

Infinite Light

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Amitābha, The Buddha of Infinite Light

THOSE who are at all acquainted with Buddhist sutras, especially those belonging to the Mahayana school, must have noticed that all the Buddhas are described as enveloped in light, as emanating rays of light from various parts of their bodies, riding on light-emitting clouds, etc. Not only the Buddhas themselves but anything connected with them also becomes luminous. For example: in the *Avatamsaka Sūtra* (*Kegon-kyō*) we observe that upon Buddha's entering a state of enlightenment the ground which surrounds him, the tree under which he sits, and the lion-seat which he occupies—all shine out in glorious light. In other words, wherever a Buddha appears, the environment including everything existing around him is miraculously transformed and finds itself enveloped in light.

The *Sukhāvati-pyūba Sūtra* and others belonging to the Pure Land school thus also describe Buddhas and their lands in terms of dazzling light. Indeed, the name of the Buddha himself is "infinite light," *amitābha* in Sanskrit¹. It is no wonder then that the sutras bearing his name portray him and his land in terms of light throughout. Śākyamuni who is the narrator of the story of Amida, (or rather, the one who transmits the story as having been told by Śākyamuni), exhausts his arts trying to impress this point in the minds and hearts of the readers or hearers. This is seen in his description of Amida's

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shining dignity which goes beyond human measurements. Infinite Light together with eternal Life are the two characteristics of Amida Nyorai.

Let me quote from Shinran's *Wasan*, "Songs in Praise of Amitābha," translated by B. L. Suzuki:

Since the attainment of Buddhahood by Amitābha,
Ten kalpas² have now passed away;
The Light radiating from the Dharmakāya³ has no limits:
It illuminates the world's blindness and darkness.

The Light of His wisdom is measureless,
All conditional forms without exception
Are enveloped in the dawning Light;
Therefore, take refuge in the True Light.

Amida's Light is like a wheel radiating without bounds.
Buddha⁴ declared that all things touched by His⁵ Light
Are freed from all forms of being and not-being.
Take refuge in the One who is universally enlightened.

The clouds of Light have, like space, no hindrances;
All that have obstructions are not impeded by them;
There is no one who is not embraced in His Soft Light:
Take refuge in Him who is beyond thought.

Nothing can be compared to His Pure Light;
The result of encountering this Light;
Destroys all karma-bondage:
So take refuge in Him who is the Ultimate Haven.

Amida Buddha's illuminating Light is above all,
So He is called the Sovereign Buddha of Flaming Light,
The darkness of the three evil paths⁶ is opened:
Take refuge in the Great Arhat.⁷

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The radiance of His Light of Truth surpasses all,
So He is called the Buddha of Pure Light:
Those who are embraced in the Light
Are cleansed from the dirt of karma and attain emancipation.

However far His Light illumines, love penetrates,
The joy of faith is attained,
So we are told.
Take refuge in the Great One who gives comfort.

He is known as the Buddha of the Light of Prajñā,⁸
Because He dispels the darkness of ignorance;
The Buddhas and the beings of the Three Vehicles⁹
All join in praising Him.

As there is a constant flow of Light,
He is known as the Buddha of Constancy;
Because of perceiving the power of Light with uninterrupted faith,
We are born into the Pure Land.

As the Buddha of Light knows naught of measurement,
He is known as the Buddha of Unthinkable Light:
All other Buddhas praise the Ōjō¹⁰
And the virtues of Buddha Amida are extolled.

As His Wondrous Light transcends form and description,
He is known as the Buddha of Inexpressible Light;
His Light has the power to enlighten all beings:
So he is praised by all the Buddhas.

As His Light surpasses that of the Sun and the Moon,
He is known as the Sun-and-Moon-Surpassing Light;
Śākyamuni could not praise Him enough:
Take refuge in the One who is peerless.

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Amida therefore is the Buddha whose Light fills all the worlds with his illuminating rays, and any of the sentient beings who happens to be struck by it is assuredly cleansed of all his defilements and his body becomes soft and his heart overflowing with goodness is filled with joy and happiness. Indeed, the features of Śākyamuni himself who gives the account of Amida radiates with a light attracting the attention of the whole congregation that is gathered around him.

The following may just as well be applied to Śākyamuni though it is ascribed to Buddha Lokeśvara-rāja¹¹ under whom Amida made his solemn announcement of the forty-eight vows.¹² In fact, unless Śākyamuni did not shine in the same Light as Amida and Lokeśvara-rāja he could never give the story of Amida as he did to his congregation on Mount Vulture. They were all enveloped, each one of the three, in one and the same Light of surpassing beauty and splendor which defies all our human efforts of description.

His radiant features are majestic and inspire awe,
His divine dignity knows no limits;
To such brilliancy of light
There is nothing comparable;
The suns and moons and mani-jewels,
However much they may shine in their way,
Every one of them appears darkly covered,
And is no more than a black mass of coal.¹³

The Light that illumines the Pure Land is also of this nature. If we, therefore, try to paint it in the color we ordinarily see about us, we can never see it, even at our death as is told by the followers of the Jōdo school. Amida and his Land are of the same nature, they belong to an order higher than and altogether transcending ours. The Light pervading the Buddha-land and everything in it has no shadow; it is not to be measured by the hypothesis of wave-lengths; it is neither short nor long, neither broad nor narrow. As it is of this nature Amida can take us into it with all our defilements, moral or otherwise. If it could be measured by its wave-lengths, our entering into it would at once cast a shadow all around and the whole land would be turned into a world of darkness. The reason why we of this *sabaloka*¹⁴ can be inhabitants of the Pure

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Land is because the Light there is of such nature that it penetrates everything and transforms it into its own color-light as it pervades the Pure Land. So we read in the *Larger Sukhāvati-vyūha Sūtra*:

“If those who are born in my country, upon my obtaining Buddhahood, should not all shine in golden color, may I not attain the highest enlightenment.” (Vow 3).

Again:

“If those who are born in my country, upon my obtaining Buddhahood, should not all be of one form and one color, showing no difference in look, may I not attain the highest enlightenment.” (Vow 4).

The Light, *Sabaloka* and *Naraka*

What strikes us ordinary beings living in this *sabaloka* most strange and beyond comprehension is the fact that the Light also shines here and that we are in it. Most of us would surely argue in this way: If we are in the Light and this world shares in its splendor, why does not this world with everything in it partake of the same golden color as in the Pure Land? Why do we have here the three evil paths? Why are we tainted with defilements¹⁵ as we actually are? Why are we so ugly and deformed as to make us feel utterly disgusted? Some such questions would arise endlessly. And how shall we dispose of them if the Light is really shining upon us and within us?

The answer is this: If we were not ugly, deformed, and tainted with all kinds of defilement, there would be no Pure Land, and hence no Light, and the very existence of this *sabaloka* would be impossible. The reason we raise questions such as above is due to the fact that the Light of Amida is right here with us, in us, and around us. If this were not the case, we would never give rise to any question as to the presence of the Light anywhere. It is the Light of Amida indeed that prompts us and makes us ask about Amida. For as soon as the Light of Amida enters here, the shadowless Light acquires a shadow and begins to torment us, as it were, with a shadow of doubt and a feeling of uncertainty. We of this world are bound to feel the darkness though the Light shines absolutely unobstructed in the Land of Amida.

We would therefore commit a most grievous mistake and suffer the consequence of it if we should persuade ourselves to think that Amida with his Land exists somewhere outside and impassably separated from this world of ours. We would commit yet another most grievous mistake and suffer if we should imagine that this world itself is the Pure Land and that we are all its inhabitants by indisputable right. These two notions are to be carefully avoided.

Another strange, perhaps the most strange, thing is that the Light of Amida also shines in *naraka*¹⁶ (or *jigoku* in Japanese). Without this Light *naraka* too could not come into existence and keep on existing. Without this Light *naraka* would be in a state of utter darkness, which means non-existence. Since we can talk about it and see so many of us actually going through all forms of torment and torture, there must be some light even in *naraka*, and this light however darkish must come from Amida's Light, for no light of whatever nature could come from anywhere else but from Amida. The reason why Yama, lord of the underworld, could have his "mirror of judgment" beside him is because it reflects the Light of Amida is not a judge in the sense taught in some other religions, but in his own way he judges. While he never punishes he is fully aware of all the defilements with which we sentient beings are inevitably tainted as beings of finitude and relativity.

Without Amida's Light reaching *naraka*, Yama's mirror of judgment can never be bright enough, impartial enough, free from egoistic taints. Without the Light Yama cannot see anything from his own light, which being conditioned and limited produces shadows all around. His light which is his judgment is of no worth unless it reflects something of Amida's. Indeed, if Amida's Light could not penetrate *naraka*, it would be nothing but that of wave-lengths.

When we talk about Amida's Light extending to this world of ours, we may feel here a sort of contradiction. But we can say that here is a far more serious, or rather an ominous form of contradiction as regards the relation of *naraka* to Amida's Light. Whether or not it is serious or ominous or threatening, there is no doubt that we have here a contradiction. In fact, *naraka* is no more than the extension of *sabaloka*, and if Amida's Light is penetrating to *sabaloka*, there is no reason why the Light should not also illuminate *naraka*. It is true that light and darkness contradict each other, for where the one is the other cannot be. This kind of light which stands against darkness is not the shadowless Light of

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Amida. If it is shadowless, it transcends all forms of contradiction. Amida's Light covers everything and makes it look like one uniform color of solid gold. Contradictions are human and logical. Amida knows of no logicalness nor of illogicalness. He transcends contradictions. *Naraka* as well as *sabaloka* is Amida's Light.

The trouble with us human beings when we at all begin to think is that we divide the thinking into two terms, object and subject, and endeavor to carry on this process endlessly. Dividing thus is the essence of thought, and on account of this division the one is made to stand always directly contrasted to the other, as if there could be no common ground between the two, while in reality there is always oneness, however deeply hidden from sight, at the basis of the opposition, whereby the two opposing terms can be brought out for a synthesis. Contradictions, therefore, of whatever nature can always be unified by making them transcend themselves. The reason for contradiction is thus the reason for mutual relationship and for a higher unification.

We establish a sharp division and an uncrossable gap between the Pure Land and *naraka*, thinking that the one can never be brought out to make a close approach to the other. But unless the Pure Land is not penetrating even to the depths of *naraka*, the Light cannot be said to be all-illuminating. In Amida's Land, it is true, there is no *naraka*, no *sabaloka*, but the shadowless Light of Amida is above discriminations—it is the Pure Land and also is *sabaloka* and *naraka*, and for this reason the Light can be touched or seen by inhabitants of all other countries other than the Pure Land, including *sabaloka* and *naraka*. If not for this fact, not only *naraka*, but *sabaloka* too, could never be recovered into the Pure Land. The latter reflects itself anywhere there are fully matured conditions. And such conditions are available anywhere throughout the worlds whose numbers, according to Buddhism, are inexhaustible.

Amida's Light reflects itself negatively as well as positively in *naraka* and *sabaloka*. Otherwise, there would be no chances whatever for dwellers of *naraka*. This is the reason for making Shinran¹⁷ say that "the evil-minded are really Amida's objectives of salvation." Amida is really more concerned with *naraka*. This means that the Light has greater chances to enter *naraka*. Paradoxically, we can state thus: Because of the very contradiction, from the human point view, between the Pure Land and *naraka*, Amida comes down to *naraka* and picks up Yama's victims, and on this account the Pure Land increases its Light

ever more radiantly where we humans consider there are more obstacles.

The unimpeded Light illuminating all the ten quarters
Shines through the darkness of ignorance;
It leads most assuredly to Nirvana
All those who are gladdened by [the experience of]
one-mindedness (*icchi-nen*).

Benefitted by the unimpeded Light,
Faith is attained, great in power
Whereby the ice of evil passions melts
Into the water of enlightenment.

Karma-hindrance is the substance of merit:
It is like water and ice—
Much ice produces much water,
The more impediment, the more merit.¹⁸

Naraka is not a region of pure darkness; there is no such thing as pure darkness. The darkness here is of such nature as to conceal the Light, or we can say that by the very reason of darkness *naraka* obtains its light from Amida and is saved from itself. As long as one stays in *naraka* one can never understand this mystery of mysteries.

I repeat, *naraka* can never see itself, for it has no light of its own. Yama's mirror is bright and free from dust because of its reflecting the Light of the Pure Land. Yama has no power by himself over the inhabitants of his realm except for the Light coming from the Beyond. The eternal fire burning in *naraka* effects its transformation into the cooling lotus-pond at the very moment the inhabitants realize that even *naraka* reflects the Light of Amida.

A woman *myōkōnin*¹⁹ of Hawaii expresses her experience:

Being told to fall,
I fall;
And lo! I find myself
Held within the lotus-petals!

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“To fall” is to fall into *naraka*, as this is the sure destination of all sentient beings conditioned by finitude and relativity. Most of us, however, are afraid of this inevitableness and struggle to escape it. But the more we struggle the deeper we are involved in the dilemma and stand looking despairingly into the bottomless abyss. The crisis is transcended by jumping right into the gaping maw of the devil. The decision is not the outcome of despair, it is the deed of giving up relativity, it is the supreme moment of the Light breaking through the darkness of the self-power of *naraka*. For this reason the bottomless abyss, the relative, empirical consciousness calculated to jump into, is now transformed into the lotus-flower radiating in the Light of Amida.

The Light is a creative activity and where it touches there takes place not only a transformation of old things but the creation of new things. If it were an event to be measured by lights and shades, by the length of wave-movements, it could never work miracles. If it created the Pure Land it could also create *sabaloka* and *naraka* as well. If it could create space and time and causation, it could also wipe out all these things of relativity by just striking them with one of its shafts. This is the reason why our “sins”²⁰ of hundreds of thousands of kotis²¹ of kalpas could be effaced by “one thought”²² (*ekakṣaṇa*) of *Namu-amida-butsu*²³.

As long as the Light is conceived spatially and intellectually, there are contradictions galore: the Pure Land versus *naraka*, self-power versus other-power²⁴, *pr̥thag jana*²⁵ (*bompu* in Japanese) versus Buddha, *kleśa*²⁶ (*bonnō*) versus *bodhi*²⁷ (*satori*) or *nirvāṇa*²⁸ (*nehan*), etc. But as soon as this way of interpreting the Light is given up and expressed in terms of time, everything becomes possible, wonders cease to be wonders. The *bompu* of yesterday is the Buddha of today; the jackal has turned into the lion; *naraka* flooded with blood and fire is transformed into a lotus-pond filled with clear limpid waters, lightly kissed by a refreshing breeze; there are no traces of a lurid fire here, all is of one golden color shining in beauty and splendor.

Not only are there spatial transformations here by the Light striking on *naraka*, but time itself loses its relative order of sequence, the past becomes the the present and the future is no more an anticipation. This is demonstrated by Amida’s vows 5 to 15. Let me quote one of them by way of illustrating my point:

“If those who are born in my country, upon my obtaining Buddhahood, should not be endowed with the heavenly ear so as at least to be able to hear and retain in memory all the Buddhas’ preaching in hundreds of thousands of kotis of Buddha-countries, may I not attain the highest enlightenment.” (Vow 8).

From the ordinary, relative point of view prevailing in this world of *sabaloka*, this acquiring of the heavenly ears or eyes or similar other powers of sense when we are in the Pure Land as mentioned in these vows, is of no significance whatever. For what would the inhabitants of the Pure Land have to do with such extraordinary sensitiveness of the senses? They are already in the Pure Land where all earthly relationships have lost their values. The heavenly eyes or ears may be something highly desirable while here, but in the Pure Land even remembering all the Buddhas’ preachings or seeing all the Buddha-lands in the ten quarters will be a kind of superfluity or even nuisance which adds nothing of worth to what the residents in Amida’s country already have. They enjoy everything there which is given in Buddhas’ teachings, in fact they are living them; the Pure Land is the very symbol of the fullness of all things, and its occupants can really have nothing wanting. If they still had something wanting in the Pure Land it would no more be the Pure Land.

All the wonderful powers and experiences promised in Amida’s vows are no more than demonstrating the transcendental nature of the Pure Land where such conceptions as space, time, and causation are of no avail. The Pure Land is the enlightenment-experience itself and all the details given in the vows of Amida are its contents as were conceivable in India in those days when the sutras were compiled.

The Pure Land is not to be interpreted in terms of *sabaloka* though it is full of imageries belonging to the latter. Where Amida’s Light is given description in its own way altogether ignoring the significance attachable to those imageries, we must use a different measurement not belonging to this world. When I said that Amida’s Light is not to be explained by the theory of wavelengths, implications were that we are here dealing with a subject quite unique and beyond our intellectual postulates.

The fact that there is no other way of describing the Pure Land except for resorting to *sabaloka* imageries shows to that extent that the Pure Land is not

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a region beyond *sabaloka* and *naraka* as well.

If Amida's Light did not reach *naraka* as well as *sabaloka*, the Pure Land would cease to be a Pure Land and Amida's vows would come to naught. If we, on the other hand, conceived this world (and for that matter *naraka*) from our intellectual standpoint to be a realm independent of the Pure Land, existing unrelated to the Pure Land, we would be taking this world away from Amida's Light and at the same time denying the all-illuminating nature of the Light. Here too Amida's vows would be of no significance.

The Light in *Sabaloka*

The statement that unless the Pure Land reflected itself in this world of particulars and relativities, Amida's vows would be in vain, may be contested by most of the Shin Buddhists, though the statement to my thinking is almost one of self-evidence and does not require a specific process of rationalization. In order to show that the statement is based on the scriptural authority and supported by our inmost experience, the following is quoted from the *Larger Sukhāvāṭī-ṛyūha Sūtra* (Chinese translation by Sanghavarman). Ānanda expresses his desire to see the Pure Land and Buddha granting it the following scene ensues:

Instantly, the Buddha of Eternal Life radiating his infinite light universally illumined all the Buddha-countries including the Diamond-enclosed mountains, Mount Sumeru, and all the other mountains large and small, and also everything that could be found there. They were then all of one color.

It was like a great flood at the end of the kalpa, which would deluge all the worlds, submerging everything in them and burying them far below the surface, so that as far as one's eye could survey there would be nothing but the surging, swelling, rolling waters.

The rays of light emitted by the Buddha were also like these waters: those of the Śrāvakas' and Bodhisattvas' were covered by the Buddha's and could not at all be seen. There was nothing but the light of the Buddha radiating in its utmost brilliancy.

Ānanda then immediately saw the Buddha of Eternal Life in his

august dignity like Mount Sumeru towering high above all other worlds. There was nothing that escaped the all-illuminating rays of light which emanated from the Buddha's [Amitabha's] body. All four groups of the congregation were then able to see everything instantly. Those [of the Pure Land] saw also this land as the latter saw the other.

The quotation is clear enough to show that this world is fully reflected in the Pure Land, showing that Amida's Light reaches here whereby the latter shines enough to make itself visible to the host of the other side. This is intelligible, but how do we of this side come to the knowledge that those of the other side saw us as we saw them? This knowledge on our part is only possible when there is a mutual reflection between *sabaloka* and the Pure Land, and this not once, as is recorded in the sutra, but must be taking place constantly between here and yonder, because this is in the nature of the Light itself.

Listen to the experience of the *myōkōnin* which is perfectly in accord with this view of the Light. I will quote some lines from the "notebooks" of the *myōkōnin*, Saichi:

Amida is here,
 Here is Amida,
 Here in this very spot.
 Namu and Amida,
 As namu-amida-butsu,
 Here we are both together!

O Nyorai-san, you have given me all of yourself,
 And I've been taken captive by you, body and soul—
 Namu-amida-butsu!

He makes me call upon him,
 And he gives himself up to me:
 This is Amida's voice of summons—
 Namu-amida-butsu!

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It is Amida's will
To make my thought turn to him:
I utter "Namu!"
In perfect obedience to Amida's will.
Namu-amida-bu and 'Mida-sama
Are one and not two.
Namu-amida-bu is myself,
And 'Mida-sama is my oya-sama:
Here is the oneness of Namu-amida-butsu.
How happy for this favor!
Namu-amida-butsu!

"O Saichi, where is your Land of Bliss?"
"My Land of Bliss is right here."
"Where is the line dividing the Land of Bliss from this world?"
"Between this world and the Land of Bliss
The eye is the dividing line."

From these utterances of one who went through the Shin Buddhist experience, we realize that there is a most intimate mutual relationship between the Pure Land and this *sabaloka*. The *myōkōnin* calls Amida or 'Mida-sama his "oya-sama," which means both father and mother, and this "oya-sama" is with him and in him, declares Saichi the *myōkōnin*. The "oya-sama" in him called upon him and made him turn to "oya-sama," who in turn faced him and willingly became the object of the devotee's whole-hearted homage. In other words, Amida divided himself, made the one turn towards the other, in order to pay homage, as it were, to each other. In terms of light, Amida makes the Pure Land reflect itself in this world and this world in the Pure Land, and this mutual fusion of light takes place instantly between them, between this world and the Pure Land, when we have an enlightenment-experience. And I must add that this mutual fusion of light is taking place constantly between this world and the Pure Land, between Amida and ourselves.

How is this mutual reflection possible?

This can take place only under the hypothesis that Amida's Light illuminates both worlds, making it possible for each of them to reflect itself in the

other, so that each can see its image as it is in the other. This means in turn that the Pure Land and this world are interpenetrating and that between them there are no separating obstructions. If there were not such interpenetration or interfusion, we could never picture to ourselves what is happening in the Pure Land whereby we are made to deplore the present state of our finite existence and to aspire to be born into the Pure Land. But this deploring and aspiring could never take place without Amida's infusing his Light deeply into our hearts. To use official Shin terminology, we could not come to the consciousness of the Pure Land without the mediation of the other-power. The self-power is discriminative, relative, and limited, and unless it draws its life from Amida's Light it could never see the Pure Land and be born there. Only by means of the Light of the other-power can we of *sabaloka* transcend ourselves.

Dialectically speaking, the absolute contradiction between the Pure Land and the defiled land of ours is synthesized only by going through the mediumship of Amida's infinite Light. Without this we could never say that the Pure Land is here or that outside this world of finitude and defilement there is no Pure Land.

Again, from the point of the Shin Buddhist experience, we who are heavily laden with all kinds of evil passions and most decidedly destined for *naraka* could not expect to be born in the Pure Land unless with our defilements there is in us the other-power working all the time for enlightenment. In fact, the defilements so called are the other-power itself, and it is only through these defilements that we could realize the presence of the other-power within ourselves. We can never get rid of our defilements inasmuch as we are finite beings and limited in every sense of the word. But by being awakened to the fact that there is in us Amida's saving Light, all those defilements lose their power of binding us to this world or making us go to *naraka*. We are finite and yet infinite; we are destined to pass out of this individual existence as far as we are in time, yet by becoming conscious of the other-power we die and yet live; we are endowed with eternal life.

So we read in one of Shinran's hymns:

Since we heard the vow of compassion surpassing anything of this
world,

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We are no more ordinary mortals going through births and deaths.
While this finite body of defilements may remain the same,
The mind is already visiting the Land of Purity.

We must not think that this mutual reflection between the Pure Land and this world took place only once in historical time, while Śākyamuni and Ānanda and his congregation appeared in India two thousand and five hundred years ago, as Christ appeared in the history of the Jewish people. From the point of view of the religious consciousness Ānanda and the whole congregation including the Buddha himself are no other than ourselves who are gathered here tonight. We cannot say exactly or individually who is Ānanda, or who is Buddha among us. Such questions are nonsensical. We are in fact all Ānandas, Buddhas, Maitreyas, Mahākāśyapas, Śāriputras, and all the rest of the congregation who were present when this sutra was delivered on Mount Vulture. The main point is that the question Ānanda asked is the question we are asking of ourselves all the time. That is to say, the Ānanda in each of us is asking this question all the time to the Buddha in each of us. For in each of us there is an Ānanda who asks questions and a Buddha who is ready to answer them.

However this may be, Amida's Light envelops not only the Pure Land and this world, but also *naraka*, for even *naraka* cannot escape being enclosed within the Light, for *naraka* is a kind of intensified shadow of *sabaloka*. It is for this reason that Yama, lord of *naraka*, including all the *oni* (devils) and all the instruments and conditions of torture, could not be made visible not only to the inhabitants in *naraka* but to this human world; the mirror of purity standing before Yama could not have the power of illuminating all the "sins" committed by the inhabitants while they were in *sabaloka*. The mirror is no other than the Light.

There is no doubt that Amida's Light penetrates all the three worlds, Pure Land, *sabaloka*, and *naraka*. However divergent and mutually contradicting they may appear, all these are ultimately one reality; they are three aspects of one identical reality, which reflects itself variously because of conditions prevailing there. It is we, addicted to or endowed with the intellect which discriminates, who see the one differentiated as three. It is we who separate one reality, one Light, into three facets and take each as contrasted to the others.

It is due to this discrimination exercised by the intellect, or to a light ac-

accompanied by a shadow, that we often think this world as a kind of connecting link between *naraka* and the Pure Land, and ourselves standing on the middle section of a straight line whose one end points to *naraka* and the other to the Pure Land. But when we stand right on the line itself, as in the Light of Amida, the straight line itself is this Light and all the three are also in it. Even when we are all inevitably destined for *naraka* as is taught by Jōdo people, we are nevertheless able to climb up the ladder of the Pure Land, or rather we can at once leap over to Amida's realm, because we are right in the middle of his Light which is like a straight line stretched out infinitely at either end. It is the privilege of the human mind that it can grasp the infinite while right in it.

In this sense, the following statement is true: *Sabaloka* is the Pure Land itself shining in its absolutely serene Light; each one of us is nobody else than Amida himself. At the same time we must remember that this kind of insight never comes to one whose eyesight is dimmed by discrimination.

The eye that sees the shadowless Light of Amida is not the eye that we all have as one of the senses. There must be a third eye like the one possessed by the heavenly god, Maheśvara. But let me remind you of this: Though this eye does not belong to this world of relativity, it is not something different from the eye which we use in surveying the world. This is very confusing, you might say. Yes, so it is. But what is needed for the transformation is to change the direction in which it is used to looking. Let the same eye turn within instead of without, and it works wonders. It is just this turning, this changing of direction, that is needed for transformation. So long as we are relying on our own light which is mere reflection, this will never be effected. There must be an inner experience, which is known as "crosswise leaping."

By virtue of this transformation or "crosswise leaping" the three poisonous passions and the five self-centred desires are also transformed into so many merit-producing virtues. This has already been noticed in connection with Saichi's idea of the eye as the dividing line between this world and the Pure Land. It will be interesting to note that Eckhart makes a similar reference to the eye, saying that it is the same eye that sees God as well as the external world.

It is indeed the eye-curtain that separates this world from the Pure Land; when the curtain is drawn up one sees *sabaloka* in the Pure Land and the Pure

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Land in *sabaloka*. Let me quote Saichi again:

“Where is Saichi sleeping?”

“I am sleeping in the Pure Land which is this world;
When I am awakened, I shall be in ‘Mida’s Pure Land.’”

In another place, he has:

Sahaloka is no other than here where I am,
The Land of Happiness is also no other than here where I am.
This means the removing of the eye-curtain.

It is the eye-curtain, not very heavy nor unwieldy, but as long as it is there the Pure Land is furthest away from our view and utterly inaccessible.

According to Saichi, while he is alive, that is, while he is leading this life of relativity and discrimination, he is in the Pure Land belonging to this world, *sabaloka*, and as such he cannot escape all the karma-conditions which characterize this world. But upon his death, that is, when he parts with this life of relativity and discrimination, he enters into the Pure Land where these conditions are no more in operation. But judging from the whole trend of his writings, he does not seem to care where he is actually living, in this land of suffering or in the land of bliss; wherever he may be he is happy and thankful for the favor which he finds everywhere he goes. Amida’s Light is always with him, he is with Amida all the time, in fact he is Amida, he cannot get away from him, he is taken captive by him. This being the case, it does not matter where he is.

With all these inner feelings which he cherishes, his expressions follow the old traditional, conventional modes; he does not try to invent a new terminology, for he is not a thinker, he is just an ordinary devotee of Shin faith which he has experienced to the very core of his being, and for that reason he cannot help giving expression to it to the best of his learning and thinking. He is happy with that and with handmaking the foot-gear according to the fashion of his day.

Saichi, however, makes distinction between “sleeping” and “awake” which corresponds to the Pure Land conditioned and the Pure Land in its absolute purity. While “sleeping,” which is our actual state in this world, we are indeed

in the Pure Land yet as conditioned by relativity. When "awake," however, whatever this may mean, we are in the Pure Land itself shorn of all its conditions. As long as Saichi finds himself to be living in this world of birth-and-death, of sleep and wakefulness, he cannot help thinking dualistically as none of us can.

It is significant that he speaks here of being in sleep and being awakened, instead of living and dying. While he is sleeping he sees the finite aspect of the Pure Land, and when he is awakened he faces the infinity-aspect of the Pure Land, where Amida's Light shines in its shadowlessness. He thus transcends his *sabaloka* existence.

When the eye-curtain is down, we sleep, and while thus sleeping we cannot perceive the eternal shadowless beams of the Light; what we see is conditioned, differentiated, where we have an interplay of lights and shades. But it is the same light even when it is seen thus conditioned; it is no other light than the one illuminating the Pure Land.

When the curtain is fully up and we are no more asleep and ushered into the Pure Land, we may see something like the following prevailing there:

The *Larger Sukhāvati-vyūha Sūtra* describes in another place the lotus-flower in the Pure Land which is significant in view of the interfusion of Light taking place everywhere throughout the worlds whose numbers are beyond our limited survey:

The lotus-flowers of precious jewels fill the entire land, and attached to every one of the jewel-flowers there are hundreds of thousands of myriads of petals. The rays of light issuing from the flowers are infinitely multi-colored: from blue flowers, blue rays issue; from white flowers, white rays; from the deep-colored, from the yellow, from the vermilion, from the violet, issue each its corresponding light. Their brilliantly radiating lights far exceed those of the suns and moons.

From each one of the petals there emanate thirty-six hundreds of thousands of myriads of rays and from each one of these rays issue thirty-six hundreds of thousands of myriads of Buddhas, whose bodies most excellently formed are golden-colored. From each one of these Buddhas also emanate hundreds of thousands of rays of light

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illuminating all the ten quarters, and the most wonderful Dharma is preached.

Each one of these Buddhas thus leads innumerable numbers of sentient beings to be securely established in the right path of Buddhahood.

The lotus-flower described in such high lights symbolizes each one of us sentient beings. For each one of us is a Bodhisattva, a possible Buddha—each one of us in his individual coloring, that is to say, not necessarily in one uniform color but each in his own unique tinge, which may be violet or yellow or red or any one of the infinitely variable hues. And all these color-lights are infinitely interfused as described above. And this interfusion explains the nature of the enlightenment-experience which always demands expression of some kind, in words, in sounds, in colors, in actions.

Amida and His Original Vow

When this Light is translated in terms of religious experience, that which makes us turn towards the Pure Land is Amida's Power of Vow (*pūrva-praṇidhāna-bala*), which is known as the other-power in the system of Shinran. He bases this on the eighteenth vow:

“If upon my obtaining Buddhahood, all beings in the ten quarters should not desire in sincerity and trustfulness to be born in my country, and if they should not be born by only thinking of me, say, ten times, . . . may I not attain the highest enlightenment.”

Shin Buddhism makes this eighteenth vow the very foundation of all its teachings, asserting that if not for this vow on the part of Amida no sentient beings can ever expect to be born into the Pure Land and there to attain enlightenment. Vows 19 and 20 emphasize the awakening of the enlightenment-mind and the accumulation of meritorious deeds based on moral discipline. However strong and sincere a man's desire to be born in the Pure Land may be, his morality and intellection alone will never take him to Amida's Land; that is, he can never hope to achieve his end of bringing about the enlighten-

ment-experience. For this, something more is needed, which does not belong in the order of moral merit or intellectual acumen. This something must come from a higher realm of values. Things belonging to the moral or intellectual order are necessarily conditioned, and what we aspire for is to transcend this and to realize enlightenment, which is the ground of all Buddhas' teachings, and also of our relative existence. Amida's Original Vow alone, according to Shin teaching, makes us reach this ground. Vows 19 and 20 are, respectively:

“If, upon my obtaining Buddhahood, all beings in the ten quarters awakening their thoughts to enlightenment and practising all deeds of merit should cherish the desire in sincerity to be born in my country and if I should not, surrounded by a large company, appear before them at the time of their death, may I not attain the highest enlightenment.”

“If, upon my obtaining Buddhahood, all beings in the ten quarters hearing my Name should cherish the thought of my country and planting all the roots of merit turn them in sincerity over to being born in my country, and if they should fail in obtaining the result of it, may I not attain the highest enlightenment.”

In these vows there is no reference to “thinking of the *myōgō* (*nāmadbeya*),” that is identified with “*namu-amida-butsu*.” This thinking of *myōgō* is what distinguishes vow 18 from vows 19 and 20.

In our ordinary way of reasoning, mere thinking of Amida's Name cannot be regarded as having the power of working such wonders as to make our birth in the Pure Land possible where conditions are all ready our attainment of enlightenment. Moral discipline especially, far more than merely thinking of Amida's Name and making it take possession of one's entire consciousness, is naturally to be considered of greater weight and consequence in the attainment of enlightenment either in this life or after, and we must feel certainly justified to attach more significance to the nineteenth and the twentieth vows than to the eighteenth.

How then is it that Shin upholds the eighteenth vow as the only means to transcend finitude and relativity, even to the extent that its followers tend to ignore the value of the nineteenth and the twentieth?

I will not try here to explain the basic ideas underlying the Shin doctrine of

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salvation through thinking or reciting Amida's Name. This I will do somewhere else. Let me just state this: moral discipline, the accumulation of merits, or the exercising of intellectual powers, or these activities together, cannot, even when the enlightenment-mind is awakened, reach the bedrock of our consciousness*; and unless this bedrock is shaken up and broken through, there cannot be any transcending this relative existence; and so long as this existence is not transcended there cannot be any enlightenment-experience, which alone gives us a final sense of rest and peace.

What then is this bedrock of consciousness?

This is the will or the Self as I call it, but the self not in its psychological sense, but in its most fundamental sense beyond which we cannot go. Enlightenment consists in knowing what this Self is, what the will is. This knowing, however, is not a knowledge as we understand it ordinarily. In another word, the will is faith, and faith is enlightenment-experience.

To realize this, moral discipline must exhaust itself, intellection must reach its limits, for in these activities there is always the sense of a relative self which obstructs the way to self-realization, to the awakening of the Self.

The Self we thus ultimately reach is Amida's Name or Amida's Light, whichever we may choose to call it. The Light, which is shadowless, illumines not only the Pure Land but all the worlds, including *sabaloka* and *naraka* as well. The Name, as is also repeatedly told in the sutra, reverberates throughout all the Buddha-lands in the ten quarters. To give instances of the miraculous power of the Name, let me cite two more vows:

“If upon my obtaining Buddhahood, all the Buddhas, immeasurable in number in the ten quarters, do not approvingly proclaim my name, may I not attain the highest enlightenment.” (Vow 17).

“If, upon my obtaining Buddhahood, all the Bodhisattvas in other lands by hearing my Name should not instantly reach the stage of no-turning-back, may I not attain the highest enlightenment.” (Vow 47).

*This seems to mean that the enlightenment-mind though awakened often retains the characteristic of the self-power. In Zen the saying is: “Enlightenment which smells of enlightenment is not true enlightenment.” “The bedrock of our consciousness,” which is the Self, stands at a distance from us as a bottom which must be broken through. Ed.

Amida puts his own life into his Name and declares that he may not attain enlightenment unless his Name is approvingly accepted by all the Buddhas and effective enough to bring all beings into his Pure Land by hearing it, reciting it, thinking of it, holding it, believing it—and all this “in sincerity and trustfulness.” As Amida is no Amida without his Light, he cannot really be himself without his Name. He is Light, he is Name; Name and Light are one. Seeing the Light is hearing the Name. As the Light is shadowless and beyond the measurement of wave-lengths, so is the Name not anything attached to something. It stands all by itself; it is the Self.

Instead of going into a detailed explanation of all the ideas presented in this paper, which will be done later under special headings, I wish to make this remark here. By Amida’s Name Shinran points to the awakening of the Self—not the self in the self-power, but the one within the innermost depths of our religious consciousness; in other words, he points to the assertion of Amida’s Vow-power which is our will-power transcending every form of finitude and relativity. In Shin terminology, this supreme moment is known as Amida addressing himself to the soul of his devotee, or the devotee’s giving up his self-power, or his being taken captive in the hands of Amida.

On the moral plane of religious consciousness, the Self cannot be revealed in its own light; what morality conceives is still under the guise of relativity; the selflessness of the Self is still far from being realized. The inner urge which is identifiable with the awakening of the enlightenment-mind is still on the plane of relative empirical self standing opposed to Amida. There is yet no state of consciousness to be designated as one-minded-ness, which is Amida’s assertion of himself in our soul, Amida’s self-identification with the Self which constitutes the reason of our being. When this takes place there is what is known as the awakening of faith, the realising of absolute sincerity as given us by Amida who is sincerity itself. As long as we are on the plane of relativity and finitude, there is no sincerity or truth in us, no Amida, no one-minded-ness, no awakening of *karuna*-heart which is the Buddha-heart itself; or viewed from different angles of human consciousness, we may call it the Buddha-mind, the Buddha-nature, or Buddhahood, or faith, or enlightenment.

The Original Vow and the Self

The power of the Original Vow is conceived by Shin followers objectively as coming from Amida; but, speaking from our primal religious consciousness, it is what is innately abiding in every one of us. The inmost Self as distinguished from the relative psychological self is the abode of the power; and it is no other than this power that makes us realize the relativity and limitation of our finite existence and condemn ourselves as burning with fiery evil passions and destined for *naraka*. It is in this way that the Self, as opposed to the relative self, expresses its dissatisfaction with the conditions under which it is placed; or we can say that in this way the Self makes itself known to our relative consciousness.

This relative consciousness or rather this relative empirical self is always ready to work mischief. It is always ready to assert itself like an autocrat with whatever powers it possesses. The autocrat deceives himself by imagining that he is the actual owner of the power and forgetting altogether the fact that he himself is a hireling and cannot shine by his own light. Quite well-meaningly he calculates, when he feels that something is not altogether right with him, to amend the situation by his own efforts. This is all very well if he does not deceive himself by thinking that he can by his own power and by that alone achieve the end he seeks. In such cases what is wrong with him is that he is not conscious of the limits of his power, that whatever power he may think he has is all derived from a deeper source. It is this deeper source which is really concerned with the unsatisfactory conditions prevailing on the relative plane of consciousness.

Moral discipline which belongs in the order of relativity is not enough, inasmuch as we are finite beings to attain the infinite. It is only when we have attained the infinite that we realize that the infinite is really in the finite and conversely. But so long as we have not attained this insight we fail to know that the finite has no power to take hold of the infinite, because there is an absolute gap between the finite and the infinite. The bridging takes place only from the side of the infinite and not from the finite side. This is an important consideration we have to make when we are dealing with religious subjects.

Moral discipline as such will never lead us to the realization of the Self which is the absolute subjectum of our being, for morality relies on the self-power

and the self-power can never transcend itself to do this; the self-power must negate itself, which means to abandon itself, deny itself, abrogate its claims to be the means of reaching the infinite. This abrogation on the part of morality of its claims for self-transcendence does by no means involve effacing itself. For the discipline as discipline has quite an independent role in perfecting human character as such. Morality has its own function to perform in human society. Only, we must remember that we cannot reach religion by means of morality, for religion belongs in a higher order of meaning or values. To awaken the religious consciousness, to open up the realm of infinite Light and eternal Life, to receive Amida's Original Vow-power, to penetrate into the Self, we must resort to another method of discipline than mere morality and intellection, both of which belong in the plane of relativity.

Amida's Light shines on everything, inclusive of all forms of self-power: moral discipline, intellectual speculation, and rationalistic calculation. The Light therefore, must be approachable from every avenue conceivable to our consciousness. It is not right to open just one approach and condemn the rest as incapable of reaching the end. Amida is all-comprehensive and will favor any means. The choice is determined by the various circumstances, internal and external, surrounding any particular personality. The only thing most important and essential, without which Amida's Light or his Original Vow-power can never be apperceived within oneself, is that the self-power in whatever pattern it may assume in the personality of the Amida-aspirant is to be carried on until it finds itself utterly exhausted, being at the end of its powers and devices.

Intellectual speculation is a form of self-power, so is moral discipline, and as such they are not conducive to the realization of the other-power. But as the other-power is at the infinite end of those human calculations born of self-power, the self-power is to be severely tried until it finds itself entirely wanting. It is not in the nature of self-power to be despaired of its own limitations without first putting itself to trial. Mere reasoning or persuasion is not sufficient. The self-power a most aggressive, most conceited power, will never be convinced of its impotency until it has exercised itself to its utmost and acknowledged its defeat. Frequently it so happens that the self-power refuses to push its efforts to the limits where it is forced to admit its powerlessness, for the self-power from its own baseness hesitates, falters,

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swerves, intoxicated with its human conceit and deep-seated delusion. The awakening of the enlightenment-mind is just the beginning of the self-power coming to the knowledge of itself. It is just an incipient stage of self-realization. One has to go through with bitter frustrations one after another, otherwise the self-power can never see itself totally bared before the other-power. But, in reality, that the self-power can bare itself shorn of all its self-conceit and self-delusions is due to the presence of the other-power within itself. In other words, it is the working of the power of Original Vow in our relative consciousness that the self-power finally comes to acknowledge its complete defeat.

In terms of the Self, the relative, empirical, psychological self which we conceive to be an ego at the centre of personality is not final reality, but a pseudo-representative of the Self. The psychological ego, however, conceals something of the real Self underneath it, and it is due to the working of this Self that the superficial self comes to acknowledge its deceptive, spurious nature.

To recapitulate:

When the exhaustion of the self-power takes place, it discerns that it is nothing so long as it remains in itself, that it is really the other-power that makes the self-power use itself up. Therefore, what is needed for the experience of the other-power is to exhaust the self-power, whatever form it may take, moral or intellectual.

I repeat, that moral discipline itself is not to be condemned, nor is intellection. Why? When it is deeply tainted with the pride and self-conceit of the self-power, it proves to be the stumbling-block to the waking of the Vow-power (*praṇidhāna-bala*) in oneself. But it is this very conceit and delusion that causes the final downfall of the self-power. So with the intellect: doubt is indeed the opposite of faith. No one is expected to attain enlightenment without removing doubt. It is this doubt, however, that leads one ultimately to faith. The denser the clouds of doubt the brighter the Light when it reveals itself. One is first to struggle desperately with doubt and self-power; this is what makes Shinran declare that the evil-minded are the objects of Amida's Original Vow.

We are always apt to forget this fact and think that moral discipline is useless and that the intellectual attempt at reaching reality is fruitless; and the

worst thing is that we for this reason relegate morality and intellect to the furthest recesses of the religious consciousness as if they were positive hindrances rather than negative unessentials. It is not that they in themselves are fruitless or useless, but that they are so when they are separated from the other-power which in fact they are.

A tendency to moral laxity is a phenomenon we frequently notice among Shin Buddhist followers. I am inclined to think this is due to their inadequate appreciation of the other-power, and probably principally to their leaders' imperfect, half-way interpretation of the vows 19 and 20 in relation to vow 18.

When these descriptions are translated into more humanly intelligible language, we may have something like this: After a good night sleep, I get up. The sun is shining into the room, a refreshing breeze comes through the windows, I breathe deeply. Probably I had a dream, but I do not remember now what it was. I am ready for the day's work. I meet people, greet them, and they greet me back. They look pleased so am I. As I am a writer, I sit by the desk, take up my pen, or have the typewriter ready. I collect my thoughts, or look up books needed for reference. After some hours' work I feel tired. I go down into the garden, take a walk among flowers, for I like them, and the garden is filled with them. About this time of the year in Japan, the morning-glories begin to shoot out their young tender leaves. It is interesting to watch them grow. They have to be carefully taken care of if we wish to see them bloom fine in summer. When the summer comes the first thing I do in the morning is to go around in the garden and admire the flowers refreshingly full of life. They can well be compared with those lotus-flowers blooming in the water of merits in the Pure Land. Nature is generally thought to be dumb, but the trouble is not on her side, but on ours: she speaks eloquently in her own way and it is we who fail to understand her. In the Pure Land every tree, every leaf, every flower is described as singing in praise of the triple treasure. So do things on this side of the world. Swedenborg's doctrine of correspondence holds good in Buddhism too. Amida's Light illuminates this *sabaloka* as much as the Pure Land. Amida attained his enlightenment and his Pure Land came into existence. We attain ours and this *sabaloka* too must transform itself into a Pure Land. When we have our absolute faith established firmly in Amida, we do not go to Amida's Pure Land, but the Pure Land comes

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to us along with Amida. Amida is born in our minds with his Land. This *sabaloka* becomes a Pure Land, and we Amida. For are we not devoted followers of Tariki, the other-power? After this musing I come back to my study and resume my work. The inner world is another "nature." Beautiful flowers are here along with rampant weeds; the sweet-singing birds are here along with poisonous snakes; the star-sprinkled skies reflect themselves on mud-filled ponds perhaps harboring noxious plants. All kinds of *bonnō* are in company with high-flying ideals and a tenderly yielding heart.

NOTES

1. *Amida* in Japanese.
2. Kalpa: a long period of time.
3. Dharmakāya: generally translated "Law-Body." The highest reality or personality.
4. Buddha, that is, Śākyamuni.
5. His, that is, Amida's.
6. Three evil paths: the hungry ghosts, the animal world, and hell.
7. Arhat: one of the titles of the Buddha; he who is worthy of respect.
8. Prajñā: transcendental knowledge or source of all knowledge.
9. Three Vehicles: (1) The Bodhisattva, being of enlightenment, (2) Pratyekabuddha, solitary Buddha, and (3) Śrāvaka, hearer.
10. "Ōjō means literally 'to go and be born,' that is, assurance of rebirth in the Pure Land."
11. It was long time ago, indeed in an innumerable, immeasurable, incomprehensible kalpa before now, that Dharmākara (the name assumed by Amida while still in the stage of Bodhisattvahood) studied and practiced the Dharma under the guidance of a Tathāgata called Lokeśvara-rāja . . . and vowed in the presence not only of this Buddha but of all the celestial beings, evil spirits, Brahma, gods, and all other beings, that unless the . . . forty-eight conditions were not fulfilled he might not attain the highest enlightenment . . . he completed all the virtues belonging to the life of a Bodhisattva, which consists of the realization of Love (*karuṇā*) and Wisdom (*prajñā*).
12. "The Original Vow, the expression of Amida's Will or Karuṇā ('love' or 'compassion') which he cherishes over all beings, is specified, itemized or particularized in forty-eight ways, each a practical situation in which we may find ourselves in the course of an individual life . . . the Original Vow is Amida himself expressed in human terms."
13. Taken from the *Kan Muryōju-kyō* (The Sutra of Meditation). This sutra "records how Śākyamuni accompanied by Ānanda came to the royal palace in Rajagriha where Queen Vaidehī was imprisoned and what he preached to her concerning the possibility of all sentient beings to be reborn in the Pure Land of Amida after the deliverance from this world of suffering. It was translated into Chinese in 424 A.D. by Kalayasas."

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14. More fully, *sabalokadbātu* in Sanskrit; *sbaba* in Japanese. Dr. Suzuki has translated this term variously “this world of suffering,” “the world of particulars,” “this relative world of finitude and limitation,” “this world of patience and endurance.”

15. “Being finite means being defiled . . . ,” “a taint of finitude or relativity . . . means defilement or karma or sin . . . As long as we are what we are, we have to continue to commit deeds of defilement and thus accumulate chances of falling into evil paths. There is no escape from this, there is no alternative other path. The self-power of relativity . . . constitutes our being . . .”

16. “Buddhists are more concerned—which is natural—with *naraka* (hells) than heavens. After death we generally go to Yama, who rules the spirits of the dead . . . He has a bright mirror before him. When we appear before him, we see ourselves reflected in it. It illuminates our entire being, and we cannot hide anything from it . . . Yama looks at it and knows at once what kind of person each of us was while living in this world. Besides this, he has a book before him in which everything we did is minutely recorded . . . His penetrating eye reads not only consciousness but also our unconscious. He is naturally legalistic, but he is not devoid of kindheartedness, for he is always ready to discover in the unconscious something which may help the criminal to save himself.”

17. Shinran (1173–1262), the founder of the Shin school of Pure Land teaching. “The Shin school is the culmination of Pure Land thought, and that took place in Japan . . . Shinran had a profound understanding of the needs of the common people.”

18. Taken from the *Kōsō-wasan*, “Hymns dedicated to the Seven Great Fathers of Shin Buddhism, in India, China and Japan.”

19. “There is a class of people among the devotees of Shin Buddhism who are popularly known as ‘Myōkōnin’ which means ‘wondrously happy (or good) men.’ They are distinguished generally by their good-heartedness, unworldliness, piousness, and lastly by their illiteracy, that is, their not being learned in the lore of their religion and not being at all argumentative about what they believe. This last quality is probably what differentiates them most sharply from the rest of the Shin devotees. They are in fact true Shin followers. They do not argue, they are not intellectually demonstrative, they just go on practicing what they have innerly experienced. When they express themselves at all, they are unaffected, their words come directly from their inmost hearts and refer directly to the truth of their faith. This is really what Shin Buddhism claims to do for its followers.”

20. “In Buddhism sin means ignorance, that is, ignorance as to the meaning of the individual or the ultimate destiny of the self. Positively, sin is the affirmation of the self as a final *svabhāva* (self-substance) in deed, thought, and speech. When a man is above these two hindrances, ignorance and self-assertion, he is said to be sinless. . . . That we are sinful, does not mean in Buddhism that we have so many evil impulses, desires, or proclivities, which, when released, are apt to cause the ruination of oneself as well as others; the idea goes deeper and is rooted in our being itself, for it is sin to imagine and act as if individuality were a final fact. As long as we are what we are, we have no way to

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escape from sin, and this is at the root of all our spiritual tribulations. This is what the followers of Shin Buddhism means when they say that all works, even when they are generally considered morally good, are contaminated, as long as they are the efforts of 'self-power,' and do not lift us from the bondage of Karma."

21. A very large number, variously rendered as ten million, one hundred million, etc.

22. "'One Thought' is a momentous term in the philosophy of Shin and Jōdo. Its Sanskrit original . . . means 'one instant' or 'one moment.' As we say in English 'quick as thought' or 'quick as a flash,' 'one thought' represents in terms of time the shortest possible duration, which is to say, one instant. The one instant of faith-establishment is the moment when Amida's Eternal Life cuts crosswise the flow of birth-and-death, or when his Infinite Light flashes into the darkening succession of love and hate which is experienced by our relative consciousness. This event takes place in 'one thought' and is never repeated, and therefore is known. . . as the 'the last moment' . . . This moment of 'one thought' is the one in our life most deeply impregnated with meaning, and for that reason must come to us in our 'ordinary moments of life' and not wait for 'the last moment' in its relative sense."

23. "'Namu-amida-butsu' is the Japanese reading of the original Sanskrit phrase 'namo amitābhabuddhāya,' meaning 'Adoration of the Buddha of Infinite Light.' But with followers of the Pure Land teaching, the phrase is far more than mere adoration for Amitābuddha, or Amida, for by this they express their absolute faith in Amida as one who makes it possible for them to be born in his Land of Purity and Bliss . . . the phrase often serves as a metaphysical formula symbolizing the identity of subject and object of the devotee and Amida, of the 'sin-laden' individual and the all-saving and all-merciful Oyasama, of all beings (*sarvasattva*) and Buddha, of *ki* and *bō*, of human yearnings and the supreme enlightenment."

24. See further on in this essay.

25. *Bompu* or "*Bombu* is the unenlightened and stands in contrast to Buddha."

26. See Note 15.

27. "It is . . . another name for Enlightenment (*anuttara-samyak-sambodhi*), which is the word used by the Buddha and his Indian followers ever since his realization under the Bodhi-tree by the River Nairanjana." "Enlightenment means perfected personality—one who is perfect in Prajñā ('transcendental or intuitive knowledge') and Karuṇā ('love')."

28. ". . . Nirvana [is] nothing else in its essence than Enlightenment, the content [is] identical . . . Enlightenment [is] Nirvana reached while yet in the flesh, and no Nirvana [is] ever possible without obtaining Enlightenment. The latter may have a more intellectual note in it than the former, which is a psychological state realized through Enlightenment. . . . Generally Nirvana is understood in its negative aspect as the total extinction of everything, body and soul, but in the actuality of life no such negativist conception could ever prevail, and the Buddha never meant Nirvana to be so interpreted."