



have a change of heart and feel repentant, and deeply realize the primal Vow... single heartedly entrusting yourselves to the Tathagata and always being mindful of this whether awake or asleep – then you are called practitioners with the entrusting heart who have attained the definitely settled mind through the reliance of the Primal Vow.”

5. The Name

“You should entrust yourselves to Amida by carefully discerning the six-character Name, “Na-mo-a-mi-da-bu-tsu.

The essence of “Namo Amida Butsu” is this: when sentient beings entrust themselves to Amida with the assurance of emancipation in the afterlife, Amida Tathagata fully recognizes this and endows them with the merit of unsurpassed, great benefit...

Because it is through Amida’s Dharma that the sentient beings who rely on the Buddha are liberated, we say that “Namo Amida Butsu” represents “the unity of beings and the Dharma.”

Summation

Rennyo wrote the letter on the Five-Fold Doctrine to help guide all to a settled life. Jodo Shinshu Buddhist rely on the Larger Sutra, find teachers that encourage and urges us to follow Amida, receive the Buddha’s great compassion through the light, entrust ourselves and realize the Buddha’s effort through the Primal Vow, and say the Name, Namo Amida Butsu in gratitude for the assurance of our eventually Enlightenment.

*Primal Vow : If when I attain Buddhahood, the sentient beings of the ten quarters, with sincere mind entrusting themselves, aspiring to be born in my land, and saying my Name perhaps even ten times, should not be born there, may I not attain the supreme enlightenment. Excluded are those who commit the five grave offenses and those who slander the right Dharma.”

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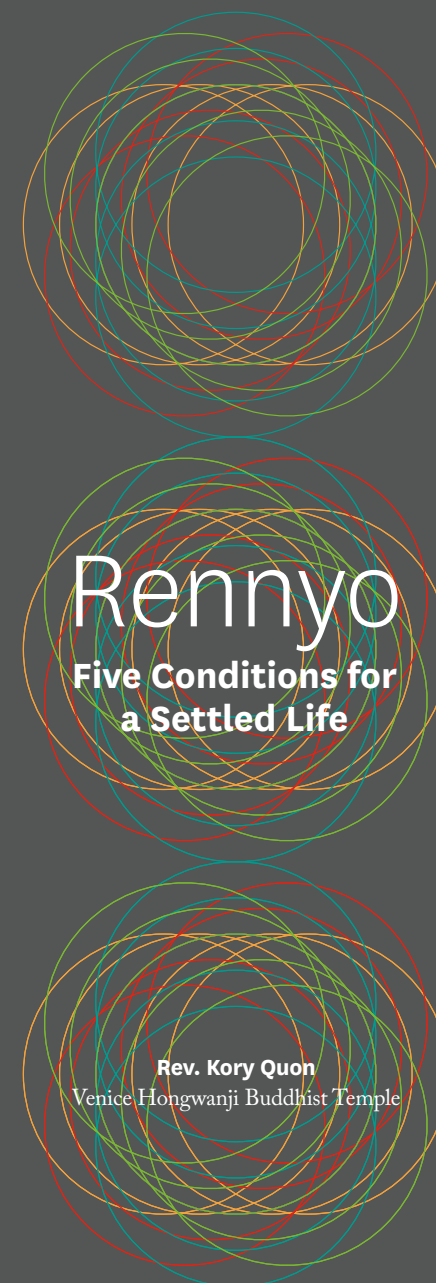
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Who was Rennyo?

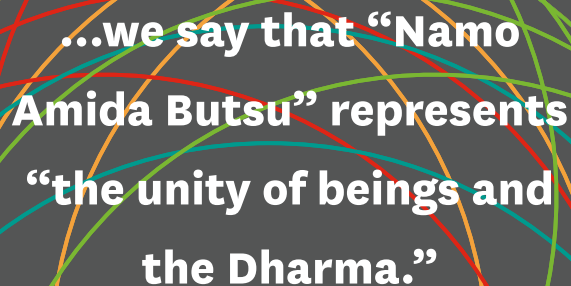
Rennyo was a descendant of Shinran and the eighth Monshu or head priest of the Jodo Shinshu Hongwanji-ha school of Buddhism which originated from Kyoto, Japan. He was born with the name Hoteimaru in his childhood and later named Kenju. At the age of seventeen, he received his ordination, and in 1457 when he was forty-three, he became the Monshu. Under his guidance, he succeeded in attracting a large number of followers. Through the use of widely spread letters (known as *Ofumi*, or *Gobunsho*) among the followers contributed enormously to the growth of the teaching throughout the country, even among the illiterate. He was able to build the Founder's Hall (1480) and the Amida Hall (1481) in Yamashina, east of Kyoto. This became the foundation of the Hongwanji institution.

In 1489, he retired as the Monshu, leaving this position to his fifth son, Jitsunyo. In 1496, he built a temple in Ishiyama, Osaka where Osaka Castle stands now and spent the rest of his life there. He became ill in 1498 and then returned to Yamashina, where he eventually passed away at the age of eighty-five.

Rennyo was awarded the posthumously title of Eto Daishi (Master of the Lamp of Wisdom) by Emperor Meiji in 1882.

Five-Fold Doctrine

Through Rennyo's motivation to build up the Hongwanji-ha School, he concentrated his efforts on making Jodo Shinshu understandable for the lay people through his propagation, visitation, and letters. He also put in place a system of rituals that everyone could take part in on a daily basis. Rennyo endeavored to firm and consolidate the Hongwanji's presentation of the path to the Pure Land by way of the Amida Buddha's Eighteenth or Primal Vow. In one of his letters to his followers numbered eleven of fascicle two, he describes this as the five-fold teaching or the five conditions through which people could attain a truly settled feeling in this life. In the *Gobunsho* this letter is known as *The Five Fold Doctrine* or in Japanese as *Go Ju No Gi Shou*.



...we say that “**Namo Amida Butsu**” represents “**the unity of beings and the Dharma.**”

1. Stored Good from the past
2. Meeting a good teacher
3. Receiving Amida's Light
4. The Entrusting Heart
5. The Name, **Namu Amida Butsu**

Looking at Rennyo's five conditions as a model it may be helpful for Nembutsu followers in their efforts in entrusting themselves to Amida's Primal Vow.

Why this Teaching?

Rennyo understood that everyone needs Nembutsu, but also he understood what they wanted for themselves. People are always looking for a life of happiness, but this leads to delusion. The true goal of living in this life is to break away from this life of samsara to find true peace. The afterlife is of greatest importance and should be resolved now.

1. Stored Good from the Past

For a Buddhist the ultimate goal is to become enlightened, to become a Buddha. There are many different paths to enlightenment. Fascicle five letter eleven of the *Gobunsho* stated, “we abandon sundry practices and without doubting, entrust ourselves single heartedly and steadfastly to Amida Buddha.” When it comes to true enlightenment, we need to stop looking for the purity in what we do for ourselves and rely on the Sutra of Immeasurable Life and more importantly Amida. Fascicle three letter twelve, it ex-

plained that there are no authentic sources of the Dharma other than what the Buddha taught. Rennyo explained, “If a person has already practiced this Dharma at one time in the past and is able to hear it again now, he will immediately realize joy.” Hear the Buddha's teachings through the *Larger Sutra*, attain faith, and keep it firm within with joy. “Good karma from the past” is to encounter or hear the Buddha's teachings, and wait for them people to mature or ripen for the attainment of Other-Power faith now.

2. A Good Spiritual Teacher

“A good teacher is the messenger who urges us to take refuge in Amida. Unless we meet a good spiritual teacher through the ripening of stored good from the past, our birth is impossible. It is a grave mistake to disregard Amida on whom we must rely and take only the good spiritual teacher as our refuge. This we should bear in mind.” This was taken from the letter entitled The Five-Fold Doctrine of the *Gobunsho*.

3. Amida's Light

The light of the Buddha is how all sentient beings are reached. Rennyo wrote in A Wrong View from “Ten Kalpas Ago,” “Single-heartedly take refuge in Amida, and then the Tathagata will embrace you within his light and never forsake you. This is how the single thought of entrusting is decisively settled.”

4. The Entrusting Heart

From Renouncing the World and Awakening the Bodhi-mind, “Attaining the entrusting heart is described in the [Larger] Sutra as “immediately attaining the state in which one's birth is assured and thus dwelling in the stage of non-retrogression...”

Next “should truly receive the Name of the Primal Vow and never forget it, whether walking or sleeping”... if you