A Comparison between Hōnen and Shinran

Similarities

Hōnen	Shinran
Hōnen, like Genshin, had thoroughly studied traditional teachings (his writings on doctrinal questions show this).	Shinran, like Hōnen and Genshin, had also made a thorough study of traditional teachings.
In addition to Hōnen's scriptural erudition, even more prominent was his compassionate nature.	Shinran, too, had a compassionate nature. His one aim was to bring faith in Amida to those like himself who needed it most – to "bad people" rather than "good people."
Hōnen was banished from Kyoto at the same time as Shinran.	Shinran was expelled from Kyoto at the same time as Hōnen.

Differences

Hōnen	Shinran
Was a Tendai scholar and monk on Mt. Hiei.	Was an aristocrat by birth. Had been on the Tendai path.
Saw the Tendai path as too difficult for awakening in a degenerate *mappō* age – and so adopted the 'easy path' of reliance on Amida and his 'original vow' to save all.	Interpreted Hōnen's message in order to make it simpler and more extreme.
Taught that, as even wicked people could be reborn in Sukhāvatī, then good ones certainly could be.	Taught that, as even good people could be reborn in Sukhāvatī, wicked ones stood an even better chance.
Retained celibacy, as did most of his monastic followers.	Abandoned celibacy, as did his followers. Also, initiated a married clergy; promoted the family as the centre of religious life.
Viewed *nembutsu* recitation as the central religious act – and frequent repetition ensured salvation (not seen as 'self-power').	Taught that one sincere *nembutsu* recitation was sufficient – repetition to aid salvation was 'self power'.
Hōnen's conservative followers adhered to the traditional monastic discipline of Buddhism (including vows of celibacy and sobriety).	Shinran felt that if salvation depended solely on Amida's grace, it was needless to act as if one's conduct could have any bearing on ultimate redemption.
Hōnen encouraged and exemplified the principle that one's devotion to Amida was deepened by continual invocation of his name	Shinran, by contrast, felt this implied there was something a person could do to win salvation (and was another manifestation of relying on "one's own power").

Hōnen did *not* wish to discard all the sūtras, except that which revealed Amida's Original Vow. He prized, for example, the two texts relating to Amida and the Pure Land.	Contrariwise, Shinran was ready to dispense with all the sūtras – except that which revealed Amida's Original Vow. (He even set aside the two texts relating to Amida and the Pure Land).
In the sūtra which revealed Amida's Original Vow, Hōnen recognized three vows attributed to Amida.	In the sūtra which revealed Amida's Original Vow, of the three vows attributed to Amida in this sūtra, Shinran discarded two (which mentioned meritorious deeds and repeating Amida's name).
Hōnen recognized two paths: (1) the Path of Holiness, involving discipline and meritorious actions, but understood it was beyond the capability of most men to pursue successfully in a degenerate age; (2) the Pure Land Path, involving only the recitation of the *nembutsu* and complete reliance on the grace of Amida, not upon oneself.	Shinran reduced Buddhism to simplicity: For example, the Three Treasures were transformed into one: Amida's Original Vow. Little remained of the Buddha as manifested by Shākyamuni, the Law as embodied in scripture, or emphasis on ethical and intellectual excellence.
For Hōnen, the *nembutsu* was the greatest and most excellent of all disciplines, and enjoyed the protection of all other Buddhas, as well as of Amida.	Shinran, in his focus on exclusive reliance on Amida, discouraged the worship of other Buddhas. He believed that Shākyamuni Buddha only transmitted the true faith, was a teacher and messenger, but not someone to be worshiped.
Hōnen was condemned and exiled at 74 for his success in winning converts to the new Pure Land School, which he had founded. The new school which developed from his followers became the Jōdo-shū, or 'Pure Land school'.	During his lifetime, Shinran did not organize a new sect around his own creed. His followers formed the Jōdo-shin-shū, or 'True Pure Land school'.

Sources:

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