THE RELIGION OF SHINRAN SHŌNIN

THE religion of Shinran Shōnin, that is, the teaching of the Shin Sect is summarised by one word "faith," which is one of the four subjects treated in his principal work known as the *Doctrine, Practice, Faith, and Attainment.* How the author considered this subject may be inferred from the special prefatory remark which he attached to the book devoted to its discussion. In this preface he emphasises the significance of faith, and to support his position he quotes passages from the scriptures as well as from the writings of Indian, Chinese, and Japanese Buddhist philosophers Based upon the discourse thus advanced by Shinran Shōnin as to the meaning and content of faith, I wish to consider in this article the following four points concerning the doctrine of faith:

1. Giving (*dāna*) and Transfering (*parināmanā*);
2. Knowledge and faith;
3. Transcendentality of faith;
4. The conception of sin, and salvation by faith.

I

The teaching of Shakyamuni, according to the Agama literature, principally consists in the ideas of giving, of observing the moral precepts, and of being born in the Heavens: the Mahayana, as far as its practical method of attaining enlightenment was concerned, also emphasised the idea of giving and morally conducting oneself. For the Six Virtues of Perfection, or the six virtues that will carry one across the stream of samsara (birth and death) to the other shore of immortality are headed by giving (*dāna*) and by moral conduct (*śila*), which are followed by patience or humility (*kshānti*), energy

(*virya*), meditation (*dhyāna*), and wisdom (*prajñā*). The idea of giving has a far deeper spiritual meaning than is ordinarily supposed, and its logical culmination is the essentially Buddhist notion of transference (*parināmanā*), especially Shinran's doctrine of Amida-transference.

The doctrine of giving existed in India prior to Buddhism, together with the ideas of morality and rebirth in the Heavens, but the Buddha gave a new and deeper meaning to these ideas. Ordinarily, giving simply means the transference of the right of possession from one person to another, notably such acts of charity as are practised by rich men for their less fortunate fellow-creatures. But in case of the poor themselves how could this doctrine of giving be practised? If giving is one of the essential virtues to be practised by every creature who wants to be a Buddha, the Buddhist giving must not be the giving of something material, which alone the rich can claim to be in possession of more abundantly than the poor. Besides, material giving admits quantitative differences, which may affect the merits of giving itself. As long as giving is confined to things material, the intrinsic virtue of the act will be lost sight of. To be religiously significant, the idea of giving must be transformed from merely material into spiritual. However rich one may be in possession of gold, estate, fine mansions, horses, carriages, servants, etc., these are after all perishable things and have no value whatever from the point of religion. True, even these are quite frequently found hard to give up. But there is one thing equally possessed by the poor as well as by the rich, the giving of which will really constitute a religious deed of the utmost importance. This is giving away the Self, the last stronghold of every conscious being, rich or poor, noble or lowly, in which all his interests are centered and by which all his material possessions are grasped. If he could deliver this up to the altar of Buddhahood, nothing could really estimate this

merit. Therefore, the Buddha distinguishes between material giving and the giving of the self and teaches that those who give up their riches may be reborn in heaven as they have detached themselves from the idea of the permanence of things, whereas those who give up their egotism will be rewarded with the attainment of Nirvana. For in the latter alone the deepest religious signification of giving is fully brought out. That the Jātaka Tales are rich in stories of self-sacrifice proves how much this has occupied the mind of every pious Buddhist. No wonder then that Shinran as an orthodox expounder of the true spirit of the founder of Buddhism believes in Amida as the Great Giver who gives his self to all beings for their spiritual welfare. In the Avatamsaka Sutra, Amida is described, while he was still a Bodhisattva, as having practised the virtue of giving to the point of sacrificing his body and life for the sake of all sentient beings. The doctrine of salvation as taught by Shinran is no more than this giving up of our selves in answer to the giving out of his infinite love on the part of Amida. In other words, this giving up of self is the transfering of one's self over to another, which is the sense of parināmanā, and the faith of the Shin followers is based on Amida's giving up of the self for the sake of all beings.

As the transfering taught by Shinran is giving in its deeper sense, all acts of transference must be giving away what belongs to oneself whether this be material or spiritual. But can one really give away all that one may have? In practical life this is an almost impossible deed. Even things which are ultimately to perish are hard to part with; they do not actually belong to the self, for the latter is unable to control the final destiny of them; but still we all cling to them as if they constituted part of ourselves. How much harder it must be to give up the very self which means the entirety of this individual being! This is especially the case

with modern people who are firm believers, whether true or false, in the finality of the ego. But apart from the practical side of the question, is the giving up of the entire self possible theoretically, so that nothing of the self will be left behind? When the self is given up, the giver is still there; for the act of giving is only possible when there is one who gives and to one whom something is given. However far we may go, there always remains the giver that will do the act of giving. As long as there is an idea of giving somewhere in one's consciousness, this self-differentiation will go on forever, and no final giving up of the self will be possible. If one wants to be an absolute giver in whom there will be no dualism of the giving and the given, such a giver must go altogether beyond the idea of giving. When this is done, there will be a shifting of positions, and one that gives will be now one that is given. All the stages of parināmanā to which the Mahayana sutras make constant reference are, except the last stage, the giving of the self on the plane of relativity; that is, in them all there is always present a residue of selfhood, which is altogether gotten rid of at the tenth and final stage of parināmanā; for here the dualistic giving is transcended and the giving means the given. This is technically known as "transference by the Other" in contradistinction to "transference by the Ego." The former is absolute while the latter is relative. The teaching of Shinran is founded upon this idea of absolute transference when Amida transfers or gives up his all to us, and we, by giving up all that is to be given up of our selfhood, are enriched by becoming recipients of Amida's love. The philosophy of the Shin teaching as expounded in Shinran's *Doctrine, Practice, Faith, and Attainment* is the growth of this fundamental idea of parināmanā, which is, as we have seen, the spiritual interpretation of the idea of giving, so highly valued by all religion.

II

Having seen how the idea of giving taught by the Mahayanists as well as by the Hinayanists came to result in what is technically known as the transfering of Amida's love to all beings, let me now consider Prajñā (knowledge) which comes last in the enumeration of the Six Virtues of Perfection (*Pāramitās*). This subject was most thoroughly studied by Nāgārjuna early in the history of Mahayana Buddhism. He is now regarded as the founder in fact of all the sects of the Mahayana, but in the beginning of his career as religious leader and philosopher he was a devoted Hinayanist. When he came to study the Avatamsaka Sutra his views of Buddhism underwent a great revolution, and ever since he remained the most learned and most militant Mahayanist. The Avatamsaka, together with the Prajñāpāramitā Sutra, is one of the principal texts of Mahayana Buddhism, and it was indeed through his literary activity that these two sutras came to be so recognised by all the later Buddhists. In his commentaries on the sutras he was quite emphatic in upholding the idea of prajñā as the foundation of all religious life. I now propose to see what he means by prajñā which was so closely connected with Shinran's teaching of "faith."

Nāgārjuna starts from the consideration of a common-sense view of prajñā, and in this case parjñā is what we ordinarily understand by knowledge. Knowledge is always dualistic in its making and presupposes the existence of an opposition, inner and outer, or subject and object. Seeing is possible; for there is a thing seen and one who sees. So with knowing; knower is no knower unless he has something known. Knowledge is judgment, and judgment naturally has two things to judge. Therefore, knowledge is always relative and conditioned. How then did Nāgārjuna come to the conception of absolute knowledge, prajñā, which is infinite and

universally valid? There are always some limits to our experience, for it is finite; while the objective world extending in space and continuing in time is infinite. The finite ego is apparently unable to stand contrasted to the illimitableness of the world. As long as this contrast is to be kept up, there will be no way for absolute knowledge to issue, which is however needed for the realisation of perfect enlightenment, the essence of Buddhahood. Nāgārjuna had to solve the following two difficulties before he could establish his theme:

a. The objective world to be known by the subject is measureless, therefore our limited knowledge cannot grasp the entirety of things that stand over against it. It will be impossible to deduce "supreme knowledge" (*prajñā*) from the consideration of relative knowledge gained through experience.

b. Even when our relative knowledge can exhaust the objective world, there still remains the knowing subject unfathomed; as long as there exists one thing unreached by our knowledge, this knowledge is not absolute and supreme.

According to Nāgārjuna the first difficulty is self-contradictory and does not exist in truth. How can one know the infinitude of the objective world when one on hypothesis has yet no absolute knowledge? The world may be finite for all we know. No attribute, either finite or infinite, can be ascribed to the objective world as long as the nature of knowledge remains quite undefined. But for argument's sake let us, whether dogmatically or not, admit the infinitude of the world, and what do we have to say of its knowledge by the subject? Inasmuch as the world stands to the latter as its object, whatever qualifications we may give to the one must be also those of the other; otherwise, there will be no correspondence between the two, and hence no possibility of knowledge in any form. But as there cannot be two absolutes, the knowing subject and the known object must be regarded as one if either one of them is to be thought of as transcending all

limitations. There then we have the possibility of supreme knowledge in the absolute identification of subject and object.

As regards the second difficulty, Nāgārjuna argues thus. If knowledge is established in the relation of the known and the knowing, this knowledge will never be possible concerning the nature of the knower itself; for the knowing agent will always be left behind as the insoluble residue in the field of knowledge. Just as in the case of giving, the knower, like the donor, will forever remain unknown. But Nāgārjuna contends that we are in possession of a certain form of knowledge which not only knows the objective world but knows itself. This knowledge is like fire that burns itself by burning its material. Again when we measure distance objectively by tracing the steps of some one else, we may have an exact knowledge of it, but we have no means of experiencing the subjective effort which is required in covering the distance unless we ourselves walkit. If so, knowledge that is possible through the relationship of subject and object becomes complete only when in it the contrast is obliterated and when when what is experienced by the subject is at once the measure of the object. This knowledge is absolute according to Nāgārjuna because it thus transcends the limitations set to our ordinary knowledge in which mind and matter, subject and object, acting and acted, are always found conditioning each other, thus binding us to dualism. But, through the experience of supreme knowledge in ourselves, we are able to see into the truth that there is just one stream of eternal causation (*pratityasamutpāda*) which our relative knowledge judges to be dualistic and conditioned by time and space. To think there is really a universe as presented to our consciousness is to stop the eternal flow of reality and to separate oneself from the deepest revelation of prajñā. Therefore, Nāgārjuna condemns the dualistic conceptions of reality as onesided as much as the other view of it, according to which there is no

reality whatever that can be regarded as ultimate. He upholds the absoluteness of supreme knowledge not dimmed by either view, dualism or nihilism. Prajñā as one of the Six Pāramitās is, therefore, *aparigrihita*, that which takes hold of nothing, and, though paradoxical, just because it has no dualistic hold of anything it can lay its hand on anything; that is to say, by transcending the opposition of subject and object, this supreme knowledge truly understands reality as it moves on.

When we considered in the beginning the act of giving as the first virtue of the Six Pāramitās, we reached the conclusion that real giving consisted in not giving, but in being given; and we have now seen in this case of knowledge, prajñā, the last of the Six Virtues, that it grows out of an absolute identification or perfect interpenetration of subject and object, where subject is object and object is subject. And the teaching of Shinran in regard to faith is exactly this; for according to him to hear is to believe, that is, to hear the voice of perfect interpenetration is to awaken faith within oneself and be reborn in the feeling of joy. Nāgārjuna compares this to one's boarding a boat to cross a stream which would be hard to wade or swim through by one's own efforts. He again calls this awakening of faith an easy walk of salvation. Shinran teaches in "The Book of Practice" the consummation of the act of giving, which is Amida's turning over of his love to all being; and he teaches in "The Book of Faith" the perfection of supreme knowledge in the awakening of faith. We will now proceed to see what is the content of faith thus grown within us when relative knowledge matures into prajñā. To do this, reference will be made to the "Parable of the Two Streams" and to "Ajataśatru's Entrance into the Path."

III

Zendo, who was one of the great historical figures

idealised by Shinran, gives an illuminating story in his commentary on the Sutra of Meditation on Amida, which is one of the three sutras establishing the doctrine of the Shin Sect. The story illustrates the Shin Sect's conception of parināmanā (turning over).

There was once a wanderer travelling from east to west across a vast prairie. One day without any foreknowledge he found himself confronting two streams, the left one of which was a burning fire while the right one was flooded with water. Both were bottomless, and nobody could see the other shore; they were so deep, so wide. Between the two abysses however there was a very narrow white-looking line, only several inches in breadth, and this was the sole passageway for those who wished to go from east to west. To walk along the road washed all the time by fire and water, was quite a perilous undertaking for anybody, however brave-hearted and dauntless. The traveller now standing at the eastern end of it trembled at the sight, and had no heart to risk his life. When he looked backward, he sighted a band of robbers and a pack of wild beasts, all of whom were hastily following his track. He was terror-stricken, but found time to reflect within himself: "If I turn back, the robbers would surely fall upon me; even if I could evade them, the beasts would not let me. But if I venture onward, how could I escape being swallowed up either by water or fire? Death encompasses me on all sides. My end is come any way. Why not then boldly move forward?" When thus finally his mind was made up, he heard some one calling him by name—the voice came from the other end of the narrow path. "With right thought and singleness of heart, walk on without hesitation. I will protect you, fear not being drowned in fire or water." Infinitely encouraged by this voice, he resolutely stepped onward and reached in safety the western bank of the streams.

He was now in the land of bliss, eternally peaceful and

filled with feelings of universal brotherhood,—no distinctions were made there, racial or national.

This parable, as we all can readily understand, depicts our life on earth where adverse circumstances assail us on all sides, and we all often pause to think about the ultimate signification of life. The other shore where peace prevails, is no doubt the ideal land of Buddhists who all believe in universal brotherhood.

By the two shores of the stream the philosopher means the opposition of finite and infinite, over which spans the bridge of religion. When this bridge is studied intellectually we have philosophy; when it is constructed by faith we have the white passage of religion.

The parable was not original with Zendo, he borrowed it from the Mahāparinirvāna Sūtra, Chapter XXIII. Its most primitive form, however, appears in the Samyukta Āgama, No. XLIII, as well as in the sutra known as "The Parable of a Venomous Serpent," which is quoted by Nāgārjuna in his encyclopedic commentary on the Prajñāpāramitā Sutra, Fas. XII.

What concerns me most at present in this Parable of the Two Streams is the "White Path," the deep meaning of which must be considered now in connection with Shinran's idea of parināmanā (turning over).

In the "Parable of a Venomous Serpent" no mention is yet made of the white passage; what corresponds to the latter in the older form is the rafter which is temporarily manufactured by the traveller in order to cross the sea of samsara. The Buddha is represented here to have compared "this side" of the stream to this worldly life, "the other shore" to Nirvana, the "one who crosses" to the Arhat, and finally the "rafter" to the Eightfold Right Path. References are about the same in the Samyukta-Āgama, XLIII; we notice here that the contrast of the two banks in

both sutras is that of suffering and happiness, while Nāgārjuna who also alludes to this parable is more philosophical as he opposes being to non-being instead of suffering to happiness.

In the Māhāparinirvāna, the "white road" of Zendo is still a rafter, but the latter is not constructed by the traveller's own hands, but he finds it there already made for him which he uses by himself for crossing the stream. By the rafter here is no doubt meant the Six Virtues of Pāramitā. But when the parable is delivered into the hand of Zendo, there appears for the first time the white passageway and from the other end of it a voice is heard by the traveller. More than that, the whole purport of the figure is transformed in his treatment; for while the Mahāparinirvāna Sūtra saw the contrast of good and evil on either side of the stream, Zendo turns this into that of pure and impure. It is in many ways illuminating to see four stages of transformation as the parable is passed from one hand to another, as regards the signification of the two opposite shores: 1. the ontological contrast of being and non-being; 2. the psychological contrast of suffering and happiness; 3. the ethical contrast of good and evil; and 4. the religious contrast of pure and impure.

What was then the vision of Shinran in the spiritual meaning of the parable? He saw in the white passageway of Zendo the bridge of salvation spanned or "given" by Amida out of his infinite love for all beings. This bridge is not, according to Shinran, built over the stream between being and non-being, or between pain and pleasure, or between good and evil, or between pure and impure, but between belief and doubt. What keeps us on this side of the bridge so mercifully constructed by Amida is our doubt. Unless this doubt is removed, Shinran's religion of faith will never be established. Says he, "The Buddha supreme has no form whatever," showing that his Buddha is not to be

conceived by ontological idea. He declares again: "I have no regret whatever even if I go to hell by invoking the name of the Buddha," which proves that his faith in the Buddha has nothing to do with the notions of pain and pleasure. A still bolder declaration of his is: "If men of good behaviour are reborn in the Land of Bliss, why not evil-hearted ones?" One's absolute dependence on Amida transcends the moral consideration of good and evil. Shinran goes even further when he ignores the value of saintliness or so-called pure life so much prized by the ascetically inclined followers of Buddhism as well as by the Shintoists to a certain extent; for Shinran did not mind violating the holy injunctions (*śīla*) of the Buddha which uphold celibacy and vegetarianism for his monkish followers. All these things show how deep and how absolute Shinran's faith in Amida was, transcending all notions of morality and holiness usually considered essential to the religious life. His heart was so filled with "the voice from the western shore" which assured his final salvation, and he had no time to think of anything else. This voice is not that of so-called moral conscience disapproving sometimes of our deeds and thoughts, but it comes directly from the Buddha forgiving all our shortcomings and absolutely and universally assuring us of salvation.

In short, the religion of Shinran is built on an absolute faith in Amida whose infinite love and light is disclosed in our inmost consciousness. Technically, it is known as a religion of unconditional dependence on Amida, "the Other," in contradistinction to the doctrine of "the self-reliance." To illustrate the meaning of this faith in "the Other," the story of King Ajataśatru as is told in the Mahāparinirvāna Sūtra will be briefly given below.

IV

Ajataśatru, King of Magadha, was an evil-minded person

and committed horrible crimes. Devadatta was his evil friend and adviser. The king thought only of the present life, gave himself up to pleasures of the senses, murdered his father Bimbisāra, and gave great pain to his mother Vaidehī. But later in his life a bitter remorse deeply gnawed into his heart, and his entire body was covered with sores emitting an unapproachable odour. He reflected, "This is all due to my past evil ways: if I have thus to suffer even in this life, what would my future be? Certainly I am destined for hell." He had no time to rest being mentally and physically harrassed in his bed. But his mother did not leave him at this critical moment of his life, tenderly nursing and comforting her ungrateful son. Not being able to bear all this torture, the king said to her: "Mother, my disease is not merely of the body, it comes from my own soul. There is nobody in the world who can cure me of this horrible decaying disease of mind and body. Because of my sins and crimes, I am bound for hell."

One of his ministers, Candrayaśa came in to pay his respect and asked, "Your Majesty seems to be very much broken down, how is your illness?"

"Not only in my body," answered the king, "but in my mind, I am incurably sick. All this comes from the murdering of my own father who was so good to me. A disease of this nature nobody can cure."

Said the minister: All illness is of the mind, your Majesty; the more troubled in mind, the more aggravating will be the physical discomfort. You worry too much about going to hell, but who ever visited hell? According to Puruna, the philosopher, there are no such things as we call evil or good in this world. Nor is there any hell where so-called evil-doers are destined. How would it do if you have a talk with this philosopher?"

Later, another officer came in to visit the king and said:

"Your Majesty's constant reference to the murdering of king Bimbisāra is not quite right. Though judicially such deeds are punishable, the law of growth often demands destruction in some form. There is a philosopher living in this city, he is Markari-gosalīputra and teaches that our body is made of seven elements which are earth, water, fire, air, pain, pleasure, and life, and that none of these elements can be injured. If so, no murdering in fact can ever take place though apparently there may be one killed; and if there is no real murdering, who is there that is to suffer from the deed?"

One of the ministers by the name of Shin-Tē (Real Virtue) came in now, and said to the king: "Your Majesty need not be remorseful about the murdering of your father. For the sake of national welfare and peace, such deeds are perfectly excusable. While you seem to think that there can possibly be no physician to cure your illness, we know of a great philosopher who may restore you to your former health. His name is Sanjaya-vairadīputra. According to his doctrine, the sovereign is above the law, and everything is permissible for him, even things ordinarily considered crimes he may safely commit. Besides, teaches the philosopher, we are all to be reborn on this earth after death, and there are no such places as hell where sinners are supposed to be destined. Why then should your Majesty be troubled with the thought of future punishment? See this teacher who is sure to save you from all eternal torture."

Another adviser approached the king, a courtier called Hsi-chih-yi (All-knower). He said, "Your Majesty is not the only person who replaced the father from the throne, and then no murderers so-called are ever reported to have gone to hell. Some of the reigning kings in this country are in the same position as you are, yet they are not worried over their past deeds, nor are they tormented by the notion of hell. It may please your Majesty to discard all the gloomy thoughts

under which you are so terribly oppressed."

When Chi-Tè (Auspicious Merit), one of his ministers, came to give the king a further advice, the king said to him: "You all tell me not to worry about my past deeds, but how could one not worry about them? Did not one of our moral teachers say, 'Even when you are pierced through with three hundred spears, you ought not to think of giving any injury to your own parents'? I am approaching every minute the everlasting fire of hell. What a wretched creature I am!"

To this answered the minister: "Who ever told you that there was hell after this life? Such a notion is the creation of an idle philosopher. It has no real existence. O your Majesty! consider the laws of nature: when wheat is planted wheat grows; when rice is sown, rice is raised. So with man; after death, man comes back as man. And again, O your Majesty, murdering or killing is impossible in reality. From the point of view of the Atman, who is there really that can put an end to Atman which is immortal? But has the Atman no real existence, being subject to constant change? If so, we are dying every minute, murderers as well as the murdered. That is to say, there are neither murderers nor the murdered. Your Majesty has no cause whatever to be horror-stricken about your situation."

The sixth and last adviser was Wu-so-wei (Fearless) who comforted the king in this wise: "There is really nothing to grieve for your Majesty. A king has the right for the sake of the state as well as for the weal of the Brahmans to kill anybody that stands in his way. There is no crime whatever. Your predecessor was too partial to the Buddhists and paid no regard to the Brahmans. He was lacking in the virtue of sameness. That your Majesty put his father king out of the way of the Brahmans, was perfectly justifiable. And again to kill another means to put a stop to his life, but life is breath, and breath like air could not be injured in

any way. Says the ascetic philosopher Nirgrantha-jñatiputra to this effect that there is in truth nothing good or bad, enlightened or confused, all these ideas await their solution in Time, which alone is reality and in which every being finds its ultimate deliverance without worrying itself about it. If this be so, the killing of one's father presents no problem whatever and your Majesty's terrible anguish has no foundation."

With all these smooth counsels and empty philosophisings the king remained unconsoled, indeed if anything his pain in mind and body increased for evermore.

Jivaka was a physician to the king, and when he entered the sick man's chamber, the king opened his heart to him, saying, "My illness is no ordinary illness, and perhaps no physician, no medicine, no magic can cure me, for it comes from the agony of my soul. The enemy of the Buddha, the murderer of one's own father who never committed any crime, how can he ever sleep in peace?"

Jivaka said: "Even a great sinner is saved by repentance, and relieved of pain. You have certainly performed evil deeds in your past, but you are now repenting them from the depths of your heart. According to the Buddha there are two things that will cleanse sinners of their stain: one is *hri* and the other *apatrāpyam*. Both mean shame: the first is awakened against oneself, and the second is felt in one's relation to others. By the first one is restrained from doing violence to one's own nature; by the second one restrains others from committing evils. This first is directed towards humanity, the other towards heaven. Those that are shameless in either way are not human, they are beasts. Because of this feeling we live happily together with one another. It is most fortunate that your Majesty is most sincerely remorseful.

"The Buddha teaches, the wise may commit evils, but

they know how to repent, while ignorant evil-doers will conceal their crimes. For those who repent and commit no more evils there is salvation. It is like placing a sacred jewel in murky water, which is thereby cleansed and reflects once more a moon bright and serene. When your Majesty feels repentance and is ashamed of his own past deeds, whatever sinful impurities he may have will surely be wiped out. The most dreadful thing one can do in the circumstances is to hide one's wrong deeds, for thereby the crime will shoot its roots down deeper yet. Such are walking straightway towards hell. Therefore, it is taught by all the Buddhas not to conceal one's sins and wear an innocent face. Your Majesty is now really believing in the law of causation, in karma, and its inevitable consequence. This is no cause for grief.

"The only being of all the four classes of people that is considered unsavable is the Icchanti who has no Buddha-nature in him, but in Buddhism there prevails the principle of universal salvation, and even those Icchantis are not left out by the love of the Buddha. All the human races stand on equality. There are no real distinctions to be made between people. Only those are Icchantis that are positively committed to the four classes of evil ways, that have no faith in the laws of causation, that feel no shame over their own sins, and that make all good friends turn their backs to the teachings of the Buddhas. To those who repent and confess, the name of Icchanti is inapplicable, for they are sure to be embraced by the merciful vows of the Buddha. Besides, your Majesty belongs to the Kshatriya even when we make the racial groupings and has every reason to be saved.

"You may not have much faith in my words; if so, come to the Buddha himself who is twelve yojanas away from here in the city of Kusinagara where he is about to enter Nirvana. He is not only the teacher of all that are actually following his steps but the teacher of all beings in

all walks of life. Not only kings and rich people come to him but the poor and lowly, and they are all impartially received by him. Even desperate criminals are saved by him, Angulimāla was one of such. The love of the Buddha is indeed beyond our understanding, for by him the hungry are fed, the maimed are restored, the beasts are tamed, and murderers are saved. Even the merit of feeding and dressing all sentient beings for one month does not excel that of thinking of the Buddha for a moment. One may exercise the virtue of charity by distributing car-loads after car-loads of precious articles, but it is far better to advance one step nearer towards the Buddha by awaking a devout heart in him. The time is now come for your Majesty to proceed at once to the place where the Buddha is delivering his last sermon on earth. May I accompany you?"

To this the king thoughtfully answered, "The Buddha is free from fault and stain, and those that are surrounding him are all Arhats also undefiled. On the other hand, I am the most depraved soul who once even contemplated injury to his holy life, and how can I dare approach him now?"

The king was then greatly excited and loudly cried out, "I hear a voice, I hear some one calling me!"

It was a voice in the air that he heard, "The depths of the Law are about to dry up, the great light of the Law is about to extinguish, the mountain of the Law is about to crumble, the boat of the Law is about to sink, the tree of the Law is about to break down, the Buddha-Sun is about to set down the great Nirvana mountain. O king, when the Buddha is no more here among us, your soul will never have a chance of healing, and the Avīci hell will be the only abode for you after death because of your dreadful sin. Out of great pity for you, you are urged to go to the Buddha without a moment's hesitation."

Hearing this voice, the king Ajataśatru trembled like a

leaf of the plantain tree before the wind, and looking up towards the sky he exclaimed, "Who are you thus calling me?"

The voice answered, "I am no other person than your own murdered father, Bimbisāra. Listen to Jīvaka's advice, delay not your departure for the Buddha! Be quiet, O my son! Have no regards for the evil counsels of your officers."

The king was stricken and fainted away, with fever increased and sores smelling more offensively than ever.

In the meantime, the Buddha who was lying between the Sāla trees saw with his mental eye the king falling on the ground, and said to his disciples; "I would never enter Nirvana until the evil-doer Ajataśatru is saved." He then entered a Samadhi called the Love of the Moon, and when the soft cooling rays of the moon-light shone upon the senseless body of the king, he at once felt so refreshed and cured of the disease. Rising from the floor, he asked Jīvaka how this happened. He was told that this was all due to the love of the Buddha whose merciful heart is tender especially for sinners. The king at last made up his mind to come in the presence of the Buddha.

Seeing him approach, the Buddha said to the disciples: "Those who seek the truth must befriend good people. Without Jīvaka the king may not escape the eternal punishment which is waiting him."

The king was struck by the majestic and yet tenderly loving figure of the Buddha, before whom he prostrated himself with the deepest feelings of reverence and trust: for the Buddha's merciful treatment of this greatest of sinners was such as to dispel all the anxiety, reluctance, and doubt that had been assailing his mind. The Buddha taught him in the main as follows:

1. You are grieved over the murdering of your father;

but are all these particular existences so fixed, so opposed to one another, that their mutual merging is impossible? Is the distinction between the killer and the killed so real and irrevocably permanent? If the Atman were eternally real, there could possibly be no killing of it from the very beginning. If the Atman were in essence empty, in emptiness there would be no killing either. In truth the absolute idea of non-Atman transcends the karmic law of cause and effect, and because of this transcendence there is no karma that will make you go to hell.

2. From the relative point of view of causation, the self is the sower and at the same time the reaper. Your father had something in him that invited a murderer, the cause was from the first in his being. You were an ascetic in your former life, and killed by your father when he was out hunting. When you were born in the family of your father, he paid his own debt by giving up life this time for you. If your father did not belong to the royalty, he would not have been killed by you; but on account of his former deeds of merit which consisted in making offerings to the Buddhas, he was born in a royal family. If your killing him were a crime, the Buddhas who, accepting the offerings of your father, enabled him to be born as king, would also have to share the crime.

3. In judging a human conduct it is necessary to consider two things: we must see, first, if it issues from his nature, and second, if he is not of his senses. Insane deeds do not constitute the cause for hell. If the king killed his father with his mind altogether out of reason, he is not necessarily bound for the Avīci.

4. If killing is sinful, the killing of innocent animals must be sinful too. While you grieve so over the murder of your father, you are having so many sheep put out of life every day in your own palace. As to loving life and fearing

death, the lower animals are just like human beings. Why then so much anguish in one case and utter indifference in the other?

5. In short, all is suffering, all is unreal, impermanent, and there is no ego-entity. Mind and matter, they are equally unsubstantial, and therefore all the phenomena supposedly arising out of their interaction are not real and permanent. And because they are impermanent, they cause pain; and because of pain, they have no final reality, that is, they are empty. As all is empty, there is no ego-substratum behind all these phantasmagorial existences. There is neither slayer nor the slayed, and consequently no slaying at all.

After this discourse, king Ajataśatru for the first time opened his eye into the secrets of being, where there were no such opposites as mentioned in the first part of this article, that is, the opposites of pure and defiled, good and bad, pain and pleasure, being and non-being. He grasped the absolute truth itself transcending the phenomenality of things, yet at the same time he did not fail to look into the relativity of all conditioned objects.

Thus filled with joy, the king said to the Buddha:

"I have now for the first time penetrated into the great truth of impermanence and non-ego. Because of my ignorance of this truth, I have committed great crimes in my past. My mind was all confused as to the true significance of such ideas as Permanence, Happiness, Ego, and Purity. It was altogether due to this confusion and irrationality that I was prompted to murder my own father. I now truly understand what the Buddha meant when he said he was the father of all beings. The law of causation is that the eranda plant produces its own poisonous fruit, but now I see the sandal wood growing out of the eranda seed. In my heart there is awakened Rootless Faith, by which I mean that I who had formerly no roots of faith within me and did not know how to revere the Buddha,

his Doctrine, and Sangha, have for the first time awakened great faith in them all. I am now saved miraculously from the everlasting fire."

Said the Buddha, "O king, well said! Through this faith of yours all beings will also have their evil hearts subdued."

"If my faith," said the king, "would save all beings from the torments of their evil hearts, I would not mind myself entering into the lowest abyss and endure all the infernal torture for the sake of all beings." So firm was now the faith of the king in the Buddha. The king then turned to Jivaka the physician and thanked him for his kind guidance without which he would not have experienced such a heavenly joy even before he was born in heaven. The king was now sure of his eternal life which was not subject to the vicissitudes of this earthly one. Making many offerings to the Buddha the king most feelingly praised the virtue of the Buddha with the following verse:

"The words of the Tathagata are of one taste,
Like unto the waters in the great ocean:
They are called the First Truth,
And therefore in them there is nothing devoid of meaning,

"What Tathagata now teaches
Is so infinitely full of signification:
Men and women, the great and the small,
All listening, equally attain to the First Principle.

"Causeless and effectless,
Birthless and deathless,—
Such is great Nirvana:
Those that listen are all freed from entanglements.

"To all beings the Tathagata
Is the father and mother always full of love;
Know that all beings are
The Tathagata's children.

"Out of great love for all beings,
The Blessed One endureth all pain;
For they are as if possessed by evil spirits
And addicted to all deeds of maduess.

"Because I have been able to see the Buddha,
Good is my threefold karma thus gained.
May I turn over this merit of mine
To the cause of the Supreme Wisdom!"

The above is the story of king Ajataśatru as recorded in the Manāparinirvāna Sūtra and quoted by Shinran in his "Book of Faith" to illustrate the teaching of the Shin Sect which is practically the religion of salvation from sin. Incidentally I wish to remark that this story as in the case of the "Parable of Two Streams" is found originally in the Āgamas (The Longer Collection XVII, and the Numerical Collection, XXXIX, etc.). In the Mahayana sutra, the apparent motive of the visit of Ajataśatru is his wish to escape from the torturing fever and the certainty of a future punishment, and the general style of description is intensely dramatic, highly tinged with psychological and religious colour. In this we notice stages of development through which the story of the king's repentance, like the "Parable of Two Streams," has gone during the long history of Buddhism in India, China, and in this country. And this history is no other than the history of the Dharma as it first dawned in the mind of the Buddha while he was quietly meditating on the meaning of life under the Bodhi-tree, and the history of the Shin Sect founded by Shinran as the religion of absolute faith and salvation is no other than that of the faith so miraculously awakened in the inmost recesses of the heart of Ajataśatru, which was heavily laden with remorse and yet unable to rise by himself from the consciousness of sin. In other words, the religion of Shinran is established in the idea of "giving," or "transfering" as the term was interpreted in the beginning of

this paper,—the transferring of Amida's love on the believing hearts of all sentient beings. Here we have the glorious culmination of Buddhist faith as it came to Japan travelling through the various nations of Asia.

GESSHO SASAKI