally one with true reality, is a different story. In Shin, of course, the point of contact with that true reality is in the arising of zero-shinjin. However, as beings of blind passions, sentient beings cannot actually *become* the nondual reality. This complex interplay between understanding and not understanding is mentioned in a quote by Rennyo, "If you think you have understood the Dharma well, you have not understood it at all. If you think you have not yet understood the Dharma, you have understood it well."[16] Nevertheless, one awakens to the

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understanding that he/she is embraced by true reality. It is this religious experience that is deeply emphasized in the Shin tradition and why nembutsu practicers can live in gratitude, trying to repay the Buddha's benevolence by taking part in Amida's compassion.

Not hindering the Buddha's compassion

Not hindering the Buddha's Compassion from spreading in this world or taking an active role in trying to spread the nembutsu teaching is another ethical quality. This feature is based on all three minds of Amida's vow. In *Hymns of the Pure Land Masters*, Shinran writes, "The mind that aspires to attain Buddhahood / Is the mind to save all sentient beings; The mind to save all sentient beings / Is true and real shinjin, which is Amida's benefiting of others."[17] The mind of shinjin that arises within one becomes the mind to save all sentient beings. This means that if one attains shinjin, that person will work to share the compassion of Amida Buddha to other people. This is not to say that one now has possession of Amida's compassion and somehow gives that to others but rather, that the person knows that Amida directs shinjin to all beings and therefore, one does not hinder the Buddha's compassion from spreading to others.

In one example of this, Miki Terukuni explains that Shinran highly regarded his teacher Honen and reverently respected him for introducing Amida's Vow to him. Miki then explains that repaying the Buddha's benevolence does not mean merely to show respect towards the Buddha. Rather, it means that for the sake of all other beings, humans must share the nembutsu teaching with those who may be leading difficult lives. People must do their best in trying to make understandable and easily accessible to others this difficult teaching.[18] Here we see Miki emphasizing the need for a more proactive approach in spreading the nembutsu teaching. He says this can be done if we have a broader understanding of the phrase of "repaying the Buddha's benevolence."

Alfred Bloom makes a comment that is relevant to our discussion here when he states,

> We are saved even though we do not have faith. The vow, not shinjin, is the causal basis for birth in the Pure Land. Someone might ask, then what is the point of being religious? The answer is that we treat religion as a means to an end, usually. We get the benefit of salvation for being "religious." But for Shinran, religion becomes a way to express gratitude for the compassion that supports all our life. It is not a tool for ego advancement or gaining benefits.[19]

Bloom explains that the motivation for being "religious" is completely different between Shin and other religious disciplines. For Shinran, religion is a way to express gratitude for the received compassion and it is not for the purpose to gain personal benefit, such as enlightenment. In other words, being "religious" also includes ethical behavior as an expression of gratitude. A nembutsu adherent knows that trying to do good and refraining from evil is contingent on many contributing factors such as one's karmic condition. Being "religious" in Shin does not have the heavy association with ethics that we might usually assume religion to have. Instead, the nembutsu adherent becomes "religious" as a way to express gratitude.

Put differently, a nembutsu adherent becomes religious by placing Amida Buddha at the center of one's nembutsu way of life. By doing so, one can see that inhibiting the spread of Amida's compassion means to hurt the Buddha himself and this can be deemed immoral. In *A Collection of Letters*, Shinran writes, "But if you simply pray for the people in society who are in error and desire to lead them into Amida's Vow, it will be a response out of gratitude for the Buddha's benevolence. You should hold the nembutsu deeply in your hearts and say it together."[20] Shinran here clearly advocates spreading the nembutsu teaching to others as a way to respond in gratitude for the Buddha's benevolence. Therefore, not hindering the Buddha's compassion means that upon awakening to this working, one now works to bring this teaching to other people who are unfamiliar with the tradition. All sentient beings are the object of Amida's salvific activity and therefore, people of shinjin will observe that universal truth. Then, in

understanding this universal identity, nembutsu adherents will participate in the spread of this compassionate activity.

Interchange between Amida Buddha and sentient being
Listening to the calling voice of the Buddha Dharma

Listening to the calling voice of the Buddha Dharma is arguably the most concrete ethical practice that a nembutsu practicer can do, as it is in listening and hearing the Buddha's calling voice in which one can awaken to the human condition. This ethical feature is based on the sincerity of Amida Buddha calling out to sentient beings to rely on him. Doctrinally, the evidence for hearing the Dharma can be found in the parable of the White Path, in which the traveler hears the calling voice of Amida Buddha calling out to him to cross the river of fire and water. Questioning whether he will be able to make it across safely or not, he also hears the reassuring voice of Śākyamuni Buddha coming from behind him telling him to proceed forward onto the white path.[21] Hearing the calling voice of the Buddha is a very important teaching in the Shin tradition. This is further evidenced in the idea that by saying the Name, one is hearing the countless Buddhas praising Amida Buddha and his virtues.[22] Hearing the compassionate calling voice of Other Power means that one cannot create great compassion of his/her own.

Expression of gratitude for the Buddha's benevolence

Another ethical feature is the expression of gratitude for the Buddha's benevolence, or *hō'on* 報恩. This has been mentioned in other areas and it is widely accepted and understood to the point that it needs little explanation other than to explicitly be pointed out. The intention of bringing it up here is to say that the expression of gratitude dynamically changes just as hermeneutics does in the changing temporal and spatial contexts that Shin Buddhism finds itself in.

One of the basis for this, especially concerning ethics, is found in the phrase "believing in Amida's Primal Vow and sharing this teaching with others" (*jishin kyōninshin* 自信教人信). This phrase is found in Shantao's, *Liturgy for Birth* (*Ōjōraisan*『往生礼讃』) where it states, "To realize shinjin oneself and to guide others to shinjin / Is among difficult things yet even more difficult. To awaken beings everywhere to great compassion / Is truly to respond in gratitude to the Buddha's benevolence."[23] The original intent was to show that one should believe in the Primal Vow and also share that teaching with others. Shinran however, interprets this slightly differently to say that Amida's great compassion spreads and awakens beings everywhere.[24] From Shinran's interpretation, we can see how nembutsu adherents respond in gratitude for the Buddha's benevolence by spreading this teaching to others. We can see here that Shinran is not suggesting shinjin, or true entrusting, only to be a matter of personal faith.

Miki uses the ten benefits to talk about how to express one's gratitude towards the Buddha's benevolence. In particular, he interprets the last feature of the ten benefits to mean that the stage of the rightly settled is not a fixed or stationary "stage" but rather, a dynamic moving or fluctuating moment in which we are constantly "enacting" the stage of the truly settled. Miki goes on to explain that this does not mean that one keeps re-entering the stage of the truly settled, nor does it mean that one actually does the practice of the bodhisattva in the 51st stage, nor does it even mean that one gradually becomes a Buddha. What he shows is that the above stated nine benefits, everything from "being protected and sustained by unseen powers (not praying to gods)" to "constantly practicing great compassion (Dharma propagation)," are all ways in which a person of shinjin, who is now in the stage of the truly settled, understands the Dharma so as to help other people. The resulting actions have nothing to do with whether a person will be born in the Pure Land or not; instead, they are actions or ways to express gratitude for the Buddha's

benevolence.[25] The stage of the truly settled is not static, where one merely holds a title. It is dynamic in which one is "enacting," "being," or "participating in" the stage of the truly settled. In other words, there is active involvement as a person in this stage.

Miki continues to say that one thinks to him/herself, "As a Shin Buddhist, or as a bodhisattva in the stage of the truly settled, what is it that I can do?" and then acts accordingly with the full understanding that one must take responsibility for those actions as a bodhisattva. With shinjin serving as the basis for ethical behavior, one will always endeavor towards making the world seek the Pure Land. [26]

Miki uses shinjin as the basis for ethics and supports his claim by using the section of the "ten benefits in the present life" in the Chapter of Shinjin. He interprets all ten to mean that people of shinjin awaken to the understanding that they must share the teaching of Amida's compassion with other people, thus justifying propagational efforts and the need for Shin ethics. His consideration of the stage of the truly settled as a dynamic phenomenon is not well-known amongst scholarship, but it nevertheless has its supporters. Omine Akira also makes a similar claim about shinjin being dynamic. He explains shinjin as the "eternal now" in which it is of Other Power where one takes part in the great "current of life." The great "current of life" is a circulating flow between the world of *sahā* and the Pure Land. As such, neither the world of delusion or the Pure Land are static, and there is a constant interchange of life taking place between each other.[27] What we can interpret this to mean from Miki and Omine is that they are emphasizing the need to explain shinjin as a dynamic process, or what I call "zero-shinjin." Zero-shinjin shows the nembutsu adherent then, that one's life—a journey of constant and turbulent change—is the opportunity in every moment to express gratitude towards the Buddha's salvific activity. Put differently, every moment of life is a unique opportunity to respond in

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gratitude to the Buddha's calling. Grounded by Amida's vow, the ignorant bodhisattva now has something to live for, a direction to move towards, and reason to share this teaching with others, not as requisites for birth in the Pure Land, but because one now awakens to the dynamic reality and is grateful for it.

Metamorphosis
Transformation of the self

Another ethical principle that can be pointed out is the transformation of the individual, and it is based on the mind of entrusting in Amida Tathagata. The human condition of karmic evil is not changeable as long as one has this physical body, which inherently tries to sustain and expand itself. However, the way in which one views the human condition can change. In *Hymns of the Dharma-Ages* a verse reads, "When the waters—the minds, good and evil, of foolish beings—Have entered the vast ocean Of Amida's Vow of wisdom, they are immediately Transformed into the mind of great compassion."[28] Here the term "transformed," or *tenzunaru* which can also be read *tenjō* 転成, is specifically used. Upon the arising of the entrusting mind, or Amida's mind of wisdom arising within one, sentient beings are transformed into the heart of great compassion. Clearly, there is a transformation that occurs in the individual who awakens to shinjin. That person is now able to see the profundity into one's karmic evil and the need to entrust in Amida's salvific vow.

Furthermore, the Shōshinge states, "But though the light of the sun is veiled by clouds and mists, Beneath the clouds and mists there is brightness, not dark."[29] Although one's blind passions that are like clouds and mist will not disappear, that person will nevertheless be able to see the clouds and mists for what they are precisely because of the light of the sun shining through. Through the wisdom and compassion of Amida Buddha, one can see his/her true nature as a being of blind passions. When one awakens to the human condition, which all other sentient

beings are afflicted in as well, that person can see that his/her actions, regardless of being good or evil, will have an impact on the world. Thus, in solidarity with humanity, one works to better him/her self not in order to attain enlightenment or some higher spiritual state of being, but rather, because one knows that he/she is an active participant in the community of sentient beings and that helping others is in accordance to the spirit of universal fellowship. Amida Buddha provides this understanding. Hence, working for the betterment of society is recognizing and responding in gratitude to Amida's salvific working.

Miki Shōkoku explains this point in much detail using parts of the section known as the "Ten Benefits in the Present Life" found in the Chapter on Shinjin. He says that the second and fifth of the ten benefits discuss how the person of shinjin changes. The individual receives the Name that transcends all mundane values and that person is given absolute truth. Sentient beings of blind passions having karmic evil with no bounds, once receiving shinjin or the highest Dharma virtue, now become aware of the limitations of such mundane values as wealth, power, love, and fame. Then they become true disciples of the Buddha. Miki explains it as having one foot in the world of the mundane, where beings cannot but help to chase after worldly values and be caught in blind passions. But at the same time, people of shinjin have the other foot in the Pure Land, where from time to time they can be free from the constraints of their egos and have moments of clarity. By being able to have this spiritual respite, beings can in turn work "freely" in the world of the mundane, or secular.[30] What Miki means by "freely" is that by awakening to the fact that all worldly values are no longer absolute and are in the end, empty, those people of shinjin begin to shift away from egocentricity to that of working towards helping others. That is why these people are referred to as "bodhisattva," "*myōkōnin*," "highest person," "supreme person," and "equal of perfect enlightenment."

Kenneth Tanaka also talks about this similarly when he states,

> The transformative dimension of trans-ethics functions 'to transform' the person to become more involved in the reflective process of a soteriological quest. Through this ethical involvement, one is gradually illuminated by the principles and inspirations of a higher soteriological life…One will likely experience personal struggles as one attempts to work through the conflict between the ethical ideals and the realities of one's selfish propensities. This gap can serve as a 'mirror' for the person to come to a better appreciation of Shinran's admission about himself as one hopelessly defiled and filled with evil thoughts.[31]

 Tanaka here is addressing that one's ethical involvement will eventually lead one to reflect on him/her self and gradually come to see the truth in the teachings of the Dharma. Furthermore, as the individual begins to see the discrepancies between ethical ideals and the realities of one's egocentricity, that person will come to understand and appreciate the same awakening that Shinran himself came to understand. Tanaka is pointing to the necessity and the crucial role that ethics has to play in one's spiritual path of nembutsu because it eventually leads to the understanding of the truth of the Dharma. As we have seen in the examples above, in Shin ethics there is a clear transformation in the self. When the person awakens to the human condition and can see that all sentient beings are undergoing the same situation, that person truly identifies with all other beings. Therefore, one now works to change his/her attitude and actions towards others and oneself as a reflection of this understanding. The person will not want to intrude, hurt, manipulate, and mistreat other people as much as possible. Through Amida's compassionate activity the individual now sees the importance in placing Amida at the center of one's life by taking part in that compassion.

Evil turning to good

Similar to the previous ethical feature, one's evil turning to good is a specific form of transformation of the self. Whereas the previous section talks about the general transformation of the individual, here we will focus on how the nembutsu practicer views the issue of good and evil. This ethical feature is also based on Amida's mind of entrusting. In *Lamp for the Latter*

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Ages, Shinran describes that people who hear the Vow and are guided by Śākyamuni and Amida Buddha gradually awaken from the "drunkenness of ignorance," rejecting the three poisons and come to prefer the medicine of Amida Buddha.[32] Here we see that when people become aware of the human condition, they see the three poisons or blind passions for what they are and despite not being able to eradicate those attachments completely, they can try to refrain from doing those actions as best they can. The well-known verses in *Hymns of the Pure Land Masters* regarding the ice becoming water states,

> Through the benefit of the unhindered light, We realize shinjin of vast, majestic virtues, And the ice of our blind passions necessarily melts, Immediately becoming water of enlightenment.
>
> Obstructions of karmic evil turn into virtues; It is like the relation of ice and water: The more the ice, the more the water; The more the obstructions, the more the virtues.[33]

We see here that Shinran is referring to ice as one's blind passions or karmic evil. When sentient beings realize just how much they are engulfed in blind passions shackled by their egocentricity, their existence of karmic evil becomes the very evidence in itself that shows why Amida's salvific compassion embraces them. Of course, Shinran is not condoning licensed evil; he is showing that human existence is, in and of itself, already one of karmic evil. However, it is this very existence that reveals to us the salvific activity of Amida Buddha. Hence, the more ice there is, there is the corresponding amount of water as well. In another example, Shinran explains in a letter that nembutsu adherents, although they recognize that they are beings of karmic evil, should not intentionally commit wrong acts of body, speech, and mind. Instead, they should respond in gratitude to the Buddha's benevolence by not intentionally committing evil speech and acts.[34] The more one reflects and understands the depths of one's karmic evil, the more one understands how and why he/she is in fact embraced by Amida Buddha. This, in turn, makes one not want to commit evil, as it becomes an expression of trying to repay the Buddha's salvific activity.

Returning to Miki's discussion of the ten benefits of shinjin, he explains that the third of the ten benefits is where our evil slowly turns into the good. When people have awakened shinjin, they realize that they are beings full of blind passions. Even though they may wonder how it is possible that such an ordinary foolish being can be born in the Pure Land, they are still accepted by Amida Buddha. These people of shinjin will seek to stop doing wrong or evil actions. This is referred to as "evil transforming to good" (*ten'aku jōzen* 転悪成善).[35] Miki is quick to point out however, that this does not allow us to make normative claims about ethics that all other people must follow. He explains that in chapter thirteen of *Tannishō*, Yuien laments that there are those who call themselves nembutsu adherents who say that only good people have the right to say the Name or they post signs that say only people who have or have not done certain things pertaining to a set code of ethics, may join the nembutsu gatherings. Yuien says that these people are showing outwardly signs of good but are inwardly full of falsity and have not truly understood the Dharma.[36] Miki cites this example to show that this understanding of "evil transforming to good" should be utilized as an introspective process that should not be used to standardize a set of normative ethical behavior that all other nembutsu practicers must follow. In other words, "evil transforming to good" does not give sentient beings the right to demand certain ethical behavior from other people. With that said however, he is saying that the person of shinjin slowly begins to move away from selfish ends and works towards the welfare of society as a whole. Like the previous section about the transformation of the self, the nembutsu adherent now understands that it is through the help of Amida's compassionate activity that one can see the collective identity of universal fellowship, that is, the human condition. Now, instead of working solely for one's selfish motivations, one works for the spread of the awakening to this compassionate activity.

Through the mind of sincerity of Amida that is given to all beings, sentient beings' hearts and minds will be flexible, tolerant, supple, and open. Because one's self-power has been negated, the sentient being knows that his/her stubborn views are a product of egocentricity and therefore, the individual is able to "let go" of those previously held strong views. Tokunaga Ichido explains,

> It is when not even the pure undefiled "faith" that one holds eventually gets negated and becomes for the first time shinjin, do we have something that transcends the general notion of religion. At the same time, shinjin transcends the conceptualization and becomes what is known as an "awakening.[37]

One's self-power faith is negated and therein lies the transcendent mind of Other Power. Here we see that after the awakening of shinjin, one can then understand that his/her "faith" that one is conscious of, talks about, or acts upon, has become a conceptual construct, distorted by that person's past karmic experiences. As such, the filtered "faith" becomes a source of possible further attachment to one's personal views. Therefore, the individual understands that at times he/she must have the ability to see the issue of "faith" for what it is and be able to "let it go," as it can cause one to force his/her views onto other people. In other words, because shinjin itself is the mind of flexibility, the "faith" that sentient beings construct in trying to analyze shinjin can be a source of further attachment, and therefore it must be let go from time to time. This idea of being able to "let go" of one's faith is the concrete expression of shinjin being flexible.

In *Larger Sutra*, the thirty-third vow talks about the flexible body and mind. This vow explains how if one receives Amida's light, one becomes soft and gentle in body and mind.[38] Sentient beings, in turn, can try to become more thoughtful and compassionate towards others. Although one may not be able to have great compassion for others in the form of true altruism, he/she does not endeavor to obscure, hinder, or block Amida's compassionate activity from

spreading to all other sentient beings. In this way, one participates in and goes along with the compassionate activity of Amida Buddha.

Inagi Sen'e helps to explain the flexible mind by showing that the mind of doubt towards Amida Buddha's Primal Vow, or in other words self-power, is very strong, firm, and stubborn. In contrast to the mind of doubt, however, there is the mind of *tariki*, which is soft, gentle, supple, and all-embracing.[39] This can be further interpreted to mean that those who are most stubborn in their views are such because they are heavily invested in themselves to the extent that they would not be able to conceive of any other viewpoints outside of their own. Also, they end up clinging to their views, afraid of any outside perspectives that may be just as right as their own. Hence, the most stubborn people often tend to be the most insecure ones, as they are unable to comprehend or even try to relate to a worldview that is outside of their own.

A person of shinjin would understand that his/her worldview is not the only one that is true, and that an individual's own firmly held beliefs are a result of that person's particular set of karmic conditions. This is precisely the point that Shinran was trying to make about self-power being a person's inability to let go of his/her egocentric pride. Other Power then becomes the only remedy that helps the person to understand that he/she is in this particular predicament and thus, it negates this stubborn way of thinking. What arises is a transcendence of one's firmly held beliefs and a newly found source of entrusting that is "adamantine" and unbreakable. However, it is in this unbreakable entrusting that one now has the confidence and security—because it is no longer based on that person's self-power—to be able to accept other points of views and opinions. The Shin understanding of the phrase "letting go" of one's own views and the reason why a person of shinjin can do so, is because the individual has been awakened to the life source of true reality that embraces one as well as all of humanity. Entrusting in this all-embracing

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reality provides the individual with the strength and confidence to live authentically despite other people's differing, opposing, or sometimes, oppressive viewpoints.

A related point to the idea of flexibility is having the tolerance to let people find their spiritual paths. Although Shinran did refer to nembutsu followers not to rely on gods or any other Buddhas other than Amida, he never condones slandering other religious beliefs nor does he claim that the nembutsu path is the *only* one to salvation. Shinran does categorize the competing Buddhist schools of his day to show that the nembutsu path of Other Power is the most effective and quickest way to attain enlightenment for ignorant sentient beings such as himself. [40] However, he is not discrediting other paths to enlightenment, saying that they will not work. He is merely explaining that the path that he has encountered, which is Amida's Primal Vow of Other Power, has awakened true entrusting within him. For that reason, he encourages but does not demand others to follow this path. It is a path that has provided awakening to an ignorant and foolish sentient being such as himself.

In *Gutoku's Notes*, Shinran writes that according to one's past karmic conditions, he/she will be led to the spiritual path that is in accordance to that person. He explains that whatever path each person has decided to follow, that person should indeed seek.[41] Shinran is alluding to the issue of *goen*, or karmic condition, which he famously discusses in the Preface of the *Kyōgyōshinshō*. He also uses the word "encountering" (*kien, gōen* 機縁, 業縁) rather than phrases like "seeking out" the Dharma, or "finding" the truth. In yet another example, he talks about being received as if he is the Dharma's "only child." All of these are used intentionally to help show that it was the Buddha's intent, and not Shinran himself, to use compassionate means to guide him to the path of Other Power. Shinran's past karmic condition has led him to the path of Other Power, and as such, one should not disparage or ridicule others for being on a different

path of the Buddha Dharma. Shinran also states, "Therefore you should not disparage the teachings of other Buddhas or the people who perform good acts other than nembutsu."[42] A person of shinjin's heart and mind being settled makes it irrelevant whether the nembutsu path is superior or inferior to other paths. In this way, true entrusting makes one tolerant of other religious paths.

Thus, one understands that his/her worldview is not the only correct one and therefore, only tolerance and acceptance of others can be the possible promotion of peace. The Shin concept of the flexible shinjin reflects this point and allows the nembutsu practicer to be tolerant, soft, and gentle to people with other ways of thinking. Amida's compassionate activity inspires and allows the individual to be more accepting of others.

Balancing between extremes

We have already discussed this earlier in the section explaining joy and shame, but it does point to the broader ethical principle of balancing between extremes. This ethical feature finds its basis in the mind of entrusting. If we are to associate joy with the "positive" and shame with the "negative," the two counterbalance each other and become serene in the sentient being's heart and mind. The importance of this balance can then be applied to many other aspects of life other than one's entrusting mind. One example that can be given is in *Tannishō*. A work written lamenting the divergent views from Shinran's teaching, the author was keenly aware of two extreme viewpoints that were exploiting the Shin doctrine. James C. Dobbins explains that we see two contending camps both of which misunderstood Shinran's thought.

On the one hand, there is the side that advocated for "licensed evil" because of Amida Buddha's unconditional salvation of both good and evil people. On the other hand, there is the side that emphasized that those who properly understood Shinran's teachings should engage in

rigorous practice and morality. This polarization will turn out to be a consistent problem that will arise within Hongwanji throughout its history.[43] That is to say, the institution's views will shift from one side to the other depending on the given religious and social climate of the specific time era.

Shinran advocated for a balance between extremes thereby promoting a minimalist, humble, and modest way of living. The *Tannishō* is warning its readers to be wary of these two extremes and be mindful of balancing between them. Understanding that sentient beings live and operate in a world of discriminative thinking and egocentricity, Amida's compassion enables people to see the pitfalls of becoming too attached to one side of diametrically opposed entities. Even the middle way can become a form of attachment. But Amida's mind shows the nembutsu adherent the importance for one to try and see the other person's perspective, as they are all sentient beings. Balancing between extremes is a way to take part in and share in Amida's compassionate activity.

Social ethics

The following is an itemized list of Shin ethical characteristics pertaining to the interpersonal or collective, which is called Social Ethics. These are ethical features that are predominant in the Shin teaching although not exhaustive. In addition, as with Individual Ethics, these features are not requisite in attaining birth in the Pure Land; they also should not be considered prescriptive but rather descriptive in their explanation.

These ethical features are the result of looking at Shinran's writings and various recent scholars commentaries on the issue of Shin ethics through the scope of the three minds and three emphatics. Social ethics can be separated into the following groups: 1. limited ethics, 2. social

skepticism, and 3. social solidarity. Ethical features may arguably overlap in certain areas, and perhaps in some instances, features may seem to contradict each other.

Lastly, Shin Social Ethics is different from Individual Ethics in that the object of study is not so much the individual him/her self but instead, the collective group, be it a group of peers, the nuclear family, community, country, humankind, sentient beings, or animate beings. In other words, the main focus is the the collective group's identity or the irreducible social identity.

Limitation of ethics

Amida's mind of sincerity shows sentient beings their limited sincerity. Ethics does not mean sentient beings have to have the answers to every social issue. As a matter of fact, Shin is probably one of the only religions that does not have a problem with saying, "We don't know." One the one hand, in Ugo Dessì's book, *Ethics and Society in Contemporary Shin Buddhism*, his main aim was to demonstrate that Shin Buddhism has not been quiet and quite vocal on certain social issues. However, on the other hand, his research shows that the Shin religious organizations as a collective whole, do not make clear-cut stances on all social problems facing the world today. That is, Shin organizations, particularly Higashi and Nishi Hongwanji, were vocal on such issues as being anti-war, anti-discrimination against Buraku peoples, anti-discrimination against those who suffered from Hansen's Disease, anti-nuclear proliferation, anti-state sponsored Yasukuni pilgrimages, anti-reformation of Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution, pro-separation of Church and State, and anti-nuclear energy. However, other social issues are still left mostly to the individual nembutsu adherents, both lay and priest alike. What about such issues as abortion, LGBTQ rights, organ transplants, stem-cell research, climate change, euthanasia, gun control, Black Lives Matter, and racism?

It can be argued that one who identifies him/her self with a specific religious tradition that is non-Buddhist, tends to have a stance on these social issues that reflect those religious principles, particularly in America. Whether one takes a stand on a specific issue knowing full well what the content is about, is another matter. Nevertheless, they do tend to have a position.

Shin organizations, for the most part, do not tell its people to take a stand on various social issues. It is often criticized for seeming to be lackadaisical in making itself vocal on current affairs. But as Ugo has argued in his book, Shin religious institutions have in fact been proactive. However, I will even go as far as to say that from a doctrinal standpoint, these organizations are in no way obligated to take a stand on most or all social issues, something that is usually expected from a religious tradition. As a matter of fact, Shin should *not* take a stand on certain social issues. The reason for this is that it is evident that Shinran knew very well that social and political climates, ethical standards, religious and philosophical ideologies, and the accepted status quo at any point in space and time, will always be subject to change. When Shinran is explained to have stated, "all matters without exception are empty and false, totally without truth and sincerity. The nembutsu alone is true and real," he really meant it.[44]

But, it does take confidence in taking a stand on a social issue, and this is important in its own right. At the same time, Shin will also say that there are times when abstaining from taking a stand; or recognizing that there are instances when we just do not know what the proper course of action is; or agreeing with neither side of the argument, are all legitimate reasons to abstain from taking a stance. This approach is a very foreign concept to those of us who are raised in western countries such as America. A commonly known phrase to many Americans is Edmund Burke's quote that says, "All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing." Taking a stand on social issues and believing in oneself to make the right decision is an

essential value in western culture. It exhibits not only strength and bravery of the autonomous individual but also self-righteous behavior that reflects divine character. However, Shin will say that almost nothing is as black-and-white as people would like to make it out to be, and therefore, the proper course of action is to try and make the best well-informed decision possible in every situation. In other words, there is no definitive right or wrong answer, ever.

John Paraskevopoulos adds to this conversation when he states, "Jodo Shinshu is a spiritual tradition and a subtle, profound and demanding one at that. It does not constitute or imply a specific social ideology and does not envisage an ideal state of affairs for the world over and above its spiritual aims."[45] He explains that religious identity does not exactly shape ethical identity and Shin Buddhism's primary purpose is a spiritual aim and not to make claims outside of what its intended purpose is. In fact, based on his paper entitled, "Amida's Dharma in the Modern World," one might read this and argue against my claim to use shinjin as a basis for Shin ethics. In another part of this paper, it states,

> Nevertheless, we must be careful not to use spiritual insights (which are not always amenable to adequate verbal formulation) as a catalyst for initiating social commentary where this is only likely to fuel confusion, uncertainty and possibly resentment. The world is full of opinions on questions of moral and social importance and it is well-nigh impossible to establish any kind of unanimity or consensus on such matters even among people who share the same spiritual beliefs.[46]

Paraskevopoulos is explaining that shinjin should not be the basis for initiating social commentary because it is likely to confuse the adherents and even worse, foment resentment. He also interestingly shows that spiritual insights, or shinjin, can be depicted and explained in many different ways—inadvertently because of the use of language—so it would not serve as a legitimate basis for standardizing ethical principles in Shin. I share this sentiment in that shinjin's conceptual formulation will be different between people, thereby making it difficult to standardize ethical principles solely through shinjin.[47] I also agree that shinjin should not be used

to make direct social commentary. My claim, if anything, is actually taking Paraskevopoulos'
position a bit further.

We both agree that shinjin cannot be used to make social commentary and to take certain
stances on a specific social issue. However, I want to push the line and see how far we can take
Shin ethics in terms of the distinction between what Shin can and cannot say about ethics from a
doctrinal standpoint. In other words, what are the concrete and comprehensive ethical features of
Shin that can inform the nembutsu adherent of how to think about a given social issue?
Essentially, I am looking for the tools that help one to make a decision on what the Shin
Buddhist approach would be—a decision that ultimately is left up to the individual or group.
Shin ethics then, stops short of taking haphazard stances on a broad range of social issues. This is
because not only does this go beyond what Shin doctrine aims to do, but also because Shinran's
thought intentionally limits specific ethical stances that can be taken. Limited ethics reflects the
fact that sentient beings, whether on an individual or collective level, live and operate in a world
of discriminative thinking and egocentricity. Shin Buddhists should work towards the spread of
the teaching of Amida's compassionate activity as foremost.

Social Skepticism
Questioning secular authority and human law

Another ethical feature that is based on the entrusting mind of Amida Buddha is questioning
and being suspicious of the motives of secular authority and humankind's law of justice. This is
what is meant by the phrase "social skepticism." We saw evidence of this in previous chapters
but beginning with Shinran, the Shin movement has had a history of being openly critical of
governmental authority. This is primarily due to the consistent persuasion of the established
Buddhist schools of Nara, Shingon, and Tendai, who tried to destabilize the accruing influence
of the new wave of Kamakura era schools, the Pure Land being at the forefront. Shinran was not

so much against the secular government because of what it stood for. In *Hymns in Praise of Prince Shotoku*, there are a number of verses praising the actions of the prince for ousting the views of Moriya of Yuge, an antagonist in the spread of the Buddha Dharma.[48] For Shinran, his primary complaint was against any forces that would try to inhibit the spread of the nembutsu teaching, not the legitimacy of governmental rule itself. In another example, Shinran writes in the Postscript,

> The emperor and his ministers, acting against the dharma and violating human rectitude, became enraged and embittered. As a result, Master Genkū—the eminent founder who had enabled the true essence of the Pure Land way to spread vigorously [in Japan]—and a number of his followers, without receiving any deliberation of their [alleged] crimes, were summarily sentenced to death or were dispossessed of their monkhood, given [secular] names, and consigned to distant banishment. I was among the latter.[49]

Here we see Shinran expressing his grievance against the imperial court for persecuting the nembutsu teaching and banishing its ardent followers.

We can also see his general distrust of secular authority by his overall attitude of the nobility, the upper and wealthy class. Shinran identified himself with the lower classes of society of his time. Shigaraki explains that Shinran, "continually placed himself in the position of the masses who stood in opposition to those upper classes and who lived at the base of society—those who were called, "evil people," "who are like stones and tiles and pebbles."[50] In fact, it was what he experienced as a Tendai priest, where Shinran felt political power and secular affairs overtook any religious significance of being on Mt. Hiei, that prompted him to leave the mountain. In addition, there are certain references he makes where he acknowledges that he portrays himself to be wise and good on the outside, when really, he is evil and fake on the inside.[51] Shinran's brutal honesty with himself left no space to indulge in the privileges of secular—and religious—prestige and authority.

Finally, in *A Collection of Letters*, Shinran explains that he has never told anyone to rely on "outside people [such] as powerful supporters," in order to help spread the nembutsu teaching.[52] Here, Shinran is telling a fellow nembutsu follower that he has never told anyone to rely on influential figures of society to help spread the teaching. This is because as the Buddha has taught, there would be times when the privileged class will attempt to obstruct the nembutsu in the future. In other words, the only reason why those in power might be lending their support now is because the nembutsu teaching suits their needs to fulfill their own personal agenda. However, in the future, when the nembutsu teaching no longer supports their motives, they will find a way to oust it. Shinran explains that this is why secular powers are not to be trusted: they use the nembutsu teaching for their own benefit and to meet their own ends, hence the term "outside people." Shin ethics maintains keeping a distance from and questioning the motives of secular authority and those of the privileged class. Ethical, secular, social, and political agendas are all subordinate to keeping Amida's great compassion at the center of ethical action.

Rejecting the mundane world

Another ethical feature that has to do with the view of society is the idea of "rejecting the mundane world" (*yowo itou* 世を厭う). This idea is based on the mind of aspiring for birth in the Pure Land. "Rejecting the mundane world," is not saying that one should hate this world and therefore, should hate everyone and everything in it. Rather, this is pointing to the idea that this world of the secular or mundane should not be taken as the absolute world. That is, the Pure Land that transcends the world of discriminative thinking is the absolute reality and the world of delusion is one of relativity and impermanence.

Shinran mentions the idea of rejecting the mundane world in various places of his works. In *Lamp for the Latter Ages*, he states, "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 and live the nembutsu."[53] In a similar quote he states, "Signs of long years of saying the nembutsu and aspiring for birth can be seen in the change in the heart that had been bad and in the deep warmth for friends and fellow-practicers; this is the sign of rejecting the world."[54] In yet another quote Shinran writes, "In people who have long heard the Buddha's Name and said the nembutsu, surely there are signs of rejecting the evil of this world and signs of their desire to cast off the evil in themselves."[55] Rejecting the mundane world is not original to Shinran's thought and can be traced back to Pure Land thought in general. Genshin makes reference to this in the *Essentials for Attaining Birth* (*Ōjōyōshū* 往生要集).[56]

What we can gather from these quotes is that those who understand the nembutsu path and now aspire for birth in the Pure Land have a change in their hearts, desire to cast off evil in themselves and of this world, and ultimately reject this world as not being the final and absolute one. Seeing that this world is impermanent, transitory, illusory, and deluded, sentient beings understand that while they must live in this world until their passing, there is a greater reality that works beyond the world of relativity in which one can awaken to here and now. Evidence that Shinran rejects the mundane world can be seen in many areas of his writing, but what is arguably the most notable is the phrase he uses, "neither monk nor layman" (*hisō hizoku* 非僧非俗). In *Kyōgyōshinshō*, he states, "Hence, I am now neither a monk nor one in worldly life. For this reason, I have taken the term Toku ["stubble-haired"] as my name."[57] Neither strictly being a religious person symbolized as the cleanly-shaven monk, the stubble-haired Shinran recognizes that his own self-power efforts were not sufficient in securing his path to liberation. However, at the same time, he also does not fully identify with the world of the mundane in that he has awakened to the absolute reality that embraces this fleeting world of delusion.

It is through zero-shinjin that one can see the juxtaposition of dual and nondual, and the fake and real realities. Zero-shinjin shows the delusory nature of secular authority as a whole and how it is ultimately not absolute. Shigaraki points out the following:

> It is this complete rejection and de-absolutization of the logic and value system of the secular order, which serve as the bases of our everyday human lives, that is in itself important…Thus, given the fundamental rejection of the secular world's systems of logic and value in Shinran's teachings, it is quite natural that ethical norms and principles are not present therein.[58]

Shin ethics involves first the rejection or de-absolutizing this world value system. One realizes the unreal and fake nature of this world of delusion and then rejects it by way of the arising of shinjin. Only when one is awakened by Amida's vow and aspires to be born in the Pure Land, can that person have a new zest for living in this life. In other words, upon the absolute negation of this world there is the absolute affirmation of it as well.

Social Solidarity
Universal Identity

One of the major Shin ethical features is the importance of community, relationships, and solidarity, which arises when the individual awakens to the human condition and the need for Amida's salvific activity.

In his discussion of the significance of Ajātaśatru, Kakehashi Jitsuen explains that because Ajātaśatru himself was saved from the pain and affliction he suffered from the heinous crimes committed against his parents, he sought out to save all other sentient beings. He volunteered himself to undergo the pain and suffering for the sake of all other beings. Because of his efforts, countless numbers of people followed the Buddhist path as well. His ordeal eventually became the opportunity to have many others encounter the Buddha's teachings.

Kakehashi goes on to explain that the salvation of Amida does not allow for sentient beings to commit evil nor does it cancel their karmic offenses. Instead, the salvific activity provides them with the correct wisdom that lets them see their evil karmic actions for what they are. It

also gives sentient beings the strength and courage to be able to accept and take on the consequences and results of those evil karmic actions. As a result, this completely turns over beings' previously egocentric way of thinking into now identifying with other people's pain, which is expressed in the character "悲," and for one to hope for the happiness and true joy for all others, which is expressed in the character "慈." The two characters *jihi* 慈悲 together mean compassion. Sentient beings come to understand the significance of this teaching and continue to be nurtured and brought up in this wisdom.[59]

Kakehashi shows that when the individual comes to understand the universal human condition, that person awakens to the true identity of all sentient beings and thus, can now empathize and hope for the true happiness of all others. The spiritual path of Shin does not stop at the individual and it is not purely a private matter. In other words, shinjin is not just an issue about individual faith. Shinjin has an aspect of social identity, mutual cooperation, and collective support, the basis of which is found in the human condition.

Miki also supports the idea that shinjin involves working with and sharing the Dharma with others. He considers the seventh, eighth, and ninth benefits of the "ten benefits in the present life" which discuss having great joy and constantly responding in gratitude for Amida's benevolence. He argues that beginning with Kakunyo all the way down to the Edo period scholars, these benefits have been interpreted to mean only that one should respond in gratitude by reciting the nembutsu. Specifically, when we refer to the Name being the "seed of truth" and entrusting being, "the mind full of truth, reality, and sincerity,"[60] Miki argues that the term "full" means *michi afureru* 満ちあふれる, which translates to, "being filled to the point where it overflows." This means that the virtues of the Name that is given to all sentient beings, who then

receive it in true entrusting, will fill them to the point where the virtues "spill out" of them, influencing other people.

Living in nembutsu means that one will help spread the virtues of the Name to others. Therefore, the Edo scholars and Kakunyo were wrong in emphasizing only the relationship between Amida Buddha and sentient being, says Miki. He urges that the relationship should not stop there and explains that there should be more emphasis not just between Amida Buddha and the sentient being, but also from one sentient being to another. An example of this is when Shinran spent the latter half of his life trying to spread the Dharma in the Kanto region and Kyoto.[61] Here we can see that Shinran was thinking about other people and working in Shin ethics from the basis of shinjin. Shinjin, therefore, must be refocused on the relationship between Amida Buddha to one person, *and then* onto other people. We see from the examples above that Kakehashi and Miki both believe that there is a social aspect in shinjin.

Another important idea related to this is reflected in the words "*ondōbō* 御同朋" and "ondōgyō 御同行," both of which mean "fellow nembutsu practicers" but I translate simply as "Dharma friends." These are of course, people who are on the nembutsu path together and see each other as equals as they are all the Buddha's children.[62] Shinran refers to this in the different letters he writes, and it shows his spirit behind how he views his relationships with other nembutsu adherents. Although there might be differences between what organization one may belong to, how to discuss the nembutsu, or what teacher one is most influenced by, it is important to remember that from Shin ethics, fellow Dharma friends are moving together in pursuit of deepening their understanding of the Dharma.

How we consider ourselves in relation to other people, how we view humanity and the world in which we live in, how best do we create a society that will be open to listening to the

teachings of the Dharma, are all ways in which Shin ethics has a social component that nembutsu adherents should always consider.

Social compassion

Shin agrees with the fundamental Mahayana principle that compassion is the underlying life force that connects all sentient beings together. As mentioned a number of times already, awakening to this universal fellowship is done through understanding the human condition. This corresponds to the entrusting mind of Amida Buddha.

In one of Nakamura Hajime's books, he concludes by explaining what Buddhist ethics should be. He finds that Buddhist ethics should be the implementation of compassion found in the actions that help move humankind in the direction towards the Buddhist principle of "self and other as not separate" (*jitafuni* 自他不二). In other words, people should try to abandon the egocentric self and let others live well. He then states, "Although this may be extremely difficult to do for a *bonbu,* nevertheless, any infinitesimal move towards the light [of the Dharma] will bring about true happiness in one's life."[63] Sentient beings should act based on the principle of *jitafuni* even though they are unable to wholly and altruistically carry this out.

From a Shin perspective, this is a realistic and concrete approach that can prove to be helpful to the nembutsu adherent. Not only does this have a direct link to a Mahayana principle, but it also gives Shin a chance to provide its unique contribution to this principle by explaining the three emphatics in Shinran's thought. It should be explicit that sentient beings, even though they may be ignorant and filled with blind passions, can still participate in the dynamically flowing force of compassion, i.e., Amida's compassionate working. As recipients of the Buddha's compassionate activity, sentient beings are playing a role in the dialogue one has with Amida

Buddha on the issue of liberation from suffering. How is this not already participating in compassion?

In his paper entitled, "A Shin Buddhist Social Ethics" John S. Yokota provides a convincing argument about how Shin Buddhists can talk about and view compassion. He states,

> In Shin Buddhism…one is always the total opposite of Amida, thus to talk of actualizing or reflecting Amida's compassion makes no sense. However, if we accept this broader meaning of the compassion of emptiness and if we accept the relatedness of the sacred (ultimate) and the profane (society) and, finally, if we accept the preference for the compassion that is Amida as the standard for society, then I can see no reason why this kind of language of actualizing the compassion of Amida in society cannot be used…Paradoxically, it is precisely in this reality that we individually and as a society are not Amida that the need for Amida's compassion is so very real.[64]

In the admitting of one's incapability to exhibit true, altruistic, and everlasting compassion, one cannot actualize Amida's great compassion. However, in the dualistic framework of the secular world of delusion on the one hand and Amida's world of the Pure Land on the other—which is the world of nondualistic zero—when sentient beings accept the truth of Amida's compassion, then it is plausible to discuss how to make known that compassion in the world of delusion. Put differently, in recognizing that compassionate activity always leads back to Amida Buddha's salvific working, and that one can never actualize true compassion from the individual's own power, then sentient beings should talk about how they are to participate in this compassionate activity and how to help spread it in this world of delusion. Yokota also mentions the word "approximating" compassion, as in sentient beings cannot ever actualize Amida's compassion but should make the effort to somehow inch towards it in this world. His explanation is helpful in understanding how a Shin Buddhist can approach the issue of ethics through compassion. Essentially, Shin ethics is the field of study that extends the soteriological framework to the secular world of delusion and seeing what patterns can come about or what nembutsu adherents can work towards. Explaining that compassion works only on the side of

Amida Buddha is not only too theoretical without any concrete value, but it is also doctrinally

incorrect.[65]

Fukagawa Sencho also makes a similar claim. He states,

> The other person is not simply the other person, but one who equally receives Tathagata's working
> and in this way is our neighbor. As such, if our neighbor is in a difficult situation and needs our
> help, even though we might have our limitations, we cannot just stand by and do nothing and
> merely consider that person a stranger. This is the basic stance of a nembutsu person.[66]

A scholar who specializes in Shin propagation, Fukagawa shares in the sentiment that Shin

Buddhists can participate in Shin ethics because we are all objects of Amida's compassionate

activity. To not be concerned with our neighbors is not to understand the true spirit in Amida's

altruistic compassion. Therefore, we can understand Fukagawa to agree with the idea that we are

a part of the universal fellowship.

In order to exhibit Shin Buddhism in daily life, nembutsu adherents must acknowledge that

they can participate in compassion by spreading Amida's activity. In *A Collection of Letters*,

Shinran states, "While holding the nembutsu in your heart and saying it always, please pray for

the present life and also the next life of those who slander it."[67] Here he shows that a nembutsu

adherent expresses concern for those who are either unfamiliar with the teaching or intentionally

disparage it. Rather than to respond back with animosity, Shinran says to "pray," or in this case

hold in one's thoughts and say the nembutsu, by having the hope that one day these slanderers of

the Dharma can properly encounter the salvific Dharma as well. By keeping Amida's Primal

Vow and great compassion as the central focus, nembutsu practicers can take part in, or

participate in, compassionate activity towards others.

An overall understanding of Shin ethics
Self-benefit and benefitting others redefined

The three parts of Shin ethics, namely Soteriological, Individual, and Social provide an original

analysis of the issue of ethics and it gives new meaning to the phrase, "self-benefit and benefitting

others" (*jiri rita* 自利々他). "Self-benefit" means to engage in religious practice and spiritual cultivation so that one can attain the benefit of eventual enlightenment. "Benefitting others" means to help others by bestowing upon them various virtues through merit-transference. This is the ideal of the Mahayana bodhisattva path where the completion of the former is the completion of the latter and vice versa, known as *jiri rita enman* 自利々他円満.[68] Although originally this is referring to the person who engages in bodhisattva practice to eventually attain enlightenment and then work for the benefit of saving all other sentient beings, the Shin perspective is different in that Dharmākara Bodhisattva is the one who completes both self-benefit and benefitting others, and then bestows that fulfilled benefit to all sentient beings.

However, when we look at this phrase from the perspective of Shin ethics, we arrive at a new viewpoint. Upon the awakening of soteriological foundation of Shin ethics, one now sees that the individual and social aspects do two things: 1. Awakens the individual to the "universal identity," which can interchangeably be called "universal fellowship," and 2. Enables the individual to become his/her authentic self and a truly independent person, freely participating within great compassion. When self-power becomes absolutely negated and one awakens to the compassion of Amida Buddha, that is arguably "self-benefit and benefitting others" already taking place. The reason is that when one awakens to the great compassion of Amida Buddha, or the greater reality that all beings are a part of, that person now understands that all sentient beings belong to the universal identity. That is to say, the individual is no longer the center of his/her own world, but rather, a part of the collective universal fellowship of all sentient beings.

Here then, the person realizes that all sentient beings alike are ordinary beings of blind passions shackled in the realm of birth-and-death. When there are moments of respite from one's own

incessant clouding of blind passions, that person can see glimpses of true solidarity with fellow sentient beings, who are also acting accordingly to their own respective cloud of blind passions.[69]

At the same time, upon awakening to the common identity, one is now able to live an authentic life as a truly independent person, freely able to be him/her self within great compassion. When there is the absolute negation of self-power, that moment of zero-shinjin is the plateau in which one awakens to the greater reality of Amida's working. This then enables one to affirm the life that he/she is living. Kakue Miyaji refers to this when he talks about the idea of absolute negation. He states,

> This person [of shinjin] can understand that even if he/she cannot attain such things as health and wealth, life will still be given even more meaning and value because of this higher value. Here the person, based on his/her experience of the essence of the value of happiness (ideal objective), transcends the life of simply pursuing the value of happiness itself, and seeks the life of an even higher value. In this way, understanding the essence of various cultural values means the same as understanding its limitations. And in understanding those true limitations, as one will inevitably negate them, he/she will inevitably seek after an even higher value.[70]

What is termed "higher value," or "ideal objective," here means true reality. In other words, upon awakening to this true reality, one no longer finds absolute value in secular values such as justice, piety, health, and wealth. Only when one realizes the empty nature of all these things and that there is a higher absolute reality that transcends all mundane values, one can now genuinely re-affirm those secular values. In other words, in absolute negation of the mundane world provided by way of the supramundane, then there is the absolute re-affirmation of the mundane world. When one sees the limitations in the mundane world and particularly of him/her self, that person no longer is bound by the limitations of the human condition. Even life-and-death itself no longer becomes a limitation in the sense that one no longer needs to fear the life process of death. Because of this, one can now live firmly, confidently, with ease, and in serene equanimity despite the turbulence of life. Also, having found this peace, the nembutsu adherent now lives freely and able to be him/her true self. In other words, the Buddha Dharma is not something that one must engage in

rigorous practice and self-cultivation in order to attain some higher state. Instead, the Buddha Dharma teaches how one can live authentically, grounded in Amida's great compassion here and now.

Shinran discusses the idea of living an authentic life in several areas. Firstly, his own life is an example of a nembutsu adherent living freely. Banished in exile from the capital, Shinran moved from one remote area to another throughout Japan, spreading the nembutsu teaching to anyone who would hear him. His *magnum opus* the *Kyōgyōshinshō* and his letters to his followers in the Kanto region are not just evidence of his propagational efforts, but more importantly, they show Shinran living authentically the way he felt he needed to live. That life was one of gratitude and trying to repay the Buddha's benevolence by sharing the teaching of great compassion.

A well-known discussion by Shinran is how he explains that one is saved as if that person were the Buddha's "only child."[71] Also, in *Tannisho*, Shinran is said to have made a similar statement as the following, "When I consider deeply the Vow of Amida, which arose from five kalpas of profound thought, I realize that it was entirely for the sake of myself alone!"[72] These quotes explain that the Buddha accepts and embraces all sentient beings equally as if that person was the Buddha's only child. However, in the context of our discussion here the phrases "only child" and "myself alone" refer to the fact that a person's unique karmic path that led to the encountering of the Dharma cannot be repeated by anyone else. Hence, this is all the more reason why awakening to the Dharma is difficult because there is no specific playbook that gets the individual to encounter it. Each path to the Dharma is unique and this is also why each person's life of gratitude will also be unique. It is often reflected in Shinran's writings and orthodox Shin tradition that to respond in gratitude is to say the Name. However, it can be argued that one's life of gratitude can in itself be

a proper response to the Buddha's benevolence. Thus, one can be a doctor, a teacher, or any other profession and live a life of gratitude to the Buddha's compassion that is authentic to that individual.

One of the most important cultural values of not only the West but of modern society as a whole is the idea of individuality and the freedom to choose one's destiny. Shin Buddhism has always agreed with this point, but there is more of a need to make this known to the outside world. The key is to explain that only when there is an absolute negation of self-power can there be an absolute affirmation of one's true authentic self. In other words, the Buddha Dharma brings out the authentic individual, allowing that person to live freely without the fear and anxiety of life's challenges or the inevitable death. Because of this, one can express his/her gratitude by living a life mindful of Amida's great compassion.

I have explained that through Shin ethics one awakens to the universal identity as well as the authentic self. This ties in with the idea of self-benefit and benefitting others. When one awakens to the collective fellowship, that is self-benefit. Conversely, when one establishes the authentic self, this is benefitting others. Although this may at first seem to be crisscrossed, in actuality this way of pairing is appropriate. When one awakens to the collective fellowship, that individual no longer relies on self-power and now identifies in solidarity with other beings. Hence, the self "benefits" in the sense that the individual is no longer alone in solitude, feeling that he/she is the only one caught in the realm of suffering and unable to escape. However, it is important to note that the self "benefits" not because of what one accomplishes but rather because one awakens to the greater sustaining life current of Amida's compassion.

On the other hand, when one establishes an authentic self, one now works for the benefit of all other beings of this world by taking part in the dynamic reality of compassion. One does not need to be a Shin priest to do this. The individual needs only to be mindful of the nembutsu and live

with gratitude for Amida's great compassion. This life journey will naturally make the individual a source of inspiration for other nembutsu practicers. In this way, one does in fact "benefit" others but again, only upon the awakening to the underlying source that is Amida's great compassion. Here we have a new way of looking at the phrase, "self-benefit and benefitting others 自利々他."

In this way, as an "ignorant bodhisattva" one already embarks on the path to eventual birth in the Pure Land.

This new interpretation of "self-benefit and benefitting others" has important ramifications as it shows that the individual who awakens to this understanding naturally works to help spread the teaching of great compassion for others. In this way, one can firmly say that he/she is on the bodhisattva path while remaining an ordinary person full of blind passions. What must be clear is that upon the awakening of entrusting one does not cease to be a *bonbu*. Rather, as a sentient being him/her self, facing the realities of day-to-day suffering and going through the process of life-and-death firsthand, the nembutsu adherent encounters the Dharma and awakens to the universal identity and the authentic self, thereby taking part in the spread of Amida's compassionate activity. This new interpretation of the meaning of self-benefit and benefitting others 自利々他 is a re-focusing of the individual on the Mahayana bodhisattva path.

Buddha Dharma as the basis for ethical life

Soteriological Ethics is the basis for both the Individual and Social ethics in Shin, which means that ethical actions must center on Amida Buddha or the Dharma. In other words, Amida Buddha must be considered the focal point of ethical action, as opposed to centering one's ethical behavior around the individual's interests, needs, and motivations. Because it is Amida's three minds found in the Primal Vow that is given to all beings, their ethical life must be directed towards seeking the Dharma. As Dennis Hirota puts it, "The obligation of the Shin path is above

all to know the self and world by the exercise of such awareness, for such knowing allows for the arising of a world of action in which the reified self is no longer absolute center."[73] Becoming aware of the working of the Dharma, one no longer places him/her self at the center but rather, the salvific working of Amida Buddha now becomes the focal point of one's life. This can be seen as the essential motivation for Shin ethics. Whether one is unfamiliar with the tradition and is pursuing to deepen his/her understanding of the Dharma, or one is already on the nembutsu path and is continuing to listen to the Buddha Dharma calling, nembutsu adherents are all moving towards the direction of Amida Buddha. In one of his letters, Shinran writes,

> Those who feel uncertain of birth should say the nembutsu aspiring first for their own birth. Those who feel that their own birth is completely settled should, mindful of the Buddha's benevolence, hold the nembutsu in their hearts and say it to respond in gratitude to that benevolence, with the wish, "May there be peace in the world, and may the Buddha's teaching spread!"[74]

Whether one feels that his/her birth is settled or not, that person should say the nembutsu and be mindful of the Buddha's benevolence, wishing for there to be peace in the world and the Buddha's teachings to spread. Thus, all nembutsu adherents are moving together towards the calling voice of Amida Buddha and working for peace in this world.

Ethical behavior with Amida at the center as opposed to the self, means focusing on Amida Buddha as the mirror which reflects the true self. Kakehashi Jitsuen explains this in the following way. He states,

> When one becomes aware of the individual's truly evil nature, that person recognizes the truth of the Buddha Dharma that is the Primal Vow. The exclusion clause awakens us and makes us see that our backs were always turned towards Amida. We then feel shame and then take refuge in the Dharma. This is known as the "turning of the heart." It is the process in which no longer does the individual place the self as most important, but rather, the Tathagata is at the center in order to understand [the meaning of] one's life.[75]

Through the process of *eshin*, or turning of one's heart, the individual places the Tathagata as the center when reflecting on one's life. Kakehashi also explains that the exclusion clause's purpose in the *Larger Sutra* is not to literally exclude people who commit these offenses, but

rather to show what all sentient beings have been guilty of: relying on the self and denying the truth of the Buddha Dharma. Only when sentient beings see through the Dharma the true human condition and the need for Amida's salvific working, do they come to realize and entrust in the vow.

Another important point to note is found in the phrase, "how much I have been hurting the Buddha's heart and mind." Here we see true reality, the Buddha Dharma, personified with anthropomorphic features. Acting unethically means hurting Amida Buddha as if one is hurting his/her loving parent. Thus, actions that are good help the Buddha as if to help one's parent. In this case, one recognizes Amida's great compassion and sees that he/she has lived unaware of it all this time. Actions that are unethical, hurt, slander, reject, and belittle Amida's Primal Vow. In much the same way, as one grows to express gratitude for the loving care given to that person by one's parent, the nembutsu adherent responds in gratitude to Amida's compassion by living according to the nembutsu teaching.

Furthermore, Shin ethics is different from western philosophical ethics in that Shin places the Buddha Dharma as the standard for ethical behavior as opposed to philosophy, which places trust in the rational human mind to decide what ethical standards should be. In other words, Shin ethics has little in common with normative ethics. There are two main problems with the western philosophical approach, according to Shin. The first is the problem of the individual, which has been discussed extensively in this paper. The second is a result of the first point in that because the human mind is indeed not rational or reasonable, any standard for normative ethical behavior will always end up being either too theoretical because it does not take into account human desires and emotions, or too inconsistent and unstable because such is the fickle nature of blind passions. Thus, from these examples we can see that the Dharma or Amida Buddha must be at

the center of one's ethical behavior and not the individual's self-interest. A nembutsu adherent seeks the Tathagata and understands that there is a greater reality other than the one in which the individual is at the center. Through this understanding, that person can better understand how to act "ethically" according to the Shin teaching.

Possible concerns with the Pragmatic Approach

One argument that can be made against my proposition of the Pragmatic Approach is that if a person acts or presumes to act on compassion, then could it not be the case that someone will carry out an act of terrorism and kill thousands of people all in the name of Great Compassion? Alternatively, as we saw in World War II, couldn't someone use compassion to justify acts of aggression on foreign soil? The only rebuttal to this question is the answer I can *only* give considering the parameters of Shin ethics. That is, sentient beings will always act based on their blind passions. The only thing we can do is the best we can do, knowing we are sentient beings with egocentric limitations. In other words, we do the best we can to reflect on what actions would be the best ones to take. We may fail to meet those expectations that we set for ourselves; we may fail to meet the expectations of society, but at least we tried our best to live on the nembutsu path and with Amida's compassion in mind.

The Pragmatic Approach does not claim to be the end-all methodology to Shin ethics that will always provide the right course of action for the nembutsu adherent. It is not claiming to be a panacea, nor will it foresee or address all complex social issues. Shin ethics presupposes the fallacy of human discriminative thinking or human reasoning. Even with the best intentions, sentient beings will always have a small amount of self-interest invested in any action and thought taken—such is the nature of sentient beings. Subsequently, conflicts and disagreements will arise; people will hurt one another physically, emotionally, and psychologically. The

Pragmatic Approach is not claiming to be able to resolve the issue of blind passions. Instead, it reasserts what it means to be living on the nembutsu path in the 21ˢᵗ century; it reflects on why Amida's compassionate activity is essential for our society to know about; and finally, it focuses on how best to share this indispensable teaching to others we share this world with.

The critique of my claim might continue by saying the following: "How then, is this approach to Shin ethics, any different from or better than the two truths theory"? To which I would reply by explaining that the Pragmatic Approach, resolves the problem of the supramundane versus mundane truths conflicting with each other, and the problem of the teaching of "receiving" being misconstrued as social passivity. The Pragmatic Approach is based on the doctrine of Shinran and it does not recognize—but also does not tolerate disrespect—of other religious views such as *kami* veneration. More importantly, the Pragmatic Approach returns the focus of all Shin Buddhists back on Amida Buddha's compassionate activity exclusively.

Actually, the two truths theory, may at times prove to be very convenient and useful. However, it ultimately pressures the individual to live on the nembutsu path only when it is in the best interest for him/her to do so in terms of worldly benefits. Then at other times, the individual is pressured to follow another set of rules and guidelines when those suit his/her interests best. However, Shinran at one point states,

1. Why do you obstruct and confuse me with what is not the essential practice corresponding to my conditions?
2. What I desire is the practice corresponding to my conditions; that is not what you seek.
3. What you desire is the practice corresponding to your conditions; that is not what I seek. Each person's performance of practices in accord with his aspirations unfailingly leads to rapid emancipation.
4. If you desire to undertake practice, by all means follow the method of practice corresponding to your own conditions. In return for a little effort, you will gain great benefit.[76]

Here we see that Shinran encourages that those who have chosen to follow a path other than nembutsu go on it fully and wholeheartedly. But he himself has chosen to follow the nembutsu

because it matches his past karmic conditions that helped to create his encountering with the Dharma. As such, he chooses to go on the nembutsu path wholeheartedly. Here we see Shinran explaining that those who choose to follow the nembutsu should only be concerned with this and nothing else, which would include *kami* veneration or any other mundane systems of truths that will not lead to true liberation. Shinran was exclusive in his decision to follow the nembutsu teaching, as all Shin Buddhists should be as well. The two truths theory deviates from this understanding. It encourages people to choose the nembutsu teaching in certain instances and then choose to follow a different set of principles at other times. This can disrupt the values of a nembutsu practicer. Thus, the two truths theory distorts the Shin ethical identity by defeating the spiritually authentic individual.

Another possible problem for the Pragmatic Approach is to argue that a drastic shift from an age-old ethical policy such as the two truths theory would prove to be too complicated. Even if we look at the values of the modern world, the idea of the separation of Church and State, or in Japan's case Religion and State, is very similar to the bifurcation found in the two truths theory. As such, it would be almost impossible to separate ourselves from this way of thinking altogether. To this point, I agree. I do not believe that we can entirely divorce ourselves from this way of thinking of compartmentalizing our personal religious values from mundane ones. There is a tendency to feel the need to drive a wedge between the private versus public self, religious versus secular values, the inner versus the outer self, and religious principles versus the rule of law. This has been ingrained in the modern world's values, particularly in the West ever since Descartes' theory to separate the body and mind.

However, that does not mean that we should then give up and force ourselves to commit solely to this pattern of bifurcation such as the two truths theory. If we must separate the

mundane from the supramundane truths, let us put that in our premise when proceeding to think about Shin ethics *and then* move on from there. Now that we know from historical experience how the two truths theory can be detrimental to the Shin Buddhist religious identity, we can then firmly understand that our approach to Shin ethics cannot stop at the simple bifurcation of the mundane and supramundane. We must go from there to the Pragmatic Approach and then think about how best to apply Shin values to ethical action.

Another way to answer this concern is by explaining that for about 700 years, the two truths theory has had a monopoly on the conversation of Shin ethics. In other words, the two truths theory was the paradigm for discussing this field. It is safe to say that history has been waiting for about fifty years now since the close of World War II for a paradigm shift in this area of research. That shift should be to the Pragmatic Approach. The reason for this is because of the problem that the legacy of the two truths theory leaves behind. I do not believe that Shin Buddhists will over-enthusiastically jump on this new proposition which changes the way we must think about Shin social engagement. But the Pragmatic Approach is an alternative to the two truths theory, a new idea which has not been posited before. This research will be considered a success if it gets the reader to at least entertain the notion that there are other ways to think about Shin ethics other than the two truths theory, one of which is the Pragmatic Approach.

conclusion

Shin ethics is based on the idea that the people on the nembutsu path take part in compassionate activity by placing Amida at the focal point of their ethical behavior. They participate in the greater reality of dynamic wisdom and compassion by living according to the Shin teaching. This is what is meant by, "repaying the Buddha's benevolence" (*button hōsha* 仏

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恩報謝). Nembutsu adherents "approximate" (*ritateki* 利他的) compassion by drawing inspiration from Amida Buddha and emulating that compassionate activity in this world.

We started this chapter with the following general questions that recent research has brought up. If compassion is a fundamental aspect of Mahayana Buddhism, then what role does compassion play in Shin ethics other than the salvific activity of Amida Buddha? Can nembutsu adherents participate in compassion? The obvious answer that we cannot lose sight of is that Amida Buddha directs compassionate activity to save all sentient beings. But having understood that, then from a Shin ethical point of view, it is possible to say that sentient beings do in fact participate in Amida's compassionate activity by living their lives according to the Shin teaching. But how does one come to understand what this means? Why should a person who is used to living in the world that primarily operates on the principle of self-power, come to think that one should live with Amida Buddha at the center of his/her life?

When one hears Amida's compassionate calling voice and comes to awaken to the human condition, that person opens up to the universal identity of all sentient beings. This is the basis for Shin ethics, or more specifically the Pragmatic Approach. Further, if we look at how Shinran receives the teaching of Amida's Primal Vow, we come to the idea of the "three emphatics": sincerity, joy and shame, and hope. Shinjin is both nondual and dual. It is nondual in that the fundamental foundation of shinjin is "zero," or *sunyata*. On the other hand, shinjin is dual in that it is the three minds of Amida Buddha expounded in the Primal Vow. Shinran then receives the three minds as the one mind of shinjin, but he experiences it as sincerity, joy and shame together, and the hope to be born in the Pure Land, which are collectively the three emphatics. Subsequent nembutsu adherents can use this as inspiration for how to live one's life here and now.

Zero-shinjin and the three emphatics are the doctrinal foundation of the Soteriological foundation of the Pragmatic Approach. It is this Soteriological foundation that is the most important of the three aspects because it is what makes it possible for Shin Buddhists to engage in the field of ethics. Previous research that involves both Shin scholars and academics who are not from this tradition, has either not emphasized this point of the Soteriological foundation enough, or completely overlooked this aspect altogether. If anything, previous research looks mostly at certain features of what Shin ethics is, but there has not been anything comprehensive that looks at the doctrinal basis for these features. The Pragmatic Approach, and more specifically the Soteriological foundation, takes care of this problem and shows how there is a doctrinal foundation in which to pursue the field of Shin ethics.

The Soteriological foundation then leads into practical ethical features that can be divided into Individual and Social Ethics. In Individual Ethics features include: problematizing the self; rejecting self-power but not self-effort; recognizing that one is a *bonbu* on the bodhisattva path; awakening to a greater reality that includes oneself; not hindering the spread of the Buddha's compassion listening to the calling voice of the Buddha Dharma; expressing gratitude for the Buddha's benevolence; transforming the self; changing evil to good; having flexibility and being able to let go of one's faith; and finally, being able to balance between extremes.

Regarding Social Ethics, features include recognizing the limits of making ethical claims, questioning the motives of secular authority and human law, rejecting the mundane world, having a deep understanding and appreciation for relationships, community, and solidarity in humankind, and having social compassion (Diagram 3). This all leads to the individual understanding a new meaning to the phrase "self-benefit and benefitting others" and putting the Dharma at the center of one's ethical life.

Conclusion

The Pragmatic Approach and not the two truths theory should define Shin Buddhist ethical identity. The two truths theory distorts and inhibits the Shin ethical identity by: 1. prioritizing the mundane over the supramundane truth, 2. confusing the teaching of "receiving" as social passivity, and 3. defeating the spiritually authentic individual. These problems are collectively called the "legacy of the two truths theory," which impacts the way Shin Buddhism views and portrays itself to the western world. The legacy of the two truths theory encourages Shin Buddhism to accept and adopt as its ethical identity, western conceptions of Buddhism rather than the core Shin teaching of soteriology. This then distorts the Shin Buddhist ethical identity, as the two truths theory forces nembutsu adherents to rely on outside sources to define what it is, something we witness in the history of the Hongwanji during World War II.

The solution to this problem is the Pragmatic Approach. It consists of the Soteriological foundation, and Individual and Social ethics. The Soteriological foundation is the doctrinal basis of Shin ethics and its contents are "zero-shinjin" and the "three emphatics." From the Soteriological foundation, there are the Individual and Social ethics, which list the practical characteristics of a Shin Buddhist. Finally, the Pragmatic Approach more clearly, comprehensively, and authentically defines Shin ethics as well as the social and religious identity of the nembutsu practitioner.

The two truths theory cripples the Shin Buddhist ethical identity. We saw how the various religious leaders of Hongwanji implemented the two truths theory as a way not only to appease external political forces as well as rivaling religious factions, but also to be able to attract new followers and accommodate the concerns of the people throughout Hongwanji's history. However, the two truths theory ultimately failed to address the problem of, "How does one live

as a nembutsu practitioner? This policy created dual identities that were, for the most part, quietly coexisting with each other until their clash in the modern era.

Next, we explored how before and during World War II, Hongwanji capitulated to the will and demands of the imperial government. By the war's end, Hongwanji promoted selfless-ness and blind obedience to the emperor and the state. Thus, the two truths theory created the possibility of distorting the Shin Buddhist ethical identity.

At the same time, across the Pacific, the two truths theory germinated in Shin propagation in America. There is both direct and indirect evidence that show how the two truths theory negatively impacted overseas Shin Buddhism, particularly the US. Although the direct evidence has been documented, the indirect evidence, which I call the "legacy of the truths theory," has not been uprooted and yet resolved. The legacy of the truths theory still impacts the Shin Buddhist religious identity today.

As we saw how Shin Buddhism was forced to submit to the demands of the Imperial Japanese government, outside of Japan, it is pressured to accommodate and conform itself to western definitions and characterizations of what Buddhism was supposed to be. This is all due to the two truths theory. Namely, that Buddhism was supposed to be an alternative religion that contrasts itself to Christianity; that it is in lockstep with science and rationality; that it only concerned itself with rational and common-sense morals that are not founded on metaphysical and dogmatic principles; that it was ecumenical and tolerant of all other worldviews; and that it was a monolithic tradition that follows only the teachings of the historical Buddha. Although these points may be true even from a doctrinal standpoint, their similarities are not the primary goals of Buddhism. From a Shin perspective, the goal is first and foremost to awaken to the salvific working of Amida's compassionate activity before anything else, and by "anything else"

I mean Shin Buddhist ethics. That is to say, Shin ethics is not even possible without the Soteriological foundation.

The two truths theory also gives the impression to both its adherents as well as people outside of the tradition that this is a teaching of "receiving" the Dharma and therefore, that its followers should be passive on social issues. Finally, this ethical policy defeats the spiritually authentic individual in that it does not allow for the person to seek spiritual awakening found in encountering Amida's compassionate activity, but instead, to conform to social norms and the status quo. In short, the two truths theory allows factors outside of the central teaching of Amida's Primal Vow to define what a Shin Buddhist is and what his/her religious experience should be.

Instead of the problematic two truths theory, the Pragmatic Approach is a better method in which to pursue the field of Shin ethics. The Pragmatic Approach is founded on doctrinal principles taught by Shinran Shonin himself and not on the social customs and norms from a certain historical context. Also, there are practical features that can help the nembutsu practitioner to think about the appropriate course of action in a given situation. In other words, these features will help to answer the question: "What is it that a Shin Buddhist would do in this particular case? What would Shinran do?" Because the Pragmatic Approach is wholly founded on Shin doctrine, this will establish a clear religious identity that Shin Buddhists can confidently carry with them as they go out and live in the world.

This project aimed to present the problem of the two truths theory in Shin Buddhism outside of Japan, which was seen mainly as an issue that occurred only within that country and ended with the close of World War II. It was previously not seen as a significant issue in America. However, I have presented why I believe this view is mistaken. In addition to this, I propose a

solution to this problem, which is called the Pragmatic Approach. This new method breaks the barrier that has hampered research in the field of Shin Buddhist ethics. Previous research has not been able to comprehensively and doctrinally justify why Shin Buddhists are able to take part in social engagement. Ultimately, research in this area failed to connect and emphasize the soteriological foundation of Shin Buddhism to ethics and have only looked at specific ethical features of this tradition. My proposal of the Pragmatic Approach not only provides doctrinal basis for Shin ethics, but it also firmly grounds the focus onto what is most central to this teaching: Amida's salvific Vow Power. Thus, this research provides new but doctrinally justified ways to think about an array of social issues such as abortion, LGBTQ rights, police brutality (Black Lives Matter), Me Too Movement, racism, artificial intelligence, climate change, and more, in addition to the ones Shin Buddhists have traditionally taken on.

Finally, Shin Buddhists can and should confidently say that we are "ignorant bodhisattvas," the oxymoron itself depicting the very path of what it means to be a sentient being who is fully embraced in *tariki*. Shin Buddhists should also firmly be aware of and make it known to the outside world that we are embraced in infinite wisdom expressed as compassion, and as recipients of that compassion, we should boldly and audaciously then *participate* in it. In other words, we should "approximate" that compassion as best as we can. This understanding is made possible through the Pragmatic Approach. Thus, recitation of the nembutsu as a way of expressing gratitude, or *button hōsha* 仏恩報謝, is also shown in the way we live out our lives.

Appendix

Diagram 1

From Ugo Dessì's book entitled *Ethics and Society in Contemporary Shin Buddhism*.

1. The minds of good and evil, or foolish beings are transformed into the mind of great compassion.[1]
2. Gentle heartedness and forbearance.
3. Possessed of supreme virtues (至徳具足).
4. Karmic evil transforms to good (転悪成善).
5. Constantly practicing great compassion(常行大悲).[2]
6. Compassion as foundation for social ethic.[3]
7. "Desire to cast off the evil" from oneself always accompanies the practice of the nenbutsu.[4]
8. Seek to respond in gratitude to the Buddha's benevolence by rejecting both "the evil of this world" and "the evil in themselves."
9. Respect for other religious beliefs.[5]
10. Critical of authority if it persecutes or suppresses the nenbutsu movement.[6]
11. Ethical life flows spontaneously from the working of Amida's Vow.[7]
12. Equality amongst all people. Shinran identifies with the lowest class. Karma is the basis for this equality.
13. A sense of community.[8]
14. Karma opens up the dimension of togetherness and non-discrimination.[9]
15. Being wary of oppression, consumerism, and the issue of education in society.[10]
16. Autonomy of the nenbutsu movement from political and secular powers.
17. Rejection of the mundane world (世を厭う).
18. The qualities of the Pure Land are meant to provide the standard to measure the inconsistencies of this world, and to realize a society free of discrimination, oppression, and violence.[11]
19. Problem of internalizing shinjin.[12]

Diagram 2
From Kenneth K. Tanaka's book entitled, *Pure Land Buddhism: Historical Development and Contemporary Manifestation*

1) I believe that the world-universe in which we find ourselves, despite its downsides and tragedies, is fundamentally compassionate. This vision finds expression in the *Larger Sutra's* Monk Dharmākara whose selfless sacrifices aspires to spiritually nourish and liberate all sentient beings.

2) The universe comprises an interconnected network in which I play a vital role. I as a member of this community must do my share to contribute to its welfare. We cannot wishfully depend on some 'transcendent beings' to bail us out from the grave environmental, medical and social crises that now stare us in the face.

3) In making my contribution to the world, I should not be motivated by a desire to be a "good person" or feel righteous that I have done a "good deed." It is because what I give back to the world pales in comparison to what I have received from the world. Plus, given my ego-centered proclivities, a "good" deed today will quickly be snuffed out tomorrow, or even the next moment, by acts driven by selfish motives. Shinran speaks to this:

Difficult is it to be free of evil nature
The heart is like snake and scorpion
Good acts also are mixed with poison-
They are but deeds vain a false

4) I believe that criminal offenses are result of causes and conditions reflecting the socio-economic environment of the offender. Though the offender must bear the responsibility for his actions, I as a member of the society should contribute in rectifying the underlying social problems as well as in rehabilitating the offender. Further, I should not feel righteous in looking down upon these people, remembering Shinran's words quoted in the *Tannishō*:

"It is not that you keep from killing because you heart is good. In the same way, a person may wish not to harm anyone and yet end up killing a hundred or a thousand people."

5) I believe that there are no absolutes in matters of the conventional world. Crucial issues, in particular, involve complex sets of factors and yield no ready-made black and white, clear-cut answer.

6) If at all possible, utmost effort must be made to preserve and foster life, and not to take life.

7) If I must terminate life, utmost care should be taken to be well informed about the subject matter. The decision-making must include a serious consideration for the welfare of all whose lives would be impacted, for a person is inevitably involved in a much wider interconnected set of relationships.

8) Whatever decision I make, I must be willing to bear my share of the responsibility for its consequences and not to shift blame or responsibility onto others.

9) I do not make as my ultimate aim in life to accumulate wealth, gain fame or garner power.

10) I strive to live simply and to share my energy, time and resources for the betterment of the world.

11) I strive to refrain from idle talk and purposely creating discord among people and speaking ill of others without any constructive intention.

12) I do not feel any need to consult or petition super-natural forces in order to satisfy worldly objectives or to allay fears and anxieties stemming from such forces. I, therefore, do not allow such activities as horoscope, fortune-telling, 'superstitious' beliefs to serve as guiding force in my life.[13]

Diagram 3

The following are two letters written by Ōtani Kōson, or Myōnyo 明如, the 21ˢᵗ Head Priest of Nishi Hongwanji (1850–1903). These can be found in:

1. *Shinshū Shiryō Shūsei Dairokukan Kakuha Monshu Shōsoku*真宗史料集成第六巻各派門主消息[Collected Materials on the History of Shinshū, Volume 6: Official Letters of the Head Priests of the Various Shin Sects].

2. *Shinshū Shōgyōzensho Daigokan*真宗聖教全書第五巻 [Sacred Texts of Shinshū, Volume 5].

(73)

One of our preceding spiritual leaders states, "The success and prosperity of the 'exclusive right practice' movement will be based on the aspirations of the following generations" (*Hō'onkō shiki*). We Jodo Shinshu Buddhists, who have fortunately been following the nembutsu teaching of the Buddha's boundless vow that is true throughout all times, should concern ourselves with aspiring to protect this truth by working to the utmost of our abilities to understand the policy of Two Truths, that is, the mundane and supramundane worlds. This has been passed down to us through the generations.

Recently, we have been preparing to have an event known as "A Gathering to Uphold Our Tradition," inviting all members of the sangha to come. People are looking forward to this function, and their enthusiasm will be the foundation for its success. I am deeply joyful of this. We have explained the purpose of this event on paper, but apparently its news has not reached everyone so I will again clarify the reason for this function here.

Needless to say, "A Gathering to Uphold Our Tradition" is an event that establishes our hope for accomplishing the protection of this nation and expansion of our organization. "To uphold" means to follow the principle of "imperial law as most essential" (*ōbō ihon*), support education, health, and industrialization in order to progress our civilization. Responding to this need, we will make the light of this imperial nation shine brilliantly, and repay his majesty's benevolence that knows no bounds throughout this world. In regards to education and health, we should develop them so we that we will not commit the mistakes of the past. With regard to industrialization, beginning with agriculture, we should always try to innovate our respective trades, always mindful that no matter how insignificant any development may be, it is ultimately helping to make our nation more prosperous and stronger. On the contrary, working only with the intention to benefit one's self, or disregarding morality deviates from this goal.

Of course, the general Japanese citizen will respect ethics and observe the moral rules of society. But as people of this Buddhist tradition, recall that the last head priest explained in his writings that when we are touched by Amida's light, we attain the benefit in which we become soft and gentle in body and mind. From this, we will be able to observe and respect good deeds, be mindful and thoughtful of others, follow the rules of society, and be respectful and cooperative of others. If we can do this, we will be in accord with the words of wisdom which state, "peace and harmony reign throughout the land [*Larger Sutra*]," and we will be repaying at least one ten-thousandth of our emperor's benevolence.

Next, "expanding our organization," means first to correctly apprehend what is most essential for our liberation, awaken to the true cause for our birth in the Land of Recompense, and be "settled in our assurance for birth while still in this life [*heizei gōjō*]." From the teaching of, "To spread the Great Compassion everywhere and guide others is truly to repay the Buddha's benevolence," we should strive to encourage the study of Buddhism and nurture the next generation of followers. We then should apply in society the Buddha Dharma that benefits all beings, making them learn to love and enjoy the sweet taste of the Two Truths. For this reason, we should solidify the foundation for spreading this teaching and not waver in thought and aspiration in protecting and upholding the great Dharma, which will then result in the two benefits.

To be "settled in our assurance for birth while still in this life [*heizei gōjō*]," finds its basis in the fulfillment of the Primal Vow which uses the phrases, "Upon hearing the Buddha's name, realize an entrusting heart in joy," where sentient beings, "all attain birth in that land and dwell in the stage of nonretrogression" (*Larger Sutra Part Two*). These are the teachings which we should rely on and they do not require even a little bit of self power. Hearing and entrusting without any doubt the Buddha's Vow, which explains the reason why Amida saves all beings and the path for their liberation, is the meaning of the one thought-moment of taking refuge. In one thought-moment, Amida embraces sentient beings, who have been wandering for a countless period of time in the stream of life-and-death, with his mind of light. This moment is also known as the stage of non-retrogression and the phrase, "settled in our assurance for birth while still in this life." When our assurance is settled, then throughout our entire lives we feel both shame and gratitude towards the Buddha's benevolence and respond with the continual saying of the Buddha's Name. Then, as stated above, we seek to obey and treat as most essential the imperial law, fully observe the standards of our morals as citizens of this nation, carryout the protection of this country along with the expansion of this organization, and strive for the success of the "exclusive right practice" movement.

Repeating again what I have stated already, as practicers who share the same sentiment, we hope for the future success of this gathering and we warmly welcome and rejoice in contributions made to this effort, whether monetary or other, hoping that there will not be any shortages whatsoever in our efforts to learn the Dharma.

Humbly and respectfully.

<div align="right">

Seventh day, Third month, Meiji 21 [1888]
Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha, Monshu
Shaku Kōson
To all ministers of the Hongwanji
To all members of the Hongwanji

</div>

The following is an excerpt, dated Fifth day, Second month, Meiji 28 [1895]
(76)

Last year, through imperial order our country has declared war on China. Our emperor temporarily transferred to Hiroshima and is residing in a small and confined area, carrying out strategic planning for our imperial army. Over one hundred days have now passed. Our army and navy have been sent far away overseas. They endured the various illnesses of the terrain,

withstood the severe winds and storms of the seas, met with extreme hardships experienced in battle, sacrificed their lives for this country, and were forced to confront absolute fear. As subjects of the emperor no matter what happens, if we do not repay our debt to this country now, when will be the appropriate time to do so? Furthermore, in Shin Buddhism there is the principle of Two Truths, and in desperate times for our nation such as these, we should not concern ourselves with trivial matters such as the distinction between the head temple in Kyoto or its branch temples, or the differences between priests and lay persons. We should only be focused with whether we have completed our duty to our nation or not.
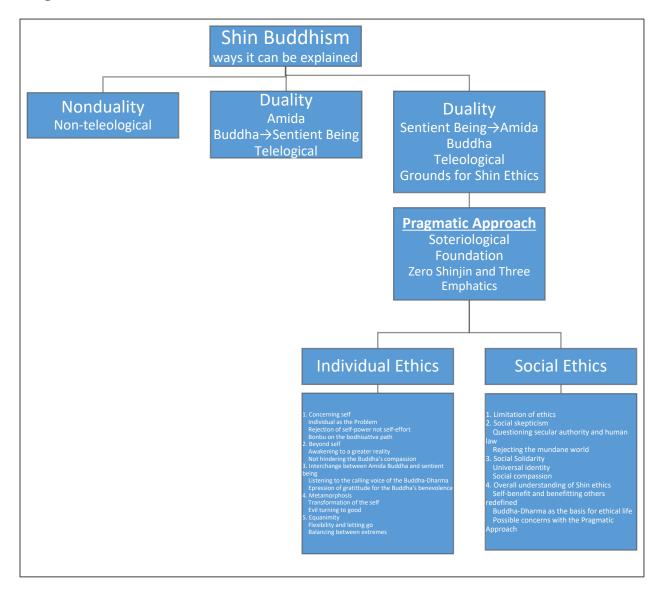
Based on this, from the time our nation has gone to war with China, I have visited and consoled members of the military, and encouraged giving donations towards the relief effort for those injured in battle and providing further contributions both monetary and other to the military. I personally have participated in these measures, sending priests throughout the country to convince members of the sangha to give to this cause. This is my humble but sincere effort to repay what little I could for this nation. Many have taken in my message and greatly responded to the call of their country and for that I am very happy.

As a result at present, our imperial army has esteemed itself in continuous victory, making the emperor's magnificent power shine brilliantly overseas, developing the Korean peninsula a hundred times over, and making rapid progress by the day. This is all due to the emperor's virtues and the loyal subjects of Japan fulfilling their duty to this nation. For this I am grateful.

Amidst these times, for a number of years now I have embraced the idea to spread the teachings overseas. This wish has grown to a point where I can no longer stop it. The reason is that Buddhism was introduced to this nation by way of China and Korea. But just as times change like the decay of material things and the shifting of the stars, most of the schools of Buddhism in those areas are now all in decline. They are no longer able to spread the Buddhist teachings, nor do they understand any longer the principle of causality. Having no compassion and acting in cruelty, they are completely lost in the world of greed. They inflict harm onto themselves as well as others. This kind of savagery between them is not seldom heard of. I feel great pity for them.

However, the compassionate Amida Buddha teaches us about non-discrimination between self and other. Now, the path between us is conveniently open and we should thus spread the wondrous teaching of the Two Truths. This will calm the minds of the people of those lands and give them assurance, and they will receive the two benefits of the mundane and supramundane worlds here and now. They will also awaken to benevolence and discern the right path, whereby they will create a realm where, "The land is prosperous and the people live in peace, so there is no need to use soldiers and weapons" [*Larger Sutra*]. If this can be done, we as Jodo Shinshu Buddhists will be responding to the great emperor's splendid thoughts of wanting to have friendly relations with our neighboring countries. This is also in accordance to the wish of Amida Buddha to benefit all people; it is his promise to us. How is this not to be considered joyous?...

Diagram 4

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                    ┌─────────────────────────┐
                    │      Shin Buddhism       │
                    │  ways it can be explained│
                    └─────────────────────────┘
         ┌───────────────────┼────────────────────────┐
┌──────────────────┐ ┌──────────────────┐  ┌─────────────────────────────┐
│   Nonduality     │ │     Duality      │  │           Duality           │
│ Non-teleological │ │      Amida       │  │  Sentient Being→Amida       │
│                  │ │Buddha→Sentient   │  │           Buddha            │
│                  │ │     Being        │  │        Teleological         │
│                  │ │   Telelogical    │  │   Grounds for Shin Ethics   │
└──────────────────┘ └──────────────────┘  └─────────────────────────────┘
                                                         │
                                            ┌─────────────────────────────┐
                                            │    Pragmatic Approach        │
                                            │   Soteriological             │
                                            │   Foundation                 │
                                            │   Zero Shinjin and Three     │
                                            │   Emphatics                  │
                                            └─────────────────────────────┘
                                                         │
                                     ┌───────────────────┴────────────────┐
                          ┌──────────────────┐           ┌──────────────────┐
                          │ Individual Ethics│           │   Social Ethics  │
                          └──────────────────┘           └──────────────────┘
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Individual Ethics

1. Concerning self
   Individual as the Problem
   Rejection of self-power not self-effort
   Bonbu on the bodhisattva path
2. Beyond self
   Awakening to a greater reality
   Not hindering the Buddha's compassion
3. Interchange between Amida Buddha and sentient being
   Listening to the calling voice of the Buddha-Dharma
   Epression of gratittude for the Buddha's benevolence
4. Metamorphosis
   Transformation of the self
   Evil turning to good
5. Equanimity
   Flexibility and letting go
   Balancing between extremes

Social Ethics

1. Limitation of ethics
2. Social skepticism
   Questioning secular authority and human law
   Rejecting the mundane world
3. Social Solidarity
   Universal identity
   Social compassion
4. Overall understanding of Shin ethics
   Self-benefit and benefitting others redefined
   Buddha-Dharma as the basis for ethical life
   Possible concerns with the Pragmatic Approach

Endnotes

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Chapter 1

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¹¹ Ibid., 216.

¹² Ibid., 218-9.

¹³ CWS, 244. JSZ II, 213.

¹⁴ Here we mean 真諦＝仏法、俗諦＝王法.

¹⁵ CWS, 443. JSZ II, 546.

¹⁶ CWS, 446. JSZ II, 549.

¹⁷ Kangakuryō Hen, *Jōdo Shinshū to Shakai*, 31.

¹⁸ CWS, 423. JSZ II, 522.

¹⁹ CWS, 272. JSZ II, 239.

²⁰ CWS, 286. JSZ II, 251.

²¹ Miki, *Shinshū Rinri no Kenkyū*, 349.

²² Ibid., 353.

²³ Kyōgaku Dendō Kenkyū Sentā, *Jōdo Shinshū Seiten: Chūshakuban Dainihan* (Kyoto: Hongwanji Shuppansha, 2009), 920. Translation is by the writer.

²⁴ Miki, *Shinshū Rinri no Kenkyū*, 356.

²⁵ Miki, *Shinshū Rinri no Kenkyū*, 357-9. This citation is not a direct quote.

²⁶ Shinshū Shōgyō Zenshō Hensansho, *Shinshū Shōgyō Zenshō* III, (Kyoto: Ōyagi Kōbundō, 1994), 173.

²⁷ Shinshū Shōgyō Zenshō Hensansho, *Shinshū Shōgyō Zenshō* III, (Kyoto: Ōyagi Kōbundō, 2003), 206.

²⁸ Miki, *Shinshū Rinri no Kenkyū*, 385-6.

²⁹ Kangakuryō Hen, *Jōdo Shinshū to Shakai*, 43.

³⁰ Minor Rogers and Ann Rogers, *Rennyo: The Second Founder of Shin Buddhism: with a translation of his letters* (Berkeley, Asian Humanities Press, 1991), 215. *Chūshakuban Dainihan*,1159.

³¹ Rogers and Rogers, *Rennyo*, 213; *Chūshakuban Dainihan*, 1156.

³² Rogers and Rogers, *Rennyo*, 176; *Chūshakuban Dainihan*, 1112-3.

³³ Refer to letters 2-2 and 2-10.

³⁴ Fukuma, *Shinshūshi no* Kenkyū, 14.

³⁵ Ibid., 17.

³⁶ For a detailed list refer to Rogers and Rogers, 86.

³⁷ Rogers and Rogers, *Rennyo*,110.

³⁸ Ibid., 119.

³⁹ For a more in-depth and comprehensive study on Hongwanji history, refer to Minor L. Rogers and Ann T. Rogers book *Rennyo: The Second Founder of Shin Buddhism* and James C. Dobbins work *Jodo Shinshu: Shin Buddhism in Medieval Japan.*

⁴⁰ Jōdo Shinshū Hongwanji-ha Kangakuryō Hen, ed., *Jōdo Shinshū to Shakai: shinzoku nitai wo meguru shomondai*, (Kyoto: Nagata Bunshōdō, 2008), 44.

⁴¹ Fukuma Kōchō, *Shinshūshi no Kenkyū*, 214.

⁴² Ibid., 217.

⁴³ Miki Shōkoku, *Shinshū Rinri no Kenkyū*, 396.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 398. Refer to "*Gosaidan no Gosho*『御裁断の御書』." *Chūshakuban Dainihan*, 1414.

[45] Miki, *Shinshū Rinri no Kenkyū*, 412-414.

[46] Kashiwahara Yūsen, *Shinshūshi Bukkyōshi no Kenkyū III Kindaihen* (Kyoto: Heirakuji Shoten, 2000), 138.

[47] Miki, *Shinshū Rinri no Kenkyū*, 418-9.

[48] Kashiwahara, *Shinshūshi Bukkyōshi no Kenkyū III Kindaihen*, 140-141. Also, R.H.P. Mason and J. G. Caiger, *A History of Japan* (Tokyo: Tuttle Publishing, 1997).

[49] *Shinshūshi Bukkyōshi no Kenkyū III Kindaihen*, 23.

[50] Ibid., 27.

[51] Ibid., 28-9.

[52] Ibid., 16-17.

[53] Ibid, 18.

[54] Ōtani Ei'ichi, Yoshinaga Shinichi, and Kondō Shuntarō, Kindai Bukkyō Sutadīzu (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 2016), 137-140.

[55] Ibid. 4-6. Although Sueki Fumihiko does posit a third category, he calls "Funerary Buddhism 葬式仏教" that developed in modern era Japan, it is not relevant to our discussion here.

[56] Kangakuryō Hen, *Jōdo Shinshū to Shakai*, 50-1.

[57] Miki, *Shinshū Rinri no Kenkyū*, 430. This list is just one example of required testing administered by the Meiji government. These tests would get progressively more difficult as the Meiji government's persecution against Buddhism intensifies each year. Also, those who have *gakkai*, or academic ranking credentials within the organization, had to undergo additional testing.

[58] Kangakuryō Hen, *Jōdo Shinshū to Shakai*, 60.

[59] Miki, *Shinshū Rinri no Kenkyū*, 432.

[60] Miki, *Shinshū Rinri no Kenkyū*, 424-426.

[61] Fukuma, *Shinshūshi no* Kenkyū, 230-2.

[62] Kashiwahara, *Shinshūshi Bukkyōshi no Kenkyū III Kindaihen*, 149.

[63] This policy was known as *shūki kōryō* 「宗規綱領」.

[64] Kashiwahara, *Shinshūshi Bukkyōshi no Kenkyū III Kindaihen*, 149-150.

[65] Kangakuryō Hen, *Jōdo Shinshū to Shakai*, 48. Minor Rogers and Ann Rogers, *Rennyo: The Second Founder of Shin Buddhism: with a translation of his letters* (Berkeley, Asian Humanities Press, 1991), 320-2.

[66] Kangakuryō Hen, *Jōdo Shinshū to Shakai*, 65-66.

[67] Ibid., 67.

[68] Fukuma, *Shinshūshi no* Kenkyū, 272.

[69] Ibid., 267.

[70] Toyoshima Gakuyū, "Manpukuji Shōkaishicho 'Shinzoku Nitai Jūgomon' ni Tsuite," Ryūkoku Kyōgaku no. 8 (1973): 35.

[71] Fukuma, *Shinshūshi no* Kenkyū, 277.

[72] Section of "five evils" is found in the *DaiAmidakyō* and *Byōdō Gakkyō* versions, but not in the *Nyorai-e*, *Shōgonkyō*, or the Sanskrit versions.

[73] Fukuma, *Shinshūshi no* Kenkyū, 278.

[74] Toyoshima, "Manpukuji Shōkaishicho 'Shinzoku Nitai Jūgomon' ni Tsuite," 35.

[75] Ibid., 36.

[76] Fukuma, *Shinshūshi no* Kenkyū, 305.

[77] Kashiwahara, *Shinshūshi Bukkyōshi no Kenkyū III Kindaihen*, 30.

[78] Kashiwahara, *Shinshūshi Bukkyōshi no Kenkyū III Kindaihen*, 33.

[79] Ibid., 34.

[80] Kashiwahara, *Shinshūshi Bukkyōshi no Kenkyū III Kindaihen*, 35.

[81] Ibid., 36.

Chapter 2

[1] Kakehashi Jitsuen "Ōbō Buppō to Shinzoku Nitai," in *Jodo Shinshu to Shakai*, ed. Jōdo Shinshū Hongwanji-ha Kangakuryō (Kyoto: Nagata Bunshōdō, 2008), 71.

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[2] Specifically, it states the following:「日本臣民ハ安寧秩序ヲ妨ケス及臣民タルノ義務ニ背カサル限ニ於テ信教ノ自由ヲ有ス」.

[3] Akamatsu Tesshin, "Tennosei Fashizumuki no Shinshū: Nishi Hongwanji Kyōdan no Hōkoku Shinkō Undō wo Megutte," in *ShinranTaikei: Rekishi Hen Jūichi kan*, ed. Kashiwahara Yūsen, Kuroda Toshio, Hiramatsu Reizō (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1989), 55-81.

[4] Helen Hardacre, *Shinto and the State: 1868-1988* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 115-116.

[5] Hardacre, *Shinto and the State*, 118.

[6] Shigaraki Takamaro, "Shinran ni okeru Seiten Sakujo Mondai," in *ShinranTaikei: Rekishi Hen Jūichi kan*, ed. Kashiwahara Yūsen, Kuroda Toshio, Hiramatsu Reizō (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1989), 3-4.

[7] Shigaraki, "Shinran ni okeru Seiten Sakujo Mondai," 5. For a more in-depth explanation, refer to this article as well as Rogers and Rogers, *Rennyo*.

[8] Christopher Ives, *Imperial-Way Zen: Ichikawa Hakugen's Critique and Lingering Questions for Buddhist Ethics* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009), 33.

[9] Nose Eisui, "Shinshū ni okeru Jūgun Fukyō no Rekishi to Yakuwari" *Indōgaku Bukkyōgaku Kenkyū* 41, no. 2 (March 1993): 522-523.

[10] Nose Eisui, "Kindai Shinshū Hongwanji-ha no Jūgun Fukyō Katsudō," *Indōgaku Bukkyōgaku Kenkyū* 63, no. 1 (December 2014): 522-523.

[11] Ibid., 523-4.

[12] Terado Naotaka, "Jūgonen Sensōki no Jūgun Fukyō; Chūgoku ni okeru Shinshū no Katsudō wo Chūshin ni," *Ryukoku Daigaku Daigakuin Bungaku Kenkyūka Kiyō* 29 (December 2007): 127.

[13] 「後の世は弥陀の誓ひにまかせつつ、命をやすく君にささげよ」.

[14] Nose Eisui, "Kindai Shinshū Hongwanji-ha no Jūgun Fukyō Katsudō," *Indōgaku Bukkyōgaku Kenkyū* 63, no. 1 (December 2014): 523.

[15] *Kokutai no Shinkō to Bukkyō*, 1938.

[16] Terado Naotaka, "Jūgonen Sensōki no Jūgun Fukyō; Chūgoku ni okeru Shinshū no Katsudō wo Chūshin ni," *Ryukoku Daigaku Daigakuin Bungaku Kenkyūka Kiyō* 29 (December 2007): 128-134.

[17] Tokunaga Ichidō (Shin scholar) in discussion with the author, June, 2017.

[18] Ives, *Imperial-Way Zen*, 130.

[19] Ives, *Imperial-Way Zen*, 107.

[20] Ives, *Imperial-Way Zen*,119.

[21] Ibid., 119-120.

[22] Ibid., 121.

[23] Ibid., 125.

[24] Senji Kyōgaku Kenkyūkai, *Senji Kyōgaku to Shinshū Dai Ikkan* (Kyoto: Nagata Bunshōdō, 1988), 168. 「親鸞聖人はこの鎮護国家の意味を徹底的に純化し開顕して、かかる現実の功利的観点よりも寧ろ、宗教的に正しき信念をもち、正しき念仏の生活を営む所に国民としての正しき道を履行し、従って鎮護国家の正法として重要な意義を有するものと主張されたのである」とある。

[25] Kyōgaku Dendō Kenkyū Sentā, *Jōdo Shinshū Seiten: Chūshakuban Dainihen* (Kyoto: Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha, 2009), 252.

[26] Senji Kyōgaku Kenkyūkai, *Senji Kyōgaku to Shinshū Dai San kan* (Kyoto: Nagata Bunshōdō, 1995), 300-2.

[27] Senji Kyōgaku Kenkyūkai, *Senji Kyōgaku to Shinshū Dai San kan*, 314.「本願の名号を聞持することに依って僧侶の行事を俟たず、思想家の論理を待たずに民衆は黙々として御念仏を称へながら耕し、職域奉公して国家を護って行くと云ふまでにこの鎮護国家の正法を消化されたことは是は親鸞聖人の御貢献であります」。

[28] Akamatsu Tesshin, "Tennōsei Fashizumuki no Shinshū: Nishi Hongwanji Kyōdan no Hōkoku Shinkō Undō wo Megutte," in *Shinran Taikei Rekishihen Daijūikkan* ed. Kashiwahara Yūsen, Kuroda Toshio, Hiramatsu Reizō (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1989), 56-65.

[29] Ibid., 78.

[30] Senji Kyōgaku Kenkyūkai, *Senji Kyōgaku to Shinshū Dai Ikkan*, 252-3.「然るに仏教的立場に於いては我々の行為はつねに感恩の念から発する報謝の行為でなければならぬ。為すべきであるが故に為し、義務なるが故に義務を行ふといふ道徳法則の尊厳に依って行為するのではなくて、衆生恩の内観に於いて、

報恩謝徳の宗教的感情から行為するのである。かかる知恩の行為に於いて初めて一切の利己的投影を宿さない善が現成するのであって、存覚上人のいはれた如く「衆善の源」となるのである」と。

31 Senji Kyōgaku Kenkyūkai, *Senji Kyōgaku to Shinshū Dai Ikkan*, 304.「ここに於いて臣民たるものはこの限りなき皇恩を感載し、我を捨て私を去りひたすら天皇に奉仕し奉らねばならぬ。殊に信心正因王法為本の宗是の下にある真宗教徒は、信心より流発する純粋無私なる報恩の至誠より、広大無辺の聖徳に報い奉るべきである」と。

32 Akamatsu Tesshin, "Tennōsei Fashizumuki no Shinshū: Nishi Hongwanji Kyōdan no Hōkoku Shinkō Undō wo Megutte," in *Shinran Taikei Rekishihen Daijūikkan* ed. Kashiwahara Yūsen, Kuroda Toshio, Hiramatsu Reizō (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1989), 59-60.「乃ち外に対しては防共の陣営を強化し内に省みては資源を愛護し国力の増強をはかりて聖戦の目的を貫徹し興亜の促進に参加して皇軍を扶翼したてまつるへし」と。

33 Jōdo Shinshū Hongwanji-ha Kokusaibu, *Jōdo Shinshū Hongwanji-ha: Ajia Kaikyōshi* (Kyoto: Hongwanji Shuppansha, 2008), 16.

34 Senji Kyōgaku Kenkyūkai, *Senji Kyōgaku to Shinshū Dai Nikan* (Kyoto: Nagata Bunshōdō, 1991), 130.「近くは隣邦朝鮮の危急を救日、我国国防の圧迫斥けた日清戦役、露国南侵の毒牙を砕き、東亜民衆の安寧を保持したる日露戦役、日英同盟の信義を重んじる世界大戦の参加、満州国独立の援護、何れも皇国精神の顕彰ならざるなく、而して今回の事変に対する帝国の派兵は、不信不義、暴虐極りなき支那兵の膺懲に外ならず、東亜永遠の福祉と平和を期待する大慈悲の折伏戦であります」と。

35 Ives, *Imperial-Way Zen*, 127.

36 Refer to Appendix.

37 Refer to Appendix.

38 Refer to Appendix.

39 Senji Kyōgaku Kenkyūkai, *Senji Kyōgaku to Shinshū Dai Ikkan*, 296-298. For more information on who composed this text and when it was published, refer to page 381-2.

40 Ibid., 298.「人間の巧者を離れてより高き意味を表はすといふ自然法爾は、我が国文科の最も本質的な特色といふことが出来る」とある。

41 Ives, *Imperial-Way Zen*, 130.

42 One such example would be Takagi Kenmyō (1864-1914) who opposed the Russo-Japanese war and military expansion in Asia.

43 Senji Kyōgaku Kenkyūkai, *Senji Kyōgaku to Shinshū Dai Ikkan*, 170-171.

44 Jōdo Shinshū Hongwanji-ha Sōgō Kenkyūsho, *Jōdo Shinshū Jiten* (Kyoto: Hongwanji Shuppansha, 2013), 353 and 585.

45 Senji Kyōgaku Kenkyūkai, *Senji Kyōgaku to Shinshū Dai Ikkan*, 39-40.

46 Ibid., 105-6.

47 Brian Victoria, *Zen at War* (New York: Weatherhill Inc., 1997), 120.

48 Scott A. Mitchell, *Buddhism in America: Global Religion, Local Contexts* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2016), 33-35.

49 Thomas A. Tweed, *The American Encounter with Buddhism: 1844-1912* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), xxxv.

50 Ibid.

51 Tweed, *The American Encounter with Buddhism*, 134.

52 Ibid., 130.

53 Ibid., 11.

54 For a more in-depth reading, refer to Thomas A. Tweed's book entitled, *American Encounter with Buddhism* and Judith Snodgrass' book, *Presenting Japanese Buddhism to the West*.

55 Judith Snodgrass, *Presenting Japanese Buddhism to the West: Orientalism, Occidentalism, and the Columbian Exposition* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 45.

56 For a more in-depth reading of Inoue Enryō, refer to Judith Snodgrass' book, *Presenting Japanese Buddhism to the* West, pages 139-154. Also, Ōtani Ei'ichi, Yoshinaga Shinichi, and Chikafuji Shuntarō's book entitled, *Kindai Bukkyō Sutadīzu: Bukkyō kara mita mō hitotsu no kindai*.

57 Snodgrass, *Presenting Japanese Buddhism to the West*, 155 and 170.

58 Mitchell, Buddhism in America, 46.

59 Ohtani Ei'ichi et al., *Kindai Bukkyō Sutadīzu: Bukkyō kara mita mōhitotsu no Kindai* (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 2016), 63. The term "fundamental Buddhism" means a belief in the strict, literal interpretation of the Buddha's teachings. It

should not be misunderstood as a term designating a group of individuals who may advocate the use of violence towards those they deem as deviants of the teaching.

[60] Snodgrass, *Presenting Japanese Buddhism to the* West, 220-221.

[61] Ibid., 198.

[62] Duncan Ryûken Williams and Tomoe Moriya, ed., *Issei Buddhism in the Americas* (Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 65. Extensive research has been conducted on this topic. For more information, refer to Scott A. Mitchell's book *Buddhism in America: Global Religions, Local Contexts*, Kashima Tetsuden's book entitled *Buddhism in America: The Social Organization of an Ethnic Religious Institution*, and Michihiro Ama's book *Immigrants to the Pure Land: The Modernization, Acculturation, and Globalization of Shin Buddhism, 1898-1941*, among others.

[63] Tetsuden Kashima, *Buddhism in America: The Social Organization of an Ethnic Religious Institution* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1977), 11.

[64] Ibid.

[65] Mitchell, *Buddhism in America*, 54.

[66] Kashima, *Buddhism in America*, 36.

[67] Amstutz, *Interpreting Amida*, 102.

[68] Bloom, "Shin Buddhism in America," 31-47.

[69] Ama, *Immigrants to the Pure Land*, 72.

[70] Ibid., 70.

[71] Eileen H. Tamura, *Americanization, Acculturation, and Ethnic Identity: The Nisei Generation in Hawaii*, (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 153-4.

[72] Ibid., 155.

[73] Ibid., 154.

[74] Ibid., 18.

[75] Yuji Ichioka, *Before Internment: Essays in Prewar Japanese American History*, ed. Gordon H. Chang and Eiichiro Azuma, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 186.

[76] Ama, *Immigrants to the Pure Land*, 190.

[77] Ibid., 186.

[78] Arai Tetsuo, *Seiten Sanbutsuka Shū* (Kyoto: Kōkyō Shoin, 1936), 60-1. Inter-Mountain Temple, ed., *Beikoku Nichiyō Gakkō Seiten, Sanbutsuka* (Kyoto: Kōkyō Shoin, 1937).

[79] Honpa Hongwanji, comp., *Bukkyō Sanka Shū* (Hiroshima: Senshin Shobō, 1903), 401.

[80] Abe Daigo, ed., *Kaitei Shinshu Seiten* (Kyoto: Kōkyō Shoin Shinshu seiten fukyūkai, 1936), 2-10.

[81] Tamura, *Americanization, Acculturation, and Ethnic Identity*, 203.

[82] Jōdo Shinshū Hongwanji-ha Sōgō Kenkyūsho, *Jōdo Shinshū Jiten* (Kyoto: Hongwanji Shuppansha, 2013), 68.

[83] Tamura, *Americanization, Acculturation, and Ethnic Identity*, 203.

[84] Dorothy Hunt, *Vade Mecum.: For Use in Buddhist Temples* (Delhi: Pilgrims Book Pvt. Ltd., 1924), 44.

[85] Ibid., 53.

[86] Ibid., 93.

[87] Amstutz, *Interpreting Amida*, 67.

[88] George W. Wright, "The West Needs Buddhism," in *An Outline of Buddhism: The Religion of Wisdom and Compassion* by Shinkaku. (Varanasi: Pilgrims Publishing, 2005), 38-39.

[89] Tweed, *The American Encounter with Buddhism 1844-1912*, 32-33.

[90] An in-depth explanation of Carus will not be done here. For more information please refer to the book entitled, *Kindai Bukkyō Sutadīzu: Bukkyō kara mita mōhitotsu no Kindai*, among many others.

[91] Tweed, *The American Encounter with Buddhism 1844-1912*, 105.

[92] Snodgrass, *Presenting Japanese Buddhism to the West*, 200.

[93] In "The Report of the 8th World Buddhist Women's Convention" held in October, 1986, a letter and public statement titled, "Appeal for Peace" was sent to then President Ronald Reagan and General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev of USSR.

[94] Refer to the *Eastern Buddhist*, 1971 issue.

[95] Refer to the *Pacific World* Journal, 1995 &1996, 2002, and 2008 issues. These are specific to Shin Buddhist studies but for general Buddhism and medicine, refer to the Tricycle Magazine, which has a plethora of articles talking about the latest research in this area.

[96] Tweed, *The American Encounter with Buddhism 1844-1912*, 105-106.

[97] CWS, 421. JSZ II, 519.

[98] Snodgrass, *Presenting Japanese Buddhism to the West*, 97-109.

[99] Sunday School Department, *BCA Course Outline for Grade Seven, Following the Footsteps of Shinran Shonin*, (San Francisco: Buddhist Churches of America, 1966), 39 and 66. Sunday School Department, *The Teaching of Buddha: Teacher's Guide Series, Number 2* (San Francisco: Buddhist Churches of America, 1962). Kikuro Taira, *Buddhist Practices for Children*. (Asilomar, California: Federation of Western Buddhist Sunday School Teachers Conference, 1966).

[100] Sunday School Department, *The Teaching of Buddha, Lord Buddha Speaks to Me* (SanFrancisco, Buddhist Churches of America, 1973), 77.

[101] Hunt, *The Vade Mecum.*, 46. Refer to other areas of this book as well. For example pages 43, 60, and 87.

[102] Tweed, *The American Encounter with Buddhism 1844-1912*, 112.

[103] Kashima, *Buddhism in America*, 55.

[104] Ibid., 54.

[105] Mitchell, *Buddhism in America*, 58-9.

[106] Tweed, *The American Encounter with Buddhism 1844-1912*, 98.

[107] Mitchell, *Buddhism in America*, 235.

[108] Amstutz, *Interpreting Amida*, 69. What Amstutz is referring to as an "Indo-European core," is based on an explanation posited by Edward Said in that a certain group of intellectual experts established a body of knowledge that they used to control and influence views on the "Other" in the experts' home culture. What this means here is that by establishing the notion of a "pristine" Buddhism that traces its origins to Indo-European culture, this gave western scholars an avenue to sideline Asian, specifically east Asian, academic studies of Buddhism.

[109] Snodgrass, *Presenting Japanese Buddhism to the West*, 115.

[110] Tamura, *Americanization, Acculturation, and Ethnic Identity*, 205.

[111] Amstutz, *Interpreting Amida*, 69.

[112] *Larger Sutra*, 33. JSZ I, 32.

[113] Amstutz, *Interpreting Amida*, 102.

[114] There are a few examples in *The American Buddhist*, where there are articles from early on that did try to take on certain social issues. The following are examples. Arthur Takemoto "The Positive Ethics of Real Happiness," *The American Buddhist*, August 1, 1957. Robert P. Jackson, "Six Paramita Applied to Practical Living," *The American Buddhist*, June 1, 1957. Robert Aiken, "The Morality of the American Involvement in the War in Vietnam," *The American Buddhist*, January, 1969.

[115] Sunday School Department, *Buddhism for Youth, Part Two: The Teaching of Buddha* (San Francisco: Buddhist Churches of America, 1965).

[116] Sunday School Department, *Nembutsu: The Way of Spiritual Fulfillment, a BCA Course Outline for Grade Eight* (San Francisco: Buddhist Churches of America, 1966).

[117] Sunday School Department, *Buddhism for Youth, Part Two: The Teaching of Buddha* (San Francisco: Buddhist Churches of America, 1965).

[118] Tweed, *The American Encounter with Buddhism 1844-1912*, 7.

[119] For more information, refer to Ugo Dessí's research.

[120] Jeff Wilson, "'All Beings Are Equally Embraced By Amida Buddha': Jodo Shinshu Buddhism and Same-Sex Marriage in the United States," *Journal of Global Buddhism* 13 (2012): 31-59.

[121] As an example, Head Minister Kosho Ohtani and Lady Ohtani of Nishi Hongwanji participate in a case for interreligious understanding and cooperation as a necessary cornerstone of world peace. The theme was "One is the Human Spirit," and the event was held on October 24, 1975, in New York. Also, refer two articles discussing pacifism and non-discrimination from a Jodo Shinshu perspective in the *Wheel of Dharma*, September, 1981 edition.

[122] As one example, please refer to the following article. Don Castro, "Buddhism: Ecology as Religion" *Wheel of Dharma*, July, 1981. Also, retired minister Rev. Don Castro has made great contributions in the area of environmental awareness from a Buddhist perspective. He is credited for starting the "EcoSangha" movement in the northwest of US. For more information, refer to: Northwest Dharma Association, "EcoSangha," accessed July 26, 2018, https://northwestdharma.org/2017/03/rinban-don-castro-champion-for-ecosangha-retires-after-31-years-at-seattle-betsuin-temple/.

[123] Ibid., 48-9.

[124] Although it should be noted that there are occasional instances in the 60s and 70s where the BCA made its presence known to the public by taking action on specific social issues. Some examples include the BCA Cambodian Relief Fund established in December of 1979, in which the organization donated $30,000 worth of relief supplies to those suffering in that area. The BCA also donated approximately 29,000 lbs. of clothes to those

suffering from the Vietnam War. Finally, the Nishi Hongwanji donated $5,000 to the United Nations children's fund in 1969.

[125] Kenneth Tanaka, "Think BIIG, Wake Up, Give Back: A Three-Step Process of Everyday Reflection and Action for Young Adults," (Berkeley: Institute of Buddhist Studies Seminary and Graduate School, 1992). Kenneth Tanaka, "Parents Sharing the Nembutsu Teachings with Their Young Children," (Berkeley: Institute of Buddhist Studies Seminary and Graduate School, 1995). Alfred Bloom, *Strategies for Modern Living: A Commentary with the Text of the Tannisho*, (Berkeley: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 1992). 4. Taitetsu Unno, *River of Fire, River of Water: An Introduction to the Pure Land Tradition of Shin Buddhism* (New York: Doubleday, 1998).

[126] On shooting that took place at a gay club in Orlando: Rod Meade Sperry "Buddhist Figures, Communities Respond to Orlando Massacre," *Lion's Roar*, (2016), https://www.lionsroar.com/buddhist-teachers-communities-respond-to-orlando/. On the issue of separating families refer to: Buddhist Churches of America's Facebook page accessed July 26, 2018, https://www.facebook.com/buddhistchurchesofamerica/. On the issue of discrimination refer to: Jeff Wilson, "'All Beings Are Equally Embraced By Amida Buddha': Jodo Shinshu Buddhism and Same-Sex Marriage in the United States," *Journal of Global Buddhism* 13 (2012), www.globalbuddhism.org/jgb/index.php/jgb/article/download/125/140

[127] Tsukasa Matsueda, *Iron Chain to Golden Chain: Dharma High School Readings* (Foster City: Buddhist Churches of America, 1993).

[128] Tamura, *Americanization, Acculturation, and Ethnic Identity*, 204.

[129] Bloom, "Shin Buddhism in America," 41. Also refer to Sueki Fumihiko's explanation of "Funeral Buddhism."

[130] Here the writer is referring to the fall in the BCA membership from year to year.

[131] Tatsudani Akio is critical of Shin scholars at the time who after the war, did not make an effort to rectify their wrongdoing and admit their compliance with imperial Japan. He explains that many scholars such as Umehara Shinryū are continuing the legacy of mid-war mentality onto the post-war by still seeing, "Shin Buddhism as the right Dharma that protects the nation." This of course, is founded on the principle of the two truths theory. There have been many academic scholars in general, who have made attempts to reflect on their past responsibilities during the war. But, he argues, Shin scholars have yet to do so. However, we should note that Higashi and Nishi Hongwanji both apologize for their participation in the war effort, in 1987 and 1991, respectively. Other Buddhist traditions follow suit soon after.

Tatsudani further explains that these scholars during war, did not take responsibility for what they said and did after it ended, nor did they offer any solution concerning replacing or resolving their past mistakes and misinterpretations. They simply went on teaching the next generation of students, both within and without the organization as if nothing ever happened (Tatsudani Akio, "Shinshū Kyōgakusha ni okeru Rekishi to Sekinin: Kyōgakusha no Sensō Sekinin wo Megutte," *ShinranTaikei: Rekishi Hen Jūichi kan*, ed. Kashiwahara Yūsen, Kuroda Toshio, Hiramatsu Reizō (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1989), 94-5).

Ives would agree to this in that he explains that after the war, many Buddhist scholars and many Buddhist religious organizations suddenly began talking about their religion as a compassionate and peace-loving tradition, completely omitting any previous signs of pro-war sentiment. He states, "Shin leaders quickly dropped their rhetoric of "the sovereign's law taking precedence" and their equations of rebirth in the Pure Land with repaying debt to the nation through utmost loyalty" (Ives, *Imperial-Way* Zen, 139). The obvious shift in focus shows the glaring danger that religious doctrine can be used both to justify peace as well as war.

However, the aim of this chapter is not to place blame on any person or Hongwanji itself. Rather, it is to show that there is clear evidence to argue that the two truths theory does not work in the interest of the religious organization nor its nembutsu adherents. Furthermore, the aim is to show how the two truths theory manifests itself in concrete ways and that these ways are in direct conflict with Shin religious doctrine. In the context of the issue of war, the two truths theory helped to justify supporting a system of belief that had nothing to do with Shin Buddhism.

Chapter 3

[1] CWS, 530. JSZ II, 786. "Supreme Buddha is formless, and because of being formless is called *jinen*."

[2] CWS, 661. JSZ II, 1053.

[3] CWS, 149. JSZ II, 129. "The Pure Land is free forever from slander and dislike; all are equal, with no anxieties or afflictions. Whether human or deva, good or evil, all can reach the Pure Land."

[4] CWS, 461. JSZ II, 702-3.

[5] Robert E. Carter, *Encounter with Enlightenment: A Study of Japanese Ethics* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), 115.

[6] CWS, 596. JSZ II, 289.

[7] CWS, 596. JSZ II, 289. Shinran describes what goodness is: Goodness, Rightness, Sincerity, Rectitude, and Truthfulness. These can be understood as characteristics of the Pure Land as well as how Shinran defines the term "good."

[8] CWS, 13. JSZ II, 15. "The great practice is to say the Name of the Tathagata of unhindered light. This practice, embodying all good acts and possessing all roots of virtue, is perfect and most rapid in bringing about birth. It is the treasure ocean of virtues that is suchness or true reality. For this reason, it is called great practice."

[9] CWS, 53. JSZ II, 48.

[10] SDJ I, 382.

[11] Yamamoto explains that when the "two truths 真俗二諦" was translated into Chinese, it was mistranslated and subsequently misunderstood that *paramārtha satya*, or "absolute truth 真諦," was somehow more truthful than its counterpart, *lokasaṃvṛti satya*, or "secular truth 俗諦." In Chinese, "saṃvṛti" became "to cover 覆う," as in the truth gets covered or concealed by blind passions. However, the original Sanskrit did not originally have this hierarchical relationship in its meaning. In fact, the secular truth had the important role of "making known" by putting into conceptual language what the absolute truth was. In other words, the secular truth is truth revealing itself where otherwise it would be impossible for sentient beings to understand it.

In one example, the word wisdom, or *prajña*, was separated from the application of wisdom, or *prajñapti*, where the latter was deemed less important to *prajña* itself. Yamamoto then shows that in Sanskrit, it is apparent that the term "empty-provisional-middle truths 空・仮・中" are all in fact equally an aspect of truth itself; this means that pajñapti and prajña mentioned above are both equal as well. But the Chinese translation misinterpreted and led many people to believe that the provisional world was somehow lower or not as accurate when compared to the world of absolute truth or *sunyata*.

[12] Yamamoto Nobuhiro. "Ryujū no 'Kū' Shisō kara Shinran no 'Hōben' ron e—'Keron' prapañca 'Chidogon' prajñapti tono Sai nitsuite—" *Tōyō Bunka Kenkyū Kiyō* 160 (December, 2011): 441-496.

[13] *Shinshūshinjiten*, 315 and 3, respectively.

[14] Also referred to as *(shi)harai*, they are: engaging in sexual acts, stealing, destruction of life, and making false statements. Monks who commit these are subject to expulsion from the sangha.

[15] CWS, 613. JSZ II, 303.

[16] This is referring to the non-meditative good explained in the *Contemplation Sutra*. The three good are separated into three categories: worldly, precepts, and practice. The first, also called the "worldly" good, involves respecting one's parents and elders such as teachers, not killing, and engaging in the ten good acts. The second, which is also called "Early Buddhist" good, involves taking refuge in the three treasures, following all monastic rules, and endeavoring to be a dignified person. The third, which is also called "Mahayana" good, involves awakening the mind aspiring for enlightenment, believing in causality, being well-read in the Mahayana scriptures, and encouraging others onto the Buddhist path.

[17] Miki Terukuni, *Shinshū Rinri no Kenkyū* (Kyoto: Nagata Bunshōdō, 1976), 140.

[18] Tannishō, 44. "But with a foolish being full of blind passions, in this fleeting world—this burning house—all matters without exception are empty and false, totally without truth and sincerity. The nembutsu alone is true and real."

[19] CWS, 525. JSZ II, 780.

[20] CWS, 459. JSZ II, 699.

[21] Inaba Shūken, "Shinshū ni okeru Rinri," *Nihon Bukkyō Gakkai Nenpō* 27 (1962).

[22] CWS, 525. JSZ II, 780. "Self-power is the effort to attain birth, whether by invoking the names of Buddhas other than Amida and practicing good acts other than the nembutsu, in accordance with your particular circumstances and opportunities; or by endeavoring to make yourself worthy through mending the confusion in your acts, words, and thoughts, confident of your own powers and guided by your own calculation."

[23] CWS, 663. JSZ II, 1055.

[24] Belief in self-power is also referred to as doubt of Amida's Primal Vow, self-contrivance, double-mindedness, the idea that good actions will bring about good results, bad ones will bring about bad results, and doubting the Buddha's wisdom.

[25] CWS, 551. JSZ II, 809.

[26] CWS, 554. JSZ II, 813.

[27] CWS, 550. JSZ II, 807.

[28] CWS, 84. JSZ II, 71.

[29] Received in an email exchange with Naito Chikō.

[30] Refer to CWS, 488. JSZ II, 676.

[31] In the past, the topic of *icchantika* was the subject of much heated debate. The Hossō school did not recognize that an *icchantika* had the capability or potential to attain Buddhahood, whereas the Tendai and Kegon schools argued that they could. In Shin, an *icchantika* can eventually become a Buddha if they accept Amida Buddha's Primal Vow. Shantao in his work *Hymns of Nembutsu Liturgy* 『法事讃（上）』 talks about those who commit the five transgressions, ten evil acts, or those who have expunged those evils yet still slander the Dharma, as well as the *icchantika*. He explains that all who fall into these categories can still be born in the Pure Land as long as they have a "turning of heart 回心" and rely on Amida Buddha's Primal Vow. Refer to JSZ I, 808.

[32] T. Vol. 12, 519a

[33] Nakamura Hajime, *Kōsetsu Bukkyōgo Daijiten*, (Tokyo: Tokyo Shoseki, 2002), 74.

[34] SDJ I, 119.

[35] Despite considering himself an evil person or a foolish being filled with ignorance and blind passions because he commits the ten transgressions, Shinran agrees with Shantao and believes that all beings are still able to be saved by Amida Buddha. This issue is crucial as it directly concerns Amida's unconditional, compassionate working. According to Shinran's understanding of the Eighteenth Vow, the exclusion clause should not be understood literally in which certain types of people are not saved. The clause conversely guarantees the liberation of those beings even though they might commit the five grave offenses, both the general Buddhism or Mahayana versions, the ten transgressions, and abuse of the right Dharma. The purpose of the clause then is to show that Amida firmly warns sentient beings against committing the various offenses and slandering the right Dharma. In the section of "The Person Difficult to Save," Shinran mentions the liberation of those who have committed the five grave offenses, slandering of the Dharma, and lack the seed of Buddhahood (*icchantika*). Those who have committed such evils are still in fact saved precisely because of Amida's compassionate working, which is also why this salvific power is referred to as being inconceivable.

[36] Stephen J. Lewis and Galen Amstutz, "Teleologized 'virtue' or mere religious 'character'?: A critique of Buddhist Ethics from the Shin Buddhist point of view," *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 4, (March 1, 1997): 147-148, accessed May 1, 2016, URL: http://blogs.dickinson.edu/buddhistethics/files/2010/04/lewis11.pdf

[37] Kenneth K. Tanaka, *Pure Land Buddhism: Historical Development and Contemporary Manifestation*, (Bangalore: Dharmaram Publications, 2004), 92.

[38] Lewis and Amstutz, "Teleologized 'virtue' or mere religious 'character'?: A critique of Buddhist Ethics from the Shin Buddhist point of view," 149.

[39] Tanaka, *Pure Land Buddhism*, 105.

[40] Other ways to explain self-power are doubt in the Buddha's Primal Vow, doubt in the Buddha's wisdom, not being single-minded, among others.

[41] Tanaka, *Pure Land Buddhism*, 105-6.

[42] Kiritani Jun'nin, *Kyusai no Ronri*, (Tokyo: Kyōiku Shinchō Sha, 2009), 73.

[43] JSZ I, 617.

[44] Dennis Hirota, ed., *Toward a Contemporary Understanding of Pure Land Buddhism: Creating a Shin Buddhist Theology in a Religiously Plural World,* (Albany: State Universtiy of New York Press, 2000), 47. Dennis Hirota's notion of teleology and the interpersonal was helpful in formulating my thoughts on Shin ethics as teleological.

[45] See website. "Vihara Movement," Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha Shakai-bu, accessed on June 11, 2017, http://social.hongwanji.or.jp/html/c11p3.html.

[46] CWS, 107. JSZ II, 91. "The amount of evil one has committed is not considered, the duration of any performance of religious practices is of no concern. It is a matter of neither practice nor good acts, neither sudden attainment nor gradual attainment, neither meditative practice nor nonmeditative practice, neither right contemplation nor wrong contemplation, neither thought nor no thought, neither daily life nor the moment of death, neither many-calling nor once-calling. It is simply shinjin that is inconceivable, inexplicable, and indescribable."

[47] CWS, 538. JSZ II, 793-4.

[48] CWS, 79. JSZ II, 67. Here it states that shinjin is, "Is the true cause of attaining great nirvana."

[49] CWS, 458. JSZ II, 696.

[50] CWS, 668. JSZ II, 1060. In *Tannishō* it states, "Next, people who discriminate good and evil acts and consider them aids or hindrances to birth, interposing their own calculation, do not entrust themselves to the inconceivable working of the Vow and, striving to do acts that will result in birth with their own designs, they make the nembutsu they say their own practice."

[51] Refer to CWS Volume II, 159.

[52] By "condition" I mean something that sentient beings must work hard to try and obtain as opposed to "right cause" which refers to shinjin not involving self-power.

[53] For an example refer to a paper by John Paraskevopoulos entitled, "Sukhavati and Samsara: Non-Duality in Pure Land Buddhism," in *Journal of Shin Buddhism*.

[54] Larger, 26-27. JSZ I, 28.

[55] CWS, 94. JSZ II, 79-80. This section is also known as 「字訓釈」.

[56] CWS, 4, 125, and 239. JSZ II, 7, 105, 209, respectively.

[57] CWS, 461. JSZ II, 702.

[58] Tokunaga Ichido, "Shinran Jōdokyō ni okeru Kū," (Paper submitted at Nishi Hongwanji headquarters for the rank of *Shikyō*, Kyoto, Japan, e-mail attachment to author January 23, 2017).

[59] CWS, 325. JSZ II, 337.

[60] CWS, 95. JSZ II, 80.

[61] CWS, 94. JSZ II, 79.

[62] Robert E. Carter, *Encounter with Enlightenment*, 47-48.

[63] Ibid., 71.

[64] Charles Goodman, *Consequences of Compassion: An Interpretation and Defense of Buddhist Ethics*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). He writes, "Once they see what would have the best results, the corresponding movements just happen, without intervening states such as decisions and the formation of intentions. The cause of these movements is the unimpeded flow of natural great compassion. The abandonment of all selfish desires has removed all hindrances to the operation of this compassion, which now spontaneously produces bodily and vocal movements that cause the happiness and relieve the suffering of others."

[65] CWS, 421. JSZ II, 519. This section is referred to as 悲歎述懐讃. Hymns #97 and 98, respectively.

[66] Inoue Zenkō, "Shinran no Kairikai ni tsuite: Haike to sono Gendaiteki Igi," *Ryūkoku Kyōgaku* 37 (2002), 22.

[67] Kiritani, Jun'nin, "Shinkō Seikatsu no Ronri" *Edani Sensei Kokikinen: Jōdokyō no Shisō to Bunka*. (Kyoto: Bukkyō Daigaku, 1972).

[68] CWS, 94. JSZ II, 79.

[69] CWS, 291. JSZ II, 255.

[70] CWS, 4. JSZ II, 7.

[71] CWS, 315. JSZ II, 275.

[72] CWS, 85. JSZ II, 71.

[73] What is important to note is that no amount of self-power will enable one to be truly shameful or joyful in knowing that he/she will be liberated. A common method that was believed to be able to do this was the act of repenting one's karmic evil. Shinran deviates from the standard method of Pure Land practice and ideology in many ways, one of which is his view on repentance and shame. Turning to the story of Ajataśatru and what parts of the *Nirvana Sutra* Shinran cites, we can see that repentance is not significant in one's possibility for birth in the Pure Land. A portion of that excerpt reads, "Jivaka replied, 'Oh, excellent, excellent! Though the King has committed a crime, profound remorse has been stirred in his heart and he is filled with shame and self-reproach," and continues to say, "Excellent, Great King! You are now filled with shame and self-reproach."(CWS, 131. JSZ II, 111) It is at this point that Shinran skips to Shakyamuni as the savior of those afflicted with karmic evil such as Ajataśatru. But the *Nirvana Sutra* in its original reading is still in the middle of its discussion of how to eradicate karmic evil. Not only must one first have remorse, shame, and self-reproach for the karmic evil committed, the person then has to repent his/her actions. Jivaka then explains that if one openly repents, then his/her karmic evil will be eradicated. This portion concerning how one can nullify past evil deeds is completely omitted in Shinran's discussion of shinjin (This is denoted in the *Collected Works of Shinran* as "…" located on page 131, towards the bottom after the words, "shame and self-reproach."). He does this in order to show that repentance has no significance in terms of enabling birth in the Pure Land.

The act of repentance has been a key practice in Pure Land Buddhism. Shantao and later Genshin are two proponents who explain that repenting, along with the practice of recitative nembutsu, is essential in the eradication of one's karmic evil and for birth in the Pure Land (for Genshin on repentance, refer to JSZ I, 1145 and 1226).

One example that can be given is found in *Liturgy for Birth* 『往生礼讃』, where it states, "There are three grades of repentance: high, middle and low. But if people in this life…repent in this way, their heavy obstructions, whether accumulated for a long time or short time, will all swiftly be eradicated" (Shan-tao, *Pure Land Bilingual Series II Shan-tao's Liturgy for Birth* 往生礼讃 *Ōjōraisan*, Hisao Inagaki trans., (Singapore: Dōyi Tan, 2009), 96-

7. Refer also to CWS, 218-9). This excerpt Shinran places in the Chapter on Transformed Buddha-Bodies and Lands That are Provisional Means, which shows that if the act of repentance is to have any significance at all, it is only a "provisional means 方便." This shows that Shinran places significance on shame and not on repentance because shame is a part of shinjin, which is the sole cause for birth in the Pure Land. This is in stark contrast to the preceding Pure Land Masters of Shinran, who advocated that repentance was an essential component to birth (Inoue, "Shinran niokeru Gyakuhō Ōjō nitsuite," 126-130). Shinran emphasizing shame but stopping short of repentance means that no act committed on the part of the sentient being can enable one to extinguish his/her karmic evil. In fact, attempting to extinguish one's karmic evil entails doubting the salvific activity and wisdom of Amida Buddha. Accepting one's true naked self, the human condition, is to awaken to the fundamental current of life that is Amida's great compassion.

[74] CWS, 429. JSZ II, 531.

[75] Inoue, "Shinran niokeru Gyakuhō Ōjō nitsuite," 132.

[76] Kakehashi Jitsuen, *Seiten Zeminā Kyōgyōshinshō Shin no Maki*. (Kyoto: Hongwanji Shuppansha, 2008), 421-2.

[77] CWS, 125. JSZ II, 105.

[78] CWS, 239. JSZ II, 209.

[79] Kakehashi, *Seiten Zeminā Kyōgyōshinshō Shin no Maki*, 422.

[80] CWS, 94. JSZ II, 79-80.

[81] CWS, 476. JSZ II, 663.

[82] CWS, 475, JSZ II, 663.

[83] Naito Chiko, *Anjin Rondai wo Manabu*, (Kyoto: Hongwanji Shuppansha, 2005), 70-1.

[84] CWS, 488. JSZ II, 676-7. In *Notes on Once-Calling and Many-Calling* Shinran writes, "When we, who are so shameful, go a step or two, little by little, along the White Path of the power of the Vow, we are taken in and held by the compassionate heart of the Buddha of unhindered light. It is fundamental that because of this we will unfailingly reach the Pure Land of happiness, whereupon we will be brought to realize the same enlightenment of great nirvana as Amida Tathagata, being born in the flower of that perfect enlightenment."

[84] Refer to diagram 3 in the *Appendix*.

Chapter 4

[1] Carter, *Encounter with Enlightenment*, 155. He writes, "Recall that the enlightened, non-dual vantage point has taken us beyond subject and object, and beyond the taking of the individual as ultimate. Our sense of who we are has eradicated the boundaries between self and other, knower and known, and through some process of self-transformation, our desires have been purified of all selfish and evil tendencies."

[2] Kiritani, Jun'nin, "Shinkō Seikatsu no Rinri" *Etani Sensei Koki Kinen: Jōdokyō no Shisō to Bunka*, (Kyoto: Dōbōsha, 1972), 1,123.

[3] CWS, 404. JSZ II, 479.

[4] CWS, 84. JSZ II, 71.

[5] CWS, 484. JSZ II, 671.

[6] For a more in-depth explanation, refer to the section "Five grave offenses" in chapter 3.

[7] Shinshū Jiten, 607.

[8] CWS, 113. JSZ II, 95. Here it explains that shinjin is 大菩提心 or *bodhicitta*.

[9] CWS, 528. JSZ II, 783.

[10] Tokunaga Michio, "'Shinjin' as a Mahayana Bodhisattva Path," *The Pure Land* 6 (1989): 15-28.

[11] Ibid., 23.

[12] Tokunaga, "'Shinjin' as a Mahayana Bodhisattva Path," 27.

[13] Carter, *Encounter with Enlightenment*, 25.

[14] Carter, *Encounter with Enlightenment*, 30.

[15] Refer to Kakehashi Jitsuen's book entitled, *Seiten Seminā: Jōdo Sanbukyō II, Kanmuryojukyō*, page 70 for the definition of good and evil.

[16] Zuio Hisao Inagaki tr., *Thus I have Heard from Rennyo Shōnin*, (Craiova: Dharma Lion Publications, 2008), 99-100. Also, Chūshakuban Dainihan, 1,300.

[17] CWS, 365. JSZ II, 412.

[18] Miki, *Shinshū Rinri no Kenkyū*, 361.

[19] Alfred Bloom, "Shinran's Vision of Absolute Compassion" *Living in Amida's Universal Vow: Essays in Shin Buddhism* (Bloomington: World Wisdom, 2004).

[20] CWS, 570. JSZ II, 844.

[21] CWS, 90-91. JSZ II, 76.

[22] Larger, 11. JSZ I, 19.

[23] CWS, 238. Compare JSZ II, 209 with JSZ I, 928.

[24] CWS 456, JSZ II, 693. Here the term "弘" is explained. Shinran cites this character as opposed to the original, which uses "伝." Shinran's citation of this quote can be found on CWS, 238 or JSZ II, 209.

[25] Miki, *Shinshū Rinri no Kenkyū*, 195.

[26] Ibid., 175-196.

[27] Omine Akira, David Matsumoto, tr., "*Shinjin* as the Eternal Now" *Living in Amida's Universal Vow: Essays in Shin Buddhism*, (Bloomington: World Wisdom, 2004).

[28] CWS, 408. JSZ II, 488.

[29] CWS, 70. JSZ II, 61.

[30] Miki, *Shinshū Rinri no Kenkyū*, 182.

[31] Tanaka, *Pure Land Buddhism*, 104.

[32] CWS, 553. JSZ II, 811.

[33] CWS, 371. JSZ II, 424.

[34] CWS, 564. JSZ II, 836. Shinran writes, "It is not at all taught that you should perform acts that become hindrances to people of the nembutsu and bring censure on the masters and true teachers, intentionally preferring wrong because the self is so evil. Having encountered Amida's Vow, which is rare to encounter, one should seek to respond in gratitude to the Buddha's benevolence. It is utterly incomprehensible that, in spite of this, there are those who with their talk and deeds cause the suppression of the nembutsu."

[35] Refer to Kiritani Jun'nin's book entitled, *Tariki to yūkoto*, in which he explains the character '転' in more detail. As opposed to '廃' which means "to eliminate," '転' means "convert, change, turn, revolve," in that one's understanding of his/her evil actions changes and revolves to have new meaning and significance in one's life. That is, when one awakens to and is shameful of the human condition, that person at the same time awakens to Amida's salvific activity and understands that he/she will be saved. Upon awakening to this salvific realization, at the same time, one also recognizes that he/she cannot stop committing karmic evil and thus be able to repay the Buddha's benevolence adequately. This, however, again makes the person understand all the more that he/she is saved and the process continues *ad infinitum*. This cyclical process of shame and joy Kiritani explains is encapsulated in the character '転.' Kiritani Jun'nin, *Tariki to yūkotoi: Bukkyō Bunka Kenkyūkai Sōsho 4,* (Kyoto: Hyakkaen, 1968), 156-159.

[36] Tannishō, 672.

[37] Tokunaga Ichido, "Shinran Jōdokyō ni okeru Kū." 「その純一無垢の「信仰」さえもが否定されてはじめて信と言い得るということは、それが一般の宗教的確認を超えたものであることを表わすと同時に、もはや対象認識を超えた「覚」とでも呼ぶべき境涯であることを示している」

[38] Larger, 26. JSZ I, 27-28.

[39] Inagi Sen'e, *Shinshū Anjin no Konponteki Mondai: Shinjin to Utagai ni Tsuite*, (Kyoto: Hyakkaen, 1991).

[40] Shinshū Jiten, 521. Refer to CWS, 108, 223, 515, 587-8, and 603.

[41] CWS, 614. JSZ II, 303.
   Shinran states, "The four occurrences of 'correspondence with conditions' are:
   1. Why do you obstruct and confuse me with what is not the essential practice corresponding to my conditions?
   2. What I desire is the practice corresponding to my conditions; that is not what you seek.
   3. What you desire is the practice corresponding to your conditions; that is not what I seek. Each person's performance of practices in accord with his aspirations unfailingly leads to rapid emancipation.
   4. If you desire to undertake practice, by all means follow the method of practice corresponding to your own conditions. In return for a little effort, you will gain great benefit."

[42] CWS, 527. JSZ II, 782.

[43] James C. Dobbins, *Jōdo Shinshū Shin Buddhism in Medieval Japan*, (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press), 77. "During Shinran's lifetime the faith faction advocating licensed evil was the more ominous extreme, for it threatened to lure his believers into religious misconduct and indulgent behavior. By the time the *Tannisho* was written, the situation had apparently changed. The practice faction demanding rigorous discipline and morality held the upper hand sought to adapt Shinran's teachings to conventional religious values."

[44] CWS, 679. JSZ II, 1075.

[45] John Paraskevopoulos, "Amida's Dharma in the Modern World," *The Pure Land* 20 (2003), 121.

[46] Paraskevopoulos, "Amida's Dharma in the Modern World," 118.

[47] This difference arises from past karmic conditions and the use of conceptual language.

[48] CWS, 443-5. JSZ II, 547-9.

[49] CWS, 289. JSZ II, 253-4.

[50] Shigaraki Takamaro tr., David Matsumoto, "Shinjin and Social Action in Shinran's Teachings," *The Pure Land* 8-9 (1992), 231.

[51] CWS, 600. JSZ II, 293.

[52] CWS, 568. JSZ II, 842.

[53] CWS, 547. JSZ II, 803.

[54] CWS, 551. JSZ II, 809.

[55] CWS, 553. JSZ II, 812.

[56] JSZ I, 1013. Here the term "厭離穢土、欣求浄土" is used.

[57] CWS, 289. JSZ I, 254.

[58] Shigaraki, "Shinjin and Social Action in Shinran's Teachings," 227.

[59] Kakehashi, *Seiten Zeminā: Kyōgyōshinshō Shin no Maki*, 443.

[60] CWS, 94. JSZ II, 79-80.

[61] Miki, *Shinshū Rinri no Kenkyū*, 189-194.

[62] Shinshū Jiten, 491, 496-7.

[63] Nakamura, *Jihi*, 270-1.

[64] John S. Ishihara, "A Shin Buddhist Social Ethics," *The Pure Land* 4 (1987), 30-1.

[65] We will show this in the following chapters.

[66] Fukagawa Senchō, "Shinshū Nembutsusha niokeru Ritatekikōi (Tasha Shien) no Ikkōsatsu: Kigoshi Yasushi Cho 'Borantīa wa Shinran no Oshieni Hansuru noka—Tariki Rikai no Sōkoku'—wo Megutte," in *Shinshūgaku* 137, 138 (2018): 76.

[67] CWS, 570. JSZ II, 488.

[68] *Shinshū Jiten*, 384.

[69] We can see a similar reference to this idea in the Shōshinge when Shinran in his famous quoting of Genshin explains that the clouds of blind passions obstruct the light of the sun, but that beneath the clouds there is still brightness. Through this brightness, one can see the clouds for what they are despite not being able to extinguish them. In fact, it is because of the clouds being there, that one can awaken to the embracing working of the light of the sun. Then, the person realizes that all beings are in the same human condition and thus, the great compassion that is given to one is the same compassion that all beings are embraced in as well. In this example, we can see that true solidarity with sentient beings arises when one's self-power is negated. When one's self-power identity is negated, that person awakens to the greater common identity and universal fellowship.

[70] Miyaji Kakue, *Shinran Seishin to Gendai*, (Tokyo: Kyōiku Shinchōsha, 1986), 158

[71] CWS, 52. JSZ II, 47. CWS, 350. JSZ II, 384.

[72] CWS, 679. JSZ II, 1074.

[73] Hirota, *Toward a Contemporary Understanding of Pure Land Buddhism*, 66.

[74] CWS, 560. JSZ II, 830.

[75] Kakehashi Jitsuen, Seiten Seminā: Jōdo Sanbukyō II, Kanmuryōjukyō, 344.

[76] CWS, 614. JSZ II, 303.

Appendix

[1] Ugo, *Ethics and Society in Contemporary Shin Buddhism*, 47.

[2] Ibid., 47.

[3] Ibid., 48. "…Mahayana concept of compassion is articulated within the framework of the Pure Land path, so as to provide the foundation for a social ethic."

[4] Ibid., 48. "…It flows quite naturally that 'Even that person who has been inclined to steal will naturally undergo a change of heart if he comes to say the nembutsu aspiring for the land of bliss.'"

[5] Ibid., 50-1. "Respect for other religious beliefs and compassionate attitude even towards those who disparage the teachings…Pray for the present life and also the next life of those who slander the nembutsu."

[6] Ibid., 54.

7Ibid., 104. Consistent recourse is instead made to the idea that the ethical life should flow spontaneously from the working of Amida's Vow, which prevents any conflict with a requirement to abandon any attempt to resort to calculation, that is, to self-power.

8Ibid., 110. "All of this provides the standard for the current self-representation of the two Hongwanji institutions as communities based on the ideal of fellowship (*dōbō*).

9Ibid., 110. "In this regard, it is typically argued that karma, rather than a concept sanctioning social differences as the result of past misdeeds, represents the opening up of the dimension of togetherness (*warera*) as a sharing of suffering, which is often expressed through reference to the "ki aspect of deep faith."

10Ibid., 117. It is a basic attitude of a Shin Buddhist practitioner not only to be against oppression, but also to consider critically various aspects of the modern world such as the shortcomings of a society of consumerism and the issue of education, in close association with the activity of listening to the teachings, that is, the Dharma.

11Ibid., 131.

12Ibid., 131. Internalization of the experience of shinjin tends to facilitate the emergence of authoritarian views, as is evident, for many authors, in the Two Truths theory, which is blamed for having compromised the ethical potential of shinjin with the secular authorities and the values, often alien to the Buddhist tradition, that they have proposed as a model for social relations.

13 Tanaka, *Pure Land Buddhism*, 108-110.

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