

Two Aspects of Shin Buddhism

This thesis is an attempt to show the inner relationship between the principle that Shin Buddhism is none other than Buddhism and the fact that Shin Buddhism is a school of Buddhism.

This relationship, however, is already revealed in Shinran's *Kyo-gyo-shin-sho*. To me, the first four volumes of the *Kyo* (teaching), *Gyo* (practice), *Shin* (faith) and *Sho* (attainment) clarify that Shin Buddhism is none other than Buddhism, and the last two volumes, *viz.* 'True Buddha and His Land' and 'Incarnated Buddha and His Land', present Shin Buddhism as a school of Buddhism. This thesis is thus based upon my view that the *Kyo-gyo-shin-sho* is made up of these two parts. I decided to call the former absolute Shin Buddhism and the latter relative Shin Buddhism. This is due to my conviction that no Absolute could actually be perceived without being relativized and that anything relative is meaningless that is not the manifestation of the Absolute.

According to the Volume on Practice (*Gyo*), Shin Buddhism teaches that it is Amida's Original Vow that all sentient beings are born in the Pure Land by their reciting the Nembutsu (Name of Amida, or sometimes Thought of Amida). At the outset of the *Kyo-gyo-shin-sho* it is clarified that the Name of Amida is what is attested to and recommended by all buddhas. This fact means that the birth in the Pure Land through the reciting of the Nembutsu is in accordance with the universal law (Dharma). "All buddhas" here means those who are enlightened, perceiving truth (as-it-is-ness) in everything. Therefore it can be said that what those buddhas testify and recommend is universal and absolute. The representatives of those buddhas are the Seven Eminent Masters or the patriarchs in the tradition of Shin Buddhism. Through their teaching we are made to realize that there is no other way for us but the Nembutsu by which ignorance is broken through and our basic will (Hongan) is fulfilled, and finally we are led to the conviction that it is in the Name of Amida that

wrong doing (*aku*) is turned to virtue (*toku*). However, the so-called buddhas might not be only the patriarchs of Shin Buddhism. Whoever are convinced from the bottom of their hearts that there is no deliverance apart from the Nembutsu are qualified to be buddhas.

When we hear Amida's Vow through the teachings of those buddhas, we are immediately made to realize that the Vow is the Dharma which is truly universal in the light of the 'Vow on Birth through the Nembutsu.' Tathagata's Original Vow for all sentient beings in the ten directions from His compassion toward suffering beings so as to deliver those who are heavily laden with evils and transgressions. It is the Volume on Faith (*shin*) in which this fact is revealed by Shinran with indescribable emotion.

From the above it is clear that the Birth in the Pure Land through Nembutsu is none other than attaining Buddhahood through Nembutsu. Apart from the birth in the Pure Land there is no other way for attaining Buddhahood. Accordingly, one's going toward the Pure Land is none other than his returning to save others. It is in the Volume on Attainment (*sho*) that the birth in the Pure Land by Nembutsu is presented as the way to be taken necessarily by all.

The significance of Shin Buddhism as absolute has been revealed in the course of its development throughout history. What appears most significant here is the fact that the ideal of Mahayana Buddhism has been to establish the Buddha Land. However, this Buddha Land cannot possibly be realized in this life.

Trying to realize the Buddha Land in this world by force makes Shin Buddhism in turn retrogress into a secular teaching aiming at worldly profit. It was due to reflection on this point that Shin Buddhism arose. As a result, all good practices have been designated as practicable as either good works in *samadhi* (*jozen*) or good works in the dispersed mind (*sanzen*) which cause devotees to yearn for the Pure Land itself.

These practices, however, are none other than means by which to lead all people to the whole-hearted practice of Nembutsu. The "relative"

Shin Buddhism thus came to be established. The whole-hearted practice of Nembutsu naturally leads to faith in Amida's Original Vow or in "absolute" Shin Buddhism.

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