

## *Goichidaiki-kikigaki*: Sayings of Rennyo Shōnin

Translated by Elson Snow

### Editorial Introduction

The following excerpts are from a collection entitled *Goichidaiki-kikigaki* (*A Record of What Was Said by Rennyo Shōnin During His Life*). Rennyo (1415-1499) was of crucial importance to Jōdō Shinshū, such that he is referred to as the second founder (*chūkō shōnin*.) At the age of fifteen he had made a vow to restore the *Honganji* to pre-eminence among the various branches of *Shinshū*. He revived the organization established by Shinran Shōnin (1173-1262), and laid the foundation for the *Honganji's* becoming a formidable religious organization.

An accomplished organizer and writer, he also oversaw the building of various temple halls, became the eighth abbot (*hosshu*) of *Honganji* in 1457, guided the *Honganji* branch through the terrible Ōnin civil war, and is closely identified with Shinran. Later Shinshū practitioners even declared that Rennyo was either a manifestation of Shinran himself or even that of Amida Buddha.

One of several collections of his teachings, the *Goichidaiki-kikigai* does not consist of memoirs per se, but is more in the nature of reminiscences (or "idealized, inspirational portraits" in the words of Minor Lee Rogers) by other writers. It includes records of what Rennyo said, stories from his life, and recollections by various disciples and family members. The purpose was to perpetuate the memory of the master after his death, and to serve as inspiration to those people remaining after him. Herein is found a wealth of information concerning the man himself, the age in which he lived, and the actual practice of Shinshū doctrine of that period.

William M. Twaddell

## (1) NEMBUTSU RECITATION

Dotoku, from the village of Kanjuji, visited Rennyō on New Year's Day in the second year of Meio. "How many years have you reached, Dotoku?" Rennyō asked. "I urge you to recite the nembutsu. When it is recited in *self-power*, it is meant that the number of times it is repeated so much merit is accumulated toward deliverance by the Buddha. When it is recited in *other-power*, it is meant that at the instant moment of total reliance one is received by the Buddha. The nembutsu following this recitation is always, *namuamidabutsu, namuamidabutsu*, expressing heartfelt joy in gratitude for release by the Buddha's strength, the *other-power*. The one moment by which we rely totally on Amida continues unbroken throughout our lives and certain birth in the Pure Land is assured.

## (2) "UNOBSTRUCTED LIGHT" IN THE WASANS

Rennyō based his talk during the morning service on the six wasans beginning with the *five inexplicabilities* and concluding with the following lines:

Penetrating light unobstructed  
 throughout the ten quarters  
 pierces the darkness of ignorance,  
 and with one thought of joyousness  
 attainment of nirvana is finalized

He compared the gist of the six wasans with a passage describing Amida's light penetrating darkness throughout the ten directions, and a poem of Honen Shōnin:

There is no place lacking moonlight,  
 but seen by watchers at night  
 wherever they may be.

The occasion was impressive for those who heard the discourse given by Rennyō on the previous evening, and again in the morning. Jitsunyo expressed deep gratitude and praise which he could not fully describe in words.

## (3) A MISCALCULATION IN CHANTING

While chanting wasans during service, Rennyō completely missed his turn at the crucial point in the text. Returning to his southern residential quarters, he said, "I was so absorbed in Shinran's stanzas, that I'd forgotten to take the lead. There are so few who follows the teaching and attain birth in the Pure Land; I rejoice for those who do."

## (4) THOUGHT AND VOICE ARE ONE

Someone told Rennyo that he did not understand Honen Shōnin's words, *Thought and Voice are One*. Rennyo answered, "Whatever is mental will cast an external form: If one believes that *shinjin's* essence is *namuamidabutsu*, we have an example of the singularity of thought and voice."

## (5) BOOKS AND SCROLLS

Rennyo often repeated the couplet:

A tattered scroll worn by hanging,  
A tattered book torn by reading.

## (6) TOTAL RELIANCE

Rennyo said, "Namu is *kimyo*, the mind relying exclusively on Amida Buddha. *Hotsugan Eko* is 'transference' of virtues and merit from Amida Buddha at the moment of total reliance. The expressive form is *namuamidabutsu*."

## (7) THE LOWER DEPTHS OF SHINJIN

Rennyo Shonin one day talked about *shinjin* to Gansho and Kakuzen, (*Matashiho*) from Kaga province: "*Shinjin* is assurance of rebirth. It is single-mindedness in relying entirely on Amida Buddha for favorable birth in the one-moment calling, *namuamidabutsu*. In spite of many evils they are all eradicated and dispersed by the power of *shinjin* at the very moment of absolute reliance." Rennyo cited a text and then explained, "Illusory seeds of karma accumulated from beginningless beginning through endless round of births on the six paths are obliterated by the wondrous vow-power of Amida's wisdom at the single-minded reliance in *namuamidabutsu*. This is the first flowering of the true cause of ultimate nirvana." Rennyo, after having spoken, then summarized this thought on a scroll and gave it to Gansho.

## (8) AWARENESS

Rennyo Shonin was discussing matters with two visitors, Kyoken from Mikawa, and Kuken from Ise. "The meaning of *namu* is *kimyo*, an anticipation of future rebirth. *Kimyo* is awareness of the fundamental vow-power's transference of merits."

## (9) UNDERSTANDING FROM A MIND OF FAITH

Someone complained to Rennyo of his inability to understand that, "we have repeated the birth and death cycle many times; and during those lengthy times there were already ways and means given to us in the practice of the vow of the other-power." Rennyo replied, "It is apparent that this response is from a man who has heard, and is knowledgeable —but, has no awakening mind of faith."

## (10) FULFILLMENT OF COMPASSION

Fukudenji said he did not understand that Amida's great compassion fills the heart of foundering sentient beings. Rennyo answered, "The lotus of the buddha-mind blossoms internally in the mind and heart, and not in any other bodily organ. It is said that Amida's benevolence fills the heart and mind of sentient beings throughout the universe, which refers only to those acquiring *shinjin*." Fukudenji was grateful for the reply.

## (11) WHY ARE WE RECITING WASANS?

At a late evening service in October, Rennyo told his listeners it was deplorable to think that by reciting wasans and the *shoshinge* they were actually making an offering to Amida Buddha and Shinran, "In other traditions merit transference is accomplished by this oral practice. In our school, Shinran intended to share with others the mind of faith in the other-power, and the wasans were composed to better understand this teaching of the seven patriarchs. Nembutsu is recited in recognition of gratitude for what he has done on our behalf, and an expressive outpouring of thankfulness to Amida Buddha, which we observe in the presence of Shinran Shōnin."

## (12) SCHOLARLY WAYS

We may be well learned in the bulk of our religious literature, but lacking a settled peaceful mind of the other-power this study is useless. Our rebirth, determined by Amida, is the faith of one-mind lasting to the end of life and in the certainty of rebirth.

## (13) A VISION DURING HO-ONKO

Kuzen tells of his experience during Ho-onko festivities: "I went to the altar of Shinran Shōnin about two o'clock in the morning, and dozed off. I was sitting in a 'gassho posture' half asleep, half awake, when I saw the appearance of Rennyo Shōnin through a cotton-like fleecy cloud

walking toward me from behind the shrine. Thinking this was peculiar, I looked inside the altar-place and saw it was empty! I almost spoke out in the conviction that Shinran had taken the form of Rennyo in order to restore Jōdō Shinshū teachings. I then recalled the praises Kyomonbo quoted from the *Ho-onko Shiki*, *the teachings of Shinran are like waiting for the effect of fire after striking stick and stone together. It is like using a file on tile and pebbles creating jewels.* Since that dream I have been convinced Rennyo is truly the manifestation of Shinran Shōnin."

#### (14) TEACHING AND ACQUIRING *SHINJIN*

Those who teach the way of the dharma should first acquire *shinjin*. Following this determination, when the sutras are read or explained those who listen will be certain of favorable rebirth.

#### (15) THE PRACTICE OF GRATITUDE

It was said by Rennyo, "One whose reliance on Amida is determined, will have a joyous mind in nembutsu practice of gratitude for the Buddha's compassion."

#### (16) TRANSMISSION OF *SHINJIN*

Rennyo Shōnin's message to his son, Chikamatsu, was that he first establish *shinjin* for himself, and then firmly transmit it to others.

#### (17) POPULARITY AND AUTHENTIC CELEBRATIONS

On a December evening before Rennyo was to leave for Kyogyoji, his residence at Tonda, a crowd of people showed up. He asked Junsei why there were so many people. "Perhaps they have come to celebrate the passing of the old year before you leave tomorrow, and they want to show appreciation for your sermons." Rennyo replied, "What a useless celebration! It would be better to observe the occasion of acquiring *shinjin*."

#### (18) INDOLENCE AND JOYFULNESS

"There are times when some of us are neglectful and overwhelmed by doubting a favorable rebirth. However, our trust in the Tathagata Amitabha establishing once this determination, we would have no regret concerning negligence but rejoice in its certainty. It is a joyous mind, regardless of neglect, that followers experience in the great practice of *other-power*.

## (19) GRATEFULNESS FOR ASSURANCE

It was asked of Rennyo whether the *nembutsu* is gratitude for final release in the future, or does the *nembutsu* express gratitude for already having received the way of deliverance in the present? "Both are good," said Rennyo. "Those established in the assembly of assured birth are grateful for their certitude in the present. And for entering nirvana their gratefulness is expressed for their future birth and enlightenment. Either way, there is the moment of joyfulness in becoming a Buddha."

(20) *SHINJIN* FOR ONESELF AND FOR OTHERS

On the 23rd day of the first month of the fifth year of Meio, Rennyo arrived from Tonda, and sternly declared that, "this year I see no one having *shinjin*." He spoke fervently and at great lengths on *anjin*, and then sponsored a Noh performance. In the second month he returned to Tonda. On the 27th day of the third month he returned to Yamashina from Sakai. The following day he remarked, "I have traveled extensively, back and forth, urging people to acquire *shinjin* and impart it to others. Wherever I have gone, I am told of those joyfully attaining *shinjin* experience. I am pleased to hear this upon my return."

(21) DISCUSSING *ANJIN* WITH OTHERS

In a declaration to Kuzen on April 9 of this year Rennyo said, "In acquiring *anjin* one may have something to say. There is nothing to be gained about useless things. To be discussed, carefully, is the essential mind."

## (22) LEAVETAKING

Rennyo left for Sakai on the 20th of the fourth month.

## (23) FROM THE WASANS

Rennyo arrived in Yamashina and quoted from the wasans:

In the age of Five Corruptions,  
Only by diamond-mind faith,  
we escape samsaric birth-and-death,  
and arrive in the Pure Land of naturalness

He then cited the next wasan, and said, "I came here explicitly to talk about these two verses. We will reach the Pure Land of naturalness! No

longer in the cycle of birth and death. How Marvelous!" repeated Rennyo several times.

(24) SHINRAN'S CALLIGRAPHIC STYLE

Rennyo wrote the phrase, *namuamidabutsu* with gold-powdered ink and hung it in his room. According to Rennyo, *namu* is written in Shinran's style. He said, "The Buddha of *Inconceivable Light* and *Buddha of Unobstructed Light* is the *nembutsu* in praises of the virtuous name. *Namuamidabutsu* is fundamental."

(25) FORM AND ONE-MIND

Innumerable Buddhas of the ten quarters  
offer protection to those recognizing  
failure of self-power Enlightenment

Junsei asked Rennyo for the meaning of this wasan and was told,  
"The skill of all the Buddhas are directed to the refuge of Amida:

The feminine heart of the nun  
to be discarded in this world,  
And the cow's horn  
to remain as-it-is.

This verse of Shinran refers to the insignificance of form, and the importance of one-mind. In this world the head is shaven, but the heart is not.

(26) ON THE CREMATORIA GROUNDS

When thinking of Toribeno  
it is with saddened heart;  
It is these grounds that  
separated us from intimacy.  
—a verse written by Shinran

(27) SHINRAN'S PORTRAIT

Kuzen, on the 20th of the ninth month of the 5th year of Meio, was presented the portrait of Shinran Shōnin. There are no words for me to express the profound gratitude I feel.

## (28) AT OUR FOUNDER'S MEMORIAL

In the same year during Ho-onko at the original shrine, Rennyō Shōnin read the biography of Shinran. He also touched several topics. For me, the depth of gratitude is inexpressible.

## (29) RELATED CONDITIONS OF THE PAST

Rennyō arrived from Yamashina on the 4th month of the sixth year of Meio. He carried with him the original portrait of Shinran, *Anjo-no-Miei*, and after unwrapping the bundle explained that the calligraphy was the writing of Shinran, himself. After homage was given to the founder, Rennyō said that without previous circumstances of related conditions presentation of this portrait would not be possible.

## (30) THE THREE ACTIVITIES

Rennyō quoted the wasan:

All Buddhas of the three actions  
in full equity,  
cures the scourge of  
mind, body, and speech.

Its significance is that there is an accord of all Buddhas with Amida Buddha for releasing all living beings.

## (31) RENNYO: ON CONTINUITY OF SHINJIN

Continuity of faith following the *one-thought of shinjin* is nothing out of the ordinary. *Anjin*, the mind of tranquility is first awakened and singularity of thought is established and always present in grateful response, "Be mindful at all times" and "Respond to Buddha's compassion." Total reliance with this single-mindedness is an essential requirement.

## (32) SEEDS OF REBIRTH

Rennyō posed the problem: "On the question of recitation of the *nembutsu*, chanting of *Shoshin-ge*, and repetition of hymns—morning and evening—is that sufficient for favorable rebirth?" "Yes" was one answer, and "No" was another. Both answers are not satisfactory. The wasans and the gatha are expressions of one-thought reliance of sentient beings on Tathagata Amitabha for future birth. This understanding of faith is gratitude and thankfulness, and joyful acceptance in the presence of Shinran Shōnin."



## (33) THE SIX SYLLABLES

Rennyo Shōnin declared that the six syllables, *namuamidabutsu*, are practiced orally in other traditions in expectation of transferring merit and great benefits to the Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and heavenly beings, assuming oneself in possession of these virtues. It is not in accord with our tradition. If the six syllables belonged to us, then we would offer it to the Buddha and bodhisattvas. It is the one-thought and one-mind, towards favorable birth, in gratitude for our releasement that the name is repeated.

## (34) THE SPONTANEOUS RECITATION

Lady Asai of Mikawa briefly met with Rennyo as he was preparing to leave for Tonda. Before departing he told her that just repeating the name is not sufficient, but at the moment of entrusting we are then assured by Amida Buddha. "With deep conviction we spontaneously repeat, *namuamidabutsu*. Our gratitude, *namuamidabutsu*, *namuamidabutsu*, is an expression of obligation for the Buddha's compassion."

## (35) SHINJIN AND CONTRADICTION

Junsei, referring to the *gobunsho*, asked Rennyo about an apparent contradiction in his explanations: "In one of your letters it is said, *At the moment of awakening shinjin all evil is eradicated, and one enters the assembly of no-returns*. You have also said that evil will remain with us during our entire life-time. This is not consistent. "Rennyo then explained to Junsei of eradicating evil at the very moment of acquiring *shinjin*, the power of *shinjin* assures birth in the Pure Land and evil is no longer an obstacle; it is as if there were never these bad effects. While we live in this world evil is never exhausted. Junsei, are you presently enlightened having no evil whatever? The text says, *At the moment of awakening shinjin, evils disappear . . .* Rather than discussing whether evil remains, it is better to question our mind of faith, constantly—With or without evil, it is left entirely to Amida Buddha. Our important concern is only *shinjin*."

## (36) THE AUTHENTIC SHINJIN

From the wasans: *Authentic shinjin of pronouncing the name is dharma transference of Amida; self-power recitation is nontransferred and unacceptable*. From Amida this is given as we respond internally with gratitude and certitude by *nembutsu* repetition. Reciting the *nembutsu* with calculation is self-power practice and to be avoided.

## (37) BIRTHLESSNESS

The *life of birthlessness* is never known in the three worlds where life migrates through many existences. It is in the land of bliss that life is referred to as *birthlessness*.

## (38) EKO

"Eko," says Rennyō Shonin, "is *merit transference* of Amida Buddha's deliverance of all sentient beings."

## (39) CERTAINTY OF REBIRTH

The principle of rebirth determined by awakening of one- thought does not depend on whether we are evil or not. — Our releasement is up to Amitabha Tathagata; it is useless thinking about our sins. It is fundamental that sentient beings are released by total reliance.

## (40) FRATERNITY

We are sitting together in equality. Shinran had declared that those possessing *shinjin* are all fraternally united. Likewise, I sit with you in the same setting, and desiring that faith is to be attained, and clarification of these issues be made whenever necessary.

(41) BONNO ACTIVITY (THE *KLESAS*)

*I am drowning in the sea of lust and passion, and my illusion of ambition is greater than a mountain; I am ashamed, having no joy entering the assembly of assured birth and approaching authentic Enlightenment.* Discussing this passage of Shinran, doubt was expressed concerning favorable rebirth. Overhearing these remarks from the next room, Rennyō said, "Lust is the activity of the *klesas* and the quieting of them are miscellaneous practice. Faith only, and nothing else is required."

## (42) ROUGH SPEECH

"One evening there was an impromptu gathering. — Out of the way!" Kyomombo angrily shouted. Rennyō, hearing this forceful language said, "Before they leave, tell them in the same voice about the true practice of *one-thought*. This is what we are trying to do from one end of the country to the other!" Kyomombo, immediately and apologetically regretted his words. In praising Rennyō, Kyomombo tearfully related this incident to an audience overwhelmed with emotion.

## (43) HO-ONKO SERVICES

In the eleventh month of the sixth year of Meio, Rennyo did not show up for *Ho-onko*. Hokyobo was dispatched to ask about arrangements for services. Rennyo composed a letter stating that only watchmen should remain at the temple from six p.m. to six a.m. in the morning. He conducted services at Tonda for three days of the week before arriving in Osaka on the 24th.

## (44) RENNYO'S INDISPOSITION

Since the summer of the seventh year of Meio, Rennyo suffered a recurring ailment, and hoped to visit the enshrined Shinran Shōnin at Yamashina. He declared, "I have no inclination to see anyone lacking *shinjin*. I would invite and warmly receive any visitor who has acquired *shinjin*."

## (45) WORDS OF CONTINUITY

People in the present should learn from the past, and the older generation commit to writing what has gone before. Words that are spoken are easily lost, but written ones are retained for the future.

## (46) ATTENDANCE

Doshu of Akao declared that "We should never fail to use the home *obutsudan* every morning, and at least once a month attend the local temple, and every year visit the head temple." Ennyo Shōnin hearing this, voiced his approval.

## (47) THE CLOGGED MIND

Do not leave things to your own mind. Exercise some control. The Buddhadharma flows freely, and whatever obstructions, acquiring *shinjin* would be beneficial to our practice.

## (48) OLD AGE

Hokyobo at the age of ninety declared that he never tired of hearing the teachings, "Never have I felt of listening too much."

## (49) WRONG HEADEDNESS

At Yamashina after a dharma talk, it was generally agreed that it contained memorable advice and should be remembered. However, im-

mediately departing from Rennyo a small part of the audience began a discussion and soon became aware of disagreement in reporting what was actually said. At least four of them missed the point all together, and each of the six had a different version. We often do not hear things correctly.

(50) ACQUIRING SHINJIN

When Rennyo was very popular and had a large audience, he would ask, "How many of you have acquired *shinjin*? One? Two?" This would always admonish his listeners.

(51) TO THE POINT!

Hokyo once declared, "Do not listen indiscriminately; Get the gist of the meaning!" This comment emphasizes the importance of grasping the main idea.

(52) NEMBUTSU WITH ENERGY

The recitation of mindfulness is energetic, and reciting the *nembutsu* is the energy of joyous faith.

(53) THE READING OF *THE LETTERS*

Concerning *The Letters*, "The sutras and commentaries are not always read correctly and are sometimes misunderstood. As for *The Letters*, however, they are readily understood and written out of compassion. Hearing them and not having comprehension reveals a lack of a fruitful relationship with past conditions."

(54) HABITUAL ACCEPTANCE

"I have listened, and with understanding have agreed with our tradition," said Hokyo, "but the heart has never grasped it."

(55) THE OTHER POWER

It was often said by Jitsunyo Shōnin that "we were taught to never leave the buddhadharma to the working of our own minds. It is essential, *mindfulness* is awareness of not allowing the mind to assert its control. This is the mind of the Other Power."

## (56) TO HEAR

In our tradition there are those who will listen with comprehension, but few of them will actually "hear." This simply means that *faith* is seldom received.

## (57) THE WORLD OF SECULARITY

Rennyō Shōnin observed, "We see there are persons engrossed in worldly discussion, when involvement in the Buddhadharmā should be made their main concern. The focus of attention should be turned once again to the Buddhadharmā."

## (58) A CHANGE OF ATTITUDE

No one thinks of himself as evil. In effect, this opinion rejected by Shinran earns his well-deserved admonishment; everyone should make amends and change their attitudes, otherwise, lengthy containment in the Naraka regions is a certainty all due to not plumbing the depths of the buddhadharma.

## (59) THE AIR OF COMPREHENSION

each and every person  
in relation to authentic faith,  
comprehends with a mind  
doggedly in self-assurance.

Before leaving for Sakai, Chikamatsu had this *waka* posted, and left word that one should think about this verse; the point was raised by Kooji. The poem is a reference to the mind of a "know-it-all person."

## (60) DIRECT MEANING OF ANJIN

Hokyōbo always spoke on *anjin* and invariably cited the explanatory phrase of, "the meaning of *namu* . . ." Rennyō's comment was that he should have talked about the quotation, itself, and tersely uncover the significance of *anjin*.

## (61) THE SPIRIT OF OFFERING

Zenshu admitted of feeling shamed in the way he presented things to Rennyō Shōnin as his own. When asked what was meant, he said, "All things belong to the Tathagata and Shinran, and are not my possessions in transmitting them. I always believe that these things are coming from me."

(62) *NEMBUTSU OF CONTINUITY*

Kazue, a man from Gunke in the province of Settsu, constantly recited the *nembutsu*, and every day while shaving and absorbed in recitation, he would be nicked by the razor. "A pity that it's never possible to say the *nembutsu* without moving the lips."

## (63) OLD AGE AND THE DHARMA

A follower said, "One should hear the buddhadharma in his youth. When he becomes older he slows down and besets with drowsiness. It is best to be attentive when one is younger."

## (64) MENTALLY, AS-IT-IS

All sentient beings, just as they are. There is no expectation of any transformation or alteration. Indiscriminately, beings are reached by the Buddha's wisdom.

## (65) THE FAMILY

It is most pitiful when concerned with our own children and wives, and they cannot be reached. Without the accumulation of ripened past conditions, it cannot be done. But there is, at least, oneself to be cultivated.

## (66) LIFESPAN FROM DAY TO DAY

Hokyobo said, "If one has no faith and days pass one after another, the hellish realm quickly approaches. Whether there is faith or there is not, one cannot easily discern it. We cannot determine the full span of life; then, reflect on your lifespan terminating on this very day, as said by a man of faith long ago."

## (67) THE LIFE-PERMANENT VOW

The single vow once made is a vow for a life-time, at its single inception the vow is for the duration of one's life. The reason is that when the last moment of life suddenly arrives, the vow summarily includes one's entire life-span.

## (68) THE DAY OF YOUR LIFE

Today, unforgetably, is the only day in your life,  
Otherwise incessant strivings are endless.

—a lyric of Kakunyo

## (69) THE NAMUAMIDABUTSU SCROLL

In other traditions the portrait is favored over the scroll, and the image considered before the portrait. In our lineage the portrait is favored over the image, and the scroll is of primary importance.

## (70) LITERARY STYLE AND RHETORIC

At the Head Temple of the Northern District, Rennyo was telling Hokyobo, "I am conscious always of my audience, and merge many thoughts into a single notion for simplicity and clarity, although my listeners may not be aware of it. Even the *Gobunsho* in recent years is written in this concise manner. "I am easily bored of what I hear, and will misunderstand what I'm told," Rennyo said. "I emphasize what is most essential for immediate understanding."

## (71) MYOGO SCROLLS

In his younger days when Ken-en resided at Futamata he was requested to supply a number of small *myogo* scrolls. "Have all of you acquired *shinjin*?" he questioned. "The name is the substance of *shinjin*."

## (72) WEALTH AND BUDDHA ATTAINMENT

I was told by Rennyo Shonin, "The head of the Hyuga firm in Sakai was worth 300,000 kan when he died, but he is now unlikely a Buddha. Ryomyo of Yamato can hardly afford summer-wear, but she will certainly become a Buddha."

## (73) QUESTIONING

Hossho of Kyuhoji asked Rennyo, "Is it correct to say that at the very moment of total reliance in Tathagata Amitabha birth is assured?" The conversation was interrupted, "Why are you asking this trite question rather than inquiring about things that are not commonly known?" Rennyo admonished him, "This is not good, seeking novelty, when our questioning should derive from our immediate and habitual concerns."

## (74) AUTHENTICITY OF FAITH

"That faith is at times unacceptable for some is understandable. It is sorry to see that those in accord with *anjin* only in words and behavior, will eventually have nothing left but their deceit."

## (75) ACCORDANCE

Shinran's words are not different than the Tathagata's instruction, and that's why the *Gobunsho* often introduces a topic with, "Amitabha Tathagata said . . ."

## (76) THE TRUE TEACHER

Rennyō asked Hokyo, "Do you know who is teaching you this trust in the Tathagata Amitabha?" Junsei spoke up replying that he did not know, and Rennyō said, "The craftsmen will pay for instructions they receive. Now, pay me for the information!" Junsei without hesitating declared he would pay anything demanded of him. "Why, it is Amida Nyorai that is telling you of this en-trusting."

## (77) THE FIERY BUDDHAS

Hokyōbo said that the Myōgō he was given by Rennyō was burnt and had been transformed into six Buddhas, which was incredible. Rennyō replied, "That is not so unbelievable that a Buddha becomes Buddha; it is incomprehensible that the ignorant man trusting Amida at a single moment becomes a Buddha."

## (78) DEPTH OF GRATITUDE

Rennyō often said, "Day and night we live by the gifts of Amida and Shinran, and this protective source should be reflected upon."

## (79) CHEWING AND SWALLOWING

It has been said that, *one may know about chewing but not swallowing*. "This means," said Rennyō, "we have wives and children, and we eat fish and fowl. Though filled with evil, this is not an excuse for our behavior."

## (80) TEACHING OF NON-EGO

Rennyō had emphasized that *selflessness* is the teaching of the buddhadharma, and thought of self should not occur; there is no one believing himself to be *evil*. This is a dictate of Shinran Shōnin. In the other-power there is no thought of self. Rennyō's son also repeated this maxim.



## (81) ACQUIRING SPIRITUALITY

Meeting a *zenchishiki* and asking about things already known by you is beneficial. How more wonderful to inquire about matters that not so well known by you.

## (82) FALSE PRETENSIONS

In listening to the dharma few persons consider that it pertains to themselves, and satisfied with picking up a line or two for impressing others.

## (83) KNOWN BY THE TATHAGATA

Rennyō declared that *one-mindedness* is known by the tathagata, and inwardly we should feel and react to this certainty of divine protection expressed by Amida.

## (84) INHERITANCE

I was not handed down anything extraordinary from my predecessor, Rennyō Shōnin; only the principle of one-thought of Amida, and I am aware of nothing more. I can testify to this inheritance.

## (85) ELABORATION ON ONE-THOUGHT

Rennyō had also said that ordinary beings are born in the Pure Land with reliance on the one-thought of the Buddha. This is verified by *namuamidabutsu* and witnessed by the Buddhas of the Ten Quarters.

## (86) SPEAKING OUT

“Speak up! Whatever is on the mind, speak out! Remaining silent is terrible.” Rennyō admonished his audience, “If you have faith or do not, speak out. Whatever is revealed, others would be able to make corrections. Whatever is thought should be expressed.”

## (87) LIMITATION IN PRACTICE

“Chanting and not knowing the rules is an accomplishment.” Kyomonbo was always taken to task by Rennyō for his failure of not respecting the regulation of chanting. “If the rules are unknown, it is never a question of being wrong or committing a mistake. If the dharma is understood without flaws and delivered incorrectly according to regulation it is a wrong.”

## (88) A BASKET FULL OF WATER

Speaking quite frankly, a man confessed that his mind was like filling a basket with water. "I am profoundly gratified in hearing the teachings during our dharma gatherings. Afterward, however, I retain nothing of this reverence." Rennyō offered the advice, "Throw the basket of yours into the water; likewise, immerse yourself in the dharma. Not having faith is what is wrong. The *zenchishiki* will say it is bad to lack faith."

## (89) THE STUDY OF OUR LITERATURE

There is no point in haphazardly studying our literary tradition. Rennyō Shōnin advised us, "Read the texts over and over. It is said that *a reading of one hundred times results in clear understanding*. If we acquire this inner principle, it would be easy to receive orally expert guidance and not rely totally on our own bad judgment."

(90) *SHINJIN* OF THE OTHER-POWER

If in reading our traditional literature, we take it as *faith-mind of the other-power*, we will not fall into error.

## (91) SELF-ENLIGHTENMENT

To think that I, myself, have a mind of enlightenment is regrettable. For the one of faith within the fold of Buddha's compassion there is no self-awakening. In the vow of the *light of tenderness*, the mind softens. Self-enlightenment does not assure attainment of a Buddha.

## (92) GRATITUDE

Even a single phrase is ego-centric. Within faith there is a sense of evilness, and one speaks from a feeling of gratitude and with thankfulness in the communication with others.

## (93) TRANSMITTING FAITH

To instill faith in others and he, himself, lacks faith, is offering something that one does not really have. There is nothing to accept. This was the word of Rennyō and finally passed on to Junsei. "Faith for oneself, then faith for others." Acquisition of *shinjin*, and then teaching others as the gift coming from the Buddha. *Anjin* for oneself and imparting it to others is in accord with great compassion and its vast dissemination.

## (94) THE COMPETENT READER

"There are those who read the classics but do no reading, and those that do not read but the classics are being read," declared Rennyo. "Illiterate persons that listen to words spoken on their behalf and acquiring faith are those who do not read, but the classics are being read. The classics not being read by those who read, lack principles for authentic understanding."

## (95) SHINJIN AND TEACHING

Dharma transmission has never been done by being well versed in our literature. Persons in the audience of a woman of piety gratefully extolling the dharma will receive faith. By extensive power of the Buddha those listening to an unlettered woman of religious enthusiasm will acquire faith. Oral readers of our literary classics lacking the dharma in their minds cannot awaken faith in others.

## (96) THE SECULAR INFLUENCE

Rennyo Shōnin said that affairs governed by worldly concerns are not emphasized in our tradition, but determined from the standpoint of the buddhadharma.

## (97) THE MAN OF THE WORLD

From the worldly standpoint the astute man is respected; lacking faith he is suspect. A handicapped person of sight and limb, on the other hand, is reliable if he is a man who has acquired *shinjin*.

## (98) AUTHORITY

*To follow one's master, it is said, is to think of self. To obey the zenchishiki and acquire faith results in favorable birth.*

## (99) EXPEDIENCY

The Buddha who has lived for long eternal kalpas is Amida. After reaching buddhahood he provisionally established vows, resulting from the strategy of *upaya*.

## (100) THE EMBRACEMENT

Rennyo said that in trusting Amida, the body is entirely enwrapped within *namuamidabutsu*, and this should warrant our gratitude for that protection.

## (101) THE STUFFED TATAMI MAT

Hogen Renji of Tango, appearing before Rennyō and suitably well-dressed, was patted on the collar and told, "This is *namuamidabutsu*." Jitsunyo also responded in the same way when he patted the tatami mat and said, "In this way I'm supported by the *namuamidabutsu*." This is stated in accord with, "Embraced and enwrapped by *namuamidabutsu*."

## (102) THERE IS NO TOMORROW

To be awed-stricken without the least exception is seeing all things from the viewpoint of the buddhadharma. Also, Rennyō would say, "According to the dharma there is no tomorrow . . . hurry, hurry!"

## (103) TODAY

"Believe there is not this very day!" Rennyō had said that we must accomplish things at once and he deplored procrastination. He would, *in accordance with the buddhadharma*, be pleased with getting things done without putting them off for the following day.

## (104) ACCEPTANCE OF THE SCROLL

"It is a fortuitous occasion for us to request and receive a portrait scroll of Shinran. Formerly, we had only the central scroll. Our lack of faith is contradictory, and its results deserve any infliction imposed upon us."

## (105) OPPORTUNE TIMING

"*The time has arrived*," is a declaration following a considered matter that has finally taken place. We cannot say, "*The time has arrived*," if we have experienced no prior consideration. We can speak of having or not having past related conditions, and accordingly by listening to the dharma, *shinjin* is finally acquired.

## (106) THE BAD SEED

"Do you grasp the meaning of *makitate*," Rennyō asked Hokyo. "It is seed that has been sown but never further cultivated," he replied. Rennyō agreed and pointed out that it resembles the obstinate mental attitude which, if not corrected by others, remains a fallowed mind; "there is no faith without cultivation."

## (107) OPINIONATED

Always have an open mind, and be prepared in such a way that others of our following can correct your attitude. It is shameful to evade opinion of others whom we consider less worthy, and become angry at their advice. Keep a mind that is easily corrected.

## (108) THE LACK OF RESPECT

"I have a determined single-thought, but lack respect for the words of a *zenchishiki*," someone complained to Rennyo. "At acquiring faith respectfulness should be shown. Nevertheless, we are still in a lowly condition and this attitude will often prevail. Whenever this persists we should toss the attitude aside as improper feelings."

## (109) ONE-THOUGHT AND JOYFULNESS

In talking to Ken-en, Rennyo declared that, "Even if we are crudely clothed in tree-bark material, we should feel no sorrow but have single-minded joyfulness in Amida."

## (110) FUTURE LIFE

Whatever our social status, whatever our age, favorable rebirth is never a certainty for we miss the way through negligence.

## (111) LACKING FAITH

It was often that during moments of pain, Rennyo with closed eyes would groan, "ahhh . . ." He said, "In thinking about those lacking faith, I groan this way with the pain of torn limbs."

## (112) IMPARTING THE TEACHINGS

Rennyo admitted that he talked with others in a suitable way and in accordance with the person's interest and understanding. In this way the buddhadharma could be inserted in his conversation. His approach was congenial to his listeners, and he was able to elaborate the teachings in this manner. He had several methods in explaining the dharma to others.

## (113) MERITOUS ACCEPTANCE OF SHINJIN

Rennyo Shōnin said there are those who think it pleases me to hear that they hold belief in the buddhadharma. It is those people possessing shinjin, however, who enjoy benevolence of greater merit. My

sense of gratitude would arise after hearing of anyone attaining *shinjin*. It would be tolerable to listen to anything at all from those persons earnestly receiving *shinjin* for themselves.

(114) SUCCESSFUL EFFORT

If there is simply just one single person determined to acquire faith, throw yourself into the effort. Although at great risk to oneself, total commitment will not be wasting away your life.

(115) ACQUIRING FAITH

On hearing that a layman was invigorated by spiritual experience, Rennyo Shōnin declared, "It is as if the wrinkles of old age have been eradicated from me!"

(116) MENTAL REFORMATION

"Are you not pleased with the reformed mind of your religious leader?" Rennyo received the reply from the layman that he was, indeed, satisfied and happy with this attitude and difference toward the dharma principles. "I am even more pleased," said Rennyo Shōnin.

(117) TEACHING-EXPEDIENT

Rennyo provided dramatic farces between sessions of doctrinal instruction to alleviate boredom among the listeners. This method of dharma-teaching was appreciated for his concern and practical relationship with his listeners.

(118) PRACTICE OF BECOMING A BUDDHA

Rennyo observing celebrants at the Dotoe Festival at Tennoji, expressed great pity for them, "Such a great number falling into the Inferno! Followers of our tradition will unfailingly become Buddhas." These words were a comfort to us.

(119) GROUP DISCUSSION

Following a dharma talk Rennyo told his sons that an audience should break into smaller gatherings of "four or five to discuss matters they have heard. It is often that each will hear things differently according to their own understanding. Group discussion is to be encouraged."

## (120) HASTY CONCLUSIONS

Although it may be untrue, it is best to accept a statement in the beginning. Confrontation would inhibit conversation. Careful consideration of what is said by others is important. An example of this would be an exchange of personal criticism, and a person denying an assertion, however, will admit that because it was "alleged, it is likely true." This rejoinder is bad, and it would be best to hold a response in abeyance.

## (121) THE TEACHING FLOURISHES

The success of our tradition has nothing to do with the number of followers. A single man of faith is testament to doctrinal transmission of selective correct practice, and it is from this power of those following it that our tradition flourishes.

## (122) ANTICIPATING A PLEASANT REBIRTH

There are many of those who believe assiduously in listening to religious discussions and not having faith, but desirous of favorable rebirth for anticipated pleasures to be enjoyed; they cannot become Buddhas. Reliance on Amida is the only assurance of becoming a Buddha.

## (123) THE LITERARY HERITAGE

The inheritance of our literature and doctrinal texts which have been saved and handed down to succeeding generations is likely to produce an affection for the buddhadharma. Perhaps these persons have flippant appearances, yet suddenly may be transformed spiritually.

(124) *GOBUNSHO*, EXPRESSIONS OF AMIDA

"The Letters" of Rennyo should be considered words coming from the Tathāgata. The form is considered to be Hōnen Shōnin, himself, and the words are the direct speech of Amida.

(125) THE BEAUTY OF *THE LETTERS*

During an illness Rennyo asked Kyomonbo to read. "How about the *Ofumi*?" It was agreed, and three letters were selected and read twice. "Although I composed them they are delightful to hear," responded Rennyo.

## (126) BACKBITING

It has been said that Junsei had given this advice, "generally speaking, persons are angered on learning that they were talked about behind their back. I don't think this way. If you can't say a nasty thing to me face to face, say it out of my presence. I will eventually hear about it and will be able to make amends."

## (127) HARDSHIPS IN THE BUDDHADHARMA

"In working for the advantage of the buddhadharma, difficulties are not considerable," Rennyō declared. He was consistent and handled all affairs with energy and conscientiously.

## (128) ATTENTION TO DETAILS

The dharma to be treated loosely, and secular affairs attended to in detail is objectionable. The buddhadharma should be thoroughly investigated with full awareness and in detail.

## (129) THE SHADOWS OF OUR EXPERIENCE

It is said, *Far is near, Near is far*, and that *Next to the Lighthouse it is Dark*. Listening to the dharma persons enjoying proximity are self-satisfied, reaping benefits they consider commonplace and ordinary. Those at a remote distance of the capital, on the other hand, would hear the buddhadharma with greater reverence, and be more deeply motivated in listening.

## (130) EXPRESSIONS OF FAITH

We are accustomed to the same expressions concerning faith, but we should respond always as heard for the very first time. Usually, we are attracted by newer interpretations; but no matter how many times we have heard it, our attitude should be to listen carefully and consider everything said as if it was uttered for the first time.

## (131) HEARD FOR THE FIRST TIME

Doshu said, "I have heard it often, but always with gratitude in the sense of hearing it for the first time."

## (132) NEMBUTSU AUTHENTICITY

It was reported of a person saying, "It is disturbing that in reciting the *nembutsu* publically I am distracted, as it may appear to others it is



done only for acquiring a reputation of piety. This is burdensome." This response is not common.

(133) "UNSEEN" BEHAVIOR

In the eyes of our companions in we are ashamed, but undismayed by the protection of divine presence; we should care for that which is not visible to us.

(134) COMPLEXITY

One should not complicate matters even if there is an accord with doctrine, secular affairs are not to be intermingled. *Shinjin* must be our primary concern.

(135) MOTIVATION

Rennyō pointed out that "the buddhadharma instructs us that the mind which is calculated to make offerings for appeasement is not good. In the dharma our consideration is an unconditional response of gratitude in everything we do.

(136) THIEVERY OF THE SIX SENSES

Sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch, and thought are man's six bandits that plunder the mind. This scheme refers to mixed practices whereas within the nembutsu there is the mind of Buddha which simultaneously overwhelms Greed, Anger, and Hatred. In the midst of *bonnō* pure desire for favorable birth is raised. Lines from the *Shoshinge* compares light and darkness, "although lying beneath heavy clouds there is sunlight and no obscurity."

(137) SUBJECTIVE HEARING

A word, or a phrase, is heard indiscriminately in a personal way. Discussion with others of the same practice is a good habit to cultivate.

(138) FAMILIARITY

Rennyō said, "In establishing close relations with the Sacred and the Buddhas we would use our feet instead of the appropriate activity of our hands. There is the firmness of familiarity with the Tathagata, Shinran, and Zenchishiki, in which stronger feelings of respect and adoration should be greatly increased."

(139) THE ROOT OF OUR ACTIONS

What is said and what is done are alike; mental reformation is no easy task, and our thoughts should be attended carefully.

(140) RESPECTING ONE'S GARMENTS

To be possessive of clothing and sloppy in dress is undesirable, for they are in Shinran's service. Rennyo would reverently raise his garments after they have carelessly fallen under foot.

(141) MORALITY

*The country's laws to the brow and the dharma held deeply within,* a maxim of Rennyo. The principles of humanity should be faithfully observed.

(142) HARDSHIPS OF EXPANSION

Rennyo Shōnin suffered many difficulties in spreading the teachings which he did with life-long determination. The expansion and flourishing of the dharma is attributed to his early persistent efforts.

(143) ACCOMPLISHMENT OF RESTORATION

During recuperation he made the comment about himself, "It had been my intent to reestablish the buddhadharma during my lifetime, and I was able to accomplish this difficult task and retire to a comfortable position, all accomplished through hard work and unseen influence."

(144) POVERTY

Rennyo wistfully testified that previously he had worn the common quilted robe and was seldom able to afford the white silk apparel. This contrast should remind us of the hidden forces and we should be eternally grateful for today's accommodations.

(145) BAD TIMES

I have learned that Rennyo, at one time, lacked oil, was forced to accumulate the smallest bundles of kindling, and studied in semidarkness, sometimes by the light of the moon. He would wash his feet in cold water and miss several meals in succession.

## (146) MENIAL TASKS

Not having service, Rennyō had stated that he, himself, had to wash out baby diapers and clothes.

## (147) EMPLOYED HELP

Rennyō enlisted help from the staff of his father, Zennyō Shōnin, who had five working members in the household. When he retired Rennyō had only five helpers, not exceeding the number employed by his father. The size of the staff is extraordinary and awesome considering the work he accomplished in his times, and the number of people working today.

## (148) ECONOMIC CRISIS

There were times in the past when facing the Buddha we appeared in dress patched together with cheap cloth; now we use pure white silk, and even an extra wardrobe set aside for use. During the depression the Imperial Court was not exempted in acquiring mortgaged loans.

## (149) PROSPERITY

Rennyō Shōnin told of his past when he had little funds and would buy cheap cotton in Kyoto for clothes padding, and wore stitched robes. He used a silk substitute for his *one-layered shirokosode*. These difficult times are not well known, and it is generally believed that we will continue today's living standard. Our enjoyment is due to divine circumstances and we should be concerned with that presence for receiving these beneficial results.

## (150) SPIRITUAL INTIMACY

Those following the same path with the *zenchishiki* ought to be intimately involved with each other. "It is an error of mixed practice," cites the *Ojoraisan*, "to stay apart from them." To mingle with bad influences will not always have an immediate effect, but sooner or later evil results are inevitable; to be with Buddhists is an advantage. There are literary references, *good and evil are acquired by association and learning*. And, there is the adage, *To know someone, know his friends*. It is also said, "one may oppose a righteous person, but do not side with the wicked."

## (151) SLICING AND TESTING

There is a saying, *toughness is discovered by cutting, sublimity is known by adoration*. We find "hardness" when slicing through material, and believing in the vow we discover its greatness. As *shinjin* rises, gratitude and sacredness are felt and our joys are intensified.

## (152) DIFFICULTIES OF A FAVORABLE BIRTH

It is thought that rebirth is easily achieved for those of us who are ignorant beings. Favorable birth, however, is *difficult of all difficulties*. Faith is not easily accomplished although receiving it from the Buddha's wisdom attainment is done without effort and favorable birth is assured. Jitsunyo shonin was in accord with those who regarded our future life of utmost importance.

## (153) SLANDER AND CERTAINTY

The Buddha said that there would be persons who slander, and those who believe. If there were no slanderous persons, and there were all believers this word would be in doubt. There are, in fact, those who slander, and with certainty of faith rebirth is firmly established.

## (154) ENJOYMENT OF FAITH

Joyousness of faith is expressed in the monto: this is seeking fame. Faith is experienced in solitariness: this is according to the dharma.

## (155) FLAMES OF GREAT-THOUSAND WORLDS

Listen to the buddhadharma intently as if there were no secular affairs; it is deplorable to use your spare time to attend the dharma. There is no tomorrow. In words of the wasan: *Great-Thousand Worlds set afire! Pass through them. Hearing the Buddha's name there is no-returning.*

## (156) KEPT PROMISES

Hokyo once told the story of a gathering of people engaged in small talk, when one of them suddenly stood up preparing to leave. "Why?" asked Rennyo. "I have just remembered something important," was the reply. Later when asked about this abrupt leavetaking he said that he had recalled a promise to speak on the buddhadharma and it was necessary to break away for an engagement. This thoughtful consideration is a laudable principle to apply.

## (157) HOSTS AND GUESTS

There is the saying, *Buddhadharma the host, secularity the guest*. Seeing things from the dharmic point of view, worldly affairs should be taken care of as they arise.

## (158) THE MASTER HAND

Ken-en brought Zonkaku's commentary to Rennyō who was staying in the south quarter of Yamashina, and questioned a doubtful passage in the work. In answering the request for clarity, Rennyō told him that a masterpiece of an accomplished person should be deeply respected by allowing the text to remain unchanged.

## (159) RECREATING THE PAST

Someone asked about the circumstances involving a certain incident in Shinran's life. "I do not know," replied Rennyō, "whenever I am stumped, I simply attend those things he left us to follow."

## (160) NON-SELF

Our tendency is to excel over others and it is in this way of thinking that worldly matters are handled. The buddhadharma teaches "non-self" and subordinate relations. Acquiring faith, recognizing reason, and breaking emotional ties are the accomplishment of the Buddha's compassion.

## (161) ONE-MIND

As for One-Mind, reliance on Amida is actually unification of the buddha-mind of the tathagata into a single mind of man and Buddha.

## (162) THE WELL OF BENEVOLENCE

It was remarked that drinking from the well is traced to the buddhadharma, a single mouthful comes from the blessings of Shinran and the tathagata.

## (163) LOSS OF CONVERSION

Rennyō, during recuperation, declared that he had accomplished his aims, although realizing that things are dependent upon circumstances. He regretted that there were persons still lacking faith.

## (164) RENNYO SHONIN'S ACCOMPLISHMENT

I have succeeded in everything put before me, the reestablishment of Shinran's teachings, the building of the Temple and Founder's Hall, successfully taken my turn as the head of our tradition, and after construction of the residence quarters at Osaka, I have retired. It can be said that fortunately, I am in accord with the way of heaven.

## (165) UNMISTAKABLE SIGNS TOWARD FAITH

A bonfire in the enemy camp is unmistakable; by speaking and reading what is learned there will be no mistake in acquiring faith.

## (166) INQUIRY

It was often said by Rennyō, "Ask about the Buddhādharma; ask others about various matters." The response was to seek the likely person for this direction. They were told to direct their concerns to a person immersed in the buddhādharma, without thought to their social status. "The unassuming person may have the best and perfect answers in accord with the buddhādharma."

## (167) PROPERLY DRESSED

Rennyō disapproved of wearing the pretentious undesigned robes, and would not don black robes either. A priest in black approaching him would elicit the response, "Now, here is a priest in proper dress! I am not attracted to piety, Amida's vow is the only elegance!"

## (168) THE BROCADED APPAREL

At the temple in Osaka Rennyō had a designed robe displayed on his personal rack.

## (169) AN ACT OF GRATITUDE

At meals Rennyō sat in the posture of *gasshō*, "In gratitude to the Tathagata and Shinran, food and clothing are received."

## (170) THE UPWARD SPIRAL

Always on the move upward and not knowing the pitfalls below. It is best to express humility in facing all things.

## (171) PURE LAND BIRTH

Favorable rebirth is the concern of each individual alone, and no one else. In the buddhadharma faith will determine one's future life. Rennyō said that those who think this is a principle for others to follow have gained no insight into themselves.

## (172) INFIRMITIES AND THE WAY OF EASE

At the Osaka temple Rennyō was told of an old man who attended the services held at dawn and expressed amazement of the effort he made. Rennyō commented that there is no wonder of the ease one feels with practicing faith, for it is activity of gratitude toward the Buddha in which infirmity is not experienced. The elder was probably Ryōshū from Togami.

## (173) CERTAINTY AND SIMPLICITY

At a meeting various spiritual matters were being discussed. Rennyō interrupted, "What are you saying? Drop insignificant things. With single-mind, without doubting, rely on Amitabha, and favorable rebirth is certain. As for attainment there is *namuamidabutsu*. What else is there?" Rennyō was often quick to answer, and in a single expression eliminated doubts and negative attitudes.

## (174) APATHY

Rennyō was fond of citing the verse, "*It is no use to frighten the village sparrows with sound of clappers, when they use the scarecrow for their perches.*" He sometimes complained of people becoming like a flock of sparrows whose ears no longer heed the warning sound of clappers!

## (175) MIND AND FAITH

"Tending the mind will be done," Rennyō has said, "faith, however, is rarely acquired."

## (176) EXPEDIENCY: UPAYA

Do not condemn the use of *Hoben*, for authenticity is gained by the use of skillful strategy and should be considered carefully. Authentic faith is reached by *hoben activity* of Amitabha, Sakyamuni, and the *zenchishiki*. This was cited by Rennyō Shōnin.

## (177) A MIRROR FOR THE COMMON MAN

*The Letters* are a mirror for ordinary people to seek favorable birth. To believe that there are more than this for entering the dharma would be making a grave mistake.

## (178) GRATITUDE DIRECTED TO THE BUDDHA

In having faith there is the uninterrupted obligation of name-recitation for the Buddha's activity. The mind that senses gratitude and practices nembutsu only by habit is in grave error and not sufficient, for the spontaneous nembutsu is Buddha's wisdom and the reaction of pronouncing the name is our proper act of gratitude.

## (179) THE BUDDHA'S BLESSING

Rennyō declared that when there is faith, "the *nembutsu* is practiced for the obligation felt toward the Buddha. In other traditions the *nembutsu* is applied for the sake of our parents and other considerations. In Shinran's lineage *nembutsu* practice is reliance on Amitabha. Following that realization there is calling of the name, an obligatory response to the Buddha."

## (180) THE SPONTANEOUS NEMBUTSU

There was a story of Rennyō during a stop-over at *Southern Quarters*; a resident, killing a bee, involuntarily recited *namuamidabutsu!* "Why," he was asked, "did you pronounce the *nembutsu*?" In explaining to Rennyō that it was a matter of compassion he was told that "under all circumstances of faith, the *nembutsu* is an act of gratitude in obligation to the Buddha."

(181) *NAMUAMIDABUTSU—NAMUAMIDABUTSU*

At the Southern Quarters, and just as he was stepping out from the raised screen, Rennyō Shonin voiced the *nembutsu*. "Ah, Hokyō! Do you know what was going on within me right now?" And he explained, "I had a sudden thought of joyful gratitude for the saving power of the Buddha."

(182) DESCRIBING *ANJIN*

*Anjin* was briefly described for Rennyō by a person from the western provinces, and it was verified, "If that is, indeed, what you have in mind, then you have the gist of it."



## (183) TALKING ABOUT ANJIN, AUTHENTICALLY

In our times there are those whose speech is consistent with *anjin*. They are looked upon as having settled faith, and yet regretfully lack attainment for favorable birth.

## (184) BLISSFUL BIRTH AND WRONGDOING

After receiving *faith* one should no longer persist in wrong-doing. Nor external influences be persuasive in one's behavior. Birth being assured in this life time with blissful result, evil activity should not continue.

## (185) HOW TO BECOME A BUDDHA

The buddhadharma is to be explained in simple terms; Hokyō was told that his listeners could be unlettered and might apply other things to *anjin* and *shinjin*. Offer the explanation that ordinary mortals will become Buddhas. Trust Amida! He who hears this will acquire faith. In our tradition there is no other dharma entry. The *Anjinketsujōshō* states that the gate to the Pure Land teachings is no other than the profundity of the eighteenth vow. It is stated in *The Letters*, "Amida Nyorai has declared that he will unfailingly save those of single-hearted reliance, however deeply evil." This is from the nembutsu, the promise of assured birth by the eighteenth vow.

## (186) THE ZENCHISHIKI'S ADMONISHMENT

*One is bad in not attaining faith, be diligent in acquiring it.* The *zenchishiki's* word is that lacking faith is bad. After admonishing a person for lacking faith, the man complained, "I have followed your word explicitly." Rennyo retorted, "You are exceedingly bad. Is it not a bad thing that faith is lacking?"

## (187) A MAN WHO HAS ACQUIRED FAITH

"I'm not happy with anything I hear," complained Rennyo. "A single person possessing faith is pleasant to my ears." This innermost thought expressed by the Shōnin was often the motivation of his spiritual efforts.

## (188) THE GIST OF SHINRAN'S TEACHING

Shinran's teaching contains the essential direction to take in placing wholehearted singleness of mind in *reliance*, and in our tradition

our teachers have emphasized the point. Followers, however, were at loss to know just what was needed in carrying out this dictum, and for that reason Rennyo left his *Letters* with the direction to cast aside all mixed practices and totally leave our future life to Amida. In this way the tradition of Shinran was fully restored.

(189) GOOD AND EVIL

Rennyo Shōnin has issued the warning that evil things can be brought about from good activity, and excellent things attained from bad motivations. From the dharma point of view, an act assumed to be good recognizes the presence of ego and this has harmful effects. An evil act can be mentally turned around and within the vow's activity produces an effective experience. The self-willed person, according to Rennyo, reveals the mind of negativity.

(190) BRIBERY OR GIFT?

Should there be a presentation made unexpectedly, we would naturally harbor a suspicion as this is usually a prelude for a request. We are easily flattered by this attention of an unexplained gift.

(191) A MISTAKEN STEP

Looking ahead and not watching our step will lead to a tumble, looking in the direction of others and not at oneself is a disaster!

(192) ZENCHISHIKI

*Even the word of a zenchishiki, I can't believe that!* This is not a good response. Even in a hopeless situation the word of a zenchishiki is reliable. An ordinary person filled with *kleśas* becomes a Buddha, what other is there that's impossible? Dosu said that if told by a zenchishiki to fill Lake Biwa, he will do it!

(193) STONE AND WATER

*Hard is Stone, Soft is Water. Water will wear away stone. If one has plumbed the mind, the Enlightenment of Bodhi is certain.* — An old saying. If faith is at a distance intensive listening to the buddhadharma ends in faith by compassionate activity.

(194) FIXED IN FAITH

To imitate a person whose faith is determined is a good model, but to admire this accomplished person and forswear the results for oneself

is not desirable. In the buddhadharma the self-effort is rejected and faith acquired.

#### (195) FAULT-FINDING AND PERSONAL REFORM

Faults of others are easily seen, our own faults are obscure. If we see them in ourselves their magnitude is obvious. We must understand this and make amends. We often overlook our own weakness.

#### (196) DISCUSSION OF FAITH

In meetings during which secular affairs are the topic, there are times when the buddhadharma is brought up and quiet decorum is observed — one is careful. At other times when lectures are given, or there are services, there should not be silence. Open discussion, and heedfulness whether there is accordance with faith or not, should follow.

#### (197) BOREDOM AND THE SACRED

Zenju from Kanegamori was asked about a life of boredom. "Not at all, in all of my eighty years has this been a problem. I have this indebted feeling of gratitude to Amida. The *wasans* and our traditional texts fill me with sacred joy. I have never become bored."

#### (198) URGENCY IN DHARMA TRANSMISSION

Jitsunyo cited a story of Zenju, "A visitor made a house visit, but before the footgear was removed at the entry, Zenju broke into a dharma monologue, *Why, can't you wait until I have properly entered the house before breaking into a spiritual discourse?* The host replied, *This saha world is a place where there is no gap between inhaling and exhaling. Life and death do not honor time in removing footwear.*" We should not procrastinate talking about the Buddhadharma.

#### (199) THE POWER OF PREDICTABILITY

Rennyō told about Zenju for telling the selected site for the temple at Nomura. On his return from the capital city the party stopped at Kanegamori and Zenju pointed in the direction of Nomura, and said, "the buddhadharma will flourish in this area." This was taken as *just talk of an old man*, but eventually the Yamashina temple was built, and the area became a lively place for expansion. It was an impressive forecast, and people referred to Zenju as a reappearance of Honen Shonin. He passed away on the 25th day of the eighth month.

## (200) EXPANSIVE GROWTH OF THE TEACHING

One day Rennyō left the Higashiyama temple and his whereabouts became unknown. Zenju looked everywhere, and finally found him in a out-of-the-way place. Rennyō had a distressed appearance and not wishing to embarrass him, Zenju cried out, "Aha! Here, we will see the Buddhadharma at its peak." This is what actually happened. *Zenju is a wonder*, declared Rennyō.

## (201) PRAISE AND DISCUSSION

Years ago, in the 3rd year of Daiei at the time of Rennyō's 25th memorial, Jitsunyo had a dream that the *shonin* was donning a purple *kosode* robe in the south wing of the temple and was saying, "the ultimate of our teaching consists in praising and discussion. We should be praising." Jitsunyo commented on the dream stressing its emphasis, "One enjoys the buddhadharma in solitude, and if this spirituality is individually experienced, how much more is the enjoyment when shared with others! Frequent discussion of the dharma should consistently increase among us."

## (202) THE REFORMED MIND

It was asked of Rennyō about the primacy of inner reformation. *By all means*, was the reply, *tend to all those things that are bad*. Investigation of ourselves should be carefully made. Rennyō said, "Whatever you have heard of others making improvements should help in realizing that self-reformation is quite possible. The exposure of personal faults are beneficial for self-correction. Openly admit the presence of these faults otherwise there is no reformation."

## (203) THE CALCULATING MIND

At buddhadharma meetings holding back in silence means faith is surely missing. It is thought that some preconceived notion must be held before speaking out. This is like seeking answers from unlikely sources. *If one is joyous it will be expressed, whatever is in the mind it will be pronounced; if it is cold, say it! if it is hot, say it!* In our dharma discussion group if there is no expression, that silence indicates faith within is lacking. Even with faith we are not always prepared, but we are more consistent through mutual practice and frequent contact with each other.

## (204) NON-RETURNING

Rennyō Shōnin had said that once we have reached single-mindedness it is not acceptable to declare that we are already enlightened by Amida, as this is a statement from the standpoint of attainment. It is better to say that assurance is granted: "At the moment of faith there is no-returning; this no-returning position although non-discernable is an equivalent to nirvana."

(205) *SESSHUFUSHA*

Yuirenbo from Tokudaiji pondered on the meaning of *embrace-ment* and while directing his energies toward Amida in the temple, Ungoji, had a dream that Amida tightly grabbed his sleeves and would not let go. *Sesshu* has the meaning of "to grasp" in which there is no escaping. Here is the sense of *sesshufusha*. Rennyō delighted in relating this incident.

(206) SIGNIFICANCE OF *MYOGA*

At a time when Rennyō was confined by illness he received a visit from Ken-yō and Ken-en who asked about the term, *myoga*. They were told that to be in accord with *myoga* of powerful effects is truly entrusting oneself to Amida.

## (207) JOYFUL APPRECIATION

In discussing the buddhadharma and imparting it to others resulting in a pleasant response, we should all the more feel the joyfulness of conveying *buddha-wisdom*. Our appreciation of gratitude is forcefully engendered by participating in this concern for the wisdom of the Buddha.

(208) REACTION OF GRATITUDE FOR *THE LETTERS*

Carefully reading *The Letters* to others is an act of gratitude. Each phrase and every word rendered in faith will also be received in faith. There will be a grateful response.

## (209) ENERGY OF OTHER-POWER

Rennyō explained: "The illumination of Amida can be compared with drying out things that are soaking wet. It is the sun's energy absorbing the surface before the bottom layer is dried. The mind of determination arises from the other-power; hinderances and evil are finally eradicated by Amida."

## (210) WISDOM OF THE BUDDHA

Whenever we see someone with *shinjin* we feel in that moment a sacredness, although it is not the person possessing spirituality that is impressive, rather we are moved by the experience of acquiring Buddha's wisdom. We have gratitude for this wisdom.

(211) OBSTACLES TO *OJO*

During a prolonged illness Rennyō admitted he had no regrets in his life other than observing lack of faith in his sons and others. "There is the adage, *we face obstacles in leaving this world*. My future life is not threatened this way. It is only deplorable that faith is not widely established."

## (212) GIFTS AND GRATITUDE

On occasion Rennyō would serve sake or present gifts attracting people in the spirit of gratefulness to the buddhadharma. Presentation such as this encourages faith, and an attitude of gratitude is acquired.

## (213) AUTHENTIC RELIANCE

Rennyō had stated that *If you think there's understanding, there is not; If you think there's no understanding, there is*.

To believe, spirituality, of Amida's deliverance there is understanding. We can never possess an attitude of certainty based on the assumption of "knowing." It is quoted from the *Kudensho*, "How is favorable birth acquired by ordinary beings other than total reliance on the buddha-wisdom of Amida Buddha?"

## (214) SPIRIT OF RECITATION AND TEACHING

Gansho from the province of Kaga in Sugao complained, "The chanting of this priest does not match the beauty of the texts, and reveals a faith that is faulty; it is uninspired." Rennyō, hearing that it was Renchi, made arrangements for him to be personally instructed in reading as well as interpreting the traditional literature. Rennyō then addressed Gansho, "I have trained Renchi in reading and delivering talks in the buddhadharma." He was then released and returned home. Gansho, appreciating the recitation and instructions, was then gratified by what he was hearing and expressed spiritual satisfaction.

## (215) YOUTH AND RELIGIOUS CONSCIOUSNESS

"Read!" Rennyō declared to his youthful audience. "Over and over again, read ; without repetition there is no benefit. At an older age good recitation cannot possibly substitute significant context and meaning which is vital. It is superficial to be acquainted with our traditional literature if it is without depth and there is no presence of faith."

## (216) ALERT AND RESPONSIVE

Someone complained to Hokyōbō, "I accept things just as they are presented but regret that I am inattentive and neglectful." He was then admonished for the shameful admission, "*You do not accept the teaching as it is taught! It tells us to be attentive; show responsibility!*"

## (217) ACQUIRING FAITH

A complaint against Hokyōbō was made. "How is it that a man in the buddhadharma like yourself has a widowed mother totally lacking faith?" Hokyōbō readily admitted the inconsistency, "Quite right! Yet, if one is hearing every morning and every evening the reading of the *Gobunshō* and there is no faith, how is it that my persuasion would have any lasting effect?"

## (218) CORRECTING ERRORS

"I am in a sweat in fear of making serious errors whenever I deliver dharma talks in place of Rennyō," Junsei declared. "When I slip and make an error in his presence it can be corrected easily, and I am at ease. In this way I am able to impart the buddhadharma."

## (219) UNCERTAINTY AND IGNORANCE

There is a difference of being uncertain and not knowing.

*If one does not know it is senseless to say that he is uncertain. If we say doubtfully, "what is that?," or may ask, puzzlingly, "what could that possibly be?" uncertainty is expressed.* Rennyō's clarification of being uncertain was further illustrated by his saying that people will usually pass off things as *uncertain* without really knowing anything at all about their details.

## (220) OBLIGATION OF A CARETAKER

At a mealtime discussion Rennyō said, "The Hongwanji at Yamashina and temple constructions at Osaka are fashioned to reproduce Shinran Shōnin's life and times. I am constantly grateful of my

obligation as a caretaker, never forgetting this obligation even during meals.”

#### (221) SAFEGUARDING PRECIOUS OBJECTS

Jitsunyo Shōnin said, “In the times of Zennyō Shōnin and Shakunyo Shōnin, previous predecessors of Rennyō, formalities were strictly observed. Their scroll portraits were revealing, *kasayas* and robes were yellow colored. In those days various objects inconsistent with tradition were burned whenever there was a cleansing. Rennyō marked these scrolls for destruction, but he hesitated and classified certain objects with labels on the cover marked, *good* and *bad*.” After careful reflection, it is obvious different evaluations were made in Rennyō’s time, and with us, too, there are wide variations—we must be quite careful in preserving tradition.” In this way past decisions were remembered. “It is not sufficient to carelessly label things *good* and *bad* of the past. In Rennyō’s times people close to him were sometimes out of line. Regarding the buddhadharma, its importance should gravely remind us to consider things seriously and seek details from others.” This was related by Jitsunyo.

#### (222) THE ERRONEOUS MIND

Whenever we see a person who has an affinity with the buddhadharma make serious errors, it appears to us that even a man like that can go astray. This is a reminder of our own shortcomings. In comparison our mistakes must even be larger. The undisciplined mind that strays in this way is certainly regrettable.

#### (223) MINDFULNESS OF OUR OBLIGATION

Rennyō said we should be mindful of our obligation to the Buddha; in the vernacular, “to keep things in mind,” is not the same as *mindfulness*. A life of faith is joyful and spiritual gratitude interspersed with indolence, but we return to the Buddha-wisdom in remembrance of our backsliding attitude and accept the gift of the nembutsu. This “keeping in mind” is what is meant by *mindfulness*.

#### (224) PERPETUITY OF THE BUDDHAHARMA

*When hearing is inexhaustible, the buddhadharma is inexpressible*, so it has been said. Jitsunyo gave the example from our everyday experience, “We always want to expand that which is firmly planted in the mind, always seeking more detail to that which we have lovingly



acquired. Neither is it tiring to hear more of the Buddhadharma. We must not fail to make inquiries concerning the teachings."

(225) OFFERINGS TO THE BUDDHA

Taking things of the Buddha and then turn them over to worldly concerns, is a terrible waste. Using expenditures for the buddhadharma is another matter, which we willingly use as an offering arising out of the sense of full gratitude.

(226) GREATEST MERIT

Our greatest achievement in the world is total reliance on Amida, and ourselves become buddhas—there is nothing that can go beyond this.

(227) HUMAN PRIORITY

To be engaged whole heartedly in secular and spiritual affairs should not be thought of as one's own doing, thereby forgetting our sacred obligation. The priority given oneself will lose protection of the Buddha in the world of dharma and men, and evil will prevail. This matter is of utmost importance.

(228) REQUESTING A FAVOR

While at Sakai Rennyo's son, Ken-en, asked his father for a "Letter" for him, especially. "This is not good," answered Rennyo. "I am an old man. If, however, having acquired faith in the buddhadharma I'll fulfill any request you make."

(229) THE GIFT OF MYOGO

At the Sakai temple Rennyo was working late at night preparing a *nembutsu* scroll, "I am old and feeble with failing eyesight, but my informant tells me that tomorrow they will be on their way to Echigo, so I forget my present difficulties in producing this *myogo*." He always served his followers in this manner. Rennyo would say, "Without complications, I hope all will acquire faith."

(230) RARE TIDBITS

Gourmet food may be prepared and served, but if there is no one to taste it the endeavor is wasted. The buddhadharma may be extolled and praised, but if there is no one with *shinjin* it is like throwing out gourmet food.

## (231) A FIREPROOF TREASURE

One may become bored and weary of many things, but it is not so with the buddhadharma. Enjoying the results of Amida's activity—gratitude never wears out. The rare treasure that is set aflame but is never consumed is *namuamidabutsu*. Amida's beneficial results are supreme. A man of *shinjin* is spiritually impressive: this is the work of compassion.

## (232) WEIGHING THE BUDDHADHARMA

Established in faith, a man's relation to the buddhadharma is seriously considered: an expressive gratitude is always given.

## (233) SEEDS OF THE PAST

Rennyō has said that feeling of gratitude for the past should not be based on our good conditions previously established, rather, we are taught to be grateful for whatever conditions prevailed that are now benefitting us in this life-time.

## (234) SHUKUZEN AND SHINJIN

In other traditions *conditional relations* were attributed to favorable contact in this life-time with the dharma. In our tradition *good conditions of the past* result in faith. For us *shinjin* is essential. The teaching of Amida excludes no one, and is characterized as "Expansive Instruction."

## (235) THE GIST OF SHINSHŪ

By entering the dharma gate of our tradition we first encounter its primary principle: *shinjin*.

## (236) SHINJIN GENERATED BY DHARMIC-ENERGY

Rennyō have said, "A man of the buddhadharma is the result of great dharmic-power; without it there is no potential. The buddhadharma is not imparted by scholarly means, rather an illiterate man of *faith* can convey the experience by his means of wisdom-strength from the Buddha. Pride in self-study of the texts has never made faith possible. A man who has acquired *shinjin* will speak out from Amida's teaching and contribute a greater dimension of faith to others.

## (237) TOTAL RELIANCE

Relying on Amida one becomes, *namuamidabutsu*: this means one has acquired *shinjin*. Also, Rennyo has said, "*namuamidabutsu* is the treasury of our tradition. This singularity of thought is *shinjin*."

## (238) SLANDERING THE DHARMA

Within our own tradition there is slander. As far as other schools are concerned we have nothing to say for their insults, as we also have our share of revilers; and fortunately, we have among us those having faith in the dharma, and for this effective realization we should be grateful for our accumulative past conditions.

## (239) CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

Rennyo had always shown concern for all kind of men. He was saddened by capital offenses and the punishment ordered by the authorities. "I believe," he said, "should these men be spared, reform would be a far easier solution." Rennyo was quick to issue a pardon whenever there were obvious signs of repentance for bad behavior.

## (240) RENSHU'S APOLOGY

Renshu of Aki province was involved in the upheaval in his region. For his participation, he was severed from the *monto*. When seeking forgiveness from Rennyo, who was recovering from an illness, the attendants ignored his request for visitation. Rennyo was saying, "I'd like to see Renshu return to the fold." This was resisted by his aides and sons who protested, "What will happen to the *buddhadharma* ridiculed in this manner, if behavior like this is condoned?" "That's the point," replied Rennyo, "nothing could be worse; however, when it is regretted and there is an attitude change, a man should not be set aside." Renshu was given a pardon and tearfully reunited with the *monto*. He passed away at the same temple, during the same days that Rennyo, himself, was mourned.

## (241) ERRONEOUS DOCTRINE

It was brought to Rennyo's attention that Joyu from Oshu was teaching erroneous doctrine and in agitation was confronted by Shonin, "How despicable! To disgrace Shinran's tradition in this deplorable manner—*To be sliced in thousand of pieces for such a deed!* It is deplorable that the *buddhadharma* should be corrupted in this way!"

## (242) FIVE KALPAS OF MEDITATION

The highest principle is the vow arising from Amida's meditation for five kalpas. One is a Buddha after being in accord with this meditative process. To be in accord is dharmic unity with this mind and body.

## (243) LIFE-TIME OCCUPATION

"I have," declared Rennyo, "spent a lifetime in imparting the *buddhadharma* to others as expedient ways and means for acquiring faith."

## (244) GOLDEN WORDS

When Rennyo was indisposed he declared that his present words were to be heard as *words of gold*: "Concerning my 31 syllable *waka*, they are actually talks on the *buddhadharma*, and not just an anthology of poetry.

## (245) A WISE MAN

*Three fools are worth one sage*, Rennyo told his successor. Whatever is said and done this is a good maxim to follow and should be adopted in our deliberations as a "golden word" by those absorbed in the *buddhadharma*.

## (246) BROTHERS

Rennyo Shonin told Junsei, "Hokyo and I are brothers!" This statement was protested by Hokyo by saying that it was not reasonable to make that claim. Rennyo replied, "In acquiring faith it is a matter of receiving it earlier or later, *an older or younger brother*. Sharing the experience of *shinjin* and its universal accomplishment serves everyone in a fraternity."

## (247) A JOYFUL BIRTH

In the scenic Southern Quarter Rennyo made the observation that we often exceed our fondest hopes, "Birth in the *Land of Bliss* is an example; although we may believe we are well off in this world, our favorable birth is joyfully beyond any comparison we know of bliss in this life-time."

## (248) MENDACITY

"A good number of people refrain from falsehood, but there are few who do not harbor deceit. If there is no disposition for doing worth-

while things, there should at least be an inclination for acceptable social behavior and a concern for the *buddhadharma*.”

(249) NUGGETS OF GOLD

“I have read the *Anjinketsujoshō* for over forty years and was never bored; from the text gold nuggets can be mined.”

(250) THE ANJINKETSUJOSHŌ

At the temple in Osaka, Rennyō was telling his listeners, “The other day I merely touched upon the *Anjinketsujoshō*. The essentials of our tradition are expounded in this text.”

(251) THE SANCTITY OF GRATITUDE

Hokyo said, “The saintly person is one who feels sanctity, and not a person who resembles saintliness.” Rennyō replied, “How interesting! There is nothing sacred in *looking saintly*, nor is there saintliness without the feeling of total gratitude—you have expressed it nicely.”

(252) EVERYDAY ADVICE TO STUDY

Ken-en reported a dream he had of Rennyō on the 15th of the first month of the 3rd year of Bunki: Following a series of questions Rennyō emphatically declared, “What a waste of time! You should get together every day for reading our literature.” Ken-en’s comment was that the *shōnin* decried the consuming of time in useless pursuits.

(253) THE OFUMI COLLECTION

On the twenty-eight of the twelfth month Rennyō, garbed in his *okesa* and robes, opened the *shoji* in a dream of Ken-en who thought he was going to hear a Dharma Talk. He was reading lines on the sliding partition and Rennyō asked, “What is that?” He replied, “It is one of your letters.” Rennyō declared that it was very important to hear and treat the *ofumi* faithfully.

(254) A STRONG HOUSE

In another dream it is recorded that Rennyō said, “Build a firm structure, establish yourself in *shinjin*, and recite the *nembutsu*!”

## (255) MIXED PRACTICES

In a more recent dream Rennyō appeared and randomly talked about miscellaneous affairs of the *buddhadharma*. He then spoke about the mixed and sundry practices throughout the countryside: "It should be emphatically declared, *these various disciplines must be given up!*"

## (256) THE TIME IS NOW!

In another dream Rennyō Shōnin was saying, "The time is now ripe! It is of utmost importance to act now." I readily agreed with the Shōnin but he retorted, "It is not enough to nod agreement and confess understanding; greatest concern must be given to this principle." In a dream the following night Rensei appeared and said, "At Yoshisaki Rennyō imparted the essential teachings, and I was told that there is an extensive literature used in interpreting and distorting our tradition. The gist of our teachings, however, are preserved." Concerning precious words in dreams, the maxims pronounced by Rennyō is his true word which I have recorded. It is the case that dreams are, at times, illusory, but there are dreams of transformation like these that are authentic visions.

## (257) GRATITUDE OWED TO AMIDA

The expression, *with sanctified gratitude to Amida* has the ring of little sincerity. That's pompous. It is better, according to Rennyō, to say, *it is our obligation to Amida that we are grateful*. It is also a curt response to cite *The Letters* as "it says," when it is far better to refer to them with respect of gratitude during their recitation. There can never be an excessive veneration for literature of the buddhadharma.

## (258) SHOWING RESPECT

In our congregation when the dharma is praised it is rude to refer to members of the assembly as "followers," they should be respectfully addressed as fellow-members.

## (259) SUFFICIENCY AND DHARMA ENTHUSIASM

*In building a house construct it any way you like, as long as it keeps your head dry.* This maxim expressed Rennyō's attitude toward ostentatious behavior. He disliked excessive possession, and even frowned on the meticulous hoarding of clothes, "appreciation, rather, should not be spared for the buddhadharma and its unseen related circumstances."

## (260) TRANSMISSION OF THE BUDDHADHARMA

Although one has entered the home where the buddhadharma is practiced and only recently arrived from another tradition—no matter what has previously transpired—he is now engaged. Even business affairs transacted here are looked upon as serving the dharma.

## (261) COMPASSIONATE REGARD FOR OTHERS

Rennyō was fond of saying, *if the weather is excessively hot, or wet, the dharma services should be cut short*. This was said out of deep concern and thoughtfulness towards others. He often declared that his talks on the buddhadharma always accommodated his particular audience; he was saddened whenever there was discord according to a stated principle.

## (262) THE KAGA UPRISING

The shōgunate, Yoshihisa, issued an edict that any of our followers in the Kaga province who participated in the recent uprising must be officially disavowed. Rennyō's sons and others in the area were recalled to Kyoto. This was distressful and particularly sad in contemplating the plight of our women members. "The disassembly of our congregation is a hardship, and a personal blow and painful experience for me." For the *Zenchishiki*, the proscription was unbearable.

## (263) SHARING THE HARVEST

"It is not wise for members of the *monto* to give the first harvest away without consideration of the offering for themselves before sharing it with others," according to Rennyō who knew very well the significance of matters like these; and in the buddhadharma we ought to realize its importance and our noble obligations toward it—a most amazing insight!

## (264) A PREDICTION

Hokyōbo visited Rennyō at the Osaka temple, and was told that his life span "will be an extra ten years after I have gone." During the conversation the *shonin* repeated the assertion, and a year after after his *ōjo* an acquaintance of Hokyōbo reminded him of the prediction: "This one-year grace was granted to you by the *shonin*, himself!" In *gasshō* the verbal response was, "Quite true!" He did live for another ten years under the powerful protection of unrecognized past, as fulfilled by Rennyō's amazing prophecy.

## (265) THE HIDDEN PROTECTION

"To engage in useless things is to ignore the powerful protection of past relation," was a precept often cited by Rennyō.

## (266) OBLIGATORY REMEMBRANCE

Rennyō always thought of Shinran and the Tathagata at meal-times, "a remembrance at every morsel!"

## (267) AT MEALTIMES

Whatever was served, Rennyō would first spiritually reflect on gratitude, and would say that whatever food is offered should be accepted gracefully.

## (268) SOUR PLUMS

Ken-en had a dream of Rennyō in the second year of Kyōraku, in which he was given an *ofumi* written especially for him. There, the Shōnin had written a proverb, "sight of the *umeboshi* will pucker the lips, likewise, one taste of *anjin* will elicit the *nembutsu*." There is no separate pathway for those with this mindfulness.

## (269) DISTASTE FOR THE BUDDHADHARMA

Kuzen complained, "I have no liking or care for the buddhadharma." Rennyō replied, *Is this not the same as hating it?*

## (270) THE CONTAGIOUS DHARMA

Outwardly, the buddhadharma is perceived as a sickness, "fidgeting during services for its *tediousness* is a sure symptom of illness."

## (271) RENNYO BECKONS JITSUNYO

On the 24th of the first month, Jitsunyo was bedridden and had suddenly exclaimed, "Rennyō has just summoned me—How grateful! How grateful!" He then intoned the *nembutsu*. Those with him thought that his incessant murmuring was a delirious outpouring, however he quickly explained that he had dozed off and that the *shōnin* had signaled him in this marvelous dream thereby relieving his attendants.

(272) DETERMINING ACTIVITY OF *TARIKI-SHINJIN*

On the 25th of the first month Jitsunyo was telling Kenyō and Ken-en of incidents concerning Rennyō during his retirement, talked



about his own experience of *anjin*, and cited the *shonin*. "Favorable birth is spontaneously determined by my steadfastness of the one-thought of Amida—it is due to Rennyō that up to this very day I have had no thought of self." This was pleasant to hear. *Shinjin of the other-power*, indeed, is the determined action of utmost importance in our lives.

## (273) DISRESPECTFUL REFERENCES

Referring to Shinran Shōnin as given in the *Tandoku Mon* is crude and should be understood as *the Founder, Shōnin*. The reference of *Originating Shōnin (Kaisan Shōnin)* is also to be avoided.

## (274) HONORIFIC TITLE

Referring to Shinran as *the Shōnin* is disrespectful, and perhaps "Kaisan Shōnin" is a more acceptable abbreviation, *as one who founded our tradition*.

## (275) MOTTE GUZEI NI TAKUSU

The text of *Tandoku Mon* reads, "It is with the vow. . ." We must not omit the "with" in this line.

## (276) READING OF THE LETTERS

During Rennyō Shōnin's stay at Sakai, Ken-yō paid him a visit and was surprised to see an open copy of the *Gobunsho* prominently placed in the chapel. It was read to any number of persons drifting in during the day. That evening during a conversation Rennyō explained, "I've just recently had a good idea. If a *letter* was read to temple visitors, whether singly or in a small group, a person among them having good related-circumstances in the past would acquire faith. An interesting and worthwhile idea, I thought." In this way Rennyō became more and more convinced of the importance of the *Collection of Letters*.

## (277) AFFAIRS OF THE WORLD AND THE DHARMA

There was a statement made that, "interest in the buddhadharma should have the same intensity as shown in secular affairs." Rennyō reacted to this comparison by saying that, "It is better to dwell on the supreme happiness of pursuing the buddhadharma." Another person made the point that "the Buddhadharma should be appreciated day by day, otherwise a devotional lifespan would be a bothersome ordeal." Rennyō thought otherwise by saying that it does not matter "how long life lasts, feelings toward the buddhadharma should be constant and consistent."

## (278) TEACHER-PRIESTS

"Terrible! Our priests seeking to transform others without themselves making a change."

## (279) LOSING SHINJIN?

Doshu requested one of *The Letters* from Rennyō who told him, "That can be lost easily, but faith embedded in the mind is secured and you never lose it." The following year a letter for him was written by Rennyō.

## (280) DHARMA-TALK

Hokyo declared that he was at ease and felt strong in front of a Buddhist-minded audience.

## (281) A SWORD CUTS BOTH WAYS

Without faith our great body of literature is a sword in the hands of a young boy—useful but dangerous for the child; for the skilled it is a treasure.

## (282) ULTIMATE DECISION OF FAITH

Upon request there'd be no hesitation in a death-decision; but no response to a command for acquiring faith!

## (283) THE SECRET DOCTRINE

Speaking at the Osaka Temple Rennyō said, "Is it the secret transmission of the ignorant, that it is with *one-thought* that favorable birth is acquired?"

## (284) INCONCEIVABILITY

Following the fund raising and during early construction, Hokyo exclaimed, "How miraculous, the building and grounds!" Rennyō responded that the inexplicability of "common people becoming Buddhas is even more impressive."

(285) THE *KAKEMONO*, "PUT AWAY"

Rennyō Shōnin prepared a script for Zenju, "And, what have you done with the *writing*," he was later asked by the Shōnin. He was told by Zenju that it had been mounted and put away for safe-keeping. "It is

senseless," Rennyō declared. "We should display it as intended, and be kept in accord with it."

(286) HEARING AND BECOMING BUDDHAS

"Those in attendance will never become Buddhas by defective listening," Rennyō commented.

(287) THE DENIAL

"The priests are the worst!" There was loud objection to this assertion by Rennyō. "It is for the depth of evil that we bear that Tathagata Amitabha releases us," he responded.

(288) THE GOLDEN RESERVOIR

By careful attention to the words of gold from *The Letters* every day, we draw treasures.

(289) WELL-MEANING COUNSEL

Once Shinran Shōnin was visited by Kenchi, head of the Senju Temple, and he was told that his journey almost met total disaster because of a violent storm at sea. "In that case take no more ships," Shinran replied. He never again travelled by sea. One day his appointment with Shinran was late, "I was ill, after a meal of mushrooms," Kenchi complained. Advised to give them up, he never touched them again. Rennyō Shōnin commented that Kenchi set a good example by relying good-naturedly on advice and benefitted from it.

(290) WELL AT EASE

When it is warm and comfortable we become drowsy; we should avoid comfort that keeps us from being alert to religious and secular affairs. It is important we do not become lax and indolent.

(291) SOFTNESS IN MENTAL ATTITUDE

On acquiring faith harsh words toward others on the same path are not to be used; calmness should follow: according to the 33rd vow, "...within my light, mind and body will become soft and tranquil." Lacking faith there is ego-centricity, there is no harmony—and there is no tranquility. A situation to reflect upon.

## (292) AN UNWARRANTED SCOLDING

Rennyō inquired about one of the *monto* members from the north whom he had not seen for sometime. He was told by an aide that this member was strongly chastized for some infraction. This irritated Rennyō, "A severe admonishment, in my estimation, should never be permitted to take place among followers of Shinran Shōnin. Relay the order at once, that I want to see that man whose indiscriminate behavior is not acceptable!"

## (293) THE FRIENDLY CIRCLE

There should never be an occasion for tongue-lashing another *monto* member. Shinran Shōnin always addressed the followers as "companion" or "fellow-wayfarer." It is not justified to put anyone down.

## (294) GUESTS OF SHINRAN

For Shinran Shōnin his greatest visitors were those of the *monto*.

## (295) ACCOMMODATING TEMPLE VISITORS

On cold days Rennyō would be sure that warm sake was provided. On warm days it was chilled sake. Whenever anyone was kept waiting to see him, Rennyō would complain loudly, "This delay is unreasonable. We should not procrastinate in greeting our visitors to the temple." Rennyō did not like to keep late appointments.

## (296) ACQUIRING GOOD &amp; ABANDONING EVIL

As for our acquiring the inclination to do good we are obligated to Amida, and also gratified for having renounced all evil activity. For acquiring good and abandoning evil, we should be grateful to the Buddha.

## (297) IN GRATITUDE FOR RECEIVING

Rennyō would always be in a *gasshō*-position whenever presented with a donation from *monto* members. He considered articles of clothing coming from the Buddha, and whenever anything trailed on the ground he would reverently lift it to his brow. We have been told that Rennyō looked upon all things passed on to him as coming directly from the hands of Shinran Shōnin.

## (298) THE JOY OF INFINITY

As we are committed in the buddhadharma myriad of things assail us, and we do not make smooth progress— and yet there is this joyfulness for future life granted by the Buddha.

## (299) LIGHTHEARTEDNESS

There is no loss in coming in contact with fellow buddhists. An entertaining word or two, playfully passed on is from the mind-depths of the buddhadharma, itself; and there is much to be gained!

## (300) THE LEGACY

We have already reported our belief that Rennyo Shōnin, according to various examples, was indeed an actual manifestation. He left us this *waka*,

“This six-character  
name is what I am  
leaving behind me.”

Obviously, a sign of the transformed body of Amitabha.

## (301) THE WEARY-WAYWORN TRAVELER

Rennyo would often show his sons the scarred feet chewed up by his thongs from journeying on foot in the capital environs and throughout the provinces—all for spreading the buddhadharma.

## (302) EXEMPLARY BEHAVIOR

Follow not the evil-doer; the man of *shinjin* should ideally be the model.

## (303) TRANSMISSION OF ANJIN

Following recuperation at Osaka, Rennyo was making his way back to the capital on the 18th of the second month of the eighth year of Meo when he met Jitsunyo in the Kawachi district. He told him, “I have written the *Essentials* of our tradition in *The Letters*, and I assume there will be no confusion. Take note and pass on this vital information.” It is said that this is one of the final acts of the Shōnin, and that Jitsunyo, himself, followed this bequest of *anjin* as given in the *Gobunsho*, and for the benefit of those throughout the provinces affixed his seal attesting to this transmission.

## (304) DIFFICULTIES IN COMPREHENSION

Zonkaku, the son of Kakunyo, has the reputation of an emanation from the bodhisattva, *Daiseishi*, yet in the *Rokuyosho* he states that he had difficulty in following various passages, particularly on the doctrine of *Three Minds*, and that Shinran's work merits our respect. This is a revelation of the spiritual intent and harmony of abandoning self-power and accepting other-power, a worthy task.

## (305) ZONKAKU'S COMMENTARY

This work was not composed from conceited motives, but to praise and express reverence for the original composition.

## (306) A TESTIMONIAL POEM

Zonkaku's final poem,

a single night,  
a dream—  
no more  
passageways!

Rennyō's comment on this poem was that Zonkaku was surely "an emanation of the Śākyamuni: a mind that comes and goes from this world and the next. From our point of view, we have traversed the six realms repeatedly without awareness until arriving on the threshold of this life."

## (307) THE SUNNY SIDE OF LIFE

There is *brightness*—and there is the *shadowy*. Flowers quickly ripen in the sunshine, in the shade blooms appear later. In our own many excursions there is early attainment, and later awakening; struck with light rays of Amitabha there is immediate birth, and there is the delayed birth. Acquired faith or not, one should be attentive to the buddhadharma. Rennyō spoke this way on the passage of time, "Some persons yesterday, and some people today."

## (308) ODDS AND ENDS

Passing through a corridor Rennyō suddenly stopped, picked up a scrap of paper from the floor, and made a reverent gesture with folded palms and bowed head. "This is wasting the Buddha's gift." Common objects were always seen in this way. Rennyō was never careless in thought or deed.

## (309) REMEMBERING THE MAXIMS

"During my recent illness, those were *words of gold* I related for you to think about."

## (310) A PREMONITION

During his recovery from sickness, Rennyo told Kyomon-bo, "Although still not feeling well, I'm anxious to tell you of an indescribable feeling, I have."

## (311) SPEAK OUT!

Rennyo said, "In secular affairs or in the dharma even-mindedness is preferred. It is never good to remain silent." He did not like anyone to be inhibited, nor could he easily tolerate whispering in front of others.

## (312) PINES AND THE BUDDHADHARMA

*Care is taken in the ways of the world, Care is taken in the ways of the dharma*—A couplet cited by Rennyo. He also said, *Cultivate the buddhadharma, tend to the culture of the garden trees.*

## (313) GIFTS OF THE TATHAGATA

While Rennyo was staying in Sakai, Ken-en bought some blue striped material, "We already have that material—what waste!" In spite of the protest that it was paid out of Ken-en's own pocket, Rennyo admonished him, "Yours? All things are the possession of the Tathagata, and all things come from the Buddha and Shinran Shonin."

## (314) A GIFT FOR KEN-EN

Ken-en once refused a gift from Rennyo, "Take it! Just as faith is given. If there is no faith can it be that a thing of the Buddha is not to be taken? Is it believed that it is mine to give? There is nothing for me to give; all comes from the Buddha without any exception whatever."

## RENNYO SHŌNIN

## LIFE-TIME OCCUPATION

"I have," declared Rennyo, "spent a lifetime in imparting the *buddhadharma* to others as expedient ways and means for acquiring faith."