

# CALL OF THE INFINITE

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The Way of Shin Buddhism

南無阿彌陀佛

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JOHN PARASKEVOPOULOS

"*Call of the Infinite* is a concise and clear introduction to the major concepts of Shin Buddhism, a tradition that has received scant attention from those with a Western background. The book is likely to stir a deeper interest in this path amidst the diversity of spiritual perspectives and alternatives available today. Its realistic appraisal of our human condition is perceptive and the author is able to unpack dimensions of spiritual reality with skill, while keeping his feet firmly planted in earthly realism. While this book represents a serious intellectual exploration, it remains very readable and has much to offer the genuine seeker."

Emeritus Professor Alfred Bloom, University of Hawaii  
- author of *The Essential Shinran: A Buddhist Path of True Entrusting*

"Buddhism is much more diverse and multifaceted than many people think. Shin ('Pure Land') Buddhism manages to be, simultaneously, one of the most widely practised forms of this tradition (the largest Buddhist school in Japan) and the least understood in the West. From the beginning, Shin was a highly sophisticated lay form of Buddhism. This thoughtful short outline of its spirituality, while disclaiming academic originality, is distinguished by its clarity, enthusiasm and indeed its high level of accuracy. Written by a Shin priest, it shows very well why this form of Buddhism – real Buddhism, a form of Buddhism very different from the many popular images of it current in the West – might appeal to modern seekers who find themselves depressed and frustrated with the decadent and sterile world around them. It also suggests why Shin Buddhism has so much to offer in fruitful dialogue and collaboration with its Christian brothers and sisters. Paraskevopoulos' little book is a delightful read, 'adorned with the fragrance of light' to quote a Buddhist text. It is highly recommended."

Professor Paul Williams  
Co-director, Centre for Buddhist Studies, University of Bristol  
- author of *Mahayana Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations*

"The excellence of this presentation of Shin Buddhism reflects the author's mastery of the subject and the clarity of his concise and accessible expression. Both pastoral and instructive, the text moves seamlessly from its opening reflection on suffering and dissatisfaction to its ultimate celebration of infinite beauty and joy. What links beginning with end is the Dharma-Body, the realm of Nirvana which comes to know itself as the 'true and real mind' pervading the whole of reality. In the process, the author clarifies the nature of self-power and Other-Power, and skillfully explicates the great Vow of Amida Buddha as the fundamental ground of all spiritual endeavor. In this regard, his explanation of the practice of the Name, and its relationship to other modes of Buddhist meditation and moral cultivation, is both penetrating and lucid. As an introduction and a sophisticated exposition, this is an indispensable text on Shin Buddhism."

Professor Brian Brown, Iona College, New York  
- author of *The Buddha Nature*

"This book takes on the big questions of human existence – Who am I? What am I here for? Where am I going? How can I live my life to the full, with the wisdom of knowing the way things are and with compassion for all beings? It then leads the reader to discover answers from the perspective of the Shin Buddhist path. This is a timely work for troubled times, with a refreshing message and vision for our twenty-first century global society."

Professor Ruben L. F. Habito  
Founding Teacher, Maria Kannon Zen Center, Dallas  
- author of *Experiencing Buddhism: Ways of Wisdom and Compassion*

“Following the traditional Buddhist pattern of diagnosis and treatment, *Call of the Infinite* probes the perplexities of the modern human condition and offers the teachings of Shin Buddhism as a plausible, indeed powerful, response. Common presentations of Buddhist practice as an impersonal process of stripping away our human nature are exposed as limited, and the author quarries the rich spiritual, emotional and aesthetic resources of the Pure Land tradition - from deep within the heart of the Mahayana - enabling them to speak clearly and effectively to the contemporary spiritual seeker. A truly beautiful book.”

Dr Wendy Dossett

Director, Religious Experience Research Centre, University of Wales at Lampeter

“This accessible, elegant and penetrating interpretation of the essential teachings of Shin Buddhism is a significant addition to the slender body of Western writings on a little-understood branch of the Buddhist tradition. Lucid and sometimes provocative, this book is an invitation to the profound spiritual experience which can be found through time-tested methods available to any sincere wayfarer.”

Professor Harry Oldmeadow, La Trobe University, Bendigo

- author of *Journeys East: 20th Century Western Encounters with Eastern Religious Traditions*

“This presentation of the Shin Buddhist teachings addresses universal spiritual concerns in a way that leaves readers reassured and wanting to know more. Paraskevopoulos’ writing is luminous and soothing, as if one were reading poetry. As a pioneer of Shin Buddhism in Australia, he offers fresh insights rarely seen in Japan. His treatment, in particular, of the importance of beauty to our spiritual life is inspirational.”

Professor Kenneth K. Tanaka, Musashino University, Tokyo

President, International Association of Shin Buddhist Studies

- author of *Ocean: An Introduction to Jodo Shinshu Buddhism in America*

“Paraskevopoulos has pondered Shinran’s thought with forthrightness and has written an eloquent meditation on questions that arise in a contemporary engagement with the Pure Land path. Drawing on a generous range of traditional sources, he explores the practical implications of the Shin Buddhist challenge to modern conceptions of the self.”

Professor Dennis Hirota, Ryukoku University, Kyoto

- co-author of *Shinran: An Introduction to His Thought*

“This splendid book is uplifting, inspiring, accurate, authentic and positive. The work of a knowledgeable authority, *Call of the Infinite* exemplifies the affirmative dimension of Buddhism – that which reveals the Buddha’s ever-present and ever-beneficent Great Self – in contrast to the joyless negativism that commonly usurps the Buddhist name. Thoroughly and unreservedly recommended.”

Dr Tony Page, Bangkok University

- editor of the *Mahayana Mahāparinirvāna Sūtra*

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